

# **From *Autoroute* to *AutoBioBD*: The Minority Voice in *Bande Dessinée***

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**by**

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# Abstract

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The world of the graphic novel has become a popular topic for academic discussion in recent decades and this wide range of work is discussed and built upon here in order to explore the theme of minority voice in the Francophone arena of *bande dessinée*. This exploration is centred on discovering how and why artists and groups have used the medium to bring their voice to an ever-increasing BD readership. A range of approaches is taken to achieve this, from examining the formal structures of the medium to considering the historical and political influences on contemporary albums.

This thesis begins by defining the term minority in the context of the graphic novel and explaining the role which autobiographical *bande dessinée*, or the neogenre of *AutoBioBD*, will play in its discussion. It then considers a range of albums in which the minority identity and voice of the artist focus on nationality, theme and race. Finally the thesis examines the work of two artists produced in the 1990s, Baru and Fabrice Neaud. Baru's road movie inspired *Autoroute du Soleil* and Neaud's autobiographical *Journal* project form two of the major case studies in the final chapters, and lend the thesis part of its title.

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## Introduction

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### 0.1 *Bande dessinée*

*Bande dessinée* (commonly abbreviated to *bédé* or *BD*) is the term in the French language for what is typically described in the English speaking world as the comic book. Traditionally, at least in the UK, comics have been understood as a medium reliant on juvenile and slapstick humour on the one hand and the fantasy world of the superhero on the other. Whilst such an assessment is certainly valid for a large number of comic book albums, calling to mind the wealth of children's publications or the perception of comics as the hobby of the reclusive obsessive, this subjective view has begun to change in the Anglophone world in recent years. Nonetheless, our understanding of the world of the comic book still has ground to cover in order to catch up with that of the *BD* in Francophone communities (the focus of this thesis) where it is an established art form, widely known as *le neuvième art*. The myriad genres and subgenres of comic books which exist today have given rise to an equally diverse readership. This has contributed to the adoption of the less connotative term 'graphic novel,' the world of which has been brought to a far wider audience, partly through film,<sup>1</sup> and the medium has also increasingly found recognition as a topic for academic study.<sup>2</sup>

Research in the field encompasses a range of disciplines, from cultural studies approaches to economics white papers, although so far most English language work on Francophone *bande dessinée* has been published by researchers in Modern Languages. The International *Bande Dessinée* Society was launched by researchers in this field at the University of Glasgow in 2001.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, French academic circles appear to have been slower to establish a group of scholars interested in *BD*,

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<sup>1</sup> Some examples are shown in Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> An example of an academic approach to *BD* related to this is to be found in a Master's thesis from the other side of the Atlantic. Its author considers films which go beyond the transposition of graphic novel characters onto the silver screen and draws on *BD*'s techniques and formal resources to form the new genre, and play on words, of *bande de ciné*: Paul Antaya, 'Utilisation des éléments formels de la bande dessinée au cinéma' (unpublished master's thesis, Chicoutimi: Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> *IBDS - International Bande Dessinée Society*, <http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ibds/> [accessed 27/02/2009].

or at least to see it become established as a topic for research, which is perhaps indicative of France's more traditional systems of research and funding. The notable exception to this is work on more established (often no longer published) *bande dessinée*, from long standing periodicals such as *Le Journal de Mickey* or the Belgian *Spirou*, to tomes devoted to *BD* stalwarts such as Tintin or Goscinny and Uderzo's Gallic cohorts.

Whilst both graphic novels and *bande dessinée* are fast attracting interest outside established readerships in the United Kingdom, this enthusiasm still pales in comparison to that for the *bédé* industry in France where countless genres of albums occupy miles of valuable bookshelf real estate from *FNACs* to independent bookshops throughout the country.<sup>4</sup> The figures speak for themselves: 2009 saw the release of 4,863 new or republished titles, with the French *BD* market worth around €320 million in 2008.<sup>5</sup> 33.6 million albums were sold in 2007 in France alone, where the *BD* market represents 6.5% of publishing as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

## 0.2 Minority Voice and Autobiography

This thesis will examine the minority voice in *bande dessinée*. It will suggest that the medium of *BD* can be classified as minority through the application of this term to a number of agents which structure it. These include the author/artist<sup>7</sup> and his or her identity, a subject which encompasses cultural studies and identity politics, the format and production of albums (including the formal composition of frames, pages and albums) and the subject matters considered in the work of a

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix B for some images of examples of this.

<sup>5</sup> Giles Ratier, *Une année de bandes dessinées sur le territoire francophone européen - 2009: 'Une vitalité en trompe-l'oeil ?'* (Association des critiques et journalistes de la bande dessinée, 2009) <<http://www.acbd.fr/bilan-2009.html>>.

<sup>6</sup> 'Chiffres', *Le Monde*, 31 January 2009, *Le monde des livres*, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Those who create graphic novels are referred to as both authors and artists, and arguments exist for the superiority of both. I will tend to use the latter term throughout this thesis on the basis that an author can be considered to be an artist but not vice-versa. Nonetheless the inherent duality in the role of the graphic novelist means that when his/her role as narrator prevails, the term author becomes more appropriate. The two terms should therefore be considered as largely interchangeable for the purposes of my argument.



number of *bédéists*. My analysis of this latter topic will centre on the field of autobiography and, more specifically, on the neogenre of *AutoBioBD*.

Chapter 1 will introduce the topic of the thesis through a consideration of the history of the medium and an analysis and definition of the terms 'minority' and *AutoBioBD* before applying a number of theories to a range of *BD* works from recent decades. The next two chapters examine two artists in greater detail. The work of these artists exemplifies my argument for applying the two themes of minority and autobiography to the medium of *bédé*. Chapter 2 explores this application by examining the post-industrial milieu which gives Baru's albums of the 1980s and 1990s their distinctive post-colonial aesthetic and themes. Fabrice Neaud's ambitious venture to publish his personal diary in graphic novel format forms the basis of Chapter 3. This chapter will suggest that not only is Neaud's undertaking testament to the autobiographical relationship between artist and album but also that, through his dual status as author and protagonist, he actively contributes to the classification of his work and of himself as minority. This will be seen to be brought to bear through both subject matter (i.e. narrative) and form (i.e. graphics or illustration).

Before turning to the body of the thesis, it is important to make a brief remark on terminology which will be particularly relevant for Chapter 1. The similarities which exist between the graphic novel medium and that of film have been well documented, particularly in terms of the formal structure of each.<sup>8</sup> For example, the *mise-en-scène* of a film starts life as a storyboard and the correlation between this and the *mise-en-page* and *mise-en-case* (or frame) of a graphic novel are self-evident. Therefore, in addition to the specific terminology which the format of the graphic novel brings with it, I shall also employ film vocabulary (such as long or tracking shot) in discussion of the works in question.

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Manuel Kolp, *Le langage cinématographique en bande dessinée*, Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles; 1992/3-4 (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1992). Also see Note 2.

### 1.1 Introduction

Depending on the history of the graphic novel to which one subscribes, the roots of the medium can be traced back to medieval tapestries, Greek pillars or even cave paintings, at least if one accepts Will Eisner's definition of the graphic novel as a sequential art (as outlined in his work of the same name).<sup>9</sup> Miller's chapter on the history of *BD*<sup>10</sup> cites the debate between the French *Cité internationale de la bande dessinée et de l'image* which named the Swiss Rudolphe Töpffer as the first real *BD* artist from an 1827 work, and the *Centre belge de la bande dessinée* which proposed the American Richard Outcalt and a date some 69 years later. The debate continues; what is certain is that the art form has been established for well over a century and that, like any art form, *bande dessinée* provides its creators with a means of expression. This expression may be on the part of the artist himself or may reflect his membership of, or allegiance to, a group. The principal argument of this thesis is that a significant number of the artists or groups to whom the medium provides voice can be categorised as 'minority,' as can the voice itself.

This first chapter will consider the topics of the minority voice and the realm of autobiography in *bande dessinée* both through specific examples of work and through a wider discussion of potential academic approaches to them. It will also cover the use of the medium by groups such as political or charitable organisations and explore whether this exploitation reflects the minority voice(s) of the groups concerned. To achieve this, the topic of the minority will be examined first through a consideration of minority studies and identity politics, and the genres of autobiography and autofiction. These theories will then be applied by offering some examples of the use of the medium to bring voice to the messages of groups with a specific political, social or ideological stance. Finally

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<sup>9</sup> Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practices from the Legendary Cartoonist* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Ann Miller, *Reading Bande Dessinée: Critical Approaches to French-language Comic Strip* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2007).

the chapter will discuss specific examples of *bande dessinée* drawn from the twentieth century onwards which exhibit the theories suggested.

## 1.2 Definition of Terms

In order to explore the identification of the minority voice in *BD* successfully, and to underscore the role played by autobiography and autofiction in this process, it is necessary to begin with a clear understanding not only of what these terms refer to but also of the context in which they are used in this thesis.

### 1.2a The Minority

A minority is either a group of entities significantly fewer in number than the whole of which it is a constituent part or a group which differs in some way from the majority (however this may be defined). Whilst the term 'minority' would tend to bring to mind the former definition, applied to groups of people with fewer affiliated members than those in the majority group (or other groups against which they are defined) this quantitative approach ignores a wider and equally valid definition. In terms of minority populations, for example, criteria such as ethnicity, religious and other beliefs, sexuality or political affiliation are often used to establish a minority status. One only has to call to mind the dominating white colonialist surveying his Caribbean plantation, or the white South African during the era of apartheid, to realise that the involuntary members of a minority group (here, defined as such through ethnicity) can easily outnumber those of the majority.

In *Bonne Année*,<sup>11</sup> an album by Baru which will be explored in the following chapter, the marginalised groups of which his protagonists are a part include the families and descendents of immigrants in the Parisian *banlieue*. They are significant in number but insignificant in the eyes of the 'majority': white Parisians who have literally fenced themselves in to the city centre and appointed guards to shoot

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<sup>11</sup> Baru, *Bonne Année* (Tournai: Casterman, 1998).

anyone from the *cit * caught trying to cross the frontier. In this case, the numbers of people involved are irrelevant; the minority obtain their status in opposition to a majority defined in various ways: history, tradition, power, influence, wealth and access to education to name but a few.

The term 'minority' therefore takes on a broader definition, one which will be used in this thesis: it describes people or groups of people (here, the characters and artists of *bande dessin e* albums) whose identities are formed, in part, through non-membership of a dominant group. In this sense, the minority is aligned with the academic use of the term 'the other,' but in a far broader sense. This is because membership of a minority does not necessarily imply that one is entirely 'othered' from individuals who form part of the majority. Specific criteria which define a certain individual or group need to be applied to establish a minority/majority distinction, but these (often convenient) labels exist alongside a myriad of other identity categories which might imply sameness. For example, returning to the example of *Bonne Ann e* above, Sonia, one of the adolescent protagonists from the 'minority' *cit *, is friends with Jimmy, a machine-gun armed guard from 'majority' Paris. The distinction between the two is external to their relationship and possibly lies outside their understanding of each others' identities.

Understanding how a minority (or majority) identity is constructed is of course an important step in recognising and analysing it. Space does not permit a detailed discussion of this and, moreover, comprehensive work has begun to be published in this area including one anthology which considers, in part, the differences between British and French attitudes to such identities, particularly in the case of Islamic identity.<sup>12</sup> Whilst one country embraces multiculturalism on a political level, the other strives to separate state from matters of religion and ethnicity which may play an important role in the definition of a group of people as a minority.

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<sup>12</sup> *The Construction of Minority Identities in France and Britain*, ed. by Gino Raymond and Tariq Modood (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

## 1.2b Minority Studies

The term Minority Studies, whilst a seemingly logical epithet for an area of academic study, is in reality, like many convenient titles, somewhat too broad to be that of an established scholarly field. It can rather be seen as roughly describing a subset of established disciplines which are as numerous as the minorities which they seek to study, ranging from Disability Studies to Jewish Studies; Immigrant and Refugee Studies to Native American Studies. Many university departments dedicated to the study of minority groups can be found in North America, particularly in the area of African-American Studies, and adopt titles such as 'The Department of Ethnic Studies' (at the University of California, Berkeley, for example).<sup>13</sup> Cornell's 'Future of Minority Studies Research Project' is an example of one of the efforts being made by scholars to combine research in the areas of multiculturalism and minority studies.<sup>14</sup> In Europe, organisations including the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), founded in 1996 by the Danish and German governments, represent the endeavours of actors in both academic and political fields to study minorities within the European community. According to the website of the ECMI, it "conducts practice-oriented research, provides information and documentation, and offers advisory services concerning minority-majority relations in Europe. It serves European governments and regional intergovernmental organizations as well as non-dominant groups in the European area."<sup>15</sup> The existence of organisations such as this demonstrates European governments' recognition of 'dominant' and 'non-dominant' groups in the European Union, whilst their support of the latter groups indicates that these groups are also seen as disadvantaged and thus as possessing minority status.

If such a discipline as Minority Studies were to exist, two examples of academic work which might reasonably fall under the field are the papers delivered at a 1986 conference entitled, 'The Nature

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<sup>13</sup> UC Berkeley Department of Ethnic Studies, <http://ethnicstudies.berkeley.edu> [accessed 31/01/2009].

<sup>14</sup> *The Future of Minority Studies Research Project: Home*, <http://www.fmsproject.cornell.edu> [accessed 31/01/2009].

<sup>15</sup> ECMI, *ECMI - European Centre for Minority Issues*, <http://www.ecmi.de/rubrik/2/about+ecmi> [accessed 31/01/2009].

and Context of Minority Discourse' and Deleuze and Guattari's *Pour une littérature mineure*.<sup>16</sup> The former (the papers of which are surmised in an article by JanMohamed and Lloyd)<sup>17</sup> includes discussion on the development of a theory of minority discourse necessary for the examination of texts categorised as minority and the inherent challenges of doing so as a member of a dominant culture. Deleuze and Guattari's work on Kafka suggests that the latter's use of the dominant German language in all his published fiction (identified here as 'minor') offers a new method of interpreting his work, in addition to consideration of his Jewish and non-Czech status, as he becomes an interloper in the major culture of Prague and the language of Germany.

As a political concept, the neologism of Minoritarianism is, logically, the antithesis of Majoritarianism: it holds that a minority is capable of dominating the space it shares with the majority and of influencing its political decision making processes. However, as the argument running through Deleuze and Guattari's work maintains, a 'dominant minority' is an oxymoron; it is nothing other than a disguised majority. This both affirms and questions my aforementioned definition of the minority as a qualitative concept: certainly a minority is not necessarily defined quantitatively, but, for Deleuze and Guattari, as soon as it achieves dominance it ceases to exist. For the purposes of arguments contained in this thesis, however, such semantic issues will be put to one side.

A final relevant area of academic study is that of identity politics which is primarily concerned with the political motivations of minority groups. Topics falling under the category of identity politics range from attempts to raise wider political awareness of issues such as intra-group socio-economic disadvantage to the processes involved in the development of group identity and allegiance. It should be noted, however, that the broad definition of minorities being applied in this thesis does not imply that a minority is necessarily subjugated. To quote an intriguing example, the 1930

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<sup>16</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1976).

<sup>17</sup> Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd, 'Introduction: Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse', *Cultural Critique*, (1987), pp. 5-12.

manifesto of the literary critic F.R. Leavis, entitled *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*, which was initially published through the aptly named Cambridge publishing house, The Minority Press,<sup>18</sup> describes members of dominating minority groups from many periods upon whom “the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends.”<sup>19</sup> Less controversial and more general examples of privileged minorities exist and to reconcile these with the majority/minority distinctions considered here would require the definition of further strata of minorities inside the majority group. Evidently the minority/majority dyad is a complex one and does not exist as a clear cut binary opposition.

### 1.2c Autobiography, Autofiction and AutoBioBD

In an article by Laurence Grove entitled, ‘Autobiography in Early Bande Dessinée’, the author makes reference to Rousseau’s claim that he is the father of autobiography and to Töpffer’s assertion (as the potential father of *bande dessinée*) that Rousseau’s work was, “parmi les livres de mon père, [...] la plus grande influence.”<sup>20</sup> As its title suggests, the article seeks to identify the convergence of the autobiographical mode of writing and the medium of early *bande dessinée* (identified here as pre-1950). Whilst Grove considers potential examples of this which range from *Le Journal de Mickey* to Tintin he concludes that it is only when “the form becomes fully self-aware, [...] (having become) more ideologically engaged” that autobiography starts to play an important role in the world of *BD*.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, texts which can be readily identified as autobiographical, some of which will be discussed below, all date from the final quarter of the twentieth century onwards. This latter period has seen an exponential increase both in autobiographical *bande dessinée* production and in the stylistic and thematic richness of first-person narrative works.

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<sup>18</sup> Ross Alloway, ‘Selling the Great Tradition: Resistance and Conformity in the Publishing Practices of F.R. Leavis’, *Book History*, 6 (2003), pp. 227-250.

<sup>19</sup> Frank Raymond Leavis, *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* (Cambridge: The Minority Press, 1930).

<sup>20</sup> Laurence Grove, ‘Autobiography in Early Bande Dessinée’, *Belphegor*, 4 (November 2004), p. 2. <[http://etc.dal.ca/belphegor/vol4\\_no1/articles/04\\_01\\_Grove\\_auto\\_fr.html](http://etc.dal.ca/belphegor/vol4_no1/articles/04_01_Grove_auto_fr.html)>.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Jan Baetens confirmed in 2004 that, “il est incontestable que la bande dessinée française connaît depuis quelque dix ans une ‘mode’ autobiographique.”<sup>22</sup> A quick scan of one of the many and extensive websites dedicated to cataloguing *BD* albums reveals hundreds of examples of successfully published works from the 1990s and 2000s alone.<sup>23</sup> One interesting consequence of this is the explosion in *AutoBioBD* disseminated through internet blogs (*bédéblogs*) which give artists voice through an online medium which makes it possible for anyone to bring his work to a potentially global audience.<sup>24</sup> A number of published works were first produced online, including Trondheim’s *La malédiction du parapluie*<sup>25</sup> and *Le syndrome du prisonnier*,<sup>26</sup> both of which form part of his weblog *Les petits riens de Lewis Trondheim*.<sup>27</sup> A festival dedicated to BD blogs, *Festiblog*, has been held annually in Paris since 2005.<sup>28</sup>

For minority authors and readerships, *bande dessinée* provides a means of expression and an avenue for the process of speaking out, so it is perhaps unsurprising that autobiography should form such a significant part of the contemporary European *bédé* canon. The process of making one’s voice heard is one of personal expression and this finds an obvious corollary in autobiography. In addition to establishing an author/protagonist correspondence, Lejeune’s *pacte autobiographique* states, “l’autobiographe, lui, vous promet que ce qu’il va vous dire est vrai, ou, du moins, est ce qu’il croit vrai.”<sup>29</sup> The pact is inherent to both autobiographical writing and to the act of asserting one’s position since both require a level of trust to be established between narrator and narratee. If an author and his text are to establish a minority position in the field of minority writing, the onus rests

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<sup>22</sup> Jan Baetens, ‘Autobiographies et bandes dessinées’, *Belphegor*, 4 (November 2004), p. 1. <[http://etc.dal.ca/belphegor/vol4\\_no1/articles/04\\_01\\_Baeten\\_autobd\\_fr.html](http://etc.dal.ca/belphegor/vol4_no1/articles/04_01_Baeten_autobd_fr.html)>.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Sébastien Lemale, *liste BD autobiographiques | Auto-BD-Graphie*, [http://autobdgraphie.fr/wiki/liste\\_bd\\_autobiographiques](http://autobdgraphie.fr/wiki/liste_bd_autobiographiques) [accessed 16/02/2009].

