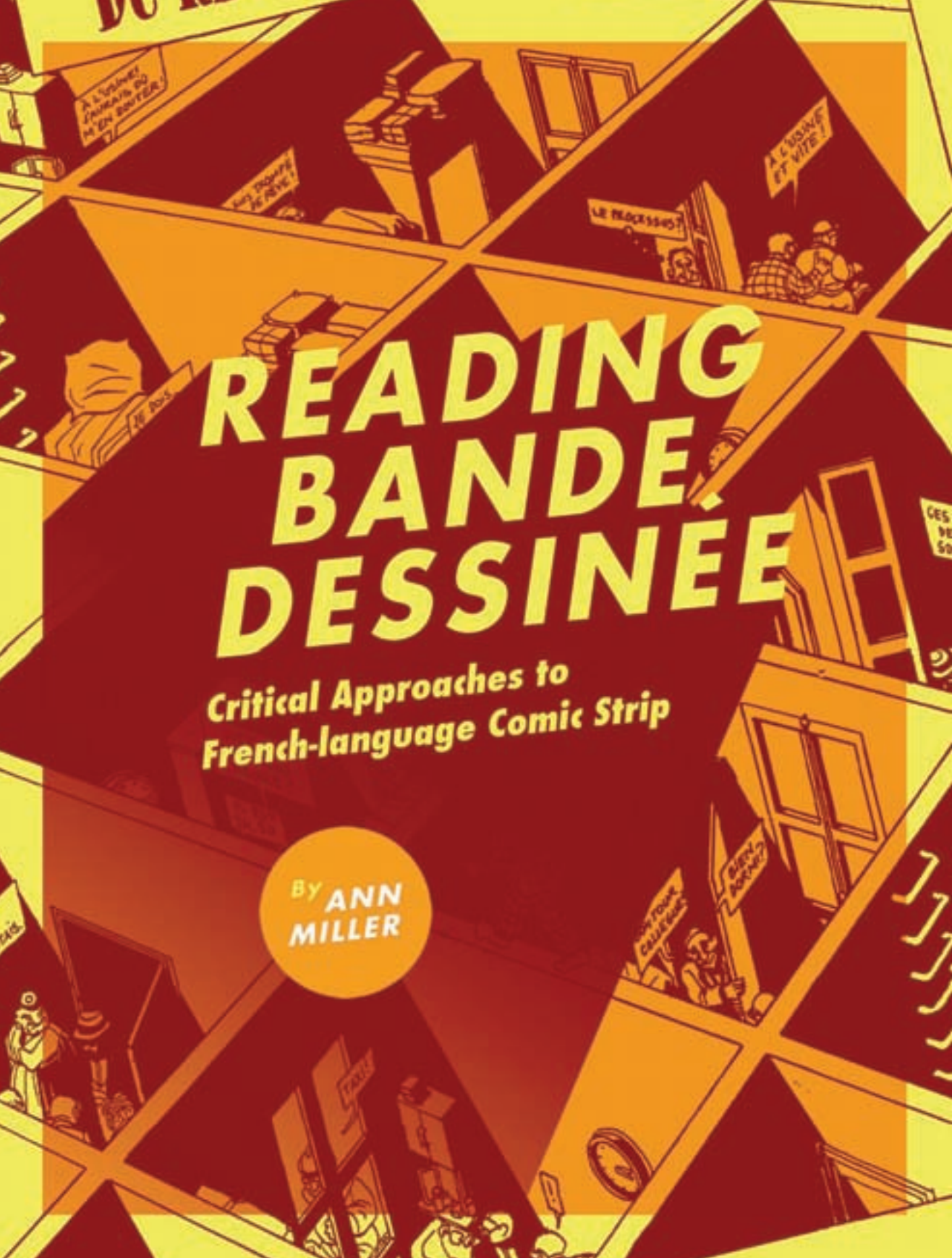
READING
BANDE
DESSINÉE
Critical Approaches to
French-language Comic Strip
BY ANN
MILLER

Reading *bande dessinée*:
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Introduction

This book is for students of French-language comic strip, or *bande dessinée*, and for more general readers. It is divided into four sections, which offer four different ways of approaching the medium, associated with different theoretical perspectives. Frameworks for analysis are made very explicit, and no prior knowledge of terminology is assumed.

The first part offers a historical overview, with the longest and most detailed section being devoted to contemporary *bande dessinée*, emphasizing the artistic impact of independent publishing houses since the 1990s. The history of the medium is in part the history of its struggle for legitimacy, and each chapter includes a section which considers the evolution of the cultural status of *bande dessinée* and of the theoretical approaches applied to it.

The second part offers frameworks within which to analyse the formal features of *bande dessinée*. It is based on a case-study approach, so that the terms and concepts introduced in each chapter are predominantly exemplified from one album, or, in the case of Chapter 7, one series. Chapter 5 introduces basic terms and concepts of analysis for the study of sequential visual narration and text-image relations; Chapter 6 draws on narrative theory, and Chapter 7 considers the potential of *bande dessinée* as a postmodernist art.

The third part adopts a cultural studies approach to the medium, discussing *bande dessinée* in relation to questions of identity. Chapter 8 focuses on national identity, Chapter 9 on postcolonial identities and Chapter 10 on the intersection of class and masculinity. Each chapter begins by resuming relevant theoretical issues, before offering detailed case studies of a small number of albums. Readers looking for Astérix in this book will find him in Chapter 8, which presents a survey of the multiple ways in which the character, and the series, have been taken to represent Frenchness.

The fourth part considers the representation of subjectivity and the body in *bande dessinée*. Readers seeking Tintin will find him in Chapter 11, which offers a critical discussion of the way

in which four different writers have brought psychoanalytic theory to bear on the unconscious of the Moulinsart household. Chapters 12 and 13 are both based on autobiography and diaries in *bande dessinée*, a major genre since the 1990s. Chapter 12 considers these works in the light of theories of autobiography, and Chapter 13 focuses on questions of gender and embodiment in *bande dessinée* autobiographical work.

The book aims to introduce readers to a wide spectrum of French-language *bande dessinée* from France and Belgium. It makes some reference to work from Switzerland and Québec which has been published in France, but work from other francophone countries is not represented here. There is a vigorous *bande dessinée* publishing industry in Africa, but it is beyond the scope of this book to consider the context of that production. There is another significant omission, which is the large and influential Flemish-language production in Belgium.

One key problem for anyone writing about *bande dessinée* is the question of illustrations. It is not possible to reproduce the pages being discussed in more than a few cases, without doubling the size of the book. The illustrations included relate to the discussion of formal features in Part two, since it is here that they are most useful. The albums used as case studies have been chosen partly for their ready availability, and we hope that in a modest way this book will encourage the spread of *bédéphilie* amongst an English-speaking readership.

Part One

THE HISTORY OF *BANDE DESSINÉE*

The following four chapters cover the history of the medium from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. The longest and most detailed chapter is the last, which covers the period from 1990 to the present. There is no attempt to be exhaustive, and a more detailed treatment of fewer albums has been preferred to a, perhaps more representative, listing of a larger number. The selection of artists and albums is inevitably subjective, but, from the 1970s, it is partly influenced by the decisions of juries at the annual Angoulême Festival. However, in order to avoid encumbering the text with references to awards won by artists or albums, a list of Angoulême prizewinners is provided in the appendix on page 247.

The history of *bande dessinée* necessarily includes consideration of its struggle for recognition as an art form. Debates around this subject have frequently been conducted in terms drawn from the work of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Familiarity with Bourdieu's work is not taken for granted here, and key terms and concepts are introduced before they are used in the sections on the status of the medium.

Chapter 1

From the Nineteenth Century to the 1960s: *bande dessinée* Becomes a Children's Medium, and then Starts to Grow Up

1.1 The origins of *bande dessinée*

It is not easy to identify the first *bande dessinée* (literally 'drawn strip') in history, particularly since the term did not take over from the rather vague word 'illustrés' until the 1950s. Indeed, in 1996, the CNBDI, the French national *bande dessinée* centre, became involved in a spat with the CBBD, its Belgian equivalent, on this very issue, and a few American scholars joined the fray, on both sides of the argument. The CBBD chose that year to celebrate the centenary of the medium, declaring it to have been invented by the American Richard Outcault in 1896, when his strip *The Yellow Kid and his New Phonograph* appeared in the *New York Journal*. The CNBDI riposted by mounting an exhibition in honour of the 150th anniversary of the death of the Swiss Rodolphe Töpffer, whose *L'Histoire de Monsieur Vieux Bois* had been written in 1827.[1] What was at stake was a definition of the medium and, behind it, the larger question of the position of *bande dessinée* within the field of cultural production, an issue with which the first part of this book will be much preoccupied.

The fixing of a date for the origin of the medium necessarily involves a specification of its defining features. The Töpffer faction argued that not only had their man combined images and words in a novel way, but he had also employed a type of sequentiality which broke with that used by eighteenth-century caricaturists. Rather than representing his hero's progress as a series of separate tableaux, he decomposed movements, allowing the reader to reconstruct a continuous narrative across the frame boundaries (Groensteen 1996a: 9). The Outcault

supporters, on the other hand, insisted that only when text was integrated into the frame in the form of speech balloons, their man's innovation, could the claim be made that a new medium had been born (Blackbeard 1995: 70).

These technical questions were, though, less important than the strategic moves that underlay them. In fact, most definitions of the medium will come up against exceptions (that of the Outcault faction would exclude silent *bande dessinée*, for example), but the debate around specificity was in itself a way of raising the status of the medium. In addition, the CNBDI had a further motive in their promotion of Töpffer over Outcault. If *bande dessinée*'s history begins with the American comic strip, then it has its roots in mass culture, even if some comic strips can be deemed to have artistic merit. If, on the other hand, it can be traced back to Töpffer's work, then it can lay claim to some illustrious European successors later in the nineteenth century, including Félix Nadar, Gustave Doré, Wilhelm Busch, Théophile Steinlen and Caran d'Ache, whose status as artists is uncontested. Its subsequent disappearance into the ghetto of children's magazines and mass culture can, in consequence, be seen as contingent and transitory, until a new conjuncture emerges in which it can flourish as an art form. It will be seen from the following chapters that the history of *bande dessinée* is not only the story of the evolution of form and subject matter, but also the story of strategic bids, like this example by the CBNDI, in the struggle for legitimization.

1.2 Children's magazines

By the end of the nineteenth century, francophone *bande dessinée* (or its precursors, according to your position in the above debate) had moved out of the press for adults and into the restricted sphere of magazines for children, from which it would scarcely emerge until the 1960s. 'They sheltered it', says Pierre Couperie, 'by imprisoning it' (Couperie 1967a: 139). This tendency was encouraged by the success of the work of Christophe, a science teacher whose strips were intended to be educative. They included *La Famille Fenouillard* (1889–1893), a parody of bourgeois tourism, and *Les Facéties du Sapeur Camember* (1890–1896), featuring a soldier whose stupidity is mocked. After first appearing in *Le Petit Français illustré*, they were subsequently published in the form of luxury albums, a procedure which would become standard in francophone *bande dessinée* for most of the twentieth century: prepublication in the press, followed by an album when a series was deemed to be successful.

Among the many magazines for children which appeared at the turn of the century was *La Semaine de Suzette*, founded in 1905 for well-brought-up girls. Bécassine, the naïve Breton maid in the service of the Marquise de Grand Air, began to appear sporadically in this magazine as from 1905, drawn by Pinchon, with scripts by Jacqueline Rivière, and was given a regular slot in 1913 with scripts by Caumery. The longevity of the series, which continued until the1950s, gives it considerable historical interest. It takes Bécassine through the First World War and the decline of the aristocracy: Francis Lacassin has called it a 'Proustian panorama' (Lacassin 1971: 123).

Louis Forton's *Les Pieds Nickelés*, who first appeared in *L'Epatant* in 1908,[2] were considerably more disreputable. In the first episode Ribouldingue emerges from Fresnes prison and meets up

with Filochard and Croquignol before all three are thrown back in prison for getting drunk and insulting the customers in a *bistro*. Forton was the first francophone *bande dessinée* artist to introduce speech balloons with any regularity, although the drawings were accompanied by lengthy texts beneath the frame, and the content of the balloons was most often redundant, since they simply repeated a fragment of the text. *L'Epatant* (launched 1908), *Fillette* (1909) and *Cri-Cri* (1911) were among a number of children's titles published by the Offenstadt brothers, whose readership came from a more popular milieu than that of *La Semaine de Suzette*.

Alain Saint-Ogan's 1925 *Zig et Puce*, which appeared in the *Dimanche Illustré*, the children's weekly supplement of the French daily newspaper *Excelsior*, is usually taken to be the first francophone (and indeed European) *bande dessinée* to replace texts beneath the frames by speech balloons, although Saint-Ogan was technically preceded in 1908 by the little-known strip *Sam et Sap*, by Rose Candide, and by Pierre Mac Orlan's *Frip et Bob* in 1912. *Zig et Puce* achieved massive popular success, engendering a great deal of associated merchandising, particularly once the two children Zig and Puce were joined on their frenetic travels by the penguin Alfred. Saint-Ogan's graphic style, 'a comic arabesque and a legible outline' (Sterckx 2000a: 48), betrays the influence of art deco whilst prefiguring the *ligne claire* that would be developed to perfection by Hergé.

The 1930s have been described as the 'golden age' of *bande dessinée*. This is partly because it was the decade in which classic American strips began to be massively imported into France. In 1928 Paul Winckler had founded the agency Opera Mundi, on the model of the American Randolph Hearst's King Features Syndicate which had existed since 1914. In 1934 Winckler launched *Le Journal de Mickey*, followed up by *Robinson* in 1936 and *Hop-là* in 1937. All these magazines contained translated versions of American material. Other publishers followed suit. The American strips offered spectacular excitement, from the exoticism of *Tarzan*, drawn by Hal Foster and then Burne Hogarth, to the science-fiction scenarios of Alex Raymond's *Flash Gordon* and William Ritt and Clarence Gray's *Brick Bradford*, 'mythical figures of the American male' (Gauthier 1989: 106), more virile than their French counterparts.

In the face of this onslaught, some long-standing French titles, such as *L'Épatant* and *Cri-Cri*, disappeared, and French *bande dessinée* was eclipsed for most of the decade, with the exception of the odd outstanding series such as René Pellos's expressionist science-fiction strip *Futuropolis*, which was influenced by Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1926), and which first appeared in *Junior* in 1937. The revival of francophone *bande dessinée* was, though, to come from Belgium.

1.3 Hergé and the ligne claire

Hergé's *Tintin* series began in 1929 in *Le Petit Vingtième*, a children's supplement to the Catholic Brussels newspaper *XXe siècle*. It was published in France in *Coeurs Vaillants* in 1930. The first adventure of the boy reporter and his dog, *Tintin au pays des Soviets*, was a catalogue of the evils of Communism, and *Tintin au Congo*, which appeared in 1930–31, presented the colonial ideology of the 'civilizing mission' in its purest form. The character and the series evolved

considerably, however, and may be taken as a barometer of ideological consensus over the century as a whole.

Famously, after his meeting with Tchang Tchong-Jen, a Chinese student of the Brussels Académie des Beaux Arts, who initiated him both into Chinese art and calligraphy and into the contemporary political scene in China, Hergé began an almost obsessive concern with documentary accuracy in his depiction of the locations into which he sent his heroes, and political reality began to impinge on Tintin. In *Le Lotus bleu* (1936),[3] for example, he witnesses Japanese *agents provocateurs* blowing up a railway line, and in *Le Sceptre d'Ottokar* (1939) Tintin defeats the attempt by the totalitarian Bordurie, of which the head of state is called Müsstler, to seize power in the neighbouring state of Syldavie.

By now, the crude drawing style of the early albums had given way to the elegance of the *ligne claire*,[4] or 'clear line', the graphic style which eschews shading, gradation of colours and hatching in favour of clear outlines, flat colours and geometrical precision. It also implies narrative legibility. Hergé defines it as follows: 'you try to eliminate everything that is graphically incidental, to stylize as much as possible [...] In fact, the *ligne claire* isn't just a matter of drawing, it also refers to the script and the narrative technique' (Peeters 1990: 204). Bruno Lecigne has argued that the ideological efficacy of the *ligne claire* lies not in what is chosen for depiction, but in the idea that the world is legible (Lecigne 1983: 40).

The German occupation of Brussels put an end to the *Petit Vingtième*, but Hergé continued to produce *Tintin* adventures, in the form of daily strips, in the children's supplement of the newspaper *Le Soir*. Current political events had to be avoided, and it was during this period that Hergé recounted the exploits of Haddock's illustrious ancestor, the Chevalier de Hadoque, in *Le Secret de la Licorne* (1943) and *Le Trésor de Rackham le Rouge* (1944). Like other journalists who had worked for newspapers tolerated by the Germans during the Occupation, Hergé would be debarred from working at the Liberation.

1.4 The aftermath of war: censorship

American magazines were banned during the Occupation, as were American strips in Belgian or French *bande dessinée* magazines, most of which also disappeared. *Spirou*, which had been launched in Brussels by Dupuis in 1938, continued to appear until 1943, when it was closed down after the publisher refused to accept a German administrator. In France, magazines that appeared in the occupied zone ceased publication in 1942, with the exception of the Pétainist *Le Téméraire*, or, as Ory has called it, 'The Nazi Boys' Own' (Ory 1979), which appeared from 1943 until the Germans left Paris the following year.

After the war, *illustrés* gradually began to reappear, with some new ones being launched such as the Communist Party's *Vaillant* in 1945, which included Poïvet and Lécureux's *Les Pionniers de l'espérance* set in space and based on the adventures of a multi-ethnic group of men and women who set out to spread a message of tolerance. The most famous of *Vaillant*'s strips was Arnal's *Pif le Chien,* which it took over from *L'Humanité* in 1952 and which would eventually give its name to the magazine itself: in 1965 *Vaillant* became *Le Journal de Pif*. In 1969 the

magazine was renamed *Pif Gadget*, and inaugurated a highly successful new series, *Rahan*, by Chéret and Lécureux, featuring a prehistoric hero who nonetheless defended an unobjectionably humanist set of values.

The end of the Occupation also saw the return of American strips. Their reappearance reactivated the moral panic which had greeted their first arrival in the 1930s: children were being exposed to the seductive effects of mass culture by a type of strip which abdicated any educational purpose in favour of pure entertainment. The resurfacing of these concerns in the post-war period coincided with protectionist arguments based on the threat to French artists represented by their American competitors, a conjuncture which incited the Communist Party to form a temporary alliance with Catholic pressure groups in order to draft a law aiming at the 'protection' of young people.[5] The *Loi du 16 juillet 1949 sur les publications destinées à la jeunesse* is still on the statute book. It prohibits the publication of material destined for young people which presents immoral or criminal behaviour in a positive light, or which might otherwise demoralize young people. It also prohibits the display of violent or licentious material, whether or not it is intended for young people, in places where minors might be exposed to it, thereby allowing for censorship to be exercised over adult publications.

1.5 The École de Bruxelles and the École de Charleroi

If the late 1940s and 1950s are described as a second golden age of *bande dessinée*, that is above all because of the work produced by mainly Belgian artists in two magazines. In 1946, Raymond Leblanc set up the Éditions du Lombard and launched *Tintin* magazine, with a French edition published by Dargaud appearing in 1948. Leblanc's impeccable credentials as a resistance fighter during the Occupation were able to overcome the decree under which Hergé was banned. *Spirou* reappeared in 1944 and was distributed in France from 1946. Out of these two publications were born, respectively, the *École de Bruxelles*, which was characterized by an aesthetic influenced by the *ligne claire*, and the *École de Charleroi*[6] whose more exuberant graphic line has been called the 'style Atome'.[7]

In the 1950s, adventure in exotic countries gave way in Hergé's work to a more contemporary mythology, that of belief in scientific progress, as he sent his heroes to the moon in *Objectif lune* (1953) and *On a marché sur la lune* (1954). Subsequently, the heroes aspire only to stay at home, and the journeys that they undertake are forced upon them when their home life is itself disturbed by, for example, the kidnapping of Tournesol in *L'Affaire Tournesol* (1956). In *Tintin au Tibet* (1960), Tintin's search for his missing friend represents what is fundamentally an inner quest for Hergé, who was deeply troubled in his personal life at the time (Peeters 1990: 212). The ultimate degree of negation of the adventure story would be reached in *Les Bijoux de la Castafiore* (1963), in which the heroes never leave home, and the drama is that of Haddock's terror of the eponymous and castratory diva.

Apart from Hergé himself, the *École de Bruxelles* included, among others, Paul Cuvelier, Jacques Martin and Willy Vandersteen. Cuvelier's exquisitely drawn *Corentin* series (from 1946) recounted the adventures of a young Breton orphan in the eighteenth century. Martin's *Alix* series (from 1948) features the eponymous hero, a young *Gaulois* slave of the Romans, and

his younger companion, Enak, in a variety of carefully documented ancient historical settings. The prolific Vandersteen produced, among many other series, the hugely successful *Bob et Bobette*, which first appeared in a Flemish version in 1945 and teemed with realist detail in spite of its far-fetched scenarios.

The most illustrious member of the group, after Hergé, is undoubtedly Edgar P. Jacobs, whose series *Blake et Mortimer* began in *Tintin* in 1946,[8] with *Le Secret de l'Espadon*,[9] and continued until the unfinished *Les Trois formules du professeur Sato* in 1977. The phlegmatic Eton-educated Captain Blake, who works for MI5, and his friend, the more volatile physics professor Mortimer, come up against their implacable enemy, the suave but ruthless Olrik, in each episode. Underneath the precision and elegance of Jacobs's style there is a disturbing climate which evokes Wells, Verne and Conan Doyle. In *La Marque jaune* (1956), for example, the evil scientist Septimus has invented a machine which will turn people into robots and control their behaviour. *L'Énigme de l'Atlantide* (1957) and *Le Piège diabolique* (1962) are both based on time travel, and in *S.O.S. Météores* (1959) Blake and Mortimer defeat an attempt by the sinister professor Miloch to prepare a Soviet invasion by taking control of the weather.

Jacobs's work has even greater rigour and ideological resonance than that of Hergé, as his extremely detailed drawings naturalize a hierarchic vision of the world where a 'natural aristocracy' (Petitfaux 1980: 4) made up of army officers, government officials and intellectuals can count on a deferential working class and, in the case of Blake and Mortimer, a devoted Indian servant. The continuing fascination of Jacobs's albums is, though, the way in which the irrational lurks beneath the seductively referential images, recalling not only his nineteenth-century literary sources but the work of Belgian surrealists like Magritte or Delvaux.

The *École de Charleroi* artists included André Franquin, Jijé, Morris, Peyo and Maurice Tillieux. Franquin, whose 'instinctive' and virtuoso drawing style (Dayez 1997: 162) ensures his place in the *bande dessinée* Pantheon alongside Hergé, took over in 1946 the drawing of Rob-Vel's (and subsequently Jijé's) character Spirou, the uniformed bellboy who gave the magazine its name, and added a cast of characters including the Marsupilami, a fabulously long-tailed and anarchic beast. Franquin also created the idle daydreamer Gaston Lagaffe, who first appeared in *Spirou* in February 1957, not in a strip, but invading the margins and editorial pages of the magazine, to which he brought the disorder and chaos that would mark his subsequent career. As from the end of that year, he progressed to occupying his own strip, which was set in the offices of *Spirou* itself, where his mania for inventing gadgets enabled Franquin to give expression to his own fascination for the visual representation of modernity and technology. Franquin's later work included his *Idées Noires*, black both in humour and graphic style, published in *Fluide Glacial*[10] from 1977.

Jijé created, amongst other series, *Blondin et Cirage* (from 1947),[11] based on the adventures of a pair of friends, one white and one black, and *Jerry Spring* (from 1954), an anti-racist western, which would influence the work of Jean Giraud. He also produced a number of biographies of figures representing Catholic moral values, such as *Don Bosco* (1949). Morris worked on a single series, the celebrated *Lucky Luke*, which began in 1946 and reworked well-

known western themes and characters on the mode of burlesque humour. He was aided by a number of scriptwriters, including René Goscinny, and in 1968 the series moved to Goscinny's *Pilote* magazine. Peyo's *Les Schtroumpfs* began in 1959 as a spin-off from his series *Johan et Pirlouit*, and went on to become an industry. Tillieux's detective series, *Gil Jourdan*, created in 1956, had an authentically downbeat atmosphere and was the forerunner of a key genre in adult *bande dessinée*.

The work of artists from the classic age of Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée*, and particularly from *Spirou* and *Tintin*, nourished the childhood imaginary of later generations of artists, and it continued to exert an influence over *bande dessinée* for the rest of the century, as unconscious or conscious source and, often, as intertext. However, the next decade would see the beginnings of the revolution set in train by the founding of *Pilote* magazine in 1959. *Bande dessinée* was to become, like its nineteenth-century ancestor, an adult medium, and, in the iconoclastic fervour of May 1968 and its aftermath, the Franco-Belgian tradition would be associated by some with the ideological and graphic norms which were to be so spectacularly transgressed.

1.6 *Pilote* magazine

After an attempt to set up an 'artists' charter' provoked the ire of their employers, the Belgian agency World Press, René Goscinny, Albert Uderzo and Michel Charlier, along with a group including journalists from Radio Luxembourg, created *Pilote* magazine in 1959. A publicity campaign over the airwaves of the station brought it to the attention of adolescents and students, and the first number sold 300,000 copies (Gaumer 1996: 63). However, it overreached itself financially and in 1960 the publisher Georges Dargaud took it over.

From the outset, *Pilote* featured Goscinny and Uderzo's *Astérix* series, the increasing renown of which offered an early indication of the commercial potential of an adult version of the medium. On 19 September 1966, Astérix appeared on the cover of *L'Express*, under the headline: 'Le phénomène Astérix'. The French identified with a certain idea of *la France résistante*, suggested the article: 'It is in resistance rather than conquest that the Gallic virtues are displayed at their best' (Gurgand 1966:1). A total of 600,000 copies of *Astérix chez les Bretons*, which came out that year, were sold in two weeks, compared with the 6500 that the first album had sold five years earlier (Gaumer 1996: 130).

Other anti-heroes included Charlier and Giraud's western series *Blueberry* (from 1963). Blueberry is a cavalry officer, courageous but cynical, occasionally mercenary and undisciplined. Jean Giraud's drawing style combined detailed realism with startling technical effects, including a flamboyant use of perspective. Cabu's *Le Grand Duduche* (from 1962) featured a naïve school student, characterized by unrequited romantic aspirations and inaction, whilst Valérian, the eponymous hero of Christin and Mézières's science-fiction series (from 1967), had no superpowers and tended to leave action sequences up to his formidably competent female companion, Laureline.

The codes of the medium were subverted by artists who used reflexivity as a comic device. Greg's self-important middle-aged bourgeois Achille Talon, who first appeared in *Pilote* in

1963, haranguing the reader and his own entourage in outsized speech balloons, gradually abandoned his suburban villa to take on the profession of full-time *bande dessinée* character, repairing speech balloons where the text had slipped out of them, or leaning against the sides of the frame which bent under his corpulence. Gotlib established complicity with the reader by constant interpellation in his *Rubrique-à-brac*, which appeared in *Pilote* between 1968 and 1972. Alexis, influenced by the American *Mad* magazine, produced 'news' pages parodying media and advertising discourses.

Fred's *Philémon* series, which appeared in *Pilote* from 1965, was in the tradition of the American Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland,* created in 1905. Little Nemo's dreams, from which he awoke in the final frame of each episode, had exploited the spatial possibilities of the page at the expense of creating a credible fictional world. Fred similarly disrupts realist conventions. He emphasizes spatial continuity over the temporality implied by discontinuous frames as his hero Philémon takes unorthodox pathways around the page, or infringes the boundaries of the diegesis by climbing into the inter-frame space. Moreover, Philémon's journeys are not across the world but across the map: the islands that he explores form the letters of the word 'Atlantique'.

1.7 The beginnings of adult *bande dessinée* and censorship

Pilote had a competitor for adult readers in the form of the satirical magazine *Hara-Kiri*, founded in 1960 by Éditions du Square, in which *bande dessinée* co-existed with various other types of material. In 1969 the same publishing house launched *Charlie Mensuel*, which focused more particularly on *bande dessinée*, featuring modern American and European as well as classic American series. It was through the earlier *Hara-Kiri*, though, that the revolutionary spirit of May 1968 was prefigured, as Wolinski, Reiser and Cavanna set about attacking taboos of all kinds. Amongst the targets was classic Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée* in the person of Tintin, shown in a variety of compromising postures by Wolinski in 1962 in a strip called 'Tintin pour les dames'. The government used heavy-handed censorship tactics to try to stifle the anarchic and provocative content of the magazine. Censorship could still be applied to the medium under the terms of the 1949 law which had been passed when the readership was assumed to be made up of children. *Hara-Kiri* was banned in both 1961 and 1966, and the latter ban lasted seven months, in spite of a petition of which the signatories included Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and film director Alain Resnais. Wolinski has said: 'We were stifled by taboos. Censorship was threatening *Hara-Kiri*. Television was controlled by the government. [...] We were like kids in a school where the head teacher was too strict' (Baudoux 2000: 152).

Censorship also became an issue when Jean-Claude Forest's science-fiction strip *Barbarella*, which had appeared in *V* magazine in 1962, was published in album form by Losfeld in 1964. The album was banned and subsequently re-issued with a partially clothed instead of a naked heroine. She was the first of a number of semi-clad female heroines, such as Peellaert's *Jodelle* (from 1966), a spy physically resembling the singer Sylvie Vartan, whose adventures took place in a neo-classical décor. She was followed in 1967 by Gigi and Moliterni's *Scarlet Dream*, Peellaert's *Pravda* in 1968 and Cuvelier and Van Hamme's *Epoxy* in the same year.

1.8 The beginnings of cultural legitimacy

The forays of the censor notwithstanding, the 1960s saw the first attempts to celebrate *bande dessinée* as something other than an infra-cultural form that endangered literacy. The review *Giff-Wiff* [12] was published between 1962 and 1967 as the bulletin of the *Club des Bandes Dessinées*, a group including not only the *bande dessinée* artist Forest but also Alain Resnais and the actress Delphine Seyrig, who brought intellectual and artistic credentials. It was at their first general assembly that the term 'ninth art' was coined (Guillaume and Bocquet 1997: 133). The change of nomenclature in 1964, from the *CBD* to the *Centre d'étude des littératures d'expression graphique,* encapsulates the desire of its adherents to confer respectability upon the medium. They set out to do so, though, by focusing not on the work of French or Belgian artists, but on *bande dessinée*'s first golden age, the American strips of the 1930s. The first international *bande dessinée* salon was held in 1965 at Bordigghera, followed by a festival in Lucca in the same year, animated by Francis Lacassin of *CELEG*.

In 1966 there was a split. A group including Claude Moliterni and Pierre Couperie, who wanted to include more contemporary *bande dessinée*, broke away from CELEG to form SOCERLID (*la Société civile d'études et de recherches des littératures dessinées*) and to produce the review *Phénix*, which appeared between 1966 and 1977. SOCERLID set up the exhibition *Bande dessinée et figuration narrative* at the Musée des arts décoratifs in 1967, which received 500,000 visitors between April and June. The catalogue accompanying the exhibition, written by a team led by Couperie, is overwhelmingly devoted to American work, although brief mention is made of a few Franco-Belgian artists. The authors do not stress the claim of the medium to be an art form, although a few artistic influences are noted, such as the fact that Burne Hogarth was an 'admirer of Michaelangelo' (Couperie 1967b: 213). They argue instead that it is the mass distribution of a medium read by a third of humanity that makes it worthy of attention (Couperie 1967: 4). The birth of the medium is taken to coincide with the arrival of mass communication and the technology allowing for the representation of movement at the end of the nineteenth century. American comic strip artists of the 1890s are therefore credited with its foundation, although various European artists, including Töpffer, Busch and Christophe are mentioned as precursors (Destefanis and François 1967: 11). For SOCERLID, then, *bande dessinée* is a modern mass cultural form, which can nonetheless acquire some second-hand artistic credentials through the reference to painting.

The decade also saw the first academic books to be written on *bande dessinée*. The sociologist Evelyne Sullerot wrote *Bande dessinée et culture* in 1966 with the aim, she said, of combating prejudices against it (Sullerot 1966: 10). Her bid to reposition the medium seems somewhat modest. *Bande dessinée* is, for Sullerot, an 'under-culture', but by that token it could be regarded as an 'antechamber' to culture. Artistic movements, she points out, have often sought renewal by contact with just such vulgar 'under-cultures' (Sullerot 1966: 13) and, moreover, as a mass medium, *bande dessinée* is a 'reservoir of mythologies' (Sullerot 1966: 24). Sullerot does, however, envisage the possibility that it could aspire to a higher status. If the cultural level of its readers were raised, she suggests, the medium's capacity for ellipsis could be exploited to achieve the intense poetry of Chris Marker's film *La Jetée* (1962), itself inspired by *bande dessinée* (Sullerot 1966: 46–47).

Art historian Gérard Blanchard produced *Histoire de la bande dessinée* in 1969, and went further than Sullerot in the attempt to raise its status, by acknowledging, as the back cover says, its 'claim to nobility'. His strategy is twofold. Blanchard traces the antecedents of *bande dessinée* back to cave paintings and through medieval illustrated manuscripts, thereby inscribing it into an art-historical discourse, and he discusses the modern version of the medium with an erudition which reinforces its claim to be a worthy object of academic study.

Apart from these isolated examples, discourses on the medium continued to be predominantly moralizing, premised on the assumption that *bande dessinée* was destined for children, and that parents must therefore be warned about its negative educational effects. Antoine Roux reproduces a selection of views expressed in various pedagogical documents from the late 1950s to the mid 1960s, all of which stress the threat to literacy presented by the reading of *bandes dessinées*. For example: 'Its grammatical mistakes pose just as great a danger as the ugliness of the pictures and the stupidity of the text' (Roux 1970: 62). The cultural visibility of the medium would increase dramatically during the 1970s, and the level of provocation in the material produced by some artists would go a considerable way beyond anything imagined by these guardians of linguistic and aesthetic propriety.

Chapter 2

THE 1970S: EXPANSION AND EXPERIMENTATION

2.1 *Pilote* artists break away: *L'Echo des Savanes* and *Fluide Glacial*

The story of *bande dessinée* in the 1970s is essentially that of the pursuit of artistic freedom. François Canette likens the decade to a period of adolescent crisis as the medium struggled to free itself from the 'corseted, sanitized, moralizing and childish *bandes dessinées*' that had gone before. In the 1970s 'everything was allowed...as long as it was forbidden' (Canette 1986: 92).

Ironically, the editor of *Pilote*, Goscinny, was himself a victim of the anti-authoritarian climate that reigned in the aftermath of the social, political and cultural upheaval of May 1968. A number of the artists whose careers he had nurtured began to feel that his rather severe editorial style was a constraint, and rebellion ensued (Guillaume and Bocquet 1997: 263).

Pilote had been running Mandryka's *Le Concombre masqué*, featuring a philosophical cucumber, since 1971. However, in 1972, Goscinny refused one of Mandryka's strips for the series (Gaumer 1996: 186). This prompted Bretécher, Mandryka and Gotlib to leave *Pilote* and form *Éditions du Fromage*, which launched *L'Echo des Savanes*, although Bretécher and Gotlib's commitment to the new publishing house and magazine was short-lived. *L'Echo des Savanes* made it quite clear who its readership was: it had 'adults only' on the cover. Influenced by the American underground (Robert Crumb's work had appeared in *Actuel* magazine from 1970), artists set out to shock through the nature of their subject matter, which frequently entailed sexually explicit or scatological images. In an article which discusses the impact of *L'Echo des Savanes* in the early 1970s, Sylvain Bouyer refers to the 'extraordinary graphic, thematic and verbal violence' of *L'Echo des Savanes* as signalling a complete break with the Franco-Belgian classic tradition (Bouyer 1986: 20). Later in the decade, Vuillemin, preferring

a *ligne crade* (filthy line) to the classic Hergéen *ligne claire*, embarked on a savage portrayal of the human race as sexually predatory, greedy and cruel.

In the late 1970s the magazine was dominated by the punk aesthetic of the Bazooka group, as they appropriated pre-existing images through collages and retouched and mutilated photographic documents. Their artistic influence on the medium has been widely acknowledged (Lecigne and Tamine 1983: 77–83), but Bazooka's nihilistic and morbid subject matter was aimed at an intellectual minority, and was almost certainly a contributing factor in the drop in readership of *L'Echo des Savanes*.

After leaving *L'Echo des Savanes*, Gotlib and his collaborator Diament set up the Éditions AUDIE in 1975 to publish *Fluide Glacial*, a magazine dedicated exclusively to humorous *bande dessinée*, in which Gotlib revived Superdupont, the beret and slipper-clad superhero whose career had begun in *Pilote*.[13] Binet's blinkered middle-aged couple Robert and Raymonde Bidochon appeared in the magazine as from 1978, and slowly ascended the social scale from flat-dwelling mediocrity to house-owning mediocrity.[14] Like *Hara-Kiri*, *Fluide Glacial* demonstrated derision rather than respect towards the heroes of classic Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée*: a famous 1978 cover, drawn by Goossens, showed Tintin shooting up with heroin.

2.2 *Métal Hurlant* and science fiction

In 1975 Druillet, Moebius (this was the other incarnation of Giraud, the artist of the western series *Blueberry*) and Dionnet set up the publishing house Les Humanoïdes Associés and launched the sci-fi magazine *Métal Hurlant*. In the work of Druillet, science fiction was not mere escapism but took on a metaphysical dimension, influenced by Lovecraft. Druillet's visionary mysticism was displayed in full-page psychedelic compositions, as the search for aesthetic effect took priority over narrative coherence. Moebius undertook the construction of imaginary universes, meticulously depicted through his striking ability to create the illusion of three-dimensional space, with a characteristic use of hatching and dots which would be much imitated. Neither Druillet nor Moebius were interested in the formulaic genre conventions of science fiction. Moebius experimented with silent *bande dessinée* in *Arzach* (1976), in which the hero's appearance changes from one panel to the next, as does the spelling of his name, which appears in six different variants. Moreover, the scenario was not determined in advance: each new frame was conceived only after the previous one had been completed (Sterckx 2000b: 35).

In the 1970s science fiction included a post-apocalyptic strand. This was initiated by Auclair's *Simon du Fleuve*, which appeared in *Tintin* magazine between 1973 and 1977, was set in the near future after a nuclear catastrophe, with a utopian vision of the reconstruction of a rural society on a collective basis, in the spirit of the 1970s experiments in communal living and farming in Larzac. The newly founded society nonetheless has to defend itself against the city dwellers, who are aiming to reinstate a totalitarian order. *Métal Hurlant* featured a considerably bleaker variant on this current. Chantal Montellier's futuristic scenarios involving totalitarian regimes and their alienated victims appeared in the magazine from the 1970s. Her first album, *1996*, was published in 1978.

2.3 Social satire and mainstream press

The coming to adulthood of *bande dessinée* was beginning to be acknowledged by the mainstream press. Bretécher's series *Les Frustrés* appeared weekly in *Le Nouvel Observateur* from 1973. The success of the series was based on Bretécher's accurate reproduction of the fashionably intellectualizing discourse of inhabitants of a certain Parisian milieu, whose earnest analyses of their own malaise, and advocacy of a leftist political stance, are conducted from a comfortably prone position. Narratorial distance is maintained through the avoidance of close-ups.

Jacques Tardi's unheroic depiction of the First World War, in *Un épisode banal de la guerre des tranchées*, was refused by *Pilote* on grounds of its anti-militarism and was published instead by *Libération* in 1975, although *Pilote* published Tardi's *Adieu Brindavoine* and *La Fleur au Fusil* in 1974, both of which were derisively satirical not only about the hypocrisy of nationalist discourses around the First World War but also about subsequent memorializing.[15]

From 1977 to 1980 *Le Matin* published Régis Franc's *Le Café de la plage*, a sophisticated daily strip in which little happens other than inconsequential dialogues, but which is highly self-reflexive, depicting the narrator sitting at his desk and composing the story as characters wander in and out. Over the same period, Got and Pétillon's *Le Baron noir* was also appearing in *Le Matin*. In this strip, political predators were disguised as animals, including the vulture referred to in the title, which bore an unmistakeable resemblance to Jacques Chirac, then a former prime minister who was currently mayor of Paris.

2.4 Prestige publications, outside and within the marketplace

In 1974 a publishing house called Futuropolis was created out of the specialized *bande dessinée* bookshop of the same name by Étienne Robial. Futuropolis was set up with the specific aim of encouraging an experimental current in *bande dessinée*, as well as that of producing re-editions of American and French classics. In its first year it published Tardi's *Le Démon des Glaces*, reminiscent of Jules Verne but lacking his faith in science, and *La Véritable histoire du soldat inconnu*, also by Tardi. Futuropolis would continue to refuse commercial compromises through this decade and into the next, whilst publishing the work of many innovators, including Baru, Baudoin, Florence Cestac and the Argentinians Muñoz and Sampayo.

In 1978, Casterman, a Belgian publishing house which had hitherto specialized in the children's *bande dessinée* market (including the *Tintin* albums) and religious literature, launched its new magazine *(À Suivre)*. Casterman wished to secure an adult readership, and *(À Suivre)* was launched as a prestige magazine in which authors would be given the freedom to develop stories over a much greater length than the standard 48 pages. These were called 'novels in *bande dessinée*' and divided into chapters, to emphasize their literary qualities. The first editorial proclaimed: 'With its novelistic depth, *(À Suivre)* will represent the explosion of *bande dessinée* onto the literary scene' (Mougin 1978: 3). The decision to use black and white also symbolized a product with artistic ambitions, although as from edition no 25, colour did creep in. The first edition included a number of series which would become classics: Auclair's exploration of Celtic culture in *Bran Ruz* (in honour of which the first edition of the magazine

was available in a Breton version), the first French translation of Hugo Pratt's *Corto Maltese en Sibérie* and Tardi and Forest's surreal *Ici même*.

2.5 Censorship

Deliberate provocation by artists brought a speedy response from the censors. The decade opened with the banning of *Hebdo Hara-Kiri*[16] after its 'Tragic dance at Colombey: one dead' headline on the death of de Gaulle.[17] The ban was announced, however, as being occasioned by 'pornography' in the previous issue. The hypocrisy of this obviously political censorship by the Minister of the Interior, Raymond Marcellin, led to protests from the press across the whole political spectrum from *L'Humanité* to *Le Figaro* (Gaumer and Moliterni 1994: 129–130).

Censorship continued through the decade, even under the more liberal régime of Giscard d'Estaing, elected in 1974 on a programme of sweeping away Gaullist paternalism. The feminist *bande dessinée* magazine *Ah! Nana!* was banned in 1978 after its eighth issue had dealt with the theme of homosexuality. In 1978 *Pilote* magazine had its 'press' number withdrawn (and therefore lost advantageous VAT and postage rates) by the *Commission Paritaire des Publications et Agences de Presse*, on the grounds that it could not qualify as a newspaper. The suspicion that this was a political rather than a technical decision was heightened by the fact that the magazine had just included images of 'Jack Racket', a Chirac lookalike. The decade ended with a conference on freedom of expression at Angoulême in 1979. A manifesto signed by seven publishers, including the traditional family firms of Casterman and Dargaud, under the heading 'Down with hypocritical censorship!' insisted that the 1949 law should not be applied to the adult press (Cannet 1993: 27). This has still not been achieved.

2.6 Cultural legitimacy

In the 1970s, as in previous decades, *bande dessinée* was still more often bought at newspaper kiosks than in bookshops, but it was beginning to occupy a more important position in the book-publishing sector. Where 50 albums had been published in 1965, by the mid 1970s the number of new titles published was 159, and by 1979 it was 285 (Bronson 1985: 82). The cultural status of *bande dessinée* undoubtedly underwent considerable change during the decade. In terminology used by Bruno Lecigne, the medium progressed from infra-cultural object, designated as morally harmful and artistically impoverished, to para-cultural object, with an 'internal legitimization apparatus' which aimed to give it parallel legitimacy. Lecigne distinguishes this from the legitimacy conferred from outside the medium, by academic writing, for example (Lecigne 1985: 7).

The internal apparatus would include classificatory literature such as the magazine *Le Collectionneur de Bandes Dessinées*, launched in 1977, which documented the heritage of the medium, and the *L'Argus de la bande dessinée*, first published by Horus in 1979, an indication of the market value for collectors that magazines from its two 'golden ages' (the 1930s for American strips and the 1940s and 1950s for Franco-Belgian strips) had now acquired.

Bande dessinée salons, a further plank of the internal apparatus of legitimization, began to take place in France in this decade. The first was held in Toulouse in 1972, followed by the

Angoulême salon in 1974, which received some sponsorship from the municipality. It had two important American guests, Burne Hogarth, the artist of *Tarzan*, and Harvey Kurtzman, the editor of *Mad* magazine. The exhibition, 'The aesthetics of black and white in *bande dessinée*', curated by Pierre Couperie, was based essentially on the work of American artists (Cannet 1993: 14–15). However, the awards amounted to a consecration of Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée* and were called *Alfreds* after Saint-Ogan's penguin. The *Grand Prix de la Ville d'Angoulême* went to André Franquin, the *Spirou* artist. The 'best artist' prize went to the *Pilote* artist, Alexis. The Salon attracted 10,000 visitors according to the *Charente Libre* (Cannet 1993: 15), and this number would double the following year. By 1977 there were 50,000 visitors (Cannet 1993: 48).

A more contentious manifestation of the internal apparatus came in the form of the review *STP*, of which four issues appeared between 1976 and 1979, and in which the editor, Thierry Lagarde, castigates the medium for remaining within the 'ghetto' of mass-cultural genres and commercial production and for failing to explore its artistic resources (Lagarde, 1976).

There were, however, also some indications that *bande dessinée* was achieving external recognition, in a continuation of the process initiated by Sullerot and Blanchard in the 1960s. Francis Lacassin of CELEG began a series of lectures at the Sorbonne on the history and aesthetics of *bande dessinée* in 1971. Much of the content of these lectures is collected in Lacassin's *Pour un 9e art, la bande dessinée* (1971), which covers Töpffer, *Bécassine*, *Les Pieds nickelés*, *Felix the Cat*, *Popeye* and *Lucky Luke*, and has sections on popular literature and science fiction as sources for *bande dessinée*, as well as a lengthy comparison between cinema and *bande dessinée*.

Later in the decade, in 1978, a significant advance in the institutionalization of the medium in Belgium was marked by the initiation of a specialized course in the theory and practice of *bande dessinée* at the *Institut St Luc* in Brussels. A number of important artists emerged from this course, including François Schuiten and Andreas as well as the review *9e rêve*, which appeared from 1978 to 1984.

Having been the object of an art-historical discourse in Blanchard's work, *bande dessinée* was now taken up by the fashionable academic discourse of semiology, which used the model of linguistics to study other signifying systems. In 1972 Pierre Fresnault-Deruelle published *La bande dessinée, essai d'analyse sémiotique*, an exhaustive attempt to account for the signifying mechanisms of the medium, but with examples confined to classic Franco-Belgian strips. An edition of the prestigious semiological journal *Communications* was devoted to *bande dessinée* in 1976. This included Fresnault-Deruelle's influential article on the linear and tabular dimensions of the *bande dessinée* page,[18] and an article by Michel Rio devoted to the inter-frame space, exemplified with reference to contemporary *bande dessinée* artists. Rio argues that the smoothness of the reader's passage into the fiction can be severely disrupted by artists such as Greg, Fred and Gotlib, who allow characters to emerge from the fiction into the surrounding non-diegetic white space, thereby drawing attention to the process of narration (Rio 1976: 99). Rio's article is particularly significant in view of Roland Barthes's claim that the

tendency of modern writing to emphasize the narration over the referent is less likely to apply in mass literature: 'A repugnance to display its codes is the mark of bourgeois society and the mass culture that emerged from it. Both require signs which do not appear to be signs' (Barthes 1966: 22). The self-reflexivity of a strand of contemporary *bande dessinée* should, according to this logic, exempt it from the status of mass literature.

2.6.1 Bourdieu's analysis of the field of cultural production: a brief summary

In an article published in 1975 in the first volume of the review *Actes de Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, edited by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Luc Boltanski sets out to link the changing cultural status of *bande dessinée* to wider social and cultural changes. In so doing, he uses terms and concepts from Bourdieu's work. Brief explanations of key points taken from a number of essays by Bourdieu, collected together in English in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), are set out here, since these terms will also be relevant to discussions about the status of *bande dessinée* in subsequent decades.

Field, dominance and capital

Bourdieu gives a specific definition to the term 'field'. He puts forward a model of society in which a number of fields (such as the cultural field, the educational field or the economic field) co-exist. All fields are ultimately contained within the field of power, ruled by the laws of economic and political profit, but they nonetheless operate with relative autonomy, and with independence from each other. Within each field there is a struggle for dominance, which takes the form of competition for the acquisition of various kinds of 'capital', a term not restricted by Bourdieu to a narrow financial sense. Within the economic field, it is of course economic capital which is at stake, but within other fields agents are competing for social capital, educational capital, cultural capital (possession of the codes which confer competence in deciphering cultural works) or symbolic capital (recognition and consecration). All cultural practices, then, involve the search for profit, but the profit may be symbolic rather than economic (Bourdieu 1993: 29–40).

Autonomous and heteronomous principles; restricted and large-scale cultural production

Bourdieu describes the field of cultural production as the site of a struggle between two opposing principles of hierarchization. The heteronomous principle regulates large-scale production and measures success by mass circulation and commercial success: works of art are reducible to their commodity value, and so interchangeable. The autonomous principle regulates restricted production and measures success by recognition from agencies of consecration such as critics, publishers, museums, galleries and academies. According to this principle, the value of a work of art is unrelated to its potential to make money. The more autonomous is the area of cultural production, the more it is subject to an inverted economic logic, whereby success in the marketplace would diminish symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1993: 40–52).

Habitus and disposition, position-taking

Bourdieu avoids a mechanical and deterministic explanation of the relationship between the economic and social background of an individual and the set of cultural practices that are open

to him/her. This relationship is a function, he suggests, of 'habitus'. All players within a particular field will bring to it their own habitus. This is not an objectively measurable social or economic status, and nor is it a purely mental attitude. It is, rather, a set of dispositions and schemes of perception through which agents assess their chances of gaining economic or symbolic profit from taking up particular positions in a field, such as 'pure' artist or commercial artist (Bourdieu 1993: 61–73).

2.6.2 Boltanski: social capital, cultural capital and bande dessinée as cultural field

According to Boltanski, from its origins until about 1960, *bande dessinée* had the features of a mass cultural form, entirely subject to the laws of the market, lacking critics or any other consecrating agencies. Some producers of *bande dessinée*, like Cuvelier, were from a socially advantaged background but had failed in their attempt to pursue a career in painting. However, Boltanski argues that by the mid 1970s, changes linked to the extension of higher education had affected readers, producers and the field itself (Boltanski 1975: 37–39).

A group of artists including Gotlib, Mandryka, Bretécher, Druillet, Mezières and Fred, who began working in *bande dessinée* in the mid 1960s, shared a habitus which arose out of a mismatch between their social and cultural capital. A higher social origin would have directed their ambitions towards painting or literature, but they regarded these fields as closed to them. However, the cultural capital that they had acquired from art colleges (albeit on vocational courses) made them look beyond the careers in technical drawing to which they seemed to be destined by their social background, and they were attracted to *bande dessinée* as a form of symbolic expression to which they could gain access (Boltanski 1975: 39–40).

The beginnings of an apparatus of legitimization around *bande dessinée*, he suggests, may also be related to changes in the field of education, which produced an influx of research students from relatively modest backgrounds who had not attended élite institutions. Lacking the self-assurance to compete in the more prestigious areas of traditional culture, they applied their academic training to hitherto culturally devalued areas such as cinema, jazz, thrillers and *bande dessinée*. Boltanski does not make Lecigne's distinction between internal and external apparatuses of legitimization, and includes the setting up of conferences, prizes and festivals as further evidence, alongside academic publications, of the symbolic capital being invested in the field of *bande dessinée* (Boltanski 1975: 42–44).

This institutionalization, together with the entry onto the scene of producers and readers with a new type of social trajectory, led, he claims, to a polarization of the field itself between heteronomous and autonomous tendencies. Established traditional artists, influential within publishing houses, saw their role as craftsmen, entertaining a lowbrow public. The new artists appealed to a public whose cultural capital, like their own, outstripped their social capital, and frequently indulged in caricature of the lifestyle of the lower middle classes[19] from which they and much of their readership originated but with which they no longer identified: Gotlib's character Superdupont is an obvious example (Boltanski 1975: 46–47).

The emergence of a tendency towards autonomization led, Boltanski argues, to a new type of relationship between artists and their work. They now looked not just for commercial success but peer recognition. In accordance with the traditions of high culture, they engaged in formal experimentation. The suppression of frames by Druillet, the subversion of the conventions of narrative continuity by Fred, and the technical virtuosity of Giraud's work were all destined for the admiration of the knowledgeable reader in possession of the codes of the medium (Boltanski 1975: 50).

Boltanski's article offers a convincing analysis of the state of play that prevailed in *bande dessinée* in the 1970s, and of the societal changes that were associated with it. The polarization of the field that he identifies as increasingly evident in the 1970s would become considerably less so in the 1980s as the heteronomous tendency gained the upper hand in the struggle. *Bande dessinée* destined for a mainstream public would dominate the 1980s at the expense of more experimental work, and the autonomous tendency would be all but buried, only to re-emerge with considerable brio in the 1990s.

2.7 From the 1970s to the 1980s

Towards the end of the 1970s, some publishers were calling for the return of narrative coherence: indeed Glénat launched the magazine *Circus* in 1975, dedicated to the production of stories in the conventional classic Franco-Belgian tradition. According to Lecigne, the publishers' insistence on the return of adventure and formulaic realism had won out by the end of the decade: 'A return to mythologizing has, in spite of everything, taken over from the propagation of anti-values from the margins and from the contestation of classic representationalism. Henceforth the reader is regarded as a passive consumer by publishers' (Lecigne 1981a: 22).

A further development that would reinforce conservative tendencies was on the horizon. By the end of the 1970s, large publishers were poised to move in as small publishing houses set up by artists came up against the realities of the recession. The oil crisis of the mid-decade had put an end to the long period of post-war prosperity, and the disposable income of the young adult *bande dessinée* public was cut. 'The 1980s were approaching, bringing economic crisis and disillusion. Commercial interests regained power[...], people stopped trying to pull the walls down and just tried to find a gap in the market' (Canette 1986: 92).

Chapter 3

THE 1980s: RECUPERATION BY THE MAINSTREAM

3.1 The publishing context

In the 1980s, there was a restructuring of the *bande dessinée* market, as the 1970s rebels were swallowed up by mainstream giants, and their magazines lost their radical edge and closed down. Some of their predecessors also folded, as the medium became less press-based and magazines tended increasingly to give way to albums. Early in the decade, Jean-Luc Fromental warned: 'the reign of the men in suits is coming'. It was no longer possible, he claimed, to imagine Gotlib, Dionnet or their like setting up publishing houses and magazines, or if they did they would have to submit to 'industrial logic' and spend their time in consultation with market researchers (Fromental 1982: 9). This proved to be prescient. Over the next few years, not only would the small firms set up by artists disappear, but many of the family firms which had specialized in *bande dessinée* would themselves be bought out. Generalist publishers such as Albin Michel and Hachette now extended their operation into *bande dessinée*, and their priorities were overwhelmingly commercial rather than artistic.

L'Écho des Savanes was bought by Albin Michel in 1982 and did survive, but in the form of an erotic magazine, very different from the cult publication of the previous decade. Across the whole sector, as editors became ever more desperate to win back readers, the display of naked women was a frequent tactic in the circulation battle: even *Pilote* was not immune. This tendency led to a protest in 1985 by four female artists, Chantal Montellier, Nicole Claveloux, Florence Cestac and Jeanne Puchol, in the form of a manifesto in *Le Monde* of 27/28 January, which took issue with the 'tired and squalid macho fantasies' that were dominating the medium at the expense of work of artistic merit (Montellier et al. 1985).

Montellier and her co-signatories were not attacking freedom of expression, but alerting fellow artists and readers to what was happening in its name (Montellier et al. 1985). A few years later, it seemed, conversely, that it was the hard-won freedom to explore adult subject matter that was under threat from more puritanical forces. Dargaud, which already owned *Pilote*, had bought Éditions du Square and *Charlie Mensuel* in 1982, and the two magazines merged in 1986. In 1989 the group Média Participations bought out both Dargaud and the Belgian publisher Lombard, which had published the Belgian version of *Tintin* magazine until its demise in 1988.[20] Média Participations, also known as the Ampère group, was a conservative Christian firm whose priorities were announced by its lawyer to be 'God, the Church, and the Christian family' (Nassib 1989: 7). A number of Dargaud artists took refuge with Les Humanoïdes Associés, itself no longer independent, but thought to be less directive (Cannet 1993: 194). Ampère rapidly closed down *Pilote*, although this decision was determined as much by commercial logic as by the desire to concentrate on 'family reading' (Nassib 1989: 7). *Charlie* had regularly sold 120,000 in the 1970s and *Pilote* over 100,000, but by 1989 *Pilote*[21] was selling only 25,000 a month (Fromental 1981: 169; Gaumer and Moliterni 1994: 504).

Another cult magazine of the 1970s, *Métal Hurlant*, disappeared in 1987 after Les Humanoïdes Associés had been bought out by Hachette the previous year. Hachette also bought a quarter share in the Belgian firm Dupuis, publisher of *Spirou*. In 1989 it sold Les Humanoïdes on to a Swiss company, Source Holding. Of the independent magazines, only *Fluide Glacial* survived.

As magazines closed down, the move towards albums gained momentum, with over 500 new albums being published per year by mid-decade (Groensteen 1987a: 12). This development may be viewed as an evolution from a throwaway item (or one which was the object of fetishist collecting) to an object which had a place on a bookshelf. Albums tended to retain the large (21.5 x 28.5 cm), hard-cover format of a children's book, however, and the term 'album' itself is not suggestive of an adult medium. An adult readership was not, of course, excluded, and was actively courted by some publishers. Futuropolis, which had championed a *bande dessinée d'auteur* since 1974, and which had taken an experimental approach to format as well as content, was taken over by Gallimard, another generalist entrant into *bande dessinée* publishing, in 1987. The new owners used the label for a collection combining *bande dessinée* and literature, including luxury editions of Céline illustrated by Tardi, Flaubert by Druillet, and Le Clézio by Baudoin. The niche market for a more literary product was exploited by a number of other publishers who included in their catalogues collections on the model of Casterman's *(À Suivre)*, made up of album versions of series which had appeared in its magazine of the same name. Dupuis launched *Aire Libre* to attract adult readers, Dargaud launched *Long Courrier*, Glénat *Grands Chapitres* and Lombard *Signé*.

In general, though, conservatism reigned. These collections aside, the production of mainstream publishers was dominated by series and heroes in escapist genres, often created through the opportunistic coupling of a scriptwriter who had a good commercial track record with an artist. Sylvain Bouyer describes the separation of *scénariste* and artist as an efficient industrial practice: 'you create interchangeable commodities' (Bouyer 1987: 48). The

massive success of the series *XIII*, which began in 1984, scripted by Van Hamme and drawn by Vance, was the paradigm. It recounted the search by an amnesiac, known by the number tattooed on his shoulder, both to find his identity and to establish his innocence of the assassination of the president of the United States, a Kennedy-like figure. As the series went on, the hero tracked down numbers XII to II, until in episode 8, published in 1991, number I, the real culprit, was revealed to be the president's brother, a Bobby Kennedy lookalike. However, by that time each new episode was selling 140,000 copies, and so further mysteries around XIII's identity were invoked to prolong the series through the 1990s and on into the twenty-first century.

Bande dessinée's share of the book publishing market had undergone a rapid rise, doubling from 1.7 to 3.5 per cent between 1975 and 1983 (Bronson 1985: 82). By mid-decade, though, there was a slump across all sectors of the book market, and *bande dessinée* was not spared (Groensteen 1993: 15). Along with the exploitation of familiar recipes for maximizing sales, publishers employed various other strategies to maintain profits, including the merchandizing of *bande dessinée*-related products. The success of the marketing campaign around Peyo's *Schtroumpfs* set the example here, and *bande dessinée* shops became cluttered with figurines and key rings, which were frequently more prominent in shop windows than albums.

The harsher economic climate, perhaps surprisingly, worked against the concentration of the market into fewer and fewer hands, by enabling the emergence of smaller publishers with lower overheads who could afford lower print runs. In 1986 a new specialized *bande dessinée* publisher, Éditions Delcourt, was founded by Guy Delcourt, and, two years later, Mourad Boudjellal founded Soleil Productions. Both would go on to become key players in the 1990s, and both built their success largely on the exploitation of heroic fantasy.

The 'industrial logic' predicted by Fromental was most certainly in evidence throughout the decade, but amongst a great deal of dross there were nonetheless some albums of considerable artistic achievement, and it is largely to these that the discussion below will be devoted.

3.2 Tendencies

The two main genres of mainstream *bande dessinée* in the 1980s were history and heroic fantasy, both manifestations of 'cultural pessimism' (Lefèvre 2000: 161). The belief in the future that had been expressed in the commitment to modernity of the *École de Bruxelles* and the *École de Charleroi* and in the renovation of form and content in the 1970s was no longer in evidence. The post-nuclear war scenarios of the 1970s had begun to indicate an anxiety about the future, but in the 1980s escapism took over. Within both history and heroic fantasy there was, however, some work which went beyond the formulaic, and contemporary reality was not completely banished, as genres like the *polar* and social satire flourished.

3.2.1 Historical bande dessinée

Historical *bande dessinée* had long been identified with *Alix* by Jacques Martin, a pillar of the *École de Bruxelles*. This was a narrative of the restoration of a moral order, albeit with a homosexual subtext which may have been invisible to its original readers. In the 1980s, by

contrast, historical realism was taken to mean the inclusion of sex and violence, and moral ambiguity reigned. Bardet and Dermaut's series, *Les Chemins de Malefosse* (from 1982),[22] has numerous fairly sordid sexual scenes, as its heroes, mercenary soldiers, are involved in the struggle between Papists and Huguenots at the end of the sixteenth century. Hermann's series, *Les Tours de Bois Maury* (from 1984), has a medieval setting, with knights who abuse their privileges and are not morally superior to the brigands that they combat.

Glénat, which published both of the above series in *Circus*, based its policy on the commercial reliability of the history/adventure formula. However, the same magazine included other series which were equally successful commercially but which displayed a certain artistic ambition. Bourgeon's *Les Passagers du Vent* (1979–84), is set on a slave ship, drawn with documentary accuracy worthy of Jacques Martin. A narrative voice-over is provided by the journal kept by a white woman passenger, who intends to present it as evidence to an anti-slavery society. Isa's humanist viewpoint is contested by other characters, however, and its naïveté is demonstrated when she is indirectly responsible for a slaves' revolt, which is brutally repressed.

In 1985 Glénat launched a collection of albums under the label *Vécu*, followed by a magazine of the same name, dedicated to historical *bande dessinée*, with the slogan 'History is another kind of adventure'. *Vécu* was inaugurated with *Les 7 vies de l'épervier*, by Cothias and Juillard (1982–1991), which had begun in *Circus*. Juillard does not limit himself to Jacques Martin-style realism in his deployment of the resources of the medium, as the historical narrative of the life and death of Henri IV is interwoven with a fictional narrative involving a masked *justicier* (righter of wrongs). The interlocking narratives come together at the moment of Henri's assassination as the realist use of the colour red in the historical strand becomes a non-realist, violent metaphor in the fictional strand.

Glénat also published Yslaire's *Sambre*,[23] (1986 to 1996, with a fifth volume in 2003), a gothic romance set against the historical context of the 1848 revolution. The conventions of the genre are observed, but the formula is renewed by the addition of a number of repeated visual motifs, including the circle and the colours red and black, which give resonance to the fictional narrative and link it to the historical background through their recurrence in the iconography of the revolution.

3.2.2 Heroic fantasy

Along with history, heroic fantasy enjoyed massive popular success in the 1980s. Science fiction, which had dominated the 1970s, now seemed dated, but some of its features reappeared in this hybrid genre. Jean-Bruno Renard sees the emergence of the supernatural in *bande dessinée* as a return of the repressed, given the general tendency in *bande dessinée* since the 1960s to reject or satirize religious subjects (Renard 1986: 10 and 62–63). The most commercially successful example of the genre was Rosinski and Van Hamme's series *Thorgal*, which first appeared in 1980. The series draws on eclectic sources: Thorgal has been brought up by Vikings, but there are some futuristic elements, including intergalactic travel. However, science tends to be replaced by magic and extra-terrestrials by gods from Norse mythology. *Balade au bout du monde*, by Makyo and Vicomte (1982–88), was also commercially

successful but more sombre in tone. The series contains its quota of duels and labyrinths, but also draws upon alchemical symbols to stand for the stages of Arthis's descent into the underworld, a strange carceral universe which seems to represent a voyage through his own psyche (Makyo 1988: 78–79).

A number of *bandes dessinées* of this period offered variations on the figure of the knight and the trope of the quest. Knights have long existed in *bande dessinée*, from *Prince Vaillant*, Harold Foster's series which appeared in France in the 1930s, through to Craenhals's *Chevalier Ardent*, which appeared *Tintin* magazine from 1966. In the 1980s, however, motivation for the quest becomes egotistical and materialist. The cynical knight in Bourgeon's *Les Compagnons du Crépuscule* (1984–90), for example, has no feudal loyalties and fights for money. In *La quête de l'oiseau de temps* by Loisel and Le Tendre (1983–1987), the epic quest by the bad-tempered, middle-aged knight, Bragon, to find the bird which can defeat an evil god, is undercut by a more disturbing incest theme. It ends in Bragon's madness as he discovers that the woman he had thought to be his daughter was an illusion conjured up to incite him to continue the quest with his cowardly and clumsy companions.

3.2.3 The fantastique

Alongside heroic fantasy, a genre which might more properly be called *fantastique* was represented by a number of albums in the 1980s. Todorov's definition of the *fantastique* distinguishes it from the *merveilleux* where the fictional world allows for the suspension of the laws of nature, and the *étrange*, where bizarre events turn out to have a rational explanation (Todorov 1970: 30). All of the following albums were published in Casterman's *(À Suivre)* collection.

Comès's *Silence* (1980), a black-and-white album which tends towards abstraction in places, creates just such a climate of *fantastique*. The superstitious practices which it depicts, such as curses, are part of the belief system of the backward rural community in which the story is set. This is not the utopian vision of a return to nature to be found in the work of artists such as Auclair: the peasants are hypocritical and cruel, and the church cravenly colludes in the political and economic power relationships which marginalize the mute hero, Silence, and the gypsy Sara. The *fantastique* elements, such as the snake which kills Silence's father, give form to unconscious desires.

Unlike Comès, Boucq employs a realist graphic style in *La femme du magicien* (1985), depicting both the rancour of the poor and the arrogance of the prosperous in unsparing detail. The theme of magic at first manifests itself through a child's wish-fulfilment fantasies, as rabbits are changed into zoo animals or ballroom dancers. As she grows into a young woman, the magic element erupts into the story with considerable sexual violence. Her metamorphosis into a werewolf seems to materialize the sado-masochistic force of the magician's hold over her and her own attachment to him.

The work of Schuiten and Peeters draws on science fiction and the *merveilleux*, through futuristic transport systems which co-exist with architectural styles from the twentieth century. In each

album a consistent style gives coherence to the fictional universe that is created. In *Les Murailles de Samaris* (1983) the style is *Art Nouveau*, for example, while in *La Fièvre d'Urbicande* (1985), it is fascist and monumental. The *fantastique* climate is created as an irrational element is gradually introduced. In *Les Murailles de Samaris*, it becomes apparent that the city visited by the hero is made up only of facades. In *La Fièvre d'Urbicande* a small metallic cube begins to grow until it has become a network which engulfs the whole city, and disturbs the rigid boundary maintenance and social segregation imposed by the regime.

3.2.4 Science fiction

Although heroic fantasy displaced science fiction as a mass popular genre, the 1980s did see some developments of the latter. It tended, however, to lose its futuristic setting: the immediate future now became the context. Jean-Pierre Andrevon compares science fiction of the 1980s with Poïvet's classic series from the 1940s, *Les Pionniers de l'Espérance*, which featured shining cities of the distant future. In the 1980s, the future is no longer seen in terms of gleaming structures of steel and glass but rather of the drying up of resources, with an aesthetic based on 'grunge' (Andrevon 1982: 33). This tendency is best exemplified by the work of the Yugoslav-born Enki Bilal, who began his *Nikopol* trilogy in 1980 with *La Foire aux Immortels*. The decors are dilapidated and the characters disfigured by scars and wounds. The atmosphere is that of an oppressive totalitarian regime, albeit sensually rendered through the use of direct colour rather than coloured-in line drawings. Bilal has said that the real subject of the cycle is not science fiction but 'power and its potential to make life unbearable for the individual' (Bilal 1982: 10–11).

The German-born Andreas follows the science-fiction artists of the 1970s in his disruption of classic page layout. He frequently uses very narrow frames which run the length of the page, diagonal frames and overlapping patterns. This excess is dazzling in its effects and challenging for the reader. In *Cyrrhus* (1984), for example, a highly complex narrative involving time travel has to be assembled by the reader from clues which are given out in the form of repeated motifs, and spatial relationships are manipulated in order to represent both the discontinuities and the interference between different three time frames.

3.2.5 Political disengagement and engagement

The late 1970s and 1980s saw a revival of the *ligne claire*, associated with Hergé and Jacobs, in the postmodernist work of artists such as Floc'h, Benoît and Chaland.[24] Lecigne refers to an 'aesthetic of quotation': the albums of these artists are simulacra, in which the referentialism of the Hergéen style is carefully replicated, but emptied of its mythological content as images refer only to other images (Lecigne 1981b: 278). In an article about Chaland, Lecigne argues that something more than simply ironic parody is involved. The Franco-Belgian strips are a kind of collective unconscious, a primary material which is then worked over, as if in a dream (Lecigne 1984: 87). The graphic style which had once asserted the legibility of the world becomes, then, through a process of 'retroversion' of signifiers, a vehicle for ambiguity and unease (Lecigne 1983: 155).

In *Fac-similé* (1983), published by Futuropolis, Lecigne and Jean-Pierre Tamine focused on 'nouveau réalisme', the movement introduced into France by painters such as Fromanger and Monory. The *nouveau réaliste* current in *bande dessinée* had its origins in the work of the

Bazooka group in the 1970s, they suggest. Unlike the neo-*ligne claire* artists, Bazooka did not confine itself to revealing the artifice of fictional worlds or evacuating the real to retreat into a world of signifiers, but used collages to contest the reality-effect of familiar visual genres such as news photographs. The work of the *nouveaux réalistes*, amongst whom Lecigne and Tamine include Tardi, Montellier, Teulé and others, challenges the normative ideology of classical *bande dessinée* through a critical engagement not only with realism but also with contemporary political issues. The founding work of this current, they suggest, is Moebius's *Cauchemar blanc* (1974), in which a racist incident, realistically depicted, turns out to have been merely a dream. The reader's relief evaporates, however, as the same incident is re-enacted in 'reality', depicted with far more nightmarish angles of vision and garish colours. This is another 'retroversion', but one based on a new thematic: the world of crime and marginality conjured up by *faits divers* (short news stories, usually about crime) (Lecigne and Tamine 1983: 63).

