STUDIES IN EUROPEAN COMICS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS

# Postcolonialism and Migration in French Comics

*Mark McKinney*

LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

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ePDF published in 2025 by Leuven University Press / Universitaire Pers Leuven / Presses Universitaires de Louvain. Minderbroedersstraat 4, B-3000 Leuven (Belgium).

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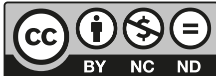


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ISBN 978 94 6270 241 7
e-ISBN 978 94 6166 733 5
D/2022/1869/68
https://doi.org/10.11116/9789461667335
NUR: 617

Layout: Frederik Danko
Cover design: Johan Van Looveren
Cover illustration: Mechkour, Larbi (art) and Farid Boudjellal (script) (2004) "Marche ou crève," in *Black Blanc Beur: Les folles années de l'intégration*, Cachan: Tartamudo, p. 34.

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*A Valérie et à Louise, pour toujours.*

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# Acknowledgments

The beginnings of this book lie in time that I spent in Paris over thirty years ago, when I first discovered comics by Farid Boudjellal, José Jover and Roland Monpierre. What was originally planned as one book has become three: *The Colonial Heritage of French Comics* (2011), *Redrawing French Empire in Comics* (2013) and the present volume. The debts that I have incurred over the years in writing the volumes are deep, many and diverse. Here, I can only begin to acknowledge what I owe. The rest of the volume will say more about my intellectual debts.

Although I began researching and writing about Boudjellal's comics while still in graduate school, I have written these three books at Miami University. I am deeply grateful to my colleagues for the intellectual, collegial and monetary support they generously gave me throughout the process. Mitchell Greenberg at the beginning, and then Jonathan Strauss led the department during my time working on the books, and enabled their progress in countless ways. Students in courses that I taught at Cornell University and Miami University provided a welcoming forum for working through ideas presented here. A significant portion of my library research in Paris and Angoulême was funded through the L. P. Irvin Fund of the Department of French and Italian at the university (now the Department of French, Italian and Classical Studies) and by other university funding, including a Hampton Grant. Three Administrative Assistants expertly provided necessary assistance with many aspects of my grants, teaching, conference attendance and conference organizing related to this project: Marcia Simmons, Juanita Schrodt and Nicolette Utsinger. The librarians at Miami University were instrumental in helping me obtain books and articles related to my research.

My friends and fellow comics scholars Hugo Frey and Fabrice Leroy heard early versions of several parts of this volume at more conferences than I can remember. Another friend, Livio Belloï, was also there as often as he could make the trans-Atlantic trip. Together they have deepened my knowledge of the comics form tremendously and have provided me with stimulating models of rigorous research on comics and intellectual engagement with them. Their strong friendship encouraged me throughout the research and writing of these volumes, and helped me reach the long awaited point of conclusion to this project.

I am most grateful to Alec G. Hargreaves and Ann Miller for their careful reading of the manuscript of this book. Their thoughtful comments enriched this volume immeasurably. Whatever the value of the finished study, it is far better thanks to their brilliant insights, meticulous comments and careful reading. They too have been friends and models of scholarship to me for many years. My debt to both of them is vast. My first essay wholly dedicated to the topic of this book appeared in the volume that Alec G. Hargreaves and I edited on *Post-Colonial Cultures in France*. It is thanks to his excellent suggestions and warm encouragement that this project began to take shape.

Through their hard work at organizing conferences and lectures where I presented material here, many other colleagues helped make my work on this possible. There are too many to list here, unfortunately, but colleagues who organized three groups of conferences were especially instrumental: International Comic Arts Forum (ICAF), International *Bande Dessinée* Society (IBDS), and 20th/21st-century French and Francophone Studies. Hugo Frey, Laurence Grove, Dominique Leduc, Wendy Michallat and Matthew Screech all organized IBDS conferences at which I presented material on (post)colonialism and migration in French comics. Many colleagues at those and other conferences provided useful feedback on my research. I am grateful to the comics scholars and the cartoonists (Zeina Abirached, Clément Baloup and Baru) who participated in two conferences that I organized at Miami University, in 2004 and 2012. Chapter 9 in this volume was originally part of a lecture that Laurence Bertrand-Dorléac kindly invited me to give in her art history seminar on "Objects" at the Institut d'études politiques de Paris (Sciences Po).

Portions of a few chapters were previously published in the following journals, for which I gratefully acknowledge permission to reproduce them here: Louisa Zanoun and *Migrance*; Roger Célestin, Eliane DalMolin and Alec G. Hargreaves and *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies: Sites*; and John Lent and the *International Journal of Comic Art*.

The staff of Leuven University Press have been extremely generous and patient over the years it has taken me to complete this project. Mirjam Truwant has been very supportive throughout the entire review and production process. I am also grateful to Hugo Frey as Editor in Chief of this book series, and to the editorial committee for their strong backing of my project.

My research has been guided at many points over three decades by cartoonists I have been fortunate enough to meet. Several of them have generously devoted long hours to educating me about their own work and much more in the field of French-language comics. The following artists all very kindly met with me to discuss topics related to this volume in one way or another: Zeina Abirached, Yvan Alagbé, Clément Baloup, Baru, Nadjib Berber, Farid Boudjellal, Olivier Bramanti, Pierre Christin, Jacques Ferrandez, Frank Giroud, Annie Goetzinger, José Jover, Kamel Khélif, Lax, Leïla Leïz, Xavier Löwenthal, Luz, Larbi Mechkour, Amine Medjdoub, Roland Monpierre,

Séra, Slim and Jean-Philippe Stassen. Some of them have repeatedly taken time out of their busy schedules to do so at length over the years: Abirached, Baru, Boudjellal, Giroud, Jover, Séra and Slim. My knowledge of comics has improved greatly thanks to all of them. Many of the artists have also kindly given me samples of their published work, sometimes unavailable otherwise. Boudjellal and Jover reached deep into their personal archives to kindly donate a treasure trove of printed material that they created or published, which has been vital to my ability to tell the story of their pathbreaking comics. I am also deeply grateful to Boudjellal for his help with the cover illustration, and to Jover for his wise advice as I chose it. Many thanks to Boudjellal and Mechkour for permission to reproduce the image that appears on the cover. It is from "Marche ou crève," drawn by Mechkour and originally published in their *Les Beurs* (L'Echo des Savanes/Albin Michel, 1985) and republished in *Black Blanc Beur: Les folles années de l'intégration* (Tartamudo, 2004: 34–5).

Research at libraries in Belgium and France was also vital to my completion of this volume: the Bibliothèque nationale française (BNF) in Paris, the Centre Belge de la Bande Dessinée (CBBD) in Brussels, and the Cité internationale de la bande dessinée et de l'image (Cité de la BD) in Angoulême. I am especially grateful to the staff at the latter two institutions for their generous and expert assistance with research materials. Catherine Ferreyrolle, Jean-Pierre Mercier and Catherine Ternaux at the Angoulême center were most helpful.

I am very thankful to the artists, publishers and others who generously gave permission to reproduce the illustrations in this volume. In several cases, cartoonists gave permission: Zeina Abirached, Yvan Alagbé, Edmond Baudoin, Yasmine Bouagga, Farid Boudjellal, Jean-Christophe Chauzy, José Jover, Larbi Mechkour, Roland Monpierre, Chantal Montellier and Slimane Zeghidour. For their kind authorizations, I also thank Laurence Bourgeon at Cambourakis, Christel Masson at Casterman, Frédéric Schwamberger at Futuropolis, Isabelle Giraud for the images by Mœbius, and José Jover at Tartamudo. I thank Todd Shepard for having put me in contact with Slimane Zeghidour.

Many friends generously gave vital help at critical points. Sylvie Durmelat and Derek Letourneau graciously hosted me during several ICAF conferences, and Sylvie encouraged my research through kind invitations to speak with her students and colleagues. Annie Rochard kindly provided a lovely and welcoming base camp from which to foray out to interview cartoonists around France in 1996. The McKinney family in the United States and the Dhalenne family in France have been unflagging supporters of my research on comics in innumerable and essential ways for decades. Eric gave me expert and timely technical assistance in preparing the illustrations that appear this volume. I thank all of you for your wonderful support.

Valérie has believed in this project from beginning to end, and has made it all possible. It was always a part of Louise's life, in one way or another. Je vous remercie infiniment toutes les deux.

# Note on translations and terminology

## Translations

All translations from the French throughout the volume are mine unless otherwise indicated.

## Terms associated with (post)colonialism or migration

A few designations of (post)colonial ethnic groups or professional categories that I shall use later are glossed here:

***Banlieue:*** *une banlieue* is literally a suburb, that is, a built up area outside the confines of a city proper. However, in French the term is often used, sometimes with qualification, to designate a working-class outer-city. The latter usage and related connotations recur in many of the comics studied here.

***Beur*:** a term often used, especially in 1980s France, to refer to young French of Arab ethnicity or of North African Arab or Berber heritage. It is probably derived from backslang for "Arab" in French (*Arabe*), though not all those it was used to designate were Arab.

***faits divers:*** literally "diverse facts," this French journalistic category encompasses news items falling outside other categories (e.g., politics, economy). It has no exact equivalent in English, but "miscellaneous news items," including both crime stories and human interest stories, would come close.

**FLN:** Front de Libération Nationale (National Liberation Front), the dominant Algerian nationalist organization fighting the French during the Algerian War (1954–62).

***Harkis:*** Algerians recruited to serve in the French army during the Algerian War. A *harka* was a military or police unit of *harkis*.

***métis, métisse***: an ethnically mixed person, say of mixed French and African parentage.

***métissage***: mixing, usually cultural or ethnic.

**OAS:** Organisation armée secrète [Secret Armed Organization, or Secret Army Organization]: a European terrorist group that fought to keep Algeria French.

***Pieds-Noirs***: (also called *rapatriés*) French colonial settlers in North Africa, especially Algeria.

***Sans-papiers:*** undocumented foreign migrants.

***Tirailleurs sénégalais**:* Black colonial riflemen putatively from Senegal who served in the French colonial army.

## Comics terminology

**comic strip:** a single line of sequential comics panels. *Bande dessinée* usually refers to comics in general, or to a specific comic (*une bande dessinée*). In French, the English term "(comic) strip" is often used to describe a "comic strip."
**embedded or incrusted panel or image (*une case incrustée*)**: a panel layered on top of another, larger one.
**ocularization (*une ocularisation*):** an image conveying the visual point of view of a character, as though the reader were in the position of that character.
**plate (*une planche*):** a drawn comics page.
**recitative (*un récitatif*):** text enunciated by a narrator and usually placed in a rectangular blank space at the top of a comics panel.
**speech balloon (*une bulle*):** a round or oblong blank space containing a character's speech or other verbal expression.

# Chapter 1
# Introduction: three postcolonial turning points in French comics

## Introduction: a gunshot in a cathedral, a museum renamed, and a comics exhibition

On 21 May 2013 at around four in the afternoon, far-right activist, author and publisher Dominique Venner walked into the Notre-Dame-de-Paris cathedral, laid a letter on the altar, drew a one-shot pistol and killed himself, apparently to protest both a new law giving gays and lesbians the right to marry in France, and forty years of "Afro-Maghrebi immigration," which could lead to a "France fallen under the power of the Islamists," according to Venner's last blog post (2013). Some months prior to that, on 10 March 2012, the celebrated French cartoonist Jean Giraud died of complications from lymphoma. The following October, the administration of the French national comics center voted to rename its historical museum building – designed by architect Roland Castro as one of President François Mitterrand's monumental building projects – "Vaisseau Mœbius" [Mœbius Vessel], in honor of Giraud, who published science fiction comics under that pseudonym. The new name alludes to space travel as a theme in the artist's work. On 16 October 2013, the French national Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration [Museum of the History of Immigration] in Paris opened an exhibition titled "Albums: Bande dessinée et immigration, 1913–2013" [Albums: Comics and Immigration, 1913–2013] and published an exhibition catalogue (Marie and Ollivier 2013) featuring comics by 117 artists, including many whose work I study in this volume. Among them were a French cartoonist trio once known as Anita Comix: Farid Boudjellal, of Algerian and Armenian heritage, José Jover, who immigrated from Spain as a child, and Roland Monpierre, a Black artist of French Caribbean descent, from Guadeloupe. What unites these disparate events is that all involve key contributors to the representation of postcolonial migration to France in comics published since 1962, when Algeria, France's last major colony, gained formal independence after a horrific war that had lasted about eight years (1954–62). In fact, across three decades, these five people helped set the stage

for what has now become a flourishing subject in hundreds of French-language comics: Venner in the 1960s, Mœbius in the 1970s, and the three cartoonists of Anita Comix in the 1980s. Their contributions to the representation of postcolonialism in those decades were each related to a key historical event, or series of events, that had significant implications for postcolonial ethnic minority and recent immigrant groups in France and signaled a turning point in the history of (post)colonial ethnic minorities in comics.

Venner's intervention as a far-right ideologue, publisher and editor of comics and cartoons is rooted in the end of the Algerian War, which radically transformed the situation of Algerians in France, and more generally in the end of formal French empire and its sequels. Mœbius's contribution to the representation of postcolonial ethnic minorities in comics took place against the backdrop of a rash of physical attacks against North African immigrant workers in France.[1] In the early 1980s, Anita Comix and associated cartoonists made comics and cartoons about and for national civil rights actions by youths from postcolonial ethnic minorities, and their allies. Moving from events to places, we can locate some *lieux de mémoire*, or places of memory, of (post)colonial French comics. This dramatically shifts the meaning of the term, given the fact that historian Pierre Nora almost completely excluded the investigation of two sets of sites from the celebrated multi-volume collaborative study of *lieux de mémoire* (1984–92) that he edited, as has often been noted, despite their major symbolic importance for the shape of modern French society: sites of memory connected to immigration, and (post)colonial ones. Those exclusions are symptomatic of larger stakes and of forces at work in French society.[2] The stories of many French comics about racism, postcolonialism and immigration are often located in anonymous, working-class *banlieues* and other marginalized spaces in French (sub)urban cityscapes, or, alternatively, in what anthropologist Marc Augé (1992) has described as *non-lieux*, or non-places.[3] For example, Mœbius set his 1974 comic discussed below, in an anonymous *banlieue*. However, if one wished to pick famous named Parisian sites for situating the colonial origins of postcolonial French comics, they could include the Santé prison in Paris, although it is not usually associated with comics.

Venner and cartoonist Jacques de Larocque-Latour, who published under the pen name Coral, spent about a year together as prisoners, in 1961–2, in *la Santé*. Venner was imprisoned there for his support of the French generals' putsch against President Charles de Gaulle.[4] Coral was sentenced to one year in prison as part of a group accused of plotting against the French government (the "complot de Paris" [Paris plot]) in 1961, for the OAS.[5] Despite Coral's importance for one strand of postcolonial comics in France, he is little remembered today beyond a few on the far right,[6] and some historians and journalists familiar with the history of the Algerian War and the French far right.[7] Coral claimed to have drawn *Journal d'un embastillé* [Journal of a Prisoner of the Bastille] (1962), probably the first comic book openly about the Algerian War, while imprisoned in *la Santé*. Although never well known, that autobiographical book and a companion

volume published two years later mark the end of one era and the beginning of another one in French comics, with respect to colonial and postcolonial themes. Elsewhere, I have argued that *Journal d'un embastillé* was a founding text in a now substantial and expanding body of comics about the Algerian War.[8] Coral's two books are also significant early examples of autobiographical comics in twentieth-century France, and of comics meant for adults, not children, both of which are now, once again, important trends in French comics.[9] His comic-strip narratives and cartoons are part of a far-right tradition of racist, xenophobic cartooning that extends back in time at least to *Carnet de chèques* [Checkbook] (1893) by Caran d'Ache (Emmanuel Poirier), and to his cartoons about the Dreyfus Affair,[10] and forward to the present, for example in the publications of Chard (Françoise Pichard), who gained worldwide notoriety when one of her drawings won a prize in a competition of antisemitic cartoons in Iran in 2006.[11] Didier Lefort (1991), a comics specialist and far-right ideologue, traced much of that genealogy in his study *Les bandes dessinées et dessins de presse de l'extrême droite, 1945–90* [Comics and Press Cartoons of the Far Right, 1945–90].

After his release from *la Santé*, Coral published *Journal d'un embastillé* with Editions Saint-Just, founded by Venner, and his anti-immigrant drawings of Blacks and North Africans in the far-right, white-supremacist periodical *Europe Action*, which both Coral and Venner directed.[12] A more-or-less direct line connects Coral's xenophobic, racist comics and cartoons of 1962–4 with both Venner's rejection in 2013 of "Afro-Maghrebi immigration," and the far-right cartoons and comics violently against postcolonial ethnic minorities that Chard, Konk (Laurent Fabre), David Miège and others have published in far-right venues during the intervening decades (see below, Chapters 6 and 7).

In *Le transfert d'une mémoire: De l'"Algérie française" au racisme anti-arabe* [The Transfer of a Memory: From "French Algeria" to Anti-Arab Racism], Benjamin Stora (1999) analyzes the transfer of colonial memory and the heritage of colonial racism and pro-colonial activism by the French far right from war-torn colonial Algeria to postcolonial, mainland France.[13] Neither Venner nor Coral features in Stora's study, but they played a role in that transfer, including in comics and cartoons.[14] Visual attacks on postcolonial and immigrant minorities, and implicit or even explicit incitement to violence against them, have proliferated in post-1962 far-right comics and cartoons in France. Physical attacks against those minorities by far-right extremists have also occurred. However, this neocolonial current of virtual and physical violence has not gone uncontested in comics. Mœbius was one of the first cartoonists to depict critically the lynching of a North African by French far-right racists, in "Cauchemar blanc" [White nightmare] (1989), a twelve-page comic set in a French *banlieue* and first published in 1974 in *L'écho des savanes*. The title of the comics magazine, "The Echo of the Savannahs," suggests a postcolonial reevaluation of the colonial heritage of French comics that was beginning in alternative and mainstream comics around then. "Cauchemar blanc" helped inaugurate a tradition of antiracist, postcolonial comics in France.

The Musée permanent des colonies [Permanent Museum of the Colonies] and the adjoining Bois de Vincennes [Vincennes Woods], in eastern Paris, together constitute another *lieu de mémoire* for situating the colonial origins of postcolonial French comics (Crowley 2020). The Musée National de l'Histoire de l'Immigration is housed in the Palais de la Porte dorée, located near the historical site of one of Paris's city gates. The Palais was originally built to hold the Musée permanent des colonies, inaugurated for the 1931 Exposition coloniale internationale, which was held mainly in the Vincennes park. Comics about colonial exhibitions and human zoos were among the first to represent the colonized in mainland France, often in Paris, the heart of colonial empire, and not just in far-off, exoticized colonies.[15] No one then anticipated, yet it is somehow appropriate, that comics by French artists originating from former colonies, works whose subject has often been postcolonial ethnic minorities living in France, would later feature in an exhibition at the former Palais de la Porte dorée. That said, it should be noted that the "Albums" exhibition, held in the building of the former French colonial museum, focused on immigration as a theme in comics *worldwide*, thereby diluting the specifically (post)colonial character of much modern immigration to France, and the long history of both immigration and (post)colonial figures in French comics.

The violent combat of Coral, Venner and their political kin against postcolonial ethnic minorities since 1962 has constituted a rear-guard attempt to reassert what I have called a colonial *affrontier* – a metaphor for a political, social and cultural frontier, and even a physical one, between colonizer and colonized[16] – in order to separate formerly colonized groups from those who see themselves as Franco-French, as the true French, and to delineate between former French colonies and "True France" (Lebovics 1992). In fact, far-right activitists have long desired to expel (post)colonial and immigrant minorities from France, to counter what some French far-right ideologues now call *le grand remplacement* [the great replacement], a notorious racist conspiracy theory that whites are being replaced by people of color in France and beyond.[17] It is closely connected to the idea of reverse colonization, of France being colonized today by people from former French colonies (Stora 1999: 88–9). Such efforts in far-right publications beginning in the 1960s were symbolically countered by Mœbius and other left-leaning cartoonists beginning in the mid-1970s, then Anita Comix in the 1980s, and many other cartoonists since then. In this chapter I refer to the comics of Coral, Mœbius and Anita Comix, and their historical contexts, to frame my subsequent investigation into migration, racism and postcolonialism in comics in France from 1962 to the present. In following chapters, I fill in the picture by discussing other important comics in this fascinating and fast changing field.

## The empire draws back

In *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Hellen Tiffin (1989) famously analyze how "the Empire writes back to the Centre," a phrase from Salman Rushdie that they quote as their epigraph and in their title. They focus on publications in English by authors from former British colonies. One can take another approach to postcolonialism by analyzing writing by authors from a former colonial power about ex-colonies, as Jean-Marc Moura (1999) did for French literature. Yet a third angle involves studying the literature of postcolonial ethnic minority writers living in a former colonial metropolis, as Alec G. Hargreaves (1997) did for authors of Arab and Berber heritage in France and Belgium. Here I analyze comics articulating various perspectives on postcolonialism in France. They have been published by French and foreign artists from a broad array of ethnic backgrounds, including majority and postcolonial minority ones. The comics studied embody a large range of artistic approaches, from avant-gardist to popular, and realistic to highly caricatural styles. They contain examples from a wide swath of genres, including historical and detective fiction, humorous and joke-based work, melodrama and tragedy. The comics vary in length from three- or four-panel strips to long-form graphic novels. Some of the comics have been published by small alternative presses, and others by large mainstream ones. Most of the authors are men, but there is a growing number of women creating comics with postcolonial themes. The works and artists discussed here offer postcolonial perspectives onto virtually the entire range of comics creation in France over the last several decades. The diversity of ethnic backgrounds, socio-political perspectives and artistic approaches provides an opportunity for dialogical critical analysis. Stating that "the empire draws back" suggests that cartoonists from formerly colonized groups often critically redraw French empire and its sequels in comics. However, saying that "the empire draws back" also suggests a retreat from empire, which happened in the 1950s and early 1960s across France's colonial domain, and occurred in mainstream comics after the formal independence of most French colonies. The expression can also suggest a counterattack by (neo)colonial forces, an attempt to reassert imperial domination, in response to the forced falling back or withdrawing, from empire. The latter characterizes cartooning on the French far right from 1962 to the present. Finally, the expression here also refers to cartooning by French mainstream artists when they depict the formerly colonized, often in a more ambivalent manner than do far-right cartoonists, and even in openly positive ways. Soon after publication of *The Empire Writes Back*, the study was criticized for lumping together literature by authors from both (former) colonial settler and (formerly) colonized groups, even though there may be significant differences in their writing practices, depending on their relationship to the colonial past (McClintock 1992: 86–7; Shohat 1992: 103). There are also often significant relevant variations within individual ethnic minority

groups, for example, with respect to gender, sexual identity, regional location, class and religious affiliation. Here I strive to focus on both differences and similarities in the comics and cartoonists studied.

Cartoonists and their comics often cross borders today, and their work can be collaborative, transnational and global. A few examples suggest the complexity of this activity. Algerian cartoonist Slim (Menouar Merabtène) lived, drew and published comics in exile in France for several years during the Algerian civil war of the 1990s and after.[18] He collaborated with French cartoonists including Boudjellal and Luz (Rénald Luzier), the well-known *Charlie Hebdo* cartoonist. Mourad Boudjellal, brother of Farid Boudjellal, published one of Slim's comics, *Le monde merveilleux des barbus* [The Marvellous World of the Bearded Ones] (1995), and Jover later published another one, *Walou à l'horizon* [Nothing on the Horizon] (2003). Slim continues to travel between Algeria and France. As critics have shown, long before Slim went into exile, his multilingual and multicultural comics drew heavily on French-speaking cultures (Douglas and Malti-Douglas 1994: 188–97). He even referred to the Algerian emigrant community in France in an episode of his "Bouzid" comics that was serialized in 1988 in *Actualité de l'émigration* [Emigration News], a publication for and about Algerian emigrants in Europe that was sponsored by the Algerian government.[19] Congolese artist Barly Baruti studied cartooning in Belgium before returning to the Congo, where he drew a series of comics about his country that were scripted by French artist Frank Giroud and published in France (Giroud and Baruti 1995, 1996, 1998), and has collaborated with other European cartoonists on several comic books (Federici 2019: 246–64). Scholars have analyzed transnational connections in the life and work of African cartoonist Pahé (Patrick Essono Nkouna), who has resided in both Gabon and northern France, and drawn a series of comics scripted by French cartoonist Sti (Ronan Lefebvre).[20] Transnational activity has always existed in comics, and has no doubt increased exponentially as the market has become more globally interconnected. Nonetheless, as in my two previous monographs on colonial and postcolonial comics (McKinney 2011c, 2013e), I focus mainly here on French cartoonists and on France, because a national framework still provides a useful measure of artistic, historical and sociocultural coherence for analysis. On the other hand, the artists whom I study here are of diverse ethnic backgrounds, and I will highlight some of the myriad transnational and globalizing connections when they are directly relevant to my subject.

The comics analyzed here often circulate in more-or-less separate spheres: for example, few readers of mainstream comics are familiar with the marginal publications of most far-right cartoonists. Nonetheless, there are significant points of overlap between them. For example, the Tintin series, drawn from 1929 by Hergé (Georges Remi; 1907–83), who maintained a lifelong association with members of the far right, and the Asterix comics series, created in 1959 by René Goscinny (1926–77) and Albert Uderzo (1927–2020), provide common artistic references to other cartoonists of widely

varying ideological and political views, and diverse ethnic backgrounds. More generally, because the artists studied here have lived and published in France, they share cultural and historical references, even if they interpret the latter in sometimes radically opposed ways. This provides an opportunity to study transculturalism in comics, as Mary Louise Pratt (2008) and Hargreaves (2012) have done for prose writing in European languages, borrowing from a study of Spanish-language Cuban culture by Fernando Ortiz (1995). French cartoonists of different ethnic backgrounds have used a shared French comics culture and its tropes to position themselves differently on issues of postcolonial acculturation and (post)immigrant assimilation, much as they have done in representations of colonial Algeria and the Algerian War (McKinney 2013e: 149–52). I have argued elsewhere that when viewing the French comics field in dialogical terms, one may use a transcultural approach to account not only for the reworking of (post) colonial signifying systems in comics by the (formerly) colonized in France, but also related cultural transformations by artists from the ethnic majority and from colonial settler groups (McKinney 2013a). Comics by several artists of mixed parentage, whose cultural heritage and ethnic identifications often straddle the colonial affrontier, suggest the complexity of transculturalism in postcolonial France: they include work by Séra (Phouséra Ing; from Cambodia and France), Marcelino Truong and Clément Baloup (from Vietnam and France) and Yvan Alagbé (from Benin and France). Boudjellal too draws on his mixed cultural background (Christian Armenian and Muslim Algerian) in complex ways. To say that “the empire draws back” in French comics is therefore to suggest the many and sometimes contradictory manners in which cartoonists have drawn on, and redrawn, imperial history and culture to represent postcolonial France.

## Inventing postcolonial migration in comics and cartoons

Todd Shepard (2006) argues that “inventing decolonization” in France as the Algerian War wound down involved switching from officially treating Algeria as an integral and enduring part of the French republic to viewing its separation from France as resulting from an inevitable historical process of decolonization. This meant ignoring French colonial racism, the history of France’s imperialist project in Algeria, and the previous legal incorporation of Algeria into the French republic. Borrowing and adapting Shepard’s key concept, and a related one from Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1989), I would say that “inventing decolonization” in French comics means several things. In comics criticism and theory, it has often meant discounting or setting aside colonialism and imperialism in French-language comics, including by Swiss cartoonist Rodolphe Töpffer (1799–1846), French cartoonist Alain Saint-Ogan (1895–1974) and the Belgian Hergé (1907–83), when they or other cartoonists are canonized as foundational artists during a reappraisal of comics as a sophisticated visual art form, sometimes for

adults, instead of simply an object of mass consumption by children. The reevaluation process has involved an artistic variation on what historians Hobsbawm and Ranger (1989) describe as "the invention of tradition."[21] As I have argued elsewhere (2011c: 18), the work of locating what Hobsbawm and Ranger (1989: 1) call "a suitable historical past" with which to "establish continuity" in French-language comics has generally entailed avoiding an extensive reckoning with their colonial origins, whether it lies in the early to mid-nineteenth century *romans en estampes* [novels in prints] from Geneva and Paris, or early in the twentieth century, with the adoption of speech balloons in colonialist comics "Sam et Sap" [Sam and Sap] (Candide and Le Cordier 1908a, 1908b) and "Zig et Puce" [Guy and Flea] (Saint-Ogan 1995a).[22] Critics and institutions render their chosen artistic past of comics more suitable for contemporary sensibilities by largely sidestepping the colonial heritage of French comics. That heritage includes the colonial grotesque as an artistic foil for producing both a *ligne claire* [clear line] drawing style and a related *discours clair* [clear speech] style of speaking in Hergé's comics. Those "clear" styles possess a discursive elegance and clarity, embodied especially by Tintin as colonial adventurer (Miller 2004), whereas the linguistic colonial grotesque is located both in deforming the speech of the colonized, for example of the Congolese in *Tintin au Congo* [*Tintin in the Congo*] (1973 [1931]), and in the colonialist insults of Captain Haddock.[23] Similarly to what Bruno Lecigne (1983: 40) and Ann Miller (2007b: 18) argue with respect to Hergé's *ligne claire* drawing style, the artist's *discours clair* exposes the world as legible in manichean, often colonialist terms.[24]

For French cartoonists on the far right, the "invention of decolonization" means treating (post)colonial migration to France as though it involved people of color belligerently colonizing the European nation, and legitimated resistance to that by supposedly native whites (Stora 1999: 88–9). This discounts migrant population flows as a foreseeable consequence of France's imperialist and capitalist projects abroad and at home, including the colonial incorporation of Algeria into the French republic (Shepard 2006), and French government and industry organizing labor migration from (former) colonies to France over several decades before, during and after formal decolonization. It therefore also means ignoring the far right's own responsibility, through its participation in the French imperialist project, for the existence and growth of (post)colonial ethnic minority groups within France. A gesture shared across much of the political spectrum involves depicting postcolonial ethnic minorities in France as "immigrants" in a way that elides the historical role of French colonialism in bringing them to France. The "invention of *de*colonization" in comics has also included the "invention of *re*colonization" or the "invention of *neo*colonialism": for example, some cartoonists have recirculated colonial-era imagery in a neocolonial manner. On the other hand, anticolonial activism remains relevant in the postcolonial era, as when cartoonists critique colonial comics images and create new, anticolonial ones to replace them (e.g., in Baloup and Jiro 2005: 87–9). Although the

shift from the colonial era to a postcolonial one, including by reworking "colonial culture,"[25] has generally meant different things as one moves from the far right to the far left on the political spectrum, and from anti-immigrant to pro-immigrant positions, some elements are shared. They include, most basically, an at least implicit recognition that the formal independence of France's colonies potentially meant a dramatic difference in their relations with France, and between the ex-colonized and the ethnic-majority French. Cartoonists associated with the French far right, which struggled at the end of empire to maintain French colonial domination, were among the first to react in comics and cartoons to this historic change in international relations and in the very structure of French society.

By the end of the Algerian War in 1962, the most ardent defenders of French empire had to draw back from France's colonies: the French army largely, though not entirely, withdrew from them, and almost all colonial settler groups left, mostly to France. However, some individuals and groups did not abandon the struggle for French empire. While Jacques Foccart helped President Charles de Gaulle lay the groundwork for French neocolonization of Africa during and after the formal independence of French colonies there,[26] De Gaulle's enemies on the French far right, who viewed him as a traitor to French imperial designs because he abandoned French Algeria, began to adapt to the new global and domestic configuration. For them, withdrawing from empire meant shoring up power in France itself, including by redrawing the colonial affrontier. Pierre-André Taguieff (1993) and others have studied how the French far right adapted the strategy of Italian communist Antonio Gramsci for gaining and holding power within civil society. In its efforts to achieve cultural hegemony – to fall back from and draw back against the former empire, that is, against the formerly colonized – the far right used cultural means at its disposal, including comics and cartoons. The far right consciously implemented a Gramscian cultural strategy in the 1980s and 1990s, which encompassed the publication of comics and children's literature (Bédarida 1996; see also below, Chapters 6 and 7). What is perhaps less known is that the far right was beginning to work out this strategy against the (formerly) colonized even as French Algeria was being dissolved. Already then, the empire was drawing back by redrawing the colonial affrontier in and through cartoons and comics.

Coral tells a pro-OAS story in mock-epic fashion in *Journal d'un embastillé* (1962) and *Journal d'un suspect* [Journal of a Suspect] (1964). The first volume, which satirizes President De Gaulle and France's official Algerian policy, was censored by the government for its mocking representation of the president.[27] In both comic books, the cartoonist uses racist, colonialist imagery to represent Algerians as revolting against the French. This includes, in *Journal d'un embastillé*, an image of armed Algerian men rioting in Paris on 17 October 1961, although the event was actually a very peaceful protest by unarmed Algerian men, women and children against a curfew selectively imposed upon them by the French government, notoriously through the orders of Maurice Papon, then Prefect of

Paris police.[28] Coral's books signal an historical shift away from generally more benign, paternalist depictions of the colonized in comics for children from the preceding, late colonial era. His harsh depiction of most Algerians recalls another, much earlier historical shift in imagery and discourse at the outset of the colonial period, from French representations of the colonized as savage and war-like to images of them as domesticated and subservient. As Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1992) has shown, there were significant historical changes in European popular visual and textual imagery in the transitions from conquest to colonization and then to decolonization, as well as continuities in imagery across those periods and events. For example, within canonical French comics, one finds a warlike representation of Moroccan fighters from the Rif violently resisting French conquest in a 1920s episode of Saint-Ogan's "Zig et Puce,"[29] which contrasts with post-conquest images of the colonized as domesticated later in the same strip. I focus here on the close of formal French colonialism, a shift in which Coral played a key iconographic role on the far right, and on its ramifications on up to the present.

Shepard has argued that as the Algerian War wound down, Venner and others at *Europe Action* quickly redirected part of their focus from maintaining French colonial rule abroad in Algeria to combating postcolonial ethnic minorities within France.[30] This meant inventing a postcolonial immigration problem, foreshadowed by Coral's depiction in 1962 of rioting Algerians in Paris, mentioned above. The articles of *Europe Action*, and Coral's cartooning there, reconstruct the formerly colonized as part of an immigrant invasion of France. In a vitriolic editorial in October 1964 that is reminiscent of anti-immigrant discourse from the early twentieth century,[31] and of anti-Algerian rhetoric during the Algerian War,[32] Venner evokes the specter of postcolonial immigrants spreading syphilis and vermin in France, and a wave of rape and murder by Black and Algerian men.[33] *Europe Action* thereby helped produce a discursive framework that many politicians, especially from the far right, but sometimes even ranging to the far left, would exploit for ideological, political and electoral reasons in the following decades.[34] *Europe Action* suggested that postcolonial populations were a drain on the French economy, through colonialist references to supposed African laziness and with alarming numbers: the front cover of the issue features a photo of several men, with the title "Ils seront bientôt un million" [Soon there will be one million of them] (cf. Shepard 2009: 42). Taguieff (1984: 124–5) connects the scare-mongering of *Europe Action* with subsequent variations on the theme by the Front national (FN), the xenophobic, far-right French political party led first by Jean-Marie Le Pen and now by his daughter, Marine Le Pen, and renamed the Rassemblement national [National Gathering] (RN) in 2018: "Un million de chômeurs, c'est un million d'immigrés de trop" [A million unemployed is a million immigrants too many], "Deux millions de chômeurs, etc." [Two million unemployed, etc.].[35]

The back cover of the October 1964 issue (no. 22) of *Europe Action* reproduces an unsigned cartoon that must be by Coral. The text reads: "On recherche: Mohamed Ben

Zobi né en Algérie résident [sic] en France. Cet homme est dangereux. Susceptible de: Tuer! Violer! Voler! Piller etc… etc… etc… etc….. Pour le trouver, inutile d'aller très loin…. autour de vous il y en a: 700.000 comme lui!" [We are searching for: Mohamed Ben Zobi born in Algeria resident of (or: residing in) France. This man is dangerous. Liable to: Kill! Rape! Steal! Pillage etc… etc… etc… etc…. No need to go very far to find him, … around you there are: 700,000 like him!]. The insulting name, translatable as Mohamed Son-of-a-Prick, is understandable in French, which during the colonial era borrowed from Arabic several words including "zob" [prick] and others in the same register (Quinsat 1991: 183). For Shepard, the cartoon is exemplary of racist, sexual obsessions of the French far right about Algerians (2009: 42–3; 2012: 93–5). He argues that this xenophobic emphasis broke through from the far right into mainstream French society in 1968, about six years after the end of the Algerian War. Two other important historical points in the development of anti-North African racism and political activism occurred in 1973, and in the early 1980s when the FN began to experience electoral and political success.[36]

The image of Mohamed Ben Zobi reportedly reappeared as late as 1982, on a poster displayed by *rapatriés* at the FN's "Bleu Blanc Rouge" [Blue White Red] festival.[37] The cartoon pastiche of a wanted poster from the American Far West suggests what historian Stora (1999) calls a far-right "sudiste" (southernist) politics in France: a colonialist strategy explicitly modeled on American colonialism, recalling both the Western frontier, with its ideology of manifest destiny, and southern resistance to the end of slavery.[38] Through his cartoon, Coral invites readers of *Europe Action* to exterminate a supposedly threatening postcolonial population in France. The cartoonist justifies murder by an ethnic slur and libelous accusations. He uses violent visual and textual caricature to fall back from and to write back against a former empire that he represents as now invading metropolitan space and bringing the colonial affrontier north, into France itself. Coral implicitly also constructs the French, the "vous" [you] whom he addresses, as radically, racially different from the formerly colonized.[39]

## A "white nightmare"

With Mœbius's "Cauchemar blanc," antiracist cartooning spectacularly joined the ideological combat along the colonial affrontier. In his preface to the album *La citadelle aveugle* [The Blind Citadel], where he republished his story, the cartoonist (1989: 9) describes it as an indignant response to government censorship of an unnamed short film about a rash of racist events. The first publication date of "Cauchemar blanc," in 1974, situates its creation during a particularly tense period: the founding in 1972 of the FN, the international oil embargo the following year, with the resulting energy crisis and rising unemployment, and a spate of racist attacks on immigrant workers in 1973, leading the Algerian government to halt emigration to France.[40] The French government also suspended labor migration into France in 1974.[41] Mœbius's story juxta-

poses two different versions of a racist attack by white Frenchmen on a working-class North African man, one after the other. In the first narrative sequence, the Frenchmen almost run down their intended victim (Figure 1.1), but miss him at the last moment, crash their car and then argue with the neighborhood's inhabitants. One of the thugs pretends to be a police officer by waving a card from the S.A.C. (Service d'action civique [Civic Action Service]), a Gaullist political organization that also served as parallel police force involved in violent extralegal activity and was dissolved by President François Mitterrand in August 1982. However, a neighborhood inhabitant with a Spanish name, Muñoz, like the Argentinian cartoonist José Muñoz, turns out to be a genuine policeman. Meanwhile the leader of the lynch group struggles with one of his henchmen who wants to give up and go home, during which the leader's gun accidentally fires, wounding the other and triggering further infighting between the racists. The first section concludes here, when a narrative hinge triggers an entirely different sequence and ending: the leader of the racist gang wakes up in his own bed from what readers realize at this point was his "white nightmare" about the racist attack gone wrong. Mœbius (9) states that in "Cauchemar blanc" he wished to "traduire le rêve de tous ceux qui désirent un monde plus fraternel, donc le cauchemar des racistes, le cauche-

**Figure 1.1:** From Mœbius (1989) "Cauchemar blanc," *Citadelle aveugle*, Geneva: Les Humanoïdes Associés – Humanos S.A., p. 42.2–3 © Mœbius Production. Reproduced with the gracious permission of Isabelle Giraud.

**Figure 1.2:** From Mœbius (1989) "Cauchemar blanc," *Citadelle aveugle*, Geneva: Les Humanoïdes Associés – Humanos S.A., p. 51.1–2 © Mœbius Production. Reproduced with the gracious permission of Isabelle Giraud.

mar blanc" [translate the dream of all those who desire a more fraternal world, therefore the nightmare of the racists, the white nightmare]. The second sequence replays the attack, which is successful this time: the French racists in their car run down the North African on his moped, then get out and bludgeon him, perhaps killing him (Figure 1.2). The final plate shows the French neighbors looking out of their windows, in three embedded or incrusted panels (Figure 1.3).[42] Here the comics technique highlights the visibility of French racist violence and the failure of onlookers to prevent it.

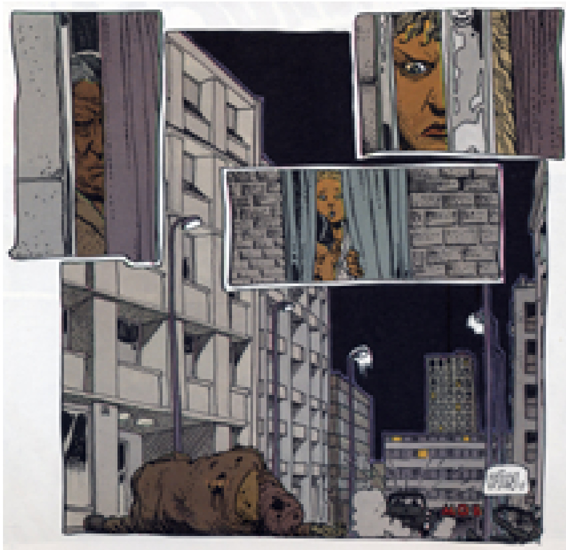

**Figure 1.3:** From Mœbius (1989) "Cauchemar blanc," *Citadelle aveugle*, Geneva: Les Humanoïdes Associés – Humanos S.A., p. 52.2–5 © Mœbius Production. Reproduced with the gracious permission of Isabelle Giraud.

"Cauchemar blanc" was inspired by the dream comics of pioneering American cartoonist Winsor McCay, although this connection has rarely been recognized or otherwise acknowledged.[43] "Cauchemar blanc" clearly and explicitly cites McCay's "Dream of the rarebit fiend" series, which functions much like "Little Nemo in Slumberland," McCay's most famous comics series, especially

through its manipulation of dream and wakeful states, as well as reading expectations. In "Cauchemar blanc" Mœbius borrows both the trivial realistic pretext of "Dream of the rarebit fiend" – eating welsh rarebit before falling asleep causes a stomach ache, which triggers a nightmare – and its fundamental structure of reality reversal: images temporarily suggest to readers that a dream world is the waking one. However, "Cauchemar blanc" differs significantly from its American comics model in its conclusion. Although McCay's series raises the specter of death (in one episode, the dreamer watches himself being buried alive), its final panel always brings one back to a reassuring reality, when the dreamer awakes and explains what just happened. By contrast, the white nightmare of the first part of Mœbius's story is followed by what could be called an Arab nightmare, which – at four pages – constitutes a third of the story, and is drawn to appear even more nightmarish than the first part, as has been noted by others.[44] Moreover, this second section of the story is nightmarish for a group other than violent far-right sociopaths, that is, for anyone with empathy for their victims. "Cauchemar blanc" has been described by Lecigne and Jean-Pierre Tamine (1983: 59–63), and more recently by Matthew Screech (2005a; 2005b: 100–16) and Miller (2007b: 39), as a foundational text of "new realism" in French-language comics. Lecigne, Tamine and Screech discuss specific comics by cartoonists that rework its dream/waking structure and theme of racism (I shall discuss them later). Mœbius's comic also inspired French film director Mathieu Kassovitz, who made it into a short film in 1991. The comic arguably also helped inspire his feature-length film *La haine* [*Hate*] (1995), specifically the scene depicting a racist attack by skinheads in Paris, the temporal movement from night to morning by the conclusion, and the surprise reversal there. By the 1990s, new images of postcolonial immigrant populations had replaced that of the male migrant worker, seen in both Coral's cartooning and in Mœbius's comic. They include the iconic young "*Black-blanc-Beur*" [Black-white-*Beur*] male trio of *La haine*. Here too cartoonists innovated first: Kassovitz's famous film trio was preceded in comics by another multiethnic male trio over a decade earlier, the autobiographical doubles of the Anita Comix cartoonists.

## *Contre-bande dessinée:* civil rights in cartoons and comics in the 1980s

The late 1970s and early 1980s were a period of cultural effervescence and civil rights activism in France among populations of postcolonial and recent immigrant heritage from North Africa, West Africa, the Caribbean, Portugal, Spain and elsewhere. This produced several cultural and political events on a local and even a national scale, including the concerts of Rock Against Police and two civil rights demonstrations that ended in Paris – the Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme [March For Equality and Against Racism] in 1983, and Convergence '84 in 1984, the latter with riders on mopeds. The national cultural center in Paris named after Georges Pompidou host-

ed an exhibition on "Les enfants de l'immigration" [The Children of Immigration] (18 January–23 April 1984), which included a focus on comics and cartoons by Anita Comix, Larbi Mechkour and others.[45] The period also saw the emergence of what one could call a *contre-bande dessinée* [contraband comics or counter-comics], a key agent in a profound renewal of French comics that continues today (McKinney 2013d; 2013e: 79). For the French artists of recent immigrant or postcolonial ethnic minority heritage who launched this, it involved affirming their ability to express themselves artistically in the comics field. Boudjellal, Jover, Monpierre and Mechkour were among the most emblematic figures, although other cartoonists were part of the trend at the time (see below, Chapter 2). Their comics constituted a bid for self-expression [une prise de parole] in a domain where up until then the representations of (post)colonial and immigrant minorities in comics had almost exclusively emanated from the pencils, pens and paintbrushes of cartoonists of European heritage.

Anita Comix, Mechkour and others began to create stories using artistic techniques and styles of cartooning sometimes borrowed from "pocket-format" comics familiar to working-class children, and from graffiti styles or other artistic models from elsewhere in the comics field, for example, the elegant black-and-white cartooning of Milton Caniff, or underground comics from the United States. In the collective work of Boudjellal, Jover and Monpierre, one also finds elements essential to the new, artistically ambitious, alternative French comics of that period (for example, in the albums of Edmond Baudoin with Futuropolis), and to literature by writers of postcolonial heritage, for example, in the first novels of Algerian-French novelists Azouz Begag, Farida Belghoul, Tassadit Imache, Ahmed Kalouaz or Hocine Touabti: a strong dose of autobiography and the foregrounding of a protagonist-narrator speaking in the first person, who was in a way the author's double, even if fictionalized to some degree (Hargreaves 1997; McKinney 2001b). One could say for Luc Boltanski's (1975) conception of the field of comics, something like what Timothy Brennan (1993: 50-51, 54-56) said about M. M. Bakhtin's model for the evolution of the novel, that he did not foresee the next major stage: the dialogical reconfiguration of the artistic form and field by individuals from (post)colonial groups that until then had little or no access to them. In Algeria, this began already soon after independence, for example, in *Moustache et les Belgacem* [Moustache and the Belgacem] (1968), a satire of the Algerian War drawn by Slim. Opening up the field of artistic expression meant countering colonial clichés still largely prevalent then in comics and elsewhere in popular culture, and inherited prejudices of French society in general.

Two artistic creations by Mechkour and Anita Comix that deal with the 1983 March and Convergence '84 will serve here as examples of *contre-bande dessinée*. These artists and comics are remarkable for several reasons. The Black-white-Arab composition of Anita Comix – their diverse cultural heritage and personal histories – provided a multicultural perspective, allowing them collectively to confront ethnic stereotypes. Their artistic background provides another source of diversity, one that is now more typical

among French cartoonists: whereas Boudjellal and Mechkour are self-taught, Jover and Monpierre studied at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts [Fine Arts School] of Paris, the nation's most prestigious school of fine arts. The fact that the latter two gained entry to the institution was already remarkable, given their postcolonial, recent immigrant, and working-class backgrounds. On the other hand, the opening of the field of comics to artists with this kind of social background and to self-taught artists was facilitated by the relatively low position of comics in the artistic hierarchy (Boltanski 1975; Beaty 2007). The contribution of these four artists to different cultural events during the 1980s was diverse and significant. They published in *Révolution*, *Sans frontière* and *Baraka*, three left-leaning, pro-immigrant, activist magazines. They also published in comics magazines and youth culture periodicals (*L'écho des savanes*, *Zoulou*), and in a left-leaning Parisian newspaper (*Libération*). Their comic books came out both with an artistically ambitious comics publisher (Futuropolis) and more popular ones (Glénat, L'écho des savanes/Albin Michel). They thereby served as pathbreakers for other artists from similar backgrounds who emerged in the 1990s. The four artists are also interesting for the diversity of their professional trajectories in the following years: Boudjellal has been the most prolific in terms of his own comics publications. Jover founded a publishing house that has published comics by the four artists, as well as several other books related to immigration and colonialism. Monpierre continues to draw and publish comics, and to create other artistic expressions about African-French peoples, including French Caribbeans.

A drawing by Mechkour published in *Révolution* on the occasion of the 1983 March exemplifies some important artistic tactics (Figure 1.4).[46] Pacifist slogans inspired by the civil rights struggles of Black Americans, which were a model for the French March,[47] are proudly displayed on banners ("Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme") and in the empty space above them ("Rengainez on arrive" [Put your guns back in their holsters, here we come]). The latter refers to the shooting of youths by French police officers, and by racist and xenophobic vigilantes in working-class neighborhoods, that helped spark the March.[48] The banner in the front has at least six holes, suggesting that the marchers themselves were targeted on their way to Paris. This represents the marchers as potential victims of the violence that they are denouncing, thereby emphasizing the necessity of their protest action and rendering it heroic, even epic. The second banner reads "S.O.S. Minguettes," referring to the origins of the March in the working-class Minguettes housing project in the suburbs of Lyon. The broom to which the banner is affixed could allude to the position of street sweeper and garbage collector [éboueur], then stereotypical jobs for immigrant working men.[49] Here, a symbol of immigrant labor becomes a symbolic flagpole for the civil rights activism of a young French generation of recent immigrant and often postcolonial origin.

On the sidewalk on the right a typical Frenchman, identified by his beret, wonderingly watches the demonstrators pass by. The juxtaposition partially inverts colo-

**Figure 1.4:** From Larbi Mechkour (art) and Farid Boudjellal (script) *Black Blanc Beur: Les folles années de l'intégration*, songs André Igwal [André Igual], Cachan: Tartamudo, 2004, p. 8 © Editions Tartamudo. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the authors and Editions Tartamudo.

nial-era caricature, because here the (formerly) colonized are no longer caricatured, but instead the (former) colonizer is, although not mean-spiritedly. However, he is stationary and relegated to the sidelines, whereas the handsome, smiling and mostly younger marchers walking past are agents of history in the making. We see three young people in the first row: a Black man and two Maghrebis – a man and a woman. The latter wear keffiehs around their necks, protecting them from the December cold, but also suggesting their solidarity with the Palestinian cause (cf. Imache 1991: 100). The Maghrebi man, who could be the cartoonist himself, gives the victory sign, while his shoe, sporting a hole repaired with two bandaids, testifies to his walking exploit. Behind the Black man we see Christian Delorme, a Catholic priest who helped organize the March.[50] He is recognizable by his black robe and hands joined in prayer. Between Delorme and the first row, a legless amputee wears a fez and moves along in a box with wheels, which sports the insignia of Citroën, the French car manufacturer. We may take him to be an immigrant automobile worker injured on an assembly line, and then amputated. Workers in the automobile industry, many from former French colonies, defended their rights and livelihoods by striking in 1982–3, including at Citroën factories (Hargreaves 1995a: 182). By rolling along with them, while smiling and winking knowingly at readers, the immigrant worker demonstrates his solidarity with the younger generation marching for their rights and adds a humorous touch to a portrait of seductively youthful marchers. Mechkour thereby playfully contrasts a handsome, young French generation with an older immigrant one wounded by dangerous work.[51] In front of him, on the ground, lies the cartoon image featured on the official poster of the March: a close up of a marcher's legs and feet, one foot in a *charentaise* [a French slipper] and the other in a *babouche* [a North African one], with the Eiffel tower in the background.[52] To sum up, Mechkour's tactic in this drawing is to create a seductive and dynamic image of a young, culturally diverse generation from postcolonial immigrant groups, and contrast it with gentle caricatures of an older immigrant generation and of an average Frenchman being overtaken by positive historical change, at which he gazes in wonder.

The artists of Anita Comix deploy both similar and different tactics in a poster for Convergence '84 and in a comic published for the occasion in *Zoulou* (Anita Comix 1984b).[53] There as elsewhere in their collective work, they take on retrograde – colonialist, racist and xenophobic – stereotypes, hollow them out and give them new subversive content in ironic reversals. The trio travels together on a motorcycle with a sidecar, which fits well with Convergence '84, because the event involved riding mopeds from the far-flung corners of France to Paris. The ethnic diversity of the trio was also à propos, because the slogan of the demonstration was "la France c'est comme une mobylette: pour avancer, il lui faut du mélange" [France is like a moped: to move ahead it needs some mix]. The three-page comic strip in *Zoulou* is preceded by a short introductory text and a photo of the artists disguised as their characters. On the left, Jover,

carrying a large alarm clock, wears glasses and sports two huge buck teeth made of card stock, a loud tropical (Spanish tourist) shirt and stretchband shorts. In the center, Monpierre is shirtless and has three fake, long, zigzag braids of hair tied with ribbons, and a large card-stock bone through, or rather under, his nose. He wears glasses, a necktie and a loose-fitting pair of pants or skirt, no doubt meant to be African. Boudjellal wears an embroidered North African tunic and a fez. A stick across the top of Monpierre's right shoulder goes under the right arms of Jover and Boudjellal, suggesting that Monpierre, disguised as a grinning cannibal, has found his next meal.

The photograph introduces some tactics used by Anita Comix in the comic-strip story that follows it. Caricatural visual exaggeration has constituted a formidable weapon in comics and cartooning for ridiculing immigrants and the colonized, and for justifying imperialism and colonialism.[54] Similarly a textual economy of simplified, satirical and popular language has facilitated the caricature of colonized and immigrant others in comics, through both insulting terms and different types of speech represented as grotesquely deformed, which were historically called *sabir* or *petit-nègre* (literally "little-negro") in French (Siblot 1991; Costantini 2011). Anita Comix adapt and thereby sap the power of grotesque elements traditionally used in French culture to ridicule, through caricature, working-class immigrants and the colonized. The visual-textual nature of comics offers the artists a formidable means of responding to images and words that represented them in alienating ways in colonial comics, and in advertising, political discourse, prose fiction and elsewhere. In their creative work the cartoonists also clear a space for distance and dialogue between generations born in France or who grew up there, and the preceding ones, as in the cartoon by Mechkour described above. This allows a new generation to define itself as distinct without abandoning the previous one (Siblot 1991). This too the cartoonists accomplish in caricatural language and drawing, through creative agility and a remarkable complexity of vision. We can therefore locate several operations in their artistic creations, in relations with emigrant parents, French society in general, and the far-right, then moving from the fringe into mainstream society to recolonize it and shore up white supremacy.

As narrative, comics possess significant resources when it comes to responding to alienating discourses. Moreover, the mixed, visual-textual nature of comics allows them to be both polygraphic and polyphonic, as Thierry Smolderen (2009) has argued. In other words, comics can reproduce and dialogize both images and words from elsewhere, contesting and replacing them with others, and thereby provide multi-voiced and multi-visual perspectives, through polyphony and polygraphy. The Convergence '84 comic strip by Anita Comix is clearly autofictional, because the artists' doubles keep their given names and physically resemble the cartoonists in the parodical photo described above, which directly precedes the comic. In the comic's masthead, Roland-the-cannibal arrives to tell Farid-the-North African, dressed with an embroidered tunic and a fez, and José-the-Spaniard, dressed both as a bullfighter and a tourist,

that they have been hired to cover Convergence '84. In spite of their status as colonial, national and ethnic stereotypes, the artist trio will take on the role of comics reporter that, as Miller (2004) demonstrates, was traditionally played by a white, European, male, colonial *aventurier* [adventurer], memorably incarnated by Tintin, reporter for the *Petit Vingtième* [Little Twentieth (Century)], in Hergé's famous comic strip.

The Anita Comix trio sets out from Marseille next to the moped riders along the planned route of Convergence '84. However, just before leaving Marseille, they receive a final warning from "Roger le poulpe" [Roger the octopus], an enemy who threatens to kill his adversaries ("vous crèverez tous" [you will all die]), like Rastapopoulos, Hergé's arch-villain, who repeatedly tries to eliminate Tintin. The language of Roger's rhymed message is xenophobic, colonialist and racist: he calls the multicultural group of moped riders, who are his enemies, "métèques" (a pejorative term for foreigners) and "ratons" [little rats], a racist insult for North African Arabs or Berbers.[55] He wears a beret and makes a backwards version of a swastika with his four tentacles. He shares the slogan of the FN ("Les Français d'abord" [The French first]), and his rhyming, violent language is reminiscent of the oratory of Le Pen. His name, Roger, is typically working-class French in connotation and evokes a hick.[56] By depicting their Franco-French villain as an octopus, Anita Comix respond to the racist and colonialist dehumanization of the colonized that Frantz Fanon had already denounced and analyzed in *Les damnés de la terre* [*The Wretched of the Earth*] (2002 [1961]: 45). The octopus mirrors far-right, antisemitic imagery and conspiracy fantasies back at their creators (Doizy et Houdré 2010: 193).[57] A member of the trio comments on Roger's message: "ces racistes sont de grands enfants!" [these racists are big children!], ironically displacing European colonialist depictions of Blacks as infantile onto white racists.[58] This linguistic strategy complements the visual one of depicting a stereotypical Frenchman (Roger) as an anthropomorphic octopus. Both are examples of *rétorsion* [retort], which Pierre-André Taguieff (1984: 131) has identified as a typical rhetorical strategy of the French far right, inverting antiracism and other anti-FN concepts and arguments in order to attack adversaries of the party.[59] The strategy of the cartoonists is to dialogize the colonialist, antisemitic and authoritarian discourse and imagery of the FN and the rest of the far right by making them collide with the lucid vision of youths from postcolonial ethnic groups who are claiming a legitimate place in French society.

The unfolding story likewise contrasts two itineraries: on the one hand, a working-class, youthful version of what Edward Said (1994b: 239–61) calls the "voyage in" of movement into the imperial metropolis, symbolized by the moped ride of the youths and cartoonists towards Paris, capital of the nation and symbolic center of the republic, and on the other, an exclusionary gesture that would remove the riders from French territory.[60] Lifetime *cartes de séjour* [residency cards], which the youths find magically growing on a tree next to the road, turn out to be visas for the Mediterranean.[61] This implicitly refers to the Algerian War: to eliminate the moped riders from the national

territory, Roger would throw them into the sea, as the FLN was seen by the settlers as at least symbolically attempting to do during the war, and as French soldiers sometimes literally did with their FLN prisoners.[62] Suddenly, the motorcyle of Anita Comix and the mopeds of the riders are drawn as by a magnet in the opposite direction from their trajectory toward Paris, this time towards Port Cassoulet, a Franco-French town inhabited by armed and aggressive racists. The town's name refers to a typical south-western French dish whose main ingredients are white beans and meat such as pork sausage. Upon arriving, the trio almost drowns in a tidal wave of cassoulet, associated here with fecal matter, unleashed from a water tower transformed into a trap.[63] They barely escape through their inventiveness, thanks to the technical prowess of their motorcycle (it stands up and walks on long mechanical legs), a tactic we could call *l'esquive*, or artful dodging.[64] However, they soon find themselves face to face with Roger who, disguised as a North African immigrant, invites them to eat a giant couscous in a nightclub named "A l'immigré dansant" [To, or at, the dancing immigrant]. When the cartoonists and their fellow riders have eaten their fill, Roger the octopus removes his disguise and unleashes weapons of the Third Reich against them: a V2 missile, two machine-gunning airplanes and a tank, recalling roots of the contemporary French far right in nazism.

By holding hands and invoking "les dieux coucous, paella et boudin blanc" [the gods of couscous, paella and white boudin] in a pastiched voodoo ceremony, the trio summons Mécanic Bamboula, a special kind of superhero.[65] With this figure, the cartoonists transform the colonialist "bamboula" image of a Black, here speaking a Caribbean French dialect ("Va voi' su' Satu'ne si j'y suis!" [Go find out whether I'm on Saturn!]), ridiculed in colonial French comics (as were voodoo ceremonies), into a Black giant whose sublimely handsome, naked, hyper-virile body recalls both superhero comics and "Black is beautiful" iconography associated with Black Power and African American civil rights movements.[66] His monocle is an ironic allusion to colonial imagery of pretentious white colonizers (Jover 2020). Roger the octopus instantly grows in size in order to fight Mécanic Bamboula, while defying and deforming the riders' republican claim with his mocking, racist discourse: "Alors blanchette?! Nous voilà à égalité!" [So, whitey?! Now we're equal!], says Roger to Mécanic Bamboula. But Mécanic Bamboula throws Roger, whom he disparages as nothing but a blustering "téta'd en latex" [latex tadpole], out of the world and into hell, where the devil is waiting for the imminent arrival of a certain Jean-Marie (Le Pen, of course) in order to begin a game of poker. By a technique of outbidding (*surenchère*),[67] that is by absurdly accumulating images from the colonial and xenophobic grotesque, and by using retort to transform them through their art, the cartoonists win their own poker game against Roger.

After the trip towards Paris (the voyage in) and the attempted expulsion out of France to the Mediterranean (a type of voyage out), Mécanic Bamboula's superheroic defeat of Roger traces yet another trajectory, one that relegates the comic-book repre-

sentative of racist discourse to an outer-worldly third space that is neither France nor its former colonies. There are multiple allusions here to stigmatized others through references to food, language, religion or clothing. This polygraphic and polyphonic approach dialogizes the images and words of racist relegation. In the final panel, the riders are moving on toward their final destination, where they are planning on having a "super carnival." José remarks that they will "not need to change" for it, because they are "already in disguise." This underlines the fact that their stereotypical appearance is only a mask chosen by the artists for the occasion.[68] With the disappearance of Roger, the carnivalesque transformation of stereotyped identities has reached its goal and cleared a space for a multiethnic welcome party in Paris.

The approach of Anita Comix to alienating and exclusionary visual and textual representations is a dialogizing strategy including several tactics that we have seen in action: autofictional self-representation, retort, artful dodging (*l'esquive*) and outbidding (*la surenchère*). It involves the rearticulation of multiple degrading images of self-as-outsider to reveal the absurdity of xenophobic, racist and colonialist typing and exclusion. This occurs at the level of each character: for example, Monpierre represents himself through French colonial images of Blacks as cannibal, big child, and colonial subject unable to speak standard French. Anita Comix collectively outbid the racists, by accumulating alienating images of several allied, immigrant and postcolonial selves in a madcap, over-the-top manner. Many of these clichés are inherited from the repertoire of the colonial grotesque often found in comics. By representing themselves in ironic versions of such stereotypes, Anita Comix, as cartoonists of immigrant or postcolonial ethnic-minority heritage, exhibit their awareness of an overlapping, reactivated French heritage of colonialism, racism and xenophobia. The artists underline a general process of representation that involves producing and selecting simplified, grotesquely drawn traits designed to incarnate others denigrated and rejected by the Franco-French. Their own ironic, absurd accumulation overflows the naturalism of racist ideology, according to which Black Africans are big children and Algerians are prone to physical violence, and underlines its artificial and arbitrary nature. Through their comic-strip doubles, the cartoonists perform (post)colonial and immigrant roles *en travesti*, in ways that rewrite and reorient – that reverse – the performance of difference that the colonized played at colonial exhibitions, analyzed by Patricia Morton (2000: 112–13, 116) for the 1931 Colonial Exhibition in Paris. Through their self-named characters, the cartoonists perform not only those inherited colonial and racist clichés, but also the current reproduction of such clichés in conflicts over the right of recent immigrants and postcolonial ethnic minorities to remain in France. Dramatizing the reproduction of stereotypes helps produce an historical counter-memory that reminds French society about the deforming ways in which it has long represented colonial and immigrant others in comics and far beyond. The demand for republican equality embodied in Convergence '84 elicits a dramatic confrontation with its adversaries.

**Figure 1.5:** From Farid Boudjellal (1996) *L'oud: La trilogie*, Toulon: Soleil Productions, p. 67 © Farid Boudjellal and Soleil Productions. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

By working on stereotypes, Mechkour and Anita Comix helped clear a space for representing postcolonial and recent immigrant populations in French comics. They then began to draw new images and stories, for example, Boudjellal's comics representing his fictional Slimani family characters in a less caricatural, more realistic style. The

page that he published in the newspaper *Libération* for the arrival of the 1983 March in Paris begins to distinguish between the perspective of youths from North African immigration to France and that of the emigrant patriarch, who still dreams of returning to Algeria (Figure 1.5). The response of Marhmoud, his eldest son, clearly indicates on which shore of the Mediterranean the future lies for the rest of the family: "Quand tu rentreras [en Algérie] p'pa tu nous écriras!" [When you get back to Algeria, Dad, write to us!] (Boudjellal 1983a; republished in 1996b: 67).

## From colonial history to postcolonial France in comics

To summarize, in this introductory chapter I have focused on three important moments in the history of postcolonialism and migration in French comics. The first involved the hinge connecting colonial-era comics to neocolonial ones in cartooning by the French far right, during and right after the end of the Algerian War. There, withdrawing or drawing back *from* empire unleashed a drawing back by the far right *against* formerly colonized populations, now postcolonial immigrants and their descendants in France. The rapidity of that switch and the viciousness of the renewed attack on the newly independent are striking. This first moment, represented by the comics and cartoons of Coral, involved creating the single, male, postcolonial immigrant worker as a violent, threatening foreigner, just after the formal independence of Algeria in 1962. The far-right cartoonist reworked colonial racism, visible in the harsh portrait of Algerian men as murderers and rapists during the Algerian War as already depicted in his *Journal d'un embastillé*, and applied it to the postcolonial situation in France. The change in tack plotted a neocolonial course from which far-right cartooning has rarely deviated in substance, although its cartoonists have faced significant challenges by laws sanctioning racist expression and Holocaust denial, forcing them to modify their approach to evade fines and other legal sanctions.

The second significant transformation in postcolonial French comics was launched about a decade later, when Mœbius published his only (semi)realist comic under that pseudonym, in 1974. The exception to his use of names was no doubt justified by the oniric qualities of "Cauchemar blanc" and by the narrative flip or twist that it makes, which recalls the geometric reversal of perspective in a Mœbius (or Möbius) strip or band. Through its narrative structure, this comic strip or *bande dessinée* is almost quite literally or physically like a Mœbius strip or band. "Cauchemar blanc," which pivots around a movement from disturbing dream to nightmarish reality, is therefore also a hinge between the artist's realist, often antiracist comics published under the pseudonym Gir or his name Jean Giraud, and his science fiction comics authored under the pseudonym Mœbius. This second historical moment saw a reversal of polarities, when left-leaning and antiracist cartoonists beginning with Mœbius redrew the image of the lone Algerian immigrant worker, changing him from threatening predator into

helpless prey, and transforming the corresponding French character from innocent victim into racist predator. Mœbius's dream/waking metaphor in "Cauchemar blanc" provides the hinge for that transformation within the comic, and invites readers unaware of far-right racist violence in France, or unresponsive to it, to wake up and oppose it, instead of resembling the onlookers in the final page of the story, shown in a mirror-like, self-reflexive image that Mœbius holds up to readers. The characters simply stand in the safety and comfort of their homes and stare out their windows at the racist beating and its victim.[69] "Cauchemar blanc" inaugurated a tradition of antiracist, postcolonial comics to which many cartoonists contributed, from the 1970s and early 1980s. The list has included David B., Enki Bilal, Boudjellal, Jacques Ferrandez, Chantal Montellier, Jeanne Puchol, Jacques Tardi and Jean Teulé.[70]

The third moment, in the early 1980s, saw a shift away from the lone postcolonial male immigrant as victim, to a focus on giving him agency and on subsequent generations of people of immigrant heritage and from postcolonial ethnic minority groups who were born or at least raised in mainland France. This, the most radical and far-reaching change, happened thanks largely to the appearance and growing prominence of cartoonists of recent immigrant and postcolonial ethnic minority heritage. Boudjellal began publishing his comics in the late 1970s in a specialized comics magazine (*Circus*). Subsequent contributions by him, along with Jover, Mechkour and Monpierre, to nationally distributed publications, including *Libération*, around the 1983 March and Convergence '84 are symbolic of the growing national recognition of such cartoonists and their comics. Many cartoonists of immigrant heritage or from postcolonial ethnic minorities have helped transform French comics. Thanks to foreign publication of several compelling comic books in translation, Zeina Abirached, Marguerite Abouet, Bilal and Marjane Satrapi are now some of the best-known such artists outside of France, but others, often less well known abroad, have played an absolutely essential role within France. They include Boudjellal, Jover and Monpierre, as well as Alagbé, Baloup, Baru, Kamel Khélif, Leïla Leïz, Olivier Marboeuf, Séra and Truong. The list continues to grow.

These three pivotal moments in postcolonial comics have produced a major evolution in the comics field in general. Many cartoonists from a wide range of backgrounds have continued to make comics about postcolonial and immigrant themes, but they now cover a wide and expanding range of events, characters, genres, styles, modes and perspectives. There is increasing interest by cartoonists in themes related to postcolonialism, immigration and racism in France.

This volume is closely connected to my two previous books on colonialism and postcolonialism in French comics. In *The Colonial Heritage of French Comics* (2011c), I study a long and evolving tradition of French comics dealing with colonial themes, from the colonial era up into the postcolonial present. I argue there that comics scholarship needs to reckon with the imperialist and colonial heritage of comics, especially

by highly influential cartoonists regarded as foundational to the art, such as Saint-Ogan and Hergé. Colonialism is deeply constitutive of their comics and played a major role in the development of the form itself, for example in aesthetics (the colonial grotesque), genre (the colonial adventure), or suspense and serialization (colonial exoticism, intrigue, danger and the cliffhanger).[71] My study opens by evoking the theme of inheriting colonial wealth in comics by Saint-Ogan and Hergé. That trope and myriad other colonial references in comics helped justify and naturalize imperialism and colonialism for generations of youthful readers in French-speaking Europe. *The Colonial Heritage of French Comics* goes on to look at imperialism, colonialism and racism throughout Saint-Ogan's "Zig et Puce" series, once hugely popular. Saint-Ogan's comics have been celebrated as foundational over the last half century or so, as the following indications suggest. Although Saint-Ogan was too ill to attend the event, he was honorary president in 1974 of the first Angoulême comics festival, now the most important such event in France.[72] In 1995 as director of the Musée de la bande dessinée [Museum of Comics], the French national comics museum in Angoulême, Groensteen presided over a special exhibition dedicated to the comics of Saint-Ogan on the centenary of his birth (Groensteen and Morgan 2007: 85). Groensteen (1996b) devoted an article to the artistic debt Hergé owed Saint-Ogan in the first issue of *Neuvième art*, the scholarly journal of the French national comics center in Angoulême, and later published a book about the cartoonist and his comics (Groensteen and Morgan 2007). That same year, Saint-Ogan's voluminous scrapbooks were the object of the first major digitalization project of the French national comics center.[73] Comics scholar Benoît Peeters praised "Zig et Puce" during a series of two lectures in November 2019 at the French national library (Bibliothèque Nationale Française). A print version of his speeches, published by the library in 2019, features a "Zig and Puce" book cover as its cover illustration. And a series of lectures on comics scheduled for 2020–1 and organized by the Collège de France, France's most prestigious institution of higher learning and research, and one of its oldest (founded in 1530 by King François I), features Alfred, the pet penguin of Zig and Puce, as its icon.[74] However, little attention has been given to the prevalence of colonialism in Saint-Ogan's most famous comics series and elsewhere throughout his work (colonialism throughout Hergé's work has generated considerably more scholarship and debate, but much remains to be done on that subject).[75] The following three chapters of *The Colonial Heritage of French Comics* deal with two major events of French colonial propaganda that inspired colonial-era cartoonists and were taken up in postcolonial comics too: the *Croisière noire* [Black Journey], a trans-African car expedition in 1924–5 that was sponsored by the Citroën car company and coordinated with colonial authorities of France and Belgium, and the 1931 International Colonial Exhibition in Paris, in which France, Belgium, the United States and several other colonizing countries participated. I trace these, as well as other colonial exhibitions or "human zoos" in France and trans-African car expeditions, across time in comics, from the colonial era

up to the present.[76] Through my analysis of these iconic events, I show the centrality of colonialism to French comics, and how its treatment evolved through the colonial era, across the threshold of formal decolonization, and up into the postcolonial present.

In my next volume, *Redrawing French Empire in Comics* (2013e), I turned to French comic-strip depictions of two major French colonial possessions, French Indochina and Algeria, and the protracted wars that the colonized fought against the French to free themselves. I again draw attention to colonialism as a key theme for foundational cartoonists and comics, for example, *Histoire de Mr. Cryptogame* [Story of Mr. Cryptogame] (1996 [1830, 1844/5]) by Töpffer, whom art historian and comics scholar David Kunzle (2007a) has called "father of the comic strip" (cf. Kunzle 1990, 2007b). Drawing on scholarship by Kunzle, Miller (2004) and others, I trace the representation of colonial Algeria through comics from the conquest up to the present, and of the French war in Vietnam (1946–54) from while it unfolded on up into the postcolonial era. There, as in *The Colonial Heritage of French Comics*, I show a range of approaches that different cartoonists have taken to colonialism, running from neo-imperialist apology for French colonial history to anti-imperialist contestation. Many comics exhibit ambivalence and ambiguity, drifting between colonial nostalgia and anticolonial critique. I again highlight continuities and shifts between colonial-era comics and those published in the postcolonial period. Cartoonists have produced a tradition of comic-strip representations of French Algeria and Indochina, including through clear references to earlier cartoons and comics about those colonies. In both *The Colonial Heritage of French Comics* and *Redrawing French Empire in Comics*, I also show how cartoonists in the postcolonial era borrow massively from other fields, ranging from published scholarly histories of colonialism to its visual iconography (sketches, paintings, posters and postcards). The ideological range, historical research and artistic complexity of the comics, especially those created after 1962, give them a richness and depth that invite sustained interpretation.

The present study picks up where my previous two books left off, focusing this time on comics about the postcolonial era in France, from the end of the nation's last major formal decolonizing event, the Algerian War, up to the present. Its primary subject is migration and postcolonial ethnic minorities in France, and their relationships with the ethnic majority. My analysis here and in my two previous books builds on prior work by many other authors, including their analysis of forms of othering such as the construction of a colonial grotesque and a colonial erotics, two categories that sometimes converge. In my outline of subsequent chapters of this volume, below, I indicate some of the work by other scholars on which I rely.

The introductory chapter of the present study has provided an historical framework for understanding the transformation of French comics at the intersection of postcolonialism and migration. The following nine chapters engage with major artists and comics in that fundamental mutation of the field. As in my two previous studies, my choice of works and themes exemplifies a dialogical approach, for which I rely on

concepts of Bakhtin (1987, 1990) and their reworking by Smolderen (2009) for analyzing comics.[77] A key intertextual dialogue I highlight is the reworking in some comics of earlier comics representations, whether by the same or different artists, of the same themes. My primary example is "Cauchemar blanc," which functions as a leitmotif in this study. Early in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, I examine how four other comics by three different cartoonists – all major figures in contemporary French comics – clearly and creatively rework the narration, character roles and sometimes even the very images of Mœbius's story. My study also brings into critical dialogue distinct subfields of comics that rarely if ever meet in terms of distribution networks or readership. Far-right comics have often circulated in highly restricted networks of like-minded individuals and organizations (by contrast with editorial cartoons widely available in far-right newspapers on generalist newsstands). Pro-immigrant comics have also often circulated in limited alternative networks, for example, when serialized in pro-immigrant and leftist magazines such as *Baraka*, *Droit et liberté*, *Révolution* and *Sans frontière*. Cartoonists from both groups have sometimes self-published their comics in small print runs. Especially before the advent of the web, circulation of such comics was usually restricted to small networks of activists or fans. Sales through dedicated politically-oriented websites still tend to reach like-minded individuals. Allusions to specific episodes from current events or (post)colonial history, and to comics classics such as *Tintin* often constitute the extent to which pro-immigrant and far-right comics overlap. Even there, artists generally frame their references in diametrically opposed directions: for example, *Tintin* as a model for racism and xenophobia in allusions by far-right cartoonists to Hergé's series, or as an example of intercultural understanding and antiracism in pro-immigrant comics.

One of my arguments throughout this volume and elsewhere is that the artistic experimentation and avant-gardism of cartoonists drawing about postcolonial and migrant issues are often more compelling than those of Oubapo (Ouvroir de bande dessinée potentielle [Workshop for Potential Comics]), a group of cartoonists that makes comics under formal constraints and modeled itself on Oulipo (Ouvroir de littérature potentielle [Workshop for Potential Literature]), the famous literary group (Groensteen 1997; Miller 2007a; *Oupus*). Oubapo's comics are clever but can tend toward dry formalism, whereas Boudjellal, Anita Comix, Alagbé and Abirached use formal experimentation creatively to explore important artistic and social issues related to migration and postcolonialism. For example, I agree with Jacques Dürrenmatt (2013: 132) that Boudjellal's first strip, "Les dingues dignes" [The dignified loonies] (1978–9), compares favorably to formal comics experimentation by artists of L'Association and Oubapo that Groensteen (1997) has encouraged and theorized. This is an early, postcolonial example of modernist experimentation that Bart Beaty (2007: 77) attributes primarily to avant-gardism in alternative comics of the 1990s, by European artist collectives and publishers such as Amok, L'Association, La Cinquième Couche, Fréon and Oubapo.

Readership is of course a major way in which the alternative comics publishers studied by Beaty define themselves: he describes how they and their artists have worked at "un-popularizing culture" (15), which among other things has meant avoiding one set of readers, a wider and more popular one, and creating or appealing to another readership, a narrower and supposedly more sophisticated one. Already in this chapter and throughout the rest of my study, I refer to various readers and readerships. A first, banal meaning of these words in my study is simply an undifferentiated person or group of people reading a given comic (as above, "from what readers realize at this point was his 'white nightmare'"). A second, less abstract use is the implied reader of the text. For example, the readership implied by Mœbius in "Cauchemar blanc" is not comprised of French racists, given the grotesque appearance and the cowardly, violent and criminal actions of people holding those views in the story. Might his implied reader be a version of the bystander characters who confront the racists in the first part of the story, but only stand by and look on in the second part? No doubt, but perhaps instead a left-leaning reader ready to oppose racist violence and not stand by silently, and one who is also a counter-cultural comics fan alienated from contemporary society and for whom even the normative lifestyle lived by Mr. Barjout, the gang's ringleader, would be nightmarish, setting aside his lynching activity. The implied reader of Mœbius would also recognize the references to McCay's "Dream of the rarebit fiend," signalling literacy in classic American comics. I also evoke specific embodied readerships or groups of readers, such as other alienated people likely to read far-right comics, or typically left-wing readers of *Révolution*. I mention how different readers, both implied and real, might read the comics I discuss. My information about who likely reads the stories and how they might react, or how they have reacted, relies on the following types of sources: publishing context, such as the nature of a periodical in which a comic was published, or a publisher's profile (large or small, alternative or mainstream, far right or leftist, Catholic or secular, activist or commercial, and such); the kind of comic in question (its genre, whether it leans toward either high art or popular culture in reference and style, humor-based or realistic, and so on); other artistic choices and trajectories (artistic training, collaborations between artists, career choices of cartoonists, etcetera); and published author interviews, newspaper articles, and the like. On the other hand, my analysis is not based on any reader surveys, archival letters by readers to cartoonists or periodicals, and the like. I try to be clear in my use of "reader," "readers" and "readership" throughout. Now, to conclude this introductory chapter, here is an overview of the remaining chapters in the volume.

## Conclusion: an outline of the volume

Chapter 2 examines postcolonial French comics in the wake of "Cauchemar blanc," starting with an antiracist comic by Chantal Montellier inspired by Mœbius.

I refer to scholarship about the trend toward "new realist" comics that "Cauchemar blanc" helped launch.[78] I argue that postcolonialism and migration played a larger role in "new realist" comics in France than previously recognized. I make a similar claim about avant-gardism in comics. Beaty (2007: 97) observes that the work of Amok, and of Frémok after Amok merged with Fréon in 2002, "fuses a sociocultural agenda with a particular aesthetic of graphic and narrative innovation within the comics form." I agree and, drawing on Raymond Williams (1995) on modernism and the avant-garde in the early twentieth century, show that postcolonialism and migration were already intertwined with a popular form of comics avant-gardism in the 1980s in the work of Anita Comix. Moreover, their work arguably helped prepare comics avant-gardism of the 1990s. For example, David B., celebrated for *L'ascension du haut mal* (published from the mid-1990s) and a member of L'Association, published pro-immigrant comics with Boudjellal, Jover, Mechkour, Monpierre and others in *Baraka* in the 1980s, and worked with them on related projects.[79] After discussing Anita Comix, I analyze comics drawn individually by Monpierre and Jover as distinctive artistic approaches to postcolonialism and migration in comics.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the realist comics of Boudjellal, which constitute both an important artistic accomplishment and a powerful statement about postcolonial migration, especially by Algerians, to France. The artist was born in 1953 in Toulon, where he and José Jover met during childhood. As young adults, both moved to Paris. Boudjellal's career as a cartoonist has been lengthy and rich in artistic accomplishments. In Chapter 3 I set the grounds for my analysis by engaging with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1986, 1996 [1975]), and with theoreticians who have rethought the concepts of minor literature and (re)territorialization in the specific context of North African migration to France (Mehrez 1993; Hargreaves 1995b). Throughout the chapter I trace key themes and artistic creativity in relation to postcolonialism and migration across much of the rich and extensive *œuvre* of Boudjellal and his artistic partners. I roughly follow the chronological evolution of Boudjellal's life's work, beginning with "Les dingues dignes" (1978–9) and two short stories featuring Abdulah (1981–5), a single Arab immigrant worker in France, one of which reworks "Cauchemar blanc." I cover Boudjellal's main, semi-autobiographical story, the Slimani saga (1985–2012), and finally "La présidente" [The President] (2015–17), a three-volume political thriller about Marine Le Pen and then her niece, Marion Maréchal, as presidents of France, in projected electoral successes of the RN.

Chapter 4 returns for the last time to "Cauchemar blanc," here in the context of an analysis of pastiche in comics by Baru (Hervé Barulea), a French cartoonist of Italian heritage who has focused on working-class migration and postcolonialism throughout virtually his entire life's work. Baru's working-class, immigrant and multicultural background in the metalworking and coal-mining area of Lorraine where he grew up is the major motivating factor behind his creative work, as he has stated repeatedly (2008,

2011, 2012b, 2019). He has received the highest awards of French comics institutions: two best comic book awards at Angoulême in 1991 and 1996, and a lifetime achievement award in 2010. Scholars have studied various aspects of Baru's comics.[80] Here, I show that two of his comics, including *L'autoroute du soleil*, a highly popular manga-style story, very clearly reappropriate Mœbius's comic. Morever, both the defense of postcolonial working-class migrants and the narrative hinge mechanism of "Cauchemar blanc" arguably helped inspire other comics by Baru. Drawing on Miller (2005, 2007b) writing about pastiche in *L'autoroute du soleil*, I discuss other instances in which Baru uses intertextual citation or pastiche in a critical manner, as he alludes to and reworks images, characters and narrative structures from classic comics, including *Tintin*. His intertextual appropriation pays hommage to the art of past masters in his own virtuoso style while also adapting it to postcolonial Europe in ways that his predecessors, such as Hergé, proved incapable of doing.

Chapter 5 revisits a useful concept, "citadel culture," formulated by Otto K. Werckmeister, who used it to analyze the first two volumes of the "Nikopol" comic-book trilogy by Bilal. The Marxist art historian formulated his concept to analyze an ambivalent cultural coping mechanism and mode of artistic expression within Cold-War-era European and American societies that functioned through militarization, nuclear brinkmanship with the Soviet Union, and the exclusion of wide swathes of the population from meaningful participation in society and politics. I argue that Werckmeister's concept remains at least as relevant today as it was when he published the English translation of his eponymous book in 1991. I use his concept to analyze representations of postcolonial France in comics by Bilal, Baru and Jean-Christophe Chauzy, and especially – for the latter two – how "citadel culture" can help us understand the relationship of working-class *banlieues*, often inhabited by proportionally large populations from postcolonial ethnic minorities, to much wealthier and whiter French inner cities. I also rely on scholarship about French national identity and society by thinkers including Etienne Balibar, Maxim Silverman and Kristin Ross.

Chapters 6 and 7 look at how far-right cartoonists have represented foreigners, migrants and postcolonial ethnic minorities in France. I begin Chapter 6 with an overview of a tradition of far-right and racist cartooning in French-speaking Europe, but from an ideological and political position diametrically opposed to Lefort's history, mentioned above. I recall several key comics and cartoonists, including *L'étoile mystérieuse* [*The Shooting Star*] (1941–2) by Hergé, antisemitic and pro-German comics published in France by Russian cartoonist Vica (Vincent Krassousky) during the Second World War, and comic strips from the 1970s including the notorious "Rats noirs" [Black rats] series drawn by Jack Marchal for Groupe Union Défense, a violent organization best known by its acronym (GUD). It was based at a public law school situated on the rue d'Assas in Paris and particularly active from its creation in 1968 through the 1970s. The second half of Chapter 6 is an extended analysis of a comic book partly serialized in

the 1980s by a neo-Nazi group (PNFE) associated with a series of violent attacks on migrants. Chapter 7 begins with an overview of cartooning by Chard, whose editorial cartoons have been published for years in the far-right newspapers *Présent* and *Rivarol*. I next analyze a 2004 comic book by Guillaume Faye and Chard that satirizes the attempted assassination of President Jacques Chirac by Maxime Brunerie, a far-right activist, on 14 July 2002. The rest of the chapter looks at a strange postcolonial turn in far-right comics: an antisemitic two-volume comic by Alain Soral (Alain Bonnet), Dieudonné M'bala M'bala and Zéon (Pascal Fernandez). It blames Jews for the victimization of Blacks, among many other things. As I show, murder and even genocide are never far from far-right French comics, even as their authors try to flip the historical record in various ill-intentioned ways. Their solution, sometimes explicitly shown, though now more usually only suggested in order to avoid running afoul of French laws against racism, hate speech and Holocaust denial, is often murder, race war and the violent expulsion of racialized minority groups from France. In these two chapters I refer to scholarship on the history of the far right (Taguieff, Ralph Schor and Nicolas Lebourg), its ideology (Bruno Di Mascio) and visual iconography (Zvonimir Novak), and on far-right comics history (Hugo Frey).

Chapter 8 examines comics about migration, postcolonialism and politics that Alagbé, whose father was from Benin, published with Amok and Frémok. Beaty (2007) has described Amok's publications as avant-gardist in artistic strategy and in formal terms. I concur, and in this chapter outline the postcolonial and migrant dimensions of their avant-gardism, which Beaty mentions too. Alagbé has often returned to the colonial past in comics, for example, in a lyrical graphic novel in large part about King Béhanzin of Dahomey, defeated by the French at the end of the nineteenth century (McKinney 2016a). In this chapter I focus primarily on comics about the postcolonial period, which of course still often conjure up colonial history, as for example in Alagbé's masterpiece *Nègres jaunes*, which connects several different postcolonial characters in the French *banlieues*: a former *harki* who, under the supervision of Papon, caught and tortured Algerian immigrants in Paris, Black West African *sans-papiers*, and a visual artist who is perhaps a *métis*, like Alagbé himself. An English translation, *Yellow Negroes*, was published by New York Review Books in 2018. I explore that and other comics by Alagbé, including a series of small-format books published under a pseudonym that combine political critique with pornography and comics history.

Chapter 9 is guided by concepts of French historians Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard that I adapt to read *Le piano oriental* [The Oriental Piano] (2015a), a graphic novel by Abirached, a Franco-Lebanese cartoonist. She is known in the United States mainly for translations of two earlier works, as *A Game for Swallows: To Die, To Leave, To Return* (2012) and *I Remember Beirut* (2014), which I have analyzed elsewhere (2015a). Her black-and-white comics are inspired by the literary experimentation of Oulipo, still in existence and that included writers Raymond Queneau, Italo Calvino and Georges Perec,

one of Abirached's favorites. Whereas her previous comics focus on the Lebanese civil war, *Le piano oriental* brings together the artist's own experience of trans-Mediterranean migration and naturalization as French, with the artistic journey of her great-grandfather, who invented a piano that played oriental music. Abirached's transcultural comics are another striking example of widespread artistic innovation by French artists from postcolonial ethnic minority groups.

Chapter 10, the last before the short coda that ends my study, stitches together a history of French comics about *sans-papiers*. In it, I use my concept of the affrontier to help me explore how cartoonists who support the rights of migrants have investigated international frontiers and other boundaries that divide nations and help ethnicize or racialize groups to dominate and exclude them. I recall Abdulah, the *sans-papiers* figure in comics by Boudjellal, and focus on four comic books: *Les migrations de Djeha: Les nouveaux immigrés* [The Migrations of Djeha: The New Immigrants] (1979), by Algerian cartoonist Saladin (Slimane Zeghidour), about an Algerian migrant and his comrades in and around Paris; *Fais péter les basses, Bruno!* [Blow Out the Bass Speakers, Bruno!] (2010), a crime thriller by Baru that features a Black African youth who travels to France hoping to become a soccer star*; Les nouvelles de la Jungle* (*de Calais*) [News from the Jungle (of Calais)] (2017), by cartoonist Lisa Mandel and scholar Yasmine Bouagga; and *Humains: La Roya est un fleuve* [Humans: the Roya is a river that flows into the sea] (2018) by Edmond Baudoin and Troubs (Jean-Marc Troubet). My choice of these four works exemplifies trends in comics about *sans-papiers*: the first two are fictions, whereas the latter two use reportage (reporting), a genre whose possibilities Miller (2008) has theorized in French comics. Whereas Mandel and Bouagga spent several weeks in the famous migrant camp at Calais on the northwestern coast of France, Baudoin and Troubs visited migrants on the border between Italy and southeastern France, where Baudoin is from.

As the metaphor of a hinge suggests, the transition from the colonial to the postcolonial in French comics has involved returning to the colonial past, as cartoonists have redrawn the colonial heritage of French comics and culture. It has also meant drawing away from the colonial past, as some of these cartoonists have pointed toward a future free of colonial images, speech and tropes. Their story is one of hope for brighter tomorrows.

## Notes

1 See especially *Arabicides: Une chronique française, 1970–91*, by Fausto Giudice (1992); see also Giudice (1993).

2 E.g., Noiriel (1992a: 13–67, and especially 18–19, 24; 1992b) on *lieux de mémoire* related to migration; on postcolonial *lieux de mémoire*, see Forsdick (2010) and Achille, Forsdick and Moudileno (2020). On *lieux de mémoire* in French comics, see Martini (1997: 201–14), McKinney (2001a, 2013e, 2020a) and Leroy (2014: e.g., 81–98).

3 On *non-lieux* in French comics, see Miller (2007b: 88) and McKinney (forthcoming).

4 Fleury (2002: 154–5, 238, 262–3; cf. 1001) states that Venner was arrested on 17 April 1961 while trying to assassinate De Gaulle just before the generals' putsch. On Venner's actions during the Algerian War, see also Dard (2005: 14–15, 179) and Venner (1994; for his time in prison, see pp. 146–9).

5 On Coral's cartooning, and his relationship to the OAS and *Europe Action*, see Duprat (1972: 122–3); Algazy (1984: 274; and document no. 29 in "Annexes"); Lefort (1991: 62–5); Charpier (2005: 59–61).

6 E.g., Lefort (1991: 62–5); and of course Venner, while he lived. A drawing from *Journal d'un embastillé* appears in an advertisement inside the front cover of issue 4H (*hors série*) of *La nouvelle revue d'histoire*, spring–summer, 2012, edited by Venner.

7 Algazy (1984: 266, 274; appendix item 29). Shepard mentions Coral's comics (2006: 91, 185), refers to an unsigned cartoon by Coral (Shepard 2009: 42n8) and reproduces it (2012: 93–4), but does not attribute the cartoon to him.

8 McKinney (2011b; 2013e: 154–6). Coral's two books were not the first French comics about the war. For example, during the war the French satirical weekly, *Le Canard enchaîné* published at least two parodies of Tintin comics that made allusions to it, as Screech (2011) shows. I have found another comic strip by J. Lap (Jacques Laplaine; see Solo 2004: 479–80) in *Le Canard enchaîné*, from 28 February 1962, that strings together twenty-seven major events of the war, creating what was perhaps the first attempt to recount it (almost) in its entirety in comic-strip form. Douvry (1983) convincingly analyzes other French comics that made coded references to the war, no doubt to avoid censorship. Coral's books were followed two decades later by the first mainstream French comic book on the subject, *Une éducation algérienne* [An Algerian Education], by Guy Vidal and Alain Bignon (1982). In the interim, Algerian cartoonist Slim (Menouar Merabtène) published *Moustache et les Belgacem* [Moustache and the Belgacem] (1968), the first Algerian comic book, also about the war (Labter 2009: 56, 247).

9 Nineteenth-century comics in French were sometimes autobiographical (Kunzle 1990: e.g., 74–5, 116–17) and often aimed at an adult audience (Mainardi 2011; cf. 2007).

10 Matard-Bonucci (2001); Pasamonik (2004); Doizy and Houdré (2010: 228).

11 *Rivarol* no. 2775, 1 Sept 2006, p. 4; Chard (2006).

12 The periodical's title is sometimes hyphenated. On Venner's change of perspective and *Europe Action*'s focus, see Dard (2005: 282–96) and Shields (2007: 119–24). Coral also drew cartoons for the far-right periodical *Rivarol* (1963) and for *Le Charivari* (1963–4) (Solo 2004: 185).

13 See also Stora (1992, 1997).

14 Shepard (2006: 91; 2009: 42n8).

15 See McKinney (2011c: 25–89) on these comics; on human zoos, see Bancel, Blanchard, Boëtsch, Deroo and Lemaire (2002).

16 I have defined the colonial affrontier as "a boundary that [...] divides and connects France and [... its former colonies], and around which individuals and groups confront each other [ils s'affrontent] – through insulting language [des affronts] or physical confrontation [des affrontements] – or instead seek peace and the effacement of the affrontier, producing an afrontier: a space characterized by freedom of movement and expression. The latter is a postcolonial territory from which colonial confrontation between groups in the present has been eliminated (cf. Hargreaves and McKinney 1997a: 22), although memory of the colonial past may remain" (McKinney 2013e: 3); see also McKinney (2007a, 2011a, 2011b).

17 Formulated especially by Renaud Camus (2011, 2015), who dedicated the third edition of his book by that title "to the two Prophets, Enoch Powell and Jean Raspail" (2015: 7). On the vision of migration propagated by these figures and their like, see below, Chapters 6 and 7, and Moura (1992: 127–41, 245–63).

18 E.g., Slim (1995, 1996, 1997, 2003).

19 I am unaware of any analysis of this episode (cf. Douglas and Malti-Douglas 1994: 188–97). Boudjellal later serialized *Ramadân* in the same periodical (Djeghloul 1988).

20 Bumatay (2012), Mehta (2015) and Federici (2019).

21 See also Miller (1999; 2007b: 23–32, 43–8), Beaty (2008) and McKinney (2011c: 18) on this kind of activity by cartoonists, comics publishers and scholars in the field.

22 For a critique of colonial elements in that tradition, see, for example, Met (1996), Pigeon (1996), Frey (2004), Costantini (2011) and McKinney (2011c, 2013e). For another perspective on the invention of tradition in comics, see Beaty (2008).

23 On "petit-nègre" in French-language comics, see Costantini (2011). Frédéric Soumois (1987: 156–7) speaks of Haddock as one of Hergé's figures of the grotesque in the series, lists his insults and points to the removal of a couple ("moricaud", "commerce noir") in subsequent versions, but fails to discuss their colonialist connection.

24 Among the critics who have underlined the importance of the colonial grotesque in comics by Hergé and others are Pierre (1984), Holo (1993), Met (1996) and Pigeon (1996). Other scholars to whose work I am indebted have underlined the importance of the colonial grotesque in photography (Alloula 2001: 38–9) and at the 1931 Exhibition in Paris (Morton 2001: 117–21, 126). Strömberg (2003, 2010) provides an overview of often grotesque depictions of Blacks in Western comics.

25 On this notion, see Blanchard, Lemaire and Bancel (2008), and Blanchard, Lemaire, Bancel and Thomas (2014).

26 See Verschave (2001) and Dozon (2014).

27 On Coral, his comics and cartoons, see Duprat (1972: 122–3), Algazy (1984: 274, and document 29 in "Annexes"), Lefort (1991: 62–5), Charpier (2005: 59–61), Shepard (2006: 91, 185; 2009: 42n8; 2012: 93–4) and McKinney (2011b; 2013e: 24, 143, 152, 154–6).

28 On this event, see, for example, Péju (2000 [1961]), Levine (1985), Einaudi (1991),

Tristan (1991), Einaudi and Kagan (2001), House (2001), House and MacMaster (2006); on the event in comics, see McKinney (2008a, 2019) and Gorrara (2018).

29 Saint-Ogan (1995a: 10). On this episode, see McKinney (2011c: plate 4, 131). Along with the general historical shifts in imagery that Nederveen Pieterse analyzes, one can find recurring scenarios in which the violence of the colonized flares up and is defeated or domesticated in comics. In some cases this is connected to specific historical rebellions (e.g., the revolt of the Flitta in Christophe's *Les facéties du sapeur Camember* 1989 [1896]), whereas in others it is not (e.g., the cannibal episode at the 1931 Exhibition in Paris in Saint-Ogan's *Zig et Puce aux Indes*; Saint-Ogan 1995c). On these episodes: in *Le sapeur Camember*, see Kunzle (1990: 189) and McKinney (2013e: 48); and in "Zig et Puce," see McKinney (2011c: esp. 63–7).

30 Shepard (2009: 41–2; 2012: 92–102).

31 Schor (1985: e.g., 165–8, 415–35; 1992).

32 Schor (1996b: 225–6).

33 Shepard (2009: 41–5, 2012: 93–6).

34 Shepard (2009, 2012). This language was to be repeated by the far right during the wave of violence against Algerians in 1973 (Ben Jelloun 1985: 68n2; Schor 1996b: 226; Shepard 2012: 101–2). It remains part of the racist, neopopulist rhetoric of the far right, including the Front national (Taguieff 1984: 123; Honoré 1986: 137, 143).

35 See Honoré (1986: 147), Gaspard (1990: 162, 180; 1995), Marcus (1995: 15–16, 21), Gastaut (2004: 111), and p. 233 in this volume. On racism and (neo)colonialism in writings (co-)authored by Venner, see Taguieff (1984: 134n40). Taguieff (1993: 5, 14–16) describes the "biological realist" approach of *Europe Action* and of GRECE in its early stage as an attempt to give racism a scientific biological and anthropological basis, for example, through eugenicism (cf. Dard 2005: 291).