<sup>24</sup> For hundreds of examples of *AutoBioBD* blogs, see [http://autobdgraphie.fr/wiki/blogs\\_bd](http://autobdgraphie.fr/wiki/blogs_bd), <http://www.blogbd.org> and <http://www.blogsbd.fr>.

<sup>25</sup> Lewis Trondheim, *La malédiction du parapluie* (Paris: Delcourt, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Lewis Trondheim, *Le syndrome du prisonnier* (Paris: Delcourt, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> Lewis Trondheim, *Les petits riens de Lewis Trondheim*, <http://www.lewistrondheim.com/blog/> [accessed 01/02/2009].

<sup>28</sup> *Festival des Blogs BD et du Webcomics - Festiblog*, <http://www.festival-blogs-bd.com/> [accessed 01/02/2009].

<sup>29</sup> Philippe Lejeune, *pacte autobiographique*, [http://www.autopacte.org/pacte\\_autobiographique.html](http://www.autopacte.org/pacte_autobiographique.html) [accessed 04/06/2009].



with him to create a text which will not be read as either artificial or insincere. Compared with the following statement by Benoît Peeters in relation to Spiegelman's *Maus* series, the *autobiobédéiste's* motivation (and the medium's appeal) become further apparent: "la BD est parfaitement adaptée à l'autobiographie, en ceci qu'il y a une intimité dans l'acte de lecture d'une BD qui me paraît plus forte que dans la lecture d'un livre."<sup>30</sup> Baetens documents a number of reasons for this. One example he gives states that in Europe's recent postmodern culture of 'victimisation' a *BD* which celebrates the antihero or the loser (as opposed to the more traditional comic book hero) will be well accepted by a contemporary adult readership.<sup>31</sup> Other justifications are less convincing (such as the 'growing up' of the medium) but the article as a whole is relevant to the discussion here.<sup>32</sup>

The genre of autofiction, as embodied in the work of modern French authors from Duras to Ernaux, is also applicable in the cases of contemporary *BD* artists such as Baru and Neaud. The problematic definition of autofiction arises from the ambiguity inherent to the genre since, in it, Lejeune's *pacte autobiographique* is abandoned in favour of a *pacte oxymoronique*.<sup>33</sup> Logically the reader is left with a work of fiction, yet first-person narratives and those in which the author and narrator share the same identity give rise to the need for this vaguer term. The identification of the work of Baru and Neaud as autofiction will be dealt with in their respective chapters but it is worth noting briefly the validity of such identification here. Baru's albums clearly draw on his pre-pubescent and adolescent experiences yet in interviews the artist refutes the suggestion that they are autobiographical, whilst still admitting that his experiences informed his writing. Here, then, the label of autofiction is an effective, if compromised, choice. The case of Neaud is more complex because his *Journal* project is overtly autobiographical but ambiguity is introduced into the text through the impossibility of

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<sup>30</sup> Benoît Peeters, 'Art Spiegelman, le Juif de New York', *Bang! Bande Dessinée, Images, Actualités*, 7 (2004), pp. 16-20.

<sup>31</sup> This is analogous to Baru's description of the 'hero' in Chapter 2.

<sup>32</sup> Baeten's article sets out many of the issues surrounding autobiography and *bande dessinée* which space in this section does not permit to be reproduced, and should therefore be consulted if further detail on this is sought.

<sup>33</sup> Hélène Jacomard, *Lecteur et lecture dans l'autobiographie française contemporaine: Violette Leduc, Françoise d'Eaubonne, Serge Doubrovsky, Marguerite Yourcenar* (Geneva: Droz, 1993).

representation which he frequently describes when, for example, reproducing the image of the face. His use of iconic metaphor and empty space in particular is exemplary of his inability simply to transfer his life onto the page; for Neaud at least, *AutoBioBD* writing necessarily entails a preordained subjectivity.

The final term which merits reference here features in the title of this thesis. *AutoBioBD* is a neologism coined by Miller and Pratt in an article exploring the work of three artists whom they describe as “proponents of the genre of *BD*,”<sup>34</sup> namely Neaud, Jean-Christophe Menu and Julie Doucet. The article identifies the self-consciousness inherent to the genre: “the component parts of the ‘AutoBioBD’ world are marked by the look which passes between them.”<sup>35</sup> The interplay, disjuncture and dialogue which occur between the spaces occupied in the world of the author and the pages inhabited by his doppelganger protagonist are intrinsic to the universe of the ‘autobiocomic,’ and are what make it such a fascinating genre. This is due in part to the graphic novel’s exploitation and amalgamation of text (the novel or, here, biography) and image (techniques from film, photo, and indeed most graphic art). In the case of the *AutoBioBD*, this exploitation is used in an attempt to construct a representation of recollected events and emotions. Perhaps what distinguishes *AutoBioBD* from literary autobiography, however, is the transition from the literary countenance of ‘*Je*’ to a graphical rendering (the face; the drawn self). Miller and Pratt expand their notion of self-consciousness to the “anguish” of Neaud’s “incarnation into cartoon format.”<sup>36</sup> The idea of this upheaval reflects Beaty’s assertion that the mobilization of works of *AutoBioBD* by European producers should be considered as a veritable social process, since the realism and autobiographical pact stand in stark contrast to what went before: the medium’s European heritage

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<sup>34</sup> Ann Miller and Murray Pratt, ‘Transgressive Bodies in the Work of Julie Doucet, Fabrice Neaud and Jean-Christophe Menu: Towards a Theory of the ‘AutoBioBD’’, *Belphegor*, 4 (November 2004), p. 1. <[http://etc.dal.ca/belphegor/vol4\\_no1/articles/04\\_01\\_Miller\\_trnsgr\\_fr.html](http://etc.dal.ca/belphegor/vol4_no1/articles/04_01_Miller_trnsgr_fr.html)>.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

of escapist heroes.<sup>37</sup> *AutoBioBD*, then, stands for more than autobiographical cartoons – it is a genre that has defined itself over the past two to three decades and played an intrinsic role in the foundation of the medium itself as the Ninth Art.

### 1.3 Politics and *bande dessinée*

As both the prevalence and acceptance of *bande dessinée* have grown, a number of collective groups (including companies, charities and government agencies) have chosen to employ the medium in their publicity or communications. The aims of these groups, like those of most of the literature produced for public relations, are broadly centred on an attempt to inform or persuade their intended audience. Such aims evidently differ from those of the ‘traditional’ *bédéistes*, for whom the medium is more than a support for a collective objective, even though this may form part of their creative impetus. The stories of Baru, for example, stand in part to create awareness (here, of working class upbringing and of the ignored ‘minority’ masses). Neaud’s *Journal* never seeks to ‘promote’ the imagined communities of which he forms a part (and which, on occasion, he strives to disassociate himself from) nor actively to display them in a favourable light. However, the artist’s political views come to the fore throughout his text (particularly in *Journal 2*) and therefore any consideration of his work cannot entirely ignore ideological motive.

There are numerous examples of use of the graphic novel medium for political or ideological purposes. One of these is the European Union comic brochure distributed in schools throughout the EU and translated into all its official languages. Entitled *Moi, raciste!?* in its French incarnation, the brochure covers all the areas in which the EU officially identifies discrimination, namely gender, race, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation.<sup>38</sup> Here the voices of the potential minorities in question are undermined by the majority voice of European government. The

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<sup>37</sup> Bart Beaty, *Unpopular Culture: Transforming the European Comic Book in the 1990s*, Studies in Book and Print Culture (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 143.

<sup>38</sup> Commission européenne, *Moi, raciste!?* (Luxembourg: Office des publications officielles des Communautés européennes, 1998).

brochure's corporate aims may be laudable but its (translated) voice, which speaks on behalf of groups of people at once imagined, standardized and convenient, loses its identity; what is left is a vaguely utilitarian European teaching tool. Its purpose is clear and commendable but the appropriation of the format and drawing style of the graphic novel, a result of the popularity of comics amongst school age children, cannot justify its categorisation as *bande dessinée*, nor to read the voice therein as minority.

The worlds of politics and *bande dessinée* have often come into contact, to the extent that, even in 1975 when a pioneering *Institut d'études politiques* published a collection of essays under the title *Le message politique et social de la bande dessinée*,<sup>39</sup> the likes of Tintin, Blake and Mortimer and Spirou were being examined as potential fascists, racists and misogynists. The defamatory conspiracy theory is certainly no stranger to Disney, a company which has historically made significant contributions to the graphic novel format.<sup>40</sup> Indeed it is certain that political motivation has always been an important factor in graphic novel production, dating from one of the earliest examples of the medium: single frame or short comic strips which offered (usually humorous) comment on events in the press in daily or weekly newspapers. It is not difficult to locate political allegiance and stimuli in the work of any of the artists considered in the following section, or indeed in the work of Baru and Neaud.

## 1.4 Minority *BD* Case Studies

So far this thesis has explored *bande dessinée* production in the context of authors and albums that can be classed as 'minority.' This section will feature examples of types of minority, explore how

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<sup>39</sup> *Le message politique et social de la bande dessinée*, ed. by Charles-Olivier Carbonell, Publications de l'Institut d'Etudes politiques de Toulouse, 8 vols (Toulouse: Privat, 1976).

<sup>40</sup> Like any multinational corporation, the Walt Disney Company has come in for criticism from a wide range of groups and individuals for an equally wide range of complaints. For information specific to Disney comics in the twentieth century, see Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic* (New York, NY: International General, 1991). For a more general overview, see Henry A. Giroux, *The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).

these are expressed through *bande dessinée* and discuss two albums which form part of the genre of *AutoBioBD*. These case studies are discrete in their own right but considered together they provide some solid examples of the arguments presented above.

#### 1.4a Minority Nationality: Frédéric Boilet

The first form of minority to be considered concerns the issue of nationality, which will be discussed in further detail with regard to Baru in the following chapter. The example here is the work of Frédéric Boilet who constructed his first *bande dessinée* in the early 1980s. Having produced a series of albums on contemporary Asia in 1990 he moved to Japan, where he lived quasi-permanently from 1997 onwards. Boilet's *BD* career has thus been one of a European artist producing work inspired by a Japanese environment which has become his own, for consumption by a Euro-Japanese readership. He has also undertaken translations and adaptations between French and Japanese works (in both directions). His work has achieved success in the immense Japanese comics market and represents one of the clearest examples of the juxtaposition of European *BD* and *auteur manga*,<sup>41</sup> fundamental to the establishment of the *Nouvelle Manga* movement.

This movement, championed by Boilet, seeks to introduce the characteristic form of manga, which draws on realism and the representation of the everyday (thematically if not stylistically), onto Franco-Belgian comics which traditionally centred on escapist themes. Much of his now multilingual work is based on his life experiences in Japan, and thus approaches autofiction. One example of this is *Love Hôtel*, co-

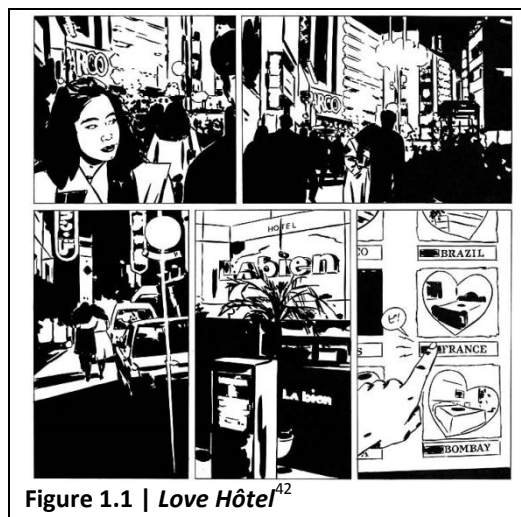


Figure 1.1 | *Love Hôtel*<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> For a detailed examination of manga from a European perspective, see Thierry Groensteen and Harry Morgan, *L'univers des mangas: une introduction à la bande dessinée japonaise* (Paris: Casterman, 1996).

<sup>42</sup> Frédéric Boilet and Benoît Peeters, *Love Hôtel* (Tournai, Belgium: Casterman, 1993).

authored in 1993 (Figure 1.1) which follows the experiences of a French traveller, a minority in his environment of Hokkaidô. As its title suggests, the album details his encounters with the Japanese sexual-cultural phenomenon of the Love Hotel, a hidden space from which the *gaijin* is normally excluded. In 2005 the album was republished by *Ego comme X*, the publishing house through which Neaud has produced the majority of his work.

Boilet is a nationally and culturally displaced artist, a displacement reflected in some of his work which, in terms of genre, might be described by the neologism 'franga,' a term increasingly used in France.<sup>43</sup> This 'neogenre' started to become prevalent at the dawn of the twenty-first century as the popularity of manga began to grow at an exponential rate, particularly among French adolescents, borne in part out of the commercial success of *animé*-inspired cultural phenomena such as Nintendo's *Pokemon*. In this sense, the upsurge of Franga will perhaps come to be understood as having mirrored the process of cultural acceptance of *bande dessinée* in the second half of the twentieth century, a medium itself initially regarded as a cultural product owned only by a juvenile audience. The diversity of work produced by Boilet is a testament to his choice to expatriate himself – he is a minority only in terms of his ethnic group and, importantly, this status is formed of his own volition – and his work does not imply a lack of freedom. Whilst his minority status is therefore more disputable than those of other artists and characters considered here, his relationship with Japan has played a role in the creation of a new form of *BD*. This in turn has contributed to the growth of European interest in the form and work of Japanese *mangakas*. Of course, whilst *manga* used to be a minority interest in Europe, the extent of this cultural phenomenon in Japan can scarcely be understated.

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<sup>43</sup> *Franga* is sometimes referred to as *Manfra*.

#### 1.4b Minority Theme: Delisle, *Chroniques birmanes*

Guy Delisle is a fairly well known Québécois artist whose eclectic albums range from those for young children such as the *Louis* series,<sup>44</sup> to *Shenzen* (2000) and *Pyongyang* (2003) which detail his experiences in China and North Korea respectively, countries in which he lived whilst supervising the production of European animations.<sup>45</sup> The album of interest for this section, which considers the minority in terms of theme, is *Chroniques birmanes*, published in 2007. The circumstances which led Delisle to Burma (or Myanmar, depending on one's political standpoint) – namely his wife's placement with *Medécins Sans Frontières* – are less remarkable here than the minority content and



Figure 1.2 | *Chroniques birmanes*<sup>47</sup>

theme of the album. My assessment here differs slightly from that offered elsewhere in this thesis since this categorisation is applied to subject matter, rather than to characters, artists or artistic form. Indeed, as seen in the excerpt in Figure 1.2, Delisle's drawing

tends towards the classic (majority) comics style epitomised by *Hergé*, that of the *ligne claire*,<sup>46</sup> yet the theme considered is unique: life in Burma under a military junta which has been in power for almost half a century.

Delisle features a number of examples of the work of Burmese comics artists on his website.<sup>48</sup> Understandably, few of them make comment on their country's regime, but the topic is not entirely absent. *Chroniques birmanes*, however, is full of the comment and humour Delisle tends to offer in his albums. This stands in contrast to the western world's typical coverage of Burma which, whilst

<sup>44</sup> Guy Delisle, *Louis au ski* (Paris: Guy Delcourt, 2005).

<sup>45</sup> Vincent Bernière, Aurore Jannin and Sabine Moinet, *Qu'est-ce que la bande dessinée aujourd'hui?* (Boulogne: BeauxArts éditions, 2008), p. 166.

<sup>46</sup> The 'clear line' style of cartoon drawing, established in comics such as the *Tintin* and *Astérix* series, where the outlines of figures are cleanly drawn in the manner of most animated cartoons and do not approach photo-realism, has been adopted as a standard for many *BD* artists. For an excellent overview of this and more information on Hergé and Goscinny/Uderzo, see Matthew Screech, *Masters of the Ninth Art: Bandes Dessinées and Franco-Belgian Identity*, Contemporary French and Francophone Cultures (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005).

<sup>47</sup> Guy Delisle, *Chroniques birmanes* (Paris: Guy Delcourt Productions, 2007).

<sup>48</sup> Guy Delisle, *Artistes Birmanes*, [http://www.guydelisle.com/c\\_birmanes/artistes.html](http://www.guydelisle.com/c_birmanes/artistes.html) [accessed 04/05/2009].

not lacking either in the media or in cultural production (Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*<sup>49</sup> and van Loon's *The Invisible Ones*,<sup>50</sup> for example), typically favours the more straightforward approaches of *reportage* and depiction. Delisle follows in a long line of humorous *BD* artists, particularly those whose work has appeared in newspaper columns over the past decades and, whilst it does not approach the caustic rhetoric one might find in a sketch by Reiser (see Note 85 below) it bears scant regard to political correctness. The work is highly observational and, through its account of daily life, creates a realist, never vindictive, fresco of his harsh and beautiful environment.

*Chroniques birmaines* can therefore be considered as minority writing not only in terms of its subject matter, but also in the way in which that subject matter is presented. The conventional Franco-Belgian *BD* drawing style which it adopts stands to highlight the difference which exists in Delisle's writing, in comparison with other texts which deal with sensitive political themes; difference which lies beyond the format in which it is presented.

#### 1.4c Minority Race: Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor's a Tale*

The classification of people according to the ambiguous category of 'race' is by its nature imprecise since it encompasses a number of criteria such as ethnicity, appearance, religious affiliation and individuals' own perceived identity. The historiography of the Second World War makes use of the term in the context of the Holocaust which, if defined as the genocide of all groups seen as 'racially impure' by the proponents of National Socialism, is itself based on an imprecise (and hideous) logic. The topic of the



**Figure 1.3 | Die Suche**  
 "A page from the book on Hitler's fiery speeches to the German masses"<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Amitav Ghosh, *The Glass Palace: A Novel* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2002).

<sup>50</sup> Karel Glastra van Loon, *The Invisible Ones* (London: Maia, 2006).

<sup>51</sup> Rolf Lautenschläger, *Goethe-Institut Helsinki - Gesellschaft - Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, <http://www.goethe.de/ins/fi/hel/ges/pok/en3955257.htm> [accessed 19/06/2009].



Holocaust has been broached by graphic novel artists; a recent initiative to teach German children about the subject included the publication by the Anne Frank Zentrum of *Die Suche* (Figure 1.3), a graphic novel which “tells the story of a Jewish family murdered by the Nazis in Auschwitz.”<sup>52,53</sup> The most well known work inspired by the Holocaust – the two volumes which make up the non-French *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* by Art Spiegelman – won the Pulitzer Prize Letters Award in 1992.<sup>54</sup>

*Maus* recounts the Holocaust as recollected by Spiegelman’s father, an Auschwitz survivor, whilst also narrating the artist’s own life and father-son relationship in New York, his home since childhood. The work is thus both biographical and autobiographical, representative and interpretive. Anthropomorphic animals play all the characters in the albums; Jews are mice, Nazis cats, Russians are bears and so on. According to Miller and Pratt, the removal of the human form from the text reduces the likelihood of characters obtaining autonomy so that “the narrative emerges as dominant, with a strong sense of testimony and associated sentiment.”<sup>55</sup> The narrative in the text thus embodies the minority voice of the ‘race’ of Jewish people during World War II – a collective voice – rather than the more subjective voice of a real or imagined human character. The minority voices in *Maus*, those of the eponymous mice, cause the reader to question his preconceptions of identity as a racially defined concept. In so doing, the albums present the most abhorrent example of the result of prejudiced majority/minority distinction of the twentieth century through an innovative medium and form, further prompting the reader to focus on the articulation of a persecuted minority voice that Theodor Adorno famously suggested is impossible to express though poetry (or art).<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Eric Heuvel and Anne-Frankhuis, *Die Suche* (Amsterdam: Anne Frank Stichting, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> Lautenschläger, *Goethe-Institut Helsinki - Gesellschaft - Politik und Zeitgeschichte*

<sup>54</sup> Art Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1986).

