
Reviews

Festival and Conference Reviews

Angoulême 2013

From 31 January to 3 February 2013, the Festival International de la Bande Dessinée (FIBD) celebrated a significant milestone: its fortieth birthday! Doubling the population of the city and the surrounding area (and quadrupling the population of just the city centre), the more than 200 000 visitors who swarmed all over this small town in southwest France during those four days represented all ages, multiple nationalities and very diverse interests. Packs of youngsters and adolescents clearly enjoying their school outings (probably, one suspects, not always for the right reasons) made getting into exhibits and moving between venues particularly challenging, especially on the first day. Given that visitors under the age of ten have free admission, those between eleven and seventeen get a reduced rate and tickets for the very popular concerts are half off for school groups, the best way to have a successful and positive experience at this festival is to plan far in advance and to arrive already armed with a pass, the hour-by-hour program, pre-purchased tickets to all events not covered by the pass and an extra supply of patience and goodwill towards the other 199 999 visitors. This year it also helped to have waterproof shoes and an indestructible umbrella, since strong winds and driving rain left the mangled skeletons of the less hardy varieties filling the city's waste bins, or simply abandoned by the side of the road. But these minor nuisances did not negate the fact that the festival is an amazing event that everyone who loves comics should try to experience at least once.

The fortieth version of the FIBD was jam-packed with the usual array of events: workshops, debates, talks, concerts, projections, meetings

and of course exhibits, and it was not without controversy once the prizes were announced. Because of unhappiness last year over the selection of Jean-Claude Denis as winner of the Grand Prix, festival organizers changed the voting procedure. The voting body was enlarged this year to allow all authors, cartoonists, scriptwriters and colourists present at the festival to vote for one of the sixteen authors pre-selected for the Grand Prix by the electoral committee, and 537 of the almost 15 000 eligible voters cast their ballot. After the voting closed on Saturday, the Académie des Grands (all past winners of the Grand Prix) selected the winner from among the five candidates with the highest number of votes. The result was the selection of Willem (seventy-one-year-old artist and editor of Dutch origin, known especially for his strips in the satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo* and the daily paper *Libération*) over Akira Toriyama, who actually received the most votes. Willem was the only continental European on the list, with the others being Alan Moore (U.K.), Chris Ware (U.S.A), and Katsuhiko Otomo and Toriyama (both from Japan). After the vote, Trondheim tweeted that the Académie voted for Willem only because they were not familiar with the work of the non-Europeans, and the website *20minutes.fr* reported a rumour that the majority of the Académie refused to vote for a *mangaka*. Toriyama was compensated by being awarded the Prix Spécial of the festival.

The exhibit of over 200 originals from the life's work of Jean-Claude Denis (president of the jury this year) was somewhat underwhelming compared to some past exhibits honouring Grand Prix winners. Normally the retrospective of the previous year's Grand Prix winner is welcomed by the Cité Internationale de la Bande Dessinée et de l'Image (CNBDI) in the Vaisseau Mœbius (formerly known as the Castro Building, or 'old museum'), but Denis opted for a more intimate setting. Housed on two floors of the small Hôtel Saint Simon, two of the more original parts of the exhibit were the thirty-seven portraits of Denis's anti-hero Luc Leroi drawn by his artist friends (including Guibert, de Crécy and Bilal) and a mock-up of a roof and skylight on the second floor through which one could see Leroi's living room, complete with armchair and old television set. The CNBDI invited Denis to create an exhibit (*Carte blanche à Jean-C. Denis*) on his perspective of the history of comics, choosing from among more than 400 documents (originals and reprints) from the museum archives. Around twenty images made the cut, and Denis wrote short texts to explain his choice and their historical importance.

The main exhibition space of the Vaisseau Moebius that was freed up by Denis's move to the Hôtel Saint Simon featured a massive retrospective of the work of Albert Uderzo: *Uderzo in extenso*. Uderzo, who turned eighty-six this year, was accompanied on his visit of the retrospective by Aurélie Filippetti, French minister of culture and communication (her first visit to the FIBD), and his meeting with the public in the Espace Franquin was emceed by Benoît Mouchart, the artistic director of the FIBD since 2003, who is leaving the post to become editorial director for the publisher Casterman.

The other invited guest of note at the festival was the legendary Leiji Matsumoto, who this year is celebrating his six decades of work as a *mangaka*. Among the various events honouring his presence and his work was a fourteen-hour non-stop projection of his Albator animations.

Other exhibits included *Mickey and Donald* in the courtyard of the town hall – a magnet for the numerous school groups and other young visitors. Works by Andreas (author of *Rork* and *Capricorne*) were on display in the city museum, while the courthouse featured comic book representations of justice and the law. Didier Comès, who died five weeks after the festival on 7 March, had his work honoured at the Angoulême city theatre in an exhibit of fifty black-and-white originals. The Ateliers Magelis near the river showcased the work of first- and second-generation Algerian artists – fifty artists for fifty years of Algerian comic art. The bar Le Cinq Sens (and their toilet rooms) doubled as exhibition space for Pénélope Bagieu's albums and illustrations, and visitors were introduced to the Japanese version of her blog as well as to a new iPhone app, 'Pénélope dans ta poche' [Penelope in your pocket]. Finally, an exhibit that got a lot of positive press was the Flemish show *La Boîte à Gand*, curated by Brecht Evens and featuring himself and Brecht Vandenbroucke, Hannelore van Dijck, Sarah Yu Zeebroek and Lotte Van de Walle.

In addition to the usual tents filling the empty squares and parking lots (mainstream publishers on the Place du Champ-de-Mars, independent and alternative publishers at the Place New York and the Para-BD at the Place des Halles), there were two smaller tents in the city centre: the 'Spécial Corée' [Special Korea] tent on the Place Saint-Martial (featuring expositions, animations, meetings with authors, autograph sessions and projections), and the 'Espace Polar-SNCF' [Whodunit Space-SNCF (the National French Railway Company)] on the Place Marengo. The SNCF (Société nationale des chemins de fer français), which has partnered with the FIBD for over seven years, launched its

dedicated exhibit space at the 2012 festival at the same time as it created a new prize, the Fauve Polar SNCF.

One of the most interesting and enjoyable events this year for this festival attendee was the Concert de dessins [drawing concert] (a term now copyrighted by the festival). Introduced for the first time in 2005 by Zep and the festival's artistic director Mouchart, the concert is a live show featuring various artists whose drawings are projected on a large screen as they are being created; the projections are accompanied by a live band that matches its music to the 'tone' of the art. This year's concert, whose theme was 'Titeuf a 20 ans', featured the artists Berberian, Boulet, Mathilde Domecq, Little Thunder, Marion Montaigne, Siuhak, Vince and Zep himself, and marked the first time that these concerts have featured Asian artists. The participation of Little Thunder and Siuhak will be followed up later in the spring when the festival exports the Concert de dessins concept (plus the musicians and two artists) to Hong Kong for the cultural event 'French May'. A different kind of illustrated concert, inaugurated this year, was music by French singer and songwriter Lescop, illustrated by Bastien Vivès, at the concert space La Nef.

