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Stereotype and representation of Near and Middle Eastern peoples in la bande dessinee

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STEREOTYPE AND REPRESENTATION OF NEAR AND MIDDLE EASTERN
PEOPLES IN LA BANDE DESSINEE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
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in

The Department of French

by
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Preface

Ever since my first voyage to France at the age of nineteen, nearly nine years ago, cultural differences have absorbed my thought. Previous to this life-changing moment in which I spent two of my most formative years living abroad, I had never been an outsider in an unfamiliar land, and therefore had never really encountered social stereotypes from an outsider's perspective. Now, in retrospect, social stereotypes intrigue me; their use provides a foundation on which internal social construction may be reinforced, and yet they possess the potential to sever irreparably relationships between communities. As a tall, white Texan I frequently experienced the broad homogenization of "all Texans" in quite a comic way. Every time I introduced myself to someone in France and divulged my origin, I was asked if I rode a horse to school or work, or if I personally knew George W. Bush. At first I laughed at the prospect of me riding a horse everywhere I went, having bacon with Dub'ya on the ranch, cradling my inexperience and reassuring myself that I was less naive than these French people. One day I happened upon several *Lucky Luke* comic books in a friend's personal library. Morris and Goscinny seemed to treat so many of the American legends of the 'Wild West,' and I began putting together the pieces of the French and European stereotypes about Southern Americans – machismo, the value of one's horse, guns, laws, even facial expressions and clothing. My inexperience turned to arrogance as I began to believe that the French learned about America through comic books, and after a year in France I became so annoyed at the redundancy of questions regarding my origin that I began experimenting with other nationalities. A man would ask me where I came from and I would reply with something believable, like Canada, Sweden, or Germany. I found that among the older generations when I lied and said I was from Germany a certain solemnity came over our

conversation. The implications of this quieting often accompanied me during the lonelier months of my stay. By experimenting as such, I sidestepped the monotonous stereotyping of my homeland while denying the truth to those I met. I also realized that I was exploiting that which annoyed me so much – by using the stereotypes of the French against them I had become a perpetuator of the use of stereotypes, ignoring the same cultural sensitivity I desired towards my own people. It was at this point, after examining myself outside of myself, that I was able to notice other stereotypes within the French culture, particularly those of North African Arab immigrants and those who “looked” as if they were from North Africa or the Middle East. Not long after this realization I began drawing parallels between my hometown of Beaumont and the division of black and white citizens in the city. I found that virtually all French cities were divided across a racial barrier and that this boundary could clearly be defined geographically, usually along a city landmark traceable on a simple street map. The barrier manifested itself not only physically, but also in language, television, radio, advertisements - in virtually every form of communication. In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where I have resided over the past two and a half years, I have found that this division exists here too, and its presence has only reinforced my observations of France and my hometown.

The division of the French and “Arab” populations in France inspired me to explore the representation of the latter of these two groups, particularly in the medium of the comics (*la bande dessinée* or *B.D.*). I use the term “Arab” here because often anyone with an olive, light brown-colored skin is considered “Arab” in France, whether they are of North African descent, Turkish, Pakistani, Iraqi, Kazakh, Iranian, etc. Moreover, a certain number of culturally stigmatized objects and ideas further tend to reduce this demographic into an invariable category. This reduction of distinct groupings of peoples

with very individual cultures is a highly natural process, a form of categorization, a basic tool of the human mind that enables us to accumulate experience and divide it into categories based on visual stimuli. I am most concerned with one-way perception, therefore this study will only attempt to confront representations of Near and Middle Eastern peoples and cultures through the prism of four white European authors and illustrators from three different eras. I arrive at the conclusion that representation of Arabs is, in many respects, both in flux and static. Here, using selected works of Edward Said to interpret my primary sources, I shall show several, if not, many, discrepancies in cross-cultural stereotyping, as well as how overly sensitive critics of Said problematically stereotype through their own criticism of the process of stereotyping. I also use several works by W.J.T. Mitchell to further interpret Said's representations of Arabs in French-language comics in order to show a clear manner in which a reader may perceive visual representations.

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Abstract

Representation of social groups in the comics is serious. In 2006, a series of twelve cartoons published in a Danish newspaper sparked a controversy that precipitated the deaths of hundreds of people. The images depicted Mohammed and other images that supposedly mocked Islam. All across Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa protesters paraded through the streets, some calling for the death of the cartoonists. Trials in Europe over the publication of these cartoons resulted in several firings. Counter protests have also arisen. These protesters found grievance with the firings, claiming that the freedom of the press was being violated (especially in France, concerning the publication *Charlie Hebdo*).

Aside from these inflammatory images, comics' artists have been depicting peoples of the Near and Middle East since the foundations of the medium by Rodolphe Töpffer. Over approximately 150 years, representation of these peoples have changed in some ways and remained the same in others. Specifically, the franco-belgian tradition of comics (also known as *la bande dessinée*) have been instrumental in the creation and proliferation of several stereotypes about Near and Middle Eastern peoples.

This thesis examines the relationships between these stereotypes and the medium of the *bande dessinée*. Through a wide variety of criticisms and sources, the researcher found that there exists a focused trend to lessen the degree to which stereotyping of Arabs occurs. Via content and context analysis, the researcher discovered several key factors in the evolution of the Arab stereotype. These factors include political and religious affiliations of the authors and publishers, the type of narrative chosen, and artistic style of the author/ illustrator, amongst others. The additions these authors and illustrators make to the available bodies of literature provide a framework in which to ground

psychological and sociological studies of a particular nature, that being the sensitivities of artists in regards to representation

Introduction: The Real World Application

On September 30, 2005 the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published a series of twelve cartoons depicting various stereotypes of practitioners of the Muslim faith as well as caricatures of Mohammed. Within four months every major newspaper in the European world had printed and documented the cartoons and the reactions caused by their publication¹. Muslim protesters and police fought in front of publication houses and government offices. The enormous public outcry on both sides stemmed from a most fundamental argument of social construction. Those in favor of the publication of the twelve cartoons argued the necessity of freedom of speech in the press; those opposed felt their religious beliefs were under attack by a nationally funded institution. In an interview, one of the illustrators, Lars Refn, stated: “In my opinion, the newspaper wanted to provoke this controversy from the very beginning.”² The publication of these cartoons led to the imprisonment of several newspaper editors, artists receiving death threats for their hand in the mass insult, a worldwide boycott of Denmark by Muslims, and more than 150 deaths from violence in Nigeria alone.³

These cartoons are perhaps the most blatant example of stereotyping with the most global effect in recent years, and the reaction to the publication typifies both the absurdity of the violence in the protests and the negative power that illustrated stereotypes possess. An example such as this may seem an obvious social criticism through the use of negative stereotypes *in newspapers*; however defining what is and is not a negative stereotype in *bande dessinée* publications is not as clear. This difficulty is

¹ See Appendix 1. (The images in the appendices have been carefully chosen to aid in the comprehension of the examples cited in the text).

² From the article entitled « Douze dessins qui ébranlent le monde musulman » published February 5, 2006 in *Le Monde* and written by Olivier Truc. The original text is as follows: « Selon moi, le journal [Jyllands-Posten] voulait dès le départ uniquement provoquer. » English translation by B. Thomas.

³ In his article entitled, “Five days of violence by Nigerian Christians and Muslims kill 150,” Christian Allen Purefoy of www.independent.co.uk recounts the violent reaction to the drawings.

in part due to the hybrid nature of the comics medium, but may also be due to overly sensitive interpretations of texts that have neglected the historical context of the content. I will show in the following pages, that the *B.D.* proves a highly perplexing medium in regards to stereotype, for its visual ‘transparency’ is as illusory as its misinterpretation as a childish medium. Moreover, the stereotype itself possesses more perplexing aspects than are at once apparent.

In order to highlight the problematic aspects of the stereotype in conjunction with my selected corpus (Christophe’s *L’Idée fixe du savant Cosinus*, Hergé’s *Les aventures de Tintin*, Schuiten and Peeters’ *Les Cités obscures*, and Didier Lefèvre’s *Le Photographe*), I will examine the various definitions of “stereotype,” as well as trace the historical concepts of stereotype across the fields of psychology, sociology, literature, and the visual arts. My intention is to broaden the discussion of stereotype within the medium of the comics, to invite scholars to re-examine comics as a powerful literary art form, and to establish the framework for an argument against Thierry Groensteen’s statement that “La bande dessinée est un art qui cultive volontiers l’amnésie et n’a pas grand souci de son patrimoine.”⁴ This last point regarding Groensteen’s words will respond to the question set forth by Benoît Berthou of labSIC (université de Paris 13 and Médiadix) for a conference at l’Université Paris Ouest in June 2010.⁵ The significance of

⁴ Trans. - “The comics is an art that voluntarily cultivates amnesia and is not very concerned with its patrimony.” From Groensteen, Thierry, *Un objet culturel non identifié*, n.p., Editions de l’an 2, 2006, (67).

⁵ Berthou identifies three potential areas of study to be examined at the conference, of which the third will be treated by this essay. From the call for papers, this area of interrogation reads: “*Mémoire, histoire et « 9^e art »* » entend interroger la forme et la fonction du passé au sein de la création de bande dessinée. Pourront ainsi être évoqués la valeur documentaire de l’oeuvre (comme dans le cas d’une bande dessinée dite « documentaire »), et un passé devenant l’occasion d’une nouvelle pratique du « médium » (comme dans le cas de l’autobiographie), voire d’une nouvelle définition des missions de l’auteur et de l’éditeur.” Trans. – “*Memory, history, and the 9th art*” intends to question the form and function of the past at the heart of the *bande dessinée*’s creation. Thus, other questions that may be raised include the documentary value of the work (as in the case of the *bande dessinée* said to be a “documentary”), and a past becoming the opportunity for a new practice in the medium (as in the case of the autobiography), indeed of a new definition of the tasks of the author and editor.”)

this conference is two-fold: as the curator of the Musée de la Bande Dessinée d'Angoulême from 1993 to 2001, Groensteen's opinion about the position of comics is one of high authority; nevertheless, a suggestion such as his (that the comics is an "art sans mémoire") may not only be damaging to the future of the medium as socially relevant, but may also be altogether a falsehood. It is from latter platform that I will analyze the cultural phenomenon that is *la bande dessinée*.

In the first section I will define 'stereotype', tracing its origins in the era of industrialization to what it has become today. I will highlight the differences between its use in the fields of sociology, psychology, literature, and the visual arts, and then examine how stereotypes can be incorporated into comics. I intend to show through both iconic and non-iconic images the manners in which some of the most prolific comics artists have stereotyped groups along the lines of age, religion, gender, and politics. Thus having embarked on a technical aspect of the comics, I will define the terms 'icon' and 'iconic' in section two. This section will also highlight the manners in which the critics may choose to use stereotypes in their works, which will serve the ends of this essay by demonstrating the textual nuances of stereotypes. Lastly, section three will comprise my corpus, in which I show the evolution of stereotypes of Near and Middle Eastern peoples in *la bande dessinée*. I will found my arguments on two specific axes – costumes worn by the stereotyped groups and gags at the expense of those groups.⁶

⁶ This essay will not attempt to treat stereotypes of the Near and Middle Eastern Jew. Other studies have already shown the Jew to have been a popular villain in Western culture before World War II. I am focusing on the most consistently salient villain in popular Western culture. For more information on the popularity of the Jewish villain I suggest Hugo Frey's article "Trapped in the Past; Anti-Semitism in Hergé's *Flight 714* (see Works Cited for full citation) and for more information concerning the Muslim Arab as the most salient villain in Western culture I suggest the film *Reel Bad Arabs* (see Works Cited for full citation).

I Problematic Definitions of the Stereotype

The stereotype has long been an important and dubious concept for its far-reaching effects. Capable of polarizing social groups with quick insensitivity, stereotypes proliferate bias by effectively focusing on superficial features of a social group. The most obvious and basic example of this may be stereotypes targeting racial identity. However, the stereotype has the capacity for infinite expansion. Stereotypes can treat almost anything, from geographic differences, religions, cultures, foods, sex, histories, and behaviors – in short, anything to which a group of people can attach their identity. As we will discover, this concept has been recognized and widely discussed in various academic circles for over a century, and although formally a rather young topic of interest, a clear degree of critical evolution can be derived from the re-examinations of the *stereotype* within differing disciplines.

The first usage of the term “stereotype” can be traced back to 1798, where the French defined it simply as “a method of printing by means of a solid plate of type.”⁷ The first usage of the term to mean an “image perpetuated without change” was used in 1850, and while sociologists such as W.I. Thomas were discussing details of the stereotype before the turn of the nineteenth century, Walter Lippmann was the first to coin and define the term critically. In 1922, the late radical journalist/sociologist Lippmann developed a three-part epistemology to explain social interactions and his ideals. For our purposes the most useful concepts are what he labeled ‘interested experience,’ and stereotypes. ‘Interested experience’ entails our jobs and family life, which have an immediate and profound impact on the formation of ideas. The close proximity of this experience changed dramatically through the advent of media forms,

⁷ stereotype. Dictionary.com. *Online Etymological Dictionary*. Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/stereotype> (accessed: April 01, 2010).

such as television and radio, leading to the rapid formulation of ideas about people, places and things heretofore never experienced; hence Lippmann's belief that we live by the "pictures in our heads." Therefore, anything perceived as knowledge outside the scope of immediate experience, for Lippmann, was a simplified image of reality. He was thus able to produce a definition of the general term *stereotype*. This definition, however loosely based on function, provides a suitable starting point for this study. In his well-cited work *Public Opinion* he writes:

[A stereotype] is not neutral. It is not merely a way of substituting order for the great blooming, buzzing confusion of reality. It is not merely a short cut. It is all these things and something more. It is the guarantee of our self-respect; it is the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights. The stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with the feelings that are attached to them. They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defenses we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy (96).

Highlighting aspects of its personal application, Lippmann, presents the stereotype as a means of justifying oneself to oneself, or more precisely, one's thought about an-*Other* to oneself. As a "guarantee of our self-respect" the stereotype necessarily stratifies the values, positions, and rights of both *our* group and *the other* group(s). Lippmann claims that the stereotype itself is emotionally "charged with [our] feelings" lending its user a sense of safety. He suggests further that the use of a given stereotype creates an appealing order that parallels the social "position we occupy," and thus feels like "tradition." Of course, Lippmann recognized an inherent power in the *stereotype*. However, to paraphrase, he believed that stereotypes themselves were rather harmless,

and that they were necessary for us to process information. Lippmann also viewed *stereotype* as “involving a loss, the loss of an individualized understanding of other people, whether those are foreigners or those in other social classes and communities outside our own situated experience” (Pickering,18). For Lippmann to bridge the gap between these two seemingly paradoxical views he relied on the power of emotional attachment to symbols on display in the stereotype mechanism. He feared this power, at once denying it, deeming it a “simplified image,” all the while granting it the strength of disastrous alchemy when combined with the strength of symbolism. Lippmann states in his *An Inquiry into the Principles of the Good Society*:

Because of its power to siphon emotion out of distinct ideas, the symbol is both a mechanism of solidarity, and a mechanism of exploitation. It enables people to work for a common end, but just because the few who are strategically placed must choose the concrete objectives, the symbol is also an instrument by which a few can fatten on many, different [emotions], and seduce men into facing agony for objects they do not understand (235-6).

The stereotype, for Lippmann, could only be as strong as the emotions attached to it. The origin of these emotions, he felt, derived from the user of the stereotype, for this group or individual found solidarity in defending their projection of their values on the world. Lippmann saw the potential for the exploitation of this mechanism, and that proper manipulation could result in a highly stratified social construction, favoring those who understood the intricacies of the combination of symbolism and stereotype to the detriment of those with less understanding of the power structures at play. This is no doubt the reason Lippmann could not refrain from employing an emotionally charged

metaphor as he denounced those he claimed were “strategically placed,” “fatten[ing] on many, [... and seducing] men into facing agony for objects they do not understand.” Humorous and contradictory, Lippmann’s propagates the stereotype of a gluttonous “fat cat” socialite in the very same sentence where he condemns the use of stereotype!