<sup>55</sup> Miller, *Transgressive Bodies in the Work of Julie Doucet, Fabrice Neaud and Jean-Christophe Menu: Towards a Theory of the ‘AutobioBD’*, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> “Kulturkritik findet sich der letzten Stufe der Dialektik von Kultur und Barbarei gegenüber: nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch, und das frißt auch die Erkenntnis an, die ausspricht, warum es unmöglich ward, heute Gedichte zu schreiben.” (Theodore W. Adorno, *Prismen: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955), p. 30.)

#### 1.4d *AutoBioBD: Satrapi, Persepolis*

The next two sections look at works which are solidly part of the genre of *AutoBioBD*. The first, Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, is tragically comic. It consists of a series of four albums which together make up a *bildungsroman* of the author's childhood in Iran under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, through the Iranian Revolution in 1979, to her departure to study in Austria at the age of 14. The Islamic republic established through revolution was to create a gender divide which saw the end of coeducation and forced women to wear the veil (Figure 1.4). Satrapi describes the political opposition to the regime by members of her family, "acquise à la modernité et dont certains membres seront arrêtés,"<sup>58</sup> leading to the execution of her uncle. As Verstappen states,



Figure 1.4 | *Persepolis (Tome 3)*<sup>57</sup>

“Un seul individu est très universel”, dira-t-elle et c’est en isolant la voix de cet individu, qui est ici à la fois Marjane Satrapi et son propre outil narrative, que l’auteur parviendra à en faire résonner l’écho au-delà de la situation sociopolitique propre à l’Iran.<sup>59</sup>

The reflective voice of the narrator in Satrapi's albums resonates with a heart-rending humour as it narrates a young girl's everyday life; the girl is a minority figure in the Islamic majority state of Iran and takes an ingenuous approach in questioning it. *Persepolis* is thus not a work which seeks to present a feminist or ideological agenda but rather offers a subjective account of the minority voice of Marjane and her family in the face of a silencing regime. It represents, perhaps, an attempt to open the minds of those Satrapi encountered upon her arrival in Vienna, in a Western world whose

<sup>57</sup> Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 3* (Paris: L'Association, 2002), p. 16.

<sup>58</sup> Nicolas Verstappen, 'Dimension Universelle', in *Qu'est-ce que la bande dessinée aujourd'hui ?*, ed. by Vincent Bernière, Aurore Jannin and Sabine Moinet (Boulogne: BeauxArts éditions, 2008), p. 158.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* p. 158.

culture was denied to the population living under the Iranian regime. This culture, for Satrapi, itself paradoxically represented a further opposing majority through its unawareness or ignorance of the voice of her social group in Iran.

Satrapi co-directed an animated adaptation of *Persepolis*, released in 2007 and nominated for an Oscar in 2008 (Figure 1.5).<sup>60</sup> Verstappen notes that,

la première étape de l'adaptation cinématographique après l'écriture du scénario fut d'enregistrer les voix avant même de démarrer le processus de mise en images. [...] Au travers du caractère séminal de ces voix [...] Satrapi laisse s'exprimer l'homme dans toute sa grandeur et sa fragilité.<sup>61</sup>

The emphasis placed on voice in the film version of the story of Marjane mirrors the prominence of voice in the original, which was drawn in an even more minimalist style.<sup>63</sup> Satrapi's narration in the graphic novels is accompanied (primarily) by Marjane's voice in the dialogue where questions of anthropology take precedence over those of politics. Satrapi continued to



**Figure 1.5 | *Persepolis* (2007)**  
In the film version of *Persepolis*, the marginality of Marjane is demonstrated even before she leaves Iran as a child.<sup>62</sup>

move after her time in Austria and returned to Iran before settling in France. Her texts are testament to the unconventionality of an artist who is a minority in all the spaces she inhabits.

#### 1.4e *AutoBioBD: Trondheim, Approximativement*

Of all the artists considered in this thesis, Louis Trondheim is the most well known, so perhaps it could be argued that neither his writing nor the voice of his albums can truly be classified as minority.

<sup>60</sup> *Persepolis*, dir. by Vincent Paronnaud and Marjane Satrapi (2.4.7. Films, 2007).

<sup>61</sup> Verstappen, *Dimension Universelle*, p. 158.

<sup>62</sup> IMDb, *Photos from Persepolis*, <http://www.imdb.com/media/rm4150106112/tt0808417> [accessed 19/07/2009].

<sup>63</sup> Satrapi's child and adult voices in the film adaptation were provided by voice actors.

He was, however, one of the pioneers in the rise of independent *bande dessinée* publishers and in 1990 co-founded *L'Association*, a now prominent publisher with an immense back catalogue including a number of Delisle's albums, as well as Satrapi's *Persepolis*.<sup>64</sup> WorldCat lists 142 books authored or co-authored by Trondheim between 1992 and 2008.<sup>65</sup> They comprise theoretical and analytical work on the medium as well as original albums, including the album in question in this section, *Approximativement*, which was written in four sections in 1993 and first published in 1995.<sup>66</sup> The work is overtly autobiographical although, interspersed with fantastical and allegorical representations, it might be more correctly (if less precisely) defined as autofiction. It can thus be considered under the banner of *AutoBioBD*. Another reason for Trondheim's inclusion in this chapter is his status as the originator of what has been dubbed *la nouvelle BD*.

Trondheim's success in both mainstream and independent retailers throughout France might preclude one from conferring the term minority on the author himself, but this is not necessarily the case for his style of work. In much the same way as the French New Wave was driven by a desire to innovate and had at its heart an eschewal of mainstream culture, *la nouvelle BD* was the result of the late twentieth century trend whereby independent collectives of authors began to appear such as the one formed by Trondheim, David B. et al., in response to commercial pressure from large publishers including Casterman and Dargaud. Another example of this is the formation of *Ego comme X*, discussed in Chapter 3. Interestingly, the process seems to have turned full circle in the case of Trondheim who, in 2007, ended his relationship with the by now established *L'Association* and began overseeing a new and expansive collection of work (including *Chroniques birmanes*) published under the label *Shampooing*.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> The website of *L'Association* is unfortunately offline at the time of writing but for a rough idea of the extent of the work published it has published, see:

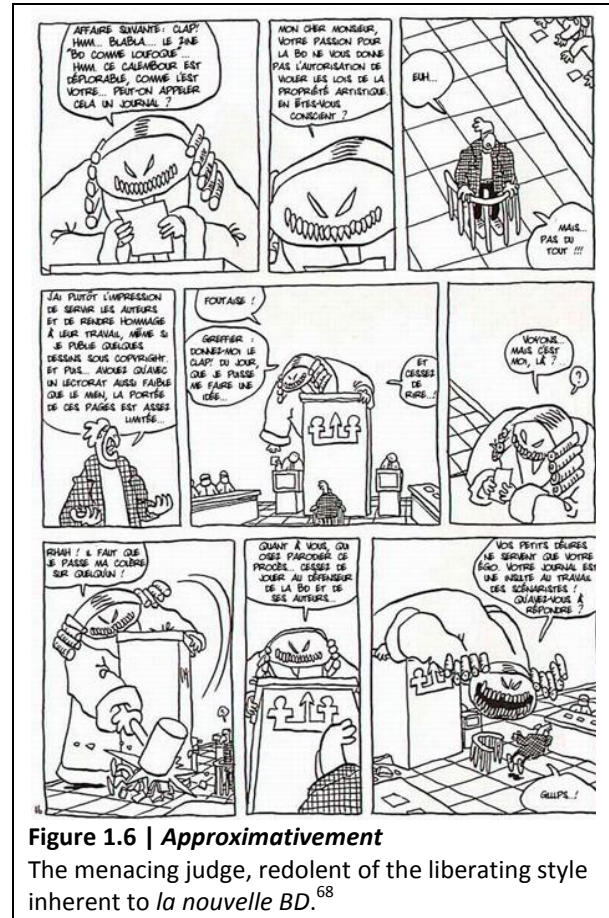
[http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modèle:Liste\\_des\\_publications\\_par\\_éditeurs\\_-\\_L'Association](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modèle:Liste_des_publications_par_éditeurs_-_L'Association)

<sup>65</sup> WorldCat's website can be found at <http://www.worldcat.org>.

<sup>66</sup> Lewis Trondheim, *Approximativement* (Paris: Cornélius, 2001).

<sup>67</sup> Marion Festræts, *On n'a jamais vu autant de bons et de mauvais livres*, [http://www.lexpress.fr/styles/shopping/on-n-a-jamais-vu-autant-de-bons-et-de-mauvais-livres\\_478626.html?p=2](http://www.lexpress.fr/styles/shopping/on-n-a-jamais-vu-autant-de-bons-et-de-mauvais-livres_478626.html?p=2) [accessed 20/06/2009].

As mentioned above, and as its title suggests, *Approximativement* is Trondheim's attempt to represent part of himself. Formally, the album is unrestrained and evokes the ethos of *la nouvelle BD*; it seeks to represent what Trondheim's character experiences as he conceives it in his mind's eye, and thus is figurative and interpretive. Indeed, a prosopopoeial vein runs throughout the album as seen in Trondheim's graphical representation (he draws himself as a cockatoo and other characters as animals). Moreover this is observed through characters which merge or become emblems of Trondheim's emotional state. Figure 1.6 shows a diabolical judge whose face inherits the teeth of a fly (the object of a dispute with publishers who wanted them removed from one of Trondheim's albums) and "before whom he appears in a Kafkaesque sequence of punishment for his megalomania."<sup>69</sup>



**Figure 1.6 | *Approximativement***

The menacing judge, redolent of the liberating style inherent to *la nouvelle BD*.<sup>68</sup>

From the 1990s onwards, Trondheim led the way for artists with minority voices such as Neaud and Baru. The identification and legitimisation of a new form not only of *bande dessinée* but also of publishing *auteur* work in the medium (work not confined to publishers' demands for derivative album formats) mirrors the act of legitimisation of the medium itself which had occurred over the preceding decades.

<sup>68</sup> Trondheim, *Approximativement*, p. 16.

<sup>69</sup> Miller, *Reading Bande Dessinée: Critical Approaches to French-language Comic Strip*, p. 220.

## 2.1 Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis was concerned with the identification and significance of minority voices over a range of Francophone *bande dessinée*. Chapters 2 and 3 will look in greater detail at the work of two artists from the 1990s by analysing a selection of their albums. Whilst the creative outputs of Baru and Fabrice Neaud, the artists in question, clearly exhibit distinct themes and narrative and artistic styles, I will argue that the identification of minority voice in their work reveals common ground between many of their albums. I will suggest that such commonalities are predominantly related to the minority identity status of the artist and his protagonists, and also to the autobiographical character of the albums. This chapter looks at the work of Baru through the themes it developed over the 1980s and 1990s and takes two of his albums as case studies: *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, published in 1995, which earned him the *Alph'art du meilleur album* at the 1996 Angoûleme festival,<sup>70</sup> and *Bonne Année*, published in 1998.

Like many other *bédéistes*, Baru (born Hervé Baruléa) has not shied away from bringing his personal life experience to his work. He maintains that to read his albums as autobiographical would be to misinterpret them (as discussed below) but a cursory glance at most of them, particularly those from the twentieth century, will reveal several self-referential characters and themes based around the working classes. In a relatively rare move for a *BD* artist, Baru has written an article about his identification with the working class and the latter's relationship with the world of comics. The article was published in *History and Politics in French Language Comics and Graphic Novels*, McKinney's collection of academic essays.<sup>71</sup> In it Baru categorically states that it is not autobiographical themes that really distinguish his work in the cornucopia of graphic novels but

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<sup>70</sup> Baru, *Album: L'Autoroute du Soleil*, <http://baru.airsoftconsulting.com/Album.aspx?page=7&album=autoroute> [accessed 2 February 2009].

<sup>71</sup> Baru, 'The Working Class and Comics: A French Cartoonist's Perspective', in *History and Politics in French Language Comics and Graphic Novels*, ed. by Mark McKinney (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), p. 239-258.

rather his choice of hero.<sup>72</sup> It is the voice of this hero which I categorise as minority yet, as shall be seen, its classification is not straightforward. More apparent is the importance of the French history and politics referred to in the title of McKinney's book to the premise of each of Baru's albums.

As a point of departure I shall discuss the life of the author before considering the minority voice in the context of the two aforementioned albums. The wealth of material and influences on which Baru draws in his work means that these topics are particularly diverse and range from French colonial history to American 1950s cinema. In my analysis I will endeavour to identify a voice which may or may not be that of Baru himself but which can confidently be designated as minority. See Appendix C for a collection of images which outline Baru's style and typical subject matters.

## 2.2 Culture versus Identity: France and the *cité*

The son of an Italian immigrant, Baru grew up surrounded by the portentous steel factory blast furnaces and chimneys characteristic of landscapes in the Lorraine region where the industrial does



**Figure 2.1 | A blast furnace in Uckange<sup>73</sup>**  
A blast furnace typical of those found throughout the Lorraine region.

battle with the rural (Figure 2.1). These manufacturing edifices form the backdrop to a number of his albums, particularly those from the 1980s (Figure 2.2) and the symbolism and significance brought about by a subtle personification of them play an important function in his work. For this brief overview of Baru's life it is useful to examine the article by the artist himself mentioned in the opening

of this chapter. In it he describes his adolescent years in the *cité*, living in an irrefutably working class society from which he departed to attend university (and to which he subsequently returned). Baru

<sup>72</sup> *History and Politics in French Language Comics and Graphic Novels*, ed. by Mark McKinney (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), p. 242.

<sup>73</sup> Jean-Marie Ottelé, *Haut-forneau No 4 de l'Usine d'Uckange* (16 April 2003) <<http://www.industrie.lu/usineuckange.html>> [accessed 15 May 2009].



**Figure 2.2 | Le saut de l'ange**<sup>75</sup>  
Landscapes on the brink of post-industrialism. This image was used in one of the covers for *La Piscine de Micheville*.

then goes on to explain the specific culture of 'his' people, a group which he frequently describes as "les miens."<sup>74</sup> This is a collective (albeit a vaguely defined one) to which he attaches the ambiguous labels of 'working class' and 'immigrant' (whether first, second or third generation), with which he identifies and

through which his work gains voice.

Baru explains that "*la culture des cités* [...] was marked above all by an absence of culture, the official one, the one with a capital C."<sup>76</sup> A specific and strong culture always has existed in the  *cité*  and, along with many other cultural forms such as hip-hop, graffiti and salsa which were all born in economically and socially deprived urban areas around the world, the Parisian *banlieue* has seen the birth of cultural forms such as  *beur*  writing,  *beur*  music and, indeed,  *beur*  comics.<sup>77</sup> Mark McKinney notes:

Comics by  *beurs*  usually focus on France as a post-colonial, multiethnic nation. [...] In the early to mid-1980s, Maghrebi-French cartoonists, who had grown up in France and called it home came of age, participated in the effervescence of the  *beur*  political and cultural movement and began to address the concerns of their own generation.<sup>78</sup>

Examples of the work of one of the most well known  *BD*  artists of Maghrebi-French origin, Farid Boudjellal, are given in Figure 2.3.

The culture of the  *cité*  gives rise to two important questions; first, whether its existence is defined only through opposition to the aforementioned 'Culture with a capital C,' and second, in terms of its validity, how aware the proponents of this culture ( *la classe ouvrière* ) are that it in fact exists. In all

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, PLG, 'Entretien',  *PLG* , 36 (2000-2001) <<http://plg.ifrance.com/>>.

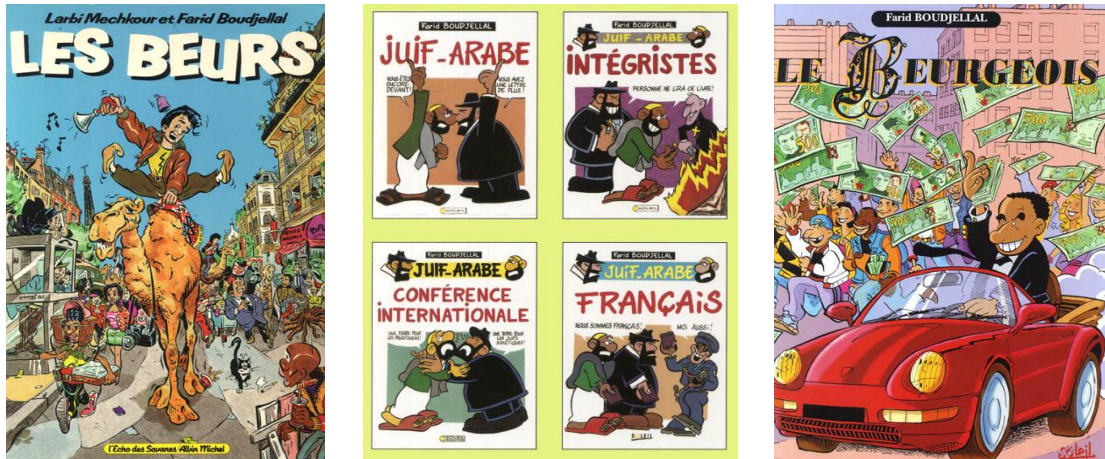
<sup>75</sup> Baru,  *Le saut de l'ange* , <http://baru.airsoftconsulting.com/affiches.aspx?page=1> [accessed 29 October 2008].

<sup>76</sup> Baru,  *The Working Class and Comics: A French Cartoonist's Perspective* , p. 240.

<sup>77</sup> For an engaging examination of the identity forging which occurred through novels authored by immigrants of North West African descent in urban areas of 1980s France, see Michel Laronde,  *Autour du roman beur: immigration et identité*  (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993).

<sup>78</sup> Mark McKinney, 'Beur Comics', in  *Encyclopedia of contemporary French culture* , ed. by Alex Hughes and Keith Reader (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1998), p. 66.





**Figure 2.3 | Comics by Farid Boudjellal**

From the “humour and caricature” of the *Juif-Arabe* series to *Les Beurs*, a “series of humorous sketches, dosed with fantasy, about life in the housing projects.”<sup>80</sup>

probability Baru saw his country’s ‘Official Culture’ as rooted in France’s historiography, as sanctioned by (and definitive of) France. This occurs through the process of nation building which Benedict Anderson eminently described as the establishment of an imagined community, in this case a cultural community.<sup>79</sup> This national unity is formed in part by accepted notions of what constitutes France and French citizenship, both from inside and outside the ‘Official Culture,’ and inevitably bring to mind the traditional ‘cultural architects’ from Molière to Matisse; Debussy to Descartes. Stereotypes that contribute to non-members’ imagined definition of a nation can be used as a tool to create national status, however inaccurate such a definition may be. Careful use of these stereotypes is sometimes made by government or other organisations in, for example, the promotion of the tourist industry (see Figure 2.4).

