Introduction

Tradition and Innovation in Franco-Belgian *Bande dessinée*

Guest Editors: Fransiska Louwagie and Simon Lambert

This thematic issue arises from the symposium ‘Tradition and Innovation in Franco-Belgian *Bande dessinée*’, held at the University of Leicester on 13 March 2020. Over three panels with a respective focus on ‘Revisiting the Classics’, ‘Contemporary Perspectives’, and ‘Reshaping Franco-Belgian *Bande dessinée*’, the symposium brought out a variety of perspectives on contemporary *bande dessinée* and its links to the Franco-Belgian tradition. The symposium saw the participation of a range of international contributors, including early career scholars, faculty, and artist contributors, based in Greece, Switzerland, Portugal, Canada, Panama, Israel, and the UK. We would like to thank our speakers for their contributions as well as for their flexibility in revising travel arrangements and, in some cases, arranging online delivery at short notice, as the start of the COVID-19 pandemic was unfolding in their respective countries at the time of the event. Our particular thanks go to Laurence Grove from the University of Glasgow for his keynote intervention entitled ‘The Relevance of Tintin’, and to graphic novelist Michel Kichka, who gave a keynote talk about the Franco-Belgian influences in his own work as well as a public seminar on his graphic novel *Deuxième Génération*.¹ We are grateful to Wallonia-Brussels International (WBI), the Association for the Study of Modern and Contemporary France (ASMCF), the Society for French Studies (SFS), and

- 1 Laurence Grove’s keynote talk is available online in a later iteration presented at the University of Villanova (Laurence Grove, ‘Why Read Tintin?’, paper presented at the University of Villanova [4 February 2021], You Tube video, uploaded 4 March 2021, <https://youtu.be/ad4utqserLs>) and Michel Kichka’s remotely delivered conference keynote is also available as a recording, in French (Michel Kichka, ‘Spirou, Pilote et Mad: Trois mondes, trois cultures, trois influences’ [13 March 2020], You Tube video, uploaded 20 March 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqYMmUT8gbc>).

the School of Arts at the University of Leicester for their sponsorship of the keynote sessions, the conference participation of comics artist Ilan Manouach, and travel and registration bursaries for early career researchers. For this follow-up publication, we express our particular thanks to all contributors and peer-reviewers, to Wallonia-Brussels International for support to the translation, and to the editors of *European Comic Art*, for their kind and patient assistance.

Presentations and conversations at the symposium brought out a multitude of perspectives on how the current comics field engages with and innovates traditional Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée*. The papers covered a broad range of case studies and theoretical angles, examining lasting influences and counter-reactions in the field, recent expansions of canonical series, new evolutions within established genres, and contemporary digital and experimental productions. These discussions on the past, present, and future orientations of *bande dessinée* could not have been more timely, as they coincided with the ‘Année de la bande dessinée 2020’ or BD2020 in France, an initiative directed by the Centre national du livre (CNL) and the Cité internationale de la bande dessinée et de l’image (CIBDI), in collaboration with the French Ministry of Culture. With a prestigious public talk series at the Collège de France, opened by Benoît Peeters and attended by French and Belgian officials, BD2020 set a new milestone in the public consecration of the medium as a quintessential part of French-speaking cultures in particular.² In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its inevitable interference with the ambitious schedule of events, it was decided to extend the year-long programme by a further six months, under the adapted title BD20>21. At the very end of October 2020, however, the initiative underwent a different type of upheaval when some of its patrons (the so-called ‘marraines et parrains’ of BD2020) resigned over the closure of ‘non-essential’ bookshops in France during lockdown, particularly affecting independent bookstores. The resignation letter emphasised the French government’s seemingly contradictory support towards the sector, which was felt to turn the BD2020 initiative into an ‘empty masquerade’.³

2 For a recording of the inaugural conference, see Benoît Peeters, ‘Génie de la bande dessinée: De Töpffer à Emil Ferris’ (Paris, 7 October 2020), available on the Collège de France website, <https://www.college-de-france.fr/site/bd2020/Benoit-Peeters.htm>.