Lippmann’s understanding of stereotype lacked specificity, although it was advanced at the time. He often confused *stereotype* with the *group using stereotype*, a subject that would eventually spark heavy criticism in academia. It was not until 1954, with the arrival of prominent psychologist Gordon Allport’s *The Nature of Prejudice*, that studies of the stereotype became more highly organized. Allport noted that Lippmann often confused the term *stereotype* with that of *category*, a psychological term meaning, simply, a unit of understanding. Allport, subsequently defined *stereotype* as “Whether favorable or unfavorable, [it is] an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category” (Allport, 191). To better understand this definition necessitates an example. Allport provides such an illustrative formulation in juxtaposition to Lippmann’s conceptualization,

More than a generation ago, Walter Lippmann wrote of stereotypes, calling them simply ‘pictures in our heads’. [...] His treatment, however excellent on the descriptive side, was somewhat loose in theory. For one thing he tends to confuse stereotype with category. A stereotype is not identical with a category; it is rather a fixed idea that accompanies the category. For example, the category ‘Negro’ can be held in mind simply as a neutral, factual, non-evaluative concept, pertaining merely to a racial stock. Stereotype enters when, and if the initial category is freighted with ‘pictures’ and judgments of the Negro as musical, lazy, superstitious, or

what not. A stereotype, then, is not a category, but often exists as a fixed mark upon a category. [...] The stereotype is not in itself the core of the concept. It operates, however, in such a way as to prevent differentiated thinking about the concept (191-2).

According to Allport, we organize our world according to categories, and it would be impossible to make much sense of the world without them. They are not synonymous with stereotypes; whereas stereotypes seek to create rigidity within categories, fossilizing thinking and resisting change, a category is flexible and, as Pickering states, “[categorical] designations can be disputed” (Pickering, 3). Allport affirms, “It [category] forms large classes and clusters for guiding our daily adjustments, [...] assimilates as much as it can to the cluster, [...] enables us to quickly identify a related object, [...] saturates all that it contains with the same ideational and emotional flavor, and [...] may be more or less rational” (20-22). These functions, Allport argues, allow the employer of stereotypes to build solidarity within a designated group through de-facto identification, resisting change even when confronted with contradictory experiences.

Allport and Lippmann differ most pronouncedly in their approaches to understanding *stereotype*. While Lippmann tends to focus on the degrees of emotional value given to *stereotype*, Allport simply defines it by function as the justification of exaggerated belief. Where Allport declines the use of notions such as ‘comfort’ or ‘tradition,’ for Lippmann, these terms are essential to his understanding. More intriguing than the differences in their approaches to understanding *stereotype*, however, are their similarities. Both deny the strength of the stereotype in isolation, insisting that symbolism (what both refer to as ‘pictures’) in conjunction with a stereotype creates the emotional charge from which the mechanism draws its power. Both conclude that the

category based on a stereotype controls the gradation of reaction, and both agree that the symbol holds a pivotal position in the formation of a given category. They suggest that stereotypes help to create a definite social order, albeit divisive. Furthermore, both show that the category itself saturates the symbol to which it is connected, suggesting that certain objects or ideas become perceived as intrinsic features of categories. For instance, a common stereotype among Westerners is that “Asians eat a lot of rice.” The category “Asians” is assumed to mean *all* Asian peoples, and this category is readily identified with the food “rice.” By association, “rice” comes to symbolize “Asians.” Over time, the need for the category “Asians” to be present alongside the idea of “rice” diminishes, insomuch that the image of a single grain of rice, in isolation, can come to represent the entire category of “Asians.” Of course, this is a completely irrational association and neglects the whims of a given individual in the “Asian” community. Moreover, the exact same stereotype exists on a more local level, for in the Northern states it is said that “Southerners eat a lot of rice.” In each case, the power of a stereotype does not lie within the framework of the stereotype; rather, it rests within the group proliferating it.

A. Approaches to Stereotype

To truly understand the differences between stereotypes of the sociological and psychological nature and those of a literary nature one must venture back to the representational arts of ancient Greece, specifically, literature and theater.⁸ The mythological construction around which Greek social powers arose relied heavily on the various deities and their interactions with each other. Although these deities were not

⁸ A more detailed explanation of this subject is needed than can be provided in the limited space allotted to this exercise. For some further reading on the subject I suggest Theophrastus' *The Characters of Theophrastus*, Sir Thomas Overbury's *A Wife: Witty Characters Written by Himselfe and Other Learned Gentlemen His Friends*, and Enid Welsford's *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (see works cited for complete reference).

representations of real people, the ancients would have immediately recognized the roles of these divine characters in the social fabric of a given narrative. The lesser gods, especially, tended to represent deeply entrenched group types, as their roles were often more limited than those of the higher order. By the most broadminded classification, some of the actions and traits of these figures repeated enough in representation that they fossilized into stock characters.⁹

Hence, the ‘stock character’ refers to any limitedly developed character whose role is highly recognizable. Authors and playwrights depend heavily on stock characters to build a connection with their audience, as these characters often portrayed a familiar personality or cultural type, manner of speech, or other characteristics. As a representation of a recognizable group or person in the human world, a stock character generally is an exaggeration of that which he or she typifies. One might think of Balzac’s *Le Père Goriot* – Monsieur Goriot spoils his daughters so obscenely that he impoverishes himself in what can be deemed a clever play on the many literary treatments of the “daddy’s girl” character. Goriot was, for all practical purposes, a stock character. The typified stock character remains pivotal in the development of genre literature. The example of the ‘jester’, or ‘fool’, illustrates perfectly how this easily recognizable schema became such a literary mainstay. The fool is the most obvious scapegoat of parody, and seldom does he provide more than laughter. This age-old literary mechanism flourished

⁹ Ruth Amossy addresses the intertwined relationship of type, stereotype, and myth production in history in her *Les Idées Reçues*, stating, [...] « l’élaboration du mythe passe par le stade de la réduction stéréotypique et de la diffusion massive. La fabrication du stéréotype, ou sa mise en place par un processus de schématisation à l’extrême, assurent la promotion d’une image simple que la presse et la batterie publicitaire répercutent à l’infini. Elle s’intègre alors à nos fantasmes quotidiens et fait partie de notre imaginaire culturel. Ce phénomène est de ressassement, qui multiplie infatigablement les reflêts et les échos, est indispensable à la production du mythe contemporain. » (p.100). This assessment of the cultural machine as reinforcer of culture serves to enhance my argument of bande dessinée’s memory, for without the continual production of comics that repeat the already diffused message therein and spread that message further, no base upon which myths, stereotypes, types, or stock characters could exist. The existence of new comics that evoke the old myths of literatures past confirm the existence of this foundation.

in the English medieval court. According to Enid Welsford, the ‘fool’ could embody two roles in the imaginative literature of the English court. “[...H]e could provide a topic, a theme for meditation, or he could turn into a stock character on the stage, a stylized comic figure” (218). The comic stock character, even in name, portrays something worthy of laughter and reflection.¹⁰ Over time, the role of the fool, although expanded to accompany evolutions of narrative genre, has remained, for all practical purposes, identical to those originally used in the Middle Ages.

How, then, do sociological and psychological stereotypes differ from those in literature? Simply put, *stereotype* seen through the prism of Sociology insists on a macroscopic view of groups and their interactions with other groups, neglecting any regard for the individual in isolation. The scope of this type of examination renders broad, generalized groupings of people, which leads to categorized studies based on race, gender, age, origin, physical features, et cetera. Psychological studies of the stereotype focus on an individual’s personality and behavior, or perhaps a group of “like” individuals, studying each subject case-by-case, and the effects that external sources may have on them. Although a clear overlapping exists in the two approaches, the psychological and sociological approaches are similar in that they both posit the stereotype in the form of *studies*. The *literary stereotype* is not a study – it is not an analysis of the phenomenon but the production. It is the application of both psychological and sociological studies into the form of representational art. Furthermore,

¹⁰ Take, for example the bande dessinée *Astérix* by Goscinny and Uderzo, and particularly the character known as the King of the Gauls, Abraracourix. The symbolic target of Rome’s desire and supposedly feared for his strength in battle, Abraracourix is a distraction from the main characters. He is an overweight buffoon and the subject of slapstick parody in every instance where he is present. His clever name is indicative of these limiting characteristics, for it features the magician’s, or more precisely, illusionist’s prefix, *abra-*, as well as the French root *cour-*, meaning “run” or “spread.” The root *cour-* also translates to “play a joke on someone” as in *faire courir quelqu’un*. I interpret, therefore, the name *Abraracourix* as “joke of a king and a distraction.”

it is an entirely focused, limited, and confined stereotype, effectively isolating the emotions which a target audience may derive from the words on the page. Planting a simplified, static character into the narrative, in this case, builds an ideational understanding of that character within the context of a pre-selected environment. The author controls the context fostering this character, the narrative structure, the narrative, and, of course any stereotype within this context. Such cannot be said of the stereotypes discussed in psychology and sociology, as a psychologist or a sociologist is not actively creating an environment in which stereotype may flourish, nor are they creating characters that exemplify stereotypes. Authors craft literary works on a very individualized basis, organizing all literary mechanisms available with an understanding of psychological and sociological traits of the characters he intends to represent. An author is unlike the sociologist or the psychologist, as he is not merely an observer and documenter of stereotypes. An author is not merely both of them combined. He is an active producer of specific stereotypes based on controlled contexts that he creates.

B. The Problematic Stereotype: The Incomparable Medium of Comics

Authors, filmmakers, and comics creators share many similarities, and each has unique obstacles to surmount in the production of their respective works.¹¹ The construction of certain creative elements in their respective fields overlap, especially in the area of character production. The creation of a character *type* provides perhaps the clearest transition into discussion of the stereotype in the visual arts. In *The Matter of Images; Essays On Representation*, Richard Dyer treats the differences between *type* and

¹¹ This essay will not attempt to delineate the various differences between the three, nor will it seek to identify an exhaustive list of their similarities. Also, the dual nature of comics' creation must be addressed. *Scénariste* (author) and *dessinateur* (illustrator) generally work in tandem, however many exceptions are noteworthy: Rodolphe Töpffer, Swiss 'inventor' of the modern *bande dessinée*, Christophe (i.e. Georges Colomb), Winsor McCay, Mœbius (i.e. Jean Giraud), Robert Crumb, Chris Ware, amongst others, write and illustrate their works. For more on the subject of the duality of comics production, I suggest Benoît Peeters' *Nous est un autre* (see works cited for complete reference).

novelistic character in Film Studies. He indicates the defining features of representation in narration and understands how their interaction affects narrative, defining *type* as “an immediately recognizable character, constructed through the use of defining traits, which do not change or ‘develop’ through the course of the narrative and which point to the general, recurrent features of the human world” (13). He proposes that the *novelistic character* opposes the *type*, writing that it is “defined by a multiplicity of traits that are only gradually revealed [...] through the course of the narrative, a narrative which is hinged on the growth or development of the character and is thus centered upon the latter in her or his unique individuality, rather than pointing outwards to a world” (13). Visual and textual recurrences associate with whatever character(s) are present in the observer’s scope, and these recurrences follow that character throughout the narrative.¹² For any creator of a narrative, typifying a character is inevitable, but the reader will invariably derive meaning from whatever sequence in which the author chooses to utilize a character. Repeated images in a sequence reinforce the significance of those images. In comics, as in a film storyboard, a sequence of two or more juxtaposed images cannot connote an absence of meaning. Scott McCloud writes about the principle of the so-called ‘non-sequitor’ panel in his *Understanding Comics*, querying:

Is it possible for any sequence of panels to be totally unrelated to each other? Personally, I don’t think so. No matter how dissimilar one image may be to another, there is a kind of alchemy at work in the space between panels which can help us find meaning or resonance in even the most jarring of combinations. Such transitions may not make ‘sense’ in any

¹² For instance, in *L’Idée fixe du savant Cosinus*, the character ‘Scholastique’ (Cosinus’ maidservant) is always depicted wearing the same garment with an apron. The reader soon learns to associate her with foot baths (visual), superstitions and unlearned speech (textual), from which she never deviates. In *Au pays de l’or noir* the sneezing effect caused by Abdallah’s ‘poudre à éternuer’ evokes the reader’s memory of Abdallah’s love of pranks, even when he is not explicitly illustrated or textually evoked in a panel.

traditional way, but still a relationship of some sort will inevitably develop. By creating a sequence with two or more images, we are endowing them with a single, overriding identity, and forcing the viewer to consider them as a whole. However different they had been, they now belong to a single organism (73).

McCloud's argument begs the question: If any suite of images, purposefully placed together, suggests a "single, overriding identity," then does the same principle apply to character and personage? The answer is a resounding, "Yes!" Any sequence of events involving a character or a personage, or even non-events, will naturally force a reader to draw conclusions about that personage, ergo commencing the process of *character typing*. The same sequence-based function is at work when the process of stereotyping enters a narrative sequence in comics.

Stereotypes abound in the comics, and although sequence plays a role in the production of this mechanism, technical aspects of the medium itself, particularly the relationship between artistic style and text, may also reveal potent liaisons. Perhaps the most unique aspect of comics is the artist's ability to establish transitions between realistic and iconic abstractions in representation, especially regarding depictions of a personage's emotions.¹³ This transition occurs in three categories: the uniquely textual, the uniquely visual, and the combination of the textual and visual. These categories are not exhaustive of all stereotypes found in comics, but represent the majority to be found in sampling.

¹³ The French translation of McCloud's *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* provides an important distinction that the English lacks. In English, McCloud's chart of the varying degrees of comics abstraction in representation (p. 52-53) uses the words "reality," "the picture plane," and "meaning." The French translation uses the word "sens" in the same place as "meaning." This word has multiple significances; while it may signify "meaning" it also connotes "direction," as in a direction on a compass, "sensation," as in one of the five senses, and "opinion" or "judgment." The implication of these other significances reinforces my argument of author as producer of stereotypes.

Although the comics medium generally insists on the hybridity of text and image, this hybridity is unnecessary to the production of stereotypes. Nonetheless, the text-image-combination stereotype flourishes in comics, setting this medium apart from others. Due to the abstract nature of text, a textual representation of a stereotype is always a potentiality. The very nature of text suggests that any combination of letters strung together to make a word, in turn, signifies an exterior *meaning*.¹⁴ The abstraction of text is entirely different from that of images. McCloud distinguishes between these levels of abstraction, defining images as “received information” and writing as “perceived information.”¹⁵ Therefore, any stereotype created via text alone necessarily belongs to a separate representational realm. In the comics medium, a uniquely textual stereotype arises primarily in two forms; dialogue or narration. Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* provides an excellent example of this isolated textual stereotype when he introduces his father’s character, Vladek, a concentration camp survivor and Polish expatriate living in New York. Spiegelman purposefully characterizes Vladek as having a rough mastery of the English language; this mechanism is most prevalent in Vladek’s narration of past events, which, when he describes them to his son, are accompanied by an incessant transposition of adverbs as well as other verbal anomalies that arise in a native-Pole’s early English-learning speech patterns. The exaggeration of this grammatical error may be telling of other categories which characterize Vladek. Art Spiegelman portrays his father as both stubborn and very confident in his abilities throughout *Maus* by the use of this linguistic marking of the text, creating a textual audibility that informs the reader of Vladek’s over-confident reliance on himself. Spiegelman thus typifies the *overly confident and stubborn father* through this use of text, showing how spoken language can

¹⁴ For further discussion of this subject refer to chapter 2.

¹⁵ In *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, p. 49 (see Works Cited for full citation).

overtly represent a person's character traits. Furthermore, Spiegelman stereotypes non-native English-speaking Poles as having only a partial grasp of the English language, which is clear through their transposition of words and fossilized second language acquisition errors.¹⁶

Majane Satrapi's *Persepolis* provides a clear example of a visually iconic stereotype in isolation. In the opening chapter, Satrapi portrays herself as a young girl in conversation with God. God is represented as a white man with long, flowing white hair and a beard, wears no shoes, and dresses in a long white robe.¹⁷ She even visually compares him to Karl Marx. Raised in Tehran, Satrapi grew up far from Western and European imagery of God; nevertheless she went to school at the *Lycée Français* as a child. The concept of a white 'God' with a white beard and hair dressed in a white robe, drawn in this abstract, flat style, suggests that the image used here stereotypes the European and Western conceptions of the physical appearance of God. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of her young self with this stereotyped vision of 'God' suggests that not only may this image represent the Western and European's conception, but also the conception of 'God' traditionally held by children.¹⁸ Moreover, comparing God to Karl Marx allows Satrapi to identify with a revolutionary figure on a spiritual and academic level, implying that a revolution was justified, reasonable, even divine.