Not to be forgotten is the growing role of digital media in the world of comics, and this year's festival saw the unveiling of a new monthly, completely online journal called *Professeur Cyclope*. The first issue came out a month after the festival, and can be seen online at <http://revues.artefrance.professeurcyclope.fr/2x.html#chapter/main>. A different kind of digital media that made its debut at the festival this year was the free app 'bdangouleme', available exclusively for the iPhone. Not having an iPhone that works in France, I was not able to try it myself, but it was advertised as offering the hour-by-hour program, ticket purchasing and transportation information, excerpts from the albums in the official competition, and live Tweets, photos, and about a half dozen virtual exhibits each day with commentary by Mouchart; it also had a geo-location function as bug-ridden as the iPhone 5 map app, if one is to believe the many negative online reviews.

All in all an exhilarating, if exhausting, event that always leaves me wondering why in the world it has to be held in the dead of winter.

CLARE TUFTS
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The 2013 Joint International Comics and Bande Dessinée Conference in Scotland: When a Country Loves Its Comics

I had the enormous pleasure of attending the 2013 joint International Comics and Bande Dessinée Conference in Scotland held on 24–28 June. The conference was ambitious, featuring two host cities (four days in Glasgow, one in Dundee), two organizations and one off-campus event. And the ambition was rewarded: the conference was a complete success.

One of the most consistently remarkable aspects of the conference was a series of intelligent organizational decisions by the hosts in Glasgow and Dundee. Travel within Glasgow, for example, was remarkably easy, as the program noted the names of subway stops corresponding to all the major events, and Glasgow's two-ring metro for central city travel is simple to understand. Housing, provided through the University of Glasgow's residence hall system, was comfortable, modern and inexpensive. All of the attendees who chose to make use of this housing found themselves in the same suites, each of us with private rooms and access to a kitchen and a wireless Internet signal. The organizers also made sure that we had wireless access throughout our time in Glasgow; although ten years ago I would have rolled my eyes at the idea that one would need Internet access while at a conference, the truth is that today, attendees follow up on information and contacts much more reliably because we can bounce onto the Internet whenever the need strikes. Food was affordable and easily accessible, what with Byres Road – home to a large supermarket, multiple pubs and many restaurants – just around the corner from the conference site. The greatest strain on the organizational ability of the conference hosts was inevitably the herculean task of getting the attendees to and from Dundee on the 26 June. The buses left Glasgow at 9:00 that morning, and the tour gave us a view of the two things foreigners most associate with Scotland: stunning lochs and decaying castles. We arrived in Dundee much later than planned, and the organizers had the humility and grace to rewrite their schedule on the fly, giving us lunch before the scheduled talks rather than after. My understanding is that Scotland knows something about revolution, but I suspect that our cadre of comics scholars would have taught them something had they marched us into the lecture hall as soon as we alighted from the bus.

There were too many excellent presentations for me to provide any sort of reasonable overview in these few words, but one major and

pleasantly surprising theme was a dovetailing of theory and practice. For example, the first full day of papers found Ian Gordon speaking on the relationship between national histories and comics alongside Jonathan Walker, writer of *Five Wounds: An Illuminated Novel*, and Tasos Anastasiades, penciller of *Fascista*. I suspect that they appeared on the same panel out of some scheduling necessity realized far above my pay grade, but juxtaposing the three speakers made for a much richer conversation, and Gordon asked excellent questions that drew out the theoretical aspects of the comments offered by the two artists. On 27 June, Paul Gravett spoke about the 'Lingua Comica' project, which brings comics creators from different countries together in artistically and socially provocative ways; the project has important artistic and social implications. In Dundee, several comics creators gave something I thought I would never see: a live performance of their work, something with direct relevance to the embodied reading of comics for which Ian Hague has been arguing.

Probably the best example of dovetailing theory and practice came with the 'Laydeez Do Comics' event, held in the early evening on 25 June at Glasgow's Centre for Contemporary Arts. The event is one in a series (dating back to 2009) that was born from an exercise in feminist praxis, as Nicola Streeten and Sarah Lightman realized that there were no comics discussion groups focusing on books that spoke to them. Its incarnation in Glasgow featured a creative icebreaking exercise followed by fantastic presentations. Kate Charlesworth gave a talk about her personal history in comics, focusing especially on her recent work with Bryan Talbot. The overview of her growth as a cartoonist – and she was remarkably good to begin with – was riveting. Gillian Hatcher presented next, explaining her new anthology comic, *Team Girl*. The story of how the comic came to be is an object lesson in applied feminist theory in the age of zines and social media, and although the word 'inspiring' has been used so often as to have become trite, there's no other word for what she and the cartoonists of Glasgow have been doing.

But the most outstanding theme in a conference that was outstanding in nearly every dimension was the question of how comics began and what they mean for the communities in which they were born. I cannot be the only comics scholar who saw the initial call for papers and wondered how on earth Scotland was going to support its claim to have been central to the birth of comics, but I left the conference looking forward to hearing more. Glasgow University Library hosted an exhibition of their excellent holdings in historic image/text materials, and the star of the show was the *Northern Looking Glass* (1825), which

was born in Glasgow and carried the work that forms the cornerstone of Scotland's claim. Laurence 'Billy' Grove gave an introduction to the exhibition at the end of the opening day of the conference, and there he spelled out both plans for an expanded exhibition and the argument for Scotland's centrality to comics' early history. Grove's argument was compelling, and when I had a little time to look through the *Northern Looking Glass*, I realized that there is a real case to be made. I surreptitiously watched other conference attendees enter the exhibit sceptical and leave with hesitant belief budding on their faces. Chris Murray's talk in Dundee about the place of D.C. Thomson in comics history was similarly enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and it broadened my sense of the importance of Scotland to the history of comics.

This brings me to my final observation, which is that the conference foregrounded not only the place of Scotland in comics, but also the importance of comics to Scotland. Both host cities took great pains to demonstrate their enthusiasm for our subject. On the first day, the chancellor of the University of Glasgow, Sir Kenneth Calman, addressed us, and I have to confess that I began listening to his talk with an attitude of resignation. I assumed that we were doomed to an hour of suffering while an administrator rambled nervously through a lecture only dimly relevant to a field in which he had no knowledge; I assumed that I was required to listen politely because the administrator before us was probably footing part of the bill for the conference. Instead, Sir Kenneth's lecture was witty, focused, prolifically illustrated and, frankly, highly informative about a dimension of cartoon scholarship about which I knew nothing. In other words, his attendance at the conference was not the cost of doing business with the university, but the generous outreach of one scholar to his peers. In Dundee, D.C. Thomson gladly provided a treasure trove of original comics materials that had been locked away for decades, and we enjoyed a lovely reception while browsing archival materials that none of us had seen before. Glasgow hosted another reception for us in the stunning City Chambers, one of the only receptions I have attended where I felt underdressed in professional attire. Just off George Square, the Chambers are sumptuously appointed, and when one of the city leaders gave us a warm, thoughtful welcome, I realized that comics really meant something to the Scots. Had the same reception been held in my home country, any public official trapped into speaking to us would have been careful to wink throughout her speech and slip in as many laughing 'Bam! Pow!' remarks as possible. The conference's theme, which I

originally regarded with bemusement, turned out to be appropriate and more nuanced than I first thought.