36 Gaspard (1990, 1995).

37 *Différences* (1984). On the FN and French Algeria, see Stora (1999) and Dard (2005: 314–22).

38 Cf. Gauchon and Buisson (1984), and Girardet (1995: 359).

39 Coral published a related image in no. 16, April 1964, p. 23. Titled "La Poubelle: avril 1964 no. 4," it includes one panel (far right top) that is an antisemitic (anti-Arab) caricature showing Muslims (fez-wearing, and skull-cap wearing) and blacks, all men. The text at top says: "Les ouvriers étrangers hésitent à s'établir en France faute de logement et d'un bon accueil. Poisson d'avril! Ça grouille….." [Foreign workers hesitate to settle in France because of a lack of lodging and a good welcome. April Fools! They're swarming…]. In the first issue of *Europe Action* (January 1963) Jacques de Larocque-Latour is listed as "directeur de la publication" [director of the publication]. By the last issue, number 47 (November 1966), he is listed on the "comité de rédaction" [editorial committee] under his pseudonym, "Coral." In June 2012, I consulted all issues of the periodical at the Bibliothèque nationale de France

in Paris: numbers 1 (January 1963) through 47 (November 1966).

40 Ben Jelloun (1985: 68–9), Giudice (1992: 93–103), Gastaut (1993), Schor (1996b: 226–7) and Spire (2005: 243).

41 Summarizing material from Hargreaves (1995a: 17–18): in 1974, the French government halted all inward migration from countries outside what was then the European Economic Community (forerunner of today's European Union). Under international treaty obligations, France later had to allow entry to the families of immigrants already there, but the door was in effect closed on new labor migration, especially from what was then commonly referred to as the Third World, consisting mainly of former colonies; see also Spire (2005: 247).

42 See Groensteen (1999: 100–6) on this technique in comics; for more on this, see below, Chapter 4.

43 For example, neither Lecigne and Tamine (1983) nor Screech (2005a, 2005b) mention the McCay inspiration. Instead, Screech (2005b: 101) compares it to a dream sequence in Tintin (cf. Frey 2004 on colonial racism in that Tintin story). Nor do they underline the crucial importance of the postcolonial transformation of French society in the appearance of such comics, although Screech does raise the issue of racist *faits divers*. Instead, they focus on the importance of a "new realism" to Mœbius and those he inspired, as opposed to fantasy and Hergéan realism in comics, and on realism in other arts. See below, Chapter 4, for analysis of the McCay inspiration of Mœbius and for Baru's reworking of the nightmare/waking mechanism of "Cauchemar blanc."

44 Lecigne and Tamine (1983: 63), Screech (2005b: 101) and Miller (2007b: 39).

45 *Les enfants de l'immigration* (1984) and Chikh and Zehraoui (1984).

46 It is reproduced in Mechkour and Boudjellal (2004: 8).

47 Delorme (1985) and Bouamama (1994a: 35; 1994b: 56–7).

48 See, for example, *Sans frontière*, nos. 92–3 (April–May 1985: 125–44), and Giudice (1992).

49 See, for example, foreign male immigrants in these jobs in comics (e.g., Montellier 1979a: 8–11; Saladin 1979; Clavaud and Duret 1984) and in Farida Belghoul's novel *Georgette!* (1986). See Hargreaves (1995a: 50) on the removal of foreigners from that position.

50 Delorme (1985), Bouamama (1994a: 31, 33–5, 47) and Bouamama (1994b: 52–3, 56–7, 62, 67).

51 See, for example, the wounded father in Mehdi Charef's first novel (*Le thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed*, 1983) and his film (*Le thé au harem d'Archimède*, 1985). At the time, youths sometimes referred to the older generation as "souffris" because they spoke of their suffering, in Arabic- or Berber-inflected French (Fahdel 1990: 142–3; cf. Ben Jelloun 1985: 98–9, 101).

52 By putting the other cartoon of the two bodyless legs in front of his own amputee (a body without legs), Mechkour may also be poking fun at the other cartoonist,

whom I have been unable to identify (he signed as "Balme"), or may just be making a joke. The original poster is reproduced in Lallaoui (1989: 75).

53 The poster is reproduced in Lallaoui (1989: 89) and in Jover and Orieux (2001: 98; 2003: 102).

54 On simplification of the graphic line, see Töpffer (2003: e.g., 8).

55 On this and related terms, see pp. 141–2n19 in this volume.

56 Anita Comix (1984a: 11) pair the same name and social type elsewhere. The type is often called "un beauf," short for "beau-frère" [brother-in-law], popularized through characters drawn by Cabu, one of the cartoonists murdered at *Charlie Hebdo* on 7 January 2015.

57 Anita Comix (1984a: 37) used an octopus in a similar way in another comic.

58 E.g., Nederveen Pieterse (1992: 170) and Berliner (2002: 9–36).

59 Cf. Honoré (1986: 149); see also 70, 202, 218, 224n56 in this volume.

60 On the voyage in and the voyage out in comics, see also McKinney (2013e: 211–23). For Said, the "voyage in" involves physical migration, but also cultural transformation and critique by the subjects of empire.

61 A far-right propaganda stunt resembling this is depicted in a comic-book biography of Jean-Marie Le Pen: the distribution of fake French national identity cards to working-class youths of postcolonial ethnic minority heritage (Frank, Lefort and Bariller 1995a: 33; 1995b: 39); these or similar cards are reproduced in Novak (2011: 94); on the comic-book biography of Jean-Marie Le Pen, see below, Chapter 6.

62 The murdered were cruelly nicknamed "crevettes Bigeard" [Bigeard shrimp] after a commanding officer of the French paratroopers (cf. Horne 2006: 201). Baru (2007: 134; 2012a: 51) depicts a variation on this form of murder in a short, worldless comic strip. The trope first appears genocidally in comics, in Töpffer's *Histoire de Mr. Cryptogame* (1996 [1830, 1844]: panel 170).

63 The cartoonists no doubt retort here to the "traditional image of racist propaganda, which presupposes the identification between immigrant and detritus" (Honoré 1986: 151).

64 Cf. the movie *L'esquive* (Abdellatif Kechiche 2004).

65 The *Petit Robert* (1987) dictionary defines "bamboula" as a "drum in use among Blacks of Africa," and a "Negro dance [danse nègre] executed to the sound of the bamboula" drum. It defines the popular expression, "faire la bamboula" [to do the bamboula] as "to have a [wild] party" [faire la noce]. For an etymology of this term, see Treps (2005: 217).

66 Some examples in colonial-era comics: Bamboula as an insult in *Sam et Sap* (Candide and Le Cordier, "Sam et Sap" in *St Nicolas*, 30 July 1908, p. 688) and as the title character of a series by Mat, "Les aventures de Bamboula" [The Adventures of Bamboula] (e.g., Mat 1954); and ridiculing French spoken by Black Caribbeans, and voodoo, in Saint-Ogan (1995b: 7, 11), first published 1927–8. The Bamboula character

was a widespread form of the colonial grotesque in French culture in colonial-era comics and beyond; see, for example, Nederveen Pieterse (1992: 159–63), Bachollet, Debost, Lelieur and Peyrière (1994: 109) and Pigeon (1996). The Bamboula figure has been recycled in postcolonial France, including in racist conversation reproduced in a 1996 article in the conservative French daily *Le Figaro*, as Blanchard and Bancel (1997: 110) have shown, in a 1994 "Village Bamboula" attraction redolent of French colonial exhibitions featuring Blacks (David and Andrault 1995: 110), and in antiracist comics from the 1990s, e.g., Téhem (2000: 18); Luz (1998: 15, 56); Luz, "Les Mégret gèrent la ville," *Charlie Hebdo*, 3 February 1999, no. 346; Tronchet and Sibran (1994: 6, 15).

67 On *surenchère* in comics, see Rosello (1991) and Groensteen (2010: 5, 79, 109, 194), who generally associates *surenchère* with *Mad* magazine and French artists it inspired, especially Gotlib (Marcel Gottlieb).

68 Their gesture prefigures similar ones in *Maus* (Spiegelman 1991: 11, 41); on the latter, see Witek (1989: 112–14).

69 See pp. 150–1 in this volume.

70 For example, Miller (2001b, 2007b: 38–9) has argued that comics by Montellier and Teulé have politicized *faits divers* much as Mœbius did with "Cauchemar blanc"; cf. Lecigne and Tamine (1983: 59–63) and Screech (2005a, 2005b: 100–10).

71 On the latter in a comic strip by Frederick Burr Opper, see McKinney (2017b).

72 Saint-Ogan (1995c: 56) and Groensteen and Morgan (2007: 85).

73 http://neuviemeart.citebd.org/spip.php?article355, accessed 15 July 2020; cf. Groensteen and Morgan (2007: 19).

74 https://www.college-de-france.fr/site/actualites/Programme-de-rentree-et-nouveaux-professeurs-du-College-de-France-annee-academique-2020-2021.htm; accessed 15 July 2020.

75 Exceptions include Holo (1993) and Baudry (2018).

76 On human zoos, see Bancel et al. (2002).

77 Cf. Hargreaves (1995a: e.g., 99–100, 108–9).

78 Lecigne and Tamine (1983), Screech (2005a, 2005b) and Miller (2007b).

79 *L'ascension du haut mal* refers to the Algerian War and migrants in France (McKinney 2013e: 204–8). I am especially indebted to José Jover for kindly discussing David B.'s collaborative work with me and providing me samples of it.

80 Features of Baru's work studied elsewhere include adolescence, ethnicity and masculinity (Miller 2005), his art and antiracist politics in *L'autoroute du soleil* [Highway to the Sun] (Miller 2007b: 75–102; 2019), the Algerian War in *Le chemin de l'Amérique* [*Road to America*] (McKinney 2008a, 2019), the transcultural (McKinney 2013a; Felici 2016) and representations of marginality (Platthaus 2019).

# Chapter 2
# Postcolonialism and migration in comics after "Cauchemar blanc"

## Introduction: the emergence of postcolonialism and migration in comics

After the Algerian War, the French far right was quick to produce neocolonialist caricatures of immigrants in France, specifically Algerians, as exemplified in the violent, racist cartoon that Coral published in 1964 in *Europe Action*, discussed in the preceding chapter. We have also seen that a critical response by a left-leaning cartoonist emerged in French comics as early as 1974, when Mœbius first published "Cauchemar blanc" [White nightmare], viewed as having inspired a neo-realist trend in comics.[1] In this chapter I begin by looking at comics about postcolonial immigrants and ethnic minorities published between "Cauchemar blanc" and the 1984 civil-rights comic by Anita Comix, also analyzed in Chapter 1. From 1974 to 1984, representation of those social groups began to spread through comics, far beyond the then relatively small arena of the far right. Sometimes cartoonists reworked the influential model of Mœbius in "Cauchemar blanc." They devoted their attention mostly to injustices against postcolonial and recent immigrant minority figures, often done by police and by civilians with far-right, xenophobic sympathies. In comics, postcolonial migration was usually first represented through characters who were adult male immigrants from sub-Saharan or Northern Africa. However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, cartoonists began to shift some of their creative attention to subsequent generations within postcolonial ethnic-minority groups in France. These included young people acculturated to France, whether because they moved there as children or were born there. The partial shift in focus, from single, male, postcolonial migrant workers to more-or-less permanently settled immigrant communities with adult men and women, as well as young people, occurred at about the same time too in other art forms, including prose fiction, poetry, film and theater, and in mass media such as newspaper, radio and television.[2] The more comprehensive focus continues today, encompassing the coexistence in

France of multiple generations of postcolonial ethnic minorities with differing historical relationships to France, and a diversity of citizenship and residency statuses. Although this complexity is typical and expected today, it required a radical transformation in thinking about the nature of French culture and society and how to represent it. Cartoonists were well attuned to profound changes brought about by the permanent settlement of postcolonial ethnic minorities in France. Comics therefore provide revealing insights on those transformations happening at a time when the art form was changing quickly, as cartoonists published comics that were increasingly sophisticated in artistic expression, and often for adults instead of children. This social and artistic evolution is strikingly visible in the comics from 1974 through the mid-1980s that are the subject of this chapter.

I begin by studying how French comics integrated the figure of the postcolonial immigrant. I focus first on stories by Chantal Montellier, an important French feminist and leftist cartoonist who reworked elements from “Cauchemar blanc” in a comic she published in 1976 in the short-lived but groundbreaking periodical *Ah! Nana*, which focused on comics by or about women (including by French artist Florence Cestac and American cartoonist Trina Robbins). In my analysis, I refer to comics scholarship on the “new realist” comics by Bruno Lecigne and Jean-Pierre Tamine (1983) and by Matthew Screech (2005a, 2005b). I also rely on reflection by Michel Foucault (1979) and Ann Miller (2001b) on *faits divers*. I argue that after “Cauchemar blanc,” a broad range of artists, including very well-known cartoonists, participated in a wide-ranging move to include postcolonial and migration themes in comics. I then turn to comics by Larbi Mechkour and Anita Comix, the latter – as we saw in Chapter 1 – a studio composed of Farid Boudjellal, José Jover and Roland Monpierre, three French cartoonists of different ethnic and national heritages: Algerian and Armenian, Spanish, and Black Caribbean. Drawing on theorizing by Bart Beaty (2007) and Raymond Williams (1995) on the avant-garde in art, I argue for understanding these artists as forming an avant-garde movement in comics, through their innovative approaches to postcolonial and migrant themes. My perspective on the strategy of Anita Comix differs from theorization of artistic avant-gardes, including in comics, that defines their experimentation primarily in formalist terms or that mainly associate avant-gardism with high art (I will return to the question of the avant-garde in Chapter 8 to discuss the comics of Yvan Alagbé, which come closer to a traditional perspective on avant-gardism). I also show how Anita Comix use autobiographical self-parody as starving cartoonists to mock stereotypes about the colonized, immigrants and foreigners, and simply to have fun. To analyze the representational strategies of the Anita Comix cartoonists and Mechkour, I borrow concepts from experts on transculturation (Ortiz 1995; Hargreaves 2012), rhetoric (Angenot 1982) and the far right (Taguieff 1984). I also refer to scholarship on nineteenth-century comics by several experts (Thierry Groensteen, Philippe Kaenel and David Kunzle).

From the collective creations of Anita Comix, I turn my attention to comics that Monpierre and Jover published separately. From among Monpierre's individually drawn comics about Black cultures, I focus mainly on a book that he published with Futuropolis that draws on Caribbean oral culture, classic comics and a Senegalese film to reevaluate culture in Guadeloupe and to interrogate its relationship with mainland France. I refer to scholarship by Martin Barker (1989) and Screech (2005b) on the folktale structure in comics, and by Miller (2007b) on meta-representation in comics. In the following section I look at comics by Jover, beginning with a crime fiction he published in 1983. Previous scholarship on "new realism" and *faits divers* in comics is again relevant here. I suggest that in general, Jover's comics may best be described as exhibiting a baroque, working-class, immigrant aesthetic that is characterized – like his paintings – by an opening of art to a multitude of popular influences. I now begin my analyses by looking at representations of postcolonialism and migration in French comics from the mid-1970s.

## Comics in the wake of "Cauchemar blanc"

During the decade between 1974 and 1984, left-leaning and pro-immigrant cartoonists inverted the roles of victimizer and victim typical of far-right cartooning and discourse by Coral and others, presented in the previous chapter, in which white French were the victims of predatory postcolonial immigrants. Olivier Terrades (in Marie and Ollivier 2013: 132) remarks, about the North African moped writer in "Cauchemar blanc," that "the hero is a martyr." Already in the 1970s, and in comics since then, especially by Farid Boudjellal, such immigrant figures have often been placed alongside other marginalized characters. Drawing on theorizing about *faits divers* and *contre-faits divers* [counter-*faits divers*] by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault (e.g., 1979: 288), Ann Miller has analyzed how leftist, feminist cartoonist Chantal Montellier was a primary exponent of *contre-faits divers* in comics such as *Blues* (1979b), a collection of short stories originally published in 1978–9, about:

> protagonists who embody some aspect of marginalization through their status as prisoners, unemployed, homeless, immigrants or psychiatric cases [...] Montellier's stories illustrate the way in which delinquents can be produced by the justice system: an Algerian worker, evicted from his *foyer* [worker's hostel], becomes liable to arrest as a "threat to public order." (Miller 2001b: 321)[3]

Screech (2005a: 99; 2005b: 104), referring to work by Bruno Lecigne and Jean-Pierre Tamine (1983: 123), mentions "Oscar Brown n'est pas un espion" [Oscar Brown is not a spy], an antiracist story that Montellier published in 1980 in *Métal hurlant*, as being inspired by both "Cauchemar blanc" and a genuine *fait divers*. Montellier was an early

and forceful creator of antiracist comic strips revolving around real or invented *faits divers*, notably in her "Andy Gang" series. Groensteen (2010: 159) classifies the series about "le roi de la bavure" [the king of illegal police violence] as a parody of the *polar* or *roman policier* [crime novel] genre in film, prose fiction and comics, but its satirical dimension is at least as important as its parodic aspect, if not more. The name ("Andy Gang") of the title character punningly refers to "anti-gang" policing during the presidency of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (1974–81).[4] The first "Andy Gang" story that Montellier published, in 1976 in *Ah! Nana*, was already clearly inspired by "Cauchemar blanc" and featured Algerian immigrant workers in Marseille.[5] Police brigadier Andy Gang unjustly orders his men to kill "Mohamed, 37 ans, travailleur algérien en France" [Mohamed, 37 years old, Algerian worker in France]. He does so in a moment of rage or madness triggered by the word *raton* [little rat].[6] When one of his men yells the epithet, Andy repeats it: "Quoi? Un raton!" [What? A little rat!]. The subsequent frame is filled with an imposing subjective image of an army parachutist, perhaps Andy himself during his military service, or maybe as he would like to imagine himself. Verses from the song "Debout les paras" [Stand up paratroopers] and the order to fire ("Feu!!" [Fire!!]) also flash into Andy's mind.

Reading the strip alongside Mœbius's influential model, one can note important similarities and differences between the two. Montellier's strip represents Mohamed as an isolated North African immigrant in France, in part by quoting a song about exile sung by Algerian artist Taos Amrouche. We observe Mohamed working as a street sweeper, an occupation typically associated with immigrant African men at the time and depicted in other comics of the era.[7] In "Cauchemar blanc," white French civilians, shown masquerading as policemen in the dream sequence, attempt to murder the unarmed North African in the subsequent, apparently real or waking, sequence (and perhaps succeed in doing so), whereas in Montellier's story the racist killers are plainclothes policemen. Both comics use a circular structure and subjective images as a hinge, but in significantly different ways. We saw earlier that Mœbius first shows the racist leader's nightmare in which the attack is thwarted and then, after he awakes, the real attack but in more oniric terms than the preceding, longer, dream segment (Lecigne and Tamine 1983: 63; Screech 2005b: 101; Miller 2007b: 39). Montellier, on the other hand, uses a single frame – the subjective image of the paratrooper – as a daydream or flashback hinge that directly precedes and, she implies, triggers the murder of the unarmed man. Montellier's version therefore replaces the trivial hinge between dream and reality that Mœbius borrowed from Winsor McCay's comics (indigestion that induces a nightmare) with a hinge that is socially meaningful: she attributes the policeman's violence to a racist, authoritarian delirium or fantasy associated with the French army and perhaps the Algerian War, in which French paratroopers played a large role.[8] At the end of the story she returns to the connection between fiction and reality, by having the police brigadier cynically impute responsibility for his murderous action on the influence that television violence supposedly had on him.

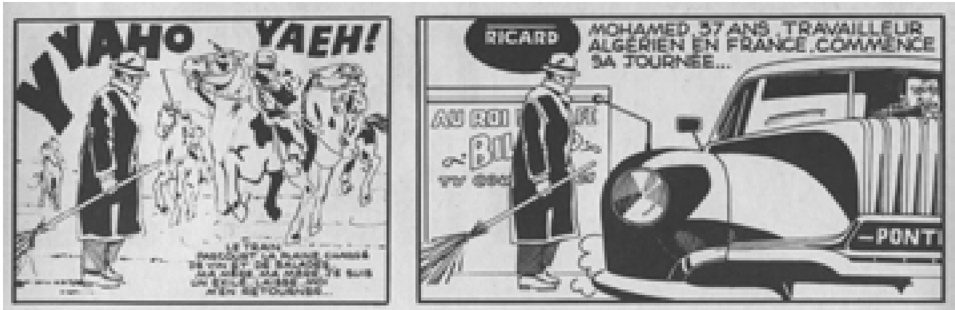


**Figure 2.1:** From Chantal Montellier (1979) *Andy Gang*, Paris: Les Humanoïdes Associés, p. 8.1–2 © Les Humanoïdes Associés. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

The story is circular in other ways too: it begins and ends with an Algerian immigrant worker going about his work routine, followed by a passage depicting Andy’s wife serving him breakfast in their suburban home. Montellier suggests that the exploitation of Algerian immigrant workers and the alienation caused by their exilic condition is ongoing, by having Ahmed take the place of Mohamed, and continuing the lyrics of Amrouche’s song, including its refrain about an exiled North African emigrant man longing to return home. Through this and another crucial change, Montellier begins to give agency to the figure of the North African immigrant worker, even though he remains primarily an alienated, solitary exilee in France, cut off from his culture and community, and a victim of French racists. The first subjective image of the story gives readers access to Mohamed’s daydream as he listens to Amrouche singing: North African men in traditional Touareg clothing wave a rifle and a flag as they ride horses across a desert-like background (Figure 2.1). This image clearly represents indigenous North African men as warriors, and could also suggest anticolonial resistance to the French. On the other hand, Mohamed himself is completely nonviolent. In fact, he telephones the police, speaking in perfect French,[9] to report a murder he just witnessed by Paulo, whose name no doubt indicates a European immigrant background. Montellier also includes a Black character singing Bo Diddley’s blues song “I’m looking for a woman,” which expresses the alienation and sexual longing of a migrant (in the lyrics, the woman spurns the singer, telling him to return to the countryside). References to African Americans as a cultural minority occupying a position similar to North Africans in France subsequently became a leitmotif in cultural productions in France.[10] By contrast, Mœbius’s North African is completely mute throughout the story and only serves as an observing bystander during the nightmare sequence, while various French characters, including a policeman of Spanish heritage, loudly discuss the failed murder attempt and resulting car accident.

Crime comics scripted by Frank Reichert and drawn by Golo (Guy Nadeau) are also among those analyzed by Lecigne and Tamine (1983: 107–9) as part of the “new realist” current of French comics in the 1970s and early 1980s that was initiated by Mœbi-

us in "Cauchemar blanc." They argue that American crime fiction helped inspire the new realist trend in comics, including the comics of Frank and Golo, several of which were published by Futuropolis (Cestac 2007: 67).[11] The comics of Frank and Golo were also heavily influenced by American underground comics and their treatment of race relations, sexuality, drug use, criminality and so on. Cestac (25–8) describes how she and Etienne Robial imported and sold American underground comics in their alternative-comics bookstore, from which they launched into comics publishing. She (38–9) also depicts a French visit by American underground cartoonist Vaughn Bodé, and the publication by Futuropolis of his comics in French translation. *Actuel* and other alternative magazines also published American underground comics. Other comics from the 1970s through the 1980s by French cartoonists that explored postcolonialism – with influences from the American comics underground, punk culture or advertising – include Jacques Tardi's "La crainte du Sloane aux yeux bleus" [The fear of the Sloane with the blue eyes] (1975), *Closh en stock* [Closh in Stock] (1991a [1982]) and *Rock around the Closh* (1991b [1984]) by Ben Radis (Rémi Bernardi) and Dodo (Dominique Nicolli), and Beb-Deum's [Bertrand Demay] "Vaudou du matin" [Morning voodoo] (1986) and *Région étrangère* [Foreign Region] (with Jean-Pierre Dionnet, 1989). In fact comics with postcolonial themes during this period are too numerous for me to list them all here.

One of the longer treatments of postcolonialism, which may have been inspired by Mœbius's "Cauchemar blanc" or Montellier's comics, is *Le voyage de Béké* [The Voyage of Béké], by Thierry Clavaud and Daniel Duret (1984). Drawn in 1983, it recounts the story of Béké, a single Black African immigrant man working in a French city, probably Paris, who sweeps streets and empties cans into a garbage truck. As in Montellier's "Andy Gang" story, the cartoonists critique French racism, which they link both to the police and to (neo)colonial French military action in Africa (5–12, 33), again by French paratroopers, this time in 1978 in the Kolwesi mining region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, then named Zaire and ruled by Mobutu Sese Seko, the corrupt dictator and neocolonial ally of France and the United States. The story develops further the theme of a postcolonial male migrant's nostalgia for his African homeland, and his sexual desire and alienation, represented here through an erotic attraction to an inaccessible white Frenchwoman (shown naked in his fantasy), though not the threat of rape, evoked by Coral in *Europe Action* to stigmatize African migrant workers. Béké returns nostalgically to Africa through his imagination during a long stream-of-consciousness passage triggered by listening to African music on a portable cassette player, retrieved from a garbage can (17–42). The cartoonists use the potential of comics to create an ironic split between visual and textual narration (a resource that Rodolphe Töpffer launched in comics in the early nineteenth century) to recount an African creation story, featuring elaborate African masks, that critiques a narrative of European technological progress. However, Béké, now too alienated by living among whites to fully reconnect with his African culture (35), dies when he imaginatively tries to return to his

roots and is accidentally run over by the garbage truck (42–3). A similarly hallucinatory death of an alienated African immigrant in Paris occurs in prose fiction in Ousmane Socé's *Mirages de Paris* (1964 [1937]).[12] The comic book's coda features a young Black man dressed like the white rockers in Frank Margerin's comics, with jeans, boots, a black leather jacket and a *banane* [front-curl pompadour] hairstyle, who picks up the portable cassette player that Béké put aside just before his accidental death. The cartoonists figure the transition from alienated African immigrant to acculturated Black French youth through these two characters and their preferred musical styles. The unnamed rocker judges Béké's music "merdique" [shitty], so he replaces it with his own cassette and walks away, snapping his fingers to a rock song in English (44).

In addition to ethnic majority artists who created comics with postcolonial themes, a significant number of cartoonists with roots in former French colonies drew comics in France in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, Algerian cartoonist Saladin (Slimane Zeghidour) published *Les migrations de Djeha: Les nouveaux immigrés* [The Migrations of Djeha: The New Immigrants] in 1979, with a preface by *Pied-Noir* stand-up comedian and actor Guy Bedos, born in Algeria. Saladin's comic book provides an excellent example of transculturation. It reworks the Djeha or Djoha character, a trickster figure in oral folktales in North Africa and beyond, as a hapless but plucky Algerian immigrant.[13] Its main story, a twenty-four-page narrative, recounts Djeha's arrival in France and search for work as a manual laborer. The story satirizes the French – including through a pastiche of Asterix as a policeman (10) – and chronicles the difficulties of lonely Algerian immigrant men living in Paris. Single cartoons and short comic strips about the plight of African male immigrants in France constitute the remainder of the volume. In Chapter 10, I discuss in detail Zeghidour's main comics narrative from the album.

Famous French cartoonists of immigrant or (post)colonial background include Baru (Hervé Barulea, of Italian and Breton parents), Enki Bilal (from what was then Yugoslavia) and Jacques Ferrandez (of *Pied-Noir* heritage and born in Algeria). All three artists published comics dealing directly or indirectly with (post)colonial migration to Europe, including "Le pain des Français" [The bread of the French] by Ferrandez (1979), the three futuristic Nikopol stories by Bilal (1995; first album publication, 1980–92) and "Quéquette blues" [Weenie Blues] by Baru (2005; first album publication, 1984–6). I analyze comics by these three accomplished artists later in this volume and elsewhere.[14] I now turn to the publications of Anita Comix, who collectively began to make innovative comics about postcolonial themes about a decade after Mœbius published "Cauchemar blanc."

## Anita Comix *et cie*: a multicultural, avant-garde cartooning trio

In *Unpopular Culture: Transforming the European Comic Book in the 1990s*, Bart Beaty argues that an avant-garde movement formed in European comics from the early

1990s (2007: 73, 85). He and some of the cartoonists he studies locate the roots of the 1990s European comics avant-garde in comics published by Futuropolis, run by Cestac, Robial and others, from the early 1970s.[15] He emphasizes transnational dimensions of the artistic avant-garde in comics, but focuses mainly on the formalist innovation of Oubapo and on fine-art modernism in comics. He (109) refers to Pierre Bourdieu's view of the avant-garde as "bring[ing] together artists from diverse backgrounds" but devotes relatively little space to exploring what those backgrounds are in sociological terms, or the (post)colonial, migrant and class dimensions of avant-gardism in comics (cf. Boltanski 1975). He (74) also argues against the thesis "that the avant-garde can exist in the present only at the global periphery, such as in Latin America." I agree with him about the existence of comics avant-gardism in 1990s Paris, Brussels, Lisbon and other European cities. I concur "that peripheries are not defined exclusively by social geography," but believe too that defining peripheries in social and geographic terms – through factors such as social class, migrant heritage, provincial upbringing, or belonging to a postcolonial ethnic minority – can be useful even when examining the artistic periphery of comics in European capital cities and other urban centers of the global North, as he does. I hasten to note that Beaty does refer to such social and geographic dimensions when discussing contributions to the 1990s comics avant-garde by Alagbé, a French cartoonist whose father was from Benin, and Olivier Marboeuf, of French Caribbean background (Beaty 1998; 2007: 83–6, 97, 110). Their comics have often featured postcolonial and migrant themes, as have those that other cartoonists, such as Kamel Khélif, published in the periodical *Le cheval sans tête* and with their publishing house, Amok, now merged with Fréon, as Frémok.[16] However, we can gain a fuller understanding of the massive transformation of comics in the last few decades if we recognize the contribution of cartoonists such as Boudjellal, Jover and Monpierre, from a postcolonial or recent immigrant background, to Futuropolis, comics avant-gardism, and French comics in general. They provide an example of avant-gardism through popular culture.

In *The Sociology of Culture*, Raymond Williams (1995: 83–5) underlines important transnational and immigrant contributions to the constitution of artistic avant-gardes in cities such as Paris from the 1890s through the 1920s. His comments deserve lengthy quotation here, because of their applicability to French comics from the 1970s to the present. They help us advance beyond a formalist understanding of avant-garde movements. For Williams, the avant-garde has five charactistics: (1) "typically, a metropolitan base [...], its key factors being a relative [especially cultural] autonomy and a degree of internationalization, itself often related to imperialism"; (2) "a high proportion of the contributors to avant-garde movements were immigrants to such a metropolis, not only from outlying national regions but from other and smaller national cultures, now often seen as culturally provincial in relation to the metropolis" (e.g., Guillaume Apollinaire, the French poet of Polish ancestry); (3) "certain factors in avant-garde culture, and especially the conscious breaks from 'traditional' styles, have to be an-

alysed not only in formal terms but within the sociology of metropolitan encounters and associations between immigrants who share no common language but that of the metropolis and whose other (including visual) received sign-systems have become distanced or irrelevant"; (4) "such avant-garde formations, developing specific and distanced styles within the metropolis, at once reflect and compose kinds of consciousness and practice which become increasingly relevant to a social order itself developing in the directions of metropolitan and international significance beyond the nation-state and its provinces, and of a correspondingly high degree of mobility"; and (5) "the internal social conditions of a metropolis, combining at once the metropolitan concentration of wealth and the internal pluralism of its metropolitan-immigrant functions, create especially favourable supportive conditions for dissident groups." Bourdieu's view of avant-gardism (1992), and Bourdieu-inspired analyses by Boltanski (1975) or Beaty (1998, 2007, 2008, 2012) usefully explain key dimensions of the field of artistic production, including of comics, but do not address in depth the postcolonial and immigrant dimensions of the comics field, or their role in avant-gardism. Williams' perspective on avant-gardes is therefore more helpful for understanding the avant-gardism of Anita Comix. His remarks provide a fertile basis for analyzing the globalizing and political dimensions of avant-gardism in comics, which have been key to transformations of the field.

Anita Comix may not fit usual definitions of an avant-garde, nor did it possess or produce some of the typical attributes of one: it created no journal or manifesto as such, and consisted of only three cartoonists, who called themselves a "Studio" and not a movement. On the other hand, they formed a core group that collaborated with other cartoonists from related backgrounds who were working in a similar vein, including Rasheed, Sabeurdet and Larbi Mechkour, French cartoonists of Algerian heritage. Boudjellal, Jover and Monpierre collectively drew a series of comics ("Anita Comix") in which they represented themselves as outsiders struggling to shift the terms of representation, both in French society and in comics. In published interviews and statements, the cartoonists asserted the value of popular comics and the importance of their immigrant and postcolonial backgrounds to their cartooning. As we began to see in the previous chapter, their comics aimed radically to transform received, stultifying habits of cartooning, often through satirical, multicultural humor. Some of their comics make strong statements about how the cartoonists viewed their transformative, avant-garde role in comics. The group helped launch enormous changes in the field, through both their collective work and individual publications.

How Boudjellal, Jover and Monpierre came to live, study and work in Paris is indicative of the role of migration and (post)colonialism in helping to constitute avant-garde groupings of artists. Boudjellal and Jover became friends during their childhood in Toulon, where Boudjellal was born and to which Jover's family had migrated from Spain. They met at the Toulon flea market, where they bought and sold "pockets,"

small-format comics read mostly by working-class children at the time. Jover recalls this encounter in “Profession: Dessinateur B.D.”[17] In 1975 Monpierre and Jover met at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris [Fine Arts School of Paris], where they both were students, and where Jover studied for six years. The cartoonists’ movement to Paris may also be linked to several key types of transnational journeys. Monpierre’s ancestors had been deported from Africa as slaves to the French Caribbean across what Paul Gilroy (1993) has called the Black Atlantic. Monpierre’s family then traveled from Guadeloupe to Paris, where he was born. Boudjellal’s paternal grandmother, Marie Caramanian, was forced into exile during the Armenian genocide in Turkey and settled in Algeria with her Algerian husband, Moussa Boudjellal (Boudjellal 2006b: 57–71). She later migrated to France with her son, Boudjellal’s father, during the Algerian War, and perhaps because of it. Jover was born in Valencia into a family of Spanish Republicans, and during his boyhood was brought to France, first to the Pyrénées region (Jover and Orieux 2003: 66–7), and then to Toulon. At age nineteen, Jover traveled to Paris to study at the Beaux Arts school. Boudjellal traveled from Toulon to Paris in search of work as a cartoonist. The travel to Paris by Jover and Boudjellal, and by Monpierre’s family, exemplifies what one could call both a postcolonial pilgrimage, following Benedict Anderson’s description of travels by the colonized to European capital cities (1991: 121–4), and a “voyage in,” in the terms of Edward Said (1994b: 216, 239–61).

We can also consider the travel of the three cartoonists to, and meeting in, Paris from another angle: it follows a traditional French pattern of movement from province to capital, whether from Toulon, Guadeloupe or elsewhere in France.[18] Taken together, the voyages of enslavement, genocide, political exile, labor migration, and education of the cartoonists, their parents and their ancestors are exemplary of movements that have criss-crossed the globe and produced contemporary, cosmopolitan, multicultural Paris and avant-gardist movements there. In that sense, Boudjellal, Jover and Monpierre were quintessential Parisians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and the inheritors of a long history of overlapping travels. They depict those voyages and related ones in their individually and collectively authored comics. Because the three cartoonists have generally preferred fiction, and occasionally history, over straight autobiography, in their comics, their representations of these voyages often refract, rather than more-or-less directly represent, their personal and family histories. Nonetheless, their richly complex voyages and histories are omnipresent in their comics.

Boudjellal, Jover and Monpierre made important contributions to the transformations that comics went through in the late 1970s and the 1980s, through their work with other cartoonists, their contributions to existing comics institutions and publications, and their work together as Anita Comix. Two collaborations show how the artists fit into other networks of alternative or avant-garde cartoonists before and during the time they worked together. Monpierre contributed some art work to the first issue of *Bazooka* (1974–5), a periodical published by the eponymous group of artists who

met at the Beaux-Arts school in Paris, and whose comics and other visual art were inspired by punk aesthetics.[19] Lecigne and Tamine (1983: 11–12, 76–83) view their work as avant-gardist. Worth mentioning too is the fact that Boudjellal, Mechkour, Rasheed (all three of Algerian heritage) and Jover contributed to some of the same periodicals, including *Le citron hallucinogène* [The Hallucinogenic Lemon] and *Viper*, as did Olivia Clavel and Lulu Larsen, both members of Bazooka.[20] In those same periodicals one finds early comics by some cartoonists, including Mattt Konture (Mathieu de la Fouchardière) and David B. (Pierre-François Beauchard), whom Beaty sees as belonging to, or at least allied with, avant-gardist cartoonists and comics in the 1990s.[21]

In fact, Boudjellal, Jover and Monpierre have had a lengthy association with David B., now celebrated worldwide for *L'ascension du haut mal* [*Epileptic*] (2011 [1996–2003]), the comic-book autobiography and family history that he published with L'Association, and many other graphic narratives. In the mid-1980s, David B. worked with Boudjellal, Jover, Monpierre and other cartoonists of postcolonial or immigrant background on the comics section of *Baraka*, a weekly and then monthly magazine published from December 1985 to May 1987, and previously titled *Sans frontière*. *Sans frontière* and *Baraka* brought together well-known authors including Abdellatif Laâbi, from Morocco, and Leïla Sebbar, of French and Algerian heritage, and made significant contributions to multicultural awareness and activism during the 1980s. Boudjellal coordinated the four-page comics centerfold of *Baraka*. Monpierre's contributions included a strip titled "Dom et Tom,"[22] set in the French Caribbean. Jover's participation included an episode of Salséro, an immigrant's son and the cartoonist's alter-ego. Boudjellal's comics in *Baraka* include stories about the Slimani family, his main fictional Algerian-French family from Toulon and then Paris. Mechkour, Rasheed and Sabeurdet also drew cartoons and strips for *Baraka*, some of which were republished by Jover in issues of *El Building*: for example, Sabeurdet's satirical "A bas les Arabes" [Down with Arabs].[23] Readers of the magazine were invited to collaborate with cartoonists, including in a regular rubric beginning in the third issue and titled "Abdulah raconte vos blagues racistes" [Abdulah tells your racist jokes], a strip featuring one of Boudjellal's main early characters, a male immigrant worker from North Africa who survives physical attacks and verbal abuse in France. The strip provided a funny way of deflating racist discourse. David B.'s contributions to issues 1 and 3–6 include cartoons and strips variously featuring Black Africans, Jewish families and a racist white skinhead. Taken together, the comics and cartoons in *Baraka* provide funny, critical takes on postcolonial ethnicity, immigration and racism in contemporary France.

In 1989 David B. and Jover published drawings and comics in *Plume et colle*, an educational periodical for children from seven to eleven years old. In 2005, Jover's press, Tartamudo, published *Zèbre*, a comic book by David B. about a mysterious Black African living in Paris, which David B. had published in *(A suivre)*. It was inspired in part by a card that David B. was given one day when exiting the Paris subway, which advertised

the services of an African *marabout* [seer]. The Anita Comix cartoonists also published books with Futuropolis, the main art and alternative comics publisher of the period. Cestac and Robial published one comic book by Jover (1989), two by Monpierre (1983, 1986) and four by Boudjellal (1983b, 1985a, 1985b, 1988b), all containing stories rooted in their postcolonial or immigrant heritages. If this was certainly an excellent opportunity that the publisher provided the three cartoonists, it was also a significant contribution by the authors to the publisher's catalogue during a period when the increasingly multicultural nature of French society was gaining nationwide recognition. The immigrant and postcolonial features of the Anita Comix collaboration and of the French comics scene of the 1970s and 1980s prefigured and prepared the way for the transnational, cosmopolitan, avant-gardist comics of the 1990s, for example those of Alagbé, to which I return in Chapter 8. Anita Comix opened up the field in part by harnessing parody and satire to poke fun of ethnic and racist stereotypes in comics and beyond.

## "On a beaucoup souffert, on a envie d'en rire": stereotypes, self-parody and satire

In an interview Jover described the direction they decided to take in 1984: "We've started a series with ourselves as characters, to poke fun at our own mugs. Have you seen them? We've suffered a lot, and we want to laugh about it" (Anita Comix 1984a: 57).[24] The result was a series of stories in which the trio appears as various characters, including the Biblical magi: Boudjellal is Melk (Melchior), Jover is Gasp (Gaspard) and Monpierre is Balt (Balthazar). Truncating the names of the wise men sets a tone and institutes a crucial difference with respect to the Biblical model: instead of being ethereal magi, the trio are a down-to-earth, familiar kind. They are comic-strip buddies, who might wink at you on the street, making you gasp and laugh at their daring, funny disguise. Parodying the Biblical trio was a brilliant choice by the three cartoonists, because of its Middle Eastern connotations, with a role tailored to Boudjellal's autobiographical Arab character, as well as the positive role the story has historically provided to a Black magus (Nederveen Pieterse 1992: 26–8), in this case played by Monpierre's alter ego. Rewriting and redrawing this part of the story of Christ's birth, the cartoonists ironically inserted themselves, along with their immigrant, postcolonial and – in the case of Boudjellal – Muslim heritages, within a central, Catholic strand of traditional French culture.[25] It also gave the cartoonists the opportunity to self-reflexively portray themselves bringing an artistic gift to French culture and society: a funny, satirical reevaluation of France's colonial and immigrant heritage in comics. In so doing, they gave themselves and their readers a good laugh, as well as an excellent representation of tolerance and mutual understanding.

In the hands of Anita Comix, satirical and parodic humor was a vehicle for a no-holds-barred send-up of received images and ideas, contemporary political discourse

on ethnicity, and stock comic-book characters inherited from the colonial era. Their collection of stories, *Anita Comix*, was published by Arcantère, a small company specializing in immigrant-related fiction and political theory during the 1980s.[26] The title page displays a concentrated brew concocted from received ethnic and national images, some racist: Boudjellal/Melk is a knife-wielding, carpet-selling Arab, Monpierre/Balt appears as an African cannibal and Jover/Gasp wears a Spanish bullfighter's outfit. Their provocative, satirical spirit is summed up in a page (11) titled "Les nouveaux étrangers" [The new foreigners], presented by Anita, the studio's blonde, female muse, who symbolizes attractive femininity to the trio. French fears of a foreign invasion are mercilessly skewered on the page: first a caricatural Frenchman is frightened out of his wits by the "new foreigners" (including the artistic magi) while another is revealed by x-rays to be an African cannibal under his white, stereotypically French features; then a close-up of sperm ridicules biological notions of racial difference; next is mocked the racist notion of a dangerous *seuil de tolérance* [threshold of tolerance] that must not be crossed, in percentages of new immigrants living among the French population;[27] and finally Anita welcomes "new foreigners" with a satirical pastiche of a famous line by the standup comic Coluche (Michel Colucci), of Italian heritage: "Moi raciste?! Mais non! D'ailleurs il y a plus d'étrangers que de racistes!" [Me, racist?! Oh, no. Furthermore, there are more foreigners than racists!].[28]

Anita Comix also took "les rois mages" out of the pages of comic books and into the streets: for example, they appeared on a poster for a 1986 concert sponsored by Radio Beur and *Baraka Hebdo* and on one for Convergence '84, the antiracist demonstration that was the 1984 sequel to the 1983 March for Equality and against Racism, nicknamed the "Marche des Beurs" [March of the *Beurs*].[29] Thierry Smolderen (2009: 88) has argued that British, French and American cartoonists acted as "sideshow barkers" and "interpreters of images 'from elsewhere'" in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example by representing world's fairs in their cartoons and comics. I have argued elsewhere (McKinney 2011c) that there was a strong colonial component in those exotic images drawn by French cartoonists. In their comics, drawn decades later, Anita Comix brilliantly satirize the role of the postcolonial cartoonist as a *montreur d'images* [presenter of images] of the exotic from French colonies and other emigrant homelands. That exoticism was current in French culture at the time, in popular music, cinema, literature and comics.

In the "rois mages" stories, parody often serves a noteworthy self-referential role. One episode shows Melk, Balk and Gasp at a comics convention trying desperately to entice festival-goers to have their portraits drawn by the trio (Anita Comix 1994a: 27). They only succeed in attracting a crowd by turning their stand into a "merguez-frites" stall, where they hawk spicy North African sausages and fries. Balt draws comics on sheets that Melk uses to wrap and distribute portions of the ethnic food cooked by Gasp. The story, especially its final image, is a striking, ironic commentary on the trio's

ethnic strategy for getting a start in the competitive comics industry. It self-deprecatingly suggests that North African food is more popular than the trio's comics, even at a comics convention, but that the artists will stop at nothing to disseminate their art and make a living. The story marks a turning point in French comics, when ethnic minority cartoonists began to paint themselves into the center of a picture where they had long been relegated to the margins, consigned to stereotyped, subaltern roles with little agency. The tradition of artistic self-parody by cartoonists has roots in nineteenth-century novels in prints: for example, Rodolphe Töpffer's artist in *Mr. Pencil* (1831), Cham's caricaturist and failed painter Barnabé Gogo in *Un génie incompris, persécutions artistiques* [A Misunderstood Genius: Artistic Persecutions] (1841), and the (would be) artists satirized by Gustave Doré in *Trois artistes incompris et mécontens* [sic] [Three Misunderstood and Unhappy Artists] (1850) and *Des-agréments d'un voyage d'agrément* [Dis-Pleasures of a Pleasure Trip] (1851).[30] Doré depicts himself painting in the latter work. I have suggested elsewhere that Léonce Petit's Mr. Bêton, a taxidermist in *Les mésaventures de Mr. Bêton* [The Misadventures of Mr. Ninny] (1868), could also contain satirical self-parody of the artist (McKinney 2013b). Again, however, a major novelty in the self-parody of Anita Comix, is their self-representation as artists of immigrant and postcolonial heritage. Previously, characters of colonial heritage were not themselves artists, and in nineteenth-century comics, colonized figures were often the target of cruel and even murderous humor, as is the Turco, an Algerian colonial soldier, in Petit's novel.

We may read a crucial strategic move by the artists of Anita Comix in the *pages de garde* [end papers] of *Anita Comix* (1984a), where we see another self-portrait of the three artists, this time in a rare realistic drawing of them (Figure 2.2). They are operating a radio control device commanding one of their characters discussed in Chapter 1: Mécanic Bamboula, a representation recalling images of comic-book superheroes and Black Power icons.[31] While Jover operates the radio control device, either Monpierre or Boudjellal tells the robot: "Vas-y, 'Mécanic Bamboula'! Fous tout en l'air!" [Go ahead, "Mécanic Bamboula"! Knock everything down!]. Meanwhile, Mécanic Bamboula, a smiling, giant Black robot, destroys high-rise buildings bearing the names of comics periodicals and publishing houses prominent in 1984: in the foreground one sees *Circus*, *L'écho [des savanes]*, *Métal [hurlant]*, *Pilote*, *Charlie [mensuel]*, *(A Suivre)* and *Fluide [glacial]*, and in the distance, *Viper*. Here the cartoonists are clearing space, creating a kind of artistic and institutional tabula rasa to make room for their own postcolonial and post-migrant comics creations.

The comics of Anita Comix and other early publications by Boudjellal are situated on a historical divide, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, at a moment when many French artists (cartoonists, singers, novelists, etc.), politicians and others were returning to the colonial past and also beginning to focus on the postcolonial dimensions of contemporary France (McKinney 2011c, 2013a). As such, Boudjellal, Jover and Monpierre were among the first cartoonists to challenge demeaning representations from the colonial

**Figure 2.2:** From Anita Comix (1984) *Anita comix*, Paris: Arcantère, end papers © Farid Boudjellal, José Jover and Roland Monpierre. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the authors.

heritage of French comics, which are heavily indebted to colonial representation in other national comics traditions, especially those of Belgium and United States.[32] As I argued in the preceding chapter, Mécanic Bamboula is an example of their work to undermine such representations. He incarnates a gesture that transforms the colonial grotesque as abject, ridiculous and ugly into a handsome, virile and sublime representation of Black Power that recalls and inflects images of comics superheroes (McKinney 2013a, 2013d).

## Transculturation in comics

In an article on “The transculturation of French studies: past, present and future,” Alec G. Hargreaves (2012) advocates using the concept of transculturation as a way out of the problematic opposition between the terms “French studies” and “Francophone studies.” In the 1940s Fernando Ortiz created the concept to describe cultural transformations in the colonial crucible of Cuba, specifically around the production and consumption of tobacco and sugar. The term is useful for thinking about postcolonial and immigrant issues in France today, and specifically here, in comics.[33] For Ortiz (1995: 102–103), transculturation consists of *deculturation*, or the loss of one culture, and *neoculturation* to another one. A few more terms help fill in the picture for the postcolonial present: *reculturation* (a return by an immigrant or postcolonial group to

its cultural roots, not necessarily in a direct or traditional way), *anticulturation* (to describe a nationalist, xenophobic defense by members of the host group, here the Franco-French), and *anti-anticulturation*, or perhaps better, the less unwieldy *proculturation*, in which members of an immigrant or postcolonial group respond to a perceived anticultural attack by the host group by advocating the right to acculturate and be accepted by the ethnic majority group. My use of the term "reculturation" is inspired in part by an article by Fernando Ainsa (1982) on emigrants and their descendants. Ainsa nowhere uses the term, but does describe the imagined or real return of the descendants of immigrants to the land and culture of their forbears.[34]

Anticulturation and proculturation supply examples of cultural retort in contemporary France. I borrow the idea of cultural retort from an article by Pierre-André Taguieff (1984: 131–3), who uses the term "rétorsion" [retort] to analyze the activity of the French far right beginning in the 1970s, which reworks the terms of its adversaries – such as "the right to difference" – the better to combat them. Taguieff, in turn, takes the term "rétorsion" from Marc Angenot (1982: 219), whom Taguieff (1984: 131, note 28) quotes: "In the case of *retort*, the polemicist places himself, to carry out his 'attack,' on the very terrain of the adversary. The former fights the latter by 'seizing' his own weapons from him." For Taguieff (1984: 131), "This flipping is characteristic of the demarginalizing enterprise undertaken by far-right currents since the beginning of the 1970s." In his evaluation of the transculturation concept, Alec G. Hargreaves (2012: 8) emphasizes its often, but not always, conflictual nature, which is present in Ortiz's model. At the risk of terminological redundancy, one might speak of *conflictual* transculturation (much as Adil Jazouli referred to *intégration conflictuelle*),[35] to highlight how the colonial aftermath exacerbates cross-cultural difficulties already typically inherent in the immigration process. Proculturation involves confronting exclusionary mechanisms, including colonial and neocolonial ones. Comic-strip narratives such as Saladin's *Les migrations de Djeha* – with a modern policeman in the role of Asterix (1979: 10) – or Anita Comix's Convergence '84 comic and their Mécanic Bamboula character provide examples of conflictual transculturation. The cartoonists reactivate and reposition figures, including comics characters, from popular cultures of France, North Africa and other former French colonies to critique what has been described as a "colonial culture" in France.[36]

Comics provide a transcultural artistic vernacular in important ways. They represent transcultural movement and change through migration and movement across and around the divide between colonizer and colonized, which I call the colonial affrontier.[37] They are also a shared form across cultures worldwide, and are being combined in new ways, for example, the artistic form and cultural content of French and Belgian *bande dessinée* with manga from Japan,[38] *fumetti* from Italy or comics from the United States. In fact, comics as an art form have involved transnational, transcultural and cross-media sharing and mixing from their beginnings in the nineteenth century, as Smolderen (2009) and others have argued. In this chapter I have already described or

mentioned several other examples of colonial or postcolonial transculturation in comics. Some of these, such as the first "Andy Gang" story by Montellier (1976), are both politically oriented and artistically innovative.

Anita Comix developed their transcultural comics at a time when immigrant rights and multicultural groups were radically transforming French society. As I began to sketch out in the previous chapter, the three cartoonists and their peers contributed to those changes in several ways. They were invited to publish two comics in the national newspaper *Libération* upon the arrival in Paris of the 1983 March for Equality and Against Racism. A two-frame, transcultural comic strip satirizes the civil rights demonstration, its representation in the media, and the Christian tradition (Figure 2.3). It merges the arrival of the protestors with Christ performing the miracles of walking on water and multiplying bread and fishes for distribution to a hungry crowd (Anita Comix 1983):

> Samedi, pendant la Marche, des témoins ont affirmé avoir vu de leurs propres yeux une série de miracles: les Beurs ont marché sur la Seine!...
>
> Ils ont aussi fait apparaître des sandwiches merguez-frites qu'ils ont distribués à la foule hystérique.
>
> [Saturday, during the March, witnesses affirmed that they saw a series of miracles with their own eyes: the *Beurs* walked on the Seine!...
>
> They also pulled merguez sandwiches and fries out of thin air and distributed them to the hysterical crowd.]

**Figure 2.3:** From Anita Comix (1983) "Les Beurs ont marché sur la Seine!," *Libération*, December 5, p. 2 © Farid Boudjellal, José Jover and Roland Monpierre. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the authors.

The strip, signed by Anita Comix, shows the protestors miraculously walking across the Seine in the first frame. The second panel shows a bearded protestor with long, curly hair, wearing a Palestinian headscarf and surrounded by a halo, as he distributes sandwiches to the crowd. The strip satirically lampoons public attention devoted to the protestors, including the characteristic reduction of its multiethnic composition to just young Arabs. By connecting the Biblical tradition of Catholic France to the identification of many young Maghrebi-French with the Palestinian cause the strip cleverly roots the protestors in French culture while also defamiliarizing the latter. The other comic strip in *Libération* is a full-page episode by Boudjellal (1983a) about his Algerian-French Slimani family whom I discuss in Chapter 3, below. First, I give an in-depth look at individually drawn comics by the two other members of Anita Comix, beginning with Monpierre.

## Roland Monpierre refashions Caribbean oral storytelling for comics

Roland Monpierre's single-authored comics celebrate Caribbean culture, including its oral storytelling traditions, music and written literature. He published two books set mainly in the contemporary French Caribbean, with Futuropolis, in 1983 and 1986. He followed that with comics biographies of Bob Marley (n.d.; 2006). More recently, he published *La Légion Saint-Georges* (2010), a historical comic about the Chevalier de Saint-Georges (an illustrious Guadeloupian from the eighteenth century), and adapted part of a novel by Alexandre Dumas *père* (from the nineteenth century) into comics, in *Monsieur Georges* (2013). Monpierre adapted the novel *Diab'-là*, by Joseph Zobel, into comics (2015). He also published an illustrated book titled *Les rêves de Paris* (2004), about art and Black identities. His comics exemplify major current tendencies in both the field of comics and the artistic creation of postcolonial ethnic minority groups in France. His comics perpetuate artistic and cultural traditions from an ancestral homeland and adapt them to new circumstances. This involves inventing ways of expressing those traditions, including oral storytelling and prose literature. His books that illustrate the lives and accomplishments of exemplary figures from (post)colonial ethnic minorities – including Saint-Georges, the father of Dumas *père*, and Marley – respond to and reverse the glorification of exemplary imperial figures by colonial-era French and Belgian cartoonists (see McKinney 2013e: e.g., 9, 105). Monpierre's cartooning helps create a postcolonial pantheon and produce an alternative history, a counter-history, with the potential to reshape the French national and cultural narrative.[39] It also adds to transnational knowledge about people of African heritage in the diaspora. His adaptation of novels by Dumas and Zobel raises the profile of comics within Caribbean literature and makes those novels available in a new way to readers. Monpierre's *Diab'là* also helps import a Caribbean oral storytelling tradition into comics. I will provide some analysis of Monpierre's other comics, but will focus mainly here on an early work, *Repas antillais*

[Caribbean Meal] (1983). Monpierre's first single-authored comic, it is a masterful experiment in reworking traditional Caribbean oral storytelling in comics.[40]

Martin Barker (1989) and Screech (2005b) adapt Vladimir Propp's model of the folktale to analyze comics in interesting ways (Propp 1973). Both concentrate on the folktale's structure, including its iterability and stock characters. Their analyses are useful here, but as with M. M. Bakhtin's concept of dialogism and Bourdieu's model of an artistic avant-garde, a postcolonial inflection is necessary if one is to account adequately for something such as Monpierre's deployment of oral Caribbean storytelling in comics. Such storytelling is collective, typically requiring a live speaker and at least one listener to share the same space, which is markedly different from typical novelistic writing and reading, as highly individualized experiences (Davis 1987), although, as Bakhtin (1990) shows, they are founded on individual *and* collective linguistic practices. Monpierre distributes French Caribbean storytelling situations, storytellers and listeners throughout his book, thereby explicitly showing the models that he is adapting from oral literature. Although reading Monpierre's comic may remain a solitary experience, his *mise-en-scène* [staging] of Caribbean oral storytelling constantly reminds readers of the collective, oral literary practice on which the cartoonist is drawing. He imports that storytelling situation, and a French Caribbean community more generally, into French alternative comics. At the same time, he adapts comics to oral storytelling traditions by making characters in his comic strip cross diegetic boundaries in ways that represent the combined storytelling powers of both traditional oral literature and comics. Miller (2007b: 128–46) has analyzed diegetic border crossing and *mises-en-abîme* in the postmodern comics of Marc-Antoine Mathieu from the 1990s. *Repas antillais* (1983) is a postcolonial version, from several years earlier, of diegetic border-crossing and meta-representational reflection on the storytelling capacity of comics.

Four liminal drawings suggest a storytelling framework. The first, on the front cover, represents a bearded Caribbean man wearing a hat and a jacket. His mouth, drawn in an exaggeratedly large manner, is wide open, suggesting his role as oral storyteller, which is confirmed in the section where he appears ("Digestif antillais" [38]). The image on the title page also depicts Oncle Tabarin, a Black man from the French Caribbean who will return in the story as the primary oral storyteller in the text (14, 20, 23, 26–35, 45–6). On the title page he wears a wide-brimmed straw hat and holds a smoking pipe in his mouth, which is nonetheless open wide, again suggesting the role of oral storyteller (Figure 2.4). The tray that he holds toward us sets a bizarre, disturbing tone. It contains, from left to center, a rooster's head and two tiny figures shaped like human corpses, one wearing a top hat and holding a wand in his hand, and the other with horns on his head, but both with a lower body ending in what appear to be food and garnishments. A walking stick with a carved dog's head as a pommel lies across the two minuscule corpses. To their right lie a tiny human skull and a normal-sized shot glass containing a drink. All these elements reappear within the story, as we shall see.

**Figure 2.4:** From Roland Monpierre (1983) *Repas antillais*, Paris: Futuropolis, title page © Roland Monpierre. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

The blurb on the back of the book ties the storytelling situation together with another framing metaphor, already suggested by the book's title and the storyteller's platter on the title page:

> Au menu: hors d'œuvre, plat de résistance, salade et digestif.
> Mangez sans crainte!...

(Une bouchée pour Maman-volcan)
... Ce n'est pas l'habituelle conserve prédigérée,
que nous servent les médias.
(Une bouchée pour Ti-Jean l'Horizon)
Mangez, enfants!...
(Une bouchée pour la métropole)
... Vous ne savez pas à quelle sauce on vous mangera.
(Une bouchée pour le député).

[On the menu: hors d'œuvre, main course, salad and *digestif*.
Eat without fear!...
(A mouthful for Mama-volcano)
... It's not the usual predigested canned food,
that the media serve us.
(A mouthful for Ti-Jean l'Horizon)
Eat, children!...
(A mouthful for the *métropole*)
... You don't know in which sauce you will be eaten.
(A mouthful for the deputy).]

The refrain ("Une bouchée pour [...]") mockingly compares reading the text to spoon-feeding a child, recalling the traditional role of comics as didactic, juvenile reading material. However, other elements mark the reading experience here as an adult activity. As this liminal text, the title of Monpierre's comic book, and its section titles indicate, the story is sequentially structured like a regular meal, instead of pablum ("Ce n'est pas l'habituelle conserve prédigérée"), moving from "Hors d'œuvre," through "Plat de résistance" [Main course], "Salades antillaises" [Caribbean salads] and finally "Digestif antillais" [Caribbean *digestif*]. Each section of the book has a distinct identity but forms part of a loosely structured whole, just like the courses of a meal. Important elements such as the haunting collective memory of slavery (24–6, 33–4, 42) recur across the different sections and help to unify them.

The liminal text also sets up the comic book story as a traditional Caribbean folktale that Monpierre has adapted to a modern setting for his comic book. It evokes a well-known Caribbean folktale figure, Ti-Jean l'Horizon [Little Jean the Horizon], traditionally an anti-hero from a disadvantaged environment who will stop at nothing to succeed – he appears in the story once in traditional, magical form (20–2), and perhaps again in a modern guise, as a "petit paysan" [lowly peasant] (45–6).[41] Monpierre innovates by adding the figure of Maman volcan, a powerful female personification of a volcano, who appears repeatedly (21, 31–2).[42] The liminal text also promises a perspective that is different from typical media sop on the Caribbean, a theme that is worked out

self-reflexively, first through a child's tale (14–23) and then an adult story (36–46), both containing elements from oral Caribbean storytelling. The comic's perspective is structured in part by the postcolonial relationship of the island to the French mainland (*la métropole*), which includes political, economic and diasporic dimensions of domination and autonomy, dependency and survival, exile and return. The ending of the short blurb ("Vous ne savez pas à quelle sauce on vous mangera"), reworking a proverbial French expression, indicates that the comic book also contains a cautionary tale involving corruption by the local representative, *le député*, to the French national parliament (l'Assemblée nationale), which constitutes the final section, titled "Digestif antillais" (36–46). As we see already, all of the elements evoked by the introductory text play out inside the book. Below the text on the back cover we see another figure, "la vieille Hélène," who appears in the comic book in a liminal storytelling space between life and death (36–7, 41–4).

The fourth introductory drawing launches the comic book as a story of exile and remembering (1). It represents Christophe, the cartoonist's adult fictional alter-ego, sitting beside his drawing board in a Parisian apartment, looking out the window at falling snow. Drinking from what may be a glass of rum, he nostalgically returns through memory to his first trip as a boy from Paris to his ancestral homeland in the Caribbean. The ensuing sequence establishes a parallel between this plane trip by young Christophe and the arrival by boat of Christopher Columbus in the Caribbean (2–3).[43] The passage, described by the older narrator as the daydream of young Christophe's cousin, Irénée (2), introduces the storytelling fluidity of the comic, which switches back and forth between tale and reality, creating an oniric vision calling for the interpretation of its symbols, structure and patterns. In Irénée's stream of consciousness, the name "Colomb," the French version of "Columbus," summons the homophone "colon" [colonizer], while the boy, daydreaming during a history lesson at school, first imagines Columbus as a man with a rooster's head, then its cry ("Colon? Co... Cocorico" [3]) – a mocking reference to French jingoism – and then the melding of the rooster's head with that of his schoolteacher, who is later referred to by Christophe's Caribbean family as "the Parisian" (9), perhaps because he studied in the capital city. The rooster is both a French national icon and a symbol of local Caribbean culture, via the practice of cockfights, which the adults evoke and Christophe then imagines (10–11). Through polysemic linguistic and visual imagery, the comic book asks what the relationship is between mainland France and the French Caribbean: to what extent does that remain colonial, and how is it reproduced through the French national education system, especially the teaching of history? Is the Black "Parisian" teacher, originally himself from the island, now an agent of neocolonial domination? During his visit later to the home of Irénée's family, conversation touches on the question of independence or autonomy for the region (10), administratively a French *département*. When the teacher's supposed desire to return to Paris is evoked by one man, another replies "Et alors? Qu'est-

ce qui l'empêche de nous aider de là-bas?" [So what? What prevents him from helping us from there?] (9). That metonymically raises the issue of the general relationship between the French Caribbean population in mainland France (then including the cartoonist himself) and those living on the islands. An earlier discussion between 'Man Durance, Christophe's aunt (and Irénée's mother), and 'Man Rose, a neighbor, alludes to a common expectation that emigrants and their descendants should provide money to Caribbeans who have not left their island homeland (6).

Episodes at the beginning and end of the book make the political dimension of the *métropole*-Guadeloupe relationship salient. The first, upon Christophe's arrival, suggests an unfair manipulation of political power. Irénée runs to the airport to meet his cousin and pays two francs to gain access to the viewing platform on the terminal's roof. However, he does not see the airplane land, because it has been deviated from its normal position to facilitate the disembarkation and departure of a government minister traveling on the same plane (4–5). Irénée and others who paid to watch from the platform feel cheated because the plane's deviation from its normal path prevents them from seeing it arrive. By including their critical speech within balloons located inside panels depicting the minister and his local welcome committee, the cartoonist clearly delineates the relationship between common Caribbeans and the political elite both in Paris and on the island as being anti-democratic and economically exploitative. This is further suggested by Monpierre's satirical representation of political discourse in the welcome speech given to the minister (significantly mentioning "fraternity"), and a zoom in on a briefcase that, we surmise, contains materials possibly benefitting local notables, but certainly not the average islanders, who will remain poor.

The final story, "Digestif antillais" (34–46), returns to the political power that shapes opportunities, and lack thereof, for common Caribbeans. It recounts the local election of Alex Marifée, and its sequels. On the morning of the election, Marifée makes a campaign visit to the marketplace, surrounded by his collaborators, but panics when he sees an old woman surrounded by men holding sticks (36–7). That evening – the storyteller continues telling us this, his modern political tale (38) – as Marifée waits at a private beach club for the election results, his political rival comes to congratulate him for winning, but in a thought balloon also silently accuses Marifée of cheating (38–9). One of Marifée's collaborators, an accountant, then asks him for a favor in return for his help in the election, but Marifée refuses, claiming that he will clean up politics and no longer has any use for the men. Later, as Marifée chats up a beautiful white model, he is given a passion fruit cocktail – the *digestif antillais* of the chapter title – that poisons him (39). He is carried inside, vomits and is put to bed, where he is left to recuperate or else die from the poison (40). That night he is visited by "la vieille Hélène," the old woman from the marketplace, who turns out to have nursed him as an infant (41). Although invalid and confined to a wheelchair that morning, she now runs across the island, guiding Marifée from his room to a strange building where a gathering of spec-

**Figure 2.5:** From Roland Monpierre (1983) *Repas antillais*, Paris: Futuropolis, p. 43.6-7 © Roland Monpierre. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

tral beings awaits him: they are the cadaverous, zombie representatives of the dead on the electoral list, whose votes were fraudulently cast for Marifée, enabling him to win the election, though just barely (41–4). In this liminal space-time between life and death, the election and the exercise of power, they now judge Marifée for his crime (Figure 2.5). He arrogantly attempts to justify his electoral fraud by claiming it will allow him to make reforms benefitting ordinary Caribbeans, incapable of helping themselves. Marifée is nonetheless judged guilty and condemned to be reincarnated as an ox. In the morning, men gather around Marifée's body in the bed where they left him, and order the doctor to attribute his death to indigestion (45). Meanwhile, reincarnated as an ox, Marifée walks toward a farmer, who – the farmer later tells the storyteller (Figure 2.6) – used him to cultivate his land and later sold him to a butcher to help purchase a tractor (46). The farmer can afford the machine thanks also to financial assistance provided by the Marifée law, just passed. That, he says, is progress. However, the final, half-page panel depicts the Alex Marifée construction site. In the recitative, the narrator ironically qualifies his tale: "Et les députés s'épanouissent au soleil sans le moindre souci! Ce n'est qu'une histoire! Digérons-la!" [And the *députés* blossom under the sun without the least worry! This is only a story! Let us digest it!]. This recalls an earlier passage, in which Christophe's relatives discuss the possibility that they might be expelled from their home (10).

**Figure 2.6:** From Roland Monpierre (1983) *Repas antillais*, Paris: Futuropolis, 1983, p. 45.7-9 © Roland Monpierre. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

Taken together, the book's introduction ("Hors d'œuvre," with the minister) and conclusion ("Digestif antillais") suggest that the relatives might have been expelled because a corrupt politician (Marifée) pretended to act in favor of the common folk but served himself and was backed by the central Parisian authority. Monpierre (Personal communication 2016) has said that his comic was inspired by the movie *Xala* (1975), by Senegalese film director and novelist Sembene Ousmane. The comic's concluding tale especially recalls the film, which reworks elements of traditional folktale for modern times to recount the sudden sexual impotence of a powerful African businessman and his attempts to be cured (Lyons 1984). The film thereby deals with various social forces at work in Senegal, including the pressures exerted there by modernization and foreign intervention.

*Repas antillais* also depicts the destabilizing forces of modern capitalism and the alienating effects of white Western culture in the Caribbean within colonialist comics. Staying at his cousin's house, Christophe begins reading some comics, when a character materializes out of the page in front of him. The character, who introduces himself to Christophe, his "cher petit client" [dear little client], as "Média, 'l'ombre fantoche'" [Media, "the Phantom Shadow"] (15), is a reworked version of Lee Falk's "The Phantom" ("Le Fantôme," in the French version), a white comics hero who fought for good in a fictional African country. Média's name and conduct in Monpierre's story suggest that

he incarnates mainstream Euro-American mass media as a mystifying and alienating force for the Caribbean boy (Figure 2.7). When Christophe points out that there are Black characters too in his story, Média belittles them as secondary, tells the boy that they are not Caribbean and therefore have nothing to do with him, and that he should keep his eyes solely on Média, as the story's hero (16). Whereas the Phantom carries two revolvers attached to a belt around his waist, Média's belt holds "concentrated milk" labeled "Nes'" (an obvious allusion to Nestlé), for good characters, and a Coca Cola bottle that contains napalm, for bad ones (16–17). However, Christophe is shocked at Média's immorality when he sees him distributing both substances indiscrimately. Monpierre's comic here critiques the ill effects of Western cultural, military and economic imperialism, through allusions to napalm (whether thereby evoking the French use of the deadly weapon in the Algerian War, or the American bombing of Vietnam, Cambodia and beyond), packaged milk (Nestlé's deadly milk marketing strategy in Africa; and Coca Cola's global marketing), and the Phantom.

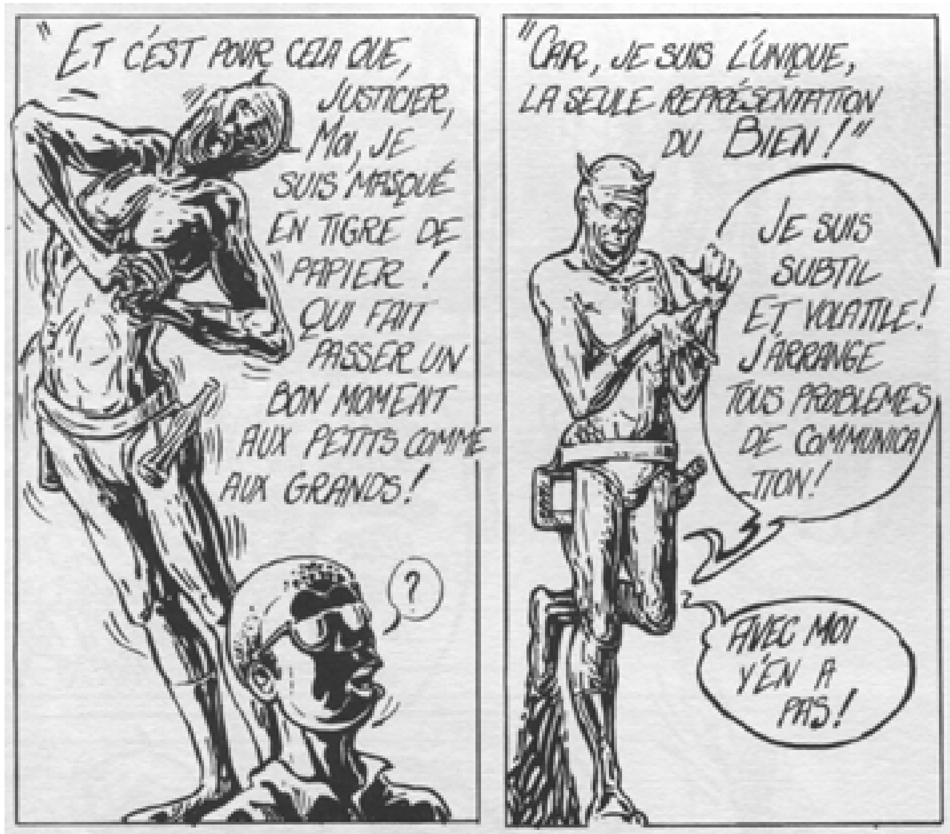


**Figure 2.7:** From Roland Monpierre (1983) *Repas antillais*, Paris: Futuropolis, p. 15.5-6 © Roland Monpierre. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

For an Afro-Caribbean boy, the focus on a white hero in a comic set in Black Africa, in which Blacks are only secondary characters, is alienating. At the moment when Christophe begins to wonder about the morality of Média, another comics hero appears, dressed with a top hat and cape, and presents himself as "M. le magicien" (17–18). He dismisses Média as "un gros paysan raciste qui opprime… / …les minorités!" [a big racist peasant who oppresses… / …minorities!] and boast that he, by contrast, is "liberal and democratic" (18). M. boasts of his unlimited powers and money, and pulls Léto, his "companion of adventures," out of his magician's hat. Here again, Monpierre satirizes two of Lee Falk's comics characters, Mandrake the Magician, a white man, and Lothar, his Black sidekick.[44] Here, as in the publications of Anita Comix, and especially their Mécanic Bamboula character, Monpierre critiques alienating colonial stereotypes in comics and replaces them with his own Black characters. A major early task for the postcolonial avant-garde in comics was the disassembling of alienating, caricatural and often racist colonial imagery in comics. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, cartoonists have continued to view this task as necessary, even recently. It is no doubt still important for several reasons, including the continuing circulation of colonial comics through republished works deemed classic (e.g., *Tintin in the Congo* [1931]), the uncritical celebration of their creators (Hergé, Saint-Ogan, etc.), and the reactivation and recirculation of related imagery throughout French society, in comics, press cartoons, film and political discourse. I now turn to the comics of Jover, which, like Monpierre's, provide a distinct perspective on comics classics and other icons from popular culture.

## José Jover's baroque comics

José Jover has remained close to the spirit of the comics of Anita Comix in terms of their parodic and satirical relationship to ethnic stereotypes, cartoonish drawing style and exuberant *surenchère* [outbidding].[45] His comics have always exhibited an energy and ethos best described as a baroque, working-class, immigrant aesthetic. Comics that Jover has created alone or with artists who were not members of Anita Comix generally fall into one or more of three categories: crime fiction, the fantastic, and biker stories. These genres have often been associated with working-class styles and tastes in fiction, and with American underground comics. Jover published his first comic book, *Sale Temps: Pierrot-la-caravane* [Nasty Weather. Trailer Pete], in the "BD Noire" [Crime comics] collection of Glénat in 1983 (Figure 2.8).[46] Jover (2016) has stated that his comic book was influenced by American hard-boiled detective fiction, including novels by Ed McBain (born Salvatore Lombino) and especially those of Jim Thompson. The book's gritty tone is reinforced by a photograph on the back cover, showing Jover standing next to a man whose given name was also Pierrot and who was the real-life model for Jover's character. In the photo, Jover wears a black leather motorcycle jacket, with his

**Figure 2.8:** From José Jover (1983) *Sale temps. Pierrot la caravane*, Grenoble: Jacques Glénat, front cover © José Jover. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

dark hair in the *banane* style typical of rockers or rockabilly musicians and fans. As Pierrot's name and the story's subtitle indicate, the real life Pierrot lived in a trailer in Clichy-sur-Seine, where the comic book story is partly set. Jover met Pierrot in that same *banlieue* at a comics festival organized by a young woman who was Pierrot's former partner.

Much as in crime fiction by Tardi, Léo Malet and Jean-Patrick Manchette, Jover's Paris features a multiethnic mix of characters of French colonial and immigrant heritage. The cartoonist interviewed Pierrot, reworked his stories in the comic book and thanked him on the first page of the story (p. 3), thereby lending an aura of authenticity to the crime fiction set in the working-class *banlieues* of Paris, which constitute a multiethnic, postcolonial and immigrant ethnoscape.[47] Jover (2016) said that he wanted to celebrate the *banlieue* in his comic book:

> I wanted to show the *banlieue* in its miserable decline of those days, but full of life and very popular or working-class, with all the immigrants and very poor French mixed together, who kept an atmosphere alive in the markets and cafés, and also the mutual aid, which is a very important element: the mutual aid.

There is certainly mutual aid between French and immigrant characters in the story, but the main thread is a series of brutal attacks carried out in *banlieues* – Clichy-sur-Seine and Kremlin-Bicêtre – and an industrial neighborhood of Paris (the docks of Tolbiac, on the Seine river). Jover's baroque approach is visible first in his drawing style, already apparent in the colors of the front-cover image of the book, which has a bright red-orange background. Two characters are looking inside an attaché case containing diamonds, over which much blood will be spilled in the story. They have yellow and blue eyes, and blue flesh with black shading. The man's hair is orange and that of the woman is a purplish blue. Jover's comic-book story is in black and white, so his exuberant drawing style there is visible not in colors, but other features, such as shading, done through extensive cross-hatching, squiggly lines and myriad dots. Jover draws the bodies of his main characters in a baroque, overflowing style too: his primary male characters have bulging biceps, and main women characters have large buttocks and breasts.

Jover's baroque style is also expressed here in the number of homicides, of which I count twenty-five, committed by eight different characters within a forty-five-page story. The first murder expresses a working-class woman's rage. When Mathilde returns home from a morning spent making and selling fries at the Saturday market in Clichy, she finds the dishes unwashed, the kitchen a mess, and her partner surly (Jover 1983: 3–5). Mathilde bitterly complains to Alfredo: "Faut que je me cloque tout, ramener du fric et faire le ménage! .. Bordeel!!" [I have to do everything, bring home the money and do the housekeeping! .. Shit [literally, bordello]!!] (5). When Alfredo, in his Spanish-inflected French, tells Mathilde to sod off ("Z'ai dit: vas te faire en-tou-ber!"), she calls him a "dirty Spic" ("Espingouin de mes fesses!") and shoots him. Meanwhile, in the background, the hit pop song "Femmes des années 80" [Women of the 80s], by Michel Sardou, is playing, creating an ironic contrast (4–5). It is surely significant that the first murder victim in this book by a cartoonist who immigrated from Spain as a boy is an abusive Spanish immigrant man. Similarly, Ahmed Kalouaz, a French novelist of Algerian heritage, built his first novel, *L'encre d'un fait divers* [The Ink of a *Fait divers*] (Ahmed K 1984) around the murder in France of an abusive Algerian by his wife Naïma, who then struggles to rebuild her life in prison by writing to and about women. In both cases a young author of recent immigrant background stigmatizes misogyny by a man from his immigrant homeland.

The first murder in Jover's comic is soon followed by another, this time by a Black dealer and reggae fan named Aimé Montrésor (his name means "Beloved MyTreasure"), who murders a white prostitute in order to repay his drug supplier (Jover 1983:

9–10). A string of murders by other characters continues until the protagonist, nicknamed Pierrot-la-caravane [Trailer Pete], appears on the scene and takes charge (17). The rest of the story revolves around attempts by Pierrot and his girlfriend Léna to sell the diamonds, first to a double-dealing fence whom Léna kills, along with his henchmen (25), and then, under constraint, to crooked policemen, who kill Léna in a shootout but fail to catch Pierrot or the diamonds (43–7). In between the two bloodbaths, Pierrot and Léna leave Clichy to stay in Kremlin-Bicêtre with friends of Pierrot: Léo, his North African wife Samira, and their children, including sixteen-year-old Zahia (31–2). Pierrot helps out by discovering that a friend of Pierrot is pimping Zahia to North African immigrant men on the weekend, a practice to which Pierrot puts an end (36–8).

When asked about his interest in *faits divers* with respect to *Sale temps* –the term is mentioned on the back cover – Jover (2016) explained that he was:

> Very interested in the *fait divers* as a motor for analyzing a moment in the life of certain categories of people, in particular the most fragile and poor among them: that's linked to my personal history because I grew up in the midst of gangsters – small-time ones – in Siblas, a neighborhood of Toulon.

The "new realist" fiction of *Sale temps* functions partly like the *contre-faits divers* comics by Montellier and Jean Teulé that Miller (2001b: 321) analyzes, notably in its depiction of the murder of Alfredo by Mathilde at the outset of the album. However, its main thrust is not to show how bourgeois society produces delinquency as a way of managing illegality, as Foucault (1979: 257–92) argues. Instead, it is a kind of "lyricism of marginality [… that finds] inspiration in the image of the 'outlaw'" (301). The heroic depiction of Pierrot recalls to a certain degree the criminal career and counter-cultural notoriety of Jacques Mesrine, killed by French police in 1979 and often celebrated in French popular culture. Pierrot's shootout at the end of the comic book is with the anti-gang brigade (42), which Montellier satirized and was one of the police groups that hunted Mesrine. Recounting the criminal actions of Pierrot as exploits of a working-class outlaw produces a critique of the state's repressive apparatus and social hierarchy, and associates Jover's cartooning with a counter-cultural marginality. As we have seen, the cartoonists of Anita Comix self-ironically occupied marginalized positions by drawing themselves as comic-strip incarnations of stereotypes about working-class immigrants and foreigners, Blacks and Arabs. This was part of their struggle to "acquire and legitimate territory for [themselves]" (Mehrez 1993: 27), a territory that is artistic and sociocultural. Jover's recounting of Pierrot's tales constitutes a related gesture.

Jover's other comics are generally far less gritty, more fun-loving, and imbued with science fiction or the fantastic, such as *Fictionnettes* (1982; Figure 2.9), a whimsical collection of short comic strips with rhyming text by Manosque (André Igual). Much humor of the strips, which feature monsters and robots, revolves around scatology and

sexuality. The strips somewhat recall the grotesque drawings and rhyming captions of American cartoonist Basil Wolverton, of whom Futuropolis published an album in French translation, *Arsouilles et créatures de rêve!* [Hoodlums and Dream Creatures!], in 1980. However, the cartoonists refer explicitly to French and Belgian comics – Astérix (12, 24, 45), Tintin (24) and Lucky Luke (45) – which they affectionately parody. When Superman makes a brief appearance (8), a phone booth eats him, suggesting the supremacy of this imagined Francophone extraterrestrial world to that of American superheroes. The collection, published by the counter-cultural magazine *Le citron hallucinogène*, also weaves a more explicit political critique into its raucous below-the-belt humor. The cartoonists refer several times to Cold War tensions between the US and the USSR, for example, through allusions to the atomic bomb (8), Tomahawk missiles (10) and nuclear destruction of the planet by the two superpowers (42). If the cartoonists satirize the revolutionary utopianism of the French Communist Party (44), they also mock the far right (9, 30). A page titled “Halte au racisme” [Halt to racism] (33) depicts

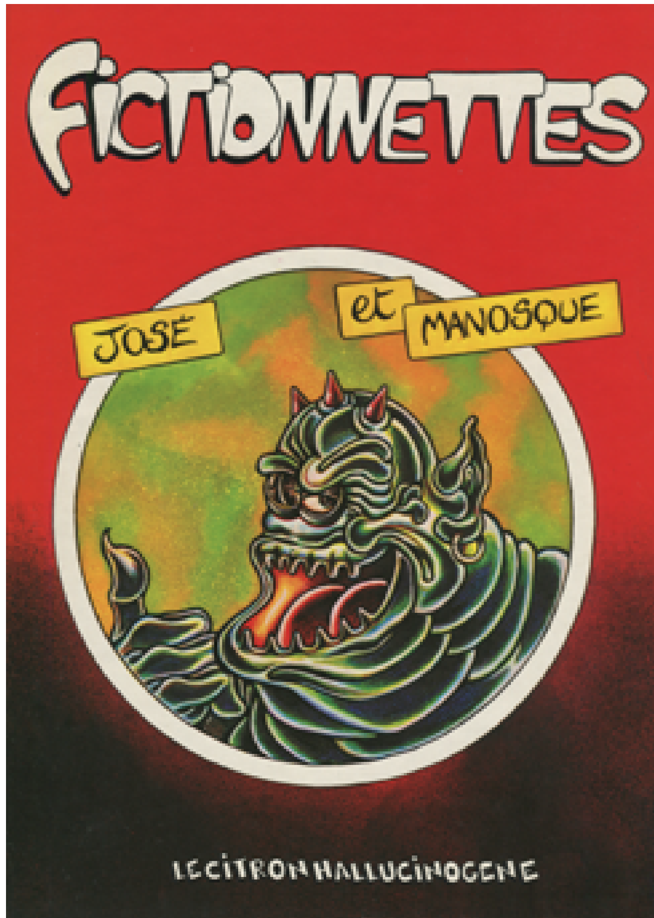


**Figure 2.9:** From José Jover and Manosque (1982) *Fictionnettes*, Salernes: Le Citron Hallucinogène © José Jover. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

robots summarily expelling all creatures who do not resemble them, whereas another strip shows a decorated monster military man (an American?) trying to colonize another planet, but failing because he drank too much "beer" (in English in the text) and crashed his spaceship (11). Jover also drew *La vie privée des monstres* [The Private Life of Monsters], with text by André Igwal (André Igual), an over-the-top illustrated collection of one- or two-page descriptions of monsters that brims over with references to classical mythology and popular culture, especially film, ranging from Georges Méliès to *E.T.* (Jover and Igwal 1995).

Two other comic books represent some of the most personal cartooning by Jover, aside from his self-representations for Anita Comix, and his autobiographical "Profession: Dessinateur B.D." (1994 [1986]): *Salséro et les bikers* [Salséro and the Bikers], published in black and white by Futuropolis in 1989, and *Salséro et Hollywood Land* [Salséro and Hollywood Land], published in color with his own press, Tartamudo, in 1999.[48] In *Salséro et les bikers*, much as in the work of Anita Comix, which featured a motorbike and sidecar, the three protagonists ride together on a motortrike. More importantly, the three are again immigrant or ethnic types, as indicated in the narrator's presentation of "Les héros" (Jover 1989: n.p.):

> Salséro: le fils du migrant, il vend des épices qui possèdent de bien étranges pouvoirs!
>
> Makoko-Tabasko: terrible pygmée de la non moins terrible tribu des Bwanas, c'est un terrible sorcier!
>
> Don Séréno: Bœuf célèste, un rêve de concours agricole! Costaud mais timide!
>
> [Salséro: son of the migrant, he sells spices that possess very strange powers!
>
> Makoko-Tabasko: frightful pygmy of the no less frightful tribe of the Bwanas, he's a frightful sorcerer!
>
> Don Séréno: celestial ox, a dream for an agricultural competition! Strong but timid!]

Salséro, like Jover's alter-ego in the Anita Comix stories, is a migrant's son. He wears shorts, sandals and a Spanish-style shirt, like José in Anita Comix. His fez, adorned with a star, suggests his magical powers, which are contained in the tray of spices that he carries everywhere, supported by a band around his neck, like a food vendor at a carnival, market or cinema. Salséro's super powers, like those of Astérix, appear on demand, by consuming something with magical properties. Contrary to many American superheroes, these French characters were not born with their strengths.

Makoko Tabasko is a grotesque caricature of a Black African, much like Monpierre's alter-ego Roland in Anita Comix: both wear grass skirts and are physically caricatured. Whereas Roland wears a bone through his nose and is bare-chested, Makoko wears a

pipe in his hair, a shirt front and bow tie, and carries around a much larger bone in his hand. When cornered, he directs the strong magical powers of his *os tonnerre* [thunder bone] against external threats. Jover’s Makoko has various possible inspirations, including the name of an African king with whom French colonial figure Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza signed a treaty in the Congo (homeland of the Pygmies), and a Black character in the French version of the Katzenjammer Kids. The conclusion to *Salséro et les bikers* contains an explicit reference to the American comics series by Rudolph Dirks, whose title is “Pim, Pam, Poum” in France. The second part of his name, “Tabasko,” may suggest a Spanish kinship, through a reference to tabasco peppers and Salséro’s spice tray. Like Monpierre’s double in Anita Comix, Jover’s Makoko parodies degrading colonialist representations of Blacks in French and Belgian comics such as Hergé’s *Tintin au Congo* [*Tintin in the Congo*] (1973 [1931]), as his grotesque visual appearance indicates. However, although Makoko often uses words indicating his African identity (e.g., “bolo”, “ungala balawe”), his spoken French is perfectly idiomatic. The Salséro-Makoko pairing also recalls colonial-era white-Black comics duos such as Hergé’s Tintin and Cocoa, Bibi Fricotin and Razibus Zouzou, in Pierre Lacroix’s version of “Bibi Fricotin,” or Blondin and Cirage, by Jijé (Joseph Gillain; see Pigeon 1996). As is often the case in such pairings, the white character Salséro generally takes the lead role in the story. The name of Don Séréno (“Sir Night Watchman”) again suggests a Spanish ethnic identity, but whereas in Anita Comix José was sometimes a matador, there is no mention of bull-fighting in the two Salséro comics. On the other hand, the star-covered “celestial ox” fights to defend his human companions when they are threatened.

The working-class, baroque nature of Jover’s cartooning is readily apparent in the Salséro stories. The first, which recounts the trio’s visit to a “super-concentration des bikers” [bikers’ meet], contains an abundance of motorcycling material. Jover, himself a lifelong biker, lavishly draws a wide assortment of biker types and motorcycle makes. Several of the machines are over-the-top contraptions, for example, one bike with twenty-eight headlamps of various shapes and sizes, and eighteen rearview mirrors, stands next to another with cattle horns across the handlebars and a miniature bull’s head in front. Much as the Anita Comix trio went to a comics convention to try to make some money by selling merguez and fries (ironically wrapped up in their comics), Salséro, Makoko and Don Séréno go to the biker’s meet to sell sausages and spices from their stand. However, they soon find themselves attempting to prevent two biker gangs from fighting each other: the Black, Afrocentric Kaikous and the white Piches (Figure 2.10). Salséro convinces them to transform their fight into a biker’s competition, which provides an occasion for celebrating other aspects of biker subculture, including wheelies, burn outs and pogo dancing. However, not even the police or the trio’s superpowers are ultimately able to prevent the two gangs from rumbling. Finally, by summoning the Pagoulines, a bikers’ club for women, to the rescue, Salséro manages to entice the two male gangs to turn from war to love.

**Figure 2.10:** From José Jover (1999) "Salséro et les bikers," in *Salséro: Deux aventures de Salséro: Salséro et Hollywood Land, suivi de Salséro et les bikers*, colors Sabine Richard and Nany, Cachan: Tartamudo, plate 13.1 © Editions Tartamudo. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

As its title suggests, the second Salséro story, *Salséro et Hollywood Land* (1999), celebrates cinematic history, another artistic field dear to Jover. At twenty-five pages, the story is his second longest. The cartoonist's treatment can again best be described as baroque. The story's title recalls *Hollywoodland*, by American underground cartoonist Kim Deitch (1987). The two cartoonists share a fascination with cinema, the bizarre, and the imbrication of fictional worlds, although Jover's fiction is more lighthearted than Deitch's. The album opens with a splash page that reprises the presentation of Salséro, Makoko-Tabasko and Don Séréno with which *Salséro et les bikers* opened, now against a landscape showing the city of Babypolis on the fictional "island-continent" where the trio lives. The story opens with the three characters going to see a horror movie, "L'invasion des kangourous" [The Invasion of the Kangaroos]. However, fiction becomes reality when the savage kangaroos, dressed up as horror figures (the Mummy, Frankenstein, Dracula, etc.), appear on the seats of the theater and begin to pursue the trio, who escape through a door into a parallel world that they recognize to be a cinematic cemetery containing icons of world cinema, from the Jewel theater front of *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (whose metafictional movement is clearly an inspiration here) to the Gaumont-Palace theater, demolished in 1973. In fact, it turns out to be a movie set where the adventures of the trio are being filmed without their knowledge by Mr.

Nabab Zanuck. As he guides them through this never-never land of cinematic history, they encounter various icons, ranging from King Kong fighting Godzilla, to R2D2 and Darth Vador. In order to escape from the movie lot, the trio must answer cinematic trivia questions asked, sphinx-like, by French-American star Josephine Baker, who turns out to be another monster and is disabled by Makoko's thunderbolt bone ("os tonnerre"). They finally reach home, but after a week's rest are invited to the premiere of *Terrificolor*, Zanuck's film, at which they learn of their starring role in the movie. The trio must again escape from the theater, this time from sexy female fans, and again find themselves pursued by cinematic monsters (Salséro defeats the creature from the Black Lagoon by eating an Amazonian hot pepper). They succeed in escaping, and learn that their kangaroo movie is a hit, so sign up to star in the sequel, and the kangaroo pursuit begins again forthwith. Thanks to their magical powers (spices and bone) and the aid of their celestial ox, Salséro and Makoko again defeat the kangaroos, this time changing them into a pile of men's underwear, thanks to the French term *un slip kangourou* (i.e., briefs with a "kangaroo pouch," for genitals). The story includes references to many comics, but especially "Blek le roc," thereby celebrating the working-class pocket-book comics also iconized in comics by Anita Comix, Boudjellal and Mechkour.

"Profession: Dessinateur B.D." (Jover 1994 [1986]), already mentioned, locates the origins of Jover's art in his love for those same comics. Jover drew this short story about the beginning of his vocation as a cartoonist, in part to pay hommage to both his Spanish immigrant father and the pocket-format comics, such as "Blek le roc" and "Amok" (both originally in Italian, then translated into French), that working-class children grew up reading in Toulon and elsewhere.[49] The cartoonist shows his father salvaging copies of his son's favorite comics from trash cans. Jover contrasts his own comparative lack of interest and success in school with his boyhood passion for comics, and his efforts to perfect his artistic abilities.[50] He shows his young self as a budding cartoonist, copying the characters of his favorite artists over and over, learning to imitate their style (Figure 2.11). Through this meta-representational story, Jover distinguishes his own mature cartooning style from those boyhood attempts to reproduce faithfully the comics of his favorite Italian cartoonists. He also shows us that he can now redraw them flawlessly and insert them into his story. Like many narratives of immigration and assimilation in France, Jover's story commemorates his father's contribution to French society by hard physical work as a manual laborer. He also shows his father actively contributing to his son's vocation as a cartoonist, which was how Jover integrated professionally and culturally into French society. And like other such narratives, Jover's story also underlines the differences between his own assimilation to French society and his father's partial acculturation, both by representing his father's oral French as inflected by Spanish, and his still incomplete comprehension of Jover's professional activity as a cartoonist: "Aujourd'hui, il est rentré définitivement en Espagne, jouir de sa retraite de maçon. Il connaît mes activités: pour lui, je gagne ma vie

**Figure 2.11:** From José Jover (1994) “Profession: Dessinateur B.D.,” *El Building*, no. 1, January, p. 12 © José Jover. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

en dessinant des cowboys et des indiens” [Today, he has definitively gone back home to Spain, to enjoy his retirement from work as a mason. He knows about my activities: for him, I earn my living by drawing cowboys and Indians]. Jover’s comics have not been much about cowboys and Indians, but instead the immigration and transculturation that he, his family and some of his friends, including Boudjellal, shared. Moreover, contrary to his father, who returned to Spain when he retired, Jover continues to live and work in France, the country to which he emigrated as a boy and where he acquired French citizenship, even though he speaks Spanish fluently and could now return to Spain too, should he desire.

## Conclusion: after Anita Comix

Beaty (2007) argues convincingly that in the 1990s, groups such as Amok, L’Association, La Cinquième Couche, Fréon and Oubapo took avant-gardist approaches to comics through modernist artistic experimentation that borrows from fine art and tends toward the painterly. I have proposed in this chapter that one can distinguish multiple forms of avant-gardism associated with postcolonialism and migration in comics: an avant-gardism by Anita Comix during the 1980s that embraces the popular, and Amok’s fine-arts approach in the 1990s described by Beaty. The artists of both Anita Comix and Amok have used innovative drawing and narrative techniques to unsettle received ways of viewing colonial history, migration and postcolonial France in and through comics. In Chapter 8, below, I return to the comics of Alagbé.

Boudjellal, Jover and Monpierre went on to pursue independent careers as cartoonists, educators, and in the case of Jover, publisher, after their collective cartooning in Anita Comix. They have also worked together on many projects, including republishing their co-authored comics, creating posters for multicultural events at the local and

national levels, teaching comic art in public schools, libraries and prisons, and publishing new comics and illustrated books. In this chapter I analyzed the independent comics of Monpierre and Jover. In the next one I discuss realist comics by Boudjellal.

## Notes

1 Lecigne and Tamine (1983); Screech (2005a: 97–101, 2005b: 100–16); Miller (2007b: 39).
2 Laronde, Michel (1988); Novels such as *Les boucs* (Chraïbi 1955), *Elise ou la vraie vie* (Etcherelli 1967) or *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée* (Boudjedra 1975) depict immigrant men from Africa in France; on these works, see, for example, Bonn (1985), Hargreaves (1997).
3 In the same article, Miller also analyzes *contre-faits divers* in the dazzling photo-collage comics of Jean Teulé, notably “Le soutien-gorge de Zhora” (Teulé 1988), about Zohra Diouani, an Algerian-French teenager caught stealing a bra in a department store. Lecigne and Tamine (1983), and Screech (2005b: 100–10) also discuss “new realism” and *faits divers* in comics by Mœbius, Montellier and Teulé. On Montellier’s comics, see also Miller (2001a).
4 In the following chapter I discuss “Les dingues dignes” [The dignified loonies] (1978–9), a comic strip that Boudjellal published about a similar range of marginalized characters at about the same time.
5 Republished in Montellier (1979a: 7–11). Lecigne and Tamine (1983: 121) refer briefly to this story, titled “Horrible méprise” in the album version. See also Montellier (1980), in the same series.
6 On this term and related ones, see pp. 141–2n19 in this volume.
7 Saladin (1979: 9, 42; on this, see below, Chapter 10) and Clavaud and Duret (1984; see below, this chapter); and in prose fiction too, for example in Farida Belghoul’s *Georgette!* (1986); on this issue in real life, see Hargreaves (1995a: 50).
8 See, for example, Horne (2006: 183–207).
9 As opposed to the pidgin-like speech of African characters in most earlier French comics and cartoons: colonial *sabir* (argot) or so-called *petit-nègre*; see Siblot (1991) and Costantini (2011).
10 For example, in the song “Bye bye Mr. Chester Himes” by Mounsi (1985), James Brown in Azouz Begag’s novel *Béni ou le paradis privé* (1989) or Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* in Belghoul’s novel *Georgette!* (1986); see Woodhull (1997), Talahite-Moodley (2009), and Hargreaves (1997: e.g., 115–17).
11 Futuropolis also published a popular study of crime fiction (Cestac 2007: 72–3); see also Screech (2005b: 104, 114) for mention of comics by Frank and Golo.
12 On this novel, see Miller (1998: 55–88), Thomas (2007: 66–75) and Malela (2008: esp. 147–55).
13 Related, more recent comic books include Mahfoud (2002) and Paicheler (2006). Djeha stories were also published briefly in an Algerian comics periodical by that name in the early 1970s (Labter 2009: 187).