Will Eisner's *A Contract with God* does well to combine the text and image of the stereotypical 'miserly Jew' in the iconic realm. Eisner's fifty-eight page narrative of a poor Jewish expatriate points directly to implications of collusion between the synagogues of Judaism and the corruption of their members. To paraphrase the narrative, Eisner's main character, Frimme Hersh, feels slighted by God, and thus seeks the

¹⁶ See appendix 2.

¹⁷ As far as can be deduced from the pen and ink drawings.

¹⁸ See appendix 3.

pleasures of the world through an accumulation of New York properties. As a trusted member of the Jewish community, one who has full access to the financial holdings of his local synagogue, Frimme uses the equity of the synagogue's bonds to take out a loan on a rental property. With pitiless shrewdness, Frimme raises rates and reduces the use of utilities, choking the comfort of his tenants while he grows rich from their misery. The superintendent remarks, "Ach...these Jews...Yesterday a poor tenant, today the owner!...How do they do it?!" When Frimme reveals his financial secret to the Elders of the synagogue, then pays them back with interest, even making a profit for them, the Elders remark that they are "grateful." This instance perpetuates the 'miserly Jew' stereotype in two ways: It portrays the members of the Jewish faith as shrewd and greedy businessmen, and it portrays the Elders of the Jewish community as accepting of these practices.¹⁹

Maus provides many brilliant examples of the potential that the comics medium possesses, particularly regarding the text/image relationship within the iconic realm. Spiegelman re-creates a scene in which Vladek and his mother, Anja, walked the dangerous streets of Nazi-occupied Sosnowiec in search of shelter.²⁰ Vladek and Anja, drawn as mice, wear masks that resemble pigs, Spiegelman's personified image of non-Jewish Polish natives, to hide their Jewish identity. A clear distinction is made between Vladek and Anja's appearance on the iconic level; she has a mouse's tail and he does not. Vladek remarks in the narration of this scene, "I was a little safe. I had a coat and boots, so like a Gestapo wore when he was not in service. But Anja – her appearance – you could see more easy she was Jewish. I was afraid for her." Spiegelman uses anthropomorphism to portray different nationalities or religious affiliation, offering a

¹⁹ See appendix 4.

²⁰ See appendix 5.

remarkable iconic study of *stereotype* in the comics form by suggesting that physical features distinguish Jewish people from non-Jewish people. The brilliance of Spiegelman's use of stereotype here is that the physical features serving to distinguish religious affiliation are textually and visually implied but never specified through representation. What, then, is Spiegelman stereotyping by implying a physical difference between Polish Jews and Polish non-Jews? Furthering the complexity of this physically founded stereotyping, the juxtaposition of the animal metaphor with reference to the Gestapo apparel begs the question: Is a person of Jewish faith distinguishable from a non-Jew in facial appearance or rather by the clothes he or she dons? Of course, Spiegelman illustrates the Star of David worn by Holocaust-era Jews throughout *Maus*, but he never directly addresses the subject of physical appearance. Thus, here, the reader completes the visual and textual stereotyping of Jews based on his or her unique prior experience. By insisting on an unspecified corporeality, Spiegelman forces the reader to apply a subjective discerning trait between Jews and non-Jews. Spiegelman forces the reader to stereotype the physicality of the Jew.

In a more humorous vein, Takehiko Inoue's *Slam Dunk* offers a clever and humorous well-known teenage stereotype in its opening pages. Sakuragi, one of several tightly-wound protagonists, has just been rejected by the fiftieth girl he has attempted to court in the last three years. Since the girl who most recently broke his heart favored a suitor from the high school basketball team, Sakuragi displaces the anger derived from his emotional defeat to the concept of basketball, stating, as he mopes around, "Basketball sucks." All of a sudden he hears a voice from behind and below him asking, "Excuse me. Do you like basketball?" In a fit of rage, he turns around and begins to shout down the mention of the sport he hates the most, when unexpectedly he remarks

that his inquirer is a cute, gently smiling girl. After a two-panel pause, Sakuragi's tears have dried and his inner dialogue exclaims, "She's totally my type!" A few panels later Sakuragi runs the gamut of elated emotions, crying, smiling, jumping for joy, and nervously laughing, fantasizing about living his unfulfilled dream of walking a girl home from school. Sakuragi's face changes repeatedly from a detailed, complex representation to the abstract, particularly in the eyes and mouth, a technique that allows Inoue to successfully stereotype the turbulent emotions of a teenage boy.²¹

Visual stereotypes in isolation, for the most part, are rather hard to come by in the comics medium, for where can one clearly distinguish between the realistic and the iconic in the comics? In *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud identifies several degrees of iconicity pertaining to the medium.²² Hergé remarkably situates his iconic characters in seemingly realistic environments, but even these environments are severely reduced understandings of the environments they attempt to portray. Alan Moore's *The Watchmen* features physically hyper-realistic 'superhero' characters in environments fraught with bizarre color, which raises the question, "Does context override artistic style when discussing the stereotype in terms of its iconicity?" These questions are beyond the scope of our discussion. However, I propose Maurice de Beveré's *Lucky Luke* contains one or two examples of a non-iconic visual stereotype in each of his albums. Framing each of the narratives offered by the author whose pen-name is 'Morris', a portrait, painting, or photograph from the Old West quietly sets an historically dated romantic vision of the era. On occasion, these single-panel narratives have a small caption, but

²¹ See appendix 6.

²² McCloud's definition of 'iconic' expands previous notions of the term. In Peircian terms, 'iconic' simply entails a representation of a person, place, thing, or idea, whereas McCloud's definition adds that 'iconic' can refer to a *manner* of representing a person, place, thing, or idea. This distinction allows McCloud to discuss artistic style in a critical context.

some merely depict a “Western” scene.²³ The stereotype derived from such visions of a time long-past is, in fact, not the stereotype of the American West itself, but rather an imposition of a romantic conception of the essence of the American West. These images framing *Lucky Luke* serve to fixate a reader’s imagination around an emblematic vision of the American West immediately before thrusting the reader into an iconic world. Likewise, Morris, closes with a different image of the American West. By terminating a fictional narrative with a scene from a painting of a scene of the Old West, Morris imposes a fictive representation onto a fictive representation that has the appearance of being dated, and (since the style of the painting is not of the cartoon-styled abstraction) the painting seals in the readers’ minds the belief that *Lucky Luke* is every bit an authentic record of the events in the American West. Thus, Morris’ frame effectively stereotypes the Old West, as *Lucky Luke*, without question, embodies the concept of the reduction, exaggeration, and justification of a belief associated with category.

Another remarkable example from *Maus* is the insertion of Vladek’s photograph into the narrative. The picture on the antepenultimate page featuring Vladek in a full concentration camp uniform, posing for a camera, perfectly exaggerates a Jewish concentration camp victim. Vladek remarks that the photograph was taken a few years after World War II, and was a “souvenir.” The picture exemplifies a distortion of the situation faced by concentration camp victims. The uniform in the photograph fits Vladek well, whereas Vladek indicates earlier in the text that some prisoners’ clothes did not fit them well at all (*Maus*,189). As a misrepresentation, and the only photographic image of anyone in a prisoner’s uniform in the entire volume of *Maus*, it offers an exaggerated view of the prisoners at Auschwitz, depicting them healthy, clean-shaven,

²³ See appendix 7.

and wearing neat-fitting clothing. Nevertheless, the text of this example removes any notion that the photographic representation was an attempt at accuracy. Can this example truly be a stereotype? If Spiegelman's approach in this instant insists on an idealized image of a photographic un-reality, all the while maintaining the gruesome reality of Vladek's narrative, then our example must inexorably point to Spiegelman's unique use of transitive form to re-write the Holocaust narrative, the ability to shift emphatic medium from text to image according to the needs of the author. The inclusion of these juxtaposed iconic images with this one photorealistic image may suggest that any image of the events of the Holocaust whatsoever imposes an exaggerated view on the entire subject of the Holocaust, no matter the veracity of Vladek's tale. The insertion of Vladek's "souvenir" of his horrific and defining experience, thus serves only in juxtaposition, to strengthen the iconic imagery of the rest of the narrative. In this sense, Spiegelman's depiction of the Holocaust points back to itself as a guide. Spiegelman's technique of re-thinking the Holocaust narrative in terms of something rather ironic to depict, whether textually or visually, on the other hand, serves foremost to stereotype himself as just a struggling comics artist and writer, not a guide to millions of people through the tribulations of his father, his family, and Holocaust survivors.²⁴

I have chosen these examples because of their relationships to my selected corpus, which treat the subject of appearance and assimilation into another culture, as well as religion and cross-cultural communication, amongst other things. I hope that by juxtaposing certain of these images and textual examples to show a distinct difference between characterization and creating a caricature. The corpus I have selected unquestionably shows a reductive vision of Near and Middle Eastern Arab Muslims:

²⁴ See appendix 8.

however, these reductions are, in many cases, far more complex than they appear, and thus raise questions about whether or not the stereotyping process is in use. Moreover, these examples from American comics, Japanese Manga, and *bande dessinée* demonstrate the flexibility of the stereotyping mechanisms found in comics.

In chapter 2, I want to focus exclusively on how the stereotype entraps even the most expert writers on the subject. I will first open a discussion on the versatility of the textual image using selections of W.J.T. Mitchell's work and then apply those concepts to a few stereotypes of the West created in selections from the works of Edward Said. W.J.T. Mitchell will aid in delineating the differences between representations found in literature and those of visual works of art. Although Mitchell's work deals primarily with painting, film, and poetry through the eyes of critics such as Goodman, Gombrich, Lessing, and Burke, his arguments provide a number of useful insights regarding the cultural natures of representation. Said's words, on the other hand will exemplify some of the possible natures of stereotypes. Together these concepts and examples will contribute vital arguments to this discussion about the process of stereotyping and how it serves to create images and caricatures.

By combining studies by Mitchell and written or spoken statements made by Said, my purpose is to apply a focused critical study of textual and visual representation to broad and biased studies of representation of Near and Middle Easterners. The end result will offer a sort of 'stabilization' to arguments made in chapter 3 regarding representations in the *bande dessinée* of Near and Middle Eastern dress, and comics gags that incorporate religious conflicts, physical differences and anatomy, "Eurocentric" interests, and language. Let the record show that the author of this study in no way condones or approves the use of stereotypes institutionally. While the phenomenon

exists both inside and outside of academia, the employment of stereotypes in any circumstance immediately serves to label the user as a member of an interested party, biased, and, thus, non-objective in intent. It has been my intent to remain ultimately objective and therefore, this study is meant to be as free of stereotyping as possible. Admittedly, this has been difficult in discussing the various stereotypes evoked in this essay; however, I have made a strong effort to eradicate any stereotypes (or even statements that may be interpreted as stereotypes) from this text.

II Codified Thought

“The modern pictorial image, like the ancient notion of “likeness,” is at last revealed to be linguistic in its inner workings. [...] We imagine the gulf between words and images to be as wide as the one between words and things, between (in the larger sense) culture and nature. The image is the sign that pretends not to be a sign, masquerading as (or, for the believer, actually achieving) natural immediacy and presence. The word is its “other,” the artificial, arbitrary production of human will that disrupts natural presence by introducing unnatural elements into the world – time, consciousness, history, and the alienating intervention of symbolic meditation. Versions of this gap reappear in the distinctions we apply to each type of sign in its own turn. There is the natural, mimetic image, which looks like or “captures” what it represents, and its pictorial rival, the artificial, expressive image which cannot “look like” what it represents because that thing can only be conveyed in words. There is the word which is a natural image of what it means (as in onomatopoeia) and the word as arbitrary signifier. And there is the split in written language between “natural” writing by pictures of objects, and the arbitrary signs of hieroglyphics and the phonetic alphabet.”

(from W.J.T. Mitchell’s *Iconology*, 43-4)

Debates about comics and their literary value have come into question more than enough over the past fifty or so years. Suffice it to say that only blind devotion to the myth of literary purity can now justify any argument against comics’ value. After the same revolutionary fashion that the Gutenberg press paved the way for the dissemination of the Bible (and thus, heresies), comics are awakening the literary scene to a new understanding of text-image relationships. Works such as *Maus*, *Fun Home*, *Persepolis*, and *Palestine*, to name a few, have forced readers to re-examine subjects that may not have been done justice by the written word alone. The above quote from W.J.T. Mitchell identifies the importance of the modern pictorial image as an ancient form of a sign, however, and more importantly, it raises questions about the fallibility of both images and words. The image is a sign and as such cannot be accurately perceived as having a “natural immediacy and presence.” It is for this reason that images in sequence become another language altogether separate from that of the written word. Both image and word may take part in the interpretation of a text and both use each other in a somewhat constant ebb and flow of interactions in comics, where one medium may crest at the employment of the other through any number of literary devices.

This is by no means a new concept. The expression, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” did not come into existence without first having been validated time and time again. For example, the unimaginative eye may not envisage much from a photograph of a wooded landscape, while the nineteenth century European prospector might see that same landscape in terms of profitability, as an investment into the machine of industrialization.²⁵ This apparently simple image would then evoke thoughts, which would turn into plans, and then words, and even numbers, establishing perimeters for an industry, and a town with all the trappings of ‘modernity.’ But what if we were to reverse this scenario, beginning with a single word that may evoke images. If words are arbitrary and abstract signs then perhaps they justify a thousand varying images. This is what Lippmann referred to when he developed his concept of “interested experience.” The term “father” means something different for everybody. For some it may stand for a role model, while for others it is someone to be feared or hated. For some it may imply an old man while others may see it as referring to a young man. Some may be able to make out the distinct image of their father when they hear the word, while others may only possess an idea of what their father might have looked like. Similarly, the term “kitchen sink” may be interpreted in an amalgam of different sizes, shapes, colors, and textures based on the subjective exposure that an individual has had with his or her “kitchen sink.”²⁶

In the comics’ medium, one looks to *icons* for signification. Comics burst at the seams with icons. A study of the icon is central to this argument about stereotype because icons and stereotypes gravitate around the subject of the simplified image or

²⁵ See W.J.T. Mitchell’s opening chapter in *Landscape and Power*, entitled “Imperial Landscape.”

²⁶ For further discussion on the referential function of language I suggest Roman Jakobson’s *On Language* and Ferdinand de Saussure’s *Cours de linguistique générale* (see works cited for complete reference).

conception. Although earlier Scott McCloud's use of the term "icon" held some precedence, here I must insist upon Charles S. Peirce's definition of the icon as

...a sign which refers to the Object it denotes merely by virtue of characters on its own, and which possesses, just the same, whether any such Object actually exists or not. It is true that unless there really is such an Object, the Icon does not act as a sign; but this has nothing to do with its character as a sign. Anything whatever, be it quality, existent individual, or law, is an Icon of anything, in so far as it is like that thing and used as a sign of it" (*Collected Papers* 2:247).

Whereas McCloud defines the icon as "any image used to represent a person, place, thing, or idea," Peirce specifies that the icon must be a sign that is like the Object it represents. This leaves an enormous amount of room for interpretation. I prefer the most broad use of the term, in so much that when I interpret comics, basically, any drawing, picture, symbol, line, or dot on a page can be considered an 'icon,' as long as it represents an Object and is not something entirely arbitrary and meaningless. No matter what degree to which a given Object is portrayed realistically on a page, the reader receives that Object as no more than a representation of that Object (unless the reader is "a believer" as Mitchell underlines).²⁷ The reception of the Object, that is the Object's acceptance as merely representative of the Object and not actually the Object itself, is reductive in nature. The reduction of this Object allows the reader to enter into a subjective interpretation. Magritte illustrated this principle of the nature of images justly in his *La trahison des images*. "Ceci n'est pas un pipe" is an accurate subtext for a few

²⁷ In the epigraph to this section, Mitchell underlines an important notion: Images only have as much power as they are given by their beholder(s). Exploring themes of idolatry and fetishism, in *Iconology* Mitchell often invokes the relationship between God and man in order to draw a parallel with the relationship between Image and man.

reasons: (1) When a viewer sees the image of a pipe and then reads that “this is not a pipe,” he is forced to think beyond the iconic representation, discerning that the painting is, in fact, *not* a pipe, but rather the painting of a pipe; (2) The reader may reconcile within his mind that the only reason he perceives the image of a pipe to really be a pipe is because he gives power and meaning to the image. In order for an object to be perceived by a reader as “an image” it requires a conscious decision on the part of the reader to perceive what is “not real” and label it, momentarily and according to its context, as “real.” W.J.T. Mitchell writes in *Iconology* that “[...] an image cannot be seen *as such* without a paradoxical trick of consciousness, an ability to see something as “there” and “not there” at the same time” (17). It is this ‘trick of consciousness’ that lends power to the icon. In comics, this ‘trick’ allows a reader to establish a framework in which to place all received juxtaposed images, and thus interpret the ensemble.