I left Scotland on the morning of 29 June, and eight days later, Andy Murray became the first British man to win Wimbledon in three-quarters of a century. Probably the win was somewhat thrilling for the young Scotsman, but I suspect that his heart really started beating only when *The Beano*, D.C. Thomson's long-running comic, announced that Murray would appear in the pages of its seventy-fifth-anniversary issue. After all, I have been to Scotland, and I have seen what comics mean to these people.

JOE SUTLIFF SANDERS
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2012 American Bande Dessinée Society Conference (Miami University, Oxford, OH)

The American Bande Dessinée Society (ABDS) held its second conference at Miami University (Oxford, OH) on 2–3 November 2012. The preceding, inaugural conference had taken place at Miami University on 11–13 November 2004. That event had featured presentations by thirteen scholars from five countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, England, U.S.A.) and three continents, plus a keynote presentation by French cartoonist Baru on the working class and comics. Revised versions of several presentations made at the conference were published by the University Press of Mississippi in a volume that I edited, *History and Politics in French-Language Comics and Graphic Novels* (2008), now available in paperback.

Between 2004 and 2012 the ABDS continued to promote scholarship in the Americas on French-language comics through panels at several conferences, including by kind invitation of the organizers of the 2011 International Comic Arts Forum at the Center for Cartoon Studies in Vermont. ABDS members also participated in the biannual conferences organized by the dynamic International Bande Dessinée Society in the United Kingdom.

The 2012 ABDS conference included presentations by eighteen scholars from three countries (Austria, Canada, U.S.A.), as well as three keynote presentations by cartoonist Zeina Abirached (France and Lebanon), cartoonist Clément Baloup (France) and comics scholar and scriptwriter Thierry Smolderen, professor at the École Européenne Supérieure de l'Image in Angoulême, France. The broad range of

scholarly presentations was impressive, on subjects ranging from wordless comics from the nineteenth century to the present, by David A. Beronä (Plymouth State University), to recent comics by artists such as Joann Sfar, by Fabrice Leroy (University of Louisiana at Lafayette). Although only one panel was devoted specifically to it, a key theme that linked together presentations throughout the conference was how comics have been situated at artistic boundaries across their history. The opening, keynote lecture by Smolderen gave a very stimulating overview of the interactions of comics with many other arts, media and technologies throughout the nineteenth century, including Egyptian hieroglyphs, theatre, photography, kinoscope, prose fiction, travel diary and artist's sketchbook. The subsequent panel continued the focus on how comics have interrogated their limits via interaction with other artistic forms, and featured presentations by Beronä, Philippe Willems (Northern Illinois University) on Laurence Sterne's influence on Cham, and Bart Beaty (University of Calgary) on comics and live musical performance. A related, later presentation by Matthias Hausmann (University of Vienna) analyzed the dialogue between comics and prose fiction in a comics adaptation of *L'Invention de Morel* [The Invention of Morel], whereas Michael Gott (University of Cincinnati) interrogated the connections between the road movie and comics in Cyril Pedrosa's *Portugal*. The dialogue between the arts was also central to Leroy's presentation on Sfar's depiction of painting and painters in *Pascin*. On the other hand, Carmina Sanchez-del-Valle (Hampton University) made connections between architecture and comics in several works about New York City. The links between comics and both architecture and painting were the focus of a presentation by Margaret C. Flinn (Ohio State University) on the series of comics copublished by the Louvre and Futuropolis.

Intercultural connections constituted another, intertwined thread that linked together many of the presentations: often, inter-mediality (or cross-artistic connections) and inter-culturality were simply two sides of the same coin. For example, two presentations focused on the relationship between manga and *bande dessinée*: one by Alexandra Gueydan-Turek (Swarthmore College) on contemporary Algerian comics, and the other by Clare Tufts (Duke University) on *À nous deux, Paris!* [It's You and Me, Paris!] by Japanese cartoonist J.P. Nishi. The talk by Jennifer Howell (Illinois State University) focused on the trauma of the Algerian War in French comics by Jacques Ferrandez and Morvandiau. Michelle Bumatay (University of California at Los Angeles)

analyzed the representation of immigration in *bandes dessinées* by artists of African heritage. David Allan Duncan (Savannah College of Art and Design) presented the cross-cultural interaction of the young American cartoonist students whom he took to, and taught in, Provence, at the French centre of his college.

History and politics returned again as themes at the 2012 conference in several presentations, including one by Guillaume de Syon (Albright College) on nuclear imagery in Francophone comics. Alexandra Newman (University of Wisconsin at Madison) used a Deleuzian perspective to analyze the repetition of the visual trope of the boy adventurer across the *Tintin* albums. Paul Cohen (University of Toronto) discussed the world of labour as represented in the world of Gaston Lagaffe, the anti-hero of André Franquin's *Gaston* series. On the same panel, Cynthia Laborde (University of Iowa) brought out the connections between *Gaston* and the natural environment. My paper focused on the connections between OuLiPo, OuBaPo and Abirached's comics in *Je me souviens, Beyrouth* [I Remember, Beirut], set during the Lebanese Civil War.

Abirached and Balouf gave fascinating illustrated overviews of their art and publications throughout their careers. Both described the importance of diasporic connections and history, especially the wars in Lebanon and Vietnam, as well as the influence of specific cartoonists on their art. Their generous interactions with the audience continued on after the question-and-answer sessions via a book signing.

Another exciting dimension of this conference was the number of presentations featuring research by scholars new to the field, whether current graduate students (Bumatay, Laborde, Newman) or professors who recently completed their doctoral work (Gott, Howell), often on comics. This is a very important development for *bande dessinée* scholarship in the United States, which has come a long way since 1989, when Maryse Fauvel completed what was probably the first dissertation on French-language comics in the United States at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Missing then was an organization in the U.S. that was devoted to promoting scholarship on comics within the university system. The ABDS is now helping to foster research by graduate students and new professors, as well as established scholars. It is doing this through conferences, but also via its support for the journal *European Comic Art*, which is publishing peer-reviewed, revised versions of several presentations made at the 2012 ABDS conference.

The conference was generously funded by several sources at Miami University, which I would like to acknowledge here: L. P. Irvin Fund

(French and Italian), Office of the Dean of Students, Humanities Center, International Visiting Scholar Exchange Fund, Honors and Scholars Program, Grayson Kirk Fund (International Studies Program), GREAL, History, and Center for American and World Cultures. Many colleagues generously assisted in preparing and running the conference. I am most grateful to them, the presenters and the members of the audience.

MARK MCKINNEY
Miami University, Ohio

Book Reviews

Groupe ACME, *L'Association: Une utopie éditoriale et esthétique* [L'Association: An Editorial and Aesthetic Utopia] (Brussels: Les Impressions Nouvelles, coll. *Réflexions faites*, 2011). 224 pp. ISBN: 978-2-87449-123-8 (hardback, £21.62)

From a research group at the University of Liège (whose name, ACME, is a nod to both Chris Ware's series *Acme Novelty Library* and the fictional company Acme in numerous Warner Brothers cartoons) comes a wide-ranging study of the French publishing house L'Association. With the goal of producing works both innovative and pluri-disciplinary, ACME is made up of scholars from widely diverse fields (sociology, history, economics) and approaches (formalism, aesthetics, semiotics) who spent two years under the direction of Erwin Dejasse, Tanguy Habrand and Gert Meesters discussing, researching and writing this first project and publication. The end result is thorough, but does not claim to be exhaustive.