14 I am grateful to Ferrandez for giving me a copy of "Le pain des Français" (Ferrandez 1979).
15 Beaty (2007: 28–9; 2008); in *La véritable histoire de Futuropolis* [The True Story of Futuropolis], Cestac (2007) masterfully recounts the rise and fall of Futuropolis in mock-epic fashion; see also the articles about Futuropolis in *Neuvième art*, no. 14 (2008).
16 For more on this group, see below, Chapter 8.
17 Jover (1994: 12); although Boudjellal is not named in this comic strip, Jover confirmed his identity (Jover, Personal communication 2019). The strip was first published in *Baraka*, no. 9, June 1986, p. 36.
18 André Igual (1950–2000), a friend from Toulon and, like Jover, the son of a Spanish mason, also traveled to Paris and worked with the three cartoonists on several different projects: José and Manosque (1982, 1984), Jover and Igwal (1995), Jover and Manosque (1996) and Mechkour and Boudjellal (2004). In a cartoon commemorating Igual after his death, Boudjellal (2001) recounts meeting him through their love of comics during their boyhood in Toulon, much as Jover (1994) tells of meeting Boudjellal in similar circumstances. All this suggests the importance of personal friendships and a common love of comics for building successful comics networks in European capitals, but also of shared regional and (post)migrant identities.
19 Monpierre (Personal communications 2016, 2019); cf. Anita Comix (1984a: 56). On Bazooka, see also Sabin (2006).
20 E.g., "Instants Rock" by Olivia Télé Clavel [sic] in a 1983 issue of *Le citron hallucinogène* (24–5) to which Jover (12–14) also contributed; Lulu Larsen (11) and Olivia Télé Clavel (6) in *Viper* no. 10, April 1984, to which Mechkour (14), Boudjellal (15–18), Jover (27, 94) and Rasheed (52–3) also contributed. On Bazooka, see also Cestac (2007: 47).
21 Beaty (2007: e.g., 29–30, 39, 148–54). Cartoonists whom Beaty describes as creating alternative and avant-garde comics in the 1990s also published in the some of the same issues of the periodicals mentioned in the preceding note: e.g., David B. (71–5) and Mattt Konture (87–9) in *Viper* no. 10; and David B. and Mattt Konture (16–19) in *Viper* no. 11, July 1984, to which Boudjellal (83–90), Mechkour (35, 78–81) and Rasheed (67–70) also contributed.
22 DOM and TOM are French acronyms for, respectively, Départements d'outre-mer [Overseas Departments] and Territoires d'outre-mer [Overseas Territories], two administrative categories for French overseas territories. Monpierre's ancestral home of Guadeloupe is a DOM. He has now moved there from Paris.
23 In *Baraka mensuel*, nos. 7–8, May 1986, p. 41, republished in *El Building* (Sabeurdet 1994); on Mechkour, Rasheed and Sabeurdet, see also Belhadi (1985), *Festival international de la bande dessinée et de la caricature. Bordj-el-Kiffan du 30 juin au 5 juillet 1987* (1987), Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 206–14), Labter (2009: 245, 250).
24 On self-parody (*autoparodie*), see Groensteen (2010: 73, 116, 144, 208, 219–30).

25 See below, Chapter 3, for similar gestures in comics by Boudjellal.
26 For example, an analysis by leftist historian René Gallissot (1985), and *Les Beurs de Seine* [The *Beurs* from the Seine/The *Beurs* on Stage], a novel by Maghrebi-French author and activist Mehdi Lallaoui (1986).
27 This was a pseudo-scientific "quota theory based on racialised criteria." It decreed that "the [native] social fabric was threatened" (Silverman 1992: 55) when a certain percentage of foreigners in a French neighborhood was exceeded; cf. Seidel (1984) and MacMaster (1991).
28 The parodied line is in his 1974 monologue "Histoire d'un mec sur le pont de l'Alma" [Story of a guy on the Alma Bridge] (Coluche 1994: 8); on the meaning of this line, see Ungar (1996: 263).
29 The latter image also appears on the title page of a book by some of the demonstration's organizers, chronicling the event (Rodrigues et al. 1985); both reproduced in Lallaoui (1989: 89, 106). On Convergence '84, see pp. 28–9, 32–9, 70, 239 in this volume.
30 On the artist figure in Töpffer, see Kunzle (2007a: 84); in Cham, see Kunzle (2019: 81–2, 86); in Doré, see (Kaenel 2005: 460–71) and Kunzle (2015: 40–8). On parody in nineteenth-century comics, see Groensteen (2010: 18–27; 2014: 149–56). On "self-persiflage" by Töpffer, see Kunzle (1990: 38; 2007a: 58–9; 2009: 187) and p. 102 in this volume.
31 See also pp. 35, 81, 278 in this volume.
32 Cf. pp. 79–81, 94n44, 147, 277–80 in this volume.
33 On this, see (McKinney 2013a) and Felici (2016).
34 I prefer "reculturation" to the term "neo-orientalism," proposed by Laronde (1993: 183–185), which carries negative connotations after Edward Said's critique of orientalism (1994a) and risks confusing two different phenomena. Reculturation also has a much broader potential purview. The term "reculturation" is also used by Adam (1975), for example.
35 Jazouli (1985; 1992: 83–4, 88–9, 168).
36 On this notion, see Blanchard, Lemaire and Bancel (2008), and Blanchard, Lemaire, Bancel and Thomas (2014).
37 See pp. 18, 23–5, 49n16, 292, 309–10 in this volume, and McKinney (2007a, 2008b, 2011a); cf. Woodhull (1997) and Balibar (1998).
38 On the mixing of comics forms in Algeria, see Gueydan-Turek (2013, 2014).
39 On counter-history and comics, see Beaty (2008: 71).
40 *Repas antillais*, a forty-six-page story, is unpaginated. My numbering begins on the first page of the story (not the title page, whose reverse side contains publication information). Two pages (31 and 32) were mis-printed in reverse order, as the textual dialogue indicates.
41 Oncle Tabarin appears to dream of "Ti-Jean et les mulets de son parrain" [Ti-Jean and his godfather's mules] (p. 20).

42 Oncle Tabarin also speaks of Compère Lapin [Brer Rabbit] (p. 20).

43 There could also be a reference here to the famous French cartoonist Christophe (Georges Colomb), whose *La famille Fenouillard* (2004 [1893]) features a trip from France to America.

44 See also an unsigned cartoon drawn by Boudjellal and titled "Lothar, pote de Mandrake," which satirizes their colonial relationship: Mandrake accompanies Lothar to an antiracist march, but has no clue why Lothar is demonstrating (in *Baraka Hebdo*, no. 4, 3 April 1986, p. 27). Boudjellal (2019) explained the reference: "As a fan of Mandrake by Lee Falk and Phil Davis, I have always been surprised that Lothar should be presented either as a king or the servant of Mandrake. That was the object of the first joke (a strip) in the first issue of *Baraka*. I even planned to make a regular series out of it, because it amused me so much." The strip was published in *Baraka*, no. 1, 13 March 1986, p. 33.

45 See p. pp. 36, 53n67 in this volume.

46 The first fifteen pages of the story appeared initially in a special crime-fiction issue of *Circus*, a comics magazine published by Glénat (Jover 1982).

47 See Appadurai (1990) on ethnoscape; on the multiethnic *banlieue* in comics, see Papieau (2001), McKinney (2004a) and Wright (2018).

48 The later volume also includes a color version of "Salséro et les bikers."

49 On pocket comics in France and Algeria, see McKinney (2013e: 197–200) and Labter (2009: 45–7, 53–5).

50 In *Le gone du Chaâba*, Azouz Begag (1986: 13) depicts his older brother, Moustafa, reading "Blek le roc."

# Chapter 3
# Farid Boudjellal's realist comics

## Introduction: "A question of territory"

In the midst of difficult economic times for comics publishing in France in the late 1980s, Farid Boudjellal remarked on the position of cartoonists such as himself (1988a: 38–9):

> there is a kind of coherence in our trajectory: most of us moved from the social ghetto to the cultural ghetto and we're hanging on there rather better than the others. In any case, we're still around! [...] I accept my normal status as a cartoonist and not that of some spokesperson, even though I am unapologetic about foregrounding in my comic strips Maghrebi heroes in the throes of ordinary life (instead of systematically harping on 'emigrationism' or sensationalism of the kind one is often expected to engage in).

Boudjellal has consistently striven to escape ghettos and resist confining forces that have been physical, ethnic and artistic. In *Jambon-Beur: Les couples mixtes* [Ham-Butter/*Beur*: Mixed Couples] (1995: 7) he describes his fictional alter-ego in terms that echo Boudjellal's own situation to a significant degree: "Mahmoud est handicapé, arabe et chômeur [Mahmoud is handicapped, Arab and out of work]" (Figure 3.1). He too is asthmatic and has a leg deformed by polio as a child (Boudjellal 2007c). He is also an Arab of Algerian and Armenian heritage in a society that has often marginalized Arabs, especially those who are Algerians. He comes from a working-class family and has achieved impressive success in the comics field, as did his brother Mourad in the business world. The cartoonist has often ascribed some of his own personal traits to Mahmoud, but has never let them define him or his fictional character in ultimately limiting ways, despite living in a society that discriminates against Arabs and has not adequately eliminated barriers to the disabled, and where cartoonists and their comics have long occupied a low position in artistic and cultural hierarchies.[1] In a later interview, Boudjellal (2011: 7–11) expressed his frustration with readers, including critics, who ignore the art

**Figure 3.1:** From Farid Boudjellal (1995) *Jambon-Beur: Les couples mixtes*, articles by Martine Lagardette, colors Sophie Balland, Toulon: Soleil Productions, p. 7.5-8 © Farid Boudjellal and Soleil Productions. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

of his comics, reading them instead as straight autobiography or transparent windows onto sociological problems of an Algerian community in France, with the cartoonist as a spokesperson. Against such readings, Boudjellal invokes the comics of Milton Caniff and Hugo Pratt as inspirations for his own artistic research. In my analysis throughout this volume, I attempt to balance the artistic with the historical, social and cultural, believing that they are intimately intertwined in the comics that I study here.

Boudjellal's cartooning career and artistic achievement have been substantial, stretching over decades and earning him national recognition and awards. He has en-

deavored to escape constraining cartooning conventions by redefining genres in significant ways. He excels in a variety of artistic techniques and styles, including black-and-white line drawing and watercolor, caricature and realistic cartooning, hand-drawn and computer-assisted art. As a result, Boudjellal and his comics have been featured in national venues, including the Centre Pompidou[2] and the French national Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration [Museum of the History of Immigration],[3] on the front cover of the weekly *Le Point*[4] and in the pages of the daily newspaper *Libération* (Boudjellal 1983a; Anita Comix 1983b). He has won several prizes, including at the French national comics festival held annually in Angoulême.[5]

Escaping marginalization is a dual process that requires disrupting systems that exclude and confine, and replacing them with more open and hospitable ones. As Alec G. Hargreaves (1995b) has argued with respect to literary writing by people of Maghrebi heritage in France and Belgium, this activity can produce a "minor literature," understood in the very specific way that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1986, 1996 [1975]) theorized the concept. Such a literature is not of any less artistic value than another literature, nor is it necessarily aimed at youths, as Rodolphe Töpffer recommended in his 1845 manifesto for the new form of *romans en estampes* [novels in prints] that he had created (Töpffer 2003: 6–7). Instead it is a politicized literature, such as the fiction of Franz Kafka, in which the language and form of a dominant tradition are destabilized and deterritorialized. Insight by Samia Mehrez on what she calls "a question of territory" in prose fiction by French authors of North African descent applies equally well to Boudjellal's comics: "the real struggle against exile and nomadism, […] even as it deterritorializes the dominant, seeks to acquire and legitimate territory for itself" (1993: 27). Whereas for Deleuze and Guattari, reterritorialization is to be avoided, but paradoxically never can be completely, reterritorialization can be vital to the ability of an ethnic minority to survive and flourish.[6] This is precisely what one finds within Boudjellal's individual comics and across his career as a whole: a movement to deterritorialize the dominant, and at the same time to secure artistic, cultural and economic territory. He therefore strategically destabilizes confining, exclusionary representations, and replaces them with other, more liberating ones.

Throughout the rest of this chapter, I analyze most of Boudjellal's comic strips and books drawn in a realist mode that are set after Algerian independence in 1962.[7] For reasons of space, I have had to put aside his comics that are mainly humorous or fantasy-based. As in the preceding chapter, I highlight artistic invention in comics with roots in popular cartooning, which Boudjellal has consistently championed, for example by commemorating "pocket" comics periodicals.[8] I argue that in important ways, Boudjellal's comics have been just as formally innovative as those by cartoonists who have preferred formalist experimentation and fine-art approaches to legitimating comics. I begin by discussing Boudjellal's earliest strip, "Les dingues dignes" [The dignified loonies], in relation to work by Thierry Groensteen (1997) on formal constraints

in comics by Oubapo (Ouvroir de Bande Dessinée Potentielle [Workshop for Potential Comics]), and by Jacques Dürrenmatt (2013) on comics as literature. I then discuss "Ratonnade" [Lynching an Arab], an early comic strip by Boudjellal that was inspired by "Cauchemar blanc" and was first published in *Charlie Mensuel*. Boudjellal, like Roland Monpierre, published his first comic books in the early 1980s with Futuropolis, the comics bookstore and publisher that has been key to the contemporary legitimation of comics as an art form for adults in France and beyond, as Bart Beaty, Ann Miller and others have argued.[9] This suggests the importance of the artistic approaches and thematic material of Boudjellal, Monpierre and Jover – who also published with Futuropolis, in 1989 – to the transformation of the comics field at the time.

After discussing Boudjellal's earliest publications, I provide a broad overview of the narrative structure, characters and stakes of the Slimani saga, his main, semi-autobiographical story world about growing up Arab in France. I study migratory tropes and types across his comics, using the concepts of dialogism, polyphony and polygraphy, from M. M. Bakhtin (1987, 1990) and Thierry Smolderen (2009). I then explore transculturation, drawing on its original conceptualization by Fernando Ortiz (1995) and on adaptation of it to a French-language context by Hargreaves (2012). The final portion of this chapter consists of an in-depth exploration of a comic in a new genre for Boudjellal: the three-volume series "La présidente" [The President], scripted by historian François Durpaire and by Laurent Muller, is a dystopian political thriller meant to warn French voters about the dangers of electing Marine Le Pen president of France in 2017. The books suggest that she and her far-right political party, the Front national (FN), renamed the Rassemblement national (RN) in 2018, would move quickly to suppress dissent and to marginalize postcolonial ethnic minorities and recent immigrants further. "La présidente" has been Boudjellal's most commercially successful series to date. In my analysis, I again rely on the concepts of dialogism, polyphony and polygraphy, as well as on studies by Groensteen (1999, 2010), Miller (2007b), and Benoît Peeters (2002b) of the formal properties and possibilities of comics.

## Postcolonial dialogism in "Les dingues dignes" and "Les soirées d'Abdulah"

Politically inflected humor in comics can comfort and support victims of oppression and their allies, while also encouraging political or social action against that oppression. It can unsettle fixed categories and confining strictures, including unfairly restricting forms of binary thought, and make space for new ways of thinking, while also giving reading pleasure. Throughout his career, Boudjellal has parodically manipulated stock characters, humorously destabilized binary thought and hierarchical relations, and satirically treated sociocultural marginality and assimilation. He has redrawn images and rewritten text that form part of the colonial heritage of French com-

ics (McKinney 2011c), and more generally of French culture, while and because other individuals and groups who reject postcolonial immigrant minorities have been mining and recycling that same colonial heritage to exclude and oppress them. In an important piece of comics scholarship that can help us understand the ways that Boudjellal reworks colonial and other alienating comics tropes and types, Smolderen (2009: 15) adapts Bakhtinian notions, describing the "graphic polyphony" or "polygraphy" of comics that engage with other representational devices and systems. He (86–91) also points to the important role of comics in representing world's fairs: in them, cartoonists found "un terrain de jeu idéal, sinon un reflet de leur propre travail d'interprètes des images 'venues d'ailleurs'" [an ideal playing field, if not a reflection of their own work as interpreters of images that "come from elsewhere"] (88).

This type of activity is already evident in Boudjellal's first published comics. In 1978–9, *Circus*, a French comics journal, printed a series of seventy comic strips by Boudjellal titled "Les dingues dignes" [The dignified loonies], of three to four panels each and from six to twelve strips at a time. In *Bande dessinée et littérature* [Comics and Literature], Jacques Dürrenmatt (2013: 132) justly describes Boudjellal's strips as "magnificent" and notes that they preceded *Moins d'un quart de seconde pour vivre* [Less Than A Quarter Second to Live], by Lewis Trondheim and Jean-Christophe Menu (1991), and Trondheim's *Le dormeur* [The Sleeper] (1993), in the use of iconic iteration as an artistic constraint. Most of the "Dingues dignes" strips revolve around a pair of characters in a relationship where one exercises power over, or is dependent upon, the other (Figure 3.2). The characters are diverse. They include Catholics confessing to a priest in a confessional booth (15 strips), an Arab immigrant worker describing a French racist (10 strips), a battered wife speaking of her abusive husband (8 strips), a critically ill patient in a hospital and the attending physician and priest (10 strips), and a patient with a psychiatrist in a ward (7 strips). Other characters appear individually, but arguably also form couples of sorts, for example, a wounded veteran of French colonial wars, who is a victim of the French state. The comic effect of the strips comes from the irony-soaked interaction between the "dingues" and the "dignes" – that is, the loony and the dignified – which usually ends up reversing the terms, so that the "dingues" appear more "dignes" and the "dignes" seem more "dingues." "Dingue" and "digne" are almost anagrams and antonyms, so by joining the two terms in his title, Boudjellal surprises and helps create a new perception of these social types.[10] He also suggests that the difference between the two characters, or types, in each strip is partially a question of labelling and perception, may be absurdly trivial and unstable, and is therefore a potential source of provocative humor.

In "Un premier bouquet de contraintes" [A first bouquet of constraints], Groensteen (1997) elaborated a theoretical framework for, and thereby gave scholarly legitimation to, the experimental comics of Oubapo (Ouvroir de bande dessinée potentielle [Workshop for Potential Comics]), cartoonists who were then for the most part members of

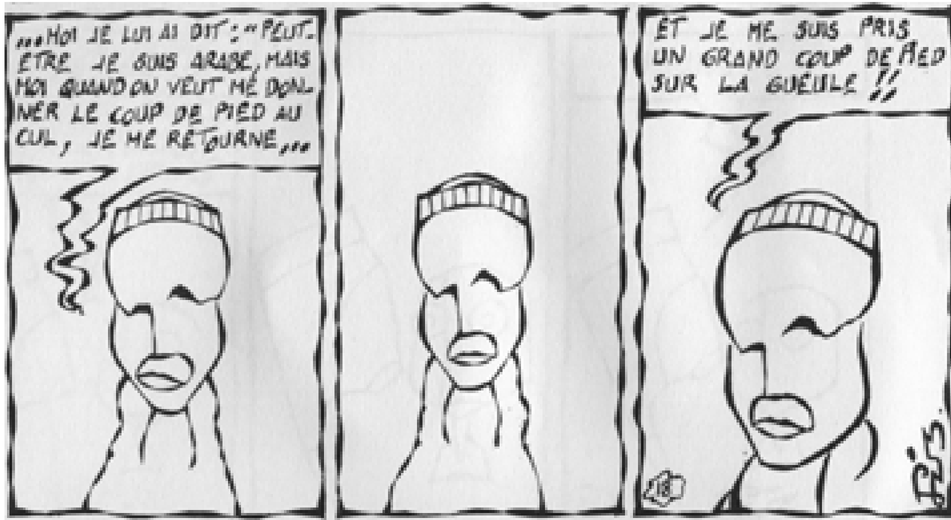


**Figure 3.2:** From Farid Boudjellal (1979) "Les dingues dignes," *Circus*, no. 16, 1er trimestre, p. 77 © Farid Boudjellal. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

L'Association, an artists' collective and publisher of alternative comics in France. L'Association published Groensteen's essay in *Oupus 1*, the group's first volume, alongside examples of Oubapo comics. Groensteen borrows a first principle from Oulipo (Ouvroir de littérature potentielle [Workshop for Potential Literature]), that comics may only qualify as Oubapo experiments if their formal constraints are imposed arbitrarily and independently of the expressive needs of the story. This theoretical restriction excludes comics whose "artistic project" requires a certain "enunciative disposition" to function properly. Groensteen posits this in a passage dealing with the "iconic iteration" that is constitutive of comics (20–6). The exclusion is no doubt intended to heighten the avant-gardist, experimental profile of Oubapo, and thereby potentially the group's capacity to raise the status of comics by recognizing only those that focus on the artistic apparatus itself.[11] However, Groensteen's theoretical restriction has at least three potential disadvantages. First, it encourages a formalism that can quickly become sterile: several Oubapo experiments, including "Grabuge galactique" [Galactic trouble], a science fiction strip by Etienne Lécroart and Jean-Christophe Menu in *Oupus 1*, may have interest as formal experiments, but have inane content. Second, a theoretical principle that formal experimentation must exclude the appropriateness of the enunciative disposition to the subject matter may not, in fact, raise the status of the medium, whereas the contrary might. And third, it institutes an arbitrary distinction between comics, one that can obscure our understanding of the field and its evolution.

"Les dingues dignes" is a case in point. The iconic repetition of the strips is complete in some cases and partial in others, much like the strips by Jean-Christophe Menu and Lewis Trondheim that Menu (1997: 11) and Groensteen (1997: 21) describe as

Oubapien, "explicitly – although anticipative." Just as Groensteen (21, 23) points out for Trondheim's strips, the simplicity and iconic iteration of "Les dingues dignes" were in part due to the fact that Boudjellal was still developing his drawing technique, thereby making virtue of necessity (on the other hand, Boudjellal's mastery of drawing style and technique was already far ahead of Trondheim's in the sets of strips compared here). "Les dingues dignes" exhibit several other characteristics that Groensteen finds in Trondheim's strips: they are based on the classic structure of the gag strip, with a pause and a punch line (24); the "reduced expressivity" of the drawn characters "produces [...] subtle comic effects" (23); much of the strips' humor is linguistic (21, 24); and when they are read one after another the strips produce a "symbolic capitalization" by "progressively building a coherent microcosm" (24).[12] And as with the duo in Trondheim's *Le dormeur*, Boudjellal's strip about a wife abused by her husband "brings us into the hidden aspects of the life of a couple" (24). Finally, in many of the strips by Boudjellal and Trondheim there is an unseen interlocutor with whom the protagonist engages in one-sided dialogue.

Where lies the difference between "Les dingues dignes" and the strips that Groensteen deems to be authentically Oubapien? It may come from a contrast in subject matter, and the relationship between that and the constraints used. The content of the strips by Trondheim and Menu reproduced by Groensteen at this point in his essay is insipid: a conversation between a rock and a human about topics such as the weather, erosion and the lack of moles in the desert, because there are no worms for them to eat there; a frog wondering about whether or not to take a nap; and a small monster in bed who asks someone else to make breakfast for it because it cannot find the saucepan. In these strips, the only thing of possible interest is the form. It is only apparently paradoxical then that Boudjellal pushes his exploration of the form even further than do Trondheim and Menu in Groensteen's examples. Although artistic forms are socially situated, that fact is partially elided by Groensteen and some Oubapo productions (such as "Grabuge galactique"), although it is highlighted by others, such as Oubapo's reworkings of Tintin comics, some of which underline the colonial and other types of violence embedded in the original content and form (Miller 2007a: 134; *Oupus 2* [2003]: 86, 88). In his "Dingues dignes" strips, however, Boudjellal always examines the social anchoring or production of the form, linking its enunciative apparatus to its subject matter. The simple stylized drawings of "Les dingues dignes" connect the tradition of social typification through visual caricature to the comic strip, and link both caricature and comics to the circulation of social stereotypes through jokes. Boudjellal also used the gag strip to parody existential self-doubt, but anchors it in specific situations of social marginalization, by contrast with the vapid discussions in the strips by Trondheim and Menu.

Self doubt has been a subject of French-language comics since at least Töpffer, in the first half of the nineteenth century, and is partly attributable to the traditionally low cultural status of the form. For example, David Kunzle (1990: 38; 2007a: 58–9; cf.

2009: 187) has argued that the social climbing of Mr. Jabot – the eponymous antihero of *Histoire de Mr. Jabot* [Story of Mr. Jabot] (1835), Töpffer's first published "novel in prints" – who desires acceptance by aristocratic society, is a form of "self-persiflage" by the author, conscious of the low rank of caricature and his new comic-strip form in the artistic hierarchy. The existential longing of a M. Bêton [Mr. Ninny], in his misadventures drawn by Léonce Petit and published in 1867–8, may also be read as a satirical reference to the lowly status of comics, if we take Bêton to be a fictional alter ego of the cartoonist (see McKinney 2013b: 7). Fabrice Leroy (1995: 333, 340–1) has proposed that the self-referentiality of francophone comics in Belgium may be attributed in part to a widespread feeling or position of cultural inferiority, especially compared to dominant French literary culture. Miller (2007b) has shown how the question of legitimation has been central to both the production of comics and commentary on them throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Luc Boltanski (1975) and Beaty (2007, 2008, 2012) have also explored the issue at length. Existential self-questioning in the comics by Menu and Trondheim in Groensteen's essay might therefore be read metatextually, as questioning the lowly status of the form.

"Les dingues dignes" certainly also question comics form, but in a much more fundamental way, by dialogizing social types in both language and caricature.[13] The economy of language and iconography in the strips reduces the speech and visual representation of characters to a simple form: for example, priest and confessant, father and son, patient and psychiatrist, doctor and dying boy, judge and accused, client and prostitute, French racist and Arab. In each strip Boudjellal uses the typical build up and punch line of the gag sequence to thwart normative expectations about social types and their relationships. The narrative form of the comic strip thereby encourages reflection on reified language and caricatural drawing, and on how cartooning and comics (re)produce social types. Boudjellal caricatures social typification through language and image by first introducing lexical terms and visual traits usually associated with one or more social types in the buildup, in the first panel or panels of the strips. The penultimate panel is often mute, thereby simulating the pause before the punch line of a stand-up comedian's joke. Humor in these strips is ironic and often self-deprecating: for example, a woman who is beaten weekly by her drunkard husband counts the number of times she has been abused in twenty years of living with him, and an immigrant Arab recounts racist humiliation heaped on him by a Frenchman posing as his friend. The juxtaposition of different social types – both victimizers and victims – and the accumulation of strips encourage a general reflection on mechanisms of humiliation and alienation, that is, on visual and verbal social caricature, and on joke-telling as sadistic, for example, when Boudjellal's victims repeat jokes that their abusers have recounted in order to mock them. The strips thereby invite reflection on cynical, exploitative joke-making of the kind that we will see in Chapters 6 and 7, in the comics and cartoons of the French far right.

The "Dingues dignes" strips integrate the immigrant Arab worker, the racist Frenchman and the mistreatment of the former by the latter into a panoply of social types and reprehensible acts: racist abuse, both verbal and physical, of the Arab immigrant is thereby equated to verbal and physical spousal abuse, and to a doctor and priest callously informing a deathly ill patient that he should abandon all hope. Boudjellal connects the gag strip to specific social contexts that produce marginality and, often also, cruel jokes about people who are marginalized and abused. His strips dialogically give voice both to abusers and abused, bullies and martyrs, thereby providing insights into social situations that foster abuse, its effects on victims, and justifications given by the violent. Boudjellal thereby interrogates the production and uses of the gag strip, jokes and caricature, both verbal and visual. The "Dingues dignes" deterritorialize the dominant in a way that encourages sympathy for several types of victims in contemporary France and carves out an empathetic space for them in social discourse.

After "Les dingues dignes," Boudjellal published three comics in *Charlie Mensuel*, then edited by Georges Wolinski: "Les petites soirées d'Abdulah" [Abdulah's short evenings] in 1980, then "Les soirées d'Abdulah: Ratonnade" [Abdulah's evenings: lynching an Arab] and "Les soirées d'Abdulah: L'oud" [Abdulah's evenings: the lute] in 1981.[14] The first two stories were subsequently republished in 1985 as "Les soirées d'Abdulah" and "Ratonnade" in *Les soirées d'Abdulah. Ratonnade*, volume sixteen of Futuropolis's "Collection X" series of comic books *à l'italienne* [in the Italian style], which Töpffer had used for his novels in prints. In the remainder of this section and in the following one I shall analyze the two stories in that album. In the first, "Les soirées d'Abdulah," Boudjellal brings together characters from his "Dingues dignes" and further dialogizes the French comic-strip form: his immigrant Arab worker from "Les dingues dignes" who is now named Abdulah, a blond woman oblivious to the feelings of others, and a prostitute (Boudjellal 1996b: 12–14). By doing so, he also answers a question that has long intrigued comics scholars: can the comic-strip form be broken down into discrete elements below the level of the single panel?[15] Here again, Boudjellal demonstrates the close intertwining between artistic form and social function. His comic shows that individual panels may contain many discrete, socially encoded, elements that interact and can be isolated. He represents social types or caricatures in different settings and situations, which cartoonists have been doing in comics since at least Töpffer's *Histoire de Mr. Jabot*. The crucial difference here is postcolonial and immigrant-related: as a cartoonist concerned about racist discrimination, Boudjellal trains his vision on social types and caricatures that are part of the French colonial heritage, including in comics, or related to working-class immigrants and their descendants. He therefore helps to make one of the most decisive shifts in French-language comics since the novels in prints of Töpffer, which are steeped in colonialist attitudes and imagery. Boudjellal's comics are an example of the empire writing back (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989), that is, they are contrapuntal, in the sense that Edward Said

defined anti-imperialist writing in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994b: e.g., 32–3, 51, 66–7).

"Les soirées d'Abdulah" consists of brief scenes of a day in the life of Abdulah that, in themes and rythm, recall "Les dingues dignes," but as though the earlier short strips were now knit together to create a longer narrative about the difficulties of an Algerian immigrant worker in France. For example, the story begins with a mute three-panel sequence with minimal visual changes that recalls the Abdulah strips in "Les dingues dignes" – Abdulah is again looking straight at readers – but exhibits significant differences. Someone gradually raises some paper documents while Abdulah smiles, whereas the Arab immigrant did not do so while recounting the humiliating jokes in "Les dingues dignes." The following panel, a reverse shot, shows us that the preceding sequence was ocularized, providing the subjective perspective of a character: we were looking at Abdulah from the perspective of a woman sitting at a counter behind a window, in an office setting.[16] Here, as in the shorter comic strips, Boudjellal begins by placing us in the viewing position of Abdulah's interlocutor, inviting us to play the role of the average French person confronted with a social type often confined to the margins of French society and to racist jokes.

Whereas in the strips of the "Dingues dignes," Abdulah told readers jokes recounting earlier conversations between him and one or more Frenchmen (in *discours rapporté* [reported speech]), those jokes are now cruelly played out in the present in encounters between him and different French social types: the condescending, unhelpful clerk at the Social Security office whom we just now saw looking at him; a former colleague from a construction site who invokes a distant future of ethnic mixing through interracial marriage, but fails to give immediate, concrete assistance to his friend now in need; or Abdulah's former employer who refuses to pay a pension to the destitute man, now disabled from a work accident, and cannot even be bothered to help the Algerian, illiterate in French, complete his application for assistance from the French Social Security agency. Several vignettes here illustrate themes first suggested by the short comic strips, but as a whole the longer story essentially expands and elaborates on one of the earlier strips that ironizes on the surprise of a Frenchman that Abdulah should be in desperate straits in France, supposedly a paradise for immigrant Algerians. The increased length of "Soirées d'Abdulah" allows the cartoonist to bring together some of the social types that he first depicted separately in the strips, and further dialogize them. France is represented as the home of callous, uncaring French men and women who are oblivious to Abdulah's predicament, with the exception of "the whore-with-a-heart-of-gold" (Douglas and Malti-Douglas 1994: 200), who finally fills out Abdulah's Social Security papers. Abdulah is shown to be a victim of French society: his hand was maimed at his construction job, which was not officially, legally declared, leaving him jobless in France and, without a pension, unable to return home to Algeria and face his friends and family there. Abdulah's boss can avoid compensating him in part because Abdulah was working without the *carte de travail* [work permit] legally required of immigrant workers.

In the strip Boudjellal creates a highly ironic and poignant view of alienation of the immigrant North African laborer in France that has as one of its strongest statements a masturbation scene. The cartoonist juxtaposes the dialogue between an announcer speaking on air with the winner of a radio show jackpot, to the visual narrative sequence showing Abdulah looking at the portrait of a bikini-clad woman on the label of a wine bottle. The shot-reverse-shot sequence shows Abdulah masturbating with his right hand, which was crippled in his uncompensated work accident. Here Boudjellal confronts the "get rich quick" myth of capitalism with the physical and sexual or affective misery of the immigrant worker whose cheap labor is necessary to the functioning of the economic system.[17]

## Little Mohamed in Slumberland

"Ratonnade" is a short, twenty-nine panel story that reworks a joke about police violence told by the Arab immigrant in a "Dingues dignes" strip (1979f: 76), but also responds to Mœbius's "Cauchemar blanc" and goes beyond it in significant ways.[18] First, the etymology of its title provides crucial historical grounding lacking in Mœbius's short story. The word "ratonnade" gained widespread currency in France during the Algerian War (1954–62), when many Arabs were lynched and summarily executed by French civilians, police officers and soldiers. The term comes from a racist French insult for Arabs, "raton" [little rat], and recalls related insults that Mœbius's white racists use (*bicot*, *bougnoule*, *crouille*).[19] Boudjellal's use of the term "ratonnade" implicitly but clearly connects the beating of an Arab in postcolonial Toulon to the Algerian War, and thereby colonial-era violence to the postcolonial present.[20] The term also shifts focus from the imagined nightmare of white racists foregrounded in Mœbius's title, to their action against an Arab in waking life. In an interview, Boudjellal (2007c: 120) compared his strip to Mœbius's, highlighting changes that he made:

> At the time I was almost alone. There was a story by Mœbius titled "White nightmare," in which an immigrant worker was the victim of an Arab lynching. That comic was not about immigration but instead about racism. The character on the moped says nothing: he is there to be lynched. Those who speak are the racists. Reading that beautiful comic strip, I told myself that it would be useful to create something in which the immigrant speaks, speaks out. So I started with Abdullah [...]

Speech and silencing are indeed central to "Cauchemar blanc." As comics scholars have remarked, the last three pages of Mœbius's story are entirely silent,[21] that is except for the onomatopoeia of machine noises. There, the open but mute mouth of the Arab helps heighten the horrific, nightmarish quality of the tale. There is no speech equiva-

**Figure 3.3:** From Farid Boudjellal (1985) *Les soirées d'Abdulah. Ratonnade*, Paris: Futuropolis, p. 23 © Farid Boudjellal. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

lent, from the victim, to the oversized letters of the onomatopoeia "ccChoc," produced when the racists ram their car into his moped, brutally knocking him off the moped, into the air and onto the ground. The absence of a human voice points toward a disconnection between the helpless victim and onlookers, both other characters within the story and readers outside of it: as though trapped in a nightmare, we can only watch the racists inhumanly and inexorably run him down and beat him savagely and in silence, perhaps to death. In "Ratonnade," Boudjellal accentuates and reorients the mute spectacle of the beating: we see Abdulah, mouth wide open and no doubt screaming in multiple panels, including from close up, his face turned almost directly toward us (Figure 3.3). However, once again we cannot hear – or rather, read – his scream.

Nonetheless, in contrast with Mœbius, Boudjellal enables his Arab victim, Abdulah, to "speak and speak out," even if not obviously within the visual storytelling, or diegesis, of the assault. Instead, the cartoonist attributes a measure of narrative au-

thority to Abdulah by having him tell his own story verbally in the textual recitative. Meanwhile, the violence unfolds silently, without any speech balloons or onomatopoeia, within the visual sequence. By keeping his images mute, Boudjellal preserves the nightmarish quality of the actual lynching as depicted in the second sequence of "Cauchemar blanc."[22] He also maintains a shift or disjuncture in perspective as in "Cauchemar blanc," but instead of articulating it through two self-contained, separate and juxtaposed sequences in which one twists, flows into and reverses the other in a kind of Mœbius (or Möbius) strip,[23] as in "Cauchemar blanc," he instead produces an ironic opposition between visual and verbal storytelling of the same event, so that readers are invited to compare the two narrating modes in each succeeding panel in the strip. This recalls the narrative tension and ironic resonances between verbal and visual narration used by Töpffer,[24] but with a crucial added complexity in terms of narratees, as we shall see shortly. In *Arab Comic Strips: Politics of an Emerging Mass Culture*, Fedwa Malti-Douglas and Allen Douglas (1994: 199) also point out that "[t]he gap between the verbal and the visual narration [in "Ratonnade"] suggests the occultation of such events [as lynchings] in the French media," a silencing that had earlier spurred Mœbius to create "Cauchemar blanc."

In the textual narration, Abdulah tells a child named Mohamed his tale about being lynched, but as a bedtime story and much euphemized, as though he were recounting a game. He does so in response to the boy's question: "Dis, Abdulah, c'est quoi une ratonnade?" [Say, Abdulah, what's a lynching?"]. By including Mohamed as a verbal or textual narratee, the story implicitly begins an important postcolonial shift in focus within French comics, from a population of single male immigrants to a new, younger generation of postcolonial immigrant heritage in France, that is, in this case, French offspring of North African immigrants (see Chapter 1, above). In the interview quoted from above, Boudjellal (2007c: 120) refers to a related change between Mœbius's story and his own, in his shift of attention from racism and racists to the North African immigrant community in France. That Mohamed would have heard the term "*ratonnade*" and ask Abdulah for its meaning suggests that both are part of, and here represent, the postcolonial immigrant community of North African heritage in postcolonial France, in part because that is where *ratonnades* still occur, after national independence (1962 for Algeria). Boudjellal's lifetime career focus on primarily addressing an audience of his fellow French citizens, and telling stories about Maghrebi characters of all ages in France, supports this interpretation. A similarly named Algerian-French youth will appear in later albums, beginning with *Le gourbi* [The Hovel] (1985b): Mahmoud, the cartoonist's fictional alter-ego, mentioned above. It suggests that one might even read the storytelling situation in "Ratonnade" as alluding to the origins of Boudjellal's own introduction to colonial violence against Arabs in France, as a boy growing up in Toulon.[25] Boudjellal has depicted racist beatings of Arabs several times in his comics, including in *Petit Polio* (1998: 46–7), in a scene set again in Toulon and whose origin is autobiographical (2019b):[26]

> For this story, as usual I mix reality with storytelling, the dramaturgy often necessitates moving away from autobiography so the reader feels an emotion equal to what I felt when it happened to me. The Algerian in the bus is an authentic story. It seems to me that if it had not happened to me, I would not have put it in these pages. I have to say that it says so many things about the perception, the rejection of Algerians in France at the time...

"Ratonnade" indicates that the Maghrebi-French population is composed of multiple generations and is constituted in part through the transfer of a memory of colonialist French violence from an older generation to a younger one. It is, in part, a modern cautionary tale, much like older folktales, whether from France or North Africa, which offer multiple levels of meaning.[27]

In addition to the shift in focus, away from racists onto immigrants and the next generation, there is a temporal adjustment between the strips. "Ratonnade" is not a bad dream that occurs during sleep, as in Winsor McCay's strips, whether in "Dream of the rarebit fiend" or "Little Nemo in Slumberland," at the end of which the dreamer awakes and is relieved of oniric terror. Nor does the brutal attack on the Arab in "Ratonnade" take place just after waking, as in "Cauchemar blanc." In Boudjellal's version there is no sleeping, waking up or subsequent relief for any character. He complicates the principle of reversibility that McCay suggests and Mœbius foregrounds, between dreaming and waking, nightmare and reality. Like McCay and Mœbius, Boudjellal gives us direct access to the psychic world of the protagonist, but this time through a waking nightmare that precedes and prevents sleep, as Abdulah remembers and recounts his lynching, euphemistically in speech and directly in visual narration. He thereby includes elements that are glaringly absent from Mœbius's text: the speech of the Arab immigrant in his textual narration, along with his recollection or imagining of the event in the visual recounting, although the latter could also be the storytelling of an impersonal, omniscient narrator, but an Arab immigrant nonetheless. As the quotation given above from the 2007 interview with Boudjellal indicates, both gestures were innovative in French comics in the early 1980s.

We have seen that Smolderen (2009) helpfully describes comics as polyphonic and polygraphic. At issue here is the creation of new, postcolonial images and speech in comics, and the dialogization of older, colonial ones. Ian Gordon (1998) has shown that in New York in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Richard Felton Outcault, McCay and other cartoonists reworked the comic strip in response to an urban modernity being produced and transformed through consumerism, immigration, racism and nationalism, which were quickly replacing old identities and affiliations (cf. McKinney 2017b). The "new realism" (Lecigne and Tamine 1983) that Mœbius helped launch in French comics is located in the dissolving and refashioning of French and immigrant identities in a postcolonial urban and suburban environment. In this

sense, postcolonial Paris of the 1970s and 1980s was experiencing upheaval similar to that of New York decades earlier, although immigrants and other foreign visitors were already transforming society in early twentieth-century Paris.[28] In "Cauchemar blanc," Mœbius dialogizes contemporary racist representations of the male Arab immigrant laborer. In such a context, the return to, and rediscovery of, American comics could be more than just a means to rehabilitate and celebrate the medium. Mœbius's turn to McCay also involves borrowing graphic paradigms for reworking images of ethnicity in a modern city marked by the upheavals of colonialism, immigration and economic crisis. The main formal device at play here is the uncanny movement from a dream state to a waking one, which unsettlingly evokes a modern urban environment turned topsy turvy by radical social change and vicious reaction to it. The doubling and reversal of Mœbius's strip, where the dream, anchored by realist conventions, appears first and is then replaced by a reality deformed by nightmarish violence, could destabilize readers, the better to spur them to act against racist outlaws. The lynching in the second segment is an illegal racist action masquerading as a form of racial justice.

Boudjellal produces a related uncanny effect in "Ratonnade," as he further dialogizes the male Arab immigrant worker, including his treatment by Mœbius, and key artistic features of "Cauchemar blanc." As we have seen, Boudjellal splits his narration between an immigrant subject who euphemistically narrates a story verbally, and on the other hand, a narrator who openly narrates the story visually and who may again be Abdulah, or perhaps instead one we could identify with the author. The two narrating instances tell a story for different audiences, with distinct techniques and in contrasting terms. The juxtaposition between ways of recounting the *ratonnade* creates an ironic reading effect that functions throughout the whole story, instead of just in a final frame (in McCay's comics) or the final third of the story (in "Cauchemar blanc"). Reading "Ratonnade," one may compare the two versions constantly, noting the repeated slips of the verbal narrator, when Abdulah inadvertently begins to reveal the true nature of the event to Mohamed, but then quickly covers it up. The equivocation is heightened insofar as Mohamed asks for a general definition – "Dis, Abdulah, c'est quoi une ratonnade?" [Tell me, Abdulah, what's a *ratonnade*?] – and Abdulah responds by defining it as a game ("un jeu") between oneself (you, or "tu") and friends ("tes copains") (cf. Douglas and Malti-Douglas 1994: 199). Boudjellal here reworks Mœbius's suggestively ironic name of the head of the racist gang, Mr. Barjout, which suggests "joue(r)" [to play (e.g., a game)], "une joute" [a joust] and "barjot" [crazy] (cf. Lecigne and Tamine 1983: 61). Mœbius makes clear that the lynching in "Cauchemar blanc" is only the latest episode in a series of attacks by the gang, which gives this one an iterative quality, so the specific *ratonnade* that we see there stands in for an unquantified number of other ones. In the final frame of "Ratonnade," Boudjellal provides a literal and figurative punch line, which repeats the principle of reversal that is central to the strips of McCay and Mœbius: the *ratonnade* is circular or repetitive here, because the police, who

had picked up Abdulah and – we thought – saved him, prepare to beat him up again, this time at the police station.[29] As Pierre Fresnault-Deruelle (1977: 139) notes, the final frame of a gag comic strip resembles the proverb at the end of a fable. Here, Boudjellal, who began making comics through gag strips modeled on the joke form, uses a last Möbius-like twist in his conclusion to provide an ironic, unexpected condemnation of racist violence by police, who should be protecting the victim of the *ratonnade*, not assaulting him once again.[30]

"Ratonnade" is told like a fable or a fairy tale (cf. Fresnault-Deruelle 1977: 139). It juxtaposes the childish fantasies of "Little Nemo in Slumberland" in the textual narration, substituting a young Muslim Arab French boy for McCay's Little Nemo, with the adult stories of "Dream of the rarebit fiend" in the visual narration.[31] The ironic relationship between the two levels parodies juvenile comics and promotes the new realism of adult ones (cf. Fresnault-Deruelle 1977; Lecigne and Tamine 1983: 59–64). "Ratonnade"'s generic fluidity locates it at an intersection between the imagined and the real, dream and waking reality, fable and auto/biography. As Fresnault-Deruelle (1977: 148) and Miller (2007b: 139–41) have argued regarding *mises-en-abîme* in comics, the undecidability they produce can have unsettling effects on readers, by producing uncertainty about how to read and interpret the story. The instability in "Cauchemar blanc" and "Ratonnade" productively raises important questions still relevant today, for example, how cartoonists might represent postcolonial and immigrant subjects without making them into mute victims, albeit noble ones, as Mœbius does. Or how cartoonists can represent them in ways that are not easily reducible to the sociological or the autobiographical, and where the speaking and viewing postcolonial subject becomes neither solely native informant nor simply witness (*témoin*), as still often happens. By partially or wholly attributing narrative authority and agency to Abdulah, Boudjellal simultaneously also interrogates the status of postcolonial ethnic minority cartoonists, and the degree to which their comics are read as transparently realist and often autobiographical stories or complex artistic representations. The conversation between Abdulah and Mohamed also foregrounds the relationship between the postcolonial immigrant generation and the following, French-born ones. That connection revolves around how, why and when a historical memory about a violent colonial past is transmitted, and the relationship of colonialism to postcolonialism. It interrogates the role of agents of the French state in perpetuating colonial violence in the present, and how to counteract it. Boudjellal's story shows that postcolonial ethnic minorities may respond to official silence and to euphemistic, humanistic representations, by recounting unofficial, hidden histories of violence through the popular art form of comics, in complex ways.

## Narrative architecture and historical underpinnings of the Slimani saga

Boudjellal's main story cycle, and longest one, is centered on the Slimanis, an extended family of Algerian heritage in France, and currently encompasses eleven albums published episodically over almost thirty years.[32] It began as a natural outgrowth of the "Soirées d'Abdulah" comic strips, as is indicated by their overlapping titles. When it was initially serialized, the first part of the story cycle was published as "Les soirées d'Abdulah: L'oud" [Abdulah's evenings: the lute] (mentioned above), and included Abdulah as a character, but no longer the main one (1981b).[33] There Boudjellal continued the major shift that he had begun making between "Les soirées d'Abdulah" and "Ratonnade," away from a focus on single, male North African immigrants and toward an emphasis on a larger, multi-generational Maghrebi-French community, with one or more generations born and raised in France. Boudjellal subsequently incorporated "Les soirées d'Abulah: L'oud" into an album that has as its title the former subtitle "L'oud." That in turn also became the series title for three books: *L'oud* (1983b) and the two following volumes, *Le gourbi* (1985b) and *Ramadân* (1988b), which together form the "Oud" trilogy. All three volumes were published separately by Futuropolis. They were subsequently republished together in a single volume (*L'oud: La trilogie* [1996b]) by Farid's brother, Mourad Boudjellal, with his Soleil Productions publishing house in Toulon.[34] In this chapter I refer to the Soleil edition of the trilogy. I begin engaging with the complexity of the interrelated stories in the Slimani saga through a synthetic analytical approach, by looking at its narrative architecture and historical underpinnings.

In an interview, Boudjellal (2011: 9) acknowledges the presence of autobiographical material in the story cycle, but emphasizes the importance of his artistic and narrative work there:

> *Ramadân* is a book that was solely conceived as a meditation on time: how can one express time in comics? That's how I extended my reflection on the comic strip. How can one bring a crowd of characters to life, not necessarily through a targeted story, a lone story, but with almost as many stories as there are characters? It was already very complicated.

Boudjellal here resists a reading of his creative activity that ignores or discounts its art. As I indicated earlier, I strive to account for interaction between artistic aspects of the comics studied here and their sociocultural, historical and (auto)biographical dimensions. I therefore begin by looking at time as it relates to story structure and page layout in the "Oud" trilogy, before going on to discuss other aspects of narrative architecture.

For Groensteen (1999), artistic and narrative architecture in a comic book may be conceived of on general levels: strip, page, double-page, album and series (38–9), al-

though other narrative sequences of varying length (126–30), including chapter units (Dürrenmatt 2013: 105–13), may also play a role. Boudjellal's "L'oud" trilogy may be described as an amalgam of two somewhat antagonistic models of narrative structure in cartoons, or a tension between them. Joseph Witek (1989: 128) discusses the first in what he calls Harvey "Pekar's aesthetic of aggressively hum-drum realism," where the emphasis is on the quotidian and the atmosphere of working-class American life, with a resultant deemphasizing of narrative structure and movement, and a slowing down of time. Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 204) have described *Le gourbi* and *Ramadân* as "giv[ing] us a soap-opera vision of a North African family," suggesting that here too the quotidian is important, as is the gradually unfolding time of daily life. Pierre Fresnault-Deruelle (1972b: 65) describes a second type of narrative structure with implications for the treatment of time. The "parentheses-script" (*le scénario-parenthèses*), at work in the traditional adventure comic book such as *Tintin*, presents itself as linear, teleological, and involves resolving enigmas or "question-problems":

> The narrative presents itself therefore at first as the accumulation of a bundle of openings leading from one to another, in the image of what is, in painting or in advertising and for the form of the content, a mirrored composition [*la composition en abîme*] [...] The series [of enigmas or "question-problems"] close one after the other, often in a much shorter fictive time than that taken to reach the structural center of the work. The word "end" is contemporaneous with the last answer given to the original question.

One way of seeing this second model operating in the "Oud" trilogy is by counting the total number of panels and pages per album: 317/43 in *L'oud*, 363/44 in *Le gourbi*, and 611/45 in *Ramadân*. The average number of panels per page is therefore 7.4 in *L'oud*, 8.3 in *Le gourbi*, and 13.6 in *Ramadân*. Because the number of pages per album remains almost constant (43, 44, 45), the enormous increase in panels from *Le gourbi* to *Ramadân* results in a greatly increased panel density and a different page layout. The range of panels per page across the pages in each album also jumps significantly: 1–11 in *L'oud* and *Le gourbi*, but 9–21 in *Ramadân*. This jump may be at least partially attributed to the *scénario-parenthèses* effect that necessitates the quick closing of several narrative parentheses in *Ramadân* that had been opened in the first two albums, *L'oud* and *Le gourbi*: several different subplots revolving around distinct but interrelated sets of characters. At the same time the artist also develops the third album's thematic unit, centered around a cultural event that also happens to be time-bound: the exploration of Ramadan as a month-long period of fasting and celebration in Paris, Toulon and beyond, to be laid out for readers in its multi-dimensional complexity and symbolic resonance. This leads to a dramatic increase in panel-to-page density and a corresponding decrease in average panel size. To aerate the layout and counteract the claustrophobic effect caused by the

**Figure 3.4:** From Farid Boudjellal (1996) *L'oud: La trilogie*, Toulon: Soleil Productions, p. 154.2-13 © Farid Boudjellal and Soleil Productions. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

larger panel quantity, greater density, and smaller panel size, Boudjellal somtimes juxtaposes a tall, narrow side panel to a profusion of mini-panels given over to dialogue and narrative progression (e.g., 1996b: 125, 145, 152, 154). Another effect of increased panel density is a corresponding change in *Ramadân* to certain kinds of camera effects that occupy several panels of medium to large size in the two previous volumes: zoom ins and zoom outs (25, 32, 103), especially ones with large panels for dramatic

effect (37, 39, 41, 110), found in *L'oud* and *Le gourbi*. The same is true with previously larger panels for establishing shots (25.1, 60.4, 70.8, 71) or for depicting crowded rooms (76.7, 88.4), which have shrunk in *Ramadân* (establishing shots in 138.1, 138.7; crowded rooms in 122.1, 132.1). Boudjellal's reflection on time in *Ramadân* is also anthropological as one page strikingly suggests (Figure 3.4): in it, Salima explains mortality to Chaïnez, her five-year-old daughter, by counting up the years of a long life, while evoking birth, aging, death and an afterlife; meanwhile, four other pairs of characters discuss important life changes, including love, loss of friendship and moving apart (1996b: 154). Moreoever, time in the album is also intimately connected to the month-long religious observance and to the long-term processes of cultural maintenance and assimilation, to which I now turn.

Boudjellal's saga begins in *L'oud* with men of diverse North African backgrounds, and then concentrates almost exclusively, in *Le gourbi* and *Ramadân*, on families composed primarily of individuals of Algerian heritage, including second and even third, post-migration, generations in France. Boudjellal thereby explores the forms, possibilities and limits of North African community in France through familial and interpersonal relations between his characters: mixed couples, *métis/se* figures, and gender roles. *L'oud*, the first full-length album in Boudjellal's Slimani saga, picks up where *Les soirées d'Abdulah. Ratonnade* left off, and revolves mainly around a trio of men living in Toulon: Aziz Chaïeb, a thirty-two-year-old Tunisian, born in 1948, who emigrated to France as a young man in 1966 and acquired French nationality, Kader Djaouti, a forty-seven-year-old Algerian who migrated to France in 1961, and Nourredine Barouche, a nineteen-year-old born in France to Algerian immigrant parents (Boudjellal 1996b: 25–7). The narrator's first recitative suggests that the existence of a North African community in France is questionable: "Ces trois Maghrébins en train de jouer un air du folklore marocain n'ont guère que l'amour d'une même musique en commun" [These three Maghrebis who are playing a tune from Moroccan folklore have hardly more in common than a love for the same music] (25). This opening statement both counters racist homogenization of Maghrebis in France and invites analysis of what might hold together a Maghrebi-French community. The album opens and closes with scenes where the trio's musical performances and interactions with audiences suggest some basic parameters. In the opening scene, a white Frenchman interrupts their playing and dismisses their music in a racist manner: "De la musique, ça, ce truc pour sauvages?" [Is that music, this thing for savages?] (28). Resistance to French racism immediately appears to be a common cause uniting the young men. However, even that basis for community is immediately undermined, because Aziz, fearing to lose his French nationality, stands down from a physical confrontation, whereas Kader is ready to fight the hostile Frenchman who struck him (28–9). Then, at the close of the album, the trio, joined by Abdulah, an expert oud instrumentalist, plays music at a North African wedding (60–3; Figure 3.5). However, during the wedding dance, Aziz picks a fight with an-

other North African man who has a visible erection and is dancing with Christine, his white French girlfriend. In the ensuing mêlée, the oud is broken. No longer able to perform their music, the trio leaves the party and subsquently disbands, which again suggests limits for a Maghrebi-French community built on a common cultural heritage and project, and shared economic interests. A parallel plot development in *L'oud*, with equally important implications for the grounds of, and limits on, Maghrebi-French community, is the departure of Nadia, Nourredine's younger sister, who runs away to Paris in search of independence from parental, and especially patriarchal, authority (32–3, 48–9). Boudjellal uses mixed, French-Maghrebi couples – both Aziz and Christine, and Nadia and her white French boyfriends – to delineate the contours of a Maghrebi community in France and viable ways of integrating into mainstream French society. The wedding fight and Nadia's flight also begin to outline a critique of male violence and attempts to control women that continues in the two subsequent volumes.

By shifting the physical setting between *L'oud* and the subsequent album, *Le gourbi*, from Toulon in the French south to Paris in the north, Boudjellal also introduces a geographical range with implications for Algerian and French national identities. He thereby locates his Slimani family, soon the primary characters of his realist fictions, in the Parisian center of French cultural and political life. At the end of *L'oud* Nourredine boards a train in Toulon bound for Paris, to search for Nadia (64), and early in *Le gourbi* he arrives in the French capital (78). There he initially stays with his maternal aunt, Salima Slimani, her husband, Abdelsalem, and their seven children. In *Le gourbi* we continue to follow Nourredine's search for runaway Nadia, but also see there the attempts

**Figure 3.5:** From Farid Boudjellal (1996) *L'oud: La trilogie*, Toulon: Soleil Productions, p. 60.4 © Farid Boudjellal and Soleil Productions. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

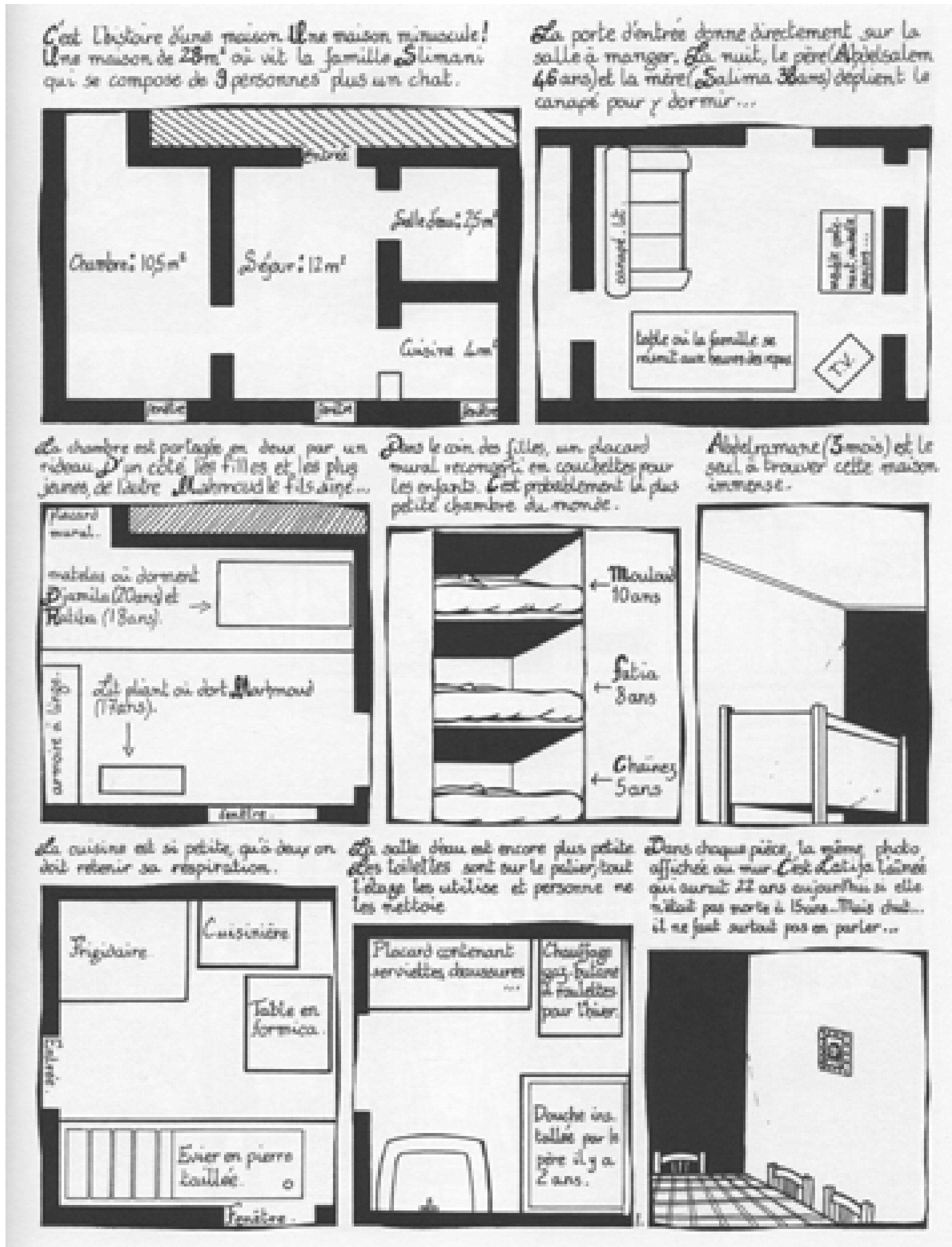


**Figure 3.6:** From Farid Boudjellal (1996) *L'oud: La trilogie*, Toulon: Soleil Productions, p. 69 © Farid Boudjellal and Soleil Productions. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

of the Slimani parents, especially Abdelsalem, to control the sexuality of twenty-year-old Djamila, their oldest living daughter (Latifa, her older sister, is dead), who begins dating. As Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 204) point out, Djamila's "name means

'pretty' in Arabic," which helps situate her in a gender dynamic that is again central to defining Maghrebi-French community in the trilogy.

The album opens with an architectural-type visual schematic showing the family's constricted living quarters (Boudjellal 1996b: 69), which the cartoonist ironically names "le gourbi," using a colonial-era loan word from Arabic (ca. 1841), whose current French meaning is a "wretched and dirty dwelling" (Figure 3.6).[35] In *Ramadân*, the following album, the story's plot becomes even more complex, as Boudjellal interweaves stories about several different Slimani family members, including their interactions with members of the French ethnic majority at school, work and play. The story, organized around the Slimanis' observance of the month-long Muslim Ramadan fast, as already mentioned, concludes soon after Djamila moves out of the crowded family apartment and into her own (147), when Nadia reunites with her family back in Toulon (158–9). She brings along her newborn child, Linda, leaving the father, her boyfriend Jacques, back in Paris. We might assume that the separation is temporary, but because Boudjellal has never picked up that plot line and developed it further, that ethnically mixed couple has remained in a kind of symbolic limbo. While the Barouche parents celebrate Aïd with Nourredine, Nadia and Linda in Toulon, the rest of the musical group from *L'oud* – Abdulah, Aziz and Kader – almost magically reappears to play for the celebration, thereby symbolically recreating a Maghrebi-French community that had disintegrated by the end of the first volume (Figure 3.7).[36]

**Figure 3.7:** From Farid Boudjellal (1996) *L'oud: La trilogie*, Toulon: Soleil Productions, p. 159.8-13 © Farid Boudjellal and Soleil Productions. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

After the "Oud" trilogy, Boudjellal makes another significant shift that begins with *Jambon-Beur: Les couples mixtes* (1995), which moves forward in time, and accelerates through the "Petit Polio" series, which returns to the past: in these books he increasingly focuses on Mahmoud and his friends, and through him engages with a range of issues including physical disability, colonial violence, religion, sexuality and social-class privilege. In *Jambon-Beur: Les couples mixtes*, Mahmoud marries Patricia, who gives birth to their child Charlotte-Badia. In the album the cartoonist again uses relations between characters and families of Algerian and European heritage to articulate tensions, this time coming from both the past history of the Algerian War, and also the Algerian civil war between the Algerian government and Islamists, which was unfolding in the 1990s while he drew his story. Social conflicts reach a head through a magical-realist twist, when Charlotte-Badia splits into two girls, Charlotte, a Catholic, and Badia, a Muslim (27; Figure 3.8).[37] That there is hope for a reconciliation between Charlotte-Badia's two religiously distinct sides is signified by a final reconciliation at story's end, between her, or between their, two grandmothers (54), each of whom has lost a loved one through violence related to conflictual Algerian and French relations: Patricia's father was conscripted into the French army and died in the Algerian War; and Salima's eldest daughter, Latifa, committed suicide after becoming pregnant from her boyfriend, described at one point as "French" (1995: 9, 53; 1996b: 103). *Jambon-Beur: Les couples mixtes* thereby launches a temporal movement that will structure several subsequent albums and illuminate tensions in French society and beyond, by recalling a violent historical past, especially the Algerian War. Boudjellal sets his narrative wholly during that war in the next segment of his Slimani saga, recounted in "Petit Polio," volumes one (1998) and two (1999), beginning in July 1958, when he starts to tell the story of Mahmoud's childhood. This return to the historical past is also a geographical voyage, because Boudjellal takes his narrative south again, first to Toulon. Then, the third "Petit Polio" volume, titled *Mémé d'Arménie* [Granny from Armenia] (2002), introduces another violent historical event affecting the Slimani family, this time the Armenian genocide, which Mahmoud's Christian paternal grandmother survived, as did Boudjellal's own grandmother, Mémé's real-life model, as a postface by Martine Lagardette to the book's second edition makes clear (2006b).

Boudjellal also moved his setting a bit eastward, from Toulon to Vence, partway through *Les années Ventoline* [The Ventoline Years] (2007a), a fourth volume in the "Petit Polio" series, as he progressed forward to Mahmoud's adolescence in the 1970s, partially filling in a temporal gap in his saga, between the childhood of his protagonist in the first three volumes of "Petit Polio," and his young adulthood in *Le gourbi*. As the reference to medecine in the title of *Les années Ventoline* suggests, the cartoonist introduces into his story Mahmoud's struggle with asthma, which constitutes a second physical handicap for the boy, in addition to his leg having been crippled by polio, which is recounted throughout the Slimani saga. Boudjellal thereby weaves another autobi-

**Figure 3.8:** From Farid Boudjellal (1995) *Jambon-Beur: Les couples mixtes*, articles by Martine Lagardette, colors Sophie Balland, Toulon: Soleil Productions, p. 25.8 © Farid Boudjellal and Soleil Productions. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

ographical fact into his fictional narrative: he too was treated in a sanatorium in Vence that specialized in respiratory illnesses (2007c: 117–18; 2011: 17). In *Les années Ventoline* and even more so in *Le cousin harki* [The *Harki* Cousin] (2012), the fifth volume in the "Petit Polio" series, both set primarily in the sanatorium, Boudjellal again focuses on a mostly male group, as in *L'oud*, but here on a more diverse one in both ethnicity and age. He again uses his cast of characters to figure the possibilities of Maghrebi, especially Algerian, community, and more broadly, the interrelationships between French citizens of different ethnic, political and religious backgrounds. *Le cousin harki*, published on the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Algerian War, again connects past historical violence with the story's present in 1973, this time by first returning in a prologue to the Indochinese and Algerian Wars, and introducing Moktar Ben Slimane-Martin (3–13). Moktar is the titular *harki* character, whose conscription in the French army (45), participation in the Algerian War, war wound (his lungs are injured in a gas attack [23–5]), and escape to France from the postwar massacres of *harkis* (52–7), considered to be traitors to the Algerian nation, are recounted through a series of flashbacks from the present, when he arrives in the sanatorium in Vence (15–19). Boudjellal also intertwines Moktar's story with that of Jean-René Martin – the French commanding officer of Moktar's father, Ziad Ben Slimane, also a *harki* –who converts to Islam and adopts Moktar after Ziad's death. Jean-René had previously adopted Daniel Hossner-Martin, a

Jewish boy whom he and Ziad saved from deportation and the Nazi genocide, in which Daniel's mother, who was deaf and mute, died (11, 35, 66–7, 71). In *Les années Ventoline* and *Le cousin harki*, Daniel is a doctor who directs the sanatorium in Vence.

In *Jambon-Beur: Les couples mixtes* and then the "Petit Polio" series there is a strong, extended focus on multiple divisive and painful historical pasts, which Boudjellal had begun to sketch out in shorter earlier comics, including "Les dingues dignes," "Ratonnade," "Amour d'Alger" [Love in Algiers] (Boudjellal 1984b) and "Vengeance harkie" [*Harki* vengeance] (Mérezette and Boudjellal 1994).[38] Boudjellal's references to traumatic, divisive conflicts, including the Rwandan, Armenian and Jewish genocides, occurred while the FN rose to political prominence and helped shape national debates in France about the place of the North African community, the relationship of the Algerian War to the present, and the status of Muslims and Jews in France. As I already noted, the Algerian civil war of the 1990s and early 2000s also played a role in Boudjellal's return to the Algerian War (Boudjellal 1995: 48). Into this overall narrative architecture, which is structured in important ways by temporal, historical, geographic, social, cultural and political parameters, Boudjellal weaves several migratory types and tropes, to which I now turn.

## Migratory types and tropes

Boudjellal plays with social types and caricature in his humorous albums such as the four-volume "Juif-Arabe" [Jew-Arab] series (1996a [1990–2]) and *Le Beurgeois* [The Beurgeois] (1997). He has also done this to some extent in his realist comics, using postcolonial polyphony, polygraphy and dialogism. As we have already seen in "Les dingues dignes" and the "Abdulah" stories, the first North African type that Boudjellal reworked is the single male immigrant who does difficult and dangerous manual labor. There and in *L'oud*, Abdulah Razouz and Kader Djaouti are victims of racist discrimination and exploitation by French characters, including an office worker at the government Social Security bureau (Boudjellal 1996b: 5), a construction company boss (10–12), predatory thugs (18–21), police officers (21) and a waiter and a manager at cafés (6, 28–9). Boudjellal also shows Abdulah and Kader to be lonely victims of "sexual misery" (8–9, 37), which contrasts strikingly with the sexually predatory North African immigrant men drawn by French far-right cartoonists including Coral, and described in far-right rhetoric and imagery.[39] Boudjellal puts another twist on this recurring racist trope by showing Aziz Chaïeb's seductive handsomeness leading some French women to question whether he is Maghrebi (26). In addition, Boudjellal dialogizes a related racist colonial image of the knife-wielding, throat-slashing North African in a scene where Abdelsalem is using a straight razor to shave a Frenchman whom the Algerian barber calls "Monsieur René" [Mister René] (99).[40] His client is articulating a common rhetorical trope, by distinguishing between supposedly bad immigrants and good ones, and including

Abdelsalem and his family within the latter group. After denying that he agrees with the xenophobic ideas of Le Pen, Monsieur René nonetheless defends a version of them to Abdelsalem, who remains politely silent, no doubt to avoid alienating his client, until Monsieur René, before leaving, asks Abdelsalem how his children are doing. The juxtaposition of Monsieur René's violent xenophobic rhetoric with close-up images of Abdelsalem's sparkling razor moving across the Frenchman's face and under his throat raises the specter of physical violence by the (formerly) colonized in order to undermine that supposed threat, and show that, by contrast, it is French xenophobia that is violent, and not its hardworking and long-suffering immigrant victims. However, this passage comes just after a long sequence in which Abdelsalem, perhaps drunk, physically attacks four members of his family in an angry attempt to enforce patriarchal authority. He strikes his daughter Djamila when she begins dating a man. He then successively attacks his daughter Ratiba, his oldest son Mahmoud, and his wife Salima, when they try to defend Djamila and each other. Boudjellal's representation is therefore dialogical, both polyphonic and polygraphic. Using images and words, the cartoonist dialogically transforms two different social types into more complex and believable fictional figures: Monsieur René expresses xenophobic beliefs while patronizing an Arab-run hair salon, and Abdelsalem is a North African immigrant who can be physically violent after drinking too much alcohol, but still loves his family. Boudjellal implicitly but firmly condemns both the Frenchman's verbal violence and the physical violence of Abdelsalem. The cartoonist produces polyphony and polygraphy in part through visual close-ups and by ironically juxtaposing images and words, whether within a single panel or between narrative sequences, sometimes on a single page. On a page just mentioned (99), the first strip shows Salima and Djamila, with a bruise on her face, leaving the office of a doctor whom they told that the young woman had fallen down some stairs. The second strip shows the encounter between Monsieur René and Abdelsalem. The third and last shows a classmate and young Mouloud Slimani fighting, and Mouloud's younger sister Chaïnez bringing a teacher to separate the two boys.[41] Boudjellal here dialogically juxtaposes various forms of violence associated with immigrants and the French to critique the violence and to explore the complexities of daily life in Paris for a family of Algerian heritage, including the degree of acceptance shown them by the larger French society.

Another image often associated with postcolonial immigrants in France that the cartoonist dialogizes is the large Maghrebi family.[42] Boudjellal deflects Franco-French fears of a demographic explosion of North African migrants in two ways that accurately represent reality: by suggesting that large families of migrant parents can offset a demographic deficit in France,[43] and by showing the offspring of such families as far less likely than their parents to have many children (see Hargreaves 1995a: 109). For example, Djamila expresses a strong disinterest in having a large family, because she grew up in one (Boudjellal 1996b: 105, 127). She eventually gives birth to twins (Boudjel-

lal 1995: 17). Mahmoud and his wife Patricia have one child, although Charlotte-Badia later magically splits in two, as we saw earlier. One could argue that, to an extent, rejection of postcolonial immigrants in France is class-based, because they are descended from groups that occupied subaltern positions in the colonial French economy, ranging from slave work in the Caribbean to voluntary or forced labor in the mines, factories and fields of metropolitan France. Immigrants, their offspring and their friends are almost always working-class in Boudjellal's comics, a situation that matches his own family background, as I indicated earlier. For example, there are no middle-class North African students, such as the colonial travelers described by Benedict Anderson (1991: 113–140; cf. 55–61) and who appear in *Chính Tri: Le chemin de Tuan* (Baloup and Jiro 2005), a graphic novel about anticolonial activists from around the French colonial world living in Paris between the two world wars. As we saw with "Les dingues dignes" and the two "Abdulah" stories, Boudjellal's immigrant characters were initially single men who sometimes left behind a wife and children in North Africa, but the cartoonist quickly moved on to entire families with immigrant parents, especially the Slimanis and Barouches. A few of Boudjellal's characters are *déclassés*, having moved from the bourgeoisie down into the working class, at least temporarily. They include Aziz (in *L'oud* and briefly again at the end of *Ramadân* [1996b: 25–6, 159]) and the family of Armand, Claire and young Rémy Cosmetti, a family whose patronym suggests an Italian heritage, in the three volumes of "Petit Polio." The alcoholism of Armand, a doctor, has caused him to lose clients and has impoverished his family, leading them to move into the working-class neighborhood of Toulon where the Slimanis live (33–41). Such characters help Boudjellal represent a diverse popular milieu, which helps him counter stereotypes about immigrants. They help highlight strengths of his working-class community, such as generosity, resourcefulness and solidarity, as well as inequities such as poverty.

It is not clear whether Boudjellal's adult immigrant couples moved to France together or were instead reunified later, for example with a wife joining a husband after his earlier emigration to France. By contrast, some comics about North African immigration to France – including *Les Mohamed* (Ruillier 2011) and *Demain, demain: Nanterre, bidonville de la Folie, 1962–1966* (Maffre 2012) – explicitly represent migration, including family reunification. However, the absence of images of emigration and immigration within the confines of the story – with significant exceptions to which I shall return shortly – helps firmly anchor Boudjellal's characters in France, because the vast majority of them are already living there in the books that we read, regardless of their prior history. Still, migratory movement does structure the Slimani saga in key ways, for example, when Abdelsalem explains to young Mahmoud that the family is in Toulon instead of Algeria to have a better life (Boudjellal 2006a: 51). Although we rarely see the voyage itself, there are several departures from Algeria and arrivals in France, and vice versa, including the migration of Aziz and Kader to France (1996b: 25–6). An episode

showing the Slimani family visiting Algiers mocks Islamist sexual mores (1989: n.p.; see Douglas and Malti-Douglas 1994: 215).[44] Moreover, stories about illegal migratory movement from North Africa to France are absent from Boudjellal's comics, but, again, are the topic of comics by various other cartoonists.[45] On the other hand, Abdulah is an early example of a figure that has become emblematic in comics and beyond: a *sans-papiers* (see below, Chapter 10).

The differing motivations and the diverse situations of migrants in Boudjellal's comics represent the complexity of migratory trajectories and of positions occupied by people of North African heritage in France with respect to nationality (Moroccan, Algerian, Tunisian or French, and bi-nationals), place of birth and upbringing (in North Africa, France or elsewhere), connection to immigration (immigrants or their descendants), cultural background (foreign or hybrid heritage), and relationship to colonial history (supporting the FLN, or serving as a *harki*). The cartoonist critically reworks places and processes prevalent in fiction and political discourse about North African immigrants and their descendants. At the same time, he both critiques some traditional practices and norms among North African migrants, and shows their offpring as the recipients of an Algerian cultural heritage but also very French in cultural terms. He also represents France as partly Algerian, recalling Etienne Balibar's (1998: 73–88) description of France and Algeria as together forming one and half nations because of their long intertwined history, transnational family ties and shared cultural references. Boudjellal is a transcultural translator who represents the complex reality too often hidden by stereotypical imagery about people of Maghrebi heritage in France.

Still, there are figures of alienation and exclusion in his comics. Several figures from his Slimani saga exemplify the trope of emigration as exile. Abdulah says that he cannot return to Algeria after his construction-job accident and face his family without bringing home money (1996b: 7). His former employer refuses to grant him a pension, nor could he find similar gainful employment, because of his crippled hand (7, 11).[46] As we have seen, Kader left his wife and children in Algeria and lives in cramped quarters with other male migrants in Toulon (27). In *Mémé d'Arménie* (2006b [2002]), Marie, Mahmoud's Armenian grandmother, is also in exile. Not only does she emigrate from Algeria to Toulon to be with her family there, after her husband has died (6–11), but as a Christian, she originally fled from her native Turkey to Algeria to escape the Armenian genocide, in which all the other members of her family perished (55–6). Her exile in France, like Abdulah's, appears to be permanent. Boudjellal artfully uses several comics techniques to encourage readers to view the distress and victimhood of Abdulah, Kader and Marie with empathy. They include visual-textual narration of the repeated humiliation and apparently insurmountable obstacles faced by Abdulah as he tries to obtain compensation for his work accident (1996b: 5–15), a shot-reverse-shot sequence showing pornographic images pinned on Kader's wall to suggest his sexual misery (37, 52),[47] and repeated close ups of Marie's face (2006b: e.g., 13.10, 16.8, 31.11),

as well as passages where she evokes the Armenian genocide (20, 55–6). Just as Marie fled Turkey, Moktar Ben Slimane-Martin must flee Algeria into exile in France to avoid widespread massacres of *harkis* and their families at the end of the Algerian War (2012: 52–3). Despite racist rejection by some in France (51–2, 62–5), he finds acceptance in a multicultural community that includes his adopted Jewish brother, Daniel Hossner-Martin, and father, Jean-René Martin, whose conversion to Islam and generous care for his former aide-de-camp (Moktar's father) and his two adopted sons exemplify true hospitality and fidelity. We might see another version of political exile in the departure of Aziz Chaïeb, who leaves behind a "severe and tyrannical" father, a "rich Tunisian industrialist" (1996b: 25), because when Boudjellal drew *L'oud*, Tunisia was under the repressive one-party rule of Habib Bourguiba. Any "rich industrialist" would have been closely allied with the regime, so Boudjellal's portrait may be an indirect political critique. The cartoonist carefully represents a diversity of legitimate motivations for migrating, none of which are predatory in intent or effect, as the French far right often claims. He also illustrates the emotional, physical, financial and cultural costs of migration. Raising a family in France brings both new costs and gains to immigrants, as Boudjellal shows in his representation of their children, who radically change the migratory project from temporary to permanent.

The national costs and benefits of allowing in migrant workers, and especially those from postcolonial ethnic minority communities, have been hotly debated in France. In the Slimani saga, several migrants leave their home in North Africa to better their economic situation and sometimes that of their families. Abdulah and Kader, the Barouche parents, Abdelsalem and Salima Slimani, Mounir and Moktar all share the experience of having grown up in a (former) French colony before emigrating to France. Boudjellal represents their migratory projects variously, as a mix of illusion and disillusionment, successful calculation and necessary compromise, political exile and asylum, and incorporating both push and pull factors. For instance, we see a rebellious young Aziz mockingly bidding his father farewell in Tunisia (1996b: 25). On the other hand, the older and poorer Kader is lured to leave his wife and children behind in Algeria and emigrate by the mirage-like portrait that his emigrant friend Saïd paints of economic opportunities awaiting Kader in France (26). We then see both Aziz and Kader in difficult economic straits together in France, with Aziz asking his girlfriend Christine, a drug addict, for 100 francs (about $20) to help him buy an *oud* (36), and Kader cursing Saïd, while writing home from the cockroach-infested, cramped room that he shares with several other poor immigrant men (26–7). In France, some of these characters hold, or held, jobs then typically done by North Africans and other postcolonial immigrant groups, such as one finds elsewhere in prose fiction, film and comics.[48] In addition to Abdulah, who worked in a construction job until he was injured, Mounir, who is Djamila's fiancé for a time, is a mason (105). Later, in the "Petit Polio" series, set in the 1950s, we see Abdelsalem working as a manual laborer in Tou-

lon, probably as a municipal employee for the city, where he drives a truck and sets up metal crowd barriers for a visit by Charles de Gaulle (2006a: 11, 23). As we already saw later in the story, as recounted in earlier albums, Abdelsalem subsequently earns a living in Paris as a barber for a North African shop owner named Habib (1996b: 99, 126, 131, 143). This is again a form of manual labor, albeit a less dangerous one. His nephew Nourredine, on the other hand, finds a job in a Quick fast-food restaurant in Paris (137). Mahmoud disparages this as menial work, as just one of many "boulots craignos" [lousy jobs] that Nourredine could do, whereas Salima suggests that no jobs should be looked down upon (137).

In several important ways, Boudjellal distinguishes between the immigrant generation and their offspring, who were often born in France and were raised there. For example, Abdelsalem tells Mahmoud that he needs to study to be able to work with his head, because he has been handicapped by polio, and so that he might make a better living than his father (2006a: 51). Both Mounir and Abdelsalem would like to return home permanently to Algeria one day (1996b: 105, 126). Abdelsalem suggests to his son that they move back to Algiers to open a hair salon together, but Mahmoud would only consider doing so if his father were to give him a half interest in the business, which would entail a major shift in authority between generations (126). Abdelsalem refuses his son's terms, so Mahmoud turns down his father's offer. In speaking with Djamila, Mahmoud disparages her fiancé for his calculating approach to getting ahead and his desire to have a large family, calling him a "beauf maghrébin" [Maghrebi hick] (107), although Mounir's outlook strongly resembles that of their own father, Abdelsalem. This represents a second-generation perspective on a typical immigrant mentality and strategy. On the other hand, we have seen that the musical group in *L'oud* brings together both North African immigrants (Aziz and Kader) and a young man of Maghrebi heritage born and raised in Toulon (Nourredine), which blurs differences between the generations through a shared cultural and economic project.

Work by Maghrebi-French women in the series includes that of Ouria Barouche and her sister Salima Slimani, whose primary occupation is to raise their families in Toulon and Paris. Salima's homemaking work is a special focus of *Le gourbi* and *Ramadân*, in part because the cartoonist focuses on the family and home as the central elements that hold together the Maghrebi community in France. We therefore see Salima buying groceries (92) and bringing them home (84), nursing her baby (86), accompanying Mahmoud to the doctor's office (124) and the hospital (138), or doing the laundry (147). She is very often in the kitchen, sometimes clearly making meals (74) or washing dishes (74, 115, 141), and repeatedly serves food at the table (86, 101, 105, 118, 128, 132–3, 157). She has so much to do to take care of her husband and their seven children that at one point she forgets to pick up her young daughter Chaïnez at school (136). Work by young Maghrebi-French women also receives significant attention: Djamila, who did not do well at school, works as a cashier in a Parisian supermarket (107, 123, 127).

Her sister Ratiba, on the other hand, is a successful student and thereby embodies the promise of upward socio-economic mobility for the future (123, 125, 142).

By contrast with the immigrant generation, young French characters of Maghrebi heritage migrate primarily within metropolitan France, especially from province to Paris and back. This movement implicitly recalls the migratory movement of the first generation from North Africa to France, while marking a symbolic distance from it, by inscribing the aspirational voyages of the second generation wholly within French territory, much as the cartoonist himself moved from Toulon to Paris, where he encountered success as a cartoonist. The conclusion of *Ramadân* reunites the Barouche and Slimani families in a way that temporarily resolves the contradictions created by the evolving migratory project, by carefully balancing the desires and goals of the different characters (parents and children; men and women) in order to preserve a sense of family and, by implication, a larger community of Maghrebi heritage in France. To sum up, in the Slimani saga there are colonial and postcolonial exiles and pilgrimages, but no members of the Maghrebi community in France return to North Africa except for vacations (in Boudjellal 1989). Instead, aside from migrating to France in search of a job (Abdulah and Kader) and going into a kind of exile there (Marie in *Mémé d'Arménie* and Moktar in *Le cousin harki*), migratory voyages in Boudjellal's comics usually involve travel within mainland France.

## Transculturation

The Slimani saga demonstrates Boudjellal's sensitivity to how the offspring of immigrants radically transform their parents' migratory projects, as well as the cost and benefits of the latter to the family as a whole. In key passages of the "Oud" trilogy, he alludes to migration and exile in a nostalgic mode, suggesting deculturation and loss among Maghrebi families living in France, but also hope for inventive new cultural forms. Of course members of immigrant or postcolonial ethnic minorities can resist or reject transculturation.[49] This position is typical of migrants who attempt to preserve their original culture intact, often because they hope to return permanently one day to their countries of origin. The desire to retain or return to cultural origins is often accompanied by some form of anticulturation, the rejection of new cultural forms and practices, in this case, French ones.

Boudjellal show various processes and positions related to transculturation in his Slimani stories. For example, in *L'oud*, after Nourredine has apparently confided in Kader about his confrontation with his parents after learning of Nadia's departure, Kader says "C'est un drôle de monde… Maintenant les filles elles partent avec les Français et les fils ils frappent le père… C'est temps de partir au pays!" [It's a strange world… Now girls leave home with Frenchmen and sons strike their fathers… It's time to go back home!] (1996b: 39). Kader is a migrant who feels alienated in French society, regrets hav-

ing emigrated from France to Algeria, and wishes to return home to his wife and children. His statement to Nourredine expresses feelings of alienation and anticulturation, that is, resistance to values that he associates with France: feminine independence and intercultural mixing via an ethnically mixed couple (Nadia leaving with her French boyfried) and a violent filial rejection of patriarchal authority (Nourredine striking his father). However, Nourredine, who was born in France, cannot imagine moving to Algeria, as Kader is recommending, to erase the cultural differences dividing members of Maghrebi immigrant families: "Où tu veux que j'aille moi? Je connais que la France!" [Where do you want me to go? I only know France!]. When Kader then asks Nourredine, "Tu l'as quand même la religion?" [You have religion, after all?], the young man answers "La religion?... Tu parles... Quand j'étais gosse, ya pas si longtemps que ça... ...je croyais que Mahomet était mort crucifié" [Religion?... You must be joking... When I was a kid, not so long ago... ...I thought that Mohammed died on a cross].[50] Boudjellal zooms out from a close-up of the two men in one panel to a long shot in a larger panel where they almost disappear, two small figures standing on the Mediterranean waterfront in the Toulon port. The visual emphasis on the smallness of the two men against the buildings, boats in the harbor, night sky, and sea helps reinforce the sense of loss described by the men. Here Boudjellal uses both humor and pathos to depict transculturation as an inchoate and conflictual process. Nourredine, as the French-born child of Algerian migrants, is incompletely familiar with either Algerian and Muslim, or French and Christian, cultural norms, or was so as a child, and would not feel at home in Algeria.

Transculturation is of course painful to the migrant parents' generation too, as Kader's comments suggest. When Nadia runs away from home, and later, when Djamila chooses to move out on her own, their departure is understandably felt by their parents to be a rejection of their cultural norms, as indeed it is, in part (33, 147). So, for example, after Nadia has run away from home and Nourredine has announced his decision to move to Paris to search for her, Mr. Barouche awakes to discover Ouria, his wife, angrily throwing the clothes of Nadia and perhaps Nourredine too, out of the window and into the street (58). As Abdelsalem says later, in *Ramadân*, while looking at a picture of his dead child, Latifa, after Djamila has just moved out, "On a fait nos enfants dans la France, la France, elle nous les prend..." [We had our children in France, France is taking them from us...] (Boudjellal 1996b: 147; see Douglas and Malti-Douglas 1994: 205). The previous album, *Le gourbi*, is constructed in part around Abdelsalem's mysterious absences from home on Sundays, which lead to neighbors gossiping (Boudjellal 1996b: 88, 91), and to marital strife, with Salima wondering whether he is unfaithful to her (88–9, 96). However, we realize what the situation must be when, on the final page of *Le gourbi*, Nourredine chances to see Abdelsalem sitting on a bench in Paris, feeding pigeons (111). The image, which Boudjellal later put on the cover of *L'oud: La trilogie*, suggests alienation and mourning of the immigrant Algerian father, caused in part by the suicide of his eldest daughter, Latifa.

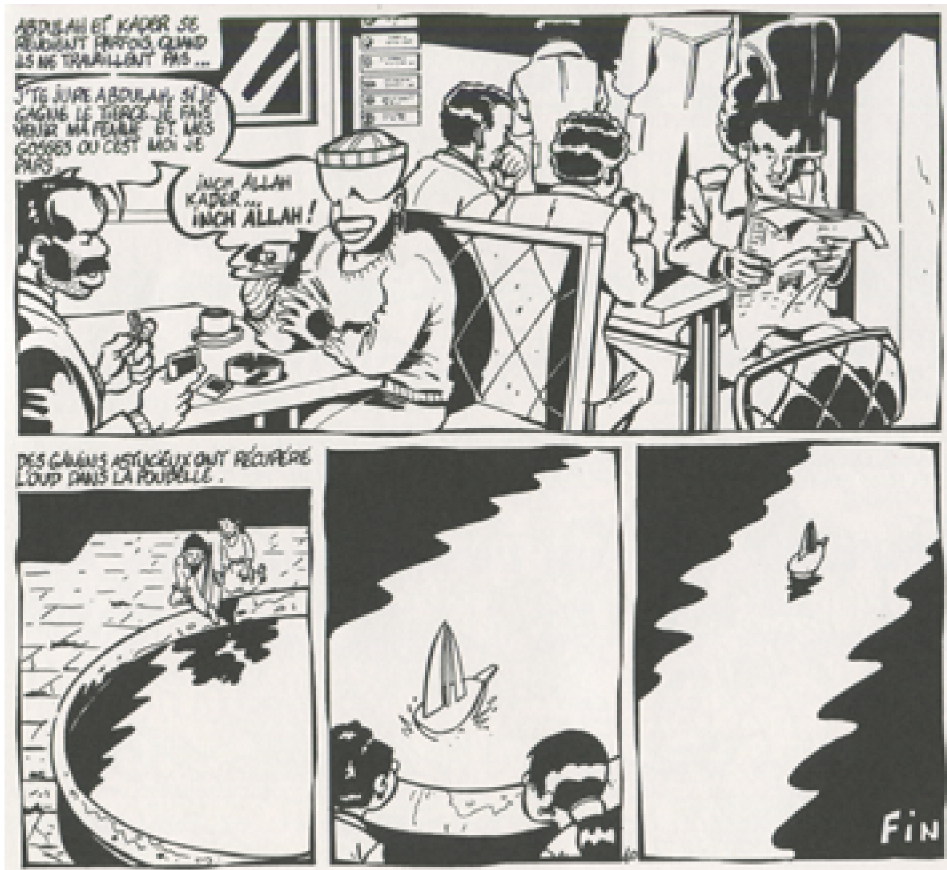


**Figure 3.9:** From Farid Boudjellal (1996) *L'oud: La trilogie*, Toulon: Soleil Productions, p. 64.3-6 © Farid Boudjellal and Soleil Productions. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

However, Boudjellal tempers depictions of loss and cultural alienation in France, and the nostalgia of exile, with strategically placed episodes celebrating both successful transculturation in France and fond attachment to an ancestral home in North Africa. For example, at the end of the one-page epilogue of *L'oud*, when Kader and Abdulah meet occasionally after the musical group has broken up, Kader describes his hope that he may one day be reunited with his family if he could only win the lottery. The following sequence links his homesickness and hope with an image symbolizing a younger generation composed of migrants' children in France. There a dark-haired young boy and girl, no doubt of North African heritage, have salvaged the trio's broken oud and transformed it into a toy sailboat (64). Across the last three panels, they put it into a pond, where it appears to sail away toward the horizon (Figure 3.9). The closing sequence of the album is both nostalgic, suggesting exile, and hopeful, symbolizing the possibility that a younger generation can recuperate and transform Maghrebi culture

in France, without forgetting their ancestral homeland.[51] *Ramadân*'s conclusion further echoes that imagery. There, Mr. Barouche gestures toward Algeria as a place where compatriots are also celebrating the end of Ramadan (159; Figure 3.7). We again see the Mediterranean, but this time Nadia and Ouria joyfully ululate to accompany the music played by Abdulah, Aziz and Kader (cf. Douglas and Malti-Douglas 1994: 216).

Throughout the Slimani saga and in other comics by Boudjellal, mixed couples and their *métis/se* offspring often symbolize transculturation's success or failure in France. Intimate relationships between people of Maghrebi heritage, and ones between them and members of other ethnic groups, help define the contours of community and the nature of integration into mainstream French society. Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 205) note that in the "Oud" trilogy, "the smoothest romantic relationships are between mixed couples." Successful adult mixed couples across the Slimani saga include Nadia and Jacques in *Ramadân* (1988b), two mixed couples – Mahmoud and Patricia, and Djamila and René – in *Jambon-Beur: Les couples mixtes* (Boudjellal 1995), and two more in *La mémoire du quartier* (2007b): Ratiba and Sébastien, and Xavier and Ivy. Of these five, three include a Maghrebi-French character and a partner from the ethnic majority group in France, one is composed of a Black woman (Ivy) and a Frenchman of European heritage (Xavier), and one pairs René, a Black man of Senegalese heritage, with Djamila, a Maghrebi-French woman (1995: 8–9). Three of the couples have children: Linda (Nadia and Jacques), Charlotte-Badia (Mahmoud and Patricia), and the twins Mathieu, who is Black, and Moussa, who is white (René and Djamila). The children's names symbolize different approaches to striking a balance between ethnic minority and majority, Muslim and Christian, cultural heritages. For example, Linda ends with the "a" characteristic of many female Maghrebi names, but is not clearly marked as North African, in contrast to Latifa, Djamila and Ratiba. Charlotte-Badia is an obvious pairing of a French name with a North African one. Moussa is the Muslim equivalent of the French Moïse [Moses], whose Muslim, North African resonance balances with the Christian (New Testament), French connotations of Mathieu [Matthew]. The symbolic act of naming is highlighted through comments by family members of the migrant generation. For example, Salima approves of the culturally versatile name that her niece Nadia has chosen: "C'est bien. Elle va être chez elle partout. Même les Américains ils appellent Linda!" [That's good. She's going to be at home everywhere. Even the Americans they call Linda! (sic)] (1996b: 153). However, later in the saga, in *Jambon-Beur: Les couples mixtes*, each of the grandmothers of Charlotte-Badia strongly insists that her newborn granddaughter bear a monocultural name reflecting her own cultural heritage and ethnic identity: it must be "Charlotte," cautions Eliane, her French grandmother, or instead "Badia," proclaims Salima, her Algerian grandmother (12–13). However, Patricia and Mahmoud try to reconcile their families to their daughter's hybrid identity by naming her Charlotte-Badia (15), which echoes the hyphenation of the volume's title, *Jambon-Beur*. As suggested earlier in my translation of the

title, "Jambon-Beur" literally means Ham-*Beur* and also homophonically refers to a typically French ham-and-butter (*beurre*) sandwich. Of course the title thereby reminds readers that practicing Muslims are forbidden by their religion to eat pork, and thereby implies that a French Muslim couple, and especially the ethnic minority character, might often be called to make radical cultural adaptations.[52] Charlotte-Badia's later, magical-realist, separation into two girls, Charlotte and Badia, expresses the difficulty of being both Maghrebi and French in a postcolonial France where transculturation is still taboo for significant segments of the population, where anti-Arab and anti-Muslim prejudice exists, and the Algerian War remains a source of pain and recrimination. At the end of the volume, the two grandmothers finally reconcile in their shared grief: the mourning of Eliane for her late husband, killed in the Algerian War, and of Salima for Latifa, her oldest child, who killed herself. However, the cartoonist leaves open the question of whether the rift between Charlotte and her alter-ego Badia has healed or will do so one day.

To represent the difficulties of transculturation, Boudjellal also uses several other *métis/se* figures who are migrants' offspring, and mixed couples with one partner from a postcolonial ethnic minority background. All of his mixed couples that fail to stay together, or are otherwise dysfunctional, consist of a North African partner and a French one. One of the first is composed of Ramdane, a young Algerian boy, and Mireille, a French girl, in "Amour d'Alger" (1984b), set in Algeria during the Algerian War. Wartime violence and pressure from both families separate the two children by the end of the short story. One finds related mixed couples incarnating the difficulties of French and North African coexistence in postcolonial France throughout his Slimani stories. For example, Nadia breaks up with her French boyfriend Denis before running away to Paris on her own (Boudjellal 1996b: 48–9). In *L'oud*, Aziz and his girlfried, Christine, have a rocky relationship, in part because Aziz is unkind to her (35–6, 45, 47–8, 53, 61–2). They appear to be held together temporarily by a shared marginality in French society: she as a drug addict and he as an immigrant without a stable job, and the target of Franco-French racism (28–9). Boudjellal's longest exploration of a Maghrebi-French mixed couple in the "Oud" trilogy, extending across *Le gourbi* and *Ramadân*, involves Mahmoud and his girlfriend Colette, both then high-school students. Through them, the cartoonist explores different issues related to gender, class, sexuality and religion, through comparisons and contrasts between their tastes in film viewing, cultural perspectives on dating and pre-marital sex, and observance of religious beliefs and holidays. So, for example, whereas Mahmoud prefers martial-arts movies, Colette finds them boringly repetitive and appears to prefer art-house movies, a difference probably related to both gender and social class (87, 103; cf. 108). Mahmoud incredulously compares the nonchalant attitude of Colette's father to the fact that the young couple is making out in her bedroom while he is in the same apartment and can hear them (102–3), to Abdelsalem's violent reaction when he learns that Djamila was dating Mounir (94–7). As we have

seen, Djamila's father repeatedly hits her, and then attacks three other family members one after the other (Ratiba, Mahmoud and Salima). Djamila's parents also require her to have a doctor ascertain whether her hymen is intact, as proof that she is still a virgin (99, 103; Figure 3.10).[53] Later Colette and Ratiba, her classmate, discuss different views on sexuality and dating, and compare their observance of Ramadan, Christmas and Easter (Boudjellal 1996b: 125). Here, as often throughout the Slimani saga, Boudjellal aims to normalize Muslim beliefs in a French milieu, while also representing trends toward secularization, gender equality and openness toward more sexual freedom among migrants' offspring. For example, Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 216) mention a related passage on the last page of *Gags à l'harissa* (Boudjellal 1989) where Mahmoud ironically cites his attendance at a midnight Christmas mass as proof of the lengths to which he will go to integrate into mainstream, Catholic French society. However, in some of his subsequent albums, beginning with *Jambon-Beur: Les couples mixtes*, Boudjellal (1995) has also depicted a return to religious beliefs by the children and grandchildren of Muslim Algerians, and even the conversion to Islam by two Frenchmen of European heritage (2012: e.g., 69–72). In this, Boudjellal represents a significant trend among the Maghrebi-French and proposes Islam as a potential source of interethnic reconciliation. Transculturalism is here a process by which characters of both European and North African heritage mutually adapt to and adopt each others' beliefs, instead of simply involving the adaptation of people of North African heritage to mainstream French cultural norms. Boudjellal thereby also counters the demonization of Muslim religious beliefs as necessarily retrograde and sectarian.