I would not suggest that the formation of national identity is achieved through a platitudinous model of, in this case, ‘Frenchness’, but I would propose that national cultural building blocks (akin to one of Bourdieu’s fields of cultural production)<sup>81</sup> are defined through the acquiescence of the majority. For Baru, *bande dessinée* can be considered as a minority cultural medium, despite predating many of

<sup>79</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York, NY: Verso, 1991).

<sup>80</sup> Alex Hughes and Keith Reader, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary French Culture* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1998), p. 66.

<sup>81</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Randal Johnson, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1993).



**Figure 2.4 | “The Fastest way from Paris to London”<sup>83</sup>**

Eurostar are well known for innovative advertising campaigns which often utilize stereotypes of the English and the French.

these majority cultural or historic building blocks (the *trente glorieuses* or surrealism to name but two) since its relative non-acceptance in the early days of the artist’s *BD* career made it an attractive (and logical) route to achieve representation of a certain group. In truth, of course, much of France’s ‘Official Culture’ does predate post-colonialism and the arrival of first-generation immigrants such as the grandparents of Hervé Barulea and Baru’s other protagonists. To a great extent, therefore, borrowing again from Bourdieu’s terminology, the minority cultural habitus of these characters is aligned with the minority status

of the medium of *bande dessinée* itself. As Baru states, he “violently rejected (the) bourgeois culture, as we called it in the elation of the time, especially philosophy and tasteful literature.”<sup>82</sup> This departure from ‘Culture with a capital C’ stemmed from his desire, and the aim of his work, to “speak out in public” and despite his lack of artistic experience, his love of *bande dessinée* over the 1970s was to provide the medium by which to achieve this.

### 2.3 Baru’s *bande dessinée*

A number of identifiable predominant (and often recurring) themes arise in Baru’s albums which, if not strictly autobiographical, certainly arise from lived experience (*du vécu*). Each theme can be interpreted as giving voice to a character or defined grouping of characters. These voices may be described as having minority status in so much as Baru aligns his work as a *bande dessinée* artist with a mission to speak out for those who have no voice, to “‘ramener ma fraise’ comme on disait chez

<sup>82</sup> Baru, *The Working Class and Comics: A French Cartoonist’s Perspective*, p. 241.

<sup>83</sup> Leg Agency, Eurostar: Speed frog | *Ads of the World: Creative Advertising Archive & Community*, [http://adsoftheworld.com/media/print/eurostar\\_speed\\_frog](http://adsoftheworld.com/media/print/eurostar_speed_frog) [accessed 03/07/2009].

moi,”<sup>84</sup> as he puts it in an interview. He goes on to state, “j’ai profité d’une parenthèse, d’un éloignement – deux ans en Algérie, pour faire mon service militaire en coopération – pour apprendre à ‘dessiner’ dans les pas de Reiser.”<sup>85</sup> Algeria becomes the setting for the character Saïd Boudiaf in *Le Chemin de l’Amérique* (1990) as he strives to free himself from the Algerian war through boxing. Baru’s first published works, *Quéquette Blues* (1984-86) and *La Piscine de Micheville* (1985) paved the way for a story arc which runs through his albums of the 1980s and 1990s surrounding life in the  *cité*  for descendants of immigrant families, mirroring Baru’s formative years. This is the overall premise of most of his albums over these two decades and it is frequently explored through the themes of adolescence, ethnicity and masculinity – subjects that are referred to in the title of an article on Baru by Ann Miller. Indeed, Miller notes “an autobiographical vein”<sup>86</sup> running through his earlier 1980s albums in particular. In these albums the progress of Hervé, the protagonist-narrator, is followed “along an Oedipal trajectory as his sexual identity is gradually constructed and affirmed through male bonding rituals and through encounters with the feminine and with representatives of male authority.”<sup>87</sup>

Whilst the implication is that Hervé represents Baru, the artist rather flridly rejects the suggestion that any of his work is essentially autobiographical:

J’imagine alors une trame dramatique qui dise le plus possible ce que je veux vous dire. Et après, je pars à la pêche aux éléments les plus aptes à ‘porter’ mes intentions. Pour ça, je tape dans la caisse de mes souvenirs personnels, ou dans celle des autres, ou dans les événements du monde tel qu’il est et comme il va. [...] (Je bouche) les nombreux trous avec des inventions.<sup>88</sup>

Thus the question of whether Baru’s work is autobiographical is left somewhat undetermined. It is a reflection of self so it could be related to the autobiographical project of Fabrice Neaud, the artist to

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<sup>84</sup> PLG, *Entretien*, p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> Jean-Marc Reiser, the infamously irreverent French comics artist whom Baru cites as his greatest influence and “un genie.” (*Ibid.*, p. 3.)

<sup>86</sup> Ann Miller, ‘Narratives of Adolescence, Ethnicity and Masculinity in the Work of Baru’, in *The Francophone Bande Dessinée*, ed. by Charles Forsdick, Laurence Grove and Libbie McQuillan (New York, NY: Rodopi, 2005), p. 147.

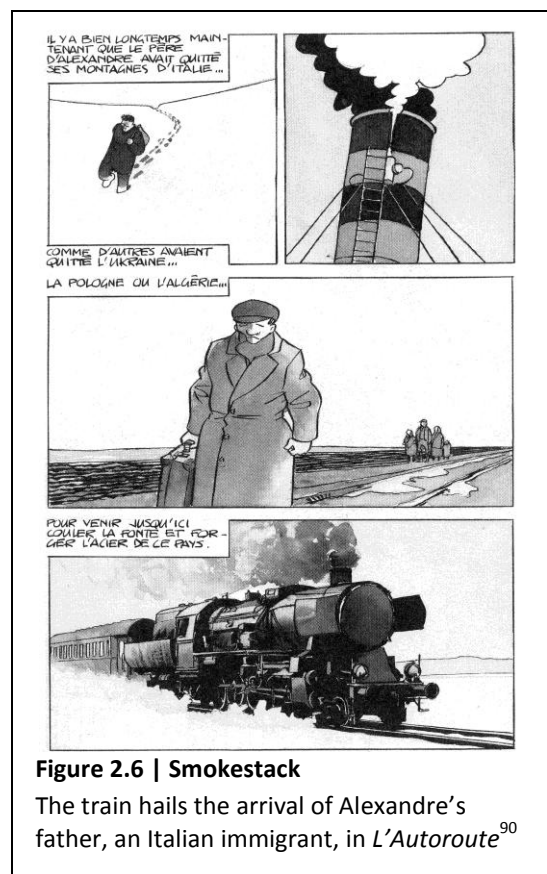
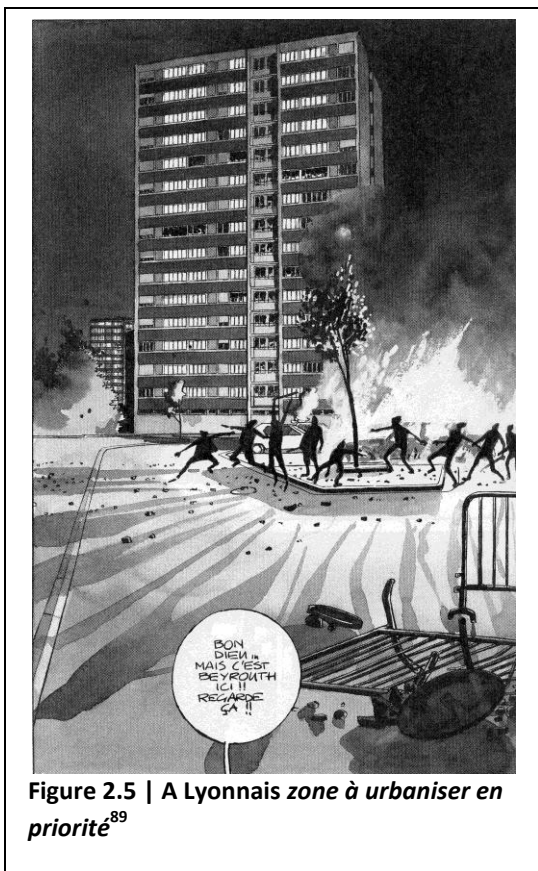
<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* p. 138.

<sup>88</sup> PLG, *Entretien*, p. 5.

be considered in Chapter 3, yet its driving force more accurately lies in that of a personal expression motivated by a political catalyst.

This catalyst is the conferment of voice to the *'moi et les miens'* mentioned above; indeed, as Baru states, his desire has always been to “invent fictions in which I and mine would have the good role, the main one.”<sup>91</sup> The protagonists of Baru’s drawn world are part of a group made up of a large number of people, yet these characters’ status and voices can still be categorised as minority, lost as they are in a post-colonial French political system which saw the rapid expansion of vast housing projects, such as the *Z.U.P.* featured in *L’Autoroute du Soleil* (Figure 2.5) in the middle part of the twentieth century.

Baru states that he “chose to strangle the Hero and to introduce, in its place, more complex figures,



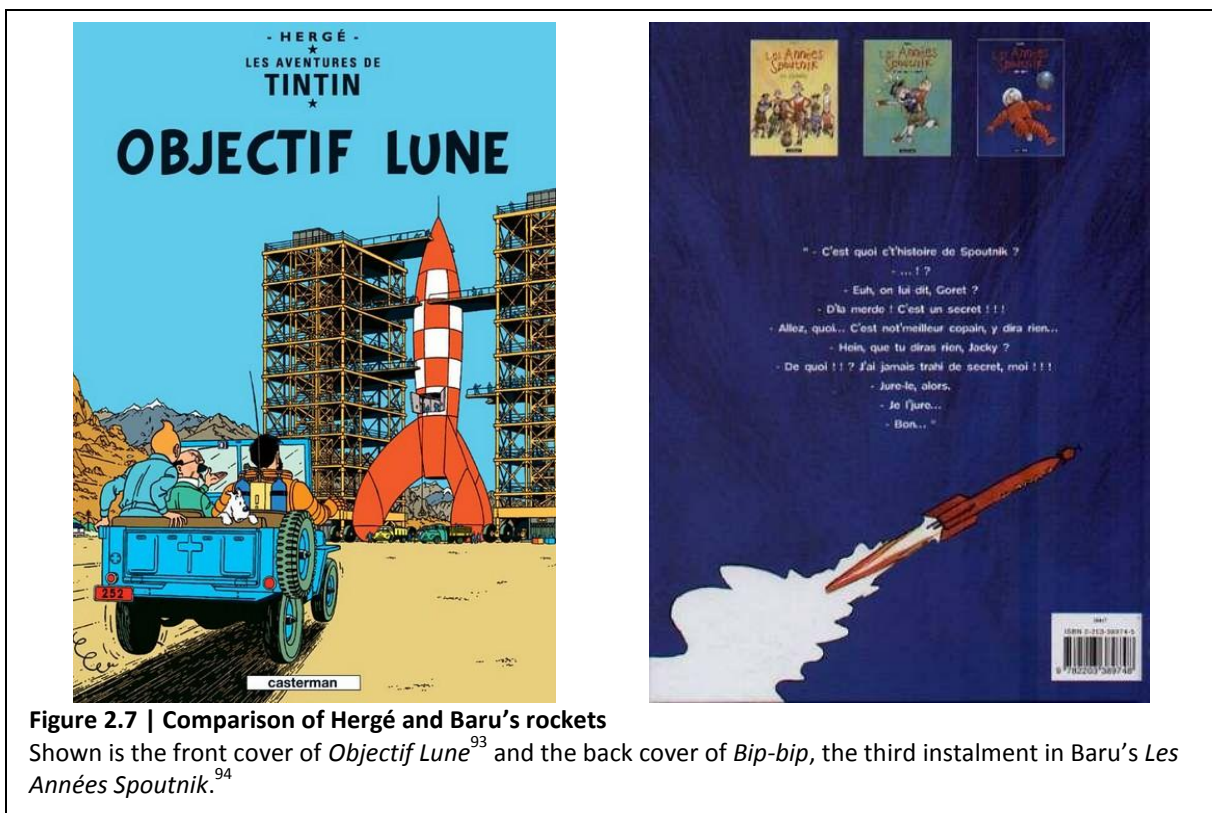
<sup>89</sup> Baru, *L’Autoroute du Soleil* (Tokyo: Casterman, 1995), p. 260.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>91</sup> Baru, *The Working Class and Comics: A French Cartoonist’s Perspective*, p. 241.

or more developed ones in any case, [...] to meticulously relate the sociological conditions of their existence.”<sup>92</sup> In other words, Baru eschewed the Hero with a capital H – the traditional caped crusader who represented the culturally accepted model of a *bande dessinée* character and whose capitalisation is not so far removed from that of the sanctioned ‘Culture’ described above.

Baru aspired to bring a new genus of ‘lower case’ hero to his narrative, to his ‘lower case’ culture, one who had, thus far, not found a voice in any of the potential media in which he had considered working (literature, cinema and *bande dessinée*). It should be mentioned at this point that Baru’s childhood memories of comic book Heroes are nonetheless still to be found scattered throughout his work. Nods to Hergé’s work abound in that of Baru in, for example, the leitmotif of the smokestack which is remarkably similar to those on ships commanded by Captain Haddock (Figure 2.6), or the rocket featured in *Bip bip!*, part of the *Les Années Spoutnik* series which bears a resemblance to the



<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* p. 243.

<sup>93</sup> Hergé, *Objectif Lune* (Paris: Casterman, 1953).

<sup>94</sup> Baru, *Tome 3: Bip Bip !, Les Années Spoutnik* (Paris: Casterman, 2002).

iconic and quintessentially Hergian rocket in *Objectif Lune* (see comparison in Figure 2.7).<sup>95</sup>

Through memories of his childhood comics Heroes, and his desire to communicate the experiences of his own minority group, Baru's pen gave life to a new breed of hero. These heroes are individuals and group members; from Hervé Barulea and the various gangs of the male immigrant milieu in albums such as *Quéquette Blues* and *La Piscine de Micheville*, to Karim the *beur* and Alexandre the second generation Italian immigrant in *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, and to Saïd Boudiaf the Algerian boxer in *Le Chemin de l'Amérique*. Whilst boxing was to provide Saïd with his route to America in the latter album, America itself offers up some of the inspiration for the first of two of Baru's 1990s albums which I will now proceed to consider.

## 2.4 *L'Autoroute du Soleil* (1995)

*L'Autoroute du Soleil*<sup>97</sup> was the second of Baru's albums to be published in the 1990s and was commissioned by the colossal Japanese publisher Kodansha, to appear as a series in *Morning Manga*, one of its hugely popular Manga magazines (Figure 2.8). Its format is unlike that of Baru's other albums; it is smaller in size (with smaller frames), and it takes the already expressionistic facial details characteristic of his work to a new level that borders on the caricatural (Figure 2.9). This caricaturisation is augmented through meticulously depicted backdrops discordant with the characters that



**Figure 2.8 | Morning – Couverture**

**20cm x 28cm**<sup>96</sup>

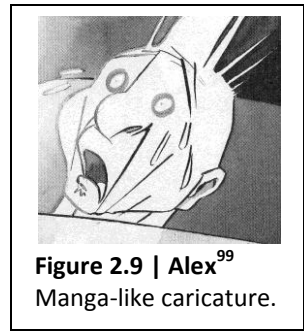
Cover of Morning magazine featuring the protagonists of *L'Autoroute*.

<sup>95</sup> I drew inspiration for these observations from the following, as yet unpublished conference paper, which identifies numerous other examples of Baru's homage to Hervé: Mark McKinney, *Baru's Pastiche*, given at The International Bande Dessinée Society Sixth Bi-Annual Conference (London, 20 June 2009).

<sup>96</sup> Baru, *Illustrations*, <http://baru.airsoftconsulting.info/Illustrations.aspx?page=7> [accessed 03/08/2009].

<sup>97</sup> Hereafter referred to as *Autoroute*.

inhabit them. The album thus follows the trend of a number of European comics artists, such as Frederic Boilet (discussed in Chapter 1) who have produced work in co-operation with Japanese publishing houses through a thematic and stylistic approach which parallels manga. Baru describes his 426 page album as a remake of *Cours, camarade!* (1988)<sup>98</sup> and qualifies its classification as a work of manga:



Je savais même pas que cela (manga) existait. Mais Kodansha ne me demandait pas de faire du manga. Il me demandait juste d'être moi-même et me donnait les conditions pour le réaliser, notamment et surtout une pagination illimitée.<sup>100</sup>

This authorial freedom gave Baru the opportunity to construct an album which would realise the aim of his work to a greater extent than in, for example, *Cours!*, an album which follows the traditional, marketable format of more mainstream comics, consisting as it does of 45 A4-size pages.

#### 2.4a Voice in *L'Autoroute du Soleil*

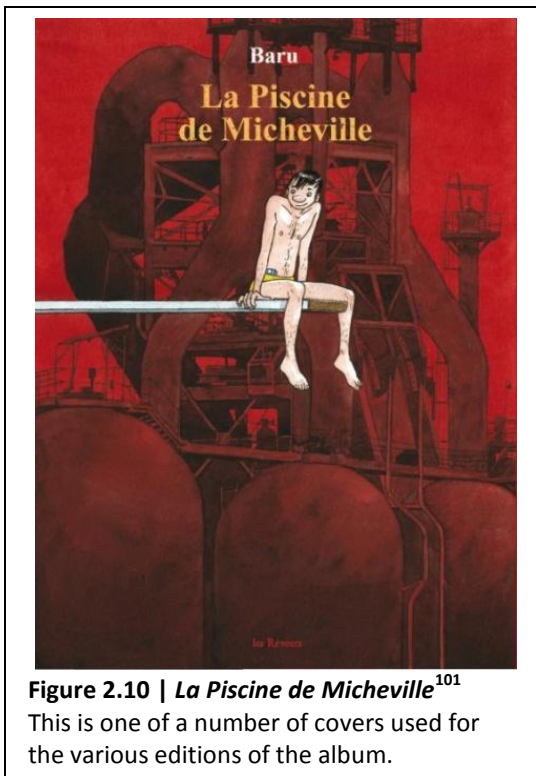
*Autoroute* primarily apportions voice to its two protagonists: 22-year-old Karim, the story's 'hero' and Alexandre, 17, his sidekick. As inhabitants of the unnamed working class town which provides the duo's point of departure and return, their voices can be read as representative of those of the townsfolk and, by extension, of the working class immigrant community in a *département* such as Lorraine. Whilst the story is one of exodus, one can extend the mythological allusion to Oedipus in Baru's work proposed by Miller above to include something of an odyssey since the journey, which bisects France north to south, is one which sees the travellers return home. Furthermore, particularly in the case of Alexandre, it marks a rite of passage and an Odyssean voyage of discovery. This discovery is that of France and thus the album acts as an assessment of the country in which the minority heroes have grown up and which plays majority host to their minority home town.

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<sup>98</sup> Hereafter referred to as *Cours!*

<sup>99</sup> Baru, *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, p. 225.

<sup>100</sup> PLG, *Entretien*, p. 3.