3 For a copy of the resignation letter, see Nicolas Gary, “‘Une mascarade vidée de son sens’: Les Auteurs démissionnent de l’Année BD 2020’ [‘A Masquerade Devoid of Sense’: Authors Resign from the Year of Comics 2020]”, *Actualitté* (31 October 2020), <https://actualitte.com/article/4836/vie-litteraire/une-mascarade-videe-de-son-sens-les>

Not only does this episode raise several questions about economic and cultural priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the discussions over ‘the year of the comic’ draw our attention once more to the at times ambiguous appreciation of the *neuvième art* in symbolic, aesthetic and financial terms, and to the intersections and tensions between these. Indeed, the cultural prestige and economic value of the sector have long been intertwined and despite its well-known internal divisions, the field has acquired a strategic flagship and ambassador role, supported on the one hand by high-profile projects and policy initiatives, and on the other hand by the medium’s ever-growing commercial expansion. In financial terms, Belgian sales figures for the French-speaking *bande dessinée* industry show a continuing growth in all areas of production (paper, digital, and export), with a particular increase in export, alongside a more stable paper home market. In the case of *bande dessinée*, digital publications have certainly not (yet) achieved the sales volume habitually reached by manga editions,⁴ though it remains worth noting that editorial revenue figures do not capture new independent types of online production and dissemination.⁵ On a policy level, designated support to the French-language Belgian sector is provided by Wallonia-Brussels International and is therefore largely ministry-led, as opposed to the French and Flemish use of more autonomous government institutions (CNL and Flanders Literature respectively). This dedicated WBI support includes prizes, bursaries, representation at national and international festivals and events, funding of educational events and international visits, support to cultural partnerships, and also the recent introduction of a ‘BD expérimentale’ representative within the Commission for Visual Arts under the French-speaking community regulations for cultural

-auteurs-demissionnent-de-l-annee-bd-2020. See also this follow-up interview with Benoît Peeters: ‘La BD toujours en mal de reconnaissance’ [Comics Still in Need of Recognition], *France Culture* (6 November 2020), <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/affaire-en-cours/affaires-en-cours-du-vendredi-06-novembre-2020>.

- 4 For sales figures on the year 2018, see ADEB, Statistiques de production du livre belge de langue française, Année 2018 (June 2019), https://adeb.be/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Dossier-stat-prod-2018_site.pdf; and for more recent evolutions, see data published by the Association des éditeurs belges: <https://www.lettresnumeriques.be/2020/12/04/les-chiffres-de-ledition-belge-francophone-en-2019-devoiles-par-ladeb/> (accessed 17 August 2021).
- 5 On this point, see the article contributed by Ilan Manouach and also Numa Vittoz’s presentation at the conference on the ‘Blog BD’ as digital genre in French-speaking comics.

governance.⁶ Whilst the active support for the sector moves beyond its popular success, public recognition still remains in part festival-based, and the development of the medium is not automatically reflected in wide-spread academic or critical esteem, an area that is developing slowly but surely, and where the English-language, more culturally-oriented interdisciplinary model of 'French Studies' may have allowed a more malleable approach.⁷

Such tensions between different types of production and recognition have long been constitutive of the field, and regular clashes in the public domain remind us of these essential ambiguities, not least through the case of the recent petitions and counter-petitions regarding a proposed Brussels-based 'Musée du Chat', featuring Philippe Geluck's iconic character. It gave proponents of high and low culture a new opportunity for debate, with Benoît Peeters placing the question of canonisation in a long-term perspective and arguing that history will decide the medium's legacy: 'Ne laissons personne se substituer à la postérité pour dire ce qu'elle retiendra ou non, car elle nous donnera toujours tort!' [Let no one speak for posterity to establish what will or will not be retained, as we are bound to be proven wrong!].⁸