Montellier bases her work on *faits divers* in *Blues* (1979) and *Lectures* (1982), combining a hyperreal graphic style with a non-realist use of colour. Jean Teulé also works on *faits divers* in *Gens de France* (1988) using mutilated and retouched photographs rather than drawings. According to Roland Barthes, a crime report will only qualify as a *fait divers* if its meaning is immanent, if, in other words, it does not need to be explained in relation to a political, economic or scientific context (Barthes 1964a: 189). Both Montellier and Teulé set out to reinscribe the apparently 'immanent' *faits divers* into their political and economic context.

Tardi and a number of other artists use the genre conventions of the *polar* (crime novel or film), such as corruption in high places, and the inclusion of characters representing social and ethnic marginality, to introduce political themes. Lecigne and Tamine cite Tardi's *Brouillard au pont de Tolbiac* (1982), based on Léo Malet's 1956 novel of the same name, which shows the triumph of post-Second World War consumerism over a pre-war utopian vision of collective values (Lecigne and Tamine 1983: 89). Montellier employs a *polar* format in *Odile et les Crocodiles* (1983), to tackle the theme of rape, in a striking riposte to the current of misogynist male fantasy which had been unleashed by the overturning of taboos in the 1970s.

Christin and Bilal's *Partie de Chasse* (1983) offers a different kind of demonstration of the capacities of *bande dessinée* to deal with contemporary political subject matter. It is set in a hunting lodge in Poland where leaders of Eastern Bloc countries meet over a weekend to settle old scores. Although it could not be called *nouveau réaliste*, since an almost photographic realism is harnessed to the objective of creating a convincing fictional world, enhanced by Bilal's expressive use of colour, the album is far from classical in its narrative structure. There is no hero and no clear division into the forces of good and evil. The young French Communist Party member who serves as a point of identification for the reader is naïvely manipulated into indirectly causing the death of a political rival of his host, and history is rewritten in the struggle amongst different factions as to how the past will be mythologized.

3.2.6 Social satire

Contemporary reality was also represented in 1980s *bande dessinée* in a continuation of the social satire which had been a strong tendency in the 1970s. In *Fluide Glacial*, Edika drew his

family and cat with a frenzied rage in the tradition of Vuillemin's *ligne crade*, while Goossens ruthlessly satirized the rituals of television, particularly in its moralizing and educative modes. Meanwhile, Binet's Bidochon couple continued their anxiety-ridden engagement with consumerism.[25] In *Métal Hurlant* and *(À Suivre)*, Masse trapped his characters in elaborate decors and encumbered their speech balloons with preconceived ideas.

Métal Hurlant had invented *bande dessinée Rock* in 1979, a current exemplified throughout the 1980s by the work of Margerin, whose affectionate rather than caustic portrayal of the suburban rockers Lucien, Rocky and their friends is nonetheless carefully observed.[26] Meanwhile, the angst, both trivial and metaphysical, of female adolescents was the subject of Bretécher's *Agrippine*, which appeared in the *Nouvel Observateur* from 1988 to 1995, and maintained the accuracy of dialogue of her 1970s work.

Relationships between the sexes dominated Martin Veyron's work, in which he claims to portray 'a domesticated, everyday sexuality' (Veyron 1985: 8). His *Bernard Lermite* series (1979–93), chronicles male unease in the face of women who are both professionally successful and sexually demanding. *Executive Woman* (1986) features a couple made up of a powerful professional woman and an unemployed man, a misogynist womanizer, a scenario which condenses a number of representations of the 'crisis of masculinity' which exercised journalists, film-makers and sociologists in the 1980s.

3.2.7 Personal life

A new tendency emerged in the 1980s, based, like the work of some of the satirists, on the observation of daily life, but treating it through emotions and atmospheres rather than humour. Gerbier evokes 'a certain liberation of the image, which is no longer constrained by the criterion of immediate narrative functionality: details, décors, cross sections can appear in order to emphasize an atmosphere or render a subtle state of mind' (Gerbier 2000: 178). Loustal's work in, for example, *New York Miami* (1980) and *Barney et la note bleue* (1987), both scripted by Paringaux, recreates decors from American cinema: the villas and swimming pools of the wealthy and their entourage, city streets under artificial lighting, jazz clubs and sordid hotels. Loustal's graphic style, which draws on Hockney and Matisse, suggests the sensuality of skin and clothes and the vibration of the light. Frames may be juxtaposed to create an emotional climate rather than a narrative sequence. Loustal prefers a narrative voice-over to speech balloons in the frames. Much is left unsaid, and text and image may be at odds with each other. In *Barney et la note bleue*, a voice-over confines itself to describing the virtuosity of the musician's saxophone playing, while the image shows him preparing a heroin injection, a scene which the reader is left to interpret (Loustal and Paringaux 1987: 51).

Cosey's *Voyage en Italie* (1988) works through discontinuous fragments. There is no distancing voice-over, but rather intense subjectivity. Two Vietnam veterans travel from Colorado to Italy, but this is not a tale of adventure and the overcoming of obstacles. Ian, unable to accept the end of his marriage, finishes the journey in a psychiatric hospital and commits suicide. Art renounces his long-held fantasy of forming a couple with the woman who has obsessed him since his departure for Vietnam. The failure of these relationships is not explained by Cosey:

the reader must piece it together from the traces of past and present, expressed as much through 'still life' images of banal objects as from the expressions, gestures and dialogues of the characters.

The portrayal of everyday life occurred in the work of a small number of 1980s artists such as Cabanes and Baru in the context of an account of childhood and adolescence. The former expresses nostalgia for rural southern France in *Colin-Maillard* (1989), while the latter portrays a working-class, mainly immigrant, community in the industrial north-east, in the three volumes of *Quéquette Blues* (1984–1986). The work of Baudoin is less precise in terms of setting: everyday reality is filtered through the subjectivity of the author which allows for the inclusion of dreams, fears and fantasies. He conveys emotion through the harshness of the line and through posture and expression, sometimes without words, sometimes in contradiction to words. *Passe le temps* (1982), in which he draws himself at the ages of eight, fifteen, thirty and as an old man, was one of the first examples of *bande dessinée* autobiography in France, a genre that would flourish in the 1990s.

3.3 Cultural legitimacy

In a decade which saw the heteronomous principle gain the upper hand over the autonomous principle in *bande dessinée* production, there were a number of developments which led nonetheless to an evolution in the cultural status of the field as a whole. These consisted of institutionalization in the form of bricks and mortar and various forms of state funding; the appearance of more books associating the medium with a variety of academic discourses; and debates within *bande dessinée* journals and at a famous conference about the specificity of the medium and its potential to become a vehicle for 'modern' work.

3.3.1 Institutionalization

In 1983 evidence that *bande dessinée* was beginning to be welcomed in from the cultural margins was offered by the appearance at the Angoulême salon of Jack Lang, Minister for Culture in the Socialist government, to present his '15 measures for *bande dessinée*', which, he acknowledged, could no longer be seen as a 'sub-literary product' but as an aesthetic mode of expression in its own right (Looseley 1995: 125). The measures included the founding in the city of the Centre National de la Bande Dessinée et de l'Image, given the imprimatur of 'grand presidential project'. Lang pledged that the government would provide 45 million francs (about £4.5 million) of the estimated 75 million that the Centre would cost, with the rest to come from regional budgets. The plans included an experimental *bande dessinée* course at the École des Beaux Arts in Angoulême.[27] These plans were in keeping with the desire of the Socialist mayor of Angoulême, Jean-Michel Boucheron, who had taken over as the president of the organizing committee of the salon in 1981, for the city to benefit from its association with *bande dessinée* all year round. There would be financial support for artists, for publishers who wished to publish the work of young artists, for events celebrating the medium (for example, a subsidy of 160,000 F, about £16,000, would go to the Angoulême salon in 1984, representing 10 per cent of its running costs) and for the purchase of original *planches* (Caméo 1984). Lang did not, though, propose to repeal the 1949 law which subjected *bande dessinée* to a stringent censorship regime, for fear of a 'wave of protest from organizations representing the family' (Caméo 1984: 180).

The measures corresponded with Lang's strategy of reinvigorating the cultural life of the regions and promoting economic growth through the culture industries. It is not clear whether this recognition from the state aimed to consecrate[28] *bande dessinée* as art or simply recognized its economic importance as a consumer product, a home-grown competitor to the American mass cultural onslaught. The inclusion of a museum dedicated to preserving the *patrimoine* (national heritage) through the collection of original *bande dessinée* pages does, however, associate the medium with official culture. Groensteen, who was the director of the museum until 2001, claims that the Direction des Musées de France, which oversees the purchasing policy of all national museums, saw the purpose of the collections not as the display of objects of aesthetic value but as an anthropological enterprise which would shed light on the collective imaginary. Groensteen argues, though, that this stance is at odds with Lang's (Groensteen 2006: 142–143).

Official culture at the highest level was represented when Mitterrand brought his august presence to the Angoulême salon in 1985, a year in which the organizers claimed that there had been 250,000 visitors (Cannet 1993: 151) and, by 1987, the existence of a 'salon off' testified to the extent to which the main event had become respectable. In 1986 Roland Castro was appointed as architect of the CNBDI and the project was maintained by the Chirac government which was elected the same year. Philippe de Villiers, during a brief period as a junior culture minister, was photographed browsing through albums at the 1987 salon. With the Socialists back in power it was Lang, though, who presided over the inauguration of the CNBDI in 1990, alongside Boucheron whose media profile as the first 'Socialist from the *bande dessinée* tendency' was shortly to give way to the notoriety accruing from his prosecution for a series of financial irregularities.

Lang's cultural policy provoked noteworthy counter-blasts, however. *Bande dessinée* was singled out as emblematic of the amalgam between high culture and hedonistic consumer culture castigated by Alain Finkielkraut as a regression to adolescence, in which 'a *bande dessinée* which mixes a flashy plot with pretty pictures is worth a Nabokov novel, as if what Lolitas read was worth *Lolita*' (Finkielkraut 1987: 152). Bernard-Henri Lévy's *Éloge des intellectuals* is similarly dismissive about the medium, mocking Jack Lang's endeavour to raise the status of *bande dessinée*, along with fashion and advertising films, as '"youth-oriented" and "modern" cultural practices [...] as if nothing, nothing at all, could distinguish Proust from a drawing by Manara' (Lévy 1987: 21).[29] The interventions of Finkielkraut and Lévy provoked a number of ripostes. Thierry Groensteen pointed out that the assumption that Manara was representative of *bande dessinée* as a whole was like assuming that Barbara Cartland was representative of literature as a whole (Groensteen 1987b: 6), and Benoît Peeters described the two intellectuals as 'aniconètes', a coining on the model of *analphabète* (illiterate) (Peeters 1991: 5).

Meanwhile, in Belgium, an initiative similar to the CNBDI provoked less controversy. A building designed by Victor Horta had been given classified status in 1975, but had fallen into disrepair. In 1983 the Minister of Public Works agreed that the Belgian state would buy the building and finance its restoration and transformation into the Centre Belge de la Bande Dessinée. On 6

October 1989 the CBBD opened in the presence of the king and queen, symbolizing the role played by *bande dessinée* in constructing a Belgian identity. After the initial restoration, the state's role in funding the CBBD has been modest, however. It is a copyright library for Belgian *bande dessinée*, and so has a complete collection of albums produced since 1988 (de Pooter 2000: 138), but only 10 per cent of its running costs are subsidized, and it has to generate income from sponsorship and entry fees (Groensteen 2006: 150).

3.3.2 Academic discourses

Semiology still dominated academic discourses on *bande dessinée* in this decade. Books included *Lire la bande dessinée*, by Pierre Masson, which appeared in 1985, and attempted to establish the 'morphology' and 'syntax' of the medium, as well as a number of studies emerging from the University of Louvain-la-Neuve (for example, Massart et al. 1984), which were based on the work of the structural narratologist A. J. Greimas. The semiological review *Degrés* produced a *bande dessinée* edition in autumn 1989.

Following on from Blanchard's art-historical discourse in the 1960s, although from outside the university, Lecigne's 1983 *Les Héritiers d'Hergé* and his *Fac-similé*, co-authored with Tamine in the same year, brought an art-critical approach which associated recent developments in the medium with movements in painting.

A special edition of the literary review *Europe* was devoted to *bande dessinée* in April 1989, and included analyses of science fiction in francophone *bande dessinée*,[30] as well as an article entitled 'L'entr'images' by Claude-Françoise Brunon, who foregrounds the formal potential of the medium by discussing the importance of ellipsis in *bande dessinée* narration. The distance that the medium had come from its pre-1960s status of infra-culture posing a danger to literacy may be measured by the fact that a *Spécial bande dessinée* was produced in April 1986 by *Le Français dans le monde*, the journal of the Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Français, dedicated to the promotion of French language and culture throughout the world.

In 1984, Benoît Peeters's *Les Bijoux ravis* brought a psychoanalytical as well as semiological discourse to his reading. Peeters, whose academic background is in philosophy, was not writing from within the university but as a freelance cultural critic alongside his activities as *bande dessinée* scriptwriter and novelist. The psychoanalyst Serge Tisseron produced *Tintin chez le psychanalyste* (1985) and *Psychanalyse de la bande dessinée* (1987), although the stress in the latter on the reactivation of infantile processes was unlikely to reinforce awareness of *bande dessinée* as an adult medium.[31]

3.3.3 The search for specificity and the potential for 'modern' work

The question of who was authorized to bestow legitimacy on the medium, the question of the specificity of *bande dessinée*, and the question of a 'modern' current that would go beyond representation were debated in *bande dessinée* journals and at a conference during the 1980s. Again, these debates are couched in terms and concepts drawn from Bourdieu, which are briefly summarized below.

3.3.3.1 Bourdieu's analysis of legitimacy: a brief summary

Specificity

Given that it is crucially important for a field of restricted, as opposed to large-scale, cultural production to assert its independence from the economic marketplace, the establishment of criteria for determining value within the field will tend to stress the specificity of the field. The types of practice that will be most valorized will therefore be those which express and explore the specific aesthetic potential of the field (Bourdieu 1993: 115–120).

The valorization of form over function and of non-representational art

Art which is merely representational, aiming to reassure its public both of the 'necessity of the mode of representation and the world represented' (Bourdieu 1993: 102), may generate economic capital, but it will not earn cultural consecration. Since the late nineteenth century the legitimizing principle has become the affirmation of the primacy of form over function, of the mode of representation over the object of representation. In other words, formal features such as composition are valued over the concern to produce a realistic likeness of the subject of the work (Bourdieu 1993: 115–120).

Distinction

This 'sacrificing (of) the "subject" to the manner in which it is treated' (Bourdieu, 1993: 117) makes considerable demands on the public for an artistic work. Works produced within the field of restricted production are only accessible to those of a cultivated disposition, who possess the cultural codes essential for the interpretation of art which is not immediately obvious. Possession of this 'aesthetic' or 'cultivated' disposition requires high levels of cultural capital and acts as a marker of social distinction (Bourdieu 1993: 120–125).

3.3.3.2 Thierry Groensteen and Les Cahiers de la bande dessinée

The fanzine *Schtroumpf, les Cahiers de la bande dessinée* was founded by the 17-year-old Jacques Glénat in 1969. After the editorship was taken over by Thierry Groensteen in 1984, with an editorial board made up mostly of journalists, the word 'Schtroumpf' was dropped from the title, and the fanzine turned into a journal which, whilst not neglecting the classic American or Franco-Belgian tradition, or commercially successful artists such as Margerin and Bourgeon, also considered work from outside the mainstream and provided a forum for critical debate.

As Bourdieu had argued, the claim of any cultural practice to be an art form will depend on a demonstration of its specific aesthetic potential. One strategy adopted by *Les Cahiers* to support this claim in relation to *bande dessinée* took the form of a sustained contrast, in a series of articles called 'Balises' (signposts), with related art forms. This was inaugurated by Groensteen, who advocated a move away from facile comparisons with cinema to a rigorous confrontation of *bande dessinée* with a number of media including painting, illustration, *roman-photo* and literature[32] in order to 'complete and nourish the reflection (which we must also undertake) on what *bande dessinée* is, its essence, its specificity' (Groensteen 1985a: 39).

Most of these articles concentrated on situating *bande dessinée* in relation to other art forms on the question of realism. Groensteen's own comparison between *bande dessinée* and theatre

argues that both work by metonymy (a single tree standing for a rural setting, for example), and have a tendency to display their codes, whereas cinema is more subject to the constraints of illusionism (Groensteen 1985a: 42–43). Perhaps surprisingly, other contributors did not follow Groensteen in this assertion of the artistic credentials of the medium through its capacity to disturb the referential illusion. In an article on *bande dessinée* and painting, for example, Pierre Sterckx contrasts the deconstruction of depth and the perception of the canvas as an arrangement of surfaces which has dominated twentieth-century painting with the vocation of *bande dessinée* to create an inhabitable world. He points, for example, to the prevalence of doors in the background of *bande dessinée* panels (Sterckx 1986: 78).

A further strategy involved an investigation of the formal resources of the medium through the work of artists who extended its boundaries. In 1986, *Les Cahiers* published an article by Groensteen**,** set out almost as a manifesto, called 'L'introuvable spécificité' (the elusive specificity), in which he reiterates part of the preface of *La bande dessinée depuis 1975*, published the previous year. It was vital, he argued, for *bande dessinée* criticism to consider the medium in its diversity: 'to privilege (..) authors who take the genre onto new terrain, and contribute to its perpetual redefinition' (Groensteen 1985b: 8, quoted in Groensteen 1986a: 46). *Les Cahiers* therefore devoted space to contemporary, and often challenging, artists such as the Italian Renato Calligari, in whose work characters or objects may change their appearance from one frame to the next, and in which the graphic style may also switch from realism to expressionism or surrealism (Groensteen 1986b: 61).

This exploratory approach to the medium did not accord with the commercial priorities of the publisher of the journal, Jacques Glénat, who became exasperated with what he saw as its excessive focus on non-mainstream *bande dessinée*. He withdrew support from the editorial team in 1988, brought in Numa Sadoul as editor, and tried to popularize the format ('*Première* rather than *Cahiers du Cinéma*' was the new instruction), but sales did not increase and the journal ceased publication in 1990 (Groensteen 1998: 18–20).

3.3.3.3 Bruno Lecigne and Controverse

This journal appeared four times between 1985 and 1986. The first number consists of a long essay by its editor, Bruno Lecigne, on the status of *bande dessinée*. He argues that once the para-cultural legitimacy accorded by an internal apparatus of fanzines and collectors had been infiltrated by academics and intellectuals, official recognition was inevitable. An 'ultra-cultural' tendency, represented by Bazooka, Futuropolis and the magazine *STP*, had tried to avoid assimilation into official culture by stressing the specificity and modernity of the medium. Elsewhere, though, the enhanced status of the medium had resulted in a globalizing discourse. It was the whole of *bande dessinée* which had been re-evaluated, in a totalizing and confusing amalgam.

Lecigne gives three examples: it is not clear whether juries at Angoulême reward innovation or commercial success; subsidies from the Centre National du Livre may go indiscriminately to the future stars of a thriving market or to artists who expect always to struggle to make a living; and journalists who review new albums do not make their criteria clear and will praise an artist for

skilful deployment of the formulaic techniques which will ensure success as an industrial mass product. Lecigne makes it clear that he does not dispute the need for *bande dessinée* artists to make a living by obeying certain commercial norms. The problem, he claims, is the discourses which hide this by representing commerce as art (Lecigne 1985: pp. 5–23). Conversely, as he argued elsewhere, experimental artistic work will be judged according to commercial criteria: the work of Bazooka was ill-understood, because critics judged it as if they were reading Hergé (Lecigne 1981a: 37).

Lecigne's attack on the critical press included, by implication, *Les Cahiers de la bande dessinée*, which featured mainstream alongside more artistically ambitious work, and did not explicitly operate a separate set of criteria in assessing work in these two different areas of the field of cultural production. However, it was from the *Cahiers* team that an initiative emphasizing precisely this distinction was to come in 1987. In the meantime, another journal would take up a more radical stance on the link between art and commerce and on the question of narration.

3.3.3.4 Barthélémy Schwartz and Dorénavant

This journal, edited by Barthélémy Schwartz and Balthazar Kaplan, appeared seven times between 1985 and 1989, and some extracts from it have been reprinted in 2006 in *L'Éprouvette* 2, as well as an article which Schwartz wrote for *Controverse* 4, in which he argues that the generation of *bande dessinée* 'auteurs' who appeared in the 1970s were worthy of no higher regard than the more modest artisans who had preceded them. They would not merit the title of 'auteur' unless they were prepared to free themselves from dependency on the marketplace (Schwartz 1986, reprinted in Schwartz 2006a: 327–331). *Dorénavant* offered a definition of *bande dessinée* as 'a global image made up of individual images juxtaposed' (Schwartz 2006b: 336) and argued that narration was only one of the forms of expression that the medium could aspire to. It was necessary to explore the language of the medium: meaning could arise out of haphazard juxtapositions and jazz-like improvisations (Schwartz 2006b: 335).

3.3.3.5 The Colloque de Cerisy

This conference took place in August 1987, and some of the papers were published by Futuropolis the following year in *Bande dessinée, récit et modernité*, edited by Groensteen 1988. The eclecticism of *Les Cahiers* gave way to a conference agenda which aimed to focus on *bande dessinée* as a vehicle for 'modern' work. This word seems carefully chosen to avoid the distinction between 'modernist' and 'postmodernist',[33] and seems to be used as synonymous with 'artistically challenging'.

In his own paper, Groensteen distanced himself from the radical rejection of narration proclaimed by *Dorénavant*, insisting that progressive work in *bande dessinée* had sought not to abolish narration but to diversify narrative strategies. He did, however, distinguish between 'programmatic' scenarios, based on a predetermined story, and 'strategic' scenarios, which emerge as the work progresses (Groensteen 1988: 45). Narrative progression will be thwarted by an amalgam of random images (a 'succession'), or by a set of images linked only by similarity or theme (a 'series', which may nonetheless be read as a narrative if accompanied

by a text), but it may arise out of the metamorphosis (rather than mere repetition) of a motif: Martin Vaughn-James's *La Cage* (1986)[34] provided an instance of this. Groensteen concluded by envisaging the possibility that certain narrative texts, even 'programmatic' ones, might be traversed 'subterraneously' by series (Groensteen 1988: 66). He would later use the term 'tressage' for the superimposition of such series onto the narrative sequence (Groensteen 1999: 8). Groensteen's advocacy of the 'strategic' over the 'programmatic' scenario was echoed by a number of contributions. Benoît Peeters, for example, underlined the importance of avoiding the 'pre-established script' which is then simply illustrated (Peeters 1988: 41).[35]

Henri Van Lier asserted that the fascination of the medium lay in its incessant metamorphoses. Where cinema is merely sequential, offering events and adventures, *bande dessinée* is fundamentally mutational: the inter-frame space is the 'annulment of all continuity' (Van Lier 1988: 8). What entrances the reader is, he suggests, 'the avatars of the Same and the Other' (Van Lier 1988: 21). A further contributor, Jacques Samson, also insisted that the essential characteristic of modernity in *bande dessinée* was its 'labile', changeable nature (Samson 1988: 120). The ninth art had the expressive potential to transgress the convention of legibility to which it had long been constrained by its status as a mass medium. Modern works are irreducible to 'the banal function of representation' (Samson 1988:124), and it is to their enunciation that the analyst should turn his/her attention. Samson discerns an obsessional and structuring motif, 'an underlying text', in Tardi's *C'était la guerre des tranchées*:[36] that of the *tricolore*, evoked through the multiple instances of layers of different shades of grey (Samson 1988: 129). He thereby provides an example of the kind of non-narrative series postulated by Groensteen.

Many of the albums extolled by the Cerisy speakers, particularly those by Vaughn-James, Alberto Breccia and Régis Franc, affirmed, in Bourdieu's terms, the primacy of the mode of representation over its object. The absence of a coherent fictional world in these albums did not amount to the mere ludic display of their own codes, but demanded from their readers the very high level of cultural competence which is able to value formal experimentation. The awareness-raising project of *Les Cahiers* in relation to the diversity of work across the medium had in effect given way to the establishment of a canon. There must nonetheless have been some doubt in 1987 as to whether the readership for the works in this canon extended much beyond the conference delegates themselves. This situation was soon to change, and partly as an incidental consequence of the Colloque. It provided the occasion for the meeting of Jean-Christophe Menu and Lewis Trondheim, who, with four other artists, would go on to found L'Association, the first of a group of independent publishing houses which would bring about a creative flowering of *bande dessinée* of extraordinary ambition, which in turn would raise the profile of the medium amongst a readership whose cultural capital had hitherto led them to shun it.

3.4 From the 1980s to the 1990s

In a decade dominated by heroes, series and escapist genres, there had been some signs that conservatism and commercial considerations had not completely extinguished innovation. Some albums which fell into the historical adventure and *fantastique* categories used narrative

techniques of some complexity and set out to challenge the normative ideology of the Franco-Belgian tradition. Furthermore, the retreat into nostalgia and recycling of the *ligne claire* was countered in the work of a number of artists by an engagement with contemporary society. Meanwhile, the decision to found the CNBDI promised a highly visible symbol of the entry of *bande dessinée* into official culture, even if scepticism was loudly expressed in some quarters.

In the 1990s the grip of heroes and series on the *grand public* sector would be undiminished, but the medium would be revivified in two quite different ways. The success of mangas would provide a new growth area in the market, and the establishment of small independent publishing houses would provide a major stimulus to autonomous production outside it.

Chapter 4

From the 1990s to the Twenty-First Century: The Return of the Independent Sector

4.1 The publishing context

If the 1980s were marked by crisis and conservatism, a different picture came into view in the 1990s. The mainstream *bande dessinée* market saw an upturn in the mid 1990s, partly attributable to the ever-increasing popularity of mangas, and expansion has continued on into the twenty-first century. At the same time, there have been significant developments in the field of *bande dessinée* production, with the emergence of a whole new sector of small alternative publishers which opened up a space for a non-commercial, autonomous area of work defying mainstream norms in terms of both format and subject matter.

4.1.1 Mainstream publishers

The 1990s began with the buying out of the last 1970s independent survivor, *Fluide Glacial*, and its associated publishing house AUDIE, by Flammarion. The magazine's star artists, including Edika and Goossens, nonetheless stayed with it, and it flourished throughout the 1990s, with sales at 100,000 (Tassel 1998: 1). The twenty-first century has seen that figure drop to 80,000 (Algoud 2004: 4), and there has been a rapid turnover of editors. In 2006 the editorship was taken over by Noël Godin, the famous cream-tart scourge of the pompous and pretentious.

Flammarion went on to buy the Belgian publisher Casterman, which held the *Tintin* back catalogue, in 1999. Casterman's flagship adult *bande dessinée* magazine, *(À Suivre)*, had ceased publication in 1997, its readership having gone down to 20,000 per month. It had long

since lost its risk-taking aura, and, in its valedictory issue, Benoît Peeters praises its achievements but notes that 'experimental *bande dessinée* [...] is happening elsewhere' (Peeters 1997: 109). The 'elsewhere' of which Peeters speaks was outside the mainstream, but by 2002, the independent publishing houses had sufficiently revitalized the field as a whole to move Flammarion to bring out a glossy new magazine. *Bang!*, which appeared thrice-yearly under the joint label of Casterman and *Beaux Arts Magazine*, was co-edited by Peeters and included previously unpublished work, mainly by authors from the independent sector. This initiative ended in 2006, however.

Dargaud, now part of Média Participations, gained spectacular sales and generated publicity around the medium in 1996, by resurrecting Jacobs's Blake and Mortimer, nine years after their creator's death, in *L'Affaire Francis Blake*, scripted by Jean Van Hamme and drawn by Ted Benoît. The album became the best-selling book of the year, selling 700,000 copies (De Saint-Vincent 1998: 66). Subsequent *Blake et Mortimer* albums, including three by a second writer/artist team, Sente and Juillard, have sold at comparable levels (Ratier 2003: 3). At the same time, sales of the Jacobs back catalogue, which had been running at 130,000 a year, went up to 400,000 (Lefebvre 2000: 30). Dargaud suffered a reversal in 1998 when it lost the back catalogue of *Astérix* to Hachette, after eight years' litigation by Albert Uderzo. However, its catalogue included two best-selling series scripted by Van Hamme: the political thriller *XIII* and, under the Lombard label, the heroic fantasy series *Thorgal*.

In 2004 Média Participations took over Dupuis. This was the end of an era. Like the other Belgian giant, Casterman, Dupuis had been a family firm, and Charles Dupuis had featured as a character in Franquin's *Gaston Lagaffe*. Owning Dargaud, Lombard and Dupuis, Média Participations now controlled 40 per cent of the *bande dessinée* market in France (Ratier 2006: 5). Along with many highly successful children's series, Dupuis's catalogue included another Van Hamme-scripted series, drawn by Francq. This was *Largo Winch*, which had begun in 1990, a bedrooms and boardrooms saga featuring a jeans-clad millionaire. By the year 2000, Van Hamme was responsible for the script of 10 per cent of all albums sold (Canard 2000: 54), and his output may be taken as representative of the kind of mainstream *bande dessinée* from which the independent publishers aimed to distance themselves. His work has been criticized not only on the grounds of the rather inexpressive realism favoured by his collaborators, but also for its eroticizing of violence against women and for its endorsement of the social order. The laid-back Largo Winch, suggests Bruno Canard, functions to humanize the ultra-liberalism of late capitalism (Canard 2000: 57).

The Grenoble-based firm Glénat built up a large catalogue of mangas over the 1990s alongside its history and adventure series. Having bought out Vents d'Ouest in 1991, it gained the latter's best-selling vintage motorcycle series, *Joe Bar Team*, by Bar2 and Fane, which had begun in 1990. Glénat also had a major success in the children's market with *Titeuf*, a series by the Swiss artist Zep. Titeuf is an eight-year-old child with a Tintin-like quiff and an impressive command of adolescent slang, much of it invented. The series began in 1992 and built up astronomical sales. By the twenty-first century, each new album habitually topped the best-seller list, with print runs of two million (Ratier 2004: 3). Around the millennium, Glénat introduced

two highly successful collections with a religious-mystical theme, *Décalogue* and *Triangle Secret*, corresponding to a vogue for esotericism manifested elsewhere in mass culture, most obviously by Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* in 2003.

Éditions Delcourt, founded in 1986, had a meteoric rise over the 1990s, by recruiting young artists emerging from the *bande dessinée* course at the École des Beaux Arts in Angoulême, by continuing to exploit the public appetite for heroic fantasy, and by adding a manga collection, *Akata*. After buying out the manga publisher Tonkam in 2005, Delcourt overtook Glénat as the biggest publisher of mangas in France (Ratier 2006: 5). Amongst these mass-market genre products, Delcourt publishes work of some distinction, such as the dazzlingly postmodernist albums of Marc-Antoine Mathieu[37] and the subtle social and political observation of Étienne Davodeau.

Another relative newcomer, Soleil Productions, made its presence felt. Mourad Boudjellal had opened a *bande dessinée* bookshop in Toulon 1982, and had begun to publish children's *bande dessinée* in 1988. In 1992, Soleil bought the rights to the children's series *Rahan*, the commercial success of which provided the capital for its move into the adult market (Boudjellal M. 2005: 94). Soleil published a number of albums by Mourad Boudjellal's brother Farid, including *L'Oud* which brought together a number of episodes first published by Futuropolis in the 1980s. Farid Boudjellal's sharp and witty observation of the experiences of the Maghrébin community in France was, however, an exception in Soleil's catalogue which was otherwise unremittingly devoted to heroic fantasy.[38] A series which began in 1994, *Lanfeust de Troy*, by Tarquin and Arleston, in which all the characters have magic powers, rapidly established itself as a major best-seller.

The venerable Futuropolis, which had been taken over by Gallimard in 1987, was wound up in 1994.[39] However, in 2004, the name Futuropolis was revived, as Gallimard embarked on a collaboration with Soleil Productions. Given Soleil's generally down-market reputation, its association with the illustrious pioneer of an artistic and experimental version of the medium caused ripples in the *bande dessinée* pool. Étienne Robial, the founder of Futuropolis, who had run it on a resolutely non-commercial basis whilst working elsewhere as a graphic designer, refused to allow Gallimard/Soleil to revive his original Futuropolis logo, and expressed his distress at this 'dangerous' association (Robial 2005: 1). Futuropolis in its new incarnation succeeded nonetheless in attracting artists of high reputation, including Blutch and David B. from the independent sector, and launched a prestigious collaboration with the Louvre museum, inaugurated by Nicolas de Crécy's *Période glaciare* in 2005. This album reproduces works from the museum, through the conceit of a story set in a distant future in which a group of explorers come upon the ruins of the Louvre and assume that all the works belong to a single period, which they make far-fetched attempts to explain.

The commercial health of the *bande dessinée* sector has seemed increasingly assured since the mid 1990s, and in this it has defied trends elsewhere in book publishing (Piault, 1998: 9). By 2005, *bande dessinée* represented 6.5 per cent of the turnover of book publishing in France (Ratier 2006: 5). If this is compared with the figure of 1.7 per cent that Bronson

quotes for 1975, it can be seen that *bande dessinée*'s share of the market has quadrupled over thirty years (Bronson 1985: 82). Output also rose rapidly through the second half of the 1990s, and reached 1,272 albums in 2000 (Labé, 2001: v), and 2,701 by 2005 (Ratier 2006: 4).

The boom in sales has led to a resurgence of *bande dessinée* magazines, such as *Lanfeust* launched by Soleil Productions in 1998, and *Avant-Première* launched by Dargaud in 2001 to pre-publish their own series. These house magazines coexist with others which pre-publish material from a range of major publishing houses and contain editorial content in the form of interviews and reviews. Many of the latter have proved ephemeral, although *Bo Doï*, launched in 1997, is still in existence. Sales figures are modest: a circulation of 15,000 is quoted for *Bo Doï* in 1998 (Tassel 1998: 1). There are also an increasing number of websites devoted to *bande dessinée*, including bdparadisio.com which claims 360,000 hits per month and actuabd.com, which claims 97,500 (Ratier 2006: 13).

4.1.2 Mangas

Mangas have existed in Japan since the beginning of the twentieth century (the term means 'irresponsible image'), but had an explosive development at the end of the 1960s, as the value system of Japanese society was undergoing profound changes (Sekikawa 2002: 7). The format is smaller than the standard French album, but the manga has many more pages, and the covers are soft. The impact of mangas in France began in 1990, with Glénat's publication of Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira*, a violent saga set in Tokyo in the year 2000, and picked up momentum when the same publisher brought out Akira Toriyama's *Dragon Ball*, which had appeared in an animated version on French children's television since 1988. Other major publishers were quick to add mangas to their catalogues, and some small publishing houses dedicated to mangas sprang up, most notably Éditions Tonkam in 1994.

Press commentators rapidly began to express concern about this invasion of a foreign form, citing its artistic poverty and its violence, in a moral panic reminiscent of that which led to the 1949 law directed against American comics. Pascal Lardellier published an article in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, in which he objected to the 'destruction of the page layout' and the spectacle of cruelty and brutality unaccompanied by a 'moralizing discourse'. Mangas were, he claimed, addictive: he referred to 'the compulsive reading of mangas' (Lardellier 1996: 29). In the same year, three mangas published by Éditions Samouraï and two by Éditions Tonkam were banned from sale to minors.

Other commentators were less alarmist. Dominique Veret, co-founder of Tonkam, insists that a manga demands active reading: 'It uses a highly codified language, and skilled reading techniques. It can be read at several levels' (Veret 1996: 11). Mangas have enabled *bande dessinée* to regain some cult status amongst young adolescents, and their popularity has increased exponentially. Where 94 mangas were published in France in 1994, the figure in 2005 was 1,142, including 195 titles from Korea (Ratier 2006: 4). The latter are strictly speaking manwha, and began to appear on the French market in 2003. Ratier claims that in 2005 one child out of two in France between the ages of 9 and 13 was a reader of mangas.

The best-selling individual titles tend to sell between 30,000 and 70,000 copies, with episodes of Kishimoto's *Naruto* series, about an adolescent training to be a ninja, which was first published by Dargaud in French translation in 2002, each selling over 100,000 copies (Ratier 2006: 9). Alongside the albums, a plethora of manga magazines and websites have appeared, some of which appeal to specialized audiences, like their Japanese counterparts: *Shôjo Mag*, for example, is for female readers.

Mangas have had an impact on the work of some French artists, a few of whom were invited by the Japanese publisher Kodansha to produce albums in the manga format. These included Baru's *L'Autoroute du soleil* (1995).[40] Baru has said that he appreciated the more gradual transitions from one panel to the next, which allowed him to avoid brutal ellipses and compose at his natural rhythm (Baru 1996: 10). A similar comment has been made by Fabrice Neaud, who says that certain scenes in his diaries, like the one in which his finger very slowly approaches Dominique's neck in the third volume, would simply not have been conceivable without the influence of mangas (Neaud 2003: 169).

Frédéric Boilet has lived in Japan since 1997 and has acknowledged the influence of mangas on his work, although he distinguishes between auteurist manga, which aims to convey emotion, and its mass-market counterpart (Boilet 1998: 9). This distinction has been recognized by a number of publishers who have brought out special collections of adult mangas, such as Glénat's *Bunko* and Casterman's *Sakka*, which both began in 2004. The decision of the independent publisher Cornélius to publish mangas in 2005 offers further evidence of the increasing awareness in France of an autonomous current with manga production. Auteurist manga has achieved consecration at the Angoulême festival through the award of best scenario to Jiro Taniguchi for *Quartier lointain* in 2003, and the award of best drawing to the same artist the following year for *Le Sommet des dieux*. In 2007 a Cornélius author, Shigeru Mizuki, won the 'best album' prize for *NonNonBâ*.

4.1.3 The independent sector

The independent[41] publishing houses which have come into being since 1990 have created a forum for a *bande dessinée d'auteur* which has had little space for expression since the 1970s. Print runs are small, often less than 1000, and sales represent a tiny share of the market as a whole: in 2000 Groensteen estimated this at 5% of the sales of specialist *bande dessinée* bookshops (Groensteen 2000a: 11). The percentage of those of large booksellers like the Fnac would be correspondingly smaller, and independent-sector albums do not appear at all in hypermarkets. The aim of the independent sector is not, though, success in the marketplace, and they have pursued defiantly non-commercial policies.

Much of the impetus for the movement came from Jean-Christophe Menu, a *bande dessinée* artist who had come from the world of fanzines. Menu first approached Robial, the founder of Futuropolis, who agreed to finance a review called *Labo*, the name of which indicates its experimental aim. Menu's editorial in *Labo,* which appeared in January 1990, alluded to the limiting effect of the dominance of the medium by heroic fantasy, asserting that it was crucial for *bande dessinée* to cease being a 'product', and that those who wished to leave 'the Middle

Ages and puberty' behind, should endeavour to realise 'the immense potential of its language' (Menu 1990:1).

It was with five artists who had contributed to *Labo*, David B., Mattt Konture, Stanislas, Killoffer and Lewis Trondheim, that, later that year, Menu set up L'Association.[42] In 1992, the first edition of its review, *Lapin*, appeared, and this was followed by collections of books in a variety of formats, none of which correspond to the traditional hard-covered, 48-page, full-colour mainstream 'album', a term which the group reject, just as they reject the abbreviation 'BD'. No predetermined length is imposed on artists: Trondheim's epic *Lapinot et les carottes de Patagonie* (1992), one of L'Association's earliest publications, in the writing of which, famously, Trondheim taught himself to draw, runs to over 500 pages.

From the outset, L'Association encouraged artists to extend the boundaries of the medium in terms of subject matter and form. There has been a certain emphasis on autobiography and reportage, but L'Association authors have also produced fictional work that defies genre norms. The editorial collective has explicitly promoted formal experiment, most notably through Oubapo (Ouvroir de Bande Dessinée Potentielle), inaugurated in 1993 on the model of Oulipo, the Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle (Workshop for Potential Literature) set up in 1960 by Raymond Queneau and others. Oubapo has investigated the artistic potential of building constraints into the creation of *bande dessinée*. Four volumes of Oubapo exercises have so far been produced, between 1997 and 2005, and an exhibition of Oubapo work has been held in Paris in 2003 and in Angoulême in 2005. The effects of one particular type of constraint, the omission of texts, were demonstrated in *Comix 2000*, an anthology of 2000 *planches* without words by 324 authors from 24 different countries, published by L'Association in 1999.

L'Association has also published re-editions of classic *bande dessinée* authors such as Gébé and Forest: Menu emphasizes that the publishing house regards itself as being part of a classic tradition, including Hergé and Franquin, which he distinguishes from the 'degenerate academicism' to be found in the mainstream (Menu 2005b: 11). In 2005, L'Association began a new collection, under the label *Éprouvette*, which features critical discussions of *bande dessinée*, and a theoretical review, itself called *L'Éprouvette*, which appeared in 2006. L'Association also positions itself against the mainstream in terms of production values: Menu stresses the importance of ensuring the high quality of the book as material object, in spite of the consequent increase in cost. Profit is not the motive: a book which does not sell is not by that token a failure (Menu, 2005b: 16).

The founding of L'Association was followed by that of a number of other small presses with comparable ambitions. A group of art students in Angoulême, including Loïc Néhou and Fabrice Neaud, founded Ego comme X and produced a review of the same name. They too have focused, largely but not exclusively, on autobiographical work, most famously Fabrice Neaud's four-volume *Journal* (1996–2003). Néhou has said that it is not autobiography in itself that interests him, but the taking of risks to speak of personal life with emotional depth: 'You have to say what can't be said' (Néhou 2001a: 3). He contrasts the personal sexual

fantasies that Neaud expresses in his work with the 'impersonal, formulaic fantasies' of traditional *bande dessinée* (Néhou 2001b: 2).

Where L'Association and Ego comme X have been determined to see their books take up their rightful place on the shelves of bookshops, two other publishing houses, which subsequently fused, have tended to stress the importance of *bande dessinée* as part of the landscape of the visual arts. Amok, founded by Yvan Alagbé and Olivier Marboeuf in Montreuil, outside Paris, launched its review, *Le Cheval sans tête*, in 1994. In Belgium, the Frigo collective, Thierry Van Hasselt, Vincent Fortemps and Olivier Deprez, set up the publishing enterprise Fréon in 1994. They produced the annual *Frigorevue* and subsequently the bimonthly *Frigobox*. In 2002 Amok joined with Fréon to form Frémok, a 'multinational', as their website proclaims (Frémok 2006: 1), which operates firmly within an artistic and not a commercial logic. The Frémok collective stress the importance of emotion over the kind of narrative legibility of the Franco-Belgian tradition, whilst insisting that their own work, and that of the artists they publish, is nonetheless narrative: 'As soon as a sequence of images comes into being, it recounts something' (Van Hasselt 2005: 73). They have, notably, published books by Alex Barbier, whose work had first appeared in *Charlie Mensuel* in the 1970s, but who had been shunned by publishers in the 1980s. Barbier works in direct colour, producing atmospheric images of bodies and places, which he subsequently arranges into a narrative (Barbier 2003: 58). Alagbé points out that Barbier's work is unimaginable in any other medium (Alagbé 2005: 76).

Éditions Cornélius was founded in 1991 by Jean-Louis Gauthey and Bernard Granger. Their early books had screen-printed covers, a practice which became too labour-intensive by the mid 1990s (Gauthey 2001: 3). Cornélius have published the work of French artists, including the virtuoso Blutch, alongside that of American artists in French translation, such as David Mazzucchelli, Daniel Clowes, and Robert Crumb. In the latter case, they have demonstrated a concern for the conservation of a key part of comic art heritage by tracking down originals, often discarded by Crumb's early editors (Gauthey 2001: 2).

Les Requins Marteaux was also founded in 1991, in Albi, in the south of France, by a collective of artists including Marc Pichelin and Pierre Druilhe. They began by producing the magazine *Ferraille*, distributed through news-stands rather than bookshops, which gave rise to Winschluss and Cizo's *Monsieur Ferraille*, a determinedly trashy reincarnation of the Franco-Belgian heritage in the form of a robot who counsels alcoholism and inventive sexual practices to the socially-deprived youth of France. The collective have extended their activity into albums and installations like the Supermarché Ferraille, where the public are invited to buy tins conceived as art objects,[43] and into the production of films.

Other small labels, such as Atrabile, Rackham, Six Pieds sous Terre, have proliferated. By 2006, Ratier lists over forty names of publishers in the category 'independent' (Ratier 2006: 6–7). Many of these were set up as associations which invited readers to subscribe, and some made use of loans from the Centre National du Livre. They use distributors who specialize in working with the alternative sector, such as Comptoir des Indépendants and Vertige Graphic (also a publisher in its own right). Van Hasselt of Fréon explained in 1999

that small publishers needed to work together to counteract the policy of the Fnac, which, he claimed, was interested only in albums which would quickly disappear from the shelves and was not prepared to promote more challenging alternatives (Van Hasselt 1999: 36).[44] At around the same time, Gauthey of Cornélius compared the Fnac to the 'slaughterhouse of La Villette' (Gauthey 2000: 34).

A paradoxical situation has, though, arisen in which a few authors emerging from the independent sector have become highly marketable, most notably Marjane Satrapi. The first volume of Satrapi's autobiographical *Persepolis*, recounting her childhood in Iran during the Islamic revolution, was published by L'Association in 2000 with a print run of 3,000. Three subsequent volumes appeared between 2001 and 2003, and the series as a whole has sold over 300,000 copies (Festraets 2005: 1).[45] The visibility of the independent sector has increased considerably though the media coverage given to Satrapi and to other 'stars' such as Joann Sfar, but the consequences have not all been positive for the small presses.

Inevitably, many independent-sector artists have been offered contracts by commercial publishers to produce albums, and often series, intended for a mainstream public. For example, Dargaud's *Poisson Pilote* series, including work by Trondheim, Sfar and others, was launched in 2000, with the express aim of restoring to the publisher, long since part of the Média Participations conglomerate, a little of the edginess that it had known in the glory days of *Pilote* (Martin 2004a: 35). Delcourt's *Donjon* series is co-ordinated by Trondheim and Sfar, and includes albums by numerous of their small-press colleagues. This development may not be of great concern to the independent sector, given that its artists need in any case to find an alternative means of supporting themselves. Indeed, Menu himself has contributed an album to *Donjon* (Menu and Sfar: 2001). Not all, though, have been prepared to make the compromises required by the mainstream. Vincent Vanoli, for example, details in *Brighton Report* (2005), published by Ego comme X, the cleaning and part-time teaching jobs that have enabled him to continue producing work for alternative publishers.

Another development is more threatening to the independents. A number of generalist publishers made their entry into the *bande dessinée* market with collections which copy the alternative-press format of black and white, smaller size, soft covers, and marketed as artistic, quality products, sold in bookshops rather than hypermarkets. This was the case of Autrement in 1994, Le Seuil in 1995 and Denoël Graphic (a Gallimard label) in 2003. In the late 1990s, mainstream *bande dessinée* publishers began to follow suit: Les Humanoïdes Associés launched *Tohu Bohu* in 1997, Delcourt produced *Encrages* in the same year, Dargaud launched *Roman BD* in 1998 (and then dropped it), and Casterman launched *Écritures* (under the editorship of Benoît Peeters) in 2003. Independent publishers have greeted these incursions onto their terrain with considerable indignation. Alagbé sees them as an attempt by the mainstream editors to kill the independents (Alagbé 2005: 68). Menu protests that these 'brands' ape the distinctive design features of L'Association in designing their 'auteur' collections and produce an inferior quality product (Menu 2005a: 35–37), while Gauthey gives the *bande dessinée* mainstream publishers the collective name Bédef, on the model of the Médef, the French employers' organization (Gauthey 2006: 191).

It remains to be seen whether the independent publishers will survive external, as well as some internal, pressures. David B. made a dramatic exit from the Association collective in 2005, amid rumours on *bande dessinée* websites about rancour and bitterness between himself and Menu. Meanwhile, Trondheim ruminated anxiously in *Desoeuvré* about the seeming inevitability of the downward trajectory of a *bande dessinée* artist's career as star artist becomes complacent hack and then has-been (Trondheim, 2005). For the publishing houses as for individual authors, the strategy has to be innovation. As Pichelin of the Requins Marteaux has said, 'If we keep moving and stay inventive, we've nothing to fear' (Festraets 2004: 3). It will perhaps be the smallest of the independents, with their low overheads, who will outwit the giants.

The following discussion of tendencies will include work from both the mainstream and the independent publishers, but, in order to give a sense of their distinctiveness, where a title is produced by an independent publisher, this will be briefly indicated in brackets within the text.

4.2 Tendencies

The best-seller lists have continued to be dominated by trolls, medieval dungeons and wizards' spell books, as well as by the more contemporary escapism of the Van Hamme-scripted series *XIII* and *Largo Winch*, which have by now become part of a merchandizing industry selling T-shirts and watches. The lists also testify to a nostalgic tendency represented by the *Blake and Mortimer* 'remakes' and by *Astérix: Le Ciel lui tombe sur la tête* sold two and a half million copies in 2005 (Ratier 2006: 8).

Outside the best-seller lists, other tendencies have flourished, and the concern for social and political issues which seemed muted in the *bande dessinée* of the 1980s returned in the 1990s, often in the form of reportage or biography, but also in fictional mode through a revisionist treatment of history which has sought to uncover some areas that had been repressed. Autobiography and diaries, mostly from the independent sector, have taken the medium into new areas of subjectivity, and the thematic of personal life has continued from the 1980s, through albums portraying not so much action as interaction in a contemporary, usually urban milieu. There was nonetheless still a place during this period for fiction which grew out of the revisiting and re-imagining of popular literary genres. In some cases, a new generation of auteurs reworked the codes and conventions of the *bandes dessinées* on which they had grown up, bringing adult sophistication.

4.2.1 Reportage

Reportage, in a fictional version, is an indelible part of the history of *bande dessinée*, having provided the pretext for Tintin to open up the world, as mapped out by the *ligne claire*, to his young readers in *bande dessinée*'s classic Franco-Belgian period. As a non-fictional genre, it became prominent in the 1990s through the work of the Maltese-American Joe Sacco, whose highly personal account of his stay in the occupied territories in Palestine was published in France in 1996. The potential of the genre has since been pursued by French-language artists.

The Québecois Guy Delisle produced *Shenzhen* in 2000 and *Pyongyang* in 2003 (L'Association), based on diaries that he kept when in China and North Korea respectively, working on behalf of a French company to supervise the production of animated cartoons, outsourced to the Far East. Delisle is not in any position of expertise in relation to the cultures which he encounters, but shares with the reader his scepticism about the official discourses which explain them. His drawing style is spare but eloquent: in Pyongyang, on an obligatory visit to the 22-metre-high bronze statue of Kim Il-Sung, he gives a sense of its gigantism for the onlooker, whilst at the same time dismantling it, and by implication the belief system that it symbolizes, by drawing the feet in the top panel of the page, the torso underneath, and, at the bottom of the page, the head and shoulders.

In *Garduno, en temps de paix* (2003) and *Zapata, en temps de guerre* (2004) (Les Requins Marteaux), Philippe Squarzoni offers a more didactic overview, seeking to make visible the violence and havoc wrought by globalization. He mixes images of his observations on the ground, in Bosnia in the first volume and Mexico in the second, with a collage of images taken from elsewhere, often from television news. He defamiliarizes them by obsessive repetition and juxtaposition, taking them out of the consensual discourses that they normally support. The fragment of an image of hands tied behind a back comes to represent the force on which the ultra-liberal world order is based, and the logo-style silhouette of Cortez's boat, used to publicize chocolate, stands for the genocide on which America and the wealth of Europe were founded.

The three volumes of *Le Photographe*, by Emmanuel Guibert, Didier Lefèvre and Frédéric Lemercier (2003–2006), are constructed from the photographs taken by Lefèvre when he accompanied a mission of Médecins sans Frontières travelling with a caravan of mujahideen into a distant region of Afghanistan in 1986, during the war with the Soviet Union. Almost twenty years later, Lefèvre worked with Guibert and Lemercier to compose a narrative account of the expedition through careful arrangement of his hundreds of contact prints. Drawings by Guibert fill in those moments or episodes that Lefèvrier was unable to film. Whereas Squarzoni's drawn versions of photographs interrogate the meanings that have accrued to familiar images, *Le Photographe* reads as documentary. Guibert's drawings borrow a referential effect from the presence of the photographs, whilst the elegant precision of the drawings enables a selective focus on the details of this crash course in Afghan culture undertaken by Lefèvre, whose disarmingly candid narrative voice-over accompanies the images.

In a continuation of her politically committed work of the 1970s and 1980s, Chantal Montellier produced a number of fictionalized reportages based on real events, setting them in their wider political context. *Les Damnés de Nanterre* (2005) uses a fictional reporter to investigate the case of 19-year-old Florence Rey, who, in 1994, with her lover Audry Maupin, was involved in a shooting which resulted in the death of three policemen, a taxi driver and Maupin himself. The photograph of Rey which circulated in the press became iconic, and the story was widely reported as an escapade inspired by Oliver Stone's film of that year, *Natural Born Killers*. Montellier's female detective, Chris Winckler, discovers the involvement

of the pair with an anarchist group which had been infiltrated by extreme right elements, accrediting the hypothesis that the pair may have been manipulated in order to justify a hardening of government policies on crime and security. *Tchernobyl mon amour* (2006), the title of which refers to Alain Resnais's 1959 film about Hiroshima, again uses the figure of Chris Winckler as the guiding thread for the reader, in an investigation of the causes of the 'greatest technological catastrophe of the twentieth century', the Chernobyl disaster of 1986, and the cover-up which followed it. Montellier emphasizes the extent of the latter by making both Chris and her informants subject to violent intimidation. The horror of the explosion itself and its aftermath is conveyed through images which submerge naïve peasant paintings and socialist-realist portrayals of idealized families and Soviet leaders with apocalyptic scenes of bodies with melting flesh.

4.2.2 Colonial history and postcolonial legacy

The traditional *bande dessinée* genre of history gained more complex forms from the 1990s. Baru and Thévenet's *Le Chemin de l'Amérique* (1990), set in the 1950s, chronicles the career of a fictional Algerian boxer, Saïd Boudiaf. There is no narrative voice-over for the first 41 pages, but the inter-frame space is sometimes occupied by letters from Boudiaf's brother, an FLN militant, allowing the rise-to-fame story to be invaded by the narrative of anti-colonial struggle. The fiction of the boxer's life collides with history when he disappears in Paris, along with many of his compatriots, on the night of 17th October 1961. In the last few pages a voice-over is introduced, speculating as to what might have become of Boudiaf, against images of the demonstration, its repression, and a close-up of a bloodstain on the banks of the Seine. As Kristin Ross has pointed out, the events of this night were the subject of a cover-up until the early 1990s (Ross 2002: 45). Baru and Thévenet's work may be seen, therefore, as part of a movement of contestation against official amnesia.

The work of Lax and Giroud has also displayed a concern to dispute official versions of history. Their two-volume *Les oubliés d'Annam* (1990–91) takes the form of a quest by a journalist to uncover the truth about a soldier who had 'disappeared' in Vietnam in 1947. The journalist finds out that the soldier had joined Ho Chi Minh's liberation forces, and had been tortured to death by a French officer. The framing narrative, in which this officer, now a high-ranking secret service officer, puts difficulties in the way of the journalist's investigation, mirrors the suppression of stories such as this from official histories. In their two-volume *Azrayen* (1998–99), the same authors tackle the subject of the Algerian war and the bloody reality of the 'peace-keeping operation' as it was carried out by one unit in the Kabyle mountains. The Berber characters speak in their own language, with French translations at the bottom of the frame, a symbol of the authors' desire to move outside the accredited version of events.

In *Celui qui mène les fleuves à la mer* (1997), the Swiss artist Cosey revived his *Jonathan* series after an eleven-year gap, in order to highlight the continuing brutality of the Chinese military occupation of Tibet. The series, which had begun in 1977, features a hero who travels not for the sake of adventure, but in order to immerse himself in Tibetan religion and culture. Tibet has, of course, long been the mythical landscape onto which westerners have projected a desire for self-discovery, but Jonathan's spiritual quest is associated with a polemical

project, as Cosey alerts his readers to the enforced suppression of Tibetan language and culture. Cosey's characteristically fragmented narrative nonetheless allows of some moral complexity in the portrayal of the Chinese, particularly through the character of a young Chinese woman army officer who supports the régime but serves as muse to a dissident poet.

In Jean-Philippe Stassen's *Déogratias* (2000), set in Rwanda, there is no narrative voice-over, and the reader's point of identification becomes the eponymous main character, a young Hutu man. The apparent naïvety of Stassen's graphic line only adds to the unrelenting horror of the story that unfolds. It gradually becomes clear that recurring images of Déogratias as a dog correspond to the character's own psychotic hallucination. At the end of a series of flashbacks from the time of the genocide, the reader discovers that, under threat of death, Déogratias had participated in the rape and murder of his Tutsi girlfriend and her family, and watched a dog devour their bodies. Other uncomfortable details emerge, including the responsibility of ex-colonial powers in stirring up hatred subsequently attributed to 'tribalism', the failure of European NGOs to take their Tutsi employees with them as they fled, the role of French troops in protecting the escape of the killers, and the indifference of the European media, more concerned to report the 'war' between Charles and Diana.

Two artists from La Réunion, Huo-Chao-Si and Appollo, produced *La Grippe Coloniale* in 2003. At the end of the First World War, four soldiers from different milieux (sketched with a certain caricatural expressiveness), return to La Réunion and find a colonial society (drawn in careful detail), unchanged in its rigidity. The black hero of Verdun is savagely beaten by the police when he applies for a job with them. The island cannot escape an epidemic of Spanish flu, however, brought over in the ballast of the ship. A page showing the panic-stricken flight of the population into the interior of the island splits the horizontal line of Réunionnais, in cars, in trucks, in donkey carts and on foot, into vertical panels displaying its social and racial hierarchy. Only the wealthy are allowed to pass a police checkpoint.

A number of other albums produced over the same period are set in contemporary France, and focus on the legacy of colonialism. These include work by Boudjellal, Khélif and Larcenet which will be discussed in Chapter 9.

4.2.3 Social satire

The current of social satire has been as strong as ever since the 1990s. Goossens continued to demolish the 'terrifying banality' (Frémion 1997: 115) of platitudinous discourses of expertise, particularly as exemplified by television cultural programmes. In the three volumes of *Georges et Louis Romanciers* (1993–97), Louis produces projects for television or cinema, as Georges lectures him, and the reader, on successful plot construction. Goossens abandons the narration to the flawed optic of his two dim and elderly protagonists, whose collection of received ideas rivals that of Flaubert's Bouvard and Pécuchet.

A preoccupation with the formulaic nature and narcotic effects of television was also in evidence in the work of Fred's *L'histoire du conteur électrique* (1995), which is particularly scathing about the obsession with viewing figures of the directors of 'Canal Moi' (The Me

Channel). The target of *L'histoire du corbac aux baskets* (1993) is psychiatry. It is the story of a man who, having woken up and found that he has become a crow, visits his psychiatrist. The latter takes copious notes but remains obtusely oblivious to his patient's anguish and attributes his problems to his insistence on wearing trainers, urging conformity with dress codes as the solution. The man's disturbing experience of having his metamorphosis dismissed so summarily is heightened by Fred's virtuosity in mixing diegetic worlds: the psychiatrist turns up unexpectedly, professional discourse intact, inside a dream that the patient is recounting to him, and advises him to visit a psychiatrist.

Pétillon's *L'Enquête corse* (2000) waded into the hugely sensitive area of Corsican politics in the year following the prefect's arrest for complicity in an arson attack, by sending the inept detective Jack Palmer to the island to try to contact a certain Ange Léoni with news of an inheritance. Since Léoni is also sought by rival independence-supporting organizations and by rival police forces, Palmer's quest is the pretext for a string of gags. Much of the humour arises out of the matter-of-fact attitude of the islanders: a phlegmatic passer-by shows his expertise in estimating the weight of bombs from the sound of the explosion, and a weary secretary, opening the post, drops a miniature coffin into a drawer already full of other miniature coffins. Pétillon's satire did not spare the French government or the justice system, however, and the album was particularly successful in Corsica (Pétillon 2001: 42).

De Crécy and Chaumont's savage satire of the new bourgeoisie, the *Léon la Came* trilogy (1995–8), along with Dupuy and Berberian's more empathetic take on the anxieties of the contemporary urban male in their series *Monsieur Jean* (from 1991), and the continuing saga of the Bidochons, will be discussed in Chapter 10 in relation to social class and masculinity. .

4.2.4 Autobiography

The fascination with daily life that had been a strong current in the 1980s tended in the 1990s to take a more subjective turn. Autobiography was a major focus for the independent publishers L'Association and Ego comme X. Baudoin, an early practitioner of the genre, continued in introspective vein in the 1990s, when much of his work was produced for L'Association. He has said that for him the past and present are the same: the past seems to be undigested, and he uses the act of drawing to try to understand it (Baudoin 1996a: 74). In *Terrains vagues* (1996b) (L'Association), pages drawn with a pen from his sketch pad are overlaid, Magritte-like, onto the 'reality', painted in brush-strokes, that they represent, suggesting the struggle to give artistic form to that reality.

The work of David B deals specifically with his childhood and adolescence in the six volumes of *L'Ascension du haut mal* (1996–2003) (L'Association), but his imaginary embraces the whole twentieth century and part of the nineteenth, including colonial and world wars, through the lives of his grandparents. David B's childhood was dominated by his older brother's epilepsy and his parents' increasingly desperate attempts to find some treatment for his condition, from doctors to gurus and therapeutic communities. Subjectivity breaks through into representations of external reality as the narrator's turmoil is figured by nightmares in which typhoons or demons invade his bedroom, or by the biblical or historical battle scenes

which he draws obsessively. The absence of perspective in David B's graphic style recalls medieval imagery, and the black backgrounds and intricate symbols arising out of his intense reading of *fantastique* and occult texts give it an esoteric feel. The sources upon which other authors draw to produce heroic fantasy, the most escapist of *bande dessinée* genres, are represented here as elements of an inner life. Marjane Satrapi has acknowledged David B's influence on her work (Satrapi 2002b: 2).

Other artists produced journals rather than retrospective accounts, although the journal format allows for the inclusion of memories. Fabrice Neaud uses a hyperrealist style in the four volumes of his *Journal* (1996–2003) (Ego comme X), which offer an almost forensic portrayal of life in an averagely homophobic small French town. This does not preclude the use of metaphors such as the 'no entry' sign which indicates the limits of hypocritical liberal 'tolerance', or subjective images like the whirling dancers who convey the ecstatic pleasure of a long conversation with Doumé, the object of his unrequited passion in the third album. More subtly, the space between the frames is used to convey emotion through an expanse of whiteness or by faint spatters of ink. Neaud repeatedly portrays himself within the diegesis, but he also makes considerable use of narrative voice-over, a vehicle for passionately expressed views about an unacceptable social and moral order, and for meditation on the process of representation in *bande dessinée*. At the same time, ethical issues around the supposed referentiality of the journal format are raised, as certain of his subjects object to his portrayal of them.

Joann Sfar has produced a series of five journals between 2002 and 2005 (L'Association), of which the format resembles a sketchbook more than a *bande dessinée*, as mostly unframed drawings of family and friends, especially fellow artist and collaborator Trondheim, are set alongside lengthy handwritten texts whose content ranges over personal, artistic and political topics, including the situation of Jews in France. The first volume focuses on Sfar's attempts to learn the harmonica, and, like all of his work, gives an impression of effortless virtuosity, as drawings of his entourage flow from his pen, accompanied by an informed and witty verbal commentary. However, on the second last page the tone suddenly changes as he reflects on the fact that his obsessive need to reassure his small daughter can be traced to the loss of his own mother when he was three and a half years old. Here Sfar returns to a *bande dessinée* format, the frames seemingly acting as a container for his childhood anxieties, a function suggested by the psychoanalyst Serge Tisseron,[46] as the journal leaves the sphere of Sfar's socialized adult self to plunge into something far more intimate.

More diaries will be discussed in Chapters 12 and 13: Dupuy and Berberian's *Journal d'un album* (1994) (L'Association), which recounts the writing of one of their *Monsieur Jean* albums, Trondheim's self-castigating *Approximativement* (1995) (Cornélius) and Menu's portrayal of the tensions of family life in *Livret de Phamille* (1995) (L'Association). All of these give insights into the independent *bande dessinée* milieu, and owe part of their fascination to the fact that the diarists are all featured in each other's diaries. The Québecoise artist Julie Doucet has also used the diary format extensively to chronicle her inner and outer life, and her work will also be discussed in Chapter 13, with that of Satrapi.

4.2.5 Biography

Biography is a genre that predates autobiography in *bande dessinée* by many years. Children's magazines of the classic Franco-Belgian period regularly featured uplifting accounts of the lives of exemplary Catholic figures, most famously Jijé's *Don Bosco*, which began in 1941. The parents of Étienne Davodeau, whose lives he recounts in *Les Mauvaises gens* (2005), were born into a working-class, deeply conservative Catholic milieu in 1942, and their trajectory from docile obedience to political militancy may be seen as equally exemplary. After a radical young priest arrives in their village in the Vendée at the end of the 1950s, Marie-Jo, a factory worker and Maurice, a mechanic, become involved in a Catholic youth organization and then in trade union activity through the CFDT. They go on to join Mitterrand's newly formed Socialist Party in 1971. The album offers a chronicle of class struggle in post-war France, as it was experienced through the developing political consciousness of two people, translated into images by a third, their son. The time frame of the events recounted never catches up with that of their telling, however, as the story ends on the election of Mitterrand in 1981. The hindsight that the narrator, and the readers, bring to their comment 'That's it, the hardest part is behind us' does not diminish his, or our, respect for their aspirations.

The artist Pascin, the subject of Sfar's biography (1997–2002) (L'Association),[47] is exemplary in a diametrically opposed way, a 'peintre maudit' of the early twentieth century, habitué of Parisian bars and brothels, who provoked scandal with his highly sensual portrayals of naked women. Sfar does not set out to offer a factually accurate account but uses Pascin's life as a point of departure for a series of scenes which show him at work, and in bed, with his models, and in conversation with other painters including Chagall and Soutine, like him Jewish émigrés from Eastern Europe. Subjects which recur elsewhere in Sfar's own work are raised: the influence of childhood, and in particular a Jewish upbringing, on creative work, and the problem of approaching drawing from a model. Jean-Philippe Martin suggests that 'With Pascin, Sfar has invented biography as autobiography' (Martin 2004b: 106). Along with Sfar's own fantasized identification with Pascin, there is arguably a certain romanticized identification of the milieu of independent *bande dessinée* with that of the whole group of painters: in the field of painting, marginality can be seen not only as vibrant and Bohemian, but as a recognized pathway to symbolic consecration.

The subject of David Vandermeulen's *Fritz Haber* (2005)[48] is both exemplary and tragic. Haber, a German Jew born in 1868, won the Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1918, in spite of the anti-semitism that dominated the academic establishment. This success had a price, though: Haber's huge ambition and desire to assimilate into German society led him to convert to Protestantism, a conversion of which he remained intensely ashamed. Moreover, his life-saving work on ammonia for fertilizers also enabled the production of the poison gas used by the Germans in World War I. Vandermeulen works in sepia-tinted watercolour washes, suggestive of photographs from the period. Dialogue appears in white typescript across the bottom of each panel, evoking filmic subtitles, and the narrative voice-over boxes have the format of silent film scene caption cards. Documentary realism is nonetheless eschewed in favour of shadows, blurred outlines and angles which convey Haber's inner torment.

4.2.6 The return of fiction

A current which contrasts with autobiography, biography and reportage has been in evidence since the 1990s in the work of authors from both the independent and mainstream sectors: a renewal of fiction. This has involved in some cases the resurgence of subject matter which draws on popular fictional sources, allowing for the inclusion of *fantastique* elements.

Édith and Yann's 1992 *Jack*, set in nineteenth-century London, has an exuberant tone, accentuated by the scribbled look of the graphic line, and an irreverent approach to its subject matter. Dickens makes an appearance, researching the slum areas to give authenticity to his novels, but quickly withdraws: 'I've seen enough...I'll just make the rest up' (Édith and Yann 1992:11). The stereotypes of the Victorian potboiler are inventively reinterpreted: Jack the Ripper turns out to be in the pay of Queen Victoria, who wishes to be rid of the prostitutes who are blackmailing her licentious son. The album has been described as a 'synthesis between trash modernism and the Franco-Belgian tradition' (Dejasse 2003: 67).

Dumontheuil's *Qui a tué l'idiot?* (1996) is a black comedy dealing with the arrival in a village of a naïve actor who becomes increasingly aware of the ever darker and crueller secrets of the inhabitants. The album is set in 1906, but, apart from the odd car, the village seems almost medieval with its overhanging gabled buildings and unpaved streets. Dumontheuil creates the atmosphere of a grotesque fairy tale, as a series of murders take place and the hapless outsider is lined up both as convenient culprit and as victim. When he fails to be credible in either role, a solution of mathematical perfection and complete cynicism is reached, as each villager, from innkeeper to local notable, confesses to the murder of one other villager, and, with equilibrium restored, 'normality' resumes.

Christophe Blain's *Isaac le pirate* (five volumes between 2001 and 2005) is similarly dark. It has an eighteenth-century setting and does not deny readers exotic locations, elegantly drawn, or novelettish elements: the departure of the ambitious young hero as official artist on a ship which is overtaken by pirates, the seduction of his fiancée, left behind, by a handsome aristocrat, tropical islands where the wives of the colonial administrators are bored and alluring. Blain is careless towards genre norms, however, letting apparently key characters die off or abandon their quest, preferring to focus on the portrayal of violent emotions and physical sensations, including fear, hunger, extreme cold and sexual desire, where the sobriety of colours gives way to a more intense and sometimes lurid tonality. Action sequences abound, but they are punctuated by conversations which range over money, impotence, jealousy and death.

4.2.7 Series and heroes: bande dessinée genres reworked

The wooing of independent-sector artists by the mainstream has resulted in series which have a knowing take on the *bande dessinée* genres with which the new generation grew up. Trondheim's nine-volume *Lapinot* series, published in Dargaud's *Poisson Pilote* collection, has a recurring cast of characters depicted as animals, including the somewhat reserved and reflective eponymous rabbit. The action usually has a contemporary setting but is sometimes transposed into an environment such as a Western frontier town or the *fantastique* dinosaur-

infested Paris of the Belle Époque familiar to readers of Tardi's *Adèle Blanc-Sec* series. The humour which arises out of the characters' anxieties, irritation or jubilant competitiveness as they carry on their everyday or genre-determined activities does not preclude the posing of the larger, unanswerable questions prefigured in *Slaloms* (1997a)[49] when Pierrot recites the opening phrase of Kant's 'Critique of pure reason'. In the eighth album, *La Vie comme elle vient* (2004a), Lapinot, uncharacteristically for the hero of a *bande dessinée* series, dies. The character is, though, resurrected in *L'Accélérateur atomique*, published in 2003, but numbered nine in the series and, therefore, situated after the hero's death. Lapinot gets to wear the uniform of Franquin's Spirou and so, as Bart Beaty points out, ultimately escapes temporality in keeping with his status as 'the symbol of the improbable meeting of the independent sensibility and Dargaud's "industrial" production' (Beaty 2004: 110).