**Figure 2.10 | *La Piscine de Micheville***<sup>101</sup>  
 This is one of a number of covers used for the various editions of the album.

Through the discordant combination of industrial and rural aesthetics, the town appears to correspond to those featured in Baru’s albums of the 1980s such as *Cours!* and *La Piscine de Micheville*.<sup>102</sup> The opening pages of the album feature the toppling of the steelworks blast furnace tower, an incident to which the events of *Piscine* (Figure 2.10) built up, the last page of this album consisting entirely of the tower’s ill-omened silhouette. As mentioned above, the blast furnace tower, whose collapse occupies an entire, unframed two-page spread in the album, takes on a

commanding anthropomorphic person. Miller goes as far as to describe the tower as a phallic signifier<sup>103</sup> and its demise is a significant factor in the death of the community (“ils n’étaient plus rien”),<sup>104</sup> a demise which, to an extent, Karim manages to destabilize through his road trip. In *Autoroute* this final blow, the collapse of the steel industry, is delivered to Karim and Alexandre’s own *moi et miens* (Figure 2.11) and it is worthwhile considering this alongside the unemployment figures and forecasts for the Lorraine region (and elsewhere in France) which can be found in Appendix D, Tables B and C. Whilst the impetus this provides for the pair’s exodus is symbolic, a more pressing motivation is to be found in the form of the troubled character of Faurissier the antihero.

Faurissier, an avid member of his regional branch of the right wing *Élan national français*, catches Karim sleeping with his wife. He shoots her and proceeds to pursue the *beur* and *immigré* twosome across the country. Through his endeavour to destroy Karim and his nationalistic rhetoric,

<sup>101</sup> Baru, *La Piscine de Micheville* (Paris: Dargaud, 1985).

<sup>102</sup> Hereafter referred to as *Piscine*.

<sup>103</sup> Miller, *Narratives of Adolescence, Ethnicity and Masculinity in the Work of Baru*, p. 139.

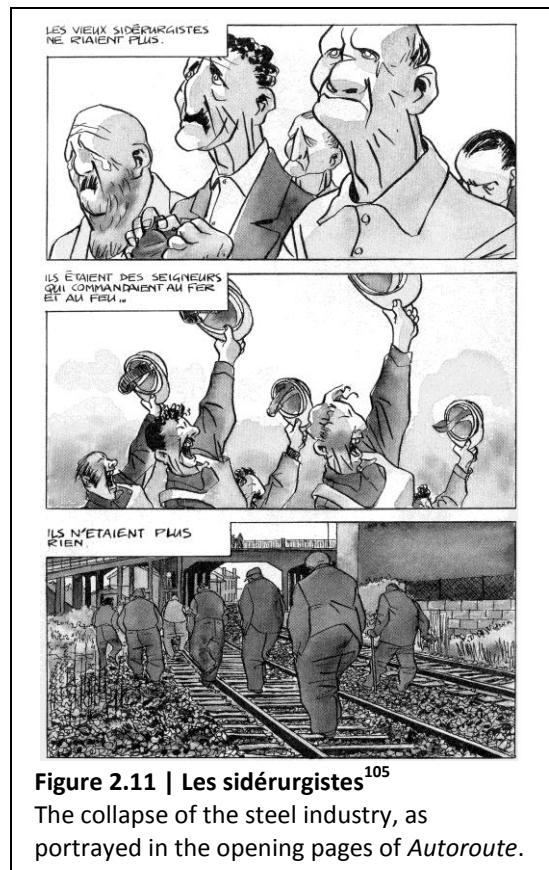
<sup>104</sup> Baru, *Album: L’Autoroute du Soleil*, p. 16.



Faurissier's voice embodies the racial prejudice of the far-right which contributes to the construction of the minority status I am seeking to apply to the majority of the central characters in Baru's work and to his interpretation of France.

As mentioned above, in terms of numbers of characters, this minority is firmly in the majority throughout Baru's body of work, and nowhere more so than in *Autoroute* where his people, *les miens*, are to be found in abundance and in every corner of France. Statistics from the French national census (reproduced in Appendix D) indicate that in 2006 just

over 1.5 million people (4.2% of the population) were of African nationality, with those from Algeria and Morocco accounting for 1.5%. In total, about one in ten people resident in France did not have French nationality in 2006.<sup>106</sup> Statistics such as this can only ever give an idea of the national heritage of French society since they do not include second, third or subsequent generation immigrants, but they are testament to its multicultural nature.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, from the Lyonnais head of the *Autoroute du Soleil* to its Mediterranean tail, from the marred bucolic surroundings of Karim's northern home town to the *gosses* hanging out in one of Lyon's *zones à urbaniser en priorité* (see Figure 2.13), in Baru's post-industrial, post-colonialist space, the middle class, white, European colonists undergo their own othering process. Baru's albums bring the grandchildren of European



**Figure 2.11 | Les sidérurgistes<sup>105</sup>**  
The collapse of the steel industry, as portrayed in the opening pages of *Autoroute*.

<sup>105</sup> Baru, *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, p. 16.

<sup>106</sup> See Appendix D, Table A.

<sup>107</sup> Second generation immigrants born on French soil to non-French parents can claim French nationality at 18. (La Documentation française, *Comment devient-on citoyen français ? - Qui est citoyen en France ? Découverte des institutions - Repères - Vie-publique.fr*, <http://www.vie-publique.fr/decouverte-institutions/citoyen/citoyennete/citoyen-france/comment-devient-on-citoyen-francais.html> [accessed 15/02/2009].)

colonialism to the forefront and give them voice. Here, the subaltern's offspring would appear to be defying Spivak: they speak.

## 2.4b Baru's Apportionment of Voice

I shall now illustrate some of the methods Baru employs to facilitate the allocation of voice to the minority group, beyond turning its individual members into the comics stars of the frame.



The album plays with the ambiguity of social status – for example that of Loiseau: he is white, French *de souche*, shares a surname with the Loiseau brothers (Tintin's opponents in *The Secret of the Unicorn*) and, as Miller notes, lives in a *château* which bears a striking resemblance to Moulinsart from the Tintin comics.<sup>109</sup> His imposing mansion and grounds (Figure 2.12) belie the fact that he is severely subjugated by his wife (who has managed to seize control of his assets) and his resentment of her is demonstrated by the fact that he refrains from turning Karim and Alexandre over to the police in an attempt to provoke her. As it turns out, Karim's presence in the Loiseau household initiates a process of self-empowerment for the dominated husband which begins with the repair of the only asset not seized by his wife – a Facel HK500 automobile – in which he and Karim

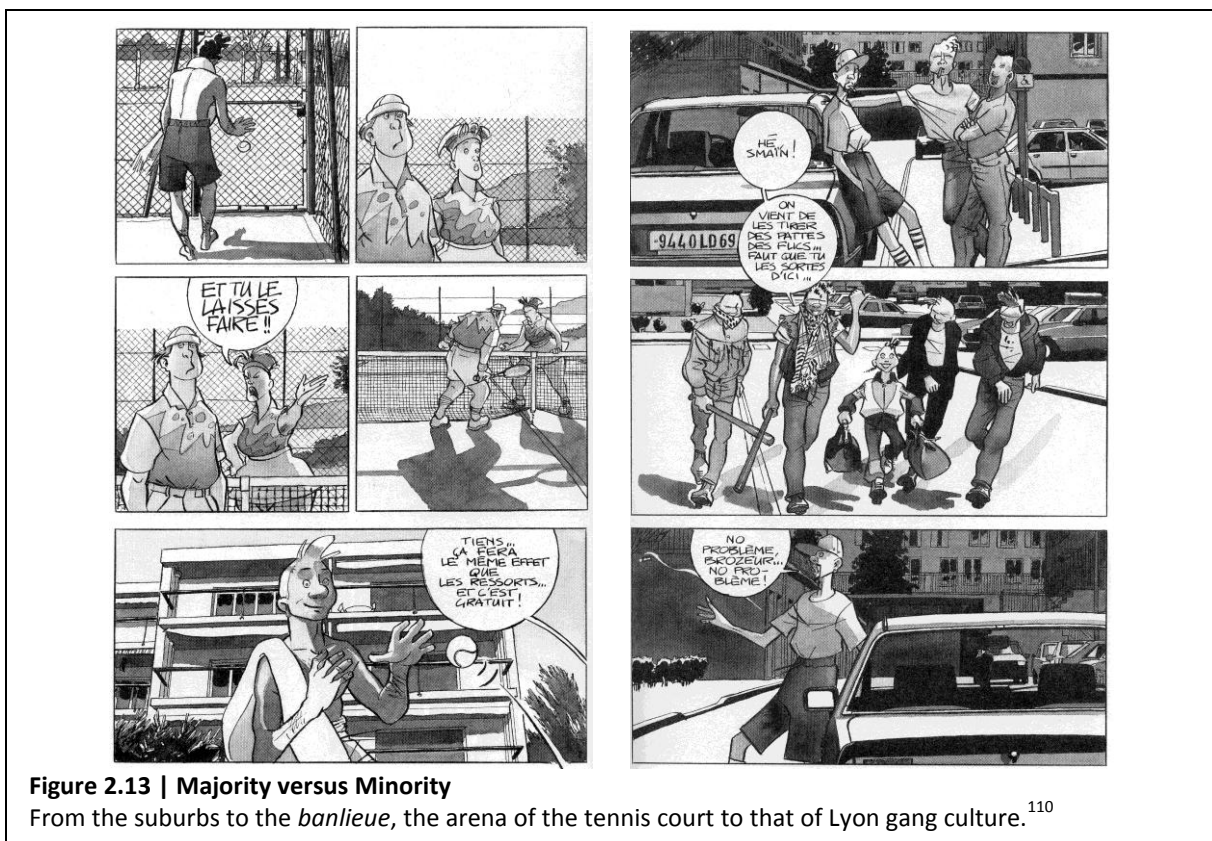
speed off at the end of chapter 12. Here the role of the coloniser is reversed – Karim and Alexandre are unwelcome houseguests, at least initially, and furthermore Karim, the minority hero, is demonstrated to be more powerful and quick thinking than his European host. Other voices, classes and statuses are more difficult to categorise, for example those of Daniel “*La Fleur*,” who is at once aligned with and disassociated from Karim. Analogies can be drawn between their personal and

<sup>108</sup> Baru, *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, p. 299.

<sup>109</sup> Miller, *Reading Bande Dessinée: Critical Approaches to French-language Comic Strip*, p. 76.

ethnic (non-European) backgrounds yet La Fleur aligns himself with the ‘majority’ through his opposition to Karim (the ‘hero’), as his character’s role is revealed to be that of a villain.

Figure 2.13 shows a comparison of the representation of members of the majority and minority groups defined above in two plates from the album. In the first an anonymous white French couple are engaging in the middle class pursuit of tennis and Karim steals a tennis ball from them. Like Loiseau, the impotency of the male partner is established through a subjugating female and through his choice not to engage with the invading minority force which calmly exerts its authority. Neither partner is capable of affirmative action; the first stands by whilst the second merely engages in rhetoric. By contrast, in the second plate Karim and Alexandre have arrived in the outskirts of Lyon and temporarily joined forces with a group of young *beur* men. Their difference from the majority group is established in a number of ways including their use of colloquial language, dress codes and culture of small group (gang) membership. They take on the police and other potential intruders into their sphere of influence and are shown as confident and unrepressed.



<sup>110</sup> Baru, *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, p. 192 and p. 281.

One technique used in the *mise-en-page* to establish this can clearly be seen in the example given, since the French couple are depicted in small, restricting boxes, even in the final wide shot of them, whereas the frames enclosing the latter group are more open, the speech bubbles (and even the lines of movement of the tennis ball) entering the inter-frame space of the page. Techniques such as this are repeated throughout the album and Miller uses it as the primary example in her chapter entitled *The Codes and Formal Resources of Bande Dessinée* which contains many more examples of the layout and use of space in the text.<sup>111</sup>

The character of Karim is described in the album's opening pages as having "une mauvaise réputation. On racontait qu'il gagnait des fortunes en jouant aux cartes... Qu'il vendait de la drogue, qu'il avait le SIDA... Mais qu'aucune femme ne lui résistait et qu'il couchait avec les plus riches pour de l'argent."<sup>112</sup> Mythologized by those who lived in his town, Karim's character is deemed a minority by those in the town community with minority status themselves. Infatuated with a romanticised aesthetic of 1950s America, he dresses and styles his hair like James Dean, rides a moped and is enamoured with the American vehicles that feature throughout the text, traits which for the townsfolk, "ajoutait à sa bizarrerie et achevait de le déconsidérer dans ce quartier ouvrier qu'il n'avait jamais quitté."<sup>113</sup> The analogies between *Autoroute* and classic 1950s road movies are clear, and Miller makes reference in her article to correlations with *Easy Rider* and *Rebel Without a Cause*<sup>114</sup> – Faurisier's pursuit is a plot device to allow for Karim and Alexandre's voyage of self- and national- discovery.

The hunter/hunted relationship which operates between Faurisier and Karim is one of the most intriguing elements of the album. At first glance, Faurisier is very much a part of the majority culture; commanding a group of henchmen, his wealth, access to armaments, ethnicity and

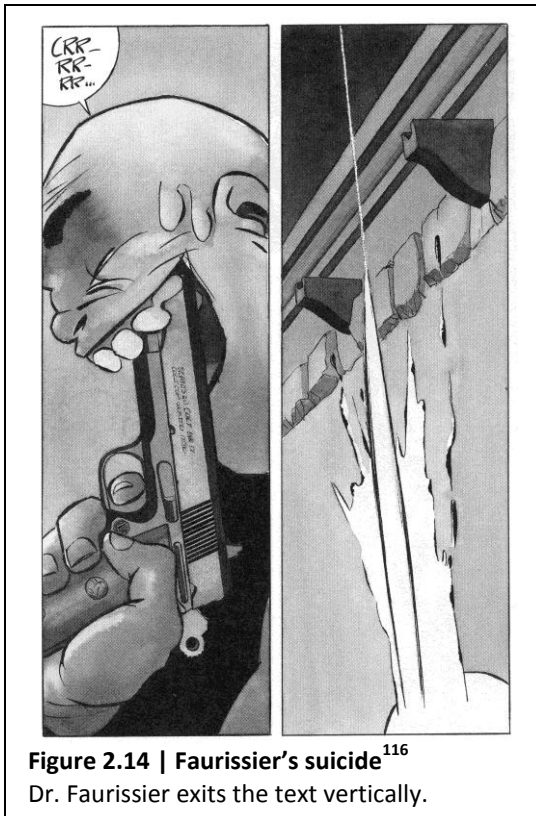
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<sup>111</sup> Miller, *Reading Bande Dessinée: Critical Approaches to French-language Comic Strip*, p. 75.

<sup>112</sup> Baru, *L'Autoroute du Soleil*, p. 6.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>114</sup> Miller, *Narratives of Adolescence, Ethnicity and Masculinity in the Work of Baru*, p. 144.



involvement in the *Elan national français* suggest his membership of the majority group in France yet he repeatedly allows Karim to escape when he would have had every chance of killing him. Karim is a source of fascination to Faurissier and, whilst any undertone of sexual desire for the former is played down, Faurissier nonetheless delights in his encounters with the latter, perhaps most evident when he rises up behind a sleeping Karim and, whispering, describes the ability of his Colt 45 which “fait des gros trous dans la tête,”<sup>115</sup> eventually proven through his own suicide (Figure 2.14). By extension,

the masculinity of this menacing, white, right-wing caricature is not only undermined through his encounters with Karim (after all, the impetus for chase was the appropriation of Faurissier’s wife), but also through his racist rhetoric. The threat posed by the majority in this text (right-wing extremists), all too apparent to many in contemporary France, is disempowered here by minority heroes and silenced by the minority voice.

The threat of a far-right majority national status was to continue to be a theme in Baru’s narrative after *Autoroute* and this chapter will conclude by considering the minority voice in one of his later albums, *Bonne Année*, one which presents a more pessimistic assessment of the strength of extremist political views in France than that represented by Doctor Faurissier.

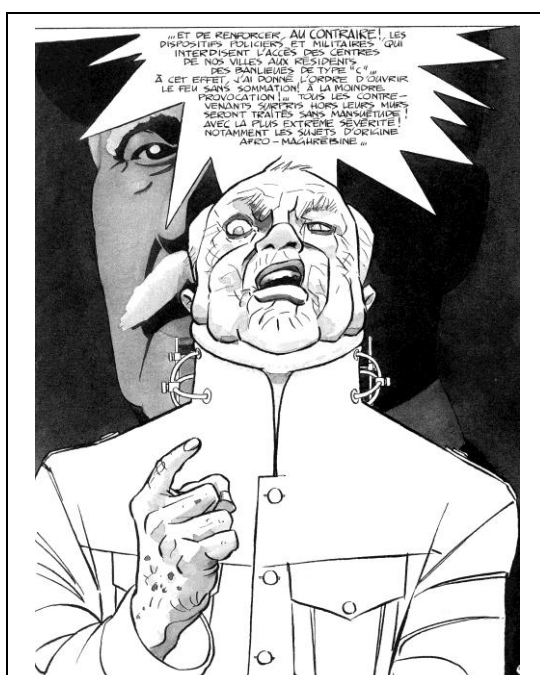
<sup>115</sup> Baru, *L’Autoroute du Soleil*, p. 377.

<sup>116</sup> Baru, *Album: L’Autoroute du Soleil*, p. 420.

## 2.5 Bonne Année (1998)

The narrative of *Bonne Année* imagines the end result of the continued imposition of the title ‘minority’ onto the subset of society from which Baru repeatedly draws his protagonists. The artist recently republished the album in a collection of work entitled *Noir*<sup>117</sup> alongside a number of other stories which form a grim chapter in the work of Baru in which, Miller observes, the “post-industrial scenario from *L’Autoroute* of a multi-ethnic working class community which combats the menace from the extreme right is rejected [...]: that fight has been lost.”<sup>118</sup> The original album was published prior to France’s 2002 presidential election, pre-empting the rise in concern over the potential of the extreme-right in France regarding the unprecedented success of Le Pen and the *Front National*. In Baru’s words:

Cette fable à peine futuriste est en fait la réponse que j’ai apportée à une question que vous me posez souvent : s’il fallait refaire “Quéquette Blues” aujourd’hui, qu’est ce que ça donnerait ?<sup>119</sup>



**Figure 2.15 | The President**<sup>120</sup>

A Le Pen-like figure, possibly artificially preserved, dictates his Orwellian regime in front of the image of Marshal Pétain.

Whilst ‘fable’ may not be the most obvious term to apply to an album which appears to superimpose the dystopia of Orwell’s *1984* on the socioeconomically deprived *banlieue*, the narrative path undertaken by the young protagonists over just a few hours, does provide the opportunity for the minority voice to be heard and perhaps offer a moral lesson.

The album is set on New Year’s Eve 2017 (the 18-year-old narrator who opens the album states that “tout le bin’s a commencé”<sup>121</sup> around the turn of the

<sup>117</sup> Baru, *Noir* (Paris: Casterman, 2009).

<sup>118</sup> Miller, *Narratives of Adolescence, Ethnicity and Masculinity in the Work of Baru*, p. 147.