The mixed couple of Mahmoud and Colette fails, but is eventually replaced by another one. The two break up when, at a party, Mahmoud sees a French youth kissing

**Figure 3.10:** From Farid Boudjellal (1996) *L'oud: La trilogie*, Toulon: Soleil Productions, p. 103.1-3 © Farid Boudjellal and Soleil Productions. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

his girlfriend, though without her consent, as readers know, having observed the event (1996b: 119). They reconcile later, when Colette kisses Mahmoud at the end of her visit with him in the hospital, where he is recuperating from an operation on his disabled foot and leg (154). However, the couple later separates definitively, although on good terms. We know this because in *Jambon-Beur: Les couples mixtes* Colette serves as Mahmoud's witness (*son témoin*) when he marries Patricia (1995: 10), thereby forming another mixed couple, one that has remained intact so far. Instead of continuing the story of Mahmoud, Patricia and Charlotte-/Badia after *Jambon-Beur: Les couples mixtes*, Boudjellal moved backward in time to Mahmoud's childhood and adolescence, where he has shown Mahmoud infatuated with French girls who mostly appear uninterested in him: Mireille in *Petit Polio* (2006a: 35, 42–3, 52–3, 88–9), and Isabelle in *Le cousin harki* (2012: 47). In Boudjellal's comics, gender fluidity, homosexuality and *métissage* have served to delimit Maghrebi-French community. For example, at the end of *L'oud*, he draws Aziz somewhat grotesquely, as a rock musician wearing make up and sporting an androgynous haircut (1996b: 64). One may recall that Aziz is first described as a very handsome man who has been naturalized French and whose "physical appearance does not betray his [North African] origins," just as his French diction bears no trace of a foreign accent (26). A character with similarly fluid gender and national identities appears early in *L'oud*: the first person whom Nourredine meets in Paris is Djilali, whose father is Arab and mother is French (79–81). He is physically attractive, androgynous in appearance, and wears earrings (79, 93), which was rare among men in France in the 1980s. Although Nourredine quickly suspects Djilali of having stolen money from him, a mystery that is never resolved (85, 92–3, 101), he eventually moves into a room next to Djilali, in an abandoned building where the young *métis* is a squatter (101, 107). Nourredine later moves out again because of his friend's drug addiction (117), but Djilali convinces Nourredine to let him stay overnight in his new apartment even though Djilali's drug use causes problems for Nourredine (121, 130). Djilali continues to be a nuisance, showing up at a fast-food restaurant where Nourredine works and getting him fired, an incident that carries a hint of racism on the part of the restaurant manager (137, 141). Here, as again later in the Slimani saga, with Charlotte-Badia, *métissage* is associated with interethnic strife. Djilali pesters Nourredine once again at the end of *Ramadân*, by asking to visit him in Toulon, which Nourredine refuses (154). Although the relationship between Djilali and Nourredine is never described as homosexual, it does contain a hint of homoeroticism. By contrast, homosexuality is openly thematized in *Le cousin harki*, both through a gay French couple in the Algerian War (2012: 46, 48–9), and years later, in Vence in 1973, when Julien declares his love for Mahmoud (48–9). Mahmoud angrily rejects Julien and then, upon finding confirmation that Moktar was a *harki* and is a French national, calls him "un traître à ta race" [a traitor to your race] (49). Later, however, Mahmoud apologizes first to Julien and then to Moktar (61), which is consistent with the album's celebration of humanistic values and its denunciation of all kinds

of prejudice, including homophobia, antisemitism, anti-Arab racism, and the scapegoating of *harkis*, both in Algeria and France. In the comic-book series to which I now turn, Boudjellal continues to explore French society through mixed couples, cultural *métissage*, and solidarity between people of different national and ethnic heritage, this time highlighting the xenophobia, racism and anti-humanism of a possible far-right government, and the threat to democracy that it would pose for everyone in France.

## Political engagement and artistic techniques in *La présidente*

"La présidente" [The President] is a comic book series published in three volumes from October 2015 to March 2017 and drawn by Boudjellal. It was scripted by historian François Durpaire and, for the third volume, by Laurent Muller too. The vision that inspires the entire narrative, a political thriller, is that France is in grave danger because the FN might win the presidential and legislative elections of 2017 and then maintain its grip on power. Of course the historical irony is that a similar scenario unfolded in the United States of America in 2016, but not in France in 2017. In the first volume, *La présidente: Maintenant vous ne pourrez plus dire que vous ne saviez pas…* [The President: Now You Will No Longer Be Able to Say That You Did Not Know…] (2015), Marine Le Pen wins the presidential elections of 2017 and begins to govern, despite mass resistance by French citizens. At the end of the book, a small far-right group kidnaps Florian Philippot, a vice-president of the FN from July 2012 to September 2017, to demand that the government be aligned even further to the far right. In *Totalitaire: Il est encore temps d'éviter le pire…* [Totalitarian: There Is Still Time Left to Avoid the Worst…] (2016), the second volume, whose story extends from December 2021 to September 2022, Marine wins the presidential elections of 2022, but then loses her position when her niece and rival Marion Maréchal learns that Marine Le Pen owes her second presidential victory to electoral fraud effected through an electronic vote. The niece blackmails her aunt, forcing the latter to resign. New presidential elections are held, and Marion Maréchal is the winner. However, at the end of the album, citizens again begin to engage in collective resistance. The third volume, *La vague: Et si le cauchemar devenait réalité…* [The Wave: And What If the Nightmare Became Reality…] (2017), whose story extends from May 2023 to September 2024, recounts the forming of international alliances between several authoritarian political leaders, including Maréchal, Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin and Boris Johnson. In spite of that, the French president is obliged to resign, because the French public learns that Maréchal made an agreement with Algeria permitting the deportation there of people of Algerian heritage in exchange for the transfer of French nuclear expertise to the North African country. New presidential elections must be held, which oppose Marine Le Pen to Emmanuel Macron. Macron wins, which opens the way toward the writing of a new constitution and the creation of a sixth republic in France. Boudjellal and Durpaire have been working for years on postcolonial

issues in France, which is again the case in this graphic novel. Although this story is in a new genre for Boudjellal, it joins a body of related comics, including some by Baru: dystopian thrillers recounting the rise of the FN or of other political figures who act in similar ways, including former French president Nicolas Sarkozy, as we shall see in Chapter 4, below.[54]

Here I focus on the first and longest volume in the "President" trilogy, with an emphasis on relations between art and political engagement, which is to say, how the authors mobilize the resources of comics to try to convince and instruct their readers, especially those eligible to vote. The main goal of "La présidente" is to alert the French who do not support the far right that the FN may ascend to the pinnacle of power in the French state if concerned citizens do not act to counter it. The first argument of the authors is therefore that a victory by the FN is possible through the votes of those who support the FN ideologically, protest votes cast against other parties, and abstention by voters who would have opposed the FN had they voted. As one of the characters says in the first volume (Boudjellal and Durpaire 2015: 8): "Avec ceux qui restent chez eux parce que la droite s'est déchirée, ceux qui ne veulent plus de Hollande et ceux qui sont carrément fachos, elle [Marine Le Pen] a de quoi faire!" [What with those who stay home because the right has ripped itself apart, those who don't want Hollande anymore, and those who are frankly fascists, she (Marine Le Pen) has a lot to work with!]. The two authors aim to delegitimate the FN by predicting the negative consequences that implementing its political platform would have for human rights, immigrants, the economy, national cohesion and the civil liberties of all French. At the same time, the authors try to legitimate opposition to the FN, for example by connecting it to the heritage of the French Resistance movement against nazism during the Second World War and to anticolonial liberation movements, and by praising (post) colonial, interethnic mixing.

Boudjellal and Durpaire use several comics techniques to critique the FN and oppose its ideas, for example, by using the capacity of comics to incorporate texts and images that come from elsewhere into its narrative – intericonicity and intertextuality (Groensteen 2010: 102) – and the associated facility for producing visual and textual dialogism through polygraphy and polyphony (Smolderen 2009: 59). Groensteen (2010: 60–1) has noted the art form's openness to the kind of techniques that the two cartoonists use throughout their series:

> the morphological particularities of comics, on one hand the fact that they combine two different semiotic systems, text and image, and on the other hand the discontinuous nature of their discourse, make this medium an especially welcoming place for all citations or quotations, the ideal vehicle for an aesthetic of collage and borrowing.

To show how the authors put the resources of comics to work for their political project, and to analyze their activity of legitimation and delegitimation, I shall focus on three aspects of their art: their incorporation of other texts and images into comics; the double-page as an artistic and narrative space; and the ostentatious, meaningful repetition of images, which Groensteen (1999: 173–86) calls *tressage* [braiding] and to which I prefer the term "weaving" (see below). However, I will begin with a discussion of ethnic mixing and its contestation in the album, because it is a central theme there, and one that runs through the near totality of Boudjellal's preceding albums, as we have seen.

## Ethnic mixing and history

The four protagonists of *La présidente* (Boudjellal and Durpaire 2015), who live together at the beginning of the album, form a multiethnic family: Antoinette Giraud and Stéphane, one of her grandsons, are whites of European heritage, whereas Tariq, her other grandson, is a French Arab. Fati, a young Black woman whose parents are Senegalese and who sleeps on Antoinette's couch, becomes Stéphane's lover before the end of this first volume. The family lives in Belleville, the Parisian neighborhood where Boudjellal located the story of his Franco-Algerian family in albums two and three of his "Oud" trilogy, initially published in the 1980s. As in *Le gourbi* and *Ramadân*, but also in prose novels by Romain Gary (1975) and Daniel Pennac (1993 [1985]), Belleville is here an urban site of social and ethnic *métissage* (Boudjellal and Durpaire 2015: 26–7, 50–1, 132). In *La présidente*, Durpaire and Boudjellal attach that mixing to French history in several ways in order to create an ideal that they oppose to the ideology and politics of the FN. After Marine Le Pen is elected president, Fati is unable to renew her French residency card, which exposes her, as she says, to "être virée du territoire à n'importe quel moment dans un pays [qu'elle connaît] bien moins que la France" [being expelled from the territory at any moment, toward a country that she knows far less than France] (95). After becoming an undocumented foreigner in hiding, she will be caught and deported to Senegal before the end of the volume (126).

Later we learn that in 2003, when Fati was ten years old, her mother died and her father returned from France to Senegal in order to accompany her body. Fati had remained behind in France and had grown up in the home of an aunt, thereby becoming "une petite Parisienne de Belleville" [a little Parisian from Belleville] (133). We also learn that the great-grandfather of Fati served France "dans le 25e régiment de tirailleurs sénégalais" [in the 25th regiment of *tirailleurs sénégalais*] (134). The authors also evoke another important aspect of French colonial history, suggesting that Tariq's grandfather, who was no doubt the lover or husband of Antoinette, participated in the Algerian War, and that she may also have assisted the struggle for Algerian independence (133). Before that, Antoinette had played a role in the French Resistance, for which she received the Croix de guerre 39–45 [War Cross 39–45] and the medal of the Resistance

(128). Since then, she has always kept her machine gun at home. She wants to use it when the police come to arrest Fati to deport her, and tells them that their action resembles the "rafles de 1942 et le Vel d'hiv" [roundups of 1942 and the Vel d'hiv] (126), when French police arrested thousands of Jews and put them first into a large Parisian sports arena, before sending them to a prison camp in the Parisian suburb of Drancy, and then, if they survived Drancy, on to the death camps, from which few returned.[55] The coincidence between the death of Antoinette, which comes just after the arrest of Fati, and the death of Jean-Marie Le Pen on the same day, is of course symbolic (128–34). The authors thereby oppose their fictional character to Jean-Marie Le Pen. Antoinette is a woman who is apparently ordinary but who has always defended liberty and faced down fascism, first in the French Resistance, then by fighting French colonialism, and now by defending the ethnic mixing of postcolonial France. Le Pen is of course a founder and historical leader of the FN. He participated in wars to help maintain French colonial empire, both in Indochina and Algeria, and then fostered and channeled the rejection of the formerly colonized and their descendants in France as a vehicle for gaining political power.[56] The two authors remind us too that "[l]'objectif [de la fondation du FN était …] de réunir les anciens poujadistes et les groupuscules pétainistes et néonazis" [the objective (of the foundation of the FN was …) to unite former Poujadists with neo-nazi and Pétainist groups] (12.1) – that is, a mix of far-right groups and individuals, some of whom supported French collaboration with the Nazis during the Second World War, that contrasts strikingly with the courageous participation of Antoinette in the Resistance. They juxtapose the burials of Antoinette and Jean-Marie Le Pen to symbolize a radical opposition between their own vision of present-day France and its history, and on the other side, that of the FN.

## Incorporating text and images into the narrative

One sees on these pages that Boudjellal has radically transformed his artistic style compared to the watercolors he used in the preceding "Petit Polio" series. He has returned here to black and white, which he had abandoned for several years. In "La présidente" the artist uses an even more realistic cartooning style than one finds, for example, in the black-and-white "Oud" trilogy, which has a realistic story, but also more stylized drawing. Here is how he describes his graphic work in *La présidente*: "j'ai opté pour un graphisme photographique. Un dessin froid, glaçant. J'ai bossé essentiellement sur ordinateur, sachant qu'il y aurait beaucoup de remises à niveau selon les variations de l'actualité" [I opted for a photographic visual approach. A cold, icy drawing. I mainly worked with a computer, knowing that there would be a lot of modifications due to variations in current events] (Pasamonik 2015b).

Indeed, one finds in this album a whole range of images that are strongly related to photography, which Boudjellal achieved through extensive use of Photoshop. There

are not only realistic drawings that recall photography, but also photographs that are more or less in focus and on which Boudjellal has drawn black outlines (Boudjellal and Durpaire 2015: 36, 40–1, 80.2), photographs clearly transformed by computer manipulation (51, 62–3, 66, 147.5), sometimes with photomontage (56–7), and finally photographic images that are not retouched or only slightly so (69.1, 74–5). Boudjellal's visual work is situated somewhere between the techniques of cartoonist Emmanuel Guibert, photographer Didier Lefèvre and graphic artist Frédéric Lemercier in their trilogy "Le photographe" [*The Photographer*] (2009) – one finds there a clear separation between Lefèvre's photographs, which are never retouched by the cartoonist, and the drawings of Guibert – and of Séra in *L'eau et la terre: Cambodge 1975–1979* [The Water and the Earth: Cambodia 1975–9] (2005). There Séra includes a few unretouched photographs, but also other photos that are so reworked by his hand and computer, giving them a spectral effect, that one has trouble classifying them as photographs or instead as drawings (Genoudet 2015; McKinney 2017a). It is obvious that in *La présidente* Boudjellal uses visual realism and photography to suggest that there is a strong possibility that the events depicted in the graphic novel could occur. Sometimes readers might even recognize photographs reworked by Boudjellal, which would reinforce the realistic effect of the political fiction, leading them to take it seriously, and therefore perhaps to act against the FN, especially by voting against Marine Le Pen.

Boudjellal inserted many other visual and textual documents into the comic book to produce similar realistic effects, for example, collages of front pages of newspapers and magazines to evoke the election of Marine Le Pen (Boudjellal and Durpaire 2015: 15, 28–9, 128), charts and graphs to show, for example, the political composition of seats in the *Assemblée nationale* (69),[57] how to spy on telephone conversations (86), or the disastrous effect of FN policies on the national economy (103, 121). He also includes political posters of the FN and the Mouvement National Républication (MNR)[58] (14, 17), an electoral map (6), an invitation card to an official ceremony commemorating the abolition of slavery (33), or to the Elysée, the French presidential palace, after the election of Marine Le Pen (73). Several of these documents are typical communication techniques for journalists reporting the news, and are inserted within the comic book into sequences of news reports that the main characters watch on television. All of that helps give a realistic and credible appearance to the fiction. I will now focus on a combination of two techniques specific to comics that reinforce the spectacular aspect of the narrative.

## Double-pages and the spectacle of horror

The double-page is often used in contemporary comics, perhaps mostly in narratives not serialized, because books generally permit layouts that serial publication can preclude. Most of the double-pages in *La présidente* include what Groensteen (1999: 100–6) calls *cases incrustées*, or inset panels. There are 21 double-pages with inset panels

here, which constitutes more than 27 percent of all the drawn pages in the first volume, or 42 pages out of 153. This proportion puts the tabular in a strong relation to the linear,[59] and thereby imparts a spectacular visual effect to the double-pages. One finds a similar technique in the "Carnets d'Orient" series by Jacques Ferrandez, especially in the last five albums, which recount the Algerian War.[60] In those volumes, background images spread across double-pages are watercolors that provide visual impressions of country or city landscapes in Algeria (and Québec in one short episode). The background image thereby sets the scene for events narrated in the inset panels, and sometimes also constitutes a sort of large first panel, with the smaller panels then recounting events following the one depicted in the large image against which they are set. The watercolor images of Ferrandez's albums explicitly recall the sketchbooks in which Eugène Delacroix set down his artistic impressions during his visits to Morocco and Algeria in 1831 and 1832. In Ferrandez's comics, there is an implicit analogy between, on the one hand, the relation between the out-of-focus background images splashed across the double-page and those, more precisely delineated and focused, of the inset panels, and, on the other hand, the relation between the sketchbooks and the finished orientalist paintings of Delacroix. We will see that the double-pages of *La présidente* function to a certain extent like those of Ferrandez, but that they also differ greatly from them in other artistic and ideological ways. For example, the double-pages of Ferrandez are shot through with a strong sense of nostalgia for a lost colonial society of the past, whereas those of Boudjellal predict the future disintegration of a multicultural, postcolonial France because of the actions of the FN.

The first thing to note in the double-pages with inset panels in *La présidente* is that seventeen of the twenty-one are directly linked to television reports narrated in the book. The double-page of the comic book here replaces a television or computer screen showing a political event as spectacle. That reinforces the realism of the comic and underlines its function as commentary on reality: the album puts readers in the position of television spectators. In fact, the narrative often also places the principal characters as viewers of the same televised spectacle. One sometimes sees them in this role at the beginning or end of a narrative sequence featuring double-pages with inset panels, to motivate the unfolding of the spectacle before our eyes and to comment critically on it. This is a form of dialogism: for example, television reporters speak, as do political figures, and spectator-characters comment on what they hear and see on the screen in front of them (and readers) (Boudjellal and Durpaire 2015: 18–21). The authors thereby implicitly invite us to adopt the perspective of the spectator-characters, who witness horrific events unfolding on their television screen, and condemn them.

Viewing by and with the characters also helps link different sequences of television reports, for example: the results of the 2017 presidential elections (8–9), then the first reactions of specialist commentators such as Jean-Yves Camus (10–11) – a scholar

who studies the far right and is a columnist for *Charlie Hebdo* – then a short history of the FN in the form of a mini-television report (12–17), demonstrations for and against the results of the elections (18–21), representative reactions from well-known politicians ranging across the political spectrum (22–3), and finally a victory speech by Marine Le Pen (24–5). As I just indicated, this constitutes a form of dialogism, because the figures who comment on the political situation express a wide variety of viewpoints. However, comments by the main fictional characters, whose privileged perspective helps guide ours, offer a very critical interpretation of the program that the FN begins to implement.

## Iconographic repetition

Since at least the comics of Töpffer in the first half of the nineteenth century, the meaningful repetition of images beyond what is needed simply to carry forward a narrative has been a powerful tool of cartoonists (Miller 2007b: 95–7). Peeters (2002b: 33–4, 55–7, 79) calls this "image rhymes," whereas – as noted earlier – Groensteen (1999: 173–86) calls it *tressage* [braiding]. Following Miller's perceptive reading of Groensteen (Miller 2007b: 95) – she says that he really means "weaving," even when he uses the term "braiding" – I have suggested elsewhere that it makes more sense to go ahead and use the terms *tissage* [weaving] or *tricotage* [knitting] instead of *tressage* (McKinney 2020b), and that the concept should also cover the ostentatious repetition of text, which was already a major feature of Töpffer's novels in prints (Groensteen mostly describes *tressage* as image repetition). The terms *tissage* and *tricotage* more accurately reflect the patterned complexity that such textual and iconic repetition can have, and the intercultural intertwining of meaning it produces. In *La présidente*, among the least retouched images and the ones that occur most often, are those that come from the cover and the pages of the FN's printed program (Boudjellal and Durpaire 2015: 31.3, 90, 92–3, 109). The artists juxtapose textual excerpts of the party's program with their implementation once the FN reaches power in order to demonstrate the disastrous effects that the party, so positioned, would not fail to have, especially but by no means only on immigrant and postcolonial ethnic minority groups in France. Other images that the artists repeat across the album represent victims of the FN, including those who resist its politics. For example, one twice sees an image of a Black family looking through the port window of an airplane during their deportation from France (94, 157). One also sees a photo of Antoinette when she was in the Resistance (30), which Stéphane takes to illustrate his website titled "résistance.fr" (32). At the end of the album, after the death of Antoinette and the deportation of Fati, the police arrest Tariq and Stéphane because of Stéphane's counter-propaganda website. The chapter ends with a close up on the photo of Antoinette during her Resistance days, next to another fighter, no doubt her companion or husband at the time (151).

Beforehand, the authors had suggested possible limits on resistance to the FN after the election of Marine Le Pen, notably through a reminder of the technical and legal means that any French government possesses to monitor its citizens, especially since the January 2015 terrorist attacks against *Charlie Hebdo* and the Hyper Cacher market in Paris. On two double-pages, the proliferation of surveillance images of the two cousins in the control room of French spy agencies symbolizes a surveillance that could be extended over everyone resisting the FN once it arrived at the pinnacle of state power (140–3). In a wink at Durpaire, Boudjellal inserts an image of his co-author next to one of their monitored fictional characters to suggest that the historian would not be spared under such repressive surveillance (141). The proliferation of screen images recalls a similar depiction in a television station's control room (54), suggesting the rapidity with which a society so interconnected could change into a nightmare of total surveillance if it should fall under the control of an authoritarian regime. If we recognize Durpaire on a screen of the spy agency, it could be because he appeared earlier in the narrative, as an invited guest on a television set during a report about the deportation of immigrants by the FN (96–7). There the scholar, a specialist of African American history, quotes Malcolm X on the importance of remaining vigilant in the face of media who could "make you hate oppressed people and love those who oppress them" (97). This is no doubt the essential message of the graphic novel: the vital importance of truly comprehending the history of today's French society, and of forces that structure it, in order to prevent authoritarian forces from seizing power. This comic book encountered genuine public success: the first volume sold more than 120,000 copies.

## Conclusion: claiming territory, from joke strips to graphic novels

In this chapter I have concentrated on Boudjellal's realist comics set in postcolonial France across almost four decades, from "Les dingues dignes," his earliest strips (1978–9) to his co-authored book series "La présidente" (2015–17). One sees the cartoonist transitioning from an apparently simple but also elegant artistic approach with black and white in "Les dingues dignes," "Les soirées d'Abdulah" and "Ratonnade," to a variety of other artistic techniques, ranging from watercolor in the "Petit polio" series to computer-assisted drawing and photomontage in the "Présidente" trilogy. In so doing, he moves from joke strips with one or two characters to highly complex visual narration featuring large numbers of characters and intricate plotlines, although he has occasionally returned to the joke strip, which he still appreciates (Boudjellal 2011: 3–4). Certain features have remained constant across Boudjellal's career, including an unceasing interest in mastering new artistic techniques. Ever present too are ordinary people of North African heritage living their lives in France, where Boudjellal stakes a legitimate claim to territory for them.

## Notes

1 On disability in Boudjellal's comics, see Boudjellal (2007c), Douglas and Malti-Douglas (2008), Miller (2009: 185–7) and Flinn (2017).
2 Chikh and Zehraoui (1984), *Les enfants de l'immigration* (1984) and Belhadi (1985: 120).
3 Marie and Ollivier (2013: 90–3) and *Guide de la Galerie des dons* (2014: 120–5).
4 *Le Point*, no. 752, 16 February 1987.
5 E.g., the Résistances/*Témoignage chrétien* prize for *Ramadân* at Angoulême in 1989.
6 Christopher L. Miller (1993) makes a similar argument in a critique of *Mille plateaux*, by Deleuze and Guattari.
7 Several scholars have studied representations of colonial history in Boudjellal's comics, especially his "Petit Polio" series: Miller (2007c, 2009), Douglas and Fedwa Malti-Douglas (2008), McKinney (2013e), Howell (2017) and Flinn (2017).
8 E.g., in Boudjellal (1996b: 31, 1998, 1999, 2002); see also above, pp. 29, 63–4, 89–90.
9 E.g., Menu (2005), Beaty (2007: 28–9, 243–4; 2008), Cestac (2007), Miller (2007b: 27, 34, 51) and *Neuvième art*, no. 14 (2008: 62–109).
10 See Ezra (2000: 52–3) on Raymond Roussel's work on linguistic and ethnic difference and identity.
11 On legitimation in comics, including by Oubapo, see Miller (2007a, 2007b) and Beaty (2007, 2012).
12 On these early pre-Oubapo comics, see also Beaty (2007: 77, 207–9).
13 On social types in nineteenth-century comics and caricature, see Groensteen (2014: 115–22).
14 Wolinski was a Jewish French cartoonist originally from French colonial Tunisia who was assassinated on 7 January 2015 by mass murderers Saïd and Chérif Kouachi during their terrorist rampage at the headquarters of *Charlie Hebdo* [Charlie Weekly]. After the massacre, Boudjellal recalled Wolinski's help in launching his career and paid hommage to the massacred cartoonists, whom he knew personally (Pasamonik 2015a).
15 E.g., in Gauthier (1976) and Groensteen (1997: 15; 1999: 3–8).
16 On ocularization, see Miller (2007: 91–4, 106, 110–119). On this story, see Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 200–2).
17 Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 201) analyze the ironies of the scene, noting for example that it accumulates symbols of religious or cultural transgression for Muslims, including alcohol, gambling, "female sexual immodesty" and reference to a pig; Tahar Ben Jelloun (1977), the noted Moroccan-French novelist and journalist explored the "sexual misery of North African emigrants" in a book subtitled so.
18 On this comic by Mœbius, see above, Chapter 1.
19 For the origins and meanings of *ratonnade*, see Liauzu (1997: 12), Chetouani (1998: 129) and https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/ratonnade#; accessed 12 July 2020; cf.

Levine (1985) and Péju (2000 [1961]). Mœbius (1989: 9) refers to the white racists in "Cauchemar blanc" as *ratonneurs*. On the other racist terms, see Lanly (1970: 51), Quinsat (1991), Siblot (1991), Liauzu (1997: 12) and Treps (2005: 225); see also Boudjellal (1996b: 84–5) for ironic use of these and other insults.

20 Cf. Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 199). On lynchings of Arabs in France in the 1970s and 1980s, see Giudice (1992, 1993) and Gastaut (1993).

21 Lecigne and Tamine (1983: 63) and Screech (2005b: 101). Fresnault-Deruelle (1972a: 43) describes the dream state in "Little Nemo in Slumberland": "It is almost as though the decor acts and the heroes – speechless – witness their metamorphoses. The dream logic takes over entirely here."

22 Cf. Canemaker (2005: 79) on "Dream of the rarebit fiend": "A dream atmosphere pervades each episode because of the detached calm of most of the protagonists."

23 Pun intended; see Chapter 1, above.

24 On this tension, see for example Groensteen (2014: 157–60).

25 That the story is set in Toulon is suggested by a newspaper, the *Var Matin République*, depicted toward the end of the story, as well as the urban architecture (Douglas and Malti-Douglas 1994: 199–200).

26 In the scene from *Petit Polio* the visual-textual terms are reversed for readers and Mahmoud, the young Maghrebi-French child in the text: there we will hear the violence of a *ratonnade* explicitly described in words, but will not fully see it (it is masked, or euphemized), whereas Mahmoud will. On this scene, see for example Miller (2007b: 173–4) and McKinney (2013e: 297–200).

27 See McKinney (2001b) on similar tales in a prose novel by a French author of Algerian heritage.

28 See Blévis, Lafont-Couturier, Jacomijn Snoep and Zalc (2008).

29 We shall see below, in Chapter 4, that Baru pushes the principle of reversal and recurrence of racist violence to an extreme, to foreground the sadism of the far right and the necessity of standing up to it in order to break the cycle of violence.

30 Other, related acts of violence by police against North Africans in Boudjellal's comics include the episode mentioned above, in the first volume of "Petit Polio," and two in *Le cousin harki*, one in colonial Algiers (2012: 44) and the other later in Marseille (64). The latter episode recalls the ironic depiction of lynching as a game in "Ratonnade."

31 As Canemaker (2005: 78) notes, "Dream of the rarebit fiend" "held a decidedly adult point of view." On other types of disjuncture between visual and verbal narrating instances, see Miller (2007b: 40, 120) and Screech (2010).

32 *L'oud* (1983b), *Le gourbi* (1985b), *Ramadân* (1988b), *Gags à l'harissa* (1989), *Jambon-Beur: Les couples mixtes* (1995), "Petit Polio" (3 volumes, 1998, 1999, 2002), *Les années Ventoline* (2007a), *La mémoire du quartier* (2007b) and *Le cousin harki* (2012).

33 Boudjellal retained this as a subtitle in the album version (1996b: 28).

34 The volume also includes "Les soirées d'Abdulah," "Ratonnade" and five "Dingues dignes" strips featuring the immigrant Arab worker, the latter now retitled "Abdulah" and slightly reworked, including visually, so that its character is now clearly Abdulah from the subsequent stories.

35 "Habitation misérable et sale" (*Petit Robert*); see also Quinsat (1991: 176) and Treps (2005: 226). On *Le gourbi*, see also Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 204–5); cf. Boudjellal (2003: 72).

36 Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 204) find this ending artificial, but its symbolism is important.

37 There is a precedent for this in Farida Belghoul's novel *Georgette!* (1986): in its conclusion the young girl narrator experiences a split in her consciousness that is ventriloquized in part through a doll (McKinney 2001b).

38 On the latter two, see McKinney (2013e: 192–3)

39 On this misery, see Ben Jelloun (1977), and for analysis of it in Boudjellal's comics, see Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 201–3). On far-right creation and manipulation of this fear, see Shepard (2009, 2012), and for its role in far-right cartooning, see also above, Chapter 1, and below, Chapters 6 and 7.

40 On this colonialist representation of North African men, see Giudice (1992: 95) and Fanon (2002 [1961]: 286). It has been articulated in unsubtle ways in the comic book *Le singe et la sirène* (Dumontheuil and Angéli 2001), where a young Algerian-French *métis* in postcolonial Bordeaux murders people using *le sourire kabyle* [throat slitting]; see also McKinney (2013e: 193, 241n53, 242n54).

41 Later Abdelsalem will have to go to the police station to bring home Mouloud, who was beating up a boy his own age (Boudjellal 1996b: 106), and he threatens to break the teeth of a friend who calls his brother Mahmoud "[l]e boîteux" [the man who limps] (128).

42 See also Tassadit Imache, *Une fille sans histoire* (1989).

43 The first appearance of his Slimani family in a full page published by the national newspaper *Libération* on the occasion of the arrival of the March for Equality and Against Racism in Paris in 1983 (Boudjellal 1983a; reprinted in 1996b: 67); see Chapter 1 in this volume.

44 Although *Les A.N.I. du "Tassili"* by Akli Tadjer (1984) uses the ferry boat crossing from North Africa to France as a chronotope for exploring migration issues (see Hargreaves 1997: 109–13), just as many colonial and postcolonial comics depict transcultural encounters through sea voyages between metropolitan France and its (former) colonies, ranging from Töpffer's *Histoire de Mr. Cryptogame* (1996; first drawn in 1830 and redrafted in 1844; France and Algeria), up through François Bourgeon's "Les passagers du vent" series (first cycle: 1980, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1994d; published beginning in 1979; France, West Africa, the Caribbean and Louisiana), and the third edition of Clément Baloup's *Quitter Saigon* (2013; Vietnam and France). See Hargreaves (1997) on the ship in Tadjer's novel.

45 E.g., Ceppi and Christin (1992), Pourquié and Ducoudray (2012, 2014), Tervonen and Pourquié (2015, 2017) and Baudoin and Troubs (2018); see Chapter 10, below.

46 For a similar work accident in prose fiction, see the father of Madjid, in Mehdi Charef's *Le thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed* (1983).

47 See Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 202–4).

48 Boudjellal represented Abdelsalem repairing a street or working on the utilities buried beneath it in a poster for an exhibition on "L'art Beur: Du 18 au 24 mai 87" [Arab art: from 18 to 24 May 1987], and speaking with Mouloud and Fatia who walk by on their way to or from school (they are carrying their bookbags [cartables]), although none are named on the poster (reproduced in Boudjellal 2003: 5).

49 On transculturation, see Ortiz (1995), Hargreaves (2012), McKinney (2013a), Felici (2016), and above, pp. 21, 69–72.

50 Cf. young Mahmoud's confusion about both Muslim and Catholic rites in *Petit Polio* (2006b [2002]: 19).

51 Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 202, 216). Boudjellal later used the chronotope of the oud-boat on a poster too (http://www.faridboudjellal.fr/2017/01/22/quelques-affiches-2/; accessed 18 July 2020)

52 Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 206, 214); Boudjellal jokes about this at the beginning of *Ramadân*, when Mahmoud eats a sandwich containing pork, probably slices of hard sausage (*saucisson au porc*), and says that "Il faudra bien 3 générations de Slimani pour me faire pardonner ce sandwich!..." [It will take three generations of Slimanis before I'm forgiven for this sandwich!...] (1996b: 118).

53 On this, see Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994: 205).

54 Baru (1995a, 1995b, 1998, 2009b); on these, see Miller (2005; 2007b: 75–102).

55 Jover published a comic book on this by a mutual friend, Maurice Rajsfus, who died in 2020 (Rajsfus, D'Agostini and D'Agostini 2010).

56 On 9 November 1962, Le Pen reportedly declared to the newspaper *Combat*, which published his purported declaration, that he had tortured Algerians in the Algerian War: "I know it, I have nothing to hide. I tortured because it had to be done," but Le Pen also claims to have requalified his declaration to the same newspaper on the following day to deny having tortured (Le Pen 2002); see also Stora (1992: 288–92; 1997: 18; 1999: 38–46). Several Algerians came forward to accuse Le Pen of torturing them (e.g., in Beaugé 2002).

57 The lower chamber of the French parliament.

58 A far-right organization run by Bruno Mégret after he left the FN.

59 Terms from Fresnault-Deruelle (1976) and Peeters (2002b: 50–1).

60 For analysis of Ferrandez's comics, see McKinney (2001a, 2013e) and Calargé (2010).

# Chapter 4
# The voyage in through Baru's pastiches

## Introduction: siting Baru's comics[1]

Hervé Barulea, whose artist's name is Baru, is one of the most important and celebrated French cartoonists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. He twice won the best comic-book award at the annual Angoulême comics festival, the largest and most prestigious such event in France. He did so in 1991 for *Le chemin de l'Amérique* (Baru, Thévenet and Ledran 1990, 1998) and in 1996 for *L'autoroute du soleil* [Highway of the Sun] (Baru 1995a), a long-form graphic novel that has sold very well and been published in multiple editions. The Montreal comics publisher Drawn and Quarterly issued *Le chemin de l'Amérique* in English translation as *Road to America* (Baru, Thévenet and Ledran 1995–7, 2002). In 2010 Baru also received the grand prize at Angoulême for lifetime achievement, the highest honor in the French comics field. He therefore presided over the 2011 festival and had a special exhibition dedicated to his work, as is customary. His comics were among those featured in the 2013–14 exhibition "Albums: Bande dessinée et immigration, 1913–2013" [Albums: Comics and Immigration, 1913–2013] at the French national Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration [Museum of the History of Immigration] in Paris, and in the catalogue (Marie and Ollivier 2013: 44–7, 148–9).

As comics scholars and other readers have observed, several of Baru's comics have dense intertextual connections with each other, because the cartoonist reworks stories from one comic to another, partly to update them for a changing social context. Some of his most obvious rewriting is in stories about: New Year's eve celebrations by working-class youths, in the "Quéquette blues" [Weenie Blues] series (2005 [1984–6]), "Bonne année!" [Happy New Year!] (1995b; 2009b: 7–29) and *Bonne année* (1998); champion athletes manipulated and entrapped by social forces beyond their control, in *Le chemin de l'Amérique* (1990), *L'enragé* [The Enraged] (2004, 2006) and *Fais péter les basses, Bruno!* [Blow Out the Bass Speakers, Bruno!] (2010); and a flight from Lorraine to southern France by two friends of immigrant heritage, one white and one Arab, to escape far-right racist violence, in *Cours camarade!* [Run Comrade!] (1988) and *L'autoroute du soleil* (1995a). However, here I mostly set aside the interconnections just between his own works to focus

instead on how Baru has used intertextuality and intericonicity, including pastiche, to create an evolving dialogue between his narratives and canonical comics by other cartoonists.[2] I shall highlight how his art engages with the stakes and means of integration and exclusion in contemporary French society, especially the class-based and postcolonial dimensions of those processes. Baru has created a coherent fictional world grounded in history and the real, structured around sites and spaces, and representing physical and social means of moving into, between and beyond those places. I first provide a brief overview of some features of that fictional world before surveying how intertextuality, including pastiche, fits into it.

Baru depicts symbolically important spaces coded and organized by social class and (post)colonialism.[3] On the one hand there are working-class spaces, for example, the row houses in a company town of northeastern France where metalworkers and their families live, or high-rise housing projects in working-class outer-cities. In both, the kitchen especially plays crucial roles in inter-generational conviviality between migrants and their children, and the transmission of an immigrant ethnic heritage through speech and food.[4] The row houses and high rises are also spaces of interethnic immigrant cooperation and conflict. The café, bar, swimming pool, bowling alley and youth center are sites where ethnically mixed groups of working-class characters, often youths, fraternize, seek friendship or sexual pleasure, but also fight when ethnonationalists try to enforce neocolonial boundaries. On the other hand, the living places and spaces of socially dominant, bourgeois or aristocratic characters, are castle-like homes in separate spaces. In Baru's comics, before deindustrialization, the metalworking factory was primarily a space of capitalist social domination, but also the locus of heroic working-class male prowess, union- and Communist-Party organizing, assimilating immigrants from across Europe and French colonies, and jobs that provided a decent living to the working class. Public school was a place of both social domination for working-class youths without the requisite cultural capital, patience or smarts to succeed there, and of social promotion for some working-class youths who worked hard and had the necessary intellectual skills, drive and luck to do well in their studies. Various vehicles symbolize the means for moving into, around and out of these spaces and sites. They are, typically, ships and later planes for transporting migrants to France, and motorcycles or scooters, cars, trucks and trains for moving around French space. Vehicles are again coded by social class, running from the Vespa scooter for working-class youths to the luxurious sedan – Mercedes, BMW, Porche or even Facel Vega – for socially dominant bourgeois, the upwardly mobile, and successful criminals.

In key ways, Baru has woven intertextual references, especially from other comics, into this fictional world. His acknowledged influences and clearly discernable references to other comics and cartoonists divide roughly into two groups: classic French and Belgian comics, including the "Tintin," "Spirou" and "Yves-le-Loup" [Yves-the-Wolf] series; and contemporary ones, such as Mœbius's "Cauchemar blanc" [White

nightmare], José Muñoz and Carlos Sampayo's *Alack Sinner*, Jean-Marc Reiser's corrosive comics in *Hara Kiri Hebdo* and the first version of *Charlie Hebdo*, and Art Spiegelman's historical depiction of the Shoah in *Maus*.[5] Initially, the first group might seem to constitute formal influences, and the latter more ideological ones through their social critique and representations of history, but in fact the relationships to such works in Baru's comics are far more complex. For reasons of space, I will focus especially on his pastiche and reworking of comics by Mœbius and Hergé (Georges Remi). Baru has used classic comics to imagine ways of opening the comics canon to working-class and (post)colonial themes, spaces and characters, to history and the real, that were often either excluded or else subordinate there. One remembers, for example, widespread representations of Africans as savage or half-civilized, living in exotic lands in colonial adventure stories, notably Hergé's *Tintin au Congo* [*Tintin in the Congo*] (1973 [1931]).[6] One recalls working-class valets such as Spirou at hotels for the wealthy, or in luxurious homes of the rich, such as Nestor at the castle Marlinspike (Moulinsart), home to the Bird brothers (les frères Loiseau), antique-dealing thieves (the bad wealthy), and then to a gentrified Captain Haddock, a transfer found in Hergé's stories about pursuing and finding colonial treasure that the captain claims as his legitimate inheritance, thereby becoming a member of the good wealthy: *Le secret de la Licorne* [*The Secret of the Unicorn*] (1943) and *Le trésor de Rackham le rouge* [*Red Rackham's Treasure*] (1944). Baru has used allusions to classic comics to suggest how working-class youths might dream of a different world, one not bound by class privilege or racism, and based instead on fraternity, common goals, and interethnic solidarity.

Pastiche and related examples of intertextuality and intericonicity often serve as a form of self-reflexive artistic integration in Baru's comics, as a postcolonial, working-class, immigrant appropriation and inflection of the comics patrimony or heritage.[7] In this chapter, I analyze three interdependent sets or cycles of intertextual and intericonic relations that include pastiches of comics by other cartoonists. I first examine how Baru has repeatedly reappropriated "Cauchemar blanc" through pastiche, including in a deep structural way, by adapting its narrative hinge and role reversal to the evolving postcolonial situation in France, most visibly in *Cours camarade!* (1988) and *L'autoroute du soleil* (1995a).[8] I draw there on Pierre Fresnault-Deruelle's (1977) analysis of pastiche and the *effet de réel* [reality effect] in comics, and what other comics scholars have said about "new realist" comics of the 1970s and after. In my second section, I describe how Baru cites and progressively hollows out a pastiched, iconic image of a ship's smokestack and pneumatic whistle from "Tintin," to symbolize the gradual disappearance of the immigrant, working-class dream of achieving a better life for self, family and community by migrating to another country and working hard there. This evolution occurs across four stories within a decade: *Le chemin de l'Amérique* (in 1990), *L'autoroute du soleil* (in 1995), "Bonne année!" (in 1995) and *Bonne année* (in 1998). Through changes to the pastiched image and to the physical and narrative sites where he inserts

it, Baru suggests that the closing of horizons results from deindustrialization and a consequent loss of economic opportunity and power for the working class. He also indicts political leaders for aligning themselves with capital and using far-right rhetoric to stigmatize the descendants of working-class immigrants now relegated to poverty-stricken, crumbling *banlieues*. To make my argument, I borrow from what Bruno Lecigne and Ann Miller have said about the evolving status of the sign across Hergé's *œuvre*, as well as Miller's astute analysis of Baru's drawing style and his reworking of elements from "Tintin." My final section engages with a third cycle or set of intertextual allusions and pastiches in Baru's comics, in the four-volume "Les années Spoutnik" [The Sputnik Years] (1999–2003), set in the late 1950s, as its title suggests. There, borrowings from two classic comics series, "Tintin" and "Yves-le-Loup," again supply models for sites, spaces and characters that help structure Baru's story world, and also indicate how an active engagement with the imaginative power of comics, despite their ideological limitations, can open horizons for working-class children of immigrant and (post)colonial ethnic-minority backgrounds. I now turn to how Baru redrew "Cauchemar blanc" to turn far-right, racist and classist violence back against its perpetrators, and begin with how Fresnault-Deruelle viewed pastiche at work in Winsor McCay's comics, which helped inspire "Cauchemar blanc," as I described in Chapter 1.

## "White nightmares" in Baru's comics

In "Entre l'ersatz et le simulacre: La bande dessinée" [Between the ersatz and the simulacrum: comics] Fresnault-Deruelle (1977: 140) distinguishes pastiche from parody:

> If for us pastiche, which is not necessarily meant for irony, puts emphasis on the technique or the codes at work insofar as they are an object, which is to say a pre-text, parody, on the other hand, takes hold of that object, that rhetorical formulation one might say, to critique or even deconstruct its necessity.

I wish to avoid getting bogged down in the often slippery distinctions between parody and pastiche, and take Fresnault-Deruelle's description here as a working definition. For Fresnault-Deruelle (143–4), McCay's "Little Nemo in Slumberland" series is an important early example of self-parody, where the artist mocks the formal codes of his chosen medium: "For the author of *Little Nemo*, it is the self-reflexive composition that will be the instrument of denunciation." The conclusion of each page of "Little Nemo in Slumberland" switches scenes, moving from dream to wakeful state, and thereby shows up the artifice of the image ("[it] states all the illusion of which the image is capable").

In the introduction to this volume, I analyzed how "Cauchemar blanc" clearly cites and reworks McCay's "Dream of the rarebit fiend" series. "Dream of the rarebit fiend"

functions much like "Little Nemo in Slumberland," especially in its manipulation of dreaming and wakeful states, and therefore, if we agree with Fresnault-Deruelle's analysis, in its self-parody. Unlike "Little Nemo in Slumberland" or "Dream of the rarebit fiend," "Cauchemar blanc" replays essentially the same story, but with an extended and inverted conclusion. "Cauchemar blanc" would seem to constitute an exception to Fresnault-Deruelle's dichotomy between self-reflexive comics and those for which the *effet de réel* is crucial (147):

> The iconographic "quotations" will very rarely be the place for real work of/on the image, which would obviously have implied that the comics in question would have been exempt from the obsession with the reality effect, of which they gave a quasi hysterical expression at the time [i.e., about 1925–65].

"Cauchemar blanc" has been seen by critics and cartoonists alike as signaling a new engagement with the real in *bande dessinée*. It also constitutes a serious interrogation of the image, specifically its relationship to dreams, as Lecigne and Jean-Pierre Tamine (1983: 63), Matthew Screech (2005a: 98; 2005b: 101) and Miller (2007b: 39) have argued. This assertion is borne out by a comparison of Mœbius's story with its intertext. "Cauchemar blanc" parodies the rhetorical structure of McCay's comics by switching the implicit subordination of dreaming to reality (in McCay's comics, reality reassuringly trumps nightmare, in the end). Mœbius's comic uses their principle of reversibility to undermine the suggestion that once we have accepted the premise that images can depict a dreaming or nightmarish state, we can depart from that state intact: it is reality that is most nightmarish for the antiracist reader of Mœbius, as the comics scholars mentioned above have noted. Mœbius is clearly also paying hommage to McCay, who famously explored the new medium and expanded its potential for depicting alternate realities and states of altered consciousness (dreams and nightmares).

After my detour through Mœbius and his American model, I return now to Baru, who has repeatedly acknowledged his debt to Mœbius's foundational comic, and has reworked elements from it, especially in *Cours camarade!* and *L'autoroute du soleil*:[9] for example, in both works the principal white French racist is a well-to-do bourgeois who lives up above street level, in a dwelling protected by a fence, and leads a band of lower-class whites in a *ratonnade* that involves extensive car and moped or scooter chases in a contemporary urban environment.[10] In both "Cauchemar blanc" (2) and *L'autoroute du soleil* (56–7), that chase includes a sequence when the racists wreck their car.

Baru exploits the hierarchical motif inscribed in the urban environment in "Cauchemar blanc" by sending his working-class, Arab characters up to the apartment of a white bourgeois racist to have sex with a woman related to him (sister or wife), and by redrawing the high-angle and low-angle shots that Mœbius uses in "Cauchemar blanc." In Baru's comics, as in "Cauchemar blanc," there are significant reversals of the

**Figure 4.1:** From Baru (1995) *L'autoroute du soleil*, Tournai: Casterman, pp. 162–3 © Baru and Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

intertext's rhetoric. Whereas Mœbius's story concludes with an image foregrounding the inert body of the solitary North African male immigrant who may be dead, Baru's do not: his Maghrebi protagonists are always descendants of migrants, belong to bi-ethnic, white-Arab duos or larger multiethnic peer groups, and – with the notable exception of Abdelkader Mehaouchi (nicknamed "Kader") in *Quéquette blues* (Baru 2005: 40–3, 102–4; cf. 36–7) – escape their racist pursuers relatively unharmed, at least physically. In fact, it is the racists who usually end up on the wrong end of the stick, literally speaking. Only in Baru's comics is the violence of racists turned back against them in the real. White supremacists are physically beaten up, by themselves, their would-be victims, or allies of their prey, in *Cours Camarade!* (1988: 11, 40) and *L'autoroute du soleil* (1995a: 48–9, 158–71), including in panels where Baru very clearly refashions Mœbius's images of the beating (Figure 4.1), well as the incrusted panels after it is over (Figure 4.2; cf. Figure 1.3).[11]

Just as significantly, Baru reworks the principle of reversal that is fundamental to McCay's comics and to "Cauchemar blanc." It is not so much the switch from dream to wakeful state that interests Baru, although he does use this liminal trope vestigially: in *Cours Camarade!*, we look at the door handle and then turn the page, as working-class interlopers Mohamet Boukhader and Stanislas Smepka wake up with the Forestier sisters to the sounds of the racists, including their brother, approaching – unless the lovers have spent a "nuit blanche" [stayed up all night] in the ellipsis or blank space between

the pages (Baru 1988: 9–10). In *L'autoroute du soleil* Alexandre falls asleep on the sidewalk below and across the street from the home of Raoul Faurissier, a doctor and far-right politician, while Karim is having sex with Faurissier's wife. Alexandre is woken up by the doctor's return and warns Karim to flee (Baru 1995a: 35–40; cf. Miller 2005: 143, 2007b: 83). More significantly, Baru uses the dreaming to waking transition in a metaphorical sense: for example, the reversal that befalls Faurissier, quite awake, when "le ciel lui tombait sur la tête" [the sky was falling onto his head] at the political meeting whose fiasco triggers his political downfall,[12] or when he opens the door to his bedroom and discovers Karim with his wife (Baru 1995a: 35–8; see Miller 2007b: 83–5), in a reworking of the door handle motif as story hinge from *Cours camarade!*. These unforeseen reversals, or hinges, constitute the beginning of Faurissier's political and personal "cauchemar blanc."

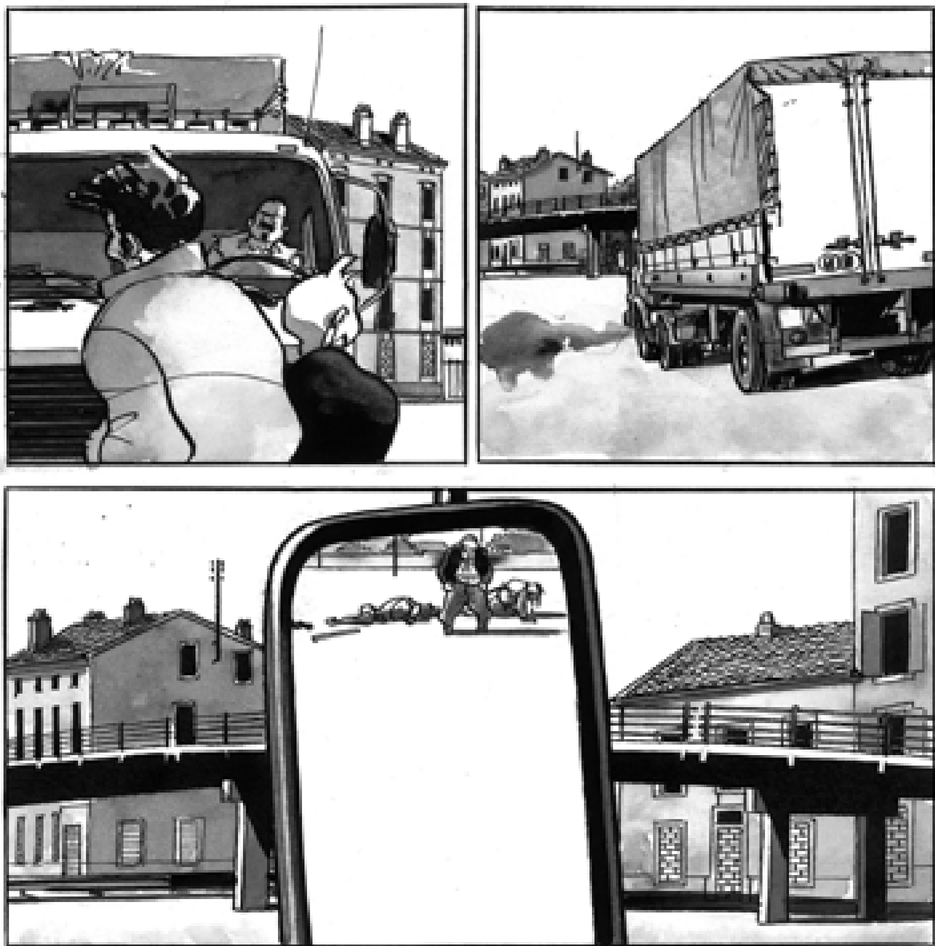

**Figure 4.2:** From Baru (1995) *L'autoroute du soleil*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 170.2–4 © Baru and Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

Echoes of this principle of reversal exist in a film sequence viewed by two distinct characters in different moments and places in the opening and conclusion of *Bonne année* (Baru 1998). Together, they frame the intervening story. In the book's opening pages, the mother of Mo, a Maghrebi-French youth, watches the film on television at home in her *banlieue* apartment (3–20). It is interrupted during a scene in the film where a guard in a watchtower on a wall around the *banlieue* refuses to kill an Arab in the no-mans-land between it and the outside, where mainstream society lives. At the end of *Bonne année*, Kovack, also a policeman, is watching the same film on video while sitting at his desk in a police station. His viewing of the same scene is interrupted by an armed policeman who brings in two prisoners and insists that Kovack lock them up: Hocine and Julien, a white-Arab duo who had illegally left the ghetto to buy condoms (69–71). Kovack, whom the other policeman disparages as a "poivrot [...] Pochetron! Sale parasite! Polack dégénéré!" [drunkard (...) Souse! Dirty Parasite! Degenerate Polack!] (70) kindly frees the two youths, although back into the *banlieue*, now actually a walled-in ghetto, much as in the film he had been watching (72). In *Bonne année*, the "cauchemar blanc" is the specter of policemen feeling empathy for *banlieue* youths, and refusing to follow orders to kill them (in the film) or lock them up (in reality, in the comics story). The gate between the outside world and the ghetto, like the hinge between dreaming and waking, facilitates a transition between two spaces or states of being, and introduces the principle of reversibility. Kovack's gesture of solidarity is of course highly ironic, but invites us to ask ourselves why walls surround the ghetto in the first place, and what could possibly justify shutting away the multiethnic underclass inside it.[13] I shall return to *Bonne année* in the next section to discuss yet another intertextual relation in it, this time with Hergé's "Tintin" series.

## "Tooot Hergé":[14] reconfigurations through serial pastiche

Miller (2005: 144–5, 2007b: 75–6) has shown how Baru updated central characters and a key setting from the Tintin series in a section of *L'autoroute du soleil*: Alexandre Barbiéri, a naive young character of Italian immigrant heritage, may remind readers of Tintin, especially after his hair has been bleached blond (like Tintin's) by his friend and mentor Karim Kemal, a slightly older and more experienced French Arab (Baru 1995a: 118–19). The two working-class youths of immigrant background eventually spend time in a luxurious dwelling that recalls Marlinspike, Captain Haddock's ancestral castle (Moulinsart in French), where a man called René Loiseau [René Bird], lives with a castrating woman who recalls the Castafiore, and their sexy daughter (Baru 1995a: 298–359; Miller 2005: 144–5; 2007b: 75–6). Of course the Bird brothers are the nefarious antique dealers who own the castle in the Tintin series before Haddock buys it (Miller 2005: 144). In fact, as Miller's analyses of *L'autoroute du soleil* suggest and as we shall see, Baru's references to Hergé in his own art are not the sign of a casual or

recent relationship to the Tintin series. Inspired by Miller's excellent readings of how Baru has reworked Hergé's Tintin story world, we may look for related allusions to Tintin in other albums. Baru (2012b: 80–3) has clearly stated that he was not an aficionado of Hergé as a child, but in his comics he has repeatedly acknowledged his artistic debt to the Belgian artist, especially – long before *Bip bip!* – through recurring intericonic relations with ship imagery in Hergé's comics. In the latter, the oceanliner is the main, original icon of the global voyages that Tintin makes as an adventurer, whose first seafaring voyage is to the Belgian Congo, in *Tintin au Congo* (1931).[15] By contrast, in Baru's comics working-class men, including the colonized, take ships to travel to France and work in its factories and mines, or fight in its boxing rings. Ships are also the vehicle that is sometimes seen but is never taken by postcolonial descendants of migrants, and their buddies of European immigrant heritage, back to the country of their colonized parents or ancestors. In those stories, ships are located on the southern border of France, in Marseille. Baru's male buddies reach that border in *Cours camarade!* (1988) and in *L'autoroute du soleil* (1995a), which substantially reworked and expanded the story from the earlier volume. The friends arrive there because they have been fleeing far-right vigilantes who refuse the possibility of inter-ethnic solidarity, and wish to kill French Arabs or expel them from France after having discovered the Arab having sex with a French woman of European ethnicity. This is a recurring "white nightmare" in far-right discourse, comics and cartoons. By not ever actually putting his postcolonial characters on ships leaving France, Baru counters the racist fantasy of the far right and affirms the right of postcolonial minorities to live in France, their home country. Given the colonial symbolism of ships and Tintin's voyages on them in Hergé's series, there is considerable irony in the fact that Baru took boat and dock imagery directly from the "Tintin" series and reworked it in his antiracist, postcolonial stories: a ship named Remada and flagged in Algiers, toward which Baru's biracial buddy couple, Stanislas Smepka and Mohamet Boukhader, are running at end of *Cours camarade!* (Figure 4.3; Baru 1988: 46.2), is a clear reworking of Haddock's iconic ship, the Karaboudjan, at port in *Le crabe aux pinces d'or* [*The Crab with the Golden Claws*] (Hergé 1981b [1941]: 9.3; cf. Hergé 1980: 267.4). The latter is a collaborationist, racist and pro-colonial story, serialized during the Nazi occupation of Belgium, as argued convincingly by Maxime Benoît-Jeannin (2001: 42–52; 2007: 120–38).

In *Reading* Bande dessinée*: Critical Approaches to French-Language Comic Strip*, Miller (2007b:127) reminds us that Lecigne, in *Les héritiers d'Hergé*, saw Hergé as moving from a realist aesthetic to the simulacrum across his comics series:

> From which there is the possibility of this paraphrase:
> Such would be the successive phases of the *artistic treatment* of *Tintin*:
> -I. he is the reflection of a deep reality (*Tintin* 1929–1941; *The Blue Lotus*)
> -II. he masks and denatures a deep reality (idem; *King Ottokar's Sceptre*)

> -III. he masks *the absence* of deep reality (*Tintin* 1942–1958; *Red Rackham's Treasure, Tintin in Tibet*; and *Tintin* 1966–1975; *Flight 714, Tintin and the Picaros*)
> -IV. he has no relationship to any reality: he is his own pure simulacrum (*Tintin* 1961; *The Castafiore Emerald*) (Lecigne 1983)

Following Lecigne, Miller (2007b: 127) sees a "decreasing credibility of Hergé's fictional world" that is especially apparent by the time of his last comics. Miller also sees a fundamental representational shift across Baru's comics. She (2005: 137) argues that in his work from the 1980s:

> The documentary precision of the décors offers an ethnographic study of the everyday life of the first and second generation Italian community. The characters, in contrast, are portrayed in an expressionist style that allows Baru to depict the uncertainties and terrors of the Oedipal dramas enacted by the adolescent narrator and his friends. [...] Baru's work offers an emotional and moral portrayal of characters against a background that is rendered with meticulous realism.

She finds a subsequent disruption of realism in his comics from the 1990s, notably in *L'autoroute du soleil*, through self-referentiality, intertextuality and a representational strategy approaching hyperrealism (Miller 2005: 137, 143–4; 2007b: 78). There is a related gradual transformation from reality to simulacrum in a series of interrelated pastiches that Baru makes of a colonial-era image from the Tintin series across several of his postcolonial stories.

The most prevalent borrowing that Baru made of boat imagery from Hergé takes the form of a pastiche of a single visual icon in Baru's comics: the smokestack of a boat with a pneumatic whistle that recurs several times there, as the cartoonist noted in *Baru ici et là*.[16] The image reminds us of the factory chimneys and *hauts fourneaux* [blast furnaces], whose phallic, paternal connotations have been analyzed by Miller (2005: 138; 2007b: 78–82; cf. Felici 2016: 29–30). These symbols are situated after the immigrant's voyage to France, the latter symbolized by the smokestack of the ship or of the train's steam engine (Baru 1995a: 12–13; see Miller 2005: 143). By contrast with the mobility of the ship, chimneys and *hauts fourneaux* are associated with stasis, and tower over the ambivalent space of steel mills until they are toppled when France deindustrializes and closes down the mills (Baru 1995a: 14–15; cf. 2003: 46–7). In Baru's comics, the mills are a symbol of working-class, male virility and of a proletariat organized by the French Communist Party, but also a dangerous prison-house where workers are internees who escape only through death or retirement (Felici 2016: 33), or later, through the cessation of the factory's activity during France's industrial decline.

Baru's first use of the ship's smokestack and whistle, in *Le chemin de l'Amérique* (Figure 4.4), is the example that is integrated most naturally into his realist decor, although

**Figure 4.3:** From Baru (1988) *Cours camarade!*, colors Daniel Ledran, Paris: Albin Michel, plate 46 © Baru and Albin Michel. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

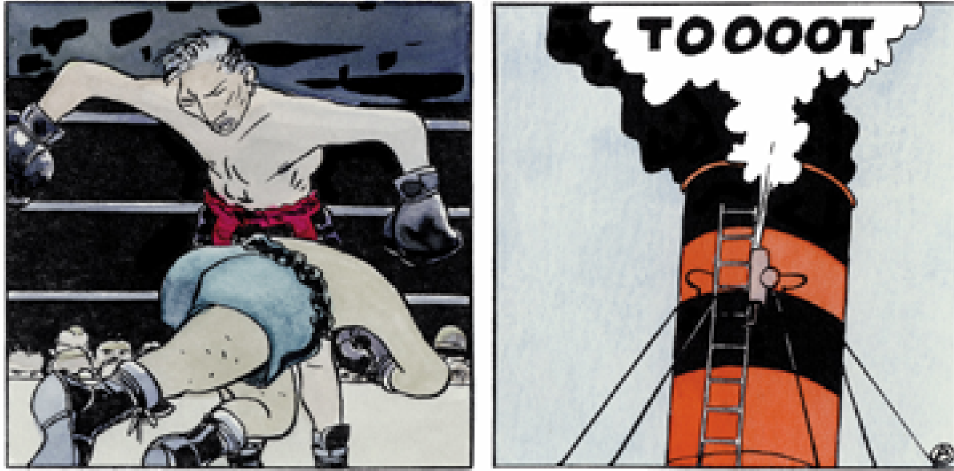


**Figure 4.4:** From Baru (art and script), Jean-Marc Thévenet (script) and Daniel Ledran (colors) (1990) *Le chemin de l'Amérique*, Paris: Albin Michel, plate 8.9–10 © Baru and Albin Michel. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

here already the pastiche invites us to begin interrogating the realism of the work, and precisely the naturalness of the decor (Baru, Thévenet and Ledran 1998: 10–11; cf. Miller 2005: 137, 143–4). Boat and smokestack imagery are prevalent throughout much of Hergé's *œuvre*, but this particular smokestack and attached whistle are recognizably from *Le lotus bleu* [*The Blue Lotus*], and specifically right at the end of the volume, when Tintin leaves behind his beloved young Chinese friend Chang (Hergé 1974 [1936]: 62). Baru's pastiche and related elements suggest not just formal influences but also ideological and symbolic connections with Hergé's work: specifically, the anti-imperialism and transnational, interethnic solidarity of *Le lotus bleu* may have rendered it more attractive as a model for Baru, who inserts the borrowed smokestack and whistle into a scene in *Le chemin de l'Amérique* that celebrates the friendship between a young Algerian boxer and two older *Pieds-Noirs* during the Algerian War: a butcher who is a family friend, and a boxing trainer (see McKinney 2008a: 147–51). The *Pieds-Noirs* are seeing off the Algerian boxer, Saïd Boudiaf, who boards a ship about to sail from Algiers to Marseille. The pastiche of Hergé suggests a transfer of roles, from a focus on the Belgian reporter Tintin as an archetypal colonial, (petit-)bourgeois European hero, to one on working-class and often (post)colonial heroes.[17] Saïd takes the place of Tintin traveling by boat to Europe, while Gaston and Henri Castaneda, the white *Pieds-Noirs*, take the place of Chang and Wang Jen-Ghié, who remain behind in China, one of many exotic lands to which Tintin travels throughout his adventures. Here, the voyage out and back of the white colonial hero (Tintin) is transformed into what Edward Said (1994b) calls the "voyage in" of the (post)colonized traveling into the heart of (post)colonial empire (see McKinney 2013e: esp. 211–23). In this case, Saïd Boudiaf travels to Paris to become a boxing champion, first by beating white European boxers.

**Figure 4.5:** From Baru (1995) *L'autoroute du soleil*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 12 © Baru and Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

Through its second appearance, in *L'autoroute du soleil* (Baru 1995a: 12.2), Hergé's smokestack and whistle begin to serve as a recurring motif in Baru's work (Figure 4.5): they move from their position as one realist metonym among others in a narrative sequence (in *Le chemin de l'Amérique*) to a recognizable visual icon or symbol in a patterned series of appearances. The loss of text in the frame in *L'autoroute du soleil* underlines this: there is no longer a "tooot" there. Reading these two instances of the pastiched smokestack and whistle together contextualizes the voyage of the Algerian boxer Saïd Boudiaf in *Le chemin de l'Amérique* as one voyage among many working-class and colonial immigrant trips to the French mainland, and locates him as a kind of father figure for Karim Kemal in *L'autoroute du soleil*. Part of what they share is their lack of interest in playing a political role, their pursuit of individual objectives, and the attempts by others to force them into predefined roles in narratives of Algerian national liberation or French (neo) colonialism (for Boudiaf) or of paranoid French ethnonationalism (for Kemal). As Miller (2005: 143) has argued, although Kemal appears completely uninterested in the colonial and immigrant history from which he emerges, the narrative sequence in which the smokestack and whistle appear in *L'autoroute du soleil* symbolizes the transition from one generation of an immigrant, multiethnic, working-class community to the next.

The third example of the smokestack and whistle is found in the short story "Bonne année!", where the French government has sent tanks to shut away a multiethnic, working-class population inside a housing project (Figure 4.6).[18] The whistle's "tooot" now takes the form of neon lights atop the nightclub's façade, which is in the form of an ocean-going ship named the Karaboudjan (cf. 2009b: 20–1). With this nightclub name, Baru makes explicit the reference to Hergé's work for the first time and clearly imports the colonial connotations of the Karaboudjan from the Tintin series into his postcolonial story. This ship is where Captain Haddock is trapped as an alcoholic when he first appears in the series, in *Le crabe aux pinces d'or* (Hergé 1981b [1941]: 14–17). Later it will serve as a prison ship for Black Africans, in *Coke en stock* [*The Red Sea Sharks*] (Hergé 1986 [1958]).[19] By using the Karaboudjan as a nightclub, Baru produces an ironic *mise-en-abîme* of the dystopian *banlieue* setting that Le Pen, now Minister of the Interior, has closed off. One may party all one likes in the nightclub on New Year's Eve, but one remains a prisoner in the closed off *banlieue*. Baru's implicit reference to *Coke en stock* recalls the central plot element of Hergé's story, to which its title alludes euphemistically. Muslim Black Africans (the *coke* of the French title) were tricked by modern-day slavers, led by Hergé's arch villain Rastapopoulos, into thinking that they would be taken on a pilgrimage to Mecca, but were locked into the ship's hold. In fact, the boat's captain is Allan, Haddock's nemesis and former first mate. Allan and his crew leave the ship precipitously when a fire breaks out and risks blowing up the explosives that they were also illegally transporting to the Middle East. Having freed themselves, Captain Haddock and Tintin put out the fire, release the Africans from the hold and try to convince them to to call off their voyage to Mecca, because they risk being enslaved

should they continue on. Through this allusion to the Hergé series, Baru here again appears to rework a Hergean gesture of solidarity: he is issuing a wake-up call to *banlieue* inhabitants to stand up and oppose the rise of the Front national (FN) before it is too late. One can acknowledge that gesture along with pertinent critiques of Hergé's *Coke en stock* for racism, notably in the caricature of Black Africans' speech in the initial version, and generally in its depiction of Black Africans, Arabs, Muslims and Jews.[20] Into the *banlieues* of a more or less contemporary France, Baru imports Hergé's critique of the exploitation of Muslim Africans and updates it: the Karaboudjan as discothèque may remind us of attention to discrimination against young Frenchmen of North African heritage, notably at entrances to nightclubs (Begag 1989). In Baru's story the Arab protagonist can freely enter a discothèque (although with a non-Maghrebi name – or nickname?: "Kent"), but is confined to the *banlieue* where he lives. This instance of Baru's recurring pastiche transforms Hergé's critique of ideological blindness in *Coke en stock*, where fervently held religious beliefs blind Black Africans to the real purpose of their voyage and facilitate their enslavement. Baru's story could be read as a wake-up call to working-class *banlieue* youths: an encouragement to gain an education, escape from poverty, influence the political system, and defeat the FN's far-right politics before they inflict more harm.[21] When, at the beginning of the story, Kent unplugs his television and throws it out the window because he is enraged by Le Pen's televised announcement of harsh new governmental measures, including racist ones, against the working-class *banlieue*'s multiethnic inhabitants, the gesture is both spectacular and futile. The rewriting here of a story that Baru first told in *Quéquette blues*, about young men looking for sex on New Year's eve, suggests that Baru's ongoing elaboration and updating of his own artistic language for representing the political, economic and cultural evolution of postindustrial, postcolonial France is at stake, as much as his rewriting of Hergé figures a new relationship to the master cartoonist and, more generally, to classic French and Belgian comics.

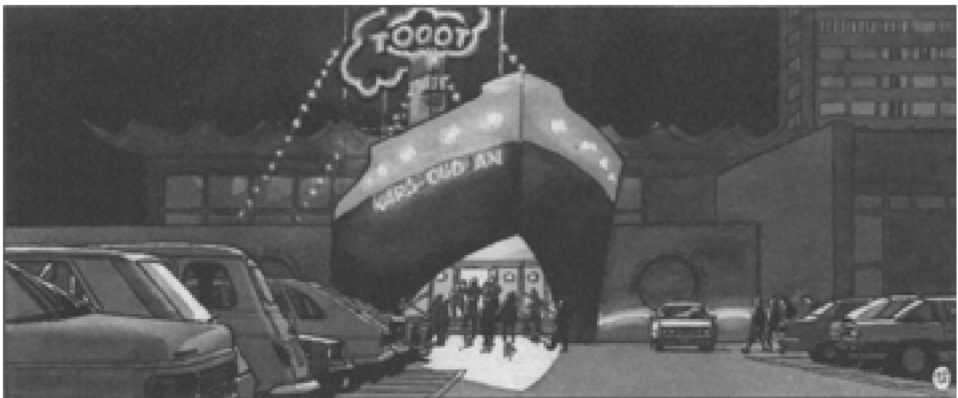


**Figure 4.6:** From Baru (2009) "Bonne année 2016," in *Noir*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 20.5 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

For the fourth time in Baru's comics, in the book-length version of *Bonne année*, the smokestack and whistle appear again, now half-hidden on a poster on a wall inside a lesbian couple's home in a former school, which contains a secret passage allowing characters a way out of the *banlieue* (Figure 4.7), now otherwise sealed off from mainstream French society by high walls and armed guards in towers (Baru 1998: 61.5; 2009b: 91.5).[22] Not for the first or last time in Baru's comics, the escape route from the confines of the working class or the underclass leads through a school, as Isabelle Felici argues (2016: 31–5). *Banlieue* characters pay the couple a fee to use the passage for drug trafficking or, in the case of Hocine and Julien (as mentioned earlier), to purchase condoms at a pharmacy on the outside, to avoid catching HIV, now endemic in the *banlieue* (condoms are a very scarce commodity in the ghetto). The poster with Hergé's smokestack and whistle suggests that the immigrant's dream of traveling to France is now only a distant memory, as the Hergé icon seems to take its place next to old posters of the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique (whose boats once linked North Africa and France), which are expensive collector items today. In *Bonne année*, Baru has hollowed out his pastiche of Hergé and reduced it to a fetishistic sign. There it is *un leurre* [an alluring illusion], suggesting an escape that has no more depth than the paper on which it is printed. Peeling away the poster, one finds not a solid way out but instead a wall like the one surrounding the *banlieue*, or like the lowered security shutter of the pharmacy where Baru's white-Arab duo tries to buy condoms, but is cheated by the pharmacist, and then caught and arrested by the police. Now vanished is the line of flight south to the ships of Marseille taken by the sons of migrants, and the suggestion of their possible escape across the Mediterranean to the country of origin of their parents' generation, which had structured the southward journey away from violent racists in both *Cours camarade!* (1988) and *L'autoroute du soleil* (1995a). The way out is now blocked off by racist soldiers manning armored vehicles in "Bonne année!" (one calls Kent "le négro" before shooting at him), and by the walls and armed guards of *Bonne année*, which recall not only Jewish ghettos during the Holocaust, but also the Berlin Wall (Felici 2016: 32), and perhaps Enki Bilal's "Nikopol" trilogy and related artwork (see below, Chapter 5).

Baru's use of Hergé again situates his own work within a significant vein in contemporary *bande dessinée*, which Pierre Halen (1993b), Miller (2004), Sylvain Venayre (in Pasamonik and Verhoest 2005) and others have analyzed: one that transforms colonial-era adventure and reportage from classic French and Belgian comics (found in *Tintin au Congo*, for example), and thereby reworks the relationship of today's readers to colonial history and its aftermath. Baru's serial pastiche across four comics, which one could call "Tooot Hergé," relocates the so-called colonial adventure within contemporary France and remaps it as a creeping, regressive circumscribing of freedom of physical movement and of civil liberties for the poor, including whites and people whose ancestors migrated to France from (former) French colonies, now relegated to crumbling housing projects on the periphery of cities. Of course Baru's series of Hergéan

**Figure 4.7:** From Baru (1998) *Bonne année*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 61 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

pastiches does not constitute in itself a full-blown representational system, and he integrates each example into his story in realistic ways. However, there is an evolution in them that resembles the dematerializing one that Lecigne and Miller discern in Hergé's art. The transformation in Baru's comics occurs across a series of stories that

depict increasingly grim situations for the urban poor of various ethnic backgrounds, including from former French colonies, living together. The dematerialization of the iconic referent – the gradual transformation of Hergé's boat with its smokestack and whistle – and the consequent undermining of the realist aesthetic that it originally supported represent the vanishing hope for equal rights and fair economic opportunities for a multiethnic French underclass. Although in these comics Baru gradually moves into a future time, it is not the fictional world that Baru creates that gradually approaches the status of a simulacrum. Instead, it is the receding possibility of escape from the nightmare of a divided society that increasingly resembles a simulacrum, as the nightmare world imposed by far-right politicians becomes increasingly real.

Moreover, this trend in Baru's pastiches runs parallel to an increasing self-reflexivity and foregrounding throughout his comics, of media, means of representation, and their manipulation: televisions are thrown out of the window (1995b; 2009b: 12) or turned off (1998: 37) when Le Pen or Nicolas Sarkozy appears; for their viewers, videocassettes symbolize either their agency (1998: 69–71) or lack of control (2006: 20–2); human subjects critique the representations that journalists make of them (2004: 42, 48, 54–7; 2006: 14–15); and comics are imitated by Baru's characters through dressing (1998: 27.2; 2000) and drawing (2000: 27). As Miller (2005: 138) has observed, self-reflexivity about the representation of self is often figured in his work through mirrors, when, through rituals of dress and grooming, characters shape their appearance and, by the same token, their character traits and fictional types or roles. Here Baru self-reflexively makes connections between his own art and that of others. In *Quéquette blues*, the characters may remind us of the rockers in Frank Margerin's "Lucien," first published a few years earlier.[23] In *L'autoroute*, Karim, dressed as James Dean from the 1955 film *Rebel Without A Cause* for reasons he cannot articulate (Baru 1995a: 120–1),[24] transforms Alexandre into Tintin (Miller 2007b: 77). In "Bonne année!" a Maghrebi character may be named "Kent," but unlike Clark Kent he has no superhero's power that would enable him to break out of confinement. In the book version of *Bonne année*, Mo (no doubt short for Mohamed) dresses up as Spirou (Figure 4.8),[25] in a scene that may remind us of the Spirou volume titled *Le rayon noir* [The Black Ray] (Tome and Janry 1993), which thematizes racial difference. Similarly, Baru's depiction of Le Pen as president of France could suggest *Le dictateur et le champignon* [The Dictator and the Mushroom] (1956), André Franquin's anti-fascistic Spirou volume. There is no easy dichotomy between Baru's references to mass media such as television, radio and news periodicals, and his pastiches of, and allusions to, other *bandes dessinées*. All are ambivalent, available to serve as the signs and instruments of domination or of liberation, and sometimes both at once.

Pastiche and related intertextual reworking are fundamentally constitutive of Baru's work, more so than has been acknowledged usually in the past. They help unsettle the nonetheless useful general distinction between the realism of his settings and the expressive caricature of his characters, because when pastiched reworking of borrowed

**Figure 4.8:** From Baru (2009) *Noir*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 57 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

comic-book characters, places and plot is foregrounded, it partially shifts our focus from the real as referent to the formal evolution of Baru's art, and its relation to the medium in general. His reappropriation of classic comics offers readers who are flu-

ent in that tradition ways into his postcolonial, postindustrial and politicized comics. His reworking of their artistic forms and topoi through his own, more contemporary, choice of themes, provides a needed updating of the medium and an expansion of its artistic and political possibilities. In the third series or cycle of intertextual references by Baru to classic comics, to which I now turn, he emphasizes precisely the ability of comics to expand the potential for imagining a different present and future.

## From Sainte-Claire to the moon

In *Bip bip!*, first published by Baru in 2002 and set in October 1957, Igor D'Alvise, a young working-class boy of Italian heritage in the industrial northeast of France, reads Hergé's *Objectif Lune* [*Destination Moon*] (Hergé 1953; Baru 2009a: 121–3, 131.5). Igor and his friends live in a multiethnic metalworking community closely modeled on Sainte-Claire, a neighborhood of Thil, Baru's hometown.[26] In *Bip bip!*, the third album in the "Années Spoutnik" series, Igor and his friends use Professor Calculus's moon rocket plans as a model for building a toy replica of the spaceship. Igor falls asleep one night on Hergé's book and dreams of being "le premier prolétaire qui a marché sur la lune" [the first proletarian who walked on the moon] (Figure 4.9). The sensitive, smart and plucky Leïla Bouhibi, a girl of Maghrebi heritage, flies smiling above the Sputnik satellite in the Lorraine sky of Igor's dream, in a watercolor image reminiscent of Marc Chagall's paintings. The explicitness of the intertextual allusion to Hergé's comic book may encourage us to read other elements in *Bip bip!* as related reimaginings of Hergé's fictional world, with respect to: place – the "centre aéré de Pouxe" [Pouxe leisure center for children] may remind us of Marlinspike/Moulinsart (128, 137); characters – especially Igor as Tintin (121), Roli Schwab (a zany German munitions expert) as Cuthbert Calculus (Tryphon Tournesol in French) (129–32), and an unpleasant, domineering schoolteacher as Bianca Castafiore (143–5); and plot – when Schwab is hospitalized for alcohol poisoning, temporarily depriving the boys of access to the formula for rocket fuel (134–5), we remember the mishaps in Hergé's two-album moon story caused by the loss of plans and of memory by Calculus, and by the excessive drinking of Haddock. Similarly, the explosion of Calculus's first, unmanned moon rocket is humorously echoed in *Bip bip!* when the toy rocket that Igor and his friends have built with Schwab's help fires a tiny model of Sputnik just above the head of a visiting Communist-Party dignitary from the USSR, who becomes hysterically alarmed, believing he is the target of a Trotskyist plot (149–50). The children's two teachers are immediately expelled from the Communist Party, and consequently must leave Pouxe with Igor and his friends (150). Baru thereby farcically transforms Hergé's manichean Cold War story about nefarious plotters into a one about sycophantic French communists and their Soviet guest.

At an earlier point the young son of the local French communist organizer calls Hergé's "Tintin" series reactionary, but is clearly foolish and misguided (142). Baru's

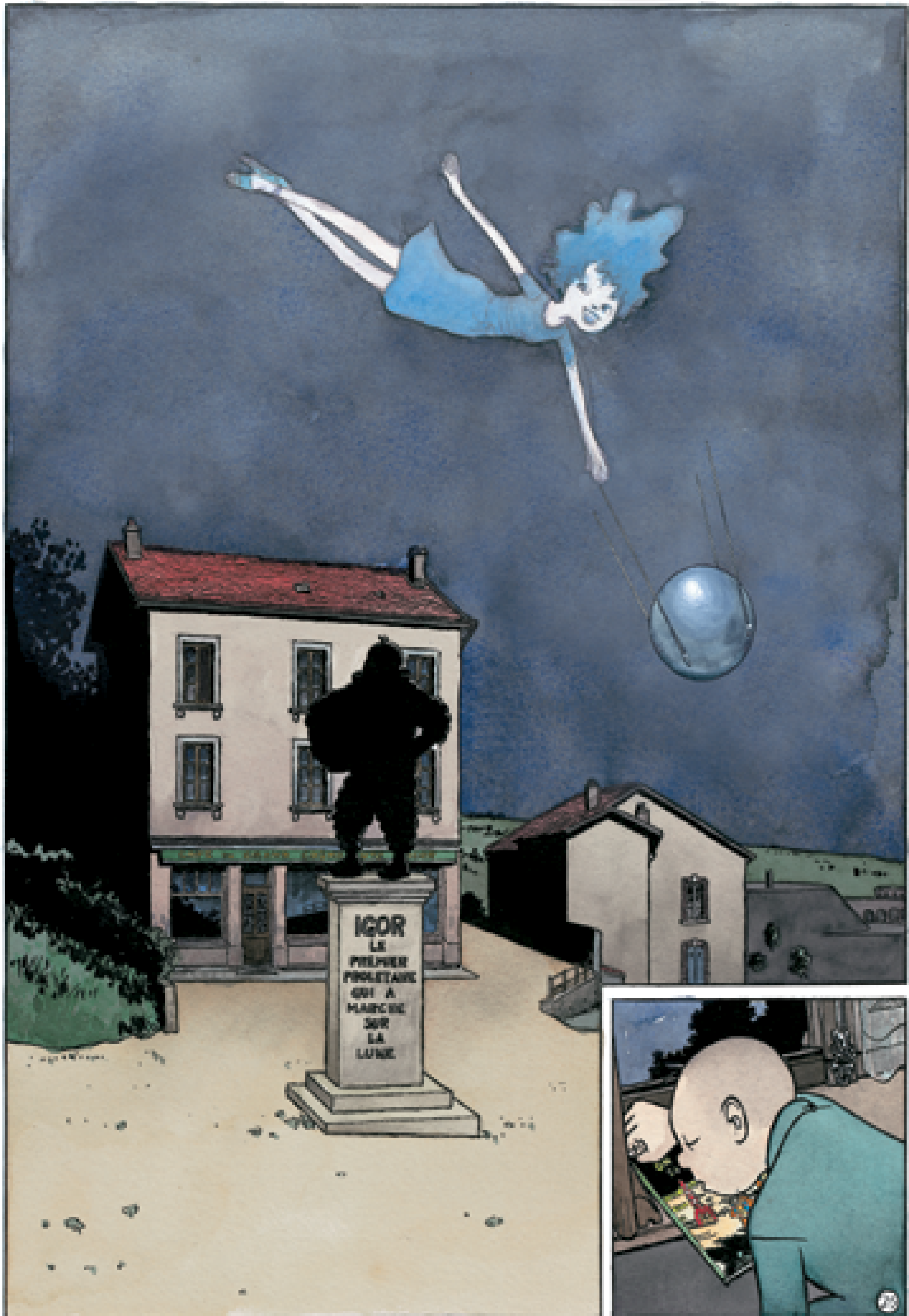


**Figure 4.9:** From Baru (2002) *Les années Spoutnik*, vol. 3: *Bip bip!*, colors Daniel Ledran, Tournai: Casterman, p. 25 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

implicit defense of Hergé against left-wing critique might seem surprising, because "Tintin" has often been regarded as a series for young Catholic, bourgeois readers, located at the other end of the social spectrum from the communist, working-class and to some extent anticlerical milieu of Baru's characters, which closely resembles his own childhood background. The leftist political positions of Baru stand in contrast to the often reactionary politics of Hergé and his publications, just as the anticolonialism and antiracism of the French author are at odds with the colonialism and racism of the Belgian cartoonist's works such as *Tintin au Congo* [*Tintin in the Congo*] (1973 [1931]), or the earlier "Popokabaka (bananera chantée)," by Hergé and René Verhaegen.[27] On the other hand, there are reasons why Baru might take Hergé as a model. After all, the Belgian cartoonist is an acknowledged "master of the ninth art" (Screech 2005a: 17–51), so his narrative and artistic techniques could plausibly inspire Baru, who has indeed expressed his admiration for the power of Hergé's realistic imagery, and his appreciation of the fact that Hergé and other early cartoonists gave legitimacy to the art form and made it popular (Baru 2012b: 80–3). Like Hergé, Baru has long been interested in current events and contemporary reality. Moreover, *Bip bip!* suggests that children's dreams may be sparked by comics despite their ideological limitations. Here, Igor and his friends combine their naive interpretation of communism and Westerns – they see themselves as "communist Indians" (Baru 2009a: 110, 126) – with the adventure of Hergé's moon story, as they imagine traveling from Sainte Claire to the moon.

## Conclusion: the evolving roles of intertextual comics references for Baru

Intertextual and intericonic relations, including pastiche, help us read Baru's cartooning within an evolving tradition of comics about colonialism, postcolonialism and migration. They also assist us in understanding the transformation across time of Baru's own narrative art, which has always been closely attuned to changes in French politics and society, especially as they have affected working-class people of recent immigrant and postcolonial ethnic minority heritage. The three sets or cycles of intertextual and intericonic relations between Baru's art and that of other cartoonists that I have analyzed here are from three partially overlapping periods and works. If there is an evolution in intertextuality and intericonicity across Baru's work, it might be as follows.

From Mœbius, Baru borrowed the dream/waking hinge and far-right attack on an Arab, adapting them in works published in 1988 (*Cours camarade!*) and 1995 (*L'autoroute du soleil*) – Mœbius's influence was perhaps already present in *Quéquette blues* (first published 1984–6), though certainly not as obvious. "Cauchemar blanc" had a profound and early influence on Baru, encouraging him to represent the real in comics in a new way.[28] His rewriting gives agency and a voice to the Arab victim in a way that Mœbius does not, as noted earlier in this volume. Baru's two sets of white and Arab buddies from the late 1980s and mid-1990s fight back, flee and ultimately evade or defeat their far-right, racist

attackers in both *Cours camarade!* and *L'autoroute du soleil*. Through them, the cartoonist encourages solidarity in resisting the far right. These were the years when Socialist President François Mitterrand was in office, although his party had to share power with the right during some of that time, and the far right was growing in influence.

Baru pastiched Hergé's boat's smokestack and pneumatic whistle in 1990 (*Le chemin de l'Amérique*), 1995 (*L'autoroute du soleil*; "Bonne année!") and 1998 (*Bonne année*). This series of pastiches and the stories in which they are set suggest a growing pessimism, especially from the mid- to late 1990s, about rising far-right politics, continuing racist discrimination against postcolonial ethnic minorities, and declining economic and political power of the poor and working class. Under President Jacques Chirac, the political right was back in power, although Chirac too had to share governance for several years, with Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin in 1997–2002.

During and just after the latter period, Baru clearly integrated references from "Yves-le-Loup" and Tintin's moon adventure into volumes 2–4 of "Les années Spoutnik," a story about childhood during the Algerian War, at the historical cusp of heavy industry's collapse, and with it, organized political power of the working class through unions and the Communist Party. It is as though the return to that past, before dreams had been swept away, led Baru to see and offer a renewed hope in the potential of the creative imagination through comics. He keeps that hope alive in more recent works, including *Fais péter les basses, Bruno!* (2010), which I discuss in Chapter 10, below. Looking at how pastiche, intertextuality and intericonicity function in Baru's comics helps us grasp the power of images that he finds in the comics canon (2012b: 82). Baru's own images can help us imagine a different world, a better and more just one.

## Notes

1 I presented an earlier version of part of this chapter, on the connections between "Cauchemar blanc" and Baru's comics, at the annual MLA convention, in Chicago on 10 January 2014.

2 See Groensteen (2010: 102) on intericonicity.

3 On these spaces and movement across them, see also Miller (2005; 2007b: 75–102), Felici (2016) and Platthaus (2019)

4 On kitchens see especially Baru (1987, 1995a, 2005, 2009a) and Baru in Lab (2011).

5 Baru has spoken about these various influences in interviews and statements (2001: 31–2, 35; 2008: 243; 2012b: 80–3); Baru in Barbier, et al (2001: 16–17). Baru refers to Spirou (Baru 1998: 27.2) and Yves-le-Loup (Baru 2009a: 76–8) in his comics. On the former, see Miller (2005: 147) and Felici (2016: 32), and on the latter, see McKinney (2013a). Other intertextual references include to the film *Blow-Up* (Baru 1998: 39.3) and the "Blake and Mortimer" comic book *Le secret de l'Espadon* (vol. 1), by Edgar P. Jacobs (Baru 1995a: 412.4).

6 Throughout this chapter I give original publication dates for Tintin albums, usually in square brackets; serialization preceded those dates (Van Opstal 1998: 128–31).
7 See Beaty (2008) on the comics patrimony; on various ways that postcolonial cartoonists have reworked colonial motifs, see McKinney (2011c: 111–20, 139–59; 2013).
8 Felici (2016: 28) mentions the link between *Cours camarade!* and "Cauchemar blanc."
9 Baru in Barbier, et al. (2001: 16) and Baru (2001: 35); in "Staline" (2012a: 17–25) Baru again pastiches "Cauchemar blanc," this time with clear references to both "Little Nemo in Slumberland" and "Tintin."
10 On the term *ratonnade* and related ones, see above, p. 141–2n19.
11 Miller (2007b: 83) analyzes precisely this example from *L'autoroute du soleil*, but does not mention its relation to "Cauchemar blanc." On incrusted panels, see also Groensteen (1999: 100–6), and above, Chapter 1.
12 The phrase of course recalls the "Astérix" series; see below, Chapter 6, on far-right pastiches of that series.
13 Baru also uses mediated, self-reflexive hinges between dream-like and nightmarish states in *Le chemin de l'Amérique* and *L'enragé*, in passages where a boxer living his dream of boxing is double-crossed and finds himself in a humiliating, nightmarish situation. In the former, a hinge moment is mediated by a boxing stage set up like a traveling carnival sideshow (1998: 4–6), and in the latter, by the viewing of a pornographic video (2006: 20–2).
14 Cf. the title *Tout Hergé: Itinéraire d'un collectionneur chanceux* [All of Hergé: Itinerary of a Lucky Collector], by Stéphane Steeman (1991).
15 On Tintin as colonial adventurer, see Halen (1993a) and Miller (2004).
16 Baru (2012a: 13); cf. Felici (2016: 38).
17 Cf. Halen (1993a, 1993b) and Miller (2004; 2007b: 59–60, 165–78).
18 Originally published in Baru (1995b: n.p.), it was republished in slightly modified form, as "Bonne année 2016," in *Noir* (2009b: 7–29).
19 Cf. McKinney (2015a) on similar resonances in Zeina Abirached's *Le jeu des hirondelles: Mourir, partir, revenir* (2007b), translated as *A Game for Swallows: To Die, To Leave, To Return* (2012). The Karaboudjan itself has intertextual resonances within the Hergé series: for example, with the probable slave-trading role of the ship La Licorne, captained by Haddock's ancestor who is the spitting image of his descendant (McKinney 2011c: 4–7).
20 On racism in the language of Hergé's comics, see Costantini (2011); on antisemitism in them, see Benoît-Jeannin (2001, 2007) and Frey (2008b).
21 When Kent's unnamed white friend tells him that he has no money, Kent replies "V'là c'que c'est de trop aller à l'école… T'as pas appris à te démerder!" [That's what happens when you go to school too much… You haven't learned how to get

ahead on your own!] (Baru 1995b: n.p.); the story suggests the deficiency of Kent's point of view; cf. Baru (1988: 2).

22 Baru republished slightly modified versions of "Bonne année!" (1995b) and *Bonne année* (1998) in *Noir* (2009b). A fifth version of the smokestack and "tooot" pastiche occurs in "Il cado," where the smokestack's Hergean origin is completely unrecognizable (Baru 2012a: 14); cf. Felici (2016: 38). The story ironizes on bourgeois French tourism in Italy. In her list of examples of Baru's serial pastiche, Isabelle Felici (2016: 38n33) mentions yet a sixth version, in *Sur la route encore*, published in 1997.

23 "Lucien" was published from 1979 (Béra, Denni and Melot 1996: 248), and "Quéquette blues" from 1983 (Baru 2001: 41).

24 Stanislas Smepka did the same in *Cours camarade!* (1988: 1).

25 See Miller (2005: 147) and Felici (2016: 32); Baru replaced the written reference to "Spirou" in *Bonne année* (Baru 1998: 27.2) with "gamin" [kid] in the version of his story republished in *Noir* (2009b: 57.2), from which comes Figure 4.8.

26 Thil and neighboring Villerupt are merged as "Thilrupt" in "Les années Spoutnik" (Baru 2009a: 128.4); cf. Felici (2016: 27).

27 Hergé (1987: 70–95), originally serialized 1 March–26 July 1927 according to Benoît Peeters (in Hergé 1987: 70); or instead 1 March–26 July 1928, in Van Opstal (1998: 128).

28 Baru (2001: 35) and Barbier (2001: 16).

# Chapter 5
# "Citadel culture" in French comics

## Introduction: citadel culture, now more than ever

In 1991 Marxist art critic Otto Karl Werckmeister published *Citadel Culture*, a study of late capitalist culture and society. The book's image of a citadel is a

> metaphor [...] to characterize the dominant artistic and intellectual culture of the democratic industrial societies during the years 1980–87, the time of their greatest economic success, a culture contrived to exhibit the conflicts of those societies in a form that keeps any judgment in abeyance. [...] The aesthetic projections of a general consciousness of tragic conflict which this culture provides contribute to the relief from political responsibility for the predicament of the disprivileged social segments within citadel society and the dependent populations outside. (1991: 4–15)

By contrast, Werckmeister asserts, the argumentative culture of the 1970s fostered politically engaged art that encouraged and participated in public debates over issues such as the Vietnam war and its aftermath. The German book version of *Citadel Culture* appeared in 1989, just four weeks before the Berlin wall was breached.[1] Therefore, it is not surprising that Werckmeister suggests in 1991 that the Cold War-era image on the front cover of his book, drawn by Enki Bilal, a widely-celebrated cartoonist, could be read as a sign that the historian's attempt at writing "instant cultural history" in an age of apparently instantaneous global revolutions was already obsolescent (Werckmeister 1991: 187–8). In the picture a raincoat-clad man sits atop the Berlin wall, while two jet-fighters cross the dark and stormy sky. Despite the fact that Bilal's drawing appeared to be an icon of a bygone era, and the apparent obsolescence of Werckmeister's study after the end of the Cold War, the critic maintained that the metaphor of citadel culture still had relevance in 1991, in a world even more militarized than ever and where "capitalism's expansion into the East will [probably] just integrate new territory into the citadel, reconfiguring intra muros, as one reviewer wrote, its external borders toward the Third World and its internal borders toward poverty" (210). Werckmeister's

insights are still relevant and true in France decades later, so I take them as a framework of analysis for several comics that portray France as divided along ethnic and class lines. In the first part of this chapter I revisit Werckmeister's analysis of Bilal's comics. In his second chapter, Werckmeister develops his theses about citadel culture and society through a close analysis of *La foire aux immortels* [*The Immortals' Business*] (1980) and *La femme piège* [*The Woman Trap*] (1986), two science-fiction comic books by Bilal, about a fascistic, post-nuclear world.[2] Bilal was born in 1951 in Belgrade, then the capital of a unified Yugoslavia, and arrived in France at the age of ten (Gaumer and Moliterni 1994: 68). In the second part of this chapter I focus on realist comic books, first and briefly on some by Baru (Hervé Barulea) already discussed from the perspective of pastiche in Chapter 4, before turning at more length to others by Jean-Christophe Chauzy. All of them portray France as increasingly balkanized along ethnic and class lines and under the racist influence of the Front national (FN). All of these comics are haunted by the figure of the citadel, which takes the form of a fortress-like city-state, a spaceship or a ghetto.

## Reading Werckmeister reading Bilal

Werckmeister detected a radical shift between the first two volumes of Bilal's Nikopol trilogy: "The tuning into the subjective introversion of citadel culture leads from political disillusionment to a sensibilization of personal relations" (1991: 65). He supported this observation of the change from *La foire aux immortels*, published in 1980, to *La femme piège*, first printed in 1986, with a quote from Bilal, about the cartoonist's disillusionment with "great political events" after 1980. Werckmeister did not bother looking for explanatory clues in the French context, concentrating instead on the global. True, this omission makes sense in a study that describes the global dimension of capitalist culture. Nonetheless, France plays a major role in shaping the new world order: for example, it is helping to create "fortress Europe," by participating in the Schengen agreement and other measures designed to seal Europe's borders against unwanted immigration from poorer countries located outside Europe. Within France itself, citadel culture is maintained through anti-democratic security measures, such as the Vigipirate plan. It has been deployed repeatedly to prevent terrorism, but also effectively controls illegal immigration and France's ethnic minorities and people of color, most of whom originated in France's (ex-)colonies. An examination of the French context, neglected by Werckmeister, can shed light on Bilal's comics, but also on the nature of citadel culture in its global dimensions.