The heroic fantasy series *Donjon*, orchestrated by Sfar and Trondheim (from 1998), seems set for unlimited expansion as different artists bring their own graphic style to different stages of the evolution of the medieval castle and its warriors, magicians and complex bestiary. The earliest volumes, produced by the Sfar-Trondheim duo, grouped together as *Donjon Zénith*, recast the genre in the mode of neurotic comedy. In *Coeur de Canard* (Sfar and Trondheim 1998), the literate duck, Herbert de Vaucanson, guardian of the castle, refuses to undertake the initiation rites that the sword of destiny commands, preferring, for example, to destabilize the hooded soul-eaters by criticizing their taste in interior design. Other sub-series bring in other artists to explore both the distant future and the past of the castle, and to develop storylines around some of the secondary characters. Trondheim has claimed that the aim is not to parody the genre but to use it to create a credible world (Trondheim 2001a:3). The enterprise seems to be neither a sell-out to the mainstream nor a Trojan horse aiming to mount an attack on a key mainstream genre or on the notion of series itself. This 'weird and wild project' (Beaty 2002: 51) may be taken as evidence that that the most adolescent of genres can grow up, or perhaps that independent sector artists have not quite left their own adolescence behind them.

4.3 Cultural legitimization

The field of *bande dessinée* production was radically restructured by the arrival of the independent sector, and this was the major factor affecting the status of the medium as from the 1990s. At the same time, moves towards institutionalization that had been initiated from outside the field continued and were in some cases accelerated by this development. The medium continued to be dogged by problems with censorship, however, and the 'Commission de censure de la loi 1949 sur les publications destinées à la jeunesse' still met regularly. Mangas were a particular cause for concern for the commission, but other publishers were not spared: Riad Sattouf recounts his interview by the police in relation to the 'negative image of the father' portrayed in *Ma Circoncision* (2004) (Sattouf 2006).

4.3.1 Institutionalization and the notion of heritage

The 1990s opened with the inauguration of the Centre National de la Bande Dessinée et de l'Image, which includes a copyright library for French *bande dessinée* production as well as exhibition space. A permanent exhibition was devoted to the history of the medium, although

this has been closed since 1999, pending the rehousing of the museum section of the Centre. Temporary exhibitions have been devoted to a range of artists, including Americans such as George Herriman and Robert Crumb, and the representation of French *bande dessinée* has covered a wide spectrum from Astérix to OuBaPo. One particular legitimizing strategy has been based on an assertion of the European heritage of the medium through exhibitions on Töpffer and Caran d'Ache, artists who 'antedate the historical separation between high and mass culture', like Fredric Jameson's examples of Balzac or Molière, and so may be held to transcend it (Jameson 1992: 15). This strategy was pursued with the exhibition *Maîtres de la bande dessinée européenne*, curated by Groensteen, which opened at the Bibliothèque François Mitterrand in 2000 before moving to the CNBDI in 2001, in which the inclusion of nineteenth-century artists from across Europe associates their twentieth-century descendents with their aura (see Groensteen 2000b).

The CNBDI also has a publishing policy. In 1996, it launched an annual theoretical journal, *9e art*, with a print run of 1,000 and, until 2007, edited by Groensteen.[50] The journal encompasses work from all periods, from the ancestors, both European and American, to current work of artistic interest, often, although not exclusively, from the independent sector, and has included coverage of mangas. Since 2006 it has been jointly published by the CNBDI and Groensteen's own publishing house, Editions de l'an 2, and has incorporated original work by artists as well as theoretical articles.

In spite of the legitimizing impact of the CNBDI's very existence, the decision to site it in Angoulême may not, with hindsight, have been a good strategic choice. Groensteen, who, for eight years until 2001, was director of the museum housed in the Centre, argues that it is illogical to site a national centre in a small town, cut off from the milieu of the mainly Paris-based artists and which is, moreover, hardly a hub for tourists. Groensteen gives a figure of 50,000 visitors a year, a third of whom come during the week of the Festival (Groensteen 2006: 140). The Centre and the Festival have, moreover, no direct connection, and, according to Groensteen, maintain an uneasy relationship (Groensteen 2006: 148). The far-flung location of the CNBDI may be compared with the geographical and, consequently, cultural, centrality of the Centre Belge de la Bande Dessinée in Brussels, which attracts almost five times as many visitors as its French counterpart. Its director, Charles Dierick, quotes a figure of 240,000 (Dierick 2000: 114).

The CNBDI is, however, about to undertake a modest expansion, when the museum will move to a new site across the river which is due to open in 2009. Jean-Marie Compte, appointed director of the CNBDI in 2005, sees it as having an influence which resonates both nationally and internationally (Compte 2006). Compte's bullish declarations on taking up the post can be usefully set alongside the comparison drawn by his predecessor, André-Marc Delocque-Fourcault, between the annual state funding allocated to *bande dessinée* (4.5 million euros, which includes a majority share of the running costs of the CNBDI and a subsidy to the Angoulême festival) and to French cinema (450 million euros) (Brethes 2003: 20).

4.3.2 Academic and critical discourses

Academic work on *bande dessinée* since the 1990s in France and Belgium has continued to investigate the signifying practices of *bande dessinée*, but has avoided dependency on a linguistic model. In *Pour une lecture moderne de la bande dessinée* (1993), Belgian academics Jan Baetens and Pascal Lefèvre carry out close readings of a corpus of seven albums, identifying both conventions and instances of their transgression. In some cases it is departures from the norm in experimental albums which suggest tendencies that may also be at work, less flagrantly, elsewhere. Groensteen's *Système de la bande dessinée* (1999) is an adaptation of his doctoral thesis, and is published by a university press, the highly prestigious Presses Universitaires de France. It sets out to define the visual codes which govern the articulation of the medium. From outside the university, cultural critic Peeters's *Case, Planche, Récit* (1991, revised in 1998) investigates the formal resources that the medium is able to deploy in the service of narrativity. *Understanding Comics*, by the American comic strip artist and theorist Scott McCloud, which uses a comic strip format to analyse formal aspects of the medium, was published in America in 1993 and appeared in French translation in the same year. Insights from all of these works will be taken up in Chapter 5.

Other theoretical work emerged from *bande dessinée* journals which, lacking the institutional backing of *9e art*, failed to survive. *Critix*, which included metatheoretical articles assessing critical tendencies as well as articles on more general artistic or institutional aspects of the medium, first appeared in 1996, and maintained a print run of 150 until its twelfth and final edition in 2001, after which it folded, 'having run out of troops' (Blanchet 2001: 3). *L'Indispensable*, which began publication in 1998, with number 0, ceased publication after its fifth volume (number 4) in 1999, in spite of some financial support from the *Centre National du Livre*. However, L'Association launched its critical journal, *L'Éprouvette*, in 2006, and in the same year the team responsible for *Critix* regrouped to produce the first edition of *Bananas*.

Bande dessinée had first appeared in academic discourse in Britain in the 1980s, through an article by Hugh Starkey in 1987, '*Bande dessinée*: the state of the ninth art in 1986', followed three years later by 'Is the BD "à bout de souffle"?', as Starkey noted the increasingly stifling embrace of mainstream publishers. Since then, it has been the subject of a growing number of articles from anglophone academics which have tended most often to situate the medium in relation to debates around culture and identity. Significantly, academic presses have recently begun to publish books on *bande dessinée*. In Britain, *bande dessinée* historian Laurence Grove has produced *Text/Image Mosaics in French Culture: Emblems and Comic Strips* (2005), and Matthew Screech has written on key artists of the 1960s and 1970s in *Masters of the Ninth Art* (2005). Canadian academic Bart Beaty has written on the restructuring of the field by independent publishers in *Unpopular Culture: Transforming the European Comic Book in the 1990s* (2007).

4.3.3 Position-taking and the question of an avant-garde

It is clear that the artists who set up small publishing houses in the1990s were very consciously taking up a position in the field of *bande dessinée* production that differentiated

them from the commercial sector. They have sought to make their work immediately distinctive from the mainstream output by eschewing the standard hard-covered, full-colour 48-page format, and by adopting a certain sobriety of design. The fact that mainstream publishers have been moved to borrow an independent-sector format in order to market some of their own albums as having an independent-sector aesthetic and thematic serves only to emphasis the extent to which the cultural field has been restructured.[51]

The sense that independent sector *bande dessinée* artists are producing works of art rather than products has been further reinforced by their inclusion of subject matter and reference systems which relate to 'legitimate' art forms, such as Sfar's biography of Pascin. Menu uses the peritext of one of his own books, *Gnognottes*, to associate the writers Alfred Jarry and Benjamin Péret with his work through a dedication which thanks them for their 'involontary contribution' (Menu 1999: 2). The reference to these two artists suggests that Menu is not merely asserting his work as an artistic practice, but as an avant-garde artistic practice. In 2005, Menu explicitly stated in *Plates-bandes* that L'Association positioned itself as an avant-garde (Menu 2005: 12), and he went on to elaborate his argument in an article in *L'Éprouvette* the following year. Menu is clearly aware that in a postmodern climate, the high-cultural notion of an avant-garde may be regarded as obsolete,[52] but, like the advocacy of 'modern' work by the Cerisy participants, it has strategic importance in a medium whose artistic history is not only short, but is often recounted simply as the history of its commercial successes. Menu argues that *bande dessinée* is the only art form in which it is still possible for an avant-garde to arise. This is because it has only recently established its specificity and escaped from discourses which imprisoned it within a commercial logic, with the exception of a few instances of 'Ultracriticism', like *STP* or *Controverse* (Menu 2006: 174; 180).

There is a difficulty in applying the term 'avant-garde' to L'Association, however. For Bourdieu, the question of an avant-garde involves a particular type of position-taking. He discusses it in the context of a struggle between artistic generations, as the orthodoxy of those who are currently consecrated and dominate the field will be contested by a group of newcomers (Bourdieu 1993: 52–55). Bourdieu's definition of avant-garde implies, then, position-taking within an already-existing field, and the application of the term 'avant-garde' to L'Association and others would imply that they had displaced a previous generation of consecrated artists.

It is here that a complication arises, since the *bande dessinée* that Menu is intent on challenging has been consecrated essentially by the marketplace. The previous generation were operating in a field of *bande dessinée* production with scant autonomy from the economic field. With little symbolic capital to be had, they tended to downplay its importance and valorize their own ability to achieve commercial success. These are the terms in which the 'consecrated ancestors' have conveyed their irritation at the lack of respect that they perceive from the independent sector artists. Bilal, for example, has declared his disappointment at the way in which his work has been dismissed by members of L'Association: 'Some of them have put me down in the media. [...] The problem is that I'm an auteur but I still get the sales figures' (Bilal 2004: 25). Tardi compares his own lack of pretension with the arrogance of the new generation: 'We didn't keep shouting "Look at us,

we're artists", like I'm sometimes depressed to hear today in interviews with kids who are just starting out' (Tardi 2005).

Menu's argument gets around this complication. He claims that an avant-garde may be seen not simply as rebelling against a previous artistic generation, but against a whole socio-political context. It is the current state of play in mainstream *bande dessinée* publishing, he suggests, which corresponds to the academicism against which previous literary and artistic avant-gardes have rebelled. Moving the medium onto new terrain, in defiance of those who hold power over it, constitutes a political gesture: just as non-figurative painting was held to be impossible before 1900, so, too, autobiography was held to be impossible in *bande dessinée* before 1990 (Menu 2006: 176).

For Menu, then, it is not a question of wresting symbolic capital from a previous generation. On the contrary, he retrospectively confers symbolic capital onto Forest, Mandryka and Moebius (admittedly, he fails to mention Bilal or Tardi), all of whom he sees as having begun the work of opening up the field, along with Robial, who had 'grafted a foreign body onto *bande dessinée*', and Bazooka, who had 'stirred up shit' (Menu 2006: 179) but who had never intended to establish and occupy their own territory. The Association collective, in contrast, have set up and defended an area of autonomous production, and their struggle is against the 'abject mercantile microcosm' which threatens to contaminate the artistic values that have been able to flourish on this new terrain (Menu 2006: 186). The adoption of the banner of avant-garde enables Menu to link this struggle to those fought out in the past by the surrealists, and to invoke the names not only of a few dissident *bande dessinée* artists from the 1970s, but of some prestigious cultural big hitters.

4.4 Conclusion

In 2006, the Grand Prix de la Ville d'Angoulême was awarded to Lewis Trondheim, who is emblematic of the crossover between the independent sector and the mainstream, which has worked most obviously to the benefit of the latter. Against this boundary-blurring tendency can be set the determination of the independent sector to defeat the attempts of the 'captains of the *bande dessinée* industry' (L'Association et al. 2005)[53] to promote 'BD' as a homogeneous consumer product. It seems that they may avoid the recuperation by the mainstream suffered by the 1970s generation, although, arguably, the mainstream has since then become more adept at re-inventing itself through collections with an 'alternative' look which is in itself a marketing strategy.

The virulence of the polemic through which the independent publishers continue to assert their existence testifies, though, to the still-uncertain cultural status of the medium. As its defenders wearily point out, in the fields of cinema and novel-publishing, the fact that restricted production co-exists with large-scale cultural production does not demote the former from the status of 'art'. Thierry Groensteen, theoretician, curator and, most recently, publisher, has spent over twenty years promoting the cause of *bande dessinée* as a medium which is capable of the very highest artistic achievement. He has done so through his work in setting up exhibitions, through a series of elegantly written and rigorously argued articles and books,

and through commissioning work from artists of ambition and distinction. It is significant that in 2006 he produced a book called *Bande dessinée, un object culturel non-identifié* (an unidentified cultural object). In this he enumerates, and refutes, a series of arguments which would see the medium as handicapped in its very essence (through the hybridity of text and image, for example) before setting out a detailed critique of attitudes and practices within the medium, often self-defeating, and of interventions by the state, frequently ill-conceived. Characteristically, he does not end on a defeatist note, and it would be inappropriate for Part one of this book to do so. Whatever clouds are on the horizon, it is surely the case that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, of all art forms, it is *bande dessinée* which has offered the most stunning demonstration of creativity.

Part Two

Analytical Frameworks

The following chapters offer frameworks of analysis for the formal features of the medium. In order not to detach those formal features from their capacity for producing meaning, each chapter takes a text, or, in the case of Chapter *7*, a series, as the case study from which most examples are drawn. These chapters aim to familiarize the reader with relevant terminology and concepts, so there is inevitably a certain amount of definition of terms. The aim is to provide theoretical tools which will facilitate analytical reading of this highly complex medium.

Chapter 5 begins by introducing the notion of code in relation to the study of cultural practices and goes on to explore the codes which account for narrative sequentiality, and those which regulate relations between texts and images. Chapter 6 draws on and adapts theories of narrative that have been applied to literature and cinema, in order to investigate narrative perspective and to consider the ways in which the presence of a narrating instance is manifested in *bande dessinée*. It is intended that this chapter should stimulate reflection on the potential of *bande dessinée* as a narrative art in comparison with literature and cinema. Chapter *7* considers some of the characteristics of postmodernist narratives, and exemplifies them in relation to *bande dessinée*, showing how its formal features make it particularly suited to address the questions posed by postmodernism.

Chapter 5

THE CODES AND FORMAL RESOURCES OF *BANDE DESSINÉE*

5.1 Introduction

As a visual narrative art, *bande dessinée* produces meaning out of images which are in a sequential relationship, and which co-exist with each other spatially, with or without text. The aim of this chapter is to introduce some terms and concepts which can be used to analyse the formal resources of the medium. Inevitably, different theorists have introduced different terms, and we will try to include many of those which occur in the existing critical literature. The chapter will begin with a brief introduction to semiology, before looking specifically at the resources of *bande dessinée* as a sequential art, and as an art which combines images and texts.

Baru's *L'Autoroute du soleil* (1995), henceforth *L'Autoroute*, will serve as the main source of examples in this chapter, although it will sometimes be supplemented with examples from elsewhere. This album, originally produced for a Japanese publisher, is a *bande dessinée* version of the 'road movie', and as such offers an *état des lieux*, or appraisal, of contemporary France. The two main characters, the charismatic Karim, who is of Algerian descent, and the hero-worshipping Alexandre, of Italian descent, witness the closing down of their local steelworks, symbolized by the demolition of the blast furnace, an event which signals the end of traditional male employment patterns in the north-east of France. After Karim has been caught by Dr Faurissier, a local extreme-right politician, sleeping with his wife, Karim and Alexandre take off on an odyssey across post-industrial France, including a high-rise estate in Lyon, marginalized and crisis-ridden, a Provençal village, falsely picturesque and inhabited only by an ageing hippy, and a lorry park, the site of an unexpected resurgence of working-class solidarity against the racism of the far right. Their journey takes in a brief stay in

a chateau, where a character called René Loiseau, a surname familiar to readers of *Tintin*, endures life with his wife, a Bianca Castafiore lookalike.

5.2 Semiology and semiotics

'Semiology', a term coined by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in 1916**,** means the science of signs. Saussure set out to account for the system, or code, underlying natural languages, but he expected that his model would be extended to other signifying systems, a challenge taken up by a number of French theorists, most famously Roland Barthes, in the 1960s. Semiology was then used in the 1970s and 1980s, by academics such as Fresnault-Deruelle and Masson, to investigate *bande dessinée* as a signifying practice: a practice which produces meaning through codes. Groensteen, more recently, has described his work as 'semiological in the broadest sense' (Groensteen 1999: 2). Since much theoretical work on *bande dessinée* takes for granted a familiarity with the semiological terminology generated in the 1960s, we begin by defining terms and looking at their relevance to *bande dessinée*. We will consider the notion of code in relation to verbal, cultural and visual signifying systems, the application of the terms 'metaphor' and 'metonymy' to visual narratives, and the application of a linguistic model to the analysis of narratives.

5.2.1 Saussure's linguistic model of the sign

Saussure refers to the code underlying a natural language as the *langue*, and to any individual use of the code by a speaker as *parole*. Meaning in language arises out of the combination of units at one level (sounds or letters), in themselves non-signifying, into units at a higher level. Thus, c+a+t (made up of three non-meaningful units) is read as 'cat', which does have meaning, and can be combined with other meaningful units, or 'signifiers', to form a sentence like 'My cat is hungry'. The signifier 'cat' corresponds to a 'signified', the mental representation of a cat. The real live cat that is sitting on your newspaper remains outside the linguistic system and is called the 'referent'. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary: there is no necessary relationship between this sequence of letters (or sounds) and the mental image of a four-legged furry animal with whiskers and a tail. Different languages have different words for it: indeed, given that French has two separate words for a male and female cat, it is clear that different languages divide the world up, or encode it, in different ways.

The code is based on both substitution and association. New words or sentences can be formed through substitution: b+a+t at word level or 'My cat is sleepy' at sentence level. Classes of units that can substitute for each other in the same context, and so exist in a state of virtual opposition (e.g. all the letters or sounds that can substitute for 'c' in front of a + t, and all the words that can substitute for 'sleepy' in the above sentence), are called 'paradigms'. Each unit associates with others at the same level to form units at a higher level, called 'syntagms'. The syntagm c+a+t forms the word 'cat', and the syntagm my + cat + is + hungry forms the sentence 'My cat is hungry'.

The importance of Saussure's contribution to linguistics is the acknowledgement that meaning is encoded: it is produced out of the differences between signifiers (cat/bat or

sleepy/hungry), not out of a relationship between a signifier and 'reality'. This insight would be taken up by theorists in other disciplines, including notably the philosopher Jacques Derrida, whose work we touch on in relation to postmodernist *bande dessinée* in Chapter 7, and the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, whose work we will use in Chapter 12.

5.2.2 The encoding of cultural meaning

Barthes used Saussure's model as the basis of an analysis of various cultural signifying systems, like clothes, which take their meaning from entering into paradigms (his example is the choice between a beret and a bowler hat) and which are combined in syntagms (a hat will be worn with a suit, shoes, etc.) (Barthes 1964b: 95). This kind of analysis is relevant to a discussion of the 'content' of *bande dessinée*. Elements within the fictional world that a *bande dessinée* constructs can be analysed in semiological terms, since if they are substituted for each other, there will be a change of cultural meaning. In *L'Autoroute*, clothes, hairstyles, accoutrements and cars, for example, are all encoded. In the course of the album, Karim will cut Alex's hair, and the resulting change is meaningful, as Alex appears less nerdish and more streetwise. Likewise, the old Renault 4L driven by the ageing hippy has a different cultural meaning from the vintage Facel Vega which Karim helps René Loiseau to restore.

5.2.3 Bande dessinée and codes of visual representation

Our concern in this chapter, though, is to analyse the formal resources of the medium. *Bande dessinée* produces meaning out of the articulation between discontinuous units, or 'panels'. Saussure's vocabulary is useful here: when we analyse the way in which articulation operates, we will be looking at the syntagmatic links between panels. This is a question that we will return to in section 5.3.1.2.

For the moment, for purposes of analysis, we will focus on the individual panel in order to consider the question of how an image produces meaning. Can a single image be said to be encoded? The linguistic model is not applicable here, for two reasons. Firstly, an image is not made up of discontinuous elements (the curves and lines which make up the drawing of a cat, for example, cannot be separated into units in the way that a word can be separated into letters, or a sentence into words).[54] Secondly, the relationship between an image as signifier (e.g. a drawing of a cat) and its signified (the mental representation of a cat) is not arbitrary, but works by resemblance.

The American philosopher Charles Peirce, who uses the term 'semiotics' rather than semiology, distinguishes arbitrary signs (such as those of language), from two other kinds of sign: the 'icon' and the 'index'. The icon works by similarity of form or configuration with its signified[55] (pictures and diagrams are both icons) and an index has an existential link with its signified: a symptom indicates an illness, for example (Ducrot and Todorov 1972: 115). The term 'index' will prove useful later in this chapter, in section 3.2.1., but for the moment it is iconic encoding that concerns us.

In a discussion relating to the difference between a photograph and a drawing, Barthes says that a photograph may appear to be a 'message without a code', since it does not transform

its object but reproduces it mechanically. He argues that a drawing is more obviously perceived as encoded, since it transposes its model, both by selecting out salient features, and by using codes of representation, which, he points out, are historically variable (such as those which determine the rendering of perspective). In addition, every artist will have his/her own style (Barthes 1964c: 46). One key dimension of visual style in *bande dessinée* is what the American comics theorist Scott McCloud has characterized as 'iconicity'. This can vary widely: some images exhibit almost photographic resemblance, and so appear not to be encoded, while others are far more schematic, using conventions such as dots for eyes. McCloud makes the point that levels of iconicity can vary within a single artist's work, within a single comic, and, indeed, within a single panel (McCloud 1993: 42–43). Such variation occurs across Baru's work, through *L'Autoroute* as a whole and in single panels. Backgrounds are drawn in meticulous detail as part of Baru's project of documenting post-industrial France, while characters are drawn in a sketchier expressionist style which emphasizes emotion.

Barthes's discussion does not only relate to the issue of resemblance. He identifies other cultural codes at work in the image, whether a photograph or a drawing. These concern choices in relation to framing, angle of vision and composition, all of which affect the perception of the image (Barthes 1964c: 46). These codes are, of course, all present in the *bande dessinée* image, but their effects are perceived not just at the level of a single image but in relation to surrounding images. They will be discussed below, in section 3.1.2.2.

5.2.4 Metonym and metaphor

These terms are drawn from literary studies but were applied to the visual arts by the linguist Roman Jakobson (Jakobson 1963: 62–63). A 'metonym' is a figure of speech based on association: Matignon, where the French prime minister lives, used to mean 'the French government', for example. In visual terms, metonymy operates by showing details out of which the viewer constructs a larger whole. The fragment of Faurissier's house shown by Baru, for example, conjures up a whole milieu of wealth and privilege (Baru 1995: 31) (Fig. 1). Metonymy is a mechanism of which *bande dessinée* makes much use: Fresnault-Deruelle has called the *bande dessinée* image a 'metonymic machine' (Fresnault-Deruelle 1999: 93). Certain metonyms have become conventional in *bande dessinée*, like 'figures of speech' in verbal language. The lines which indicate speed or the trajectory of an object were developed by Wilhelm Busch in the nineteenth century out of the lines in snow or water that he had previously used to indicate movement (Kunzle 1990: 351–355). Lines may, by extension, also indicate strong emotion: Baru expresses the fury of Faurissier by a jagged halo effect (Baru 1995: 91). Other metonyms include the beads of sweat which conventionally stand for fear or panic (Baru 1995: 71).

Signification may also employ 'metaphor', which works by substitution: the singer born Édith Gassion chose 'Piaf' (sparrow) as her stage name to suggest that she had the qualities of that bird. Such substitutions can also occur in a visual medium: when Milou is torn between duty and gluttony in *Tintin au Tibet*, these two abstractions are figured by two versions of Milou, dressed respectively as angel and devil, which appear on each side of him (Hergé 1960: 45). The more realist *L'Autoroute* does not employ substitution, but certain visual elements

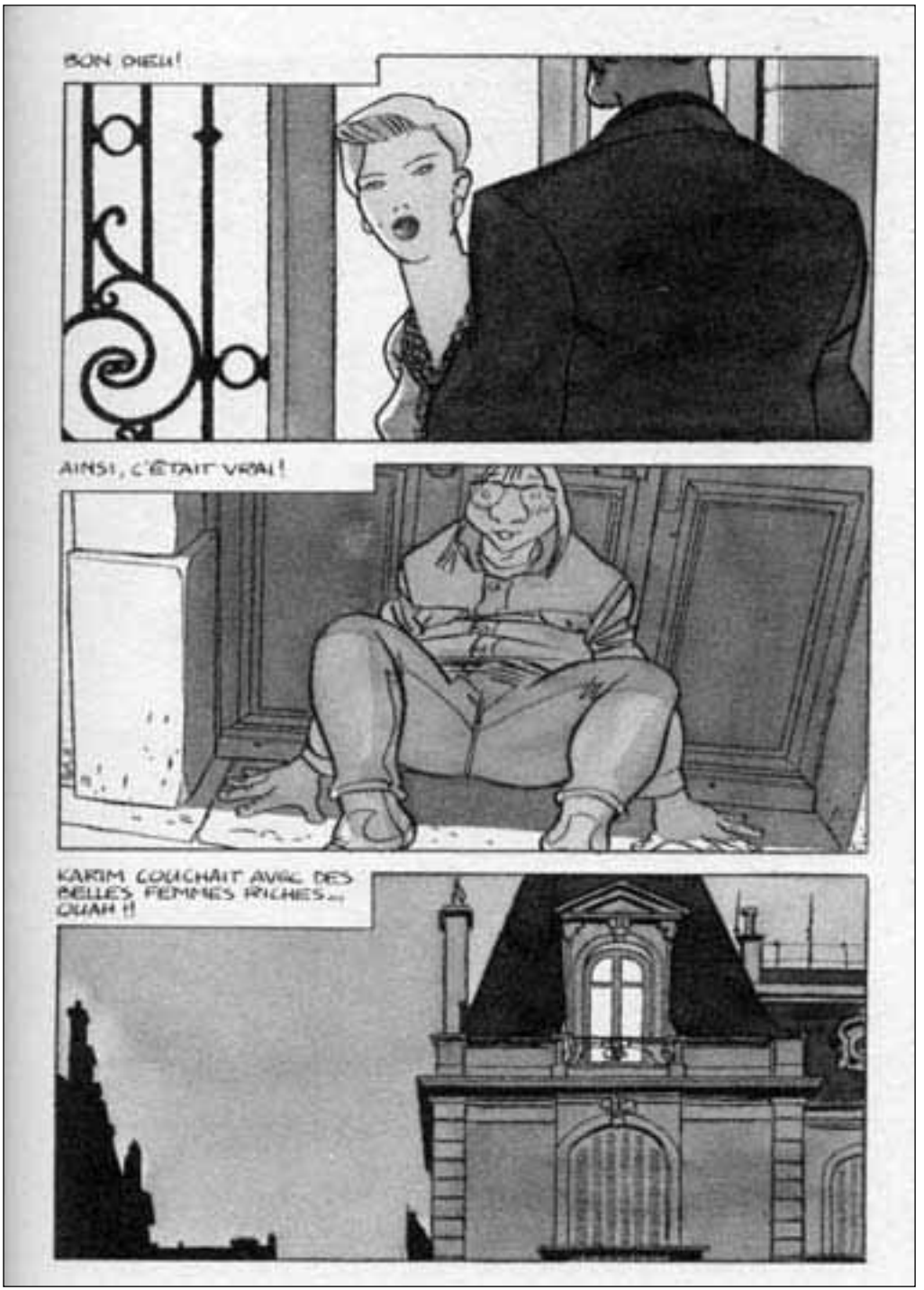


Figure 1. Baru (1995) *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, p. 31. © Baru.

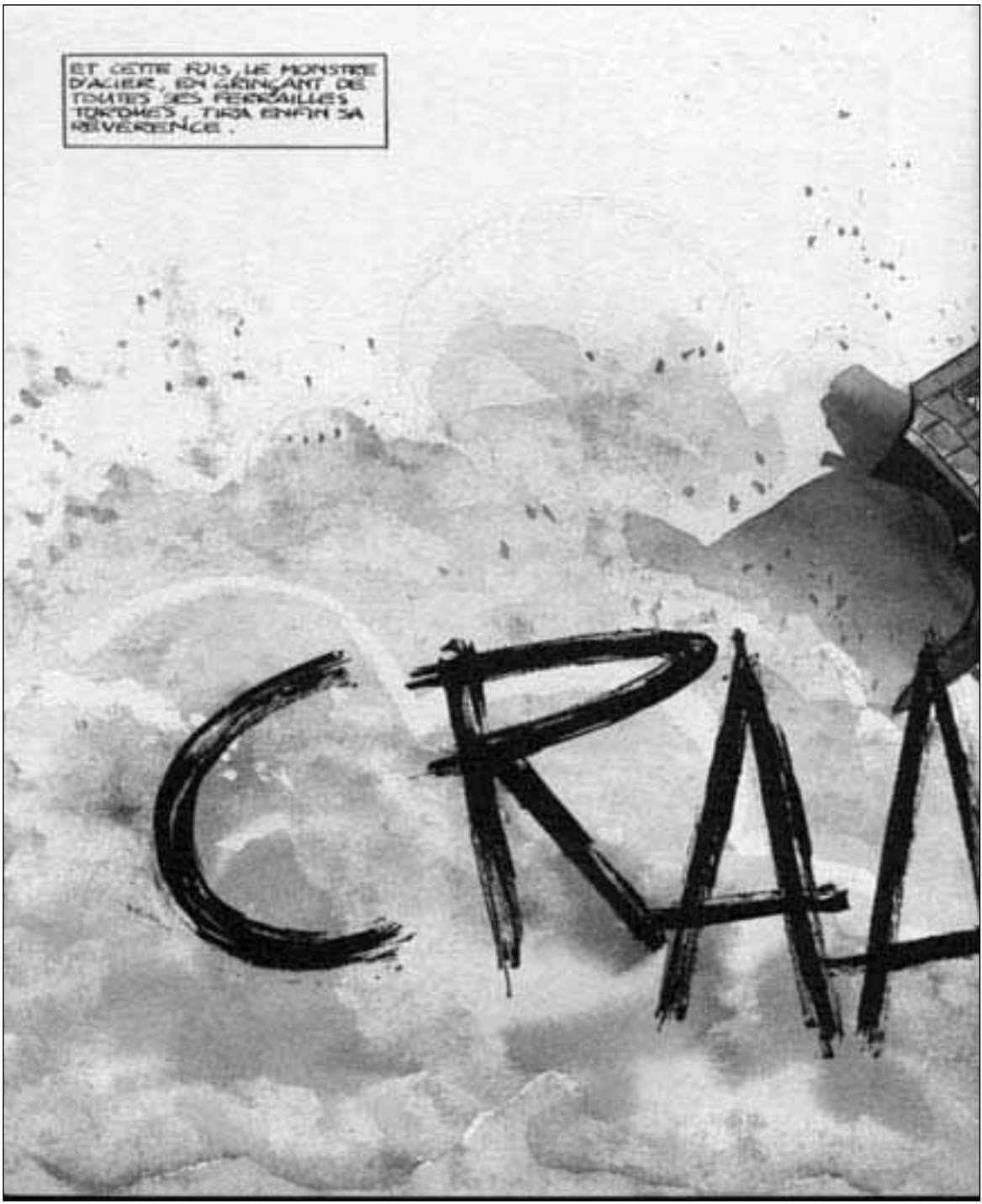
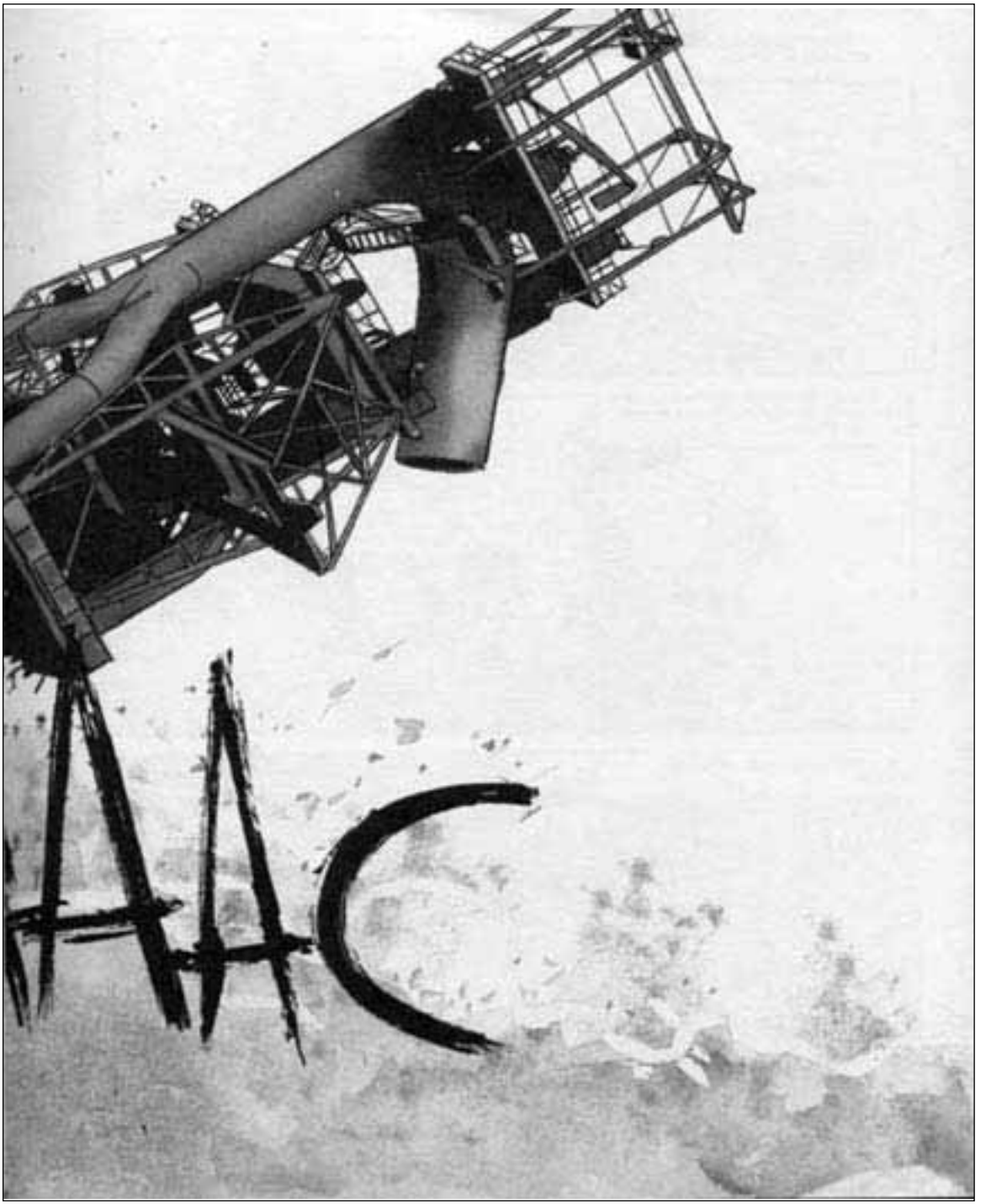


Figure 2. Baru (1995) *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, pp. 14–15. © Baru.



have a metaphoric resonance which overlays their narrative function: the image of the phallic-looking blast furnace being pulled down is a symbol of the loss of masculinity of the workforce that resulted from the demise of heavy industry (Baru 1995: 14–15) (Fig. 2). The medium as a whole relies on a number of conventional metaphors, such as the cloud-like shape of the speech balloons which represent thoughts.

5.2.5 Semiology and narrative structure

Semiologists also interested themselves in the question of narrative structure. Again, structural linguistics was used as a model. In 'L'analyse structural des récits', Barthes asks whether there is a common model which underlies all narratives. Is it possible, in other words, to describe the *langue* from which the *paroles* of individual stories are engendered? He uses as an example the model of 31 narrative functions proposed by Vladimir Propp in *Morphologie du conte russe* (1928), which form the skeleton of a story ('forbidding', 'transgression', 'difficult task' etc.). According to Propp, these functions are common from one story to another (although not all occur in every story) but are differently realized: what is forbidden may be a place, for example, or a meeting with a particular person (Barthes 1966: 1).

A. J. Greimas reduces the list of 31 functions proposed by Propp to three semantic axes (desire/quest, communication and help), in relation to which characters, or 'actants' in Greimas's term, take up positions derived from grammatical categories: subject/object, sender/receiver, helper/opponent (Greimas 1966: 45). Greimas's terms are helpful in the analysis of any narrative, since they enable the separation of the complexities of character psychology from the narrative roles that characters take up. (Will René Loiseau in *L'Autoroute* be a helper or an opponent?) They can also help to focus on basic questions: what is the object of the quest of Karim and Alex? We will pursue the question of narrative theory further in Chapter 6.

5.3 The resources of *bande dessinée*

We will discuss these under two main headings. We will first consider *bande dessinée* as a sequential art by looking at articulation. Secondly, we will look at *bande dessinée* as an art which may involve text and image.

5.3.1 Articulation: the three codes

The *bande dessinée* panel does not occur in isolation. Meaning is produced out of the relationships, both linear and non-linear, between panels. Groensteen has introduced the term 'arthrology' for the codes which govern the articulation of the medium, of which he enumerates three. The first concerns the spatial layout of panels on the page (*mise en page* in French), which Groensteen calls the 'spatio-topical' code. The second concerns the sequential, linear relationship between panels: Groensteen calls this the code of 'restricted arthrology'. The third concerns the way in which one panel may recall or prefigure other, spatially distant panels, through similarity of form or content. Groensteen refers to this type of relationship as *tressage*, and to the code which governs such associative links as the code of 'general arthrology' (Groensteen 1999: 25–27). We will discuss the three codes separately, although, in the process of reading, they operate simultaneously.

In an influential article from 1976, Fresnault-Deruelle asserts that there is a tension on the page between the first two of the dimensions outlined above. He claims that the linear reading of each panel, successively, as a 'scenographic cube', invested with fictional depth, will be disrupted by a simultaneous impression of the page as a tableau, a two-dimensional surface (Fresnault-Deruelle 1976: 20). We will see that the relationship between the linear, narrative function and the tabular, aesthetic, function continues to preoccupy theorists.

5.3.1.1 Mise en page *(Groensteen's 'spatio-topical' code)*

This term refers to the spatial configuration of panels on the page. Peeters introduces the term *périchamp* ('perifield') to emphasize a fundamental difference between *bande dessinée* and film. Where the filmic image enters into a spatial relationship only with the off-screen space cut off by the frame, the *bande dessinée* image will always be perceived simultaneously with other images. Each panel is, then, surrounded by its perifield (Peeters 1991: 15).

5.3.1.1.1 Size, shape and position of panels

The relationship between panels on the page is a function of their size, shape and position. The impact of variations in size can be demonstrated in *L'Autoroute*. When Karim and Alex get into the 1950s Chrysler, the increase in size of the second panel relative to the first emphasizes Alex's sense of exhilaration (Baru 1995: 123). *L'Autoroute* does not offer examples of the extreme variations in panel shape to be found in the work of artists such as Giraud, Andreas or Bourgeon, where circular frames or jagged edges may occur, but his occasional use of panels which are vertically rather than horizontally divided tends to increase the importance of the decors in relation to the characters (Baru 1995: 298–299).

The position of a panel relative to other panels allows for links over and above the linear narrative. A panel in *L'Autoroute* showing the elaborate pediment and tricolour-bedecked upper facade of the community centre owned by the now-defunct steelworks, crowns the page above a panel showing a ranting far-right orator, an implied judgement on the social policies which have abandoned the political ground to the far right (Baru 1995: 20) (Fig. 3). Certain positions on the page will tend to have more intrinsic narrative significance than others, most notably the bottom right-hand panel, which affords possibilities for suspense. Baru uses this site for a panel showing Faurissier's hand approaching the bedroom door, behind which his wife is committing adultery with Karim, thereby inciting the reader to turn the page (Baru 1995: 35) (Fig. 4).

5.3.1.1.2 Incrustation

Panels may also be superimposed on each other: one or more smaller panels may be positioned inside a larger one. This process is called 'incrustation'. Some artists, such as Cosey or Bourgeon, make much use of it to set a detail of a decor or a close-up view of a character against a wider view which is perceived simultaneously. Baru does not employ incrustation in *L'Autoroute*, preferring the device of a mirror within the fictional world to offer a second frame within the larger frame. This occurs, for example, where the threat represented by the wounded but doggedly determined Faurissier, seen in the lorry's wing mirror, is superimposed on the urban landscape (Baru 1995: 170).

Figure 3. Baru (1995) *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, p. 20. © Baru.

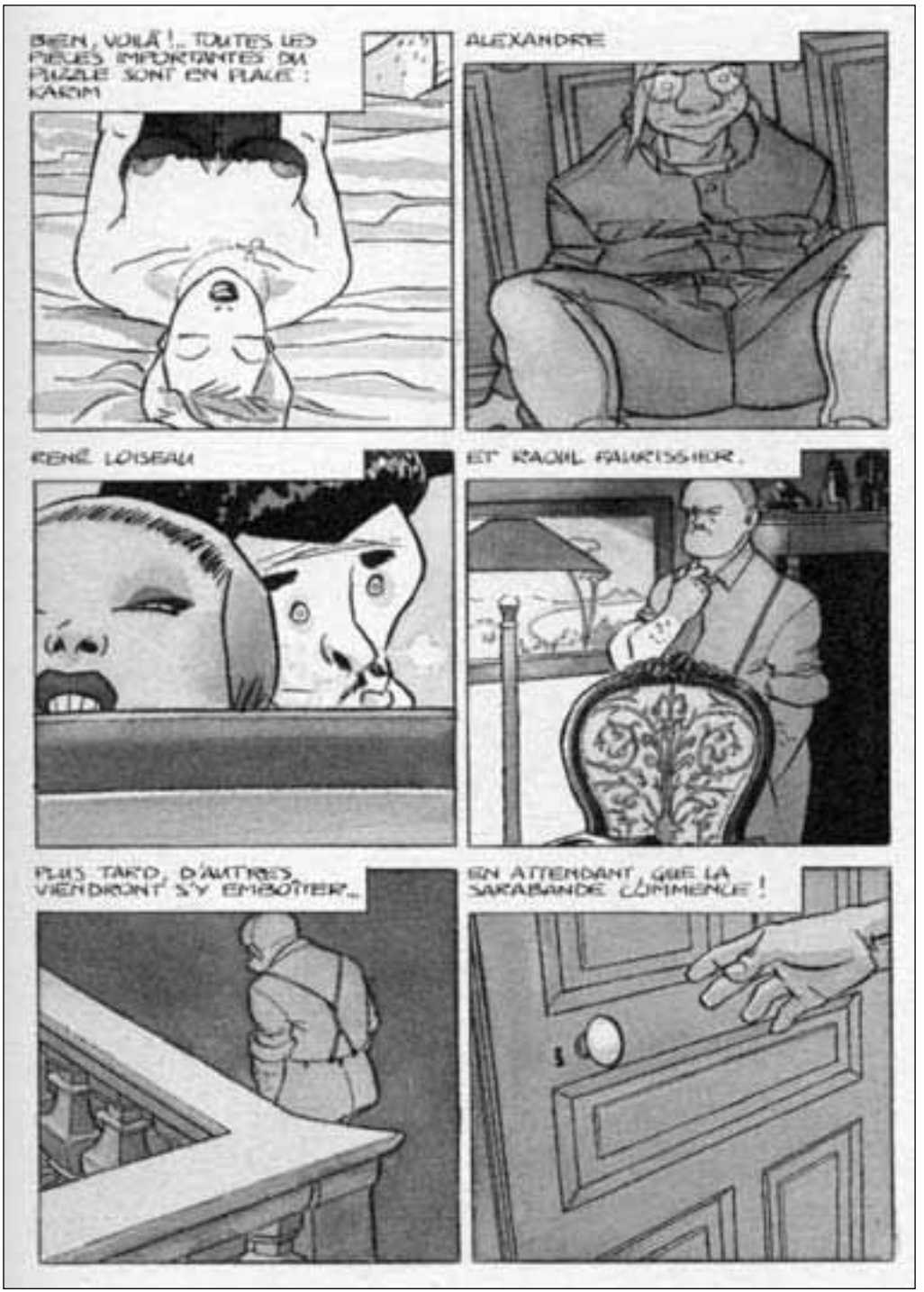


Figure 4. Baru (1995) *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, p. 35. © Baru.

5.3.1.1.3 The gutter

This term refers to the space visible both outside the *hypercadre* ('hyperframe'), Peeters's term for the (usually) discontinous frame formed by the outer frames of all the panels (Peeters 1991: 38) and between the frames, although the latter does not apply in the case of an artist like Bretécher who uses a single line rather than a space between panels. The space of the gutter may be invaded by an image which bleeds into it: on some of his single-panelled pages Baru abolishes the gutter altogether, taking the image to the edges of the page. This occurs, for example, where he reproduces an extract from the newspaper *Le Dauphiné libéré* and has the effect of suggesting continuity between the story world and external reality (Baru 1995: 249). The gutter may be invaded by speech balloons, which will tend to break up the impression of geometrical regularity and introduce an element of disharmony, as in Karim's shocked realization that he and Alex have not shaken off their pursuers (Baru 1995: 87). Visual elements from the image may also break the frame, often to give an impression of speed and élan. Baru uses this technique so sparingly that it adds all the more impact to a panel where an irritated Karim seems to boot Alex out of the frame (Baru 1995: 203).

Certain artists, like Wolinski, simply omit frames, in which case the gutter as a visual element is also abolished, while others insert an occasional unframed panel into a sequence which is otherwise framed. The American comic strip artist Will Eisner suggests that the effect of this is to 'convey unlimited space' and to provide 'a sense of serenity' (Eisner 1985: 47). This comment is appropriate to the example shown by Eisner but hardly applicable to Baru's unframed image showing Faurissier's subjective recollection of shooting his wife. Here it seems rather to suggest a moment taken out of time (Baru 1995: 215) (Fig. 5).

More radically, an artist like Fred will superimpose the grid of frames onto another surface, such as a curtain or stage backdrop, which is visible both outside the hyperframe and between the frames, thereby evoking a further fictional world which encloses the first one (Fred 1986: 47). Elsewhere, he simply allows his characters to contest the boundaries of the fictional world by climbing out of their frames into the gutter (Fred 1974: 47).

5.3.1.1.4 Patterns of mise en page

The fact that a *bande dessinée* frame has no predetermined size or shape allows for considerable variation in *mise en page*, with some patterns being more conspicuous than others. Peeters has drawn up a typology of *mise en page*, which he bases on the idea, alluded to above, of the tension between the linear narrative and the tabular surface of the page. If the narrative dimension dominates, he argues, the result will either be 'conventional' (a regular grid of frames), or 'rhetorical' (frame sizes and shapes dictated by the demands of the narrative). The conventional grid is sometimes referred to as a *gaufrier*, or waffle-maker, and it occurs in *L'Autoroute*, on page 74, for example. The rhetorical grid is also frequent: on page 10 the long narrow frame down one side of the page emphasizes the still-vertical status of the blast furnace which is defying the demolition men.

If the tabular dimension dominates, Peeters categorizes the grid as either 'decorative', demonstrating an aesthetic preoccupation which has no narrative relevance, as in the work of

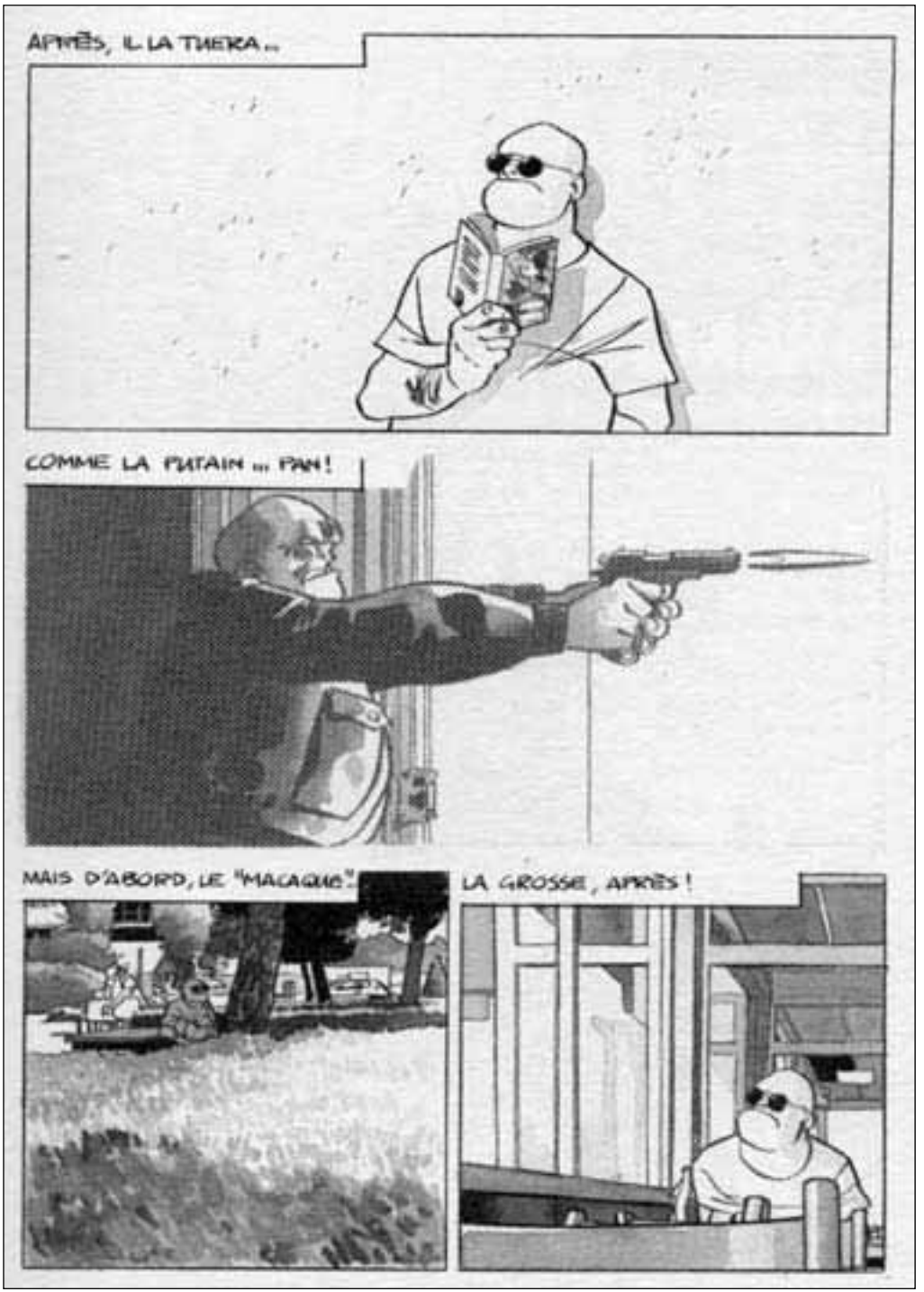


Figure 5. Baru (1995) *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, p. 215. © Baru.

Jacobs, or 'productive', in which the case the narrative is actually engendered by the *mise en page*, a process that Peeters exemplifies by the work of Fred, whose characters often follow unorthodox routes around the page (Peeters 1991: 34–53). A concern for symmetry is in evidence in *L'Autoroute* on pages where narrative clarity does not require a rhetorical grid, and undoubtedly contributes to the aesthetic effect of an album which is to be read as a work of art rather than a mass-cultural product. One would not expect a narrative-driven album like *L'Autoroute* to contain pages which fall into the 'productive' category, but it would be possible to argue that the interweaving of 33 single-page and five double-page panels into its 430 pages has an effect on the construction of the narrative, by requiring it to be structured around a series of emblematic images of the places and non-places (motels, service station cafés, etc.), in Marc Augé's term (Augé 1999: 110), that make up the landscape of post-industrial France.

Groensteen criticizes Peeters's model, arguing that the more important distinctions are between 'regularity' or 'irregularity' and 'discreetness' or 'ostentation'. He points out that the norm tends to be Peeters's rhetorical category, which, although irregular, is unremarkable, and therefore discreet. He argues moreover that a regular grid may in fact be ostentatious, given that it departs from the norm (Groensteen 1999: 115). In the second edition of his book, Peeters modified his model, suggesting that the very regularity of the 'conventional' grid, by pushing a constraint to its limit, could stimulate creativity as in the album *Demi-Tour* (1997), on which Peeters himself had collaborated with Boilet (Peeters 1998: 44). A number of artists of the current generation have opted for the *gaufrier*, such as Blain in *Isaac le Pirate* (2001–2005) and Sfar in *Le Chat du Rabbin* (2002–2005). Blain rejects the flashy framing effects of a previous generation, calling them 'bidon' (phony), and claims that the regularity of the frames frees him up to be innovative in relation to the images (Blain 2002: 17).

5.3.1.2 Sequential links (Groensteen's 'restricted arthrology' code)

The narrative is segmented into discontinuous units which are aligned sequentially, articulated by syntagmatic links. Narrative progression depends, therefore, on the conservation of certain elements and the modification of others: *bande dessinée* is an art of both iteration and transformation. Artists differ in the extent to which they emphasize one or other of these principles. Peeters argues that sudden metamorphosis has been a fundamental resource of the medium from the days of early *bande dessinée*, where characters would be beset by catastrophes and reversals of fortune (Peeters 1991: 23–25). Conversely, an artist like Bretécher will use a sequence of near-identical panels and thereby maximize the effect of very small changes in expression or posture (Peeters 1991: 38). Fresnault-Deruelle discusses the question in relation to Hergé's work. He points to the omnipresence in *Tintin* albums of the Dupondt twins, who incarnate the principle of redundancy and repetition. He suggests that they represent a knowing, albeit sporadic, indulgence by Hergé in 'the demon of pure iteration' and so draw attention, by default, to the narrative process of the medium (Fresnault-Deruelle 1999: 49).

5.3.1.2.1 The inter-frame space: spatio-temporal relations

The inter-frame space is a key element in the signifying mechanism of *bande dessinée*. The narrative process of the medium is founded on ellipsis, the gap in the signifying chain through

which temporal and spatial transitions are managed. The temporal and spatial hiatus implied by the inter-frame space is indeterminate, and allows for considerable variations in the rhythm at which a story is narrated. There may be a conspicuous break in time or space within the fictional world, either between sequences or during a sequence, or, conversely, the break may be smoothed over by an impression of continuity.

Blatant use of ellipsis is a comic or dramatic device. There is an example which combines both comedy and drama in *L'Autoroute*. A drunken driver staggers up to Karim in one panel, and, in the next one, Karim and Alex are installed in his car as he snores on the back seat. Only the dialogue, Karim's 'About time' in answer to Alex's 'That's it! Your mate's snoring', indicates that this outcome has not been achieved without a struggle (Baru 1995: 113).

Elsewhere, uninterrupted dialogue from one panel to the next can imply that the time excised by the inter-frame space is minimal. This is the case, for example, between two panels of *L'Autoroute*, in a scene which takes place on a train. Karim continues to speak to Alex, with just a beat of hesitation between frames as he takes in the presence of the girls on the opposite seat. The hiatus between the second and third panels is perhaps a beat longer, as his words peter out and he turns the full beam of his attention onto the girls (Baru 1995: 77).

In a sequence where the hiatus articulates actions rather than static conversation, the disparity between the continuity of the fictional events that the reader is invited to postulate and the gaps in the recounting of them is likely to be greater. There is an example in the scene from *L'Autoroute* where the lorry driver throws Alex and Karim out of his lorry on receiving Faurissier's CB radio message claiming that they are dangerous rapists (Baru 1995: 106 - 109). Although Baru has said that the manga format has enabled him to use ellipses which were less brutal than in a standard-length album (Baru 1996: 10), it is nonetheless clear that the dynamism of a sequence like this is created by the marked discontinuity of the signifying chain.

The transition from one panel to the next does not have to imply a temporal interval. The gap may instead be taken to signify 'meanwhile', and articulate spatially distant, parallel actions, as in the sequence of *L'Autoroute* where Karim and Alex, on the train, are pursued by Faurissier and his thugs in a car (Baru 1995: 84). Other non-temporal links may involve what Fresnault-Deruelle calls a 'technical hiatus', based either on the transition from outside to inside, the equivalent of a filmic establishing shot**,** or on the transition to or from a subjective image (Fresnault-Deruelle 1972: 54). There are a number of instances of the former in *L'Autoroute,* such as a panel showing the outside of a police station, which indicates that the man interviewing Alex must be a detective (Baru 1995: 404). The latter can be exemplified by the panel showing Faurissier's mental recollection of shooting his wife, which does not follow the previous panel chronologically, but illustrates the thought which occasions his smile of satisfaction (Baru 1995: 215) (Fig. 5).

McCloud notes the prevalence in mangas of another non-temporal type of transition that he calls 'aspect-to-aspect', where time seems to stand still, and the reader 'must assemble a single

Figure 6. Baru (1995) *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, p. 239. © Baru.

moment using scattered fragments' (McCloud 1993: 79). The pace of the narration of *L'Autoroute* does not in general allow for intervals of this kind, but the arrival in the Provençal village provides a moment of brief respite where atmosphere rather than action is portrayed. The first three panels of this chapter have a spatial rather than a temporal relationship as the image of rooftops gives way to that of a breakfast table, and the narration seems to pause to allow the reader to contemplate different aspects of the scene (Baru 1995: 239–240) (Fig. 6, Fig. 7). There is a more complex example of non-chronological links on the final page of the first chapter, where a series of images taken from various narrative threads are brought together, as the narrator announces that the pieces are in place for the plot to be set in motion. These links are made not at the level of the fictional world but at the level of the narration (Baru 1995: 35) (Fig. 4).

Spatial and temporal dimensions may come into conflict if the grid of frames is imposed over a spatially continuous backdrop. This is the case in Hergé's famous 'triptych' in *Tintin au Tibet*, which has the effect of emphasizing the unchanging vastness of the landscape in contrast to the characters in the foreground who are subject to temporality (Hergé 1960: 35).

5.3.1.2.2 Stylistic variations: framing, angle of vision, composition, colour

The effect of these parameters in *bande dessinée* works by variation or constancy from panel to panel.

A *bande dessinée* panel may frame characters or objects with varying degrees of tightness, from extreme close-up to much more distant views. A transition which reframes a previous panel may suggest movement of characters. Over a four-panel sequence of *L'Autoroute*, Karim and Alex at first dominate the landscape and finally appear tiny in the distance (Baru 1995: 98). Elsewhere, reframing, rather than suggesting movement of characters, may be used by the narrator to control the flow of information. Framing may widen to include elements that were not previously visible, or narrow to give the reader more detailed information. In a sequence in the Provençal village in *L'autoroute*, a first panel shows a breakfast table, before the framing of the second panel widens to reveal that the ageing hippy, La Fleur, is at the table, and then narrows again in the third panel to capture the detail of his facial expression as he addresses Karim, who arrives in the next panel and so is visible to the reader in the perifield (Baru 1995: 240–241) (Fig. 7).

The drama of the narration can be heightened through the use of elements in the extreme foreground, combined with depth of field. In the middle panel of page 153, Karim is seen from the waist up, the centre of attention of the group of lorry drivers. In the following panel, his legs only can be seen in the extreme foreground, but behind them, far in the background, and invisible to him, Faurissier's car approaches.

Variations in framing may also correspond to variations in narrative point of view. We may be offered a viewpoint which is simply that of the narrator, but, on occasion, the framing may correspond exactly to what can be seen by a character: here we can use a term from film theory and speak of 'ocularization' (Gaudreault and Jost 1990: 129).[56] For example, the

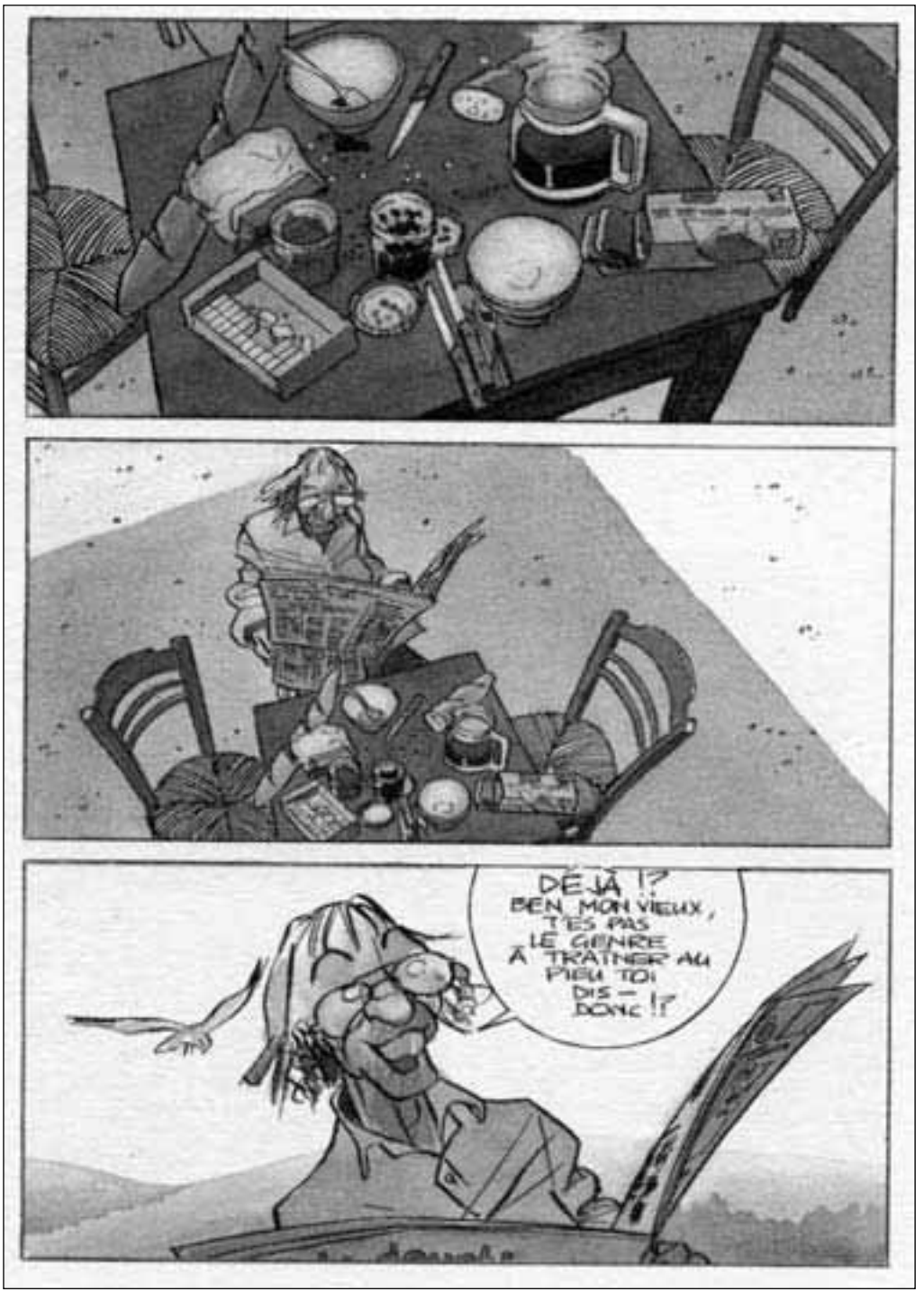


Figure 7. Baru (1995) *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, pp. 240–241. © Baru.


TOI NON PLUS ON DIRAIT...
BOH.. J'ARRIVE PAS À DORMIR QUAND IL FAIT JOUR...

panel which shows Karim's first entry into the Provençal breakfast sequence seems to be shown from the ocular viewpoint of La Fleur. Baru tends to combine character point of view with another framing technique, which is the inclusion in the frame of only the hand or foot of a character. In the panel which immediately follows Karim's arrival, La Fleur is shown reading his newspaper, and Karim's hand can be seen, reaching for the coffee. This has the effect of suggesting that La Fleur is seen from Karim's viewpoint (Baru 1995: 241)[57] (Fig. 7).

The angle of vision of a *bande dessinée* panel is likely to be noticeable if it is high or low. Again, the significance to be attached to an artist's choice is relative to the sequence in which it occurs. Markedly high or low angles of vision may correspond to the ocular viewpoint of a character. The alternation of low and high angles on the page of *L'Autoroute* in which Alex observes Karim being admitted to Faurissier's house by the latter's wife, in her husband's absence, works to indicate that the scene at the door is viewed from Alex's perspective, as he sits on the pavement, just as the bedroom window in the final panel is seen from his low angle. The angles of vision also have symbolic value here. The high angle from which Alex is viewed (by the narrator and the reader) emphasizes his lack of social or sexual status, and the low angle which corresponds to his view of the bedroom window suggests his fascination with Karim's involvement in erotic mysteries inaccessible to him (Baru 1995: 31) (Fig. 1).

The composition of a *bande dessinée* panel may have a primarily narrative function, as it helps the reader's eye to alight on details which are significant. Diagonals within the panel may be used to guide the direction of the reader's gaze. In an early sequence of *L'Autoroute*, after the blast furnace has been demolished, the diagonals of the railway line underscore the direction of the exit from the frame of the redundant steel workers, a reversal of the direction of the train that had brought them to man the steel mills, four pages and about thirty years previously (Baru 1995: 12 and 16).

Elsewhere, composition can heighten expressivity. Diagonal lines, for example, can suggest tension, as in the final panel of age 241 where the oblique line of the roof, subtly prefigured by the line of the bird in the panel above, indicates Karim's anxiety as he scans the newspaper (Fig. 7). Such an effect may be further increased by framing, as in a panel of *L'Autoroute* in which the image seems to be tilted (or 'canted', to use a filmic term), and so conveys the desperation with which Karim and Alex try to escape their pursuers (Baru 1995: 143). There are also certain moments where the composition suggests harmony, as in a panel where the moon rises above the symmetrical facade of the chateau. René Loiseau has gained a symbolic victory over his castrating wife, and a certain justice has been done (Baru 1995: 339). This image of the chateau recalls similarly harmonious panels depicting Moulinsart in *Tintin* albums, as the heroes return from righting wrongs. There is an example of this towards the end of *Le Trésor de Rackham le Rouge* (Hergé 1944: 59).

The *bande dessinée* artist has the option of removing non-essential details from the frame, either in the somewhat capricious way used by an artist such as Régis Franc, or by placing a character against a blank background. This occasionally occurs in *L'Autoroute*, but with a realist alibi, in that the background could be taken to be the sky (Baru 1995: 122).

Elsewhere, though, there is a use of blank space which does not have a realist justification. Faurissier, tiny but centrally placed against the urban horizon, is stranded in a vast expanse of white, reducing him to some essential core of evil which seems to transcend the social realism of the context (Baru 1995: 171).

Colour in *bande dessinée* has tended to have a narrative rather than a realist function, by allowing characters to be rapidly recognizable from one panel to the next: Tintin's light blue and Haddock's dark blue sweaters work in this way. It is also used expressively, to evoke atmosphere, and to give unity of tone to sequences. Baetens and Lefèvre point out that the use of black and white in *bande dessinée* has come to connote an album presented as a work of art rather than a commercial product (Baetens and Lefèvre 1993: 41). This does not, however, apply to mangas, and the use of black and white in *L'Autoroute* can be attributed to conformity with the production norms of Kodansha, the Japanese publishers. *L'Autoroute* generally uses its palette of greys to expressive effect. The use of a black background behind Loiseau, in a scene where he brandishes an iron bar at Karim, can be justified by the fact that the former is in the shade but it appears to be symbolic, as at this point he is a negative character. He will emerge into the light as he gains respect for Karim (Baru 1995: 304).

5.3.1.3 Tressage (Groensteen's 'general arthrology' code)

Panels may relate to each other through links which are woven throughout an album. Baetens and Lefèvre refer to these links as *renvois structurels* (structural cross-references) (Baetens and Lefèvre 1993: 72), but we will use Groensteen's simpler term *tressage*, which makes reference to the idea of weaving (Groensteen 1999: 174). He argues that a narrative sequence can be overlaid by a 'series', which he defines as a (continuous or discontinuous) succession of images linked by a system of formal, iconic or semantic correspondences.

There are a number of instances of the repetition of a formal element in *L'Autoroute*, including the panels on pages 12 and 16 referred to in section 5.3.1.2. The diagonal composition of the panel containing the train bringing migrant workers to France after the war is visually echoed four pages later as the same workers, years later, trudge diagonally back along railway lines after the blast furnace has been demolished. Here, the pathos of the second image is increased by the fact that both panels occupy the same, bottom left, position on the double page.

The album contains various instances of iconic correspondences, most obviously those around the shooting of Faurissier's wife, which convey his increasingly psychotic state. The panel showing the fascist leader's hand approaching the doorknob before he kills her echoes the almost identical panel which preceded his discovery of her adultery (Baru 1995: 35, 174) (Fig. 4), and the panel showing him firing the gun, as she remains out of frame, will be repeated in his mental image 40 pages later, as he plans the killing of another woman (Baru 1995: 175, 215) (Fig. 8, Fig. 5).