Having a *structure en entonnoir* [funnel shape structure] as its organizing principle, the study begins by situating L'Association in its time and place. Chapter 1, 'De la marge à la pulpe' [From Margin to Pulp], describes ancestors and predecessors, most notably the publishing house Futuropolis, the Association pour l'Apologie du Neuvième Art Libre (AANAL) [Association for the Defence of the Ninth Art] and the review *LABO* [Lab], whose sole issue represented a rejection of both the fanzine and the 'industrial' production of comics. In 1990, with the demise of Futuropolis, the AANAL was transformed by its founders into L'Association à la Pulpe, with the goal of exposing the nerve, or essence, of comic art and of directly communicating that essence through publication, debate, exhibits and other means.

Additionally, chapter 1 outlines the constant adjustments and changes necessitated by the success and rapid growth of L'Association (evolving economic policies and production techniques as well as decisions about space and staff), and notes the irony of an entity founded to be independent of the constraints of mainstream publishing modifying its goals and sometimes compromising its principles as it begins to play an ever-growing role in the Angoulême festival, negotiates contracts with bookstores and gains legitimization through a museum exhibit mounted by the CNBDI in 2000. By 2005 the reformer had become the model for large and small publishers alike; L'Association had become a victim of its own success.

The socio-economic history presented in chapter 1 of this study provides a detailed overview of the creation and evolution of L'Association, but its somewhat classic organization (twenty-two pages of text and images) and mostly predictable content is followed by a more unusual second chapter, a four-page 'interlude' consisting of a one-paragraph description of the techniques of self-promotion employed by the editorial board (primarily by Jean-Christophe Menu), and three and three-quarter pages of supporting images: the editorial of the 1995 catalogue, four covers from the newsletter *Les Nouvelles de l'Hydre* [News from Hydra] (2001, 2002, 2003, 2009), and examples of editorials from the journal *Lapin* [Rabbit] (1997) and from its pamphlet-like extension, *Le Rab de Lapin* [More Rabbit] (2009).

Taken together, the first two chapters of this study show the originality of the structure of the overall work. Altogether there are eighteen chapters. Ten of those (whose titles are printed in boldface in the table of contents) are heavily footnoted, analytical articles that average fourteen pages in length, with the longest being chapter 1. Following the account of the editorial trajectory of L'Association in the first chapter, the other topics covered in these articles are: the annual catalogue, autobiography, reportage, visual narration, silent comics, Sfar's 'spontaneous' graphic style, François Ayroles's experimentation with the 'systems' of comics, a semiotic reading of a page from Manuel's *Manuel 1-2-3* (2008) and graphic design in Guy Delisle's *Shenzhen* (2000).

The remaining eight chapters (with titles set in lightface) follow the format of the chapter 2 'interlude' described above: one paragraph to one page of text, followed by as many as eight pages of reproductions of documents (album covers, the catalogues of the different collections, pages, strips and individual panels). These chapters are purely descriptive, each one following a longer article and sometimes

highlighting a topic found therein: the presentation of the founding members; the relationship between L'Association and its supporters and fans; the three journals *Lapin*, *OuPus*, and *L'Éprouvette* [The Test Tube]; OuBaPo and its ties to L'Association; the 2000-page international anthology of comics (*Comix 2000*); the *Persepolis* phenomenon; and the 'new' generation identified by Manu in the 2009 issue of *Lapin* (no. 37). The ever-narrowing focus of the ten analytical articles reflects the funnel-shaped organization of the content adopted by the ACME group, and at the narrowest end there is no descriptive interlude separating the chapters analyzing Manuel's pages and Delisle's panels.

This first project and publication of the ACME group is a richly illustrated study that elucidates and celebrates the leadership role played by L'Association in the worlds of comic art and independent publishing, but the group's decision to approach the subject from multiple perspectives ('un regard pluriel') and to analyze in detail its multiple dimensions might leave the reader not already familiar with the history and catalogue of L'Association wishing at times for a little more background and explanation. Both the novice and the initiated will have nothing but praise, however, for the iconography of this study: almost one hundred pages dedicated entirely to visuals or documents selected from the archives of L'Association, with smaller images scattered throughout the text on all but thirty-two of the remaining pages. Notably missing from the work is a bibliography, an index, and information about the contributing authors, perhaps because of the group's philosophy, stated in the introduction, that 'la bande dessinée est un sujet digne d'être étudié en soi, au même titre que les autres productions culturelles et artistiques' [comics is a subject worthy of its own study, in the same way that other forms of cultural and artistic production are]. ACME has, however, included a bibliography for this project on its website (<http://www.acme.ulg.ac.be/>), under the rubric 'Projet 2009'. Also found there is a list of the members of ACME, four of whom include links to their own websites.

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Thierry Groensteen, *Entretiens avec Joann Sfar* [Conversations with Joann Sfar] (Brussels: Les Impressions Nouvelles, coll. *Réflexions faites*, 2013). 288 pp. ISBN: 978-2-87449-158-0 (paperback, £18.02, €22)

The result of a productive encounter between contemporary French comic art's most productive artist and its most distinguished theoretician, this lengthy series of interviews offers not only an invaluable insight into Joann Sfar's creative universe, but also a view of the aesthetic process of comics writing in general, to the extent that both the scholar and the cartoonist share a deep understanding of the poetics of graphic storytelling. Over the past two decades, Sfar has indeed produced 'une œuvre généreuse, protéiforme, qui a marqué en profondeur le paysage de la création contemporaine en bande dessinée' [a bountiful and proteiform work, which has deeply left its stamp on the landscape of contemporary creation in *bande dessinée*] (7). This is a cartoonist who, with unbridled energy and ambition, initially planned to write no fewer than 300 *Donjon* albums with Lewis Trondheim (and still managed to publish thirty of those, among countless other projects). Sfar's 'faim insatiable de dessin' [insatiable hunger for drawing] (158) is matched only by his eloquence in interviews, where he comes across as an erudite creator with a clear understanding of his practice, and a well-defined set of moral and aesthetic values – he remarks that orality has always been one of his obsessive themes (in his early drawings, monsters would come out of his characters' mouths).

The particularity of this compelling set of interviews resides in the incisiveness of the interviewer's questions, his frequent analytical interventions and his organization of the book's content into thematic or conceptual sections, all of which give this project a scholarly validity far beyond that of standard press or blog interviews. Groensteen often identifies recurrences in Sfar's work; for instance, he comments on his 'morphotype' when depicting women (with large, almond-shaped eyes, a pointy nose, high cheekbones, thick lips and curvy features), which prompts the artist to defend himself against commodifying or eroticizing women by explaining that such images are expressions of his own femininity and of his – arguably somewhat paradoxical – understanding of feminism (178).