Bilal's decision to portray a fictional dictatorial regime ruling over Paris in the year 2023 in *La foire aux immortels* is no doubt informed by his personal acquaintance with the effects of communist rule in Yugoslavia.[3] The comic also contains references to mid-twentieth-century fascism – for example, the book's fictional dictatorship is based

on Benito Mussolini's (Bilal 1995: 30–1), and the Parisian police is a "milice" [militia], like that of the pro-Nazi Vichy government (25). Yet individual characters and the general flavor of the book should also be interpreted within the French political context of its publication. At that point, Gaullists had been in power for twenty-two years, since 1958, when De Gaulle had returned to the head of government thanks to a colonial settler uprising and a threatened military coup, both designed to prevent the decolonization of Algeria. In 1980, President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing was increasingly seen as an autocratic figure, and he appears in the comic as Ministre de la coordination financière [Minister of Financial Coordination] (7–8).[4] The impending fascistic elections in Paris of 2023 may remind readers of the electoral context of 1980, when Giscard was running for president against Socialist Party (PS) candidate François Mitterrand. The success of Mitterrand the following year was foreshadowed by the conclusion to *La foire aux immortels*, where revolutionaries take control of citadel Paris and expel the dictatorial regime that had been in power.

The shift in focus seen by Werckmeister, from fascism in *La foire aux immortels* to the Third World in *La femme piège*, and from political activism to subjective concerns, may be correlated with the deflated hopes of many on the left in France, as the Socialist government took a right turn and initial elation over the left victory of 1981 evaporated. The Mitterrand government briefly attempted to modify France's capitalist structures and promote a range of multicultural initiatives, but failed to deliver on its promises of radical economic reform and quickly moderated its support of postcolonial minorities. However, Werckmeister's observation of an increased interest in ethnic minorities in the second volume (*La femme piège*), although substantially true, should not keep us from seeing coded references to colonial and ethnic minority issues in the earlier *La foire aux immortels* (Figure 5.1). Reactionary fears of the colonization of the French language by English are ridiculed through the language of beings relegated to the second zone of Paris, outside of the fascistic inner-city citadel, who use a bastardized idiom (Bilal 1995: 14): for example, "Il satanic product! Chiure du diable!!!" and "T'tention! Il milice's comin'!!!". This zone is inhabited by sick and mutated human beings, but also by extra-terrestrials (perhaps an allusion to postcolonial immigrants),[5] whereas only healthy white male humans – "la nouvelle race parisienne" [the new Parisian race] (31) – live within the inner-city walls and are ruled by the color-coded governor, Choublanc [White cabbage].[6] Homosexuality (25), the sequestering of women (29), and the use of "khôl" (7), a North African beauty product, impart connotations of oriental despotism to the regime.[7] The most apparent orientalist aspect of *La foire aux immortels* is Bilal's use of Egyptian gods, especially Horus, as characters.

By contrast, *La femme piège* shows cityscapes fought over by clearly recognizable ethnic minority groups, this time located outside of French space: African and Pakistani gangs wage a drug war against extraterrestrials in London, whereas the twentieth-century's Lebanese War between Maronite Christians and Shiite Muslims has

**Figure 5.1:** From Enki Bilal (1995) *La foire aux immortels*, in *La trilogie Nikopol: La foire aux immortels, La femme piège, Froid équateur*, Geneva: Les Humanoïdes Associés-Humano S.A., p. 15.1 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

been transferred to Berlin (Figure 5.2).[8] Werckmeister concluded his chapter on Bilal by commenting on this change in scenery and themes (1991: 69):[9]

> Between 1980 and 1986 Bilal's comics have indeed become more realistic. From a mythical overthrow of future fascism they have been dimmed to a projected intrusion of the Third into the First World. The individuals exposed to that hyperrealistic experience fall back from rebellion to reportage, from reportage to suffering, from suffering to oblivion, and from oblivion to introversion, to relaxation on the run.

Although substantially true, his observation is not completely accurate, to the extent that the 1980 volume, *La foire aux immortels*, was also "realistic," insofar as it articulated political tensions and aspirations of the late-Giscardian era. Moreover, the "intrusion of the Third into the First World" was already a matter of French public concern during colonial times (Gallissot 1990: 344). We have seen that this intrusion was a structuring element of the first volume, *La foire aux immortels*. Nonetheless, I readily agree with Werckmeister's basic point, that between the two books there is a discernible shift away from a bipolar political order to more-fragmented "racially polarized battle zones of drug syndicates and religious sects in London and Berlin" (Werckmeister 1991: 55). This may be seen as characteristic of a general transformation in collective representations of group conflict, which Yvon Le Bot (1997: 173) describes: "Notre fin de XXe siècle place les violences collectives sous le signe de questions culturelles, ethniques et religieuses, plus qu'elle ne les articule avec des thèmes de classes ou des formes de domination

politique" [Our end of the twentieth century puts collective violence under the sign of cultural, ethnic and religious questions, more than it articulates it with class themes or forms of political domination]. Class and political domination still exist, but the language of their expression has changed.

In *Froid équateur*, the final volume of the trilogy (published after Werckmeister's volume), Bilal greatly increased his use of postcolonial themes.[10] There the cartoonist transferred citadel culture from Europe into a sub-Saharan East African metropolis in the year 2034. Equateur-City is an urban fortress ruled over by KKDZO, a five-member, multicultural, international clique that defies the United Nations' authority and has transformed itself from a legitimate hub for distributing humanitarian aid to Africans into a renegade, mafia-like, city-state. Authority over the local population has been shored up with the help of an African spiritual leader who was integrated into the ruling group for that purpose (Bilal 1995: 136–7). The extension of citadel culture into Africa provides Bilal with an occasion to revisit and parody key Africanist myths, many of which figure prominently in the French and Belgian comic-book traditions. Chief among these is no doubt the voyage to the heart of Africa as an encounter with the irrational, which provokes a descent into madness, as well as the loss of language and memory (161–5). Bilal's cultural horizon here is certainly informed by Hergé's comic *Tintin au Congo* [*Tintin in the Congo*] (1973 [1931]), as well as the novels *Voyage au bout de la nuit* [*Journey to the End of the Night*] (1932), by Louis-Ferdinand Céline, and *Heart of Darkness*, by Joseph Conrad (1899; cf. Denis 1994).

There are undoubtedly also allusions here to post-1940s United States "imperialism-without-colonies," which – Anne McClintock argued, in a critique of the concept of

**Figure 5.2:** From Enki Bilal (1995) *La femme piège*, in *La trilogie Nikopol: La foire aux immortels, La femme piège, Froid équateur*, Geneva: Les Humanoïdes Associés-Humano S.A., p. 97.2 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

"postcolonialism" – is characterized by "greater sublety, innovation and variety" than previous, colonialist forms of imperialism (1992: 89). Because the textual evidence from Bilal is highly overdetermined, not least by its science-fiction genre, certain references stand out. For example, there is foreshadowing of the disastrous U.S. attempt to intervene in the Somali conflict, when Somali planes shoot down an air-taxi carrying John Elvis Elvisson (Bilal 1995: 132, 141), on his way to fight in Equateur-City. Elvisson exudes the cocksure arrogance of Elvis Presley, but also the boxing film character Rocky, and his combination chess-boxing championship match mixes allusions to Sylvester Stallone's boxing movies and a variety of other memorable competitions.[11] His predictable defeat is soon followed by the destruction of the KKDZO outlaw state, when the flying pyramid of the Egyptian gods is destabilized and falls, destroying skyscrapers in the citadel's center (171). The wounded but immortal gods walk away from the rubble, with falcon-headed Horus voicing the possibility that they might create and rule over a divinely inspired "new world order" (173), clearly a reference to U.S. attempts at global hegemony.[12]

Key elements of post-Cold War citadel culture come together in *Froid équateur* and are pursued in Bilal's next series, a tetralogy (1998, 2003, 2006, 2007). With the disappearance of the Soviet bloc, the Third World becomes the locus of new threats to Western domination of the globe. *Froid equateur*'s KKDZO represents the growing menace of technologically sophisticated renegade organizations sponsoring terrorism, often in the service of rabid nationalisms and religious neo-traditionalism (1995: 171). In *Le sommeil du monstre* [*The Dormant Beast*] (1998) and subsequent volumes, a similar role is played by the Obscurantis Order, an unholy alliance of neo-traditionalist Christians, Muslims and Jews connected to African mafias and hidden financial groups (1998: 26). Here too, Bilal's work has proven remarkably prescient, in light of the attacks of 11 September 2001 on American targets and of 2015 on French ones, including the cartoonists of *Charlie Hebdo*: "La Tribu des 'Eradicateurs' est constituée. Extension en Afrique et en Europe Méditerranéene du 'néo-talibanisme' pakistanais (sous-traitance, 'Vatican dissident'). […] Destruction méthodique des biens culturels et scientifiques dans tous les protectorats religieux contrôlés par l'Obscurantis Order. Implantation de puissants réseaux prosélytes en Europe néo-libérale et aux Etats-Unis" [The Tribe of "Eradicators" is constituted. Extension of Pakistani "neo-talibanism" into Africa and Mediterranean Europe (subcontracting, "dissident Vatican"). (…) Methodical destruction of scientific and cultural goods in all religious protectorates controlled by the Obscurantis Order. Implantation of powerful proselytizing networks in neoliberal Europe and the United States] (26). Here, as in recent history, a national landmark is hit (Figure 5.3): the Eiffel tower is partially destroyed by a laser shot from a satellite (42–3, 49). Immediately before that the Order also kills an astronaut in Hubble 4, a space-station.

The fact that a French cartoonist was so attuned, in 1998, to the extreme vulnerability of the technologically advanced nations to attacks from religious extremists,

**Figure 5.3:** From Enki Bilal (1998) *Le sommeil du monstre*, Geneva: Les Humanoïdes Associés-Humano S.A., p. 42.1-2 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

with networks implanted in Europe and the United States, is surely due in part to the string of bombings by a radical Muslim network in France in 1995. A similar realization among the inhabitants of the United States came with the attacks of 11 September 2001, to a far greater extent than the earlier bombing of the World Trade Center. This radical transformation of citadel culture differs significantly from its earlier form (well-described by Werckmeister), which leaders of the industrialized nations have reframed. Middle-class members of neoliberal Western democracies have to some extent come to live in constant fear and expect casualties among themselves, but also that an acceptable societal response is to consolidate power and control over the poor and discontented at home and abroad. Exacerbated patriotism is being mobilized to convince the privileged segments in neoliberal democracies that they should give up even more personal freedoms. They are invited to accept a renewed, post-Cold War funding of the military-industrial complex, and are discouraged from asking questions about the killing and pillaging on a world scale that support their heretofore privileged position.

## The *banlieue* in Baru’s comics

Werckmeister’s comments, quoted above, serve as a revealing counterpoint to the transformations found in comics by Baru, in which marginalized characters attempt to find “relaxation on the run,” though under increasingly unfavorable

conditions, as the "intrusion of the Third into the First World" gradually opens onto a fascistic state of the future. In Chauzy too, there is a clear connection between postcolonialism and fascism. However, his work differs from Baru's in its perspective: we will see that whereas Baru tries to show the point of view of those marginalized by citadel society, Chauzy depicts the citadel from a perspective of privilege, albeit knowingly and with self-irony. French *banlieues* are so often discussed today in negative terms that one may forget the way that they were seen when first built: "during the *Trente glorieuses* [thirty glorious years, circa 1945–75] these new urban margins were symbols of modernity [... and] a place of passage for the laborious classes moving upward in society"(Gaspard and Khosrokhavar 1995: 175). However, this was also the period when *bidonvilles* [shantytowns] housed working-class Third-World and European immigrants who shouldered much of the burden during France's "economic boom years." Kristin Ross (1995: 149) argues that France's social and political evolution during this timespan prepared the way for today's racialized organization of space: with the absorption of France's dangerous classes (the petite bourgeoisie and the working class) into an expanded middle class, and with the loss of the colonies: "national subjectivity takes the place of class: one is French or not, one is modern or not." "[T]he return to atavistic principles of racial identity and their attendant spatial logic of inclusion and exclusion" occurred progressively, as the French slowly realized that the loss of "their" colonies did not mean that the formerly-colonized would leave French soil. The stage was set for the colonization of the *banlieues* and for the authoritarian, neocolonial FN to begin making inroads in French politics.

The colonial nature of the fortress-like worlds depicted in the comics discussed here may be read in several dimensions: spatial and geographic perceptions, language, characters, and echoes of colonial wars. I will touch on all four of these aspects in my analysis, first of Baru's comics and then, in the following section, of Chauzy's. In *Cours camarade!* [Run Comrade!], the first of four comics published over a period of ten years that I examine here, Baru's protagonists Stanislas Smepka and Mohamet Boukhader, one of Polish and the other of Algerian immigrant background, flee racist pursuers determined to beat them up or worse (Baru 1988). Their flight takes them from the deindustrializing east of France to Marseille's port, where they appear set to board a ship for Algiers, after having faced down and bested their attackers. Eight years later, Baru published *L'autoroute du soleil* [Highway of the Sun] (1995a), a hefty, 430-page tome that considerably reworked his earlier, spare, 46-page narrative. Among the many significant differences is the fact that in the new version the pursuer, a local leader of the Elan National Français [French National Bound] (i.e., the FN), tracks his buddy duo, this time of Arab and Italian heritage (Karim Kemal and Alexandre Barbiéri), right down to the water's edge in Marseille (413–25). However, this time no freighter is in sight, and Kemal cannot even swim to save his life, though the police do arrive just in time. The message seems clear: he belongs in France. On their way to Marseille they briefly visit a *banlieue* in Lyon where they witness a fight between angry

young residents and the police after a Frenchman "a tué un p'tit Arabe avec un fusil à cause du bruit qu'il faisait avec sa mobylette" [killed a little Arab with a gun because of the noise he was making with his moped] (261; see Miller 2005: 145). The episode provides a transition between Baru's treatment of space in his manga and in a third, much shorter story also published in 1995, to which I now turn.

In "Bonne année!" [Happy New Year!] (Baru 1995b) the national space across which his characters travel has suddenly collapsed. We move forward in time to the close of the millenium, when Le Pen as Minister of the Interior has decided to reinforce the police forces that already surround certain *banlieues*. All that remains is an illusion of liberty: the space of flight has shrunk to ghetto proportions and Baru's Algerian boat has been replaced by a nightclub in the cruel guise of Haddock's drug-running and slave-carrying Karaboudjan from Hergé's colonial-era comics series (cf. Hergé 1981b: 13–14). The Maghrebi-French protagonist may enter the nightclub (cf. Begag and Delorme 1994: 60), but he cannot escape the *banlieue*'s confines.

In the subsequent *Bonne année* (1998), Baru again refashions and expands older material – the third narrative (Baru 1995b) – to create an even more claustrophobic environment: concrete bunkers, walls and guard-towers now permanently hem in the *banlieue*-ghetto on all sides. In his televised New Year's address to the French people, Le Pen, now president of France, announces that the guards may shoot *banlieue* inhabitants at will and that "les sujets d'origine afro-maghrébine" [the subjects of Afro-Maghrebi origin] caught outside of the ghetto will be immediately deported from France (Baru 1998: 35–7; cf. 20.3). The convergence between fascism and neocolonialism, their mutually reinforcing nature, is suggested by the image of Maréchal Philippe Pétain, head of the collaborationist Vichy regime during the Second World War, looming behind Le Pen on the TV screen, and by the reference to "les sujets d'origine afro-maghrébine" (36–7).[13] This resurrects and reworks the hierarchical colonial division between French citizen and colonized subject, and reinforces the spatial separation between the two, which had collapsed with the arrival of postcolonial ethnic minorities in the space of the French working-class *banlieues* (Silverman 1992: 144–5). Baru has returned us to the manichean separation of a colonial "monde coupé en deux" [world cut in two] described by Frantz Fanon (2002 [1961]: 41–3; 1968: 38–40) in *Les damnés de la terre* [*The Wretched of the Earth*], though with a twist, because working-class whites too live alongside postcolonial ethnic minorities, so a capitalist logic of exclusion is complemented and reinforced by a racist one. Baru (2009b: 5) explained that he reworked "Bonne année!" as *Bonne année*:

> in reaction to the explosion of the racist and xenophobic gangrene of the Front national of J.M. Le Pen in France. The 1990s saw the galloping contamination of French politics by the theses of the extreme right, which culminated in 2002 with the presence of Le Pen in the second round of the presidential election.

Among the few shards of hope that Baru allows into his version of citadel society is the heterosexual, homosocial bonding between Maghrebi-French and Euro-French youths that structures all four of his buddy stories. Another shard in *Bonne année* is the generosity of the police officer who allows Hocine and Julien, captured outside of the *banlieue*, to return there (Baru 1998: 72).

## Citadel culture, Paris and the *banlieues* in Chauzy's comics

Several comics by Jean-Christophe Chauzy came out during the 1980s with Futuropolis, the ground-breaking alternative comics publisher founded by Florence Cestac and Etienne Robial. During the 1990s, Chauzy published various comic books, created individually or with script writers, that centered on social transformations taking place in France, especially in the *banlieues*.[14] In this chapter I focus on two individually authored autofictional works by Chauzy: *Parano* [Paranoid], a collection of seven short stories published individually in *(A Suivre)* in 1993–4 and then together as a book by Casterman in 1995, and *Béton armé* [Armed Concrete], a sixty-three page story completed in 1995,[15] serialized in 1995–6 and published as an album in 1997. Like Chantal Montellier, Baru and others, Chauzy appears to have been influenced by Mœbius's "Cauchemar blanc" [White nightmare] (1974).[16] The two volumes by Chauzy often depict the paranoid dreams and daydreams of their shared protagonist. Indeed, *Béton armé* opens as the protagonist awakes from a dream, but then goes on to live a nighmarish experience throughout the ensuing hours, one that constructs his identity as class-based (*petite bourgeoise*), postcolonial (white) and gendered (male). As in Mœbius's short story, waking hours produce a "white nightmare" that is meant to be more nightmarish than the preceding dream. To show how these comics illustrate citadel culture in 1990s France and beyond, I shall look at them from three overlapping perspectives: physical-spatial, political-historical and autofictional.

For Werckmeister, Bilal gives physical form to citadel culture in his futuristic *La foire aux immortels* [*The Immortal's Business*] (1980), by reworking an ancient image and reality: the île de la Cité as the original island fortress from the beginnings of Paris. As Werckmeister explains, Bilal builds into it the military fortifications of the Second World War and the Cold War: concrete bunkers, guard towers, gun stations and so on, separating the center of a fascistic city-state, occupied by a masculine white elite, from a surrounding swath of the city in disrepair and teaming with a poverty-stricken, sickly mix of humans, extraterrestrials and mutants. In *Parano*, set in the present, Chauzy depicts a Parisian city center from which people of color have been almost completely excluded, mostly leaving white characters, such as Jean-Christophe Chauzy (hereafter Jean-Christophe), the cartoonist's alter ego who is a left-leaning, bourgeois bohemian antihero, and on the other hand, far-right louts who police the space (Figure 5.4).[17] The remaining people of color are subject to brutality from whites, including police officers.

They are either token minority figures tolerated because of their subaltern place in the economic order (e.g., an Arab greengrocer), or are on the verge of being expelled.

The short story “Blanc-bec” [Greenhorn; literally “White beak”] (1995: 35–45) dramatizes the xenophobic notion of a *seuil de tolérance* [threshold of tolerance] and plays out an irony-laden neocolonial confrontation between African and Frenchman within the confines of the citadel.[18] In the story, a complaint by Jean-Christophe about a loud party appears to spark a chain of events leading to a racist riot against, and the subsequent expulsion of, Black men originally from one or more former French colonies south of the Sahara and who live in a migrant workers’ hostel across from his apartment. On the title page, as Jean-Christophe gazes down at the Africans in their living quarters he has the paranoid colonialist fantasy of being cooked in a pot by Black cannibals ready to eat him (35; cf. 39). His decision to descend from his lofty perch and negotiate a reduction in the noise-level degenerates into a riot, when a white woman

**Figure 5.4:** From Jean-Christophe Chauzy (1995) *Parano*, Tournai: Casterman, front cover © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

arrives and begins striking the Africans and spouting racist invective. She is quickly joined by other white neighbors and then the police. When French riot police attack the defenseless workers, a fleeing African pitifully exclaims: "Seigneur, échapper à Bokassa pour assister à ça..." [Good Lord, to have escaped from Bokassa and have to be subjected to this...] (44). The conclusion perversely and satirically suggests a kind of ethnic purification along the lines of the "threshold of tolerance" notion: the African workers' hostel is replaced by offices, thereby guaranteeing a reduction in the level of racist violence in the neighborhood. In *Béton armé*, Chauzy reworks several elements from *Parano*, including the riot sequence (Figure 5.5). In the riots in "Blanc-bec" and *Béton armé*, ambivalent relationships between narrative sequentiality and causality, and between tepid historical or political allusions and hard concrete realities, produce a quandary typical of citadel culture, which is characterized by "self-critical ambivalence [...] which protects the plausibility of its exaggerations by bouncing them back and forth between critique and

**Figure 5.5:** From Jean-Christophe Chauzy (1997) *Béton armé: Un monde merveilleux*, Tournai: Casterman, front cover © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

self-critique" (Werckmeister 1991: 67), helping white cartoonist and readers to avoid taking a clearly-defined political position. An ever-present feature of Chauzy's comics analyzed here is his constant irony and self-critique: the author repeatedly demonstrates that Jean-Christophe's left-wing and Third-Worldist sympathies are a sham.

In *Béton armé*, Jean-Christophe travels from the Paris center to Bourre-sur-Yvette (1997: 7.6, 8.4, 11.1, 16.8, 56.8), a working-class *banlieue*, to celebrate the ten-year wedding anniversary of Phil and Julie, two white friends who live there. The cartoonist delineates the capital city center from its periphery through toponomy and topography. The suburb's name suggests a perversion of quaint country origins (cf. the real town of Bures-sur-Yvette, about 15 miles southwest of Paris). The contrast between bucolic names of neighborhoods (Cité [Housing Project] des Mimosas, Cité des Orties [of the Nettles] [11.2], Résidence Mimosas [38.1]), jeweled names of apartment complexes (Rubis [Ruby] [11.3], Résidence Cristal [Crystal] [12, 13.1]) and, on the other hand, their decrepit, postindustrial appearance and nature as slums is equally grotesque, although the reference to nettles foreshadows the protagonist's difficulties. Fourteen narrow horizontal strips over three pages (9–11), in which Jean-Christophe drives through the traffic congestion of Paris, including on the *périphérique* [ring road], to eventually complete isolation on the highway, suggest the relegation of the town, fifty kilometers distant from Paris (8.5), and a restricted passage out from the capital to it. As the protagonist disdainfully says before beginning his odyssey, Bourre is "à perpette" [in the sticks] and "la zone totale" [the complete boondocks] (8.5; cf. 29.3). The isolation of Bourre and its inhabitants becomes even clearer at the end of the story when Jean-Christophe, deprived of his car, finds it necessary to hitchhike back to Paris (64–7), because the communist (CGT) rail workers are on strike and no taxis are available in the early morning hours (61). When he first arrives in Bourre, Jean-Christophe gets lost in a garbage dump (11–12), a metaphor for the *banlieue* as a whole, and then discovers scenery that he describes as Sarajevo and West Beirut (13.3, 15.2): walls topped with barbed wire and surrounded by trash, and dirty, graffiti-covered high-rise apartment buildings in disrepair (13). Chauzy's depiction of the *banlieue* suggests the transformation of some French spaces into "marginalized territories made savage that escape the control of the Republic" (Blanchard and Bancel 1997: 108). The *banlieue*'s topography evokes both confinement within vertical spaces (Jean-Christophe almost faints in the elevator, which later breaks [Chauzy 1997: 15, 20]) and arid desolation at the ground level, through cluttered parking lots around housing complexes and littered vacant spaces between them (13, 22–5). One meaning of the album's punning title is "reinforced concrete," summing up the physical composition of the *banlieue*. Its appearance contrasts starkly with Jean-Christophe's more chic Parisian neighborhood, which features 19th-century, Hausmannian architecture, with its white stone façades.

Chauzy also represents the politics and history of the relationship between Paris and *banlieue* through language – both written texts and speech – and interactions

between characters. Surveying the distance before leaving his apartment, Jean-Christophe distinguishes between Bourre (again: “à perpette” and “la zone totale”) and “le paradis [qui] est à portée de main” [paradise within arm’s reach] in Paris (8). He cannot understand why Phil and Julie choose to live “chez les sauvages” [among the savages], a term that he repeats twice later (27.6, 29.2), although he otherwise avoids colonialist language, preferring terms such as “Maghrébin” [Maghrebi] (27.8). “Sauvages” nonetheless inscribes the Paris-*banlieue* relationship into a history of French class and colonial racisms, which, Etienne Balibar (in Balibar and Wallerstein 1991) has argued, are historically related. One convenient confirmation (among many others) of this colonialist racialization of the *banlieues* can be found in remarks by Jean-Pierre Chevènement, then French Interior Minister (1997–2000), about unruly “sauvageons,” that is, in Chevènement’s logic, the delinquent “little savages” from the *banlieues* who deserved locking up. Jean-Christophe’s friend Phil, a social worker, fits into a cast of characters who, when taken together, act out the drama of neocolonization in contemporary citadel culture:

> For what one could designate as the new colonial enclaves in the heart of the Republic are the object of a strategy of (re)colonization. The four figures of the conquest, the pivot of all colonial ideology and literature – the missionary, administrator, instructor and soldier –, may be found again, almost detail for detail, in representations, in the form of the social worker (or educator), the representative of the State (or the mayor), the teacher, the police officer (or the CRS in the case of a “crisis” or “pacification”). (Blanchard and Bancel 1997: 108)[19]

The Greek root of the name of Philippe or “Phil,” as he is nicknamed (Chauzy 1997: 18.3, 58.9), indicates his missionary-like role as one who befriends or loves *banlieue* youths. Chauzy satirizes Phil’s left-leaning, multicultural sympathies, including by having his wife leave him on their ten-year wedding anniversary to live with a sympathizer of the FN (18–19, 23, 63). She claims that he spends so much time with them that he has none for her. His efforts to stop rioting youths are ineffective and backfire, leading instead to his own (mistaken) arrest for participating in the looting (58–60).

Like Bilal’s characters in the Parisian periphery, *banlieue* dwellers as Chauzy draws them and Jean-Christophe sees them are deformed, contrasting with the bourgeois bohemian protagonist, usually drawn less grotesquely but nonetheless satirically. Several rites of passage establish a relationship between Jean-Christophe and the inhabitants of Bourre. The first occurs when he makes a wrong turn and stalls in the garbage dump, inhabited by people, perhaps Roma, who ask for money in exchange for directions, in a scene recalling Hergé’s *Les bijoux de la Castafiore* [*The Castafiore Emerald*] (1963: 1–4). Jean-Christophe’s snarling refusal to reciprocate augurs ill for the future. His next passing encounter, with a multiethnic group of youths at the bottom of a di-

lapidated apartment complex, will launch a sequence of thefts. After recognizing him as an outsider to their world by his license plate number (Chauzy 1997: 75), indicating his privileged, Parisian city-center origin (14.8), they steal his car (21–2) while he goes inside the building to find his friends. Subsequent rites of passage confirm his outsider status as he encounters other locals: two armed, racist whites—a shop owner defending his apartment (16) and a security guard policing the exterior (23; Figure 5.6). The guard sports a button of the FNJ (Front national de la jeunesse, the FN youth organization, renamed Génération Nation in 2018) and his dog is named “Jean-Marie” (cf. Le Pen). Jean-Christophe is later screened by two Black bouncers at a party in the Nelson Mandela youth center (26). This reveals the second meaning of the title: the inhabitants of the housing project, built of concrete, are armed. In this dangerous environment, Jean-Christophe’s inability to master the codes and rituals of the Parisian periphery leave him vulnerable: when he tracks down the thieves in the youth center, they also take his sports jacket, with his identity papers and money (32–4).

A third interpretation of the title becomes clear when Jean-Christophe confronts the thieves a second time to reclaim his possessions. His yelling wakens a middle-aged white man, who begins shooting out of his window, killing one of the youthful thieves, Slimane, who is choking Jean-Christophe into silence (Figure 5.7). The man yells rac-

**Figure 5.6:** From Jean-Christophe Chauzy (1997) *Béton armé: Un monde merveilleux*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 23.4–8 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

**Figure 5.7:** From Jean-Christophe Chauzy (1997) *Béton armé: Un monde merveilleux*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 35 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

ist insults and continues shooting from his fourth-floor apartment, wounding other youths and wrecking the stolen car, the violent act that Jean-Christophe finds most distressing. "Béton armé" therefore also means that the *banlieue* is an armed explosive device, a concrete bomb ready to explode at the slightest provocation. Even more clearly than in *Parano*, in *Béton armé* Jean-Christophe catalyzes a sequence of events that degenerates willy-nilly into an urban riot with racist, neocolonial overtones, although this time the color line is not so apparent and there is armed resistance: multiethnic groups of youths fight the police, which has happened in many *banlieues* across France, most spectacularly in 2005.

A brief comparison with Mathieu Kassovitz's film *La haine* [*Hate*], also released in 1995, helps clarify Chauzy's perspective, including his relationship to Jean-Christophe. Both Kassovitz's film and Chauzy's comics figure the tensions of citadel culture partly through a provocative relationship between creator and story that raises questions about the artist's position: Kassovitz plays the role of a racist white skinhead in the film he also directs, whereas Chauzy has Jean-Christophe temporarily join the rioters. However, Kassovitz's position is more clearly what Werckmeister calls argumentative, partly because *La haine* tries to promote understanding of, and empathy with, *banlieue* youths who riot, mainly by giving us insight into the daily life of his Arab-Black-white (Jewish) protagonist trio while they are not rioting. By contrast, both Chauzy's narrative presentation of his killer as understandably fed up with horrible living conditions, especially noise at night (1997: 40.1–3), and intertextual echoes between *Parano* and *Béton armé*, implicitly provide a partial alibi for the shooting. In both stories, Chauzy uses the window frame of his protagonist to satirize a petty bourgeois perspective on Paris as a visual paradise. It also serves as a *meurtrière* [arrowslit] in the citadel, through which excessive noise of others enters, sparking a violent encounter that turns into a riot. So there is a structural parallel between Jean-Christophe in "Blanc-bec" and the killer in *Béton armé* in their exasperation with excessive noise associated with postcolonial ethnic minorities within the urban or suburban citadel.

"Drowning the fish" [noyer le poisson] describes a technique that Chauzy uses repeatedly to wash out the historical origins and political basis of citadel culture in France, and to dilute responsibility for its violence and spread that around widely. He multiplies historical and political references, often in graffiti, that overdetermine the nature of the conflict and its origins. As we have already seen, there are allusions to devastation and violent interethnic conflict in Lebanon, South Africa and Yugoslavia, but also to the Algerian War (1954–62), the Algerian civil war (raging at the time), the French student uprising and worker strike of May 1968, and possibly the French Revolution, or just revolution in general. There are derogatory graffiti references in the *banlieue* to right-wing politicians then in power in France[20] and especially to the far right,[21] which is the critical focus of "Patriotes," another story in *Parano* (Chauzy 1995: 15–23), whose self-referential conclusion Chauzy reworks and adapts for *Béton armé*.

Similarly, it is impossible to determine responsibility in *Béton armé* for the riot itself. Is it Jean-Christophe, who was yelling, but legitimately protesting theft? The thief, who loses his life? The killer, whose nerves have been frayed by earlier incidents, but who embarks on a murderous shooting spree while using racist language – he calls the youths "bronzés" [coloreds]? The other white adult *banlieue* residents, who resemble the killer in legitimate complaints, but also racist attitude and readiness to use vigilante violence (e.g., Chauzy 1997: 48–9)?[22] The youths, some of whom use racist language too?[23] Their political aims are muddled at best, and they appear most interested in stealing. Or the police, portrayed as incompetent, insulting and lusting to beat up the protestors?[24] In *Béton armé*, all are responsible, so none are. However, perhaps the most striking technique for hiding the basis of citadel culture is Chauzy's satirical play on his alter ego's identity: when the police find Jean-Christophe's expired national identity card on the body of Slimane, they attribute his identity to the youth, both because Slimane's face was blown off by the killer, and Jean-Christophe no longer resembles his more youthful image. This identity transfer is prepared earlier, when a white adolescent girl, describing the thieves to Jean-Christophe, tells him that Slimane is "un grand con de bicot endoudouné un peu de votre gabarit" [a big jerk of an Arab esconced in a jacket who's about your size] (22.5). Like many other terms used by *banlieue* characters here, "bicot," a racist term, recalls French colonialism in Algeria and the Algerian War, but its off-the-cuff use here does not clearly trace a genealogy of present-day inequality and violence in citadel culture to their colonial origins.

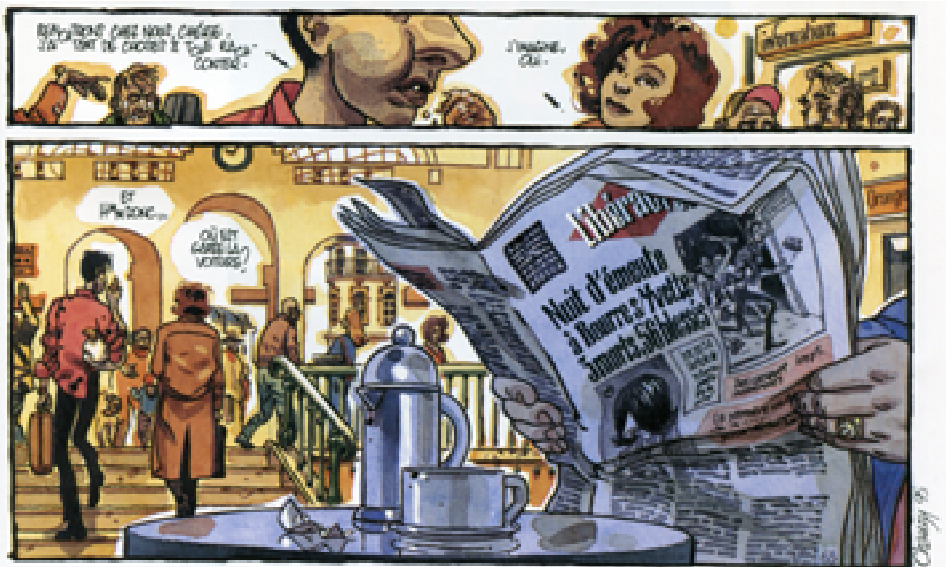


**Figure 5.8:** From Jean-Christophe Chauzy (1997) *Béton armé: Un monde merveilleux*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 69.5–6 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

Later, a photojournalist will photograph Jean-Christophe, adopted by the rioters as an inspirational figure, as he weakly throws a stone against a store window to launch a looting spree that he himself had inadvertently suggested. Although he only cracks the window, after which the youths employ their own, far more effective technique to break into the store, the photograph immortalizes Jean-Christophe as the leader of the riot. After he escapes from his journey to the end of night and arrives in the Gare de l'Est train station in time to meet his wife returning home from a trip, we see these two photographs on the front page of *Libération*, formerly a radical leftist newspaper co-founded by Jean-Paul Sartre and now somewhat left-leaning politically, but mostly hip in cultural terms (Figure 5.8). There they assign to Jean-Christophe the roles of both victim of white racist vigilante action and leader of the riot. The newspaper's title is of course ironic in this context: Jean-Christophe may feel liberated back in Paris proper after his night in the *banlieue*, but his troubles there may well pursue him into the future. Here, as often in French comics about colonial or postcolonial identity and alterity, the encounter between French self and (post)colonial others involves identity transfer and reversal (cf. McKinney 2011c: e.g., 75–8). This is a striking illustration of a recurring fear in postcolonial citadel culture: the possibility that one might become like one's colonial others, and they like oneself. And as often in comics by white French cartoonists, French colonial history and the cultural specificity of others are effaced.

They return in a depoliticized form in the last confrontation between Jean-Christophe and one of the youths who stole his belongings: Faridah, riding a scooter, catches up with him before he finally escapes from Bourre and tries to run him over to avenge Slimane, her boyfriend. Here one might remember a white girl's earlier description of Faridah as "une mauvaise petite Arabe en bomber noir" [a mean little Arab in a black flight jacket] (22.5). That description and Faridah's action – she becomes a kind of suicide bomber – recall aspects of the Algerian War (specifically, Algerian women planting terrorist bombs designed to kill and injure civilians), but also a murderous series of bombings in Paris and across France in 1995 that were carried out by a French branch of the Algerian Groupe Islamique Armé. However, Faridah's revenge is personal – she blames Jean-Christophe for Slimane's death – and she denigrates Jean-Christophe with language ("face de rat") that recalls terms used by racists against North African Arabs and Berbers, and associated with the Algerian War.[25] This perversely confirms Jean-Christophe's new identity as Slimane, or vice versa. As Jean-Christophe walks away unharmed, leaving Faridah dangling from the highway overpass above the burning wreckage of the scooter, he mutely watches army trucks drive back toward Bourre, again recalling a war, which might, or might not, be a distant echo of the Algerian War. In the Gare de l'Est, Jean-Christophe borrows money from his wife, buys an armful of croissants and begins stuffing his face. As Werckmeister (1991: 65) argues, with respect to *La femme piège* [*The Woman Trap*], in citadel culture, the relatively privileged retreat into the personal when they no longer wish to be reminded of their society's structural

violence against others. But as Chauzy suggests with a sadistic, satirical irony that permeates *Parano* and *Béton armé*, the violence of citadel culture still lurks, ready to return to haunt himself, his fictional double and his readers: the front cover of *Libération*, visible to us but not yet seen by Jean-Christophe, tells us that the travails of citadel culture are not over for him.

## Conclusion: citadel culture and its others

I return briefly to two distinctions made by Werckmeister. First, the opposition he drew between "a mythical overthrow of future fascism" and "a projected intrusion of the Third into the First World" seems to hold neither in Bilal's Nikopol trilogy (whose third volume was published the year after Werckmeister's book was printed in its second, English edition), nor in the comics of Chauzy. In their work, fascism and the Third Worlding of France go hand in hand. The second distinction is between the citadel culture of the 1980s and the argumentative culture of the 1970s, whose artistic works were characterized by "[t]he unequivocal suggestiveness of their historical subject matter and the clear chronological progression of their narrative" (Werckmeister 1991: 12). Chauzy's work is clearly an example of the ambivalences of citadel culture, whereas Baru's comics – with their more sharply defined political positions – fit Werckmeister's definition of argumentative culture.

## Notes

1 The German version was first published during 1986–7 as a series of magazine articles.
2 Other chapters give readings of works drawn from popular and high cultures of the 1980s, including the music of Kraftwerk, and paintings by Francis Bacon.
3 Bilal lived in Belgrade until he was ten, when he and his mother joined his father in exile in Paris (*Sapristi!* 1994; Marie and Ollivier 2013: 102).
4 Giscard was finance minister under presidents Charles de Gaulle, from 1962 to 1966, and Georges Pompidou, from 1969 to 1974. Choublanc could perhaps be seen as partially modeled after De Gaulle, in his desire for immortality (Bilal 1995: 16, 46). See also the attempt on Choublanc's life by a General (24–5, 32–5), just as the OAS and its renegade military men tried to assassinate De Gaulle. There is also a possible parody of cartoonist Alain Saint-Ogan, as J. R. Phormholtz, Ministre à la jeunesse et à la propagande (38; cf. the photo of Saint-Ogan in *Zig et Puce: En route pour l'Amérique*, Saint-Ogan 1995a: 45). Saint-Ogan was "the cartoonist whose services were most often used by the Ministry of Information" of the Vichy government, according to Assouline (1998: 257); for specific artistic projects by Saint-Ogan for Vichy, see Saint-Ogan (1942), and the afterword to *Zig et Puce en Ethiopie* (Saint-Ogan 1999); see also Delporte (1993).

5 As in the film *Brother From Another Planet* (John Sayles 1984).
6 "Faire chou blanc" means "faire un coup nul," or to miss one's mark.
7 Homosexuality is often associated with European harem fantasies (see Grosrichard 1979).
8 The theme of the *libanisation* of Europe recurs in Chauzy's *Béton armé* (1997: 15.2), analyzed below, and is a recurring motif in French political discourse on and resistance to multiculturalism; see below, Chapter 6.
9 This passage sounds a bit like a premonitory lament (in 1986–7) for the devaluation of Marxist critique, increasingly replaced by more or less watered-down versions of multiculturalism, much more palatable to a range of capitalist institutions increasingly dependent on the integration of multiethnic and multinational labor forces; on this, see Dirlik (1998) for example.
10 In Bilal (1995: 122–76), first published in 1992. *Froid équateur* appeared the year after Werckmeister had published *Citadel Culture* in English translation, so he was obviously unable to include it in his study.
11 There are also suggestions of "the rumble in the jungle" match between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman, in Kinshasa, Zaire, in 1974, and of the Garry Kasparov chess championships (Bilal 1995: 142).
12 Here again, a line of continuity could be traced from Bilal back to Hergé and Céline. Benoît Denis (1994: 80) has convincingly argued that the Belgian cartoonist's *Tintin au Congo* and *Tintin en Amérique* share an ideological viewpoint with the French novelist's *Voyage au bout de la nuit*: "From scepticism in the face of the [European] colonial enterprise to a feeling of attraction/repulsion toward the American model, a certain vision of the world and of the place of Europe is worked out, characterized by an obsession about the Old World receding."
13 In *Noir* (Baru 2009b), Baru made a few significant changes to these stories: "Bonne année!", retitled "Bonne année 2016," now features Nicolas Sarkozy as President in place of Le Pen as Minister of the Interior (9–11); and in *Bonne année*, retitled "Bonne année 2047," the image of Pétain has disappeared from behind President Le Pen (66–7). He explains the changes in his preface. *Noir* was published during the presidential mandate of Sarkozy (2007–12). For Baru "the flies have simply changed asses," because Sarkozy "is nonetheless the barely mitigated descendant of J.-M. Le Pen" (6).
14 Examples of Chauzy's co-created work include Chauzy and Jonquet (2001, 2003a, 2003b). I discuss the first briefly in McKinney (2004a: 117–18).
15 According to the author's date on the final plate of the story (p. 69).
16 See above, Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4.
17 The author stated that half of the stories in *Parano* are autobiographical in origin (Chauzy 2001: 63).
18 See above, pp. 67, 93n27.

19 Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité (CRS) are national police units charged with maintaining and restoring public order that are typically called upon to quell riots.

20 "Mafia RPR" (9.6), "Chirac Revient [:] Résistez" (13.5), "Debré Chibré" (33.8), "Debré Pauv' type" (44.2).

21 For example, the FNJ button of the security guard. There is anti-FN graffiti on the MJC Nelson Mandela: Front Nazi (26.5), Ras L'Front (32.5).

22 The white adult civilians in the *banlieue* use the following colonial and racial language: bamboulas [Blacks] (25.4), bicots [Arabs] (60.6), blanc [white] (16.6), bronzés [coloreds] (35), macaques [monkeys] (48); on this language, see especially Quinsat (1991), Siblot (1991), Liauzu (1997), Goudaillier (2001) and Treps (2005).

23 *Banlieue* youths use the following colonial and racial language: basané [colored] (28), bicot [Arab] (22.5), sale petit nègre [dirty little Negro] (14.8), nique ta race [screw your race] (39.6), sale race [dirty race] (41.6, 43.7), face de rat [rat face] (64.3). See also fissa [pronto] (54.5), whose colonial origins in French are pertinent here. See the lexicological studies listed in note 22, above.

24 Police officers, including CRS, use the following colonial and racial language in *Béton armé*: vermines [vermin] (41.1), sales rats [dirty rats] (41.6), racaille [scum] (44.6, 54.6, 59.2), ratisser ce nid de vipères [rake out this viper's nest] (55.1); see also méchoui [barbecue] (40.1), whose colonial origins in French are pertinent here. See the lexicological studies listed in note 22, above.

25 On these and related terms, see above, pp. 141–2n19.

# Chapter 6
# Comics from the far right through the 1990s

## Introduction: colonialism and after in far-right comics

As many comics scholars have shown, before 1962, French-language European comics, especially in Belgium and France, often enthusiastically celebrated imperialism and colonialism, mainly through adventure stories set in the colonies. They were about exploring untamed wilderness, manly conquest of belligerent indigenous peoples, defeating Arab and Black African slave traders, claiming colonial loot sometimes represented as the rightful inheritance of the colonial adventurer, and civilizing savage peoples, often converting them to Christianity.[1] Anticolonial struggle and the transition away from formal colonial rule after the Second World War – including during the Indochinese War (1946–54) and the Algerian War (1954–62) – produced an important watershed moment for European cartooning and comics. Cartoonists continued to defend empire during decolonization, including sometimes by directly or indirectly representing the wars of independence as they happened.[2] Although the French far right was not always pro-colonial throughout modern history, generally speaking it strongly committed itself to defending French empire during decolonization, as historian Raoul Girardet (1995) has argued (he was active on the far right during the Algerian War). In my introductory chapter to this volume, I noted that Todd Shepard (2006) has shown how decolonization was invented in important ways by French administrators and others during and after the Algerian War. Historians including Benjamin Stora (1999) and Shepard (2009, 2012) have also studied major transformations of the French far right after Algerian independence in 1962. At the end of the war, Dominique Venner (1935–2013), together with Coral (Jacques de Larocque-Latour) and others, invented a new French colonial perspective on immigration to France.[3] It involved no longer representing Algerians just, or mainly, as vicious enemy combatants in France and Algeria during the Algerian War (notably in comics, in Coral's *Journal d'un embastillé* [1962]). After formal decolonization, they began creating vicious, caricatural representations in articles and cartoons in *Europe Action* that defamed Algerians and migrants from other former French colonies as dangerous inhabitants within mainland France.

Since then, several other cartoonists have contributed related comics and cartoons to various far-right publications, an activity that is still happening today.

However, before exploring further the neocolonial dimensions of far-right French comics, I need to provide some important context by recalling part of comics history that is too little known and still inadequately understood. Zvonimir Novak (2011) has argued that far-right iconography ranging from comic strips and cartoons to electoral posters and political banners has a long history in France, with common themes and recurring imagery. I begin this chapter by emphasizing that there is an established tradition of far-right cartooning and comics in France – and in Belgium too, although I discuss France's northern neighbor only briefly. I then describe publication and distribution networks for far-right comics, and why that imagery is often difficult for those outside of far-right circles to find. I discuss obstacles to full and frank expression of far-right ideology in cartooning, and take note of how cartoonists deal with those impediments. I then start to sketch out a history of far-right cartooning, beginning with the Dreyfus Affair, then skipping ahead to the Second World War. During each of those historical crises, cartoonists published far-right cartoons and comics that historians, comics scholars and media specialists have studied: for example, Christian Delporte, Pascal Ory and Clare Tufts have shed light on far-right cartooning in France during the Second World War. Maxime Benoît-Jeannin, Hugo Frey and Benoît Mouchart have examined related far-right cartooning by Belgian friends and collaborators Hergé and Jacques Van Melkebeke during the same period. Similar far-right cartoons and comics were published in subsequent times of crisis, notably during and right after major French wars of decolonization, as Jean-François Douvry, Alain Guillemin and I have shown. I trace a history of far-right cartooning from the 1970s through the 1990s across emblematic works such as the "rats noirs" [black rats] comics that Jack Marchal (1946–) drew for the far-right student organization Groupe Union Droit [Group Union Law] (GUD).[4] Historians including Nicolas Lebourg, a specialist of the French far right, have pointed to the success of "black rats" comics and cartoon imagery in popularizing far-right violence both in France and abroad. I then analyze an antisemitic science-fiction story titled *Avant-guerre* [Pre-War] (1985), scripted by Guillaume Faye (1949–2019), one of the main ideologues for the Nouvelle Droite [New Right], a far-right movement in France, and someone who has been influential on ethnonationalist, identitarian and white supremacist movements elsewhere, including the United States (François 2019). I also discuss a comic-strip biography of Jean-Marie Le Pen, who was then president of the Front national [National Front] (FN), now named the Rassemblement national (RN). Neocolonial, anti-immigrant perspectives have been key to the politics of the FN/RN since its foundation. Finally, I spend most of the second half of this chapter on *Douce France* [Sweet France], a neo-Nazi comic book by Sergueï that is violently neocolonial, antisemitic, anti-Arab and anti-immigrant. I begin by discussing a monograph on comics history that was illustrated by Sergueï and written by Didier Lefort, himself a member of the far-right.

## A tradition of far-right, racist cartooning in France

In 1991 the French comics journal *Bédésup* published a book-length study of *Les B.D. de "l'extrême droite"* [Comics of the "Far Right"] by Lefort. Sergueï drew its cover image: two black rats, armed with guns and one holding a rope noose, stand with their backs to a burning cross. Both wear white tunics with "KKK" and a Celtic cross on either side of the chest. One also wears a white hood. That this is a mutual endorsement by Sergueï and Lefort of their common beliefs is suggested by the fact that the cartoonist also drew a colonialist comic strip reproduced on one of the book's opening pages. It is set in a French military outpost at "Quan Tri" (no doubt Quang Tri) in Vietnam during the French Indochinese war and promotes Lefort's book: a mail shipment dropped by a military airplane includes a copy of Lefort's book, described by a soldier character to readers as an example of "healthy and virile readings." Lefort, Jean-Claude Faur and Alain Sanders (Alain Potier) were members of the editorial committee of *Bédésup*, which Faur also directed. All were aligned with the political far right in France.[5] The quotation marks around "Far Right" in Lefort's title are indicative of this, because adherents to that general current of politics often refer to it in other terms, such as "la droite nationale" [the National Right]. In his volume, Lefort grounds his analysis, which focuses mainly on comics and cartooning since 1945, by returning to what he calls "[a] great French tradition" of far-right cartooning in Western Europe. It is in fact a violent, racist, colonialist and politically extremist tradition in comics, which continues today. As his chapter title suggests, Lefort celebrates it.

Even though my perspective is diametrically opposed to that of Lefort with respect to the political and human value of comics in the far-right comics tradition that he reconstructs, I agree that the tradition exists, for four reasons. First, comics expressive of far-right ideologies have been produced and distributed from at least the late nineteenth century to the present by cartoonists, publishers and political organizations associated with the far right. Second, cartoonists have inscribed their comics within that tradition, by reproducing its tropes and by explicitly referring to preceding far-right cartoonists and comics. Third, this production's continuity has been recognized by some readers and critics, including Lefort himself. Aspects of it have been studied by established comics historians, critics and biographers.[6] My analysis is indebted to all of them, as I indicate throughout this chapter. A fourth factor is an awareness among cartoonists and comics critics on the far right about postcolonial and left-leaning cartoonists and critics who oppose their ideology and politics. An early chapter of Lefort's book provides an example of this. Titled "The Far Right 'seen from the left'" (1991: 15–20), it critiques the comics and cartoons of Farid Boudjellal, Plantu (Jean Plantureux) and several *Charlie Hebdo* cartoonists (Cabu [Jean Cabut], Siné [Maurice Sinet], Willem [Bernhard Willem Holtrop] and Georges Wolinski) for being critical of the far right. The French far right has historically included various and sometimes competing ide-

ologies, political views, organizations and strategies. In recent decades, ideologies and attitudes on the far right run from traditionalist Catholicism to neo-paganism, and from monarchism to neo-Nazism. Cartoonists have positively articulated these, and many other, positions typical of the far right. For various reasons, including censorship by the government, by cartoonists themselves or by their publishers, as well as political marginality and the traditionally low cultural status of comics, it is often challenging to identify far-right cartooning and locate comics on the far right. Some cartoonists change their political positions to some extent and in some ways, as they move into or out of far-right circles. Changes in political regimes or sociocultural mores have sometimes marginalized far-right cartooning across time, or instead moved it more into the mainstream.

Readers, including comics scholars, have ignored or downplayed political ideology in comics and its importance there. They have sometimes done so in recent years because of a felt need to defend cartoonists and their comics that are deemed important to the artistic evolution and the cultural legitimacy of the form. Sometimes they lack independence, because they depend on comics publishers and other institutions for access to original source material and permission to republish it. Hergé and his comics are a prime, but by no means the only, example of this today, both in his native Belgium and in France. It is therefore not true, as Dominique Petitfaux has tried to argue (in Delcroix 1998), that all the "great authors of comics" that the far right has tried to claim as its own were not in fact from the far right, for example Hergé, claimed by Lefort for the far right in *Les B.D. de "l'extrême droite"* (Petitfaux specifically points to *Bédésup*, which published Lefort's study). It is in part *because* comics scholars such as Petitfaux habitually sidestep the thorny questions of how and to what degree the cartoonists whom they study have staked out far-right and colonialist positions in their comics, that locating and analyzing those issues in comics is important. It allows us to have a more accurate vision of politics in and around comics, both historically and today. Novak (2011: 161) argues, correctly, that "comics and press cartoons were and remain essential tools in the diffusion of the ideas of the extreme right."

Through a range of techniques and strategies, the far right has made a spectacular return to politics in recent decades. In France, that transformation has been traced back to key individuals, including ideologue Alain de Benoist, and politicians Jean-Marie Le Pen, Marine Le Pen and Marion Maréchal, organizations such as the FN/RN, and moments, including the founding of the FN in 1972, or its break into national politics in the early 1980s. Since at least the 1990s, the French far right has adopted a conscious and effective strategy of pushing its political agenda through Gramscian tactics of working towards cultural hegemony, as conceptualized by de Benoist and others.[7] Authoring and publishing far-right comics and illustrated children's novels in prose has been part of that effort, to which cartoonists have contributed (Bédarida 1996; Delcroix 1998). Editions du Triomphe have commissioned new comics celebrating Catholic saints and

French military imperialism, and republished older comics deemed compatible with far-right values.[8] Other publishers, including Le Taupinambour, have republished comics deemed classic (such as those of Vica [Vincent Krassousky]), but appear primarily driven by various forms of nostalgia instead of any clear or coherent far-right agenda. Mainstream publishers also republish out-of-print comics to capitalize on a nostalgia market among older readers.

Distribution of far-right comics and cartoon anthologies has often followed alternative routes, outside of the mainstream. A few far-right bookstores are scattered around France. Two in Paris have closed: L'Æncre, renamed La Librairie nationale, and La Licorne bleue. L'Æncre was notorious for publishing and disseminating antisemitic and negationist books, and was occasionally the object of physical attacks because of its far-right extremism. In the last few decades, online commerce and social media have immensely helped the far right to spread its hate-filled wares, as we shall see in Chapter 7. In the course of my research on this and related topics over the past decades, I visited several sites to collect and consult research material. In addition to mainstream bookstores and comics specialty shops, they include La Librarie nationale, La Licorne bleue and La Librairie France Livres, since renamed Librairie Notre-Dame-de-France, a bookstore associated with the Catholic traditionalist movement founded by Marcel Lefebvre. For example, at La Licorne bleue I finally obtained a copy of *Douce France* (Sergueï, n.d.), a far- right comic book that I had hunted for years, after reading about it in Lefort's study (I discuss it at length below). In this chapter I sketch out a brief history of far-right cartooning in France, especially its neocolonial dimensions, from 1962 through the 1990s. I have chosen to focus on works published outside of mainstream comics that are often hard to obtain. They express far-right ideology in revealing ways that highlight key moments of far-right history in postcolonial France. I will draw attention to continuities across far-right comics since 1962, as well as key differences and transformations, including a surprising postcolonial development in the early decades of the twenty-first century. On the other hand, this chapter and the next are by no means an attempt at a comprehensive history of far-right cartoonists and comics, even only in the post-1962 period. That topic in itself would require a substantial volume and would need to engage at length with several cartoonists who have had considerable success in mainstream comics: Hergé, of course, but also Dimitri (Guy Mouminoux), or Serge de Beketch (see below).[9] Let us begin this short history by returning to the Dreyfus Affair.

Emmanuel Poirier (1858–1909), who published under the pseudonym Caran d'Ache, is a key figure in the far-right cartooning tradition. His comic art has been celebrated by Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly, who republished his wordless comic art in *Raw* magazine (in Spiegelman and Mouly 1987: 38), by Thierry Groensteen, who edited Caran d'Ache's unfinished *Maestro* as "the first graphic novel" (Caran d'Ache 1999; cf. Steinlen et al. 1998), and by Thierry Smolderen, who helped republish *Carnet de chèques* (Caran

d'Ache 1893).[10] Caran d'Ache's comics are certainly interesting in formal terms, as those comics scholars propose, but Jean-Luc Jarnier (2008) argues that the cartoonist helped prepare the terrain for the Dreyfus Affair with *Carnet de chèques*, "which denounces the speculation of the financial milieux and saddles Jews with the weight of the responsibility for the ills from which the country is suffering. They appear as the dominant figures of corruption and bribery" in the comic book. Caran d'Ache subsequently founded the anti-Dreyfusard and antisemitic journal *Pssst!*, which ran from 5 February 1898 to 16 September 1899. It was also illustrated by Jean-Louis Forain, "another great name in drawing" (Novak 2011: 159).

French artist Alain Saint-Ogan (1895–1974) and Belgian cartoonist Hergé, who was heavily inspired by Saint-Ogan (Groensteen 1996b), have both likewise been celebrated by a diverse array of critics and by French and Belgian national comics institutions as foundational figures. For Lefort (1991: 27), Hergé occupies a prominent place in the tradition, as demonstrated by all his Tintin albums: "his fundamental, original and constant right-wing tendency [... was clear] from *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* all the way to *Tintin and the Picaros*." Comics scholars highly critical of far-right cartooning have demonstrated that both Saint-Ogan and Hergé did indeed publish comics, cartoons and book illustrations that were colonialist, antisemitic and an integral part of a far-right tradition of comics and cartooning in France and Belgium.[11] Hergé wore his far-right politics on his sleeve until the end of the Second World War, when he was repeatedly arrested and interrogated about his collaborationist activities with Nazis and their allies in Belgium.[12] Lefort (27) singles out *L'étoile mystérieuse* [*The Shooting Star*] as "naturally" one of several albums – including the colonialist *Tintin au Congo* [*Tintin in the Congo*] (1931) – that Hergé later "ascepticized" (Lefort's term) to avoid more problems from what Lefort calls "the bitter leftists." *L'étoile mystérieuse* was serialized from 20 October 1941 through 22 May 1942 in the Brussels daily newspaper *Le Soir* (called "volé" [stolen] because it was under Nazi control) and then published in September 1942 in book form by Casterman, a conservative Catholic publisher (Van Opstal 1998: 130). It was most basically an antisemitic, anti-American and pro-Axis conspiracy theory in comic-strip form in those wartime versions, as Maxime Benoît-Jeannin (2001, 2007) argues. The original book version was republished in facsimile as recently as 2005, with still no contextualizing material. Benoît-Jeannin (2001, 2007) convincingly demonstrates that Hergé's collaborationist and antisemitic cartooning during the war extended significantly beyond *L'étoile mystérieuse*, despite Hergé's postwar claims that he was not antisemitic and that he bore no real responsibility for the Nazis' actions, including their genocidal deportation of Jews from Belgium to the death camps.[13]

Comics similar in ideology to *L'étoile mystérieuse* were published in France during the same period. In *Tricolores: Une histoire visuelle de la droite et de l'extrême droite* [Tricolors: A Visual History of the Right and the Extreme Right] (2011), Novak helps contextualize the far-right comics that are the subject of this chapter and the next. For exam-

ple, in a section on "Neo-fascists, neo-Nazis and other ultras" (162–3), he discusses the comics, cartoons and illustrations of Russian cartoonist Vica, who was active in France from the 1930s through the Second World War.[14] It is no surprise that Lefort (1991: 34–8) recuperates Vica for the "great French tradition" of far-right cartooning. Today Vica is remembered for his colonialist drawings for Banania breakfast food, but also for three pro-Nazi, antisemitic comic books published in France during the Second World War, for which he was tried, convicted and jailed after the war, and which were republished in 2011 by comics publisher Le Taupinambour.[15]

After the Second World War it became dangerous for far-right cartoonists to express their views openly in comics and caricature. Hergé was included on a wanted poster of traitors and collaborators by members of the Belgian resistance to the Nazis and, as already noted, arrested for his collaborationist war-time cartooning.[16] Some of his friends and fellow Belgian cartoonists experienced even more difficulty at the time and subsequently.[17] However, most Belgian and French cartoonists, including Saint-Ogan, who produced collaborationist and pro-Vichy comics and other propaganda, escaped prosecution after the war.[18] As Lefort (1991: 27–33) points out, Hergé subsequently avoided open expressions of antisemitism and other far-right beliefs in his new comics, and carefully eliminated some of the most salient manifestations of colonialist and far-right ideology from his earlier ones, when he and his studio artists prepared them for republication.[19] Most of the individuals and institutions involved in the publication and study of Hergé's comics have either largely avoided discussing their far-right ideology or have downplayed it. The same goes for other well-known cartoonists with similar perspectives, including Saint-Ogan. The postwar repression and marginalization of far-right activists, mainstream rejection of far-right beliefs, and passage of antiracist laws, have led to other strategies by cartoonists on the far right, in addition to cleaning up past publications. For example, Frey (2008b) has shown that Hergé inserted far-right and antisemitic elements into his comics as late as 1968, in the album *Vol 714 pour Sydney* [*Flight 714*] (2000b [1968]), but in ways that are encoded, more difficult to detect or easier to explain away. Despite damning far-right imagery and ideology in his Tintin comics throughout the series, Hergé is often considered to have moved from far right to mainstream comics.

On the other hand, at least two far-right cartoonists were active in mainstream comics after the Second World War and later moved on to specialized far-right publications. De Beketch (1946–2007) worked for several years as a scriptwriter for many cartoonists publishing in *Pilote* magazine, then directed by René Goscinny, who was of Jewish immigrant background and lost family members in the Shoah.[20] The artists with whom de Beketch worked included Jacques Tardi (1946–), Enki Bilal (1951–) and Claire Bretécher (1940–2020), all of whom may be considered left-leaning and some of the most celebrated contemporary cartoonists. With Loro [Jean-Marc Laureau] (1943–98), de Beketch published a science-fiction and heroic-fantasy comic strip "Thorkaël"

in *Pilote*. It was subsequently published in book form (Loro and De Beketch 1977, 1982). After leaving *Pilote*, de Beketch was very active on the far right, for example, becoming chief editor of the periodicals *Minute* and *National Hebdo* [National Weekly] (an organ of the FN), and broadcasting at the far-right radio station Radio Courtoisie (Novak 2011: 160–1). Loro too moved on to work for *Minute* (1987–98) and *National Hebdo* (1990), as an editorial cartoonist (Solo 2004: 517). As Frey (2010) has shown, another comic published in a mainstream comics periodical, *(A Suivre)*, is antisemitic: "Léopold Micheteau, détective" (1981), drawn by Benoît Sokal and scripted by A.D.G. (Alain Fournier) for a special crime issue. Unsurprisingly, Lefort (1991: 15–20) celebrates this very comic strip. Laws have been passed in France criminalizing the expression of racist views, and the denial of the reality of the Shoah, which has led far-right cartoonists generally to avoid expressing their extremist views in ways liable to expose them to legal action. Euphemism and indirection provide opportunities for legally plausible denial of racist or negationist intent or meaning, as Frey (2008b, 2010) has argued. Despite this, far-right cartoonists, publishers and their comics have occasionally been the object of legal prosecution for racism in their comics (I mention some examples below and in Chapter 7). Other strategies to avoid prosecution have included using pseudonyms, and alternative networks of comics publication, sales and distribution: independent publishers and bookstores, serialization in publications available by subscription, and distribution at far-right events, and by mail order. Instead of concentrating on far-right comics by cartoonists in mainstream periodicals and with established comics publishers, this chapter and the next focus primarily on the bottom-most tip of the far-right comics iceberg, that is to say the most clearly committed and violent portion. I am especially interested in their neocolonial, anti-immigrant and xenophobic aspects. I turn first to some comic strips from the 1970s that were republished in a 2007 anthology. Among them is the most emblematic far-right comic strip of the 1970s.

## French far-right comics and cartoons from the 1970s through the 1990s

*Casque à cornes et manches de pioche* [Helmet with Horns and Pickax Handles], a volume from Auda Isarn (Marchal, Rémi and Dioclétien 2007), a far-right publisher based in Toulouse and associated with the magazine *Réfléchir et agir* [Reflect and Act], anthologizes comics by far-right cartoonists.[21] Its title highlights two themes that figure prominently there and in other far-right comics: neo-Celtic nativism ("helmet with horns"), which is a form of white nationalism on the far right, and the celebration of physical violence ("pickax handles"). Three strips from the 1970s that are reprinted in the anthology often recount fights between left-wing and far-right characters: "Les rats maudits" [The cursed rats] by Jack Marchal, published from 1973 in *Alternatives*, about law students and other members of GUD, and two strips by Rémi, "La bande à Balder" [Balder's Band], published 1976–9 in *Balder*, and "Le Ramolli" [The softened]

(drawn 1977–9), another comic strip depicting far-right militants as rats (the title suggests a pun, "Le rat mollit" [The rat softens]).[22]

Historically, some of the best-known, militant, far-right strips during the last quarter of the twentieth century were probably Marchal's "Les rats maudits." Nicolas Lebourg (2010), an historian who studies the far right, draws on a published interview with Marchal to describe the impetus behind the French far right's self-representation as rodents: "The 'iron bars, Celtic cross and provocative humor' style becomes a central element in the self-representation of the GUD (founded in 1969), symbolized by an emblem born in late 1970 and quickly become a legend, the bellicose black rat."[23] Several sources suggest that Marchal's choice was inspired at least in part by a famous children's comic strip, which he viewed as expressing a profound socio-political outlook: Raymond Macherot's "Chlorophylle," a series in the funny animal genre that features a dormouse as the title character.[24] It was first published in the Belgian version of *Tintin* magazine in 1953 (Macherot 2012: 2). Its second episode, *Chlorophylle contre les rats noirs* [Chlorophylle against the Black Rats], was a thirty-two-page story published in the Belgian *Tintin* magazine in 1954, and in the French version of the periodical in 1955–6. Anthracite, the violent king of a band of black rats, first appears in the story when he and his subjects invade the territory of Chlorophylle and his friends, who must organize to defend themselves. Lebourg (2010), quoting from the interview with Marchal, states that far-right militant, ideologue and historian François Duprat gave rodent nicknames to various far-right activists, including "Anthracite" to Alain Robert, a far-right leader involved with some of the most notorious and physically violent radical-right organizations of the 1960s and 1970s.[25] According to Lebourg, Marchal drew a comic strip featuring his black rat character almost daily on "le panneau" [the sign] of the GUD office on the rue d'Assas law school campus of the University of Paris, "with an undeniable talent and ravaging humor that would never be equaled by his successors."

The first plate of "Les rats maudits: La triste et affligeante histoire du GUD, feuilleton en 18 rounds" [The cursed rats: the sad and afflicting history of GUD, serial publication in 18 rounds], originally published in 1973 in the magazine *Alternative* and republished in *Casque à cornes et manches de pioche* (Marchal, Rémi and Dioclétien 2007: 5–21), represents the origin of the black rats as a cartoon drawn by a long-haired leftist on a blackboard, when Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's character the Little Prince (le petit Prince) asks him to draw him "une sale bête" [a dirty animal] (7). The leftist complies by drawing a rat holding a metal pipe, which he describes to the boy: "La plus immonde bête, c'est… … la **vermine fasciste!**" [The most revolting beast, it's… … the **fascist vermin!**] (original emphasis). In the second plate (8), the rat comes alive, tells the Little Prince that the belly of the horrific beast is still fertile, hits the leftist on his head with the pipe, and invites the Little Prince to join him. The Little Prince declines, saying he is more "A.F.", no doubt for "Action française" [French Action], the far-right movement founded at the end of the nineteenth century, during the Dreyfus affair. Lefort suggests

that the kind of reversal at work here, a "classic procedure of the semantic inversion of words and values" is how "[t]he rat [...] was imposed on the nationalists" (1991: 142, 143 note 1). In other words, Lefort argues that far-right extremists reclaimed in an ironic mode the negative imagery used against them by their adversaries.[26] This is related to the *rétorsion* strategy used by the far right and described by Pierre-André Taguieff (1984: 131; see Chapters 1 and 2, above). Marchal (2000) has described this recuperation and reversal of vermin imagery in similar terms:

> The fact that we immediately identified with the animal is obviously connected to the fact that in the preceding period our leftist friends had represented us in that manner. A poster pasted onto the palissades of the southern neighborhoods of Paris in December 1969 had marked us a lot. It proclaimed "Let's squash the fascist vermin," and was decorated with a large shoe sole that was in fact about to squash a hideous rodent inspired by Reiser. From that point, doing a judo trick by exploiting for our benefit the blows of the adversary was in the logic of Situationnist *détournement* [diversion], very much in the spirit of the times.

Marchal's references to Jean-Marc Reiser, a cartoonist for *Charlie Hebdo*, and to the Situationnists indicate a far-right borrowing or imitation of far-left media tactics such as *détournement*, or as Marchal says, a "judo trick." Gregory Pons (1977: 20) states that *Alternative*, the journal in which Marchal published his "Rats maudits" comics, "wanted to be a sort of *Charlie Hebdo*, but monthly and on the far right." Of course the rhetorical twist by which the far right represents itself as a black or cursed rat, fictionally recounted in Marchal's comic strip just described, is replete with unsettling connotations. The far-right rats are extremely violent throughout the strips, but by having the leftist draw the rat with a pipe weapon, Marchal suggests that the far right's violence is a creation of the far left. In point of fact, both GUD and far-left groups that opposed it engaged in brutal fights with each other. The rat image is also highly disturbing because of its historical echoes with nazism. Nazi imagery represented Jews as vermin, as mice and rats. The anti-fascist poster mentioned by Marchal is reproduced in a published history, by far-right authors, of far-right student organizing that also includes far-right posters clearly based on and responding to it through visual pastiche.[27] The representation of the far right as a rat in the leftist poster flips Nazi imagery. The subsequent recuperation of the rat image by the far right implicitly puts the far right in the position of Jewish victims of nazism. On the other hand, Marchal's rats are violent, predatory, libidinous creatures who engage in epic battles with leftists, from which they emerge victorious, and have sex with far-right females, represented as white rats. Novak (2011: 164, 166) insightfully comments on the far right's adoption of the black rat, which is a far cry from much other traditional far-right imagery that he analyzes:

> The self-derisiveness here is unheard of, since it entails taking for oneself a negative representation invented by the leftist adversary from May 1968, that of a hated and hideous animal.
>
> This reversal of meaning is certainly not anodine and reveals a change in status. The image of the authoritarian little rodent translates both the desire to represent oneself as subversive and introduces on the right a new propaganda tool, the politically incorrect. It also expresses a feeling of marginality. The rat is aggressive and intelligent, but obliged to hide away in the depths. He is not entitled to the light. It is no longer a question of projecting oneself in the outdated image of a heroic, feudal knight, nor that of a kind scout ready to serve, but in an aggressive symbolism closer to social decomposition than the normative order. The nationalist has lost his luster, he has become a paria of the democratic order like the anarchist or the communist were in yesteryear. And it is in the rat that he recognizes himself! The international success of the black rat is the other surprise.

Gaulish warriors and feudal knights, historically central to far-right imagery in comics and elsewhere, continue to feature prominently there.[28] However, self-representation as abject and preyed upon, and the manipulation of political incorrectness are by now powerful weapons of the far right in multiple countries. The black or cursed rat image and its ethos not only served as an effective recruiting tool in France, but were also adopted by far-right groups in Italy, Belgium, Spain and beyond.[29] In the remaining plates published in *Casque à cornes et manches de pioche*, the rats move into the Assas campus building and gradually take it over, by both beating up leftists, which they enjoy, and subversively using the democratic election process, which they despise.[30] There is little in the reprinted pages of "Les rats maudits" that might refer to migration or postcolonial issues, except two references in one panel, to a "bidonville" [shantytown] and "Maspéro" [sic], in a caricature of left-wingers' jargon (Marchal, Rémi and Dioclétien 2007: 9).[31] Nonetheless, even the post-1962, far-right comics by Marchal and Rémi, which do not represent formerly colonized ethnic minorities and immigrant groups, still participate in a neocolonial reconstruction of French identity. *Alternative*, the GUD periodical in which Marchal published "Les rats maudits," published various racist material attacking immigrants, including, in comic-strip form in a 1975 issue, "the particularly vulgar story of the rape of a leftist woman militant by a group of immigrants [that …] ends, with the classical ironic tone of the periodical, through a disculpation of perpetrators: 'It's not their fault, you know'" (Bérubé-Sasseville 2015: 51–2). The journal included antisemitic material and a great many Celtic crosses, also found on GUD imagery by Marchal.

Along those lines, it is worth noting that Marchal has had a long career in the far right since his GUD period, including as guitarist for various far-right rock groups, notably Elendil, named after the character in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* saga

(Collectif 2004: 47). The influence of that fantasy saga is visible in the pseudonym of another far-right cartoonist and singer, Aude Bertrand, also known as "Aragorn," who moved into other areas of reactionary activism as a lawyer, after having denounced the very basis of French parliamentary democracy, in the song "Leur république" [Their republic] on Elendil's album "Chants de colza" [Canola Songs].[32] The titles of a comic strip by Dioclétien titled "Auda, princesse wisigothe" [Auda, Visigoth princess] and of the book in which it was reprinted, *Casque à cornes et manches de pioche*, suggest the related Celtic nationalist mythology prevalent on the French far right.[33] The strip was originally published beginning in 2000, first in "la revue occitaniste *Montségur*" [the Occitanian journal *Montségur*] and then in *Réfléchir et agir*, according to the volume's anonymous editor (Marchal, Rémi and Dioclétien 2007: 59). The strip and periodical *Montségur* suggest returning to a suitable, distant "European" past – Occitania and the Occitans, much like Gaul and the Celts – to ground the construction of a reactionary, far-right French identity in the present (cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1989). Episodes of "Auda, princesse wisigothe" denigrate Muslims (Marchal, Rémi and Dioclétien 2007: 71-2, 74–5, 78, 85–6, 91–3), youths of color living in French *banlieues* (76–7, 80, 89, 91), undocumented migrants (84) and various other Black characters (83, 86, 88–9, 92). This includes constant physical violence in which the "white" Gothic protagonists beat up or kill the "invaders," colonialist representation of Blacks' speech as pidgin French (88), and racist insults at a soccer game (89). It is militantly pagan, with repeated attacks of various sorts on Catholics (61–3, 66, 69, 84). Antisemitism (e.g., 67, 77) and homophobia (62.7) constitute two other typical far-right aspects of the strip. Two panels contain examples of ironic far-right recuperation through pastiche, and twisting, of attempts to promote tolerance: the antiracist slogan "Touche pas à mon pote" [Hands off my buddy] of S.O.S. Racisme reworked as "Touche pas à mon Goth" [Hands off my Goth] (63.8), and the book title *L'immigration: Une chance pour la France* [Immigration: An Opportunity for France] (1984; by center-right politician Bernard Stasi) as "Les Goths, une chance pour les Francs!" [The Goths, an opportunity for the Franks!] (76.8). "Auda, princesse wisigothe" is one of the most poorly and most recently drawn of the far-right strips anthologized in *Casque à cornes et manches de pioche* (the same applies to Dioclétien's other strips reproduced there). It is clearly based on a comic-strip masterpiece, the "Astérix and Obélix" series by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo, which used a similar anachronistic transposition of contemporary French society to the Gallo-Roman period (Stoll 1978): for example, Dioclétien's strip includes a pastiche of Astérix (Marchal, Rémi and Dioclétien 2007: 93.8), and of the final banquet scene in every Astérix album (86.9), as well as allusions to specific scenes or dialogue from the original comic strip (e.g., 70.6, 76.5). A similar pastiche was printed on a commemorative postcard for the 1993 Bleu Blanc Rouge [Blue White Red] festival of the FN, modeled on the French Communist Party's Fête de l'Humanité [Festival of Humanity], which I obtained at a far-right bookstore in Paris. On it, Jean-Marie Le Pen is drawn as Obélix, no doubt because

his supporters reportedly referred to him as "Le menhir" [The Menhir] in reference to his Breton heritage, and because Obélix and his friend Astérix fight to defend their Gaulish village against Roman invaders.[34] This far-right borrowing is ironic, given the Jewish and immigrant backgrounds of Goscinny and Uderzo. On the other hand, the contemporary celebration of a Celtic identity can have roots and expressions that are not necessarily positioned against postcolonial ethnic minorities. Indeed, the retrieval of a Celtic identity in Breton comics can instead be left-leaning and critical of the dominant, ethnic-majority French culture, as in the comic book *Bran Ruz*, by Claude Auclair and Alain Deschamps (1981).[35] Auclair subsequently drew *Le sang des flamboyants*, which contains a strong critique of slavery and colonialism in Martinique (Auclair and Migeat 1985).[36] However, the post-1962 reconstruction of Celtic identity by the far right is partly an attempt to articulate a supposedly true French identity distinct from others that would be less so: a somehow pure, white, Celtic French identity against postcolonial ethnic minority or culturally mixed ones.[37]

Celtic references may be more prevalent within the far right's neo-pagan current than among its traditionalist Catholic segment.[38] *Avant-guerre* [Pre-War] (1985), an album containing a more lengthy single story, mixes Celtic mythology with celebratory references to Nazism. It was drawn by E. and J.-M. Simon, and scripted by Guillaume Faye, a prominent far-right ideologue. Faye graduated from one of the most prestigious French institutions of higher learning, the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, commonly referred to as Sciences Po. He published many essays, and from 1970 to 1986 was a key member of the Groupement de Recherche et d'Etudes pour la Civilisation Européenne [Group of Research and Studies for European Civilization] (GRECE), a far-right think tank for which Alain de Benoist also served as a theoretician (François 2019: 91). In the late 1980s Faye left politics for work in the media, including running a program for the Skyrock radio station, and "claim[ed] to have acted in pornographic films" (93).[39] In the mid-1980s Faye thought that France should ally itself "with Arab regimes [... and] defended the idea of taking action against 'Zionist lobbies' in the US that wished to influence the global geopolitics that supported the state of Israel" (95). After returning to politics in the late 1990s, he "reversed his position [... by] support[ing] Israel and the US against the Arab and Muslim world" (96). The comic book clearly aligns with Faye's first, antisemitic perspective.

The futuristic, erotic tale in *Avant-guerre* is set primarily in a decadent Western Europe whose capital, Cosmopolis, is ruled by characters drawn to look like various prominent French figures, including Jewish ones, especially politician Simone Veil, with singer Serge Gainsbourg also making a brief appearance (42). This rearticulates the familiar antisemitic theme of a decaying, multicultural cosmopolitan society led to ruin by a pusillanimous elite that notably includes Jews and homosexuals. Elements such as the title and the striped clothing of the fictional double of Veil (34–5) – herself a survivor of the Nazi death camps, where members of her family died – inevitably con-

jure up the Second World War and events leading up to it. This is typical of the "vision crépusculaire du monde" [twilight vision of the world] of the far right.[40] Political scientist Stéphane François (2019: 95–6) describes Faye's belief that "non-European immigrants" should be expelled "to their civilizational area" outside of Europe, his rejection of multiculturalism, and his promotion of ethnonationalism and racialism.

By the end of *Avant-guerre*, Cosmopolis has been destroyed by Aryan-like extraterrestrials, including a vamp figure named Albertine, and Holrick, a male figure whose name necessarily recalls the arch villain, Olrik, of Edgar P. Jacobs' "Blake and Mortimer," itself a colonialist and reactionary series, although generally viewed as a comics masterpiece.[41] This rehabilitation of the evil protagonist of a classic comics series recalls the far right's likely adoption of the black rat from Macherot's "Chlorophylle" series. According to François (2019: 95), in Faye's neo-pagan thought, "sexual freedom facilitates the acceptance of an authoritarian regime." This is clearly at work in *Avant-guerre*. At the end of the album, the extraterrestrials, including Holrick, who destroyed Cosmopolis are rewarded by the "Présideur" with imperial decorations and Californian slaves who participate in orgiac activity with them (Faye, Simon and Simon 1985: 47–8). The next target of the extraterrestrials will be the United States (48), and China may follow (47).

The far-right theme of a white savior rising up to end the decay of Western society is also reworked, in a realist mode, in a biography of Jean-Marie Le Pen. In collaboration with Bédésup Diffusion, the Editions nationales, part of the FN, published the album *Français passionnément: La vie de Jean-Marie Le Pen en bande dessinée* [Passionately French: The Life of Jean-Marie Le Pen in Comics] (Frank, Lefort and Bariller: 1995b). Drawn by Frank Marest and scripted by Lefort and Damien Bariller, it was also published as a special issue of *La lettre de Jean-Marie Le Pen* [The Letter of Jean-Marie Le Pen] (1995a). The hardback album (1995b) includes a preface by Bruno Mégret and an interview of Le Pen by Bariller. Unsurprisingly, it glosses over key episodes in Le Pen's biography. For example, it ignores persistent allegations that Le Pen tortured prisoners during the Algerian War (16–18),[42] and the fact that SERP, his record company, sold and distributed Nazi and other far-right songs (18).[43] It represents his negationist statements about the Nazi death camps on 13 September 1987, on the radio show "Le Grand Jury RTL-*Le Monde*," as a media trap meant to sabotage his presidential campaign (31), statements for which he was tried and found guilty by the courts.[44]

If many far-right comics are mostly read by far-right activists because of limited distribution, the latter is often less of a problem for far-right cartoons. Some French cartoonists who are far-right militants publish editorial cartoons in its periodicals, of which some are sold at general newstands around the country: especially *Minute*, *National Hebdo*, *Présent* and *Rivarol*. These cartoons therefore have a much wider distribution than most far-right comics, even by the same artists. Editorial cartoonists of far-right periodicals include Pierre Pinatel (1929–), Chard (Françoise Pichard; 1941–), Konk

(Laurent Fabre; 1944–) and David Miège (1968–).[45] The first three have worked the longest for the far-right press, each having drawn for many years in various publications, including Pinatel and Konk at both *Minute* and *National Hebdo*, and Chard at *Présent* (since its foundation in 1982) and *Rivarol* (since 1967).[46] Miège, who earned degrees from the Fine Arts schools of Aix-en-Provence and Versailles, publishes cartoons in several far-right publications, especially traditionalist and militant Catholic ones, including *Présent*, *Les 4 Vérités Hebdo* [The Few Home Truths Weekly], *L'homme nouveau* [The New Man] and *Légitimiste* [Legitimist] (Solo 2004: 569). His books include *Blanc comme Miège* [White Like Miège] (2001), whose punning title has racist overtones (cf. the expression "blanc comme neige" [white like snow]). Several books by these cartoonists include prefaces and similar endorsements by other prominent figures on the far right.[47] Some books and drawings by far-right cartoonists and their publishers have brought them trials and other legal sanctions, for example, *Profanation* (1996 [1992]), by Chard (see also Chapter 7). Konk's *Aux voleurs!* (1995, 1999) includes negationist, or Holocaust-denial, cartoons. Moreover, L'Æncre published editions of both *Aux voleurs!* and Chard's *Profanation*. Some of these cartoonists have also illustrated far-right books written by others: for example, Chard illustrated several volumes in the "Clan des Bordesoule" series of mystery novels for children authored by Francis Bergeron and Sanders, including *Le secret du grand-père disparu* [The Secret of the Missing Grandfather] (1991), a colonialist novel about the Algerian War and its aftermath. Chard was eventually named "gérante et directrice de la publication" [manager and director of the publication] for *Présent*, which was in severe financial trouble by 2018 (*Correspondance de la presse* 2018).

The remainder of this chapter analyzes a significant series of comics and cartoons and their context. The rise of the French far right in the 1980s and early 1990s was accompanied by cartooning that produced a comic book, Sergueï's *Douce France* [Sweet France] (n.d.), that is equal in anti-immigrant representational violence and hatred to Coral's anti-African comics and cartoons from two decades earlier. *Douce France* engages with the widespread French public recognition in the 1980s of ethnic minority populations, and especially youths, originally from former French colonies and now living in France.

## Reconquering sweet France

Pierre-André Taguieff (1993: 14) has argued that during the 1970s and 1980s, French far-right ideologues such as de Benoist and politicians such as Jean-Marie Le Pen formulated what he calls a "racisme différentialiste et culturel" [cultural and differentialist racism]. He notes that GRECE, founded in 1968, which theorized this new form of racism, inherited from its influential predecessor, *Europe Action*, "a synthesis of aryanist racism and eugenicism, which was called 'biological realism' at the time." Taguieff reports that in 1965 de Benoist published an article expounding this racist

perspective in *Europe Action*. That was the journal of Coral and Venner, where Coral published his racist, anti-immigrant cartoon discussed in Chapter 1 of this volume. Ralph Schor (1996a), in a study comparing the racism and rejection of immigrants in France in the 1930s and the 1980s, analyzes the positions of Le Pen and other leaders of the FN by examining their rhetoric to determine whether it was racist, and if so, how. He (253–4) notes, for example, that Le Pen claims not to be racist, and that, in a speech in 1988, he "returns the accusation against his adversaries": "One could say that it is we who are treated today like the Jews were in Germany. Will the cosmopolitan mafia take things so far as to make us wear the tricolor star?" (254). Schor (254–6) also points out ways in which the discourse of Le Pen does, in fact, resemble racist language of the 1930s, for example, by: collectively stigmatizing prominent Jews, including politicians and journalists; rejecting immigrants, sometimes in very negative, animalistic terms; and classifying groups of people into different and unequally gifted races. Schor also highlights a significant difference in racist discourse, also noted by others (e.g., Stora 1992: 286): the substitution of North Africans for Jews as the ethnic or cultural group most stigmatized by the far right, in this case the FN, in contemporary France. Schor (1996a: 256) also notes "[t]he relative moderation of the Front national" in regards to racist discourse, compared to the discourse of some smaller, more radical groups on the far right. For example, he cites the Parti nationaliste français et européen [European, French and Nationalist Party] (PNFE), a neo-Nazi, skinhead organization whose slogan was "France d'abord! Blanche toujours!" [France first! White forever!].[48] Schor quotes the conclusion of a speech of Claude Cornilleau,[49] head of the PNFE, at the close of the party's congress in 1991, as reported in *Le Monde* (Biffaud 1991):

> May nothing turn you away from the only goal worth living and fighting for: the triumph of racial nationalism in France, the total victory of our cause and our race! Down with democracy! Down with multiracial society! Long live white and European nationalism! Long live the white race!

There was a clear link between such racist speech and hate crimes. Members and ex-members of PNFE were associated with bombings and attempted bombings of immigrant workers in France. One bomb wounded four people on 9 May 1988, and another killed one person and wounded eleven or twelve others on 19 December 1988.[50] Jean-Claude Gros, a former member of PNFE who was convicted in 1992 for beating up a North African man (Magne 1997), led others in defiling Jewish tombs in the Carpentras cemetery on 8–9 May 1990, which led to national public outcry against the FN and, more generally, the far right.[51] *Tribune nationaliste* [Nationalist Tribune], the party organ of the PNFE, began publication in 1985, the year that the group splintered off from the Parti nationaliste français. The periodical was subject to legal sanction in 1991, through an "interdiction de vente d'une revue aux mineurs, d'exposition et de toute publicité"

[ban on selling a periodical to minors, displaying it and all forms of publicity].[52] The judgment was rendered because of "the racist and antisemitic character of the magazine […] and the place it devotes to discrimination and racial hatred." The ban was printed in the *Journal officiel de la république française* (JORF), the official governmental journal of record, and reproduced in *Tribune nationaliste*.[53] Other PNFE iconography, on stickers and posters, is clearly racist and white supremacist (Novak 2011: 122, 134, 151).

*Douce France* is a comic book partially serialized in *Tribune nationaliste* and celebrated by Lefort (1991: 199–205). Twenty-five and one-third pages of cartoons and comics, out of thirty-seven total in the comic book (i.e., sixty-eight percent), were published in the periodical between October 1988 (no. 32) and April-May 1991 (no. 50), two issues before the periodical ceased publication.[54] As Lefort (201) notes, one must not confuse Sergueï, its author, with the editorial cartoonist by the same name at *Le Monde*. Lefort gives a few biographical details about Sergueï – such as that he was born in Paris in 1959 – but, unsurprisingly, not his real name. He describes Sergueï's political itinerary, beginning in the "J.C.," that is, the Jeunesses Communistes, the Communist Party's youth group, and moving to the far right, including membership in GUD and the FN. Lefort (201, 203) states that *Douce France* was serialized in *Tribune nationaliste* before book publication, with an initial print run of 2,000 book copies. He (203) claims that the publisher's exhortation to readers to copy the book's pages and distribute them as widely as possible led to thousands of photocopies being disseminated across France (cf. Sergueï n.d.: 2).

During the Algerian War and after, the men who helped publish the comics and cartoons of Coral and Sergueï shared similar goals and the violent means to achieve them. Cornilleau, a parachutist in the French army, acted as a representative for prominent members of the far right, the Sidos brothers, in Algiers during the war.[55] The Sidos brothers also created Jeune Nation, of which Venner was a member. As noted in Chapter 1 of this volume, Venner founded the Editions Saint-Just, which published Coral's comic books, including *Journal d'un embastillé* [Journal of A Prisoner of the Bastille] (1962) and *Journal d'un suspect* [Journal of a Suspect] (1964). Like them, *Douce France* is an incendiary work. It targets increasingly visible ethnic minorities from former French colonies living in France during the 1980s. It also champions the FN and Jean-Marie Le Pen, then its president, whose influence was growing. The expression "douce France" is already present in the epic poem *La chanson de Roland* [The Song of Roland] from the Middle Ages. Sergueï titled his comic book *Douce France* with explicit reference to the famous eponymous song that Charles Trenet created in 1943, but may also have had *La chanson de Roland* in mind, specifically the military conflict that it recounts between Charlemagne's Christian troops and Muslim Saracens. The cover illustration of Sergueï's book overlays the title on a musical annotation. The typed preface to the volume also quotes the first two lines from the refrain of Trenet's song: "Douce France, cher pays de mon enfance" [Sweet France, dear land of my childhood] (2). The author then

asks: "Pour qui? Et pour combien de temps?" [For whom? And for how long?]. The book's front and back covers implicitly ask and answer the same question visually, through a message told in part by its colors. Black and bright yellow have two strong connotations in the context of the 1980s: they recall both the yellow star of David patches that the Nazis required Jews to wear on their clothes during the Second World War, and the badges of S.O.S. Racisme, the antiracist organization founded in 1984 and whose vice-president was Julien Dray, a French Jew born in Oran, Algeria, and presided over by Harlem Désir, whose father was from Martinique. The antiracist yellow badges, shaped like a hand, bore the inscription "Touche pas à mon pote" [Hands off my buddy].[56] The implicit allusion to S.O.S. Racisme, and other elements on the cover, suggest that Sergueï refers to Trenet's song, but also to the cover version recorded in 1986 by Carte de Séjour, the French-Arab rock group from Lyon, whose lead singer was Rachid Taha (Lefort 1991: 201; Hanus 2015). The central figures on the cover form a handsome young couple composed of a blonde-haired white woman and a Black man holding hands and looking out toward readers. The woman wears the badge of S.O.S. Racisme.[57] The man, arguably modeled on Harlem Désir, wears a Hawaiian surfer shirt, a Western belt with a ranger buckle, and three badges affixed to what may be an American military-surplus bomber jacket: an American flag, a badge in the shape of a saxophone and a third one advertising Coca-Cola. Behind them stands a wall covered with graffiti, posters and stickers, which together refer to significant social trends, organizations and activities from the 1980s: communist organizing against racism and apartheid in South Africa and against the authoritarian Turkish regime, gay sexual liberation, and election campaigns in France. Some graffiti is in Arabic script and some in French. There are political slogans but also stylized signatures that may imitate American graffiti models. The trash strewn on the ground notably includes fast-food wrappers from McDonald's.[58] One of the most striking visual elements is the wooden baton or bat that the man holds, tucked under his left arm: the phallic symbolism of the stick is obvious, and helps draw our attention to the partially visible buttons of the man's pants fly. Three other, extradiegetic inscriptions on the front cover provide clues for interpreting the entire image, including the stick. In a white band across the yellow background are, on the left, the words "Point de mire" [Crosshair], whose "o" is drawn to look like the aligned crosshairs of a gun, and on the left, the cartoonist's name, Sergueï, drawn in letters that recall runic inscriptions. Its initial letter, "S," unmistakably recalls the runic-style lettering of the Nazi "SS."[59] The name of the publisher, Editions de la Résistance [Resistance Publishers], is inscribed in capitals, in Roman type, on a white border stretching across the bottom. The remaining information necessary for interpreting the scene on the front cover is found on the back cover. There one sees a round, white, spotlight comic-strip frame on an otherwise all-yellow background, whose sparse detail contrasts with the clutter of the front cover. It frames five elements: two rope nooses hang down above the bat or baton, now broken in two and lying in what must be a

puddle of blood, and the cartoonist's runic initial, topped with a dot recalling the "i" at the end of his name.

The meaning of the front and back covers now becomes obvious and profoundly disturbing. Together these images constitute a story by recounting two moments of a single event: the front depicts a moment preceding, and the back represents a moment after, an attack that is both suggested and elided. Sergueï's racially mixed couple has obviously been lynched by white supremacists, who view themselves as resisting the invasion and pollution of France and French culture by several related antagonists, including Blacks, Turks, Arabs and Americans. Foreign, non-French populations import a cosmopolitan cultural mix of the worst in the world, from a white supremacist French perspective. American culture is a major component of this, as the American flag patch or badge on the jacket suggests. The Black man's surfer T-shirt could suggest a contemporary colonization of France similar to that of Hawaii, reversing the colonial trope, as in Coral's drawings for *Europe Action* and in far-right discourse: "Aloha" suggests an indigenous welcome that is taken advantage of by colonial invaders. The Coca-Cola badge implicitly recalls both grotesque colonial advertising associating colonized Blacks with imported, often dark-colored, food products such as cocoa and coffee,[60] and, more explicitly, the contemporary transformation of the French landscape, both culinary and literal, by American transnational companies, also symbolized by the trash from McDonalds. The saxophone badge suggests an influence of African Americans on music, including jazz and pop, in France. This cosmopolitan mix implicitly threatens to produce a cultural ethnocide in France and thereby justifies a responding, cleansing violence that eliminates cultural and racial decadence and pollution. The most hated, threatening symbol of this transformation is the racially mixed, Black-and-white couple. The act of supposedly patriotic resistance eliminates the couple and restores "sweet France" to its rightful inhabitants, that is, to supposedly native French whites who refuse cultural mixing and are mythically descended from the land's original Celtic populations (cf. Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 86–106). This violence transforms the white French from victims into victors. Cultural or ethnic mixing as a positive force is completely excluded from this racialized, xenophobic vision of history and society: whether Carte de Séjour's cover version of Trenet's "Douce France," the antiracism represented by the S.O.S. Racisme badge or the ethnic xenophilia of the mixed couple. The baton or bat, a symbol of Black virility and power on the front cover, has been broken on the back cover. The weapon also serves as an alibi: its implicit violent threat on the front cover helps justify the lynching. Sergueï and his publisher imply that by espousing white supremacism they are the equivalent of the French Resistance, whereas antiracists occupy France as contemporary Nazis. This is implied by a combination of elements on the cover and inside the book, including the publisher's name, "Editions de la Résistance," and the references to the nostalgic song that Trenet composed in 1943 while France was occupied by the Nazis. The colors and layout of the comic book

cover also recall the classic French and foreign, often American, comics that Futuropolis published during the 1980s in its "Copyright" collection. This could suggest that *Douce France* is more classic or legitimate than those comics. It might be relevant here that Futuropolis also published the comics of Arab, immigrant and Black cartoonists, specifically the artists of Anita Comix: Boudjellal, José Jover and Roland Monpierre.

The forty-page comic book by Sergueï includes twenty single-panel cartoons, three four-panel comic strips, and fourteen full-page comics stories ranging from one to three pages long. Their content is designed to justify and extend the violent, white supremacist reaction suggested by the cover images. Several comics represent political conspiracy and collusion allowing people of color to invade France, usurp its resources and displace the native, white population. The rejected populations, represented as invading foreigners, are predominantly of Arabo-Muslim heritage (e.g., 6, 13, 16.3, 31.4, 34–5) – especially from North Africa, including Algeria (6.9) and Libya (14.6) – as well as from Turkey (front cover, 6.3), Iran (22) or Lebanon (7.3). There are also southeast Asians (13.3. 13.5), especially Vietnamese (4.7–8, 14.2, 14.5) but also Cambodians (15.4). Black Africans (5, 6, 10.6, 13.1, 13.6, 14.4, 14.6, 16) figure prominently too, including specifically from Burkina Faso (13.4), Ghana (15.8), the Ivory Coast (9.1), Senegal (6.3) and Zaire (23.2). The xenophobic perspective also targets pro-independence Kanak from New Caledonia (23, 37.1, 39.4), political refugees from Latin America (23.2), and economic migrants from southern Europe, including Portugal (14.1). Several stories depict white French, especially but not only men, as victims of foreigners, to various degrees and in several manners. For example, they are represented as the losers in a French national welfare system biased towards immigrants, especially people of color, and in which native white French are increasingly marginalized (13.6, 16.8, 19, 22–3). They are shown being squeezed out of farming by a system of European regulations that artificially manipulate the market and by rapacious bankers (28–31). One patriotic Frenchman is shown violently but futilely resisting forcible eviction from his home, which has been expropriated to be replaced by a mosque (34–5).[61] Several cartoons or comics depict or clearly suggest interracial combat, generally with white French characters retaliating, or defending themselves, against people of color (3, 7, 11, 15.9, 34–7). Marriages of convenience, called "mariages blancs" [white marriages] in French, with white French women depicted as ugly and stupid, are decried as a fast track toward naturalization (6.1, 15.6–7), as are what are now termed "anchor babies" in far-right American discourse (16.6). Some of these stories depict what is essentially a race war comparable to conflicts in Lebanon (7) or South Africa (front cover, 16.4, 20, 37.1–2), to which there are pointed allusions. The French political figures whom Sergueï represents may be divided into several categories, beginning with ones actively fostering the colonization of France, mostly Socialist Party figures, including Pierre Joxe (6.4; unnamed, but recognizable), Danielle Mitterrand (16.9), François Mitterrand (front cover, 17.8, 38) and Michel Rocard (17.4), as well as the populist businessman Bernard Tapie (17). The cartoonist also decries cen-

trist and authoritarian right politicians for being ineffectual in stemming the immigrant tide, specifically Raymond Barre (17; caricatured as a prostitute), Jacques Chirac (7.1, 15.2, 17), Charles Pasqua (6.4) and Stasi (33.10). Sergueï approvingly refers to far-right leaders, from Henri Dorgères (31.3), a *pétainiste* and *poujadiste* politician who championed farmers, to Eric Raoult (7.3) and especially Jean-Marie Le Pen (7.3, 23.7, 39.1–2). The latter are deemed the sole leaders capable of stemming and reversing the colonizing invasion, mainly by groups themselves formerly colonized by France. Typically for far-right discourse, communists here play a negative role, mostly via labor organizing of people of color through the Confédération Générale du Travail [CGT] (7.2, 36.3, 39.3–4). Another major target of Sergueï is S.O.S. Racisme, as is already apparent on the cover. The badge of the organization is depicted several times (4, 15.6, 16.7, 20.3, 21.2–4, 36.2), including when worn by the white female partner in two other grotesquely portrayed mixed-race couples (15.6, 39.3). The group is referred to by name, including via a sexual allusion ("S.O.S. Quéquette" [S.O.S. dick] 36.2; cf 7.3), again suggesting a racist phobia of ethnic mixing, especially between white French women and men of color. Antiracism is condemned as an anti-French ideology (7.3, 24.1), and three other pro-emigrant and antiracist groups are singled out for attack: France Plus (7.3), J'y suis, j'y reste [I'm here, I stay here] (15.1) and the Amicale des Algériens en Europe [Association of Algerians in Europe], renamed Amicale des Branleurs Algériens en Europe [Association of Algerian Jack-Offs in Europe] (39.3). The latter is an organization of the Algerian government, while the other two are French organizations focusing on youths of recent immigrant background (Blatt 1997: 50–1). The most prevalent other, related emblem in Sergueï's *Douce France*, aside from the S.O.S. Racisme badge, is the hand of Fatma, here symbolizing a pervasive colonization of France by people of Arab and Muslim extraction, especially North Africans (6.9, 7.2–3, 8.7, 12, 16.9, 20, 24.1, 34–5, 36.2).