There are other recurring motifs throughout the album which have semantic correspondences linked to the theme of the album, although they do not necessarily offer close iconic

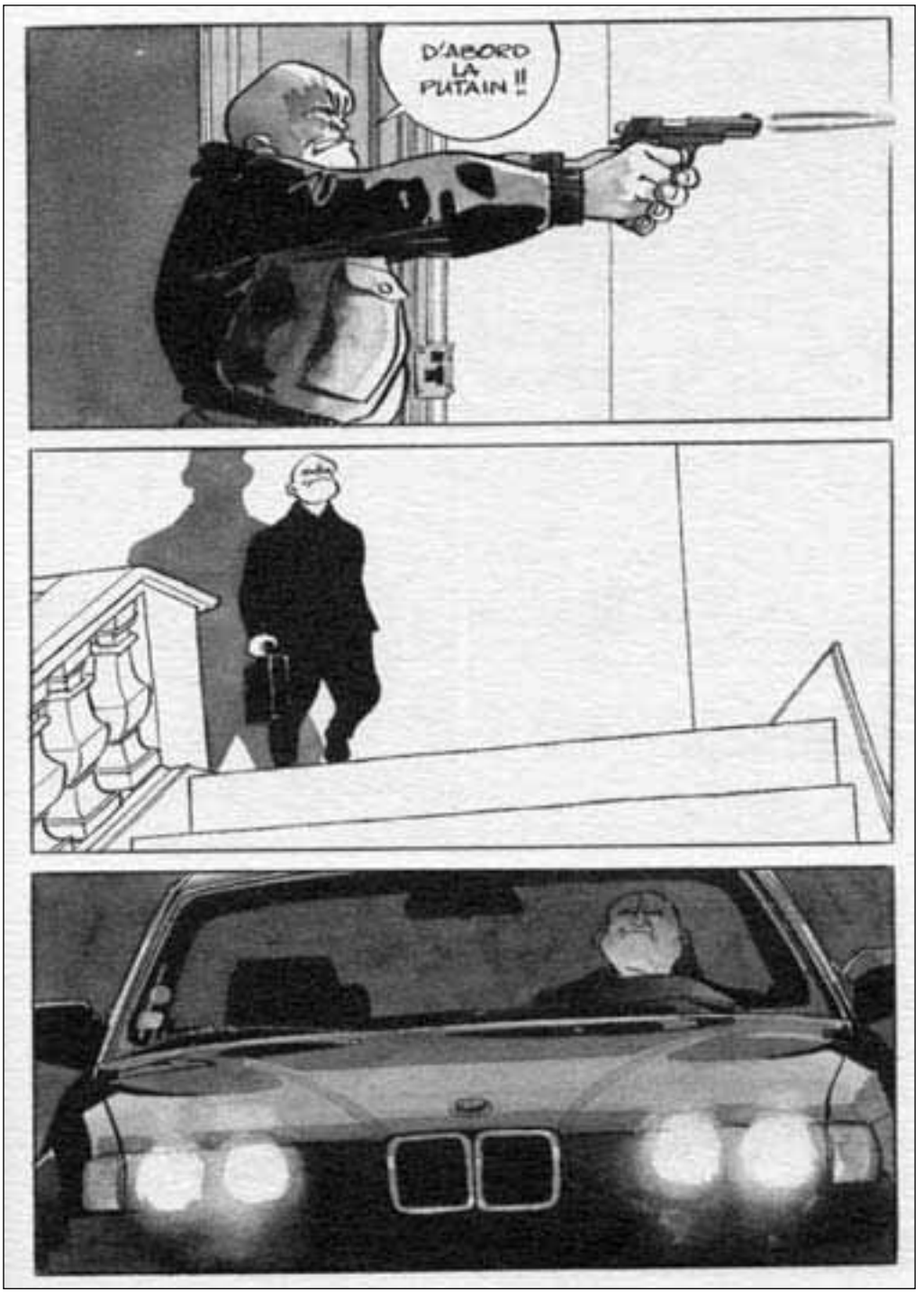


Figure 8. Baru (1995) *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, p. 175. © Baru.

correspondences. These motifs form 'isotopies', a term used by Greimas to mean chains of elements, dispersed throughout a text, which have semantic features in common (Greimas 1972: 97–99). The many cars, trains and other vehicles are generic elements arising out of the road movie scenario, and evoke the idea of a certain dislocated masculinity. The series of full-page, or sometimes double-page, panels showing the destinations where they fetch up provide a panoramic survey of French social geography at the end of the twentieth century.

5.3.2 Text and image

There are a number of ways in which text can enter a *bande dessinée* panel, although it is not a necessary component: a panel, strip, page or entire album may remain silent. Texts of different types will be integrated to a greater or lesser extent into the image, and, in certain cases, the physical appearance of the text will itself be expressive. Furthermore, the function of texts is not limited to the provision of dialogue or narrative information.

5.3.2.1 The five types of text and their integration into the image

Bande dessinée employs five types of text: the peritext, to be found on the covers and fly leaves, the narrative voice-over or *récitatif*, the dialogue, the sound effects or *onomatopées*, and any texts which exist within the fictional world. The extent to which a text is integrated into the image or separated from it depends on its status in relation to the narrative. The least integrated textual element of an album is the peritext, which remains outside the fiction. Baetens and Lefèvre point out that the peritext is normally the only element of a *bande dessinée* where typeset characters are used (Baetens and Lefèvre 1993: 17).

The *récitatif* is more integrated than the peritext, but less so than the dialogue, although it resembles the latter in that it is normally hand-printed. Baetens and Lefèvre argue that this reduces the impression of heterogeneity between images and text, and so minimizes disruption of the fictional world (Baetens and Lefèvre 1993: 17). There are exceptions, which therefore stand out as such, like Vandermeulen's typeset *récitatifs* and dialogues in *Fritz Haber* (2005) that evoke silent film intertitles and subtitles. The *récitatif* is usually separated from the pictorial space by a box which adheres to the top of the frame. Departures from this practice, like an example in *L'Autoroute* of a *récitatif* box detached from the frame and placed in the bottom half of the panel, make the narrating voice considerably less discreet. In this case, the box marks the beginning of a sequence in which the *récitatifs* represent the point of view of Faurissier, and they take on a menacing tonality (Baru: 1995: 209). *Récitatifs* may occasionally appear with no box: this occurs in several sections of Dupuy and Berberian's *Journal d'un album* (1994) indicating, perhaps, an absence of narrative distance from the events portrayed.[58]

The dialogue is normally enclosed in speech balloons (*bulles* or *phylactères* in French), non-diegetic[59] elements that intrude into the space of the fiction. An unvoiced 'thinks' balloon is distinguished from a balloon containing spoken dialogue by its wavy contours and discontinuous tail. There are also conventions for distinguishing between different speech sources: dialogue from a mechanical source such as a telephone or television is indicated by jagged balloons (Baru 195: 104, 394). Dialogue not enclosed by speech balloons will tend

to be more invasive. Baru always uses speech balloons, although when Alex and Karim argue, the size of the balloons makes it impossible for them to be completely enclosed by the panel frames. Baru chooses to leave both balloons and frames incomplete, suggestive of vehemence which cannot be contained (Baru 1995: 288–289).

Since the speech balloon implies a speech source, it testifies to the presence of a speaker even when s/he is invisible, either too tiny within a panoramic view (Baru 1995: 430), obscured by an object within the frame, as when the angle of a flight of steps prevents us from seeing Karim (Baru 1995: 51), or situated outside the frame, when, for example, Karim's attempt to enter the Loiseau's space is at first rebuffed as unwelcome (Baru 1995: 304). A speech balloon therefore works as an index, in Peirce's terminology, since it has an existential link with its signified. The speech balloon allows not only for spatial localization of a speaker, but for temporal ordering of the dialogue. On page 17 of *L'Autoroute*, Alex's question is understood as preceding Karim's reponse by the superimposition of the speech balloon, even though Karim's balloon begins a little further to the left. The overlapping of speech balloons can suggest interruption, as when Faurissier shouts over the protests of the man whose car he has hijacked (Baru 1995: 365).

The onomatopoeic sound effects are not usually enclosed and tend to occur within the picture space. In *L'Autoroute*, Baru integrates them further into the diegesis by giving them the appearance of graffiti. On page 57, the impression that the word 'Craach' is an element within the fictional world is strengthened by the fact that it is partially obscured by the car bonnet. These sound effects observe certain conventions of encoding, whilst still allowing for individual expressiveness. Baru uses plosive sounds, like 'Blam' and 'Craaaac' for an explosion or crash, 'Poc poc poc' for Faurissier's footsteps, 'Clac clac clac' for the footsteps of Madame Loiseau in high-heeled shoes and 'Pan' for a gunshot. More muffled sounds or sounds involving objects falling into water make greater use of fricatives, such as 'Ptouf', 'Plaf', 'Plouf' and 'Paf'. *Onomatopées* do not have to be associated with loud and striking effects. In his book on mangas, Groensteen makes the point that manga artists use *onomatopées* for phenomena that western artists would not think of sonorizing, such as rain, or sugar dropping into tea (Groensteen 1996b: 44).

The only text which can be fully integrated into the diegesis is that which occurs on décors or objects within the fiction. The question arises in *bande dessinée* as to how far the graphic style of a second-level text, a text inside the fictional world, adheres to that of its real-world model, and how far it is blended into the graphic style of the album. In *L'Autoroute*, the typeface and layout of the newspaper *Le Dauphiné Libéré* are exactly replicated. Indeed, the articles surrounding the report of Faurissier's faking of his death are mechanically reproduced from an authentic edition of the paper (Baru 1995: 249). This erosion of the boundary between the fiction and the real world may be compared with the adaptation of the real world to the universe of Dupuy and Berberian's Monsieur Jean, when Jean reads a copy of *Libération*. The newspaper is recognizable through the red diamond on the cover, but the headlines proclaiming 'Crisis, unemployment, catastrophe, pollution' are scrawled with no attempt to imitate the typeface of the original. The newspaper becomes part of the paranoid projection

of the character, along with his vision of booksellers who refuse to stock his book (Dupuy and Berberian 1992: 41).[60]

5.3.2.2 Iconic encoding: when text becomes image

Hand-printed script allows for variations in the size and shape of letters which are used for expressive purposes: Fresnault-Deruelle describes this as the 'imaging function' of the text (Fresnault-Deruelle 1972: 36). An increase in the size of letters is conventionally read as an amplification of volume (Baru 1995: 91), and jagged edges may be used to convey fear or shock. More inventively, Baru uses letters which appear to be trembling to indicate the vibrations that the speaker feels as the car goes along a railway line (Baru 1995: 285). The most striking visual effects tend to be reserved for *onomatopées*, in which size and width of lettering may be increased or decreased within a single instance to allow for crescendo or diminuendo (Baru 1995: 158–159). Conversely, Baru uses small lettering for the 'Poc poc' of Faurissier's footsteps, the gradualness with which they penetrate Alex's sleep contrasting with the enormous danger that they represent (Baru 1995: 39–40).

The legibility of the message may be deliberately reduced: very tiny letters indicate near-inaudibility, as in the grudging 'Bonsoir' proffered to Dupuy and Berberian's Monsieur Jean by his concierge and her sour-faced friend (Dupuy and Berberian 1991: 9). Letters which dissolve into squiggles, as in Menu's *Livret de Phamille* indicate unwillingness or inability to comprehend on the part of an interlocutor, or boredom (Menu 1995: 'Promenade' 10).[61] The use of a non-Roman script in speech balloons will make it incomprehensible to most French readers, but may serve to increase authenticity. In Cosey's *Celui qui mène les fleuves à la mer*, the use of the Tibetan language and script to transcribe a singer's words is a gesture of respect towards a language which the album portrays as under threat from the Chinese occupiers (Cosey 1997: 11). Elsewhere, the use of a non-Roman script can emphasize the alienation and isolation of a protagonist excluded from conversations, as in Delisle's *Shenzhen* (2000).

A certain expressive effect may, in addition, arise out of any text which is striking in its length, even if the words remain legible, since the impression of extreme wordiness will be more salient than the content of the message. The logorrhoea of Greg's Achille Talon is an obvious instance of this, as is the frame-filling speech balloon given to the radio interviewer José Arthur in Dupuy and Berberian's *Journal d'un album* (Dupuy and Berberian 1994: D2 5).

Iconic encoding of the text may be taken to the point where symbols rather than words are used. These range from the question mark or exclamation mark which commonly signify perplexity or shock in 'thinks' balloons, to the plumed parrot, bottle of poison, knife, gun and skull and crossbones in Haddock's 'thinks' balloon as he glowers at the parrot given to him by Castafiore (Hergé 1963: 10). In comic *bande dessinée*, non-speech sounds will tend to be rendered by symbols: a saw will conventionally represent snoring, for example. The realism of *L'Autoroute* would make this inappropriate, and Baru uses the onomatopoeic sound 'Rrron' as Alex dozes (Baru 1995: 39).

5.3.2.3 *Functions of the text*

In general terms, the text allows for a 'soundtrack' to be added to a silent medium, but it has other, more subtle, functions.

5.3.2.3.1 Anchoring: exposition and linkage

In a discussion of texts which occur with images, Barthes makes specific reference to *bande dessinée*. He says that text may either 'anchor' the meaning of an image, since images tend to be polysemic (susceptible of more than one interpretation) or 'relay' it, bringing in additional meanings, and it is the relay function which will dominate in *bande dessinée* (Barthes 1964c: 44).

Given that the visual information in a *bande dessinée* image is preselected for its narrative (and sociocultural or symbolic) relevance, Barthes is obviously right to suggest that the text will not often be called upon to play the anchoring function. However, at the beginning of an album in particular, it may play an expository function, narrowing down the metonymic extension of details of the décor to a specific time and place. At the beginning of *L'Autoroute*, the *récitatifs* guide us to understand that the northern French working-class street depicted on the opening page is, in fact, in Lorraine (Baru 1995: 5). This function may on occasion be carried out through speech balloons, as when Alex identifies one of the now-redundant steelworkers as his father (Baru 1995: 11), but excessive use of dialogue for expository purposes will sound artificial.

Peeters points out that the *récitatifs* in Jacobs's work play an important role in articulating panels which have no spatial continuity, often through the use of conjunctions such as 'meanwhile' or adverbial phrases such as 'at that moment' (Peeters 1991: 86–87). Linkage is, therefore, part of the anchoring function of the text. The opening chapter of *L'Autoroute* similarly relies on the *récitatifs* to enable the reader to understand how events taking place in different locations, including Karim's street, the blast furnace, the spaces through which the immigrant workers travel on their way to France, the meeting hall, the city streets, the motel and the bourgeois quarter, can be articulated into a coherent but intricate narrative sequence which runs from just before eight in the evening until 1.30 in the morning, and includes three flashbacks, one of which goes back a whole generation (Baru 1995: 5–35).

5.3.2.3.2 Relaying: dramatization and counterpart

A number of *bande dessinée* theorists stress the importance of the avoidance of redundancy. Baetens and Lefèvre argue that a general principle of narrative economy demands that the text should not repeat information already given visually, but should complement it (Baetens and 1993: 20). The artist most often cited as infringing this principle is Jacobs, whose *récitatifs* frequently reiterate the action shown in the panels: 'Mortimer jumped to his feet and, grabbing a chair, brandished it. But Septimus anticipated his move...' (Jacobs 1956: 52). However, it is the *récitatifs* which give Jacobs's work its flamboyant theatricality, and in this sense they are clearly not redundant. This function of dramatization can be discerned in the work of other artists, including Baru, in spite of his general tendency to avoid *récitatifs*. The narrator is moved to use a rhetorical device in the description of the collapse of the blast

furnace under the explosives of the demolition workers: 'And so the steel monster, creaking with all its twisted metal, finally bowed out' (Baru 1995: 13). The event, including sound effect, is shown in the image and the words are strictly speaking redundant, but the magnitude of its significance is underlined by the epic tone of the text.

Conversely, the text may undercut, rather than reinforce, the images. The complementarity advocated by Baetens and Lefèvre may take the form of a certain dissonance. Baru makes use of counterpoint between text and images on page 52, in which Loiseau is seized with a sudden desire for a further sexual encounter with the unnamed woman exiting from his car. The discretion of the *récitatifs*, which, moreover, give an impression of formality through two instances of syntactic inversion, is at odds with the cheerful vulgarity of the images, the first displaying Loiseau's vision of the woman's ample posterior, and the second his feverish and undignified groping.

5.3.2.3.3 Temporality and rhythm

We discussed in section 5.3.1.2.1 the use of the inter-frame space to represent varying degrees of temporal hiatus, and we made the point that dialogue which continues from one panel to another tends to minimize temporal ellipsis. Dialogue also introduces temporality into a single panel, resulting in the paradox that characters within the same panel are situated differentially in relation to time. As Groensteen puts it: 'Everyone lives in time with their speech balloon' (Groensteen 1999:158). This visual anomaly can be attenuated. On page 288 of *L'Autoroute*, for example, where Karim shouts at Alex, and Alex reacts with an indignant 'What?', Karim is seen from the back only.

The temporality of silent panels is more indeterminate, particularly if they represent décor only, or characters who are immobile. A silent panel in the midst of panels containing dialogue can mark a significant pause in the action. The one silent panel on page 308, in a conversation that otherwise extends over three and a half pages, implies a long moment of reflection, as Loiseau begins to see Karim in a new light. Conversely, Groensteen suggests that an action sequence may need to include dialogue in a panel which is intended to have emotional impact, in order to prevent the reader from racing on to the next panel (Groensteen 1999: 157). The dialogue in the first panel on page 170 is spoken by Alex, but its function seems to be to allow Karim to stare for some time at Faurissier, in response to his threats, before turning away.

5.4 Conclusion

Bande dessinée has existed as an art form since the nineteenth century, and those who have claimed Töpffer as its inventor have also claimed him as its first theoretician. In his writings on the medium, he concerned himself with issues of identity and transformation from one panel to the next, and with the integration of text and images (Groensteen and Peeters (eds.) 1994). After the 1840s, there was a gap of well over a century before anyone saw fit to investigate the signifying practices of the medium again. Even when it was taken up by semiologists in the 1970s, there remains some suspicion that the medium merely served as a pretext for the exercise of a fashionable discourse: the plethora of studies of ideograms in speech balloons,

for example, suggests that the artistic potential of *bande dessinée* was not always a major concern. It is clear that more recently there have been considerable theoretical advances, even if they have depended on the work of a relatively small number of theorists. The elaboration of the codes which articulate the medium and insights into the diverse ways in which texts and images work together have provided frameworks which can better account for the complexity of *bande dessinée*. This work is, of course, ongoing, and the innovatory artistic production which has flourished since the 1990s provides material that will challenge and extend frameworks still further. *À suivre*...

Chapter 6

Narrative Theory and bande dessinée

6.1 Introduction

This chapter on the application of narrative theory to *bande dessinée* begins with sections on this theoretical framework as it has been developed in relation to the novel and to cinema. The purpose of these sections is to introduce key points before discussing their relevance to *bande dessinée*, as well as to afford an opportunity for reflecting on processes of narration across different media, both visual and verbal.

We will draw upon Juillard's *Le Cahier bleu* (1994), henceforth *Le Cahier*, as our main source of examples, since the story arises out of the disjunction between different narrative standpoints, and a narratological approach is therefore likely to illuminate the way in which it works.

The album is set in Paris in the 1990s. Armand and Victor both become attracted to Louise after glimpsing her naked, through the uncurtained window of her flat, when they are stuck in a metro train that has broken down. Courted in person and through the mail by Armand, Louise goes out with him, before dropping him for Victor, with whom she has had two seemingly chance encounters. Angry that Louise has spurned him, Armand retrieves Victor's diary from a dustbin and puts it in Louise's mailbox. On reading the diary, which forms the second chapter of the album, Louise discovers that Victor had not met her by chance, as she (and the reader) had believed, but had been watching her and following her. In the final chapter, a number of characters, including Victor himself, are interviewed by an examining magistrate. We learn that Louise had broken off contact with Victor, who was subsequently arrested for the murder of Armand. He is freed after Elena, a young woman from former Yugoslavia, returns from visiting her homeland, and gives evidence that Victor had spent the night in her flat after they had both left Armand in his flat, the worse for drink but far from

dead. Victor is released from prison, and, at the same time, Louise hurries to an unspecified destination. On the final page she can be seen observing Victor and Elena from a distance as they walk together, unaware that their conversation reveals that Elena and Victor are simply keeping each other company, as both are in need of consoling.

6.2 Enunciation and narration

In Chapter 5, we looked at Saussure's model of structural linguistics which formed the basis for semiology, the science of signifying systems, and was also applied to the study of the structure of narratives. Another area of linguistics, concerned with enunciation, has provided a further theoretical framework for the analysis of narrative. Theories of enunciation move beyond structural linguistics, which conceived of language as an abstract system, in order to consider the context of utterance, implying a speaker and listener, or writer and reader, and a time and place of speaking and writing. The linguist Émile Benveniste drew attention to the distinction between *énoncés* (utterances) presented as *histoire* (history/story) which, through use of the third person and tenses such as the simple past, betray no traces of their enunciation ('Sarkozy became president of France in 2007'), and *énoncés* presented as *discours* (discourse) which refer to the situation of enunciation through use of first- or second-person pronouns, spatio-temporal indications such as 'here' or 'now', and tenses such as the perfect. The sentence 'I've been here for three hours', for example, contains a number of 'markers of enunciation' which refer to the temporal and spatial situation shared by the speaker and listener (Benveniste 1966: 244).

6.3 Narration in the literary text

It was Gérard Genette's *Figures III* (1972) which offered the first thoroughgoing exposition of the implications of a concern to separate enunciation from *énoncé* in the analysis of literary texts. Narration is a particular form of enunciation, one in which the *énoncé* is a story. The fictional world constructed by the narration is known as the 'diegesis'. We will briefly outline Genette's argument below.

6.3.1 Narrative time

Genette's analysis of narrative discourse begins with an investigation of narrative time. The double temporality of narration and fictional world is discussed under three headings: order, frequency and duration. The notions of both order and frequency apply rather obviously to the relationship between the time of recounting and the time of the events recounted: for example, the discovery of a body may be recounted before the events which led up to the murder, and an event which happens regularly within the story world may be recounted only once, or, conversely, a single event recounted several times (Genette 1972: 122).

The notion of duration is more awkward. While a film can, for example, take 90 minutes to recount several years, it is difficult to attribute duration to the narration of a written text, other than indirectly, through the time taken up by reading it. It can, though, be discussed in terms of rhythm. Here Genette proposes four categories: 'ellipsis', where events within the diegesis are missed out of the recounting; 'scene', where continuous dialogue allows for the postulation of equivalence between 'time' of narration and time within the diegesis; 'summary', which falls

between scene and ellipsis; and 'pause', taken up by description, where no time passes in the diegetic world (Genette 1972: 129). Genette contrasts ellipsis with 'paralipsis', which refers not to the excision of a period of time, but to the deliberate omission by the narration of certain elements of a situation. It therefore relates to order rather than duration, as the missing information will be supplied at a later stage of the narration (Genette 1972: 93).

6.3.2 Mode and voice

Genette then goes on to consider other aspects of narration. He makes a crucial distinction. The question of narrative perspective, of who sees and knows, is discussed under the heading of 'mode', while the issue of who recounts is discussed under the heading of 'voice' (Genette 1972: 253).

'Mode' is originally a linguistic term relating to the area of language (such as the choice between subjunctive and indicative) which enables information to be affirmed with greater or lesser degrees of certitude or subjective investment. Genette's discussion of mode concerns above all the orientation of narrative perspective, which he calls 'focalization'. Omniscience, where the narrator has knowledge not only of the actions but of the thoughts of all characters, implies zero focalization. Internal focalization will restrict its field of vision to the viewpoint of one character, while external focalization presents characters from the exterior, as if the narrator had knowledge only of their behaviour. A novel will not necessarily be consistent in its use of focalization, which may change from one chapter (or part of a chapter) to another (Genette 1972: 206–211).

The category of 'voice' addresses the question of who tells the story, and what traces of the narrator's presence may be discerned in the text. The characters exist within the temporal and spatial bounds of the story world or diegesis. The narrator may be 'heterodiegetic' or external to the fictional world. The story may, though, be recounted by a character who exists within the fictional world, and in this case s/he will be a 'homodiegetic' narrator (Genette 1972: 225–227). Genette sometimes substitutes the term 'narrating instance' for narrator. This emphasizes the fact that the narrator exists only within the text and is not to be confused with the author. As he points out, the narrator of Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, although heterodiegetic and so outside the fictional world, claims familiarity with the Vauquier boarding house and its inhabitants, whereas Balzac, the real live person sitting at his writing desk, can only imagine them (Genette 1972: 226).

Hetero- and homodiegetic narrators may co-exist over the course of a novel, through alternation or the embedding of one story within another. So, for example, a story which is heterodiegetically narrated may include within it a story that has a homodiegetic narrator. In this case there is likely also to be a homodiegetic narratee, who acts as a surrogate for the reader. We refer in these cases to first and second (and sometimes third or more) levels of narration, and the higher-level narrative is called a 'framing' narrative.

Mode and voice may combine in various ways. A heterodiegetic narrator may deploy zero, internal, or external focalization. A homodiegetic narrator cannot, logically, be omniscient but

can only present events from his/her own viewpoint. S/he may, though, choose between the perspective offered as the fiction unfolds, or the greater knowledge afforded by hindsight. In the case of a homodiegetic narrator, markers of enunciation, presenting the text as discourse, will be obvious, since, at the very least, there will normally be first-person pronouns. However, Genette suggests that traces of enunciation can still be found in a heterodiegetic narration. Although in some cases the narration will adopt a discreet and neutral tone, effacing all markers of the narrating presence from an account which presents itself as pure *histoire*, elsewhere the presence of the narrator will be highly intrusive and make itself felt in the recounting (Genette 1972: 225).

6.4 Narration in film

We will not include here discussion of narrative time in film, since that would raise issues which do not particularly illuminate the question of time in *bande dessinée*, but we will consider the questions of mode and voice in film.

6.4.1 Mode and voice in film

The Québecois film theorist André Gaudreault and the French theorist Francis Jost have drawn on the framework established by Benveniste and Genette to show how the questions of narrative perspective (mode), and of narrating instance (voice) are relevant to cinema.

In their discussion of mode, they subdivide the term 'focalization' used by Genette. They point out that in the novel, seeing is metaphorically associated with knowing. In film, however, it is useful to separate the question of knowledge (whether that of the narrator or of characters) from that of vision. For example, the narrating position can be limited to the knowledge of a single character, as is frequently the case in a detective film, but this does not imply that the camera is restricted to that character's ocular viewing position. They propose therefore to use the term 'focalization' (zero, internal or external) in relation to knowledge, and to use the term 'ocularization' to represent the visual perspective of a character within the diegesis (Gaudreault and Jost 1990: 129). The film theorist Edward Branigan (who uses the term 'point of view shot' rather than 'ocularized shot') specifies that the establishment of point of view normally requires two shots, the 'object shot', and, either before or after it, the 'glance shot', which establishes a point in space which is the origin of a character's vision of events (Branigan 1984: 103).

Gaudreault and Jost identify a subcategory of ocularized shots which bear traces of the subjectivity of a character through deformation (blurred vision indicating grogginess, for example) or partial masking. Subjectivity may be further extended through images which represent purely mental processes such as dreams. In this case, they argue, the status of these images will be made clear by 'modalization operators', such as fades to black or dissolves (Gaudreault and Jost 1990: 128–137). However, Francis Vanoye points to the way in which certain film-makers such as Buñuel deliberately mislead audiences as to whether a sequence is to be interpreted as the point of view of the narrating instance or that of a character, or indeed as the wholly subjective mental image of a character (Vanoye 1989: 147–151).

The question of voice, or who tells the story, may seem not to apply to cinema, since it may be argued that, as a visual medium, cinema 'shows' (it is 'mimetic', in Aristotle's term), but does not 'tell'. In mainstream cinema in particular, the impression is given of events which simply unfold before the spectator, 'shown' rather than 'told'. Gaudreault argues, however, that while a single shot works through showing (for which he uses the term 'monstration') there is a process of narration (or 'telling') as soon as shots are edited together (Gaudreault 1988: 113). Filmic narration arises, then, out of sequentiality and articulation (Gaudreault 1988: 116).

Some films may include a narrative voice-over, but Gaudreault argues that any such 'delegated', 'explicit' narrator must be distinguished from the implicit narrating instance which is responsible for the sequencing of shots, and which, ultimately, orchestrates not only images but also words, sounds and music (Gaudreault 1988: 159). Gaudreault uses the term 'meganarrator' for this narrating instance (Gaudreault 1988: 113).[62]

In fiction films, any delegated narration through a voice-over tends fairly rapidly to give way to an account which emanates from the meganarrator. This account will be 'transsemioticized' (Gaudreault and Jost 1990: 46), meaning that it will be transposed from the channel of words alone into a channel which can deploy all the means of expression available to cinema, including images and music. Furthermore, where the narrator is homodiegetic, the transemioticized account will often fail to be restricted to that narrator's knowledge of events: in *Citizen Kane* (Welles 1941), Susan's account of her opera-singing debacle shows scenes which she cannot logically have witnessed. Gaudreault and Jost argue that such inconsistencies serve as a reminder that 'above' or 'beside' the verbal narrator there is the implicit narrator, or meganarrator. The spectator is thereby forced, they claim, to become aware of the enunciation of the film (Gaudreault and Jost 1990: 47).

They acknowledge that, in general, markers of enunciation are less obvious in film than in the novel, especially in classic Hollywood cinema where continuity editing hides the activity of the meganarrator. Cinematic enunciation may nonetheless be marked through the verbal/visual discrepancy alluded to above or in visual terms. According to Jost:

(T)he narrative act [...] becomes visible at the moment when the image detaches itself from the mimetic illusion [...] , that is to say when, through visual utterances, markers of enunciation are perceptible. It is because I am suddenly aware that someone is 'speaking cinema' to me that I realise that someone is telling me a story. [...] I can identify this mode of narration with *discourse* in language (Jost 1987: 31–32).

The American film theorist David Bordwell rejects the term 'enunciation', disliking the linguistic analogy that underlies it, and neither does he refer to 'mode' or 'voice', but he does accept that there is a narrational process, which he distinguishes from any voice-over which may occur in a film. The narration can, he argues, display varying degrees of knowledge, communicativeness, or self-consciousness. A 'self-conscious' narration will draw attention to itself through, for example, its potential to 'flaunt' its control of information to the spectator, or

to 'flaunt' its omniscience over the restricted knowledge of a character (Bordwell 1985: 54–61). Bordwell also points to the way in which acts of narration can be 'judgemental', conveying narrational attitude towards the story action by stylistic devices such as sympathetic or ironic music, high angles which can indicate detachment, or an overall narrative strategy which presents characters as, for example, fascinating or puzzling (Bordwell 1985: 61).

6.5 Enunciation in bande dessinée

Our discussion of film has aimed to establish the theoretical well-foundedness of the claim that a process of enunciation can be at work in a visual medium. Like cinema, *bande dessinée* does not simply show, but also tells, through the way in which images are articulated. A single *bande dessinée* panel is not equivalent to a shot in cinema, since a single shot can involve an action or camera movement that would take up a number of *bande dessinée* panels, but it would seem all the more logical to claim that while a single *bande dessinée* panel works through monstration, narration arises out of *bande dessinée* panels in sequence. We do not intend to embark on a systematic comparison of *bande dessinée* with cinema, and neither do we have scope to engage with dissenting views which would argue, for example, that a single *bande dessinée* panel can be said to 'narrate', on the grounds that it can imply relations of causality or consecutiveness (see Morgan 2003: 41). Our concern is, firstly, to combat the assumption that the term 'narration' necessarily refers in *bande dessinée* only to the text of the *récitatif*. Just as filmic narration may be delegated to a voice-over, so *bande dessinée* narration can be delegated to a *récitatif*, but this is nonetheless subordinated to an overall narrative process which works through both images and text (and for which we can adopt Gaudreault's term 'meganarrator'.) Secondly, having established that there is a narrative process at work (and that *bande dessinée* is not just an art of 'showing'), we wish to demonstrate that Genette's work on narrative time, mode and voice provides useful analytical tools for the medium.

6.5.1 Narrative time

We will use Genette's headings of duration, frequency and order here.

6.5.1.1 Duration

We saw in Chapter 5, section 5.3.1.2.1., that *bande dessinée* narration is susceptible to variations of rhythm. These correspond fairly closely with Genette's categories of ellipsis, scene and summary. The visibility of the interframe space makes rhythm more salient in *bande dessinée* than in literature, and, at the same time, its indeterminacy can achieve rhythmic effects which are very subtle. Genette's category of pause is less obviously applicable, although we cited a silent sequence from *L'Autoroute*, where links between panels seemed spatial rather than temporal, as the new Provençal location of the heroes was gradually revealed and, arguably, no time elapsed in the story world (Baru 1995: 239–240) (Figs. 6 and 7). We quoted McCloud's claim that such 'aspect-to-aspect' transitions are common in mangas (McCloud 1993: 79). *Le Cahier* has no examples of sequences which imply this type of 'pause'. However, it does have a number of single panels which invite the reader to pause as s/he is reading them, in order to peruse the clues which are offered as to Louise's lifestyle. This is the case of the first panel on page 1, which is part of an almost wordless sequence

showing Louise's routine of getting up in the morning, but which contains the metonymic elements that encourage a reader to linger over the image in order to situate the heroine in sociocultural terms (Juillard 1994: 1)[63] (Fig 9).

6.5.1.2 Frequency

If the same event is recounted more than once in *bande dessinée*, its visual impact will be amplified, since *tressage* effects will inevitably be set up. This is the case in *Le Cahier*, where events narrated first heterodiegetically and then again homodiegetically, through Victor's diary, give rise to spatially distant panels which illustrate the same moment, often with subtle differences due to the subjectivity of Victor's memory.

The opposite case, an event recounted once which stands for multiple occurrences, can be achieved in *bande dessinée* through the addition of a *récitatif*. For example, the repetitious obsessiveness with which Victor watches Louise's window is indicated by the words 'Every morning, every evening' and the image is thereby taken out of the immediate temporal sequence in which it is situated (Juillard 1994: 24).

6.5.1.3 Order

Like film, *bande dessinée* can provide explanatory flashbacks, and *Le Cahier* is particularly complex in its inclusion of multiple flashbacks. In general, the mode of reading of a *bande dessinée* enables the reader to return to earlier sequences armed with information originally omitted through ellipsis or paralipsis and subsequently supplied in a flashback. This is particularly rewarding in the case of *Le Cahier*, where many subtle details, invisible to the unwary reader the first time round, become conspicuous on a second reading.

Bande dessinée is particularly suited to another type of manipulation of narrative order, parallel narration, as its spatial layout allows for the simultaneous presentation of sequences which are spatially distant within the diegesis. This occurs on page 60 of *Le Cahier*, where Louise is seen hastening through the streets as Victor walks away from prison (Fig. 10). The parallel positioning of the panels dramatizes their separate trajectories, although the narration thwarts the reader's expectation that they will finally converge. The indexical function of the speech balloon also allows for a more complex form of parallel narration. In the second panel of the final page, Louise is visible in the distance at a moment when Victor and Elena have already left the frame, their conversation inaudible to Louise but accessible to the reader through the speech balloons (Juillard 1994: 62) (Fig 11).

6.5.2 Bande dessinée and mode

Bande dessinée may employ either a homodiegetic or a heterodiegetic narrator. In the case of the former, images and *récitatifs* will be restricted to the knowledge of the narrator, although, as in film, it is rare that images are restricted to the ocular viewpoint of that character. Baru experiments with this in *Sur la route encore* (1997), in which the narration of chapters alternates between André and his wife, Édith, each of whom is travelling separately across France. In the chapters narrated by André, not including the final one, almost every panel represents his ocular perspective, and so the character himself is not in the frame. The

exceptions to this are a few panels which function as establishing shots, within which a tiny image of André may occasionally be discerned.

In the case of heterodiegetic narration, *bande dessinée* allows for zero, internal and external focalization. In *bande dessinée* terms, external focalization would require that all characters should be seen from outside only, with no thinks balloons, ocularized panels or subjective images. Conversely, zero focalization would display omniscience, giving access to the knowledge of all characters. Logically, any of them could have thinks balloons, and the narration could also offer their ocular perspective, including purely subjective images. However, as in the novel or film, zero focalization will rarely give equal levels of insight into the subjectivity of all characters. Internal focalization would not move beyond the knowledge of one character, who would therefore have to be present at all times, either within the panel or as the source of an ocularized image. There would be access to that character's thoughts, through thinks balloons or through wholly subjective images.

Ocularization in *bande dessinée* can include not only images representing the ocular viewpoint of a character, often preceded by a panel showing that character's 'glance', as in the two-panel sequence conveying La Fleur's upward look at Karim (Baru 1995: 240–241) (Fig. 7), but also images which bear traces of subjectivity through deformation, as in Alex's groggy vision of Karim (Baru 1995: 66), and purely subjective images, such as Faurissier's recollection of shooting his wife, which appears in an unframed panel and, in addition, is given a pixellated appearance (Baru 1995: 215) (Fig. 5).

As in the case of a novel or film, a particular type of focalization does not have to be maintained consistently throughout an entire work, although it may be. *L'autoroute* is recounted in zero focalization, not restricting its narrative perspective to that of any one character, but giving greatest insight into the subjectivity of Alex and Karim. It does, however, include sequences where it departs from this mode and temporarily adopts internal focalization. This is the case of the first 20 pages of chapter 8, which are focalized through Faurissier. The *récitatif* represents his perspective: 'The fat woman repelled him... She was lascivious... Afterwards he's going to kill her' (Baru 1995: 214–215), and the images portray only scenes where he is present, including panels representing his ocular viewpoint, and the subjective image referred to above. The atmosphere of this sequence is, therefore, particularly sinister.

6.5.2.1 Focalization and ocularization in Le Cahier bleu

Le Cahier, unlike *L'Autoroute*, uses a uniform, realist graphic style throughout, but nonetheless achieves great complexity of narrative perspective. Indeed, the story is wholly constructed out of the play of narrative perspective, and this is achieved principally through the deployment of the visual resources of the medium.

Chapter 1 is heterodiegetically narrated, and employs internal focalization, restricting itself to Louise's range of knowledge, with the exception of a single panel towards the end of the chapter, showing Armand leaving her flat, after she has broken with him (Juillard 1994: 18)

(Fig. 12). She is otherwise present throughout, and she has a couple of brief 'thinks' balloons. The very small number of *récitatifs*, apart from three which give brief indications like 'a few days later', are used to inform the reader of what Louise is reading and thinking about. They concern Armand's note to her, the rejection of his invitation that she formulates and then writes, and his subsequent unabashed response, which she reads whilst standing on a metro platform (Juillard 1994: 5–7) (Fig. 13). There are instances of her ocularized point of view, notably a panel showing Armand's letter lying unopened in her living room waste-paper bin, followed by a 'glance' panel showing Louise looking down at it (Juillard 1994: 5). There is, admittedly, one panel which shows Armand's ocular perspective, a high-angled view of Louise's legs as she opens the door of her flat (Juillard 1994: 2). It occurs at a very early stage, serving to indicate his indelicacy from the outset, and does not affect the dominant impression of internal focalization through Louise.

Chapter 2 consists of Victor's diary, and is therefore homodiegetically narrated. After the first two panels, the diary is transposed into *bande dessinée* format (or 'transsemioticized', in Gaudreault and Jost's term) with Victor's first-person verbal account in *récitatif* boxes, in his handwriting. The chapter is framed at the beginning by panels showing Louise settling down to read the diary, and at the end by panels showing her distress (Juillard 1994: 22, 42) (Fig. 14). She acts as the reader's surrogate and as we learn with her that she has been deceived by Victor, we realize that we have been deceived by the narration of Chapter 1. It becomes clear that by restricting us to Louise's perspective, the narration had hidden key information. In fact, the first chapter amounts to an exercise in paralipsis on a grand scale. Paralipsis is described by Genette as a 'lateral ellipsis', where the narration 'sidesteps a piece of information' (Genette 1972: 93). As a spatial medium, *bande dessinée* is very suited to such sidestepping. Like Louise, once we discover that we have been duped, we reappraise our vision of events. During Chapter 1, we realize, Victor must, logically, have been lurking outside many of the frames, observing Louise. We were misled, for example, by an image of Louise outside her flat, seemingly alone, throwing the envelope of Armand's letter into a waste bin. This image recurs in Victor's homodiegetic account in Chapter 2. This time, though, it clearly represents the ocularized viewpoint of Victor, who was there all the time, but invisible to Louise and to the reader (Juillard 1994: 6, 27). We will, furthermore, discover that we had been given certain information in Chapter 1 which we had ignored as narratively irrelevant, such as Victor's shadow on the ground in Louise's courtyard, and the left-hand side of his body, cut off by the frame, on the opposite metro platform to Louise as she reads Armand's letter (Juillard 1994: 7) (Fig. 13). Unnoticed by Louise, he went unnoticed by us. When we reread Chapter 1, we do so no longer in relation to what Louise knew, but to what she did not know, and we now look to the omniscience of the narration.

The narrative continues to be manipulative until the end. In Chapter 3, the heterodiegetic narrating instance resumes, framing a series of second-level homodiegetic accounts by the various witnesses who enable the detective-style intrigue to be resolved. The heterodiegetic narrating instance is responsible for the final pages of Chapter 3, but, where in Chapter 1 it had led the reader astray by entrapping us within Louise's perspective, it now frustrates us by presenting these pages in external focalization, depriving the reader of any insight into the

Figure 9. Juillard (1994) *Le Cahier bleu*, p. 1. © Éditions Casterman.

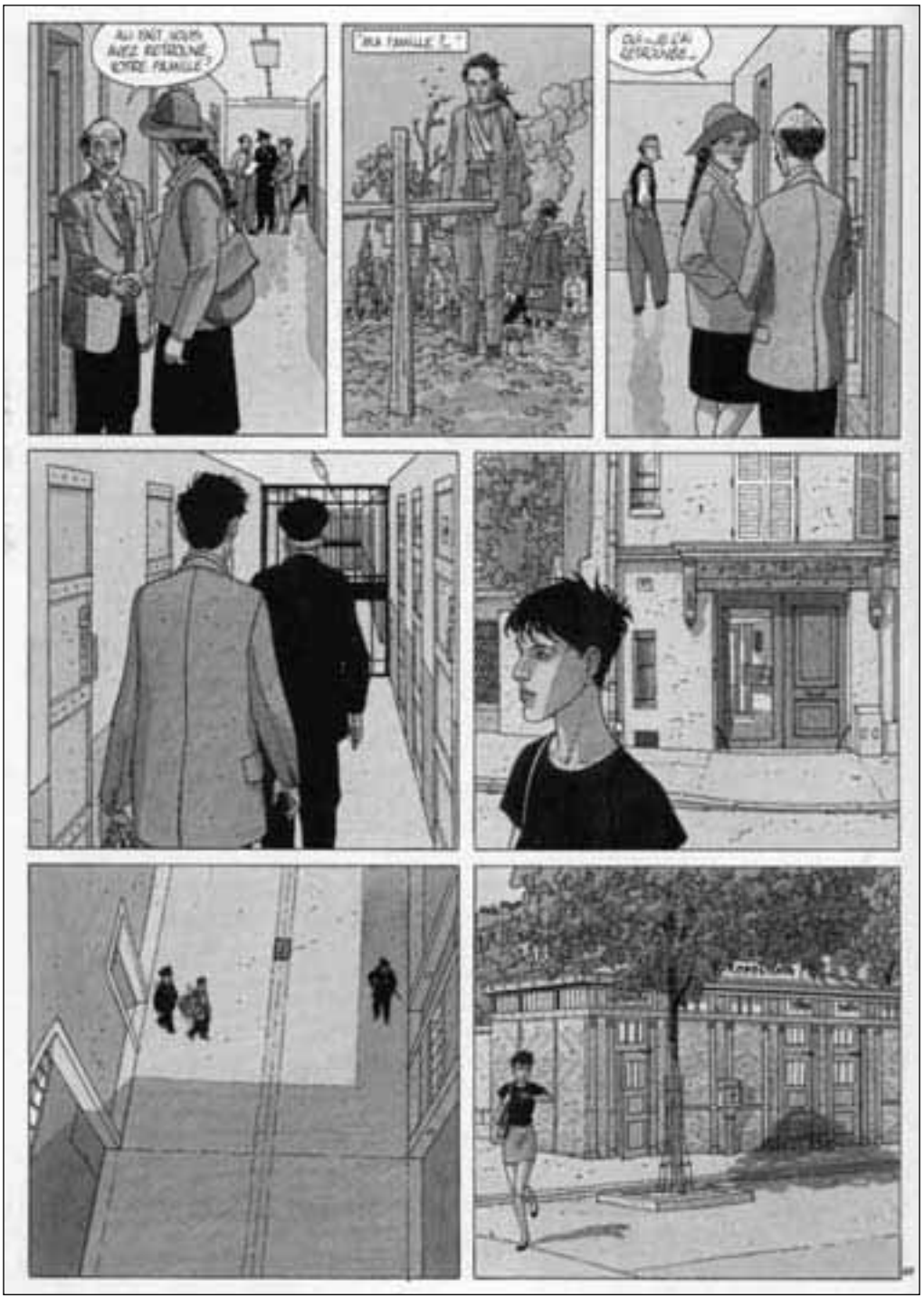


Figure 10. Juillard (1994) *Le Cahier bleu*, p. 60. © Éditions Casterman.

Figure 11. Juillard (1994) *Le Cahier bleu*, p. 62. © Éditions Casterman.

Figure 12. Juillard (1994) *Le Cahier bleu*, p. 18. © Éditions Casterman.

Figure 13. Juillard (1994) *Le Cahier bleu*, p. 7. © Éditions Casterman.

Figure 14. Juillard (1994) *Le Cahier bleu*, p. 22. © Éditions Casterman.

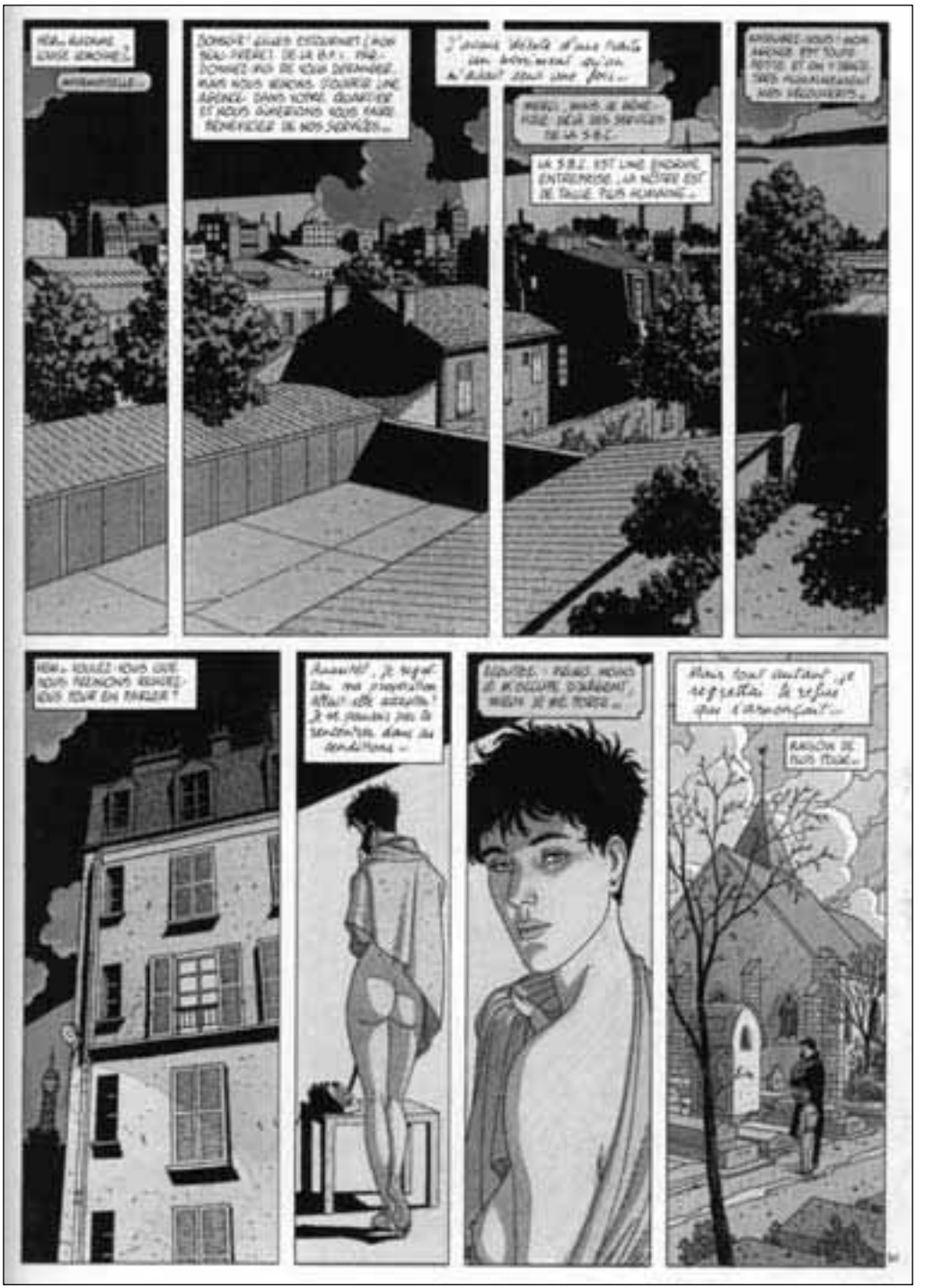


Figure 15. Juillard (1994) *Le Cahier bleu*, p. 30. © Éditions Casterman.

change of heart that has motivated Louise to go to meet Victor as he emerges from prison. At the same time, it 'flaunts', in Bordwell's term, its knowledge of Victor and Elena's conversation, which is outside Louise's earshot (Fig. 11).

Le Cahier demonstrates that *bande dessinée* narration has considerable flexibility in relation to mode. This extends to the use of subjective images.

6.5.2.2 Subjective images in Le Cahier bleu

Subjective images are regarded by Gaudreault and Jost as a subcategory of ocularized images, but we will treat them here in a separate section. In general, *bande dessinée* tends to exhibit a certain permeability between inner and outer worlds. We will see in Chapter 9, for example, that the diegesis of Dupuy and Berberian's *Monsieur Jean* is frequently invaded by the character's fantasies and anxieties, which take on material form. This is facilitated by the graphic style of the series, less realist than that of *Le Cahier*, which suggests continuity between fantasy and reality.

The realist style of *Le Cahier* nonetheless allows for the integration of subjective images in a particularly subtle way. Victor's homodiegetic first-person *récitatif* in his diary is accompanied by images which are focalized through his narrative perspective, and, occasionally, his ocularized point of view. There are, in addition, a number of images which must be read as wholly subjective. They do not, though, display modalization operators, in Gaudreault and Jost's term, which mark them out as memories or fantasies. Modalization operators can occur in *bande dessinée*: as we have seen, Baru gives a pixellated appearance to a panel which represents Faurissier's mental recollection of killing his wife (Baru 1995: 215). Juillard chooses to introduce subjective panels or sequences with no such signalling, however, and leaves it up to the reader to work out that they are not part of the reality of the diegesis.

In some cases, the status of these images can be ascertained by comparison with the account given by the heterodiegetic narrating instance in Chapter 1. When Victor phones Louise in the guise of a cold caller from a bank, he pictures her almost naked as she responds to it (Juillard 1994: 30) (Fig. 15). A return to Chapter 1 makes it clear that this must be a fantasy on Victor's part, since the call interrupts the preparations of a fully dressed Louise who is about to meet Armand at the Coupole (Juillard 1994: 7) (Fig. 13).

However, the album includes other panels whose status is not verifiable. These are at odds with the temporal and spatial sequence in which they occur and have no obvious relationship to those which precede or follow them. For example, during Victor's account of the feigned cold call, after the two panels showing the fantasized images of Louise, a panel showing a man and two small children standing by a gravestone inexplicably appears. It is not referred to by the *récitatif*, which continues on from the previous one, and concerns the phone call. It is for the reader to surmise that the image can only represent a memory of childhood loss. The absence of a verbal explanation, and the juxtaposition of the image with the erotic daydream about Louise, has the effect of creating an association between Victor's desire for Louise and the irreparable loss of his mother. The image in isolation would not convey such depths of

subjectivity. Its potency can be explained by the dissonance of the visual image from the *récitatif* and by the position of the panel, syntagmatically linked to the previous one, not by events within the diegesis but by the logic of the unconscious. It brings into play, then, the resources of *bande dessinée* as a verbal and visual medium, and the creation of meaning through the articulation of panels. Moreover, it will be echoed on page 60, by a similar panel, giving access to Elena's subjectivity and showing her standing by a grave, an image which we interpret as the outcome of her quest to find her family back in her home country. (Fig.10). *Tressage* adds to the resonance of both panels.

6.5.3 Bande dessinée and voice

This section will consider the question of markers of enunciation and the postulation of a meganarrator. It will be argued that such markers can take the form of dissonance between visual and verbal narrating instances, transitions which upset the impression of seamless continuity across the inter-frame space, and evidence that the narration is taking up a judgemental stance towards characters or events within the diegesis.

6.5.3.1 Visual and verbal narrating instances

When *bande dessinée* narration is delegated to a narrative voice-over, through *récitatif*, the potential arises for contradiction between voice-over and images. We mentioned this possibility in Chapter 5, section 5.3.2.3.2, when discussing the function of the text, but we will discuss here it in relation to markers of enunciation. When tension between the verbal and visual narrating instances is exploited, the activity of the meganarrator, ultimately responsible for both, is foregrounded, or given prominence. Such tension can, therefore, serve as a marker of enunciation. In Chapter 5, we quoted an example from *L'Autoroute* where there is a discrepancy between the register of verbal and visual elements. Elsewhere, more savagely ironical effects may be achieved, notably in Tardi's *C'était la guerre des tranchées* (1993), where patriotic homilies from establishment figures are used as *récitatifs* in panels showing the squalid death of soldiers (see Chapter 8).

A more complex kind of disjunction can occur where there is a difference in focalization between images and text. In Loustal's *Barney et la note bleue*, the heterodiegetic *récitatifs* in some chapters are focalized through the jazz musician Barney. In one of these, a *récitatif* in which we are told that he is musing upon a woman that he has noticed in a bar accompanies an image which represents not what he sees or knows but instead what he refuses to face, the unhappiness of his lover, Pauline. Here, then, the visual narrating instance takes up a critical distance towards the character's solipsism and inability to make his emotional needs coincide with those of his lover (Loustal and Paringaux 1987: 44).

6.5.3.1.1 Visual and verbal narrating instances in Le Cahier bleu

Le Cahier makes substantial use of *récitatifs* only in the sections which are delegated to homodiegetic narrators. In Chapter 2, where the content of the *récitatifs* consists of Victor's homodiegetic narration through his diary entries, the transposed version conveyed through images appears similarly to be restricted to his range of knowledge. There are no panels where Victor's *récitatif* is obviously contradicted by the image. Indeed, the fact that certain

panels in his account are slightly at variance with the corresponding panels in the heterodiegetically narrated version of events in Chapter 1 (for example the more welcoming smile that his version attributes to Louise when they meet at the gallery where he works), serves to confirm the status of the images as representing Victor's subjective recollections, thereby reinforcing their solidarity with the verbal narrative voice-over.

On closer inspection, however, there are traces of the presence of the meganarrator, which contrive to suggest a faintly ironical stance towards Victor. These arise, like Gaudreault and Jost's example from *Citizen Kane*, out of the inclusion in the homodiegetic account of images which represent events or situations that are outside his range of knowledge. They include a *tressage* series of three panels in which, as he anxiously observes Louise from a distance on different occasions, he is observed in his turn, rather more coolly, by a cat (Juillard 1994: 26; 32; 35). A further *tressage* series arises out of the marked formal resemblance between a panel in Victor's account and a panel in the first, heterodiegetically narrated, chapter.[64] Victor's own account shows him speaking to Louise on the phone whilst staring at a framed art gallery poster on his wall, to his right, presenting a photograph of the back view of a semi-naked woman (Juillard 1994: 41). The panel which depicts this same moment in the first chapter shows Louise in her flat taking Victor's call, whilst the jealous Armand, with whom Louise has just ended her relationship, stares to his right, not at a tasteful nude, but at Louise's (clothed) posterior (Juillard 1994: 17). Since Victor cannot logically be aware that Armand's stare duplicates his own, without the aesthetic pretext, this visual echo must be attributed to the meganarrator.

6.5.3.2 Conspicuous transitions

Since the process of narration in *bande dessinée* depends on the articulation between panels, the text's enunciative operations may draw attention to themselves through conspicuous transitions from one frame to the next. However, given that *bande dessinée* is an art based on ellipsis, we may include the absence of transformation as a device for making an impact. A famous example was alluded to in Chapter 5: that of Hergé's tryptich in *Tintin au Tibet*, where the background remains continuous across frame boundaries, but temporal progression is implied by the dialogue.

6.5.3.2.1 Spatial continuity and conspicuous transitions in Le Cahier bleu

There are a number of examples of spatial continuity across the inter-frame space in *Le Cahier*, notably the sequence in which Victor is making his fake cold call to Louise on page 30, where a view across the skyline of Paris is segmented by the frame boundaries (Fig. 15). Here the technique is used rather subtly, to emphasize Victor's sense of the vastness of the emotional space that separates him from Louise.

The album makes more dramatic use of marked discontinuity. This may arise out of ellipsis: in Chapter 1, between pages 9 and 10, the narration abruptly abandons Louise and Armand in the Coupole and precipitates the reader to the following day, where we find Louise at her place of work. Furthermore, suspense as to the outcome of the evening is sustained until four pages later, when Louise confides to her sister that she had slept with Armand. This 'flaunting'

of ellipsis, in Bordwell's term, should perhaps serve as a warning to the reader of the deviousness of the narration. We have pointed also to the case of transitions between panels which represent not a temporal hiatus, but a move from outer to inner worlds. Since *Le Cahier* does not employ modalization operators, so that it is not immediately obvious that an image is to be read as purely subjective, continuity is considerably disrupted.

Very salient transitions in relation to framing also function as markers of enunciation. The opening page of the transposed version of Victor's diary includes a panel showing the naked Louise, tiny through her flat window, followed by an extreme close-up of Victor's eyes, the 'glance' panel from the metro (Fig. 14). The latter panel may be naturalized within this homodiegetic account as establishing Victor as the origin of the visual, as well as the verbal, narration, but the disproportion between the relative sizes of Victor and Louise suggests that the meganarrator is drawing attention to his obsessiveness (Juillard 1994: 22).

Abrupt changes in angle of vision will be similarly noticeable. An extremely high-angled panel showing Victor looking up at Louise's block of flats is a sudden departure from a sequence of panels in which the framing is unmarked, and is particularly unexpected given that it falls within Victor's homodiegetically recounted version of events, where one might have expected a low angle, representing Victor's ocular viewpoint (Juillard 1994: 24). This can, then, only be the detached point of view of the meganarrator, tending to emphasizing Victor's role as, ultimately, the plaything of the narration, and prefiguring the later instances of subtle disjunction from his viewpoint, like the cats which seem to mock him, from outside his field of vision.

As we saw in Chapter 5, panels relate to each other not only through linear progression but also through the spatial disposition of the page as a whole. Where links are non-linear, they will tend to emphasize the enunciation over the diegesis through the paradoxical nature of their continuity, even though they may extend the thematic resonance of elements of the fictional world. We referred in Chapter 5 to the way in which the *mise en page* of *L'Autoroute* enables a tricolour-embellished roof to shelter the racist orator (Baru 1995: 20) (Fig. 3). In *Le Cahier*, *mise en page* associates Louise's body with Victor's aesthetic and erotic preoccupations, as a panel showing her head and shoulders occurs immediately above one containing the invitation to the photography exhibition, sent to her by Victor. The invitation features a photograph of a naked woman with head and shoulders cut off by the frame, making the link between these two fragmented images of a woman at the level of the enunciation rather than within the space of the diegesis (Juillard 1994: 18) (Fig 12).

More generally, the question of markers of enunciation can be related to the categorizations of *mise en page* by Peeters and Groensteen discussed in Chapter 5. An 'ostentatious' *mise en page* will necessarily draw attention to the process of enunciation. *Mise en page* is in general fairly sober in *Le Cahier*, with the exception of page 1, where the linear progression of the narrative is disrupted by two diagonals formed by a motif of frames. In the centre of the page is a panel which is entirely taken up by the stalled metro train, reframed within the frame through Louise's window. This forms the intersection of the X, the branches of which are frames

within panels representing windows and doors, out of which, in three cases, the progress of the metro can be observed. The narrative sequence showing Louise's morning routine is, then, overlaid by this pattern which announces the voyeuristic theme of the album (Fig. 9).

6.5.3.3 Narrative authority and judgement

We alluded in section 6.4.1 to Bordwell's claim that a filmic narration can take up a judgemental stance. We noted his aversion to linguistic analogies, but we will nonetheless use the term 'modalization' in relation to *bande dessinée* narration. We have suggested above that the term 'modalization operators', used by Gaudreault and Jost's to denote filmic techniques for indicating that a shot should be read as subjective, can be applied to *bande dessinée*, even if it is the absence of such techniques that is noteworthy in *Le Cahier*. 'Modalization' also has a wider usage in linguistics, referring to the resources that language has to imply judgements of certainty or uncertainty, or an evaluative or affective stance (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1999: 82–94, 122–134). In this section we will look particularly at the capacity of the graphic line and, more generally, the visual style of *bande dessinée*, to convey such judgements.

Representation in *bande dessinée* does not involve mechanical reproduction, and the individuality of the artist's technique necessarily testifies to the fabricated nature of the *bande dessinée* image. Styles vary from apparently impersonal neutrality to the highly personal. It may be assumed that the stamp of a particular graphic style is to be attributed to the extra-fictional artist rather than to a narrator, but this assumption would be challenged by the example of Giraud/Moebius, whose drawing technique varies radically according to genre. The epic scale of the landscapes gives an authority to Giraud's Westerns which is absent from the more fantastical decors of the science-fiction images tinged with 1970s psychedelia and signed 'Moebius'.

Bande dessinée has, of course, the verbal resource of the *récitatif*, and can use the modalization systems of language, but it is unique as a narrative art form in having an extensive range of visual resources to express degrees of certainty and nuances of attitude in relation to what is being recounted. We referred in Chapter 5 to the capacity of the medium to vary levels of iconicity. Fabrice Neaud specifically discusses in *Journal 4* the way in which such variation offers 'a new way of hierarchizing memories', as he redraws an image with a sketchier line to suggest that his recollection may be faulty (Neaud 2002: 18). Where a text does appear to display narrative authority, the reader may need to be wary, however. The confidence engendered in the reader by the realist style of *Le Cahier bleu* turns out to be misplaced, as the narration reveals itself to be manipulative and misleading.

We have seen that an ironical or evaluative stance may be implied by dissonance between verbal and visual enunciating instances, including the highly subtle *tressage* effect in *Le Cahier bleu* which undercuts the sensitive Victor's narration by establishing a visual equivalence between him and the cynical predator Armand. The graphic line itself can also indicate such a judgement. The increasingly grotesque representation of Faurissier, for example, in *L'Autoroute*, through drawings which become more and more caricatural, is a

condemnation of the character as well as, by implication, the extreme right-wing politics that he stands for. Similarly, the highly aggressive *ligne crade* was used by Vuillemin and others from the 1970s to express derision in relation to their subject matter.

An affective stance may also be communicated through line, as well as through colour. Baudoin's 'unfinished' line conveys rawness of the emotion felt by the narrator towards the characters, particularly the women, who people his memories, while the luminous tones of certain Tibetan scenes in Cosey's *Celui qui mène les fleuves à la mer* (1997) represent a vibrant homage to the country and its people.

In addition to the resources of verbal language, *bande dessinée* can, then, call upon a graphic language to attest doubt or certainty and signify attitude. The flexibility of the graphic line allows for varying degrees of precision and subjective investment by the narration in the representation of characters and decors.

6.6 Conclusion

In our discussion of mode in *bande dessinée*, we used *Le Cahier bleu* to demonstrate that the play upon narrative viewpoint, exemplified by Vanoye in relation to cinema through the work of a surrealist master such as Buñuel, can be used in a sustained and subtle way in *bande dessinée* so that a readjustment of assumptions about perspective becomes a key part of the reading process. The same album can illustrate the relevance of posing the question in *bande dessinée* as to who is narrating, since the answer is not always straightforward: the presence of a meganarrator can be discerned even where the narration appears to have been delegated to a character, and the album brings into play a number of the modalizing resources which mediate between narrator and fictional world. However, *Le Cahier*, like *L'Autoroute*, is a realist *bande dessinée* album, and the recognition by the reader of its constructedness as an art object of great formal complexity will simply add to the pleasure of reading. In the next chapter we will consider work by *bande dessinée* artists which goes considerably further in undermining the realist illusion. Some of the markers of narration that we have considered above will occur in a more extreme and exacerbated form, in texts which set out to display their own enunciative operations rather than to construct a coherent fictional world.

Chapter 7

Bande dessinée as Postmodernist Art Form

7.1 Introduction

The period which began in the second half of the twentieth century, which saw the rise of consumer society and the decline of heavy industry in the West, has been referred to as 'postmodernity'. A set of cultural practices, and a more general sensibility, that began to arise during this period, have been given the label of 'postmodernism'. Fredric Jameson has called postmodernism 'the cultural logic of late capitalism' (Jameson 1984).

It should be noted that postmodernism is not a 'movement', and theorists differ in the ways in which they characterize it: Jameson, for example, is pessimistic, whereas Brian McHale's account of postmodernist fiction stresses its inventiveness and the importance of the questions that it poses (McHale 1987). We will outline some of the features of postmodernity and postmodernism as put forward by key theorists, and illustrate them in relation to *bande dessinée*, before embarking on more detailed discussions of features of postmodernist narratives: metafictional elements, questions of narrative levels and intertextuality, and the display of the codes of the medium.

7.2.1 Postmodernity: the end of grand narratives

The postmodern period can be seen as a reaction against modernity. Jean-François Lyotard argues that postmodernity means an end to the grand narratives (*grands récits*) that characterized modernity: the belief that the universal human values of the Enlightenment would bring about emancipation and democracy, the belief in rationality and scientific progress, and the Marxist account of history as the story of the inevitability of the triumph of the proletariat. In a postmodern period these narratives have lost all credibility and have been

replaced by small narratives (*petites histoires*) that are provisional and contingent (Lyotard 1979).

The early *Tintin* albums stand as an illustration of a faith in grand narratives. Even the virulent attack on Bolshevism in the first one, *Tintin au pays des Soviets*, testifies to a belief in the power of a narrative that needed to be combated. The excitement of modernity takes the form of a fascination with speed and motion, and a belief in scientific progress takes the hero to the moon and back. Tintin, as the upholder of the 'civilizing mission' of colonialism and of western values in general, travels the world righting wrongs. These ideological certitudes began to fade in Hergé's later work, however, and by *Tintin et les Picaros* (1976), it is clear that the reversal of General Tapioca by General Alcazar will bring no change to the slum conditions endured by the people of San Theodoros, and all that Tintin can do is to rescue Castafiore**,** whilst leaving the people to their fate.

7.2.2 From modernism to postmodernism

As postmodernity displaces modernity, so postmodernism suggests a superseding of modernism, the artistic movement which had dominated the first part of the twentieth century. Modernism was itself a reaction against realism, the belief that the world could be known and portrayed through a transparent medium. Modernist movements in the visual arts include cubism, which used multiple perspectives to depict reality, and abstract expressionism, devoted to the exploration of the formal resources of the medium. By the 1960s, modernism had become thoroughly established in the institutions of high or official culture, and the critical discourses which surrounded it were hostile to mass culture, regarded as kitsch (see Greenberg 1941).

The term 'modernism' also applies to the fiction of authors such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Marcel Proust, who convey the complexity of individual psychology through techniques such as stream-of-consciousness, metaphor and an intensely subjective layering of time and memory. According to McHale, modernist fiction is preoccupied with epistemology, the problem of knowledge. Modernism asks questions which attempt to interpret the world such as 'What is there to be known? Who knows it? How do they know it and with what degree of certainty?' and often uses the logic of the detective story, 'the epistemological genre par excellence' (McHale 1987: 9).

There is, undoubtedly, a modernist current in *bande dessinée*. The work of Alex Barbier, based on crime intrigues set in mysterious urban landscapes, featuring denunciations, lies, cover-ups, and changes in point of view, falls into McHale's definition of modernism, as does that of Baudoin, which portrays subjectivity, memory and unknowability. It could be argued, furthermore, that the 'perspectivism' (often used as a synomym for 'modernism') of *Le Cahier bleu* betrays modernist influences on Juillard, hinted at by the Mondrian poster in Louise's flat (Juillard 1994: 3).

Postmodernism has broken with the retreat into subjectivity and into abstraction, and with the elitism of modernism. In the following sections, we will consider some theoretical issues that

have been associated with postmodernism, such as the idea of the simulacrum and the notion of deconstruction, before looking at questions more specifically concerned with postmodernist narratives.

7.2.3 Postmodernism: the loss of the referent

Jameson notes, with a certain melancholy, the loss of a belief in the referent, meaning a sense of the reality of the outside world. Cultural production 'can no longer look directly out of its eyes at the real world for the referent', as reality is transformed into images, often pastiches of other images and texts, and depth is lost, replaced by a preoccupation with surface appearance (Jameson 1988: 20).

The question of the loss of the referent is associated by Jean Baudrillard with the idea of the simulacrum. Baudrillard discusses the detachment of signs from their referents as a gradual process, which, in this postmodern era, has reached the stage of the simulacrum, the copy without an original. The image, he contends, has been through successive phases. Where once it was taken as the reflection of a profound reality, guaranteed by religion, it was subsequently assumed to mask reality, and could, therefore, be unmasked as ideology, allowing for the possibility that the truth behind the appearance could be revealed. In later phases, though, images marked the absence of any underlying reality and then became mere simulacra, referring to nothing but themselves (Baudrillard 1981: 17). The period in which we live is the 'desert of the real' (Baudrillard 1981: 10).

Bruno Lecigne has argued that the whole of Hergé's *oeuvre* can be regarded as a progression through Baudrillard's four stages of the image, from the confident assumption in the early albums that the images on the page were signs of the real until, in the final albums, the realist illusion was destroyed and the album became a pure simulacrum (Lecigne 1983: 52). The decreasing credibility of Hergé's fictional world is certainly apparent by 1963, with *Les Bijoux de la Castafiore*, where non-events, including the false rumour of Castafiore's engagement to Haddock, are amplified and circulated through press and broadcast media. Moreover, the one seeming event, the theft of the emerald by the magpie, is merely the product of a play on words, enabling Tintin to solve the crime by reading a newspaper report of Castafiore's triumph in 'The Thieving Magpie'. In Hergé's earlier albums, newspapers had been a device to inscribe his stories into a determinate, pre-existing reality. Hergé's attack on the referential illusion continues in *Vol 714 pour Sydney* in which the implausibility of the action is underlined by Milou's comment on the final page: 'Ah! If only I could recount what I've seen!... But no-one would believe me'. Hergé's final, unfinished album, *L'Alph'art*, posthumously published in 1986, had the eminently postmodern theme of the forgery of paintings.

The loss of the referent can be further exemplified in *bande dessinée* by the adventures of Fred's 1972 creation Philémon, who travels to faraway places like his classic Franco-Belgian predecessors, only to find that the island where he has landed is in fact the first letter of the word 'Atlantique' on the map. His travels can take him not into a realist fictional world but only onto the other letters: his voyage is confined to the signifier.