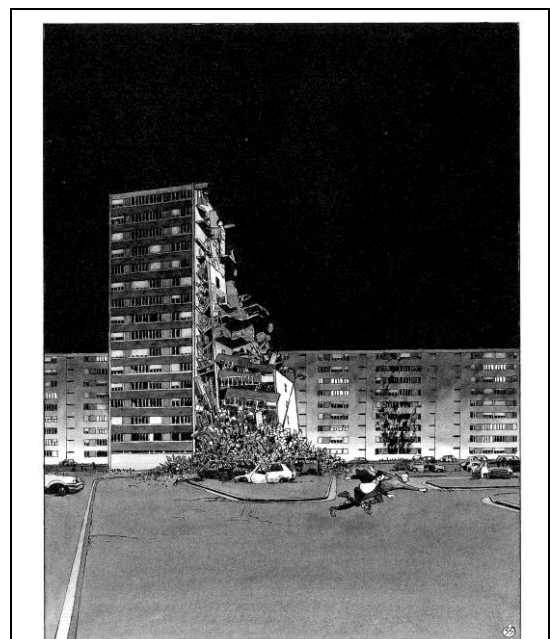
<sup>119</sup> Baru, *Album*, <http://baru.airsoftconsulting.info/Album.aspx?page=9&album=bonneannee> [accessed 15/02/2009].

<sup>120</sup> Baru, *Bonne Année*, p. 36.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

century when he was very small). Essentially, following a series of riots in large French cities, an unnamed Le Pen lookalike has come to power (Figure 2.15) and ordered the segregation of inner city from *banlieue* by means of prison-like walls, watchtowers and armed guards trained to shoot anyone trying to cross the border. Another weapon in the president's armoury is the proliferation of AIDS in the *cit *. On page 67 of the album the image on a video monitor (not unlike the telescreens of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*<sup>122</sup>) alludes to the fact that a vaccine has been developed and given to the inner city dwellers, defined here as the majority, whilst the minority residents of the *banlieue* are refused access to contraception in a (successful) attempt to spread the disease amongst them. This is the backdrop for the story of Hocine and Julien's quest to cross the border and purchase condoms, although the plot here is subjacent to the depiction of characters and experiences, as the diegesis hops between individuals, groups and occurrences.

As quoted above, Baru saw this album as a rewriting of his *Quequette Blues* series, first published in 1984. Baru's recurring themes of masculinity, ethnicity, adolescence and immigration are all present here, but presented in hopeless surroundings. The camaraderie and group identity of those who form the minority group, however, still appear strong. The opening narrative voice states, "des jours j'ai l'impression qu'on est dans un immense ch teau fort, comme si c' tait nous qu'on voulait se prot ger d'eux... et  a m'fait rigoler."<sup>124</sup> The only people who



**Figure 2.16 | An Urban Savannah**<sup>123</sup>  
The Lyonnais Z.U.P. from *Autoroute* is now burnt out and brought to the unnamed *banlieue* of *Bonne Ann e*.

venture into the world of the *cit * from the inner city, men seeking male prostitutes, and undoubtedly forming part of this President's Untermensch, are hunted like wild animals on four-wheeled safaris in

<sup>122</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984) (Middlesex: Penguin, 1949).

<sup>123</sup> Baru, *Bonne Ann e*, p. 57.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

the same *Z.U.P.* featured in *Autoroute*, now completely derelict (compare Figure 2.5 with Figure 2.16).

Pages 51 to 72 of *Bonne Année* close the album with the story of Hocine and Julien crossing the border from their minority space to that of the majority. In another parallel with *Autoroute*, the couple bear a striking resemblance, both physically and in terms of the roles played, to Karim and Alexandre. Julien is the sidekick who follows Hocine and, on page 53, sits in waiting while his hero tries to live up to Karim's amorous reputation (mirroring Alexandre on page 39 of *Autoroute*) with Clara reprising the role of Faurissier's wife. Furthermore, Baru's nods to his own comics heroes are not lacking here: the Hergian smokestack features on a poster on page 61 and Miller notes that the character 'Mo is a nod to the classic character of Spirou in his bellboy-like hat although, as she further notes, his cheerful presence in the text only stands to heighten the bleakness and sombre mood of his surroundings.<sup>125</sup>

The culmination of the album sees the two protagonists arrive in the majority space and presents the reader with a brief glimpse of majority life (a New Year celebration dinner). Their arrival causes a rupture in the proceedings as they burst through the house, a cake with candles that read '2018' is dropped and a middle class overweight Frenchwoman gasps in horror as the pair wish her "Bonne Année".<sup>126</sup> The duo finally complete their quest and obtain their idolized treasure at a pharmacy, at which moment the patriarch of the dinner party arrives with the machine-gun clad *Police Nationale* and the pair are dragged off to the police station. The arrival of members of the minority group appears to be an unprecedented event for the household concerned. Baru's representation of the pair further confirms their apartness from the majority group and space – not only is the caricature-like drawing style of the adolescents even more obviously incongruous with the detailed

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<sup>125</sup> Miller, *Narratives of Adolescence, Ethnicity and Masculinity in the Work of Baru*, p. 147.

<sup>126</sup> Baru, *Bonne Année*, p. 66.



backgrounds in this section, but the relatively detailed depiction of the faces of the police demonstrates their correspondence with the majority backdrop of traditional French architecture.

The final pages of the album offer, in Miller's words, "a moment of optimism when one of the border guards, Kovack, tired of racist taunts from his colleagues, releases (the pair)."<sup>127</sup> This really is little more than a note however since, whilst the album ends with the same triumphant leap into the air as on page 424 of *Autoroute* (and as Hocine and Julien make their own Odyssean return to the *cit *) there is little to be optimistic about in the narrative of Baru's unnerving tale. Conversely, the remarkable characteristic of *Bonne Ann e*, and the one which contributes most to the definition of the voice of the text as minority, is by its nature affirmative: the constructed identity of the exiled group. Admittedly some members of this group are as contemptuous towards the majority group as the latter is to the former (hence the safari of the *Z.U.P.* mentioned above) but the group of adolescent young men form bonds through the anthropological concerns of friendship and sexual attraction and activity. The official voice of the majority group is diffused artificially through a television image and the lower case heroes of the text unquestionably inhabit the minority space. The terror in the story exists only in the division that has been created, and even this is undermined slightly as Kovack the border guard exonerates the immigrants. He facilitates their return from the majority space in a gesture which, ostensibly borne out of convenience (he is busy watching the end of the televised film which opened the album) is also perhaps due to his own immigrant background (hinted at as his colleague insultingly refers to him as a "Polack d g n r ").<sup>128</sup> The minority voice therefore not only makes itself heard, as it did in *Autoroute* (and Baru's 1980s albums such as those from *Quevette Blues*) but refuses to be silenced.

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<sup>127</sup> Miller, *Narratives of Adolescence, Ethnicity and Masculinity in the Work of Baru*, p. 147.

<sup>128</sup> Baru, *Bonne Ann e*, p. 70.

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider the *Journal* project of Fabrice Neaud. Neaud is one of the founding members of the independent *bande dessinée* publishing house *Ego comme X*, established in Angoulême in 1994. He has been a key contributor to the house's periodical of the same name and his diverse albums include a collaborative project on his home town's *Maison des Auteurs* (entitled *Neaud Squarzoni Mussat*)<sup>130</sup> and *Alex et la vie d'après*.<sup>131</sup> The latter's 45 pages follow Alex's

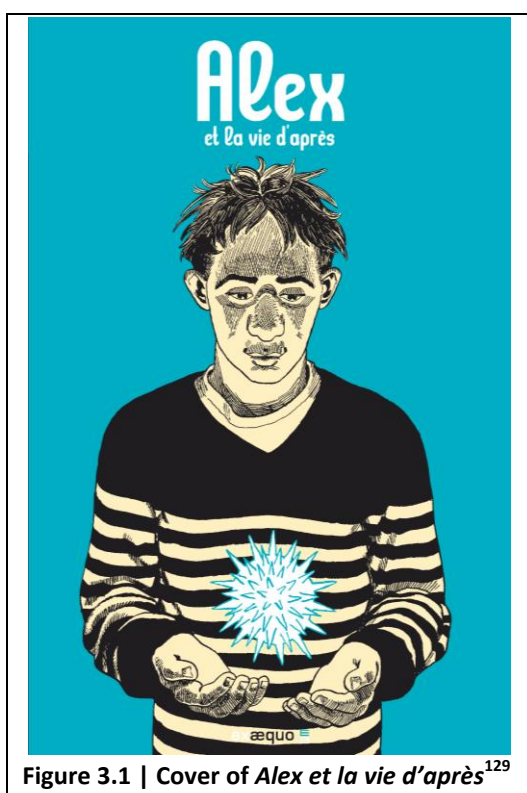


Figure 3.1 | Cover of *Alex et la vie d'après*<sup>129</sup>

encounters with a number of individuals after discovering that he is HIV-positive. The album, distributed free of charge in print and online, was published through *Ex Aequo*, a Belgian not-for profit organisation which works to promote sexual health.<sup>132</sup>

Its cover features an artistic interpretation of a Human Immunodeficiency Virus between Alex's hands (Figure 1.1), the physical representation of which mirrors Baru's use of anthropomorphism (as seen in Chapter 2). Neaud's work features countless other graphical representations and anthropomorphic interpretations of concepts, thoughts and feelings along with examples

of pathetic fallacy, which will be an important factor in this chapter's analysis. The wide ranging topic of homosexuality also features in the majority of Neaud's work but the author does not set out to act as an ambassador for gay people (he has made this clear both in interviews and through the

<sup>129</sup> *Ego comme X: Alex et la vie d'après*, <http://www.ego-comme-x.com/spip.php?article433> [accessed 12/07/2009].

<sup>130</sup> Xavier Mussat and Fabrice Neaud, *Neaud Squarzoni Mussat* (Online publication: *Maison des auteurs/ego-comme-x*, 2004) <<http://www.ego-comme-x.com/spip.php?article430>>.

<sup>131</sup> Fabrice Neaud, *Alex et la vie d'après* (Online publication: *Ego comme X/Ex Aequo.*, 2008) <<http://www.ego-comme-x.com/spip.php?article433>>.

<sup>132</sup> *Ex Aequo absl, Qui sommes-nous?* [http://www.exaequo.be/cms/qui\\_sommesnous\\_fr.php](http://www.exaequo.be/cms/qui_sommesnous_fr.php) [accessed 16/10/2008].

content of his *Journal* series, as seen below). Rather, much of his work actively questions the validity of concepts such as ‘the gay community’ and bemoans the frequently stereotypical nature both of this imagined community’s adherents and of the way queer topics are represented in *bande dessinée* and the wider artistic world. Nowhere is this questioning more apparent than in Neaud’s most well known and ambitious work, and that which this chapter will endeavour to explore: his autobiographical project, *Journal*.

Neaud’s *Journal* is both a diary and a series of albums (Figure 3.2) and provides an introspective account of lived experiences released into the public domain through the medium of *bande dessinée*. At the time of writing the series consists of four volumes; Neaud has announced that a fifth tome is slowly taking shape and has outlined his plan for subsequent albums.<sup>133,134</sup> In so far as it is autobiographical, the volumes of his diary align themselves with a number of other graphic novel artists. As seen in Chapter 1, evidence of this stretches from the earliest days of *bande dessinée* – Grove’s

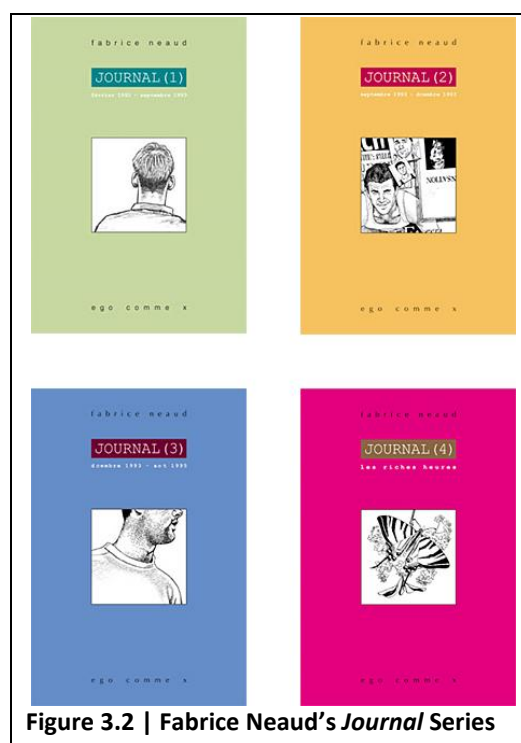


Figure 3.2 | Fabrice Neaud’s *Journal* Series

article cites Rousseau’s claim that he is “the founder of autobiography” as an influence on the likely father of *BD*, Rodolphe Töpffer<sup>135</sup> – to well known twentieth century works such as Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* series, a biography of the author’s father during the Holocaust.<sup>136</sup> However the key themes and the very scope of his project (which thus far comprises 779 pages) disassociate Neaud from many other *bande dessinée* diarists. It is not difficult to classify the *Journal* project under numerous

<sup>133</sup> Sébastien Soleille, *Fabrice Neaud*, [accessed 08/02/2009].

<sup>134</sup> Neaud has stated in an interview that, “J’ai 6 tomes du Journal sur le feu, la période 1999/2000 devant correspondre à un virtuel tome 11.” (Vincent Henry, *BD Sélection, Interview F. Neaud*, [http://www.bdselection.com/php/index.php?rub=page\\_dos&id\\_dossier=9](http://www.bdselection.com/php/index.php?rub=page_dos&id_dossier=9) [accessed 06/03/2009].)

<sup>135</sup> Grove, *Autobiography in Early Bande Dessinée*, p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale*.

categories – format (the graphic novel, the autobiography), theory (*AutoBioBD*, (post-) queer) and theme (provincial life, belonging, (gay) identity) but what stands out is the project's difference and therefore its minority status which, by extension, apply to the author and character of Fabrice. This thesis has sought to explore minority voice in *BD* and this third chapter represents a culmination of the ideas already considered, offering a discussion of one of the clearest examples of the use of *AutoBioBD* to give voice to an alternative expression.

## 3.2 Concepts for Analysis in *Journal*

Before examining the minority diarist's voice in *Journal* it is necessary to introduce two key concepts that will be used in the evaluation of Neaud's work in this chapter: the face and the idea of circles.

### 3.2a Face

The formal qualities of Neaud's work are of paramount importance to his readership's understanding of the core theme of the individual and of his or her place in society. In this respect a number of parallels can be drawn between the aesthetic qualities of *Journal* and those of *Autoroute*. The backgrounds in the world of Neaud's diary, like those of Baru, are meticulously reproduced with numerous examples of establishing shots drawn in painstaking detail (such as those of the railway – a recurrent leitmotif – shown in Figure 3.6) although this also applies to many of the characters depicted. However, frequent deviations from this detailed reproduction are to be found throughout Neaud's work and these typically stand to illustrate the disassociations between self and milieu which permeate his life story, through the contrast between the illustration of people and that of backgrounds and surroundings.

Of particular note is the non-homogeneous representation of the face, a trait of *Journal* which Johnson identifies in his article as being a core element of any graphic novel (along with the idea of

place).<sup>137</sup> One of many examples of this is described in Figure 3.3. Johnson’s article explores this characteristic with particular reference to a pre-pubescent Fabrice being chased and attacked in the opening scene of the first diary. This is an excellent case in point but other examples of the equation of marginality (minority status) with subjugation and disadvantage are to be found throughout all four volumes of the diary, particularly with regard to his sexuality and employment status, and will be returned to below.



**Figure 3.3 | Preserving the ‘anonymity’ of Doumé**

The last two frames in this example show the differences in style used to represent the face, here suggesting the disappearance of the image of the face of Neaud’s muse Dominique from the page (eventually all that is left is a speech bubble with no source).<sup>138</sup>

### 3.2b Circles

I will suggest that Neaud’s world, as seen through his eyes (the point of view of the album and thus that of its readers) is constructed from restrictive circles which he fights to expand or escape from. His sexuality, whilst arguably not the only foundation of the diary project, is relevant to a number of the artist’s inter- and intra-personal examinations and informs his representation and analysis of his situation (despite his resistance to being labelled a ‘gay *bédéiste*’). This resistance is shown self-referentially in the diaries themselves. The first volume of Neaud’s diary had already been published by the time he was creating the fourth volume, in which the project becomes self-referential, as he takes part in a radio interview about the project and is asked, “ton sujet principal, c’est

<sup>137</sup> Michael A. Johnson, ‘Post-Queer Autobiography: Placing/Facing Fabrice Neaud’, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 12 (2008), pp. 27-39., p. 27.

<sup>138</sup> Fabrice Neaud, *Journal (III): décembre 1993 - août 1995* (Angoulême: Ego comme X, 1999), p. 295.

l'homosexualité. T'as un message à faire passer?" Neaud replies, "Je n'ai aucun message à faire passer sur l'homosexualité!! Est-ce que "Roméo et Juliette" a pour sujet principal l'hétérosexualité ? NON !" and, in a smaller speech bubble, "Je parle de mon quotidien..."<sup>139</sup> However, in the same way that a contemporary film such as *Brokeback Mountain*<sup>140</sup> could not avoid the media-fuelled epithet of 'the gay cowboy movie', the convenient label of 'BD homo' is inevitable in the case of *Journal* and thus aligns it with other works by Neaud (including *Alex et la vie d'Après*, mentioned above). The project can also be classified as belonging to the wider universe of French gay *bédé*, the authors in which include Hugues Barthe<sup>141</sup> and the (smaller) world of French lesbian *BD* production which is home, for example, to a couple writing under the *noms de plume* of Arbelune and Jour de Pluie.<sup>142</sup> The promulgation of such a categorisation, however resisted it may be by the author, sets the albums up as a minority cultural product for a potential readership before they even leave the shelf of the *BD* bookstore.

Smaller circles exist inside this circle of sexuality (and possibly overlap with it) such as Fabrice's career in art which, apart from the liberating experience of creating the diary, is predominantly depicted as constraining. The second volume of the series features his disdain for and feelings of disassociation from artists with whom he shares a workshop: "...Je pense de plus en plus à l'écriture de mon journal ... en autres termes: je ne me sens pas forcément proche de l'atelier des 'bras cases'" (p. 17). His disillusionment is also apparent when he seeks paid employment – the bland and uninspiring world of graphic design for advertising is seen on pages 11 to 13 of the second volume. This banality is reflected in the uninspired use of a traditional layout of symmetrical frames on the pages depicting bureaucratic discussions and criticisms of his work. Such a traditional formal framework appears conspicuous (and incongruous) amongst the innovative *mise-en-page* employed in the depiction of many other scenes which do not always follow a traditional left to right and/or top

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<sup>139</sup> Fabrice Neaud, *Journal (4): les riches heures* (Angoulême: Ego comme X, 2002), p. 130.

<sup>140</sup> *Brokeback Mountain*, dir. by Ang Lee (Focus Features, 2005).

<sup>141</sup> See, for example, Hugues Barthe, *Dans la peau d'un jeune homo* (Paris: Hachette, 2007).

<sup>142</sup> See, for example, Françoise Leclère, *Les Marsouines* (Brive, France: Self-published, 1997).

to bottom reading order (see Figure 3.4). The world of commerce appears as yet another domain (another circle) with which he feels no association. Further metaphorical enclosures permeate the *journaux*, from the ramparts of Angoulême to spaces such as the *jardin public* which, as explored in Johnson’s aforementioned article, facilitates the demasking process of Fabrice since, in his mind’s eye, it forms the locus of sexual encounters.