In *Douce France*, acculturation and anticulturation are irremediably, explicitly and lethally violent acts and processes, as, for example, in a full-page story titled "Air connu" [Known tune]. There, in a pastiche of the "Astérix" series, Sergueï (21) pits Le Pen-as-Obélix against a singing trio. One singer has caricatural semitic facial features and a Freemason symbol on his shirt, while another wears the hammer-and-sickle communist insignia. Sergueï mixes typical far-right iconography from the 1930s with 1980s anti-antiracism: a third character wears the hand symbol of S.O.S. Racisme. Thanks to the "potion magique FRANC NATIONAL" [NATIONAL FRANK/C magical potion] (original emphasis), Le Pen smashes and no doubt kills the three: "couic" is an onomatopoeia suggesting murder. By contrast, in the "Asterix" stories the villains, usually Roman soldiers, are beaten up but never die. Sergueï's Le Pen then expels the Black African immigrant, thereby resisting "encore et toujours à l'envahisseur" [again and always against the invader] of color from outside France,[62] after having eliminated the xenophilic fifth column within, represented here as a musical trio who bastardizes French culture by mixing it with Black American popular culture (doo-wop music) and welcoming the

African immigrant to France. The comic-strip page parodies a song and music video by Bill Baxter, a French pop group, and Tippa Irie, a Black British artist, singing "Bienvenue à Paris" [Welcome to Paris], released in 1987. The group was composed of Joe Cool [Laurent Ganem], Lewis Primo and Bo Geste (cf. the colonial novel *Beau Geste* and film adaptations thereof, but perhaps also Bo Diddley; Ganem is a family name of Jewish North African origin).[63]

In *Douce France*, Sergueï borrows several elements from "Tintin." Some of his protagonists, always white French and usually men, recall Tintin, whether visually, by name or function. All three elements are true for Mr. Martin who, in the two-page story "Sécu" (22–3), helps illustrate the far-right conspiracy theory that the nationally subsidized French healthcare system ("la Sécurité sociale") is overwhelmed by and unfairly favors immigrants and people of color, and is biased against native French whites. In this, Martin serves as a neocolonial version of the colonial reporter function that Ann Miller (2004) shows Tintin playing overseas during the colonial period. The significant difference is that now the formerly colonized are invading and colonizing France, crowding out native white inhabitants. The story begins when the hapless French everyman learns that all but one of his medical prescriptions will no longer be reimbursed by the government. The fact that the doctor who announces the bad news is drawn like Laszlo Carreidas from Hergé's *Flight 714* album suggests an antisemitic conspiracy as an explanation for Martin's problem. As Pierre Assouline (1998: 598) and Frey (2008b: 36–8) have shown, Hergé modeled Carreidas, a rich, hypochondriac, stingy and dishonest character, on industrialist Marcel Dassault, born Marcel Bloch, who was deported to Buchenwald and barely survived the war. In *Douce France* Martin goes to the local office of the Sécurité sociale to obtain a reimbursement that he has been unable to obtain by mail (Sergueï n.d.: 22–3). There he is surrounded by a variety of other, grotesquely drawn people of color, immigrants and political refugees, who are called before him. While he waits, Martin reads *Seconde*, a title alluding to the far-right weekly *Minute*, whose feature article is about organized cheating of the health system by immigrants from Zaire. When Martin's number is finally called at 5:15, the white woman who waits on him wears a ska music pin featuring a checkerboard black-and-white pattern, and a corresponding mod haircut, suggesting that she favors cultural or ethnic mixing with Blacks in music and beyond (see Hebdige 1984: 49, 55, 69). She announces to him that the office will now abruptly close for a three day weekend that includes the May 1st holiday (associated with left-wing and communist-aligned labor organizations such as the CGT), causing Martin to collapse (Sergueï n.d.: 23). While he is carried away on a stretcher he dreams of a pledge by Le Pen, unnamed but visually recognizable, to create separate Social Security systems for foreigners and French, expel unemployed immigrants, and apply "[ethno]national preference" to "faire échec aux lobbies de l'immigration" [defeat the immigration lobbies]. In the version of this story published in *Tribune nationaliste*, Martin instead thinks "Vivement que le PNFE

prenne le pouvoir et que les Francais soient maîtres chez eux. Seuls les nationalistes pourront nous sortir de là!" [Would that the PNFE take control soon so that the French are masters in their home. Only the nationalists will be able to get us out of this!] (*Tribune nationaliste*, no. 32, October 1988, p. 16). Was the change related to the legal sanction against *Tribune nationaliste*? Did Sergueï change the strip for book publication after leaving the PNFE and joining the FN? Or was it simply a strategic move to help attract readers to the largest far-right organization?

As the ambulance drives away, a veiled woman observes, in what is meant to be Arabic-inflected French: "Encoure un roumi qui monque d'entrainemont... Allez Rachid, Farid, Abdel, Mourad, après la Sécu, on va aux Allocs..." [Another Frenchie who's not used to it... Come on Rachid, Farid, Abdel, Mourad, after the Social Security office, we're off to the Child Subsidy office...]. In this two-page story alone, the cartoonist imports and adapts a dizzying array of grotesque colonial imagery and ideas to a neocolonial French context: Caribbean men working for the postal system; Black men working as public street cleaners, dressed as pimps, or carrying loads on their heads (labeled "Zaire," to confirm the news report in *Seconde*); a variety of Levantine and North African men, wearing turbans, fezzes and djellabahs, with one wearing a pinky ring and another smoking a hookah; veiled Muslim women, including an overly fertile one flooding France with Muslim boys; a Black African woman – perhaps also pregnant, wearing neck bands, and bones as earrings – as a cannibal; and a Black child as a pickaninny. Elsewhere, we see the same and other colonial stereotypes, such as Arab carpet sellers (17.9; cf. Blanchard et al. 2003: 71), adapted to postcolonial France. Given the concatenation of grotesque, colonial images here and throughout the book, the question becomes: which ones are missing? The general lack of images representing ethnic minority women from former French colonies as attractive, found in other French comics at the same time, helps confirm the neocolonial, white supremacist rejection of *métissage*.

Another story in *Douce France* titled simply "Conte" [Tale] draws from Hergé's comics universe (Sergueï n.d.: 33).[64] Monsieur Durand [Mr. Durand], drawn to look like a combination of Tintin and Hergé himself, is an average white Frenchman, again with radical sympathies: he carries a copy of *Le choc du mois* [The Shock of the Month], a French far-right publication, under his arm. Durand encounters an acquaintance, Monsieur Rastapopoulos, at an outdoors market, in front of a stand run by a character who is a visual pastiche of one of Hergé's Dupond/Dupont characters. In the Tintin series, Rastapopoulos is an arch-villain who repeatedly tries to murder the title character. Frey (2008b) has convincingly shown that Hergé's Rastapopoulos is an antisemitic caricature. In "Conte," various ethnic majority and formerly colonized minority characters appear behind Durand and Rastapopoulos as the two discuss the problems of Rastapopoulos. The latter hired an emigrant to redo his wallpaper because French workers were too expensive, but this led to a nightmarish sequence of events: the worker prays five times a day, takes over the bathroom to perform his ritual ablutions,

and consequently the work does not progress. Rastapopoulos has to buy semolina for the immigrant, who sleeps in Rastapopoulos's bed, first with his host's wife, whom he later repudiates, and then with his daughter. This has been going on for thirty years, and now he has brought three cousins over to live with them. When Durand, shaking his fist, offers to help Rastapopoulos expel them from his bed, Rastapopoulos refuses. He believes "que 'l'emigration c'est une chance pour [s]on appartement'" [that "emigration is a lucky thing for his apartment"], which alludes to Stasi's *L'immigration: Une chance pour la France*. Instead, Sergueï's Rastapopoulos suggests to Durand that the humane solution would be to take two of the cousins into his own home, which Durand angrily refuses to do. Rastapopoulos softly calls Durand a racist as they part. Sergueï implies that antiracism is both economically self-interested and masochistic – the contradiction between these two is attributed to madness: Durand thinks "Pauvre fou" [Poor madman] as he walks away. Moreover by naming the overly hospitable character Rastapopoulos and modeling him physically after Julien Dray, Sergueï suggests that a Muslim invasion of France is being organized by Jews. His depiction of Rastapopoulos is physically repulsive, which is typical of antisemitic imagery: he sputters in seven of the eleven story panels and picks his nose in one.

The discussion between Rastapopoulos and Durand strongly resembles Le Pen's discourse. The illustrated dialogue of "Conte" recounts a sequence of events meant to be read simultaneously on national and personal levels. This is facilitated by the prevalence of familial tropes in nationalist discourse, including that of the FN. The conflation of the two levels produces the story's absurd and racist humor as well as a far-right political lesson, which goes as follows: when stingy Jews let lazy Muslims into France because they appear to furnish cheap labor, the immigrants will exploit the political and social system, pervert French culture, and take white French women away from Frenchmen and for themselves. The joke's punch line appears in the last frame, where a Muslim character, whose face and speech are caricatural, asks the Dupont/Dupond double whether he sells semolina, whereas the grocer was hawking leeks at the beginning of the story. This suggests that foreign, Muslim food may soon replace even homegrown French vegetables. Elsewhere the comic blames foreigners, usually but not only from former French colonies, for a vast array of perceived or real social ills, including labor unrest (7.2, 39.3), unjustified Social Security expenditures (5.8, 13.6, 16.8, 19–23), theft (8.7, 9.4, 25.2), squatting (16.2), drug dealing and consumption (5.9, 6.6, 18.12, 25.4), rape (25.4), murder (25.4), and race war (7.3–4, 34–7). The cartoonist gives the moral of the tale as "La France aux Français" [France for the French] (33), a slogan that also appears elsewhere in the book (39.1), and sums up its racist ideology.

The comic book perpetuates and teaches racist reading through its insidious or direct antisemitic references (e.g., 15.2, 25.1, 27.11) and to groups from countries formerly colonized by France. Reading in this way involves looking for tell-tale clues to stigmatized ethnic groups, for example, by recognizing and interpreting names of characters,

understanding visual caricature of bodies and textual deformation of speech, spotting and piecing together visual clues, and decoding euphemistic language. It also entails accepting simplistic, false explanations for complex sociohistorical phenomena, such as those provided by antisemitic conspiracy theories. The story's title – "Conte" – and fabular form encourage an allegorical reading, in this case, of family for nation. In *Douce France*, Sergueï uses comics – including elements from a racist, far-right tradition in them – to transmit racist messages by planting visual and textual indications in a panel as though they were extraneous to the main story, or else justified by something else in the image. This strategy permits both effective racist communication and plausible denial, the latter being important for evading prosecution under French laws against racist discourse (Frey 2008b, 2010; Novak 2011: 125, 289). Apparently extraneous elements contain a surplus of meaning allowing them to be integrated into a racist paradigm. For example, a fleeting visual-textual allusion contributes to the reality effect in the marketplace setting: the momentary appearance of a box of oranges from Haïfa, stamped "Made in Israel" and with a star of David. We have already seen that Sergueï's story deploys a racist constellation of allusions to three different ethnic groups – ethnic majority French, French Jews and North African Muslims – including via references to the Tintin series. Within this framework, oranges from Haïfa are a transitional term between the leeks from the first frame and the intrusive request for semolina in the last one. Similarly, a Jew (Dray-as-Rastapopoulos) allows the entry of Muslims into his home and then, the conclusion implies, the Franco-French space of the marketplace. The reference to Haïfa oranges in the market recalls a trip that Tintin takes to Haïfa in *Au pays de l'or noir* [*Land of Black Gold*], where he is briefly mistaken by members of Irgun for a Jewish character, Salomon Goldstein (Hergé 2000a [1950]: 14–16; on antisemitism in this story see Benoît-Jeannin 2001: 74–7; 2007: 186–200). Oranges feature in that album (33–4, 39–40). Whereas in *Au pays de l'or noir* Hergé depicts the Jewish colonization of Palestine, Sergueï represents a Jew abetting Muslim colonization of France in "Conte." Sergueï's story is an antisemitic conspiracy tale about reverse colonization, in which Franco-French have replaced Jews as the victims of a cultural form of genocide, and where Muslims have replaced the French as colonizers, but in which Jews continue to play a colonizing role, as they do in *Au pays de l'or noir*.[65]

Several of Sergueï's cartoons and comics contain explicit incitement to violence against Muslims, people of color, and groups formerly colonized by France. The cartoonist represents white, Franco-French violence as legitimate and self-defensive (Sergueï n.d.: 7, 11, 21). One of the last stories in the book pushes this to an extreme by depicting a race war in which immigrants of color lynch white Frenchmen but are beaten back by militias of Franco-French men and women (36–7). Each panel of the story, titled "Chantons gaiement" [Let us sing gaily], illustrates the lyrics of the "Chant des partisans" [Song of the Partisans], the battle hymn of the French Resistance against the Nazi occupation. This is both highly ironic, given the neo-Nazism of the PNFE, and

typical of the colonization by the French far right of all possible symbols of French national identity. It is also an act of retort, which *Europe Action* had earlier helped inaugurate on the far right: rhetorically transforming terms such as "racism" into their polar opposites (e.g., multiculturalism as "du racisme anti-Français" [anti-French racism]). Other surprising reversals in this neo-Nazi comic book include two explicit pastiches of famous imagery from the Second World War. The first transforms the 1945 photograph "Raising the flag on Iwo Jima" by American photographer Joe Rosenthal, of Jewish heritage, into a drawing showing far-right men, some wearing motorcycle helmets emblazoned with the Celtic cross, raising a far-right flag bearing the same emblem, atop the rubble (3). The second substitutes a man, no doubt a North African immigrant construction worker – he is curly haired, with a mustache, missing a tooth, and carrying a Bouygues company hard hat on his belt – for a German soldier in a pastiche of the famous Nazi propaganda poster from June 1940, by Théo Matejko (12). Sergueï has replaced the original caption "Populations abandonnées, faites confiance au soldat allemand!" [Abandoned populations, have confidence in the German soldier!] with "Populations abandonnées, faites confiance au travailleur immigré!" [Abandoned populations, have confidence in the immigrant worker!]. There are obviously multiple ironies in Sergueï's pastiches of both Rosenthal's photograph and the Nazi poster from the Second World War. Whether or not the cartoonist was aware of those ironies, he readily reappropriated a wide array of images and texts from visual culture, music and history to create truly horrific comics and cartoons that are neo-Nazi propaganda.

## Conclusion: overt and covert ideology and imagery

Throughout this chapter, I have traced a history of far-right cartooning from the Dreyfus Affair through the 1990s. I have highlighted ways that cartoons and especially comics printed in far-right periodicals and published by far-right presses transmit the ideology of that extremist wing of French politics. I have focused mainly on comics known primarily in far-right networks, in which the cartoonists make little secret of their far-right convictions, instead of on comics such as Hergé's "Tintin" series that are generally, although problematically, considered to be mainstream comics and free of far-right ideology and imagery. The latter often appear in their most naked, frankest form in the more marginal comics studied here, which celebrate and encourage violence against Arabs, Jews, Blacks and leftists. In them, far-right ideology and imagery are often expressed through grotesque neocolonial visual caricature, vicious antisemitic and anti-immigrant jokes, doomsday scenarios about the disappearance of French culture, and fantasies of genocidal retribution against demonized groups, including Arabs, Blacks and Jews. At least some of these publications, especially *Douce France*, would no doubt draw severe legal sanction if they were republished today and their authors identified. We shall see in the next chapter that violence continues un-

abated in more recent far-right comics, but often takes more euphemistic or otherwise covert forms to avoid prosecution. We shall also see a surprising postcolonial twist in a pair of far-right comic books from the 2010s.

## Notes

1 E.g., Pierre (1984), Kunzle (1990, 2007a), Douvry (1991), Jannone (1992, 1995), Halen (1993a, 1993b), Holo (1993), Denis (1994), Met (1996), Pigeon (1996), Hunt (2002), Miller (2004), McKinney (2011c, 2013e) and Filliot (2012).

2 Douvry (1983, 1991), Guillemin (2006) and McKinney (2013e).

3 Shields (2007: 119–24) and Shepard (2009, 2012).

4 Renamed Groupe Union Défense (Lebourg, Preda and Beauregard 2014: 32), and described as a "national-revolutionary, far-right student union" (Di Mascio 2016: 20); on GUD, see also Chatillon, Lagane and Marchal (1995), Shields (2007: 159), Lebourg (2010) and Bérubé-Sasseville (2015).

5 Cf. Delcroix (1998). One source states that "Didier Lefort" was a pseudonym of Faur, and that Faur has died (Collectif 2004: 99). *Bédésup* serialized a comic-strip adaptation by Sanders and Chard of "The Maltese Cat," by Rudyard Kipling (nos. 42–4).

6 For example, Ory (1979, 2002), Delporte (1993), Frey (1999, 2002, 2004, 2008b, 2010), Douvry (2006) and Novak (2011).

7 Taguieff (1993), Marcus (1995: 23) and Shields (2007: 143–4, 154, 239, 342–3 notes 2–3).

8 Novak (2011: 160) mentions René Le Honzec, who has published comics with Le Triomphe (see also McKinney 2011c, 2013e).

9 On Dimitri and Beketch, see also Novak (2011: 160–1).

10 See Pasamonik (2004) on this republication and the ensuing debate with Smolderen.

11 McKinney (2011c, 2013e); see especially Ory (1979, 2002), Delporte (1993), Frey (1999, 2004, 2008b), Benoît-Jeannin (2001, 2007) and Douvry (2006).

12 On this episode, see, for example: Lefort (1991: 27), Assouline (1998: 333–45), Benoît-Jeannin (2001: 29) and Peeters (2002b: 231–5).

13 Sadoul (2000: 84–6) and Mouchart (2014: 118–20).

14 Novak's study lacks some of the standard scholarly apparatus, especially notes and some source references, but is still invaluable here for the author's thoughtful, well-informed and insightful analysis, and its extensive iconography from an understudied area that overlaps with the topic of this chapter and the next.

15 Some of Vica's Banania drawings were republished in Garrigues (1991: 44, 84–5), Novak (2011: 163) and Vica (2012: n.p.); and the antisemitic comic books were reissued in Vica (2011). Vica (2012) also contains some comics published in *Le Téméraire* (1943–4), a children's publication based in Paris that promoted Nazi ideology and that Ory (1979, 2002) has analyzed. Lefort (1991: 38n2) – unsurprisingly, given

his celebration of far-right and racist comics – dismisses the first edition of Ory's study, published in 1979. On Vica, see also Ory (2002: e.g., 23, 28, 32–3, 92), and Tufts (2004). Novak (2011: 163) mentions two of Vica's three collaborationist comic books.

16 The poster is reproduced in Peeters (2002a) and on the front cover of Benoît-Jeannin (2007).

17 E.g., Jacques Van Melkebeke (Mouchart 2014) and Paul Jamin (a.k.a. Jam, Alidor, etc.; 1911–95). Jamin was condemned to death at war's end for his cartoons in the same publication as Hergé's comics (*Le soir* "volé"), and elsewhere, but was not executed and spent seven years in prison before returning to cartooning. On Jamin's friendship with Hergé, see Assouline (1998) and Steeman (2001). Lefort (1991: 31, 33) mentions their friendship and reproduces their cartoon images of each other.

18 See especially Ory (1979, 2002) and Delporte (1993).

19 Assouline (1998: 469–82).

20 Vidal, Goscinny and Gaumer (1997: 10–11, 104).

21 The anthology was favorably reviewed in *Rivarol* (P.-L. M 2007).

22 My information about Marchal's comics comes from Pons (1977: 19–21), Lefort (1991), Chatillon, Lagane and Marchal (1995), Marchal (2000), Collectif (2004), Marchal, Rémi and Dioclétien (2007), Novak (2011) and Lebourg, Preda and Beauregard (2014: 100, 103–5). Chatillon, Lagane and Marchal (1995) reprint several of Marchal's rat comic strips, cartoons and posters not reprinted in Marchal, Rémi and Dioclétien (2007). The title of "La bande à Balder" refers to the Norse god Balder, and to *la bande à Baader*, the Baader-Meinhof terrorist group.

23 On the physical violence of GUD, see, for example, Lebourg, Preda and Beauregard (2014: 22–3, 74). Novak (2011: 136, 151, 165–7) reproduces GUD iconography featuring both the Celtic cross and a black rat wielding weapons (slingshot, sledge hammer, club).

24 Chatillon, Lagane and Marchal (1995), Marchal (2000), Lebourg (2010) and Novak (2011: 164).

25 See also Chatillon, Lagane and Marchal (1995). Robert was involved in the Fédération des étudiants nationalistes or FEN, Occident (until it was dissolved in 1968 for its violent actions), GUD (as president), Ordre nouveau, and the Front national (as founding general secretary), before eventually joining the more mainstream, Gaullist party Rassemblement pour la république (RPR). On Duprat, see Marcus (1995: 16, 20–1) and Shields (2007)

26 Pons (1977: 19–20) makes the same claim, as do former members of GUD, including Marchal himself, in Chatillon, Lagane and Marchal (1995) and Marchal (2000).

27 For example, two posters from the time labeled leftists "vermin," though neither contains rat imagery; and in a poster from 1984, a foot wearing a paratrooper's boot is about to squash PCF leader Georges Marchais drawn as a spider (Chatillon, Lagane and Marchal 1995).

28 For historical examples see Saint-Ogan (1942), Ory (2002) and Novak (2011). On Saint-Ogan's far-right cartooning, including work for the Vichy government (such as Saint-Ogan 1942), see Delporte (1993: 39, 84), Groensteen and Morgan (2007: 67–9) and McKinney (2011c). For contemporary examples of such imagery, see Bariller and Timmermans (1993) and Novak (2011). The Joan of Arc imagery used by the FN is an important example of this.

29 Lebourg, Preda and Beauregard (2014: 104) state: "The 'black rat' is taken up by the European equivalents of GUD and, supreme hommage, by Italian neofascist youth." Chatillon, Lagane and Marchal (1995) reproduce far-right posters from Italy and Belgium featuring black rats. Novak (2011: 166–7) discusses the spread of Marchal's black rat imagery to Spain, Italy, Belgium and the United Kingdom, and reproduces various iconography featuring it (comic strip, sticker, poster, postcard). He (118) also notes that the "best-known character font" for lettering on far-right iconography, "which one frequently found in the fanzines and on the posters of Ordre nouveau, was codified under the name Ratanegra, 'black rat' in Spanish, in hommage to the drawings of Jack Marchal, the main user of this font."

30 On the GUD takeover of the Assas campus see Pons (1977: 8–15), Chatillon, Lagane and Marchal (1995), Lebourg, Preda and Beauregard (2014: 32, 100–1) and Bérubé-Sasseville (2015); see also Lebourg, Preda and Beauregard (2014) on how the Gaullist government tolerated and even supported the violence of far-right groups, specifically Ordre nouveau.

31 François Maspero (1932–2015) was an anticolonial left-wing publisher and writer (see Paquot 2015).

32 A homophonic pun on "champs de colza" [canola fields]. Betrand, now Aude Mirkovic, moved from far-right "identitarian rock" and militancy in the FN, including its youth section (Front national de la jeunesse [FNJ], now Génération nation [GN]; Collectif 2004: 47–8, 51, 92, 98, 117), to ultra-conservative activism in La manif pour tous movement, created to oppose legalizing gay marriage. She earned a doctorate from the Assas law school in Paris and is now a professor (Maître de conférence HDR) at the Université d'Evry-Val-d'Essonne. She is currently fighting against allowing assisted reproductive technology (*la procréation médicalement assistée*) to be used by single women and lesbian couples in France. She has played a high profile role in this and related debates, including through invitations to testify in the French parliament (l'Assemblée nationale).

33 The "Auda, princesse wisigothe" strips appear in Marchal, Rémi and Dioclétien (2007: 61–93).

34 On Le Pen as a "menhir" see Marcus (1995: 3, 28) and Novak (2011: 80).

35 On this, see Blin-Rolland (2017).

36 I am indebted to Séra for having pointed out to me the postcolonial connection between these two volumes.

37 Gaspard (1990, 1995) and Shields (2007: 17); cf. Lebovics (1992: 12, 140).

38 Novak (2011: 152–3) describes debates between far-right factions over the meaning of the Celtic cross, including whether it is a pagan or a Christian symbol. On paganism on the far right, especially as formulated by de Benoist and GRECE, see Marcus (1995: 25) and Shields (2007: 144–57). On Catholicism on the French far right, see Shields (2007).

39 On the links between *Europe Action* and GRECE, see for example, Duranton-Crabol (1988) and Lebourg (2011).

40 On this vision, see for example Angenot (1982: 99–109); Honoré (1986: 144), who cites Angenot; and Moura (1992: 127–41, 245–63).

41 For a critique of imperialism in the series reprise by other cartoonists from 1996, see Miller (2009a).

42 Bresson and Lionet (1994: 151–82) and Marcus (1995: 32).

43 Bresson and Lionet (1994: 283–7), Marcus (1995: 126) and Collectif (2004: 9–11, 26–9, 49, 83).

44 Bresson and Lionet (1994: 451–9) and Marcus (1995: 125–7).

45 Solo (2004) contains entries for all; see also Novak (2011: 160–1). An official history of the FN includes a cartoon by Konk depicting Le Pen as a victim (Bariller and Timmermans 1993: 125).

46 Lefort (1991: ), and Solo (2004: 159, 470, 686).

47 For example, Jean Raspail, the author of the far-right novel *Le camp des saints* [*The Camp of the Saints*], introduced Chard's *Le Chardnaval socialiste* [The Socialist Chardnaval] (n.d.); Jean-Marie Le Pen prefaced *Konk: 1993–1995: Persiste et signe…* [Konk: 1993–1995: Persists and Signs…] (Konk n.d.), published by the FN's Editions nationales; Philippe Randa included back-cover material for Konk's anthology *Aux voleurs!* [Help, Thieves!] (1995, 1999) and prefaced the second edition of Chard's *Profanation* (1996 [1992]); Lefort prefaced *Le roman noir du métropolitain* [The Detective (or Black) Novel of the Paris Subway] by Sanders, Chard and Randa (1994); and Sanders wrote the prefaces for *Chard à la une de Présent* [Chard on the Front Page of *Présent*] (Chard 1986) and *Miège en liberté* [Miège Free to Roam] (Miège 2004).

48 Schor (1996a: 242) mistakenly calls it the Parti national français et européen and gives its acronym as PFNE. On the PNFE, see also Lebourg (2018).

49 His name is also spelled "Cornillau" in some news articles (see below, note 51). It is always spelled "Cornilleau" in *Tribune nationaliste*.

50 Giudice (1992: 240–7) recounts these attacks and subsequent trials; see also http://www.france-politique.fr/wiki/Parti_Nationaliste_Français_et_Européen_(PNFE), accessed 18 July 2020; http://www.ina.fr/video/CAB89041098/arrestation-affaire-sonacotra-video.html, accessed 18 July 2020. Gorce (1997) says "Attentats contre l'hebdomadaire *Globe*, contre un foyer de la Sonacotra (un mort) en 1988, expéditions contre des Maghrébins et homicides jalonnent son histoire" [Attacks

against the weekly *Globe*, against a Sonacotra workers' hostel (one dead) in 1988, expeditions against Maghrebis and homicides litter its history]. Another article (*Sud Ouest* 1997) states that "[i]n autumn 1989, several leaders of PNFE, including Claude Cornilleau and principal inspector Serge Lacanu [sic], were charged with two attacks against immigrant workers' hostels in Cannes and Cagnes-sur-Mer. The charges were dismissed and Serge Lacanu was expelled from the police." On Lecanu and the police, see also Lebourg (2018: 155). An article in *Le Monde* (1996) states that "[i]n October and November 1989, several leaders of PNFE, including Mr. Cornilleau and Mr. Lecanu, were indicted and jailed by an investigating magistrate of the Grasse tribunal (Alpes-Maritimes) who suspected them of complicity in two attacks (one dead and fourteen wounded, all told) committed in 1988 against immigrant workers' hostels in Cannes and Cagnes-sur-Mer. Suspended from his position, Mr. Lecanu was expelled from the police by the Minister of the Interior, Pierre Joxe, in June 1990.

However, Mr. Cornilleau, Mr. Lecanu and Mr. Francis Allouchery, national secretary of PNFE, had their case dismissed, which was confirmed by the Court of Appeal in June 1991, whereas the primary author of the attacks, a former member of PNFE, was condemned in November to eighteen years in jail."

51 See http://www.ina.fr/video/CAC96042002/qui-sont-les-coupables-video.html, accessed 18 July 2020. Gorce (1997) states that "[f]ounded in 1987 by Claude Cornillau, a former member of OAS who took refuge for a while in the United States, PNFE is the most violent group in terms of antisemitic attacks. The columns of *La Tribune nationaliste* [The Nationalist Tribune], whose sale to minors is forbidden and was rebaptized *Le Flambeau* [The Torch], are filled with negationist theses and references to Hitler's national socialism." Another article (*Sud Ouest* 1997) states, regarding Cornilleau, that "[t]his former member of OAS was condemned in absentia to twenty years in prison for having participated in the generals' putsch in Algiers in 1961." The same article says that the PNFE "asserts the supremacy of the white race, rejects parliamentary democracy and has as its uniform the exact replica of that of the SA, the Hitlerian paramilitary group." An article in *Le Monde* (1996) states that "[c]ondemned in absentia to twenty years in prison for having participated in the generals' putsch in Algiers in April 1961, he [i.e., Cornilleau] took refuge in the United States and returned to France under the amnesty of 1968." In 1994, a French judge banned a company run by Cornilleau from selling Nazi paraphernalia (Peyrot 1994). On the widely decried defamation of Jewish tombs in Carpentras by former PNFE militants, see Gattegno (1996).

52 In June 2012, I consulted all issues of *Tribune nationaliste* held by the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris: numbers 1 (October 1985) through 52 (February 1992).

53 JORF no. 6 of 8 January 1991, "Arrêté du 4 janvier 1991 portant interdiction de vente d'une revue aux mineurs, d'exposition et de toute publicité" [Order of 4 January

1991 banning the sale of a periodical to minors, displaying it, and all advertising], NOR: INTD9000005A, reproduced in *Tribune nationaliste*, no. 48, December 1990–January 1991, p. 16.

54 *Tribune nationaliste* (nos. 39–40, May–June 1989, p. 6) contains an additional antisemitic cartoon by Sergueï reprinted by Lefort (1991: 201). The periodical printed racist comics by another cartoonist, Korbo, whom Lefort (165) describes as an emigrant from Belgium. On the homophonic pun here (to "corbeau"), see below, p. 249n16.

55 Rémi Kauffer (2002: 118) states: "The liaison between the universities and the FAF was made by the direct representative of the Sidos brothers in Algiers, Claude Cornilleau, lieutenant of the 1st regiment of airborne soldiers [chasseurs parachutistes]." Kauffer (118n1) then indicates that "[i]n the 1980s, Cornilleau led a small neo-Nazi group, the French and European Nationalist Party." Novak (2011: e.g., 122, 125, 134, 151) and Lebourg (2018) also contain useful information on Cornilleau and the PNFE.

56 Novak (2011: 128) argues that the badges constitute a highly successful example of retort or *détournement* by the left of a far-right icon often associated with the struggle against postcolonial migrants: "We have already encountered the unsettling hand of Ordre nouveau. Copied throughout Europe, it becomes the rallying sign of European fascism against immigration in the 1970s. This hand is decidedly very pleasing, and l'Œuvre française wants its own. [...] The open hand is really a recurring sign on the right. Its abduction by the left is both a stinging insult but also a stroke of genius." Novak (128–9) also notes the implicit reference by the badge to the yellow star of David and the Nazi genocide against the Jews, and documents unsuccessful far-right attempts to take back the symbol from S.O.S. Racisme.

57 The badge and other references to S.O.S. Racisme recur throughout the book (Sergueï n.d.: 7.3, 15.6, 16.7, 20.3, 21.2–4, 36.2, 39.3).

58 McDonald's as a symbol of non-French culture in France recurs later in the book (26). See Novak (2011: 151) for a 1993 GUD poster featuring a black rat that has apparently just destroyed a McDonald's.

59 The acronym of the Nazi Schutzstaffel ["protection squadron" or "defense corps"]. This letter therefore also recalls the meaning of the runic "S" as "sieg" [victory]. On runes in contemporary far-right iconography, see Novak (2011: 155–7). He (155–6) argues, regarding the extreme right, that "[t]his political current, profoundly attached to legends, opposes the idealism of myths to the materialism of reason. It borrows from Nazism the search for an imagined golden age and a pure race unsullied by racial mixing. That is how one must understand its persistent taste for runes"; see also Novak (2011: 175).

60 Garrigues (1991), Nederveen Pieterse (1992), Bachollet, Debost, Lelieur and Peyrière (1994) and Donadey (2000).

61 Also in *Tribune nationaliste*, no. 44, June 1990, pp. 20–1.
62 This phrase does not appear in the far-right comic; instead, I have adapted it from the Asterix series.
63 Le Pen as Asterix and white French as *Gaulois*: see also Honoré (1986: 133–4).
64 Also in *Tribune nationaliste*, no. 46, September–October 1990, p. 9.
65 One could read another nationalist reference to the comics tradition in "Conte." The marketplace grocer's cry of "Ils sont beaux mes poireaux" [My leeks are beautiful] could easily remind comics readers of the fish monger in the Astérix series, who yells out "Ils sont beaux mes poissons" [My fish are beautiful]. The peace of the Gaulish village in the series is habitually disturbed by external forces, whose most visible effect is often to cause a fight at the market amongst the Gauls themselves.

# Chapter 7
# Comics from the far right from the 2000s to the present

## Introduction: Chard and far-right comics

Far-right cartoons and comics after the 1990s continue many of the themes found in ones from the 1960s through the 1990s, which we saw in Chapters 1 and 6. I begin this chapter by discussing cartoons and comics by Chard (Françoise Pichard), especially *Chirac contre les fachos* [Chirac Against the Fascists], drawn by her and scripted by Guillaume Faye (2004). I then analyze a far-right comic from a decade later, *Yacht People*, in two volumes initially published in 2012 and 2014. Together, Sergueï's *Douce France* [Sweet France] (n.d.), analyzed in Chapter 6, and these two more recent comics exemplify key continuities in far-right cartooning – especially their antisemitism – and major new developments. We shall see that, very differently from Sergueï's approach, far-right cartoonists are now much more careful to avoid prosecution for Holocaust denial, incitement to racial hatred, and related infractions of antiracist laws that have been passed, although their comics are in many ways just as violent. Another remarkable change, this time a postcolonial one, is the switch from the entirely anti-African-immigrant position of *Douce France* to a pro-African stance in *Yacht People*, whose dialogues were written by Dieudonné M'Bala M'Bala, a comedian and actor of mixed, French and Cameroonian, heritage, who played a role in *Astérix et Obélix: Mission Cléopâtre* [*Asterix and Obelix: Mission Cleopatra*] (Chabat 2002), the film based on the volume *Astérix et Cléopâtre* (1965) in the famous comics series originally scripted by René Goscinny and drawn by Albert Uderzo. Now M'Bala M'Bala is a notorious far-right figure whose stage name is "Dieudonné." *Yacht People* was drawn by Zéon (Pascal Fernandez), who has described himself as "métis, fils de réfugié politique chilien" [*métis*, son of a Chilean political refugee] (*Egalité & Réconciliation* 2013). In my analysis of *Yacht People*, I will refer both to Zvonimir Novak's comprehensive survey of far-right iconography (2011), which includes helpful analysis of other imagery produced for Dieudonné and his collaborator, far-right ideologue Alain Soral, and to a study by Bruno Di Mascio (2016) of the organizations run by Dieudonné and Soral, and their ideology. I turn now to my discussion of comics and cartoons by Chard, one of the most prolific and established far-right cartoonists.

As noted in the previous chapter, Chard has illustrated many books written by others, including fictions for young readers, and draws editorial cartoons for far-right Parisian periodicals: the weekly *Rivarol* and the daily *Présent* (five days per week). She also illustrated *Signal d'alarme*, a monthly newsletter published by Faye. The ideology that permeates Chard's work is racist, xenophobic, anti-communist, homophobic, and shot through with a longing for the far-right French ideal of a homogenous, white, conservative, agrarian society. She redraws the traditional far-right themes of a French decadence and decline produced by the corruption of its political and cultural elite, and by an invasion by foreigners of alien, inassimilable and predatory cultures. Her comics and editorial cartoons often depict Blacks, Jews and Arabs, whom she consistently denigrates. Her books include *Le roman noir du Métropolitain* [The Detective (or Black) Novel of the Metropolitan] (Sanders, Chard and Randa 1994), *Profanation* (Chard 1996), *Ma Déclaration des droits de l'homme* [My Declaration of the Rights of Man] (Chard 2005) and *La France métisse de A à Z* [*Métisse* France From A to Z] (Chard 2002). Two other books by Chard, published under her real name, Françoise Pichard, are wordless fables about invaders who disturb pristine rural settings that recall Vichy-era propaganda about rural France.[1] In *Brève histoire d'un épouvantail* [Brief Story of a Scarecrow] (2007a), a story set in the present, they are violent, antisocial youths, including from postcolonial minorities. In *Le cheval borgne* [The One-Eyed Horse] (2007b), set in the distant past, the invaders are an Asian-looking horde riding into Gaul. In both, Celtic mythology and Christianity provide the ideal alternative to the damaged present: for example, an elf and a wise woodswoman at a dolmen that is being used as a cottage in *Le cheval borgne*, and in *Brève histoire d'un épouvantail*, an unnamed god of the heavens, perhaps Toutatis, as in the "Asterix" series, by Goscinny and Uderzo. In most of her comics and cartoons, Chard repeats the racist, xenophobic and homophobic stereotypes that characterize far-right visual and verbal discourse as it has been elaborated in the postcolonial period, beginning in the early 1960s and in an increasingly pervasive manner from the mid-1980s: the bearded Muslim fanatic immigrant man and his overly fecund wife, the violent Arab or Black *délinquant* [criminal] from working-class *banlieues*, the moralizing but foolish antiracist, the angry and irresponsible French leftist, the pro-Israeli Jewish or pro-Palestinian Arab gang of thugs, the effeminate gay man, and the besieged heterosexual, native, white French everyman or everywoman, whose embattled culture and rights are defended only by the courageous far-right *résistant* [resister].

Much of this imagery has roots reaching back earlier. According to Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci (2001: 27–8), in an article on antisemitic imagery during the Dreyfus Affair at the turn of the 20th century:

> The image did not simply accompany antisemitic discourses. It synthesized, simplified, concentrated and standardized them, facilitating the memorization of stereotypes that became human types through it. Introducing, by its nature, a radical-

ization of antisemitic discourse, at least in the way it is expressed, it also contributed to the diffusion of prejudice throughout Europe.

With some modifications, this observation accurately describes the form of the activist imagery that Chard and like-minded cartoonists have been churning out in the far-right press for decades, as well as its effects and spread. For example, Chard publishes in serial fashion the inventory of caricatural types that I just listed, as well as other ones: visual themes and variations on interrelated strands of bigotry. Through re-posting on the web, these images now quickly and easily reach a worldwide audience.

## *Chirac contre les fachos:* the rhetoric of racism and far-right ideology

On 21 April 2002, an election took place in France that produced unexpected and unprecedented results: Jean-Marie Le Pen received enough votes in the first round to participate in the run-off election against sitting president Jacques Chirac. It led to an enormous outpouring of protest by many in France, including mass demonstrations during the short interval before the runoff election. Left-wing and centrist presidential candidates ousted from the first round called on their supporters to vote for Chirac as the right-wing but more mainstream, and therefore less unpalatable, candidate. A recurrent left-wing slogan during the street demonstrations was "votez pour l'escroc, pas le facho" [Vote for the crook, not the fascist], because Chirac had been implicated in several illegal activities. Chirac was reelected president on May 5 for a second and final term. Just over two months later, during the traditional Bastille day parade of July 14, Maxime Brunerie, a young man who had been active on the far right, attempted to assassinate Chirac and then end his own life. Brunerie was unsuccessful at either, and was instead immediately overpowered and captured, then tried, convicted and sentenced to ten years in prison, but was released after having served seven. Unité radicale [Radical Unity], a far-right organization that he had belonged to, was banned, though it then reformed under the name Bloc identitaire [Identitarian Block] (Brunerie and Rol 2011: 10, 12–14).[2] This was the first attack from the far right against a sitting president since the assassination attempt against Charles de Gaulle at Petit-Clamart, near Paris, on 22 August 1962 (Charmelot 2002).[3] This bit of recent French history provides the context and inspiration for *Chirac contre les fachos*, which was self-published by Faye in 2004.

Like most far-right comic strips and books, *Chirac contre les fachos* has been distributed mainly through far-right channels and so is virtually unknown to mainstream comics readers and commentators. This contrasts with Chard's editorial cartoons when they appear in *Présent* and *Rivarol*, which are visible at local newstands all across France. They may thereby help to spread racist, far-right visual discourse even among those who do not buy the weeklies, as Matard-Bonucci (2001: 28) argues that illustrated anti-Dreyfus periodicals did. Although *Chirac contre les fachos* is not Chard's only foray into

comics per se, the fictional comic-book narrative articulates her caricatures of social types in a more comprehensive and complex manner than do her editorial cartoons and non-narrative books. Today the best-known ancestor of this comic book is the serialized newspaper version and the first book edition of Hergé's *L'étoile mystérieuse* (Hergé 2005 [1942]), with which *Chirac contre les fachos* shares some key features, and which may have inspired Chard and Faye. But even those early versions of Hergé's story are mostly unknown to readers of the Tintin series. In any case *Chirac contre les fachos* provides a useful window into far-right ideology in France today, while it also points to comics ancestors and antecedents that today's far-right cartoonists claim for their work.

The comic book by Faye and Chard weaves a conspiracy theory typical of far-right discourse in post-Second World War France.[4] The themes of false identity and covert manipulation in the story echo Faye's activity on Skyrock, where he was known as "Skyman" and was a "specialist of imposture" (Rankl 2002), taking on other identities when he phoned people, reportedly in threatening ways, for a live radio program. The conspiracy theory in the comic book appears to be based at least in part on two strands of thinking in France just after Brunerie's attempted assassination of Chirac. There was some questioning in the mainstream French press at the time about whether Brunerie's act had been part of a wider, far-right plot or was instead the work of a single individual (*Le Temps* 2002). The cartoonists represent conspiracy in a comic, parodic manner in their book. This approach allows them to do several things. It helps them satirize France's mainstream politicians of the right and left, who are depicted as incompetent buffoons. The parodic approach may also help shield the cartoonists from lawsuits alleging defamation of recognizable individuals depicted in the story. The conspiracy theory also allows the cartoonists, in manner typical of the far right, to depict the Front national (FN), Le Pen, and the far right in general, as victims of mainstream political parties, but especially of their closest rivals, in political terms: Chirac's right-wing UMP party (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire [Union for a Popular Movement]), since renamed Les Républicains [The Republicans]. Last but not least, by presenting the conspiracy theory as a ridiculous joke, the humorous, parodic mode may lend the cartoonists a degree of protection from legal prosecution for publishing racist imagery. However, in some ways the comic book's conspiracy resembles traditional antisemitic, far-right conspiracy fantasies: its key figure, Nicolas Sarkozy, is of Jewish heritage on his mother's side, and the book makes covert but telling allusions to this. It also brings secondary Jewish characters into the conspiracy, although in a minor mode.

France has passed several laws against racism in the press and in speech, including the 1990 Gayssot law, which have had significant consequences for far-right iconography in general, as Novak (2011: 125) explains in a key passage:

> For the last twenty years or so, we have seen a form of self-censorship, a graphic holding back that can certainly be explained by a desire for respectability, but above

> all by fear of the police. The nationalists are henceforth forced to adopt a strategy of deviation [une stratégie du contournement]. Although sanctions against racist acts already existed, the Gayssot law of 13 July 1990 reinforced them and acts like a guillotine blade. It sharply represses racist, xenophobic and antisemitic acts and intention. It is no longer possible openly to let out one's racism; one has to hold back. Of course those mainly concerned by this cry out loudly against an attack on freedom of expression, which is rather comic! The law finally serves the ultras by forcing them to reflect on new communication strategies. There is a before and an after Gayssot. The racial dimension in far-right imagery showed off its bluster [s'affichait comme une bravade], and moreover Ordre nouveau, GUD or PNFE had raised it to the level of a principle of provocation. It took the form of a folklore for shiftless students rebelling against the dominant values. At the end of the 1990s, intellectuals from that current reflected on how to attack the immigrant without having to deal with possible judicial complaints. The advocated strategy is to break the representation of the immigrant, presented by antiracism as the eternal victim. This flipping is of both a semantic and a graphic nature. Therefore, the Arab and the Black change from scapegoats to persecutors; and the ethnic Frenchman switches from accused to martyr. The aim is to prove that the racial identity of white French, although ultra majoritarian, is threatened by migration flows.

I quote Novak's argument at length because of its pertinence to my analysis of far-right comics and cartooning. First, an important historical caveat is required: the flipping of victimizer/victimized to which Novak refers is already at work in comics by Coral from the 1960s, for instance, when he represents Algerians protesting in Paris on 17 October 1961 as marauding invaders, instead of the helpless, unarmed victims of police brutality that they were then. In his neo-Nazi comics from the 1980s, Sergueï likewise depicts individual French whites as victims of violent immigrants. However, Novak helpfully underlines both this general postcolonial trend in far-right iconography and the turning point brought about by the Gayssot law, curbing explicit representations of hatred and violence against postcolonial ethnic minorities in France. Whereas the first rhetorical term in comics by Coral and Sergueï was migrant victimization of whites native to France, the second term was the call to a race war in which whites fought back. The law caused the second representational term to be muted and reworked.

Faye and Chard were well aware, and wary, of the Gayssot law and its potential consequences, having been tried previously for racist hate speech or drawings. Chard and the first publisher of her *Profanation* were tried for "provocation à la discrimination, à la haine et à la violence raciale" [inciting discrimination, hatred and racial violence] (Chard 1996: 81). Chard and Marie-Luce Wacquez, the director of *Rivarol*, were found guilty by the Tribunal correctionnel de Paris in 1994 for publishing a caricature of Laurent Fabius by Chard in the 27 November 1992 issue of the weekly that was deemed

injurious to the former Prime Minister: "Mr. Fabius offering himself as a sacrificial victim and wearing an enormous Jewish star pinned to his chest" (*Le Monde* 1994). Chard's position on the Shoah is suggested by her expressed sympathy for negationist Ernst Zündel (1939–2017), a German who lived for decades in Canada, then moved to the United States, before he was arrested and returned to Canada, where he was arrested and then deported to Germany in 2005. There he was tried and convicted "in 2007 on 14 counts of inciting hatred and one count of violating the memory of the dead" for Holocaust denial (Chan 2017). In her collection of cartoons *Ma déclaration des droits de l'homme* (2005: n.p.), Chard pairs the illustration of a prison door on which the name "E. Zundel" is affixed with a quotation of article 9 of the United Nations' "Universal declaration of the rights of man": "Nul ne peut être arbitrairement arrêté, détenu ou exilé" [No one may be arbitrarily arrested, detained or exiled]. This is a duplicitous comment by Chard, suggesting that Zündel was in fact being arbitrarily detained at the time. A later pairing in the book, of article 19 on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, further clouds the issue by complaining that someone accused of being a "révisionniste" [negationist], does not, in fact, enjoy that freedom. In reality, Holocaust denial is illegal in France, not because it is a matter of opinion, but because it is a falsehood designed to discredit the struggle against antisemitism. In an interview on Radio Courtoisie, a far-right radio station, Chard repeatedly reminded her interviewer to be wary of saying certain things, so as to avoid prosecution under the Gayssot law.[5] And when one of her negationist cartoons was entered into the Holocaust drawings competition in Iran in 2006 and then won a prize there, Chard (2006) and *Rivarol* were quick to state that the competition entry had been made without her knowledge and consent, and that the drawing was an old one, made a dozen years previously. Therefore, just as Chard does in her editorial cartoons, she and her co-author walk a fine line in *Chirac contre les fachos*: they often make thinly veiled visual and textual allusions of various sorts without explicitly stating or depicting their underlying views. Chard and Faye are careful to avoid explicit expressions of negationism, racism and homophobia, and instead represent those discourses indirectly or euphemistically, through more or less transparent allusion, or parodically, for example by mocking antiracist discourse. This is a kind of rhetoric of denial of racism (Van Dijk 1992).

There are in fact several interrelated conspiracies in *Chirac contre les fachos*. Although the story is set at the time of the book's publication, in 2004, it reworks the 2002 Maxime Brunerie assassination attempt, transforming it into part of the build up toward the following presidential elections, to be held in 2007. On the first page, President Chirac summons Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin (2002–5) and the Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, to complain about poll results indicating that 27 percent of French voters intend to vote for the FN candidate (7). Sarkozy proposes to expell twenty illegal aliens who have just been released from prison, whereas Raffarin recommends an advertising campaign. Taken together, these suggestions translate the far-right

claim that the response of the UMP party to illegal immigration is largely symbolic and will always fail to rid the country of Third World immigrants from former French colonies, especially African ones, who are perverting French culture and driving up unemployment among the native French. The most infamous, successful and long-running FN slogan is no doubt "A million unemployed is a million immigrants too many," and versions thereof, discussed in Chapter 1.[6] Unsatisfied with the initial responses of Raffarin and Sarkozy, Chirac then contacts Claude, his daughter and advisor, who arranges a brainstorming meeting in the presidential Elysée palace between Chirac and four "Republican mayors of all tendencies" (8): Bertrand Delanoë (Paris), Jean-Claude Gaudin (Marseille), Philippe Douste-Blazy (Toulouse) and André Labarrère (Pau). This early scene introduces the use by the cartoonists of transparent allusions meant to defame enemies and rivals of the far right: "of all tendencies" is an example of double-entendre. On the one hand, it is a factual reference to the multiple political affiliations of the mayors, of whom two are members of the Socialist Party and two belong to Chirac's UMP. On the other hand it is a sexual allusion, because Delanoë is openly gay and Labarrère was too, and all four are represented as gay here, in clichéd terms ranging from a limp wrist to the way that Chirac refers to his guests (as "gonzesses," a derogatory term for women), as well as their comments to each other about their sexy appearance or lack thereof (e.g., "J'adddore ton falzar moulant!" [I looove your tight pants!]; and "Mais t'a pris du ventre mon Gaugau, t'es moins sexy" [Why you've gained weight my Gaugau, you're less sexy]) (8–9). A comment by the Socialist mayor Delanoë suggests a solution to Chirac's electoral problem: "Pour défendre la république, débrouillez-vous pour interdire le FN et coffrer Le Pen! La démocratie est en état de légitime défense face à la populace facho! La fin justifie les moyens comme disait… euh…" [To defend the republic, figure out a way to ban the FN and lock up Le Pen. Democracy is in a position of self defense against the fascist populace! The end justifies the means, as was said by… er…] (9). This inspires Chirac, who thinks, finishing Delanoë's sentence: "…Lénine. Pas con. J'en parle à Sarko" […Lenin. Not bad. I'll talk with Sarko about it] (9). This meeting too provides a representative sample of far-right ideology: Le Pen often used to speak of "La bande des quatre" [the Gang of Four] to refer to the leaders of the main political parties at the time (PCF, PS, UDF, RPR),[7] thereby associating them all with communism, via the defaming reference to infamous Chinese party leaders, and suggesting that they conspire together against the FN unfairly to block access by his party to political power and to deprive native white French of their only defense (i.e., him and his party) against invading waves of immigrants of color and Muslims. The reference to Lenin also reminds readers that Chirac was close to the French Communist Party in his youth (there is an explicit reference to this later in the story [20]). The idea of the plot is therefore first and foremost an example of political collusion by mainstream parties cynically to exclude the FN and its hapless voters from the democratic process and specifically target its historical leader, Le Pen. The conspiracy gives the lie to democra-

cy and brings together feminized, gay mayors and a brainless ninny, because Chirac is depicted throughout the book as incapable of original thought. By contrast, Le Pen is later represented as virile, intelligent, decisive and forthright.

As soon as the meeting is over, Chirac orders Sarkozy to undertake a covert operation to eliminate his far-right political rival: “Démerde-toi pour faire interdire le Front national. Monte-moi une manip... Dans le respect de la démocratie, naturellement” [Figure out a way to ban the Front National. Set up an undercover operation for me... Respecting democracy, naturally] (10). Sarkozy quickly sets the plot in motion by calling in Inspector Détritus, an undercover agent. Détritus soon finds the right man for the job in “Chez Adolf” [Adolf’s Place], described as “an unsavory bar” [un bar louche] (14). Both the name of the bar and the verbal narrator’s recitative mock anti-fascist discourse, which associates today’s French far right with its antecedents from the Second World War, as we saw with the “Black rat” comics in Chapter 6: “Dans l’atmosphère enfumée on perçoit l’haleine fétide de la bête immonde” [In the smoky atmosphère one perceives the putrid breath of the revolting beast]. “La bête immonde” is a term often applied to Nazism in French, and was used by Jack Marchal to mock leftist discourse in “Les rats maudits,” as we saw in Chapter 6.[8] Of course the bar is full of white skinheads sporting tattoos, drinking and smoking. This is the classical archetype of the violent far right, found also in anti-fascist comics and cartoons, as well as in movies such Mathieu Kassovitz’s *La Haine* [*Hate*] (1995). In fact it has historically been a genuine component of the far right: a notorious example of racist violence by far-right skinheads and of their association with the FN is the drowning death in the Seine river of Brahim Bouarram, a young Moroccan man, by skinheads participating in the FN’s traditional May day parade in 1995. We will see that this physical violence does indeed erupt at the end of the comic book. By contrast, the cartoonists depict their fictional skinhead as a dupe: he is dim-witted and penniless, and therefore easily manipulated when Détritus offers him a monthly salary of 6,000 euros supposedly to join a special operations section of the internal security force that protected Le Pen and FN events (the Département Protection Sécurité [DPS]), for which Détritus claims to work as a recruiter (Faye and Chard 2004: 14).

Throughout the comic book, the cartoonists apply punning pseudonyms to the fictional doubles of the real people whom they depict, no doubt in part to avoid lawsuits but also for satirical, comic effect. The skinhead is one of the first: Minime Blondie inverts the name of Maxime Brunerie. The skinhead’s given name suggests that he is only a pawn, and the shift from brown to blond in his last name both eliminates a possible suggestion of fascist brown shirts (*chemises brunes*) and suggests a white, Aryan identity. The code-name of the plot, “18 Brumaire,” refers back to the coup d’état that ended the Directoire period of the French Revolution and inaugurated the Consulat, leading eventually to Bonaparte’s complete seizure of power. It also reminds us that Brunerie chose Bastille day for his attack. The cartoonists thereby again suggest that

the French republic and its revolutionary heritage are merely a façade hiding totalitarianism. Whereas Brunerie shot at Chirac as the president's motorcade drove down the Champs-Elysées, Détritus drives Blondie to a rather different setting for his assassination attempt (20): he is to shoot at Chirac as the president gives a speech at a newly built mosque in the city of Gacougnol-les-Bouzouilles (21), an untranslatable, ridiculous name. The imam has an offensive name: Omar Allah Moriken, an obvious homophone for "homard à l'armoricaine" [lobster prepared in the Armorican fashion] that clearly points to Hergé's Moroccan drug lord named Omar Ben Salaad, in *Le crabe aux pinces d'or* [*The Crab with the Golden Claws*] (Hergé 1981b [1941]: 328, 331, 341–5; 1981b). The UMP helped push for a French Islam, which the Imam would represent, as his name suggests. However, when Chirac gives his speech at the mosque about secular tolerance for Islam in France, it is met by a barrage of threats and insults, such as "Nique la France!" [Fuck France!], "Islam vaincra" [Islam will win] and "Vive Oussama!" [Long live Osama!] (Faye and Chard 2004: 22), recalling Osama bin Laden. The scene includes one of Chard's recurring caricatural images: immigrant, formerly colonized others as a hostile, threatening horde in France.

When Blondie arrives at the mosque, having been brought there by Détritus, he shoots at and misses Chirac – Sarkozy's undercover agent had told him to aim high because the rifle was misaligned – which spares the president from harm.[9] Blondie is then captured by undercover police officers who had been waiting for him and is interrogated by them. However, only Sarkozy himself is able to extract the required confession, through threats. The fabrication eventually breaks down, when a judge sees through the coerced, false confession (42) and then during a television interview when Sarkozy accidentally mentions the top-secret role of Détritus (43). By the end of the book, Chirac has been reduced to a whimpering state and goes to bed, not knowing to whom he should turn to get out of the mess (46). At this point, Détritus shows up again, in a doctor's uniform, and injects the president with the "[l]e radjaïdja, le poison qui rend fou!" [The radjaïdja, the poison that makes one go mad!], exulting afterward that Sarkozy will be happy. This explicit borrowing from Hergé is potentially complex: in *Les cigares du pharaon* [*The Cigars of the Pharaoh*] (1979 [1934]: 89, 107–9) and *Le lotus bleu* [*The Blue Lotus*] (1979 [1936]: 147–8, 187–90), the poison is wielded by an Indian fakir and a Japanese spy, Mitsuhirato, who are part of a drug trafficking ring, but the use of an injection (as opposed to the fakir's poison-dipped blow darts) may also remind us of the sinister Doctor Krollspell in *Vol 714 pour Sydney* [*Flight 714*] (2000b [1968]: 23–31). In both cases, the mastermind is Roberto Rastapopoulos, who – Hugo Frey (2008b) has convincingly argued – is an antisemitic caricature. This scene therefore implicitly puts Sarkozy, of Jewish heritage, in the position of Hergé's arch-fiend Rastapopolous.

A few other textual indicators suggest that the cartoonists may in fact be weaving an antisemitic conspiracy theory. After Détritus cons Blondie into participating in the fake plot to kill Chirac, he calls Sarkozy from a pay phone (Faye and Chard 2004:

14). In one frame we see Détritus speaking to Sarkozy in code: "Hyène rouge à Chacal crochu? Ça roule, le poisson est ferré" [Red hyena to Hooked jackal? It's working, the fish is caught]. In the subsequent frame, we see a silhouette of Sarkozy, whose bent nose and protruding lips are reminiscent of classic antisemitic caricature, including in drawings by Hergé. At the end of the book, the radjaïdja poison triggers a paranoïd nightmare in Chirac, who dreams that his predecessor, President François Mitterrand, returns as the "mythe errant" [wandering myth], a homophonic pun on the Socialist president's name that of course recalls the stereotype of the "juif errant" [wandering Jew] (46). Sarkozy is part of a chorus of characters singing to Chirac. Mitterrand says that he himself had been a fascist in his youth (he was in fact an official in the collaborationist Vichy government), and counsels Chirac to let history simply run its course. The following frames show this occuring, as one prominent figure after another is killed by a fascist regime: Prime Minister Raffarin, Alain Juppé (then leader of the UMP), Bernadette Chirac (the president's wife), Delanoë and Douste-Blazy (47). Finally, Chirac's ultimate fear is realized, when not Le Pen but Sarkozy arrests him in his bed, staging a coup d'état. So here we see Sarkozy, the grandson of a man raised as a Jew (Sarkozy's maternal grandfather, Bénédict Mallah), staging a coup d'état against Chirac, the French president who, in 1995, officially recognized the responsibility of the French state in the genocide of the Jews, an unwelcome and unwarranted act according to the French far right. I readily agree that the elements I have pointed to as constituting an antisemitic slur against Sarkozy are sparse and cryptic, but if my reading is accurate, then the story rehearses an antisemitic conspiracy theory.

Whether or not the two Sarkozy-led conspiracies – first against Le Pen and the FN, then in Chirac's nightmare of being deposed by his Minister of the Interior – are antisemitic, the comic book does present the mainstream political parties colluding with other forces in French society in a kind of conspiracy to exclude from power both the FN and the average French whites the party claims to represent. By the same token, this collusion against French nativists as unfairly labeled fascists also constitutes a kind of conspiracy against French identity. To make their case, the cartoonists depict specific well-known personalities and generic caricatural types. In the days before he goes to the mosque, Chirac consults various leaders from civil society, given ridiculous and demeaning names, who counsel him about the nature of fascism and how to respond to it. Here again, the selection of public figures of Jewish heritage suggests an antisemitic conspiracy theory: Bernard-Henri Lévy, or BHL, becomes BHV, which stands for the Bazaar de l'Hôtel de Ville (a famous Parisian department store) (12); Jean-Marie Lustiger, born Aron Lustiger, a cardinal and the archbishop of Paris, becomes Le Joyeux [The Jolly One] through a translation of his German Jewish surname into French (12); and Joseph Haïm Sitruk, grand rabbi of France, becomes Spamontruk (18; cf. "c'est pas mon truc" [ItAin'tMyThing]). Interlocutors of Muslim North African heritage receive similar treatment: Dalil Boubakeur, rector of the Great Mosque of Par-

is and first president of a national French organization of Muslims (Conseil français du culte musulman), becomes Dalil Barbokeur (barbe au coeur) [beard in the heart] (13); and Malek Boutih becomes Malah Boutih (mal abouti) [poorly finished] (13). These puns are entirely in the vein of Le Pen's vicious humor: for example, he famously called Kofi Yamgnane, the Togolese-Frenchman who served as French Secretary of state in charge of integration (1991–3), "Yaka Miam Miam" (Charaudeau 2008) perhaps suggesting African cannibalism (cf. Il n'y a qu'à miam miam [You only have to eat]).

The cartoonists also parody the anti-FN demonstrations that took place between the two rounds of presidential elections in 2002: a first frame caricaturing several famous leaders (Faye and Chard 2004: 33) is followed by a page filled with Chard's generic caricatures of various groups (a multiethnic crowd of immigrants rights activists, trade unionists and antiracists, a multiethnic group of youths, pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel activists, and anti-fascist intellectuals on the right and left). The cartoonists attribute entirely improbable slogans to the demonstrators in each frame, and depict the demonstrations degenerating into bigoted fights. They thereby deform the protest movement of 2002, which decried the intolerant politics of the FN. This is a typical rhetorical move by the far right: refusal to tolerate the far-right exclusion of gays, people of color, Third-World immigrants and foreigners is recast as intolerance of native-born, average white French citizens. The comic-book narrative depicts the anti-fascist movement uniting various leaders in government, political parties and civil society with protestors of various ethnic and other types that the far right despises. This effectively suggests a collusion of interests presented here as, in essence and at the base, a conspiracy against the FN and more generally the entire far right.

The effectiveness of the comic-book narrative as a vehicle for spreading intolerance derives from several elements. First, it allows the cartoonists to weave together several conspiracy theories into a more-or-less coherent narrative that assigns to the French government the responsibility for what was in fact an historical attack on it by an individual from the far right. It thereby inverts the roles of victim and attacker. Instead of being the potential victim of the attack by Brunerie, Chirac, along with Sarkozy, bears criminal responsibility for an attack on the FN via the manipulation of Blondie. The narrative also permits the articulation of caricatures of recognizable leaders with derogatory depictions of generic social and ethnic types in a way that indicts national leadership for the decline of French national identity and culture, which is a classic accusation and theme of the far right. It uses euphemisms and indirect or passing allusions to malign specific individuals and groups in a satirical manner. It deploys those and other rhetorical techniques, as well as parody, for comic effect, to avoid accusations of libel, and to produce and camouflage antisemitic and other racist ideology and imagery. And the cartoonists clearly support the FN and its leaders, who are not caricatured, whereas Chirac and other politicians from more mainstream parties are.

## A remarkable postcolonial turn

Far-right comics such as "Léopold Micheteau, détective" (Sokal and A.D.G. 1981), *Avant-guerre* (Faye, Simon and Simon 1985), *Douce France* (Sergueï n.d.), *Français passionnément* (Frank, Lefort and Bariller 1995) and *Chirac contre les fachos* (Faye and Chard 2004), studied in this chapter and the preceding one, are in different genres, were published over a span of almost a quarter century, and correspond to different moments in the history of the far right and of neocolonialism in France. However, they have much in common. Several of the cartoonists explicitly inscribe their comics within a tradition of far-right, French-language cartooning in Europe, specifically through references to Hergé's Tintin series, as Coral too did in his early 1960s comics. Several of them also spread negative and often more-or-less covertly racist representations of Jews, including prominent public figures such Simone Veil (*Avant-guerre*; *Français passionnément!*),[10] Serge Gainsbourg (*Avant-guerre*), Julien Dray (*Douce France*), Bernard-Henri Lévy (*Chirac contre les fachos*; "Auda, princesse wisigothe"),[11] Marek Halter ("Auda, princesse wisigothe")[12] and Rabbi Joseph Haïm Sitruk (*Chirac contre les fachos*).[13] With the exception of some early strips (such as "Les rats maudits"), most of these far-right comics also represent postcolonial ethnic minority groups in violently negative ways. Already in *Journal d'un embastillé* (1962: n.p.), Coral included hostile caricatural representations of a prominent Jew (Socialist politician Pierre Mendès France as a crab) and Algerians in France: he represented peaceful Algerian demonstrators who were victims of police brutality on 17 October 1961, as a rioting mob (McKinney 2011b).

A more recent comic in two volumes makes a remarkable postcolonial turn in representation of ethnic minority groups in France. The first volume of *Yacht People* is subtitled *Quenelle en haute mer* [Quenelle on the High Seas] (Dieudonné, Soral and Zéon 2013 [2012]). Scripted by Alain Soral (Alain Bonnet), with dialogues by Dieudonné (Dieudonné M'bala M'bala) and drawn by Zéon (Pascal Fernandez), it was published by Kontre Kulture, Soral's publishing imprint. Before delving into the comic book, an extended contextual detour through the thought of Soral is no doubt necessary, because despite the significant influence of Soral and those in his ideological orbit, including Dieudonné, on youths and popular culture in France, they are far less known and understood than, say, far-right politicians Jean-Marie and Marine Le Pen. Knowledge of the Soral phenomenon is useful for understanding the postcolonial turn that *Quenelle en haute mer* represents in the far-right comics tradition. Soral articulates his thought in videos, and in books published by Kontre Kulture (Di Mascio 2016: 28), and through the "reinformation" (26) web site of his organization, named "Egalité et Réconcialiation" [Equality and Reconciliation]. In fact, Soral's site, egaliteetreconciliation.fr, and Dieudonné's, dieudosphere.com, have been some of the most visited ones in France, with "4 to 12 million visitors per month" (Di Mascio 2016: 7). Egalité et Réconciliation's motto, which features prominently on its website, is "gauche du travail, droite des valeurs, pour une

réconciliation nationale," which might be loosely translated as "the working-class left and values from the political right come together for national reconciliation." Bruno Di Mascio (2016: 16) explains that the "political form" proposed by Soral "constitutes a real counter-society, [... a] 'politics of rupture.'" His goal is to "bring together nationalist whites of Catholic culture and Muslims from the popular classes," which is what passes for "national reconciliation" in Soral's counter-society (23): "the productive and conservative small folks against social progressivism and neo-liberal, financeer and globalized capital" (8). The "values from the political right" or "social conservatism" provide the cement that holds these groups together (23). Di Mascio (24–5) explains that, in Soral's thought, working-class white nationalists ("petits Blancs" [poor Whites]) and Muslims share a common experience of social marginalization, economic disenfranchisement, and cultural discrimination imposed by "the dominant ideology" or "the System" (11), which is supposedly controlled by Zionists, Jews and Freemasons, who are therefore depicted as the common enemies of the two alienated working-class groups (21–5, 31). Soral's thought is against homosexuality (19) and feminism (18–19), and relies heavily on conspiracy theories (8, 11, 28–9). Di Mascio argues that Soral "updates [...] the hatred of Jews, while also superposing on it the Palestinian cause and the '*banlieue*' anti-Zionism specific to the '*new Judeophobia*'" (22, original emphasis; cf. 28–30). Egalité et Réconciliation has thereby succeeded in federating groups of alienated French whites, or "Français de souche," and Muslim or Arab French, including many youths (7, 12), who often strongly identify with the Palestinian cause and are regularly victims of racist discrimination and socioeconomic marginalization in France. Soral's cooperation with Dieudonné, beginning in 2005, has helped attract youths from postcolonial ethnic minorities (19). The alliance, or at least cohabitation, between those ethnic minorities and the far-right whites is foreign to most contemporary far-right organizations, who often blame recent immigrant and ethnic minority groups composed of Muslims, Arabs or North Africans for economic insecurity, and dilution or weakening of traditional French culture. Soral has also worked with Farida Belghoul, an Algerian-French activist who was a member of the French Communist Party's youth group, before helping to lead the 1984 antiracist rally Convergence '84 and then writing a remarkable novel, *Georgette!* (1986), that was part of the early wave of *Beur* or Maghrebi-French literature during the 1980s.[14] By 2014, Belghoul had moved to the far right and was organizing "Journées de Retrait de l'Ecole" (JRE) [Days of Withdrawal from School] to protest against the weakening of male and female roles through gender-neutral teaching in public schools (24). There are certainly continuities between Belghoul's 2014 organizing and her 1986 novel, including a strong focus on received gender categories and the key role of the national public school system in educating youths from postcolonial ethnic minorities. Di Mascio (24) notes that Belghoul found common cause with Christine Boutin, an arch-conservative Catholic activist and politician. Like Soral, Belghoul has pointed to a Masonic conspiracy against her (31). Di Mascio (24) goes on to argue that:

> If Islam is attractive within the far right incarnated by Egalité et Réconciliation, it is precisely because of its image as a virile and antimodern religion, and even a religion of those persecuted by American imperialism and of course the victim of Israeli colonization in Palestine.

Soral and Dieudonné have also been close friends and allies of a Black supremacist leader, Kemi Seba, born and raised in Strasbourg by parents from Benin. Seba blames Jews for the enslavement of Blacks, and is reported to have belonged to the French branch of Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam (33; Chichizola and Gabizon 2006). If both Soral and Dieudonné are clearly aligned with the cultural values of the far right and its organizational focus on the marginalized among the working class, they also have direct personal connections to other far-right organizations and figures. Across his lifetime, Soral moved from briefly being a member of the French Communist Party (PCF) to being named by Jean-Marie Le Pen to the Central Committee of the FN, on which he served from 2007 to 2009 (Di Mascio 2016: 19–20). He left the Committee in protest against Marine Le Pen's cosmetic mainstreaming of the party (20), and his web site housed videos of Jean-Marie Le Pen after Marine Le Pen began disassociating herself from her father (32). Soral created Egalité and Réconciliation with the help of former members of GUD who were close to the FN (19–20; on GUD, see Chapter 6). Jean-Marie Le Pen is the godfather of one of Dieudonné's daughters (Agence France Presse 2008). Moreover, Dieudonné invited Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson on stage repeatedly during his shows, in 2008, 2009 and 2011 (Di Mascio 2016: 30).[15] Di Mascio (29–30) argues that cartoonists Zéon and Joe le Corbeau [Joe the Crow][16] "participate [...] in the creation of a visual identity and an anti-Zionist graphic imaginary." As Di Mascio (30) notes, this led to Zéon being judged guilty on 20 September 2013 for "provocation à la haine raciale" [incitement to racial hatred], although he later won his appeal. In a later case, on 21 December 2017, Soral received a suspended sentence and a fine, and Zéon was also fined for antisemitism in cartoons by the latter published on the web site of the former (they were cleared on appeal, on 9 May 2019).[17] Soral has been found guilty several times for Holocaust denial, publicly inciting hatred, and other acts. In 2019, Dieudonné, who has also been found guilty of antisemitic infractions, was condemned to three years in prison and a fine for fiscal fraud, a judgment coming after numerous prior sentences against him (Gurrey 2019).

*Quenelle en haute mer* continues the far-right theme of antisemitism that we have seen in other far-right comics, including through its very negative depictions of many prominent French Jews.[18] The book's title advertises the story's antisemitism in a typical far-right manner meant to ward off legal prosecution: the word "quenelle" refers to the arm gesture that Dieudonné has promoted as a legal substitute for the Nazi salute, which can bring a prison sentence in France, depending on the context. The comic book contains at least one classic far-right conspiracy reference to Freemasonry.[19] *Quenelle*

*en haute mer* and the sequel volume are also unrelentingly homophobic and heavily misogynistic, which are recurring far-right tendencies (Novak 2011: 117). Through a flashback, the first volume recounts a televised cruise sponsored by a Russian oligarch, Sergey Ploucatchov (a satire of Sergueï Pougatchev), on his huge, luxurious yacht. The junket's putative *raison d'être* is to raise money for starving African children (Dieudonné, Soral and Zéon 2013: 17–18), but it is in fact a pretext for an orgy of gluttony and sex (24–5). The kitchen is staffed by various Third World leaders with blood on their chef's aprons (18), indicating that we are to read this as a cynical allegory of global politics, in which monied cosmopolitan elites give lip service to humanitarian goals while profiting from violence done in their name by dictators, in this case literally eating the poor. The prevalence of Jews among Ploucatchov's guests indicates that, like Hergé's *L'étoile mystérieuse* [*The Shooting Star*] (2005 [1942]), this is an antisemitic conspiracy theory. Including various other characters who are not Jews (e.g., fashion designer Jean-Paul Gaultier; 39) helps provide cover to the cartoonists, who may thereby protest that their story is not antisemitic. Discovering which characters are based on Jews, and who the real-life models are, is then part of an antisemitic game that the authors invite their readers to participate in. Various people of color who are stars, such as stand-up comedian and actor Jamel Debbouze (18) and Pouffy or Pouf Dodu [Plump Whore] (i.e., Puff Daddy) (22), are represented as grotesque clowns who have sold out to a system that otherwise betrays postcolonial ethnic minorities.[20] Two Black characters are represented as victims: Nafissatou (clearly referring to Nafissatou Diallo) (3–5, 33), and an orphan boy named Cham (i.e., Ham) who miraculously escaped the Tutsi genocide (7). Both are the virtual slaves of Jewish men. Nafissatou cleans dishes in the galley, where she is sexually molested by a character modeled on Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who tells her to hurry up, perhaps so that he can rape her when she is done with the dishes (19). Professor Moshé Sussfeld, perhaps based on the media executive Alain Sussfeld, rapes Cham, his adopted son (19). After setting out from Qatar, the cruise ship is ambushed by Black African pirates in the Persian Gulf. The wanton violence of the pirates allows the cartoonists to depict horrific fates for several Jewish public figures, notably the caricatural double of Bernard-Henri Lévy, whose face is torn apart by a grappling hook when the pirates board the ship (25). Various elements point to the identity of the cartoonists, beginning with references to "quenelles" in the volume's subtitle and on the splash page at the end of the volume (44). The book's first page depicts Nafissatou arriving in Swnät-äñña, Ethiopia, a week after the cruise's departure. While she buys a drink in a bar, we see a television broadcast showing the only Westerner who survived the cruise ship's voyage. On the title page we see an image that, we will learn during the attack by the pirates, is a subjective one of the ship's captain, a drunk: he dreams he is on a tropical island with bare-breasted women, listening to another man sing "Sho-Sho-Shoananas" (34). Both Swnät-äñña and "Sho-Sho-Shoananas" are transparent references to Dieudonné's antisemitic song "Shoananas," which makes light of the Holocaust (cf.

"Shoah," "nana" [girl] and "ananas" [pineapple]). Two of the cartoonists are also named through passing allusions that ironically represent them as victims of hate or slander: a Dieudonné voodoo doll that a lawyer has been pricking with pins (39.3) and graffiti on a wall ("Soral m'a tuer [sic]" [Soral killed me]; 39.5).[21]

In 2014, Dieudonné, Soral and Zéon published *Au dessus c'est le soleil*, the second volume of their comic-book series, which is as violently racist as the first volume. Ploucatchov cuts a deal with the head of the pirates (11–16, 19–20), but unknown to Ploucatchov, Sussfeld asks a fellow Jew, "Henri" (i.e., Henry) Kissinger, to save them (23–5). The authors thereby reveal their vision of contemporary world history as being arranged by Jews in the United States doing what is best for themselves and for Israel. Zéon's depiction of Sussfeld throughout both volumes is entirely antisemitic. He is a "pédopsychiatre devenu producteur de cinéma" [pedopsychiatrist become cinema producer], has a huge hooked nose and smokes cigars – his lighter is inscribed with a Hannukah candle holder (Dieudonné, Soral and Zéon 2013: 7). His use of his adopted Black son Cham as a sex slave alludes to the antisemitic libel accusing Jews of enslaving Black Africans. When he embarks on the ship, he is followed by several characters hauling aboard his luggage, huge Vuitton lockers: one marked "Israel" is on the back of a barefoot man wearing a Palestinian headscarf with feet shackled to a ball and chain, another marked "Holocaust" is carried by a man in traditional German clothes, who is followed by Jesus carrying his cross, and a third locker is borne by a Black man in chains (7.5). Two panels in *Au dessus c'est le soleil* that feature Kissinger conversing with Sussfeld help summarize the authors' antisemitic conspiracy theory. In the first, we see Kissinger at his desk at the beginning of a teleconference call by computer with Sussfeld (Dieudonné, Soral and Zéon 2014: 23.3). On his desk sit two miniature flags, of the United States and Israel, crossed together, signifying their alliance. Just in front of him, a cut-open skull serves as an ashtray. To Kissinger's left are four large file sleeves labeled "CIA: Operation Condor," "Guerre du Kippour" [Yom Kippour War], "Vietnam War" and "Dislocation Yougoslavie: NATO." In and around the sleeves we see pages marked "911," "Agent Orange," "Timor oriental" [East Timor], "Salvador Allende" and "Pinochet." On yellow notes stuck to his computer screen are written "Moon Lie," "Apollo / Area 51," "Bnaï Brith," "Watergate," and "Pessa'h" above a star of David. A gold model of the tabernacle serves as a pencil sharpener, and Kissinger's bookshelves are lined with volumes of Jewish texts, including the Talmud and writings by Maimonides. Taken together, these refer to a few constellations of events or entities, some overlapping: Jewish identity and Israeli hegemony, imperialist actions by the United States abroad, and real or imagined conspiracies. The second panel shows Kissinger up close, staring out at readers through gold-rimmed glasses, although his eyes are hidden, and smoking a fat cigar (26.3–4), a classic antisemitic image of the Jewish plutocrat that Hergé often used (Frey 2008b). To his right, his thought balloon is filled with twenty-five gears that are all either interlocking or connected by

three pulleys. All of the gears are named, and five have Jewish or Israeli labels: "Grand Israel" [Great Israel], "Sionisme" [Zionism], "Rothschild," "Bnaï Brith" and "Mossad." Three other gears are named after spy or mercenary agencies: "MI 6 / MI 5," "Central Intelligence Agency" and "Blackwater." Four refer to countries or supra-national entities: "Qatar," "Arabie Saoudite" [Saudi Arabia], "UE" [EU] and "Nouvel ordre mondial" [New World Order]. Six refer to banking institutions or financial concepts: "La City / Londres" [The City / London], "Wall Street," "FED / 1913 Federal Reserve," "Banque / Système bancaire" [Bank / Banking system], "Oligarchie / Finance mondialisée" [Oligarchy / Globalized finance], "Usure / Spéculation" [Usury / Speculation]. Five allude to war and terrorism: "Complexe militaro-industriel" [Military-industrial complex], "Terrorisme," "Al Qaïda," "Guerre humanitaire" [Humanitarian war] and "IIIe guerre mondiale" [Third World War]. Two are labeled for entities that figure prominently in far-right conspiracy theories: a Masonic symbol is on a small blue pulley linked to the "Bnaï Brith" gear and pulley, and another gear is labeled "CFR / Bilderberg," for the Council on Foreign Relations and the Bilderberg Meeting. Below Kissinger is a demonic goat figure with a star of David on its forehead and a braided beard. It holds two tablets with the antithesis of the ten commandments, beginning with "Tu n'auras pas d'autre dieu que satan" [You will have no other god but satan]. Floating around, as though poisoned by his smoke acting like Agent Orange, are thirteen babies with physical malformations.

If I have enumerated the references in these two panels at length, it is because together they denote the elements of far-right conspiracy theories expounded by Soral, Dieudonné, Zéon and many others around the globe. If I have mostly avoided indicating which gears and pulleys are proximate or directly connected to each other, it is in part because those linkages are secondary to the overall picture. The main fact is that far-right conspiracy theorists try to represent the world through *some* completely interconnected linkage between these or similar entities or forces. The gear-and-pulley mechanism in the thought balloon is a drawn metaphor for far-right, antisemitic conspiracy thought. The mechanism is interconnected in a way meant to suggest an explanation for a hidden process controlled ultimately by powerful Jews such as Kissinger.[22] Conspiracy theories alluded to in the two panels include the notion that the 11 September 2001 attacks by Al Qaïda were carried out by Jews and the American government, and that the Apollo space landing on the moon was fake or that it was part of an American government attempt to contact extraterrestrials through the Area 51 base in Nevada. It is not clear whether the cartoonists subscribe to all of these conspiracy theories. They may be alluding to some simply in jest, or to provide themselves with the ability to claim in court that some or all of the work was just a joke satirizing conspiracy theories. After all, they preface the book with a nose-thumbing disclaimer aimed precisely at the specialized French court charged with determining whether laws against defamation and those governing the press and media have been broken (4):

> Nous précisons en outre que toute ressemblance avec des personnages, des situations existantes ou ayant existé, ne saurait être que pure coïncidence; et qu'en aucun cas les auteurs ne pourront être poursuivis devant la 17e chambre du tribunal de grande instance de Paris pour laquelle ils ont le plus grand respect.
>
> Moreover we make clear that any resemblence with characters [sic, instead of *personnes*, i.e., "people"], situations that exist or have existed, is purely coincidental; and that in no case will the authors be able to be charged before the 17th Chamber of the High Court of Paris, for which they have the greatest respect.

Not withstanding this formal disavowal, the rest of the volume unfolds an antisemitic conspiracy theory that implicates fictional characters and defames many real people through transparent allusions to them, just as in the other far-right comics studied here.[23] Kissinger immediately picks up his hotline to the American president, a red phone with Mickey Mouse on it, and calls Obama, depicted as a puppet, in the Oval Office. With him are Zbigniew Brzezinski (unnamed, but visually recognizable), who has "Bnaï Brith" inscribed on his coat-pocket handkerchief, and a general who has "WASP" emblazoned on his cap. On speaker phone, Kissinger announces to the trio, "Messieurs, je crois qu'on tient notre nouveau 11 septembre" [Sirs, I think we have our new September 11] (27.3). This is a clearer allusion to the 9/11 conspiracy theory already mentioned. The "new version" of this purported conspiracy will involve massacring the African pirates and all the remaining boat passengers, even Sussfeld, except for two: the film director, whom they intentionally spare and bring home with them, and Nafissatou Diallo, a silent witness throughout the hostage crisis and fighting, who will leave the boat at the end (21.1–2, 28.2, 42.6, 46.2, 57). Once the American soldiers, under the command of Colin Powell (52.4), have murdered all the passengers listed in their playbook, which has "Mossad" stamped on the back (42.4), a "false flag" team plants evidence on the boat suggesting the hijacking had been the work of Islamist terrorists (51.3). The role of the French journalist who was spared from the massacre is to act as a witness for the American-Israeli hoax, first by lying to the press upon arriving, wounded, at the Elysée palace in the first volume (Dieudonné, Soral and Zéon 2013: 5), before the flashback to what really happened that makes up the bulk of that volume and the next. Second, he directs a film titled "Yacht Terror" that retells the lie and earns an Oscar at the end of the second volume (Dieudonné, Soral and Zéon 2014: 61). In the propaganda movie, Johnny Depp, unnamed but recognizable, kills a saber-wielding terrorist wearing a beard and a turban, with a copy of *Mein Kampf* in his safari jacket pocket. As Depp shoots him, the American yells "Terroriste islamo-nazi!" (60.3). In the audience at the Oscars, the cartoonists put an array of contemporary cultural figures whom they tie into their antisemitic conspiracy theory or mock for other reasons (62). For example, on the left, sitting side by side are, from left to right, Claude Lanzmann holding a DVD

collection titled *Shoah 2: Le retour* [Shoah 2: The Return], Benjamin Netanyahou, with a bloodstained butcher's apron over his suit and pointing to Lanzmann's DVDs, Stephen Spielberg filming the ceremony, Woody Allen holding an Asian girl in front of him (no doubt modeled on Soon-Yi Previn), and Roman Polanski holding a blonde white girl in front of him (probably Samantha Geimer). The audience also includes Disney characters, Hergé and Tintin, and Superdupont, a comics character created by Jacques Lob and Gotlib (i.e., Marcel Gottlieb, a French Jew whose father died in Buchenwald), to parody American superheroes. The authors suggest once again here in their conclusion that the mass media in general, and the film industry in particular, are in the service of a Jewish-controlled, Israeli-American empire, which they associate here with the evil empire of the Star Wars series: Kissinger participates in the cloaked guise of Palpatine in the American military attack – with warships and missile-shooting helicopters – on the hijacked ship, and finally orders the execution of Sussfeld "pour la cause" [for the cause] (52–5). At the awards ceremony, the journalist holds his Oscar aloft, proclaiming that it also belongs to Moshé (Sussfeld), "mon ami, mon frère" [my friend, my brother], but when we turn the page and see him from behind, looking out at the audience, we see that he is crossing his fingers. This virtual wink invites readers to participate in the conspiracy theory that Hollywood is run by Jews in the service of the American empire and themselves, a theory already at work in the depiction of Rastapopoulos in Hergé's comics (Frey 2008b). In reading these two comic books by Dieudonné, Soral and Zéon, one might remember Hergé's Tintin series, including *Coke en Stock* [*The Red Sea Sharks*] (Hergé 1986 [1958]), which had already rehearsed some of the very same antisemitic conspiracy theories, namely control of the film industry by a nefarious Jew and enslavement of Blacks by Jews (Rastapopoulos/Di Gorgonzola).[24] Dieudonné and Soral are two of the best-known purveyors of antisemitic libels in France today. Through allusions, their comics repeatedly engage in Holocaust mockery and denial, for example by showing Ploucatchov hiding his money in a safe covered by a painting of a prison camp (Dieudonné, Soral and Zéon 2014: 20.1), recalling the libel that the Holocaust is a fake story in the service of a money-making scam,[25] or the journalist dressed in white-and-blue striped pajamas and playing an online "quenelle" game involving pineapples (21.4), reminding us of the uniforms of death camp prisoners, Dieudonné's "Shoanana" song, and the meaning of the "quenelle" gesture.[26] Tracking these sly references strewn throughout the comic book must be part of the pleasure of antisemitic readers, though some details are so small as to require the use of a magnifying glass. The slyness is partly an attempt to avoid legal prosecution for racism and Holocaust denial.

*Yacht People* represents an important and somewhat surprising postcolonial turn in far-right comics. It is indicative of an antisemitic trend within France in general, including among postcolonial ethnic minorities, one that has provided audiences for Dieudonné's racist comedy routines: they include French youths of North African and West African heritage from working-class *banlieues* (Di Mascio 2016: 46–7). The cartoon-

ists mock French citizens of postcolonial ethnic heritage as sell-outs who have joined the ruling elite: for example, S.O.S. Racisme president Cindy Leoni (Dieudonné, Soral and Zéon 2014: 40.4), Socialist party politician Najat Vallaud-Belkacem (40.6), Socialist party politician and Minister of Justice Christiane Taubira (40.6), President of S.O.S. Racisme and Socialist party politician Malek (Abdelmalek) Boutih (40.4, 40.6), rappers La Fouine (Laouni Mouhid; 40.6) and Kaaris (Armand Gnakouri Okou; 40.6) are all depicted in a grotesque manner and then massacred by the Americans. The cartoonists represent a few Black and Arab French as their allies on the final page of *Au dessus c'est le soleil*, where several sitting in the audience give the "quenelle" salute (62). They include soccer star Nicolas Anelka and actor Ramzy Bedia. Soral and Dieudonné are sitting next to them. Novak (2011: 288–9) notes both the "graphic modernity" of two 2011 posters of Soral's Egalité et Réconciliation that he reproduces, and the "relents nauséabonds" [foul odors] of their content: "It is all there: Freemasons, international plot, antisemitism, plutocratic power and so many other enemies." This, he says, recalls earlier far-right iconography, but in an indirectly allusive, euphemistic and ironic mode that requires a multi-layered reading:

> E&R [...] ties back into the demonic and terrifying style of the fascist posters of the 1930s. But today the old demons have been revised and corrected with a consumate art of suggestion and veiling. E&R plays with a tone that recalls the cynicism of the cartoonists of the French collaboration with the Nazis. First, second and third degrees, all its visuals are coded and require several levels of reading.

Earlier in his study, in a section on the "Dieudonnisation des esprits" [the influence of Dieudonné on minds] – recalling the expression "Le lepenisation des esprits" [The influence of Le Pen on minds] – Novak (142–4) analyzes three posters promoting Dieudonné's and Soral's candidatures on an "anti-Zionist" list for the 2009 European elections. He notes that the posters' iconography is antisemitic and recalls that of the far-right leagues between the two world wars. One poster's pastiche of another poster, for the film *The Matrix*, is "a well wrought media campaign": "Because what hides in a seductive form is horribly cynical and aimed at a target audience, that of the *banlieues*."[27] The antisemitism peddled by Soral, Dieudonné and their collaborators in comics, stand up comedy, online videos and elsewhere has provided some *banlieue* youths with a false and facile way of reading French society, and of misguidedly laying blame for their own real and perceived victimization. Persistent discrimination against postcolonial working-class minorities in France is all too real. Adopting antisemitic views allows some youths from those groups a perverse integration into society, through a longstanding tradition of hate and violence against another French ethnic minority.

## Conclusion: facing racist hatred and humor

Why is it important to study the depressingly hate-filled cartoons and comics studied in this chapter and the previous one, and why now, sometimes decades after their publication? First, they provide insight into the historical evolution of French society in general, and the field of comics in particular, at crucial turning points. Some of these works have circulated in France in the recent past, and no doubt continue to do so: for example, several copies of *Douce France* were for sale in 2012 at La Licorne bleue, a now-defunct, far-right bookstore in Paris. Other far-right cartoonists – including the likes of Chard, Konk (Laurent Fabre) and David Miège – continue daily to publish related imagery online, in books and in print periodicals including *Rivarol*, *Minute* and *Présent*, all distributed at newsstands across France. Today, online stores such as Kontre Kulture sell far-right comics, and websites publish antisemitic and anti-immigrant cartoons. Therefore, this type of imagery is by no means only a thing of the past. Finally, analyzing far-right cartoons and comics alongside ones with diametrically opposed perspectives on colonialism, immigration and ethnic minorities in France – by artists such as Zeina Abirached, Yvan Alagbé, Baru, Farid Boudjellal or Roland Monpierre – helps us better understand the comics by the latter, and better appreciate why they are so vital and necessary today, as the far right continues to strive for sociocultural influence and political power in France.

## Notes

1 Lebovics (1992: 39–45, 171–88).

2 After they denied responsibility for his act, Brunerie claimed not to have been very close to them (Brunerie and Rol 2011: 148–9).

3 After leaving prison, Brunerie published an autobiography co-written with a journalist, Christian Rol (Brunerie and Rol 2011), who later also co-wrote the memoir of another far-right figure. The book blames Brunerie's love interest (19, 93, 153–6), his parents and especially his supposedly over protective mother (117–19) for leading him to his act and purports to describe his abandonment of far-right and racist convictions after it (e.g., 19, 187–8), but with an ambivalence typical of far-right comics aimed to avoid censorship and to spread racist views. For example, his list of antiracists includes a high percentage of Jews (48–9). Other well-known Jewish figures are mentioned pejoratively (51, 74–5). He reads far-right authors while in prison (136, 186). References to them (38, 41, 51, 55, 89–90, 161, 193) and to French far-right history (56, 74, 158, 163) are scattered more or less uncritically throughout. He celebrates far-right skinhead music (20, 23, 73). A supposed friend in prison, "an African from Cergy-Pontoise" (191), is nicknamed "Kaïra" (190–2), a homophone for "caillera," backslang for "racaille," pejorative terms appearing elsewhere in the

book as the opposite of "French" (54, 87, 115, 128, 175, 212). Another character encountered in prison is a Jewish banker nicknamed "lord Larnak," homophone of "l'arnaque" [swindle] (111, 120–2, 132). White supremacist ideology (55), including pagan Celtic mythology (58–61, 106, 134, 158, 189–91, 214), is extolled. The far right in general, and Brunerie in particular, are represented as the victims of society (e.g., 150–2, 160, 179, 185, 220–1). For a time, Brunerie belonged to PNFE (11–12, 57–62, 156, 165), the neo-nazi party in whose periodical Sergueï serialized *Douce France*, and to GUD (30, 65–78), which published the "Rats noirs" or "Rats maudits" comics (67), before he joined Mégret's Mouvement National Républicain (MNR) (30, 78–91, 157).

4 I do not mean to suggest that there have not been any conspiracies or manipulations at the summit of the French state. Of course the real ones help feed the paranoid conspiracy theories of the far right.

5 Program "Les trésors en poche: Notre vie politique en dessin," with Anne Brassié, 10 April 2014; https://www.radiocourtoisie.fr/2014/04/10/les-tresors-en-poche-du-10-avril-2014-notre-vie-politique-en-dessin/; accessed 8 August 2020.

6 Bariller and Timmermans (1993: 33, 36), Souchard et al. (1997: 62) and Novak (2011: 69–70). Silverman (1992: 90–1), quoting from a book by Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, points out that politicians such as Jacques Chirac and Michel Durafour used similar language.

7 PCF (Parti communiste français [French Communist Party]), PS (Parti socialiste [Socialist Party]), UDF (Union pour la démocratie française [Union for French Democracy]), RPR (Rassemblement pour la république [Gathering for the French Republic]).

8 See also Marchal, Rémi and Dioclétien (2007: 7–8).

9 Instead Blondie wounds a pigeon that has been hovering over Chirac. This is no doubt borrowed from *Le combat des chefs* [*Asterix and the Big Fight*], where an owl hovers over, or sits on the head of, a Roman legionary during much of the story. This could suggest that we should view Le Pen, Chirac's opponent, as one of the Gauls in the "Asterix" series, a recurring representation discussed in Chapter 6.

10 Frank, Bariller and Lefort (1995: 20, 23, 25 and perhaps 35). For more far-right iconography featuring Veil, see Bariller and Timmermans (1993: 37, 41) and Novak (2011: 161, illus. no. 120).

11 Faye and Chard (2004: 12, 27, 43) and Marchal, Rémi and Dioclétien (2007: 67, 77, 83).

12 Marchal, Rémi and Dioclétien (2007: 77).

13 Faye and Chard (2004: 18).

14 I interviewed her in July 1992 in Paris in the course of my dissertation research on Maghrebi-French prose fiction; on this novel, see for example Hargreaves (1997) and McKinney (2001b).

15 On Faurisson and Holocaust denial at the Université Jean-Moulin Lyon III, see Rousso (2004).

16 "*Corbeau*" is also a term for a hidden accuser, someone who might call the police anonymously to accuse someone, sometimes falsely, or who might try to blackmail someone.

17 A drawing mentioned in note 25 (below) is among those for which Soral and Zéon were sentenced; *Libération* (2016), *Le Monde* (2016) and BFMTV (2019). In *Au dessus c'est le soleil* (2014: 40) the cartoonists attack Alain Jacubowicz, a Jewish lawyer who was president of CRIF (Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France [Representative Council of Jewish Institutions of France]) and LICRA (Ligue internationale contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme [International League Against Racism and Antisemitism]) and has taken part in at least one lawsuit against Zéon. As with many defamatory allusions in the book, Jacubowicz is not named but is identifiable, and identified by the cartoonist, both by the physical likeness of the drawing to his face and by items associated with him. He holds a file including a paper on which "'Zèon' dessinateur antisémite" ["Zéon" antisemitic cartoonist] is printed. On the file is stamped UGIF (i.e., Union Générale des Israélites de France [General Union of the Israelites of France]), but crossed out and replace with CRIF (UGIF was a Jewish organization created in France in 1941 under orders of the occupying Nazis and that has been accused of collaborating in the Holocaust). It also has a doctored version of LICRA's logo, with its three human heads altered so they wear Jewish hats. Paper money is stuffed up a sleeve of his black lawyer's robe. He has a characteristic red volume of the law handbook published by Dalloz, but on its cover is printed "Code Turim" (a Jewish law code) instead of the French "Code civil" or "Code pénal". He cries "Moi d'abord! J'ai souffert!" [Me first! I've suffered!]. The American soldiers to whom he appeals then massacre all the people in the room hoping to be saved, including him. The implications of the crude, antisemitic allusions should be obvious.

18 Marie Drucker (4-5), Bernard Kouchner (44), Bernard-Henri Lévy (9, 25, 27, 47), Alain Finkielkraut (28), Enrico Macias (9, 20–1, 24, 27, 47), Julien Dray (9, 21), Dominique Strauss-Kahn (17–19, 44), Anne Sinclair (44), Michel Drucker (44) and Jacques Attali (44).

19 Dieudonné, Soral and Zéon (2013: 28).

20 In the following volume, Pouf Dodu is humiliated, shot and murdered (2014: 12–14, 30, 33).

21 A reference to the graffiti "Omar m'a tuer," written in blood and found on 24 June 1991 at the crime scene where the body of Ghislaine Marchal was discovered. Omar Raddad, her gardener, proclaimed his innocence but was found guilty of murder and spent time in jail, later receiving a partial pardon.

22 Di Mascio (2016: 50) notes: "The opposition to the '*Système*' counts more than intellectual coherence, because it is about denouncing absolute Evil in the Zionist System, which he associates with the devil [...] The art of eclecticism and a taste

for provocation separate Soral in any case from the rank of theoreticians."