Figure 16. Mathieu, *L'Origine*, p. 11. © 1990 – Guy Delcourt Productions – Mathieu.

Mathieu's *L'Origine* deals specifically with the notion of the copy with no original. The hero, Julius Corentin Acquefacques, encounters the word 'origin', scribbled on a page of his own adventures that is sent to him anonymously. When he looks it up in the dictionary, it is missing: the entries go from 'orienter' to 'orin' (Mathieu 1990: 11) (Fig. 16). He will discover that he is a *bande dessinée* character whose entire existence is based on the reproduction of images by a printing press, and that the concept of an 'origin' is inapplicable to his world. We will use Mathieu's work later in this chapter to exemplify other aspects of postmodernist *bande dessinée*.

7.2.4 The decentred subject, deferral of meaning and deconstruction

Along with the loss of the referent, Jameson laments the loss of a sense of individualism and personal identity. Corporate capitalism has brought with it the 'death of the subject': the psychologically complex subject of modernist art has been replaced by the shallow and fragmented subject of consumer society (Jameson 1988: 16–18).

We can further discuss the disappearance of both subject and referent in relation to the work of the poststructuralist philosopher Jacques Derrida. Derrida does not, however, speak in terms of 'loss.' Instead, he dismisses the notion that there is any fixed point of reference for meaning, either in the world or within individuals. The belief that words simply take their meaning from their referent had already been undermined, as we noted in Chapter 5, by Saussure's characterization of language as a system in which meaning arises out of the differences between signifiers. Derrida goes beyond Saussure, though, seeing the system as intrinsically unstable. He calls into question Saussure's assumption that a signifier can be reliably associated with its signified. Meaning arises out of the potentially endless play of difference between signifiers and so can never quite be pinned down, as it carries traces of other signifiers in a metonymic chain. In Derrida's term, meaning is 'deferred'. Any sense that we might have that as human subjects we are the origin of meaning, and that words directly express our thoughts, is, therefore, illusory: the human subject is 'decentred'. Neither is there any ultimate authority or 'transcendental signifier' outside the system which will guarantee the stability of meaning. Derrida is particularly suspicious of those terms which are privileged within western thought through their hierarchically superior position within a binary opposition: man/woman, reason/unreason, for example. His method of reading a text, through 'deconstruction', sought to subvert these hierarchies through uncovering contradictions in the text itself (Derrida 1967).

These ideas can be illustrated by the deconstructive readings carried out by two members of the Oubapo group on early *Tintin* albums. The process of deferral of meaning along metonymic chains of words and images is exemplified by Jochen Gerner's *TNT en Amérique* (2002), based on Hergé's *Tintin en Amérique*, in which Tintin succeeds in defeating gangsterism in Chicago. Gerner's version has the same number of pages as Hergé's original, but each of them is overlaid with black, through which a few isolated words from Hergé's dialogues emerge. Hergé's drawings are replaced by pictograms cut out of the zones of flat colour from the original and haphazardly placed, dependent on the availability of coloured areas. Tintin himself is absent, and there is no narrative thread to tie the meaning down. On

the final page of *TNT en Amérique*, only the words 'honour', '*affaire*' (business or scandal), 'cleansing', 'arrest', 'city' and 'America' are visible, accompanied by iconic signifiers in the form of an American flag and an electric chair. In Hergé's original, a particular interpretation of these words had been encouraged by their inclusion in the radio reporter's speech praising Tintin's victory over crime which had earned him the gratitude of America. In Gerner's version, the meaning of words such as 'honour' and 'America' is freed from the constraining authority of the original, not fixed into a new definition, but brought into association with elements of a somewhat different metonymic chain.

A further Oubapo experiment offers an elegant example of the subversion of a binary hierarchy. François Ayroles transforms another early *Tintin* album, *Tintin au Congo*, by reducing the whole album to just two of its original panels. This results in a deconstruction of the binary terms which underlie it. In Ayroles's version, the first panel shows Tintin pointing out the coast of Africa to Milou as they arrive in a ship. In the second, he repeats the same left-to-right gesture, but with a rifle that fires off several shots. The animals, the pretext of the shooting in Hergé's original, are not visible in this panel, and only the violence of the gesture remains. As a result, the binary civilized/savage is overturned as the 'civilizing mission' now appears to rest on the savagery of the colonial enterprise (Ayroles 2003a: 88).

7.3 Postmodernist narratives

We have quoted above McHale's claim that modernist fiction is concerned with epistemology, the problem of knowledge. He contrasts this with postmodernist fiction, which is concerned with ontology, the problem of being. The questions that it asks, he says, are those which attempt to establish which world we are in, such as 'What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ? What happens when different worlds are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?' (McHale 1987: 10).

In this section we will discuss some characteristics of postmodernist narratives that are to be found in *bande dessinée*: metafiction; play on narrative levels through transgression of the boundaries of the diegesis (metalepsis) or through parallelism between first- and second-level narratives (*mise en abyme*); intertextuality; and the display of the codes of the medium.

We will use Mathieu's five-volume series, *Julius Corentin Acquefacques, prisonnier des rêves*, as a source of many of our examples. The hero's name, which corresponds to 'Kafka' backwards, evokes the paranoid universe which he inhabits. As the series title suggests, dreams feature frequently, but not as the expression of unconscious desires as they might in a modernist text. They work, in general, as a device for allowing (although never completely naturalizing) shifts from one level of narration to another, one 'world' to another. Dreams are one of the ways in which Mathieu explores the underlying theme of all the albums, which is *bande dessinée* itself and its codes. Mathieu has described his albums as 'a discourse on the medium' (Mathieu 2003: 34). We briefly summarize the theme of each album below.

Figure 17. Mathieu, *L'Origine*, p. 42. © 1990 – Guy Delcourt Productions – Mathieu.

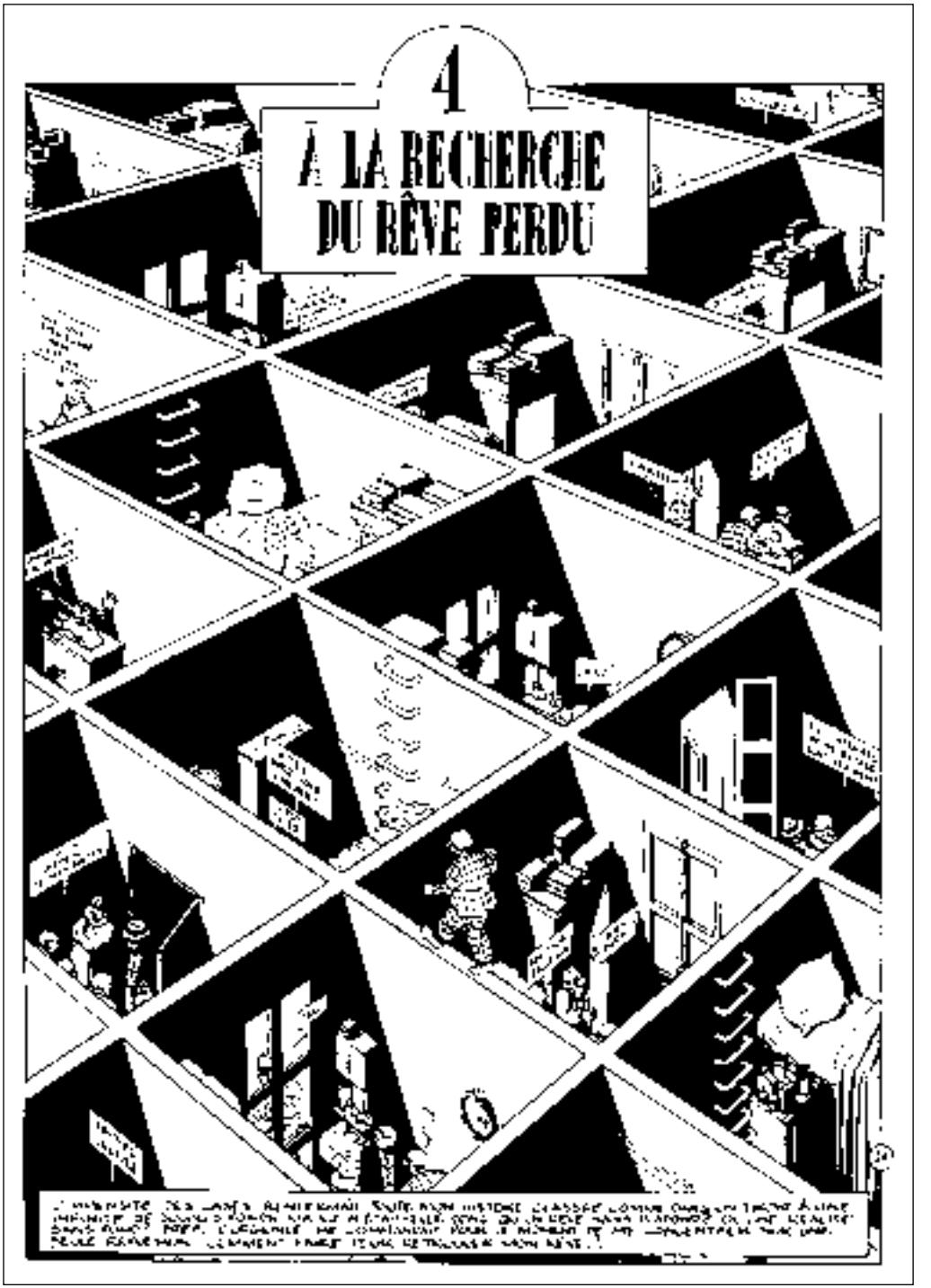


Figure 18. Mathieu, *Le Processus*, p. 28. © 1993 – Guy Delcourt Productions – Mathieu.

In *L'Origine* (1990), Acquefacques repeatedly receives torn-out pages from the album itself, sent to him by white-coated scientists who have come upon a copy of it, although it lacks the final pages. This has led them to realize that there must be a three-dimensional world which is responsible for creating the two-dimensional world that they inhabit. On the final page of the album, page 42, page 43 suddenly arrives by courier. It portrays the artist setting light to the page itself, and so the characters are abruptly faced with the imminence of their own destruction (Fig. 17). In *La Qu...* (1991), once Acquefacques has woken up from the nightmare on which the previous album ended, he embarks on a journey that enables him briefly to gain access to a world from which, as a black-and-white character he is normally cut off, that of *quadrichromie*, or colour printing. In *Le Processus* (1993), Acquefacques is caught up in a time-loop narrative, and walks back along the inter-frame space to try to re-enter his dream at the apposite moment (Fig. 18). *L'Épaisseur du miroir* (1995), which is symmetrical and can be read from either end, investigates reversibility at the levels of the monochrome represention of characters and of *mise en page*. *La 2333e dimension* (2004) is an exploration of two-dimensionality, through the device of a malfunction of the code which normally enables a three-dimensional world to be represented in a two-dimensional medium. In Acquefacques's opening dream, he drops a 'vanishing point' that was about to be fitted by an engineer, called out to replace a faulty one. Since a new vanishing point can only be found outside the world inhabited by the characters, Acquefacques and his neighbour Hilarion are launched into the 'infraworld' to collect one.

7.3.1 Metafiction

Metafiction refers to fiction which takes fiction itself, and fictional devices and techniques, as its subject. The loss of faith in the referent, referred to above, has led to a tendency for writers to abandon the construction of a believable diegetic world in favour of works of art which represent the process of representation itself. A novel may recount the writing of a novel, a film the making of a film, or a *bande dessinée* the production of a *bande dessinée*. This may amount to no more than an ironical, self-reflexive stance, whereby a work establishes complicity with a knowing reader by drawing attention to the fact that it is a book, a film or a *bande dessinée*, but it may, as in the work of Mathieu, Trondheim and others, ask more far-reaching questions. According to Patricia Waugh, 'metafiction' is 'fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality' (Waugh 1984: 2).

In a general sense, all of Mathieu's work may be said to be metafictional, since its subject is fundamentally the codes of the medium itself, but we can illustrate the concept more directly with an example by Trondheim, a strip called 'Étude sur un projet', in which a *bande dessinée* narrator explains, in *récitatif* boxes, how he is going to create various characters who will embody abstractions, such as God, death, a star, the moon, and madness, all of whom will be figured by different geometric shapes, as well as a human being. The rudimentary drawings and the triviality of the characters' initial concerns ('stripes are very slimming'), makes it seem doubtful that they can represent the profound metaphysical principles that the narrator ascribes to them, but soon they are raising questions about their own mortality and autonomy, provoked in part by irritation with the smugness of God's observation that, as a

representative of the author, he has life or death power over the characters (Trondheim 1997b: 118–121).

7.3.2 Levels of narration

As the quotation from McHale above implied, postmodernist fiction creates possible worlds and allows for the boundaries between them to be transgressed. Moreover, since these worlds are purely textual, they are 'under erasure', in McHale's term, and may be abruptly negated (McHale 1987: 101–106). This section will investigate narrative levels in *bande dessinée*, when they collide, as in metalepsis, or when they exist in a relationship of analogy, as in *mise en abyme*.

7.3.2.1 Metalepsis

'Metalepsis' is the term used by Genette for the violation of narrative levels (1972: 243–245). Fictional characters are normally enclosed within the diegesis, but metalepsis allows them to gain access to the level of the narration, or to that of the narratee. Conversely, the narrator may, metaleptically, enter into the world inhabited by the characters. There may also be a transgression of the boundaries between the world of the diegesis and the world of a second-level narrative within it. Dorrit Cohn has distinguished between these two types of metalepsis by calling the former 'external' and the latter 'internal' (Cohn 2003). Both types of metalepsis are familiar to *bande dessinée* readers.

7.3.2.1.1 First- and second-level narratives and internal metalepsis

Genette alludes to a tradition which dates back to the *Iliad*, of the picture which is 'animated' by a narrator in prose to the point where the characters seem to come alive (Genette 2004: 81–89). There is a tradition in *bande dessinéé* which goes a metaleptic stage beyond this. Smolderen and Groensteen have pointed out that a picture on a wall has habitually been the occasion for *bande dessinée* characters to penetrate its two-dimensionality and disport themselves in three dimensions. They cite, among others, Vandersteen's album *Le Fantôme espagnol* (1948), in which Bob and Bobette enter Breughel's *Village Wedding* and are able to continue their adventures in the sixteenth century before re-emerging out of the frame back into the twentieth century (Smolderen and Groensteen 1986: 91–97).

In Schuiten and Peeters's *La Tour*, conversely, a character emerges from a picture, a naked woman who beckons Giovanni to join her. This will prove to be a dream, but later the hero, weary and frustrated after his failed attempt to explore the labyrinthine tower in its entirety, will enter into the world of another painting, reproduced, like the first, in colour in this black-and-white album, and find himself fighting a battle with uniformed soldiers. The tower, now strangely reappearing as an element within the second-level narrative, is destroyed, and by the end of the album, the first-level narrative seems to have become an illusion and it is the second-level narrative which is real.

In Mathieu's *La Qu...*, there is a picture-entering incident which turns into metalepsis of a different kind. Having entered a picture of a theatre, which was hanging on the wall above his bed, Acquefacques finds himself alone in the audience. The actors on the stage step out of

Figure 19. Mathieu *La 2333e dimension*, p. 38. © 2004 – Guy Delcourt Productions – Methieu.

role and, still more transgressively, inform him that he is to play the principal role. This episode is subsequently naturalized as a nightmare, however.

The second-level text may itself be a *bande dessinée* rather than a picture. In this case, however, the shock effect is lessened, since both texts use the same representational system. Mathieu explores this type of metalepsis on two different occasions and maintains the impact of the transgression of levels by giving the second-level texts the form of pencilled-in drafts. In the case of *Le Processus*, the drafts that Acquefacques encounters are those which appear in their inked-in final versions in the album itself, and serve to emphasize that his personal history is entirely graphic. In *La 2333e dimension*, during Acquefacques and Hilarion's travels in the infraworld, they drift into some orbital debris in the form of screwed-up *bande dessinée* drafts portraying characters that are unfamiliar to them, for the good reason that their existence has been terminated before they ever got to the stage of being inked-in. Acquefacques and Hilarion, fully inked-in, find themselves in the middle of a protest by these characters against their rejected, unfinished status (Fig. 19). This episode not only illustrates a boundary-crossing between diegetic worlds, but shows one of those worlds as under erasure, in McHale's term. The protesters fit his category of 'cancelled characters' who occupy an 'intermediate ontological status between erasure and non-erasure' (McHale 1987: 105), and demonstrate the 'ontological peculiarity of a world in which events apparently both do and do not happen' (McHale 1987: 106).

7.3.2.1.2 The boundaries of the fictional world and external metalepsis

The ability of *bande dessinée* characters to become aware of their own graphic and fictional nature has long been a topos of comic *bande dessinée*. In the 1930s, Hergé's series *Quick et Flupke* featured two Brussels urchins who were regularly depicted visting their artist, drawn as Hergé himself, to play tricks on him, and who would take a rubber to parts of the drawing that displeased them (see Peeters 1990: 134–137). Mathieu's work is very different in tone. Acquefacques's realization that he is a *bande dessinée* character is a source of anguish to him, and *L'Origine* stresses the characters' tragic inability to have access to the three-dimensional world beyond their own in which the 'creative entity' exists. They will, metaleptically, glimpse this entity when Acquefacques receives the page showing the artist at his drawing board.

On the fifth page of the subsequent album, *La Qu...*, page 43 of *L'Origine* is reprised, but in the form of a photograph of the artist at his desk, taking a lighter to the page that he is drawing (Fig. 20). Acquefacques and his neighbour, Hilarion, can be seen hurtling across the page, in their graphic versions. The effect is to emphasize their fictionality, in contrast to the artist's existence outside the diegesis. The incompatibility of graphic status suggests an incompatibility of ontological status: while Acquefacques and Hilarion seem to have broken out of the diegetic world in which they had been trapped, through some kind of explosion, they cannot gain full access to the world of the artist, although they can see him**.** While one ontological boundary is maintained, another is blurred. The photograph of the 'creative entity' represents Mathieu himself. This is confusing for two reasons. On the one hand, the 'creative entity' may exist one narrative level up from its creations, but it cannot, unlike the real

Figure 20. Mathieu *La Qu...*, p. 5. © 1991 – Guy Delcourt Productions – Mathieu.

Mathieu, have a life outside the text. On the other hand, Mathieu's textual counterpart has a capacity to cause consternation amongst *bande dessinée* characters that the flesh-and-blood Mathieu surely lacks. At all events, Acquefacques and Hilarion's excursion outside their own world ends when they fall into the artist's coffee cup. As they break the surface of the black liquid, it changes from a photographic representation to a black graphic space, whereupon Acquefacques wakes up from what we now discover had been a nightmare and finds himself back in his own flat.

These examples of escape from the diegetic world use the spatial metaphor of characters managing to get 'outside' it. There are other ways of spatially representing the transgression of the boundary of the diegesis. *Bande dessinée* has a built-in non-diegetic space, the inter-frame space. From the 1960s onwards, Fred's Philémon and his companions would regularly find themselves expelled into the limbo of the gutter, from where they would struggle to re-enter the diegesis (Fred 1974: 47). The white space might also be co-opted into the fiction with a drawing of a page curling up at the edges postulating a further diegetic world containing the original one, so that the transgression would then be between first and second levels of narration (Fred 1993: 29).

Once characters are let loose into the inter-frame space, the spatio-temporal code is necessarily disrupted. Artists such as Fred and Gotlib have shown characters stepping from one panel to another, thereby straddling two time frames and, frequently, acknowledging the existence of their own past or future self in an adjacent frame (see Fred 1975: 6, for example). It is this possibility that Mathieu dramatizes in *Le Processus*, where each frame is transformed in his dream from a two-dimensional geometrical shape into a three-dimensional room, in which is played out one of the episodes from the first part of the album. Acquefacques is able physically to walk along the inter-frame space, which has become the top of the partition wall between the rooms, as he tries to get back into synchronization with his former self (Fig. 18).

The diegetic world can also be breached by giving characters an awareness not only of the level of the narration, but of the existence of the narratee, to whom they direct their dialogue. The spatial metaphor here works by analogy with film, as a character acknowledges the position of the camera, or of the spectator. This is famously exemplified by the cover of *Les Bijoux*, as Tintin steps out of the fiction to enjoin the reader to silence. He is set against a background showing the cameras, lights and other paraphernalia which are ready to film Castafiore's operatic performance.

Gotlib has made considerable use of this form of direct address. As a narrator, his textual self can claim the access to his narratee which is denied to fictional characters, but the comic effectiveness of this technique arises from the confusion of the narratee, implied by any act of narration, with the real-life reader. In his *Gai-Luron* series, which began in *Vaillant* in 1964**,** Gotlib spreads confusion further, by attributing an identity to the 'reader', that of 'Jean-Pierre Liégeois'. Philippe Geluck's series, *Le Chat*, features a cat which gazes out at the reader, dispensing aphorisms and observations, and, again, comic effect can depend on the

absurdity of the postulation that the reader can occupy the same spatio-temporal space as the character. The cat tells the reader to stop reading while he is speaking (Geluck 1994: 34), or photographs him/her, professing lack of concern for the embarrassment of anyone caught reading in the bathroom (Geluck 1994: 10).

7.3.2.2 Mise en abyme

The existence of a second-level narrative may give rise to *mise en abyme*. The term can be traced back to André Gide, who used it in 1893 to refer to instances of the subject of a work of art transposed 'to the level of the characters' (Gide 1948: 41). Among Gide's examples were heraldic devices, where, for example, a shield can be decorated by a motif of an identical shield, which is in its turn decorated by the same motif, and so on. *Mise en abyme* can occur in visual arts such as painting or film, or in literary works, where a framing story has a thematic relationship with the story that it frames. Lucien Dällenbach describes *mise en abyme* as an 'enclave having a relationship of similarity with the work which contains it' (Dällenbach 1977: 16).

Mise en abyme does not only occur in postmodernist texts. There is an example in *Le Cahier bleu*, in the form of a photograph by Doisneau, which offers the pretext for a discussion between Victor and Louise about the pre-arrangement of apparently chance meetings (Juillard 1994). Here *mise en abyme* works to add thematic resonance, without excessively disturbing the fictional illusion. However, McHale argues that postmodernist writing has exploited and developed the device extensively because its effect is 'to foreground ontological structure' (McHale 1987: 125). We will see that Mathieu's use of *mise en abyme* is considerably more flamboyant than that of Juillard, and that it does indeed foreground ontological questions such as 'What world are we in?'.

Dällenbach offers a typology of *mise en abyme* in literature, which can also be applied to visual narratives including *bande dessinée*. He categorizes it in relation to 'amplitude'. A *mise en abyme* can evoke its framing story without reproducing it identically, like the 'play within a play' in Hamlet: this is 'simple doubling'. It can offer an identical reproduction of its own framing story, as in Gide's Les Faux-Monnayeurs, whose hero, Edouard, is writing a story called called Les Faux-Monnayeurs, with a hero called Edouard, who is...and so on: this is 'infinite doubling'. It can also evoke the framing story in its materiality as an object, like Don Quijote's discovery of the book recounting his own adventures: this is 'paradoxical doubling' (Dällenbach 1977: 142).

L'Origine offers examples of all three types. It opens on a dream, which represents 'simple doubling'. Acquefacques dreams that he is walking across a surface covered in a grid pattern, where he encounters a flat character who exists only in the two dimensions of the floor. The surface is then transformed into a sphere, and Acquefacques ejected into the blackness outside it, while the character continues to adhere to its curved surface (Mathieu 1990: 1–3). This dream prefigures the discoveries that Acquefacques will make of his own two-dimensionality and of his inability to escape the diegetic world that encloses him, while reversing their logic.

Figure 21. Mathieu *L'Origine*, p. 29. © 1990 – Guy Delcourt Productions – Mathieu.

There is a vertiginous example of 'infinite doubling' on page 29, when the page sent to Acquefacques is page 29 itself. This is a moment anticipated by the reader, as up until this point the torn-out pages that Acquefacques and the reader have held in their hands have corresponded to pages that occurred earlier in the album. When page 29 arrives, the effect is spectacular, since it is not simply a single image that is repeated to infinity, as in Gide's example of a heraldic shield, but a multiple image. The page contains five panels, two of which portray the torn-out page itself, on which the amazed character contemplates himself in an infinite recursion (Fig. 21).

'Paradoxical doubling' occurs through the representation of the book as a material object, on page 29 itself, and on the previous page, where the bookseller hands it over to Acquefacques. The book, therefore, becomes both framing and framed. As Dany Rasemont puts it, in a study of *mise en abyme* in Mathieu's albums, 'the work which is included in the work is the same as the one that we have in our hands' (Rasemont 1999: 52). Rasemont quotes Jorge Luis Borges, who argues that the unease felt by the reader on discovering that Don Quijote is reading *Don Quijote* arises out of the possibility that we ourselves may be fictional characters (Borges 1974: 669 quoted in Rasemont 1999: 43). It is, of course, not only the book as a whole but also the individual torn-out pages that are represented as material objects in *L'Origine*: Acquefacques's thumb as he holds them corresponds to our own as we read them, and when the fictional world is under threat of annihilation at the end, we may hastily seek mental reassurance as to which world we ourselves are currently inhabiting.

7.3.3 Intertextuality

In 1968, Barthes announced the death of the author: a text's meaning could not be guaranteed by reference to an 'author-God', seen as its origin. Instead, every text can be regarded as 'a multi-dimensional space, in which a variety of writings, none original, blend and clash: the text is a tissue of quotations' (1984: 65). Julia Kristeva first used the term 'intertextuality' the following year, and her definition seems particularly applicable to *bande dessinée*, even though she does not refer to visual texts: 'every text is constructed like a mosaic of quotations, every text absorbs and transforms other texts' (Kristeva 1969: 145).

Intertextuality as defined by Kristeva implies that all texts are interwoven with traces of other discourses, in a poststructuralist deferral of meaning. Genette, while not assuming that a text's meaning can be exhaustively accounted for, contends that the mechanisms of intertextual relations (which he calls 'transtextual' relations) are subject to classification. He makes a distinction between 'hypertextuality', through which a new text (the hypertext) is created out of a previous one (the hypotext) by imitation or transformation (1982: 12–13), and 'intertextuality', which involves the co-presence of two texts, through allusion or quotation (Genette 1982: 8–9).

7.3.3.1 Hypertextuality: transformation and imitation

Examples of transformation are provided by the Oubapo group's reconfiguration of *Tintin* texts, referred to above, which may be seen as part of a continuing process of resistance and integration of the Franco-Belgian heritage by contemporary *bande dessinée* artists. Another

Oubapo experiment by Ayroles takes a story from Jean Graton's *Michel Vaillant* motor-racing series, which began in *Tintin* magazine in1957, as its hypotext, and changes the dialogue in the speech balloons, giving the characters metafictional insights into the graphic and narrative techniques out of which their fictional world is constructed. 'Even when I weep, no emotion comes across', complains the woodenly distraught Madame Vaillant, while Monsieur Vaillant fatuously declares his satisfaction with a clumsy use of ellipsis (Ayroles 2003b: 43, 48).

Imitation involves less critical distance and may take the form of straightforward pastiche. Jameson has argued that in the postmodern period, parody, which has a political and moral intent, has given way to pastiche, just as a sense of history has given way to the nostalgic recreation of the past through retro styling and the imitation of surface appearances (Jameson 1988: 15–18). Baudrillard has similarly argued that one of the consequences of the loss of the referent is nostalgia: 'When reality is no longer what it was, nostalgia takes on its full meaning' (Baudrillard 1981: 17). The exploitation of nostalgia has resulted in prodigious commercial gain for Dargaud, since the resurrection of Jacobs's *Blake and Mortimer* series in 1996, in which contemporary artists have simulated Jacobs's graphic style and the carefully recreated the 1940s and 1950s décors of the originals. There is, though, a certain readjustment of the referential system, as aspects of the originals that now seem unpalatable, like Blake and Mortimer's unproblematic acceptance of the colonial hierarchy, are rectified. In *Les Sarcophages du 6e continent* (Sente and Juillard 2003/4), a flashback credits Mortimer with a chaste teenage love affair with an Indian princess, forbidden by his own father and hers. His (mistaken) belief that he had caused her death bestows something approaching colonial guilt on the character as adult.

7.3.3.2 Intertextuality: quotation and allusion

Intertextuality may involve quotation from, or allusion to, a medium other than *bande dessinée*, including photographs, paintings or texts. We will focus here, though, on intertextual borrowings from *bande dessinée* itself.

When another *bande dessinée* text is directly quoted by a *bande dessinée*, it will normally appear in the form of a second-level narrative. Worton and Still have spoken of the 'power-relations aspects' of the transfer of texts, arguing that insertion into a new context will necessarily invest the quoted text with new meanings (Worton and Still 1990: 2). The cover of one of Vance and Van Hamme's *XIII* albums appears in a Trondheim strip, provoking Menu to comment, '*XIII* makes me sick – it's badly written' (Trondheim 2001b: 33). Trondheim disdains to make any effort to produce an approximation of Vance's style, thereby implying that he endorses this deprecating view. *Bande dessinée* can also allow for a new meaning to be literally supplied: in *Le Petit Christian*, Blutch reproduces pages from a Mickey Mouse strip, showing how it is defaced by little Christian and his friends who egg each other on to add rude words to the speech balloons (Blutch 1998).

Mathieu offers a variation on the hierarchy between quoting and quoted texts in *La 2333e dimension*. When Acquefacques and Hilarion are launched into the infraworld, the diegetic world from which they take off is portrayed as a sphere, its surface covered in pages of the

Figure 22. Mathieu *La 2333e dimension*, p. 42. © 2004 – Guy Delcourt Productions – Mathieu.

album up to that point. On their travels they will encounter two other diegetic worlds, also in the form of spheres: that of Schuiten and Peeters's *La Fièvre d'Urbicande* (1985) and that of Trondheim's *La Mouche* (1995) (Mathieu 2004: 42) (Fig. 22). These, then, are worlds which have equal ontological status to Acquefacques's own, and the fact that the pages are mechanically reproduced rather than redrawn by Mathieu emphasizes the disparity of drawing styles and suggests a certain respect towards the originals.

It is not only through direct quotation in the form of a second-level text that characters from one *bande dessinée* can appear in another. The eponymous heroes of Chéret and Lécureux's *Rahan*, and Morris's *Lucky Luke*, along with figures from various other popular cultural sources such as television series, emerge from their own fictional world to appear in that of *Le Petit Christian*, as the child's identity merges with theirs through his active fantasy life. The style of the originals is faithfully reproduced, in homage to the characters, and to emphasize their glamour in relation to his own world (Blutch 1998).

If such incursions across diegetic boundaries are not justified as a subjective fantasy, they will be more obviously transgressive. McHale refers to such instances as 'transworld migrations' (McHale 1987: 36). They can, admittedly, be accommodated in comic *bande dessinée* with some ease: Astérix can be spotted in *Tintin et les Picaros*, just as Dupond and Dupont make an appearance in *Astérix chez les Belges*. Elsewhere, the incongruity of such migrations is more striking. In another Blutch album, *Sunnymoon tu es malade* (1994), the artist integrates secondary characters from *Tintin*, such as Rackham-Lerouge, the fake claimant to the pirate's fortune and from *Blake and Mortimer*, such as the mad scientist Miloch, into the adventures of his heroine. In this album, he adapts their graphic style to match his own, thereby disturbing the fictional illusion of the originals as well as that of his text.

The Oubapo group have experimented with the sustained cohabitation of characters from different fictional worlds: Ayroles cuts and pastes McCay's Little Nemo, along with his speech balloons, into Schuiten and Peeters's *La Tour*. Curiously, however, the failure of Giovanni, the hero of *La Tour*, to acknowledge the intruder gives the impression that the nightshirt-clad child represents his unconscious and allows the two fictional worlds to coalesce (Ayroles 2003c).

It may be artists rather than their characters who are parachuted into another artist's *bande dessinée*, and the insertion of real-world people into a fiction produces what McHale calls an 'ontological scandal' (McHale 1987: 86). The *bande dessinée* artist Bilal turns up as the mystery villain in one of Menu's stories, and makes it clear that he feels himself to be slumming it: 'I don't understand this shitty story .. just fuck off and leave me alone' (Menu 1999: 50). In this case, the scandal of boundary violation serves to emphasize the conflictual relationship entertained by independent-sector artists with their immediate predecessors.

7.3.4 The display of the codes of the medium

In Chapter 5 we enumerated the codes which are the basis of *bande dessinée* narration, and in Chapter 6 we identified instances of the conspicuous display of those codes. In *Le Cahier bleu*, we found markers of enunciation such as discrepancies between verbal and visual

narrating instances, articulations between frames stressing either transformation or continuity to an unusual degree, and links (diagonal or vertical, for example), made at the level of the *mise en page*. We suggested that these were likely to increase the reader's awareness of the album as a work of art rather than to destroy the fictional illusion. Such devices may, however, be exacerbated to the point where, in Jean Ricardou's expression, the story does not exist prior to its enunciative apparatus, but is produced by it (Ricardou 1973: 39). This is the case of Mathieu's work, which is created out of experiments into the codes of two-dimensionality, monochrome and colour representation and the spatio-temporal code.

The question of the two-dimensional representational system of *bande dessinée* runs through many of Mathieu's albums, and *La 2,333e dimension* is his most ambitious exploration of this code. A play upon the two-dimensionality of the medium has occurred in the work of other artists, notably Schuiten and Peeters's *Les Murailles de Samaris*. However, in *La 2,333e dimension*, not only are streets made up of mere facades, as in the *trompe-l'oeil* city of Samaris, but the characters, including Acquefacques, have become flat. His travels through the infraworld lead eventually to an alternative way of creating a three-dimensional effect on a two-dimensional surface. The last part of the album contains several pages produced as anaglyphs, which have to be viewed through the colour-filter glasses supplied with the album. This episode ends when the 'guardians of reality' succeed in capturing the dream which had set the whole process in motion, and so restoring 'reality', in which the codes once again function unobtrusively.

In *La Qu...*, the apparent naturalness of both black-and-white and colour representation is called into question. Throughout the album there are verbal allusions to the monochrome nature of Acquefacques's world: day is referred to as 'white' and night as 'black'. He manages, though, at the end of the album to unlock a sealed hatch onto the exterior, and what comes flooding in is not colour, but quadrichrome, a printing process: this was the 'Qu...' of the title. As Acquefacques looks at a wall through a magnifying glass, he, and the reader, can see that the impression of flat colour is given by a combination of dots of different shades. He may have gained access to a world beyond his own, but it is no more 'real': it is simply governed by different codes of representation. The codes of monochrome representation are foregrounded in *L'Épaisseur du miroir*, in which the axis of symmetry signals a reversal not only of the progression of the narrative and the composition of panels and pages, but of the distribution of black and white areas out of which décor and characters are created.

We have alluded to the materialization, in *Le Processus*, of the code through which the inter-frame space implies temporal progression, in the form of a ledge along which Acquefacques could walk and so look down at his former self in previous panels. A still more startling disruption of the spatio-temporal code occurs in *L'Origine*, where a panel is simply cut out of the middle of page 37, a literal hole in the space of the page. The device of the empty frame causes paradoxical leaps forward and back in time, since panels from previous and subsequent pages can be seen through it and so are anomalously juxtaposed to the surrounding panels. The disquieting effect of this sudden void cannot simply be attributed to

the havoc that it wreaks on narrative chronology, however. Once again, Mathieu shows the precarity of a fictional world which can simply be annihilated.

More generally, Mathieu alludes to the codes of the medium through the use of grids and squares as a visual motif throughout, on floors, walls and Acquefacques's pyjamas. Baetens and Lefèvre have noted a general tendency in *bande dessinée* for frames and grids to feature within the diegesis and argue that this is so flagrant in Vaughn-James's *La Cage* that certain pages seem to declare, 'I am a *bande dessinée*' (Baetens and Lefèvre 1993: 70–71). In Mathieu's work, internal frames and patterns of grids are generalized to the point where this message becomes positively hypnotic. As Laurent Gerbier says, 'the effects of graphic checkering (*quadrillage*) provide an analogy of the work of *bande dessinée* within the story itself, and the story [...] is that of Julius Corentin Acquefacques, *bande dessinée* character, confronted with the agony of his own engendering as a graphic character' (Gerbier 1999: 75–76).

7.4 Conclusion

The title of *La Qu...*promises investigation of a question, since most French question words begin with the letters 'qu...'. The reader might expect it to be an ontological one such as 'What kinds of world are there, and how do they differ?'. The letters turn out to refer to *quadrichromie*, however, but this allusion to one of the codes of the medium is not an unreasonable response, given that the album, like the others in the series, interrogates the construction of a diegetic world through the signifying mechanisms of *bande dessinée*, and brings that world into contact with others within it, beside it and beyond it.

We have noted that postmodernist fictions are characterized by a certain disinvestment in the reality of the fictional world in favour of the exhibition of the devices that bring it into being. *Bande dessinée* is, then, peculiarly suitable as a vehicle for postmodernist narrative, since the enunciative apparatus constituted by the grid of frames is visible on the surface of the page, bringing the illusory world of the fiction into permanent contact with its two-dimensional surround, and allowing for transgression of its boundaries to be similarly highly visible. The grids which tend to proliferate within the diegesis further contest its integrity. We would argue, though, that this does not imply that the medium is condemned to favour surface over depth. Mathieu's dramatization of the tension between ontological worlds is striking, not just for its cleverness, but for the climate of anxiety aroused by his interrogations.

Part Three

A Cultural Studies Approach to *bande dessinée*

Jill Forbes and Michael Kelly argue that the basic question which cultural events and activities are called on to answer is 'that of identity: who am I?' (Forbes and Kelly1995: 1). The following chapters will consider how various aspects of identity have been explored in *bande dessinée*. It is French culture that concerns us here,[65] and one dimension of identity will concern nationality. It is on this area that we will focus in Chapter 8. *Bande dessinée*, like other cultural forms, may celebrate consensual views of 'what it is to be French', with *Astérix* as the most obvious example, but it may also contest them, as we will see in the work of Gotlib and Tardi.

Nationality intersects with other dimensions of identity such as ethnicity, class and gender, areas which we will touch on in Chapter 8 and pursue further in Chapters 9 and 10. Minority ethnic groups are in a complex position in relation to national identity, particularly when their family origins are in former colonies, since their status as French may at different times be insistently proclaimed, or challenged. In Chapter 9 we will look at the work of two artists from an Algerian background, one born in France and one in Algeria, but we will also look at the way in which France's long involvement with Algeria, and the violence which accompanied the achievement of independence by the former colony, has affected the identity of a French artist from the white majority.

Chapter 10 focuses on social class and masculinity. As we saw in Chapter 2, Boltanski argued that the social origins of artists of the *Pilote* generation led them to caricature the lifestyle of the petite bourgeoisie (Boltanski 1975: 46). We will look at the work of Binet, one such artist, but we will also see how later generations have extended their satire to sections of the bourgeoisie. Meanwhile, the working class have tended to remain unrepresented by *bande dessinée* artists, with rare exceptions such as Baru, upon whose work we drew in

Chapter 5, and, in more comic mode, Frank Margerin, whose work we will also discuss in Chapter 10.

In considering gender identity, as figured in *bande dessinée*, in Chapter 10, we focus on masculinity rather than femininity. Female characters have, notoriously, tended to be absent from the medium or to depend for their existence on adolescent male fantasies in which it is difficult for women to recognize themselves. The obverse of these fantasies is the castration terror embodied most strikingly by Hergé's Castafiore (which we will discuss in Chapter 11).[66] There have been notable exceptions such as Tardi's Adèle Blanc-Sec, but, in general, *bande dessinée* is a richer resource for discussing male identity than female identity, and the analysis of the representation of social class in Chapter 10 would be incomplete without a discussion of the portrayal of masculinity.

The under-representation, or stereotypical representation, of women in the medium is, of course, linked to the difficulties that female artists have had in getting their work published, a topic on which Chantal Montellier, an almost lone pioneer, has been eloquent. In the *bande dessinée* publishing milieu, as she says, 'misogyny exists' (Montellier 1985: 73). Since the 1990s, the situation has eased, and in Part four we will consider the autobiographical work of two women artists, Julie Doucet and Marjane Satrapi.

Chapter 8
NATIONAL IDENTITY

8.1 Introduction

In analysing the representation of national identity in *bande dessinée*, we would want to ask questions such as: what does it mean for these characters to say 'we'? What meanings are attached to being French? What are the national values? Who embodies them? We will take *Astérix* as a case study, before more briefly considering two other series whose sharp satirical attack on various symbols of Frenchness contrasts with the gentle parody of Goscinny and Uderzo: Gotlib and Lob's *Superdupont* and Tardi's *Adèle Blanc-Sec*.

Benedict Anderson has, famously, defined the nation as an 'imagined community': the members of a nation will never meet the vast majority of their fellow members, who nonetheless live in their minds, and with whom they are linked by a 'deep horizontal comradeship' (Anderson 1983: 6–7). Anderson stresses the importance of print media in fostering this impression of belonging to a national community, but he also asserts that the 'imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life' (Anderson 1983: 35–36). We may take 'everyday life' to include cultural practices in the anthropological sense, such as mealtime routines, as well as material culture in the form of objects and décors which are iconically French.

In addition to these 'horizontal' links there is, Anderson proposes, 'the need for a narrative of identity', which has to be written backwards and arises out of a process of both remembering and forgetting (Anderson 1983: 205). Étienne Balibar develops this point, arguing that the presentation of the history of a nation in the form of a narrative, a myth of origins and continuity, is a 'retrospective illusion'. It gives the impression that succeeding generations have transmitted an 'invariant substance' to each other, and turns a succession of events into a 'destiny' (Balibar 1988: 117–118). The narrative of national identity, like any other narrative,

has heroes, and is also associated with sacred sites and monuments around which there is an accretion of historical memories, the 'sites of memory' which are the focus of official symbolism and ceremonial (Pierre Nora: 1997).

The national narrative also features enemies, of course, and identity is further defined in opposition to those who have taken up this role. At varying times in French history the 'other' has been Britain, during colonial rivalries, for example; Germany, in three wars since 1870, including the two world wars; America, whose imperialism in foreign affairs and cultural dominance from the 1950s onwards was perceived as a threat; and the many countries which came under French colonial rule, most of which ultimately regained their independence during the 1950s and 1960s after often very bloody struggles. Opposition does not preclude a certain fascination. The 'orientalism' of western art (Said 1978), which portrayed the colonial other as exotic and savage, appeared in *bande dessinée* from the earliest days of the adventure genre, in Saint-Ogan's *Zig et Puce*, for example. The medium has also drawn considerably on American genres such as the Western.

The 'other' may be found not only outside the nation but within it, as different groups claim to uphold the national interest. This was notably the case during the Occupation, but 'franco-français' divisions have broken out into open conflict at various other times, including, spectacularly, May 1968. As we saw in Chapter 2, *bande dessinée*, perhaps more than any other medium, embodied the often anarchic spirit of counter-cultural rebellion that was in the air. Explicit political allegiances are overlaid onto a national identity which is already, as we argued in the introduction to Part three, necessarily multiple. While official representations of the nation may well acknowledge diversity in relation to region, there may be under-representation, or negative or stereotyped portrayal, of some social or ethnic groups. Those who wield power and influence may use culture, including mass culture, in order to naturalize their own dominance, and, conversely, some artists, including *bande dessinée* artists, see their role as the contestation of such normative representations.

Frenchness may be defined, then, in relation to a national historical narrative, which is subject to constant retrospective readjustment. It is shaped by external and internal conflicts, and connected with the practices and surroundings of daily life, as well as to the more formal manifestations of the life of the nation. *Bande dessinée*, like other art forms, may act as a vehicle for dominant representations of national identity, but, as we shall see, it has also shown itself to be particularly apt at subverting them.

8.2 *Astérix* (Goscinny and Uderzo, from 1959)

We have chosen to focus on *Astérix* in this chapter, since it has itself become part of the mythology of Frenchness. However, even in the case of such a mainstream series, it will be clear that there is no one world-view which can simply be read off the text, and *Astérix* has proved to be particularly open-ended in its relationship to the collective imaginary. We will limit our discussion to those albums produced by Goscinny and Uderzo together. The first of these appeared in 1961, based on the series which had begun in *Pilote* in 1959. Goscinny died in 1977, and although his name continues to appear on the cover of albums produced

by Uderzo alone, the final album on which he is credited as the writer is the 1979 *Astérix chez les Belges*. Our purpose is not to analyse the mechanisms of humour in the series, but to consider how various critics have discussed it in terms of French identity, and to contribute to the debate.

The action of *Astérix* is set in the year 50 BC. Astérix the warrior, Obélix the menhir deliverer, Panoramix the Druid, Assurancetourix the bard and Abraracourcix the tribal chief are the best-known inhabitants of a Gaulish village which is alone in holding out against the Roman occupation. Goscinny and Uderzo's chosen historical period has great significance in relation to French identity, for reasons which we will briefly outline. 'Gaulishness' is itself a myth of origins, with its hero, Vercingétorix, from the Averni tribe (from the area corresponding to the present-day Auvergne), and its symbolic sites. At Gergovie (now Clermont-Ferrand), Vercingétorix led the Gaulish tribes, united under his leadership, to victory against Caesar's army in 52 BC. At Alésia, in the same year, the Gauls were besieged and suffered a heroic defeat at the hands of the Romans, including Caesar's Germanic cavalry, regarded as 'barbarians' by the Gauls. Vercingétorix was forced to surrender.

These historical facts are well established. The mythologizing of Vercingétorix is a relatively recent invention, however. The site of Alésia was excavated in the 1860s under Napoleon III, who erected a statue of Vercingétorix amongst the ruins. The status of the Gaulish warrior as national hero grew under the Third Republic, which lasted from 1870 to 1940, and which greatly reinforced the role of the school in forming future citizens of the Republic. It was important for schoolbooks to provide a progressive alternative to the royalist narrative according to which the foundation of France dates back to royal dynasties, and in particular to King Clovis's baptism into the Catholic Church in 496. André Thill suggests that Vercingétorix was chosen for his ability to incarnate both national unity and secularism, since the Gauls were pagans (Thill 1998: 313). The image of Vercingétorix's noble surrender to Caesar, caricatured at the beginning of the first *Astérix* album, *Astérix le Gaulois* (1961), appeared in history textbooks, and the warrior was offered as a model of Republican values.

What further meanings does this version of French identity take on when represented in comical form by the characters of Astérix and his fellow villagers? It may be argued that the series is primarily a 'burlesque parody of any orthodox mythology', in the words of André Stoll (Stoll 1978: 131). Moreover, the authors have always claimed that their intention was simply to find a period of French history that would be a source of humour (Guillaume and Bocquet 1997: 116 and 172). This would suggest that, rather than adding meanings, the series undermines those that already exist by lampooning the rhetoric and iconography of a national culture transmitted through school textbooks. However, authorial intention does not account for all the meanings to be found in a work, and the use of anachronism as a source of humour seems to invite readers to interpret *Astérix* in the light of more recent historical events. Many critics (including Stoll) have taken up this challenge.

One obvious interpretation arises out of the idea of resistance. It was in 1959, a year after de Gaulle had inaugurated the Fifth Republic, that Goscinny and Uderzo chose a Gaulish

village as the setting for their series. Can we assume that the resistance by the villagers against the Romans can be straightforwardly equated with the Resistance against the German Occupation that de Gaulle had led from London? In 1959, France was still suffering from national amnesia. The historian Henry Rousso has emphasized how far the memory of Pétainism was repressed in the national psyche. Official memories of the Occupation recast the nation as *La France résistante*, united in defence of the 'eternal France' that had briefly been usurped by the collaborationist regime (Rousso 1987). It was therefore unsurprising that when the series came to the attention of the media in the 1960s, it should be seen as incarnating the spirit of Resistance associated with the personal legend of de Gaulle. *Astérix* undoubtedly allows for this form of identification, and for some critics it remains the most obvious reading. As Christophe Campos says: 'The Roman legionnaires of Goscinny and Uderzo are a comic-opera version of the Wehrmacht' (Campos 2005: 2). Others have suggested that the text allows interpretations which depart from this direct transposition.

Stoll, a German, wrote the first book on the subject of *Astérix, Astérix, l'épopée burlesque de la France*, in 1974. It was published in French in 1978. Stoll allows that there are certain obvious references to the Occupation and the Resistance. In *Le Tour de Gaule d'Astérix* (1965), Astérix and Obélix go to Lugdunum, the Roman name for Lyon, the city of the Resistance hero Jean Moulin, and the methods used by their Gaulish compatriots to hide them from their Roman pursuers are clearly based on those used by Moulin's network. In *Le Combat des chefs* (1966), the fascist salute of the collaborator Aplusbegalix and his subsequent condemnation to 're-education' seem to situate him in the context of the occupation and the *épuration* (rooting out of collaborators, literally 'purification') which followed the Liberation in 1944.

However, Stoll argues that the collaborator's urbanism projects associate him with the American influence on post-war France, and that the portrayal of the Roman army conforms less to the stereotype of the German occupier than to that of American troops, known for their 'legendary lack of discipline' (Stoll 1978: 152). He further points out that the manufacturer of sickles in *La Serpe d'or* (1962) is called Amérix, and that the Roman governor who is profiting from his work is represented as a mafia boss. In general, Stoll claims that the opposition Gauls/Romans should be read not as French resistants/German occupiers, but as France/America, thereby resituating the idea of resistance as opposition to the Americanization of France in the 1960s: 'From the beginning to the end of the epic sequences, the USA is hidden under the most caricatural features of Roman civilization' (Stoll 1978: 152).

The historian Maurice Agulhon dismisses altogether the idea that the series should be read in relation to the Occupation: the Romans do not plausibly represent the Nazi occupiers, since they are not portrayed as 'hateful butchers' (Agulhon 1998: 300). He argues that the series addresses different cultural and political anxieties. The 1950s had seen the beginnings of the dismantling of the French Empire with the defeat at Dien Bien Phu. By 1959, the crisis in Algeria had become acute, and the imperative of decolonization had to be faced. Agulhon claims that the ideological mutation that *Astérix* brought to the Gaulish myth chimed with the

ideological mutation that de Gaulle had to bring about in France. Once the Évian agreement had sealed the independence of Algeria, it had become painful to evoke the imperialist mythology which had dominated the first half of the century. It was vital, then, to create an alternative mythology.

Agulhon points out that Vercingétorix was a glorious and valiant loser, whereas Astérix is invincible. The Romans are therefore not represented in the series as conquerors, unlike Caesar's Romans, and so must be read as whoever France was standing up to at the time, which logically means NATO and/or the 'Anglo-Saxons' (a term used in French to mean North American and British). *Astérix* supplied, then, an anti-imperialist mythology, in which Astérix was de Gaulle, flamboyantly defying the 'Anglo-Saxons' by refusing to allow NATO bases in France and, on a famous visit to Mexico in 1964, by declaring his support for the resistance of Latin-American countries to US hegemony. 'If our hypothesis is correct', says Agulhon, 'the success of *Astérix* is a sign of the adhesion of a considerable part, if not a majority, of French opinion to a neo-patriotism which could be called Gaullo-third-worldist' (Agulhon 1998: 300).

The 'other' against which French identity is defined in *Astérix* has, then, been variously designated as the Germans, the Americans or NATO. Nicolas Rouvière, writing in 2006, is not convinced by any of these readings. He agrees that Astérix, as an anti-superhero, could be said to stand in opposition to the Anglo-Saxon world order, but suggests that it is difficult to see him as the incarnation of Gaullist foreign policy, given that the idea of 'grandeur' is alien to the ethic of the series (Rouvière 2006: 133–135). Rouvière picks up the theme of the Occupation, but he rejects the simple equation of resistance with Resistance against the Germans, finding instead, in one album, a more complex confrontation between competing mythological representations of this period. By the end of the 1960s, the 'resistentialist' version of history was being called into question, and Rouvière argues that *Le Bouclier arverne*, published in 1968, is symptomatic of this evolution of collective memory. The album deals with the search for the shield of Vercingétorix. The action is situated at Aquae Calidae, a spa town which clearly stands for Vichy, and Rouvière points out that the metaphor of a shield against Nazism was often used to exculpate Vichy politicians. The character of Alambix has given away the shield of Vercingétorix to a stranger at some time in the past, and this plays on his conscience, an evocation, maintains Rouvière, of France's collective sense of guilt over the events of the war. Moreover, during his search for the shield, Astérix encounters people through whose hands it passed, who represent varying degrees of collaboration and compromise. On the other hand, Abraracourcix, who will finally reveal that his own shield is in fact the shield of Vercingétorix, refuses all mention of the defeat at Alésia and will only condone recollections of the victory at Gergovie. Rouvière claims that 'the authors offer even-handed condemnation of the "resistentialism" of Abraracourcix and the guilty cowardice of Alambix, who both repress the past in the same unhealthy way' (Rouvière 2006: 150).

The interpretative compulsion that surrounds *Astérix* is, however, far from exhausted by readings which focus on the theme of resistance against an external enemy, or by Rouvière's

more nuanced take on the struggle over historical memories of the Occupation. The series has also been discussed in terms of internal political debates, including those provoked by de Gaulle's conception of the presidency as a direct relationship between a strong leader and the people, above party factions, a principle which underlay the constitution of the Fifth Republic.

For Hervé Barraud and S. de Sède, writing during de Gaulle's regime, the President is figured by Abraracourcix. They argue that in spite of, or perhaps because of, his inactivity, the tribal chief embodies an eternal idea of Frenchness based on recognition of the 'national soul'. Those who are insensitive to this mystical vibration rule themselves out of being French, but those who can feel it will be receptive to the idea of the 'providential man', whose legitimacy depends only on his capacity to incarnate the 'profound aspirations' of his people (Barraud and de Sède 1969: 37–40).

For Forbes and Kelly, who describe the series as 'a conscious self-representation of the French nation in the early years of the Fifth Republic', the Gaullist presidential style, characterized as 'Césarisme' by the parties who opposed it, is represented not by Abraracourcix but by the Roman emperor. They suggest, though, that the series brings about an imaginary reconciliation: 'Julius Caesar is a figure of power and respect, with a complicit twinkle in his eye. There is the hint there of an accommodation between the unruly French political parties and the aloof *césariste* President' (Forbes and Kelly 1995: 134).

The series has also been held to articulate conflicts over particular areas of domestic policy, such as the Gaullist project of rapid modernization. The Gauls and de Gaulle would seem to be on opposite sides of the divide, since Brittany is not an obvious choice for the location of a village which would stand metonymically for the Gaullist vision of a forward-looking nation. Stoll points to an earlier *bande dessinée* representation of Britanny in the *Bécassine* albums, where the eponymous Breton maid represents the provincialism and backwardness that are stereotypically associated with the region and a focus for the contempt of the progressive bourgeoisie (Stoll 1978: 38). Moreover, as he says, modernity is frequently parodied in *Astérix*: Giscard d'Estaing, Minister of Finances under de Gaulle, is caricatured in *Astérix et le Chaudron* (1969) as a Roman tax collector with a bureaucratic and modernizing discourse (Stoll 1978: 156). *Astérix* would seem, then, to be rejecting the programme promoted by the Gaullist government. Indeed, Stoll claims that the series was on more than one occasion characterized in the press as being Poujadiste (Stoll 1978: 157), a general term for right-wing populism deriving from the 1950s protest of small shopkeepers, led by Pierre Poujade, against both the state and big business. Stoll concludes, though, that the contradiction seems to be resolved through the personae of Panoramix and Astérix. Where Obélix incarnates a primitivism and hostility to progress, the druid is cultured and cosmopolitan, and the warrior easily masters the communication networks of the 'more civilized' invaders, all the better to defeat them (Stoll 1978: 159).

Rouvière again offers a re-reading, however, looking rather to antagonisms within the government, and suggesting that certain albums dramatize the differing views on economic

policy that divided de Gaulle from his minister and then successor, Giscard d'Estaing. He notes a critique of capitalism in both *Astérix gladiateur* (1964) and *Le Bouclier arverne*, in which capitalists are depicted as selfish, and their power to exploit insufficiently curbed. This would appear to accord with a Gaullist vision of the economy, which favoured free enterprise only as long as it operated within state planning. On the other hand, in *Obélix et compagnie* (1976), both Gaullism and untrammelled free enterprise are satirized: the state dirigisme that had been associated with de Gaulle is shown as a force for inertia, whilst, at the same time, the market-oriented liberalism espoused by Saugrenus, a caricature of Jacques Chirac, then Giscard d'Estaing's prime minister, leads to over-production and the collapse of prices (Rouvière 2006: 138–140).[67]

We may decide that the series is open-ended to the point where almost any meaning can be read into it. This conclusion would not, though, account for the fact that long after the demise of de Gaulle and the political conjuncture whose antagonisms, both external and internal, have been allegedly enacted and given imaginary resolution by *Astérix*, it continues to be perceived as the most iconically French of all popular cultural products.[68] What continuing form of identification does the series offer?

An obvious answer may be found in the familiar scene on which each album concludes, as the ritual meal takes place, solidarity reinforced by the silencing of the bard. It is perhaps the idea of community itself that is a focus of identification. The sacred place in the *Astérix* myth of Frenchness is the (anonymous) village itself, and particularly the site of the meal. The community can be extended to include not only the villagers, all fish-related quarrels resolved by the end of each album, but also the inhabitants of the towns of Gaul visited by Astérix and Obélix on their 1965 tour, affectionately parodied through stereotypes, and metonymically present in the form of the regional dishes brought back by the heroes. The identity of France is, then, not limited to the Breton village but extends throughout its regions, based on shared values which are materialized by the sociability symbolized by food.

The limits of this multiple identity can rather easily pass unnoticed in an atmosphere of such bonhomie. Female characters are almost absent, with a small number of exceptions such as Abraracourcix's harridan of a wife, and the Gauls are, by definition, limited to a single ethnicity. Does this matter? Does this make the series sexist and racist? The sexism question needs to be addressed in the wider context of the under-representation of women in the *bande dessinée* of this period, an issue which we have briefly raised.

We can consider the racism question by returning to Balibar, who has argued that racism is inevitably linked to nationalism (Balibar 1988: 77). He claims that the community instituted by a nation state will be based on a 'fictitious ethnicity': the populations that it includes will be represented '*as if* they formed a natural community with a common origin' (Balibar 1988: 130–131). This ethnicity, which must not, of course, appear to be fictitious, is produced in two ways: through a common language and through the postulation of a common racial origin.

According to Balibar, 'the language community is a *current* community which gives the impression of having always existed' (Balibar 1988: 135). The use of anachronism serves to reinforce this impression in *Astérix*, since the inhabitants of all regions of Gaul are represented as speaking French. In reality, French was not imposed as a national language until after the Revolution, and the Marseillais, Bordelais and others visited by Astérix and Obélix would have spoken their own regional language, as would the inhabitants of the Breton village themselves. However, the use of French by all the Gauls contributes to the 'retrospective illusion' described by Balibar, allowing for the linguistic unity of present-day France to appear as France's 'destiny', and the regional accents which are caricatured reinforce the sense of a language which belongs to all the people in their diversity and so unites them.

Balibar maintains that the community of language has to be supplemented by the idea of racial unity as the origin of the 'historic continuity of a people' (Balibar 1988: 135). As he points out, the invention, under the Third Republic, of the ideology of the 'French race, with its roots in the past of "the land and the dead"' coincided with the beginnings of mass immigration into France (Balibar 1988: 77). Where the national language can be spoken just as fluently by the children of immigrants as by the children of families whose origins are in the 'terroir' (a word used to refer to one's own rural locality, with the implication of a deep sense of belonging), the founding of French identity on racial unity allows a difference to be made between 'true' and 'false' members of the national community (Balibar 1988: 136). Goscinny and Uderzo, themselves both sons of immigrants, can hardly be accused of racism for portraying their Gauls as, quite simply, Gauls, members of a racial community not so much rooted in the past as actually situated in the past. A gag in *La Serpe d'or* makes precisely this point: school pupils gathered around the blackboard are at a loss when asked by the bard to name their ancestors. However, since the joke is based on the familiarity of the schoolbook cliché 'nos ancêtres les Gaulois' (our Gaulish ancestors), it only serves to emphasize the 'historical continuity' between the Gaulish villagers and their readers. Moreover, the ethnic exclusivity of the end-of-album banquet, however logical, feels uncomfortable once the series becomes so closely associated with contemporary national identity. By the year 2002, when Alain Chabat made *Astérix et Obélix: Mission Cléopâtre*, debates around racism and social exclusion had made the question of 'who is French?' a highly sensitive one. Chabat chose to make Jamel Debbouze, the hugely popular French actor of Moroccan descent, the star of his film, in the role not of a Gaul but of the Egyptian architect who is aided and abetted by the Gauls. The idea of 'Frenchness' celebrated by *Astérix* was thereby implicitly, even if not literally, extended, particularly as Debbouze was allowed to be much funnier than his co-stars.

The continuing currency and appeal of the *Astérix* myth is attested by its projection onto José Bové, the leader of the Peasants' Confederation (whose physical resemblance to the character seems deliberately cultivated) after his dismantling of a half-built McDonald's restaurant in Millau in 1999. Bové's campaign, focused on the defence of Roquefort cheese, condenses aspects of French identity similar to those put forward in *Astérix*: rurality, the particularity of a regional product which can nonetheless stand metonymically for the French way of life, and resistance to invasion. The place of the Romans is taken up by the American fast-food corporation, with, behind it, the forces of globalization.

However, the values of conviviality and community associated with the series have also been harnessed by none other than McDonald's itself, in an *Astérix*-themed promotion which coincided with the release of Chabat's film in 2002. A McDonald's marketing director claimed in an interview that 'the operation should help integrate McDonald's into French culture' (Campbell 2002: 2). This is not the first time that *Astérix* has featured in an advertising campaign: the characters have been used to sell cooking oil and dairy products (Touillier-Feyrabend 1998: 360–371). But its use as a weapon in a strategy of 'glocalization' by McDonald's is particularly significant, since here the corporation is going beyond the simple tactic of respecting local sensibilities (by substituting lamb for beef in India, for example), and is selling back a version of Frenchness to the French. From being a 'national institution' (Forbes and Kelly 1995: 125), the series may have become merely a brand.

8.3 *Superdupont* (Gotlib, Lob and others, from 1972)

Superdupont, the baguette-wielding French superhero, was invented by Marcel Gotlib and Jacques Lob in 1972 in *Pilote*, but continued three years later in *Fluide Glacial*, still scripted by Gotlib and Lob but drawn by Alexis, and, after the latter's death in 1977, by various artists including Coutélis, Jean Solé and Daniel Goossens. Where Astérix celebrates resistance against foreign invasion as a virtue, Superdupont incarnates blinkered chauvinism: his enemies are the 'anti-France', a term used by the monarchist Charles Maurras, founder in 1898 of the extreme right-wing Action Française. The absurdity of Superdupont's xenophobia is expressed through the complete lack of realism of the portrayals of the foreigners themselves: when the Eiffel Tower is kidnapped, the criminal gang speak in an international patois which mixes English, German, Italian and Spanish. However, this did not stop Le Pen from claiming: 'I am Superdupont and proud of it', at which point, in the mid 1980s, Gotlib put an end to the series (see Gotlib, Vuillemin, Gourio 1989: 59 and Solé 1992: 2), although a number of episodes have recently been reissued as albums.

Le Pen had perhaps not read an episode drawn by Goossens that appeared in *Fluide Glacial* in 1982, in which Superdupont's initial accession to superhero status is narrated, and which comprehensively ridicules the heroes, events and sites of the mythology of nation. Guided by a strange light, the naïve Jean Dupont, visiting Paris, is led beneath the Arc de Triomphe where he is greeted by the Unknown Soldier, who turns out to be his father, still in possession of the bullet that killed him. Dupont is sent on a mission to gather some of the 'sacred mud' from the battlefield of Verdun. This interpellation of Dupont in the name of the nation is rendered particularly farcical by the excessively foreshortened image of the outstretched finger which points at him. The names of Joffre, Foch, victorious First World War generals, and Clémenceau, prime minister at the moment of victory in 1918, are ritually recited as the fatal bullet is melted down and mingled with the sacred mud, before being reforged into a suppository which Dupont (mercifully drawn with only his upper body in frame) inserts, thereby acquiring his superpowers.

These official symbols of nation are not the only objects of derision, however. As Boltanski observed, the chief target of satire for this generation of artists is the petit-bourgeois lifestyle from which they themselves emerged (Boltanski 1974: 46). In *Astérix*, Obélix's occupation

may give him the humble status of artisan, but his class attributes, such as a huge appetite, are represented as carnivalesque and congenial, in some idealized vision of France as a nation of lusty peasants, rooted in the *terroir*. Superdupont's resolutely lower middle-class outlook and cultural tastes are, in contrast, caricatured as manifestations of *franchouillardise*: the reactionary small-mindedness of the *français moyen*, the average Frenchman.

8.4 Jacques Tardi

Tardi's attack on nationalist mythology is mainly, although not exclusively, focused on its deployment at the time of the First World War. Most of his work, including the *Adèle Blanc-Sec* series, is haunted by the war and its aftermath. The tonality of his work is altogether darker than that of *Superdupont*, and his venom is directed primarily at the ruling class who profited from the war, although the credulity of those members of the working class and lower middle classes who swallowed the nationalist propaganda is treated with scorn.

La Véritable Histoire du soldat inconnu was published in 1974 by Futuropolis, and reissued by the same publisher under its new ownership in 2005. It pours bathos over the glorification of the Unknown Soldier, buried with military pomp under the Arc de Triomphe, whom Tardi portrays as a writer of lurid pulp fiction. An image of his body lying in the mud of the trenches is accompanied by the slighting comments of his fellow soldiers, who describe him as 'une tête de con' (a dickhead). His own posthumous commentary, above an image of his imposing tomb, informs us that the war, a story of which he was not the author, was 'worse than any of his pathetic novels'. The official memorializing of the war as a narrative of heroism in which he has been cast, albeit anonymously, into the leading role, is thereby disparaged and dismissed.

La fleur au fusil (1979) similarly subverts both nationalist symbols and the notion of heroism. A soldier called Brindavoine, delirious after being shot in 1914, has hallucinations in which he sees a statue of an overweight Marianne, the symbol of the Republic, on a plinth on which are carved the words: 'To our heroes, from their grateful country, 1914–1918' (Tardi 1979: 56). She harangues him, telling him to get back to the front line, as his sacrifice will not be in vain. When he walks in the opposite direction, past the bodies of dead soldiers, he is pursued by the cock, the symbol of French fighting spirit, also part of the statue, until he kicks it, a symbolic assault on the patriotic virtues extolled by Marianne. Brindavoine will subsequently reappear in *Le Secret de la salamandre* (1981), from the *Adèle Blanc-Sec* series. The word 'hero' is now used with a different kind of irony: Brindavoine's one act of heroism, according to the narrator, occurs in 1916 when he inoculates himself with gangrene, in order to be demobilized, whilst shouting, 'Vive la France!' (Tardi 1981: 6).

The war is constantly present in the background of the *Adèle Blanc-Sec* series, making it something more than a derisive reworking of its sources in nineteenth-century popular fiction and in the albums of Jacobs. *Momies en folie* (1978), set just before the outbreak of the war, opens by taking a few sideswipes at nationalist memorializing from previous eras in the form of heroic statuary, as the gout-ridden, self-satisfied bourgeois Choupard 'gives a stupid and respectful glance at the golden, equestrian, and wholly uninteresting statue of the maid of

Orleans', before receiving in his turn 'the dull gaze of Generals of the Empire' (Tardi 1978: 3) whose heads adorn the Louvre. In this album, the heroine will miraculously escape a series of real-life disasters, including the train crash at Montparnasse Station and the sinking of the *Titanic*, before being apparently shot dead and buried, but actually cryogenized. At the end of the album, the mood dramatically and literally darkens: a poster appears on the wall with the call-up order, and the following panel is completely black, as a *récitatif* announces, 'and hope ended there' (Tardi 1978: 47). The frivolity and caustic humour of Adèle's adventures gives way to a disaster of a different magnitude, which is forcefully represented by this void. The final panel is silent, as bayonets decked with blue, white and red flowers and ribbons point upwards, an image which needs no text to underline its deluded optimism.

Le Secret de la salamandre follows on from this, and continues to use the resources of the medium, and in particular a disjunction between text and image, to undermine nationalist mythology. The rhetoric of 'glorious death for France' appears verbally in a *récitatif* box while the image shows bodies in a muddy field, and the panel beneath is filled with skulls. Another panel on the same *planche* juxtaposes the iconography of patriotism, in the form of a tricolour and a war memorial consisting of a winged female figure grasping the hand of a soldier, with a narratorial comment: 'Later, grotesque monuments were erected to tell the world how beautiful was the carnage and how heroic the combatants' (Tardi 1981: 4).

Tardi specifically points in this album to the way in which the appeal to nationalist sentiments worked in the interest of an international caste of industrialists. Brindavoine, back in Paris, holds forth to a café owner: 'Who do we fight the war for? [...] For industrialists: Renault, Schneider. Boussac and co., for steel merchants and arms manufacturers'. He adds, however, 'and for wine merchants' (Tardi 1981: 22). Tardi avoids turning Brindavoine into a high-principled hero of pacifism, since his anti-war sentiments are expressed as alcoholic ranting. His viewpoint is, though, supported by the album as a whole. His story is narrated in flashback, in parallel to that of the industrialists who have convened in New York to continue planning wars which will enrich them, and to enlist the services of religious leaders who will ensure the acquiescence of the colonial labourers who must supply raw materials (Tardi 1981: 41–42).

Meanwhile, the heroine of the series, Adèle herself, is frozen into a block of ice, and wholly unaware of events around her. Her obliviousness lasts for the duration of this album and of the war: she is brought back to life on the day before the signing of the armistice. This cynical narrative ploy matches the cynicism of the harnessing of nationalism in the cause of the political and economic interests underlying 'the industrialization of murder', in the words of the narrator (Tardi 1981: 43), who waves a tricolour in a tricolour-framed panel on the final page, and ends his summing up of the ten million deaths, the rivers of blood and the mutilated lives, with a few rousing notes from the Marseillaise (Tardi 1981: 48).

C'était la guerre des tranchées (1993), another album devoted, as its title indicates, entirely to the First World War, abandons any sustained plot or characters, a way of banishing any notion of individual heroism, in favour of a series of incidents featuring multiple protagonists.

Most of those portrayed are French, but in some cases nationality is not specified, an omission which reinforces the sense that the 'other' is not the Germans but the class other, whether arms manufacturers or officers. The arms manufacturers flourish in wartime, and the officers stay in the safety of their bunkers as they order their men to go forward under enemy fire.

Tardi uses symmetry to show the cannon firing in both directions, those on the left making money for wealthy German families, and those on the right making money for their French counterparts (Tardi 1993: 10). He also uses symmetry to equate the conditions endured by the men in both sets of trenches as they are forced to fire on each other. With a certain black humour, he portrays the German trenches as tidier than those of the French, but it is not possible to discern the nationality of the soldier dying under shellfire in the bottom panel (Tardi 1993: 11). This is also, of course, the case for the many skeletons which litter the panels, although it is, again, the rhetoric and iconography of French nationalism against which these gruesome images are set. As Samson has pointed out, a monochrome version of the tricolour is suggested by the background of many panels (Sansom 1988: 129, see Chapter 3), while others are accompanied by a *récitatif* quoting the pious words of religious figures or generals, exalting the nobility of sacrifice.