At another point, Groensteen aptly theorizes about Sfar's watercolour technique, which in his analysis tends to delay the legibility of the drawings (199). He also notes that Sfar's characters fraternize immediately upon meeting each other, somewhat unrealistically, but as

a testament to the author's humanism (105–106). Such perceptive participation of the interviewer only contributes to elevating the debate, for the reader's benefit.

Among the chapters of this book, the biographical elements are notably engaging, insofar as the author has re-worked many of them in his fictions. Sfar shares captivating and often moving information about his atheist grandfather Arthur Haftel (the model for both the cat in *The Rabbi's Cat* and for the rebellious Yaacov in *Klezmer*), born in a Polish shtetl, who partially raised him; his maternal Pied-Noir grandmother; his father, who left Algeria in 1957, and became the first French lawyer to prosecute neo-Nazis in the 1970s; and his mother, who died of unknown causes at the age of twenty-six. The guilt and trauma caused by his mother's untimely passing, coupled with his father's demanding education, instilled a culture of excellence in the young boy that was partially resolved through writing and imagination, even though his family initially feared that his obsessive interest in drawing (especially of monsters and morbid subjects) might be the product of abnormality or suffering (33). In this section, Sfar also describes his Jewish religious education and his subsequent opposition thereto, as well as his resulting worldview, which he describes as esoteric, mystical, spiritual, but atheist (23). He also approaches his own Jewishness with resolution yet ambivalence: 'Je ne veux pas être de ces conteurs dont le métier est d'être Juif. En revanche, je pense que la voix du Judaïsme a une légitimité en France et dans la polyphonie européenne' [I do not want to be one of those storytellers whose profession it is to be Jewish. However, I believe that the voice of Judaism has its legitimacy in France and in the European polyphony] (30). This desire to avoid being pigeonholed as a Jewish author explains his opposition to the release in France of Sam Ball's documentary *Joann Sfar Draws from Memory* (2009), which he considers to be too exclusively focused on ethnic identity, and consequently not representative enough of other aspects of his work.

Groensteen's focus on Sfar's idiosyncratic poetics constitutes one of the many qualities of this book. As someone who has often been misunderstood as graphically deficient by readers and editors alike, who seem to view his unique style as the product of technical limitations or a careless approach to the comics medium, Sfar defends his singular aesthetics by theorizing various principles. He does express admiration for the seminal works of Moebius, Pratt, Quentin Blake, Fred and many others, but he categorically rejects what he labels the 'suivisme'

[imitation] that plagues the many comics creators who are intent on producing derivative work that apes these masters. Although he situates himself in the midst of a generation of young artists who came to prominence within L'Association (Christophe Blain, Lewis Trondheim, Frédéric Boilet, Emmanuel Guibert, David B., Marjane Satrapi, etc.), he appears fairly dismissive of the alternative comics scene and its contribution to progress within the medium (54). When he discusses his early artistic training as a Beaux-Arts student in Nice or Paris, he often downplays the importance of technique, as well as aesthetic norms and codes of representation. By contrast, he favours the virtues of improvisation both in graphic freedom and in plot construction; rejecting all mechanical templates of drawing and storytelling, he expresses a preference for the baroque, an attachment to 'impurity', and a commitment to originality, citing writers like Romain Gary and Albert Cohen, as well as 'naïve' painters like Marc Chagall, as inspirations. He likens the process of writing to a 'free fall': the act of projecting oneself into an action whose result is uncertain at the onset, 'un acte de foi' [an act of faith] (108) by which the writer can surprise himself and attain cathartic release.

Prompted by Groensteen's precise questions, Sfar describes his technique and craft at length, for instance, his regular use of the six-panel page layout as a narrative unit, a structure that gives each panel a specific rhythm and function (91). He also comments on the evolution of his aesthetics since his books on *Brassens* and *Gainsbourg*, in which he significantly re-invented his approach by dilating and repeating images, as well as juxtaposing different styles and materials, which resulted in stylistically groundbreaking works such as *Tokyo* or *Klezmer 4*. He presents his personal method of page composition, his order of composition, his particular use of text and his understanding of the relationship between text and image (182–184). He also attempts to correct the common misperception that his drawings are 'bâclés' [botched, rushed] and explains that such impressions are less a matter of speed of composition than a question of technique (works done in pencil, then re-drawn in ink tend to appear less improvised), although he states a personal preference for more improvised works like *La Java bleue* [Blue Waltz], completed in a mere ten days. Taking a position explicitly against realism or journalism, he asserts the freedom of fiction over its referent; for him, mimetic resemblance is not the main function of comic art: 'Est-ce que ça ressemble à la nature est une mauvaise question. On trace des signes. Le dessin est une écriture. Il

n'est rien d'autre que cela' [Whether it resembles reality is the wrong question. One traces signs. Drawing is a form of writing. It is nothing else than that] (169). At the same time, he considers drawing as the opposite of religion: in his perspective, religion refuses to see the world, whereas drawing constitutes an attempt to see the world as it is, in its truth and diversity (195).

All of the central themes of Sfar's fecund universe are broached here in detail, from his use of comics as a perfect medium for translating or communicating abstract ideas by relying on the reader's empathy for drawn figures (36) (*La Petite bibliothèque philosophique de Joann Sfar* [Joann's Small Philosophical Library], etc.), to his ambivalent rapport with autobiographical comics, which he considers an addiction but also 'la part la moins intéressante de mon travail' [the least interesting part of my work] (62), and in which he often counter-balances egotism with self-irony (drawing himself as a dog, a bear or a crocodile, and drawing his family in *Simpsons* fashion): 'Je me livre mille fois plus dans mes fictions que dans mes *Carnets*' [I reveal myself a thousand times more in my fictions than in my *Notebooks*] (69). He also appears self-critical of his failure as a political cartoonist for *Charlie Hebdo*, and asserts his commitment to various political values, but, ultimately, his alienation from both ends of the French political spectrum (82).

The interviewer guides the author through his main works and collects his entertaining thoughts on each segment of his production: his books for children (such as *Monsieur Crocodile a beaucoup faim* [Mr Crocodile is Real Hungry]), about which Sfar states that he values young readers above all (114); the artist's pleasure of drawing the naked human body in *Pascin*; the philosophical subtext of *Minuscule mousquetaire* [Tiny Musketeer] and its embodiment of the highs and lows of the human condition; *Donjon's* departure from standard heroic fantasy; the themes of childhood and adulthood in *Petit vampire* and *Grand vampire*; the contradictions of French enlightenment regarding slavery in *Les Lumières de la France* [The Lights of France]; the use of photography and cinema and the aesthetics of horror in *Tokyo's* revolutionary page layouts; and much more. Asked to explain the extraordinary success of *Le Chat du rabbin* [The Rabbi's Cat], Sfar attributes it to '[c]ette manière de faire de la bande dessinée historique en parlant de choses qui intéressent tout le monde, sans culpabiliser quiconque, avec cette morale qui m'est propre selon laquelle tout le monde est un peu con' [this manner of making historical comics while talking about things that interest everybody, without making anyone

feel guilty, with this ethos that is particular to me and according to which everyone is a bit stupid] (132). He also reveals that he has written a script for a sixth album of *Le Chat du rabbin*. Among the prolific cartoonist's new projects, he alludes to a *Blake et Mortimer* with Mathieu Sapin, a sequel to his Rabelaisian anti-fairy tale *L'Ancien temps* [The Old Era], a continuation of *Les Olives noires* [Black Olives], an album on Django Reinhardt with Clément Oubrerie entitled *Jeangot*, and a science fiction saga for young women with Pénélope Bagieu called *Star of the Stars*. He also discusses his experiences with film (*Gainsbourg, vie héroïque* [Gainsbourg: A Heroic Life]) and animation (*Le Chat du rabbin*), and what they taught him in relation to comics.