This statement raises further interesting points about the memory, transmission, circulation, and value of *bande dessinée*, which will be addressed in this thematic issue through scholarly and artist or practitioner perspectives, building on the symposium. Sometimes considered as a medium that has 'no memory' of its own history⁹—a lack of self-awareness closely linked to the highly accelerated rhythm of publication and the commercial and industrialised drive of a popular medium largely aimed at consumption—contemporary *bande dessinée*

6 The *Décret de la nouvelle gouvernance culturelle* [Decree of New Cultural Governance] can be found at https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/46371_000.pdf (accessed 17 August 2021). Beyond the support dedicated to the field of *bande dessinée*, it may be worth noting the broader initiatives in the field of 'Lisez-vous le belge?' [Do You Read Belgian?], launched at the end of 2020, which aim at promoting awareness and translation of Francophone Belgian literature abroad. See Wallonie-Bruxelles Édition, 'Lisez-vous le belge?', *News* (18 November 2020), <https://www.wallonie-bruxelles-edition.org/en/article/-id59> (accessed 17 August 2021).

7 On this point, see the above-mentioned talk by Laurence Grove.

8 Benoît Peeters, 'Ne laissons personne se substituer à la postérité pour dire ce qu'elle retiendra ou non, car elle nous donnera toujours tort!', *Le Soir* (5 May 2021), <https://plus.lesoir.be/370404/article/2021-05-05/benoit-peeters-ne-laissons-personne-se-substituer-la-posterite-pour-dire-ce>.

9 Xavier Guibert, 'JC Menu' (interview with Jean-Christophe Menu), *Du9* (2009), <https://www.du9.org/entretien/jc-menu/> (accessed 17 August 2021). On this point, see also Groensteen quoted in Pellegrin in this issue.

has nevertheless shown an increasing engagement with (sometimes competing) legacies and notions such as *archive* and *patrimoine*.¹⁰ The status of *bande dessinée* today therefore raises numerous questions about the relevance of certain traditional models, such as the Tintin case with its problematic worldviews and heroic models, as discussed by Laurence Grove in his keynote paper, and related to these, the significant silences and underrepresentation of alternative and minority perspectives.¹¹ How does *bande dessinée* deal not only with this type of *archive*, but also with its legacy, sometimes perceived as inspirational and sometimes as problematic or even toxic? How have standardised formats been adapted or revalorised beyond their perceived or intrinsic lack of aesthetic value?¹² How does the handling of *bande dessinée* heritage intersect with the other ongoing polemical debates and continued entrenchments or repositionings within the field, and with concerns over the status of the *neuvième art* today, including its internal organisation, its relationships with the broader literature and art sector, and with its different intended—selective or mass—audiences? The conference papers and contributions in this issue have considered the exploration of traditional forms that take standard conventions to new horizons, analysing different examples of affective but also critical and sometimes radical engagement with the medium and its potential.

The first two contributions examine the expansion of the *Spirou* universe in contemporary creations, through a number of spin-off albums produced by various authors. Whilst *Spirou* has never been the creative child of a single author, the recent publications—with *Le Journal d'un ingénu* [Spirou: The Diary of a Naive Young Man] by Émile Bravo and *Le Groom vert-de-gris* [The Verdigris Bellhop] by Yann and Schwartz

10 See for instance idem and Maheen Ahmed and Benoît Crucifix, eds., *Comics Memory: Archives and Styles* (Cham: Palgrave, 2018).

11 For an accessible overview on the marginalisation of women in the representation and creation of *bande dessinée*, see Thierry Groensteen, 'Femme (1): La Représentation de la femme', *Neuvième Art* 2.0 (n.d.), <http://neuviemeart.citebd.org/spip.php?article677> (accessed 17 August 2021), and 'Femme (2): La Création au féminin', *Neuvième Art* 2.0 (February 2014), <http://neuviemeart.citebd.org/spip.php?article727> (accessed 17 August 2021). For comprehensive case studies on some of these questions, including from a broader Francophone point of view, see Catriona MacLeod's monograph, *Invisible Presence: The Representation of Women in French-Language Comics* (Bristol: Intellect, 2021).