This is not to say, however, that the working- and lower-middle-class characters are treated as a collective hero. On the contrary, their readiness to be roused to patriotic fervour, graphically depicted as a crowd triples in size from one panel to the next before turning with a single movement to follow their leaders, is described as 'stupid docility' (Tardi 1993: 36). The only kind of 'heroism' that Tardi will admit is, like that of Brindavoine, the refusal of nationalist zeal. An old man declines to stand up as a crowd sing the Marseillaise in a café after war has been declared, and is beaten to the ground, as wine stains the floor like the blood soon to be shed (Tardi 1993: 37). A soldier is ordered by his officers to continue a suicidal assault in the face of German fire, and, in a direct address to the reader, says, 'La France, je l'emmerde' ('Fuck France') (Tardi 1993: 47).

Mainly, though, the working- and lower-middle-class characters are depicted as victims of a war fought on behalf of a 'France' to which they are indifferent. Amongst the most tragic victims are the soldiers from France's empire, who are treated with casual racism by the French officers but nonetheless considered French enough to be put on the front line and meet a certain death (the narrator comments in the *récitatif:* 'Senegalese, your Gaulish ancestors are proud of you') (Tardi 1993: 116).

8.5 Conclusion

We have, in this chapter, considered very different versions of French identity as expressed in *bande dessinée*. *Astérix* offers a comforting vision of a society united by its opposition to an invading force, all internal conflicts resolved, whose chief national characteristic, alongside resistance, is the companionable enjoyment of food. The French are invited to recognize themselves in the community of Gaulish villagers, although we have noted that a film based on *Astérix* and made in 2002 found a way of avoiding the ethnic exclusivity of the albums. For the current generation of independent *bande dessinée* artists, the *Astérix* albums have

taken on another meaning: they have come to symbolize not only a consensual and nostalgic view of the nation but also a publishing juggernaut which tends to be taken to represent the medium as a whole, to the detriment of more ambitious work.

Superdupont was the product of the same artistic generation as Goscinny and Uderzo, but had no aim of being consensual. On the contrary, it embodied the iconoclastic spirit of the aftermath of *mai 68* in its disdain for the mythology of nation and, in particular, for the conservatism of the *petite bourgeoisie*, as the artists sought to break out of their own class background. At the same time, there is a certain ironic celebration of this very parochialism in comparison with the blander virtues of Superdupont's American counterparts. It was the inability of Le Pen and his followers to spot the irony that led to the French superhero's demise.

Tardi has repeatedly returned to the First World War in his work, and it is in this context that he has shown the potency of the symbolism of nation and its devastating consequences. In particular, he demonstrates how a supra-national class promotes its interests by draping them in nationalist rhetoric and iconography. It is in his use of the medium to disrupt the naturalness of a highly ideological strategy that he displays the resources of *bande dessinée* to remorseless effect.

Chapter 9

POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITIES

9.1 Introduction

The term 'postcolonial' refers to the legacy of the colonial period, particularly as experienced by formerly colonized peoples, by minority communities originating from colonies or ex-colonies who have settled in a former colonial metropolis (such as Britain, France or Belgium), and the majority community in the metropolis, whose identity may be tied up with processes of colonization and decolonization. France ruled over an empire which, at its height, extended over much of Africa and South-East Asia (known as *Indochine*) as well as parts of the Caribbean and the Pacific, and French colonial conquest was officially justified by Republican ideals: the 'civilizing mission' aimed to extend the benefits of French culture to as much of the world as its armies could subjugate. The power relations on which the colonizing process was built did not, of course, disappear with decolonization. They are perpetuated by neo-colonialism (continuing economic and political domination by ex-colonial powers and by the US, with the complicity of a local elite), and intersect with globalization, which blurs national cultural boundaries. It is difficult to understand questions of cultural identity in present-day France (or Belgium or Britain), however, without some reference back to the colonial past.

The Palestinian writer Edward Said uses the term 'Orientalism' to denote the way in which western thought has long constructed a mythical version of the Orient (in which Africa and the Middle East, as well as the Far East, are included), as a place of brutality and unreason, albeit enticingly exotic, which is in need of western rationality (Said 1978). The adventure genre which dominated traditional Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée* served to confirm the Orientalist discourses which underpinned colonialism, from Tintin's paternalistic attitude to the Africans in *Tintin au Congo*, to the connotation of primitiveness attached to the artefacts, such as masks, which decorate Blake and Mortimer's flat in Park Lane. These souvenirs of their various expeditions are markers of otherness which emphasize that the Orient is not only 'out

there', but a structuring presence which is constitutive of their identity as citizens of an imperial power. The colonial hierarchy is reproduced through Blake and Mortimer's relationship with their loyal Indian servant Nasir.

By the 1970s, independence movements had swept across the globe, and a new type of *bande dessinée* adventurer emerged into a postcolonial world. The Swiss artist Daniel Ceppi's far from idealistic hero Stéphane Clément first appeared in 1977, in *Le guêpier*, on the run after an inept bank robbery. He travels through Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, and if exoticism is still undoubtedly a powerful attraction for the reader, all sense of the superiority of the western moral order has crumbled. The early albums cast a cold eye on the drug trafficking and plundering of cultural artefacts which motivate the journeys of some of his fellow European bus passengers, and Stéphane himself is frequently morally compromised by his own need to survive. The representation of the local people still owes much to colonial stereotypes, though: those with whom Stéphane comes into contact are either venal or victims, expendable within the narrative. By *Pondicherry, filiation fatale* (1995), the hero is working as a design consultant, drawing on his privileged contacts with Third World artisans. The commodification of the exotic which motivates the genre as a whole here enters quite explicitly into the diegesis.

The focus of this chapter is not, however, the adventure genre with its individual protagonists, but the *bande dessinée* representation of contact between cultures arising out of journeys of a different kind, by characters caught up in collective movements, whether military expeditions or migration. We will look specifically at the work of *bande dessinée* artists which deals with continuing relationships between France and Algeria, relationships which, as Benjamin Stora wrote in 1991, were 'founded on violence through the imposition of the colonial system, and through a seven-year war which enabled Algeria to achieve independence' (Stora 1998: 317). Since then, he argues, memories of the war have been falsified and repressed, a work of denial which has 'eaten into the foundations of French society like a cancer, like gangrene' (Stora 1998: 8).

Larcenet's trilogy, *Le Combat ordinaire* (2004–2006), deals with the effects of this repression on the son of a French conscript in Algeria. The work of Farid Boudjellal is based on the experiences of the ethnic minority community of Algerian origin living in France, and we will consider in particular *Petit Polio*, begun in 1998, which is set in France in 1958–9, during the Algerian war. Kamel Khélif's *Ce pays qui est le vôtre* (2003), is set in present-day France, but includes memories of Algeria.

We will first briefly sketch the relevant historical background. Algeria was occupied by the French in 1830 and declared to be a French territory in 1848. French people were encouraged to settle in Algeria, and, by the 1940s, around a million of its population of nine and a half million were Europeans, although many of these were from Mediterranean countries other than France (Larkin 1997: 226). During the twentieth century, there was also a movement in the opposite direction, as impoverished and landless Algerians crossed the Mediterranean to seek work in France.

The three Algerian *départements* had the same administrative status as mainland *départements*, but the indigenous Algerian inhabitants could only obtain French citizenship if they renounced their Muslim religion. Furthermore, although Algerians had the right to vote as from 1947, an electoral-college system meant that one European vote was worth eight Algerian votes (Stora 1998: 19–23). The belief that Algeria was part of France was nonetheless an important part of France's self-perception, and when the independence struggle began with armed attacks by the Front de Libération Nationale in 1954, the head of the French government, Pierre Mendès-France, spoke of the importance of defending 'the interior peace of the nation and the integrity of the Republic' (Stora 1998: 16).

The violence employed both by the FLN and by the French army in its riposte rapidly escalated. By July 1957 there were 450,000 French troops in Algeria (Larkin 1997: 256), and, in their attempt to root out the FLN, the French army resorted to the systematic use of torture on detainees, while the French government had recourse to censorship in an attempt to prevent public awareness of this policy. The special powers granted to the government in 1956 to restore order in Algeria were extended to metropolitan France in 1957, and brutal and repressive measures were used against Algerian immigrants suspected of supporting the FLN, who were subject to arbitrary arrest and detention.

In 1958 the crisis threatened to escape the control of the French government as the army in Algeria, fearful of a negotiated settlement with the FLN, attempted to mount a coup d'état. The French government turned to General de Gaulle, hero of the Liberation fourteen years previously. On his insistence, the constitution was changed to allow for the direct election of a president, and he was duly voted in. Although on an initial visit to Algeria earlier that year, he had seemed to reassure the army and the settlers by uttering the slogan 'Vive l'Algérie française!', he rapidly came to the conclusion that the only solution to the crisis was self-government for Algeria. This outcome was endorsed by a referendum, in France and Algeria, in 1961, but it was opposed by a group of dissident generals and settlers, known as the Organisation Armée Secrète, who launched a terror campaign. Meanwhile, in France, Algerians were still being harassed by the police, and a demonstration was organized on 17 October1961 to protest against a curfew to which they were subject. The demonstration, intended to be peaceful, was met by ferocious police violence. An unknown number of Algerians, certainly over two hundred, were murdered, their bodies thrown into the Seine, and many more were injured. No police were brought to justice, and de Gaulle remained silent (Stora 1998: 100).

The war (not acknowledged as such, given Algeria's status as part of France) ended in 1962, with the signing of the Accords d'Évian. The treaty included an amnesty both for those who had taken part in the liberation struggle and for those who had been involved in repressing it. A further series of amnesties included members of the OAS, who were ultimately reintegrated into the French army by the Socialist government in 1982. Torture was not punished, or even acknowledged. But, as Stora says, 'what is repressed is not eliminated, and always finds a way to express itself through indirect routes. The amnesty which meant to mask and expel the past led to other conflicts and other regressions' (Stora 1998: 283).

Stora points out that between 1953 and 1962, around 2.3 million French soldiers fought in Algeria, virtually an entire generation, and that the continuing defence of the colonial enterprise by certain right-wing politicians, like the refusal by certain left-wing politicians to be held responsible for the actions of their predecessors, are 'the camouflage of a guilt hidden in the folds of the collective unconscious' (Stora 1998: 295). Stora calls one of the sections of his book 'The dark violence of family secrets', and it is just such a family secret, and the psychic violence that it engenders in the succeeding generation, that is the subject of Larcenet's trilogy.

9.2 *Le Combat ordinaire* (Manu Larcenet, 2004–2006)

Le Combat ordinaire illustrates the ambivalence of postcolonial identities, both individual and national, in a former colonial power. The trilogy is concerned with the generational transmission of unacknowledged colonial guilt. The panic attacks to which the central character and narrator, Marco, is subject, seem to arise out of unresolved issues in relation to the Algerian war, in which his father fought as a French army conscript. All three albums are drawn in a cartoon-like style, of which the iconicity becomes still lower when Marco has a panic attack, to the point where his face and body decompose into lines and blobs against a darkly scribbled background, but they are interspersed with more detailed realist monochrome images, most of which represent photographs taken by Marco.

The trilogy is not a straightforward allegory, in which Marco's psychic troubles would stand for a crisis of the national psyche, and it can be read essentially as an account of the character's personal evolution as he gives up his job as a war photographer, ends his psychoanalysis, hesitates over committing himself to a relationship, suffers at his father's illness and death, goes into analysis again and takes a determined step to find out about his father's role in the Algerian war. However, it is clear that Marco's, and his family's, own history has been profoundly affected by events in Algeria. More generally, the theme of memory and forgetting, which runs through the trilogy but is most obviously figured by his father's Alzheimer's disease, has a resonance beyond that of Marco's individual story.

In the first volume, Marco, on a visit to his parents, comes upon a photograph of his father, in army uniform and decorated with a medal, standing next to an officer. When he asks his father why he has never talked about the war, both parents reply in unison: 'there is nothing to tell' (Larcenet 2004a: 18). The following panel shows the family house in darkness, an image which suggests that the blanking out of the past has led to a void in family life. Marco almost repeats his parents' formula in a *récitatif* to explain his own reluctance to talk to his psychoanalyst about them: 'There wasn't much to say. It's just that we never got on.' He had believed, he says, that this was the 'source' of his troubles, but had come to understand that his childhood was a 'misunderstanding' for which no one was responsible (Larcenet 2004a: 19). Whatever had made this relationship a failure can only be found, then, in the unconscious, both his and theirs, and the family history is deeply intertwined with the story of the war. The process of overcoming this repression proves to be highly indirect.

The theme of memory and forgetting in relation to the common history of France and Algeria resurfaces in a different context when Le Pen gets through to the second round of the

presidential elections in 2002. Marco's brother arrives with his wife, Naïma, a nurse, whose family background is Algerian. She says that the French are so fearful for their houses that they have forgotten that it was her parents and their fellow immigrants who built them (Larcenet 2004a: 38). Stora suggests that the racism reactivated by Le Pen, himself an army officer in Algeria during the war, is 'colonial' in that immigrants from former colonies are turned into 'colonizers' in the public imagination, and particularly those from Algeria, who recall the French national wound that has never healed (Stora 1998: 289). Le Pen has deliberately pursued the war by a policy of submitting the painful national memory to a series of 'electric shocks' (Stora 1998: 290). Naïma's own profession, and the fact that she is pregnant, perhaps seem to hold out, on a symbolic level, some possibility of healing.

Marco's troubles remain deeply buried, however, and any cure needs to involve a confrontation with material from the past that is still inaccessible to him. When his mental anguish is exacerbated by professional and personal difficulties, including the desire of his partner, Émilie, to have a child, a prospect he cannot bear to contemplate, he finds solace in the wise words of the elderly man who lives near him. This kindly figure had first appeared in the guise of rescuer of his cat, attacked by a brutish local landowner. Marco subsequently finds out that his sympathetic interlocutor is none other than the officer from the photograph, identified by his father as Lieutenant Gilbert Mesribes, who had been renowned in Algeria for the fervour with which he tortured civilians. When Marco aggressively taxes Mesribes with this information, however, the latter insists that he had hidden nothing from him, and that Marco had chosen to see only what he wanted to see, a wilful blindness which the reader cannot help but equate with that of the nation as a whole (Larcenet 2004a: 52). Marco angrily breaks off relations with him, and then finds the body of his cat, shot by the landowner. The dead cat, drawn in realist detail, seems to materialize the submerged violence of the past which has erupted into Marco's life. Marco himself is drawn very sketchily, as if dissolving under the shock.

Ultimately, Marco's emotional distress can only begin to heal if he addresses the uncomfortable aspects of the past which have blocked his relationship not with this substitute paternal figure, first idealized and then furiously rejected, but with his own father. That past seems definitively lost when his father is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and, in the first instance, it is a different aspect of his father's former life that Marco chooses instead to explore. He takes photographs of his father's workmates in the shipyard where he had worked for forty years, an elegiac celebration of a tradition of industrial labour which is disappearing with globalization, and the photographs are exhibited in a gallery in Paris. This is a part of Marco's heritage of which he is proud, and that pride includes a childhood spent in and out of the home of one of his father's colleagues, Pablo, a first-generation immigrant from Spain. Marco tells his brother that the paellas and the Spanish songs with which they grew up are also part of them (Larcenet 2004b: 41).

In *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*, Julia Kristeva writes: 'Strangely, the foreigner lives in us: s/he is the hidden face of our identity [...]. By recognizing him/her in us, we spare ourselves from hating him/her for him/herself' (Kristeva 1988: 9). Marco is clearly able to welcome the

foreignness within himself that he absorbed as a child. In this he differs from his father's ex-colleague Bastounet, who, fearful for his future when the shipyard is threatened with closure, has voted National Front. However, the other men, including Pablo and Ümit, who is Turkish, do not condemn him, saying that they are all frightened at the prospect at having to compete on the labour market with a new generation of immigrants who sell their labour more cheaply (Larcenet 2004b: 27). Bastounet's reflex is the 'protectionist rage' to which Kristeva alludes, the rage of those whose identity is disturbed by the presence of foreigners, which manifests itself as the desire to expel the intruder and take revenge on him/her (Kristeva 1988: 33).

Marco's response to Bastounet is indignant, but a subsequent incident suggests that Marco himself is by no means serene in accepting another kind of alterity that lives in him: this arises out of the interlocking destinies of France and Algeria back through, and beyond, his parents' generation. When looking after his baby niece Chahida, the daughter of his brother and Naïma, he has a panic attack and passes out. This could be read as a symptom of his terror at the possibility of becoming a father himself, but, given the centrality to the narrative of the family silence over his father's role in the Algerian war, it seems feasible to interpret it as an unconscious fear of acknowledging the dual identity embodied by the little girl, a dual identity which is associated with his own legacy of repressed guilt. However, Naïma reassures him that, when they found him, he was holding Chahida safely in his arms, an indication, perhaps, of the possibility of a new beginning for Franco-Algerian relations. As Mark McKinney has shown in relation to Lax and Giroud's *Les Oubliés d'Annam* (1990–1991), *métissage*, the mixing of ethnicities, can be used as a trope to represent postcolonial reconciliation between former enemies (McKinney 1997: 177).

In the final volume, after his father has committed suicide, Marco finds a diary, but any hope that this would enlighten him about his father's inner life is thwarted, when it proves to contain only minutely detailed observations of the natural world. Marco's panic attacks continue, and eventually he returns to see Mesribes, to ask him what he remembers of his father. Mesribes tells him that his father had arrived in Algeria in 1957, when General Massu, the operational commander, sanctioned whatever methods were necessary to obtain the intelligence that would defeat the independence movement and keep Algeria part of France. His father, a timid young man, had 'turned up, wet behind the ears, when the horror was at its height' (Larcenet 2006: 55). Mesribes is adamant that the French government and press were aware of the torture, rapes and executions that were being carried out by soldiers who had 'ceased to be men' (Larcenet 2006: 56), but they chose to remain silent. He tells Marco that his father had participated: although he had not been an interrogator, he had stood guard while torture took place. Eventually, fearing for his sanity, Mesribes had had him decorated for a supposed act of 'bravery', which enabled his transfer to an office job.

The 'nothing to tell' that inhibited the relationship between father and son has now been told, even if posthumously. It seems that Marco may now be able to move beyond this blocked relationship and envisage becoming a father himself, and the album ends as Émilie receives confirmation that she is pregnant. There is, however, no suggestion that the psychic wound of the French nation can be healed so easily. Marco's story achieves narrative resolution, but

alongside it are a series of references, mostly in the form of visual traces, to the way in which the history of contemporary France is bound up with that of its ex-colonies.

These include the image of a cargo ship, first seen silhouetted on the horizon as his father, a diminished figure, gazes out to sea, and speaks of his failures of memory. The image returns as a motif throughout the trilogy and stands for elusive memories, most obviously those of the labour involved in shipbuilding but also that of colonial conquest, the inescapable origin of the unspeakable events which haunt subsequent generations. Amongst other visual traces are the photographs taken by Marco in his career as a war photographer, exemplified by an arrestingly beautiful portrait of a black child soldier (Larcenet 2000a: 21). This not only evokes a world of neo-colonial and postcolonial chaos and suffering, but also raises the question of the aestheticizing and commodification of that suffering through the work of the photographer. The fact that this is in itself a neo-colonial enterprise is emphasized through the absurd macho strutting of the celebrity war photographer Fabrice Blanc, who refers to Marco as his 'comrade in arms' and whose brilliantly composed photographs of guerilla fighters cost him 'balls and spunk' (Larcenet 2004b: 13). Marco himself is disinclined to continue photographing 'exotic corpses or people about to become exotic corpses' (Larcenet 2004a: 16).

Marco does not give up taking photographs, even if he moves to different subjects, and the third volume contains a discussion with the editor of his book, in which the latter states his belief that images, better than words, can 'recount the secret of a person' (Larcenet 2006: 31). However, those panels in the albums which represent photographs, such as those of Marco's father's tools in his shed, or, more insistently, the framed photograph of Marco's father and Mesribes in uniform, frequently suggest a surface reality beneath which secrets remain intact. It is the medium of *bande dessinée*, which is not dependent on photographic realism, that enables Larcenet to burrow under the surface into the psychic dramas that resulted from the colonial encounter and reverberate on into the twenty-first century.

9.3 *Petit Polio* (Farid Boudjellal, 2006)

Farid Boudjellal was born in Toulon, in 1952, to parents who were Algerian immigrants. Much of his work exploits the daily life of his own generation and that of his parents in comic vein, within which he raises more serious issues of identity and memory. A collection published in 1989 called *Gags à l'harissa* brings together a number of strips featuring the Slimani family, Abdel and Salima, born in Algeria, and their French-born children including the *banane*- and leather jacket-wearing Mahmoud, who, like the author, limps as a result of suffering from polio as a child, an autobiographical detail which suggests a certain investment by Boudjellal in this character. Comedy arises out of the younger generation's negotiation of the demands of French youth culture and the constraints of their family life. Occasionally, though, the reader is reminded of the larger historical picture. In one episode, the whole family are out together in an unfamiliar part of Paris as Mahmoud tries to locate a funfair. They attract a crowd of followers who, unused to seeing such a large family group, assume that they are the head of a demonstration. Through the magic of *bande dessinée* ellipsis, the 'demonstration' rapidly grows, and a banner is urged upon Abdel. He refuses, saying that he

has no wish to find himself in hospital like in 1961, an understated but, nonetheless, clear reference to the massacre of 17 October.

Jambon-Beur, subtitled *Les couples mixtes*, published in 1995 by Mourad Boudjellal's Soleil publishing house, uses the same characters to deal with the theme of *métissage*, the ethnic mixing that arises out of inter-ethnic relationships. This album recounts the marriage of Mahmoud to Patricia, whose father, a French conscript, had been killed in Algeria. Patricia's mother, like Mahmoud's parents, finds it difficult to accept the marriage and, when the couple have a daughter, Charlotte-Badia, the grandparents on each side try to impart their own cultural practices to her, to the exclusion of the 'other' culture. This effect of this is that, rather than embodying a successfully hybrid cultural identity, the child actually splits into two: Charlotte adopts the French Catholic identity of her maternal grandmother and Badia the Muslim identity of her paternal grandparents. As McKinney points out, it is significant that the same album contains other examples of much happier experiences of *métissage*, such as the twin offspring (one black and one white) of Mahmoud's sister Djamila and her Senegalese husband, René. The white twin, Moussa, chooses to play with black children, and the black twin, Mathieu, with white children. According to McKinney, the album demonstrates that cultural difference is not in itself an obstacle to *métissage*, but that 'the difference between *métissage*'s positive pole of represented by Moussa and Mathieu [...], and its negative pole, in the form of Charlotte-Badia [...], should be attributed to concrete social conditions, informed by historically derived antagonisms between the French and the Algerians' (McKinney 1997: 183).

In 1998, Boudjellal went back to the roots of the rancour of his protagonists with the first episode of *Petit Polio*, a 'prequel' to *Jambon-Beur*, set during the Algerian war. The series was republished as a complete album in 2006. It begins with Boudjellal's habitual comic verve, but becomes increasingly serious in its treatment of the question of identity, and of the experience of the war both for Algerians living in France and for the French conscripts who fought in Algeria. It opens in July 1958, just after de Gaulle had been called back to power, and ends a year later.

The album is not set in Paris like the previous albums concerning the Slimani family, but in Toulon. The cultural hybridity within which the children grow up is represented metonymically by items within the family's flat. These include various artefacts brought by Monsieur and Madame Slimani from Algeria, such as rugs and leather pouffes, which sit alongside the six-year-old Mahmoud's collection of French *bandes dessinées*. Mahmoud's own sense of identity seems to be dominated by Frenchness, however: when asked to choose a name for the baby that his mother is expecting, he suggests 'François' (Boudjellal 2006: 37). His impressive repertoire of slang expressions suggests, moreover, a particularly localized Frenchness associated with the region around Toulon. The built-up shoe that the six-year-old Mahmoud has to wear is, at first, the only thing that makes him any different from his friends. Even then, the difference is slight: he challenges them to hopping races and wins.

Mahmoud will soon realize, though, that he is not French, a discovery comparable to that made by the writer Frantz Fanon, who was born in Martinique and worked as a

psychoanalyst in Algeria, where he supported the armed struggle for independence led by the FLN. In *Peau noire masques blancs*, Fanon describes the moment when he first saw himself through the eyes of whites as a 'negro' (Fanon 1952: 88). In this book, he theorizes the particular form of alienation to which colonized peoples are subject. Fanon suggests that for Europeans, there is a close parallelism between family and nation: the child will find the values and principles with which s/he has grown up affirmed by the nation as a whole, and the authority of the state is perceived as continuation of the authority of the family. However, for the black child, this is not the case. The authority figure which is interiorized is that of the white 'master', and entry into the social world for him/her is entry into the realization of his/her inferiority (Fanon 1952: 115–125).

For 'black' child we can substitute 'Arab/Algerian' in the case of Mahmoud. His first encounter with the symbolic father in whom the authority of the state is invested is a positive one. It occurs when de Gaulle visits Toulon, an important naval base, in July 1958, a month after his 'Vive l'Algérie française!' declaration. The General appears as a strict but benevolent figure who not only forgives the boy for drawing a caricature of him showing his behind (after the drawing has accidentally come into his possession), but predicts a brilliant career for him as a cartoonist (Boudjellal 2006: 31). Subsequently, however, other representatives of the nation are revealed to be far more sinister. Mahmoud, with his friends, witnesses an incident in which a man referred to by the kids as an 'Arab', and depicted only from the back, is taken off a trolleybus by two policemen and brutally beaten. The children remark to Mahmoud that the man looks like his father, although two of them are subsequently surprised to learn from a third, his neighbour Rémy, that Mahmoud is Algerian (Boudjellal 2006: 44). The traumatic effect of the incident on Mahmoud is conveyed by the replacement of realist colour over the three frames where the beating takes place by a blood red tone which saturates the crowd, out of which emerges the baton.

As Mahmoud watches in horror, he also listens to a conversation in the crowd, and learns what an 'Algerian' is, as constructed by colonial discourse: the man was a petty criminal, he was travelling without a ticket, and in any case, violence against Algerians is justified: 'What do you think they do back in their djebels (mountains)?' (Boudjellal 2006: 45). As Fanon says in *Les Damnés de la terre*: 'The colonizer and the colonized are old acquaintances. And, in fact, the colonizer is right when he claims to know "them". It is the colonizer who has made and continues to make the colonized' (Fanon 1961: 66). He goes on to argue that the only way of giving back a sense of being and agency to the colonized is through decolonization, which will necessarily be a violent process (Fanon 1961: 66–67).

Mahmoud attempts to participate vicariously in the decolonization struggle: he rushes back home and seeks solace in his comic, *Kiwi*, which features the character *Blek le Roc* (Essegesse, from 1955). Fanon has suggested that comics play a role in educating young colonized peoples to identify with white heroes such as Tarzan against the savage 'natives' (Fanon 1952: 118–9), but the figure of Blek, although white, nonetheless, represents identification with an anti-colonial cause. Blek is an eighteenth-century North American trapper and hero of the independence struggle against the British. The child metaleptically

enters into the story and rewrites the speech balloons, enlisting Blek and his friends on the side of the Algerians. The dialogue that he gives them suggests that Mahmoud now identifies fully with Algerian culture: they vaunt the merits of the couscous cooked by Madame Slimani. When Mahmoud tells them about the incident with the policemen, Blek declares that the Algerians are fighting for independence just as the Americans are, and that he and his men will help them.

However, the vision of Blek and his men marching off to liberate Algeria soon gives way in Mahmoud's imagination to another blood-coloured image of the police truncheon and the crowd watching the beating. Mahmoud now becomes physically ill with stomach pains. It is the doctor who lives next door, a Frenchman whose alcoholism has forced him to live in reduced circumstances, who diagnoses the problem: Mahmoud has discovered that he is Algerian (Boudjellal 2006: 49). It is, then, through the scene played out before him representing the unmanning of the colonized subject, this man who resembles his father, by the colonial power, that Mahmoud's awareness of his identity as an Algerian is born.

The arrest and beating of the anonymous Algerian foreshadows the arrest of Mahmoud's real father later in the album, when the police come to the flat and take him away in handcuffs, after a friend, Habib, has been arrested and has given his name away as a fellow donor of funds to the FLN, just like 130,000 other Algerians living in France who gave financial support to the FLN, according to Stora's estimate (Stora 1998: 93). Abdel thereby becomes one of the 44,282 Algerians who were arrested in France during the conflict (Stora 1998: 34). The conditions of his detention are not shown, but when he is freed a week late, after the intervention of a lawyer friend of the alcoholic doctor, he is in a state of collapse. As the doctor tends him, Abdel lists the instruments used to beat him, and the image of the two figures becomes progressively smaller. Fanon, who treated many Algerian victims of torture, noted that it had the effect of a 'massive attack on the sense of self' (Fanon 1961: 303). As Abdel names the final weapon, 'words', the two men appear tiny against the background, a visual analogy for this psychic diminution.

Abdel's story runs in parallel to that of César, his French friend and workmate at the beginning of the album. As César explains to Abdel that he is going to have to go to Algeria to do his military service, the Statue of Liberty which stands on the main square in Toulon seems to get bigger as the framing tightens, a silent and ironical allusion to the Republican ideals in the name of which the fight to keep Algeria French was being conducted, in spite of the fact they had never been extended to colonized peoples.

Like most of his fellow conscripts, César knows nothing of the background to the situation in which he finds himself in Algeria. Stora quotes Jean-Pierre Vittori who says: 'No-one understood what they were fighting for. It was guerilla warfare. You didn't know who you were shooting at' (Vittori 1977 quoted in Stora 1998: 52). César understands only the values of comradeship, and it is a photograph of himself with his 'best friend, Gérard', that he sends back to his wife, Rita, and that she shows to her best friend, Salima, Mahmoud's mother. On the next page, the photograph gives way to the vastness of a real Algerian landscape against

which the dead body of Gérard is carried to a helicopter as César's grief hardens to hatred of 'Arabs' (Boudjellal 2006: 77).

On returning to France on leave, he refuses to speak to Abdel, explaining to his wife that he 'has got to know them better now' (Boudjellal 2006: 78), a statement which recalls Fanon's observation about knowing 'them'. When César hears Arabic spoken on the street, he tells Rita that he can hardly control his desire to kill and walks out of the frame to the right (Boudjellal 2006: 94). Boudjellal sets up a confrontation between César and Abdel, as the latter walks through the streets in the opposite direction after his release from prison, until they are separated only by the frame boundary. They will meet, and fight, although Boudjellal chooses to show the onlookers rather than the brawl, and the next page shows them reconciled, as César tells Abdel that he now understands what the war is about, although he still has to go back to Algeria (Boudjellal 2006: 104). This episode is intercut with panels depicting another narrative thread: the wife of the alcoholic doctor, and mother of Mahmoud's friend Rémy, is dying of leukaemia, and Rémy is repeatedly punished at school for his inability to recite the poem that he is supposed to have learned. The album ends on the burial of the mother, and Rémy's subsequent successful recitation of the poem, when on a beach with Mahmoud and his family (Boudjellal 2006: 109–110). The poem is Victor Hugo's elegy to his dead daughter, and the final page depicts Rémy's mental images of his mother's tomb. Although this event is seemingly unrelated to the war, it carries such a powerful affective charge that it seems impossible that it does not in some way symbolize a wider sense of loss, perhaps Mahmoud's loss of innocence in relation to France, which, as the country where he was born, is his mother country.

9.4 *Ce pays qui est le vôtre* (Kamel Khélif, 2003)

Kamel Khélif was born in Algeria in 1959 but has lived in Marseille since the age of five. This album is dedicated to the 'lost youth of the estates'. The story, about a man of Algerian origin who is remanded in police custody in Marseilles for a crime of which he is innocent, is based on Khélif's own experience (Khélif 2003b). However, the artist distances himself from it by using *récitatifs* in the third person to describe the experience of detention and trial. These sections are intercut with sequences of dreams and memories, where the *récitatifs* are in the first person.

The title of the album raises the question of belonging by its careful ambiguity as to which country is being referred to, and whose country it is. The 'pays' (country) could refer to France, and 'vôtre' (yours) to the majority white community, as if it were being addressed by the unnamed protagonist, whose experience of marginalization has now become the more radical exclusion from society represented by prison. The 'pays' could also refer to Algeria, and it is then unclear as to whether the protagonist addresses those, not including himself, who live under the postcolonial regime there, or whether the interpellation of 'vôtre' includes himself, and evokes the exile's sense of belonging to a country from which he has been uprooted.

All of these interpretations of the title seem to coexist in the album. The protagonist's alienation from French majority culture is an effect of the treatment that he receives from its

representatives, and particularly the police. A young woman is attacked by a Maghrebi, of whom she catches only a brief glimpse. She then points to the protagonist, who happens to be standing at a bus stop nearby. He is remanded in custody and subjected to a series of dehumanizing rituals, not least of which is the demeaning use of the familiar 'tu' form, a practice which recalls the way in which colonizers customarily addressed the native inhabitants of the colonies.

The overwhelming shock and humiliation of being imprisoned is rendered by a series of pages which show nothing but the blankness of the cell walls, on which the protagonist gradually deciphers the names scratched by past detainees, who appear in his mental image as row upon row of blurred faces, suggesting Maghrebi or black African origins. Aedín Ní Loingsigh has pointed out how the role of immigrants in building French public monuments is effaced, since those monuments never bear their names: 'the immigrants are refused the right to name, and are thereby powerless to write their history on the cityscape' (Ní Loingsigh 2003: 158). By writing their names on the wall of the cell, these men will not succeed in recounting the story of their, or their fathers', labour in constructing the modern city. But they will assert themselves as subjects, resisting the erosion of their identity and inscribing the fact of their existence, if not their history.

The possibility that the 'pays' of the title also represents Algeria is reinforced by a first-person reverie, occasioned by shadowy stains on the cell walls that begin to take on the shape of memories. The protagonist thinks of a visit that he had made back to Algiers, during which he had sat by the statue of Emir Abdel Kader, hero of the resistance against the French in the nineteenth century, and had felt violent nostalgia for a room in the flat opposite, where his mother had sung him to sleep as a child. Edward Said, whose name occurred earlier in this chapter in connection with Orientalism, has also written about the condition of exile. He describes it as 'the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted' (Said 2000: 173). Strictly speaking, the protagonist of *Ce pays qui est le vôtre* is an émigré rather than an exile, but as a child he had no choice in the matter, since his family's departure from Algeria was driven by poverty.

This recollected return to the land and the roots from which he has been cut off could imply that the 'vôtre' of the title includes him. He had been born into a country which was still a colony fighting for its independence, and perhaps had felt pride in belonging to the people of a victorious and emerging nation. As Said says, 'Exiles feel [...] an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as a part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people' (Said 2000: 177).

However, any idealized vision of the home country had been quickly shattered by his visit. His mother had returned to live in Algeria after years in France, but after the requisitioning of the family flat in Algiers, she had had to go back to her childhood village. The protagonist had been to see her in this village, to find that its orchards and its singing birds had given way to concrete. In his mother's words, the dream of revolution was now dead. Land had been

confiscated and burnt by the government, who had constructed 'grotesque monuments' on which they flew a flag 'whose colours no-one recognized'. It is clear that the protagonist's family do not recognize themselves in the nationalist 'rhetoric of belonging', in Said's term (Said 2000: 176). It would seem that 'Ce pays qui est le vôtre' can only be taken to include them if the 'vôtre' is assumed to express grim irony.

Said argues that independence struggles, including that of Algeria, begin from a condition of estrangement, as national groups feel themselves to be separated from their rightful way of life, but once victory is achieved, the narrative of the founding and upholding of the nation becomes selective, with its own official landmarks, heroes and enemies (Said 2000: 176). Khélif's portrayal of post-independence Algeria accords with Said's description of it as 'the site of a bloody contest between Islamists and an aging and discredited government' (Said 2000: 581). Said gives a brief historical overview: after defeating the French in 1962, the FLN 'declared itself to be the bearer of a newly liberated Algerian, Arab and Muslim identity'. However, it turned into 'an unyielding oligarchy', submerging all opposition, whether from Muslim leaders or the Berber minority, and ultimately provoking a crisis in which the contest for power was also a contest 'for the right to decide the nature of Algerian identity' (Said 2000: 581). There was an acceleration of violence in 1992, when the army cancelled elections after the first round had been won by the Front Islamique du Salut, and since then it has scarcely abated. In an interview, Khélif has estimated the number of women in Algeria who are currently seeking the bodies of their sons, and encountering the cynical cruelty of the authorities in their search, at 30,000 (Khélif 2003c).

In Khélif's album, the protagonist's family are not spared. He remembers seeing his aunt at his mother's house, but the two smiling images of her are deceptive: she does not yet know, the *récitatif* tells us, that she is soon to join these tragic women. Warned of this, the reader can only see the sheets that she is carrying for her nephew's bed as shrouds for her unburied sons. The following double page returns to the cell wall and the inscriptions: Mourad, Rachid, Kader and the many others. These names carved in stone now stand in symbolically for the names of another 'lost generation' of Algerian youth, those in Algeria, for whom there will be no grave, no gravestone, and no monument, grotesque or otherwise.

The *récitatif* returns to the third person, and to the present of the protagonist's detention, conveyed through shadowy images. It goes on to recount the interminable process of his trial and appeal, the three years taken to establish his innocence. While he is out of prison, but not yet cleared, he gazes at the night sea and sky, and his mother's story of the harshness of the family's early days in France comes to him in words and images, along with happier memories of his own from childhood and adolescence. Incrusted onto these pages is a series of superimposed panels each containing an ill-defined oval-shaped object. These are not referred to in the text, and perhaps represent dead bodies in shrouds, perhaps simply the formlessness of the protagonist's own sense of self.

This is a story of dislocation, the first uprooting, and subsequent journeys, physical and mental, back to a 'homeland' which has itself become a site of enforced displacement and of violent

disappearance. France, the protagonist's country of adoption, has not, though, proved to be a welcoming place. He discovers that for many of his fellow Maghrebis, the zone of contact with the indigenous population passes through the judicial system: the names of his lawyer's clients, glimpsed as he waits in his office, testify to this.

There is, then, no country that is 'his' other than, perhaps the text itself, which becomes an extension of the gesture of the previous inmates of his cell who have written their names on the walls. Said quotes Theodor Adorno's *Minima Moralia, Reflections from a Mutilated Life* (1951), in which the writer speaks of his own experience of exile: 'In his text the writer sets up house. [...] For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live' (quoted in Said 2000: 568). The octavo format of the album gives it a kind of monumentality, which allows it to stand not only as a memorial to those who have none, but as a refuge for his own inner life.

9.5 Conclusion

The three albums which we have considered in detail explore different areas of the long and unfinished joint history of France and Algeria, with identities intertwined, and shaped by suppression as much as by memories. Larcenet's account of the inability of one generation within a family to speak of the atrocities committed by the French army, and the crisis that this provokes in the next generation down, has psychological realism as the story of a family secret, but may also be taken to have wider symbolic meaning as the story of a national secret. Boudjellal's flashback to the Algerian war offers an insight into the early life of his hero (and alter ego), Mahmoud, as he learned what it was to be 'Algerian' in the eyes of the majority population, inflamed by the violent resentments unleashed by the independence struggle. The back story of the characters of the generally light-hearted adventures of the Slimani family makes it clear that the question of identity for the second generation is complex. They may be less attached to certain cultural practices than their parents, but they too are marked by history. This history pursues Khélif's protagonist, long after the war is over. Like Monsieur Slimani, he undergoes arrest and humiliation, an experience common to Maghrebis of his generation, still demonized in the public imagination.

All three albums demonstrate the resources of the medium for dealing with the theme of identities constructed out of memory, amnesia, allegiance and exile. Larcenet varies iconicity to convey his character's mental torment when what has been repressed threatens to surface. Boudjellal uses comic strip as *mise en abyme*, a fictional world into which his character is able to retreat and find a figure with whom he can identify when the authority of adults from his own community is undermined by their treatment at the hands of the police. Khélif's album records scenes too painful to recollect in precise detail, and renders instead the emotion that they reawaken. At the same time, he uses the materiality of the album itself as a surface on which the names of those who are forgotten by history can be indelibly engraved.

Chapter 10

Social Class and Masculinity

10.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will discuss three *bande dessinée* series and one trilogy, which use social class to humorous effect, whether gentle or acerbic, and we will suggest that in each case, the social class identity of the characters interacts with gender, and specifically masculine, identity. This interaction is configured in varying ways in our four examples. We will focus in this chapter on Binet's farcical demolition of petit bourgeois aspirations in *Les Bidochon*, which began in *Fluide Glacial* in 1977, initially starring the family dog, and on Margerin's more indulgent portrayal of his proletarian rockers in *Lucien*, which first appeared in *Métal Hurlant* in 1979. These have both remained massively best-selling series in album format. We will also consider two visions of the lifestyle of more privileged classes. De Crécy and Chomet's three-volume *Léon la came* (1995–1998), is a merciless satire of the new managerial bourgeoisie and the lifestyle gurus of the new petite bourgeoisie. Dupuy and Berberian's *Monsieur Jean*, a series which began in1991, exposes the anxieties and self-delusions of the Parisian intellectual milieu.

Since we make extended use of the work Bourdieu on social class and of Freud on psycho-sexual development, we briefly set out key terms and concepts first.

10.2 Bourdieu and social class

Habitus and lifestyle choices

We have used Bourdieu's term 'habitus' in relation to position-taking amongst artists in Chapter 2. Here we draw on his use of the term in *La Distinction* (1979), in which he sets out a very detailed analysis of the lifestyles of different social classes amongst the population as a whole. The notion of 'habitus' enables social class identity to be viewed not just as a function

of economic power but in terms of the status distinctions which arise out of the struggle over other kinds of capital, including particularly cultural capital. For Bourdieu, lifestyle choices are, of course, constrained by economic possibilities, but are also made on the basis of class habitus, the system of dispositions through which different social classes assess their life chances and the cultural practices to which they can aspire.

According to Bourdieu, the family background of the dominant classes prepares them to profit from their formal education by supplying them with the cultural codes that enable them to display their appreciation of legitimate culture. Dominant ideology works to disguise this long process of cultural apprenticeship as innate good taste, and to stigmatize those who lack the requisite cultural codes as vulgar. Bourdieu argues that the aesthetic disposition of the dominant classes which favours form over function in art extends to other areas of life: for example, the ceremonial of mealtimes is perceived as more important than the nourishing qualities of food (Bourdieu 1979: I-VIII). The working class, by contrast, are restricted to the 'taste of necessity', but will nonetheless perceive their tastes to be a matter of choice (Bourdieu 1979: 194–195).

Habitus is also inscribed on the body: Bourdieu uses the term 'bodily hexis' to refer to 'the practical way that someone has of feeling and expressing his or her social value' (Bourdieu 1979: 552). Objects, cultural practices and the body itself may be seen, then, as signs which enable the dominant classes to distinguish themselves from their social inferiors. Power relations can, therefore, be reproduced indirectly rather than through direct repression, in what Bourdieu refers to as a 'symbolic struggle' (Bourdieu 1979: 230). A further weapon in this struggle is language, through which 'symbolic violence' may be exercised (Bourdieu and Thompson 2001).

In *La Distinction*, Bourdieu focuses on the habitus of three classes: the dominant class, the petite bourgeoisie and the working class. He also makes distinctions between different sections of the first two of these. We will exemplify all of these types of habitus from the *bande dessinée* series referred to above, but we will first briefly outline Bourdieu's categories.

10.2.1 The dominant class

A distinction can be made between those who are rich in cultural capital but less so in economic capital, such as writers and artists, and those who have economic wealth but less cultural capital, such as industrialists and financiers. The latter tend to use legitimate culture to enhance their social standing and to confirm, rather than challenge, their view of the world (Bourdieu 1979: 305, 335). A further distinction can be drawn between the old bourgeoisie (including the business establishment), who value restraint and formality, and the new bourgeoisie, whose bodily hexis favours a certain relaxation in style of dress and language. The latter group tend to pepper their speech with American expressions, and to focus on marketing rather than production (Bourdieu 1979: 353–355).

The petite bourgeoisie

This group is described by Bourdieu as possessing 'cultural good will' (Bourdieu 1979: 365). They wish to escape identification with the working class but lack the confidence of the

bourgeoisie. Their relationship to culture is anxious and dutiful, with the sense that legitimate culture 'is not for them' (Bourdieu 1979: 377). They engage in linguistic hyper-correction and are 'shocked' by bad grammar (Bourdieu 1979: 382). They refuse formalism in art, and their homes contain cheap substitutes for tasteful objects. They lack the sociability of the working class, and break links, even family links, which would be obstacles to individual betterment (Bourdieu 1979: 389).

Bourdieu draws a distinction between the traditional petite bourgeoisie, typically small shopkeepers and office workers, marked by a regressive conservatism (Bourdieu 1979: 397–408), and the new petite bourgeoisie. The latter are opposed to the repressive morality hitherto associated with the petite bourgeoisie and have adopted a personal ethic of physical and psychological health, expressed in psychoanalytical jargon. New professions and professionals have grown up to market symbolic goods and services to them, through occupations such as home design and counselling (Bourdieu 1979: 409, 415). Bourdieu includes in this group those who engage in counter-cultural practices in the belief that this will enable them to escape from their class origins, a 'dream of social flight' (Bourdieu 1979: 429).

The working class

This group lack both economic and cultural capital. Their 'career' prospects are limited to avoidance of falling into the absolute poverty associated with the sub-proletariat (Bourdieu 1979: 459). They practice a 'realistic hedonism' and value conviviality and solidarity (Bourdieu 1979: 203, 459). They eat copiously, in defiance of the dominant ethic of sobriety and slimness (Bourdieu 1979: 201).[69] Their leisure pursuits involve popular cultural entertainment like fairs (Bourdieu 1979: 458), although they are also involved more passively as fans in mass cultural pursuits (Bourdieu 1979: 450). Any discussion of culture would be considered pretentious, and pretentiousness is perceived as an affront to virility. The dimension of virility valued by this group is physical strength (Bourdieu 1979: 447). From their schooldays, the working class have experienced dominant culture as an attempt to impose order and morality on them, and they have more recently become subject to the moralizing effects of the therapeutic culture preached by the new petite bourgeoisie (Bourdieu 1979: 447–8, 451). They can, however, attain counter-legitimacy through language, which they use to desacralize dominant values (Bourdieu 1979: 460).

10.3 Masculinity

Antony Easthope suggests that gender identity can be discussed in terms of the body, social roles, and the way in which those social roles are internalized and lived out (Easthope 1986: 2). Given that these are all categories relevant to Bourdieu's analysis of social class, there is likely to be considerable interaction between these two dimensions of identity. We will refer here, very briefly, to Freud's account of the psychic structures out of which masculinity is constructed, in order to emphasize how precarious this construction is. We will look in more detail in part four at how psychoanalytically based critical approaches have been applied to *bande dessinée*, and at *bande dessinée* representations of gendered identity.

According to Freud, the way in which we behave is determined by the unconscious, which is made up of drives, memories and emotions repressed by the conscious mind. The contents of the unconscious are, by definition, hidden, and when they do betray themselves in the form of dreams and certain behaviours, the underlying, or in Freud's term 'latent', meaning is subject to censorship. It may be disguised through displacement onto a seemingly unimportant object, or by condensation, where several elements are combined into one.

The two main drives are narcissism and sexual desire, which eventually have to be repressed or sublimated into socially acceptable goals, as the pleasure principle gives way to the reality principle. The reservoir of drives is called the 'id' by Freud, and the part of the psyche which develops as the drives are redirected is called the 'ego'. The child is born 'polymorphously perverse', its whole body potentially a focus for its libidinal energy, energy directed towards sexual pleasure, and at successive stages of development this pleasure becomes localized in different parts of the body, as processes originally associated with the satisfaction of biological needs become pleasurable in their own right. The oral stage, where pleasure is found in sucking, is followed by the anal stage, where pleasure is found first in the expulsion and then in the retention of faeces. Each stage involves the resolution of conflicts, over availability of the breast, for example, or over the parental demand for control of the bowels, and if the conflicts are imperfectly resolved some libidinal energy will remain invested in that part of the body. Gifts and money are, for example, unconsciously associated with anal eroticism.

The conflict which arises out of the subsequent stage, the phallic stage, is called the Oedipal conflict. At the phallic stage (about three to five years old), the child's libidinal energy is directed towards the mother, and aggressive feelings are directed towards the father. Under the threat of castration posed by the father, these feelings are repressed. The male child has to give up the desire for the mother, and identify with the father, internalizing his value system in the form of the 'superego', which acts as a moral censor towards the ego. If the Oedipal conflict is successfully negotiated, the child will eventually be able to take up his place in the social order by obtaining a 'bride' of his own and by becoming a father himself. The girl child has a different trajectory, which leads to a displacement of the desire to regain the 'lost' penis onto the desire to have a child. (See Freud 1905a, Easthope 1999 and Laplanche and Pontalis 1967 for further discussion of these points.)

Although Freud's account has been disputed, few contemporary theorists would disagree with his insight that gender is a cultural construct, or, in Judith Butler's term, a performance (Butler 1990). Since Jacques Lacan emphasized the distinction between the anatomical male organ and the phallus, the symbolic power that it represents (Lacan 1966: 685–695), many cultural analysts have focused on masculinity in terms of anxiety about gaining and maintaining power and status.

10.4 The *petite bourgeoisie*: *Les Bidochon* (Binet, from 1978)

The beret-wearing Robert Bidochon works in an office, but he does not demonstrate the decorum associated with the petite bourgeoisie. His taste in food favours the abundance that

Bourdieu ascribes to the working class, and when, on his first date with his future wife, Raymonde, he takes her to the station buffet, she is startled by the noise that he makes when eating his *sardines à l'huile*. The grossness of his bodily habits is, moreover, the occasion for a good deal of scatological humour. However, the portrayal of the couple's lifestyle in many ways typifies Bourdieu's description of the petit-bourgeois habitus, a context which renders Robert's absence of social graces the more comical. His inability to restrain himself may, in fact, be interpreted as much in psychoanalytic terms as in class terms: he emerges from the album which recounts the couple's meeting and marriage, *Roman d'amour* (1980), as a pre-Oedipal child.

Although Robert's failure to perform sexually on the wedding night may be attributed to his having overeaten at the wedding, it becomes clear during the honeymoon, spent at the home of his parents, that he has never detached himself from his mother. Madame Bidochon senior dotes on Robert and regards Raymonde, however improbably, as a heartless predator, while Robert's father dismisses his son as cowardly and vain. If Robert chooses Raymonde over his mother, after an ultimatum from the former, it is only because he has paid money to the marriage agency. He does not, though, seem to attain adult sexuality: when the Bidochons, unable to conceive a child, visit a doctor, it emerges that Robert's testicles have never dropped. This diagnosis is experienced as a humiliation by Robert, and the couple walk, with some pathos, into the distance, Raymonde's arm around her husband. She remains an essentially maternal figure to him: indeed, he calls her 'Maman'.

Many albums further on, in *Bidochon mère (môman)* (1997), Robert's incomplete separation from his mother is confirmed when the couple visit her. She does everything in her power to prevent Robert from leaving her, recalling how ecstatic she was to feel him inside her, and reminding him how much he loved sucking her breast, although even Robert is taken aback when she invites him to do so again now. In the same album, the exasperated Raymonde gains access to Robert's brain, represented as a computer. She discovers that the keyboard is controlled by a child, whose place has never been taken, as it should have been, by the adult Robert (who was otherwise occupied watching television), and ectoplasm-like 'uncontrolled fantasies' run wild inside it, insufficiently repressed or sublimated.

The revelation that Robert's psychic development is thus arrested would account for his frequently spiteful behaviour to small children, who may be seen as rivals for the attention of the mother. In an episode from *Les Bidochon en vacances* (1981) which combines child-persecution with scatological humour, Robert encounters a child who is looking for fish to show his mother. Robert shits in the sea and directs the child to search in that area. His conscious aim is to cause trouble for the child by provoking the mother's horrified reaction, but, unconsciously, he has found a way of using the child as an intermediary for his own 'present' to the mother, the faeces that, according to Freud, are offered up to please her. In *Bidochon mère (môman)*, it is implied that the gift is made more directly. Robert's willingness to satisfy all the caprices of his mother, who claims to be on her death bed, annoys Raymonde who asks if he would shit in his pants if his mother asked him to. Seizing upon this suggestion, Robert hastens back into his mother's bedroom.

Robert's childishness may lead to transgression of the norms of petit-bourgeois acceptability, but he is nonplussed when faced with the deliberate taboo-breaking that is practised as 'therapy' by the couple's pretentious friends in *Des instants inoubliables* (1995). René and Gisèle engage in the kind of fashionable religious cultism mixed with psychoanalytic jargon that Bourdieu associates with the new petite bourgeoisie (Bourdieu 1979: 424–5). The master in their ashram having taught them how to expel aggression by shouting insults at each other, they initiate the Bidochons into this technique. Robert, although prepared to shout 'salope' (bitch) at Gisèle, becomes increasingly incensed at being called a 'pédé' (an insulting term for homosexual), claiming that the difference is that 'Gisèle really is a bitch'. Although Robert is scarcely an eager participant in heterosexual activity, a subject of some disgruntlement to Raymonde (see Binet 1997: 36, for example), the suggestion of homosexuality is subject to absolute repression on his part.

Robert's choleric character and lack of self-control are clearly a prime source of humour in the series, but Binet's derision is similarly exercised on those occasions when the couple conform, or attempt to conform, to the traditional petit-bourgeois habitus. In the first years of their marriage, the Bidochons live in an HLM, an *habitation à loyer modéré*, equivalent to a council flat, but instead of the conviviality that characterizes working-class life, they display the 'each for himself, each in his own home' mentality associated by Bourdieu with the petite bourgeoisie (Bourdieu 979: 389). In *Les Bidochon en habitation à loyer modéré* (1982), Robert and Raymonde celebrate New Year's Eve alone as a couple, annoyed by the noise of their neighbours' parties, drinking sparkling wine rather than champagne: Bourdieu alludes to the prevalence of substitutes and 'false luxury' in the petit-bourgeois lifestyle (Bourdieu 1979: 370). A meeting of the tenants in their block fails to evince any sign of solidarity. Robert is one of only three to turn up, and all are unwilling to engage in collective action, over rent increases, for example, preferring to complain about the habits of individual neighbours. Many years later, when the Bidochons buy a mobile phone in *Les Bidochon usent le forfait* (2000), they have acquired only two friends, René and Gisèle, and so are obliged to fill the memory with the numbers of strangers found in the phone book. Robert resorts to ringing Raymonde from the sofa in order to benefit from the free credit that came with the purchase.

Their project of having a suburban villa constructed, the subject of *Maison, sucrée maison* (1983), brings out a typically petit-bourgeois preoccupation with status, although the pair manifest this in different ways. Raymonde's social anxiety is so acute that she is afraid of making the show house (modelled on the Château de Chambord) dirty, exemplifying Bourdieu's description of a petit bourgeois as 'a proletarian who must make him/herself small to go through the door of the bourgeoisie' (Bourdieu 1979: 390). Robert feels the need to impress the salesman by displaying his mastery of technical terms such as 'wall' and 'door handle', but he is confident of the social ascension conferred by house ownership. He is mistrustful of the working class, claiming that the builders will deliberately produce shoddy workmanship unless they are appeased, to which end he has bought them a crate of red wine. His belief in his ability to handle the lower orders misfires, however, when the builders turn out to be North African, and, as Muslims, are insulted by the offer of wine.

Robert also demonstrates the petit-bourgeois obsession with hyper-correctness in language noted by Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1979: 390). In *Roman d'amour*, he rebukes Raymonde for saying 'la chiotte', a crude word for 'toilet', in the singular instead of the more usual plural form 'les chiottes', on the grounds that 'when you're out in the world and you say "la chiotte" instead of "les chiottes" people will take you for a stupid twat'. His concern seems inappropriate, given that in the event of Raymonde making an entrance into the refined social world that he projects, it is clearly the choice of the word 'chiotte', rather than the failure to use the plural form, that would raise bourgeois eyebrows.

Raymonde herself displays the petit-bourgeois awareness of the importance of bodily grooming. Lacking the self-assurance of the bourgeoisie, says Bourdieu, women of this class know that they must invest time and effort on maintaining their 'corporal capital' (Bourdieu 1979: 227–8). In *Roman d'amour*, she uses Robert's razor to remove her 'duvet disgracieux' (unsightly 'down': 'duvet' is a euphemism for body hair used in women's magazines). The evidence of the image shows the absurdity of this endeavour, as vast swathes of hair cling to the razor. Her body, undoubtedly a 'bearer of signs', in Bourdieu's term (Bourdieu 1979: 214), will never approach the dominant norm of female appearance and deportment. Almost twenty years later, in *Les Bidochon toniques* (1997), she has still not given up, and consults a beauty counsellor who urges her to invest in the technological innovations which will give her a 'dream body'.

The Bidochons' cultural pursuits offer a parodic version of the 'cultural good will', the earnestness that Bourdieu attributes to the petite bourgeoisie who lack the bourgeoisie's ease with the official culture transmitted by the education system (Bourdieu 1979: 365). It is true that Raymonde is able to recite some learned-by-heart lines from Victor Hugo when experimenting with the new mobile phone, and thereby convinces the extra-terrestrials hovering in outer space near the satellite that there is intelligent life on earth (a conclusion subsequently confounded by the fart noises that Robert uses to test the line). In general, though, the Bidochons engage in the ersatz forms of legitimate culture to which the petite bourgeoisie are condemned by their misplaced zeal: Bourdieu describes them as visiting monuments and chateaux rather than art galleries, for example (Bourdieu 1979: 376–7). Robert and Raymonde scale the hierarchy of legitimacy down a little further in *Les Bidochon usagers de la route* (1988), by making a studious comparison of the symbols for different chateaux on road signs rather than visiting the actual buildings. They do, though, visit a shoelace museum in *Les Bidochon en vacances*, and dutifully pore over the strangely identical exhibits, which include shoelaces from the twelfth century and shoelaces worn by Napoleon.

For Bourdieu, a key distinction between the bourgeoisie and their social inferiors is, of course, the possession or non-possession of the cultivated disposition which valorizes form above content in the arts, and enables the learned competence of the privileged classes to masquerade as innate taste (Bourdieu 1979: 29–31). This distinction does not fail to manifest itself in *Les Bidochon*, but is given an absurd twist. Raymonde's taste, predictably, runs to representational art. Less predictably, the representative of the 'aesthetic disposition' is Kador, the family dog and scholar of Kant, who hides his exasperation when, in spite of his erudite

commentary on the compositional qualities of Japanese prints, Raymonde's response is limited to excitement at their portrayal of naked men (*Kador*, 1978).

More unexpectedly still, the distinction is reconfigured in the same album as a contrast between the reader and the characters. Robert, unable to appreciate the formal mechanism of ellipsis through which *bande dessinée* operates, complains to the narrator that he is being made to go to bed when he has only just got up. The reader is thereby put in a superior position of sophisticated awareness of codes of the medium. Robert does, though, show a keen aesthetic sense in relation to photography. Bourdieu describes how the petite bourgeoisie use this practice to demarcate themselves from the working class: where the latter use their cameras to record important family occasions such as first communions, the former go in for a certain stylistic research (Bourdieu 1979: 62–67). Robert exemplifies this concern by his determination, in *Les Bidochon en vacances*, to take 'an artistic horizon', once he has mastered the technological complexities of choosing between the 'sun' and 'shade' settings on his camera.

Although our laughter at the expense of this dim couple precludes identification, Binet's satire frequently moves beyond them to take in those who treat them with disdain. Bourdieu describes the moralization and demoralization to which the working class are constantly subject (Bourdieu 1979: 447). The Bidochons may have moved up the hierarchy to become homeowners but their fragile social position makes them vulnerable not only to exhortations to continued self-improvement like those of Raymonde's beauty counsellor, but also to intimidation by officials and professionals of various kinds. In *Les Bidochon assujettis sociaux* (1984), the symbolic violence of the incomprehensible language used by the doctor, who, furthermore, addresses the couple in the third person, has the effect of making Raymonde pass out. They are constantly subjected to policing, even when on holiday in *Les Bidochon en voyage organisé* (1984), through the petty authoritarianism of their tour guide, and the reader applauds when they participate in a rare moment of collective revolt. The group refuses to visit another monastery, a rebellion joined even by the tedious autodidact whose appetite for sharing his guidebook-gleaned knowledge about Romano-Byzantine art had seemed inexhaustible.

Significantly, it is *Maison sucrée maison*, the album in which the couple attain the status of homeowners, that most effectively sums up their lack of power in the wider world, through an ending which is both strikingly cruel and oddly compassionate. As the Bidochons, having no deckchairs, sit on a breeze block outside their *pavillon* enjoying the silence, the frame widens in the next panel, revealing that they and the house are enclosed in a glass display case surrounded by men in suits. A waiter presides over a table full of champagne in the background. The framing widens still further to reveal the model of a vast new airport next to the house, as the men drink a toast to the success of the project.

10.5 The working class: *Lucien* (Frank Margerin, from 1979)

Frank Margerin's *Lucien* series focuses on a small group of suburban rockers, the eponymous Lucien and his friends Ricky, Gillou, Marco and the rest, but the format of the albums, usually

made up of stories each consisting of a few pages, allows for the inclusion of episodes featuring other characters.

In contrast to the petit-bourgeois individualism and social ambition of the Bidochons, Margerin's rockers embody the shared hedonism and the philosophy of living for the moment that Bourdieu associates with the proletarian habitus (Bourdieu 1979: 203). Where Binet's satire of his *Français moyens* is frequently cruel, Margerin's mockery of his characters is gentler, and his portrayal of their milieu offers a nostalgic celebration. Although the series began in 1979, with *Ricky banlieue*, and continued through the 1980s and 1990s, the suburbs that Margerin evokes resemble those of his own youth in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Margerin 1987: 9–10). As in Bourdieu's account (Bourdieu 1979: 204), their lifestyle revolves not around home life but around the bistro, depicted by Margerin with semiological precision, from the *flipper* (pinball) machine to the peanut-dispenser on the bar.

Their pastimes include a number of the popular cultural pursuits which Bourdieu enumerates (Bourdieu 1979: 458), such as fairs: in *Bananes métalliques* (1982), the Foire du Trône in Paris is rendered in careful detail, with the occasional more fantastic element such as the vulture hovering over the stall which sells sweets and merguez. In the same album, they engage in the fandom that Bourdieu describes in relation to sport and music (Bourdieu 1979: 450), but their participation is not limited to the passivity that he laments, since they have their own rock band, even if gigs are hard to come by and they have to settle for a village fete, where they sing 'Fuck off and destroy, you bunch of bourgeois' to a few polite families (Margerin 1982: 49).

If this declaration of a desire to overthrow the bourgeoisie seems far-fetched, this is because dominant culture seems to impinge very little on the lives of the characters. Even when political change is envisaged, as in *Votez Rocky* (1981), where a rocker is elected president, the dream is that popular culture becomes dominant: two fur-coated old ladies with small dogs are able to use street slang to discuss rock music. The blue, white and red presidential sash worn by the rocker over his jeans as he drinks beer in his bedroom, in which the Eiffel Tower features as a kitsch object on a shelf, indicates that proletarian taste now represents national culture. Outside such fantasies, the group's relationship to official culture is perhaps best encapsulated in an episode of *Chez Lucien* (1985) in which the group get on a crowded train and try to avoid having to sit with various undesirable people. The latter include an intellectual reading a book of which the title is 'bouquin chiant' (bloody boring book), conceivably a novel not unlike that written a few years later by Dupuy and Berberian's *Monsieur Jean*.

The cultural practices of Lucien and the gang are, clearly, intended to affirm the masculinity that is an essential element of their class identity. The social group from whom they are most eager to demarcate themselves are the *babas*, latter-day hippies, represented by Lucien's cousin Nanard, who lives in a community in Provence and keeps sheep. The *baba*'s counter-cultural lifestyle places him squarely within Bourdieu's category of the 'new petite bourgeoisie', whose 'practical utopianism' is a debased form of intellectualism (Bourdieu

1979: 428–9). The group's embarrassment at being seen with the long-haired, peace-sign wearing Nanard, who, for example, holds up his lighter at a concert in *Votez Rocky*, is, though, based primarily on their fear of losing their image as hard men.

The precarity of the group's hard man pose, which depends heavily on the vestimentary symbols of *perfecto* (leather jacket) and *santiags* (cowboy boots), and, in Lucien's case, the *banane*, or rocker's quiff, becomes particularly evident whenever they are confronted with a group whose masculinity is based on the threat of physical force, even if more or less symbolic: Lucien's *banane* is ruffled by a group of soldiers on leave when he has to go past them on the train in *Chez Lucien*, and, in *Bananes Métalliques*, Rickie has his *santiags* stolen by a group of hyper-macho *loubards* (thugs) in the metro. In general, though, the excessive masculinity of the *loubards* is ridiculed, and shown to be even more insecure than that of the rockers. When Marco needs to get into condition for a particularly tough babysitting assignment in *Votez Rocky*, he deliberately provokes a group of *loubards* hanging around the metro by calling them 'girlies' and 'transvestites'. Predictably, the tattoo-and-chain laden yobs rise to the bait, unaware that they are helping him out by giving him the practice he needs.

Curiously, the group's own anxious performance of masculinity seems not to imply homophobia: indeed, in an episode of *Votez Rocky*, they dress up as The Village People, having carried out a series of complicated heists to assemble the costumes, substituting a beret-wearing baguette-carrier and a street sweeper for the Native American and the cowboy. When, in the much later *Lucien: le retour* (1993), a stereotypically gay party guest flirts with Lucien, he seems oblivious rather than affronted, and the humour arises out of his naïveté.

Encounters with women tend to be brief in the early albums and are essentially a function of competitiveness within the group. In *Chez Lucien*, Lucien is teased because he is never seen with a girl, and is handicapped, when he goes to a disco, by the strobe lights which show up the dandruff on his jacket. The situation is resolved when, on leaving, he is accidentally knocked down by the bus carrying the 'Miss France' candidates, who accompany him back to the bistro and enable him to impress his fellow rockers.

The rockers seem, in fact, to be living out an extended adolescence, reluctant to commit themselves either to relationships with women or to jobs. They are only sporadically employed, preferring to get by through various kinds of blagging and schemes, legal or illegal, which most often fail, and lead to punishment at the hands of male authority figures such as policemen and bouncers. The avoidance of social insertion may be explained by the fact that that the adult males who people their world are represented either in these exaggeratedly repressive roles or as timid petits bourgeois. Specimens of the latter can be spotted in *Bananes métalliques*, neurotically reading a map in the dodgem car at the fair or fussily arranging a blanket and pillow at the beach.

Overall-clad men can be seen drinking at the bar in the café in *Chez Lucien*, but these models of proletarian virility are an exception. The physical strength that, according to Bourdieu, is

valorized by the working class as an attribute of manhood, appears in the *Lucien* series either as the unconstrained pre-Oedipal violence of the *loubards*, or as the threat of castration from older males whose power is wielded with sadism. This threat is given rather obvious metaphorical form in *Votez Rocky*, when Lucien responds to an advertisement for a flat which specifies that candidates must 'look respectable'. His efforts to achieve respectability involve the experience of visiting a barber, a terrifying figure who has scissors behind his ear as well as menacing clippers, and who cuts off his *banane*. He is subsequently humiliated by the derisive laughter of a group of girls.

Elsewhere, settling down may not be equated so directly with castration, but it takes the form of a more gradual emasculation through petit-bourgeois domesticity, and so is resisted by the group, even if sometimes inadvertently: in *Chez Lucien*, when Lucien offers to put up some shelves for recently married friends, he ends up by destroying their house. When he goes camping, in *Votez Rocky*, he finds himself next to a petit-bourgeois couple, whose tent resembles a suburban villa. The episode ends on their shock as Lucien urinates into the neat potted plant which stands outside their door-flap.

The 1987 *Lulu s'maque*, an album-length story, explores these issues in more depth and seriousness, whilst maintaining an overall comic mode. Lucien has undergone the rite of passage of military service. The album opens on his return, and the institutionally inflicted loss of his *banane* is revealed when Ricky, to Lucien's annoyance, pulls his hat off. Gillou and Ricky have themselves settled down to the extent of getting permanent jobs, in a garage and as a waiter respectively, and they find Lucien a job selling army surplus clothes. He moves in with them, but, lacking a mattress, visits his parents, depicted as petit bourgeois, the father pipe-smoking and tie-wearing, and the mother in flowered dress and marigolds. His enquiry as to whether they have a mattress to spare elicits a disconcerting response from his mother, who offers Lucien the marital bed, on the grounds that she and his father are buying new furniture. As he stands with both parents gazing into the parental bedroom, Lucien is clearly embarrassed. This episode may be likened to what Freud has called the primal scene: the child's memory/fantasy of seeing his parents have sex, during which the sight of his mother's genitals gives him a conviction of the reality of castration (Freud 1918: 57). In Lucien's case, the over-elaborate furniture and the crucifix on the wall embody the repressive dreariness of the petit-bourgeois lifestyle and imply that the trauma of this primal scene is not so much the vision of his mother as castrated, but rather his father.

Lucien hurries away but embarks, albeit very nervously, on a relationship with Suzie, a student that he meets at a party, and she eventually moves into the house that he shares with Ricky and Gillou. Her arrival provokes a frenzy of competitiveness amongst the young men, but they gradually find their lifestyle affected as various elements of their masculine identity are challenged: Suzie's dislike of football forces them to go to the bar to watch matches, and she urges them to cease smoking and take up jogging. It is on class differences, though, that her relationship with Lucien begins to founder. Her efforts to educate his tastes are vain, since he is not ashamed of preferring *bande dessinée* to Valéry poems, and rock music on his Walkman to Mozart on the turntable. Like Raymonde Bidochon, he appreciates content over

form, and his perception of Renoir paintings is limited to noting that the women are well endowed. Unlike Raymonde Bidochon, he has no desire for social advancement and is irritated by Suzie's pretentious friends. This album differs from the earlier ones in that Lucien displays an awareness of the economic realities which underpin his 'uneducated' tastes and restrict the choices available to him. When Suzie accuses him of a lack of ambition, he points out that she is only able to study because her parents support her. When she asks if he would prefer her to work on the checkout at Monoprix, he calls her a 'petite bourgeoise', and says that this would do her good (Margerin 1987: 53). The album ends with Suzie's departure for a scholarship in America. Lucien regrows his *banane*, masculinity still untamed and class identity fully assumed.

Episodes in subsequent *Lucien* albums include excesses of working-class sociability and juvenile irresponsibility. In *Lucien, le retour*, Lucien's flat fills up with party guests, invited and uninvited, to the point where some are forced to stand in the bath. Like traditional *bande dessinée* characters, the group do not age over the series, and the evolution of Lucien that occurs in *Lulu s'maque* seems to be arrested. The characters' prolonged suspension of adulthood is logical, given the absence of role models of mature proletarian masculinity in a post-industrial society: in this respect, Margerin's work may be likened to that of Baru, in spite of the contrast in tonality.