Sfar acknowledges that he is emotionally attached to his series; he does not finish them, nor does he kill off his characters, so that they can come back, which he attributes to his childhood trauma: 'Il y a en moi une peur, liée à mon enfance, de la disparition des êtres et des choses. Le dessin permet de tenir les choses, de les attraper, et par là de vaincre le temps' [There is a fear in me, connected to my childhood, of the disappearance of beings and things. Drawing makes it possible to hold on to things, to grab them, and thereby to vanquish time] (193). Upon finishing this endearing book, any reader who has developed a similar affective bond with comic art will certainly be moved by the artist's engaging rapport with his own medium, and appreciative of Thierry Groensteen's expert prodding of one of the most important cartoonists of our time.

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Jean-Marc Pontier, *Lectures de David B.* [Reading David B.] (Montrouge: Éditions PLG, coll. Mémoire vive, 2010). 160 pp. ISBN: 978-2917837061 (paperback, €15.30) and *Nicolas de Crécy: Périodes graphiques* [Nicolas de Crécy: Graphic Periods] (Montrouge: Éditions PLG, coll. Mémoire vive, 2012), 176 pp. ISBN: 978-2917837122 (paperback, €15).

Characterizing the collection 'Mémoire vive', in which these two studies appear, as 'atypique' [atypical], the PLG website refers perhaps to the unusual but growing crossover trend for publishers to blend *bande dessinée*, criticism and art within the same catalogue. Certainly, the production values supporting Pontier's twinset of monographs in the series benefit from PLG's practiced eye for layout and design, fanzine heritage and industry networks, with each of the *dessinateurs* featured

being acknowledged for their support for the projects. Equally atypical, though, are the artistic journeys undertaken by the artists under the lens, with each having embarked on his own idiosyncratic enquiry at the limits of comic art, typifying the ways in which experimentation is built into the DNA of the medium. Pontier's achievement, in each of these thoroughly engaged monographs, is to highlight the individuality and idiosyncrasy of David B. and Nicholas de Crécy's respective graphic and thematic evolutions across their albums and other works, and, in particular, to bring to life, through a careful selection of illustrations, the organic nature of the artist's ongoing engagement with both preoccupations and materials.

Each of the volumes follows a similar format, one that adapts itself well for the purposes of providing thought-provoking companion pieces to the artist's collected works. Pontier begins by presenting in broad strokes his predominant lines of enquiry and briefly situating these within a chronology, before providing more detailed readings of the albums, followed by bibliographies, illustrated primarily by album covers and some unpublished or less easily accessed drawings or short works. This process builds up a familiarity with the authors' preoccupations across their oeuvre (myth, death, illness, family, history, war and ultimately the figure of the Tower of Babel in the case of David B.; the baroque, consumption, disfigurement, anti-realism and the nature of the social pact for de Crécy), while at the same time raising questions about the graphic turns and project decisions each takes in finding form for his enquiry. The latter author's stalled ambitions to bring his 2007 *L'Orgue de barbarie* [The Street Organ] to the screen as an animated work, for instance, is contextualized in relation to de Crécy's disappointment in seeing how much of the 2003 success of *Les Triplettes de Belleville*, for which he only received a minor credit, drew upon his own fictional universe of New York-sur-Loire. At the same time, the corresponding album's unpredictable narrative concerns and unconventional characterizations are situated within the continuing aesthetic quest to test the boundaries of how we read and position the animate, how we constitute the social, within a readerly decoding of the graphic. In Pontier's account, de Crécy's adventures in ellipsis, layering, digression, reflexivity and his alternative colouring of a parallel realm that de-privileges our conception of humanity acquire all the tortured status of an ethical and aesthetic endeavour. In addition, the plastic family resemblances between works as diverse as his playful anti-superhero *Monsieur Fruit* (he can sometimes float a few feet above the ground) (1995, 1996) and the challenging and torturous narrative of

Journal d'un fantôme [Journal of a Ghost] (2007) begin to take shape. It is in his considerations of the major critical successes of de Crécy, though, that Pontier's analytic approach is most effective, reading *Le Bibendum céleste* (1998,1999, 2002) and the text-less *Prosopopus* (2003) as stylistically groundbreaking enquiries into the nature of the literary, the graphic and 'la représentation esthétisée d'une condition humaine soumise à de multiples distorsions, à des traumatismes majeurs' [the aestheticized representation of a human condition subjected to multiple distortions and major traumas] (21).

Pontier's earlier text on David B. uncovers a similar range of recurring artistic concerns in this important *dessinateur's* trajectory from (auto) biography through adventure and quest narratives to travel journals, with a particular focus emerging on the ceaseless proliferation of the drawing as an anti-psychology, a coming to terms with illness, a taming of the inevitability, facelessness, and ultimate unknowability of death and its many legions. Here, however, whether due to the structural limitations of the monograph's frame, the author's resolute resistance to citing or engaging with existing critical work on David B., or an over-involvement with re-telling the captivating stories that marble his albums, the insights into the artist's achievements and ambitions are more limited. Too often plot summaries are capped by short re-statements of key themes that do little more than reiterate the recurring components of a David B. artwork, without elucidating on the details of graphic process and production, imperatives for his more recent collaborative work or, importantly, theoretical contexts within which these might come to life for his, and Pontier's, readers. As with the later volume, a strong sense emerges of the interlinked mythologies that inform the artist's universe, and a key reading is unearthed that unlocks the central conceit to his work: in this case, the observation that David B.'s originality lies in 'faire de l'imaginaire, qui est pourtant l'une des ultimes propriétés de l'individu, une valeur collective' [making something imaginary, which is nonetheless one of the ultimate properties of the individual, a collective value] (113). And yet, it is the mechanics of the distinctively monochrome and patterned representation that David B. makes of that imaginary, the complexities of sense adhering to his accumulation of the night and ultimate battle against despair and disappearance, that readers will continue to ponder after completing this less thought-provoking of Pontier's two nonetheless highly readable and illuminating studies.

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Vicent Sanchis, *Tebeos mutilados: La Censura franquista contra Editorial Bruguera* [Mutilated Comics: The Franquist Censorship of Editorial Bruguera] (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2010). 176 pp. ISBN: 978-84-666-4421-1 (paperback, €25.00, £28.64)

Franquist censorship has been studied quite extensively by now, as has the history of Spanish comics. However, until Vicent Sanchis, no one had focused so rigorously on the history of comics censorship during Franco's dictatorship.