On the contrary, word-based images require no “trick” of consciousness. Using Wittgenstein’s critique of the image in language, Mitchell aptly states; “It is important to realize that the “pictures” that reside in language, threatening (in Wittgenstein’s view) to trap us with their false models, [...] are translations, isomorphisms, structural homologies – symbolic structures which obey a system of rules for translation” (20-1). The reader draws the image from his interested experience and inserts it into the framework already established by the narrative. If words themselves adhere to laws which dictate their potential translation, and words are entirely abstract, “icons of the practical realm” (borrowing another notion from McCloud), is it also possible, then, to apply a system of translation to the “image” in so much that its role becomes as predictable in translation as

language itself?²⁸ In *Iconology* Mitchell argues that images are, contrary to popular belief, highly flexible in interpretation. Mitchell's opening chapter addresses the development of modern writing through the pictograms, ideograms, and hieroglyphics of antiquity, and insists that in order to understand the image, one must know how to read the image in the context of the culture using it. This would imply that "culture" determines the translation of images. By the same token, culture determines the use of written language. In order to illustrate this point, let us take the subject of 'rights to education' and apply it to two cultures with highly different translations via their constitutions; The United States of America and Russia. The Constitution of the United States of America makes no mention whatsoever of any right to education, while the Russian Constitution explicitly defines the rights of its citizens to education.²⁹ To identify a few possible explanations for these completely opposed viewpoints, one must acknowledge the inherent differences between these two cultures, the manners in which

²⁸ Attempts have been made to define the parameters of the translatable image, however, in comics, artistic style varies drastically from decade to decade, from country to country, and genre to genre. In *Lire la bande dessinée*, Benoît Peeters provides perhaps the best explanation I have found for the absence of any universally agreed upon language in comics (despite the fact that the section is not dedicated to some universal codification). In reference to the role of the comics writer, he writes : "[...] ce qui me frappe de plus en plus, c'est le caractère non maîtrisable de l'émergence d'une image. Si interventionniste soit-il, si soucieux de spécificité qu'il se veuille, le scénariste se doit de conserver vis-à-vis du dessin une certaine forme de retenue. Quelques mots parfois, un geste, une évocation oblique déclenchent soudain ce qu'une explication méthodique n'avait pas pu obtenir. [...] Ma propre attitude, je la résumerai d'une formule : tout concevoir, ne rien pré-voir. Quand enfin je les aperçois, les images qu'il m'avait paru écrire m'étonne comme des inconnues: à chaque fois, elles me surprennent. Je n'attends peut-être rien d'autre que la répétition de ce choc : découvrir comme du neuf ce que l'on croyait connaître, trouver en lieu et place du même le visage singulier de l'Autre" (180). This quote may be understood as such: a comics writer does not write entirely based on a set of predetermined constructs. Each image provides for him a sort of 'muse' that evokes from him a unique creation. That is not to say that he has not conceptualized his production, but rather that despite any effort of conceptualization each image asserts itself as unique, causing the writer to adjust his style to fit more accurately the needs of the image on which he is working. According to Peeters, the 'image' does not assimilate into any given style, and, therefore cannot be reduced to a systematically translatable entity.

²⁹ Article 43 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation states that, (1) everyone shall have the right to education, (2) guarantees shall be provided for general access to and free pre-school, secondary and high vocational education in state or municipal educational establishments and at enterprises, (3) everyone shall have the right to receive on a competitive basis a free higher education in a state or municipal educational establishment and at an enterprise, (4) the basic general education shall be free of charge. Parents or persons in law parents shall enable their children to receive a basic general education, and (5) the Russian Federation shall establish federal state educational standards and support various forms of education and self-education.

the concept of citizens' rights developed, the social and political history surrounding the establishment of those cultures, and the conscious decisions by the individuals of those cultures to adhere to a belief based on such precedent. Therefore, images are not only "linguistic in [their] inner-working[s]," they are also culturally founded phenomena.

It is for this reason that the author of this study believes a highly developed form of codification occurs at the levels of images and texts, as well as in visual and spoken language. This codification is wrought upon the minds of a given society so much so that it is custom, even commonplace. As a system of signification it seeks to reinforce and replicate itself to infinity, which is why ideas like "American" or "Palestinian" or "Korean" can become so tinged with emotion. When different cultures come in contact with each other the likelihood that the manifestation of irreconcilable differences may arise, potentially leading to generalized accusations such as, "Well, you and your culture are wrong to believe what you believe." No normal human being desires to be 'wrong' in such a moral sense about something that binds him to his culture, so when that individual is reduced to a term based on nationality, for example, and collectively called 'wrong,' he is labeled as such from without his culture *but* remains incapable of reconciling with that other culture's thought. Since the critique comes from beyond the borders of the accused culture, that criticism may be dismissed as bigoted, biased, racist, or stereotypically conceived. However when one culture negatively represents another culture, pushback generally occurs and stereotypes arise under the guise of images masquerading as true-to-life representations of cultural reality. Therefore, when Western media representations of Palestinians portrayed the Middle East as groups of terrorists and barbarians in the seventies and eighties, the sensibilities of the most well-known Palestinian academic and

cultural expert were greatly offended. Are we tempted to say that no one knows the Palestinian culture as well as Palestinians themselves?

In our effort to understand stereotypical perceptions of Middle Easterners in comics, it behooves our study to examine several excerpts from the above-mentioned academic and his works. Edward W. Said, Palestinian-born, educated in British colonial schools in Egypt as well as in the United States at Mount Hermon School and later at Princeton and Harvard, is most well-known for his work in the late seventies entitled, *Orientalism*. He authored nearly twenty books throughout his career, most of which were highly politically charged while maintaining an exacting academic rigor. A master debater and literary wordsmith, Said was difficult to refute. Yet throughout his career he would grant interviews which had the tendency to draw from him more emotional responses to questions than any of his other premeditated works. On occasion Said would rely on clever literary devices to enhance the flavor of his argument, or perhaps metaphorically address a subject. Although he staunchly opposed the stereotyping of the Arab and Muslim world by the American and European press, he would occasionally indulge in stereotyping to prove its absurdity, or perhaps to “battle back” against the stereotypes he saw so abundantly leveled against those he defended.

Shortly after the publication of *Orientalism* Said wrote a critique of journalism, specifically addressing American foreign policy toward Palestine entitled, *The Question of Palestine*. In this work he is highly critical of the mediocre image of Palestinians portrayed by the news media, as well as (according to Said) the apparently disingenuous treatment in the press of the Palestinian people in Israel in relation to the favorable treatment of the Jewish people in Israel. The subject of the media’s projection of negative images of Palestinians, very close to Said’s heart, would occupy a large, if not

the largest, portion of his subsequent works. In the introduction to *The Question of Palestine*, Said wrote about Western prejudice towards Islam, Arabs, and the Orient in terms of attitude, stating that Western attitude reduced Palestinians to the status of a nuisance. He then goes on to write,

[...] I certainly do not intend this book as a polemic against what has rightly been called the ideological bent of social science work that pretends to scientific objectivity, particularly since the advent of the Cold War. But I do intend consciously to avoid its “value-free” pitfalls. Those include accounts of political reality that focus on superpower rivalry, that claim as desirable anything associated with the West and its modernizing mission in the Third World, that ignore popular movements while praising and valorizing a battery of undistinguished and oppressive client regimes, that dismiss as ahistorical anything that cannot be easily made to fit a particular *telos* or a particular methodology whose goals are “rational,” “empirical,” and “pragmatic” (xiv-xv).

In highlighting these qualities of the West, Said criticizes social and political scientists. These he encapsulates as the “serious defects of [the] Camp David [negotiations].” The production of this stereotype, that the West, the United States, and the Carter administration in particular, is self-serving, ideologically bent upon transforming the Middle East into a ‘modernized’ civilization, and shortsighted in foreign policy because of a blatant ignoring of historical facts, is subsumed in the form of simple metonymy, and subsequently reverberates throughout the two-hundred fifty pages of Said’s “political essay.” Camp David, of course, was the chosen sight for the Middle Eastern Peace discussions agreed

upon by Jimmy Carter, Menachem Begin, and Anwar al-Sadat, which, according to Said, resulted in little more than empty promises and reinforced the uninformed understanding held by the West about the social and political situations surrounding the Middle East. More than twenty times Said evokes this image of the President's getaway, the exclusive retreat for the First Family, figuratively speaking, the garden above Metropolis where the children of the elite frolic in isolation from the unclean masses. For Said, the exclusivity of the lieu highlights the separation from the public, the distance between what the elite perceive as real and what is real, but most importantly, in this context, that this exclusive meeting between these leaders excluded the Palestinians. The 'image' of Camp David serves his analysis and his metonymic stereotype succinctly.

In an interview with Edward Said on October 8, 1991, David Barsamian opens up their conversation with "Welcome to the Land of Oz," making what appeared to be an allusion to *The Wizard of Oz*. Barsamain asks, "[have you] heard the recent press reports [that] Congress and the President have announced billions of dollars in loan guarantees to help build new homes and resettle the quarter of a million Palestinians who were living in Kuwait who have now been forced to emigrate to Jordan[?]." Said replies in the negative to which Barsamian posits "Do you find it rather capricious?" Said re-evokes the allusion to *The Wizard of Oz* but takes it a step further, stating "Yes. It's totally unthinkable, because it seems to me that the United States has in a rather purposeful way been waging war on Palestinian civilians for the last forty years. So any change of this sort strikes me as the tooth fairy, Oz, Pollyanna, Mr. Rogers, all rolled up into one" (*The Pen and the Sword*, 39). At first glance this may appear to be equating U.S. foreign policy to a fairy tale, a fictitious caricature of an idealized scenario, and representative of

the lies told to a child in order to assuage his fears, but this dismissal of the sincerity of Congress and the President goes one step further. Barsamian, maintaining a focus on the images of the Middle East, introduces an Israeli novelist named Amos Oz into the discussion, saying that, “[according to Oz] Palestinians have always been on the wrong side: Hitler, Nasser, the Soviet Union, and Saddam.” The utterance of the name Amos Oz awakens the harsh and cynical critic in Said, who states:

Amos Oz is an interesting figure. He is part of this composite fair-haired acceptable Israeli figure who appears in the West, who speaks to the town hall in Hempstead and writers’ groups in New York and has all the agonized look of a man who’s searching for a solution because, as people like him say, the occupation is bad for our soul, and look what it’s doing to us. Never mind what it’s doing to the Palestinians who are dying and being beaten up and tortured. But it’s worse for us because our souls are at stake. Amos Oz, it seems to me, is a genuine Jekyll and Hyde. He will say phrases like, the occupation must end, we are against this domination of another people, at the same time that he presents opinions about the Palestinians that suggest that, as he says, they are the worst and most evil national movement in history. He has actually said that. There’s a schizophrenic quality there where in order to maintain your credentials as a liberal in the West you have to attack the very people whom you’re oppressing and blame it on them (*The Pen and the Sword*, 48).

This interaction sheds light on the opening statements in which Barsamian stated, “Welcome to the Land of Oz,” for now that we have sufficient context we may conclude that “Land of Oz” refers to the fictional works and political activism of the novelist Amos

Oz vis-à-vis Congress and the President's foreign policy towards Palestine. He does not limit himself to Oz the individual, however. Said's comments about Oz's physical appearance and the acceptability of it in Western spheres provocatively situate the liberal West in a superficial framework before stereotyping it as schizophrenic, Jekyll and Hyde-esque, and as bait-and-switch warmongers. Aided by the evocative images and fantasy of imagery in *The Wizard of Oz*, the tooth fairy, and the false stereotypes and naivety of Pollyanna and Mr. Rogers, Said encapsulates the liberal West as self-contradictory.

A year before his death, Edward Said wrote a short series of letters that would be published in a posthumous collection compiled by Homi Bhabah and W.J.T. Mitchell called *Edward Said; Continuing the Conversation*. Roger Owen's "Conversation with Edward Said" elicits a marvelously constructed stereotype against the field of Orientalism and its supporters in academia. Writing about his book *Orientalism* and the circumstances under which it was received, Said states: "once my political-cum-academic opponents realized that the book was being taken seriously enough to make it impervious to ad hominem attack, they turned to its supposed academic imperfections with the intention, I would suppose, of trying to buttress their own authority before their often wavering students" (*Continuing the Conversation*, 132). This instance, at first glance may not appear to be a stereotype; however, focus on the verb "buttress." *Orientalism* was written as an argument against the "malign influence on the way in which Europeans and Americans regarded what they were encouraged to perceive as a different order of human beings" (132), and as such contended that the origins of Orientalist discourse could be roughly placed at the late eighteenth century (*Orientalism*, 3). Thus, Said equated this nearly 250 year old field of research to be antiquated in thought, nevertheless, powerful and full of durable ideas, for he writes, "any system of ideas that

can remain unchanged as teachable wisdom (in academies, books, congresses, universities, foreign-service institutes) from the period of Ernest Renan in the late 1840s until the present in the United States must be something more formidable than a mere collection of lies” (*Orientalism*, 6). Yet, Said summons the image of a medieval church (or fort) with buttressed walls to don those who wave the banner of Orientalism. In doing this, Said places Orientalist thought in a setting that has not seen the age of modern science, well before the advent of the Orientalism. He insinuates that Orientalists are, figuratively, trapped within the old crumbling fortresses of their knowledge, which is now out-moded. Yet, with their walls buttressed, they are restored remnants of a time long past, perhaps somewhat interesting at first glance, but once seen, no longer a subject of relevance. According to Said, proponents of Orientalism are old thinkers, cripples in need of crutches upon which they may maintain their balance and their careers. By likening Orientalists to medieval churches (or forts) Said also reminds his readers of the monopoly of thought held by the ecclesiastics and feudal lords in medieval times. The relationship between peasant and church and state power comes to mind. This master-and-servant power relationship dominates Said’s metaphor of the buttressed authority which Orientalists assume to possess, thus stereotyping the field as outdated, unconvincing, and stubbornly arrogant.

These three examples of stereotypes function at different levels of analysis. The first (Camp David) pits the masses against the elite, the citizen class against the political class, those outside of positions of power against those holding positions of power. It relies on metonymy, replacing concepts, frustrations, conceptions and misconceptions with a single, all-encompassing noun as referent. Reductively working from the top down, the ‘Camp David’ stereotype serves to identify the West as corrupt based on media

misinformation. The second (The Land of Oz) reduces the whole of Zionists and Jewish Israelites as represented in the fictional works of Amos Oz. conflating the values of Oz with those of the Western world. The third example (Orientalism as *buttressed*) works as a verbal metaphor. Said uses this metaphor to discredit his critics and, in turn, lend himself more credibility. This minute detail in Said's rhetoric reduces the field of Orientalism as well as any defender of Orientalism in this manner, and is a great example of the subtlety with which stereotypes may be produced. Indeed, W.J.T. Mitchell stated, in his *What do pictures want?*, "The stereotype is most effective [...]when it remains unseen, unconscious, disavowed [...]" (296). To go further, these examples provide evidence that, in language, stereotypes can be cleverly disguised as people and places, and even as verbal insinuations if presented emblematically. In comics, stereotypes remain unseen, unconscious and disavowed most effectively when they are blatantly presented to the reader. Our examples from Edward Said briefly demonstrate the versatility of the emblematic *textual* stereotype. Comics, however, rely on a far more complex system. Not only can comics authors and illustrators textually stereotype, they can pictorially stereotype, and through careful manipulation of the text and image together, form a hybrid stereotype. The following section will attempt to illustrate this versatility, beginning with an analysis of "costumes."