23 The first volume begins with the same disclaimer, that "[t]oute ressemblance avec des personnages ou des situations existantes ou ayant existé ne saurait être que fortuite" [any resemblance with characters (sic) or situations that exist or existed is purely coincidental] (*Quenelle en haute mer*, p. 2).

24 On this album and the character Rastapopoulos, see Benoît-Jeannin (2001: 77–9; 2007: 220–7, cf. 87–9, 203) and on Rastapopoulos, see Frey (2008b).

25 A drawing by the same cartoonist, Zéon, making precisely this argument won the top prize (with a monetary reward of $12,000) at an international Holocaust cartoon drawing contest in Teheran in 2016; see *Caricatures&caricature* (2016) and Lemaignen (2016).

26 A character front and center in the final, full-page image gives the salute, but wears a card stating "humour" around his neck (62).

27 The poster may also allude to Dieudonné's performance in the 2002 film *Astérix et Obélix: Mission Cléopatre*, directed by Alain Chabat, in which Dieudonné's character pastiched that of Darth Vader.

# Chapter 8
# Avant-gardism, migration and postcolonialism in Alagbé's comics

## Introduction: Amok's emergence

In 1991, cartoonists Yvan Alagbé and Olivier Marboeuf created an association named Dissidence Art Work (DAW). In 1994, they also founded Amok, an important alternative publisher of comics and other visual print art that was based in Wissous, near Paris. Together they drew comics and published several comic-book series and two journals over a period of several years: first *Œil carnivore* [Carnivorous Eye], from 1992, and then *Le cheval sans tête* [The Headless Horse], from January 1994 (Beaty 1998; 2007: 83–4). Alagbé and Marboeuf revamped *Le cheval sans tête* in 1996, with a higher-quality paper, a larger format, and a new, twice yearly publication schedule. The result was an even more attractive periodical, mostly in black-and-white semi-glossy pages, with the occasional work in sepia or on another paper type. It brings together a variety of experimental visual and narrative forms, including drawings, photo-and-text essays, comics, and other graphic narratives with and without text and speech balloons. In his study *Unpopular Culture: Transforming the European Comic Book in the 1990s*, Bart Beaty (2007: 84) observes that Amok's periodical "*Le cheval sans tête* quickly became a venue for the exploration of many of the most urgent themes facing contemporary France: immigration, the quest for identity, the confrontation of cultures, and the *banlieues*." Quoting Marboeuf, Beaty attributes this interest to "the backgrounds of the editors," to which I will return. Although Amok's publications often explored (post)colonial themes, it was not an exclusive focus. They covered other topics too, but always with an emphasis on artistic experimentation. Amok's success with formally innovative and socially conscious books has attracted additional attention beyond Europe: for example, in 1998 Alagbé and Marboeuf were invited guests at a scholarly conference on comics sponsored by Georgetown University (ICAF). In 2002, Amok merged with the experimental Belgian comics group Fréon to form FRMK, or Frémok.[1] More recently, Alagbé's *Nègres jaunes et autres créatures imaginaires* (2012) was published in English translation as *Yellow*

*Negroes and Other Imaginary Creatures* by the New York Review of Books, in 2018. That year Alagbé was invited to promote his book at the MoCCA Arts Festival in New York.

Beaty (2007) devotes several pages to the comics of Amok and Alagbé in his book on alternative and avant-gardist comics in Europe. Hugo Frey (2008a) has also written about a comic book by Alagbé. Ann Miller (2007b: 175–8; 2007c: 269–73) has studied yet another comic book that Frémok published: *Ce pays qui est le vôtre* [This Land That Is Yours] (2003), by Kamel Khélif, a French cartoonist of Algerian heritage. I wrote an essay (McKinney 2016a) on *Qui a connu le feu / Who has known fire*, a bilingual, English-French story about colonial history drawn by Olivier Bramanti and scripted by Alagbé (2004). However, to my knowledge the present chapter constitutes the first in-depth analysis of (post)colonialism across several of Alagbé's comics.

I begin by discussing the question of an avant-garde in comics, already visited in Chapter 2, but this time in relation to cartoonists who take fine-art approaches. Here again I emphasize the importance of migration and postcolonialism to comics avant-gardism. I will refer to work by Jan Baetens, Beaty, Frey, Miller and Raymond Williams on avant-gardism, the relation of French colonial history to the postcolonial present, the situation of working-class French *banlieues*, and the plight of *sans-papiers* in France. I also rely on critiques of eurocentrism, orientalism and imperialism by Samir Amin and Edward Said.

## The avant-garde, postcolonialism and migration

The creation of Dissidence Art Work, an associational structure, and Amok, its publishing arm, was part of a general trend in alternative comics. Beaty (2007) and Miller (2007b: 53–7) argue that by creating such structures, alternative comics gained greater freedom than was normally available from major comics publishers such as Casterman, Dargaud and Glénat, which had tended to favor recognized popular genres and styles. Another impetus was the disappearance in the 1980s of many well-established or path-breaking comics magazines that had provided publishing outlets for cartoonists during the 1960s through the 1970s, a period of lively experimentation in the field (Miller 2007b: 33–4). The independent movement therefore helped to fill a gap and fostered an explosion in creativity, in part because its small publishers could afford to print experimental comics, often with a small audience, in relatively low print runs (Miller 2007b: 53–7). According to Beaty's analysis (2007, 2008) based on the sociological concepts of French intellectual Pierre Bourdieu, the strategy of the avant-garde in European comics of the 1990s was to seek approval from artistic peers – that is, other like-minded cartoonists – and shun the commercial, mass-market logic of mainstream comics publishers, artists and fans. Independent comics publishers across Europe have provided mutual artistic recognition and material assistance to each other, by helping distribute each other's publications, publishing work in each other's magazines, sharing the expense of partici-

pating in major comics festivals, and jointly producing special events and projects. Work from other countries has been distributed in France (and vice versa) in the original language or in translation, which has led to dissemination and cross-fertilization of styles and themes (Beaty 2007; Miller 2007b: 53–7). For example, Amok distributed publications of many counterparts, including from Belgium (L'atelier d'édition, Bill, Frigoproduction/Fréon, and *Pelure amère*) and Spain (*El Ojo clinico* and *Nosotros somos los muertos*).[2] As Beaty argues, one way these alternative cartoonists and publishers have distinguished their comics from commercial ones has been to publish books with a non-standard physical format, a strategy that actually began with the Parisian comics publisher Futuropolis in the 1970s and continued with New York-based *Raw* in the 1980s (Beaty 2007: 28, 49). Jean-Christophe Menu (2005), then with the independent publisher L'Association, famously summed up and denigrated the mainstream, commercial comic-book standard in France and Belgium as "48cc": 48 pages, hardback (*cartonné*) and in color (cf. Beaty 2007: 241–4; Miller 2007b: 54). Alternative European publishers of the 1990s began publishing soft-cover volumes instead of hardback books. They were shorter or longer than the standards of 48 or 64 pages, and smaller or larger than the normal A4 page size of typical commercial French and Belgian comic books (Cestac 2007; Beaty 2007: 44–69). In line with this, Amok's publications cover a range of non-standard sizes and formats.

Beaty (2007: 70–137) convincingly describes the avant-gardism of alternative comics in Europe during the 1990s, including international and metropolitan dimensions of the movement, which flourished especially in Paris and Brussels, but with connections to artists clustered around Geneva, Lisbon, Madrid and New York. Here I focus on an important feature of the movement, namely the constitutive roles of imperialism and immigration to it, which Beaty evokes but are not his central concern. In Chapter 2, above, I noted that Williams proposed five hypotheses in *The Sociology of Culture* (1995: 83–5) to conceptualize cultural and artistic avant-garde movements.[3] Briefly summarized, his points are, again, that: first, such movements were based in a Western metropolis and characterized by some "relative [especially cultural] autonomy" and internationalization, the latter often driven by European imperialism; second, many contributors were immigrants to the metropolis from outlying, "smaller national cultures"; third, stylistic breaks must be understood not just formally but also sociologically, in terms of immigrant innovation; fourth, these "avant-garde formations" produced consciousness and practice related to internationalism and cultural mobility; and fifth, the metropolis provided a supportive environment for "dissident groups" through its wealth and "metropolitan-immigrant functions." All five are relevant to the avant-garde comics of Alagbé and to some work by other artists that he has published, although they are less so for some of the other avant-garde comics groups that Beaty analyzes, including Oubapo and Fréon before it merged with Amok.

Comics scholars have discussed key features of *Le cheval sans tête* that generally distinguish it from Fréon's comics, with some exceptions, before the two publishers

merged. For example, Baetens (1998: 127) notes that "the *Frigobox* periodical [... is] apparently less politicized than its colleague *Le cheval sans tête* (published by Amok)," although he goes on to argue that the politics of artistic form in *Frigobox* is in and of itself radical and politicized in its approach to the (post)modern *métissage* of visual stimuli in the Western metropolis (128). Beaty briefly describes the positions of Alagbé and Marboeuf, his former artist partner, and quotes from a 1998 interview with the latter (Beaty 2007: 257n29):[4]

> Yvan and I, we have always been decentered, in everything that we've done... First off through our origins and also because neither of us is from a cultured background. What we represent, including in our work, is impurity. We're not purists, we don't work for an audience of purists, such as comics fans: the hardcore. We have always mixed everything. We have always been off kilter.

This expresses a characteristically avant-gardist rejection of normative expectations for artists and their creations. However, especially interesting to me here is the point of departure: decentering begins "[f]irst off through our origins," which are rooted in immigration for both, and in the case of Alagbé, of mixed French (his mother) and Benin (his father) parentage and cultural heritage, whereas Marboeuf is of French Caribbean background. The lives and work of Alagbé and Marboeuf share several distinctive characteristics with those of three cartoonists on whom I focused in Chapters 1, 2 and 3: Farid Boudjellal, José Jover and Roland Monpierre, who together formed the Anita Comix studio. Commonalities include their ethnic backgrounds in former French colonies, interest in the colonial heritage and postcolonial present of France, and an avant-gardist position with respect to French comics. However, the latter takes significantly different forms for the two groups. Anita Comix, despite the fine-art training of Jover and Monpierre, primarily favored an avant-gardism informed by popular traditions in comics and elsewhere, ranging from the inexpensive "Pocket" comics that Boudjellal and Jover read and collected in their youth in Toulon, to Caribbean oral storytelling in Monpierre's comics. Even Jover's paintings lean in that direction, as the title of a 2016 Paris art gallery exhibition that featured them suggests: "Pop is Popular."[5] By contrast, the two self-taught Amok artists, and many in their networks (such as Khélif), trended toward comics informed by artistic techniques and traditions with typically greater art-world prestige.

## Alagbé's avant-gardist aesthetics

Since the early 1990s, Alagbé has been publishing fascinating work at the intersection of avant-gardist comics innovation across Europe and of reflection on migration and (post)colonialism (Beaty 1998, 2007).[6] The longest section of the anthology

titled *Nègres jaunes et autres créatures imaginaires* [*Yellow Negroes and Other Imaginary Creatures*] (2012) is *Nègres jaunes*, one of the artist's most compelling comic books, which has deservedly drawn critical attention.[7] Alagbé's single-authored works also include *Dyaa* (1997; reworked in the 2012 anthology), several small, highly provocative volumes of pornographic political critique published 2009–10 under the series title "Démoniak" [Demonik], and *Ecole de la misère* [School of Misery] (2013). Alagbé has also created comics with other authors. For example, an early collaborative volume, from 1993, is titled *Ville prostituée: Acte 1: Valse dans un seul corps* [Prostituted City: Act 1: Dance In a Single Body] (Alagbé and Marboeuf 1993). It was drawn by Alagbé and scripted by him and Marboeuf, and serialized in *Œil carnivore* the same year. "Le deuil" [The mourning], a short story that Eléonore Stein scripted and he drew (Alagbé and Stein 1997) was one of the bases for *Ecole de la misère*. There is also the remarkable co-authored comic *Qui a connu le feu / Who has known fire* (Bramanti and Alagbé 2004), already mentioned. Alagbé's books are of non-standard format for French and Belgian comics, a difference that – as we have seen – is typical of Amok and Frémok publications, and more generally of alternative and avant-gardist comics in Europe (Beaty 2007: 44–69). Even though *Nègres jaunes* is more or less standard length (47 pages of drawings), it is larger than A4 paper and in paperback. *Dyaa* (1997), although of A4 size, is soft-cover and only 20 pages long. And *Qui a connu le feu / Who has known fire*, in hardback, contains 52 drawn pages and is of non-standard size (21x26.5 cm.). *Ecole de la misère* too is hardback, but is Alagbé's longest book, at 220 pages, is in black, white and sepia, and has the same dimensions as *Qui a connu le feu / Who has known fire*.

Another characteristic trait of Alagbé's work lies in its lyrical, first-person textual voices, which connect past and present, colonialism and its aftermath, migrant and host communities. The subjective poetic voice is variously that of the artist himself, a narrator, or characters. For example, in "Le deuil" a young woman named Claire thinks about her grandparents who have just died and who were *colons* [colonial settlers]: "Je veux les laisser partir pour leur paradis, aussi légers que de la fumée. Ils me laissent le poids, la douleur... Pourquoi faut-il encore que je les pleure? Ils ne faisaient plus partie de ma vie depuis tellement longtemps..." [I want to let them depart to their paradise, as light as smoke. They leave me the weight, the pain... Why should I weep for them any more? They were no longer part of my life, since so long ago...] (Alagbé and Stein 1997: 25).[8] Or to take another example, in "Etoile d'Orient" Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum (called Oum Kalsoum, in the text) speaks to Mohamed el-Qasabgi, who composed for her: "Moi le feu, Qasabgi, je lis les pages que tu me donnes à lécher. Moi le coeur de l'étoile, je lis les notes, les paroles de la chair. Je chante pour les vivants et les morts. Je chante Dieu, je chante l'amant et le fidèle" [I the fire, Qasabgi, I read the pages that you give me to lick. I the heart of the star, I read the notes, the speech of the flesh. I sing for the living and the dead. I sing God, I sing the lover and the faithful] (Alagbé 1998: 35). The seven-page story uses the singer suggestively to evoke a relationship between

European imperialism, Arab nationalism and religious traditionalism. Alagbé nostalgically evokes the inspirational power of Umm Kulthum's singing to captivate audiences, comparing it to Gamal Abdel Nasser's eloquence. The cartoonist describes the hope that both figures gave to disempowered Egyptians who braved the might of colonial powers in the 1940s and 1950s: England, France and Israel. However, an image of a Muslim praying, with his machine gun in front of him, may also be a gesture towards violence gripping Egypt today (40). The cartoonist ends with a question ("La vérité se tient-elle toujours du côté de ceux qui savent tuer?" [Is truth always on the side of those who know how to kill?]) and a blacked-in panel, again suggesting the need to escape a logic of violence that falls most heavily on the weakest (41).

Alagbé uses not just words but also images in poetic, provocative and lyrical ways. Several of his comics insert recognizable symbols and transform widely circulated images. For example, in *Qui a connu le feu / Who has known fire* (Bramanti and Alagbé 2004), the cartoonists rework well-known colonial images of defeated Béhanzin, the nineteenth-century Dahomean king (1844–1906), alongside images meant to suggest the life and times of Dom Sébastien (1554–78), the sixteenth-century king of Portugal (McKinney 2016a). This recirculation of pre-existing icons and imagery is even more striking in a bilingual, French and Portuguese version of *Personne ne connaît mon nom* [No One Knows My Name] (Alagbé 2000b) that encourages reflection on important historical figures and events through juxtaposition of textual fragments with symbolic imagery, of Malcolm X, Umm Kulthum, a brain with attached nervous system, and a scratched out heart. The latter could represent the death of both iconic figures and their symbolic manipulation. Alagbé characteristically weaves images and fragments thereof across texts. In *Personne ne connaît mon nom* he does so in ways closer to a series of paintings than to a standard comic strip. He also repeats images, characters and even narrative sequences in poetic, non-linear ways from one text to another, creating transtextual cycles or networks of artistic fragments.

## Drawing diaspora in *Dyaa*

Alagbé's drawing style in many of his comics is a mix of outlines, finer detail and shading that might be disconcerting for the reader of mainstream comics. Beaty (2007: 70–110) explains non-standard approaches in alternative European comics as an avant-gardist importation of fine-art techniques designed to elevate comics' status and explore their artistic potential in experimental ways. Alagbé and his co-authors, including Marboeuf and Bramanti, have generally drawn in black and white, or sometimes in sepia (as in *Ecole de la misère* [Alagbé 2013]), but very little in color (a rare exception for Alagbé is the early *Ville prostituée* [Alagbé and Marboeuf 1993]). Black-and-white work emphasizes drawing ability, whereas coloring has traditionally been lower-paid, less prestigious, and often women's work in French and Belgian comics production.

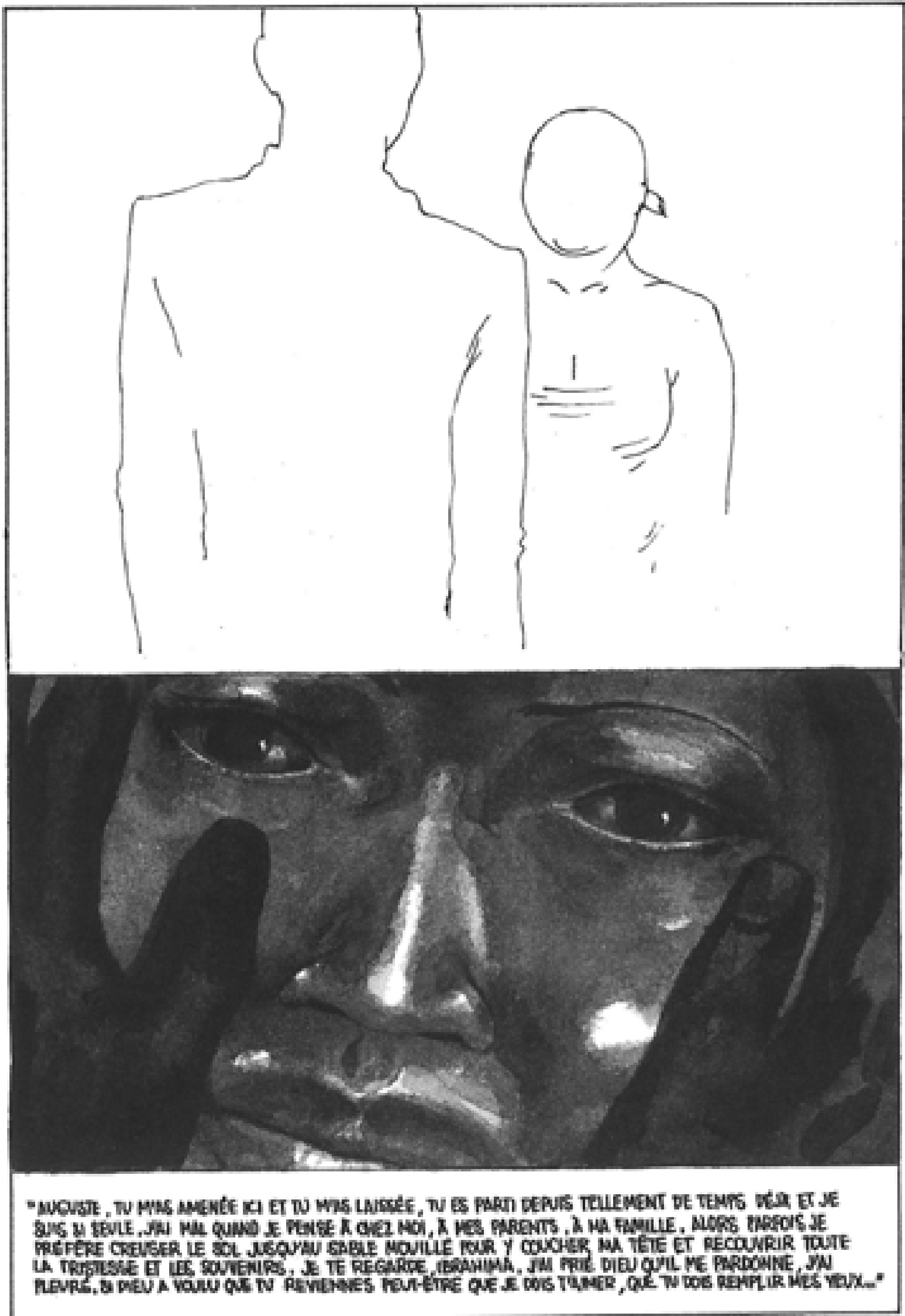


**Figure 8.1:** From Yvan Alagbé (1997) *Dyaa*, Wissous: Amok, p. 10 © Editions Amok. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

The use of black-and-white line drawing constitutes a kind of artistic asceticism that eschews the vibrancy of color, perhaps seen by the artists as more popular and too easily accessible – too readerly (*lisible*) and not sufficiently writerly (*scriptible*), in Roland Barthes's terms. I will now illustrate Alagbé's experimental artistic approach to postcolonialism and migration through a close reading of the first book edition of *Dyaa* (1997). None of Alagbé's individually authored works have page numbers, so my own page numbering in the rest of this chapter begins on the first drawn page of each book.

Some examples from *Dyaa* illustrate its specific style: a detailed and shaded head atop the simple outline of a torso (5); two facing characters outlined, with no shading at all, followed by hands holding a finely detailed face up close, with heavy shading (10; Figure 8.1); an ink wash with little or no darker outlining (4); or the dark form of an airplane overhead against a blank background (7). The drawings are strategically fragmentary in ways that are relatively rare even for *bande dessinée*, which is by definition an art of ellipsis and of repeated, metonymic fragments (Miller 2007b: 78–82, 104–5): for example, on one mute page in *Dyaa* (5) a shot-countershot sequence shows part of the first intimate encounter between two African immigrants in France. In frames one and three the reader sees Martinah in profile from behind, in partially subjective, over-the-shoulder shots: she appears first in sketchy outline, with her body wrap (*pagne*) barely suggested through curving lines from under her shoulders down; and in panel three, black ink brushed on provides only a form with some definition of depth and volume, but little in the way of bodily surface texture – for example, the strands of her hair are barely suggested with the visible brush stroke at the borders of her pony tail. In the first frame Ibrahima's dark face and hands stand out against the white background, connected only by a few lines suggesting his clothes, whereas in panel three his head floats against the blank background, suspended above a few brush strokes that abstractly suggest his chest. These two fragments stand in for his entire body and focus the reader's attention intensely on them.

Alagbé's fragmentary technique might remind one of the early theorization of comics by nineteenth-century Swiss cartoonist Rodolphe Töpffer (1799–1846), in his *Essai de physiognomonie* [Essay on Physiognomony] (2003 [1845]: 12), despite obvious differences between the two (for example, in terms of shading): "the graphic line, because its meaning is clear, without complete imitation, allows, calls for enormous ellipses of accessories and details."[9] Something that surprises in *Dyaa* in comparison to classical comics (by Hergé, etc.) is the mix of different drawing techniques, which nonetheless form a coherent artistic whole already just on this carefully patterned page: the second frame gives us a partial image of Martinah's face, whose intense emotion is rendered through the close up created with a combination of ink wash and fine detailing of her features. There is a striking contrast between this fine-grained image of Martinah's face and the less detailed shots of her back that precede and follow, in frames one and three, which also serve as partial inversions of each other, stacked vertically: in frame one the

reader sees Ibrahima with Martinah from across her left shoulder, and in frame three from across her right shoulder, as the light/dark polarities of Martinah's body switch from a negative image (washed out) to a much more positive one (overexposed). These drawing techniques make the characters alternately dematerialize and reappear, as though they were flickering on an old black-and-white television. The alternation of these kinds of drawings in several of Alagbé's comics – varying from fragile outline, to block shadow, to more complex renderings made up of a subtle interplay of grays, blacks and fine line-work, as well a mix of long shots and close ups – suggests here both the fragility of African lives and their social fabric in the former colonial metropolis, and the material reality of their presence there.

Through such techniques the cartoonist produces a kind of reportage that could encourage more privileged readers to think about their relationship to the daily lives of postcolonial workers at the margins of the metropolis, in this case Paris.[10] Part of that physical closeness, both between individual characters and with respect to the reader-as-voyeur, is the representation of the sexual intimacy of the characters. The fourth image on this page is of Martinah's vulva, in a frame that might remind comics readers of pornographic stories by Milo Manara, especially since it is followed by an image of Ibrahima's hand on Martinah's genitals, and then on the following page (6) by a post-coïtal panel, where the reader again sees Martinah's naked body and now Ibrahima's penis, still erect. Sexual voyeurism is oriented here by Ibrahima's recitative towards an expression of the sexual misery of the African immigrant characters. This is expressed visually in a frame by the two faces, turned away from each other and either partially framed out (that of Ibrahima) or hidden in hands (that of Martinah). One is reminded of Tahar Ben Jelloun's 1977 essay *La plus haute des solitudes: Misère affective et sexuelle des émigrés nords-africains* [The Highest of Solitudes: Emotional and Sexual Misery of North African Emigrants], except that here Alagbé represents the misery of West-African immigrants and devotes attention to the alienation of women as well as of men.

Alagbé's elliptical, fragmentary technique functions within the individual panel, but also at level of the narrative as a whole: the story begins in media res, and through flashbacks offers us the opportunity to reconstruct a narrative that is hauntingly ambiguous and incomplete. Throughout much of the story Ibrahima speaks in the recitative, voicing his perspective on the relationship between himself and Martinah, apostrophizing other characters including his wife Aïsatou (Figure 8.2), Martinah and his father. Out of seventy-one panels in the twenty-page story, only four include dialogue not in the recitative, and in those few cases it is not contained within balloons. The effect is to create a stream-of-consciousness verbal narration that makes us privy to the inner thoughts and emotions of Ibrahima. Nonetheless, the verbal narration is dialogic insofar as Ibrahima responds in the recitative to comments made by other characters within the panels, but also because other characters momentarily inhabit or displace Ibrahima's discourse in the two center pages (10–11): first Martinah speaks to her hus-

band Auguste (10; Figure 8.1, above), who abandoned her to go "là-bas" [down there], no doubt Africa, and may be having sex with other women; and Ibrahima's wife, living in Africa, speaks directly to him about their dead or dying child (11). Both women express to their partners their distress at having been abandoned. However, the status of these two passages is unclear. In between them, Ibrahima describes his own perception (11): "Depuis que je suis mort, tout le monde vient parler dans ma tête. Je partais de chez toi, Martinah, juste avant que tu pleures et ma femme était venue là, m'attendre à ta porte, avec les bras comme si elle tenait un enfant, mais ses mains sont vides" [Ever since I died, everyone comes to talk in my head. I was leaving your home, Martinah, just before you cried and my wife came there, to wait for me at your door, with her arms as though she were holding a child, but her hands are empty]. In his stream-of-consciousness narration, Ibrahima speaks of being dead, but it is not clear whether this death is physical or symbolic, because the reader never sees him die. The ambiguity encourages the reader to try to determine his state by piecing together the fragmentary information available.

Readers are told early in the story (2–4), for example, that Ibrahima met Martinah when he almost ran over her with his taxi while she was lying naked in the road, trying to commit suicide. Shortly before the end of the story (17–18), Ibrahima states that he and Martinah are both dead, with Martinah's suicide attempt once again visible: "Nous roulons, mais autour de nos corps les gens se rassemblent. Nous sommes morts sur la route" [We are riding along, but around our bodies people are gathering. We are dead on the road] (17). Two panels later Ibrahima refers to the perception of onlookers: "J'entends un blanc qui se dit: 'Quand on y pense, c'est tout de même bizarre d'avoir ici en France deux noirs morts sur la route. C'est drôle d'imaginer ce qui a pu les amener jusqu'ici'" [I hear a white man say to himself: "When you think about it, it really is bizarre to have two Black people dead on the road here in France. It's funny to imagine what could have brought them all the way here] (18). Have both Ibrahima and Martinah now committed suicide together? Does the white onlooker mistakenly believe that Ibrahima is dead, whereas he is instead trying to get Martinah to stand up after having almost run over her? Or, less plausibly, did both in fact die when Martinah tried to commit suicide? What is clear is the fact that there is some type of death, which appears to be essentially symbolic and presented from several perspectives. As I said earlier, it is clear that Ibrahima met Martinah when she tried to commit suicide. Both are emotionally wounded, because they are far from their partners, who are both in Africa, where Ibrahima's child may be dead or dying. The relationship between Ibrahima and Martinah is burdened by the guilt that both feel for betraying their partners and, in the case of Martinah, her Christian religious beliefs. Ibrahima is also alienated from his father and his ethnic group back in Africa, because he has not reimbursed them for the money that they advanced him to pay for his migratory voyage to France and has thereby betrayed the bonds of kinship and community (14). So the African immigrants,

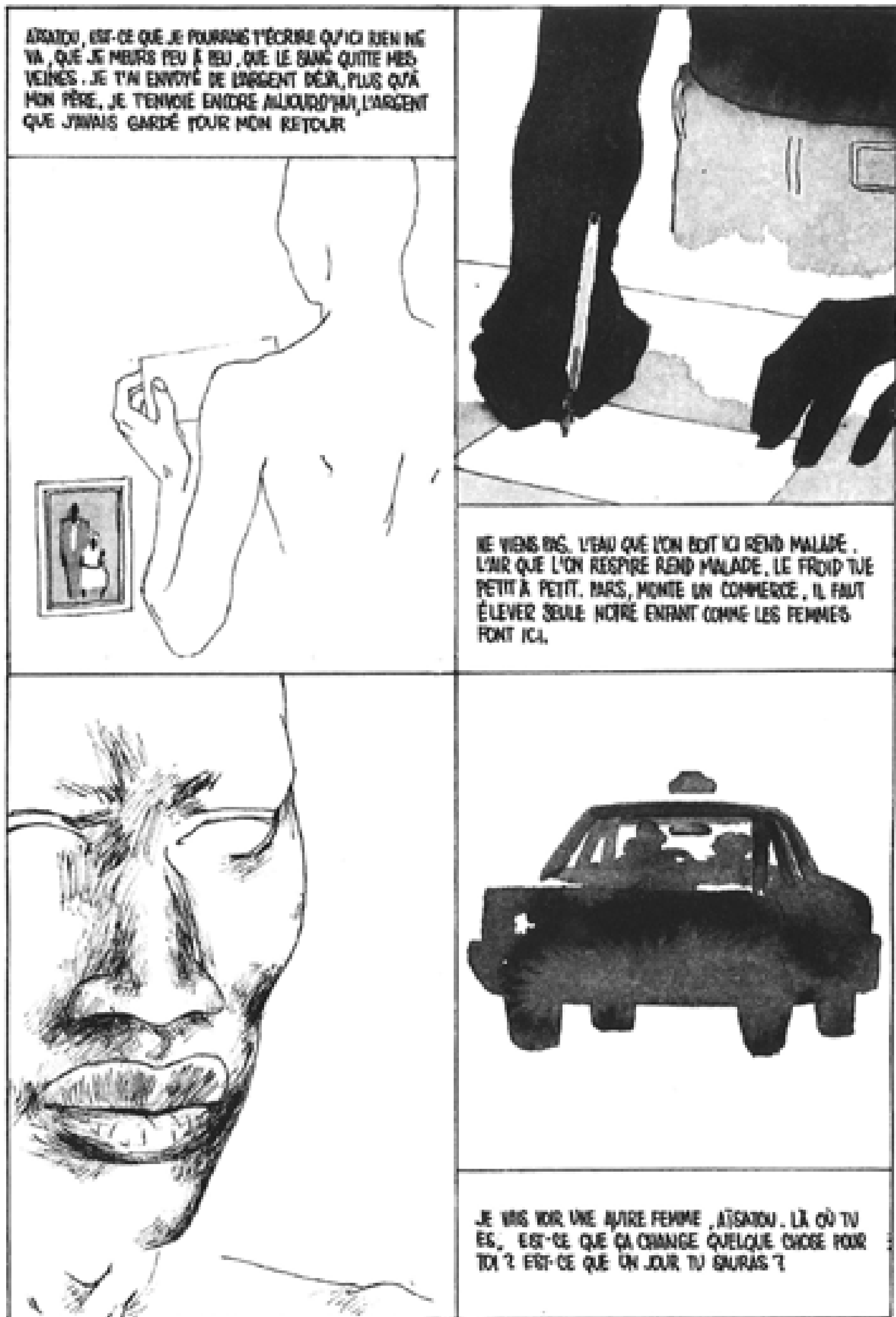


**Figure 8.2:** From Yvan Alagbé (1997) *Dyaa*, Wissous: Amok, p. 12 © Editions Amok. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

far from their families and ethnic groups and living isolated within French society, are experiencing psychological pain and a kind of social death, even if not a physical one. I turn now to a compelling comic book that Alagbé has reworked and reissued repeatedly. Published before *Dyaa*, it too features Martinah as a character, deals with exile, and includes painterly images.

## The colonial past, migration and *sans-papiers* in *Nègres jaunes*

Alagbé has created a web of interconnected stories. His comics are often loosely related through recurring characters featuring the same or similar names, physical features or personal history. They sometimes share other elements, such as repeated images, including symbols, as I noted earlier. This allows the artist to explore in provocative ways how the fabric of contemporary French society is rooted in colonialism and migration. It also enables him to recount related stories and evoke connected motifs with different artistic techniques, thereby producing different perspectives on them, and varying atmospheres. This is different from classic French-language comics, which are serial in the sense that the same protagonists live a sequence of adventures, one per book or episode, sometimes chronologically, and are usually drawn in the same style. The first and one of the longest of Alagbé's single-authored stories is the remarkable *Nègres jaunes*. Here I shall refer mainly to the first book version, published by Amok in 1995, but will occasionally mention a preceding version (1994–5) serialized in the first version of *Le cheval sans tête*, which has significant differences in story and drawing style. Frémok subsequently published two more book editions of the story: a standalone volume in 2000 (Alagbé 2000a) and as part of the 2012 anthology.

The story opens with an epigraph from Gustave Flaubert's short story "La légende de Saint-Julien l'hospitalier" [The Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitaller]: the passage where the leper asks Julian for the warmth of his own body. Alagbé has stated that "[j]'ai lu la nouvelle de Flaubert en classe (au lycée je pense) et le passage final m'avait marqué" [I read the short story by Flaubert in class (in high school, I think) and the last passage struck me] (Alagbé 2020). One can read Alagbé's book as radically rewriting and (re)drawing Flaubert's story, adapting it to questions of (post)colonial migration in France today. Other authors, filmmakers and visual artists have reworked classic texts from French literature and art in related ways in postcolonial France. The process adds important layers of meaning to literary classics taught as part of a national literary canon in French schools. It also creates space for new ways of seeing art, literature and contemporary society. We have encountered similar gestures by other cartoonists in this volume, generally with respect to classic comics characters. Alagbé's decision to rescript a literary classic is of a piece with his reenvisioning comics through a fine-art lens: both strategies aim to impart to comics a higher status in artistic, literary and cultural hierarchies.

Here first, before my analysis, are a brief description of the principal characters and a short summary of the plot (unless otherwise indicated, my references are to the first book edition [Alagbé 1995c]). Two main Black characters are Martinah, here named Martine, and her brother Alain (6.5–6, 11.3), both *sans-papiers* from Benin (7–8). Sam, a third Black or *métis* character, appears to be the son of Antoine, Martine's boyfriend or fiancé, who has returned to Africa (12.3, 38.4). Sam is not Martine's son (11.3). Martine, Alain and Sam live together in an apartment in a housing project of a working-class French *banlieue*, perhaps Montreuil, near Paris. Claire is Alain's white French girlfriend (4). There are also characters of Algerian heritage: Mario was a police officer until he was wounded in a leg, spent six years in a hospital and consequently had to retire from the force (5.4, 7.4, 8–9). His wife left him while he was hospitalized, and they divorced – he says – because of a dispute over what their daughter would study (9). The daughter is now a successful gynecologist in Metz (9.5) and has little time for her father (20). Mario, on the other hand, lives with his own mother, now senile, in a detached home within walking distance from the apartment of Martine, Alain and Sam (17.1). Without proper residency and work papers, neither Martine nor Alain can find stable or well-paid positions, and must take part-time, free-lance work paid in cash (2, 20.5–6). The story opens with Alain losing a job putting up posters for Sergei Eisenstein movies to be shown at an art-house cinema (2). After seeing an advertisement that Martine posted in a bakery, proposing to clean homes, Mario offers her the job of cleaning the apartment where he and his mother live. Martine and Alain go there for an interview (12.1–2). However, during and soon after it, they realize that Mario is incredibly lonely and has severe sociability problems. He immediately starts telling them his life story and quickly becomes invasive, inviting them to his apartment for Christmas (10, 12.2, 13.6), tracking down their address by ringing on doorbells throughout the housing project (5–6), calling them repeatedly (11, 13, 29, 38, 40–3), and coming over uninvited (30). Martine takes the cleaning job (21–2), but quickly drops it because she thinks that Mario is dangerous (he keeps a pistol under his bed), and his mother defecates everywhere in the apartment (24.5–6). Mario calls Alain his son (18.1, 36.2), insists that Alain take food from Mario's refrigerator (18.4–6), gives Alain money in response to Alain's false claim that he has a sick daughter in Africa (35–9), and suggests that their two families should live together as one (36.1). Claire's divorced mother, who drinks too much, had already proposed a similar living arrangement (14–15). She would like to take early retirement for disability, have her adult children and their partners, including Alain, take over her house payments, and all of them live together, including her grandson Jules, the child of Claire's sister and her partner Serge. Claire also offers to marry Alain so he can obtain official papers allowing him to remain legally in France (15.3–4). However, Alain fears owing everything to Claire and never leaving France, which he finds cold and alienating (16). Instead, he dreams of returning home to warmer Africa and its women (17.4–6).

The artist depicts his marginalized African characters as victims of racist and anti-immigrant discrimination, as Frey (2008a: 125) argues. For example, Alain's movie-theater employer harangues him about his lack of gratitude for the part-time job that he had given Alain despite his status as a *sans-papiers* (2). Both of Claire's parents are prejudiced against Black people. Her mother says that she does not like Black Caribbeans, but that Black Africans are fine (14.5–6). Claire's father expresses his dislike for "nègres" and is shocked and disappointed when he learns that she is dating Alain (3–4). The building superintendent (*concierge*) of the housing project uses similar racist language when speaking with Mario: "Y'en a une chiée des nègres dans ces immeubles!!" [There's a shitload of negroes in these buildings!!] (5.1). And a white passerby in a car insults Alain, Sam and Moussa, a Black friend, who are picking up a discarded television to send it back to Africa, calling them "Ordures…" [Garbage…] (19).

On the other hand, the marginalized characters do not all get along well with each other. Mario offers to help Martine (7–8) and Alain (17–18, 35.3–4) obtain official papers, but when Mario suddenly kisses Alain on the mouth without asking (36), Alain angrily pushes Mario away. Mario desperately grabs Alain's leg and pleads for forgiveness, alternately threatening to turn Alain in to the police and then immediately offering him more money instead (37). Upon Alain's return home, he and Martine quarrel over the money that Mario gave Alain for his nonexistent sick daughter, and about Alain's potential access to French identity papers through him (39–40). Alain in turn mocks Martine because her partner Antoine, whom she has known for two years and lived with, never married her and left for Africa. He was to be gone only for a two-week trip, but has been gone for four months. Alain throws the money on the floor and leaves the apartment (40–1), apparently having decided to marry Claire and obtain official identity papers (41.2–3, 44.1). He does not have a subway ticket, but illegally jumps over the turnstyle, is stopped by subway employees checking tickets, and runs away from them (44–5). He is quickly caught by police officers, arrested, and will probably be deported back to Benin (45–7). Meanwhile, Mario, desperately lonely in his apartment, probably kills himself with his pistol (42.5–6). The last two panels depict Alain under arrest and Mario lying on the floor, after having put the gun in his mouth (47.5–6). As Frey (2008a: 123) observes, Mario's "attachment to the Beninese group is shown to be in part founded on a profound loneliness rather than on a purely political brutality toward *sans-papiers* people per se."

In support of this, Frey (2008a: 123) goes on to quote from an interview with Alagbé about his book: "For me it was about showing how marginalized people, instead of helping each other, end up oppressing one another" (Loret 2001). The cartoonist is clearly challenging his readers to get close to some of the most needy in contemporary French society, showing us their precarious situations and extreme distress. At the same time, various aspects of the story are meant to challenge his readers – perhaps especially his more affluent and privileged ones – and make them unconfortable,

much as the requests by the leper challenge Julian in Alagbé's epigraph from Flaubert's tale. As Alagbé has said and I have already suggested, his most marginalized characters sometimes act in ways that are self-defeating, selfish and exploitative of others. The most emblematic character in this regard is Mario, whose story is intimately bound up with a colonial history to which I now turn.

The very title "*Nègres jaunes*" both speaks to the importance of the colonial past in contemporary perceptions of Blacks in France and destabilizes them, as Frey (2008a: 123–4) has noted. Dictionaries of French slang attest to variations on the now usually degrading colonial term "nègre" in the slang of young people in the *banlieues*, suggesting a reworking of the French language's colonial heritage.[11] Like the name of the rock group "Les négresses vertes" (Laronde 1993: 64–8, 91n29), the color adjective in the title of *Nègres jaunes* perturbs a Black-white dichotomy. It can suggest that people who are not Black may also be treated like "nègres" today, especially those from other formerly colonized groups that have also historically been victims of white supremacist structures erected under colonialism. On the other hand, Alagbé also illustrates ways in which individuals from one postcolonial minority may exploit others from that group or another one, in part because distinctions that colonialism created between them, and forms of colonial privilege, continue to exist today.

A comparison of two versions of the story reveals Alagbé's decision to focus attention on infamous violent events in colonial history through his characterization of Mario. Whereas Mario describes himself as "Moroccan" in the first, serialized version in *Le cheval sans tête*,[12] the narrator of the first book version says he has discovered Mario's true identity, as "Jean-René" Néouche, an Algerian officer who helped command a *harka*, in a passage retained in all subsequent book editions (25). Maurice Papon, then Prefect of Police for Paris, had created the *harka* in November 1959 to assist in dismantling the Parisian network of the FLN by using torture to extract confessions.[13] The narrator tells readers that the Parisian *harka* helped massacre peaceful Algerian demonstrators on 17–18 October 1961, an event also recounted in *Le chemin de l'Amérique* (Baru, Thévenet and Ledran 1990) and other comics.[14] Alagbé here uses a collage technique found in other comics documenting a suppressed or forgotten colonial history: inserting into the comic fragments of text relating the history, in this case to document the veracity of the narrator's revelation about Mario.[15] This is an example of colonial violence that has come home to roost in the former colonial *métropole* (metropolis, or mainland France) and which is symbolized by the gun that Martine finds hidden under Mario's bed when she is cleaning the apartment and that he will later use to kill himself (24.5, 42.4–5).

Alagbé represents colonial violence principally as an alienating force that perverts relationships between characters in France, just as it did for groups and individuals in contact during the colonial period. When Mario learns that Martine and Alain are from Benin, he salutes and tells them that he visited that country as part of a colonial

military force: "Bénin? Ancien Dahomey? J'y suis allé moi, avec le général! C'était en 53. Avec le général j'ai été partout! Et pas seulement le Dahomey hein! Presque toute l'Afrique noire!" [Benin? Formerly Dahomey? I went there, I did, with the general! It was in '53. I went everywhere with the general! And not only Dahomey, huh! Almost all of Black Africa!] (8.2–3). This kind of experience was the result of a divide-and-conquer policy, in the sense that France regularly used colonial troops from one part of its empire to put down rebellions and maintain French control elsewhere. When the characters meet in present-day postcolonial France, Mario tries to wield power over Martine and Alain that owes something to his colonial experience, as Frey (2008a: 122) argues. Having served France during the colonial period and after Algerian independence, Mario was able to acquire French nationality and a network of relations through which, he claims, he can assist Martine and Alain obtain identity papers (7.4, 8.5, 35–6, 39.3). All three characters came to France through colonial or postcolonial migration circuits, hoping to better their lives, but find themselves in exile, cut off from homelands and social support networks, and living in a society characterized by a high degree of anomie and exclusion. Mario desperately tries to reconstitute a family with his new acquaintances, although in artificial and exploitative fashion, and seeks consolation with prostitutes (25–8). However, the roles of victimizer and victimized are difficult to ascertain, because Mario's need for affection leaves him vulnerable to Alain, who swindles him (35–7). Like Alain, Mario is treated disrespectfully by a white Frenchman (the building superintendent), which adds weight to his claim that, like Alain, he is "Black" (42.3–4), taken here as a marker of racist oppression by whites. Mario and his mother have become social outcasts. Even Mario's daughter, the successful doctor, keeps him at arm's length (20). Indeed, like the legendary leper in Flaubert's tale, at one point Mario pathetically complains that he is freezing and begs Martine to warm him by lending him a blanket (31.4).

Sam plays an important role in how readers might perceive the other characters. He acts as an intermediary and buffer between on the one hand, Alain and Martine, and on the other hand, Mario, answering his repeated phone calls, filtering information and keeping the intrusive man at bay (11–13, 38, 41–2). After Mario comes over, soaking wet, on a rainy day, Sam sketches him while he sleeps on the couch (33; Figure 8.3), lying in a fetal position and covered with the dirty sheet that Martine lends him to warm him (31.5). Sam is clearly a cartoonist in the serialized version of the story: Mario refers to him there as making "des dessins, des bédés" [drawings, comics], and Sam later draws comics panels on a page (Figure 8.4).[16] Those pointed references are absent from the book editions, but as Frey (2008a: 127–8) has argued, there one can still view Sam as a cartoonist and even as the author of *Nègres jaunes*, which undermines realist reading conventions and encourages reader reflection. A page where the reader sees Sam's hand drawing images in the panels of the page that we are reading is key to this interpretation (43; Figure 8.5). As Miller (2011: 244–5) has shown, this is a typical way

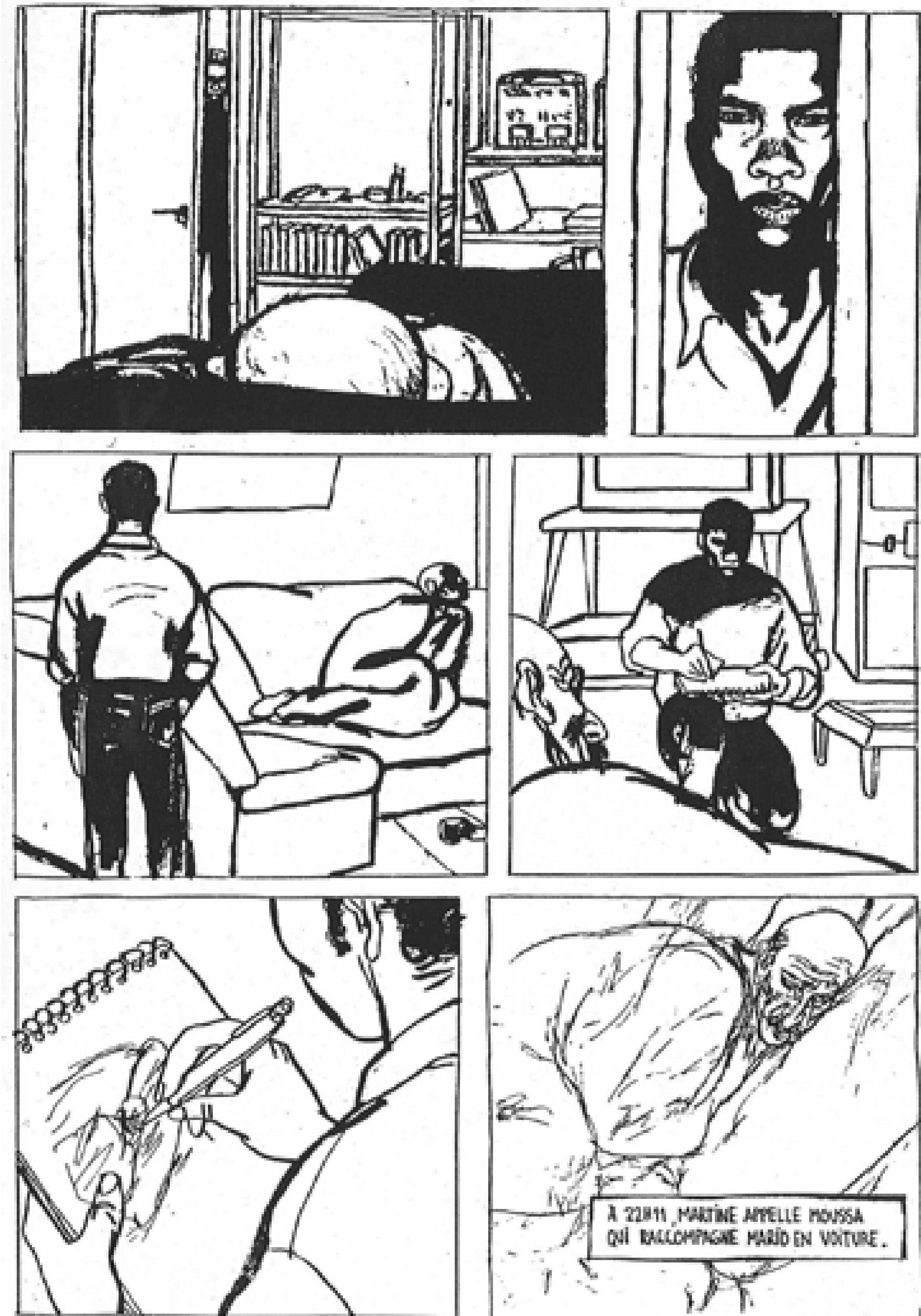


**Figure 8.3:** From Yvan Alagbé (2000) *Nègres jaunes*, Montreuil: Amok, p. 33 © Editions Amok. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

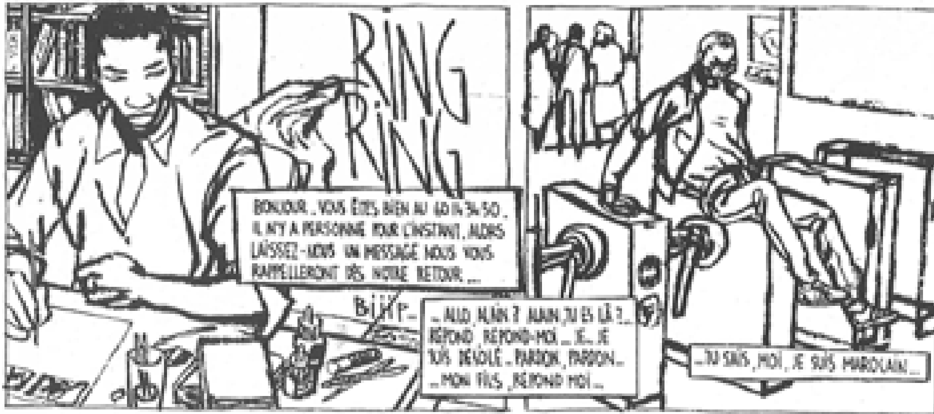


**Figure 8.4:** From Yvan Alagbé (1995) "Nègres jaunes," part three, *Le cheval sans tête*, no. 5, May, p. 52 © Editions Amok. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

in which cartoonists seal a pact with readers to authenticate comic-book autobiographies. Of course *Nègres jaunes* does not present itself as an autobiography, but as Frey (2008a: 127–8) argues, this visual gesture nonetheless helps produce a *mise-en-abîme* of the relationship between the cartoonist, whether Sam or Alagbé, and his characters as subjects. Self-referentiality is characteristic of both the comics medium in general and contemporary avant-gardist comics in particular, where it serves to interrogate the possibilities of the form, including the relationship between cartoonist, story and readers. With Sam, Alagbé includes an artist in the text in a (self-)reflexive gesture that encourages readers to reflect on their relationship to his marginalized characters, especially Mario (Figures 8.3–5; Frey 2008a: 127–8). Sam's response towards Mario changes across the story: early on he interrupts his drawing activity to answer Mario's phone call (11–13), but towards the end he just keeps drawing, even though he can hear Mario pleading desperately through the speaker on the answering machine (38, 41–2). Alagbé thereby uses Sam to raise questions about the artist's social responsibility and implicitly the reader's too (Frey 2008a: 127–8): caught between Mario and his two housemates, what is Sam to do? Moreover, as a professional artist, what representation should he give to the events and trauma that he witnesses?

Alagbé also uses experimental verbal and visual narration to address these complex issues. For example, he uses dream-like symbolic images and third-person textual narration to represent Alain's interior subjectivity, specifically Alain's reactions when Claire suggests that they marry to give him official papers – perhaps even naturalization as French – and when Mario promises to help him out (16–17). Alagbé also uses first-person narration to address Mario directly and accuse him of his crimes: "Je sais qui tu es Mario. J'ai fait des recherches…" [I know who you are Mario. I have done research…] (25; Figure 8.6). A few panels later the cartoonist directly addresses a narratee, or narratees, whose identity is unclear (25.6–26.3):

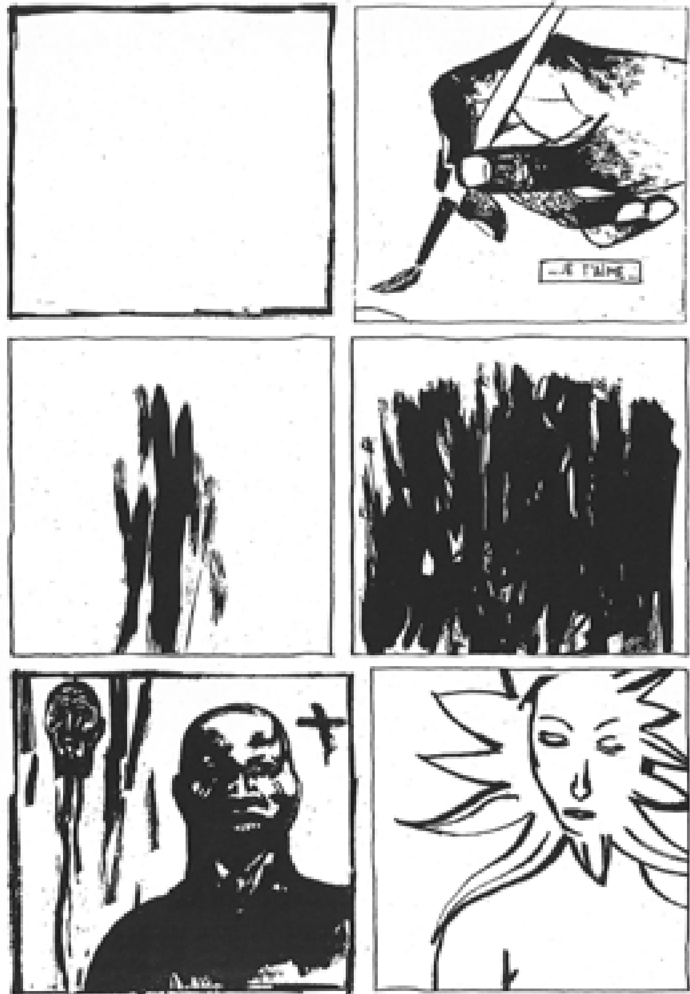

**Figure 8.5:** From Yvan Alagbé (2000) *Nègres jaunes*, Montreuil: Amok, p. 43 © Editions Amok. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

250 francs. Il accepte et la suit. Ils reviennent sur la rue principale où des visages éclairés bas avancent le long des voitures, comme des rumeurs malfaisantes. (Combien de corps gorgés d'eau portés par les flots calmes du fleuve?) / L'air est froid qui favorise les cris. Et vous vous imaginez cédant à l'appel d'un désir souverain, rampant sur les trottoirs en roi de l'asphalte. / Enveloppé dans une étoffe-feu, dans l'éclair d'une draperie qui claque, vous éclaboussez sur votre parcours chaque paroi chaque façade. / Et vous laissez derrière vous Mario et la femme qui entrent à présent dans un de ces vieux immeubles de la capitale.

[250 francs. He agrees and follows her. They come back along the main road where low-lit faces advance alongside the cars, like maleficent rumors. (How many bodies

> stuffed with water carried along by the river's calm waves?) / The air is cold, favoring the cries. And you imagine yourself giving in to the call of a sovereign desire, crawling along the sidewalks like the king of the asphalt. / Enveloped in a fire-cloth, in the flash of a drapery that snaps, you spatter on your way each wall each façade. / And you leave behind Mario and the woman who now enter one of those old buildings of the capital.]

Is Mario the first "vous" [you]? Is that "vous" the same as the second one? The second "vous" is clearly not Mario, but then who is it? Could one or both of the "vous" be the soul of one or more murder victims from 17 October 1961 mentioned in the parenthetical question, or instead another client of the prostitutes Mario encounters? Might the "vous" be the author, the narrator, or readers of the text?

A related later passage again productively unsettles narrative certainties. It begins on the bottom of the page where Sam draws Mario asleep on the couch (33; Figure 8.3, above). The last panel contains his drawing and is an ocularized image, with the reader in Sam's viewing position (33.6). The following page consists of six panels with symbolic drawings, four of which (1, 2, 4 and 6) represent Mario respectively standing, kneeling, lying on his back with his eyes closed, and on his side, with his head and perhaps his arms outstretched above his head. The fifth panel depicts a horned character, who could be the devil. Meanwhile, the textual narration in the unframed recitative speaks of Mario in the third person and then addresses him directly (34):

> A présent je suis une ombre / Je suis venu pour la douleur, pour aiguiser mon chant, la langue qui saigne. Je ne peux l'imaginer silencieux, paisiblement ensommeillé. Il geint, grimace et ouvre les yeux sans quitter le sommeil. / Je dors à ses côtés. J'ai le souffle des victimes. L'aimer ou le détester, quelle importance? La pitié torture l'horreur. La bienveillance est liée au dégoût comme une rose qui grimpe ma jambe. / / Mon amour est si bref… / …J'ai promis ta mort, Mario.
>
> [Now I am a shadow. / I have come for the pain, to sharpen my song, the tongue (or language) that bleeds. I cannot imagine him silent, peacefully sleepy. He groans, grimaces and opens his eyes without leaving sleep. / I sleep at his side. I have the breath of the victims. Love him or hate him, what does it matter? Pity tortures horror. Benevolence is linked to disgust like a rose that climbs my leg. / / My love is so short… / …I have promised your death, Mario.]

Is the spectral narrator Alagbé, or is it instead Sam, whom we just saw in one panel drawing Mario, followed by the drawing he made, in the next panel? Are we narrating, perhaps as Sam, given the ocularization of the panel with Sam's drawing? Is the narrator of this page the devil-like character looking straight out at the reader on the fifth

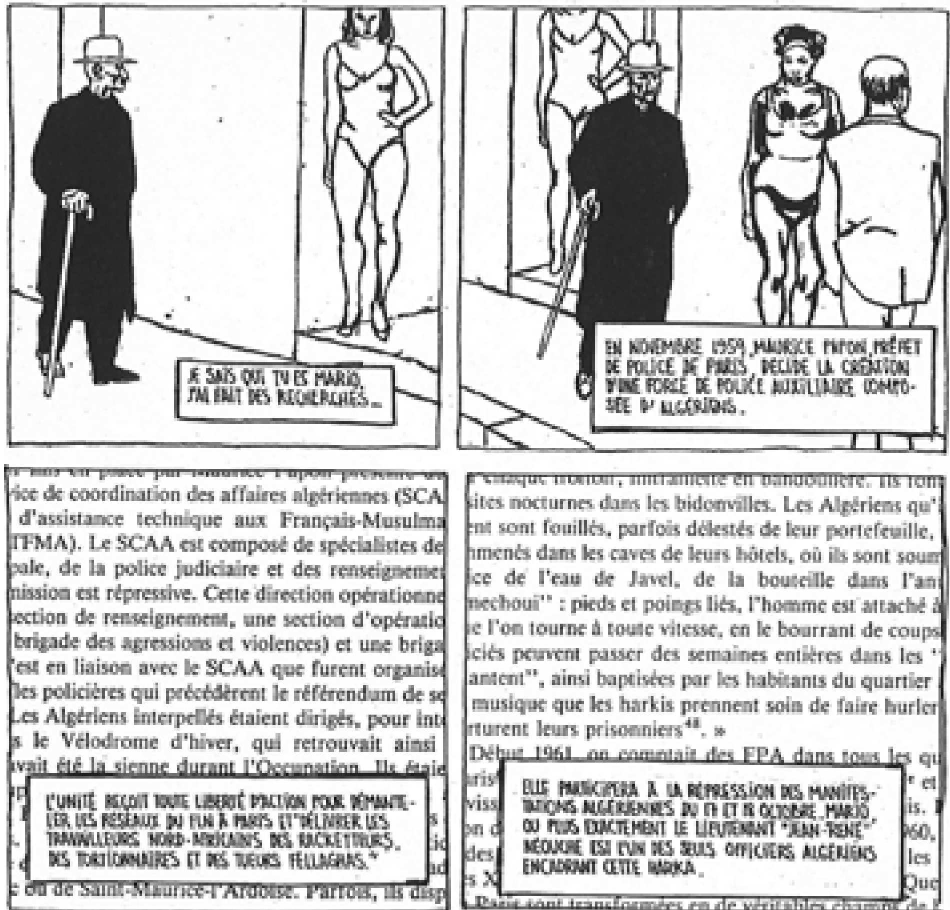


**Figure 8.6:** From Yvan Alagbé (2000) *Nègres jaunes*, Montreuil: Amok, p. 25.1–4 © Editions Amok. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

panel? Are we the devil, looking at ourselves mirrored in the panel? The narrator appears simultaneously to be Mario's torturer ("Je suis venu pour la douleur, pour aiguiser mon chant, la langue qui saigne," etc.) and victim ("J'ai le souffle des victimes"), both his executioner ("J'ai promis ta mort") and intimate partner ("Je dors à ses côtés"). The significance of the last image becomes clearer when juxtaposed with the long epigraph to the book, which – as noted earlier – is drawn from one of Flaubert's *Trois contes*, "La légende de Saint-Julien l'Hospitalier," in which an encounter with a leper tests the limits of Julian's hospitality. The specific passage quoted by Alagbé occurs in the conclusion to Flaubert's medieval tale, when the leper demands that Julian lie down beside him to keep him warm. The sixth panel is also the only one to be almost exactly duplicated in the story, in an image rhyme or example of weaving: the second occurence occupies

the highly symbolic last position in the story, its final panel (34.6, 37.6). Mario's death foretold in the passage just quoted has come to pass by the story's conclusion.

There are potentially many modern-day social lepers in *Nègres jaunes*: African *sans-papiers* (Martine and Alain), a racially-mixed couple (Alain and Claire), a jilted woman (Martine), parents with serious faults (Claire's father and mother), and even the cartoonist (Sam, in the serialized version) as an ill-paid artist (10.1). Of all the characters, Mario is furthest estranged from human community. He is more or less alienated from all members of his immediate family: his divorced wife, his senile mother and his busy daughter. As a *harki* he is regarded as a traitor in Algeria.[17] His wartime responsibility for torturing and murdering other North Africans makes him reprehensible. He lost the basis for his professional identity as a policeman, a job of which he is still proud, when he was hospitalized. He is scorned by French racists, such as the building superintendent. A white prostitute leers at him after he fails to achieve orgasm and requests a partial refund of the money he paid her (27–8). Through panel weaving or image rhymes, Alagbé underlines Mario's rejection by two women whose favors he tries to buy in different ways: sexual intimacy from the prostitute, and both cleaning labor and friendship or emotional labor from Martine. On two pages, Mario successively begs a favor from each woman that they both mutely reject with an eloquent, scornful look (28.5–6, 30.5–6). Shot-countershot sequences, ocularization, panel placement, and similarly framed drawings of the women's heads but with the tone polarities reversed, all reinforce the similarity of the situations. Mario's desperate attempt at recreating community with the *sans-papiers* therefore fails miserably because both Martine and Alain are repulsed and refuse to be manipulated by him, and Sam ignores his final plea.

Nevertheless, in light of the similarity between the saintly action of Julian and the narrator's declaration ("Je dors à ses côtés"), the question asked by the narrator urges an examination of readers' attitudes towards Mario: "L'aimer ou le détester, quelle importance?" [Love him or hate him, what does it matter?]. This seems to imply that the only appropriate response would be to "lie down beside him," that is to assist him by trying to alleviate his pain and suffering. To some degree, Alagbé presents this as a Christian moral imperative:[18] his reference to Flaubert's tale, and imagery from the book suggest that Mario, and Alain too, have been martyred by French society. So also do images of both men on the cover of the first book edition.[19] The back cover reproduces an image of Mario cold and in pain on the Africans' living-room couch (31.6). The front cover reworks two of the story's images together (42.1, 43.6), including one from a rare panel extending across an entire page (there are only five: 1.1, 16.5, 23.3, 24.1, 42.1). On the front cover, Alain looks upward, with his left arm outstretched, as though he were crucified (Figure 8.7). An anthropomorphic sun with a mask-like face shines next to him, while a plane crosses the sky. The recitative in the panel version of the image states that "...c'est l'hiver au pays des toubabs" [it's winter in the land of the whites] (42.1; Figure 8.8). Here again we have a colonial-era term, this time a loan word from Algerian Arabic that

**Figure 8.7:** From Yvan Alagbé (2000) *Nègres jaunes*, Montreuil: Amok, front cover and inside flap © Editions Amok. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

designates "whites."[20] In the story, on the following page (43.6) – the one drawn by Sam (Figure 8.5, above) – the sun figure seems to have the face of Claire, whose name could refer to her skin color (clear, or white). She puts her hand on Alain's naked shoulder and tells him "Tu seras ici chez toi" [You will be at home here] (44.1). The immediately following subway sequence, which concludes Alain's story, betrays her promise. The characters in *Nègres jaunes* who come closest to playing the role of Saint Julien l'Hospitalier are Claire, because of her love for Alain, and Sam, who translates the story of the marginalized characters into images and texts, that is, the comic-book itself. Still, Claire is unable to save Alain from the police who catch him in the subway, whereas Sam, busy drawing the story we read, hears Mario's desperate plea for Alain to respond but does not pick up the phone and prevent Mario from committing suicide. Through such passages, and indeed throughout the comic, Alagbé encourages readers to examine their own attitudes towards his characters and the groups they represent.

## From (post)colonial misery to pornographic satire

From his very first comic book, made with Marboeuf, Alagbé's work has contained highly sexualized imagery: *Ville prostituée* figures urban space as the naked bodies of women, often prostitutes (Alagbé and Marboeuf 1993). Since then, Alagbé has often put erotic imagery in the service of political, postcolonial ends, in works drawn across his career: *Nègres jaunes* in 1995, "Ce qui me donne envie de mourir" in 1996, *Dyaa* in 1997, "Le deuil" in 1997 and *Ecole de la misère* in 2013. It generally symbolizes sexualized colonial exploitation, sexual misery of immigrants, (post)colonial *métissage*, or combinations of those themes. I have already discussed how Alagbé represents sexual and affective misery of West and North African immigrants in France in *Nègres jaunes* and *Dyaa*. In the conclusion to *The Colonial Heritage of French Comics* (2011c: 160–4), I ana-

**Figure 8.8:** From Yvan Alagbé (2000) *Nègres jaunes*, Montreuil: Amok, p. 42 © Editions Amok. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

lyzed colonial and postcolonial eroticism that Alagbé and Stein represent in "Le deuil" (1997). "Ce qui me donne envie de mourir" [What makes me feel like dying], Alagbé's individually authored contribution to *Atteindre Marseille* (1996: 67–72), volume two of *Le cheval sans tête* (second version), reworks themes in postcolonial France similar to those of "Le deuil." Like *Dyaa*, it experiments with the dialogical confrontation of voices and of visual perspectives, to produce a polyphonic and polygraphic text (Smolderen 2009). Alagbé's short story is a triptych of two pages each: "Un seul amour" [Only one love] (67–8), "Ce qui me donne envie de mourir" (69–70) and "L'oubli" [Forgetting] (71–2). The first part takes place in a café with Italian-French male clients in Marseille, some of whom are discussing immigration when one makes a "denial of racism" (Van Dijk 1992) that is criticized by another. Two other clients discuss Leïla, who passes by. One tells the other that he can have cheap sex with Leïla anytime he wants and that she sleeps with the lawyer of her brother, who is in jail. This first part is recounted from the point of view of the man who had been told about Leïla and who has casual sex with her a few days later in an empty lot by the highway. Afterwards, he runs away from her, telling himself that she would be his only love (hence "un seul amour") but that he does not wish to support her financially. The second part is told from the point of view of Leïla. She encounters a man who is apparently the one with whom she had sex the previous day. He wishes to speak with her about their encounter, but she pushes him away, and he calls her a "petite putain" [little whore]. She continues to walk around Marseille, crying and trying to figure out "ce qui me donne envie de mourir." A fishmonger attempts to comfort her and gives her a fish (Figure 8.9). The third part depicts the lawyer of Leïla's brother, and is narrated from his point of view. He visits Leïla in her house and has sex with her on her mother's bed. He tells her that it is the last time, but she bitterly responds by telling him to put the money on the table and get out. He drives away, remembering how he had duped the naive girl with promises he would not keep, and used her. The sex scene is framed by a memory of Alberto, an antiracist, railing against the lawyer, who dismisses him. In the story Alagbé emphasizes the multiethnic character of Marseille: the lawyer is of Armenian background, Leïla is Maghrebi, and Alberto is no doubt Italian. The cartoonist sets up a dialogical contrast between, on the one hand, the degrading treatment that the two men of the first and third parts mete out to Leïla, and the kindness of a stranger, the fishmonger, in the second part. Similarly, the antiracist attitude of Alberto is contrasted with the demeaning, callous treatment inflicted by other men on Leïla. The recounting of the three parts from different points of view – Leïla's two clients and Leïla herself – allows for a critical contrast between the men's self-serving views of Leïla and the traumatic effects that the men have on Leïla's vision of herself, that is, what makes her want to kill herself. The situation portrayed is abject, but the treatment given presents a complex, empathetic view of this type of marginal situation (prostitution, drug use). Alagbé thereby productively reworks the often clichéd images of a young Maghrebi-French woman (Leïla) as a sex interest and of a young Maghrebi-French man (her brother) as a delinquent.

**Figure 8.9:** From Yvan Alagbé (1996) "Ce qui me donne envie de mourir," *Le cheval sans tête*, vol. 2: *Atteindre Marseille*, September, p. 70 © Editions Amok. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

Later, circa 2008 to 2014, Alagbé anonymously published a series of comics both in print with Frémok and on a blog, in which pornographic images express political and cultural satire in a very different mode.[21] Here I will discuss the first six bi-monthly, printed booklets. Each contains thirty-two pages. Their slipcovers bear both the series title "Démoniak: Protohistoire pour adultes" [Demonik: Protohistory/story for Adults] and a specific title for each volume: *Le livre qui tue* [The Book That Kills] (no. 1), *Mort à Babylone* [Death in/to Babylone] (no. -1), *L'intrusion historique* [The Historical Intrusion] (no. 2), *Dirty Diana* (no. -2), *L'amphigouri de la caverne* [The Amphigouri of the Cavern] (no. 3; cf. Plato's "l'allégorie de la caverne" [allegory of the cave]) and *La rose noire du Caire* [The Black Rose of Cairo] (no. -3). The predominant colors of the booklets are black, white and red, but occasionally there are full-color images. They recount delirious, hallucinatory – the terms are not too strong – stories about well-known, real-life celebrities in politics, entertainment, business and elsewhere, ranging from singers Alain Bashung (Alain Babouine; cf. *babouin* [baboon]) and Michael Jackson (Monkey Johnson), to Diana, Princess of Wales (Lady Dirty Diana), American politicians Donald Rumsfeld (Ronald Rhumsteak) and Condoleezza Rice (Condomeeza Twice), and French politicians Rama Yade (Raya Crade [Dirty Raya]) and Bernard Kouchner (Koukouch [Go lie down]). As this list suggests, Alagbé takes perverse pleasure in irreverent *détournement* [diversion] of the names of the famous, rich and powerful, as well as their images. The characters regularly engage in all manner of sexual acts, graphically protrayed.

The protagonist is Démoniak, a handsome, muscular and virile Black character, whose name, disguise and activities indicate borrowing from one or two Italian comics series and their film adaptations: *Diabolik* (begun 1962), by Angela and Luciana Giussani, inspired by the Belle époque fictional character Fantômas (appreciated by the Surrealists), and *Satanik* (from 1964), an erotic comic by Magnus (Roberto Raviola) and Max Bunker (Luciano Secchi), published in French translation as *Démoniak*. Alagbé demonstrates his awareness of the tradition that these Italian comics draw on by redrawing the famous image of Fantômas standing over Paris and holding a blood-stained knife from the front cover of the first, 1911 volume of the series by Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain, on the first page of *La rose noire du Caire* (-3). When I asked Alagbé about these possible inspirations, he acknowledged them and pointed to others too (Alagbé 2020):

> As for Démoniak, yes, the series of which you speak inspired me as did numerous other characters (from comics but also from literature, cinema or photonovelas like *Killing* that I use a lot in *Démoniak*) that form a constellation around what I call the "Colonial Phantom." I never succeeded in writing something clear and constructed about the topic, but let's say that it comes out of an intuition of a link between this kind of "demonic" character and the colonial question. It's obvious for Tarzan, but can seem less so for Fantômas, but the Phantom of Lee Falk allows the connection to be made. I even discovered an Italian copy named.. Amok![22]

*Killing* was a series of erotic Italian photonovelas from the mid-1960s about an eponymous sadistic criminal who tortured men and, especially, sexy women in various states of undress. The French translation of the series was also titled *Satanik*. Alagbé borrowed its subtitle, *Protohistoire pour adultes*, for his own series, which is far more sexually explicit than the original.

Alagbé's reappropriation of the Black superhero figure in comics, in part via his *détournement* of Falk's Phantom, reminds one of Surrealist and Situationnist techniques (e.g., Vienet 1997; cf. Miller 2007a: 118). We may also recall Anita Comix's Mécanic Bamboula character, and Monpierre's critique, in *Repas antillais*, of Falk's characters the Phantom, Mandrake the Magician and Lothar (see above, Chapter 2). The first volume of "Démoniak" crosscuts a version of the invasion of Irak by the U.S.-led coalition in 2003 that descends into a gay sex orgy between Major Cunt Beastwood and Brat Pils (Clint Eastwood and Brad Pitt), and others, with a sadomasochistic sex scene between Démoniak, also called "le Fantôme colonial" (cf. Fantômas), and a blond white woman modeled on Catherine Deneuve in Luis Buñuel's erotic 1967 film *Belle de jour*. The story includes recollection of the slave revolt on Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti), and especially anti-Black propaganda in text and image produced by white plantation owners to sway mainland French opinion against the revolting slaves (Figure 8.10). Alagbé reproduces an engraving titled "Incendie du Cap: Révolte générale des nègres. Massacre des blancs" [Burning of the Cape: General revolt of the Negroes. Massacre of the whites] (see Gómez 2013). Démoniak reads a written account of the revolt and looks at the engraving while drinking "Black Head Rum," an alcohol imported from the Caribbean to France for decades by a Bordeaux company. The French couple's activities and speech serve as metacommentary on the contemporary military invasion and on French colonial history, producing something akin to the interaction between sexual practice, libertine sexual commentary and political theory in *La philosophie dans le boudoir* [*Philosophy in the Bedroom*] by the Marquis de Sade.

Alagbé reinterprets icons from comics history in similar ways, for example by renaming Tove Jansson's comics character Papa Moomin, colored red, as "Papa Legba," recalling a voodoo spirit or divinity from Benin, and inserting an erect black phallus into his hand (-1; a related sketch of Moomin with an erection appears in "Démoniak," volume 1). Alagbé later created a single image by collaging elements from several panels on the 3 November 1907 page of Winsor McCay's "Little Nemo in Slumberland" to show Nemo with Flip and three Jungle Imps, black(face) characters in the American strip (instead of just one Imp on the original page).[23] He also changes Nemo's name in the speech balloon of an emissary calling him to the palace of King Morpheus, so that she calls instead for "Little Momo" (-2), recalling a nickname for "Mohamed" in France, as in Romain Gary's *La vie devant soi* (1975). In the same volume, Alagbé uses similar techniques to transform a panel from "Fantomah, mystery woman of the jungle," the

**Figure 8.10:** From Yvan Alagbé (2009) *Démoniak*, no. 1: *Le livre qui tue*, January–February, Brussels: Frémok, p. 9 © Editions Frémok. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

superhero character of Barclay Flagg (i.e., Fletcher Hanks), into "Fantomak," drawn by YalaraB Flag (almost an anagram of "Yvan Alagbé"), now dark-haired instead of blonde, so again probably a visual collage, with the face of the Dragon Lady from Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates*. Her face echoes eerily with that of Michael Jackson's fictional double in the panel below, suggesting a blurring of gender and racial identities.

On the facing page, Fantomak has sex with cartoony characters, in the manner of Tijuana bibles, pornographic American comics in which mainstream comics characters engage in orgies.[24] In fact, a later volume of "Démoniak" (-3) includes a panel lifted from a Tijuana bible featuring Popeye in a double-page sequence that also incorporates two panels from "Little Nemo in Slumberland" and an original drawing by Charles Dodgson in his 1862–4 manuscript "Alice's Adventures Under Ground," reworked and published as *Alice in Wonderland* under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll.[25] Alagbé later published several other booklets in a "Démoniak Dirty Strips" series that are explicitly modeled on

Tijuana bibles. They feature virtually untranslatable titles with erotic and scatological references such as "Najat Goulot-Belsacoch dans L'Azizette" [Najat Throat-BelsaCock in the Dick] (featuring a fictionalized version of Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, a French Socialist politician of Moroccan heritage) and "Jérôme Cuhassec: The Wild Side" [Jérôme Dried-OutAss] (satirizing Jérôme Cahuzac, a disgraced Socialist politician).

Here I have only begun to suggest the complexity of Alagbé's pornographic political satire, much of which involves a political critique of offensive colonialist and imperialist imagery from the past (such as the engraving from Saint-Domingue) up into the contemporary epoch (including Abu-Ghraib torture photos). Throughout the "Démoniak" series, Alagbé challenges normative categories of identity – national, racial, ethnic, cultural, gendered and sexual – in a fiercely satirical and postcolonial mode that uses Situationnist and Surrealist iconographic techniques to engage with a vast array of iconography, ranging across classic comics to photonovelas, advertisements and far beyond. His signifying practice in "Démoniak" also recalls the wiles of Legba, the pan-African, Black diasporic trickster figure analyzed by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (1988).

## Conclusion: avant-garde openings for postcolonialism and migration

Through their editing and publishing activities with Amok, Alagbé and Marboeuf opened up ways of thinking about how comics and other visual arts in print might engage with issues of colonial history, migration and postcolonialism. Amok's publications helped imagine those possibilities in an avant-gardist direction through modernist formal approaches inspired by fine-art techniques, as Beaty (2007) argues. Alagbé's own comics, created individually or in collaboration with other artists, and published first with Amok and now with Frémok, constitute an impressive body of work centered on those issues. We shall see another kind of experimental approach to related issues in the following chapter, this time with references to Oulipo, the literary association that inspired the comics group Oubapo.

## Notes

1 Baetens (1998: 119–47) and Beaty (2007: 82–110).

2 Listed in Amok catalogues of 1995 and 1996–7; see also Beaty (2007: 111–37).

3 See above, pp. 62–3.

4 Http://www.peripheries.net/article203.html; accessed 1 August 2020.

5 Https://www.galeriejpht.com/vernissage-pop-is-popular; accessed 1 August 2020.

6 I am indebted to Séra, an accomplished Cambodian-French artist (cartoonist, painter and sculptor) and comics scholar, for recommending Alagbé's *Nègres jaunes* to me in 1996, when we stepped into a Paris bookstore. On Séra's comics, see Genoudet (2015) and McKinney (2017a).

7 On this work, see also Groensteen (1996a), McKinney (1997b: 178), Beaty (1998, 2007: 97) and Frey (2008a).
8 On "Le deuil," see also McKinney (2011c: 161–4).
9 On this, see Groensteen and Peeters (1994: 10–16), Kunzle (2007a: 116–17) and Groensteen (2014: 101).
10 On reportage in French-language comics, see Miller (2007b: 57–9; 2008), Bumatay (2020) and below, Chapter 10.
11 Pierre-Adolphe, Mamoud and Tzanos (1998: 56) and Goudaillier (2001: 203); cf. Treps (2005: 218–19).
12 "Nègres jaunes," part 3, *Le cheval sans tête*, first series, no. 5, May 1995, p. 52.
13 On Papon and *harkis* in Paris, see also Péju (2000 [1961]), Amiri (2004: 97–122) and House and MacMaster (2006: esp. 77–87).
14 On this book, see McKinney (2008a, 2019); on other comics about the police repression of 17 October 1961 see Gorrara (2018); for this event in *Nègres jaunes*, see also Frey (2008a: 120–2).
15 In one of these two panels, the text that Alagbé inserts includes material quoted from *Les ratonnades d'octobre: Un meurtre collectif à Paris en 1961*, by Michel Levine (1985: 40), one of the first studies to unearth this history in postcolonial France. On this collage technique in comics about colonialism, see McKinney (2013e).
16 *Le cheval sans tête*, first series, no. 5, pp. 40, 52.
17 On Mario as a former *harki*, see Frey (2008a: 122–3); on *harkis* in and after the war, see Stora (1992: 163–6, 200–2, 206–8, 261–5).
18 Martine is a Christian: she wears a cross around her neck (e.g., 30.6), and a crucifix hangs in her bedroom (38.2).
19 Frey (2008a: 128) argues that the cover illustrations on the second book edition destabilize dominant visions of *sans-papiers* and French policing of them.
20 Pierre-Adolphe, Mamoud and Tzanos (1998: 11), Goudaillier (2001: 282) and Treps (2005: 222); cf. https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/toubib; accessed 2 August 2020.
21 Https://demoniak.wordpress.com; accessed 23 July 2020.
22 José Jover depicts himself as a boy copying precisely this comic in Figure 2.11, in Chapter 2, above.
23 McCay (1989: 47); *Ville prostituée*, by Alagbé and Marboeuf (1993: 3), includes a pastiche of Little Nemo.
24 Adelman (1997: 12–43, 144–9); cf. Thomas (2018).
25 Panels two and five of the "Little Nemo in Slumberland" page of 7 October 1906; for Dodgson's original drawing, see page 37 at https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/alices-adventures-under-ground-the-original-manuscript-version-of-alices-adventures-in-wonderland#; accessed 7 July 2020. Frémok has a blog dedicated to artistic exploration loosely organized around the theme of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*: https://experiencealice.wordpress.com; accessed 3 August 2020.

Chapter 9

# Across the affrontier with Abirached

## Introduction: *la contre-bande dessinée*

Zeina Abirached is a French and Lebanese cartoonist who has published several semi-autobiographical comic books about life in Lebanon and France. She uses a beautiful avant-gardist artistic approach to express socially significant and historically important content in compelling comics narratives. She first published four comic books with Cambourakis, an independent publisher in Paris (Abirached 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008). Two of them have also been translated and published in English (and other languages): *Mourir, partir, revenir: Le jeu des hirondelles* (2007) and *Je me souviens: Beyrouth* (2008), respectively as *A Game for Swallows: To Die, To Leave, To Return* (2012) and *I Remember Beirut* (2014).[1] She published her next two comic books, both long-form graphic novels, with the major Belgian comics publisher Casterman: *Le piano oriental* (2015a), her first work foregrounding her own migration to France and colonial relations between France and Lebanon. In 2018 she published *Prendre refuge*, a long-form graphic novel that she drew alone and scripted together with Mathias Enard, an author who won the Prix Goncourt, one of France's most prestigious literary prizes, in 2015 for one of his novels. Her comics were featured in the 2013–14 exhibition on comics and immigration at the French national Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration [Museum of the History of Immigration], including on the institution's website and in the exhibition catalogue (Abirached 2012–13; Marie and Ollivier 2013: 86–7). Abirached's books have encountered increasing success in Europe and beyond. She has given presentations about her art at several American universities. I have written previously about Abirached's avant-gardist art in *Mourir, partir, revenir: Le jeu des hirondelles* and *Je me souviens: Beyrouth* (McKinney 2015a). I have also analyzed how she uses autofiction and intertextuality to find a way around the *affrontier* in *Le piano oriental*.[2] Here I continue my exploration of the rich possibilities that *Le piano oriental* offers for thinking about artistic invention, transcultural mediation, postcolonialism and migration in and through comics. I borrow three well-known concepts used by historian and anthropologist Michel de Certeau, including in co-authored writing with historian Luce Giard – *la relique* [the relic], *la geste chemina-*

*toire* [walking epic song]) and *la perruque* [poaching] – and put them into dialogue with equivalent visual symbols and narrative practices in Abirached's comics, especially *Le piano oriental*: family relics, narratives about moving through urban space and across international frontiers, a hat that facilitates artistic invention, and (post)colonial interpretation between languages and cultures. With them, I will show how Abirached imports a form of postcolonial contraband into the language, culture and comics of France, and normalizes it there. The result is an example of *contre-bande dessinée* [contraband comics or counter-comics], a counter-discursive artistry that, "even as it deterritorializes the dominant, seeks to acquire and legitimate territory for itself" (Mehrez 1993: 27), as I argued in Chapter 1 of this volume.[3]

I begin by summarizing the plot and outlining the structure of *Le piano oriental*.[4] The graphic novel alternates between two main stories. The first features Abdallah Kamanja, the fictional double of the artist's maternal great-grandfather. In the second, Abirached retraces her life in Beirut during and after the war, which lasted from 1975 until 1991, and then her voyage to France to study art at the Ecole nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs [Decorative Arts School] in Paris. She especially recounts her experience of adapting to life in France before and after acquiring French citizenship. She also presents her paternal grandfather, who worked as an interpreter for the military administration during the French mandate in Lebanon, and was naturalized French. The novel opens in Beirut in 1959, when Abdallah shares with his best friend, Victor Challita, the much awaited news that he just received an invitation from the Hofman company, which builds pianos in Vienna. The directors would like him to demonstrate his invention, the oriental piano, so they may determine its musical and commercial value. When he does so, they are very impressed, and promise to build more if Abdallah can gather a hundred orders. Delighted, he returns home to Beirut with Victor. Sadly, over the following years, Abdallah is unable to gather the minimum number of orders, despite meeting some of the most celebrated musicians of the Near East and North Africa. He dies in January 1975 without achieving his artistic dream. The novel ends with the cartoonist traveling once again from Beirut to Paris after a trip home to Lebanon, years after first moving to the French capital. This time she brings with her material given to her by her mother that will allow her to tell the story of Abdallah and his oriental piano. Those documents constitute a type of relic.

## *La relique*

In *L'ordinaire de la communication*, a text that Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard first published in 1983 as a study for the French government, the two historians theorized the concept of the relic, borrowed from religious iconography and also inspired by Freudian analysis.[5] Their concept is helpful for thinking about how immigrants preserve "fragments of history," that is, sociocultural remains of the past that they

**Figure 9.1:** From Zeina Abirached (2007) *Mourir, partir, revenir*: *Le jeu des hirondelles*, Paris: Cambourakis, p. 129 © Editions Cambourakis, 2020. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Cambourakis.

maintain and set ("enchâssent") within their new environment, and around which their memory coalesces. Today the concept of the relic remains useful for understanding postcolonial migration to France, and analyzing how comics are an art that can preserve the visual and textual fragments, and the storytelling ways, of postcolonial ethnic minorities. Abirached already developed an iconography of the relic in her preceding work, notably in *Mourir, partir, revenir*: *Le jeu des hirondelles* (2007). There she celebrates Anhala, an old woman who personifies maternal tenderness and has dedicated her entire life to serving a wealthy family in Beirut in a very selfless and devoted manner, whereas those who benefit the most from her kindness never recognize it for its true worth. Abirached calls Anhala a goddess ("Vénus d'abondance" [Venus of abundance]; 129; Figure 9.1) and represents her as a saint who deserved a place at the center of an icon, but was dislodged or denied that position by her employers (121). Through her graphic narrative, Abirached restores Anhala to her rightful, saintly place.

The cartoonist also represents a cloth tapestry as an object of inheritance and a relic in a way that resembles its use by Certeau and Giard (Figure 9.2). Although the family has not permanently migrated from one country to another at this point, they have been repeatedly displaced by the Lebanese civil war, as we see in *I Remember Beirut* (2014: 48–60), and have lost much in the disaster (e.g., in *Le piano oriental*, 2015a: 204). Their wartime losses and repeated flights from violence create a situation akin to that of a migrant who has left a country and much else behind. Early in the story, the narrator says:

> Cette tenture était la seule chose qui nous restait de mon grand-père paternel. Après le décès de ses parents, mon père l'a trouvée pliée en quatre, dans un carton au grenier. Quand je suis née, la tenture était déjà accrochée dans l'entrée. (2007: 38)
>
> [That tapestry was the only thing that we had left from my grandfather. After the death of his parents, my father found it folded up in a box in the attic. When I was born, the tapestry already hung in the front hallway.]

On the facing page, the smiling young double of the author expresses a talismanic faith in the power of the tapestry to protect her family (39): "Je n'ai pas connu mes grands-parents paternels, et je les ai toujours associés à cette tenture. Réunis ainsi dans l'entrée, rien ne pouvait nous arriver" [I never knew my paternal grandparents, and I always associated them with that tapestry. Gathered together in the front hallway, nothing could happen to us]. However, the parents' look, strikingly more distraught than that of their two children, disavows the childish faith of Zeina. The narrator thereby suggests that those fighting the civil war respect nothing, not even the life of civilians, including children.

In the same book the cartoonist also uses a recurring image to represent family treasures that survived the conflict. Farah, from a wealthy Lebanese family, is the

**Figure 9.2:** From Zeina Abirached (2007) *Mourir, partir, revenir*: *Le jeu des hirondelles*, Paris: Cambourakis, p. 37 © Editions Cambourakis, 2020. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Cambourakis.

last in a lineage of three generations of women raised by Anhala. The narrator tells us that when a bomb destroyed the family home, Farah and her husband Ramzi managed to save some objects, which represent both their lost past and their hope for a better future (63): "Ils avaient emmené dans leurs valises les quelques vêtements qui leur restaient et une vieille boîte à chaussures qui contenait les photos de leur mariage. Ils avaient réussi à sauver des flammes ce que Farah avait désormais de plus cher" [They had brought their few remaining clothes in their suitcases, and an old shoebox containing their marriage photographs. They had succeeded in saving from the flames what Farah henceforth held to be most precious]. Farah shows her photographs to her neighbors during the evening of bombing that forces them to shelter together in the

**Figure 9.3:** From Zeina Abirached (2015) *Le piano oriental*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 204 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

apartment of Zeina's family, on the apparently safer, lower level of the building. The images, which show the lavish celebration held toward the beginning of the war (127–35), constitute visual relics from which Farah reconstructs a nostalgic tale of bygone times, before the destruction of her home. By telling her story, she resists the wartime destruction and preserves family memories from an historical time blown apart by the catastrophe of war. Similarly, the shoebox as a reliquary containing sacred objects saved from wartime disaster returns at the end of *Le piano oriental*, where it holds the photos that Nour, Zeina's mother, gives her before her departure from Beirut (2015a: 204; Figure 9.3):

> J'ai mis quelques photos de ton arrière-grand-père dans une boîte... Les archives ont disparu quand tout a brûlé... pendant la guerre mais il reste ces photos... et ce disque! Ce sont les seules traces de son invention! [...] ...Il reste son piano bien sûr...! C'est l'exemplaire unique du piano oriental! Prends-en quelques-unes si tu veux
>
> [I put some photos of your great-grandfather in a box... The archives disappeared when everything burned... during the war, but these photos remain... and this record! They are the only traces of his invention! [...] ...There is still his piano, of course...! It's the one and only version of the oriental piano! Take some of them if you wish]

It is no coincidence that this shoebox recalls the one that held shoes purchased by Abdallah at the beginning of the novel to celebrate his invitation to Vienna,[6] as well as the shoebox with Farah's photos (2007: 63). The narrator tells us: "J'ai pris la boîte à chaussures et je suis rentrée, à Paris" [I took the shoebox and I returned home, to Paris.] (2015a: 205–6). She thereby affirms her own migratory status (Paris is now her second home) and indicates her attachment to a past from Lebanon before the war that she intends to preserve. It is from these photographs that Abirached will reconstruct her great-grandfather's story, set like a relic within the graphic novel, itself a reliquary. Abdallah, the inventor of the oriental piano, thereby becomes a kind of patron saint of artistic biculturalism by the end of the novel, and through it. Two more key concepts of Certeau in dialogue with Abirached's novel will help us understand her transcultural artistry even better.

## *Le tarbouche et la geste cheminatoire*

A tarboosh, which is to say a fez, figures prominently in *Le piano oriental*, first on the front cover, where Abdallah is wearing it (Figure 9.4). In the novel, it almost magically allows him to find time for artistic creation. He begins his musical voyage by refusing to work in a spinning mill (*une filature*), perhaps belonging to his father, who

**Figure 9.4:** From Zeina Abirached (2015) *Le piano oriental*, Tournai: Casterman, front cover © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

bitterly chides him for abandoning his filial duty (65). Abdallah prefers instead to put on the tarboosh of his uncle Khalil, a musician and his role model, and travel to Beirut to pursue his dream. The hat functions a bit like the fable's seven-league boots, allowing him to undertake his initiatory voyage, of which the narrator recounts four competing versions in the manner of a burlesque epic, a folktale, or a family legend (59–65). This first journey prefigures his trip to Vienna, as well as the initial voyage of Zeina, his great granddaughter, to Paris in 2004. Upon arriving in Beirut, Abdallah finds a job at the bus station (*la gare routière*), a routine and almost monacal activity in a sort of document factory: he must make handwritten copies of documents (77), which is the very antithesis of the artistic creativity that he loves. By ostentatiously wearing his tarboosh every morning on his way to work, Abdallah ensures that everyone sees him, because the hat is already anachronistic in Beirut at the time. The narrator tells us that he resembles the proverbial white wolf (78). Abdallah greets people he meets on his way to work and his colleagues upon arriving there, by tapping on his hat, making a char-

acteristic noise, "Poc, poc, poc" (76–85). He sits down at his desk, takes off his tarboosh, and begins to copy documents. After a while, though, he leaves his tarboosh very visibly on his desk and returns home, bare-headed and drawing no attention to himself (86–9; Figure 9.5). His reputation for wearing the tarboosh renders him invisible on his way home, whereas the hat left on his desk tricks his boss into thinking that his employee is still in the office somewhere because he cannot imagine that Abdallah might envision going out without it on his head. Abdallah thereby cleverly manipulates his notoriety to avoid surveillance. He continues to pursue his musical dream by spending hours playing his upright piano, and especially trying to modify it so that it can play the quarter tone notes typical of oriental music (88, 102–12).[7]

In fact Abdallah uses his tarboosh in a way that recalls how Certeau describes "la perruque," ou "perruquer" (translated into English as "poaching," but literally, "the

**Figure 9.5:** From Zeina Abirached (2015) *Le piano oriental*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 87 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

wig," or "to wig" in French). In a celebrated passage from *L'invention du quotidien* [*The Practice of Everyday Life*], Certeau (1990: 45) conceives *la perruque* as a manner in which the popular persists in modern French society: "It is impossible to relegate the operatory models of popular culture to the past, the countryside or primitive peoples. They exist in the heart of the strongholds of today's economy. This is the case with *la perruque*." I here poach Certeau's terms and translate them as *le tarbouche* and *tarboucher*. In Certeau's model, *perruquer* is a way of evading the surveillance of capitalism, of its managers and foremen, in the factory. It is a way, he says, of pulling off tricks (*faire des coups ou des tours*) that resemble the clever techniques of the heroes of folktales analysed by Vladimir Propp (1973), whom Certeau mentions (Certeau 1990: 42). It is a kind of tinkering (*bricolage*) at work, a poaching of time (*un détournement*), as well as of bits of material that would otherwise be thrown out. One therefore builds things at work for oneself, one's family and friends. This deviation or *détournement* evades the capitalist mastery and surveillance of collective resources that have been privatized. By calling Abdallah's artistic activity on company time *le tarbouche*, I borrow a theoretical term and re-orient it, but hopefully still remain faithful to the spirit of Certeau's work. Whereas Certeau establishes a spatial distinction between *perruquer* in the industrial factory and *bricoler* at home, *tarboucher* in *Le piano oriental* consists of taking time away from the numbing, factory-like work of copyist in order to *bricoler* at home. Certeau's analysis quickly takes a metaphorical turn, when he envisions a free writing practice in university research that could liberate it from constraints imposed from above (48–9). Abirached (2015a) represents Abdallah's rerouting or *détournement* of time towards artistic invention as having the potential to effect a true postcolonial, cultural and artistic transformation within France and Lebanon, and between both countries. The cartoonist's own practice of writing and drawing is itself an example of *le tarbouche*, because she poaches from French culture, literature and comics in a liberating manner (McKinney 2020b). It is an example of the free writing envisioned by Certeau, enriched by a free drawing practice, which reorganizes the contemporary world in a poetic way, including by recalling its colonial basis. Tracing a path across the colonial affrontier, she draws her way toward a world free of colonial constraints.

Abirached also diverts the crossing of space from its ostensible function while accompanying Abdallah across the city, because what first seems only to be the path leading from his home to his workplace, reveals itself as an artistic and sociocultural crossing (*un cheminement*) across Beirut. This resembles how Certeau describes pedestrians rewriting urban landscapes, by crossing them on foot in ways that divert them away from the functionalist intentions of architects and city-planners. Ann Miller (2008b: 105–9) very convincingly uses Certeau's theorization of urban space to analyze a related example of postcolonial *cheminement* in *La présidente*, a comic strip by Jean-Christophe Menu and Blutch.[8] In *Le piano oriental*, Abirached shows Abdallah walking down from his apartment on the hillside to his office, next to the port, and chatting freely with friends and acquain-

tances on the way. This type of deambulation will later become impossible for Abirached and her family during the long years of civil war, which will create a faultline in her relationship to her hometown. She represents that in a poignant manner, when she describes the aphasia – a sudden inability to speak French or Arabic – that her long delayed first trip to West Beirut will inflict on her, a traumatic urban crossing that she earlier represented in *I Remember Beirut*.[9] In *Le piano oriental* she overcomes that barrier through the *truchement* – the interpretation or translation – of drawing, which replaces speech long enough for her to retie her relationship to the city (2015a: 90–4).