12 See for instance the well-known rehabilitation of the *gaufrier* in Thierry Groensteen, *Système de la bande dessinée* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006), 113, or the creative revival of the much decried 48cc format as discussed in Jan Baetens, 'Marcel Proust en 48cc', *Marcel Proust Aujourd'hui* 9, no. 9 (2012), 173–183, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789401208765_011.

as best known examples¹³—open up a series of new adventures and reinterpretations which are different from the industrialised continuations of certain other series (with Studio Vandersteen as an example on the Flemish-speaking side for the adventures of *Suske en Wiske*, or *Bob et Bobette*) and also offer a strong contrast with the closed and heavily protected Tintin universe.¹⁴ The new publications and the interaction with the *Spirou* ‘archive’ have been the object of significant critical attention, including a recent edited collection.¹⁵ In this thematic issue, Annick Pellegrin and Cristina Álvares focus their attention on the historical and personal dimensions of these productions that sit outside the main series, considering their relationship to the original, but also their evolutions in terms of character, setting and the broader medium.

In her analysis, Annick Pellegrin offers rich insight into the various developments and uses of the *Spirou* universe and analyses how the recent albums fill gaps in the earlier timeline, particularly with regard to the Second World War. This specific focus is reminiscent of the collective ‘Vichy Syndrome’ identified by Henry Rousso, which manifests itself in the literary sphere through an incessant line-up of new publications.¹⁶ Pellegrin argues, however, that the interest of the new albums does not only lie in this focus on the historical context; she convincingly demonstrates that the ‘anchorings’ used within the recent adventures also involve a new engagement with the *Spirou* universe itself. The author concludes that there is a tension between a nostalgic revisiting of the series, associated with retro albums in general, and the potential for a more moral or critical stance on textual and contextual values, which may differ across publications.

Acting as a seamless counterpart to this analysis, the next article by Cristina Álvares focuses in particular on the portrayal of the hero Spirou in the new albums. Álvares outlines how recent creations personalise and individualise the main character Spirou, in a way that distinguishes him from the traditional unattached hero that we have become accustomed to in *bande dessinée* adventure series, not least in *Tintin*. As her analysis insightfully demonstrates, recent authors have

13 Émile Bravo, *Spirou: Le Journal d'un ingénu* (Marcinelle: Dupuis, 2008); Yann and Schwartz, *Le Groom vert-de-gris* (Marcinelle: Dupuis, 2009).

14 On the latter point, see Laurence Grove's above-mentioned keynote talk and online recording.

15 Gert Meesters, Frédéric Paques and David Vrydaghs, eds., *Les Métamorphoses de Spirou* (Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2019).

16 See Éric Conan and Henry Rousso, *Vichy: Un passé qui ne passe pas* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996 [first ed. 1994]), 35.

explored Spirou's personal background and given him a new domestic dimension, captured through the specific configurations of the founding and the bastard child. These new takes on the hero impact the storylines and by extension the genre itself: Álvares argues that the hero's adventures gradually gain a more intimate and domestic nature, and shows how this personal sphere is also closely linked to the new historical contexts portrayed.

By acknowledging and analysing variations across the different retro albums under consideration, these two articles raise interesting questions about the changing interactions between hero and author perspectives in contemporary *bande dessinée* and the ways in which these open up new meanings. The analyses demonstrate shifts in the character, genre, and settings of the series, which balance a sense of nostalgia with broader cultural and memory evolutions. To the extent that the albums may reflect and adopt previous and current values, or partially challenge and renew these, they remain interesting cultural barometers of their times.¹⁷

An interview with Michel Kichka based on his keynote intervention at the symposium offers a further return to the Golden Age of *bande dessinée*. Born in 1954 and raised in Wallonia in a family of Polish-Jewish origin, Kichka has grown up and come of age with the medium of *bande dessinée* in Belgium. Discussing major influences on his work, Kichka evokes *Spirou* and *Franquin* as the preferred readings of his childhood and his later love for *Pilote* and *Mad Magazine*. Having moved from Belgium to Israel as a young student, Kichka also discusses his ongoing links with the Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée* scene. He gives us a