III *La bande dessinée* Incorporates the Near and Middle East

Physical appearance dominates pictorial representation of people. Groups of people are discernible from one another without the need for speech or actual physical contact because of certain physical traits, be they physiognomic or culturally distinguishable features, as sometimes is the case with clothing. For this reason ‘costume’ contributes greatly to the stereotyping of people in *bande dessinée*. Near and Middle Eastern peoples generally are depicted as wearing long flowing robes, the patoo, and sandals. Typically, the men wear beards and the women don the veil. These distinct cultural markers will aide in demonstrating a certain evolution of this representation in the *bande dessinée* over three different eras. For our purposes this section of analysis of costume will be divided into two parts. The first part will treat the unambiguous representations of Near and Middle Eastern peoples; that is, we shall observe the manner in which these European authors depict these Eastern peoples in Eastern dress, thereby calling attention to their ‘Easternness’. The second part, and arguably more important to the development of an understanding of the European perspective, will treat the representation of Europeans in the traditional costumes of the Eastern peoples upon whose land they embark in their journeys. Both first and second parts shall be explored for each primary source before moving to the next primary source, and the sources shall be presented chronologically by order of publication. Three of the four primary sources used in this essay contain instantly recognizable representations of Eastern peoples. The oldest of these works, Christophe’s *L’Idée fixe du savant Cosinus*, treats only the European donning the traditional dress of “des sectateurs de Mahomet;” therefore no analysis is possible in regards to the treatment of Near and Middle Easterners with this

work.³⁰ The other three treat this same subject, however, each differ drastically in narrative use of Near and Middle Easterners. Moreover, these works possibly demonstrate a trend in European comics that has developed over the last century – European authors are decidedly attempting to represent Near and Middle Eastern peoples more closely and sensitively, in part owing to increased contact due to colonialism and decolonialization, in both fiction and non-fiction works, such as *Le Photographe*, in the *bande dessinée*.

In order to successfully analyze these works, we shall examine them through the prism of Said's *Orientalism* to attain a strategic position on the subject of the representation. We shall further approach the goals of this analysis by viewing these works with considerations of the histories surrounding the writing and production of the works in question. Although some aspects of this study will concern the immediacy of the comics image, this study is not meant to remain uniquely in the realm of description. To better focus our analysis we shall rely on the writings of a variety of comics' critics, especially regarding Hergé's *Tintin au pays de l'or noir*, about which vast amounts of criticism have been written.

Chapter three is divided into two sections, one primarily descriptive, and the other more interpretive and suggestive. The first section, devoted to a study of the costume, paves the way for section two, which will bring narrative into question in regards to cross-cultural representations via the 'gag.' Of course, an analysis of the written word in these texts is requisite, and will be intertwined in the following arguments. This study

³⁰ At the time of Christophe's work (1899), the exoticism of the Middle Easterner was still quite novel, and his presence in Europe was less pronounced. This is perhaps one reason for the absence of representations of Middle Easterners in *L'idée fixe du savant Cosinus*. Overtime, this cultural figure has become commonplace.

will show that while the Western European depictions of Easterners have a certain authoritative aspect, they are unquestionably deliberate in their execution.

A. The Costume

Georges Colomb, better known by his pen name, Christophe, wrote and illustrated *L’Idée fixe du savant Cosinus*, and was the author of a number of other comic works, including *La famille Fenouillard* and *Le Sapeur Camembert*.³¹ His work insists on what Groensteen calls “une conception plutôt littéraire,” a notion which is most clearly evident in Christophe’s style, for the illustrations of his work appear above the written text and the two are never combined, that is, the text is never superimposed on the image or vice versa.³² This style follows the narrative and literary tradition set forth by the Swiss Rodolphe Töpffer, avoiding the use of speech bubbles.³³ Therefore when looking at Christophe’s *Cosinus*, one must take care to consider the interplay of the text and image, all the while remaining aware of the separate roles the two occupy. Note that without Christophe’s comedic text only crude interpretations of the images, if any, are possible.³⁴ Without the images the text may stand, however alone, as a narrative without a visual referent.

In this Dixième Chant of *Cosinus*, the aloof mathematician and doctor Zéphyrin Brioché, given the name ‘Cosinus’ for his mathematical prowess, decides to attempt yet another voyage in his typically distracted manner. With seemingly no forethought, Cosinus telegraphs to Senegal to have his bags shipped to Tehran, then, as the narration explains, dresses in a traditional Turkish outfit before bidding farewell to Paris and its inhabitants. Upon departure Cosinus stumbles into an open manhole with his trusty dog,

³¹ *L’Idée fixe du savant Cosinus* was first published in a complete volume in 1899.

³² Groensteen, Thierry. *Un objet culturel non-identifié*, n. p., Editions de l’An 2, 2006. (50).

³³ Occasionally, Christophe inserts words in his images, however these words help situate the setting as posters or public announcements affixed to walls.

³⁴ See Appendix 9.

Sphéroïde. Below the city he does battle with rats, darkness, and fear, all the while covered in sewage. When a sewer worker discovers and detains Cosinus, in effect saving his life, the goofy professor finds out that it is illegal to walk in the sewers without possessing a permit, and thereby dragged to the commissariat's office, where he receives a staunch berating. Cosinus further degrades himself by accidentally releasing into the room a small batch of sewer rats that had stowed away in his satchel. The result of the ordeal leaves an official with a rat-bite on the nose and Cosinus with a hefty fine, a filthy garment, and a shameful return home.

The humoristic nature of Christophe's work consistently situates his characters in positions of deprecation. Using the principle of the literary process of *typing*, it is impossible to avoid drawing conclusions about a series of symbols situated side-by-side. Here, the symbol of the Turkish costume must be considered in relation to the character of Cosinus. Since Christophe neither mentions nor illustrates any other symbol from the Near or Middle Eastern worlds in *Cosinus*, there are only a few possible interpretations of this insistence on Turkish dress. Christophe may imply that only a foolish European would attempt to infiltrate the "sectateurs de Mahomet." He may maliciously imply by conflation that the Turkish tradition is foolish, since the majority of Cosinus' thoughts on travel lack any textual prudence. He may also merely imply that his character, Cosinus, follows in the literary tradition of the fool, ignoring altogether the subject of Mohammed and religious affiliation. We shall examine this example in greater detail in the next section.

According to Michael Farr, Hergé was an avid armchair traveler, seldom venturing from his Belgian residence. It was not until 1960, the year he left his first wife and established a life with a young colorist working at his studio, Fanny Vlamynck, that

Hergé began traveling the world, personally viewing the sites where his most famous character lived out some of his most acclaimed adventures.³⁵ Hergé conducted most of his research for the *Tintin* series from newspaper and magazine clippings that he would eventually use as models for his artwork. Captivated by the images and stories found therein, Hergé rigorously documented his media findings. It is, thus, no wild leap of the imagination that *Tintin* would become a creative endeavor in the representation of investigative journalism.

Hergé followed world news in newspapers religiously; however he also made use of historical books to document his works. During the planning stages of *au pays de l'or noir*, he used

[...] a book by Zischka published in Paris in 1934, *Ibn Séoud, Roi de l'Arabie*, [...]. This biography of the founder of Saudi Arabia gave him a direct model for the emir, Ben Kalish Ezab. Contemporary photographs of King Saud reveal a remarkable likeness to Hergé's cultivated but cruel emir, while those showing him with his sons provide a choice of obvious prototypes for the outrageously spoiled Abdullah. However the principal inspiration for Abdullah was to be found in Faisal II, who at the tender age of four became king of Iraq in 1939, just when Hergé began work on the adventure. Among Hergé's papers is a photograph of the young Faisal which he copied in every detail, including dress and footwear, for Abdullah. Later he admitted having a considerable affection for the emir and his unbearable son. Like the emir, King Saud, who in 1924 regained and extended his former homeland by conquest, carving out a kingdom,

³⁵ Farr, Michael. *The Adventures of Hergé*, p.7,16.

had rivals against whom he battled. Moreover, in 1932, the year after Saudi Arabia's foundation, King Saud concluded an agreement with Britain's Standard Oil for the exploitation of the Arab kingdom's mineral resources that mirrored Ben Kalish Ezab's contact with Arabex.³⁶

Hergé's representations of Saudi royal costumes are, for all practical purposes, accurate. The progeny of some of his less notable characters in *L'Or noir* springs from a different source.

Tintin au pays de l'or noir is perhaps the most unique example of Hergé's comic production. Begun before the German occupation of Belgium in World War 2, Hergé was compelled to cease work on *L'Or noir* when *Le Petit Vingtième* closed down operations on May 9, 1940.³⁷ The original story of this album would have been perceived as a threat to the invading fascist Nazi regime, for it closely tied Nazi Germany to the hostile takeover of the Middle East's oil reserves via Hergé's stock villain 'Müller'.³⁸ As a result, Hergé opted to work on *Le Crabe aux pinces d'or*, a politically neutral work. In 1949 Hergé finished the second version of *L'Or noir*; however in 1969 he was compelled to alter the representations of certain elements in the artwork. His work was "too dated" to publish in England. Hergé gave the following explanation for the third version of this story:

L'album ne pouvait paraître en Grande-Bretagne dans sa version originale: il y était question de la lutte des organisations juives (groupe Stern, Hagannah, Irgoun) contre l'occupant britannique, avant l'indépendance d'Israël. Pour le lecteur belge ou français de l'époque, même s'il était trop

³⁶ Farr, Michael. *Tintin: the Complete Companion*, 133.

³⁷ *Le monde d'Hergé*, 85-91, published by Casterman under the direction of Benoît Peeters, provides a highly detailed explanation of the history of *L'Or noir*, including side-by-side comparisons of the three versions of this *Tintin* adventure.

³⁸ See *Les aventures de Tintin; L'Île noire*.

jeune pour s'intéresser aux événements de Palestine, ces faits étaient à l'ordre du jour: on en parlait autour de lui. Pour le jeune lecteur anglais d'aujourd'hui, qui en est à découvrir *Tintin*, en revanche, les allusions de *L'Or noir* auraient été court-circuitées et ont donc disparu de la version nouvelle: la lutte se circonscrit entre l'émir Ben Kalish Ezab et son rival qui tente de prendre son émirat, de devenir calife à la place du calife!³⁹

In addition to conflict between Jewish organizations, this third edition eliminates signs featuring Hebrew lettering in the fictitious port of Khemkhah. It also undergoes a change in the appearance of Tintin's guards. The first two editions featured Kilt-wearing Scots as guards, while in the third we see Arab military police in their stead. These characters were adapted to the 1969 version in an attempt to update this fictitious environment, indicating the politically sensitive nature of the *bande dessinée*. The degree to which Hergé researched his subjects, in this case in particular, and his willingness to accept and adapt to criticism, clearly differentiates his work from other creative writers/artists from previous eras.

The most interesting use of costume in *L'Or noir* is, without question, Tintin's adoption of the traditional Arab dress. The first instance depicts Tintin in 'survival mode', attaching a handkerchief to his head to provide himself shade in the desert after being left for dead by the would-be emir Bab El Ehr. This example is a rather innocent start to the slow transition. The next instance in which Tintin adopts the local dress is under the cover of night. Hearing a familiar voice, Tintin grows suspicious of several men on horseback tampering with the oil pipeline. In order to find out more about this group, Tintin targets and attacks 'Ahmed' (a character who is never portrayed as more

³⁹ Sadoul, Numa. *Interview avec Hergé*, 168-169.

than a silhouette), stealing his horse and clothes and leaving him stranded in the desert near a burning pipeline. Hergé omits any consideration for this disposable Arab, who is, in effect, sentenced to death by dehydration, or execution for the destruction of the oil pipeline, or is already dead at the hands of Tintin. Furthermore, the villain of this story, Dr. Müller, undergoes a similar transformation via costume. Müller dupes several Arabs into aiding him in the destruction of a section of the oil pipeline running through the desert. Before Müller discovers Tintin's identity, it is clear that he intended to kill or subdue Ahmed all along (27). This insistence on the removal of Ahmed begs the question: Is Ahmed's removal from the story, first by the hero, then by the villain, indicative of the author's priority of Europeans over Near and Middle Easterners, or is Hergé consigned to this narrative technique in order to move his plot forward in *L'Or noir*? If we refer to Said's criteria, this would certainly be an example in which European dignity is favored over that of Middle Easterners. Beyond the question of Ahmed's removal from the text remains the manner in which Hergé applies the change of costume differently for his hero and villain. Tintin remains cleverly disguised in Eastern garb from the time he overtakes Ahmed until after his meeting with the emir Ben Kalish Ezab. Dressed as such, Hergé lends Tintin local legitimacy, allowing him to infiltrate the highest levels of the city of Hasch El Hemm.⁴⁰ Conversely, Hergé establishes Müller's illegitimacy by clearly representing him in Western coat and tie, as well as pants and boots typical of the German military. As a foreigner and representative of 'Skoil Oil Company', Müller possesses the same degree of power as Tintin, but now Müller

⁴⁰ 'Hasch El Hemm' is not a real city, however it points to Hergé's clever use of a common acronym in Francophone culture. HLM, in French "habitation à loyer modéré," is a type of government housing built to solve the Housing Crisis in the 1950's and 1960's. They are usually found in impoverished sections of any town, and currently have a large percentage of North African immigrants and their descendants. Furthermore, "Hasch" by itself invokes the familiar drug (hash) of the Middle East. Hergé's use of the acronym in *L'Or noir* may indicate a social critique of Francophone society, or may be a clever play on words, however the underlying implication is that Middle Easterners smoke hashish.

signifies the *other*, as his intent is to exploit the gullible emir. Tintin, by virtue of his clothes alone, can now weave himself into the local social fabric in such a manner so as to represent the very people he has infiltrated by playing executioner!

A more recent example of Europeans clothed in Middle Eastern attire can be found in Emmanuel Guibert's *Le Photographe*. *Le Photographe* follows Didier Lefèvre, a Parisian born in 1957 and a trained pharmacist and photographer, and the French-based humanitarian group MSF (médecins sans frontières) through the desolate landscape of war-torn Soviet-occupied Northeastern Afghanistan during 1986 and is an example of photo-journalism and the photo-roman blended with comic art. *Le Photographe* establishes a compelling sense of realism by using photographs of people and places alongside comics' illustrations that serve to complement the narrative. Didier Lefèvre, encounters Afghan culture for the first time, and is completely unaware of any of the intricacies of the social system therein. Throughout his narrative Lefèvre remains naïve to his situation, however he allows himself to be surprisingly open and possesses a willingness to learn anything he can about the Afghan culture.

As soon as Lefèvre arrives in Pakistan he is taken to a tailor and dressed from head to toe in traditional Middle Eastern dress.⁴¹ Here we have an exceptional example of a European adopting Middle Eastern clothing style, before this compulsory adoption of the culture, although not implicitly forced upon Lefèvre, becomes such a priority as to imply that any deviation may result in unwanted or unnecessary tribulations. Lefèvre explains that his adaptation to this style has a threefold end, a subject on which he had no doubt been briefed immediately beforehand; "Primo, je serai à l'aise dans mes vêtements flottants. Deuzio, je serai conforme à la décence islamique puisqu'ils sont longs et

⁴¹ The story begins in Peshawar, Pakistan before moving across the border at the mountain pass Dewanah Baba, just west of Chitral.

dissimulent bien le corps. Tertio, je me fondrai dans la foule” (Tome 1, 7). Thus, Lefèvre’s intention early on becomes to infiltrate the Afghan culture in order to document his voyage in as authentic a manner as possible. Again, when crossing the border into Afghanistan Lefèvre and MSF conceal themselves in the traditional robe of Afghan women (known as ‘chadri’) because they completely cover the face and body, and are thus less visible under the cover of night. Soon it becomes apparent that Lefèvre underwent a dramatic physical transformation in addition to his dress. After just a few weeks in Afghanistan Lefèvre is emaciated; “Mon corps est décharné, mon visage, mes mains et mes poignets sont noirs, tout le reste est blême, chaque fibre musculaire est visible comme sur un écorché de cire”(Tome 2, 9). All the fat that once clung to his bones is sucked up by the heat of the desert and the grueling pace of his caravan. Even more captivating are the compelling “portraits” at the end of the third volume that briefly update the reader on the lives of the characters depicted in *Le Photographe*. Lefèvre lost fourteen teeth and suffered from chronic furunculosis due to stress, exhaustion, lack of hygiene, and malnutrition the year after his MSF mission. In subsequent years he would revisit the places and people he encountered on his first trip to Afghanistan eight more times. His rather young death due to heart failure is most likely related to these trying adventures.