In accompanying Abdallah to his workplace, the cartoonist lovingly recreates the polyglot speech and daily activities of the inhabitants of Beirut (76–85), as well as the spectacle of the traditional architecture of the city (Figure 9.6). This crossing celebrates

**Figure 9.6:** From Zeina Abirached (2015) *Le piano oriental*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 77 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

**Figure 9.7:** From Zeina Abirached (2015) *Le piano oriental*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 9.1 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

and commemorates the city, because it resurrects a world forever lost in the war and the reconstruction that followed it. In a passage titled "Pratiques d'espace" [Practices of space], Certeau (1990: 139–91) opposes the moving and inventive walking of pedestrians in large cities, which he calls "une geste cheminatoire" [a walking epic song] to the static and panoptic perspective of architects and urbanists (see Miller 2008: 106), for example, the one now also forever lost that he had seen from the top of the World Trade Center in New York (Certeau 1990: 139–46).[10] Furthermore, Abirached frames and gives rhythm to her graphic novel through a series of artistic perspectives that, while certainly panoptic, are nonetheless filled with empathy and historical memory. One sees from afar the topography of downtown Beirut on the waterfront progressively invaded by skyscrapers as the years pass by. Little by little, postwar reconstruction obstructs the view of the sea that Abdallah used to enjoy from the window of the family's apartment (Figure 9.7).[11] The narrator (Abirached 2015a: 202) sadly tells us that "[l]a vue par la fenêtre n'est plus tout à fait la même" [The view from the window is no longer quite the same] (Figure 9.8).

The urban crisscrossings of Abdallah and Victor participate in the commemoration of Beirut's urban landscape and its importation into Europe, across the colonial affrontier, thereby producing in the graphic novel what Arjun Appadurai (1990: 7) would call an ethnoscape, or ethnic landscape, composed of itinerant figures:

> By ethnoscape, I mean the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers and other

moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree.

Paris too is an ethnoscape in *Le piano oriental*, in Abirached's narrative about the strange and the familiar, about the defamiliarization of a country she had become familiar with in Lebanon, but oddly, in an off-kilter way, through out-of-date images in her French-language grammar books (Abirached 2015a: 69–71). Assimilating means refamiliarizing herself with France, a kind of reterritorialization that first entails undoing the French-Arab *métisse* culture that she grew up with in Lebanon (124–9), and then making place for it again, after she has been naturalized French (166–73). She recounts the process of occupying cultural space in France and of mediating between it and her Lebanese homeland through, again, a kind of *geste cheminatoire*, in passages recounting her migration to Paris in 2004 to attend art school (26–8, 34–5), walking through the French capital (71, 127, 166), and traveling back and forth between there and Beirut (164–5, 202–5). She weaves – or, in her metaphor, knits (95–7) – her personal epic traveling poem into, or out from, the *geste cheminatoire* she tells about her great-grandfather's move from province to Beirut (59–66), his walks through the streets of the Lebanese capital (10–25, 76–84, 114–15, and his trans-Mediterranean voyage to Vienna and back (36–9, 49–51, 130–47). Her poetic journey picks up the thread from where his ended, and prolongs it in a new fashion.

To wend and weave her own way, which is to say to recount her story of artistic invention, thereby producing a *geste cheminatoire* both familial and personal, Abirached

**Figure 9.8:** From Zeina Abirached (2015) *Le piano oriental*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 202.1 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

**Figure 9.9:** From Zeina Abirached (2015) *Le piano oriental*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 29 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

adapts memorial and formal literary techniques from Oulipo,[12] and borrows images from classic and contemporary comics that she reworks and threads into her narrative (McKinney 2020b). Her novel shows that she is one of those "researchers adept in the art of *diversion* [détournement], which is a return of the ethical, of pleasure and of invention in the institution" (Certeau 1990: 48–9; my emphasis). She is a researcher in comics, a creator of the graphic novel as both visual art and literature. As we shall now see, this is also, at the same time, the rewarding work of interpreting language, culture and art.

## *Le truchement*

The cartoonist knits a third story into her work, that of her paternal grandfather, or in fact her father's grandfather, because here, as elsewhere, she seems to have diverted, or modified, family history (Abirached and Bouillon 2015: 142). This man, who is her alter ego's grandfather in the novel, served as an interpreter between the occupiers and the indigenous during the French mandate in Lebanon (Figure 9.9). She tells us that he was a *drogman*, that this term comes from the Arabic word for "interpreter," and that it gave us the French word *truchement*.[13] Abirached's etymology digs into the French language to unearth its foreign, Arabic portion, which has been naturalized within it.[14] The historical transformation of *drogman* into *truchement*, and the cartoonist's excavatory activity, function as a *mise-en-abîme* of her own naturalization as French, and of that of her paternal (great-)grandfather. She says that on photos he "looks elsewhere" (Abirached 2015a: 29), a diversion or displacement of looking – a looking aside – that she reproduces in her drawn portraits of him, and which recalls the sideways movement of the pedal and hammer mechanism in the oriental piano that her maternal great-grandfather invents, and calls a *déhanchement* [swaying of the hips] (142). The neologism *désyeuxment*, a looking aside, or a swaying of the eyes (*un déhanchement oculaire*), is perhaps too strange, but suggests a way of seeing that is oriented toward an elsewhere, another linguistic or cultural space, whether French or Lebanese, and therefore ready to translate between one language or culture and another. The author also cites what is no doubt the most famous example of translation in modern history, moreover one that comes from French imperial history, when she names the boat that takes Abdallah and Victor on their trans-Mediterranean voyage "The Rosetta Stone" (38). It links Alexandria to Marseille, with stops in Haifa, Beirut and Athens. In this way she links the musical project of her maternal great-grandfather to the work of linguistic interpretation of her paternal (great-)grandfather.

When Abirached moves to France, she feels the need to separate the French from the Arabic components of her hybrid idiom, like the sticks in a game of Pickup sticks (called *mikado* in French), a fastidious and difficult job (124–6), in order to make herself properly understood by the French. This recalls a similar linguistic alienation that she

**Figure 9.10:** From Zeina Abirached (2015) *Le piano oriental*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 172 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Casterman.

experienced at age eight in Beirut, during the civil war, when she visited West Beirut for the first time, which I mentioned earlier. There, she draws herself as a grotesque wooden bird who incarnates the denigrating epithet "Franji coucou," or "French cuckoo bird," attributed to her at school because she preferred to speak French (74). She had difficulty pronouncing Arabic words correctly, because for her that language represented the fratricidal violence of war. Later, after her French naturalization, she draws herself as a stuffed woman-bird, punning on a French word: one says that an animal has been *naturalisé*, or stuffed, by a taxidermist (173). Here again, an object that unites and congeals the human and the animal figures a negative vision of a reified ethno-cultural identity. However, after Abirached's naturalization, the way that she naturally speaks French, with an intonation inflected by Arabic and a vocabulary sprinkled with Arabic words, comes back in force (Figure 9.10). It strengthens her linguistic and cultural interdependence, which requires an intimate, ongoing *truchement* or translation between languages and cultures (166–70).

In *Le piano oriental*, *truchement* can also designate a sort of prosthesis or transmission between different forms of artistic creation, especially the use of the visual to supplement the linguistic and the sonorous. The dictionary defines *truchement* as "that which expresses, makes one understand, thoughts, sentiments," but also "that which makes one understand what one does not express through words" (*Petit Robert*, 2001). One finds this meaning at work in the graphic novel, where visual motifs – whether abstract patterns or legible symbols – and figurative drawings represent music, and artfully arranged onomatopoeia resemble calligrams, all of which also express cultural hybridity. There is a mutual dependence in Abirached's text between linguistic translation, exchanges between the arts, and cultural *métissage*. For example, the cartoonist represents the work of her grandfather the *drogman* as the production of French and Arabic onomatopoeia, when he tickles both a French administrator and his Lebanese counterpart with his tie (he also wears a tarboosh!): "Parce qu'il était bilingue, le drogman était à cette époque un lien important entre le haut commissariat français et les autorités locales arabophones" [Because he was bilingual, the *drogman* was at that time an important link between the French high commission and the Arabic-speaking local authorities] (Abirached 2015a: 29). This activity recalls the art of the cartoonist herself, which is partly an art of translating, through the *truchement* of bilingual text and bicultural images, for readers without her bicultural background, perhaps especially those in France. In one of his earlier essays on comics, Pierre Fresnault-Deruelle (1971) remarks that onomatopoeia are common there, and that they constitute both a limit within language in general – at the frontier between speech and non-linguistic, or abstract, sounds – and a frontier zone between different languages. In this regard he cites the gallicization of English onomatopoeia in French comics. Onomatopoeia and gestures must often be modified or translated to be understood in a different cultural or linguistic context, something that Abirached does for readers on a page of *Le piano*

*oriental* (Abirached 2015a: 128). Even if French is the main language of her text, one finds several examples of spoken and written Arabic in it, and at least one transliteration of a French word in Arabic writing: the onomatopoeia designating the tickling that her grandfather does with his tie alternately to French and Lebanese authorities during the French Mandate period, symbolizing his interpretive activity as a *drogman* (29).[15] In a sense, onomatopoeia are the music of language. In *Le piano oriental*, they even constitute a musical language, and so are right at home there.

For Abirached, transcultural *truchement* also necessitates a confrontation with the reifying images of exoticism, orientalist seduction, and terrorist violence often associated, in France and elsewhere, with Lebanon in particular and Arabs in general (171–2; see also Abirached and Bouillon 2015: 143). She travels around the affrontier by evoking these received ideas and images, and replacing them with another vision of Lebanon, which she shows through her family's history and her personal itinerary. She positions herself as the beneficiary and endpoint of a family tradition of transcultural mediation and *truchement*. The narrator of *Le piano oriental* tells us that her paternal grandfather never lived in France despite having been naturalized as French (Abirached 2015a: 32), and that her maternal great-grandfather never succeeded in having oriental pianos built on the model of the prototype that he took to Vienna (196). By contrast, the cartoonist emigrated to Paris where she too was naturalized, and succeeded in publishing *Le piano oriental* with Casterman, a major comics publisher. Her artistic practice of *truchement* therefore successfully extends the mediating projects of her ancestors across the affrontier, from Lebanon to France, and beyond.

## Conclusion: towards a future unfettered by colonialism

In this chapter I have put the poetic conceptual metaphors of Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard into dialogue with the poetic comic-book metaphors of Zeina Abirached. Their writing and her cartooning are profoundly humane and delightfully inventive, richly poetic and deeply thoughtful. Taken together, their metaphors and the intelligent conceptual, artistic networks they weave between them, trace ways around and over the exclusionary barriers that ethnonationalism builds on monoculturalism and monolinguism. *Le piano oriental* puts different national and ethnic spaces into dialogue, as Abirached constantly migrates through her narrative between past and present, France and Lebanon, Beirut and Paris, French and Arabic, Eastern and Western music, her great-grandfather's piano-playing and her cartooning, the musical instrument and the narrative named after it. Abirached's graphic novel helps us remember, mourn and celebrate beauty lost, seize present-day transcultural opportunities, and envision a future unfettered by the colonial past.

## Notes

1 I will refer to the French versions of all of Abirached's comics, with one quirky exception: *I Remember Beirut* has page numbers, whereas *Je me souviens: Beyrouth* does not. I therefore give page references to the English-language version of that text, but any translations from the French original are my own.

2 McKinney (2020b); in a separate, earlier essay (McKinney 2015a), I discuss Abirached's avant-gardism in *A Game for Swallows* and *I Remember Beirut.*

3 On *contre-bande dessinée*, see also McKinney (2013d; 2013e: 79).

4 The following summary is adapted from McKinney (2020b).

5 Republished in Certeau (1994); see pp. 266–8 on "the relic."

6 Abdallah's Italian shoes are made of "vera pello" (Abirached 2015a: 14), two words also inscribed on the box that Zeina receives (204).

7 Paradoxically, the fact that the tarboosh is no longer fashionable helps Abdallah be ahead of his time, through the invention of the oriental piano (Abirached 2015a: 76, 199–201), even though the instrument will one day be made obsolete by electric synthesizers, with their oriental key (194–6).

8 See also my essay on Laurent Maffre's graphic novel, *Demain, demain: Nanterre, bidonville de la Folie, 1962–1966*, suivi de *127, rue de la Garenne*, raconté par Monique Hervo, which I read in dialogue with Certeau's concepts on movement, space and perspective (McKinney, forthcoming 2021).

9 Abirached (2014: 69–72); there, the trauma appears mostly to be that of her parents, although the narrator does say "I had the impression of being in a foreign country" (72). On the other hand, when she first travels downtown, two years later (in 1991), Zeina too looks sadly at the destruction and appears affected by it after her return home (77–82).

10 Certeau says: "Differently from Rome, New York has never learned the art of aging while playing with all the pasts [en jouant de tous les passés]" (Certeau 1990: 139).

11 Of course the catastrophic 4 August 2020 explosion at the Beirut port badly damaged or destroyed much of that reconstruction, killed and wounded many people, and made thousands homeless.

12 Ouvroir de littérature potentielle [Workshop for Potential Literature].

13 In an essay on the historical etymology of "truchement" and the role of interpreters in the first colonial encounters between Europeans and others, Georges Van Den Abbeele (2014) observes that "The [French] word truchement is derived from the Arabic, tardjeman. It enters the French language in the XIIth century as 'drugement,' to designate the Arab interpreters at the time of the Crusades"; cf. Treps (2005: 223–4).

14 This is a typical (post)colonial gesture; see the novel *Nedjma* (1956), by Algerian

author Kateb Yacine, for another example.

15 I am grateful to Matthew Gordon and his contact(s) in Beirut for having provided translations from Arabic in the volume.

# Chapter 10
# *Sans-papiers* in comics

## Introduction: *sans-papiers* and the affrontier in France

*Sans-papiers* now have a history reaching back several decades in French comics. After the end of the Second World War and up to 1973, France needed a large number of migrant workers, especially in heavy industry.[1] Migration to France was therefore relatively unrestricted during the period, with migrants often receiving legal residency status and a work permit after traveling to France without them (Noiriel 1992a: 123). Even during the Algerian War, when the French government was imposing severe restrictions on the migration of Algerians between France and Algeria to counteract nationalist organizing and anticolonial violence, French employers brought large numbers of Algerians to work in France in mines, foundries and car factories. However a series of physical attacks against Algerians in France in 1973 led the Algerian government to suspend migration to France. The attacks roughly coincided with key events in far-right organizing, including the founding of the Front national (FN) party in 1972. Moreover, the oil embargo of 1973–4 led to an economic slowdown, a rise in unemployment, and the French government suspending relatively unrestricted labor migration to France.[2] The theme of postcolonial migration, including of *sans-papiers*, began to emerge in comics at about the same time. I begin this chapter with a brief overview of French migration history as it relates to *sans-papiers*, and a survey of *sans-papiers* as characters in comics, before turning to close readings of four comics about them.

As I discussed in previous chapters of this volume (1, 2, 3 and 4), Mœbius's "Cauchemar blanc," first published in 1974 in *L'écho des savanes* [The Echo of the Savannahs], sparked a realist trend in comics, including stories dealing with postcolonial migration, racism, far-right violence and a failure to defend postcolonial migrants and their descendants against it. There is no indication whether or not the migrant victim of "Cauchemar blanc" is a *sans-papiers*, but cartoonists soon after turned their attention to that aspect of migrants' plight. The *sans-papiers* as a character in comics has a paradoxical status as both the most and least visible postcolonial figure, one whose presence in France is legitimate or deviant, depending on political and historical perspectives. For the far right, including its cartoonists, the mere presence of postcolonial ethnic minorities in France is a scandal and a threat to white or Franco-French hegemony. From that perspective,

*sans-papiers* constitute the most egregious or extreme example of intrusion into France by migrants, especially among postcolonial minorities: not only do they supposedly not fit French cultural norms, but they appear to defy even basic laws governing borders, citizenship and national sovereignty. *Sans-papiers* therefore come to stand as a cipher for a whole range of overblown fears and mischaracterizations about the nature and status of migrants in France. Historically, the term *clandestin* preceded that of *sans-papiers*, which was positioned against the earlier term to justify the struggle of migrants to stay legally in France (Akin 2019: 195–6). Naming someone a *clandestin* [clandestine] evokes a threat of danger hiding in the shadows of society, as Salih Akin (2019: 195–6) argues:

> The word expresses the sense of secret, conjures up a hidden life, as though in a subterranean dimension of society. When it is applied to populations without a residency authorization or permit, the word represents a category of people who supposedly voluntarily and illegally crossed the border of the country where they now are, to stay there illegally. That criminalizing representation stamps an argumentative orientation on the semantic field of *clandestins* that justifies the arrest and expulsion of people without a residency authorization.

Of course, as Akin is suggesting, *sans-papiers* have not always "voluntarily and illegally crossed the border of the country where they now are, to stay there illegally." Instead, they often enter legally but then fail to gain, or they lose, the right or ability to remain there. Policing helps produce a sense of *sans-papiers* as illegitimate and illegal inhabitants of France, thereby virtually inscribing the national border, and the separation between French national and excluded foreigner, potentially everywhere across French territory. In practice French police officers regularly stop people even without probable cause of criminal activity, and demand to see identification papers. The latter often take the form of either a French national identity card (*carte nationale d'identité*) or, if one is a foreigner, identity papers demonstrating the right to be in France, usually a French residency card for foreigners (*carte de séjour*), or a foreign passport with a valid visa.[3] Racial profiling of "visible minorities" by police officers exists in France. When a police officer or other official asks someone for identity papers, the end result can be expulsion from the country, sometimes even in cases where a person was born or raised in France. As historian Gérard Noiriel (1992a: 163–6) notes, the desperate desire to prove one's right to remain in France and retain access to work, home, family and friends there has led to a fetishization of identity papers. He and others have shown that the creation and evolution of French identity papers helped produce the modern distinction between French national and foreigner (e.g., Spire 2005). However, vagaries of French nationality law, which right-wing politicians such as Jacques Chirac, who was twice prime minister and later president (1995–2007), have repeatedly attempted to revise to restrict access to French nationality, have often put people, including French-

born youths of postcolonial ethnic-minority heritage, into a legally ambiguous, fragile status with respect to French citizenship and the ability to prove their right to remain legally in France. The closest United States equivalent is the status of "Dreamers," or DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival) recipients. The presence in France of postcolonial migrants or their offspring is often represented in a range of ways, often most explicitly by the far right, as less legitimate than that of immigrant communities from other countries, especially European ones, for example, Spain, Portugal and Italy. The latter have often been construed in recent decades as more assimilable and assimilated, for cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic reasons, despite a lack of concrete evidence for this, and by ignoring the history of xenophobic French reactions against those groups in earlier times. The desire to reject, exclude and expel entire postcolonial minorities or at least some of their members is founded on a combination of things, including resentment against the formerly colonized for having gained independence, white supremacism, economic disenfranchisement, and opportunistic scapegoating by politicians. To a large extent, discussions in the media and in government venues about *sans-papiers* and ethnic minority groups from (formerly) colonized groups generally avoid references to the roles of (neo)colonialism and imperialism in creating a "world labor market" (Potts 1990) and in establishing and maintaining migration routes between France and its (former) colonies. Instead, migration by those groups is treated as a problem, and in terms that are ahistorical, too narrowly economic, and individualistic. Neither was much attention paid historically to the real difficulties and motivations of migrants, except, for example, when outcries occurred against government mistreatment. For example, there were protests in the 1980s against what was called *la double peine* [double legal jeopardy], that is, both jailing and deportation from France of people of immigrant heritage for criminal activity. The expulsion of West African immigrants from the Saint-Bernard de la Chapelle church in Paris in 1996 by Minister of the Interior Jean-Louis Debré, under President Chirac, also led to strong criticism of the government. Akin (2019: 189, 191, 195) locates the fixing of the term *sans-papiers* as a lexeme precisely in the organized activism in 1996 of Africans, mostly Malians, for the right to remain in France. He argues (189, 196) that it is "one of those rare designations expressing a viewpoint from within those populations":

> the denomination *sans-papiers*, in a two-trigger movement, denounces, in its very linguistic structure, a state of social exclusion and an arbitrary administrative situation while also envisioning a program of action that implies an imposed irregularity and foresees the normalization of that situation.

Cinematographer-led protests in 1997 against the restrictive Debré laws followed, for the legalization of the status of *sans-papiers* (that is, authorizing them to reside in France) and in support of people trying to help them. At the time, the national, Paris-based

newspaper *Libération* published cartoons by artists protesting the Debré laws.[4] More recent events that have helped foster the interest of cartoonists and their publishers in comics about *sans-papiers* include the migrant shantytowns or "Jungle" around Calais in northwestern France, the often tragic Mediterranean crossings of migrants, and spectacular rescue operations to save them, the Syrian refugee crisis in 2016, and the death of migrants by suffocation in long-haul trucks.

Regardless of their nationality or immigration status, individuals from postcolonial minorities are often suspected by the police of breaking nationality, residency, migration and asylum laws and procedures giving access to the basic right to remain in France. In this sense, the destabilizing feeling of unbelonging that a *sans-papiers* feels in France often extends to individuals who have French nationality, whether from being born in France or to a French parent, or through naturalization. The line between French national and *sans-papiers* may therefore be lived as a thin one. Anti-immigrant discourse by politicians, especially on the far right but often extending far across the political spectrum, contributes to this. Cartoonists suggest the fragility of national identity for postcolonial minorities in France by depicting police officers ordering characters, even those born and raised in France, to produce their identity papers. Farid Boudjellal shows this in *Le gourbi* [The Hovel] (first published in 1985), when policemen require two French characters of Algerian heritage, Nourredine and Djilali, to show their identity papers in Les Halles shopping mall in central Paris (Boudjellal 1996b: 80). The fragility of naturalization is suggested in the preceding album when another character, Aziz, dares not fight with a racist Frenchman for fear of losing his French citizenship (29). Another comic book from 1985, *Les aventures de Petit-Beur* [The Adventures of Little-*Beur*], by Pierre Dumayet and *Le Monde* cartoonist Denis Pessin, parodies this practice on the front cover and first pages of its story: a young French Arab is shown hatching from an egg and immediately ordered by police to produce his identity papers ("Tes papiers!" [Your papers!]).[5] The officer goes on to explain the boy's situation to him: "Petit-Beur, tu démarres dans la vie, alors écoute bien ceci: tu es en France, et en France chaque immigré qu'on fait venir… … doit se sentir dans une situation illégale!!" [Little-*Beur*, you are starting out in life, so listen well to this: you are in France, and in France each immigrant whom we bring in… …must have the feeling of being in an illegal situation!!]. Thierry Smolderen (2009: 93–5) has argued that "the cute" has long been a primary component of visual representation in comics. Here the cartoonists produce it through the name of Petit-*Beur* (a homophone of "Petit Beurre" [Little Butter], a kind of cookie traditionally fed to children), his physical traits, and his birth through hatching, which likens him to a defenseless young bird. The satire springs from the contrast between his cuteness and the police order and explanation, which absurdly label Petit-Beur an immigrant, even though he hatched, or was born, in France. Pessin and Dumayet suggest that the command to produce identity papers robs the young *Beur* of a feeling of belonging in France.

I now turn to another key point of categorization that breaks down in a different but related way. Throughout this volume I focus on the postcolonial and the neocolonial in French comics since 1962, that is on how and the extent to which French colonization and its aftermath play a role there, especially in representational terms. However, the status of *sans-papiers* in and around French comics constitutes a point at which the category of "postcolonial" blurs. For example, many *sans-papiers* in France are not originally from a former French colony, but nonetheless find themselves in the same situation as *sans-papiers* who are from one. Some are certainly from former colonies of other European nations, such as Pakistanis or Afghans in Calais trying to reach the United Kingdom. Surely even some Americans who overstayed their tourist visas are now *sans-papiers* in France. Often, however, *sans-papiers* come from poorer countries, especially in the global South, or the Third World, whose integration into the world economic order has disrupted local economies and pushed people to migrate. Whether directly or indirectly, climate change is increasingly propelling illegal migration to Europe, for example when bad harvests trigger political unrest, which becomes a war, which people flee through migration. I therefore propose here partially to suspend the postcolonial category, or at least extend it to include *sans-papiers* in France from nations other than former French colonies. The distinction between French national or European citizen within the European Union, and on the other hand, undocumented migrant, bears at least some structural resemblance to the former distinction between colonizer and colonial subject in French colonies.

There is a growing number of comics that treat the situation of *sans-papiers* as an independent category that sometimes overlaps with, or draws on, French (post)colonial history. Perhaps the first such comic was *La nuit des clandestins* [The Night of the *Clandestins*] (1992) by Swiss cartoonist Daniel Ceppi and French script-writer Pierre Christin (see McKinney 1997a; cf. Marie and Ollivier 2013: 176–7). Christin, a journalist, professor of journalism, and one of the first directors of a school of journalism at the University of Bordeaux, has often scripted comics synchronized with current events of national or international import, as his collaborative work with Enki Bilal and Annie Goetzinger often shows: for example *La ville qui n'existait pas* [*The Town That Didn't Exist*] (Bilal and Christin 1989, 1994 [1977]), about the textile industry's collapse in northern France, or *La voyageuse de petite ceinture* [The Female Traveler on the Little Loop] (Christin and Goetzinger 1985), about a young Arab woman runaway in Paris (McKinney 1997b), a theme that Leïla Sebbar wrote about in prose fiction around the same time. *La nuit des clandestins* depicts a coordinated, covert migration of *sans-papiers* on a global scale that almost magically converges on France overnight. This type of scenario has been the stuff of far-right nightmare fantasies for years, notably in Jean Raspail's 1973 novel *Le camp des saints* [*The Camp of the Saints*] and, more recently, Renaud Camus's pamphlet *Le grand remplacement* [*The Great Replacement*] (2011, 2015), which have inspired the far right around the globe, sometimes with tragic consequences: far-right physical

violence, including murder, at the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017, or the Christchurch shootings of 15 March 2019. By contrast with far-right positions and to avoid a "new world disorder," *La nuit des clandestins* takes the side of migrants and offers a peaceful solution to their distress. The story proposes welcoming *clandestins* who have migrated to France and resolving the problems that led them to leave home in the first place. Since that work's publication in 1992, several other comics have been published that likewise bring together *sans-papiers* from different regions of the world.

*La nuit des clandestins*, scripted as it was by a journalist, unsurprisingly contained elements of reportage, although it was a fiction. Reportage in French-language comics, now quite prominent, is normally traced back to at least 1929–30, when Hergé published *Les aventures de Tintin, reporter du "Petit Vingtième," au pays des Soviets* [The Adventures of Tintin, Reporter for the "Little Twentieth," in the Land of the Soviets] (Hergé 1981a [1930]).[6] In it, Tintin is a reporter for the children's supplement of *Le Vingtième siècle* [The Twentieth Century], a Catholic newspaper edited by the Abbé Norbert Wallez, an antisemitic Catholic clergyman with proclaimed fascistic political sympathies who was an influential mentor of Hergé (Assouline 1998). Tintin's mission is to unmask Stalinist ideology and reveal the miserable living conditions of ordinary people in the Soviet Union. Reportage now often features in French-language comics about *sans-papiers* and asylum seekers, largely inspired by highly publicized and sometimes tragic events, and against the background of politicization of migration by political parties across the spectrum, but especially by the FN, now the Rassemblement national (RN). Today the body of comics about the topic covers a wide range of genres, modes and styles: fiction and non-fiction, historical reconstruction and contemporary reportage, biography and autobiography, humor and tragedy, drawn in a realistic or a caricatural style, and so on.

Whereas comics from the late 1970s and early 1980s focusing on *sans-papiers* were fictions, (auto-)biography and reportage have increasingly come to play an important role in depicting the plight of undocumented migrants. The role of witnessing is key here, as cartoonists try to address one of the most pressing political, economic and moral issues of our time. Autobiography, biography and reportage all lend authenticity to comics about *sans-papiers*, by offering a realistic account of their lived situation as observed by migrants themselves, or by artists and reporters with direct, firsthand knowledge. On the other hand, fictions can still allow dramatic, imagined renderings of situations involving *sans-papiers*. Jeff Pourquié is a cartoonist who has done work in both fiction and documentary reportage. His two-volume comic story *Békame* was scripted by Aurélien Ducoudray, who based the story set near Calais on his previous photojournalism among *sans-papiers* in Limoges (Pourquié and Ducoudray 2012, 2014). Pourquié has also published a two-part comic documentary scripted by independent reporter Taina Tervonen, based on her reporting on the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, also called Frontex, which oversees the external frontiers of European

countries in the Schengen area (Tervonen and Pourquié 2015, 2017). Tervonen is originally from Finland, grew up in Senegal and settled in France as "an economic migrant," she has said. She has extensively reported and published in French on migration issues, including in her book of reportage in prose, *Au pays des disparus* [In the Land of the Disappeared] (2019), where she tries to reconstruct the life story of an anonymous man who died in a shipwreck off the coast of Libya on a boat with eight hundred passengers trying to migrate illegally to Italy. Pourquié and Tervonen's comic-strip reporting was published in *La revue dessinée*, a periodical dedicated to publishing "investigations, reports and documentaries in comics." The 2017 episode recounts Tervonen's reporting that would lead to *Au pays des disparus*.

All of these comics take positions on the *affrontier*, that is, a metaphorical division between people who see themselves as uniquely "Franco-French" or "European-French," and others, often from postcolonial ethnic minority groups, whom they reject. The French national border is a key instrument for policing the affrontier. This occurred in a literal, spectacular manner on 21–2 April 2018, when the media-savvy far-right group Génération Identitaire went to the Col de l'Echelle, a mountain pass in the Hautes-Alpes region, to block the passage of migrants into France, if only symbolically. They wore matching blue down jackets, carried large blue and white flags stating "Defend Europe," and laid out a red and white banner on the snowy ground, proclaiming "Closed Border. You will not make Europe home! NO WAY. Back to your homeland!". Far-right militia policing of the border continued after the event, reportedly resulting in some migrants being escorted by the activists back across it to Italy during the night of April 26–7 (Pommiers 2018).

Cartoonists have contested far-right xenophobia and racism, and repressive approaches by the French state to *sans-papiers*, by telling compelling stories about them. For this chapter, I have selected a few important works to represent the growing subfield of comics about *sans-papiers*. Here I will not attempt a thorough genealogy of *sans-papiers* in French comics, although I have already provided some elements towards one in this introduction. The next section, below, deals with fiction-based comics about *sans-papiers*. The section following it engages with comics that represent *sans-papiers* through (auto-)biography and reportage. These two sections each focus primarily on two comics, making four total, with scattered reference to a few others. The little-known work that I analyze in my first section, below, is to my knowledge the first comic book wholly devoted to the situation of postcolonial migrants in France. Under the pseudonym "Saladin," Algerian cartoonist Slimane Zeghidour gave extended treatment to the theme of *sans-papiers* in his foundational fictional stories, serialized beginning in 1976, just two years after the publication of "Cauchemar blanc," and published in book form in 1979.[7] I shall argue that comics by Zeghidour represent the effects of the affrontier on Algerian *sans-papiers* in and around Paris, far from any physical international frontier, aside from airports.[8] They show policing of the affrontier in

part through racist and far-right prejudice against migrants, but also through the need to carry and produce identity papers everywhere, and the discrimination and repression that facilitates. I then jump forward in time to *Fais péter les basses, Bruno!* [Blow Out the Bass Speakers, Bruno!] (2010), a fictional story in which Baru shows the predicament of *sans-papiers* and the incredible pluckiness and invention with which they face desperate situations. The cartoonist takes an African *sans-papiers* from his West African homeland across the frontier, through Paris and on to eastern France, where the cartoonist is from. We see Baru's *sans-papiers* character constantly hiding from French police, made to produce identity papers when caught, and finally being expelled from France and sent back to his African homeland. Baru lays bare a system of cross-border movement that enriches a range of figures, beginning with *passeurs* [migrant traffickers] in Africa and continuing in France, where his *sans-papiers* characters are subjected to various kinds of exploitation.

In the following, second section I discuss biography, autobiography and reportage in two comic books about *sans-papiers* that are set on borders France shares with Italy and the United Kingdom. They depict the production, maintenance and costs of the (af)frontier. As in the other works studied here, their authors contest injustice and violence against *sans-papiers* that organizations ranging from Génération Identitaire to the French government and the European Union perpetrate by producing a "Fortress Europe" (Nederveen Pieterse 1991), and by enforcing its borders in ways that harm migrants, including refugees, desperately seeking a better life. I turn first, however, to fictional stories about *sans-papiers*.

## Satirizing France through a trickster taken from folktales

Cartoonists of Algerian heritage were among the first to depict *sans-papiers* in comics, at a time when the French government was tracking down and expelling undocumented migrants and even youths who had grown up in France but lacked official documents allowing them to remain there. In 1979, Zeghidour published *Les migrations de Djeha: Les nouveaux immigrés* [The Migrations of Djeha: The New Immigrants], prefaced by *Pied-Noir* stand up comic and actor Guy Bedos (1934–2020). The book collected together a twenty-four-page comic strip, shorter stories (usually three or four panels long), and single-panel cartoons. Zeghidour originally published most of this material in issues of *Droit et liberté* [Law/Right and Liberty], the monthly publication of the antiracist organization Mouvement contre le Racisme, l'Antisémitisme et pour la Paix [Movement Against Racism and Antisemitism, and For Peace] (MRAP), renamed Mouvement contre le Racisme et pour l'Amitié entre les Peuples [Movement Against Racism and For Friendship Between Peoples] in 1977. "Les migrations de Djeha," the longer main story, was almost entirely serialized in *Droit et liberté* in twenty-three issues, from May 1976 (number 348) through July-August 1978 (number 371). Before that,

in the early 1970s, Zeghidour had published comics under his real name in *M'Quidèch*, a legendary periodical in Algerian comics history.[9] Somewhat like Farid Boudjellal would do beginning in June 2000 with his Slimani family characters in *Agora*, the magazine of the Gennevilliers public housing authority (OPMHLM, now OPH Gennevilliers), Zeghidour put his comics and cartoons in the service of MRAP, an organization working to improve society, by publishing them in *Droit et liberté*. Both his cartooning style and his militant stance recall the Algerian comics milieu of the time. The official discourse of the Algerian one-party state was a mix of allegiance to Islam, socialist revolutionary militancy, and third-worldist critique. This language and ideology generally characterized Algerian comics, which were published in state-sponsored periodicals by state-funded publishers and printers (e.g., ENAL, SNED and Algérie Actualité). Zeghidour's transition to *Droit et liberté* must have been relatively seamless, given the similar political position of MRAP.[10]

Zeghidour's Djeha story weaves militant social critique into the fictional tale of an Algerian *sans-papiers* trying to survive on the periphery of French society. As I noted in Chapter 2, the transcultural story takes Djeha, a traditional trickster figure from oral literature in North Africa and elsewhere in the Arabo-Islamic world, and sets him down in Paris (Saladin 1979: 12.7). The comic strip articulates a systemic critique of the position of *sans-papiers* in France, something that characterizes several other comics about their plight. Zeghidour represents key aspects in the life of a *sans-papiers*, including his exploitation by those who house and hire him, neocolonial economic ties between the former colonial power and a now formally independent colony, racist attitudes toward postcolonial ethnic groups in France, and rough policing of *sans-papiers*. On the other hand, the perilous voyage to France that often features prominently in more recent comics about *sans-papiers* is missing, perhaps because illegal migration from North Africa to France did not yet generally involve trans-Mediterranean travel in small, unseaworthy and often overcrowded boats, as is now the case. Djeha is therefore already in Paris at the story's start, alone at night, with no job and "sans papiers" [without papers] (7), that is to say, no official authorization to stay legally in France (Figure 10.1). He spends his first night in a rudimentary hotel ironically designated by the French homophone "autel," suggesting that Djeha is a victim to be sacrificed on an "altar." The hotel manager's French is interspersed with Arabic, but he wears a tartan cap, shirt and pants, whereas Djeha wears traditional North African headgear and a tunic. The manager's clothes and insulting treatment of the twenty-five *sans-papiers* staying in the hotel suggest that even if he is originally from Africa too, in France he has adopted exploitative methods and disdainful attitudes toward *sans-papiers*: "Aya dehors! Bande de fainéants vous venez en France engraisser, draguer les femmes et dormir… et sans papiers en plus" [Aya out! Band of lazy bums you come to France to get fat, try to pick up women and sleep… and to top it off, without papers!] (8). Scandalized, Djeha confronts the manager, calling him a dog ("Ya kelb"), an especially injurious in-

sult in the Arab-Islamic world, and a crook because the description of the lodging at the entrance had misled Djeha into thinking he had finally found hospitality in France, after having slept “sous les ponts, dans les parcs, dans les cimetières de voitures, hiver comme été” [under bridges, in parks, in automobile junk yards, winter and summer]. This indicates that Djeha has been a *sans domicile fixe* [homeless] (SDF) too. In reply, the manager dismisses Djeha as a “chômeur-révolutionnaire professionnel” [professional unemployed-revolutionary] who will find no work as a revolutionary in a France now in the midst of economic crisis, and expels him from the hotel.

Wandering down the street, Djeha the *sans-papiers*, now again *sans domicile fixe*, walks by flyers posted on walls advertising temporary work through an agency, but requiring a “tenue correcte” [correct attire] that excludes Djeha, and offering seaside or urban lodging, surely only to the wealthy with residency papers (9). Here and elsewhere (e.g., 42), Zeghidour uses a form of implicit ironic contrast or counterpoint between image and text that is an eloquent cartooning resource used in comics since the nineteenth century. Djeha soon encounters an empathetic Black street sweeper and explains “...je suis venu de chez moi il y a 4 jours, je suis sans papiers, sans travail et... sans logement... ma seule richesse c’est ma pauvreté... mais la vie est vraiment impie ici!... [...I left my home four days ago, I have no papers, no work and... no lodging... my only wealth is my poverty... but life is truly unpious here!...] (9). The discrepancy between Djeha’s reference to a recent departure from his home and his earlier reference to sleeping outdoors through winter and summer is never explained – was Djeha already homeless in Algeria? – but his lack of official papers will make it impossible for

**Figure 10.1:** From Saladin (1979) *Les migrations de Djeha: Les nouveaux immigrés*, pref. Guy Bedos, Claix [France]: La Pensée Sauvage, p. 7.1–4 © Slimane Zeghidour. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

**Figure 10.2:** From Saladin (1979) *Les migrations de Djeha: Les nouveaux immigrés*, pref. Guy Bedos, Claix [France]: La Pensée Sauvage, p. 9.6–9 © Slimane Zeghidour. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

him to find decent lodging and a good job throughout the comic strip. Acting on the friendly sweeper's tip, Djeha goes to a nearby construction site, where he encounters a classic catch-22 of *sans-papiers*, as he later grumbles, on his way out (Figure 10.2): "Gggr! Pour travailler, il faut une carte de séjour et pour avoir cette dernière il faut travailler… C'est vraiment nous prendre pour des ânes!" [Grrr! To work you must have a residency card and for the latter you have to work…They really take us for donkeys!] (9). Zeghidour contrasts Djeha's critique of his dilemma as a *sans-papiers* with the racist discourse of the construction site boss, who immediately calls him by the stereotypical name "Mohamed" when Djeha arrives and, after having asked him unsuccessfully for "only" five different kinds of documents (Djeha has none of them), decides that the Algerian man is walking away because he is lazy, like "all of them" ("ils sont tous fainéants").

Later, Djeha runs into a friend whose whimsical name N'Hineh, translated as "Petite menthe" [Little Mint] by Zeghidour, recalls their homeland (12). N'Hineh takes Djeha across town to the hovel-like hotel where he is staying, featuring two triple-decker bunk beds crammed into a small room (15). The following day N'Hineh walks Djeha to a restaurant, where he abandons him, suggesting the limits of migrant solidarity in France (17). The owner offers Djeha work slaughtering chickens at the restaurant's farm in the countryside, but also evokes racist stereotypes about the supposed propensity of North African men to stab people.[11] It turns out that the owner has hired seven new workers, who begin their trip to the farm crammed into the back of a truck, are then required to push it up a hill, before having to run after it to catch up on the downward slope (17–19). The driver's sadistic treatment of the workers is slyly alluded to by the name of the business, "Ets Chauçade" (cf. Chaud Sade [Hot Sade] Establishments). When the driver returns to Paris with a load of slaughtered chickens and several workers, he leaves Djeha behind, remarking that the bloodstains on his clothing would draw police attention, get him arrested, and thereby deprive his boss of a needed employee (22). After washing his djellaba, Djeha wears the classic barrel of slapstick humor, though with a postcolonial twist (Figure 10.3). He muses that it contained Algerian

**Figure 10.3:** From Saladin (1979) *Les migrations de Djeha: Les nouveaux immigrés*, pref. Guy Bedos, Claix [France]: La Pensée Sauvage, p. 23.8 © Slimane Zeghidour. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

wine that France no longer buys from its former colony. Djeha thinks that not only is this humiliating for him, because as a Muslim he does not drink alcohol, but that migrant workers are the export product that has replaced the wine. Of course the Algerian wine industry was developed by French colonizers before independence in 1962 by using Algerian labor, so Djeha's analysis suggests that although Algeria may now be formally independent, France continues to extract profit unfairly from Algeria by exploiting its poorly paid migrant laborers in France. The next few pages show a roomful of migrant workers left at the farm eating dinner together and commenting on the situation of migrants, including the French government's offer to give them the paltry sum of 10,000 new francs if they return to their home countries, an offer ironically nicknamed "le million du retour," which is to say, the equivalent of one million old francs (24–5; Figure 10.3).[12] This, the characters suggest, is a kind of hostage taking, because instead of letting the spouses of migrant workers join them in France through family reunification, the government is trying instead to entice the workers to leave France, but with only a fraction of the money that they had contributed to the national pension fund, and to which they would normally be entitled if they remained in France and retired there.

Across a couple pages, some of the characters at the farm look out at the reader or hide their faces, and accuse the cartoonist and other intellectuals of depicting them in degrading terms and for their own benefit, to increase their own prestige instead of helping the laborers (26–7; Figure 10.4). Through this self-reflexive cartooning tech-

nique and a variety of others, Zeghidour critiques several types of injustice, ranging from the economic exploitation and sociocultural marginalization of *sans-papiers* in France, to French anti-Arab racism (10.1, 12.7, 14.6–7, 22.9, etc.), the complicity of autocratic elites in the Third World with the former colonizer in their abandonment of working-class emigrants in France (18.2, 18.4, 23.2, 30.7–8), and the plight of homeless Palestinians (30.8). Throughout the story, Zeghidour makes clear that a lack of proper identity papers constantly puts *sans-papiers* at risk of being arrested by police and expelled from France (e.g., 11.1, 13.6, 30.1). This also makes them more vulnerable to exploitation by hotel owners and employers.

As we saw in Chapter 3, one of Boudjellal's first characters was Abdulah Razouz, whose right hand was maimed in an accident at a construction job in "Les soirées d'Abdulah" [Abdulah's evenings], is beaten up by racists in "Ratonnade" [Lynching an Arab] and is revealed in *L'oud* [The Lute] to be in France illegally. The stories' original publication dates in the early 1980s make them among the earliest featuring *sans-papiers* in postcolonial France. Abdulah's illegal status makes him vulnerable to economic exploitation by the French construction company boss, who refuses to give him a pension after his accident or even fill out Social Security papers to help his former employee, who is illiterate, handicapped and jobless, obtain a minimum of financial support (Boudjellal 1996b:10–12). On the other hand, in *L'oud*, Aziz Chaïeb, a Tunisian who has managed to be naturalized as French, preys upon Abdulah, striking him and stealing

**Figure 10.4:** From Saladin (1979) *Les migrations de Djeha: Les nouveaux immigrés*, pref. Guy Bedos, Claix [France]: La Pensée Sauvage, p. 26.4–5 © Slimane Zeghidour. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author.

his North African lute, because he knows that Abdulah will not dare report him to the police for fear of being deported (46). In these comics, as in “Les migrations de Djeha,” *sans-papiers* are victimized by both French and assimilated North Africans. However, if *sans-papiers* are the most vulnerable victims in the immigrant community in these comics, Zeghidour and Boudjellal also represent *sans-papiers* as resourceful and talented. Djeha’s pluck and insightful political critique turn the traditional folk hero into a witty satirist who, along with his fellow *sans-papiers*, reveals hypocricies of both French society and his home country. Abdulah is the eloquent narrator of his tragic tale in “Ratonnade,” and a talented lute player in *L’oud*, even after his work acci-

**Figure 10.5:** From Baru (2010) *Fais péter les basses Bruno!*, Paris: Futuropolis, p. 5 © Futuropolis. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Futuropolis.

dent, despite his maimed hand (Boudjellal 1996b: 53). My next example of a comic-book fiction about *sans-papiers* was published about thirty years later, but again highlights their exploitation in France and the resourcefulness that they use to survive and even outwit their exploiters.

## Soccer set-ups and illegal migration

In *Fais péter les basses, Bruno!* (2010), Baru links soccer playing to a transnational economy that relies, again, on migrants made vulnerable by their legal situation, much as Djeha already was decades earlier. Slimane, a hardworking youth with great soccer-playing talent, lives in an unspecified former French African colony. Beginning on the first page, Baru clearly and strikingly redraws the famous dance of the masks by the Dogon people in Mali, representing it as wholly integrated into an international tourist economy: the first two frames zoom out from a single dancer to an entire troupe surrounded by elders with African robes, hats and canes (5; Figure 10.5). The third and final frame on the page is a reverse shot, indicating to us that the first two had been ocularized through the point of view of white European tourists photographing and filming the dance. From the outset of his narrative, Baru thereby provides a self-reflexive point of view inscribing his story about illegal migration within a viewing relationship in which Africans perform aspects of their traditional culture for white tourists in search of exoticism. The first nine pages emphasize the centrality of European tourism and spectatorship to the livelihood of Slimane's African village by showing at least four separate groups of tourists visiting it (5–13). Three of the tourist groups are shown watching mask dances performed especially for them (5, 9.5–10.1, 12.6).

Interspersed between them, other repeated imagery fleshes out the tourist economy. We twice see Slimane and an unnamed man, whom we could take to be his father, sewing clothes (8.1, 13.1) that Slimane later offers for purchase to tourists (13.2; Figure 10.6). Slimane and another boy also offer miniature masks for sale to tourists during a break in the men's dance (12.6). However, the primary sequence in this opening passage focuses on another aspect of the neocolonial relation between Europe and Africa. In it, Ousmane Traoré, a famous African soccer star, brings a group of white tourists wearing clothes in the colors and with the logo of the Metz soccer club, FC Metz, from Baru's home region (8–12). In the fiction, Traoré acts as a tour guide for the French tourists visiting Africa. Here, as often, Baru's visual vocabulary is eloquent: Traoré, the local guide and the village boys are fit and handsome, whereas the white French tourists are overweight and unshaven (10). Traoré agrees to watch the village boys play a game, because one of them claims that they will soon travel to play soccer in France and that he is a better player than Traoré (9). Slimane, who wears a (Zinedine) Zidane jersey, plays so brilliantly that Traoré promises to speak about him to the president of his soccer club, who might travel to the village to get Slimane, but that it would be better for Slimane

to travel to France on his own. Traoré gives Slimane his personal address (12). Slimane is thereby lured to France by the prospect of becoming a soccer star, and begins his journey on the following page (Figure 10.6).

Here too, Baru's graphic novel is based on important trends in global migration and spectatorship. FC Metz has a long and consequential history of relying on African soccer talent. In 1984 the club signed Jules Bocandé, a Senegalese player, and in 2003 signed a partnership agreement with a Senegalese soccer training camp, Génération Foot, that was created in 2000 by Mady Touré, a former professional soccer player from Senegal who played in France (Wisnicki 2019). This has had significant positive results for the club: "Promoted to League 1 in 2019, FC Metz is the first division club

**Figure 10.6:** From Baru (2010) *Fais péter les basses Bruno!*, Paris: Futuropolis, p. 13 © Futuropolis. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Futuropolis.

that has the greatest number of Senegalese players in its lineup" (Wisnicki 2019). Five were trained by Génération Foot. Thanks to the partnership, FC Metz is able to recruit African players without breaking a new rule of FIFA, the international governing body of soccer, against recruiting juveniles abroad.

Baru uses the boy's illegal migration to represent the discrepancy between an emigrant's high hopes, great resourcefulness, youthful dreams of success and risky investment (e.g., he pays off a *passeur*; gambles with his life; etc.), and, on the other hand, the exploitative reality and typically low rewards of both organized sports and the economy of illegal labor migration. Slimane, fleeing the border police after having jumped from the cargo hold of an airplane that just landed in France, is saved from deportation by a man in the Paris region who hires out illegal immigrants as manual laborers (Baru 2010: 16–19), including in difficult jobs such as construction, and over holidays such as Christmas, when labor is scarce (38–9). On their way to and from work, Slimane and his fellow *sans-papiers* must carefully dodge police officers checking people's identity papers in the city streets (Figure 10.7). Here, as in the other works already discussed, Baru depicts interconnected systems of domination. In this case, a political system is run by Gaby Genty, man of many talents: mayor of a small town in eastern France (31, 96, 121), member of a criminal gang (32–7), counterfeiter (120–1), explosives expert from his military service during the Algerian War (35), owner of an automotive service station and garage (32), and manager of a small soccer club (56–8, 82–3, 90–5). As Gaby explains to Paul and Fabio, his Italian-French criminal accomplices, his soccer team must quickly improve its performance, without which he will lose the next mayoral election (56, 121). When, through a series of improbable and funny coincidences, Slimane – again running from the police – is picked up by Paul and Fabio (77–9), they first take him to Traoré's home (80), but after no one answers the bell, a passing neighbor tells them that "On l'a revendu aux Turcs, ou quelque chose comme ça…" [He has been sold to the Turks, or something like that…]. Baru here comments on the international market for (African) soccer players, in terms that one could interpret as alluding ironically to the slave trade. Slimane is very disappointed, but Paul and Fabio then introduce him to Gaby, who hires Slimane to work in his garage, but also especially recruits him to play soccer (81–5), enabling Gaby's team finally to win a game (91–4).

Through a criminal collaboration and then a series of double-crosses, mistakes, and a final shootout, two rival crime gangs, one run by Maghrebi-French and the other led by Fabio, Paul and Gaby, first carry out a spectacular robbery of an armored truck and then lose or destroy all the stolen money. Slimane is the only character to succeed in retaining some of it at the end (125–6). We saw that in Africa before migrating, Slimane worked as a tailor selling shirts to French tourists. When Slimane first discovers part of the stolen money hidden in a damaged truck towed to the French salvage yard where he is working, he sews some euros into his down jacket (*doudoune*) (70–3). He is still wearing the jacket when the police discover that the papers that Gaby the criminal

artist drew for him are counterfeit (119). Here, as almost always, Baru ends his story on a positive note, allowing exploited and resourceful characters to escape. Slimane is expelled from France to Africa (Figure 10.8). Upon returning home, he rips out the seam of his coat and shares the stolen money with the elderly tailor who is probably his father (125–6). By contrast, the first edition's cover illustration, comprised mainly of mug shots, suggests that all the characters of Maghrebi or Italian heritage who participated in the theft were caught and convicted. I now turn to two comic books that combine reportage, biography and autobiography. Like the fictional works analyzed above, they tell us stories about the risks run and dangers faced by *sans-papiers*. The state's repression of *sans-papiers* is also prevalent in them, through border policing, expulsion and more. However, these works also introduce us to new characters: NGOs and volunteers determined to defend *sans-papiers*, and to their authors, the cartoonists, taking a stand for them too.

**Figure 10.7:** From Baru (2010) *Fais péter les basses Bruno!*, Paris: Futuropolis, p. 38.2–3 © Futuropolis. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Futuropolis.

**Figure 10.8:** From Baru (2010) *Fais péter les basses Bruno!*, Paris: Futuropolis, p. 125 © Futuropolis. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the author and Editions Futuropolis.

## Reportage and (auto-)biography in a comic from Calais

Each of the comic books I study in the rest of this chapter is a collaborative work by two authors that tells the story of the struggle of *sans-papiers* and their allies for the right of migrants to remain in France and to travel from there to other European countries. As in all the other comics discussed in this chapter, the cartoonists clearly and openly side with the *sans-papiers*, while also striving to depict multiple facets of a complex problem. There are also differences between these comics and works already discussed. For example, although Pourquié depicted himself in the comics he authored

with Tervonen, he shows himself listening to her story, but did not participate in her investigation, which he can only retell secondhand. By contrast with that collaboration and with the fictional comics studied above, the artists in the two works analyzed here show themselves conducting their own investigation among *sans-papiers*. Unlike Christin, none of these four authors is a professional journalist in the traditional sense, although the authors of the second work discussed below had already traveled abroad together to gather material for two other published books of reportage. Moreover, one of the four authors is a trained sociologist with extensive experience interviewing human subjects for academic research. The first of the two comics studied here involved on-site reporting of about three to four months in 2016 and was originally published serially for the most part in 2016, and then in book form in early 2017, whereas reporting for the second occurred mostly over a period of about two months in 2017, and was published only in book form (not serially), in early 2018. Both coincide with important recent trends and events in the situation of *sans-papiers* in France, which they describe in formally innovative ways. One comic book focuses on *sans-papiers* and asylum seekers trying to *leave* France and travel to the United Kingdom. Logically, many of the migrants depicted there speak English instead of French and come from countries once colonized by England. The second album focuses on migrants *entering* France from Italy, and includes more French speakers from former French colonies in Africa, along with English-speaking *sans-papiers* and asylum seekers. Whereas references to European colonialism and its aftermath are mostly absent from the first work, the second one features pointed discussion of the effects of European colonization and neocolonialism on Africa, including the pressure they have put on Africans to migrate to Europe. The first book was issued by an historical comics publisher based in Belgium and has a more caricatural cartooning style, whereas the second, out with an alternative Parisian comics publisher, is typical of the fine-arts trend that has transformed the comics field over the past decades. Both works exemplify how cartooning can use reportage, biography, autobiography and specific resources of the art form to depict *sans-papiers* in compelling ways.

I first discuss *Les nouvelles de la Jungle (de Calais)* [News from the Jungle (of Calais)] (2017), drawn by Lisa Mandel, scripted by both her and Yasmine Bouagga, and published by Casterman as the first special (*hors série*) “Terrain” volume in the “Sociorama” collection, directed by Mandel and Bouagga, which pairs cartoonists with social scientists to focus on issues ranging from television news reports on *banlieues* to pornography production. The two authors first published the majority of *Les nouvelles de la Jungle (de Calais)* in blog posts on the site of respected French national newspaper *Le Monde*, based in Paris, between late February and late May 2016, and then again in late October the same year, when the French government finished dismantling a large migrant camp in Calais, nicknamed “the Jungle,” and relocated many of the *sans-papiers* still living there. The book also includes three parts apparently created especially for it and not

published on the blog. First there is a one-page prose description of the project. It is followed by a thirty-two page comic-strip preface reconstructing the history of informal migration through Calais from the early 1990s to 2015 that borrows from *Ceux qui passent* [Those Who Pass], a book written by Iranian-French journalist Haydée Sabéran, long associated with *Libération*. At the end of *Les nouvelles de la Jungle (de Calais)*, after the final blog posts from late October 2016, the artists include a fifteen-page epilogue about migrants still in Calais or departed elsewhere after October 2016. Bouagga is a sociologist with extensive academic expertise who works for the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), the French national research institution. She earned her doctorate in 2013 from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), a prestigious academic institution in Paris. Since completing her dissertation, an ethnography of prison life, she has increasingly researched and published academic essays on migration, including at Calais. She collaborated on *La Jungle de Calais* (Agier et al. 2018), a book by several migration experts under the direction of Michel Agier, an anthropologist at EHESS and the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD), who has extensively studied migration, exile and camps in Calais and other locations around the world. He has advocated for a more engaged, militant approach by academics toward subjects they study, for example in favor of *sans-papiers*. In line with that approach, there is considerable overlap between Bouagga's academic research and publications, the cartooning that she co-scripted with Mandel on the Jungle, and advocacy activity for *sans-papiers* in which she engaged while on site in Calais, as documented in the comic book. For example, Mandel draws Yasmine,[13] who knows literary Arabic, helping Bilal, a Sudanese asylum seeker, fill out his asylum application, by translating for him between Arabic and French (Mandel and Bouagga 2017: 62–3, 77). The two are at the *Centre juridique* (law center), built by Charpentiers sans frontières [Carpenters without borders] and financed by the Appel de Calais [Call of Calais] (45), a group of intellectuals and artists who signed "Jungle de Calais: L'appel des 800" [Jungle of Calais: The Call of the 800], a manifesto published in *Libération* on 20 October 2015 to protest the French government's failure to take charge in Calais and provide humane living conditions for the migrants waiting there, instead of relying on underfinanced, not-for-profit organizations (Abdelhamid et al. 2015). Lisa underlines the fact that the manifesto was also signed by several cartoonists.[14]

In a blog post dated 14 March 2016 we again see Yasmine working in the *Centre juridique*, this time helping Mokhtar, a migrant wishing to file a complaint against the police for violence against him (Mandel and Bouagga 2017: 111). The following post, dated March 17, recounts Mokhtar's story about police violence (112–14). At the end of the post, the cartoonists note that (114):

> Depuis son ouverture, le centre juridique reçoit des dizaines de plaintes pour agression. Celles qui concernent des milices ou des gens se faisant passer pour des

> policiers font l'objet d'enquêtes et d'interpellations. Par contre, celles qui impliquent des policiers sont restées pour le moment sans suite…
>
> [Since it opened, the Law Center has received tens of complaints for assault. Those concerning militias or people pretending to be police officers are the subject of inquiries and arrests. On the other hand, those implicating the police have not been followed up on for the time being…]

In the next day's post (March 18), the cartoonists report that the *Centre juridique* burned down the preceding day at 6 p.m. (115–17). Lisa self-mockingly recounts an episode of "paranoïa mégalomane" [megalomaniacal paranoia] in which she wonders whether their preceding day's blog post about police violence led to an act of retaliatory arson against the Center (115). Although Mandel shows Yasmine trying to allay the fears of her autobiographical alter-ego, Lisa, she also reports ominously that "Marianne, de la cabane juridique, pense aussi que le lieu n'a pas brûlé par l'opération du Saint-Esprit…" [Marianne, from the Law Cabin, also thinks that the building did not burn through an operation of the Holy Spirit…] (116). Marianne notes that the Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité (CRS)[15] failed to call the fire brigade to extinguish the fire. By the end of the post, Yasmine, like Lisa, is beginning to worry about her personal safety and the possibility of further reprisal for their engagement in favor of *sans-papiers*, by helping them lodge complaints for police brutality and publicizing this on a national scale through their blog posts. Mandel protests that the cartoonists should not be blamed for having failed to give a police perspective on the accusation of police violence, because their attempts to speak to officers had not received a favorable response.

Norms of objectivity and well-balanced reporting that takes into account all sides of a story are implicitly at issue in this defensive assertion. In an apparent response to possible objections to their reporting, the cartoonists later published three blog posts relating interviews with police officers, two dated April 4 and 5 (148–54) and another from May 26 (238–43), which provide further useful examples of how the cartoonists use resources of the art form to create a dialogic presentation of the situation of *sans-papiers*. The first two posts recount an interview with "Marc, un CRS qui a travaillé sur Calais" [Marc, a CRS who worked in Calais] in the past (148). He explains to Lisa that it was normal that she had been unable to find a police officer in Calais willing to be interviewed, because "ils signent des accords de confidentialité [:] ils s'engagent à ne pas communiquer avec les journalistes ni les réseaux sociaux" [they sign confidentiality agreements (:) they agree not to communicate with journalists or social media]. Perhaps no longer bound by such an agreement because he has left Calais, Marc provides his perspective on policing *sans-papiers* there, describing in the first post how the CRS help prevent accidents on the highway around Calais by keeping migrants from piling debris on it to stop traffic and then hide in temporarily stopped trucks traveling to the

UK (148). He also explains how outnumbered CRS officers try to catch well-organized, large groups of migrants who cut holes in the border fences with portable electric saws and then rush through (149–50). He points out that policing in Calais ties up about one sixth of all the riot police in France: eight to ten of sixty-one total squads (151). In this post, Mandel transcribes his discourse with little dialogisation or critical perspective. For example, towards the conclusion, Marc points out that because of the drain on riot policemen in Calais "pendant ce temps-là, de la délinquance dans les banlieues, y en a en veux-tu en voilà" [meanwhile, delinquency runs rampant in the *banlieues*] (151). Lisa does not challenge this blanket, stereotyping assertion that represents *banlieues* as globally lawless, while ignoring white-collar crime, for example. However, readers might compare this blog post with the earlier one in which Mandel translated into comics Mokhtar's account of police violence against *sans-papiers*. In both passages, police officers rush after groups of migrants trying to cross the border. Whereas Marc describes migrants creating traffic jams by throwing debris onto the highway – a highly dangerous practice that a young migrant will also later describe (238–9) – Mokhtar speaks only of taking advantage of an existing traffic jam, not creating one (112). Mandel's second blog post featuring Marc provides a more sinister perspective than his first. He begins by evoking the negative view of police authority embodied in the traditional Guignol puppet show, in which Guignol beats a policeman with a stick. However, by the end of the post Marc has flipped the beating paradigm to disculpate "le flic qui a trop utilisé sa matraque" [the cop who has used his billy club too often] on migrants (154). He also shifts blame away from local residents conducting surveillance rounds on migrants and supporting the police, and even a truck driver he witnessed beating up migrants with a shovel. Although I agree that the French state bears ultimate responsibility for the predicament in which desperate migrants, residents feeling besieged, and frustrated police and truckers find themselves, his either/or question – who among these three groups, or the French state, is responsible? – is morally and legally problematic, to say the least. It implicitly exonerates police violence and vigilante action, which can be illegal in France, as members of Génération Identitaire learned, if they did not already know, when some of them were sentenced to prison and their group fined for aforementioned incidents at the Col de l'Echelle.

Although multiple other representations of police violence across the book, including Mokhtar's account, help dialogize Marc's speech, the third post relating a police officer's viewpoint provides an excellent, self-contained example of several cartooning techniques for providing a dialogical perspective on the border crisis in Calais. The post does so through a sequence of characters speaking about it from different vantage points. It begins with Yasmine interviewing Ali, a fourteen-year-old who describes how he and other migrants create traffic jams on the highway by throwing debris onto it, and then hide in trucks (238–9). He explains that the last time he succeeded in hiding inside a truck, a policeman pulled him out so hard that he limped

for a month. Next Frédéric, a policeman from the Brigade Anti-Criminalité (BAC), describes the same situation from his perspective (Figure 10.9). For example, he justifies the recourse to tear gas to beat back the migrants by the number of migrants the BAC and CRS officers have to face all at once in this type of situation: "face à une vague de 100–150 migrants, tu veux faire quoi?" [faced with a wave of 100–150 migrants, what can you do?] (240). Frédéric's first intervention in the sequence ends with his evocation of "No Borders," that is, pro-migrant, anarchistic activists who are against the very existence of national border control. Here and elsewhere in the volume, the cartoonists provide a critical perspective on the negative view that various French authorities have of the activists, and articulate views held by the latter in sympathetic ways.[16] In this example, dialogization occurs first through an authorial comment on Frédéric's statement that the migrants trying to cross the border "se font aider par les NO BORDERS" [receive help from the NO BORDERS]: "Cette phrase revient souvent dans la bouche des représentants d'Etat et dans les cafés…" [This sentence pops up often in the mouths of government representatives and in cafés…]. The comment is in a blue-colored textual space, with an arrow pointing from it to Frédéric's statement. The comic book's pages are never formally divided into panels with line borders and gutters, but in the next spatial equivalent of a panel Mandel zooms in on Frédéric's face, colors him completely in pink, suggesting intense emotion, and draws his pupils in the shape of miniature devils with horns, implying demonization of the No Borders by Frédéric. Surrounding most of his face, five separate speech balloons contain a series of affirmations of increasing gravity, ending with the accusation that "c'est une organisation PARAMILITAIRE" [It's a PARAMILITARY organization]. The block letters stand out against the rest of the text, which is in cursive here, as almost always throughout the book, when relaying dialogue in speech ballons.

The cartoonists then give the floor to four unnamed No Border activists on the top half of the following page (241; Figure 10.10). They neither deny nor exactly confirm some of Frédéric's specific preceding accusations, such as "ils détruisent les clôtures avec des scies circulaires" [they destroy the fences with circular saws], stating instead, for example, "nous, on est pour la liberté de circulation, si on peut aider on aide" [we are for freedom of movement, if we can help, we help]. However, they also justify their help by referring to migrants who die or are wounded at the border: "C'est d'une extrême violence! rien qu'en 2015 il y a eu 30 morts… …et plus de 200 blessés graves à cause de ce contrôle des frontières" [It's extremely violent! in 2015 alone there were 30 deaths… …and more than 200 severely wounded because of this control of the borders]. They also argue that they are "là surtout pour filmer les violences policières" [there mainly to film police violence], and "en fait on défend les droits des migrants, y a des policiers qui sont de vrais fachos!" [in fact we defend migrants' rights, there are some police officers who are real fascists!]. Next, on the same page, the cartoonists insert statistics showing increasing numbers of "migrants found in trucks," rising from 13,500 in 2013 to

**Figure 10.9:** From Lisa Mandel (art and script) and Yasmine Bouagga (script) (2017) *Les nouvelles de la jungle (de Calais)*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 240 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the authors and Editions Casterman.

55,000 in 2015. The exclamation point after the last number, and the conjunction "and" at the beginning of Frédéric's next speech balloon, suggest him as the source. Rapping his finger on a desk, Frédéric goes on to contest the paradigm of "pauvres migrants et méchants flics" [poor migrants and mean cops] by alleging that he has "ramassé beaucoup de blessés sur le port de Calais" [picked up a lot of wounded on the port of Calais].

**Figure 10.10:** From Lisa Mandel (art and script) and Yasmine Bouagga (script) (2017) *Les nouvelles de la jungle (de Calais)*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 241 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the authors and Editions Casterman.

On the following page he provides three examples: migrants suffocating in refrigerated and petrol-tanker trucks, and "même dans une cuve de produits chimiques" [even in a vat of chemicals] (242; Figure 10.11). Next up in the dialogue is Mohammed, who, we are informed by a narratorial comment, had his "tibia fracassé par une grenade lacrymo" [tibia broken by a tear gas canister]. Mandel's mention of the injury reminds us that Frédéric had earlier justified police use of tear gas by the large number of

**Figure 10.11:** From Lisa Mandel (art and script) and Yasmine Bouagga (script) (2017) *Les nouvelles de la jungle (de Calais)*, Tournai: Casterman, p. 242 © Casterman. Reproduced with the gracious permission of the authors and Editions Casterman.

migrants trying to get across the border all at once. As was manifestly obvious during the Gilets jaunes [Yellow Vest] protests in 2018–19, French police do not always follow required safety procedures when firing tear-gas canisters and other weapons toward crowds, resulting in repeated physical injuries by those targeted. However, Mohammed does not speak directly to police violence, as one might expect, but instead explains that sometimes migrants want so badly to cross the frontier that they "pète[nt] les

plombs" [blow a fuse] and throw rocks at passing cars. Anne, a car driver, explains that she once accidentally ran into a migrant who had been crossing "n'importe où" [just anywhere], but that when she stopped to help the victim, "j'ai failli me faire lyncher par les autres" [I was almost lynched by the others] (242–3). Dan, an emergency-room doctor, intervenes next to contest the assertion that there is "Pas de violence policière" [No police violence], citing types of wounds he has seen that raise questions: "un mec avec les deux poignets pétés et des marques de matraque dans le dos" [a guy with both wrists busted, and billy club marks on his back] (243). Mandel gives the last word in the post to Frédéric, who again emphasizes the public safety dimension of frontier policing in Calais, implicitly attributing the deaths to the illegal actions of migrants on the highways. He then flips the accusation of violence, aiming it at the media (and perhaps implicitly at the blogging cartoonists), by saying that he is "très choqué par la banalisation des décès de migrants dans les médias… maintenant ce ne sont plus que des chiffres" [very shocked by how the media make the deaths of migrants appear banal… they are no longer anything but statistics] (243).

Throughout this sequence Mandel mobilizes several resources of the art form to create a dialogic perspective on the problem of violence at and around the frontier in Calais. As we have seen, this includes orchestrating a sequence of voiced perspectives by characters playing very different roles. This must have involved selecting which people to interview, which parts of their discourse to include, and where to situate them in the narrative sequence. Although Frédéric is the principal interviewee, because he intervenes the most often, three times, including the strategically important end point of the sequence, the interventions of other characters contest some of his rhetoric, especially his attempt to depict police activity as benevolent or justified. Even at points where Ali and Mohammed corroborate Frédéric's description of dangerous and even violent actions by migrants in their attempts to cross the border, their wounds suggest that they too have been victims of excessive use of force by the police, as doctor Dan suggests too. Moreover, the No Border activists contradict Frédéric's argument that he has saved migrants' lives by extracting them from dangerous situations. They blame dozens of deaths and hundreds of severe injuries of migrants on the existence and police enforcement of borders. As the authors point out in the last comic book analyzed in this chapter, below, when French authorities strictly police easily crossed borders and fail even to follow international refugee and migration law, that drives desperate migrants to go to increasingly dangerous lengths to cross borders (Baudoin and Troubs 2018: 91, 105). Mandel of course also uses drawing and coloring to dialogize discourse and to suggest an authorial perspective: for example, visual caricature of Frédéric at the point where he describes No Border activists as a threatening presence encourages us to question his viewpoint (Mandel and Bouagga 2017: 240). By contrast, through their transcribed speech and Mandel's drawings of them, the activists on the facing page appear to be idealistic young people, a far cry from the thuggish spectre of a vio-

lent organized group or even a paramilitary force that Frédéric and other agents of the French state invoke, which the cartoonists earlier spoofed through a caricatural image, a towering, blue-toned, masked spectre saying "Ouuuuuh," as a "menace qui plane sur la ville" [threat hovering over the city] (84). We also see the fright of car drivers, expressed through small lines or sweat emanating from their heads, when migrants throw objects onto the highway or run after Anne, carrying a stick and calling her a "Murderer!" (242). One of the strongest tools in the cartoonists' attempts to depict the migration crisis humanely is by giving names and faces to migrants and their allies such as the No Border activists and NGO workers, allowing us to hear migrants' life stories, the reasons why they left their homes and what they seek abroad, and showing us their difficult living conditions in the Jungle and other migrant camps around northwestern France. In the last comic book studied in this chapter, the cartoonists do similar things in equally insightful ways. There, drawn portraits of *sans-papiers* and activists on both sides of the French-Italian border, and the textual transcription of their words, powerfully humanize them and encourage us to regard their situation with empathy.

## Crossing the borders of representation in *Humains: La Roya est un fleuve*

I now turn to another comic that mobilizes biography, autobiography and reportage. Its drawing styles are less caricatural or cartoonish than *Les nouvelles de la Jungle (de Calais)*, and its tone tends less toward the humorous and more toward the tragic. It also effectively mobilizes resources of the art form. *Humains: La Roya est un fleuve* [Humans: The Roya is a River that Flows into the Sea] is a 107-page work of non-fictional reportage by French cartoonists Edmond Baudoin and Troubs (Jean-Marc Troubet) that portrays migration from Italy to southeastern France, especially along or near the Roya river, which crosses the border between the two countries and flows into the Mediterranean (specifically, the part named the Ligurian Sea). The work is one of the most compelling comic books about undocumented migration in terms of both artistic complexity and political engagement. The cartoonists based *Humains* on a series of interviews they made during a trip to the region in 2017. In the book, the two cartoonists make specific reference to the tradition of reportage in comics, to which they had already contributed. They open their story by mentioning their two previous collaborative books, one of which was about refugees in Colombia (2013). At the outset of their reportage (Baudoin and Troubs 2018: 3) they also insert a playful one-panel pastiche of Hergé's work in which they preclude the possibility of making their book into a Tintin album because they could not decide who of the two would play the role of Tintin and who would be Captain Haddock. However, one might also note the inadequacy of Hergé's political and artistic perspective to their own topic and approach. By contrast with *L'étoile mystérieuse* [*The Shooting Star*] (2005 [1942]), for example, Baudoin and Troubs describe

Jews in flight from the Nazis as needing help to escape and survive, but tragically not receiving it. They depict migrants who illegally enter France through Italy as deserving similar assistance today against state institutions and agents who would exclude or expel them from Europe.

In his one-page preface to the book, J.M.G. Le Clézio, the French laureate of the Nobel prize in literature in 2008, takes a strong stand in favor of accepting all migrants now coming into France from poor countries. He categorically refuses to differentiate between economic migrants and political refugees who might qualify for asylum. Baudoin and Troubs take the same position. Activists featured in the book include: Cédric Herrou (33, 51–65, 77, 87–95), a local farmer whose trials for helping migrants have drawn national attention to this cause in France; Enzo Barnabà (4, 8, 12), the author of several books, including an account of the massacre on 17 August 1893 of Italians working on salt farms at Aigues-Mortes in southern France; cinematographer Michel Toesca (48), whose film *Libre*, about Herrou's support of migrants, was shown at the Cannes film festival in 2018; a photographer named Pascal (48); and Françoise Cotta (68), a lawyer originally from Nice who practiced law in Paris before retiring and moving to Breil-sur-Roya. The cartoonists also meet Daniel Trilling (13–16), an English journalist of Jewish heritage.

The book is mainly made up of three sets of intertwined material, in addition to the preface by Le Clézio: drawn portraits of mostly male African migrants, and written biographical material about them; drawn portraits of people, mostly but not only Europeans, who help migrants, and their transcribed oral responses to the cartoonists' repeated question of why they are engaging in pro-migrant activism; and contextual drawn and written material that includes the cartoonists' reflections on their interactions with the individuals whom they meet and on migration in general. Baudoin and Troubs also inscribe their work in a current of alternative and art-oriented cartooning stretching back to the 1970s with Futuropolis, and continuing from the 1990s with L'Association, the Paris artists collective and publisher that published their volume. As several comics scholars have shown, autobiography plays a significant role in alternative French and Francophone comics, to which it has helped provide a measure of artistic, literary and cultural legitimacy.[17] Baudoin, one of the best-known cartoonist autobiographers in France, has been publishing stories about himself for decades, although he has also created comics, some fictional, about other themes, including postcolonial migration to France.[18] In *Humains* (Baudoin and Troubs 2018: 79), he redraws an image, or a combination of images, from *Passe le temps* (1991: 44.7; cf. 5.2, 6–7, 10, 12, 16.1, 20–1, 22.2–3), a book first published by Futuropolis in 1982, later reissued by L'Association in an anthology of Baudoin's early books, and that contains autobiographical references (Screech 2008: 57, 74, 77). A related trend in alternative comics, also present in *Humains*, is self-reflection on the creative process and the comics milieu, which helps give artistic legitimacy to comics. So, for example, cartoonists draw themselves or other cartoonists

in the process of drawing. Of course self-portraiture has been a typical artistic gesture of painters for centuries. Here, though, these two related forms of self-reflexivity are mainly directed toward the relationship of artists and art to migrants and migration. The cartoonists contemplate their responsibility as people and as artists for the plight and rights of migrants, and raise questions about whether and how they can represent them. Indirectly, they invite readers, probably especially those with the legal right to live in France, to assist *sans-papiers*.

By drawing and discussing artists using other arts and media to help migrants, Baudoin and Troubs inscribe their cartooning within a context of cultural and artistic activism in diverse areas such as news media reporting, film, prose fiction, photography and music. Although the cartoonists' main mode of storytelling is reportage, the book assembles other representational techniques, including drawn portraiture, travel writing, oniric visual symbolism, oral testimony, short biographical sketches, and first-person narratorial commentary. Baudoin has often used a variety of cartooning techniques and genres in his autobiographical comics. Matthew Screech (2008) has argued that it shows Baudoin's awareness of the open-endedness of autobiography, and helps demonstrate the ability of comics to represent the hybrid, fragmentary nature of identity. In *Humains* too, the cartoonists use a variety of techniques, drawing styles and artistic or literary genres, but mostly for rather different ends than in Baudoin's primarily autobiographical comics.

The archive and the *lieu de mémoire* (Nora 1984–92), translated variously as "realm" or "place of memory," are two complementary concepts that can help us understand the book's organization and functioning. The work constitutes a popular archive of migration and exile stories from the past and present. For example, the cartoonists and those whom they interview recall the generations of Italians who migrated to and from France, Jews fleeing Nazis during the Second World War (Baudoin and Troubs 2018: 85), a personal experience of migration from South America to France (74), the Calais Jungle (35), and migrants crossing illegally from Italy to France today. They use words and images to describe the increasing construction of the state apparatus for border policing and selective migration control (e.g., 12, 51, 86), which they trace from the Dreyfus affair up to the present system that allows citizens of European nations to circulate freely throughout the European Union, while severely restricting the ability of others to do so, especially those from poor nations of the global South. Baudoin and Troubs reflect on selective policing, for example, contrasting their unhindered passage from France into Italy with the probable close scrutiny that border police give to people who look different from them, and may be of a different color (4). They document humanitarian work by migrant rights activists, including those working with a Catholic charity group, Caritas, in Vintimille (Ventimiglia), and especially members of La Roya citoyenne [The Civic-Minded Roya] in France. The two artists accompany a group of migrants that the association leads from the farm of immigrant rights activist Herrou

to an office in Nice, where they begin the asylum application process, documenting the trip and the process (69–75). They also recall past gestures of solidarity with oppressed minorities, for example, by mentioning the 1966, civil-rights era song "Je voudrais être un noir" [I Would Like to Be a Black Person] in which French-Italian singer Nino Ferrer (1934–98) described his admiration for musicians such as Wilson Pickett and James Brown, and criticized the white supremacist actions of governor Orval Faubus, who tried to keep Black students from enrolling in Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. The cartoonists' archive therefore contains an alternative history of migration that dissents from the restrictive language of the nation-state and the European Union. Their historically informed archive of bottom-up democracy stands in rebuke to top-down, dehistoricized and repressive official discourse and actions regarding certain forms of migration.

The book is also a *lieu de mémoire* for dead migrants. I have already mentioned the Italian salt-field workers killed at Aigues-Mortes, France, in 1893 (48; cf. Noiriel 1992a: 260–1; 1992b: 286–7). Later in the book (Baudoin and Troubs 2018: 85), they commemorate Jews who were prevented from fleeing from France through the Col de Fenestre into Italy in September 1943. They quote the French inscription on the bilingual plaque placed on the Italian side of the pass in September 2005. Both the plaque and the book thereby help constitute the site as an historical place of memory. Similarly, at several points the cartoonists refer to anonymous migrants who have died in recent years while trying to migrate to Europe. Their book is therefore itself a memorial to the dead, a place of memory for them. One of the ways that the cartoonists link these two historical times and exilic movements is by repeatedly calling those helping migrants today "les justes" [the just] (44, etc.). The Israeli Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem, the 1953 law establishing it, and a special commission officially confer the designation "Juste parmi les nations" [Righteous Among Nations] on non-Jews who disinterestedly saved Jews from the Nazi genocide, with peril to their own lives. At the same time, Baudoin and Troubs also cite the complicated national history of villages in the Roya valley (some became French only as recently as 1947) and the transnational course of the river itself as reasons why local inhabitants are interested in migration, and, it is implied, why they question the current status of national borders (44).

By harnessing the art form's capacity to configure words and image in different artistic genres within the same space the cartoonists produce a compelling, humanizing narrative about a group of people often dehumanized in visual and verbal public discourse in France. As the title of *Humains: La Roya est un fleuve* suggests, the book represents illegal, often postcolonial, migration as a human river flowing from many countries into France, in a way that contests anti-migratory representations: for example, verbal or visual imagery depicting migration as an uncontrolled flood that swamps and drowns a national body and threatens ethnicized national cohesion. The two accomplished cartoonists expertly use the interface or borders between different artistic

**Figure 10.12:** From Edmond Baudoin and Troubs (2018) *Humains: La Roya est un fleuve*, Paris: L'Association, p. 58 © L'Association. Reproduced with the gracious permission of Edmond Baudoin.

and narrative genres to represent the clandestine crossing of political, geographical and national frontiers. That artistic activity involves going beyond the limits of generic conventions, including those of the art form itself. They thereby work to undo strictures on the ability of art and literature to depict migration, the massive efforts it requires of migrants, and the damaging and liberating effects it has on them. In short, in *Humains* the act of illegally crossing national borders calls for crossing the borders of representation.

The relationship between portrait drawing and comic-strip narrative is central to this. Another concept – after the archive and the *lieu de mémoire* – can help us understand that relationship: the album or sketchbook, a form that has been important for the French-language comic-book form since Rodolphe Töpffer invented the latter during the first half of the nineteenth century. Traditionally, portrait painting often helped consolidate the power of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, by celebrating the accomplishments of an elite few and helping consolidate both intra-group solidarity and bourgeois individuality and subjectivity. Portrait drawing as practiced here by Baudoin and Troubs serves a very different function. I will first go through the process in some detail before making a few general observations about its functions and effects. The activity may be grouped into two main parts: drawing a portrait and telling a story. The artist first offers to draw a portrait of the migrant. The migrant accepts the offer and poses, or refuses. If invited to, the artist draws the portrait, photographs

it, and then gives it to the migrant. The process of drawing includes first of all an exchange of looks between the artist and the migrant: as he begins to draw a migrant's portrait, Baudoin asks each person to look straight into his eyes (58; Figure 10.12). This involves the artist and the migrant acknowledging each other's presence through an exchange of looks, which is punctuated by the artist repeatedly looking down at his drawing and back up at the migrant. As Baudoin describes it, his insistence that the migrant look straight at him, into his eyes, is itself a humanizing gesture: he wonders whether the migrants have dared to do so recently, given the violence they have encountered during their travels. In the second part of the process, which does not always entirely unfold because it depends in part on speaking the same language or having access to an interpreter, the cartoonist gives the migrant the portrait and, in exchange, asks for a personal story or reflection on the future, which the cartoonist listens to, transcribes, and includes in the book, along with the migrant's portrait. By telling a story, the migrant produces a self-portrait in words. This gives the migrant more agency than simply sitting for a portrait.

Here now are a few more observations about this process, its reason for being, and its effects. Visual portraiture helps the artists bridge the barrier of silence between them and the migrants, whether that silence comes from fear or from not being able to speak the same language. By its very nature, the creative act of drawing a portrait is a humanizing gesture here, because it acknowledges and affirms the other's identity and presence, and includes the trace of the artist's craft through the gesture of hand drawing and the artist's style, which is a kind of visual signature. The drawn portrait thereby acknowledges and unites the humanity of both the artist and the migrant, through traces of both in the image. Creating a portrait, a drawn visual likeness, of the migrant affirms that person's identity and thereby works against the dehumanizing and de-individualizing intentions and effects of anti-migrant discourse, and the top-down reification of migrant identity by the state. The generally realistic style and humanizing effects of the drawn portraits in the book stand in contrast to dehumanizing, caricatural language and imagery about migrants by far-right cartoonists that we saw in Chapters 6 and 7. Taken together, the portraits, biographical statements and artists' observations about their interactions with migrants help to humanize migrants in *Humains: La Roya est un fleuve*.

The artists assemble the portraits and biographies and insert then into a narrative that they produce about their trip, in a process that unfolds during and after the event: they draw and write about the event as they go, producing a kind of word-and-image travelogue, and then assemble the book's various components (102). By inserting a series of portraits and biographical stories into the book, the cartoonists produce something that partly resembles a photo album and an artist's sketchbook, much as one finds in other recent comics recounting postcolonial and migrant stories. They also create a document containing both singularizing elements and a communal di-

mension, which humanizes individuals within a collectivity. This works against the effects of some media imagery such as television news reports or newspaper articles illustrated with a group photograph that typically represents migrants as anonymous faces or individuals, for example, on a rescue boat, or walking together as a group. On the other hand, the accumulation of portraits and biographies in the book helps suggest the scale of both the suffering and resourcefulness of migrants in France and Italy, something that just one or a few images and stories would have more difficulty demonstrating. The portraits of the migrants literally put faces on the so-called "migration problem," and thereby humanize them. Together, the images with associated captions – a first name and a country of origin – and in some cases biographies and commentary by the cartoonists produce what Barbara Harlow (1987) described as "resistance literature." The comic book resists the power that the state has accumulated to determine identity and legal access to citizenship. For Etienne Balibar (in Balibar and Wallerstein 1991), this is in part a genealogical power: the ability to determine who belongs to the nation, conceived of in ethnicized terms of kinship. The portraits of the activists celebrate an affiliative non-state network of citizens helping to restore some measure of power to migrants.

The book's cover image is excerpted from the narrative (Baudoin and Troubs 2018: 66), in a passage where Baudoin explains that the activists, cartoonists and migrants, who are bathing in the Roya river, have seen four migrants coming down from the border, and also police officers who have not yet seen the four, because the officials are observing the bathers instead (Figure 10.13). One of the bathing migrants sings loudly in Arabic to the four fugitives, warning them not to move until nightfall, so they will not be arrested and likely returned illegally to Italy by the police. Here, loudly sung Arabic speech surreptitiously warns the *sans-papiers* about those who are hunting the migrants. Dark shading around two or more drawings that could be either human faces or grotesque masks blends them into the natural background of the canyon terrain behind. Baudoin has often used similar images in previous comics to blur distinctions between human subjectivity and the natural or built environment, or the internal life of the mind and a person's external surroundings. A drawing by Tanguy Dohollau (94), another French cartoonist with whom Baudoin has collaborated (93), is in Dohollau's drawing style, but with an image much like Baudoin's human-natural mixing, just described: Dohollau draws Baudoin with a tree in place of his head. The image recounts another artistic mixing, or representational border-crossing, that is typical of the comics milieu today but is here again in the service of migrants. Baudoin is performing a *concert dessiné*, or comics concert, at Herrou's home, for some Sudanese and Chadien migrants, by drawing to the sounds of Sudanese and Ivoirian music (94). The text accompanying Dohollau's drawings is multilingual, translating between Malinké, Italian and French, gesturing toward peaceful cohabitation between speakers of African and European languages. Dohollau depicts Baudoin's comics concert performance as a

**Figure 10.13:** From Edmond Baudoin and Troubs (2018) *Humains: La Roya est un fleuve*, Paris: L'Association, p. 66 © L'Association. Reproduced with the gracious permission of Edmond Baudoin.

space and time of solidarity and transnational community, through translation, multilingualism and mixing art forms, or crossing representational borders.

Some other related symbolic images by Baudoin and Troubs are far more disturbing, because they reflect on, and memorialize, the danger that migrants run in attempting to reach Europe, and the horrific death of many in that quest (21, 38.2, 81.3). They indicate limits on border crossing, both in terms of artistic representation and literally, at the frontier between two countries. However, the last image of the book depicts a young African rising out of the waves and contemplating the Mediterranean (107), instead of disappearing into it to drown, as an earlier one does (38.2). This final image is set below the portrait and poem of a girl who hopes for a better world for the refugees. Returning to the book's cover we may read the title, "Humans: The Roya is a River that Flows into the Sea," as an injunction against the practice of naturalizing borders, and of using natural features of the environment, such as the Roya river or the Mediterranean, as a barrier to migration. Instead we may find ways over and around those barriers, for the river of desperate humans migrating to the richer countries of the world today, in search of a better future. Of course the problem will only become more pressing in the future, with the massive global migration propelled by climate change that has already begun. The fact that rich countries of the global North bear immense responsibility for the environmental catastrophe now unfolding because of global overheating means that they owe it to migrants – and also those unable to migrate – to address their resulting needs in a substantial, meaningful way. Reinforcing borders to try to keep out migrants, while ignoring what drives them into danger, is too costly to human life and welfare, and simply will not work in the long run. In *Humains: La Roya est un fleuve*, both Le Clézio and an activist directly address the responsibility of the French, and implicitly citizens of other wealthy nations, in creating conditions that migrants flee by traveling to France (67).

## Conclusion: *sans-papiers* and the limits of the postcolonial paradigm

Increasing numbers of French-language comics are now drawing attention to the situation of *sans-papiers* in order to humanize them and gather support for, on the one hand, stopping the French government from engaging in repressive anti-migrant policing, whether legal or illegal, and on the other, changing European and French law to make it more welcoming to migrants, including refugees. As we have seen, the figure of *sans-papiers* appeared in French comics by 1976, just two years after Mœbius published "Cauchemar blanc," in 1974. Comics by Slimane Zeghidour and then Farid Boudjellal, both of Algerian heritage, quickly made the North African *sans-papiers* figure key to thinking about working-class, postcolonial migration to France. Their comics and those of Mœbius flipped the far-right figure of the single, male North African migrant drawn by Coral, transforming him from predator to prey, and from threat to victim.

This empathetic artistic gesture helped pave the way for a tradition of representing *sans-papiers* as some of the most vulnerable people in France, but also among the most courageous and resourceful. More recent works by many other cartoonists have further opened comics to depicting *sans-papiers* across a wide range of story genres, artistic styles and cartooning approaches. Fictional representation of *sans-papiers* remains important, as in Baru's *Fais péter les basses, Bruno!*, but biography, autobiography and reportage are playing increasingly important roles, as we saw in *Les nouvelles de la jungle (de Calais)*, by Lisa Mandel and Yasmine Bouagga, and in *Humains: La Roya est un fleuve*, by Edmond Baudoin and Troubs. All of these comics invite us to question the postcolonial paradigm, for example, to ask ourselves to what extent does imperialist exploitation continue in former European colonies? What are the effects of Western tourism on African societies? What responsibilities do wealthy countries that support authoritarian regimes in poor countries have to migrants dislocated by those regimes? How should we address (inter)national migration of the poor to escape climate change caused principally by the lifestyles of wealthy countries, colonizing the global climate, as it were? It seems fitting to end this volume with a chapter about one of the most enduring and emblematic characters related to migration in French comics, who invites us to rethink the postcolonial paradigm.

## Notes

1 Noiriel (1992a: 140–2) and Hargreaves (1995a: 4–17).

2 Hargreaves (1995a: 17).

3 Akin (2019: 191 ) defines official identity papers: "official identity papers, delivered generally by an institution representing the State: national identity card, passport, driver's license, stay or residency card that make possible the establishment of someone's identity."

4 I am grateful to Alec G. Hargreaves for having shared several pages of these cartoons with me.

5 I am grateful to Yvan Gastaut for reminding me about this book.

6 On reportage in French-language comics, see Miller (2007b: 57–9; 2008) and Bumatay (2020).

7 As we saw above, in Chapter 2, Chantal Montellier was publishing short comics stories featuring similar characters in the mid- to late 1970s, in "Le brigadier Andy Gang" (1976) and *Blues* (1979b).

8 Comics by these two cartoonists do not represent international airports, places where frontiers legally exist in Paris, whereas a comic book by Baru (2010) does. There is related representation of the international frontier with England legally situated within France in comics about Calais. I return to those below.

9 See Lazhari Labter (2009: 85, 95, 131, 136, 170, 178, 186, 252–3) and *Festival international de la bande dessinée et de la caricature* (1987).

10 Algerian cartoonist Slim made a similar transition when he went into exile in France during the Algerian civil war in the 1990s and began drawing cartoons for *L'Humanité*, the organ of the French Communist Party.
11 Fanon (2002: 283–97).
12 Hargreaves (1995a: 19).
13 I use the first names of the authors when they appear as characters in their work, and their family names to refer to them in other capacities, including as authors.
14 Mandel and Bouagga (2017: 43); the names of the following cartoonists and comics publishers were listed as signatories of the manifesto: Pénélope Bagieu, Olivier Balez, Claire Braud, Max Cabanes, Bajram Denis, Jacques Ferrandez, Leo, Emmanuel Lepage, Wilfred Lupano, Franck Margerin, Jean-Christophe Menu, Jeanne Puchol, Marjane Satrapi, Riad Sattouf, Joann Sfar, Jean-Louis Tripp, Lewis Trondheim and Fabien Vehlmann. Several of these cartoonists have represented migrants, exilees or their descendants in comics: e.g., Ferrandez, Margerin, Menu, Puchol, Satrapi, Sattouf, Sfar, Tripp and Trondheim.
15 See above, p. 192n19.
16 E.g., also on pages 22–3, 31, 70, 84–8, 272–3.
17 Groensteen (1996c), Mercier (1999), Jan Baetens (2004), Bart Beaty (2007: 138–70) and Ann Miller (2011).
18 On autobiography in Baudoin's comics, see Screech (2008), Beaty (2007: 145–6) and Miller (2007b: 61).

# Chapter 11
# Coda: postcolonialism and beyond

French colonialism and imperialism, and the movement of (formerly) colonized individuals and groups to France, have been associated with several major stages in the development of the modern comics form, which I will briefly recall here. First, there was the creation of the book-length comic-strip narrative by Swiss artist Rodolphe Töpffer, whose *roman en estampes* [novel in prints], *Histoire de Mr. Cryptogame* [Story of Mr. Cryptogame], drafted in 1830 and reworked in 1844, is structured by colonial references to the French conquest of Algeria.[1] The comics form was imported from Geneva into France and further developed there throughout the nineteenth century by artists such as Cham, Léonce Petit and Christophe, who were inspired by Töpffer's novels in prints and created comics that, like Töpffer's, relied in part on colonial tropes and imagery, as several comics historians and theoreticians have argued.[2] There was an early use of speech balloons by Rose Candide and Georges Le Cordier (1908) in *Sam et Sap* [Sam and Sap], a comic that grotesquely depicted the colonized in France, and by Alain Saint-Ogan in "Zig and Puce," a famous and long-running series that often promoted French colonialism and imperialism.[3] Saint-Ogan's strip heavily influenced the comics of Belgian cartoonist Hergé (Groensteen 1996b), known for his clear-line drawing style, which Hergé articulated through and against the alterity of the colonial grotesque. In the early 1960s, Coral, who clearly modeled his comics on Hergé's often antisemitic and colonialist Tintin series, created an autobiographical comic to recount the end of the Algerian War, including his jailing for terrorist-related activities in support of French colonial rule. He also helped pivot the far-right toward neocolonial attacks on postcolonial immigrant populations in France, as we saw in Chapter 1.[4] As discussed in Chapter 2, several comics scholars have explored how Mœbius, in "Cauchemar blanc" [White Nightmare] (1989 [1974]), launched a trend of "new realism" in French and Belgian comics, but have generally paid relatively little attention to its postcolonial dimension, although it played an important role in comics by Baru, Farid Boudjellal and Chantal Montellier that were inspired by it. In this study I have focused considerably on the dialogization of colonial comics types and tropes, often

but not always by cartoonists of postcolonial ethnic minority or migrant heritage.

Colonialism, its sequels, and migration have been integral to the development of the medium itself. Cartoonists have often made formal innovations in response to colonial and imperial pressures and opportunities. The voyage out of comics and their protagonists to European colonies has long been tied to the voyage into and around the comics art form that colonial aesthetics have made. The connection between comics aesthetics and colonial history is by no means the only determining factor in comics innovation, but it is certainly much larger than is usually recognized, when it is acknowledged at all. I have focused on comics across the political spectrum and by French cartoonists of various ethnic identifications and heritages in an attempt to provide a broad and multidimensional perspective on postcolonialism and migration in French comics. What I originally envisioned as a single book has expanded into three: *The Colonial Heritage of French Comics* (2011c), *Redrawing French Empire in Comics* (2013e) and the present volume. Scholars are increasingly paying attention to (post) colonialism in French comics. Monographs published in Paris by Philippe Delisle (2008, 2013) on colonialism and slavery in French and Belgian comics, and by Sandra Federici (2019) on African cartoonists who create comics in French, and essays by Michelle Bumatay (2012, 2020) on African comics, are part of a wave of scholarship helping to illuminate the colonial heritage of French comics and their postcolonial and migrant dimensions.

Colonialism, postcolonialism and migration in comics have received critical attention in recent years through highly visible exhibitions in French museums and festivals. For example, the Cité internationale de la bande dessinée included a special exhibition on the comics series “Petite histoire des colonies françaises” by Grégory Jarry and Otto T. (Thomas Dupuis) in the January 2011 festival over which Baru presided (see Baru 2011; McKinney 2011c: 118–20). The exhibition ran 27 January–30 April 2011 at the French national comics center in Angoulême. The same festival featured a major exhibition on Baru’s own comics, titled DLDDLT, or “Debout les damnés de la terre” [Stand up, wretched of the earth], which of course comes from the first line of “L’internationale” [The Internationale], the leftist anthem written by French Communard Eugène Pottier. The 2013–14 exhibition “Albums: Bande dessinée et immigration, 1913–2013” [Albums: Comics and Immigration, 1913–2013] at the Musée de l’histoire de l’immigration, and its catalogue (Marie and Ollivier 2013) featured many cartoonists with ancestors from former French colonies, and French comics on migration and colonialism, although it also focused on migration in comics from other countries, especially the United States. The French Musée du Quai Branly Jacques Chirac in Paris held a temporary exhibition from 23 May–7 October 2018 titled “Le magasin des petits explorateurs” [The Store of Little Explorers], about colonialism in French popular culture from the 18th century to the present, that included an emphasis on comics. The catalogue, edited by anthropologist Julien Bondaz (2018), contains several

articles wholly or partially devoted to colonialism in French comics (e.g., Baudry 2018; McKinney 2018b). However, critical work on (post)colonialism and migration in French comics has only just begun, given the vast extent of the topic.

A growing number of French comics with refreshing perspectives on postcolonial and migratory themes are being published by both mainstream and alternative publishers. Among the encouraging signs is the fact that an increasing number of women, including artists with backgrounds rooted in recent migration to France or with ancestors from former French colonies, are creating comics in France, sometimes on the topics studied in this volume. This has the potential to transform the field radically once again, much as the appearance of cartoonists, mostly men, from postcolonial and migrant groups did beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as we have seen here. Cartoonists such as Zeina Abirached, or Marguerite Abouet, who scripted the popular "Aya de Yopougon" [Aya of Yop City] comics series, have already earned considerable success in an art form traditionally dominated by men.

On the other hand, prominent politicians from major French political parties, including the current French president, continue to foment fear about migration, especially from former French colonies, to advance their political agendas and cement their own power and that of their organizations. The unfolding world climate and ecological catastrophe risks triggering massive waves of migration recalling the fantasy that the far right peddles in its propaganda, but if that occurs, it will have been the making of the industrialized, colonizing nations. Blaming their postcolonial and migrant victims is a lie and a cynical, demagogic ploy to capture and keep domestic political power. However, focusing only on the colonial past, and ignoring our commonalities and opportunities for alliances would be tragic. Our world deserves a better future.

## Notes

1 Kunzle (1990: 65–8; 2007a: 101–7), Filliot (2012) and McKinney (2013e: 43–5).

2 On the development of the form across nineteenth-century French-language comics, see for example Kunzle (1990, 2007a, 2007b, 2009, 2015, 2019), Groensteen and Peeters (1994), Grove (2005, 2010), Mainardi (2007, 2011), Smolderen (2009), Dürrenmatt (2013), Groensteen (2014), Sausverd (2014a), Willems (2015) and Filliot (2016); on colonialism in these comics, see Kunzle (1990, 2007a, 2019), Filliot (2012) and McKinney (2013b, 2013c, 2013e).

3 On *Sam et Sap*, see Patinax (1985), McKinney (2011c) and Frémion (2013); on Saint-Ogan, see Petitfaux (1985, 1986, 1995), Lehideux (1995) Groensteen (1996b), Douvry (2006), Groensteen and Morgan (2007), McKinney (2011c) and Baudry (2018).

4 See also McKinney (2011b).

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