Sanchis, born in Valencia in 1961, is a respected journalist and a professor of communications at Ramon Llull University. In 2009 he published a first essay in Catalan, *Franco contra Flash Gordon*, devoted to the question of censorship.¹ A short year later, in 2010, he published, this time in Castilian, *Tebeos mutilados: La Censura franquista contra Editorial Bruguera* [Mutilated Comics: The Franquist Censorship of Editorial Bruguera], with Ediciones B.²

Whereas *Franco contra Flash Gordon*, with its 222 pages, its sober, paperback cover, standard publication format, footnotes and bibliography signalled that it was academic in nature, *Tebeos mutilados* draws on the aesthetics of comics: hardback, album-size, 165 pages in length and devoid of notes and bibliography, and with a garish graphic design and numerous colour illustrations, it was clearly conceived with a view to seducing a large audience. However, the commercial paratextual apparatus and the abundant and generously quadrichrome iconography that dominates throughout – there are some 250 illustrations, including 66 full-page illustrations and 19 double pages – stand in marked contrast to the equally plentiful historiographical textual content, which, in spite of the free tone adopted by the author, is clearly less destined to the average comics amateur than to historians of censorship and comics. In short, in spite of its variegated appearance and conflicted editorial strategies, this book belongs as much to the category of the essay as Sanchis's earlier volume. Consequently – and this is my primary criticism – one can regret, bitterly, that the more recent publication lacks a bibliography and references, particularly because of the numerous, but unreferenced, quotes.

1 *Franco contra Flash Gordon: La Censura franquista aplicada a les publicacions infantils i juvenils (1936–1977)* [Franco against Flash Gordon: Franquist Censorship of Publications for Children and Young People (1936–1977)] (Valencia: 3i4 Edicions, 2009).

2 Ediciones B belongs to the Catalan communications group Grupo Z, founded in 1987 following the acquisition of the catalogue of Bruguera, which included *Mortadelo y Filemón*, among other titles.

Beyond this major issue, which will inevitably disappoint academic readers – clearly Sanchis's intended audience – the author succeeds in providing a detailed history of forty years of Franquist censorship over the course of six well-balanced chapters. The time frame is the same as the one chosen for *Franco contra Flash Gordon*, namely, 1936–1977. Moreover, in both instances, as the titles suggest, which follow the binary model of *Marvel* and other comic books, the author's goal is to use examples to show and explain how censorship worked while also paying homage to the (heroic) publishers, who laboured under extreme constraints, yet managed to allow entire generations of children to dream.

The book progresses chronologically from one chapter to the next, almost decade by decade, an efficient decision that demonstrates the constancy of the effort put in place by the Franquist apparatus in order to control information as well the formation of young minds. Page after page, Vicent Sanchis provides an impressive list of legislative and administrative texts used by censors to impose the values of the New Spain: respect for state and church authorities and institutions, unity of the fatherland, morality, hierarchy, discipline and so on.

In spite of the extraordinary constraints imposed from 1938 on, including the promulgation of the *Ley de Prensa* [Law on the Press] sponsored by Ramón Serrano Suñer, Sanchis makes plain that censorship was not always applied with equal severity.³ Indeed, one can distinguish between several stages over the course of the long Franco era: whereas the first years were dominated by the difficulties associated with applications for authorizations to publish (and the chronic paper shortages), from the late 1940s until the early 1960s, censors evinced a certain permissiveness towards representations of violence and aggression (normally prohibited), which led, according to Vicent Sanchis, to the publication of works that were 'más interesantes, sólidas y transgresoras con humor crítico y corrosivo' [more interesting, strong and transgressive, with a critical and corrosive humour] (70). However, it was, unexpectedly, during the 1960s and 1970s that censorship was enforced most harshly on Spanish comics, to the point where swords and arrows were absurdly deleted from combat scenes and various

3 Chief of the *Falange* (Traditionalist Spanish Falanx of the Assemblies of the National Syndicalist Offensive), minister of the interior, and head of the Press and Propaganda Delegation from 1938 to 1942, as well as, not incidentally, Franco's brother-in-law, Ramón Serrano Suñer (1901–2003) was one of the most influential men of the early days of the Franco era. His pronounced Germanophilia led to his being pushed aside in 1942. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the Law on the Press, written in haste in 1938, remained in force until 1966.

signs of aggression (such as a monster with a face deemed overly menacing) had to be erased, on the grounds that such items ran contrary to the educational principles that were to guide children's publications. This relentless censorship weakened and choked Spanish comics and is one of the main reasons for the collapse of the Spanish comics market in the 1970s.

In conclusion, as the preceding paragraph illustrates, *Tebeos mutilados: La Censura franquista contra Editorial Bruguera* does not tell the story of one publisher's struggles with Franco's regime, but the history of comics publishing and of children's publishing more generally during the Franquist era. By retracing the history of Franquist censorship as it pertained to comics and by offering numerous illustrations of censored pages alongside censors' comments, *Tebeos mutilados* is an indispensable work for any reader who wishes to understand clearly and precisely how the censorship machine functioned and succeeded in defeating a hero that even the most evil characters had not managed to unsettle.

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Translated from the French by Catherine Labio

Elisabeth El Refaie, *Autobiographical Comics: Life Writing in Pictures* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012). 192 pp. 37 b/w ill. ISBN: 978-1-61703-613-2 (hardcover, \$55.00, £57.95); ISBN: 978-1-61703-614-9 (e-book, \$55.00).

The aim of El Refaie's book is to propose an in-depth reading of a new genre, which has emerged at the crossroads of comics and autobiography: the *autobiographical memoir* (for good reasons, the author does not deem it very useful to pigeonhole this genre in terms of either comics or graphic novel). Based on a corpus of eighty-five different works, both European and North American, and covering the whole field from its beginnings in the underground and post-underground 'comix' era of the 1970s to the most recent variations of a genre that cannot be reduced to a single format or formula, El Refaie's work should be welcomed by students, scholars and all those interested in the medium, as an interesting and useful contribution to the study of a new way of storytelling that is as different from traditional autobiography as from certain moulds of visual storytelling in comic form.

This book's appeal lies not only in its presentation of the burgeoning research on a booming genre in a more systematic way than was the

case in other, more case study-oriented or more theoretically specialized publications (mainly, Hillary Chute's *Graphic Women* and *Graphic Subjects*, edited by Michael Chaney), but also in its very balanced and well-informed approach to the two larger fields that the author is addressing: autobiography and comics.⁴ Without claiming to offer a complete and detailed overview of both the history, scope, stakes and challenges of autobiographical life stories, on the one hand, and of narrative in comic form, on the other, El Refaie manages very craftily to sketch the broader panorama the reader needs to make sense of the work that has been done in the field of autobiographical memoirs in the last four decades or so. Her study contains an excellent introduction to autobiography as a specific form of writing while providing the reader with many insightful views on the history and the poetics of comics. In all cases, El Refaie's work is characterized by a sound knowledge of the existing literature and great didactic qualities. She proves capable of going rapidly to the essence of what she is discussing and her presentation of concepts and problems is always illuminating, deprived of any superfluous jargon (but not of theoretical concepts).