The final circle Neaud willingly excludes himself from is that of the gay (imagined) community with which he feels little or no affiliation. This is demonstrated, for example, in his ‘warts and all’

assessment of people in a gay café:

Une faune bigarrée, [...] quelques bourgeois cinquantenaires endimanchés qui se la jouent “Mort à Venise” en siphonnant du rhum-coca, [...] des lesbiennes [...] gaulées comme des garagistes, quelques travelos pathétiques [...] et des clones jeunes mariés qui, en mal de paternité, ont accouché au bout de neuf mois d’un caniche abricot.<sup>144</sup>

In so much as these circles act to exclude and constrain, and as shifts occur between the resistance and willingness of Neaud’s face to reveal itself depending on his physical or mental situation, the protagonist of the diaries can be read as a minority in his environment, in an isolation only compounded by the solitary nature of any diarist’s voice.



<sup>143</sup> Neaud, *Journal (4): les riches heures*, p. 102.

<sup>144</sup> Fabrice Neaud, *Journal (1): février 1992 - septembre 1993* (Angoulême: Ego comme X, 1996), p. 41.

### 3.3 The Diarist's Voice

#### 3.3a Identification of Voice

At first glance the identification of voice in any autobiographical project is straightforward and in Neaud's diaries the perspective through which the reader is carried across the four volumes is indeed presented as that of Fabrice. However, iconic metaphors and recurring leitmotifs feature heavily throughout the work and these stand to introduce the more reflective voice of the narrator. The non-immediacy inherent to diary writing can act to lessen its validity, since the creative act occurs after the events or feelings which inspire it. This is of particular relevance in the case of a graphic novel diary because the time required for its production precludes any attempt to remove the narrative voice. Simultaneity of the processes of action and documentation is neither achievable nor the intention of the project. This fact is raised in several articles and interviews with Neaud, for example:

**Vous avez décidé de ne pas mettre de distanciation entre votre vécu et votre journal. Est-ce par honnêteté, facilité [...] ?**

Fabrice Neaud: Il y a plusieurs années entre les événements vécus et la réalisation des planches, ce dont témoigne la date de publication, il y a donc automatiquement une distanciation. La réalisation du tome 3, par exemple, est postérieure de 5 ans aux événements qu'il décrit. Supprimer la distance était le but de la première tentative de journal direct dans Ego comme X n°5, pas de l'ensemble du Journal. [...] Il n'y a pas plus difficile, au contraire, que de supprimer la distance, surtout avec un dessin comme le mien. Il faudrait une écriture minimale pour parvenir à tenir un journal qui prétendrait à l'abolition de la distance, ce qui resterait une illusion. Il y a toujours transposition.<sup>145</sup>

In the same interview, however, Neaud describes some of his distance-reducing techniques such as taking photographs and then copying them to try to lessen the inherent *décalage* of his frames. Any attempt to identify voice in the diaries and to classify it as minority therefore requires an awareness of the unavoidable dual role Fabrice plays in the text. As both narrator and protagonist Neaud occasionally strays from Lejeune's pact, often through imagined scenarios or sequences illustrative of experiences which are thought and felt rather than lived and this regularly occurs through iconic metaphors.

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<sup>145</sup> Vincent@bdselection, *BD Sélection, Interview F. Neaud, Fabrice Neaud*, [http://www.bdselection.com/php/index.php?rub=page\\_dos&id\\_dossier=9](http://www.bdselection.com/php/index.php?rub=page_dos&id_dossier=9) [accessed 12/07/2009].



An example of use of iconic metaphor can be found in the sequence in *Journal 2* which features frames depicting ever amassing shackles restricting Fabrice’s body (Figure 3.5). These are representative of desperate emotions borne out of the events described in the intermediary frames (chiefly derived from the futile nature of many of his character’s unrequited sexual desires). Examples of leitmotifs which run throughout all four volumes include railway landscapes and an anatomically representative heart (Figure 3.6). The significance of each leitmotif is left open to interpretation. The image of the railway is usually connected with the idea of departure (in the case of the opening to the second volume this is the departure of Stéphane which occurred at the end of the first album) whilst that of the human organ acts a physical representation of intangible matters of the heart. Prior to the frames reproduced in Figure 3.6 Stéphane states his concern for Fabrice which causes the heart (assumed to be that of Neaud) to be physically touched by Michaelangelo’s hand of God (another leitmotif which features in the first two diaries). Later on in the first diary a loaded gun is seen pointing at that same heart, representative of Stéphane’s subsequent desire for

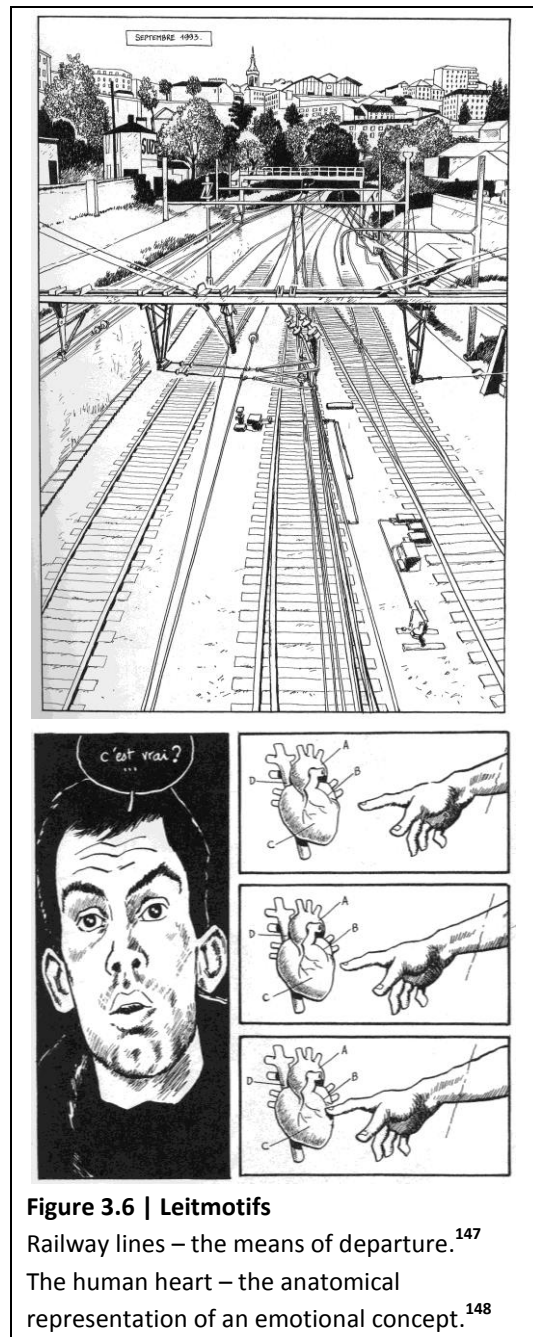


Figure 3.5 | Frames (highlighted in red) demonstrating Neaud’s use of iconic metaphor<sup>146</sup>

<sup>146</sup> Fabrice Neaud, *Journal (2): septembre 1993 - décembre 1993* (Angoulême: Ego comme X, 1998), p. 60.

severance. These devices can be read to some extent as reductive. The authority, or at least the exclusivity, of Neaud’s voice in the albums is diminished as the narrative voice introduces interpretation (usually graphically) of personal and social issues and, as in this example, Neaud frequently depicts himself from a third person point of view.

Paradoxically, Neaud has stated in an interview that he avoids self-depiction as far as possible: “dans une autobiographie il est logique de ne pas être, *de facto*, qu’en camera subjective.”<sup>149</sup> This is perhaps not entirely tenable in the *journaux* since, whilst the narration is subjective, the camera’s point of view (that of Fabrice Neaud) alternates between Fabrice the protagonist and Neaud the narrator. Furthermore the image of his face is clearly present throughout the text, indeed it stands as the most prominent (and repeated) leitmotif of the entire project, to the point that



**Figure 3.6 | Leitmotifs**

Railway lines – the means of departure.<sup>147</sup>

The human heart – the anatomical representation of an emotional concept.<sup>148</sup>

Groensteen’s preface to *Journal (1)* describes it as a signature: “Pour longtemps sans doute il nous sera difficile de dissocier cette signature (je) de cette voix (de Fabrice).”<sup>150</sup> These caveats notwithstanding, the authority of the subjective ‘Je’ is strengthened through the combination of graphic novel format (with its infinite creative possibilities) and diary (one of the most personal

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>148</sup> Neaud, *Journal (1): février 1992 - septembre 1993*, p. 61.

<sup>149</sup> ‘Réponses à huit questions sur l’autobiographie’, *Neuvième Art*, (January 1996), pp. 70-83. The questions are unattributed.

<sup>150</sup> Identified in Johnson, *Post-Queer Autobiography: Placing/Facing Fabrice Neaud*, p. 33.

modes of expression). This combination effectively transports emotion and mood onto the graphic novel plates and can thus be understood to distil the voice on the page to that of Fabrice.

### 3.3b The Minority Voice of *AutoBioBD*

Having discussed Neaud's voice this section will look at the classification of that voice as minority. Although the *Journal* project forms part of a growing trend towards autobiographies produced in *bande dessinée* form (see Chapter 1) it nonetheless displays characteristics distinct from those of almost any other artist. In a news item about *Ego comme X* broadcast on France 3, Neaud is described as a unique artist with a cult status and, when interviewed, states, "la liberté que j'ai dans mon travail, je la dois à cette collaboration, je la dois à Loïc,<sup>151</sup> [...] sans lui je n'aurais pas fait ce que j'ai fait. La question ne se pose même pas, quoi. Faudra avoir une catastrophe pour ne plus travailler avec *Ego comme X*."<sup>152</sup> This freedom has allowed Neaud to embark upon a singular undertaking in which he presents provocative, even scabrous subject matters (sexual scenes are depicted without restraint, as is his desire for a number of male characters which cause the reader, through the eyes of Fabrice, to focus on both imagined and real homoerotic images and observations). Such frank depiction alienates a potential readership (not least amongst heterosexual males) as has been discussed in Pratt's article on heterocentricity<sup>153</sup> and, whilst this is not of central concern to this thesis, the distinctiveness of Neaud's work is to be found in its unapologetic and, to an extent, selfish presentation of Fabrice, a self-centred approach inherent to diary writing.

Fabrice Neaud's status as a minority author and character and the minority voices of these identities therefore arise in part from non-conformity; Fabrice is gay, his relationships range from unrequited love (the principal story in *Journal III*) to quasi-stalker (the main narrative of the latter part of the first diary) and he is variously unemployed or trying to eke a living out of his artwork. Given that two of

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<sup>151</sup> Loïc Néhou is the founder of *Ego comme X* and a regular character in the *journaux*.

<sup>152</sup> *Ego comme X: un autre regard sur la BD* (France 3, 21 January 2009). (Transcription of interview.)

<sup>153</sup> Murray Pratt, 'The Diary of Neaud's Body: Approaching the Subject of Heterocentricity', in *Gay and Lesbian Cultures in France*, ed. by Lucille Cairns (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 266.

the key premises of the diaries involve the identities or circles<sup>154</sup> of the homosexual male and the (BD) artist, the processes which other his character in the *journaux* occur in encounters with the heterocentric non-art world (for example, his disdain for the office-fodder who criticise his drawing when he is forced to seek marketing work in *Journal (2)*).<sup>155</sup> The manner in which his ‘othering’ occurs goes further than this, however, and demands an investigation of the specificities of both the medium of *bande dessinée* and the particular style of *BD* employed in the *journaux*.

### 3.3c *Journal as AutoBioBD*

The medium of *bande dessinée* is at once restricting and liberating. *BD* brings with it a number of formal qualities and conventions, characteristics which might be described as limitations, such as that the image is drawn (rather than photographic) or that extradiegetic narration appears in boxes within each frame. For Johnson the medium is “architectural” by which one can assume that common features such as framing and the progression of time and narration from left to right, top to bottom, are common imperatives to the canon of the medium. This is not to say that all *bande dessinateurs* follow these rules, indeed the most interesting examples of the strength and artistic merit of the medium typically arise from departures from its defining features. However, these departures are only identified through their difference from other work, or their otherness – perhaps even their minority status. In other words, Neaud, the archetypal non-conformist comic book writer, is able to express his own minority status through the medium of *bande dessinée* because of his otherness from, yet reference to, a conversely stringent set of rules and methods, which themselves have been explained and explored by academics and graphic novel artists alike (using the medium itself, in some cases).<sup>156</sup> Thus, out of the work of all the authors mentioned in this thesis, the neogenre of *AutoBioBD* described in Chapter 1 is perhaps most appropriately applied to the *Journal*

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<sup>154</sup> As defined in Section 3.2.

<sup>155</sup> Neaud, *Journal (2): septembre 1993 - décembre 1993* pp. 10-14.

<sup>156</sup> See Lewis Trondheim and Sergio García, *Bande dessinée: apprendre et comprendre* (Paris: Delcourt, 2006). This album posits the authors in their created *bande dessinée* world in order to elucidate a number of its formal features, and Benoît Peeters, *Case, planche, récit: Comment lire une bande dessinée* (Tournai, Belgium: Casterman, 1991).

project. Neaud's work certainly leaves room for debate and, given that its rules were 'written to be broken' to an extent, *bande dessinée* offers the *journaux* the possibility for "limitless stylistic variance."<sup>157</sup>

### 3.4 Formal Visual Resources

The singularities of Fabrice's character and his situation explored above can be referenced with regard to their visual representation on his canvas (the expanse of pages which make up his diary to date) and to Neaud's exploitation of the resources of the *bande dessinée* format. The form and structure of graphic novels is one of the key topics in academic study of the medium and much of it draws on film theory. My intention in this section is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of Neaud's *mise-en-page*, which would centre on his construction of semiotic codes, temporality and meaning; these topics have been covered in detail by a number of scholars, notably in the Francophone world by Groensteen in *Système de la bande dessinée*.<sup>158</sup> Rather I aim to provide examples of Neaud's use of these codes and formal resources that contribute to the establishment of minority voice. A logical starting point for this is the artist's portrayal of his surroundings.

#### 3.4a Surroundings and Backgrounds

Although never specifically named as such, the "typical provincial town"<sup>159</sup> – as Neaud denotes it – featured in the diaries is his home town of Angoulême where both the *Ego comme X* publishing house and the *Cité internationale de la bande dessinée et de l'image* and its accompanying museum are located. This is the (somewhat remote) spiritual home of *BD* in Western France, where huge cartoon frescos adorn the sides of buildings akin to those in its Belgian counterpart of Brussels and street signs are shaped as speech bubbles (see Appendix B). The walls surrounding this provincial

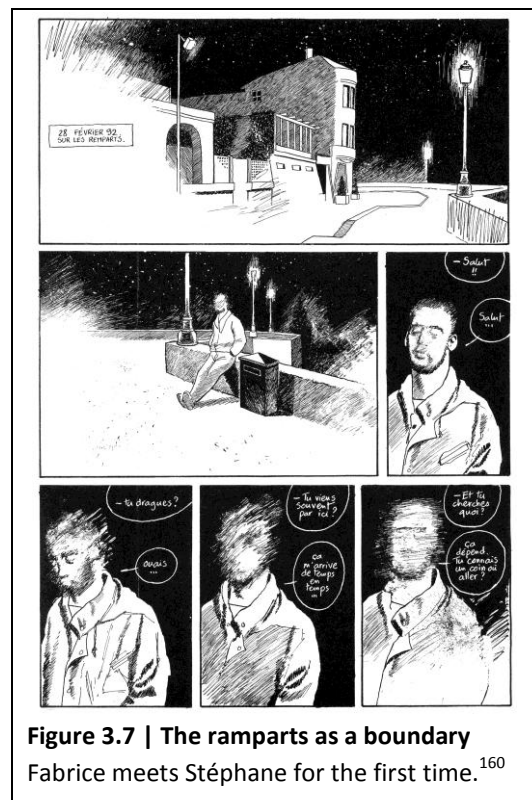
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<sup>157</sup> Pratt, *The Diary of Neaud's Body: Approaching the Subject of Heterocentricity*, p. 268.

<sup>158</sup> Thierry Groensteen, *Système de la bande dessinée*, 1st edn, *Formes sémiotiques* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1999).

<sup>159</sup> Pratt, *The Diary of Neaud's Body: Approaching the Subject of Heterocentricity*, p. 257.

*bourg* frame and enclose Neaud as the town becomes his storyboard and unsurprisingly its ramparts feature heavily in his drawings. In *Journal (1)* for example, they provide the location for Fabrice’s initial meeting with Stéphane, who is to become Fabrice’s muse and obsession. That the locus for this meeting is situated here not only calls to mind the idea of the peripheral but also of the boundary – Figure 3.7 shows this crucial nocturnal scene, the blurred figure of Stéphane both aligned with Fabrice’s minority status and apart from the everyday town. This apartness is realised both temporally (the meeting happens towards the



**Figure 3.7 | The ramparts as a boundary**  
Fabrice meets Stéphane for the first time.<sup>160</sup>

end of the day in an otherwise deserted street) and spatially (the street is on the edge of the town), as the ‘end’ of the town marks the beginning of the diaries’ story.

So far I have identified one of the primary themes of the *Journal* project as Fabrice’s non-belonging, evidenced by his voyeuristic tendencies and penchant for unobtainable and unrequited emotional attachments. The issues raised in the text are undeniably controversial in nature but then controversy is hardly a stranger in the diverse world of *bande dessinée*. Examples of the content and form of *BD* sparking debate range from Spiegelman’s Jewish mice and Nazi cats, to the work of Quebecois artist Julie Doucet, some of which is also autobiographical and all of which might tactfully be labelled alternative.<sup>161</sup> Another key theme in the diaries is that of the loss of identity, perhaps most clearly demonstrated in *Journal (III)*, as Dominique literally fades off the page, but also seen in the periodic refusal to reveal Fabrice’s identity to the reader, such as after he is attacked in the same volume. On page 191 he crawls into a foetal position on the pavement, a background which then

<sup>160</sup> Neaud, *Journal (1): février 1992 - septembre 1993*, p. 24.

<sup>161</sup> Mark Shainblum lists the core themes of Doucet’s work as, “sex, violence, menstruation and male/female issues.” (Mark Shainblum, ‘Canada’s Alternative Comic Creators Stand Up For Themselves’, *Onset*, 1, p. 25.)