17 The notion of 'barometer' is borrowed from Ann Miller's description of *Tintin* as a measure of ideological consensus over the twentieth century. See Ann Miller, *Reading Bande dessinée: Critical Approaches to French-language Comic Strip* (Bristol: Intellect, 2007), 18. The strong connections between contemporary *bande dessinée* and memory are visible in multiple recent comics productions, which often foreground individualised as opposed to national narratives. Related research projects include the SSHRC-funded 'Narrative Art and Visual Storytelling in Holocaust and Human Rights Education' research partnership, which was presented at the symposium by Dr Alexander Korb from the Stanley Burton Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Leicester. The presentation focussed in particular on the work of Barbara Yelin, a German artist best known for her graphic novel *Irmina* (Berlin: Reprodukt Verlag, 2014, with a preface by Alexander Korb), which portrays the story of Yelin's grandmother and her complicity with the Nazis. As part of the Narrative Art and Visual Storytelling in Holocaust and Human Rights Education project, Yelin works alongside Miriam Libicki and Gilad Seliktar on the portrayal of Holocaust survivor stories, forthcoming with New Jewish Press (University of Toronto Press) and C. H. Beck (for the project website, see <http://holocaustgraphicnovels.org/> [accessed 17 August 2021]).

unique insight into the early beginnings of his drawing career, and explains the personal nature of his graphic novels *Deuxième Génération* [Second Generation] and *Falafel sauce piquante* [Falafel with Spicy Sauce].¹⁸ Resonating with Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, but long delayed because of the personal and professional risks involved, the first album, published in black and white, goes back to Kichka's experience as a second-generation Holocaust survivor and works in particular through the relation with his father, Henri Kichka. The second book, published in colour, focuses on Kichka's complex love relationship with Israel and on questions of identity and artistic practice within the Israeli context, with its ideological challenges and divisions. In the vein of other autobiographical comics, these mediations of deeply personal experiences and views require the author to put himself directly on the line.¹⁹ As shown in the interview, the references and techniques offered by the Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée* tradition serve in this context as a crucial toolbox to capture personal and family relationships and to interrogate the author's Belgian, Jewish, and Israeli roots. The conversation also focuses on the author's practice as a political cartoonist and on the differences and touchpoints between his respective activities.

Nicolas Martinez's article considers the genre of the Western within the field of *bande dessinée*, which, despite its obvious American roots, was a particularly successful format in Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée* in the aftermath of World War II, and has regained considerable momentum in recent years.²⁰ Martinez examines in particular the intermedial nature of the genre, not only in light of its closeness to Western films, but with consideration given to the use of other visual sources, such

18 Michel Kichka, *Deuxième Génération: Ce que je n'ai pas dit à mon père* [Second Generation: The Things I Didn't Tell My Father] (Paris: Dargaud, 2012); Michel Kichka, *Falafel sauce piquante* [Falafel with Spicy Sauce] (Paris, Dargaud, 2018). As discussed in the interview, *Deuxième Génération* has also been adapted into an animated movie. Academic studies of the work include: Jürgen Kaumkötter, *Der Tod hat nicht das letzte Wort: Kunst in der Katastrophe 1933–1945* (Berlin: Verlag Galiani, 2015); Cynthia Laborde, 'Re/trouver sa place dans l'H/histoire: Perspectives postmémorielles dans *Deuxième Génération: Ce que je n'ai pas dit à mon père* de Michel Kichka', *French Forum* 44, no. 1 (2019), 119–131, <https://doi.org/10.1353/frf.2019.0008>; Assaf Gamzou, 'Third-Generation Graphic Syndrome: New Directions in Comics and Holocaust Memory in the Age after Testimony', *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 33, no. 3 (2019), 224–237, <https://doi.org/10.1080/25785648.2019.1631574>; Fransiska Louwagie, 'Michel Kichka: *Deuxième Génération*', in *Témoignage et littérature d'après Auschwitz* (Amsterdam/New York: Brill/Rodopi, 2020), 313–332.