If the prospects of economic capital for Lucien and his friends are slim, and they do not aspire to cultural capital, there is one area in which they can attain status, if only within their own group. Bourdieu refers to the 'counter-legitimacy' that may be affirmed by the working class through the skilled use of language, the sole domain in which they value a certain stylization, as in the use of slang by 'caïds' or gang leaders (Bourdieu 1979: 460). Margerin's characters display considerable virtuosity both in their use of slang for verbal jousting or in the demonstration of their expertise in the technical terms relating, for example, to complex moves in pinball. The accuracy of the artist's observation of the bodily hexis, accoutrements and decors associated with different classes is matched by the exactness of his ear for dialogue.

While still producing the occasional *Lucien* album, Margerin worked during the 1990s on a variety of other projects including an animated television series based on younger hero called Manu, whose adventures take place in a family context. In 2002, he inaugurated a new series, set this time in a recognizably contemporary *banlieue*, with a hero of Maghrebi origin, Momo, who enables him to exercise his visual and aural acuity on a new generation.

10.6 The new bourgeoisie and the new petite bourgeoisie: *Léon la came* (De Crécy and Chomet, 1995–1998)

The first volume of de Crècy and Chomet's trilogy, *Léon la came* (1995), introduces the Houx-Wardiougue family, whose name amounts to a peremptory interrogation, in English, as to the status of anyone that they encounter. Their wealth has been built on the family cosmetics firm established by Léon and run for the last thirty years by his son Aymard. The family retain some aspects of the habitus of the traditional bourgeoisie, such as the elaborate ritual of mealtimes,

but their infatuation with all things American makes them essentially a caricature of the new bourgeoisie. Aymard's daughter, Nadège, employs the Anglicism-filled discourse of management, including the ludicrous 'driver' as a verb meaning to 'drive' an advertising campaign. Her teenage son, who has the very bourgeois name of Jean-Guy, is expensively clad in designer versions of the clothes worn by the American black underclass.

Aymard's bodily hexis signals uncontestable authority, as he fills entire panels, immobile and threatening. His wife is dead, and his detachment from the feminine element is shown by his willingness to manufacture soap out of mother's milk. His masculinity has been asserted against the trade unionists within the firm, whom he has 'rooted out like headlice' (De Crécy and Chomet 1995: 34). His charges his son, Gégé, with running an advertising campaign based, absurdly, on the bringing of the 100-year-old Léon out of an old people's home to demonstrate the effects of an anti-wrinkle cream. This task is expressed by Aymard as a test of manhood: he tells his son, 'Your balls are at stake' (De Crécy and Chomet 1995: 119). Gégé is not up to this challenge, however. His fear of his father and of dealing with the social world is so acute that he has difficulty in controlling his bowels and spends most of his time in the lavatory. By the end of the trilogy, in *Priez pour nous* (1998), he will have regressed still further to an uncontrollable junk-food fuelled orality that inflates him to several times his former size.

Aymard's other children and grandchildren have more successfully internalized his values. The name of the business school attended by Nadege's son, Béranger, is D.E.F.E.C., a plausible-sounding acronym which is a homophone for 'defecate', and therefore stands as a metaphor for the sublimation of the pleasures of anality into business management. The grandfather, Léon, on the other hand, is an anarchic figure who remains outside the social game, and who disapproves of his son's business practices and treatment of Gégé. Léon insists on making dinner for the family, and serves up a turd on a silver platter, a malodorous reminder of all that is repressed to keep the social order in place.

The new petite bourgeoisie is represented by the publicists and designers enlisted by the Houx Wardiougues, and particularly by the ponytail- and stubble-adorned figure of the design consultant Jean-God Michel. As Bourdieu argues, these professions, which have become the new 'taste-makers', permit the maximum of cultural pretension, since they represent types of knowledge which do not have well-established standards (Bourdieu 1979: 415). Jean-God's status as a cultural arbiter is indicated by his name, and satirized by his extension of the notion of fashionable taste beyond the Philippe Starck coffee cups which litter the studio to the shrunken head of a Dutch explorer from the Amazon, on the grounds that only 'has-beens' still display heads of Jivaro Indians on their shelves (De Crécy and Chomet 1995: 66).

The rising petite bourgeoisie continue to loom large in subsequent volumes of the trilogy, as their upward trajectory meets the downward trajectory of others. Those who have turned 'therapeutic moralizing' in Bourdieu's term (Bourdieu 1979: 428) into a career opportunity include a woman who runs courses for unemployed members of the traditional petite bourgeoisie, to teach them the new virtues of adaptability. They are unwilling or unable,

though, unable to lose the habitus and bodily hexis of their former professions. An ex-accounts clerk sits on the edge of his chair clutching a briefcase when he is supposed to be dressing up as a theme-park monster. The woman's symbolic violence towards them ends in their real violence towards her when they kill her. Similarly, Brian Molduren, the writer of the self-help 'Winner's manual' devoured by Gégé in *Laid Pauvre et malade* (1997), will meet a violent death in the final volume at the hands of the defrocked priest who acts as an avenging angel, religion having been outsourced, as God adopts ultra-liberal economic practices.

The factory workers are represented in the first album at the height of militant pride and class-consciousness in a flashback to the strikes of 1936. They subsequently appear only as the gas-masked drones who stir up the foul mixture of offal from which the cosmetics are made, and disappear from the scene altogether once the factory is moved to Shanghai. In the final two volumes, there is no longer any working class as such, only the 'poor', represented mainly by the hapless Gégé, thrown out by his father, but also by various other marginal figures, all engaged in an individualistic and frequently murderous struggle to survive. The slick sales-talk of the homeless young man on the metro reconfigures begging as offering the kind of career flexibility that the group of unemployed men were unwilling to embrace, but he markedly improves his earning capacity by borrowing their gun.

The world painted in glaucous colours by De Crécy and Chomet is inhabited by grotesques, whether predators or victims, but their gallery of social types is memorable, as they depict the relentlessness of the struggle in late-twentieth-century France for the prizes held out by the 'Winners' manual': money, power and social respect.

10.7 The intellectual bourgeoisie: *Monsieur Jean* (Dupuy and Berberian, from 1991)

Dupuy and Berberian's *Monsieur Jean* series has been called 'BD pour bobos' (*bourgeois-bohèmes*) and although their irritation with this label is attested (Loiseau 2006: 137), their portrayal of the obsessions and neuroses of the *bobo* milieu is meticulous. Jean's own background is not bourgeois. His parents' petit-bourgeois taste is signalled as from the first album, *L'amour la concierge* (1991), by the mass-produced peasant-style furniture in their living room ('*salon rustique*'), which is decorated with ornaments in the form of a Spanish doll and a German beer stein. As a published writer, Jean has ascended out of this milieu, and his own tastes are high cultural: he has abstract prints on the walls of his flat, he reads Céline in bed in *Les nuits les plus blanches* (1992) and a Matisse exhibition catalogue in his bath in *L'amour la concierge*. According to Bourdieu, intellectuals and artists have the self-confidence to express a preference for 'riskier' objects, which are transformed into works of art by being singled out by the 'taste of distinction' (Bourdieu 1979: 321). One of Jean's predilections is for vinyl jazz records, and his friend Clément has to remind him that not everyone shares his cultural elitism. Faced with Jean's concern that his collection will be stolen while he is on holiday, Clément asks in *Les nuits les plus blanches* how likely it is that a gang of intellectual burglars will break in. Even Jean, though, is daunted in the same album by the thought of the avant-garde film *Prise de tête* (Pain in the neck), and goes to see it only when he is suffering

from insomnia, in the hope that it will send him to sleep. In the event, he is the only person in the cinema who stays awake through it.

It is not clear how avant-garde Jean's own books are, but the negative review that one receives in 'Dentists' monthly', in *Les nuits les plus blanches*, indicates that they have minority appeal only. He watches with irritation as customers in a bookshop queue up for a book written by a TV presenter, and notes that their poor taste in clothes matches their literary tastes. It is clear that Jean's cultural capital considerably outweighs his economic capital. *In L'amour, la concierge*, he comes into contact with someone who has economic capital in abundance when he takes a scriptwriting job with a very wealthy film producer whose interest in culture is limited to its market value, and whose term of approval is 'banco!'. The producer's kudos amongst his friends, invited round for champagne, is nonetheless enhanced when he introduces them to Jean, not because they have read his book but because, in their eyes, appearing on the literary TV chat show 'Apostrophes' is a marker of symbolic prestige. A contest between the possessors of the two types of capital is fought out over the au pair girl Solveig. She seems attracted by Jean's intellectual bodily hexis, remarking that, like Sartre, he smokes. However, it is the producer that she sleeps with. Noting the victory of economic capital in the sexual power stakes, Jean utters a silent 'Banco!' (Dupuy and Berberian 1991: 41).

Masculinity interacts with social class in a number of ways throughout the series. Jean tends to be easily intimidated by working-class characters. His fear that they perceive him as lacking in virility is figured in a dream in *L'amour, la concierge*, in which he is sold a droopy baguette by the woman in the baker's shop and feels shame as he carries it through the streets. His concierge does not think of writing as real work and maintains power over him by holding onto his mail. At the supermarket, he finds himself the object of the casual contempt of, successively, the Maghrebi woman on the checkout, a spotty youth and an older male supervisor whose combined intransigence results in his doing, and paying for, his shopping twice over. In *Les femmes et les enfants d'abord* (1994a), he is rejected, after a brief affair, by the sexually athletic Manureva (whose taste for the overblown 1970s song after which she has named herself he is prepared to overlook) in favour of her muscular former boyfriend, and the fact that the latter makes grammatical mistakes when he daubs slogans on Jean's flat seems only to emphasize his superior masculinity. Jean is more easily moved to sentiments of masculine superiority, and indeed derision, when his rivals are petit bourgeois, such as the *baba* who appears in a flashback in the same album, wooing Jean's former girlfriend Cathy with repeated renderings of 'Norwegian Wood', or, when Jean and Cathy are once more an item in *Vivons heureux sans en avoir l'air* (1998), the identity-bracelet-wearing Pierre-Yves, Cathy's TV producer colleague.

The question of perceptions of sexual orientation is also related to social class. In the first volume of the series, Jean is rounded up by the vice squad, along with several gay couples, when he wanders round a public square at night in search of the cat that he is supposed to be looking after for a friend. The indignity of his arrest, witnessed by the cat, back at home on the balcony, who seems deliberately to have set his temporary guardian up, is compounded by the homophobic banter of the police. Later in the series, however, in *Comme s'il en pleuvait*

(2001), the frequent presence at his side of his needy friend Félix leads again to the assumption that Jean is gay, this time on the part of journalists interviewing him about his new book. This apparent revelation about his sexual orientation works to his advantage in the fashion-driven literary milieu by boosting the attendance at his press conference and creating an aura of modishness around him.

As Jean reaches the crisis of his thirtieth birthday (unlike Lucien, he ages over the series), the major source of his anxiety is related not so much to his inability to convince others of his masculine credentials, although he remains vulnerable to the scorn of the concierge and the baker, but rather to a more radical fear of the feminine element. His birthday increases the pressure on him from his parents to settle down, and his father's gift of an electric drill, in *Les nuits les plus blanches*, seems to represent a domestication of his phallic power. He resists, by giving the drill away. In *Les femmes et les enfants d'abord*, he dreams that he is a soldier in a military fortress, a rather common metaphor for the male ego, fighting off an attack by women who try to breach its defences by throwing babies over the ramparts.

Over the course of the series he does, however, overcome his commitment phobia and takes up his place in the social order by entering into a long-term relationship with Cathy, and by becoming a father himself. Moreover, he seems to have accepted his own feminine side by taking on much of the childcare, to enable Cathy to return to her career. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner suggest that the 'involved, nurturant father' is merely one more style of masculine gender display, and that the real work of day-to-day caring is likely to be done by a hired lower-class woman, often an immigrant (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner 1994: 205–206). In *Un certain équilibre* (2005), Jean is, however, thwarted in his attempts to profit from his class and gender advantage by the difficulty of finding such a person. The candidate that he finds acceptable is vetoed by Cathy, who dislikes her authoritarian approach: any maternal substitute must adopt the permissive style of parenting favoured in bourgeois bohemian circles. Jean therefore becomes the main carer, but his taking on of the 'new man' role brings him no credit, since the other, female, carers with whom he comes into contact suspect him of trying to dominate a traditionally feminine area with his masculine expertise.

Although Jean's attempts to grapple with the stresses of fatherhood are treated in satirical mode, his acceptance of responsibility is contrasted with the immaturity of his unemployed friend, Félix, whose flight into adolescence makes him periodically neglectful to Eugène, whom he has unofficially inherited from a previous relationship with the child's mother. Eugène may enjoy spending sprees with Félix's credit card, bringing home crateloads of tiramisu and electronic toys, but when, in *Un certain équilibre*, the games console that he has just acquired is monopolized by Félix, even Eugène accuses him of being an unsatisfactory father figure. The playful tone of the series does not preclude sharp observation of the consequences for children of parental self-absorption.

Similarly, the focus on the bourgeois bohemian milieu allows nonetheless for the inclusion of brief but telling vignettes concerning working conditions in the liberal economy of the twenty-first century. Félix's plan to reinvent himself as a 'counsellor in social fulfilment' in *Vivons*

heureux sans en avoir l'air is a parody of the professions based on 'therapeutic morality' enumerated by Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1979: 428). The downside of 'adaptability' is illustrated in *Inventaire avant travaux* (2003), by the assistant in the department store where the *bobos* exercise their cultivated taste in home furnishings. Her CDD (*contrat à durée determinée*: fixed-term contract) is not being renewed, and she tells Jean that he can smash all the china he wants. Gender is again an issue: if Jean was unable to assert class and gender privilege, his friend, the self-assured bourgeois Clément, who runs an advertising agency, has no such reticence. He repeatedly asks out the young woman who is on unpaid work experience with the agency, and his persistence in the face of her refusals amounts to sexual harassment. She does, eventually, speak out: 'Are you really a cretin or are you just pretending?'. (Dupuy and Berberian 2003: 36).

Even Jean's nemesis, the concierge, is not immune from the harshness of economic conditions. She is an essentially comic working-class character whose culture consists of TV and TV magazines, and whose purchase of a slimming belt featured in a TV advert ('Say yes to your body') gives her electric shocks but otherwise has little visible effect on her grotesque body. However, in *Vivons heureux sans en avoir l'air*, she loses her job when a *digicode* is installed, a move which subtly underlines the increasing paranoia of the bourgeoisie.

The Parisian microcosm of the *bobos* is, then, set in the wider context of a climate of economic precarity. When, in *Inventaire avant travaux*, a group of homeless people occupy the pavement in front of the department store, the management try to dislodge them by installing plot plants on their pitch, which then becomes a bizarre replica of the aspirational lifestyle on sale inside the shop. The spectre of the absolute poverty of the sub-proletariat, described by Bourdieu as the threat that haunts the working class (Bourdieu 1979: 459), is now a highly visible presence for all social classes. The authors' treatment of the homeless people, observed with the same ironic eye as the *bobos*, is devoid of pathos**,** in a portrait of contemporary France which is certainly comic, but rather less light-hearted than it first appears.

10.8 Conclusion

As we suggested in the introduction, masculinity and social class identity are differently configured across our examples. Robert Bidochon's incomplete separation from the mother accounts for his failure to take up an adult social role and achieve petit-bourgeois propriety and status. Margerin's rockers, on the other hand, fear petit-bourgeois settlement as a castration, and so prolong their proletarian hedonism. In the world of De Crécy and Chomet, masculinity is associated with the ruthless wielding of power by the bourgeoisie, and Gégé, unable to live up to this phallic ideal, regresses back to anal and oral-fixated behaviour. Monsieur Jean, as an intellectual, is conscious that he lacks both the physical signs of masculinity associated with the proletariat and the economic muscle of the wealthy bourgeoisie, but his main anxiety is around the redefinition of masculine social roles and responsibilities within his own milieu of *bourgeois bohèmes*.

Bande dessinée is a particularly apt medium for the representation of social class through bodily hexis, which can be reduced to its most salient traits, and through the metonymic selection of the décors and accoutrements that make up a lifestyle. At the same time, its freedom from the constraints of realism allows for the psychic dramas through which masculinity is claimed or threatened to be given striking figurative form. The artists whose work we have discussed use their graphic line in very different ways. Binet's hysterical line captures the violent emotions that the Bidochons expend on mediocre goals, their response to the symbolic violence that they meet without recognizing it as such, and their inability to curb their bodily excesses to meet the norms of petit-bourgeois respectability. Margerin's line is calmer and kinder. Objects like those which look so humble in the photographs of working-class life that illustrate *La Distinction* are singled out and given iconic status, and the fragile masculinity of the rockers is respected, if gently mocked. In contrast, every line of the facial expression and bodily posture of De Crécy and Chomet's characters reveals the tension through which power relations within the family and beyond are imposed, the cruelty of the oppressors, and the savage glee of the oppressed when they seize the opportunity for revenge. The exception is Gégé, although his very flaccidness, in his inability to construct the hard body and ego of masculinity, makes him ultimately as monstrous as his tormentors. Dupuy and Berberian's world seems very different, as their sophisticated line takes up a certain distance to Jean's agonized fretting over his masculine role, but that line nonetheless takes us into his unconscious and to his fears about insecurity, played out in the form of nightmares. It is the capacity of the medium for evoking both social and psychic worlds that this chapter has aimed to demonstrate.

Part Four

Bande dessinée and subjectivity

Where Part three considered the expression of collective identities in *bande dessinée*, Part four will look the treatment of subjectivity in the medium. Although we appear to be concerned in these chapters with the expression of individual fears and fantasies, psychoanalytic theories would see subjectivity as culturally determined, as the child grows up into a set of rules and prohibitions which pre-exist it. Chapter 11 is based on existing critical work by four writers who have applied concepts taken from psychoanalysis to the analysis of *bande dessinée*. Unsurprisingly, they have all chosen the work of Hergé as their object of study. Where *Astérix* has proved a fertile source of material for those investigating the mythology of Frenchness, *Tintin* is rich in characters who incarnate the deepest anxieties which haunt us, and its fascination can be shown to arise out of the psychic dramas that it stages. Chapters 12 and 13 are devoted to examples of the first-person narratives which have become a key genre in *bande dessinée* since the 1990s. Chapter 12 looks at the way in which different artists have approached the task of constructing of a textual version of the self, and the way in which they manage the relationship between the narrating 'I' and the represented 'I'. Chapter 13 is concerned more particularly with gender, raising questions about the representation of the self as embodied or disembodied, and considering the attempts of women artists to move beyond normative definitions of femininity.

Chapter 11

PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACHES TO TINTIN

11.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an account of the work of four writers who have investigated the unconscious mechanisms at work in *Tintin*. Benoît Peeters's book, *Les Bijoux ravis* (1984), is devoted to *Les Bijoux de la Castafiore*, while Michael David's *Une psychanalyse amusante: Tintin à la lumière de Lacan* (1994), like Tom McCarthy's *Tintin and the Secret of Literature* (2006), covers the whole of Hergé's œuvre. Serge Tisseron brings a psychoanalytical reading to the medium as a whole, but it is his work on Hergé that we will discuss in detail below. The four authors take different approaches. Peeters aims to reveal the unconscious of the text, Tisseron looks for evidence of an encrypted family secret in one of Hergé's characters, which he then links, encouraged by some biographical evidence, with Hergé's own family history, whilst David states his intention of using Hergé's work as a source of illustrations of Lacanian theory. We will conclude the chapter by referring to McCarthy's book, which uses Tisseron's work as a starting point, but goes on to develop an analysis based on theoretical perspectives drawn from Barthes and Derrida.

We briefly summarized Freud's description of psychic structures in Chapter 10, and we offer below a similarly brief summary of Lacan's rereading of Freud in relation to subject formation and the Oedipus complex. Lacan's account relates the child's progress through three orders: the Real, the imaginary and the symbolic. The work of the four writers discussed in this chapter draws on both Freud and Lacan.

11.2 Lacan on subject formation

11.2.1 The order of the Real

For Lacan, the child is born into the order of the Real. This is to be distinguished from 'reality', which we can only experience insofar as it is mediated through language. The newborn baby exists in a state of nature, unable to invest the physical world (which is mainly reducible to the maternal body) with signification: it is 'unassimilable' (Lacan 1973: 65). The baby's sense of complete fusion with its mother's body, experienced as a continuum with its own, will inevitably come to an end as it has to cope with periodic separations from the mother, and, so, for the first time, to experience lack, a key term in Lacanian theory.

11.2.2 The mirror phase and the imaginary order

This lack, which can never be filled, will impel the child towards the next stage, the mirror phase, during which ego formation takes place and the child enters the order of the imaginary. This occurs approximately between six and eighteen months, as the child sees its own image in mirror and identifies with this representation of itself, more perfect and unified than it feels itself to be (Lacan 1966: 90).

The ego is, therefore, founded on alterity, since the specular self is an external image, separate from the child. It is necessarily split, dependent on its mirror-image other, and any sense of a unified identity can only be illusory. This imaginary unity, will, however, continue to haunt the child on into adulthood. The mirror may be taken as metaphor for look of mother: the self only exists as reflected in her look. Although separate from the mother, the child remains locked in an intense and narcissistic relation with her as she confirms its sense of self. In order for the child to enter into wider world of language and culture, a third term outside this dual relation has to intervene.

11.2.3 The entry into the symbolic order (the Other)

This third term is the father, who founds the unconscious by repressing desire for the mother. Lacan stresses that this role is played not by the empirical father, as Freud's account may imply, but rather the symbolic figure of the 'Name of the Father' (in French the 'nom du père' is a homophone for the 'non du père', the prohibition of the child's incestuous desire) (Lacan 1966: 157). Lacan's account of the Oedipal stage refers to the phallus rather than the penis. The child becomes aware not of the absence of an anatomical organ, but of the fact that the mother lacks the power and authority invested in the phallus. The phallus, then, is a signifier, a symbol of sexual difference rather than a biological attribute possessed by one sex. It is, nonetheless, a privileged signifier, since it is on the possession or lack of the phallus that the symbolic order is founded.

The child now takes up its place as subject in the symbolic order, which is not just that of language but the whole of culture. The symbolic order is that of the Other: the circuits of linguistic and social exchange, bearing meanings which pre-exist the child, depend on a relation between the self and the Other. As Elizabeth Grosz emphasizes, 'the Other is both "a socio-symbolic network" and "a psychical structure", representative of this social Other,

internalized in the form of the unconscious' (Grosz 1990: 117). Crucially, Lacan does not see the subject as the agent or origin of meaning: it is language that constitutes the subject: 'The subject is born insofar as the signifier emerges in the field of the Other' (Lacan 1973: 231). The capital letter is used to distinguish this use of the term 'other' ('autre' in French) from the non-capitalized version, the 'objet petit a'.

11.2.4 Need, demand, desire and the 'objet petit a' (the other)

The biological needs (food, warmth etc.) experienced in the order of the Real, become associated, in the imaginary order, with a demand made, in rudimentary verbal terms, to the mother to satisfy the child's needs. This amounts to a demand for proof of her love and although it may be temporarily represented by a series of interchangeable objects, such as toys, it will be continually displaced onto others.

When, in the symbolic order, demand has been separated from the need which originally engendered it, it gives way to desire, which is divorced from any kind of biological urge. Lacan defines desire as a 'lack of being' (*manque à être*), a longing for all that has been repressed in order to found the self (Lacan 1966: 623). It seeks satisfaction by addressing the Other, and so depends on the intersubjective networks of meaning that arise out of language: what may seem to be private yearnings or sexual fantasies are dependent on the signifying system in which we are caught up. Culture, not nature, regulates our desire. However, representations can ultimately only ever be supplements for the lost sense of pre-Oedipal plenitude. Lacan uses the term 'objet petit a', or 'other' (with no capital letter) to designate the unattainable object of desire, endlessly displaced, bearing the trace of the idealized and specular self from the imaginary (Lacan 1973: 73; 186–189; 201).

11.2.5 Language and the unconscious

Lacan's account of the unconscious borrows from Saussure's analysis of language, in which signifiers have no necessary relationship to their signified, but are related to other signifiers through a system of opposition and differentiation: meaning is based, therefore, on lack. The unconscious, for Lacan, consists of signifiers which have been repressed. Condensation and displacement, the processes described by Freud, through which the latent content of dreams is transformed into their manifest content, are redefined by Lacan as the purely linguistic operations of metaphor and metonymy. In the former, one term replaces another, so that a signifier becomes a signified, and in the latter, meaning slides from one signifier to another in a chain of substitution which can be likened to the workings of desire as it moves from one object to another (Lacan 1966: 267–271).

The key metaphor for Lacan is the paternal metaphor, the 'name of the father' which represses and replaces desire for the mother. It is the child's internalization of this metaphor, dependent on the acknowledgement that the mother lacks the phallus, that enables it to enter into language and the social order. Once it can represent itself in language by using the word 'I', it has become a subject rather than an 'hommelette', (little man/omelette), Lacan's punning evocation of the formlessness of its identity before it enters the symbolic order (Lacan 1973: 221). There will never be, though, a complete coincidence between the enunciating subject,

which says 'I', and the subject of the enunciation, the 'I' to whom it refers (Lacan 1973: 156). The child's sense of identity has a cost, since the self is formed out of lack, repression of desire and loss of the unmediated immersion in the Real that it has had to give up. However, failure to internalize the 'name of the father' will lead to psychosis. The symbolic world will have a 'hole' in it, and the psychotic, unable to enter into the world of socialized meanings, will be imprisoned in the imaginary and subject to delusions (Lacan 1981).

11.3 *Les Bijoux ravis* (Benoît Peeters, 1984)

Benoît Peeters acknowledges the influence of Barthes (who had died in 1980), under whose supervision he had worked, and in particular the influence of *S/Z* (1970), in which Barthes cuts a Balzac novella, *Sarrasine*, into short sections or 'lexies', and lays bare the narrative, symbolic and cultural codes which make it readable. Peeters similarly cuts the text of *Les Bijoux de la Castafiore* (henceforth *Les Bijoux*) up, although he prefers the term 'segments' to 'lexies' (Peeters 1984: 6). His method is to identify 'chains' of signifiers which give access to unconscious mechanisms at work in the album (Peeters 1984: 7).

In *Les Bijoux*, the solution to the enigma is to be found not in the world but in the title of an opera. Tintin reads a newspaper report of Castafiore's performance in 'The Thieving Magpie', and so a magpie will be conjured into existence as a convenient culprit for the 'theft' of her jewel. Hergé's deconstruction of the universe of the Tintin albums therefore involves the substitution of the letter of the text for the reality which the albums had been supposed to represent. The interest of Peeters's reading is his demonstration of how the latent content of the album is also represented by chains of signifiers. Mechanisms of condensation and displacement come into play in Haddock's dream. The parrot and Castafiore become fused through their visual similarity, and her capacity to arouse terror is then displaced onto the dinner-jacketed parrots in the audience, whose disapproving glance at the naked and red-faced Haddock in their midst is an obvious figuration of castration (Peeters 1984: 43–44). Motifs around birds and flowers proliferate through the album: she is the 'Milanese nightingale' (Hergé 1963: 27; Peeters 1984: 8) and her name means 'chaste flower' (Peeters 1984: 59). White roses suggestive of virginal hysteria alternate with red roses representing the aggressive sexuality also evoked by the consonance of her name: the red rose which she forces Haddock to sniff contains a wasp which stings him, causing his nose to swell up to embarrassingly phallic proportions (Peeters 1984: 67).

Peeters's chosen title, *Les Bijoux ravis*, would appear to be a reference to Poe's 1845 novel *La lettre volée* (originally *The Purloined Letter*), to which he alludes briefly (Peeters 1984: 129; 133), although he makes no mention of Lacan's analysis of this text in *Écrits* (1966). Both Poe's text and Lacan's commentary on it nonetheless shed considerable light on Peeters's own method. In Poe's story, the queen 'hides' an incriminating letter from her husband, just as, subsequently, the minister who steals it 'hides' it from the police, by the tactic of not hiding it, in order to make it seem innocuous. This crafty manoeuvre could be compared to Hergé's strategy, identified by Peeters, of 'drowning' key narrative information in this album. As Peeters points out, the magpie which will play such a key role appears on the first page of the album, but the equal prominence given to a squirrel misleads the reader into assuming that both are

simply there to enhance an effect of realism in this rural scene (Peeters 1984: 7). Peeters brings his analysis to bear not just at the level of the narrative, but at a psychic level, though, by demonstrating that what is essential in *Les Bijoux*, 'the confrontation of a group of masculine characters with femininity' (Peeters 1984 : 11) is hidden, but hidden on the surface.

Lacan likens the acuteness of vision of the detective Dupin, who spots the letter which the police have missed because it is 'hidden' in the open, in a letter rack, to that of an expert player of a game which consists of setting an opponent the task of finding a place name on a map: a beginner will always be led astray by the choice of a name such as that of an entire country, written in large letters dispersed across the whole width of the map.[70] The 'hidden' word is then compared by Lacan to a woman's body: 'Thus the stolen letter, like the immense body of a woman, is stretched out across the minister's office, when Dupin enters. But that is exactly what he is expecting, and it only remains for him, his eyes hidden behind green glasses, to undress this enormous body' (Lacan 1966: 47).

Within the story, Tintin's detective work may be compared to that of Dupin. Lacan insists on the importance in Poe's story of 'the materiality of the signifier', even to the extent of looking at it as a 'typographical element'. It must be understood 'literally, to the letter' (Lacan 1966: 33–34). The same applies to *Les Bijoux*. Tintin is alone in seeing that the signifier *La gazza ladra*, which appears in his newspaper in connection with Castafiore's latest triumph, must be taken literally. However, although Tintin solves the mystery of the disappearance of the emerald, he retains a certain tunnel vision, since he is oblivious to the 'immense body of a woman', which Peeters, a more expert player of the name-spotting game, finds scattered across the whole work in the form of signifiers which appear to be merely decorative or incidental, beginning with the materiality of the title of the album itself. Peeters argues that although the typographical conceit in which jewels replace the letter 'O' in the title on the front cover of the album may appear to cover over the 'O' which stands for the female sex, the choice of an object which is clearly associated with sexual symbolism, as in Diderot's *Les Bijoux indiscrets* (1748), actually insists on the sexual nature of what is hidden (Peeters 1984: 14; 87–88). He draws attention to a further typographical link between the female sex and castration: the gypsy's 'OOOOOH!' (Hergé 1963: 3), as she predicts the 'great mishap' that is about to befall Haddock, is rendered in large, thick characters (Peeters 1984: 13).

In addition, Peeters tracks numerous instances of the co-occurrence and substitution of 'o' and 'i' sounds, which point, he argues, both to the omnipresence of the danger of castration embodied by the diva, and to her own fear/fantasy of rape if the 'vol' (theft) of the jewels were translated into a 'viol' (rape) (Peeters 1984: 93). The word 'bijoux' appears in the same thick characters every time that the jewels are lost, and is converted into 'bougie' (candle) in a lapsus committed by the detective Dupond, whose obsessive 'fidelity to the literal' (Peeters 1984: 92) makes his slip the more significant: 'Can you tell me where your candles...sorry, your jewels...were?' (Hergé 1963: 38). Peeters claims that this works as a sexual metaphor: 'To replace the jewels (already associated with the letter 'O') by candles in the form of the letter 'i' is to designate the thing that really threatened Castafiore, to put in place the phallus which was missing up to that point' (Peeters 1984: 93).

Peeters argues that the aim of his analysis is not to give access to Haddock's or to Hergé's unconscious, but to that of the work itself by bringing to light relationships which had been hidden (Peeters 1984: 47). He does not, therefore, concern himself with speculation about Hergé's own life, unlike certain biographers, such as Pierre Assouline, who have drawn comparisons between Castafiore and Hergé's first wife (Assouline 1996: 317–8). What he achieves is to show the remarkable coherence of *Les Bijoux* as a work of art. Hergé's project of making redundancy the subject of the album is both given resonance and countered by Peeters's demonstration of the fact that the 'detective' intrigue is itself incidental. It becomes clear that the essential is to be found elsewhere: the immense, and sexualized, body of a woman that is made visible by Peeters's reading of the signifiers.

Peeters undoubtedly succeeds in demonstrating that *Les Bijoux* is a 'plural text', as his mentor Barthes had done for the Balzac novella on which *S/Z* is based (Barthes 1970: 12). However, where Barthes had set out to determine the codes which formed the basis of the intelligibility of *Sarrasine* for the reader, Peeters makes no claim that his uncovering of the 'unconscious' of *Les Bijoux* will shed any light on the activity of the reader. Nonetheless, his elaboration of the way in which formal features of the text spell out a fantasized scenario around castration could be taken to imply that much of the reader's pleasure arises out of the plurality of subject positions that the text offers. It seems plausible that the reader identifies not only with the masochism and castration anxiety of Haddock, and with the careless sadism of Castafiore, but also, on a conscious level, with the apparent mastery of Tintin, who is ultimately in a position of knowledge in relation to the 'detective' intrigue, the resolution of which offers the satisfaction of narrative closure. This sense of control must surely be further emphasized through the harmony of the *ligne claire*, which seems to offer the 'single, primary, literal meaning' sought by the conscious mind, which blocks out the variable and multiple meanings generated by the unconscious (Easthope 1999: 40, referring to Freud 1905b). The 'unconscious of the text' may, however, break through. Directly beneath the vignette showing Haddock with hugely tumescent nose, Tintin, informed of the incident by Castafiore, muses: 'A wasp sting on the nose...the poor man!... That must be hideously unpleasant!' (Hergé 1963: 24). Peeters notes the peculiar appropriateness of the word 'gênant', which can also mean 'embarrassing' (Peeters 1984: 68). It could be argued that the reader, like the earnest young hero, may not altogether be able to repress awareness of the underlying scenario.

11.4 Serge Tisseron

Serge Tisseron's work has covered many areas of *bande dessinée*, but his most fertile terrain of investigation has undoubtedly been the *Tintin* albums, to which he has brought an analysis based on the idea of the family secret. However, we will begin with a brief consideration of *Psychanalyse de la bande dessinée* (1987), in which Tisseron approaches the medium from the point of view of the reader, arguing that it allows for the figuration and consequent control over certain unconscious processes, and the *mise en scène* of various fantasmatic scenarios. For this reason, he advises against the pedagogical use of the kind of sanitized *bande dessinée* generally favoured by teachers, such as the Bible or the history of France in comic strip form. He points out that the level of violence which adults may find distasteful in *bande dessinée* is a measure of the psychic conflicts which it both reactivates and helps to resolve

(Tisseron 1987: 135–136). His chapters range over formal features of the medium as well as content. He argues, for example, that the multiple frames and closed outlines which characterize the medium enable the interiorizing and containment of emotions and bodily states which would otherwise provoke anguish, particularly in relation to the process of separation from the mother: *bande dessinée* organizes a psychic space which acts as a container for anxieties. Unframed *bande dessinée*, he suggests, like that of Feiffer or Wolinski, often deals with existential angst (Tisseron 1987: 99).

In *Psychanalyse de la bande dessinée*, he explains that a child's drawings may offer a symbolic representation of a psyche which is grappling with the 'unsayable' of a member of his/her family (Tisseron 1987: 118–119). This is the theoretical basis of *Tintin chez le psychanalyste* (1985), in which he argues that the *Tintin* albums can be shown to contain displaced traces of an interrogation around just such a family secret, that of the paternity of Haddock's ancestor. Le chevalier de Hadoque, postulates Tisseron, is none other than the illegitimate son of Louis XIV. After the publication of this book, Tisseron was dealt a spectacular piece of good fortune. Investigations by journalists into Hergé's background revealed that there was empirical confirmation for this hypothesis in relation to the author's own biography. Hervé Springaël's *Avant Tintin* (1987) and Thierry Smolderen and Pierre Sterckx's *Hergé* (1988), both brought sensational revelations of a secret in Hergé's family. Hergé's father, Alexis, and his twin brother Léon were the illegitimate sons of a servant at a local chateau. The identity of their real father was never disclosed to them, or to Hergé and his brother in the next generation down. It was, however, hinted that the mystery ancestor was a member of the nobility: 'We won't tell you who your grandfather was, it would turn your head' (Smolderen and Sterckx 1988: 28). In his biography of Hergé, Assouline suggests that during the twins' adolescence, rumours that circulated about their birth went so far as to name the king himself, Léopold II, a frequent visitor to the chateau (Assouline 1996: 19).

In 1985, Tisseron's suggestion that the genealogical quest of Haddock could be linked with a personal problematic arising out of a secret in Hergé's family was mere speculation. He refers in the book to the psychoanalytic notion of 'cryptage' put forward by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (1978): the original secret will be isolated inside a 'crypt', an empty psychic space which is sealed up. The actual words relating to the secret cannot be pronounced, and so are only revealed indirectly, through phonetic allusions. Succeeding generations will be haunted by a 'ghost', as their unconscious and blind attempts to resolve the parent's problem are organised around phonetic resonances in relation with the unspeakable words of the secret.

It is with *Le Secret de la Licorne* (1943) that the thematic of the genealogical quest begins, Tisseron suggests, although he finds motifs which relate to it in earlier albums, including *Le sceptre d'Ottokar* (1939) in which the phonetic coincidence of sceptre with 'spectre' may announce the arrival of a 'ghost' (Tisseron, 1985: 35). In *Le Secret de la Licorne*, Haddock is quite clearly haunted by a family secret. Ostensibly, this relates to the treasure which his ancestor, le chevalier de Hadoque, won in a battle on the high seas with the pirate Rackham le Rouge under the reign of Louis XIV, the whereabouts of which are revealed from co-

ordinates that emerge when three parchments are superimposed. Tisseron surmises, however, that the real secret is that of Hadoque's royal descent, and that he had kept the treasure, which should rightly have been handed over to the king, because he felt that he had been denied recognition.

Another parchment, found in a casket in the wreck of Hadoque's galleon, turns out to be the act of donation of the Château de Moulinsart from Louis XIV to Hadoque. This was an attempt, suggests Tisseron, to buy Hadoque's silence over his paternity. The treasure is eventually found in the crypt at Moulinsart (now owned by Haddock, with some financial help from Tournesol, after it had come fortuitously onto the market), beneath a statue of John the Baptist, the 'eagle of Patmos', as indicated by the *aigle* on the original three parchments. The *aigle*, suggests Tisseron, is the *aïeul*, the ancestor, now out of the crypt where he was haunting Haddock (Tisseron 1985: 51). The treasure symbolizes, then, the secret of his own origin.

Amongst the further indications which Tisseron finds to support his hypothesis is Haddock's famous capacity for oaths and invective, revealed to be inherited from his ancestor when the three heroes discover that Hadoque's expletives have been perpetuated by generations of parrots on the island where he was stranded after the explosion of his ship. These insults, according to Tisseron, reveal the repressed emotions of Hadoque, whose anger at his abandonment by his father is transmitted in encrypted form to Haddock. Tisseron points out that Louis XIV is himself strangely absent from Haddock's oaths, and argues that his presence is asserted in the form of the shark ('requin') which at one point swallows the casket containing the letter that he had sent to Hadoque. It is further asserted by the pirate Rackham (a metaphorical shark whose name echoes 'requin'), the substitute target of Hadoque's anger (Tisseron 1985: 68). The presence of the guilty father is further inscribed throughout the Tintin albums, phonetically encoded through the sounds K, A and R, which occur in the names of many of the opponents faced by the heroes: Carreidas, Raskar Kapac and Ranko, for example. Most crucially, the tourist brochure on Syldavie which appears in *Le sceptre d'Ottokar* indicates that the final syllable of the name of Ottokar means 'king' (Tisseron 1985: 68–72; 1992: 18).

A certain reconciliation will come, Tisseron claims, at the end of *Le Temple du soleil* (1949). Tintin saves himself, Haddock and Tournesol from being burned on a pyre by pretending that it is at his command that an eclipse of the sun has occurred. The chief Inca, 'son of the Sun', then gives the trio sacks of treasure as a reward for swearing that they will never mention the existence of the Inca temple. For Tisseron, the 'son of the Sun' represents, on a symbolic level, both the legitimate descendents of Louis XIV, the Sun King, and the Sun King himself. Haddock now freely consents to keep the secret, and the 'King', by giving him treasure, absolves Haddock's ancestor of the theft of the original treasure (Tisseron 1985: 58–59).

Tisseron goes on to consider the figure of Castafiore. Unlike Peeters, he does not see the jewels as representing her sex, and her fear/desire of *vi(o)l* (theft/rape). Neither does he analyse the diva herself as a castratory figure, although he admits that this was the

interpretation which greeted *Les Bijoux* on its publication (Tisseron 1985: 88–89). He suggests, instead, that after the interrogation around his paternal line of descent, Hergé now turns to the relationship with the maternal instance. The jewels were given to Castafiore, Tisseron reminds us, by the Maharadjah of Gopal, the first man to whom journalists had 'married' her. They represent, then, her child, and their repeated 'disappearances' correspond to the *fort/da* game described by Freud, whereby the child manages to symbolize, and so control, anxiety about the mother's absence by repeatedly throwing a cotton reel away (saying 'fort', meaning 'gone') and pulling it back (and then saying 'da', meaning 'here') (Freud 1920 14–15). However, since Castafiore is not a child but an adult, the purpose of this staging of their recurring loss and retrieval is not to allow her to internalize a representation of them (which she seems in any case unable to do) but to provide a fantasized scenario of the desire of the child that his/her mother should show the same anxiety over separation as s/he does (Tisseron 1985: 91–97).

Tisseron discusses the relation between Haddock and Castafiore, then, in terms of the pain and ultimate achievement of separation from the mother. The mother is supposed, through her look, to guarantee to the child its first image of itself, but Castafiore's narcissism (her only aria is Marguerite's 'Ah! How I laugh to see how beautiful I am in this mirror!' from Gounod's *Faust*) and her constant mangling of Haddock's name make it impossible for her to reflect back any sense of his identity to him, blocking any progression on his part towards autonomy. It is through a scene involving a mirror, though, that Tisseron sees this situation as being resolved. On discovering that Castafiore is to leave for Milan, Haddock stands in front of a mirror singing, 'She's going, she's going!'. As he sees the diva approach, he quickly adds 'my pain' (a feminine word in French), referring to the sprained ankle that has immobilized him for the duration of the album (Hergé, 1963: 55–56). Tisseron postulates that the substitution of 'pain' for 'Castafiore' can be interpreted as indicating that Haddock sees Castafiore to be suffering at their impending separation. This realization on his part enables him to bear the separation (Tisseron 1985: 102–103).

Where Tisseron's account of Haddock's genealogical quest offers a coherent reading of a number of recurring motifs, his analysis of Castafiore's relation to her jewels is less convincing. If their disappearances are to be equated with rehearsals of the separation between mother and child, then her status as comic character, and moreover one who is sublimely indifferent to the suffering of others, is considerably undermined. Tisseron's scenario fails, moreover, to account for the damage that is repeatedly inflicted on Haddock by Castafiore herself or by figures who represent her, such as the parrot and the wasp, simply omitting these episodes from his analysis.

In *Tintin et les secrets de famille* (1992), jubilant at the empirical evidence that had now emerged in support of his hypothesis about Hadoque/Hergé, Tisseron singled out the work of Peeters for criticism, asserting that any psychoanalytical study of an author's work which omits transgenerational factors will be facile (Tisseron 1992: 86–87). The validity of this claim may be evaluated by how productive it is when applied to the work of authors other than Hergé. In *La bande dessinée au pied du mot* (1990), he offers analyses of the work of ten other

artists, stating at the outset that he will not concern himself with those, like Uderzo and Goscinny, whose work is based on the satire of collective mythologies, but with those who use the resources of *bande dessinée* as a medium to give expression to their internal world (Tisseron 1990: 11).

Tisseron's discussions of the work of these authors are highly perceptive. However, his attempts to link his analyses to the encoded presence of ancestral secrets are convoluted and tenuous. In the case of the underlying incest theme in Loisel and Le Tendre's *La quête de l'oiseau du temps*, this amounts to no more than a rather slight play on words: the title could be read as 'la quête de Loisel-Le Tendre' (the quest of Loisel-Le Tendre) (Tisseron 1990: 143). Where, in the case of Hergé, Tisseron produces substantial textual evidence of the phonetic resonances on which his hypothesis depends, here the evidence is scant and seems scarcely to justify the generalization of the search for traces of the genealogical quest into an interpretative method across all albums.

11.5 *Une psychanalyse amusante: Tintin à la lumière de Lacan* (Michel David, 1994)

Michel David takes the title of his book from an expression used by Lacan in his first seminar: 'The closer we are to an amusing kind of psychoanalysis, the closer it is to being real psychoanalysis. Then, by approximations and ploys, we will get it to run smoothly' (Lacan 1975: 91). David explains that it is these 'ploys' (*trucs*) that his discussion of Hergé's work aims to illuminate. He will not investigate the unconscious of either Hergé or Tintin, but rather the unconscious itself. Just as Freud had claimed in a letter to Arthur Schnitzler that the playwright knew intuitively what he, Freud, had spent years discovering through research, so Hergé may be, Monsieur Jourdain-like, 'an expert on the unconscious without realizing it' (David 1994: 21). Hergé's work will be used, then, as a source of illustrations of various aspects of Lacanian theory (David 1994: 9).

He begins his book by noting a persistent motif that runs through all of Hergé's work: the 'empty object'. David points out that, for example, the contents of the cigars (in *Les cigares du Pharaon*), the tins of crab (in *Le crabe aux pinces d'or*) or the Arumbayan fetish (in *L'oreille cassée*) all remain unrepresented, so that Tintin may be seen as forever running after the Lacanian objet petit (a), the cause of desire which is perpetually displaced onto various substitutes (David 1994: 13–14). The remainder of the book deals with the albums in chronological order, and the discussion in this chapter will focus on David's analysis of the albums concerning the ancestor Hadoque, and on *Les Bijoux de la Castafiore*, since these are the albums featured in the work of Peeters and Tisseron.

David argues that the ancestor Hadoque plays a key role in Haddock's psychic development. Just as, according to Lacan, the father comes between the symbiotic completeness of the mother and child to force them to look, desire and speak elsewhere, so the ancestor Hadoque functions, David suggests, as a paternal metaphor enabling Haddock to move into the symbolic order (David 1994: 155–156). When the character is first introduced in *Le crabe aux pinces d'or*, he is in danger, suggests David, of falling into psychosis (David 1994:

118; 128). Haddock seems to be fatherless: Tintin, on first encountering this drunken wreck, asks him what his old mother would think if she saw him (Hergé 1940: 16). In the absence of a paternal instance, he does not have access to the symbolic world, and suffers from hallucinations. In one of these, Tintin takes on the form of a bottle of champagne and is almost strangled by Haddock as he attempts to remove the cork by squeezing his neck. Tintin rescues Haddock from his dependence on alcohol, and restores dignity to him, but the cure is not completed until the two later albums.

David implies that in *Le secret de la Licorne* the ancestor Hadoque first fulfils the maternal role in the mother-child relation before going on to act as the paternal signifier. When Hadoque first appears, he is a double of Haddock, who identifies with him completely: he speaks his ancestor's words and acts out his story (David 1994: 158). The violent invective which he proffers, identical to that of Hadoque, locks him into a mirror-image relationship with the ancestor (David 1994: 124). But he must move out of the register of sameness and identity to enter the realm of signification. By recounting his story to Tintin, Haddock is enabled to 'move into the phallicized and symbolic register of History' (David 1994: 160). He is also helped in this by Tournesol, whose deafness means that he cannot hear the captain's insults. This enables Haddock to realize that his link with Hadoque is not inevitable: unlike the parrots, he does not have to remain the echo of his ancestor (David 1994: 164–165).

The island itself, which Haddock visits with Tintin and Tournesol, in search of the treasure hidden by Hadoque, is a metaphor for the 'place of the Other', the realm of society, culture and the law, encountered in the form of the already-existing set of signifiers to which the child accedes on entry into the symbolic order. This is the place from which Haddock can now speak. Haddock is like a child who comes into the world, says David, and finds himself confronted with the prior existence of the Other, in the form of the evidence of his ancestor's trajectory. The island is the place from which he can orient himself in the symbolic order (David 1994: 166–167). The unconscious that is the condition of Haddock's constitution as a speaking subject is metaphorically represented, suggests David, by the trunk, hidden away in the gloomy loft of his flat, in which he had unearthed the relics left by the ancestor (David 1994: 168). Finally, it is noteworthy, David claims, that *Le trésor de Rackham le rouge* will feature Haddock's signature, as he confirms his ownership of the Château de Moulinsart: the entry into language is complete (David 1994: 170).

Les Bijoux de la Castafiore is of particular interest to a psychoanalyst because it stages an encounter with the feminine by the inhabitants of Moulinsart. David argues that the disturbing nature of this encounter can be attributed to the diva's close association with the order of the Real. The voice, which by its materiality is before and/or beyond signification, may be seen as a fragment of the Real, and David emphasizes the link between Castafiore and the Real by noting the many instances of tragic deaths of women in opera (David 1994: 262). Death, he reminds the reader, is designated by Lacan as one of the figurations of the Real (David 1994: 264). More significantly, Lacan also emphasizes that female *jouissance*, or orgasmic pleasure, can defy signification by its extreme nature: Bernini's statue of the ecstasy of Saint Teresa is cited by Lacan (1975) as exemplifying this. It may, suggests David, be Castafiore's

occupation of this unsignifiable terrain that is so troubling for Haddock. He has a particular aversion to her voice, perhaps an evocation of the 'uncanny' corporeality of the maternal body, just like the specks of skin that detach themselves from Freud's mother's hands in one of his own dreams, the 'noodle' dream, to which David refers (David 1994: 253; Freud 1900). Through her singing voice which resists signification, she represents a *jouissance* that is denied to him, and it is this that Haddock cannot tolerate.

Castafiore herself is analysed by David as a hysteric. He argues that as a female subject whose own sex is inscribed into her unconscious as an absence of the phallus, she is divided (David 1994: 265). On the one hand, by acknowledging the phallus as signifier, she can enter into language and operate in the realm of desire. She wishes to lose her emerald and moreover keeps attributing its loss to some masculine Other (a ghost, a monster, a man whose steps she claims to hear in the attic). On the other hand, as a hysteric, she maintains her desire by keeping it unsatisfied and thereby contests the power of the phallus. The repeated loss of (or rather failure to lose) the jewels could, David proposes, represent a 'démontage', a dismantling of the signifier. Castafiore is constantly both 'flirting with and driving away the phallic signifier' (David 1994: 267) and this is why she is threatening, both to Haddock and to the (presumably male) reader: 'Is the fundamental significance of Hergé not the fact that he makes us realise that we are all dissatisfied by phallic *jouissance*, which is linked to the symbolic?' (David 1994: 267).

This presentation of Castafiore as a hysteric is more intuitively satisfying than Tisseron's attempt to cast her in the role of the mother caught up in the drama of separation. David's suggestion that she represents a *jouissance* which is unattainable to men has the merit of accounting not only for the horror expressed by Haddock whenever he is forced to endure Castafiore's singing, but also for the fascination that she exerts upon him. David's avowed aim is above all, though, the illumination of Lacanian concepts, and the *oeuvre* undoubtedly proves to be a rich source of figurations of psychic processes: Hergé does indeed reveal himself to be an expert on the unconscious. David's reading of the island as a topological representation of subject formation, as the place of the Other and a place from which to speak, is particularly striking, and Castafiore must surely rival Lacan's own example of Bernini's statue of Saint Teresa as a representation of the ecstatic self-sufficiency of female pleasure.

11.6 *Tintin and the Secret of Literature* (Tom McCarthy, 2006)

McCarthy, himself a novelist, has produced a compelling reading of Hergé's work which is inspired by a number of theoretical perspectives, including that of Tisseron, whose insights he develops and extends. McCarthy returns to Abraham and Torok's work, and argues that, according to them, 'cryptonyms', or the words that are used to hide buried and illicit source words associated with trauma, become insistent in their demand for repetition: the process of transmitting them itself becomes compulsive (McCarthy 2006: 82–85). As McCarthy convincingly demonstrates, Hergé's oeuvre keeps forming crypts. He shows that the elements of ghosts, transmission, burial and treasure are already present from the very beginning, in *Tintin au pays des Soviets* (McCarthy 2006: 87), and, more interestingly still, he finds the

same motifs associated with Castafiore, beginning with the lyrics of her only song, the *Air des bijoux*, from Gounod's opera, in which Faust seduces the young Marguerite, who becomes pregnant. It is, suggests McCarthy, 'a story of sex, pleasure, shame, a lost child, madness, condamnation. In Bianca Castafiore, the crypt's emanation, its transmissions and its rhythms are embodied in a single character' (McCarthy 2006: 98–99). If Haddock is obsessed with her, this is because her song repeats his own story (McCarthy 2006: 100). Moreover, in *Les Bijoux*, a series of miscommunications lead from the 'white flower' created by Tournesol to the rumours published in Paris-Flash of Castafiore's betrothal to Haddock. The story loops back, McCarthy points out, to a secret sexual union (McCarthy 2006: 104).

However, McCarthy's discussion of *Les Bijoux* leads beyond the ancestral secret, the concern of Tisseron's book, to the question of castration, the concern of Peeters's book, although McCarthy does not refer to the latter, and he finds in *Les Bijoux* not just a cause of anxiety to Haddock, but a more radical threat. He compares Castafiore's role to that of Zambinella, the castrato whose story is the family secret within Balzac's novella *Sarrasine*, the text analysed by Barthes in *S/Z*. The revelation to the sculptor Sarrasine that the longed-for woman upon whom he has modelled his statue of ideal feminine beauty is not a woman, but not a man either, disrupts the process of signification, founded on the symbolization of sexual difference, and empties it out of meaning. As Barthes's decoding exercise shows, realism creates the real through a set of codes, it does not give access to it. McCarthy argues that Castafiore similarly functions to draw Haddock 'behind the realistic surface of things into a hollow world where landscape has no depth' (McCarthy 2006: 113), metaphorically re-enacting his catastrophic venture behind the scenes in *Les Sept Boules de Crystal*, where the stage set falls on him. Through Castafiore, the album revels in the facticity of any notion of a real behind the duplicate. It reveals only 'the inability of things to mean, of language and the world to correspond, of signs to have some content' (McCarthy 2006: 114) He makes his case forcefully by tracking through the chains of substitutions that permeate the album.

In the following chapter, he develops the case further by referring to Derrida's discussion of a Baudelaire story about counterfeit money, which Derrida sees as an allegory for literature, artificial signs based on cultural conventions which fabricate the 'reality' that they purport to portray (Derrida 1991). McCarthy then embarks on a vertiginous chase through the other albums, beginning with the series of fake statues in *L'Oreille cassée*, and taking in the multiple instances of forged money and documents. They prove to be founded on an all-pervasive economy of the counterfeit, which leads him back to Haddock's family secret but also to the more startling suggestion that Tintin may himself, like Balzac's Zambinella, be a castrato and by his androgyny threaten the collapse of meaning. This, then, is the 'secret' of the title of McCarthy's book, and the secret which lies behind Tintin's silencing gesture on the cover of *Les Bijoux*. By silencing it, he allows the spectacle to continue and makes 'literature' possible (McCarthy 2006: 162).

11.7 Conclusion

The accounts of Hergé's work discussed in this section have shown that psychoanalytically oriented critical approaches can be productive in a medium which, constructed as it is out of

metonymy and metaphor, has a rich range of resources for the representation of unconscious processes. It is noteworthy that the world without shadows portrayed through the conventionalized and diagrammatic realism of the *ligne claire* can nonetheless betray the presence of repressed material. The Moulinsart family has been shown to be riven by psychic crises, and critical fascination has focused above all on the figures of Haddock, whose unconscious, dominated by his ancestor, surfaces in verbal and visual fragments scattered through the albums, and by that of Castafiore. This extraordinary female figure attracts a variety of readings: for Peeters she is castration anxiety incarnate, where for Tisseron she is the mother who suffers at the impending separation from her child. Where David had characterized her cataclysmic impact as the effect of the irruption of the Real into the tranquillity of Moulinsart, McCarthy's reading that suggests the symbolic order simply cannot withstand assault by a figure that embodies fakery and artifice to such a triumphant degree. Tintin himself had slipped curiously under the radar of these psychoanalytic accounts until McCarthy took a detour via Barthes and found in him the 'signifier of the inexpressible' (McCarthy 2006: 29).

Chapter 12

AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND DIARY WRITING IN *BANDE DESSINÉE*

12.1 Introduction

Autobiographical writing was long disdained by academia until Georges Gusdorf wrote *La découverte de soi* in 1948, a meditation on the textual construction of a sense of the self as unique individual. The genre has attracted increasing academic interest since then, and the emergence of autobiographical work and, in particular, diary-writing (*journal intime* in French), as a key tendency in *bande dessinée*, has been taken as evidence of the increasing seriousness and maturity of the medium. This chapter will begin with a brief introduction to some theoretical approaches to the study of autobiography and diaries, and will then discuss two *bande dessinée* diaries, which encompass the work of three artists all of whom appear in each other's albums: Lewis Trondheim's *Approximativement* (1995a) and Dupuy and *Berberian's Journal d'un album* (1994b).

Philippe Lejeune gives a famous definition of autobiography in *Le Pacte autobiographique*: 'A retrospective account in prose which a real person gives of his/her own existence, with the accent on his/her individual life, and in particular the history of his/her personality' (Lejeune 1975: 14). In 1986 Lejeune would extend his definition beyond prose to include poetry (Lejeune 1986: 28), and by 1998 he presided over a colloquium at which Jean-Pierre Mercier presented a paper on 'Autobiography and *bande dessinée*' (Mercier 1999).

The autobiographical pact, to which Lejeune's title refers, implies a nominal identity between author, narrator and protagonist, either through the use of names attested in text and paratext or through metatextual commentary (Lejeune 1975: 15). For Lejeune, autobiography is referential. The author is the referent, even though compliance with the 'referential pact'

allows for deformation or misremembering which will lead to varying degrees of resemblance between the protagonist and his or her extra-textual model (Lejeune 1975: 35). As Lejeune says, 'identity is not the same thing as resemblance', and he poses the question as to how a text can resemble a life (Lejeune1975: 40). The question of resemblance in *bande dessinée*, to which we will return, obviously raises the issue of images as well as text.

The notion of extra-textual model is, of course, far from straightforward. Discussions of the autobiographical genre have stressed the evolution of the representation of the self. As we saw in Chapter 11, Lacan, following on from Freud, has replaced the sense of an essential inner self with the concept of a precarious subject, constitutionally split, constructed only through relations with others, and subjected to the laws of language, 'a product rather than a source of meaning' in David Macey's phrase (Macey 2000: 369). The autobiographical self has similarly evolved. According to Mounir Laouyen, 'Rather than displaying a unified progression through which the identity of the writing subject is elaborated, New Autobiography seems instead to be a site where the subject gets lost and is dissolved into multiplicity' (Laouyen 2002: 3–4). The exploration of certain memories will allow for the emergence of repressed material, and, as Laouyen says, 'memory and fantasy become confused' (Laouyen 2002: 4), opening the way to autofiction, a term coined by the writer Serge Doubrovsky in relation to his own work (Doubrovsky 1977: back cover).

Identity is, then, constructed in the course of the autobiographical process. Lejeune acknowledges, in a text which looks back on his earlier work, that although the autobiographical pact commits the author to compliance with referential codes, it will also draw on literary codes which do not claim to offer a transparent replication of reality (Lejeune 1986: 22). Michael Sheringham offers an elegant formulation of autobiographical selfhood as 'a "seepage" of subjectivity into language through the medium of style' (Sheringham 1993: 19). We will see in this chapter how both literary codes and style may find equivalents in *bande dessinée* terms.

Some theoretical writing devoted specifically to diaries and journals has suggested that the apparent artlessness of this variant on the autobiographical genre will lead the reader to assume that it is bound by the referential pact to a greater extent. Rachel Cottam, for example, argues that since a journal is not a detached product of the lived life, like autobiography, but continuous with it, it may give impression of direct access to self, 'a glimpse of undistorted life' not subject to the fallibility of memory (Cottam 2001: 268). Michel Braud, however, whilst admitting that the diary remains underpinned by a continuing faith in referentiality, points to the difficulty of gaining access to deepest emotions 'without slipping into the imaginary, without getting carried away by one's own story' (Braud 2002**:** 80).

However raw and unmediated it may appear to be, the diary is, then, a construct like any other autobiographical work. It does nonetheless have a number of distinctive features and functions. Lejeune and Catherine Bogaert insist that a *journal intime* must be dated, although its frequency may be variable, and it must be written in ignorance of the future. They raise the

question of corrections: a diary which has been corrected for purposes of publication may gain in literary value, they suggest, but it will lose authenticity (Lejeune and Bogaert 2003: 9).

Amongst the functions of the diary is clearly that of confidant. According to Lejeune and Bogaert, it can be an interlocutor and a means of escaping from social pressure (Lejeune and Bogaert 2003: 10). Béatrice Didier claims that many diarists have lost their mother early (as was the case with Joann Sfar), or may simply seek refuge from the pain of the symbolic loss of the mother. The frequent inclusion of childhood memories may, she proposes, be an attempt to reconstruct the security of the early link with the mother (Didier 1976: 91). Didier notes a tendency to indecisiveness amongst diary writers, and an incapacity to face up to adulthood (Didier 1976: 95).

The diary is also, of course, a means of preserving memories. Lejeune and Bogaert see it as an attempt to master experience by giving narrative identity to the flux of lived experience, and fixity to the passing of time (Lejeune and Bogaert 2003: 9). Related to this is the project of building a self-image: they see the diary as a mirror (Lejeune and Bogaert 2003: 10). Didier, similarly, likens the diary to a Lacanian mirror which would give a global image of the body, experienced as fragmented. The writer, she says, has the impression that his/her self is dissolving, and the continuity of the diary is a way of trying to grasp the self as whole. But this unifying project is doomed to failure. The diary form itself decentres the unified subject through its lack of closure, and the contradiction between unity and multiplicity noted by autobiographers is actually exacerbated by the journal (Didier 1976:116–117).

Many theorists allude to the judgemental function, which can be traced back to the 'examination of conscience' dating from the Counter-Reformation. As Françoise Simonet-Tenant points out, resolutions will be made, followed inevitably by the evidence of the writer's failure to keep them (2001: 87). Judgement will also be exercised through metatextual commentary on previous entries, and, according to Simonet-Tenant, this metadiscourse is more often devalorizing than appreciative (Simonet-Tenant 2001: 91). The diary may be read not only by its author but by other readers, whose reactions, which may concern representation of themselves as well as autorepresentation of the writer, may be noted (Simonet-Tenant 2001: 92). At the same time, it may act both as a workshop for, and an epitext[71] on, other works by the author (Simonet-Tenant 2001: 93–97). These functions are particularly to the fore in the diaries that we discuss below.

Autobiographical work in *bande dessinée* has attracted critical writing in recent years, including two very useful surveys, by Groensteen and by Jean-Pierre Mercier. Groensteen (1996c) traces the genre back to its origins in the American underground of the 1970s, particularly in the comic strips of Justin Green, who reveals the emotional scars of a repressive Catholic upbringing, Robert Crumb, whose sexual fantasies are recounted on the mode of the confessional, and Art Spiegelman, whose 1972 account of his mother's suicide about which he felt intense guilt, *Prisoner on Hell Planet*, would be included in the first volume of *Maus* (1986). Groensteen notes that the work of French *bande dessinée* artists of the 1990s has a greater focus on their professional milieu, and the guilt and anxiety that they portray is often

related to work or to the conflicting demands of work and life. Mercier's article discusses many of the same artists, but includes, in addition, a consideration of the influence of Crumb's collaborator (and wife) Aline Kominsky, who also emerged from the American underground of the 1970s (Mercier 1999:158).

In a theoretical article, Jan Baetens has pointed out that the vogue for autobiography in *bande dessinée* is part of a current of auteurist *bande dessinée*. The assumption that autobiography will be produced by a single artist/scriptwriter runs counter, he says, to the prevalence in the commercial sector of the separation of scriptwriter and artist, although Baetens suggests that the relative autonomy of the verbal and the graphic enunciator (Baetens adopts the term *graphiateur* for the latter), would allow for the possibility that these two functions could be split (Baetens 2004). Such experiments do exist: Harvey Pekar's autobiographical scripts have had the visual narration supplied by a number of artists, including Robert Crumb (Pekar 1991). None of the autobiographical accounts that we discuss take up Baetens's suggestion, but his point is relevant to our discussion.

In Chapter 6, devoted to the application of narrative theory to *bande dessinée*, we looked at the relationship between the enunciation (the narrational process) and the *énoncé* (the fictional world, or diegesis). In the case of autobiography, the *énoncé* consists of the textual self, and the fictional illusion gives way to a referential illusion, even if this does not preclude some degree of fictionalization. The relationship between narration and diegesis may be recast, then, as that between representing and represented self. In Chapter 6, we referred to both verbal and visual narrating instances, and we would therefore assume that the representing self would take up both of these: this seems to be implied by Baetens's terminology, even in the case of an autobiography where the functions of verbal and graphic enunciator were assumed by different people.

However, in an article on Marjane Satrapi, the Québecois theorist Mélanie Carrier suggests that in *bande dessinée*, the split between representing and represented self corresponds precisely to the division between the linguistic and iconic elements of the medium, with a further distinction between the immediacy of texts attributed to the autobiographical self in speech balloons, and the retrospective effect of the *récitatifs*, where dissociation between character and narrator is maximal (Carrier 2004). The hindsight on which Satrapi's verbal narration draws, as an adult narrator recollects her childhood, adolescence and early adulthood, does make Carrier's view plausible, as we will acknowledge in Chapter 13. We would argue, though, that elsewhere in *bande dessinée* autobiography there are many examples where the representing self manifests its presence through the visual as well as the verbal narration, notably where a judgemental function is exercised.

In our discussion of the journals of Trondheim and of Dupuy and Berberian, we will, then, look at the varying ways in which representing and represented subjects are figured. We will also consider other tendencies noted above: the relative dominance of referential or autofictional elements, and the use of *bande dessinée* codes to construct the self, whether as unified subject, or as fragmented multiplicity. We are interested by the representation of the self in its

professional guise as *bande dessinée* artist, and we will look at disruptions of the time sequence by flashbacks, memories and subjective sequences which may relate to other functions of the diary, such as refuge or regression.

12.2 *Approximativement* (Lewis Trondheim, 1995a)

Approximativement is a collection of four separate volumes, which originally appeared between May and September 1993, and, by dint of this episodic production, it fulfils Lejeune and Bogaert's criterion of ignorance of the future. Trondheim's subsequent venture into diary-writing, the four volumes of *Carnets de bord* produced between 2001 and 2003, takes the notion of authenticity further, in that the claim is made that no prior pencil sketches have been made, and nothing has been Tipp-Exed out. Crossings-out, where made, are left in, and the very sketchy nature of the drawings suggests that the lapse of time between an event and its drawing is reduced to a minimum. It is on *Approximativement* that we shall focus here, though.

The autobiographical pact is observed in *Approximativement* through the use of names (the main protagonist is introduced to someone as 'Lewis Trondheim' on page 99), and much of the album takes place in a *bande dessinée* milieu amongst other artists, such as Menu, who are also named. However, the title suggests that referential accuracy is not going to be paramount. A metatextual discussion further on in the album confirms that both dialogues and images are recomposed rather than being in any sense recorded: Trondheim tells a colleague who shares his studio, and who is looking over the latest episode of the diary, that he has reconstructed the dialogues out of a 'vague memory' (Trondheim 1995a :33). A paratextual (and unpaginated) section invites friends and colleagues to comment on their representation in the album, and, whilst Charles Berberian says 'Lewis's vision is accurate', others are indignant at the lack of fidelity to extra-textual reality. Émile Bravo denounces 'this tissue of lies,' and Killoffer asserts that 'readers are mistaken if they think they're going to learn anything about Lewis through this album [...] more than ever, Lewis is wearing a mask'.

Approximativement is, then, more autofictional than autobiographical. In constructing himself and others, Trondheim has used aesthetic means: to adapt Philippe Lejeune, he has drawn not only on familliar referential conventions, but also on the codes of *bande dessinée* (Lejeune 1986: 22). This is most obviously the case through his portrayal of all of the characters as birds or animals, including Trondheim himself, who is drawn as a cockatoo, a stratagem which can be related to a long tradition of animal *bande dessinée*. It also inevitably recalls Spiegelman's use of mice and cats in *Maus* which, as Michael Rothberg has suggested, works 'to unsettle assumptions about the naturalness of identity' (Rothberg 2000: 208), even if Trondheim's characters, unlike Spiegelman's, retain a curious resemblance to their models.

The codes of *bande dessinée* are also in evidence in the numerous sections where fantasies intrude into the recounting of the day's events. When Trondheim wishes to teach a lesson to a metro passenger who stands in the way of the door, he gains superpowers as his arm and hand become enormous, able to pluck the offender out of his seat. The extraordinary extension of his arm is emphasized by the greatly foreshortened angle of vision.

Elsewhere, his surroundings are invaded by elements from his own fictional creations. His daydream about the prospect that the publication of his series *La Mouche* (Trondheim: 1995b) in Japan will lead to huge financial rewards is materialized by the fly itself, hovering above his desk, then disappearing out of the window. Its teeth, the object of a dispute with the Japanese publishers who want them removed, are then displaced onto the face of the judge before whom he appears in a Kafkaesque sequence of punishment for his megalomania (Trondheim 1995a: 12–16). Later, he escapes from a moment of paranoia by entering the dark interior of the pavilion on the beach that figures in *Moins d'un quart de seconde pour vivre* (Menu and Trondheim 1990). Having become a character in a fictional world of his own making, he dissolves into a pattern of swirling lines, a complete collapse of referentialism but nonetheless a use of the medium's signifying resources to figure his delirium (Trondheim 1995: 26–27).

The relationship between representing and represented selves is complex in this album. The possibility for the author as enunciating subject to pass judgement on the author as character, and subject of the enunciation, is extensively exploited: *Approximativement* is an extraordinary *mise en scène* of guilt, anxiety and paranoia. However, the impression of self-censoriousness is intensified by the fact that it is exercised not only by Trondheim as narrator but also as character. Moreover, the text/image division does not correspond to the representing/represented division as Carrier analyses it in the case of *Persepolis*. Where in that album the narrative voice in the text boxes is that of the adult Satrapi, recounting her past, in *Approximativement*, the enunciative position of both images and texts is that of a narrative present, with the exception of two flashbacks to childhood.

The opening page portrays Trondheim walking down a street, with three text boxes offering first-person reflections on his failure to be sufficiently demanding of himself as an artist or as a person. The expression on the face of Trondheim as character shows him to be engaged in this self-castigation. The *récitatif* boxes seem, in fact, to function more as 'thinks' balloons, belonging to the character, than as a narrating instance which takes up a distance from him. The internal voice is by no means always one of detachment and reason: on the next page, it becomes bad-tempered about the behaviour of the other metro passengers and initiates the fantasy in which the superpowered Trondheim teaches them a lesson: 'Idiot. I'd like to wipe the smile off your face with a few karate chops' (Trondheim 1995a: 2). The inner monologue is suspended for the duration of the imaginary confrontation, which includes dialogue in speech boxes, and resumes once it has ended ignominiously, with Trondheim hitting himself over the head with his giant hand, concluding grimly that 'I can't even manage to have a starring role in my own fantasies' (Trondheim 1995a: 5). Again, Trondheim as character is judgemental towards himself.