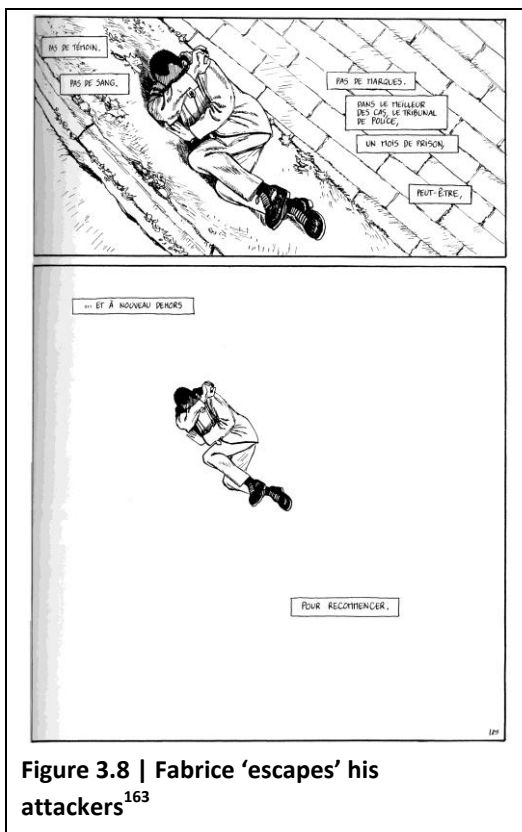


Figure 3.8 | Fabrice ‘escapes’ his attackers<sup>163</sup>

disappears in the final (largest) frame of the page, leaving Fabrice stranded and removed from the degraded world of his attacker (Figure 3.8). The closing two pages of the chapter feature his trademark empty faces and one frame goes as far as to substitute an overflowing sink onto his shoulders, representative, he states, of an anguish which, “sauvage, archaïque, enfouie au fond de moi jusqu’au plus animal, remonte alors le long de mes vertèbres tel un égout qui refoule.”<sup>162</sup> The ability of the face to convey emotion through expression is taken a step away from reality here, as it does in Neaud’s caricaturing, blurring,

camouflage and distortion of faces throughout his work – in a contradictory attempt to communicate the lived experience in the most accurate way possible. Surreal techniques such as this are possible, if rarely executed, in film but one of the strengths of the medium of *BD* is that it makes such a mode of communication readily available to its artists.

### 3.4b Points of View

Two techniques used in *bédé* which undoubtedly parallel their use in film are high and low-angled shots and point of view shots. Kolp emphasizes that the choice of shot angle, which could be unrealistically positioned, “peut modifier l’aspect d’un personnage et se charger d’une signification psychologique apparente.”<sup>164</sup> He draws a parallel between Tintin and Chaplin, both of whom are predominantly ‘shot’ from a horizontal angle, thus the ‘expression’ in the narrative is solely reliant on

<sup>162</sup> Neaud, *Journal (III): décembre 1993 - août 1995*, p. 192.

<sup>163</sup> Neaud, *Journal (III): décembre 1993 - août 1995*, p. 191.

<sup>164</sup> Kolp, *Le langage cinématographique en bande dessinée*, p. 25.

the personality of the characters being filmed (or drawn).<sup>165</sup> In the *Journal* series, however, the diverse range of techniques borrowed from film are contributory factors in the construction of both a spectacular and engaging narrative of the everyday. Perhaps the most obvious shot to represent allegorically a lack of social status (or a minority status) is a high angled one, implying superiority on the part of the viewer and indeed these are to be found in abundance throughout the diaries (Figure 3.8 is an example, the superior ocular point of view here being that of the attacker rather than the hopefully empathetic reader).

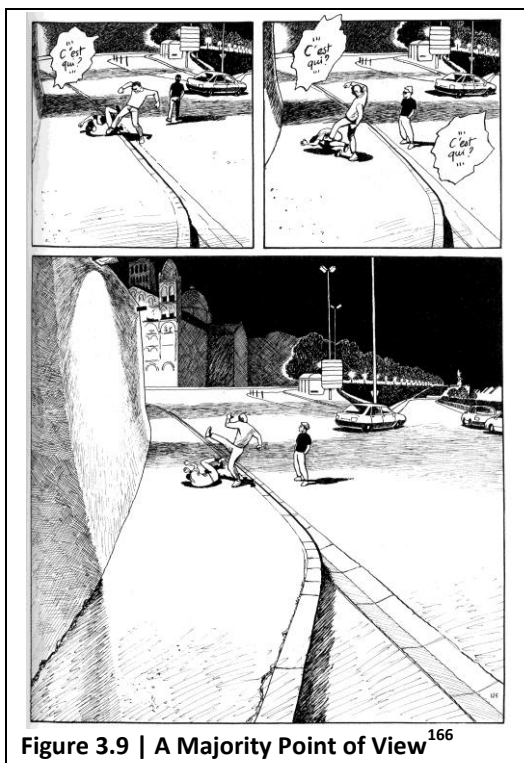


Figure 3.9 | A Major Point of View<sup>166</sup>

This attack scene is the second of two featured in the chapter and the first, which covers nine pages, offers another example of point of view choice. An establishing shot of a park, earlier established as a gay cruising spot, provides a transition from the previous scene (positioned as it is in the final frame of page 170). Fabrice is seen from a number of angles sitting on a fence before a chase ensues between him and his prospective attackers and, at the bottom of page 175, the shot (the reader's point of view) briefly changes to that of the assailant himself. Finally on page 177

(Figure 3.9) the final throws of the attack are shown from a distant, eye-level point of view, as that of an observer. This view is unnerving for the reader who, engaged in the process of observation, is drawn to play a role in the text – he stands and watches and the artist is kicked and stamped on. Not only is Fabrice disempowered by his inability to defend himself but the reader, who takes on the culpability of the attacker through his inaction, also adopts the majority status assigned to the

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>166</sup> Neaud, *Journal (III): décembre 1993 - août 1995*, p. 177.



aggressors, albeit temporarily, through the group's opposition to Fabrice and this only stands to strengthen the latter's minority status.

### 3.4c The Lines of the Frame

Sections 3.2b and 3.4a made reference to the premise of enclosure in Neaud's diaries, firstly through the idea of social and personal circles, and secondly in terms of the walls of the town which allegorically create Fabrice's minority status by denying access to a world outside of that inhabited by his majority opponents. It is possible to extend the premise of a demarcated enclosure to the use of frames in the albums. The most straightforward observations to make concern the occasions when Neaud eschews the frame. These occur less often than in Baru's work (and much less than in the work of many other artists) which stands to emphasize their significance. It might be expected that the frame simply stands to imprison Neaud's character and thus its elimination would signify moments Fabrice is able to free himself from his minority status. However Neaud's removal of the frame does more than imply space, escape or openness, although this may form part of his intention on occasion. On the contrary, the landscapes which open the four albums (a park, a railway, an isolated tree and a Dutch village respectively) are all enclosed in frames. Neither are frames absent in the much discussed chimerical shots of the sequence where Fabrice meets with Dominique at a table in Chapter 5 of *Journal (III)* when, if anywhere in the text, Neaud feels his most liberated. Rather, exodus from the frame sometimes corresponds to a personal disconnection with Neaud himself (such as the manifestly drawn Dominique on page 67 of *Journal (III)* or the atypical Denis on pages 84-87 of *Journal (4)*). Alternatively it stands to highlight a crossover between the drawn world which his character Fabrice inhabits and the lived world of Neaud the artist (the act of drawing becomes apparent for example when ink splatters appear on the page and are unconstrained by the frame, as on page 290 of *Journal (III)*).

Other sequences in the *Journal* series exhibit inspired, evocative and dramatic *mise-en-page* techniques and, whilst my focus here has been on examples which emphasize Neaud's minority

status, it is worth at least alluding to the depth of originality to be found in his work. The examples listed above are in no way exhaustive and do not begin to discuss issues such as the inter-frame space or the distinctive *décalage* which occurs between text and image in Neaud's work. Entire research projects arise from the topic of formal resources in *BD*, such as a chapter by Miller (from which this section borrows part of its title) which uses Baru's *Autoroute* as the primary source of examples to explore 'The Codes and Formal Resources of *Bande Dessinée*'.<sup>167</sup> In *bande dessinée* there can be no narrative without attention to form since, broadly speaking, *bédé* corresponds to the moving image of television and film as literature corresponds to oratory media such as radio. As we have seen, the minority voice is to be found not just orally (in terms of what it says, who says it or in what context) but also in terms of how the voice is presented visually to the reader.

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<sup>167</sup> Miller, *Reading Bande Dessinée: Critical Approaches to French-language Comic Strip*, p. 75.

## Conclusion

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Throughout history literature and art have facilitated a creative process through which voice – the expression of individual and group experiences and perspectives – can be realised. Forms and media for this expression evolve over time, as do the medium and proliferators of *bande dessinée*, but the voice of the artist remains the lifeblood of any artistic endeavour. This thesis has sought to suggest that *BD* in particular offers to those artists whose voices can be classified as minority the opportunity to transfer their voice to the page. This must be considered in light of the fact that, as an artistic medium, *bande dessinée* can be classified as a majority art form due to its widespread appeal and recognised position in popular culture.

The multi-disciplined approach taken in analysing the works considered reflects both the diverse content and form of *BD* albums and the various categories under which the work of the artists discussed herein can be placed. Specifically for the two artists considered in detail I have identified the genre of *AutoBioBD* (autobiography and autofiction) in the case of Neaud and the concept of the ‘lower case heroes’ of road novels and movies for Baru. These categories would appear to be equally important in the wider body of graphic novels. Firstly, *AutoBioBD* was discussed in relation to Spiegelman, Satrapi and Trondheim in Chapter 1 as a neogenre which has proved necessary to address the specificities of form and the unique properties of autobiographical *BD*. Secondly, the notion of an underdog or lower case hero runs the gamut of popular graphic novel and comic genres, from fantasy (Tolkienesque ‘goodies’ coming up against an evil other) to superhero (Peter Parker’s Spiderman or Denny Colt’s *The Spirit*).<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> See Appendix A.

The key concept of the minority has chiefly been considered as qualitative in nature and discussed in terms of its academic and political interpretations. Theoretical interpretations of the minority are particularly important in relation to Neaud's victimised voice, whilst Baru's voice is more politically motivated. Minority voice in *bédé* is multifarious and has been identified through topics such as nationality in the work of Boilet, form and theme in Delisle's albums, race and ethnicity in those of Spiegelman, and religion in the case of Satrapi. Finally the extensive work of Trondheim is evidence of the minority voice increasing in authority through the rise of *la nouvelle BD*, facilitated in part through the upsurge in independent publishing houses such as *Ego comme X* (in the case of Neaud). This process, analogous to Deleuze and Guettri's rejection of the concept of the dominant minority, calls into question the appropriateness of applying the term minority to the works it encompasses.<sup>169</sup>

From the working class heroes of the  *cité* in Baru's work to the non-conformist diarist resisting identification with, and membership of, a majority group, the visual presentation of minority voice appears to have found a home in *bande dessinée*. As the medium has increased in popularity and as its genres and readerships have diversified, it has now undoubtedly achieved legitimisation as an art form. This would seem discordant with the fact that the graphic novel format has always appealed to minority artists (in the various ways such a label has been applied in this thesis) and that this in turn has traditionally been associated with the anti-establishment spirit of the medium.

The rise of the independent publishing house, the neogenre of *AutoBioBD* and the BD's own *Nouvelle Vague* movement would all appear to be a response to *bédé's* entry into the cultural majority space. More recently the commercial world of *BD* has encroached into this newly formed subset of the medium as can be seen in the establishment of so-called *auteur* divisions of large publishers (as mentioned above, *Autoroute*, for example, is published under Casterman's *Écritures* label). As new minority voices are formed in the generations born into the not so distant world of *Bonne Année*, and

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<sup>169</sup> Deleuze, *Pour une littérature mineure* .

as the fast paced information age brings technological advances within ever closer reach of anyone who wants to make those voices heard artistically, it will be intriguing to see whether *bande dessinée* continues to provide the medium for this to happen.

## Appendices

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## Appendix A | *Bande dessinée* and Film



The analysis of the formal elements of *bande dessinée* has traditionally borrowed heavily from film theory, and BD has more recently begun to return the favour. The medium has shaped the *mise-en-scène* of films including comics author Frank Miller's *Sin City* and *The Spirit* (based on Will Eisner's eponymous masked crusader, the alter ego of Denny Colt).<sup>170</sup> Formal devices are employed in the use of costumes, the framing of shots and the use of CGI and drawn backdrops which appear to blur the distinction between live action and artificial reality. An examination of adaptations from BD into film can be found in Note 2 on page 5. Other silver and small screen productions have drawn inspiration from the graphic novel, such as Besson's *Nikita* or the NBC drama *Heroes*, an example from the world of television.<sup>171</sup>



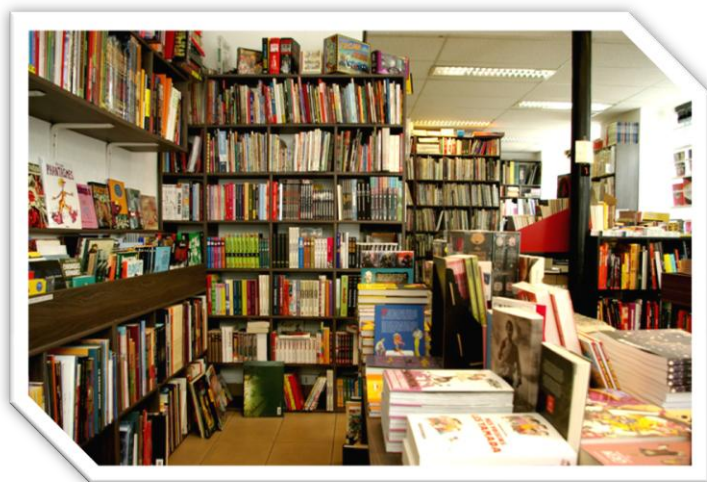
<sup>170</sup> Top left: *The Spirit*, dir. by Frank Miller (Lions Gate Entertainment, 2008).

Bottom left: *Sin City*, dir. by Frank Miller (Dimension Films, 2005).

Top right: *Nikita*, dir. by Luc Besson (Gaumont, 1990).

<sup>171</sup> Bottom right: Tim Kring, *Heroes* (National Broadcasting Company, 2006 - present). Image source: National Broadcasting Company, *heroes.jpg*, [http://www.nbc.com/NBC\\_First\\_Look/images/heroes.jpg](http://www.nbc.com/NBC_First_Look/images/heroes.jpg) [accessed 21 January 2009].

(i) *BD Spirit*, a *bande dessinée* shop in Paris<sup>172</sup>



<sup>172</sup> Phillipe Bordier and Geoffrey Bonnefoy, *dixhuitinfo.com*, <http://www.dixhuitinfo.com> [accessed 18/03/2009].



## (ii) Belgian BD culture in Brussels



A tableau of Tintin adorns *Gare du Midi* (left) whilst a fresco of Asterix et al. can be found just outside (right). (Photos: author's own.)

## (iii) French BD culture in Angoulême<sup>173</sup>



<sup>173</sup> Stuart Ng Books, *angouleme\_streetsign.jpg*, [http://www.stuartngbooks.com/angouleme\\_streetsign.jpg](http://www.stuartngbooks.com/angouleme_streetsign.jpg) [accessed 18/03/2009].

## Appendix C | [www.expobaru.com](http://www.expobaru.com)

The images below are taken from a website dedicated to *Exposition Baru*, an exhibition of Baru's work held in Blois, France and Charleroi, Belgium in 2007. They give an idea of the aesthetic qualities of Baru's work and of his subject matter but the site itself, which includes an introductory animation featuring video typical of the environment in which Baru grew up, should be consulted for a more complete picture. All of the images in this Appendix are taken from [www.expobaru.com](http://www.expobaru.com).<sup>174</sup>



<sup>174</sup> Phonem Communication, *EXPOBARU.COM*, <http://www.expobaru.com> [accessed 15/02/2009].

## Appendix D | INSEE Data

The data below is taken from the 2006 census undertaken by the *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques*, the results of which can be found at <http://www.recensement.insee.fr>.

A.	Agriculteurs exploitants	Artisans, commerçants, chefs entreprise	Cadres, professions intellectuelles sup.	Professions intermédiaires	Employés	Ouvriers	Retraités	Autres sans activité professionnelle	Ensemble
Français de naissance	552 064	1 434 335	3 826 789	6 444 630	7 716 768	6 151 951	11 780 077	18 934 060	56 840 674
Français par acquisition	5 771	101 900	189 963	294 175	471 209	403 921	569 575	634 034	2 670 547
Portugais	1 062	22 205	11 514	31 057	90 173	142 747	75 446	117 345	491 547
Italiens	355	7 576	12 665	12 170	13 316	18 530	77 049	35 817	177 476
Espagnols	358	4 051	9 215	11 070	14 155	15 699	53 608	26 802	134 958
Autres nationalités de l'UE (à 27)	3 935	21 567	61 879	53 433	43 633	31 259	93 146	159 508	468 360
Autres nationalités d'Europe	799	3 334	9 369	11 151	15 883	18 470	18 789	64 314	142 109
Algériens	148	12 132	10 286	22 458	57 192	80 540	99 045	199 184	480 986
Marocains	607	10 235	9 387	18 538	48 936	98 432	43 920	231 154	461 210
Tunisiens	67	5 843	4 700	6 780	16 602	33 120	13 796	65 212	146 121
Autres nationalités d'Afrique	272	7 369	13 670	26 012	80 174	69 185	11 916	229 181	437 779
Turcs	399	9 886	1 716	5 652	11 883	58 136	9 007	124 996	221 675
Autres nationalités	1 070	17 490	31 776	30 923	58 491	53 681	20 372	270 836	484 638
Ensemble	566 906	1 657 923	4 192 928	6 968 049	8 638 414	7 175 672	12 865 746	21 092 442	63 158 080

Taux de chômage localisés trimestriels par département (en moyenne trimestrielle - données CVS)

B.	%		
	2ème trim 2008	1er trim 2009	2ème trim (1) 2009
Ain	4,90	6,80	7,50
Aisne	10,40	12,10	13,00
Allier	7,30	8,80	9,40
Marne	6,80	8,20	8,70
Haute-Marne	7,30	9,40	10,20
Mayenne	4,50	5,90	6,50
Meurthe-et-Moselle	7,10	8,50	9,20
Meuse	8,20	9,40	10,10
Morbihan	6,50	7,70	8,30
France métropolitaine	7,3	8,5	9,1

### A. Nationalities in France

### B. Unemployment figures by département

Highlighted is Meurthe-et-Moselle, Hervé Barulea's birthplace, where the unemployment rate is expected to surpass the national average.

### C. Unemployment figures by region

The figures for Lorraine, whilst not the highest of the regions, are consistently higher than the national average.

Taux de chômage localisés trimestriels par région (en moyenne trimestrielle - données CVS)

C.	en %		
	2ème trim 2008	1er trim 2009	2ème trim (1) 2009
Alsace	6,4	7,7	8,4
Aquitaine	7,2	8,3	8,7
Auvergne	6,6	8	8,4
Bourgogne	6,4	7,9	8,5
Bretagne	6	7,2	7,7
Centre	6,4	7,7	8,4
Champagne-Ardenne	7,8	9,4	10
Corse	7,7	8,2	8,3
Franche-Comté	6,8	8,9	9,7
Île-de-France	6,6	7,3	7,8
Languedoc-Roussillon	10,5	11,9	12,4
Limousin	6	7,2	7,7
Lorraine	7,5	9,1	9,9
Midi-Pyrénées	7,4	8,5	9
Nord-Pas-de-Calais	10,5	12,1	12,8
Basse-Normandie	6,8	8,5	9
Haute-Normandie	7,9	9,5	10,2
Pays de la Loire	5,9	7,5	8,2
Picardie	8,5	10	10,8
Poitou-Charentes	7	8,4	8,9
Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur	8,8	9,9	10,3
Rhône-Alpes	6,4	7,9	8,6
France métropolitaine	7,3	8,5	9,1

(1) Estimations provisoires au 2ème trimestre 2009

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