Lefèvre’s audience discovers Afghans photographically represented in every approach available to the photographer. Concomitantly, Guibert depicts Lefèvre realistically, as any neophyte to an unfamiliar territory and culture. In drastic contrast to the fictive works of Hergé and Christophe, Lefèvre essentially sacrifices himself for the sake of his work, finding his legitimacy in total immersion, directly confronting a culture with the foreknowledge that he would not comprehend the scope of his undertaking. This

fundamental difference in collecting research on his subjects creates a narrative that underlines the documentary nature of these albums. It also establishes a precedent by which journalistic endeavors in cross-cultural representation should use as a beacon.⁴² In order to understand a culture, one must adapt wholly to that culture, so as to attain an internal perspective. Lefèvre suggests by example that one arrives at this internal perspective through a deep-seated appreciation and love for the people of a given culture. Only after this empathy towards a culture is attained may one accurately represent both positive and negative aspects of the culture. It is this concept that drives the hypothesis mentioned in the beginning of this section, for Lefèvre's journey occurred in 1986 and received very little notoriety until the publishing of the first volume of *Le Photographe* in 2003. However, in 1986 *Libération* published six photographs from his expedition. In 1999 MSF won a Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts in Afghanistan. Little by little Europe witnessed the perspective of non-Afghans working and living in Afghanistan, not as *others* but as integral units in the fabric of the Afghan culture. These exposures, along with television reports done by France 3, significantly altered the European perspective, particularly that of francophones, and has been instrumental in what may be considered a shift towards 'political correctness' in representations of Near and Middle Eastern peoples in the *bande dessinée*, as well as other works of significance. In the *bande dessinée* no better example of this trend exists than in the culturally sensitive representations of Afghan culture in the fictitious work of Benoît Peeters and François Schuiten's *La théorie du grain de sable*, published in two volumes from 2007 to 2009.

⁴² Joe Sacco, another comics writer and illustrator, has been documenting his experiences in Palestine and those of the Palestinian people from the height of the Middle Eastern conflict between Israel and Palestine for the past two decades. His work excludes photography, nevertheless, like Lefèvre he has adapted to the culture he depicts (see his works *Palestine* and *Footnotes in Gaza*).

La théorie du grain de sable as a whole may be construed as a creative work that attempts to coalesce two cultures via actions and artifacts that are seemingly trivial. The two cultures are more or less transparent adaptations from the real world; “Brüsel” and “Boulachistan.” These two fictive regions represent, respectively, the European community and the Middle Eastern community, namely Brussels, Belgium and Afghanistan. The narrative gravitates around three parallel crises involving three citizens of Brüsel and the death of a tribal chief from Boulachistan in Brüsel. The three citizens and their crises echo the impression given by the title of the work; the tiniest thing, even a single grain of sand, can profoundly alter the histories of people and places in distant lands rarely, if ever, considered significant. The reader encounters all three crises in minute form very early in the narrative. The first we see is Madame Antipova and the strange manifestation of a small, but heavy, pile of sand in her high-rise apartment. Each time she removes the sand it reappears in larger quantity, eventually overwhelming her. The second crisis we encounter is that of Constant Abeels who discovers a large, unrefined stone resting on his desk in his office at his residence.⁴³ A new stone appears on his desk every time he turns his back, each weighing 6793 grams. Abeels documents the date and time of each stone’s appearance, noting that the speed at which the stones appear increases exponentially. The weight of these stones ultimately collapses his second-story office into the first-story. The third crisis we come upon involves Chef Maurice, a local master cook who unexpectedly loses weight. Strangely, his body shape does not alter, nor does his appetite for food. In the end, Maurice’s weight loss becomes

⁴³ A recurrent character from the *Les cités obscures* series, often represented as a ‘savant,’ and featured in every depiction of the fictive city of Brüsel, Peeters and Schuiten most likely employ this character as a means of representing the learned, white male Belgian (see *Les cités obscures: Brüsel*). This is a recurrent theme in the works researched in this essay, for Christophe, Hergé, and Peeters and Schuiten rely on the wiles of the highly educated yet clumsy white male for the progression of their narratives. Here a comparison of the representations of this stock character between these three eras may be useful to another study of stereotype – that of the scholar.

so extreme that he becomes light enough to float, and even carry Abeels through the air as though he were in a hot-air balloon. The Boulachistani chief comes to the city to sell jewels, and with the money derived from his sales intends to purchase firearms with which to defend his homeland from a group of invaders known as the Mektars. His first and only visit is to a jeweler. His attempt to sell a variety of precious stones fails, however the jeweler, eager for nouveauté in her trade, takes interest in the artifact around the chief's neck. The Boulachistani chief calls this artifact a "nawaby" and agrees that the jeweler may borrow it under the condition that she return it after a short time. The chief, however, never returns, as he is killed walking directly along the rails of the city's tramway. It is after this man's death and the subsequent disappearance of the 'nawaby' that Brüssel begins facing these "phénomènes inexplicables." The entire narrative predicates itself upon a disorder in one nation that upsets the order in another. Before order can be restored in Brüssel, the 'nawaby' must be restored to Boulachistan. For our purposes, this study will focus temporarily on only one aspect of this complex and allegorical story – Monsieur Abeels' adoption and embracing of the traditional clothing of Boulachistan immediately following the restoration of order in both Brüssel and Boulachistan.

Abeels journeys to the desert kingdom of Boulachistan to put an end to the chaos in Brüssel. He discovers a tattered and abandoned kingdom. During this voyage Abeels develops a great appreciation for the symbols found in the Boulachistani kingdom. He even remarks that the firearms depot of the Mektars, the mortal enemies of the Boulachistanis, is tied to trade in Brüssel; "Regardez, tout ça vient de Brüssel!...Oui, Constant, c'est une fameuse pierre dans votre jardin...si j'ose dire" (Tome 2, 94). Schuiten and Peeters suggest in this enlightening passage that the misery of Boulachistan

can be traced easily to Brüssel. If the stereotyped characters who serve to represent European communities and those of the Middle East translate transparently into this narrative, then *La théorie du grain de sable* fits neatly into the hypothesis of this study, for Abeels' enlightening creates an atmosphere where the Brüselois (European) is compelled to feel personally responsible for Boulachistan's (or Afghanistan's) misery. Consequently, Abeels remains in Boulachistan, stating, "...Après tout, rien ne m'attend, ni à Brüssel, ni ailleurs...et il reste tant de choses à comprendre..." (Tome 2, 104). This insistence on European initiative in the undertaking of cross-cultural comprehension is derived from the change of costume that Abeels undergoes. Upon his return to Brüssel, Abeels wears a long, flowing robe intricately bordered with decorative Boulachistani designs at the base. His scope now refined to comprise the global scope of his actions, Abeels concedes that, after all, "[il] ne parviendr[a] jamais à tout comprendre..." (Tome 2, 114). Despite Abeels' new sensitivity towards other cultures, the last panels depict him wearing Western pants and a shirt underneath his open Boulachistani robe, suggesting that he has retained his European identity.

As an example of one of the most recently published European comics, *La théorie du grain de sable* strongly illustrates the hypothesis of this study through the codified costume. In the next section we shall evaluate the representation of Near and Middle Eastern peoples through the prism of narrative placement; that is, how does narration serve to affect the representation of social groups based on the situations in which characters are placed? Again, we shall respond to this question in chronological order of publication, highlighting the above-hypothesized trend in the *bande dessinée*.

B. The ‘Gag’

A gag is not successful without one or more characters suffering some degradation. However, when a group becomes the repeated target of gags, insult may arise. Likewise, the repeated target of gags may find that the subject of the gag has a cultural significance. If such is the case, then these repeated crescendos that occur throughout a narrative may point to the production of negative stereotypes. The following section is an inquiry into the implications of the degradation of a character in the *bande dessinée*. We will examine the proliferation of negative stereotypes based on the manner in which a ‘gag’ is presented in order to determine if such situations potentially insult a group. We seek to distinguish humor from insult, accuracy in representation from exaggeration, for precision in the *critical* environment is essential if interpretation is to be controlled whatsoever. In the *comics* environment, the same need for precision arises; when the still image is juxtaposed to other still images and gently sewn together by text an ideal environment for casting characters in any imaginable way transpires. Yet, and most importantly, the interpretation of this text-image combination rests entirely upon the reader. Any illustration of costume, setting, cultures, and characters drastically affects the manner in which readers perceive and interpret a work. For the critic, this is a two-part quandary; first, the critic may interpret the representation of a character, costume, culture, or theme as particularly offensive to a given group of people; second, other critics may interpret the first critic’s interpretation as overly sensitive, perhaps altogether false. In no way does the author of this study intend to imply that any of the works analyzed as primary sources purposefully propagate ill will towards a group of people. The following examples are simply ways of seeing the works of the past from the perspective of an ethnicity represented therein. The author of this

study also recognizes that he is of an era in a culture where a heightened awareness of cultural differences has retrogressively imposed itself on works of the past, thereby transposing modern sentiments to previous generations. Hergé was very aware of critics' negative interpretations of his works, especially those of *Tintin au Congo* and *L'Etoile Mystérieuse*. He consistently stated that his foremost quality *and* character flaw was his naivety, particularly in regards to his representation of different races and cultures.⁴⁴ In both banal representations and gags, his work has raised questions ranging from anti-Semitism to colonialism.⁴⁵ Contrasting such criticism of Hergé, many writers defend the creator of the most translated comics series ever published. Describing Hergé's naivety, Numa Sadoul states in *Tintin et moi; Entretiens avec Hergé*, "Sans doute y avait-il en lui un boy-scout qui ne sommeillait pas tout à fait. Mais il n'en était pas moins doué d'une rare faculté de s'émerveiller, de s'étonner toujours, de connaître l'enthousiasme. C'est cela, je présume, la jeunesse..." (23). Sadoul's credibility as a judge of character merits recognition, for Sadoul worked with Hergé from 1971 until 1978, at one point having total access to Hergé's production studio. Echoing testimonies of Hergé's tendencies towards naivety, Jacques Martin stated in 1972 that, "Je n'ai jamais rencontré quelqu'un d'aussi sagace, réfléchi, attentif et sur ses gardes qu'Hergé [...] Comme son héros [Tintin], il est habile, rapide, aigu, il voit juste et vite, tout en conservant cette pincée de naïveté (reste de l'enfance) qui caractérise Tintin" (*Entretiens avec Hergé*, 254). Despite

⁴⁴ In *Le Monde d'Hergé*, 210.

⁴⁵ Benoît Peeters expertly catalogues criticisms of Hergé's Nazi collaboration in his *Hergé, Fils de Tintin* (2002), citing versions of Hergé's *L'Etoile Mystérieuse* in *Le Soir*, a Nazi controlled publication. In 1974 Hergé stated that he did not become aware of the Nazi atrocities until 1945 (in an interview with Henri Roanne), before the publication of *L'Etoile Mystérieuse* in *Le Soir*, of which Peeters critiques, stating, "Si Hergé ignorait la « solution finale » lorsqu'il dessinait *L'Etoile Mystérieuse*, il ne pouvait, en revanche, pas manqué de connaître les mesures antisémites promulguées à cette époque (197)". As for accusations of colonialism, there is no question that *Tintin au Congo* contains colonialist propaganda in support of Léopold II of Belgium's efforts to "civilize" the indigenous peoples of the Congo through Catholicism, as delineated by Pascal Lefèvre in his article "The Congo Drawn in Belgium" (in *History and Politics in French-Language Comics and Graphic Novels*, 184).

the voice of Hergé's following and his own pleas of innocence, the debate continues as to whether or not his work is bigoted. Aside from character witnesses, the global history of comics favors Hergé as naïve in the case of *Tintin au Congo*. At about the same time that Hergé was caricaturing Congolese people in Europe, Osamu Tezuka, the famous Japanese creator of the *Astro Boy* series, was representing Africans in a similarly naïve manner for *Shonen Magazine*.⁴⁶ This parallel between two of the greatest comics creators of all time, one European and the other Japanese, represents a social climate that predates the urgency of discourse about race relations by approximately twenty-one to fifty years. The social climate of the 1990s guided the criticism of that era, resulting in a sensitivity that has permeated nearly every level of discourse and every institution. Moreover, such a gap in time between the productions of Hergé and Tezuka provides ample room for a later generation to reinterpret their works.

Another important detail about the intricacies of this study demands attention. Our study comprises a particularly difficult challenge regarding classification, for there exists a nuance in degree in the treatment of one race by another in representation and this varies from literary tradition to literary tradition as well as from generation to generation. Said noted this changing system of classification when he wrote:

⁴⁶ The third volume of *Astro Boy*, as published by Dark Horse Comics in 2002, features the following "note to readers" forewarning, "Many non-Japanese, including people from Africa and Southeast Asia, appear in Osamu Tezuka's works. Sometimes these people are depicted very differently from the way they actually are today, in a manner that exaggerates a time long past, or shows them to be from extremely undeveloped lands. Some feel that such images contribute to racial discrimination, especially against people of African descent. This was never Osamu Tezuka's intent, but we believe that as long as there are people who feel insulted or demeaned by these depictions, we must not ignore their feelings. We are against discrimination, in all its forms, and intend to continue to work for its elimination. Nonetheless, we do not believe it would be proper to revise these works. Tezuka is no longer with us, and we cannot erase what he has done, and to alter his work would only violate his rights as a creator. More importantly, stopping publication or changing the content of his work would do little to solve the problems of discrimination that exist in the world. We are presenting Osamu Tezuka's work as it was originally created, without changes. We do this because we believe it is important to promote the underlying themes in his work, such as love for mankind and the sanctity of life. We hope that when you, the reader, encounter this work, you will keep in mind the differences in attitudes, then and now, toward discrimination, and that this will contribute to an even greater awareness of such problems." -Tezuka Productions and Dark Horse Comics (*Astro Boy*, vol.3, 5).

In the writing of philosophers, historians, encyclopedists, and essayists we find *character-as-designation* appearing as physiological-moral classification: there are, for example, the wild men, the Europeans, the Asiatics, and so forth. These appear of course in Linnaeus, but also in Montesquieu, in Johnson, in Blumenbach, in Soemmerring, in Kant. Physiological and moral characteristics are distributed more or less equally: the American is “red, choleric, erect,” the Asiatic is “yellow, melancholy, rigid,” the African is “black, phlegmatic, lax.” But such designations gather power when, later in the nineteenth century they are allied with *character-as-derivation*, as genetic type. [...] Thus when an Oriental was referred to, it was in terms of such genetic universals as his “primitive” state, his primary characteristics, his particular spiritual background (*Orientalism*, 119-120).⁴⁷

From designation to derivation, Said remarks how this change occurs as the field of evolutionary science first formed under the publication of Darwin’s study of finches in the Galapagos. He notes, “There was general agreement too that, according to a strangely transformed variety of Darwinism sanctioned by Darwin himself, the modern Orientals were degraded remnants of a former greatness; the ancient, or “classical,” civilizations of the Orient were perceivable through the disorders of present decadence, [...]” (232-3). As a negative result of such groundbreaking scientific progress, the fusion of knowledge gained from the literary tradition saw itself presumptuously applied to genetics. Such an application, according to Said, enlarged the disparity between “us” and

⁴⁷ italics added.

“them,” respectively, Europeans and ‘Orientals.’ In the afterword to the 1994 edition of *Orientalism*, Said’s reflects again on this shifting standard,

The construction of identity [...] involves the construction of opposites and “others” whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from “us.” Each age and society re-creates its “Others.” Far from a static thing then, identity of self or of “other” is a much worked-over historical, social, intellectual, and political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies. [...] It should be obvious in all cases that these processes are not mental exercises but urgent social contests involving such concrete political issues as immigration laws, the legislation of personal conduct, the constitution of orthodoxy, the legitimization of violence and/or insurrection, the character and content of education, and the direction of foreign policy, which very often has to do with the designation of official enemies. In short, the construction of identity is bound up with the disposition of power and powerlessness in each society, and is therefore anything but mere academic woolgathering (*Orientalism*, 332).

Said’s reflection twenty five years after the first publication of his most famous work reveals a human truism – competition exists at every level of the human experience.⁴⁸

Likewise, critics engage in these social contests in a unique manner; within the fabric of society they hold the position of judge and jury over popular and critical works, defining what is and is not acceptable for the masses to consume. Each culture represents less

⁴⁸ Refer to Appendix 17 and to commentary within this essay on pages 82-83. This example from *Le Photographe* illustrates Said’s reflection succinctly.

familiar cultures in different manners according to the time period in which their works were created. The author of this study believes a similar phenomenon occurs in the medium of comics. From generation to generation, authors and artists choose to represent different cultures along the perceived lines of social acceptability depending on the era. The process of re-creating “Others” in comics may be inextricably linked to the employment of the comics ‘gag.’