If the verbal narration is delegated to Trondheim as character, is it, then, possible to identify a narrating instance that takes up a distance to him? Recurring metatextual images of Trondheim (in character as cockatoo) at his desk drawing, identify him as narrator as well as character, and his narrating presence can, in fact, be discerned throughout, conveyed through visual, not verbal means. Silent sequences, where the character is deprived of his running

commentary, can imply the disapproving gaze of a narrating instance. One such occurs where, instead of sitting at his desk to work, Trondheim plays with a Gameboy. His frown of concentration over six panels gives way to a look of fatuous satisfaction as musical notes indicate that he has won the game (Trondheim 1995: 47).

Narrative perspective may be foregrounded through the transition to extreme angles of vision. In places a very high angle is employed, as in the panel in which Trondheim laments his inability to star in his own fantasies, giving the impression that the narrator is taking up a critical stance towards his textual self. A similarly high angle is used, and a similarly critical, or at least sceptical, viewpoint implied, in a panel in which Trondheim as character reaffirms his belief in mankind on his recovery from a bout of flu-related depression spent watching daytime television (Trondheim 1995a: 93).

Conspicuous tightening of framing can convey the sense of an intrusive narrating presence whilst simultaneously taking the reader deep into the paranoia of the character. As Trondheim-character begins to recount one of his nightmares about the forthcoming visit to America, a horizontally juxtaposed series of ever-tighter close-ups of his face, which becomes an abstract pattern of lines, has the effect of a zoom in across the double page, disrupting the linearity of the account and taking it into achronological dream-time (Trondheim 1995: 58–59).

The gap between the Trondheim as character as Trondheim as narrator is not, then, to be found in the distinction between verbal and visual narration, since the voice-over belongs to the character, not to the narrator. The presence of a narrating instance is nonetheless attested through the modalizing effect of highly salient framing and perspective. More generally, the way in which the world inhabited by the irascible and neurotic Trondheim character is rendered in selective but careful detail into the exuberance of the graphic line has the effect of presenting both character and world through the prism of an ironic vision.

The two flashbacks to childhood do, of course, break the pattern in that there is a verbal narrating instance: the *récitatif* box contains the voice of the adult, detached from and looking back on the childhood self. In the second of these, the narrating voice is gently mocking, as the child fails to do anything any more transgressive than steal a franc, subsequently returned (Trondheim 1995a: 50–52). In the first flashback, however, involving a school trip when Trondheim acted as ringleader in playing a trick on a fellow pupil, faking a collective *Exorcist*-style possession by the devil, narrative comments are limited to brief indications of time ('until the day when...') (Trondheim 1995: 42), and the episode seems to be enacted 'live' through dialogue. Moreover, the slightly childish drawing style, less sophisticated than elsewhere in the album, suggests that events may be viewed through the child's eyes. Again, the graphic line itself acts as narrative device.

If the constitutive splitting of the autobiographical 'I', representing and represented, is rather subtly signalled and suggested, further doublings are clearly and unmistakeably marked. Trondheim as character is intensely self-critical from the outset. Having blamed himself in the first panel for his lack of rigour in work and life, he turns upon himself in the second panel for

this habit of self-deprecation. Self-appraisals take place at regular intervals as he contemplates his mirror image and notes both moral and physical decline, forced to face up to being 'a fat old fart' with an expanding waistline, carefully palpated over a series of subsequent frames (Trondheim 1995a: 53–55). He is also subject to the approval or disapproval of others, like the great *bande dessinée* star and father figure, Moebius, who sees him sitting in an Angoulême street, feeling sick (a malaise occasioned by Dupuy's account of cutting his finger) (Trondheim 1995a: 64).

The splitting will take more dramatic forms, however. To the pre-Oedipal fantasies of himself as all-powerful superhero, whose violent intimidation of, for example, an over-persistent flower-seller in a restaurant is disavowed by the 'stop' that the Trondheim character addresses to himself in the voice-over (Trondheim 1995a: 8), is added a series of remarkable figurations of the Freudian superego. The first of these is the Kafkaesque judge, followed by a prehistoric monster which reiterates the judge's accusation of megalomania (Trondheim 1995a: 17). Later in the album, though, it is Trondheim himself who simultaneously incarnates both the judgemental figure and the figure who is judged, as he pulls from his mouth versions of himself that incarnate his worst qualities: infatuation with mass culture, inarticulateness, exaggeration ('Exagératorman), vindictiveness ('Justiceman'). These figures then turn on him for his presumptuousness in judging them (Trondheim 1995a: 84–85). In a subsequent episode, the prehistoric monster returns to mock his procrastination, and Trondheim explicitly accuses him of representing a series of authority figures from parents to school, from whose repressive régime he wishes to liberate himself and protect his own son. However, as he tries to strangle the monster it turns into another version of himself. He splatters this other self with a giant hand, but it springs up again, this time as a Hydra-style monster with multiple Trondheim-heads (Trondheim 1995a: 129–132).

Approximativement offers a virtuoso demonstration of *bande dessinée* autofiction as 'a site where the subject gets lost and is dissolved into multiplicity', in Laouyen's phrase (Laouyen 2002: 3–4), as he both indulges and then repudiates the wishes that break through in the form of fantasies, and as he both identifies with and attempts to resist the authority invested in various paternal substitutes. This multiplicity is prefigured on the cover of the album, on which over four hundred versions of Trondheim appear, including an incarnation as muscle-bound colossus, and a metarepresentative image of Trondheim looking at his face on the screen of a television set held up by another Trondheim. The fact that included amongst all the Trondheims is his incarnation as the sheriff from his album *Blacktown* (1996), in the *Lapinot* series, may invite the reader to reflect on the possibility that the process of proliferation and doubling may continue beyond *Approximativement*.[72]

Functions other than the judgemental are introduced, through the trope of objects which hold memories from the past as Trondheim goes through papers and possessions prior to moving house at the end of the album. In a striking image which recalls Béatrice Didier's suggestion that the evocation of childhood by diarists is an attempt to hold onto the security linked with the mother, Trondheim draws himself in foetal position, surrounded by childhood toys. However, the judgemental function returns as he deplores his own tendency to create a

museum of his life on the lines of Graceland, and the fact that he had kept, amongst other souvenirs from America, the entry tickets to Graceland, moves him to describe himself as a 'cretin' (Trondheim 1995a: 133). The album ends with Trondheim's resolution to become a better person, physically and morally. Over the final two pages, the angle of vision becomes wider and higher, as the 'camera eye' of the artist moves up and away, suggesting some doubt on the part of Trondheim-narrator as to whether this is achievable.

12.3 *Journal d'un album* (Dupuy and Berberian, 1994)

Dupuy and Berberian, who normally collaborate on both the script and the drawing of their albums, each produced separate sections of this journal, which is the diary of the writing of one of their *Monsieur Jean* albums, *Les Femmes et les enfants d'abord*, and which also becomes the diary of the writing of the diary itself. The reference to Dupuy and Berberian's *Monsieur Jean* series would in itself ensure compliance with the autobiographical pact, but the character of Charles Berberian is introduced by name in B2: 2,[73] and in the same panel the expected presence of Philippe Dupuy is announced. There is also a clear visual resemblance with the extra-textual models, even if this is caricatured and imbued with subjectivity: for example, Dupuy's self-consciousness about his hairiness leads him to exaggerate it, arms and back invariably bristling with fuzz. The first of Dupuy's sections include his comments on the first three sections produced by Berberian, from which it emerges that the former sees the enterprise as more of an exercise in spontaneity than the latter. However, the two authors are in agreement over the inclusion of fictional elements: this issue is specifically addressed by Dupuy: 'I agree with you that we mustn't deprive ourselves of fictional scenes' (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b**,** D1: 1–4).

As in the case of Trondheim, the fictional scenes draw upon a *bande dessinée* imaginary, although Berberian's daydream, in which he and Dupuy attempt to banish the anxieties which are assailing them by turning into Batman and Robin, founders as Dupuy goes out of role and declares the costumes to be ridiculous (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, B4: 3). It is their fictional creation, Monsieur Jean, who most often serves as a bridge between reality and fiction. The character's function as alter ego is denied by Berberian, as he asserts sanctimoniously to a colleague that both he and Dupuy have long since moved on from the prolonged adolescence that their hero is reluctant to renounce. However, the credibility of this claim is weakened by the context of the conversation (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, B3: 12–13). It occurs during a sequence in which, in the temporary absence of his wife and daughter, Berberian has regressed to indulgence in fast food and to CD-buying as a work-displacement activity to disguise his procrastination. Moreover, Monsieur Jean will not stay within the bounds of the second-level narrative of the album whose progress the journal charts, but will emerge to figure personal and professional anxieties of both artists.

Where Trondheim had delegated much of the narration to his drawn character, Dupuy and Berberian tend to rely more on narrative voice-over. Different sections of the *Journal* make varying use of *récitatif*, and the temporal distance between the narrative voice-over and the events depicted in the images also varies. Neither artist adopts a consistent pattern. However, even in sections where the voice-over seems to be simultaneous with the visual portrayal of

events, the verbal narration takes up a stance which is detached from that of the self as character: it does not have the function of an internal monologue emanating from the character as it does in *Approximativement*. The self-as-narrator is also distanced from self-as-character through visual techniques such as high angle of vision (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, B2:13), and through self-caricature, most notably in situations of acute embarrassment, such as Berberian's encounter with a supercilious secretary who only half-heartedly dissuades her dog from sniffing enthusiastically at his groin (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, B2:4).

In the case of both artists, the autobiographical self is constructed to a considerable degree through their impression of the judgement of others. In the first sections produced by Berberian, this self is a collective one: it is the social status of the *bande dessinée* artist which is reflected back to him through the attitude of various interlocutors. The socially constructed identity of the *bande dessinée* artist also features on the cover of the album: Dupuy and Berberian are perceived as extraterrestrials as soon as they announce their profession.

The titles, '*Des Conneries*' (stupidity, rubbish) and *Conneries* (*II*) of Berberian's first sections, denote the term used to describe *bande dessinée* on two different occasions. The first features a voluble taxi driver, whose familiarity with the medium is limited to 'Axtérix and Obélix' (*sic*). Berberian represents this conversation as literally excruciating: he draws himself attached to a cross, as the taxi driver whips him, chuckling at the thought of 'all that rubbish' (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, B1:8). The second takes place at a holiday village, where he and Dupuy have been invited to animate a cultural evening around their work. Berberian is left alone to face the tiny audience, and the sea of empty chairs, as Dupuy phones to say that his car has broken down. The popularly prevailing conception of *bande dessinée* is evinced by the martial arts characters drawn by a child, Matthias, and proffered for Berberian's approval (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, B2: 11). Berberian is also expected to enjoy seeing the fruit of the *bande dessinée* workshop run earlier that day. Matthias has filled in blanked-out speech balloons from a *Monsieur Jean* album, replacing the sophisticated dialogue with laddish mumblings about fags and birds, thereby transforming it into something closer to the mass cultural product that *bande dessinée* is widely assumed to be. Mathias's proud father then fills an awkward silence after his son has declared that he is in fact far more interested in video games than *bande dessinée* by saying, 'Still, it must be great to make a living from drawing rubbish' (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, B2: 13).

Berberian's stoical public face gives way later to a nightmare in which the assault on his professional status is represented by a kick from one of Matthias's badly-drawn karaté experts. A subsequent holiday-village engagement, this time alongside Dupuy, brings a bigger audience, but at the subsequent meal it is inevitably through mention of *Astérix* that their hosts engage the two artists in conversation. Berberian concedes defeat at the end of the chapter by portraying the event as an *Astérix*-style banquet (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, B2: 16).

The holiday-village sequence includes a page in which Berberian builds an image of the *bande dessinée* artist at work for the benefit of his intratextual audience: inspiration flows and

fat cheques arrive through every post Dupuy and Berberian 1994b: B2: 10). This vision is contradicted by the *récitatif*, and comprehensively belied by the remainder of the album. Berberian's lack of confidence in his own abilities as an artist, together with anxieties about the commitment and solvency of their publisher, are materialized as the speech balloons of the *Monsieur Jean* page that he is drawing, blank on his original, suddenly acquire a text. This time it is not the inanities of Matthias's attempts at comic strip dialogue that come out of the characters' mouths, but a direct attack on Berberian: he is incapable and his work is worthless (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, B4: 7).

In Dupuy's sections, insecurities about his own artistic talent, particularly in relation to that of Berberian, are shown to be an obsession which outweighs concerns over the status of the profession as a whole. His anxieties are unleashed as he repeatedly represents himself through the eyes of others. Like Berberian, Dupuy launches a devastating critique of himself by employing Monsieur Jean as a mouthpiece: the character turns up metaleptically in his studio in order to compare his progress unfavourably to that of Berberian. A masochistic fantasy follows, within which Berberian is not only pictured in a frenzy of unstoppable creativity, but is given the narrative voice-over, affecting regret as he recounts to an interviewer his shock on discovering his former collaborator, now an alcoholic wreck, lying prone and ranting on the banks of the Seine (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, D1: 5–7).

Another sequence involves not a fantasized but a real judgement on Dupuy's artistic competence: he shows the members of the Association collective the pages of the diary that he has produced so far, only for them to be criticized by Trondheim on grounds of excessive introspection, and by David B. for their absence of rhythm (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, D1: 9). Dupuy's reaction to this harsh verdict is to seek oblivion in sleep, but it is disturbed firstly by nightmares in which the Association editorial board join Berberian in mocking him in his persona of self-pitying drunken derelict, and then by a telephone message from his father: Dupuy's mother has died (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, D1: 11). The shock of this event gives rise to a page from which procrastination and fretting are excised, and rhythm brutally accelerated.

The spontaneity of approach which had led Dupuy to devote pages to metatextual agonizing over his difficulties in starting the diary, followed by his own condemnation of their self-indulgence as he rereads them, now leads him to a sudden and violent silencing of this nagging self-doubt. A single page covers his mother's life in six frames. Four snapshot-like images show her as toddler, child at the piano, bride, mother of four. In a later remembered image she sits on a hospital bed, oblivious to Dupuy's presence, and, finally, she is seen lying in her coffin. The intimate self-portrayal prefigured on the previous page by the image of Dupuy standing naked as he receives the news will actually come into being in the space between the frames: it is through the acceleration of ellipsis that Dupuy expresses the intensity of his pain at his mother's decline and death. At the same time, this exhibition of his mastery of the medium offers a ferocious reaffirmation of himself as *bande dessinée* artist, a reaffirmation bitterly, but also triumphantly, endorsed by himself as narrator. The final image has the words 'That's the way to give a story some rhythm!' in the voice-over box (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, D1: 12).

For both Dupuy and Berberian, self-representation in this album emerges predominantly out of the dialectic of self as character and self as narrator, visual and verbal, with the narrative scrutiny mediated and extended by that of others, both real and fantasized. There is, however, one sequence produced by Dupuy in which the grip of the narrating instance appears to loosen, to the point where we are given access to raw subjectivity. This sequence occurs within a longer section, recounted from the distance of a year later, which mostly concerns a crisis in his marriage. For the space of five pages, the narrative voice-over fades away, and Dupuy enters into the fictional world of the new *Monsieur Jean* album at a point where the character, undergoing a difficult period of his own, finds the derisive laughter of others unendurable. Here the character does not act as an external, judgemental double. Instead, Dupuy seems to merge with him and then take his place, as he too flees from the critical onslaught of others. The seething vortex into which Monsieur Jean is sucked is replicated in the *Journal* by the gradual transformation of the *bande dessinée* frames into a circular arrangement which traps Dupuy, until his image dissolves, and swirling lines figure his mental breakdown (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, D3: 9–13). The lowering of iconicity to suggest access to the unconscious of a character is a device that recurs in Dupuy's solo album *Hanté*, published in 2005, a transcription of dreams and nightmares, in which the crudeness of the drawing, particularly in comparison to the elegance of style for which the artist is known, gives the impression of unworked-over immediacy.

Berberian offers no such moments of apparent unguardedness in relation to his personal life, maintaining a certain playful distance throughout. This includes a panel in which he constructs the vision of his collaboration with Dupuy that he imagines his intratextual holiday-village audience to entertain: he and Dupuy are dressed in leather and chains, but the hard-core sado-masochistic scene thus metonymically conjured up is undermined by their simpering smiles (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, B2: 10). Significantly, in his own solo album, *Playlist*, published in 2004, Berberian does not adopt Dupuy's technique of lowering his defences, but instead offers an indirect account of himself through a detailing of the music and musicians that are associated with periods of his life.

In the *Journal*, he offers a similarly indirect evocation of his childhood. Rather than using the diary to express directly the pain of the loss of childhood security, or to provide a refuge against it, he shows how it is the medium of *bande dessinée* as a whole that has fulfilled this function. In a episode where his wife urges him to throw out the old *bande dessinée* albums which are cluttering up their house, he draws himself as panic-stricken at the prospect, explaining that these albums represent his only way of revisiting his itinerant childhood, spent in Baghdad and Beirut and so now inaccessible to him. The memories that the albums hold for him are symbolized by a house made entirely of *bande dessinée* albums set amidst a few metonymic palm trees (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, B3: 2–3, 7–8). However, his childhood self now enters the scene, protesting that the clutter is due less to his unwillingness to part with childhood relics than to his continued accumulation of albums as an adult. Berberian's doubling of himself here recalls Trondheim's use of doubles to castigate himself for his moral weaknesses, but there is a certain confusion of roles as the adult Berberian takes over the role of accuser, admonishing his childhood incarnation for exclaiming, 'Holy shit!' on catching

sight of his beloved Batmobile (Dupuy and Berberian 1994b, B3: 9–10). The episode is rueful rather than guilt-ridden. The deliberate malfunction of the conceit of the child-conscience may be taken as evidence of Berberian's pleasure in exploring the resources of the medium, but it may also be viewed as symptomatic of his evasiveness in relation to any serious revelation about himself and his past, in contrast to Dupuy's preparedness to expose his emotional disarray.

If the diary is viewed as a record of what it is to be a *bande dessinée* artist, then the different approaches of the two authors clearly add to its resonance. The unintended insults or simple contempt that Berberian endures in relation to his profession may be taken to stand for the public response to the medium as a whole, and the self-deprecation of the narrative voice invites readers' complicity in rejecting the vision of *bande dessinée*, and *bande dessinée* artists, that is presented by the common-sense wisdom that he encounters. Berberian is not immune to self-doubt as an individual artist, but it is Dupuy who offers the more detailed evocation of the agonies of creation as he is tortured by his imaginings of how others see him, and, on occasion, by the devastating criticism of others. The Monsieur Jean character departs from his mild-mannered incarnation in his own series and becomes altogether more tyrannical as he personifies not the lifestyle of a Parisian intellectual but the constant threat of artistic failure. Both that threat and the more general appreciation of *bande dessinée* as 'conneries' are decisively repudiated by the artistic achievement of the album.

12.4 Conclusion

The three artists offer varying versions of a drawn self: it is disguised in Trondheim's work, elegantly evasive in Berberian's, and raw and naked in Dupuy's. For all three, though, the drawn rather than mechanical reproduction of observed and remembered surroundings and situations, and the facility with which external reality can be invaded by dreams and memories gives rise to the 'seepage of subjectivity', in Sheringham's term, a subjectivity which frequently takes the form of elements of a *bande dessinée* imaginary. Furthermore, we have seen that the medium offers complex ways in which narrating instance may relate to the self as represented, from the verbal voice-over which castigates the character's procrastination to more subtle modalizing effects of angle of vision and graphic line which can take up an ironic distance. It also allows for doublings, as the character's conscience or anxieties are projected onto other characters, or onto duplicate or multiple versions of the self. In the case of Trondheim, the tendency of the character to proliferate is a function of all-embracing guilt and paranoia, where, with Dupuy and Berberian, it is more often their artistic self-doubt that is externalized. In extreme personal crisis, any sense of narrative distance may be abolished: Dupuy and Trondheim both figure the dissolution of their sense of self through the breakdown of representation. These two albums demonstrate the potential of *bande dessinée* as a medium for autobiographical writing, as well as offering testimony of both the institutional and the private processes of *bande dessinée* creation during one of the most fertile periods in its history.

Chapter 13

GENDER AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

13.1 Introduction

We will consider in this chapter the work of two women artists, the Québécoise Julie Doucet and the Iranian Marjane Satrapi, and of one man, Jean-Christophe Menu, who, as a founder of L'Association, has been responsible for publishing the autobiographical work of other artists, including Doucet and Satrapi, and who produced his own autobiographical volume in 1995.

Theorists of women's autobiography have argued that it breaks with a male tradition. Helena Grice goes back to the definitions of autobiography put forward by Gusdorf in 1956 and points to the prominence given in male autobiography to the celebration of public success, and to the sense of the writer as spokesman for his society (Grice 2001: 359). Shari Benstock finds in autobiography, as defined by Gusdorf, a self which is knowable, clearly bounded and cohesive over time. Such a view of autobiography, writes Benstock, 'rests on a firm belief in the *conscious* control of artist over subject matter', a belief only tenable by 'those whose assignment under the Symbolic law is to *represent* authority' (Benstock 1999: 9). We noted in the previous chapter that such a conception of the self has tended to give way to a divided self which is founded on repression and loss, and whose unstable identity is subordinated to pre-existing discourses. Dupuy, for example, may be male, but his work scarcely conforms to Gusdorfian orthodoxy, given the extent to which the boundaries of his textual self dissolve.

Some French feminist theorists of the 1970s tended to celebrate forms of writing which seem to escape regulation by the Law of the Father. Julia Kristeva, for example, analysed the work of certain writers in which drives from what she calls the 'semiotic' (roughly equivalent to Lacan's imaginary order), the pre-linguistic pre-Oedipal state of attachment to the mother, break through the syntactical logic and semantic norms held in place by the symbolic order,

manifesting themselves through gaps, silences and traces of irrationality. For Kristeva, such a subject position can be taken up by male or female writers, and her examples are in fact all drawn from the work of male writers (Kristeva 1974).

Luce Irigaray focuses particularly on women, arguing that they are positioned in a particular way by patriarchal discourse. She claims that Freudian psychology is based on the premise that, since the girl child's sex is invisible, woman, having 'nothing to show', is afflicted by penis envy, and thereby functions as a mirror which reflects masculinity back to the man (Irigaray 1974: 53). Irigaray prefers the metaphor of the speculum, the curved surface of which is able to make the woman's sex visible (1974: 182). Irigaray suggests that women can subvert the logic of phallocentric discourse by mimicry, but they can also take pleasure in a use of language which she calls 'le parler femme', characterized by fluidity and resistant to fixed forms and ideas (Irigaray 1977). This latter aspect of Irigaray's work has, however, been criticized as amounting to gender essentialism, through its postulation of a biological origin for women's writing practices.

Simone de Beauvoir had, famously, declared in 1949, in *Le Deuxième Sexe*, that 'one is not born a woman, one becomes one' (Beauvoir 1949: 285), and, like her, many feminists have preferred to stress the extent to which women's identity has been defined by a dominant, but historically specific, male culture. This is particularly apparent through the contrasting ways in which masculine and feminine selfhood have been represented in relation to the body. Beauvoir's own writing can be read as suggesting that women's bodies are a hindrance to the attainment of the universality associated with the male subject. Judith Butler claims, however, that Beauvoir offers an implicit critique of this notion of an abstract masculine subject, and glosses her argument as 'That subject is masculine to the extent that it disavows its socially marked embodiment and, further, projects that disavowed and disparaged embodiment onto the feminine sphere, effectively renaming the body as female' (Butler 1990: 11).

Sidonie Smith, writing specifically on autobiography, considers social meanings of the body arising out of accounts of subjectivity, contrasting the disembodied, unitary, rational self of the traditional subject of autobiography, whose occupation of the dominant cultural terrain is founded on various practices of exclusion, with the material, embodied, selves of those who inhabit the cultural margins. The borders between the centre and the margins are well policed through discourses which normalize certain bodies (white, male, heterosexual, property-owning) and render others abnormal and even grotesque. Certain female autobiographers may themselves resist embodiment and restrict their presence in the text to a disembodied rationality (Smith 1993: 9). Smith, in a text co-written with Julia Watson, suggests that such women may aim to achieve cultural empowerment (Watson and Smith 1992: xix). Many women writers prefer, though, to inscribe their bodies into the text, allowing free play to any disruptive effects that may ensue. This need not imply a reassertion of gender essentialism, but on the contrary a refusal of what Judith Butler calls an 'uncritical reproduction of the mind/body hierarchy' (Butler 1990: 12).

A number of feminist writers have claimed that women's subjectivity tends in any case to be based on collective identifications, often complex and interlocking, rather than on a sense of the self as an individual. According to Susan Stanford Friedman, in women's autobiography, the 'important unit is [...] never the isolated being' (Friedman 1988: 38). Friedman offers a dual explanation: on the one hand, in a patriarchal society, girls and boys are differently socialized within the family, and on the other hand, girls and women are subject to a culturally imposed gender identity.

Friedman draws on the work of the feminist psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow in support of her first argument. Chodorow maintains that boys are 'required to engage in a more emphatic individuation and a more defensive firming of experienced ego boundaries', whereas girls retain a primary attachment to their mother, and even after the Oedipal phase, they 'tend to remain part of the dyadic primary mother-child relationship itself' (Chodorow 1978: 166–7). For Chodorow, such patterns of upbringing are historically contingent and are open to challenge and change. To support her second argument, Friedman turns to the work of Sheila Rowbotham, who asserts that the alienation of an oppressed group can be overcome if they develop a collective consciousness (Rowbotham 1973: 29). Friedman acknowledges that the individual will sometimes need to assert an individual identity to avoid being reduced to categories such as 'woman' or 'black', as delineated by dominant cultural norms, but argues that women are also able to construct an alternative group identity through solidarity with each other (Friedman 1988: 50).

Autobiography has increasingly proved to be a key genre for women, enabling them to uphold both individual and group identities. The dissolution of self so valorized in the work of writers like Kristeva would, from the feminist standpoint outlined above, be premature for women. In the words of Rosi Braidotti: 'In order to announce the death of the subject, one must first have gained the right to speak as one' (Braidotti 1994: 141). The referential aesthetic of autobiography allows for the recounting of experience which has previously been silenced and repressed, giving a voice to marginalized groups whose subjectivity has been hitherto denied.

The above issues will be taken up in our discussion of the work of Doucet, Menu and Satrapi. It will be seen that not only does Doucet embrace embodiment, but that she defies normative modes of representation of the female body. Menu's work seems at first to conform to the male autobiographical tradition of representing the self as disembodied rationality, but ultimately calls it into question. Satrapi's account of her childhood in Iran, schooling in Austria and subsequent return to Iran conveys the struggle to construct and maintain an identity, in the isolation of a foreign country and subsequently with other Iranian women, against the definitions which are forced upon her.

13.2 *Ciboire de Criss!* (Julie Doucet, 1996)

Doucet works in both French and English. Her autobiographical work in French includes *Ciboire de Criss!*, which is largely made up of accounts of dreams. The title derives from a Québécois expletive, literally meaning 'Christ's ciborium', the power of which derives from the

rigid Catholic orthodoxy which held sway in Québec until the 'quiet revolution' of the 1960s. *Changements d'adresses* (1998) deals with a period during which Doucet moved to New York. She subsequently produced a diary, called simply *Journal*, in 2004, and an autobiography made up of words cut from women's magazines, called *J comme Je*, in 2005. This section will concentrate mainly on *Ciboire de Criss!*, the portrayal of an inner life of dreams and fantasies, but one which is anything but disembodied.

Doucet makes clear the link between body and text from the outset of this album, through a play on words. The first episode of *Ciboire de Criss!* is called 'Dirty Plotte', a title taken from Doucet's comic of the same name. The word 'plotte' is a Québécois slang term for the female genitals. At the top of the first page, a map of Québec is held up by two versions of Julie herself, dressed only in underwear and stockings with suspenders and high heels. Along with the map of Québec, the reader is, it seems, being offered a cultural mapping of the female body. Here Doucet is undoubtedly deploying the mimicry advocated by Irigaray, by representing herself as a male fantasy, complete with fetishized accoutrements. According to Freud, fetish objects offer a defence against the fear of castration by acting as a substitute for the mother's penis, the absence of which is a source of horror to the boy child. Moreover, Freud claims that the fetishist will feel aversion from the real female genitals (Freud 1927). The fact that the more disreputable-looking of the two versions of Julie announces, 'You can call me Zizi' (a slang word for 'penis') emphasizes her role in compensating for the missing organ.[74]

However, this indulgence of male fantasy is short-lived. In the next panel, Julie, now dressed in shirt and jeans, stands by a blackboard, in pedagogical mode. The blackboard shows a medical diagram of female genitals, with Chinese labels which emphasize how far this non-fetishized, non-sanitized view of the female body is outside the bounds of normative western male discourse. Julie helpfully spells out to her readers 'This is a *plotte*', thereby transgressing the considerable social taboo on the word. While the fetishist will have to face up to the terrifying absence of a penis, the notion that women have 'nothing to show' is gleefully belied. The question of penis envy will be given full frontal treatment in a later episode, in which Julie wakes up in hospital to find that she has acquired a penis. She, at first shyly and then excitedly, confirms that it is in working order, and then swaggers down the street, happy in her newfound ability to attract both women and, more unexpectedly, the ex-Monkee Micky Dolenz. The episode ends, however, on a note of misgiving which gives way to panic: what if she missed her vagina?

The lesson on the first page does not, in fact, end with the 'plotte' diagram, but engages once more with male constructions of women. Doucet points to another usage of the term 'plotte' as she shows herself interpellated in the street by men, who call out, 'Hey man, look at that plotte', a remark so offensive that it makes her hair stand violently on end. Doucet will not allow her identity to be reduced to a certain form of male-determined embodiment. It is embodiment on her own terms that she will seek to claim throughout the rest of the album.

In any *bande dessinée* autobiographical account, the narrating self must necessarily confront the question of embodiment, but, as we have noted in the previous chapter, the medium

allows for a range of ways in which the author/narrator can co-exist with her/his drawn self. It will be seen later in this chapter that, in certain sections of *Livret de Phamille*, Menu has considerable reticence in drawing himself. His presence is attested above all as verbal enunciating instance through the *récitatif*, and through the visual perspective offered by images drawn from his ocularized point of view.

Doucet, in contrast, never takes up a disembodied speaking position. Indeed, in many episodes Julie's language is barely articulate: 'Glou gloup sssip encore ssch pluss de cafe mm sssssip'. Doucet very rarely uses a *récitatif*, and even then does so only to give brief details of changes of time or location: '3 gallons of coffee later'. Julie appears in almost every frame, and the distance between Julie as enunciating subject and as texual self is diminished through her use of direct gaze and direct verbal address, via speech balloons, towards the reader, who is situated with her in the here and now. Neither are we led to intimate any further narrating instance which would be detached from its cartoon self by retrospection or critical standpoint: the consistent use of the same frontal angle of vision and lack of variation in framing focus attention away from the narration onto the character. At the beginning or end of every episode the inter-frame space is used simply to insist upon the identity between artist and character: 'A day in the life of Julie D. by Julie Doucet herself'.

Doucet does on one occasion introduce a judgemental stance towards her textual self through the device of a double of Julie, explicitly named as her conscience. This might suggest a certain Freudian structure of superego and moral censorship. However, her conscience indulges in much wilder and more uninhibited behaviour than Julie herself, jumping on cars, farting, and calling out to good-looking passers-by, and reproaches Julie for being too timid and straight. The scene ends with an image of bonding and intimacy, as Julie and her conscience cuddle up together.

In the oneiric world of *Ciboire de Criss!*, then, Julie seems to exist in a pre-Oedipal state in which the Law of the Father, which would regulate her behaviour, has evidently not been internalized. Separation from the mother is, on one occasion, enacted by Julie in the strip, but seems not to be definitive. Julie takes leave of her mother in order to go up in a space rocket, but the interior of the rocket turns out to be a welcoming and womb-like space.[75] Moreover, her mother gives her some biscuits and tells her that she can use them to masturbate, so the pleasure associated with attachment to the mother's body is not lost. Significantly, when Julie dreams that she herself is pregnant, she is able to take the baby out and return it to the womb at will.

Incomplete separation from the maternal body, together with an uncertain status in relation to language, suggest that Julie is by no means integrated into the symbolic order. Moreover, her pride in the squalid state of her flat (she defies an attempt by the super-housewife figure Super Clean Plotte to clean it) indicates a lack of disgust in relation to what Kristeva has called the 'abject'. The process of breaking free from the mother's body and taking up a place in the symbolic order involves the separation of the clean body from the 'abject' body: 'The abject confronts us with our earliest attempts to demarcate ourselves from the maternal entity even

before ex-isting outside of it, thanks to the autonomy of language' (Kristeva 1980: 20). Abjected substances, such as bodily excreta, evoke the state of animality (roughly equivalent to Lacan's phase of the 'Real'), prior to the constitution of subjectivity. The abject has to be radically excluded and deposited on the other side of a border that delineates the self from whatever threatens the self. As Kristeva points out, many cultures have rituals surrounding areas of the abject such as animals and death (Kristeva 1980: 18). The film theorist Barbara Creed has described the horror film as a 'modern defilement rite', which confronts the abject in order finally to eject it, 'and redraw the boundaries between the human and the non-human' (Creed 1993: 14).

Far from seeking to redraw the boundaries between self and non-self, Doucet comprehensively transgresses them with an exuberant portrayal of bodily fluids and wastes. She runs out of Tampax, and her menstrual blood floods the whole city. In another episode, she accidentally traps her cat in rivulets of her own snot. In one of her pregnancy dreams, she gives birth to a cat (the hospital having run out of babies), and happily suckles it. Doucet's graphic style, which recalls both that of Robert Crumb and the *ligne crade* of Vuillemin, is messy and swarms with detail, the antithesis of the boundary-reinforcing *ligne claire*. Oppositions between self and other give way to flux and mobility, and Oedipal fixity of subject positioning dissolves. As Julie lies in her bath she feels that she may have become a piece of furniture or the washbasin. In another dream, Julie can have a man's body on one side of the mirror and a woman's body in the reflection. Each reflects the other, on equal terms, and they end by stepping through the mirror and.embracing

Doucet's next two autobiographical works deal with her daily life, even if dreams are occasionally included, and she therefore leaves the idyllic world of the imaginary and its undifferentiated *jouissance* to return to a socio-symbolic order founded on sexual difference. In *Changements d'Adresse*, it is female solidarity that enables her to free herself from an increasingly stifling relationship with a boyfriend who cannot tolerate her success. However, as she leaves New York, with catbox and suitcase, a marching band of men bearing Christ's body on a crucifix passes her, perhaps a reminder that the patriarchal moral order is not so easy to evade. Her textual self remains embodied, and, in this album, has to deal with the realities of epilepsy and of miscarriage. For most of the album, events are directly enacted through the images and speech balloons, as in *Ciboire de Criss!*, but in a few episodes *récitatifs* appear and introduce a certain distance between narrator and character.

The *Journal*, which offers a remarkable and detailed portrayal of the pleasures and frustrations of the life of a *bande dessinée* artist, relies on extensive *récitatifs*, and the Julie character is no longer given speech balloons. The division between representing and represented selves now seems to correspond to the text/image division, and the gap between them is considerably increased by the use of collage. The narration is occasionally delegated to anonymous captions cut out of women's magazines and stuck on the page where they provide a curiously dissonant commentary on a life which resists their platitudinous conception of womanhood. 'The joy of family life: the mystery of marriage', for example, is used as a title for a scene which shows Julie alone and hard at work inking in lithographs in a

studio. *J comme Je* takes the collage technique still further, by dispensing with images altogether and offering a verbal narrative entirely constructed of pre-existing fragments. Julie is now invisible, and her textual self is painstakingly put together from the stuck-on letters, words and phrases, uneasily wrested from fragments of a normative discourse, in which the gaps and silences are eloquent.

In general, Doucet's work may be characterized as an example of 'dessiner femme', to adapt Irigaray's phrase, not because it is determined by her biology but because it gives access to a rich, often hilarious and sometimes disturbing, female imaginary which is never severed from her bodily presence. The *Journal* contains a particularly striking *mise en abyme* of the construction of the autobiographical self: a Julie doll, designed by Julie and lovingly realized by two of her friends, complete with mini-wine bottle and mini-tampon, a replica of the female body not so far put into production by the manufacturers of Barbie dolls, although, like Julie, we can all dream.

13.3 *Livret de phamille* (Jean-Christophe Menu, 1995)

The autobiography of Jean-Christophe Menu seems to construct a self far more traditional in terms of its sexual fixity. The title of the book and its dedication, 'À ma phemme, Valérie. À mes philles Séraphine, Ophélie et Raphaëlle' ('to my wife', and 'to my daughters', but with *ph-* replacing the initial letter *f* in both cases), suggest that it is to be placed under the sign of the phallus.[76] The cover shows a cartoon version of Menu scribbling on his wife's pregnant stomach. It appears that a woman's body is being inscribed by a male writing/drawing practice, the opposite of Doucet's project in presenting her 'plotte' diagram. Some episodes are drawn in realist style, and in these Menu makes only very rare appearances. He is present almost exclusively as enunciating subject in the form of a disembodied voice-over in the *récitatifs*, through the metonym of the drawing hand, and through his ocularized vision of his family and his surroundings. The embodiment of his wife is, however, emphasized throughout: she is often drawn naked and is usually pregnant.

Menu appropriates both the landscape and his wife and daughters with his pen. Some sketches of Saint-Vaast, in Normandy, conventionally labelled 'sa mer' (its/his seaside), 'son fort' (its/his fort), etc. are followed by sketches of his wife labelled 'sa femme' (his wife), and of his child and his wife's pregnant stomach labelled 'ses enfants' (his children). Saint-Vaast is indicated on a map of the Normandy coast, and another arrow another points to 'the future second daughter' in his wife's belly. Menu also carefully maps out the house in Saint Vaast, with plans of each floor on which rooms and items of furniture are positioned. This precise mapping of geographical and living space, as well as socio-sexual terrain, may be compared not only with Julie's mapping of the female body in *Ciboire de Criss!*, but also with a plan that she draws of her own flat. Here her concern is to less to show the relative positions of different areas of the flat than to plot her own trajectory through it as she levitates from bedroom to bathroom trying to limit the leakage of blood from her Tampax. Where Doucet maps fluidity and flow, Menu implies the fixity of topographical reference points.

Whilst images of his wife and his daughters abound, Menu appears only fleetingly in the realist episodes. He draws himself four times in all, and on three of these occasions he is

engaged in drawing, so that, arguably, these images can be categorized, with the trope of the drawing hands, as emphasizing his role as narrator over that of character. In one instance he depicts himself drawing his reflection in a clothes shop window as he stands with sleeping baby in harness, waiting for his wife, who is inside buying a dress. This metarepresentative image enables him, perhaps, to affirm his occupancy of the symbolic order which might otherwise be threatened by the feminized image reflected back to him: this includes not only the baby but the women's clothes in the window. It might, though, be argued that what is captured here is rather Menu's desire to merge into the female space of the mirror image, just as Doucet's mirror image allows for a merging of male and female versions of Julie. This reading of Menu's work as less than phallocentric is supported by other elements of the album.

The sense that the masculine narrator exists as a disembodied rationality faced with the grotesque, embodied, female other is undermined in a number of ways. The notion of autobiography as representing a unified subject, with a coherent identity across time, is disrupted in *Livret de phamille*. This is partly a consequence of metanarrative explanations which make it clear that some panels that had been drawn at a previous stage have been inserted into a later part of the book, thereby emphasizing the work of ordering and shaping that goes into the construction of an apparently continuous experience. Menu replicates, for example, one of his own adolescent works of art, an abstract, angst-ridden image of himself. This early attempt at self-portrayal is described as an 'ancient daub' in the *récitatif*: any sense of continuity with his younger self is derisively dismissed.

The complexity of the enunciative system of the album further undoes the coherence of the subject position. The disembodied narrating presence manifested through the *récitatif* disappears in certain episodes of the book where realism gives way to a cartoon style. Menu represents himself in these sections as a cartoon figure. The cartoon Menu is highly emotive and certainly embodied: it has hangovers and bleeds copiously when it cuts its hand on a saw. Unlike the cartoon Julie, it does not address the reader, and the narrating 'I', no longer represented verbally, now seems to become itself embodied through the violence of the drawing style, energetically expressive of the powerful emotions generated by the tensions of family life. The careful perspective and rational control of the realist sections is replaced here by the frenzied immediacy of jagged lines: these pages seem to bear the physical inscription on the paper of the fury of the artist.

Ultimately, however, it is through the realist episodes that the sense of the narrator as a controlling consciousness is called into question. This process begins in the middle of the album when the cartoon self intrudes into a realist episode set in Cerisy where it represents Menu's past self giving vent to unrepressed emotions of boredom, rage and frustration during certain contributions to the *Colloque* that had taken place there a few years earlier. By the end of the album the fixity of the subject positioning of the enunciating 'I', post-Oedipal and rational, will be undone. It is the Oedipal crisis itself which will be dramatized, and this will be achieved by a particular rendering of space and geography, using the visual resources of the medium.

At the beginning of the album, in Saint-Vaast, Menu is the sovereign subject, possessing with his pen what he surveys with his eye. This impression of control over his surroundings persists when he depicts his return to his Parisian flat, distancing himself from its clutter by drawing rooms and surfaces with careful realist precision, including the sticky paper used to trap cockroaches, in a clear refusal of the promiscuity with the abject that Julie happily entertains. Moreover, unlike Julie, who merges with her disorderly surroundings, Menu does not appear in these images, which cover eight pages, apart from one frame in which he is seen, in shadow, drawing. It is a return to his childhood home in a subsequent realist episode that is the occasion for a dramatic figuration of the fragmentation and splitting which threatens his sense of a unified self. Menu's mother still lives in the house in which he himself grew up, and she has recently purchased, in addition, the house next door. Menu stays with his family in the next-door house as he approaches his thirtieth birthday, an occasion for anxiety so acute that he seizes upon a series of numerological coincidences to convince himself that 1994 will be the year of his death.

Intensely depressed, he buys an old Jijé album at a bric-à-brac market. The hero, the Catholic priest Don Bosco, is comforting a boy: 'I can see that although your body is healthy, your soul is sick'. In two panels which propose a flashback to his childhood, Menu offers images of enviable security, firstly seated at a meal table, alone with his mother, and then in his bedroom drawing *bandes dessinées* with the childish certitude that *Spirou* would publish them. As an adult, he likes to go and work 'on Mum's side in my old bedroom'. This journey back to 'the sites of the past', in the words of the *récitatif*, involves passing through the cellar, which is depicted as dark and womb-like: the high-angled view of the steps leading down into its shadowy depths suggest both attraction and fear. The page ends with two panels which juxtapose the old part of the house with the central part of the image in shadow, and the recently acquired part of the house, where an empty chair is set up, ready for Menu to welcome several dozen friends to his thirtieth birthday party. The inter-frame space seems here to represent the division of Menu's subjectivity, a graphic correlate of his psychic schism as he is torn between the maternal house/body and the place assigned to him as an adult.

The enunciating 'I' and mastery of surroundings through realist drawing now give way to a cartoon-style episode, and the anxiety is displaced onto Menu's cartoon body, when he reacts hysterically on being attacked by wasps, and his wife and daughter accuse him of behaving like a child. Resolution comes through a dream, in which Menu is living in a pyramid which has a rip in its fabric. Don Bosco, the *bande dessinée* father (both as Catholic priest and as ancestor within the medium), returns to seal up the split ('colmater la brèche') in Menu's imagined abode. The final, realist, pages, which show friends talking, eating and drinking at the party, suggest that he has successfully taken up his place in the social order. The outcome would appear to be a restoration of a post-Oedipal masculine assurance. There is, though, a silent image which acts as a postface to the book. Menu depicts himself, not drawing but simply standing in a station, a setting which evokes provisionality. His uncertain gaze, which does not quite engage the look of the reader, suggests continued anxiety rather than the recovery of a secure sense of a unified self.

13.4 *Persepolis* (Marjane Satrapi, 2000–2003)

Sent by her parents to a French school in Austria at the age of fourteen, in order to escape the repressive régime of the Ayatollahs in her native Iran, the young Marjane misses her mother, and, in *Persepolis 3*, fired with the desire to educate herself which runs through all four volumes, reads books by her mother's favourite author, Simone de Beauvoir. She is particularly taken with *Le Deuxième Sexe*, and its discussion of the cultural construction of femininity. Inspired by Beauvoir's claim that women's conception of life would change if they could urinate standing up, Marjane immediately attempts this feat, but succeeds only in soaking her leg. In the next panel, she sits on the toilet, in reflective mood, and thinks, 'As an Iranian woman, before urinating like a man, I needed to learn to become a liberated and emancipated woman'.[77] The juxtaposition of these two images cannot help but recall a diagram in Lacan's *Écrits*, in which the labels 'men' and 'women' on adjacent toilet doors are used to show the dependency of binary signifiers on each other for meaning (Lacan 1966: 256). The relationship between the terms of this particular binary is, of course, hierarchical. For Beauvoir, the power to define the terms of the binary has been appropriated by the male subject, so that masculinity is the norm against which femininity is the aberrant other. Marjane's statement to her readers acknowledges that becoming liberated and emancipated is not to be achieved by crossing the gender binary and gaining access to some illusory sphere of 'freedom', unencumbered by the anatomy that condemns her to urinate sitting down. Neither will it be achieved by separating that binary from the wider social and political context and asserting her identity simply as a woman. It is as an Iranian woman, one who has grown up in Iran and who also experiences exile, that Satrapi situates herself in relation to a nexus of power relations, of regulatory practices, of exclusions and inclusions.

Pre-revolutionary Iran was not a colony, but its ruler, the Shah, was an Anglo-American puppet and a point made by Edward Said about postcolonial regimes is apt. Said has discussed the often aggressive attempt by a number of such regimes to create a new national identity out of a 'return' to culture and tradition. 'These "returns" accompany rigorous codes of intellectual and moral behaviour [...] In the formerly colonized world, these "returns" have produced varieties of religious and nationalist fundamentalism' (Said 1993: xiv). In the case of Iran, the codes of behaviour are, quite clearly, gendered. The first volume of *Persepolis* opens in 1980 on a panel showing the ten-year-old Marjane wearing an Islamic headscarf. This is followed by a panel showing four of her school friends wearing identical headscarves, with only the edge of Marjane's own scarf visible within the frame, a metonym for the apparatus of control over women's behaviour with which she would thereafter have to reckon.

The next panel makes it clear that the Islamic regime had usurped the Iranian national identity asserted by the 1979 revolution against the Shah, depicted as a mass uprising of unbearded men and unveiled women. The *récitatif* informs us that the revolution was renamed 'the Islamic revolution' some time after it had taken place. We learn in a long flashback how Satrapi's own sense of Iranian identity had been acquired through her liberal, professional family and her own reading. As a child, she had been exposed to a plurality of discourses, including the texts of Zoroastrian prophets and of Iranian revolutionaries, as well as texts from a wider international culture such as a dialogue between Marx and Descartes in the form of a *bande*

dessinée. This pluralism is rendered visually as well as verbally as the iconography associated with each belief system is reproduced.

The narration is delegated in parts of the first volume to Marjane's father. His conversation with his daughter appears in speech balloons, but in some panels his words occupy *récitatif* boxes. He explains how the Shah's father had been installed as emperor by the British, and how Marjane's grandfather, a leading Communist member of the opposition, had been imprisoned and had undergone water torture. Proud of her family's oppositional stance, Marjane tries to feel her grandfather's suffering in her own body by staying in the bath long enough to make her skin wrinkled. Later, when friends of her parents are released from the Shah's prisons in 1979, Marjane's imagination will be haunted by images of mutilated bodies. Many of the Shah's opponents face a new round of persecution by the religious authorities, however, and, when her beloved uncle Anouche is executed, she violently expels the figure of God which had arrived in a dream to comfort her.

As Carrier (2004) has indicated, in this retrospective account, the representing 'I' is the adult Marjane, verbally present in the *récitatif* boxes, whereas the represented 'I', the child who grows into an adolescent and young woman, appears in the drawings. There are, nonetheless, exceptions: at times the child or adolescent self takes over the narration in a direct address to the reader through a speech balloon. This occurs, for example, when, after the intervention of a bearded official, a mixed group of schoolchildren in a secular, bilingual school, is transformed into separate groups of boys and veiled girls in an Islamic school. Marjane's own veiled image gazes out at the reader from the next panel, saying, 'So there we are'. These panels have the effect of challenging the reader and provoking a moral response. Elsewhere, narratorial hindsight is maintained, but is conveyed more eloquently through an image than through words. This is notably the case in a panel where Marjane's father, expressing the general euphoria after the departure of the Shah, says, 'Let's enjoy our freedom'. The panel is, however, encircled by a snake, an acknowledgement of how short-lived that sense of freedom would be. Satrapi's abstention from verbal comment here increases the effect of both irony and pathos.

In the second volume, Satrapi conveys the realities of life under a fundamentalist regime which reduces women to the status of sexualized bodies that must be concealed, under threat of being insulted as a 'prostitute' and arrested: Marjane experiences the former and narrowly escapes the latter. Acts of collective resistance, such as the anti-veil demonstration that she attends with her mother, are severely repressed, and women are forced to rebel in more subtle and individual ways. Satrapi offers a lecture on the semiology of Islamic dress codes, according to which the visibility a few strands of hair can indicate opposition to the regime. In this context, the trying on of a westernized gender identity, as Marjane does when she models her stance on a poster of Kim Wilde smuggled in from Turkey by her parents, becomes a subversive act.

By now, Iran is at war with Iraq, a situation which creates an insatiable demand for 'martyrs', recruited from poor families through the token of the key to 'paradise'. A panel showing the

bodies of these young men, thrown into the air by exploding mines, is juxtaposed with a panel showing Marjane and her more privileged friends assuming similar postures as they dance, punk-style, preferring 'un look d'enfer' ('a hell of a cool look') to the promise of paradise. The war enables internal repression of dissidents to become still more severe, and Marjane's adolescent rebellion against her mother, which takes the form of smoking, is set against images of the mass execution of political opponents of the regime. However, when her teacher asserts that there are no political prisoners under the Islamic regime, Marjane does not hesitate to denounce this lie, to the applause of her fellow students, and it is her outspokenness which convinces her parents that they must send her abroad for her own safety.

The third volume depicts the four years that Satrapi spent in Vienna. The pain of separation from her country and her family is severe. Marjane finds herself an outsider, whose experience of war and political persecution is so far removed from that of her schoolmates, even those who call themselves 'anarchist revolutionaries', that she is either disbelieved or not listened to: her words become tiny in their speech balloon. The image of Iran diffused through western media is that of evil incarnate, and, at her school, Marjane finds herself denying that she is Iranian, before remembering that her grandmother had told her to be true to herself, and shouting to her detractors that she is proud to be Iranian, in letters which fill the frame.

She experiences her gradual accommodation with western cultural practices, in relation notably to sex and drugs, as a betrayal of her parents, but her disarray is temporarily assuaged by a relationship with a fellow pupil called Marcus. However, Marcus's mother shouts racist abuse at her, and her landlady calls her a prostitute. She breaks with Marcus when she finds him sleeping with another girl and leaves her lodgings when her landlady falsely accuses her of theft. Marjane spends the last four months of her stay in Vienna sleeping on park benches, scavenging in dustbins and getting thrown off the trams where she goes to get warm. She has become an abject body, an object of disgust to Austrian society, a fate metaphorically foreshadowed earlier by her mother's complaint that Iranians who passed through airports were now viewed with suspicion as terrorists, modern-day plague carriers. Marjane eventually passes out in the street and is taken to hospital, from where she makes arrangements to go back to Iran. In the final panel she gazes at her reflection in the mirror, having resumed her Islamic headscarf and chosen a curtailment of her autonomy as a female body over continued marginalization as a foreign body.

Throughout the portrayal of this period of abjection, the reader has curiously little impression of a breaking down of Satrapi's subjectivity except, perhaps, in one panel where the looping trajectory of the tram suggests disorientation. But even this, seen from above, is elegantly aestheticized. The retrospective narrative commentary and the wit and clarity of the drawings convey, in general, a sense of lucidity and control. The final volume of *Persepolis* recounts Marjane's decision to go to art school, after a period of depression and inertia, and it would seem that it is the ability to represent her experience which eventually gives Satrapi the liberation and emancipation to which she aspires, just as she herself discovers that the black humour which circulates in Teheran enables people to go on living in a city that has become a vast necropolis, with over half a million dead, and many more mutilated or mad.

Getting to art school is not easy, even if the gullible authorities are impressed by her transformation of Michelangelo's *Pietà* into an icon of Islamic martyrdom. The entry requirements also include an 'ideological test' on the history of Islam, and, once there, she is confronted with the absurdity of regulations which permit female students to draw from life only if the model is wrapped in shapeless garments. Solidarity amongst the students wins out, though, as male and female students together set up their own classes in someone's house, and their art teacher congratulates them, saying that a true artist must defy the law. After four years of study, Marjane gains the highest possible marks and goes on to gain admittance to an art school in Strasbourg, ready now to affront life abroad as an Iranian woman and an artist.

Six years later the first volume of *Persepolis* would be published, and the story of her life recounted with detachment and reflective hindsight. This is not to say that conscious control is relentless. Some experiences are unrepresentable: when her friend Néda is killed by an Iraqi bomb, Satrapi draws only a black square. But her stance is most often one of analytical distance. Thus she is able to show, for example, that her sexual infatuation for the man to whom she was married for three years during her time at art college was based on mutual illusion, as each sought in the other what they lacked. It is not the desire that Satrapi portrays, but the impossibility of its fulfilment.

It is as an artist, then, that Satrapi attains freedom. Her sense of self is not constructed in isolation from others: the oppression that she faces and resists afflicts her as a woman and as an Iranian. Neither is it in any sense disembodied: the hilarious sequence where she takes herself in hand after her depression, and epilates eyebrows, face and legs, testifies to the physical labour involved in constructing a new persona, the precondition for the ambition which induces her to apply for art school. But the careful rationality that she deploys in representing herself is a way of snatching back her own experience, and that of her family and friends, from definitions of 'woman' or 'Iranian' that would deny her subjectivity.

13.5 Conclusion

We have seen that these three artists are very different in the relations that their narrating selves entertain with their textual, drawn selves. For Satrapi, the separation of hindsight enables her to achieve the subjectivity as an artist that is vital in enabling her to construct a resistant female and Iranian identity, whereas, in *Ciboire de Criss!*, Doucet stages a kind of bodily theatre whose immediacy precludes any kind of reflexive self-consciousness, whilst challenging the boundaries within which the female body is normally contained. Menu's work shows the difficulties of preserving the disembodied abstraction of the traditional male subject, as control breaks down and is only tentatively regained. All three demonstrate the potential of the medium in the life writing/drawing project: Satrapi through the faux naïveté of her graphic line which is combined with the sophistication of her narrating voice, Doucet through her astonishing rendering of the fluidity of the female body in her fantasized scenarios, and Menu through his alternation of drawing styles between authoritative draftsmanship and panic-stricken scrawl.

Notes

1. Although written in 1827, this album was not published by Töpffer until 1837. The first of Töpffer's albums to be published was *Monsieur Jabot* in 1833.
2. After Forton's death in 1934, the series was taken over by various other artists including, as from 1948, René Pellos.
3. From this point the dates given for Hergé are those of the first appearance of the album.
4. The term 'ligne claire' was invented by the Dutch *bande dessinée* artist Joost Swarte on the occasion of an exhibition in Rotterdam 1977, for which he produced a catalogue entitled *De Klare Lijn*.
5. In the event, the Communist Party voted against it, because they failed to obtain the inclusion of clauses setting limits on imported material.
6. Sometimes known as the *École de Marcinelle*, after the suburb where Dupuis had its headquarters.
7. This term was also coined retrospectively by Joost Swarte in 1977. The word 'Atome' refers to the Brussels Atomium, erected in 1958 as a symbol of modernity and scientific progress.
8. 1946 is the date when *Blake and Mortimer* first appeared in *Tintin*, but subsequent dates given for Jacobs's work are those of album publication.
9. This was published in album format in two volumes in 1950 and 1953.
10. This series first appeared in *Le Trombone illustré* in 1977, a short-lived supplement to *Spirou*.
11. This is the date at which the series began regularly in *Spirou*. It had briefly appeared in the Catholic magazine *Petits Belges* between 1939 and 1940.
12. The review was named after the dog from *Pim Pam Poum*, the French translation of Dirks's series, *The Katzenjammer Kids*, which had first appeared in France in the 1930s.
13. See Chapter 8 for a discussion of *Superdupont* in relation to French national identity.
14. See Chapter 10 for a discussion of *Les Bidochon* in relation to social class and masculinity.
15. See Chapter 8 for a discussion of Tardi's work in relation to French national identity.
16. The *Éditions du Square* team first brought out the weekly magazine *Hebdo Hara-Kiri* alongside the monthly *Hara-Kiri* in 1969. After the ban, the same team brought out *Charlie Hebdo* the following week. This coexisted with the intermittently appearing *Hara-Kiri Mensuel* (1960–1987) and with the artistically ambitious *Charlie Mensuel*, founded in 1969.
17. This was a reference to a fire which had occurred in a dancehall shortly before, in which 146 young people had been killed, and which had been widely reported as a 'bal tragique'. Colombey-les-Deux-Églises was the home village of de Gaulle.

18. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of semiology and *bande dessinée*, and for elaboration of this distinction made by Fresnault-Deruelle.
19. Boltanski uses the term 'classes moyennes', of which the closest approximation in English is 'lower-middle-class'. He uses the term 'petit bourgeois', however, to refer to the *bande dessinée* characters such as Superdupont created by these 'lower middle-class' artists.
20. The highly lucrative *Tintin* albums were published by Casterman.
21. The magazine was called *Pilote et Charlie* from 1986 to 1988, but reverted to *Pilote* in 1989.
22. Where no end date is given for a series, this is because the series is open-ended. The 29th album of the series *Les Chemins de Malefosse* was published in 2006.
23. Balac is credited as scriptwriter for the first volume.
24. See Chapter 7 for a definition of postmodernism and a discussion of postmodernist *bande dessinée*.
25. See Chapter 10 for a discussion of *Les Bidochon* in relation to social class and masculinity.
26. See Chapter 10 for a discussion of Margerin's work in relation to social class and masculinity.
27. Thirty students embarked on this course in 1983. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s it would prove to be a breeding ground in which talent flourished, including many of the group who would form the alternative publisher *Ego comme X* in the 1990s.
28. The Bourdieusian term 'consecration', along with the adjective 'sacred', was extensively used in the press coverage of the unveiling of Lang's policy, and particularly in a *bande dessinée* supplement produced by *Le Monde* on 29 January 1983. See Massart 1984: 9–13 for a discussion of this point.
29. Milo Manara, an Italian *bande dessinée* artist, produces albums in which a realist drawing style is used to depict much female nudity with a suggestion of sado-masochism.
30. See in particular the articles by Jean Arrouye, Guy Gauthier and Roger Bozzetto.
31. See Chapter 11 for a discussion of psychoanalytic analyses of *Tintin*, including those of Peeters and Tisseron.
32. A comparison with literature did not in fact appear in the *Balises* series.
33. See Chapter 7 for a discussion of these terms and their application to *bande dessinée*.
34. *La Cage* remains the *locus classicus* of avant-garde *bande dessinée*. It consists of a series of images of a room, containing no characters, which undergoes a number of transformations, and contains visual puns, particularly around the themes of leaves and frames. It was the subject of several papers at the conference.
35. Peeters's paper appears not in *Bande dessinée, récit et modernité* but in *Les Cahiers de la bande dessinée*, vol. 81.
36. *C'était la guerre des tranchées* had appeared in an unfinished version in *(À suivre)* in 1982, although it was not published in album format until 1993.
37. See Chapter 7 for a discussion of Mathieu's work in relation to postmodernism.
38. See Chapter 9 for a discussion of Farid Boudjellal's work in relation to postcolonial identities.
39. The name was used on Tardi and Pennac's *La Débauche* and Ferrandez and Bernaquista's *La Boîte noire*, both published in 2000, where the front cover gives the publisher as 'Futuropolis Gallimard'.
40. This album offers a virtuoso demonstration of the formal resources of the medium and is, therefore, used as the major source of examples in Chapter 5.
41. The term 'independent' has been contested. As Jean-Christophe Menu points out, any publishing house, like Delcourt or Glénat, which is not owned by a conglomerate, could be called 'independent', and he prefers the term 'alternative' (Menu, 2005a: 11). Jean-Louis Gauthey of Cornélius says that the so-called 'independent' labels are in fact highly dependent on banks,

bookshops and distributors (Gauthey, 2005: 37). However, 'independent' has achieved wide currency in relation to the small-press publishing phenomenon of the 1990s.

42. Mokeït was part of the founding group but rapidly left.
43. The Supermarché Ferraille can be found in virtual form on the site http://supermarcheferraille.free.fr/home.htm.
44. The Fnac is a cultural supermarket which is responsible for the sales of around a quarter of mainstream *bande dessinée* albums (Delcourt 2000, 35).
45. See Chapter 13 for a discussion of Satrapi's work in relation to gender and autobiography.
46. See Chapter 11 for a discussion of Tisseron's psychoanalytically informed work on the medium.
47. The six volumes were published as a single volume in 2005.
48. This is the first volume of a projected five volumes.
49. *Slaloms* was originally published by L'Association in 1993 in black and white, then re-issued in a redrawn and coloured version by Dargaud.
50. There was an experiment with biannual publication in 2003 and 2004, and the journal did not appear in 2005. Since 2006 it has reverted to annual publication.
51. See Beaty 2007 for an extensive discussion of the question of position-taking by independent publishers.
52. See Chapter 7 for a discussion of modernism and postmodernism and their relation to high culture.
53. A press release was put out by ten independent *bande dessinée* publishers in 2005 protesting against the declaration of a 'Fête de la BD' by the mainstream publishers.
54. An image can, of course, be digitalized for electronic transmission, but this does not account for the way in which it signifies, or produces cultural meaning, which is what concerns us here.
55. Peirce does not use the term 'signified', but we will avoid his rather complex set of terms where this does not affect our argument. Peirce's writings on semiotics (the term that he adopted rather than 'semiology') are dispersed throughout his collected papers, and most easily accessible in glosses such as that offered by Ducrot and Todorov.
56. See Chapter 6, section 6.4.1 for further discussion of this term and of the question of narrative viewpoint in *bande dessinée*.
57. Baru's general reluctance to use visual elements which break the frame, suggesting élan, may be contrasted with his very frequent use of limbs which protrude into the frame from outside, and which accentuate the sense of a movement into the frame, suggesting an implosive tension as Karim and Alex are hunted.
58. See Chapter 12 for a discussion of this album.
59. The diegesis is the fictional world. See Chapter 6 for a fuller discussion of the relationship of the narration to the diegesis.
60. See Chapter 10 for a discussion of this series.
61. See Chapter 13 for a discussion of this album.
62. In their jointly-written book, Gaudreault and Jost prefer a term coined by Albert Laffay, the *grand imagier* ('great image-maker', by analogy with an eighteenth-century characterization of God as the 'great watchmaker') (Laffay 1964). Laffay's term has the advantage of emphasizing that narration is conceived above all as a process of articulating images, in the form of shots, but Gaudreault's term is perhaps more appropriate given that this overall narrating instance subsumes soundtrack as well as images.
63. Since different editions of this album number the pages differently, we refer to Juillard's own numbering, visible in small figures, which remains constant across editions.
64. The narrative significance of this coincidence was first pointed out to me by Teresa Bridgeman. See Bridgeman 2005.

65. Although much of the *bande dessinée* that we covered in the history section was Belgian, it is beyond the scope of this book to consider the way in which Belgian identity is expressed through *bande dessinée*, given the large amount of *bande dessinée* production in Flemish.
66. Part four, which deals with the expression of subjectivity in *bande dessinée*, is not restricted to French artists.
67. Rouvière's main thesis, which takes up the first part of his book, does not in fact relate to Frenchness. He claims that the series stages a confrontation between three political systems: democratic, absolutist and totalitarian, represented respectively by the Gaulish village, the Romans and the Barbarians (including the Goths and the pirates) (Rouvière 2006).
68. The merging of the character of Obélix with the star body of Gérard Depardieu in two films made in 1999 and 2002 reinforces many aspects of Frenchness already present in the series. Ginette Vincendeau describes Depardieu's persona as one of 'idealized French masculinity' and as evoking 'a popular longing for ancestral roots' through his screen roles and off-screen activities (Vincendeau 1996: 68).
69. We suggested in Chapter 8 that conviviality, especially in relation to the sharing of food, was represented in *Astérix* as a characteristic which defines an idealized Frenchness, but we also argued that this does not imply that readers identify with the proletariat. It seems based instead on a fantasy of association with peasant forebears and attachment to the *terroir*.
70. A dilemma *literally* enacted in *bande dessinée* form by Fred's Philémon.
71. Genette defines the epitext of a book as all those elements outside the book itself which contribute to its reception, such as interviews with the author and reviews (Genette 1987: 10–11).
72. See Gerbier & Ottaviani (2001) for a discussion of some of Trondheim's fictional series as a kind of autofiction.
73. Each section of the album is paginated separately. For ease of reference, we have numbered the sections according to which artist is responsible for them.
74. *Ciboire de Criss!* is made up of very short episodes, each individually paginated or in some cases unpaginated. It is therefore not helpful to give page references.
75. Rather like that inhabited by Forest's heroine, Barbarella, in 1962.
76. Like *Ciboire de Criss!*, *Livret de Phamille* is unpaginated.

Appendix

Prizes awarded at Angoulême

Grand Prix de la Ville d'Angoulême

1974 André Franquin
1975 Will Eisner
1976 Pellos
1977 Jijé
1978 Jean-Marc Reiser
1979 Marijac
1980 Fred
1981 Moebius / Jean Giraud
1982 Paul Gillon
1983 Jean-Claude Forest
1984 Jean-Claude Mézières
1985 Jacques Tardi
1986 Jacques Lob
1987 Enki Bilal
1988 Philippe Druillet
1989 René Pétillon
1990 Max Cabanes
1991 Gotlib
1992 Frank Margerin
1993 Gérard Lauzier
1994 Nikita Mandryka
1995 Philippe Vuillemin
1996 André Juillard
1997 Daniel Goossens
1998 François Boucq
1999 Robert Crumb
2000 Florence Cestac
2001 Martin Veyron

2002	François Schuiten
2003	Régis Loisel
2004	Zep
2005	Georges Wolinski
2006	Lewis Trondheim
2007	José Muñoz

Best album prize. (From 1981 to 1988 known as the 'Prix Alfred', between 1989 and 2003 known as the 'Prix Alph'art', thereafter known as the 'Alph-Art ')

1981	Carlos Gimenez shared with Comès	Paracuellos Silence
1982	Cosey	Kate (Jonathan vol. 7)
1983	José Antonio Muñoz and Carlos Sampayo	Alack Sinner: Flic ou privé
1984	Attilio Micheluzzi	Marcel Labrume: À la recherche des guerrres perdues
1985	François Schuiten and Benoît Peeters	Les Cités Obscures: La Fièvre d'Urbicande
1986	Jérôme Charyn and François Boucq	La Femme du magicien
1987	Jean-Pierre Autheman	Vic Valence: Une nuit chez Tennessee
1988	Laurence Harlé and Michel Blanc-Dumont	Jonathan Cartland: les Survivants de l'Ombre
1989	Frank Le Gall and Yann	Théodore Poussin: Marie-Vérité
1990	Jano	Gazoline et la planète rouge
1991	Baru, Jean-Marc Thévenet and Ledran	Le Chemin de l'Amérique
1992	Edmond Baudoin	Couma acò
1993	Edith and Yann	Basil et Victoria
1994	Fred	L'histoire du Corbac aux baskets
1995	André Juillard	Le Cahier bleu
1996	Baru	L'Autoroute du soleil
1997	Nicolas Dumontheuil	Qui a tué l'idiot?
1998	Nicolas de Crécy and Sylvain Chaumet	Léon la came: Laid, pauvre et malade
1999	Dupuy and Berberian	Monsieur Jean: Vivons heureux sans en avoir l'air
2000	Pascal Rabaté	Ibicus vol. 2
2001	René Pétillon	L'Enquête corse
2002	Christophe Blain	Isaac le Pirate (Les Amériques vol. 1)
2003	Chris Ware	Jimmy Corrigan (translated from the English)
2004	Manu Larcenet	Le Combat ordinaire vol. 1
2005	Marjane Satrapi	Poulet aux prunes
2006	Gipi	Notes pour une histoire de guerre (translated from the Italian)
2007	Shigeru Mizuki	NonNonBâ (translated from the Japanese)

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Albums

Dates given below are for the first appearance of a strip in album format, and so may differ from the date given in the text, if the reference was to publication of a strip in a magazine. In the case of strips from the nineteenth century or early part of the twentieth century, dates of later republication are also given. Some contemporary strips which have appeared only in magazine format are included. In the case of series, only the date of the first volume is given, unless the series consists of a finite number of volumes. If the reference in the text was to one (or more) particular volume(s) of a series, then the individual volume(s), rather than the series as a whole, is/are listed below. The intention of this section of the bibliography is to indicate where the strips and series mentioned in the text may be accessed in album format, although the date on any current edition of an album is likely to differ from the date of first publication, since it is common for *bande dessinée* albums to bear only the date of the most recent edition. It is beyond the scope of this book to offer extensive bibliographical data concerning dates of appearance of strips in magazine format. Many *bande dessinée* artists are known only by their surname or a pseudonym.

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Bande dessinée has variously been considered a danger to literacy and morals, and an art form worthy of prestigious national centres in France and Belgium. The first section of this book retraces the history of the medium, and sets it in the context of debates around cultural legitimization.

The second section focuses on *bande dessinée* as visual narrative art. How can its formal resources be analyzed? Can narrative theories be profitably applied to the medium? Why may *bande dessinée* be described as a postmodernist art form par excellence?

The third section takes a cultural studies approach. How does Astérix mythologize Frenchness? How have different artists figured historical memory and amnesia in relation to the Algerian war? And which artists offer textbook illustrations of the cultural practices that distinguish prolos, petit bourgeois, bobos and the new managerial bourgeoisie?

The final section looks at *bande dessinée* in relation to subjectivity and the body. What psychic dramas are enacted within the walls of Moulinsart? How does autobiographical work construct a textual self out of both images and words? And how have female artists defied dominant representations of the body?

READING BANDE DESSINÉE

Critical Approaches to French-language Comic Strip

Dr Ann Miller is a lecturer at the University of Leicester. She has published widely on *bande dessinée*, and has taken a particular interest in the work produced by independent publishing collectives since the 1990s.

'The work provides both a key analysis for scholars of the bande dessinée, *as well as a manual for a modern application of critical theory.'*

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