19 Jean-Christophe Menu and Fabrice Neaud, 'Autobiography: An Autopsy', *European Comic Art* 14, no. 1, (2021), 41–68, <https://doi.org/10.3167/eca.2021.140104>.

20 See amongst others the thematic issue 'Pourquoi le Western est indémodable', *Cahiers de la Bande Dessinée* 10 (2020).

as historical photographs and painting. By analysing the ways in which visual documentary evidence is used by comics artists in their albums—with specific attention to the case studies of Morris's *Lucky Luke* and Lambil and Cauvin's *Les Tuniques bleues*—Martinez sheds new light on the tensions between realism and fantasy within the genre. Moving the focus beyond the analysis of Western stereotypes, his study shows how the use of intertextual and intermedial references in comics opens up space for historical revisions and moves the narratives beyond set horizons of expectations. Moreover, in his discussion of visual sources, Martinez highlights in particular the frequently overlooked importance of Native American ledger art for comics. In this manner, the article highlights further questions about the place of history and memory in *bande dessinée*, and reconsiders shifts and tensions within the Western comics genre; the analysis equally scrutinises the focus of existing *bande dessinée* scholarship and its possible reductionist views on the primary corpus, its sources, and the realities it represents.

The final article, by Ilan Manouach, outlines the programme of a conceptual *bande dessinée* from a combined academic and artistic perspective. Brussels-based and of Greek-Belgian origin (with again a Jewish background), Manouach is well renowned within the field of experimental *bande dessinée*.²¹ His work tends to draw attention to material production processes in comics, highlighting the industrialised nature of the medium and its essential but often overlooked role in meaning-making. By undertaking various material alterations of existing works and formats, Manouach's comics uncover hidden meanings and ideologies, and his publications have played a provocative role in challenging dominant positions in the field. In his 'pirated' edition of *Maus*, significantly titled *Katz*, Manouach endeavoured to question the ideological configuration of Spiegelman's original by erasing the differences in animal status and changing all characters to cats.²² After his publishing house, Brussels-based La 5^e Couche, settled to destroy the work to avoid a lawsuit by Spiegelman's French publisher Flammarion, Manouach followed up with the publication of *Metakatz*, a reference to Spiegelman's own *Metamaus*.²³ His work *Blanco* offers us

21 See also the plans for a forthcoming critical reader on Manouach's work, edited by Pedro Moura: <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2020/09/18/cfp-the-ilan-manouach-critical-reader/> (accessed 17 August 2021).

22 Art Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History* (New York: Pantheon, 1986); Ilan Manouach, *Katz* (Brussels: La 5e Couche, 2011).

23 Art Spiegelman, *Metamaus: A Look into a Modern Classic* (New York: Pantheon, 2011); Xavier Löwenthal and Ilan Manouach, eds., *MetaKatz* (Brussels: La 5e Couche, 2013).

a material incarnation of the forty-eight-page standard *bande dessinée* format, but with the content (and colours) erased: following on from Jean-Christophe Menu's *Plates-bandes*, it aims to raise awareness of the industrialised product that is a comic book.²⁴ The work Manouach presented at the symposium in Leicester, his *Abrégé de la bande dessinée franco-belge* [Compendium of Franco-Belgian Comics],²⁵ is based on a collection of second-hand 48ccs that have been re-configured in a new album, drawing attention to recurrent motives in traditional *bande dessinée*, not least its propensity to violence and negative stereotypes or prejudices.²⁶ An equally critical approach towards the *bande dessinée* canon or *archive* is also present in *Noirs*, an adaption of Peyo's *Les Schtroumpfs noirs*, which is the subject of Manouach's article in this issue.²⁷ In this production, Manouach opts for a monochromatic blue rendition of Peyo's work, which again erases the distinctions between characters and thereby challenges the uncomfortable connotations of skin colour in Peyo's work. Rather than a discussion of content or narrative, and moving beyond the constraint-based approaches of OuBaPo, Manouach's proposed conceptual vision of *bande dessinée* advocates a critical reflection on the industry's production processes and their signifying potential.²⁸ By shifting the focus from hero- or author-based perspectives and histories of *bande dessinée* to much more industrialised and uncreative processes, he proposes to build 'alternative histories' of the medium that critically question the hidden toxic potential of *bande dessinée*.²⁹ As Manouach explains, this conceptual approach to *bande dessinée* is closely linked to internet-based communities, which bypass the traditional institutions and their divisions to take responsibility for all elements of *bande dessinée* production. These new communities