The gag is not a guarantee that a negative, stereotyped representation will inexorably arise. What may have been regarded as innocent humor by previous generations may be interpreted, under the different sensitivities of a later generation, as malicious. Nonetheless, classifications of people at the level of ‘designation’ are rather harmless. For instance, designating that ‘Larry’ of *The Three Stooges* is a ‘white, sickly, buffoon who is violent to himself and others’ is risk-free, while deriving from *The Three Stooges* that ‘white people are sickly buffoons and violent towards themselves and those around them’ is utter fallacy. A gag does indicate, however, a nuance of degree in the sensitivities from one generation to another. The gag may also mark the degree to which certain sensitivities have diminished; the perfect example of this is R. Crumb’s decidedly offensive works, meant to cause knee-jerk outrage and scandal in those bound by the once authoritative Comics Code. Whatever subject a gag may treat, it stands as a probable indicator of social climates and the insecurities of an author (or a generation) and may also serve to represent shifts in these categories.

One final issue must be addressed before continuing with our examination. Comics are rarely created by one person. The medium depends on a collaborative effort between writer and artist, at the least. More recent works often include colorists, letterists, writers, pencilers, and inkers; indeed, keeping up with the visual demands and

standards of readers often requires an entire production studio to accomplish a work in a timely manner. So many hands involved in the process of creation results in a hybrid product, for no work in the comics genre is entirely one person's work. Authors, editors, printers, publishers, producers, and distributors all take part in the creation of comics. Criticisms of comics, therefore, target an entire industry, not simply an individual. In order to criticize more completely the production of representational stereotypes in comics, the scope of this study would require a vast expansion, including a comparison of a large body of works from individual publishers, printers, editors, and producers. For our purposes we shall remain focused on the stereotype itself, on the representation in question, with the unfortunate consequence of leaving other potentially noteworthy aspects aside.⁴⁹

⁴⁹In Numa Sadoul's *Tintin et moi, entretiens avec Hergé*, Hergé states that "[i]l y a certes des quantités de choses que mes collaborateurs peuvent faire sans moi et même beaucoup mieux que moi. Mais faire vivre Tintin, faire vivre Haddock, Tournesol, les Dupondt, tous les autres, je crois que je suis le seul à pouvoir le faire : Tintin (et tous les autres), c'est moi, exactement comme Flaubert disait : « Madame Bovary, c'est moi » ! Ce sont *mes yeux, mes sens, mes poumons, mes tripes* !...Je crois que je suis le seul à pouvoir l'animer, dans le sens de le donner une âme. C'est une œuvre personnelle, au même sens que l'œuvre d'un peintre ou d'un romancier : ce n'est pas une industrie ! Si d'autres reprenaient « Tintin », ils le feraient peut-être mieux, peut-être moins bien. Une chose est certaine : ils le feraient *autrement* et, du coup, ce ne serait plus « Tintin » ! " (66). Michel Lafon and Benoît Peeters made the following statement about this passage: « Hergé n'avait pas tort. Son oeuvre était indubitablement « personnelle ». Il était bel et bien un auteur, au sens de cette « politique des Auteurs » promue, dans les années 1950 et 1960, par les *Cahiers du cinéma*. Car Hitchcock, Hawks et Lang, mais non moins Rossellini, Visconti, ou Fellini, était eux aussi entourés, d'une équipe technique bien sûr, mais également de scénaristes, sans qu'on leur ait refusé la qualité de créateurs à part entière. Mais au sein de cet art moins légitime qu'est la bande dessinée, l'aveu de la collaboration était plus difficile encore. Ou en tout cas plus ambigu : autant Hergé fut prolixe et généreux dans ses appréciations sur ses assistants graphiques, autant il demeura silencieux par rapport à ses scénaristes éphémères. Tout se passe comme si être entouré de spécialistes des décors et des costumes, des couleurs et du lettrage, constituait à ses yeux un signe de richesse, la marque d'un perfectionnisme accru. *En matière d'invention narrative, en revanche, admettre des collaborations, si limitées fussent-elles, eût été comme reconnaître avoir des nègres* (italics added). *Pour un homme qui disait avoir mis « toute sa vie » dans Tintin, c'était littéralement impensable »* (Nous est un autre; enquête sur les duos d'écrivains, 284). For a man who passed his entire life perfecting his art in his own manner, Hergé's pride kept him from admitting that he needed help. However, Lafon and Peeters cite Jacques Van Melkebeke as instrumental in the narrative constructions of *Le Secret de la Licorne* and *Le Trésor de Rackham le Rouge*, as well as Edgar Jacobs in the graphic construction of *Sept boules de cristal* and *Temple du Soleil* amongst others. That is not to say that Hergé did not accomplish the majority of his work alone, nonetheless the latter half of his career saw the creation of his studio and, thus, the complication of his work, which gradually resulted in a decline in output as well as in quality.

1. An Unclean Standard

Edward Said notes the existence of a pervasive stereotype in media representations of the Arab in his *Culture and Imperialism*; specifically that Arabs are “sleazy, ‘camel jockeys,’ terrorist, and obscenely wealthy sheikh[s]” (36). In *Orientalism*, he also cites representations of Arabs in seventeenth century literature as “hated hordes of barbarians.” Does Christophe’s goofy Parisian in Turkish clothing, who clumsily causes a great deal of problems for himself, negatively stereotype the typical Arab of the late 1800’s, or does Cosinus merely force the stereotype of the learned fool upon himself and his race? Cosinus, desirous to voyage to Tehran, nevertheless cognizant of the differences in clothing styles of Easterners and Parisians, dresses himself in order to go “inaperçu au milieu des sectateurs de Mahomet” (Appendix 9, panel 3). His inattention to details unceremoniously lands him in sewer filth, defiling the visual identification to the East with which the reader connects, namely, his Turkish costume. His filthy appearance further taints his reception at the commissioner of police’s office. Here, Cosinus and his Turkish costume are juxtaposed to a sewer’s most foul resident - the rat. Europe in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s was dominated by the Christian, mainly Catholic, faith. Any deviation from Christianity, especially Islam, was considered “a threat” to the institution of Christianity from as early as the eleventh century.⁵⁰ More threatening, however, is the association with the bubonic plague and other diseases that Christophe makes in juxtaposing rats with the Turkish style of dress. In this case, conflation of the ‘rat’ with the ‘Easterner’ does nothing to bruise the character of Cosinus, or that of the Frenchman in general; it indirectly categorizes those with an Eastern appearance as ‘unclean.’

⁵⁰ Said briefly describes Christian authors’ view of the Muslim world starting at 632 C.E. on into the seventeenth century as symbolic of “terror, devastation, the demonic, [and] hordes of hated barbarians” (*Orientalism*, 59).

A different sort of cleanliness is at play in Schuiten and Peeters' *La théorie du grain de sable*. Constant Abeels, the 'savant' of Brüssel, makes known his outrage at the renowned jeweler, Elsa Autrique, when he haphazardly spots her lying in bed between two Boulachistani men. The men are both asleep; Elsa is in her nightgown; Constant only sees her for a brief moment, however he draws the conclusion that Elsa engages in licentious sexual behavior with foreigners. Constant remarks, "Ce n'est pas ce que je parle... Elsa Autrique, tu l'as vue quand même? Je n'aurais jamais cru ça d'elle... Deux à la fois !!!" (53). Schuiten and Peeters' clever employment of a comics gag gives way to Constant's misinterpretation of Elsa's behavior as promiscuous. Moreover, the image of two men from Boulachistan in bed with one woman from Brüssel connotes the presence of another misperception. The reader is fully aware of Elsa and the two men's innocence, for an earlier point in the narrative indicates that Elsa has no other bed in which her two guests might sleep. The trio sleeps together out of necessity rather than for pleasure, however Constant's presupposition alters his understanding of the brief moment that he saw, leading him to not only connect Elsa with lewd sex acts but to derive that the two Boulachistani men are also lascivious.⁵¹ Montesquieu plays on a similar theme of misperception. In his *Lettres persanes* he depicts one of his protagonists, Usbek, as particularly fond of imagining the innocence of his wife, Roxane. Usbek writes to her about how depraved the women of Europe behave, stating, "Oui, Roxane, si vous étiez ici, vous vous sentiriez outrage dans l'affreuse ignominie où votre sexe est descendu; vous fuiriez ces abominables lieux, et vous soupiriez pour cette douce retraite, où vous trouvez l'innocence, où vous êtes sûre de vous-même, où nul péril ne vous fait trembler, où enfin vous pouvez m'aimer sans craindre de perdre jamais l'amour que vous me

⁵¹ see Appendix 10, p. 105-8.

devez” (98).⁵² Of course, Roxane was never as faithful as Usbek believed. She seduces Usbek’s eunuques, cruelly writes a malicious letter of admission, and then commits suicide, giving Usbek no opportunity to respond to her actions. Usbek’s misunderstanding about Roxane reveals precisely how blinded he is by his own expectations. He cannot imagine her as anything other than submissive and innocent. Parallel to this misunderstanding, Constant imagines his absence of dominance over Elsa, leading him to interpret this scene as perversely as Usbek interprets his wife’s feelings.

2. Foolish Interpretations

Hergé’s caricatures of his father and uncle, born identical twins, stand as two of the most memorable characters in comics. Dupond and Dupont provide endless entertainment through their misadventures, shoddy detective work, and dialogues between each other. Hergé uses them as a recurring gag, nevertheless, one instance stands out as particularly noteworthy. In *Tintin au pays de l’or noir*, the Dupont brothers, on the beat, this time, in the desert of a fictional Arab land, rent a jeep and traverse the desert in search of clues as to why gasoline in Europe has recently caused machines to explode. Four times, the Dupondts misinterpret their vision as either a mirage or a real object in the desert. The third time finds Dupont kicking an Arab in the posterior during his daily prayers. Upon realizing his mistake, Dupont hastily apologizes and runs away from the infuriated Arab. This instance typifies Hergé’s clever gag sequences, about which Thierry Groensteen writes:

Hergé est passé maître dans cet art du réemploi. [...] Ce sont les Dupont qui, dans les deserts du Khemed, sont aux prises avec le phénomène des

⁵² “Oh, Roxane, if you were here, you would feel insulted at the awful shame your gender has brought upon itself; you would flee these abominable places, and long for sweet retreat, where you could find innocence and be sure of yourself, where no danger might shake you, where at last you can love me without fear of losing the love you owe me.” Translation by B. Thomas.

mirages. Des palmiers, des lacs, des caravans et des bédouins en prière qui apparaissent au milieu des sables, lesquels existent pour de bon, lesquels ne sont qu'hallucinations? Les deux policiers ne manquent pas de se tromper à chaque pronostic (*l'Or noir*, pp. 19 à 23). (Il faut reconnaître que, dans le cas d'espèce, Hergé, ravi de disposer d'un aussi puissant levier comique – le phénomène du mirage est un formidable révélateur de la bêtise du fameux duo –, a un peu tendance à trop tirer sur la corde: les mêmes effets reviennent à l'identique, le récit piétine, et la séquence se conclut sur cet incident d'un goût douteux, de Dupont bottant le train d'un fidèle en prière et se justifiant d'un piteux «*Excusez-moi si je vous demande pardon: je vous avais pris pour un mirage!... »*).⁵³

Groensteen's gentle treatment of Hergé's humor only magnifies the inflammatory interpretation of this gag, for throughout the *Tintin* series no depiction of a Christian in prayer is similarly attacked.⁵⁴ It seems that Hergé's Catholic background may be implicated in this gag, for *Le Petit Vingtième* was a notably Catholic publication. Hergé's gag may be interpreted as a ridicule of the Islamic posture in prayer. Truly, this scene appears to target the unnamed masses of faithful Islamic peoples and unceremoniously kick them in the butt, albeit accidentally.

Schuiten and Peeters provide a different example of misinterpretation. Whereas Hergé dealt with vision and a person's capacity for visual error, *La théorie du grain de sable* highlights the potential for verbal misinterpretation. Gholam Mortiza Khan, a man of very large stature and quite obviously from a distant land, enters the city of Brüssel in search of a well-known jeweler, Elsa Autrique. He finds her and presents to her a large

⁵³ Groensteen's italics. *Le Rire de Tintin*, ps.54-55.

⁵⁴ see Appendix 11, p. 109-10.

number of precious jewels that he is selling, none of which truly capture her attention. Elsa notices a remarkable object around Gholam's neck, which he indicates is not a jewel and not for sale. She convinces him to let her borrow it for a couple days to show her artisans, also agreeing to purchase other jewels from him as well. Before the large Bugtis leader leaves Elsa with his 'Nawaby,' he asks for directions. She obliges him, saying, "Il suffit de marcher droit devant vous... en suivant les rails de tram" (28). He does precisely what she instructs him to do, and a few moments later is hit by a tram and killed. This gag serves less as an insult as it does to reflect a truism – languages do not translate exactly. Gholam's understanding of "droit devant vous" literally meant, to him, walk one foot in front of the other directly up the middle of the tram tracks. His lack of exposure to Brüssel leads to his misunderstanding of Elsa's directions.⁵⁵ This is the tragic story of taking literally a figurative statement. Although the gag serves as the catalyst for the entire narrative, an overly literal understanding of the directions leaves a man of Eastern appearance dead in its wake.

3. A Fetish for Violence and Terrorism

While Cosinus' costume is true enough in appearance to confound four of his fellow Parisians, his reception as an Easterner is of particular importance to this essay. His dress permits the commissioner of police and his colleagues to conclude that Cosinus is, for all practical purposes, from the East. The text below the image of the embarrassed Cosinus tells us that he is charged with being an "anarchiste dangereux," and thus in opposition to the laws and customs of Parisian Christian society. The French justice system, here, is positioned in opposition to the appearance of the East, certain that there is a criminal underneath anything as suspicious as a permit-lacking, sewer-walking man

⁵⁵ see Appendix 12, p. 111-13.

dressed in a traditional Turkish outfit. Christophe's scene indicates the social climate which Said refers to as "threatening." Although no violence occurs, the conflation of the term "anarchiste dangereux" and Cosinus' costume asserts an environment of suspicion, creating the fear of violence by anyone dressed as such.

Tintin au pays de l'or noir is rife with examples of the Arab portrayed in a violent fashion. Upon arrival at the port of Khemkhâh, Tintin is apprehended by military police, and then kidnapped by operatives of Bab El Ehr. Two pages later, Bab El Ehr and his men are firing rifles at an airplane passing overhead; at first Bab El Ehr believes the plane to contain the Emir's spies, but even after discovering that the plane's occupants are merely distributing tracts, the men still fire their guns at the missionaries. Having decided that his camp is in danger of being discovered, Bab El Ehr moves camp. He ties Tintin's hands behind his back. Then, Bab El Ehr and his men proceed to march Tintin across the desert until he can no longer keep up with the mercenaries' horses. Bab El Ehr pitilessly leaves Tintin for dead in the desert. When Tintin awakes and recovers, he discovers that a group of Arabs are igniting an oil pipeline. Further in the story, when Tintin meets Emir Ben Kalish Ezab, the reader encounters the violent words of a harsh ruler at the disappearance of his son, supposedly kidnapped by Bab El Ehr. "Ah! Bab El Ehr, Bab El Ehr!... Fils de chien galeux!...Petit-fils de chacal pelé!...Arrière petit-fils de vautour déplumé !... Ma vengeance sera terrible !...Je te ferai *empaler* !...Je te ferai *rôtir à petit feu* ![...]".⁵⁶ Again, the Emir's son, Abdallah, exhibits these violent tendencies, happy to see a good fight, cheering at a car turned over and burning, shouting, "Chic! On a eu un bel accident!...", smiling at the barrel of a gun pointed at his head, and anxious to

⁵⁶ "Ah! Bab El Ehr, Bab El Ehr!... Son of a mangy mutt! Grandson of a bald jackal! Great-grandson of a featherless vulture! My wrath shall be terrible! I'll have you impaled! I'll have you roasted over a low heat!" Translation by B. Thomas.

see Captain Haddock burn himself with a pipe.⁵⁷ These depictions of Arabs acting violently or deriving pleasure from chaos no doubt contribute to the stereotyping of Near and Middle Easterners as naturally violent and destructive.