The overall structure of the book is extremely clear and makes room for as complete and diverse an approach as possible. The book has five chapters that foreground all the major questions one should ask when studying autobiographical memoirs in comic form. First, what is autobiographical writing and how do autobiographies in comics differ from traditional forms of written autobiography? The author rightfully stresses in this chapter that comics offer opportunities for self-narration and self-exploration to people who would never have thought of themselves as 'authors'. In particular, graphic memoirs are very different from traditional comics and autobiographies inasmuch as the latter may be described as the sole playground of male, if not patriarchal, authors. Second, what does it mean for the autobiographical voice to be confronted with the necessity of embodiment? Here, El Refaie investigates the implications of self-visualization and analyzes very subtly the gaps between self-awareness and self-representation, while insisting also on the meaning of stylistic and cultural aspects of the body, with revealing examples drawn from authors struggling with all kinds of culturally coded representations. Third, how can we invent a vocabulary and a toolkit to analyze the temporal complexities of the

4 Hillary Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Michael A. Chaney, ed., *Graphic Subjects: Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).

autobiographical memoir, which excels, for instance, in combining temporal and experiential layers, not only within the same page but also within the same panel? Fourth, how do we re-think authenticity, one of the most problematic and challenging issues in the autobiographical memoir? Indeed, while authenticity is necessary even in those cases where the author is clearly constructing a fake autobiography, it is also, in our post-modern times, a very slippery, if not 'impossible' notion (knowing that direct or objective representation is a myth does not free us from the desire to represent and communicate). Finally, how does visual storytelling in the autobiographical comic change the relationship between author and reader? Elisabeth El Refaie re-works here some very classic tools of narratology, such as the implied reader, but she does so in a way that helps us better understand what is going on the page.

One of the great merits of this book is its fair and stimulating approach of the autobiographical corpus. El Refaie does not rely too much on some privileged examples (the usual suspects we are now all too familiar with); she succeeds in striking the right balance between examples every reader expects (*Persepolis*, for example, or *Maus* or *Fun Home*) and examples that will be new for quite some readers (in a praiseworthy move, the author quotes and analyzes European examples, some of which are not yet available in translation). El Refaie has an almost intuitive feeling of the examples that deserve a certain form of close reading (although the objective of the book is certainly not to propose new interpretations of the corpus that is being studied) and those that it is enough to mention briefly. By doing so, she is able to study a very broad corpus in a way that leaves nothing really out, which is quite an achievement. Finally, it is also a pleasure to emphasize the very fluent reading and the extremely well-chosen, abundant and sufficiently diverse examples, which offer a real added value to this study.

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Jean-Noël Lafargue, *Entre la plèbe et l'élite: Les Ambitions contraires de la bande dessinée* [Between Plebs and the Elite: The Contradictory Ambitions of Comics] (Gap: Atelier Perrousseaux Éditeur, 2012). 176 pp. 978-2-911220-42-5 (paperback, €25.00)

Entre la plèbe et l'élite offers three histories. The first is a short, general history of comics that focuses on how, where and when the comics medium emerged and on its subsequent development, especially

during the twentieth century. The second deals with the rejection of comics, and the third the legitimization of comics. All three histories are told chronologically and include subsections organized by country, genre or type, and by conflict or societal phenomenon relating to comics and their development. The second and third histories focus specifically on the role and status of comics in society from two almost opposing perspectives (rejection and legitimization), which is the book's central issue, as expressed in its title and subtitle. After the three stories there are two 'bonus sections'. One deals with how film and comics have inspired each other over time; the other describes how the comics format relates to other art forms and genres.

After the first general history of comics, which focuses especially on genres, publications and cartoonists, the second history describes the rejection and criticism of comics, especially on the grounds of their potentially negative influence on children. With French law and the U.S. comics code as his main examples, Lafargue discusses the efforts to protect children by controlling or censoring the contents of comics. This section concludes with a statement that, as of 2010, comics are by and large accepted in society as literature for young people and that criticism has now moved on to other media.

The third story traces the process of legitimization of comics. Although Lafargue takes the early twentieth century as his point of departure, he focuses primarily on the development from the late 1960s and the emergence of organized fandom, exhibitions, comics festivals, etc., up to the creation of 'comics for adults' as an established field and the inclusion of comics in universities and magazines devoted to 'la culture'.

By presenting the history of comics through three different stories, the author draws attention very efficiently to the often-contradictory ambitions of – and societal views of – comics. Overall, it is an original and interesting idea, and the stories on rejection and legitimization in particular include valuable points and connections that become visible primarily through Lafargue's choice of book structure. However, presenting comics history in this way also leads to certain weaknesses, as it obscures the dynamics between rejection and legitimization over time. The U.S. phenomenon of the underground comics will function as an example here, as it is mentioned in all three stories. In the first section, underground comics are part of general comics history; in the second, they are mentioned in relation to the relaxation of the censorship of comics; and in the third, they are included because of their role as predecessors to the graphic novel and the comic autobiography and

thus as representing an important step in the process of legitimization. Underground comics are thus part of the histories of both the rejection and the legitimization of comics, but the dynamics between the two, which is basic to any understanding of comics history, is not made clear in the book, as there are hardly any cross-references that connect one story to the other.

This lack of cross-references means that the three sections can be read in isolation without any major inconvenience. This may be relevant for some readers, but it also means that as a whole the book misses out on central issues in comics history, even though its very structure draws attention to them. The book would have gained immensely from a more explicit focus on the dynamics between rejection and legitimization. This would probably require more pages, but these could have been taken from the bonus sections, as these do not contribute very much to the book as a whole.

This is not an academic book and it documents its statements and argumentation only to a limited extent. I would have reviewed it differently otherwise; for example, the above remarks would have included a critical assessment on its very limited bibliography and on some of its features, especially in the case of the first section. Nevertheless, *Entre la plebe et l'élite* is a good introduction to comics history, especially for an audience with only an introductory knowledge of comics.

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The National Book Festival is a literary festival in the United States organized and sponsored by the Library of Congress, founded by Laura Bush and James H. Billington in 2001. In 1995 the First Lady of Texas Laura Bush (a former librarian) founded the Texas Book Festival with Mary Margaret Farabee and other volunteers. The goal of the festival was to honor Texas authors, promote the joys of reading, and benefit the state's public libraries. The first Texas Book Festival took place in November 1996. Coimbatore Book Festival goal is to build up healthy powerful and quality through sustained efforts, firm commitment and a system to review continuing suitability of policies and to analyse new ideas for Tradeshow Arts & Crafts Education & Training. Interested 432 following 4.1.Â Conference Education & Training Books & Publishing Library & Information Science. Interested 192 following 4.2. Sat, 15 Aug 2020. Conferences, exhibitions, classes and festivals " see where you need to be this year in the UK and beyond. Find inspiration, skills and the chance to meet some like-minded people.Â Look out soon for more tips on this year's must-do design and creativity conferences and festivals. Also, keep checking back to see if events are still running - with the Coronavirus running rampant, cancellations and changes are snowballing, with the latest victims including May's Pictoplasma conference and the Adobe Summit. The stalwart of Adobe MAX looks safe to go ahead as it's due near year's end, but Adobe have confirmed this week that the new European version of MAX is now cancelled, proving that conferences running this winter, spring and early summer are all at ris