24 Jean-Christophe Menu, *Plates-bandes*, (Paris: L'Association, 2005); Ilan Manouach, *Blanco* (Brussels: La 5e Couche, 2018).

25 Ilan Manouach, *Abrégé de bande dessinée franco-belge* (Brussels, La 5e Couche, 2018).

26 On this work, see Ilan Manouach, 'Comic books as Ontographs: The Composition Process of *Abrégé de bande dessinée franco-belge*', *Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios en Diseño y Comunicación* 125 (2021), 63–77.

27 Ilan Manouach, *Noirs* (Brussels: La 5e Couche, 2015); Peyo and Yvan Delporte, *Les Schtroumpfs noirs* in *Spirou Magazine*, no. 1107 (1963).

28 For an overview of some of these works, see Benoît Crucifix, 'A Chamber of Echo: On the Post-Comics of Ilan Manouach', in Sébastien Conard, ed., *Post-Comics: Beyond Comics, Illustration and the Graphic Novel*, (Ghent: Het Balanseer, 2020), 77–86. See also the artist's website, <https://ilanmanouach.com/> (accessed 17 August 2021).

29 On Manouach's negativistic vision, see Pedro Moura, 'Talking with Benoît Crucifix about Ilan Manouach', *Yellow Fast and Crumble* (2020), <https://yellowfastcrumble.wordpress.com/2020/05/02/talking-with-benoit-crucifix-about-ilan-manouach/> (accessed 17 August 2021).

also open up the medium to different types of networks, with a more diverse body of participants than the traditional field of *bande dessinée* and a different ability to deal with repressed histories. The conceptual approach finally seeks to redefine scholarship as it shifts the focus away from content, form, authors, and institutional affiliations to confirm the importance of distribution and material premises in the field.

As the articles in this volume show, the emphasis on the familiar in traditional *bande dessinée* extends into different unfamiliar realms.³⁰ In this sense, the canon and archive of *bande dessinée*, its history and memory, are central ‘*points de départ*’ or starting points for today’s *bande dessinée* production, as possible ‘anchorings’ but potentially also elements from which to take leave.³¹ As a complex point of reference, the *bande dessinée* tradition offers a strong mediating potential: as is wont in intertextual practices, it may act as an interpretative tool, enabling authors to shape or grasp experiences, identities, and memories, as in Kichka’s case; as a critical counterexample, as in some uses of *Tintin* analysed in Laurence Grove’s keynote lecture; as a nostalgic homage, observed for instance in relation to some of the *Spirou* retro albums; and as a medium that opens up to different intermedial and conceptual perspectives, questioning definitions, practices, and scholarship. As these different modalities interact, overlap or complement each other, they show once more that the field of *bande dessinée* does not evolve as a linear process, nor does it manifest clear-cut dichotomies, but instead offers a multi-layered picture composed of different forms of appropriation, rejection, attraction and innovation with regard to its own and other memories and practices, across and beyond institutions.

30 On Ilan Manouach, see Bill Kartapoulos, ‘Ilan Manouach: Defamiliarizing Comics’, *World Literature Today* 90, no. 2 (2016), 44–47, <https://doi.org/10.7588/worlittetoda.90.2.0044>.

31 See the use of the notions of ‘point de départ’ and ‘ancrage’ in George Perec, *W ou le souvenir d’enfance* (Paris: Denoël, 1975), as analysed also in Fransiska Louwagie, *Témoignage et littérature d’après Auschwitz*, 217–223.

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