La théorie du grain de sable offers another depiction of the aggressive use of force that stereotypes peoples of Near and Middle Eastern descent. Upon learning the whereabouts of their father's body, the two brothers from Boulachistan ransack the Brûsel morgue in search of his remains. The two attendants testify that they didn't have enough time to find the correct key before the men began pulling bodies out from the wall. In their wake, the two massive men leave upturned dead bodies criss-crossing each other in the hallway. The anguished faces of the recently dead stare up, pained at their disturbance.⁵⁸ This scene, like Cosinus' costume and the term 'anarchiste,' creates a fear of violence, with death being the end result. Death juxtaposed to the uncivil upsetting of the dead, juxtaposed to the idea of two enormous Eastern men ransacking the morgue generates a fear of the physical power these two men possess, making the reader associate the threat of death with the appearance of the two Easterners. This psychological effect at work in the mind of the reader reiterates the stereotype of the violent Arab, insomuch that when the reader confronts such an Eastern appearance again he will look upon that appearance with suspicion, fear, or apprehension.

4. Textual Belittling

In the roughly two-hundred pages of *L'Idée fixe du savant Cosinus*, only once does Christophe refer to people of Middle Eastern descent. For this instance, he chooses to textually identify Easterners according to their religious beliefs, contained neatly in the words "sectateurs de Mahomet" (Appendix 1, panel 3). The root of the word 'sectateur'

⁵⁷ See Appendix 13.

⁵⁸ See Appendix 14.

is the term “secte,” which in the French language commonly connotes the concept of “cult” in the English language; it is, for all intensive purposes a negative term.⁵⁹ A modern reading of Christophe would likely associate the somewhat pejorative term “secte” to Cosinus’ costume, and also associate the costume most immediately to Islam, thereby uprooting any legitimacy that the religion would have otherwise possessed.

Jovially, Cosinus announces his departure to the East and proceeds to the gates of Paris. His adventure both ends and begins as he falls off his originally plotted course into a dark Parisian sewer. There, confronted with a whimsical fear and lacking any understanding of how to measure his bearings underground, Cosinus happens upon a sewer worker, who, seeing Cosinus, cries “Tiens! Un zouave!” (Appendix 1, panel 16). The definition of “zouave” which most closely corresponds to the one intended by Christophe is a conscripted member of the French military serving in North Africa. In 1831, the year the Zouaves were first assembled, the French Army recruited soldiers from the Zouaoua tribe in the Kabyle Mountains. They were distinguished from other French battalions by their clothing, which somewhat resembles the Turkish outfit worn by Cosinus. It was not until 1899, however, that the city of Paris saw the arrival of a battalion of Zouaves. This limited contact with North Africa and Eastern culture, along with a poorly illuminated sewer, leads the sewer worker to conclude that Cosinus is part of that military group. It is imperative to note that by the time Christophe published *L’Idée fixe du savant Cosinus*, the term ‘zouave’ already held a negative connotation. By 1886 “Faire le zouave” commonly meant to play the fool, or to show off. Whether Christophe merely makes a humorous play on words or if he is precisely attacking the

⁵⁹ See “secte” and “sectateur” in *Le Robert*.

North African and Turkish style of dress, the joke unquestionably is made at the expense of an Eastern demographic.⁶⁰

Despite these arguments against Christophe's inclusion of a representation of Middle Eastern people, no truly conclusive argument may stand as to whether or not Christophe's work here is an attack against the East. For instance, the humor of Cosinus depends entirely on the follies of a *Parisian Christian*, not those of a Middle Easterner. Cosinus' decision to infiltrate Turkey as a native highlights this man's absurdity of thought, for his residence is an hour-long walk to the border of Paris and not even children can understand why a white Parisian male would dress in such a costume or act as he acts (Appendix 1, panel 5). Cosinus' adventure through the sewer reveals his incapacity to survive without the strong hand of a stern, nurturing system, always prepared to reprimand him into submission with legal threats and official fines. Furthermore, Cosinus' inane action erroneously leads his own race to assume that he is a danger to the society. In an attempt to escape his own race disguised as another, Cosinus unwittingly makes fools (and stereotypes) out of the white Parisian public servants and mathematically inclined professors and once again serves as the butt of Christophe's joke.

Regarding Hergé's *Tintin au pays de l'or noir*, our study encounters a complicated network of possible interpretations. The last of the three editions of *l'Or noir* depicts Middle Easterners in a variety of roles excepting that of 'hero,' reserved appropriately for the star of the *Tintin* series, Tintin. Hergé takes care to represent his

⁶⁰ Another interesting note about the usage of the term 'zouave' – Hergé's Captain Haddock occasionally uses the term as one of his characteristic insults. He does so in *Le crabe aux pinces d'or* at a quite illuminating moment: in a fit of rage at having his bottle of wine snatched from his hands, Haddock, madly goes after his captors. He handles two of them, both white men, easily and chases after a third, shouting insults down a corridor. This third happens to have a dark olive brown complexion, and Haddock calls him a zouave.

fictitious Middle Easterners as military police, informants, exiled political enemies, rebels, kidnappers, proselytes, opportunists, cruel mercenaries, devout followers of the Islamic faith, conspiring terrorists, gullible, crony, socially organized, susceptible to mob mentality, majestic, helpless, concerned and loving parents, pranksters, criminals, naïve, and bold, to name a few. Despite this diverse group of roles, a few arguments can be made in favor of critics who believe Hergé's work to be colonialist or elitist. Hergé first depicts the potential for evil perpetuated by Bab El Ehr and his band of mercenaries when Tintin is deemed not worth caring for as a prisoner and subsequently left for dead in the desert (*l'Or noir*, 21). The turn of the page greets the reader with an image of Dupont kicking a faithful Islamic man in the behind. This point-counterpoint choice of cultural representation, clearly places the European representation in the position of victim and the Easterner in the abusive role of murderer. Such a scene thereby justifies any subsequent insult, for no matter what subject may be the target of Hergé's next gag, it will pale in comparison to the thought of Tintin being left for dead in the desert.

Another example of European elitism is the premise of *L'Or noir*; Tintin, a Belgian and model citizen, must come to the proverbial rescue of the helpless ruler of an Arabian kingdom, save this Arabian ruler from civil unrest and bring a kidnapping criminal, a German, no less, to justice. Such a premise casts doubt on the ability of the Arabian ruler to rule his kingdom. An even more damaging argument against Hergé's treatment of Easterners is the manner in which he depicts the Emir's ability to parent his own son. Hergé portrays the Emir as a spoiler and a push-over, yielding to whatever desires his son might have, as well as tolerating his son's malicious pranks. The Emir laughingly accepts Abdallah's tricks, stating, "Ce n'est rien...Une amorce, Abdallah avait l'habitude d'en semer partout...Cela mettait de la vie dans le palais" (40). These

arguments create a three-fold insult to Arabian culture – first, any reverence to the Islamic faith is lost in the assault during prayer; second, the Emir cannot effectively rule his kingdom without the help of a European; and third, the Arabian ruler does not have effective parenting skills. As with the example taken from Christophe, Hergé’s portrayal of the Emir as menacing, laughable, and utterly unfit to parent children or rule a kingdom afford critics ample material to build an argument against Hergé’s negative stereotyping of Middle Easterners.

Conversely, one may interpret *Tintin au pays de l’or noir* as another of Hergé’s humorous installments in the detective comics genre, with traditional heroes and villains, victims and perpetrators. Arguments favoring Hergé’s treatment of Easterners as diverse and complex individuals abound, considering Europe’s thorny history of encounters with the Eastern world, as described by Said. Hergé gives his Khemkhâh natives a variety of both positive and negative roles and qualities rather than isolating them in static villainous roles. The quality of human fallibility of the Emir, Bab El Ehr, and other secondary characters shows how Hergé acknowledges that all peoples and cultures possess the capacity for both good and evil. His characters contain complexity. Moreover, Hergé sends Tintin to the Arab world more than once, which Michael Farr suggests may indicate Hergé’s deep appreciation for the Middle East. Farr writes, “While there were a few corners of the globe that Tintin did not reach during the course of his twenty-four adventures, there were regions to which he did return and for which he seemed to have a special affinity – the Middle East and the Arab world, and South America” (*The Adventures of Hergé*, 83). Hergé’s comedic efforts are also quite innocent; the Dupondt’s errors in deciphering mirages serve his comic style succinctly, cleverly closing a sequence of humoristic moments in the misadventures of the would-be

twin detectives. More degrading than being the “butt” of a joke, the Dupondt brothers are consistently represented as ignorant Europeans - stock characters whose antics most closely categorize them as *fools*. Furthermore, these characters are based on Hergé’s father and uncle.⁶¹ But herein is a discrepancy: are the Dupondt brothers ridiculous because they are ignorant Europeans, or is it the state of being twins that lends them an air of ridiculousness? Hergé’s work offers no specific solution.

One textual reference in *La théorie du grain de sable* clearly indicates a certain colonialist sentiment toward Easterners. At the scene of the Gholam’s accident a local patron of Maurice’s restaurant refers to Gholam as “Un sauvage” (32). Used here by a Brüselois to describe a strangely dressed man from a distant land, this term connotes an unrefined manner about a person. Had Gholam conformed to the trends in appearance to which most Brüssel citizens adhere, those at the scene of the accident might have called him “Monsieur” rather than the less-than-civilized term “Sauvage.” This example very clearly displays linguistically the proliferation of the negative stereotype of Easterners as unsophisticated. Moreover, Gholam’s interpretation of Elsa’s directions indicate that he may have had enough mastery of Brüssel’s language to perform business, but not enough to survive. Again, referring back to Said’s analysis of Darwinism, that proponents of Darwinism viewed the modern Oriental as a degraded remnant of a former greatness (*Orientalism*, 233), this once great power from the East (at least as represented here) is no longer fit enough to adapt to his environment.

In terms of situational degradation, the *absence* of representation may prove more telling than the presence of representation. On March 24, 2009, Fox News released an article written by Greg Burke entitled, “Politicians Fret as Muslim Population Swells in

⁶¹Photographs of Hergé’s father and uncle reveal that the two were identical twins, and that they often dressed alike in public (See Farr, *The Adventures of Hergé*, 29).

Europe Amid Little Integration.” The article claims that some twenty-five percent of Bruxelles’ urban population is Muslim, a statistic that indicates a changing social climate in the heart of Belgium’s capital city. According to Burke, the neighborhood known as Molenbeek appears “more like North Africa than the heart of Europe.” The article goes on to state that the majority of this twenty-five percent are Moroccan immigrants or born of Moroccan immigrants. In a city such as Bruxelles diversity abounds. But in Brüssel, in Schuiten and Peeters’ alternate universe, only one representation of Moroccan culture can be found. This one representative of Morocco serves as an assistant at the morgue, a sort of attendant. All of the other citizens depicted in Brüssel are white and European in appearance. If Bruxelles is as diverse as Fox News claims, why then does this diversity not manifest itself in *La théorie du grain de sable*’s Brüssel?

Obviously this perspective teems with bias, for one cannot deny that three of the main characters in Schuiten and Peeters’ work are clearly of Middle Eastern descent (or, more precisely, from ‘Boulachistan’), and their roles, as well as all other protagonists’ roles, serve to redeem the Boulachistani culture. *La théorie du grain de sable* suggests that the healing of ‘Boulachistan’ is the responsibility of Brüssel. Furthermore, the narrative suggests that if Brüssel takes the appropriate measures to ensure that Boulachistan properly heals, Brüssel’s own problems will be solved. Yet, this same argument that requires Brüssel to restore order to Boulachistan points to the same type of cultural imperialism of which Hergé has been accused. Again, the West must rescue the East, proving that even with a heightened sensitivity towards representation of other cultures, the same dominant position is awarded to the West.

5. The Gagless *Photographe*

Le Photographe highlights the unique details of the experiences of people who lived and worked among Afghani natives and witnessed their infirmities, prejudices, and practices. Using Didier Lefèvre's journals, photographs and words, Emmanuel Guibert captures the Afghani people in a number of revealing moments. There are no 'gags' in *Le Photographe*. On the contrary, the narrative tone feels somewhat disconnected, lacking in anything other than pure objectivity, like a photograph simply documenting a moment in time. Objective as it is, however, the production of stereotypes knows no limitations, and *Le Photographe* produces (or rather *presents*) several stereotypes of Afghani people. One telling example arises in a brief introduction to culture, representation, and displays of strength in the Afghani culture. MSF (médecins sans frontières) traveled with a large Dutchman named Ronald. According to Lefèvre, the Moudjahdeen, or leaders of Afghani tribes, were particularly interested in Ronald because of his size. Lefèvre states :

Sa taille intrigue les Moudj'. Ils veulent savoir s'il est aussi fort que grand. Tous les soirs, Najmudin le sollicite pour un bras de fer. Tous les soirs, Ronald perd, parce que nul n'est plus fort que Najmudin. Mais même si Najmudin était une chiffe molle, Ronald aurait tout intérêt à le laisser gagner. On n'humilie pas un moudj' sur le chapitre de la force physique, quelques occidentaux ont fini au fond d'un ravin pour l'avoir ignoré.⁶²

⁶²See Appendix 15. "The Muj' find his size intriguing. They want to know if he's as strong as he is tall. Every evening, Najmudin challenges him at arm wrestling. Every evening Ronald loses, because no one is stronger than Najmudin. But even if Najmudin had been a wimp, Ronald would have been well advised to let him win. You don't want to humiliate a Muj' on the subject of physical strength – a few Westerners who didn't know that ended up at the bottom of a cliff." Translation by Alexis Siegel.

The members of MSF, all of them ‘Westerners’, are the “others” in this situation, reversing the roles assigned by Said’s study of Orientalism as well as the vantage point favored by authors of works Said would have labeled ‘imperialist’. In order to survive, the members of MSF must conform to their environment. However, the context of this scene, the apparent strength of Najmudin versus the perceived strength of Ronald, is highly suggestive. The primary interpretation of Ronald’s ‘defeat’ in arm wrestling, of course, is the necessity of the Westerners, outside of their native territory where they would be safe in displaying their strength over a man of a different culture, to recognize the priority of living as opposed to delighting in a bolstering of their pride. By ceding physical prowess to the Moudjahdeen, Ronald controls the emotional reactions of the Afghanis, sparing his life and lending them confidence, albeit insincere. The mention of the threat of death upon victory in an arm wrestling match, however, portrays the Afghanis as petty and violent. Of course, since *Le Photographe* is an example of photojournalistic realism, autobiographical, and contains still-life photographs of reality in Afghanistan in the eighties, one must posit whether or not the stereotype of the petty and violent Afghani is, in fact, typically representative of the culture.

We observe another stereotype related to violence in *Le Photographe*, however this one veers toward the Afghani youth. Lefèvre encounters a group of armed teenagers who insist on having a shooting contest. With their automatic rifles pointing haphazardly, Lefèvre feels rather uncomfortable. He is alone and in the midst of immature teens dangerously playing with large, powerful guns. However, since Lefèvre lacks sufficient language skills to back down from this contest he is compelled to participate, making him complicit in the acceptance of such behavior from Afghani

teens.⁶³ Again, does the image of smiling armed teens, ready for combat in a moment's notice, stereotype Afghani teens as violent or does it typify them? Regarding the significance of photography, E.H. Gombrich wrote that "[i]t is not a visual truth, it is an objective record, but one which has to be interpreted in the light of additional information."⁶⁴ If it is not true visually that Afghani teens are violent, but rather an objective record, then we should interpret this scene as stereotypical, for without much more "additional information" this scene greatly reduces all Afghani teens, lumping them into one big category and not allowing for any flexibility. Yet this raises another question; how much additional information is required before the objective record can be said to typify? For our purposes, it suffices to simply pose the question rather than reply in full.

Lefèvre encounters religion multiple times per day while touring Afghanistan. Every time he enters a house he is reminded of the Muslim faith. The caravans he travels with frequently stop for daily prayers. As a Westerner, each time he meets someone he must tell them to what religion he belongs - Christian' is *Isawi*. On his return to Pakistan, Lefèvre encounters one man who has an authoritative air about religion. At a slight distance from his caravan on his trek away from MSF, Lefèvre spots a man walking the high roads of Afghanistan, coming toward him. The man appears to be learned, at least more learned than the members of Lefèvre's hired caravan. Wasting no time at their meeting, the man asks Lefèvre his religion, to which Lefèvre replies, "Isawi." After a short explanation that Christian is good but Muslim is much better, the man tells Lefèvre that it's very bad to be Jewish; "Par contre, il ne s'agirait pas que je sois *Yahud*. *Yahud*, c'est *khalop*, c'est vraiment mal. Il dit ça en fronçant les sourcils. Et puis pof, il me

⁶³ See Appendix 16.

⁶⁴ Gombrich, E.H. "Standards of Truth: The Arrested Image and the Moving Eye." Quoted in *The Language of Images*. Ed. W.J.T. Mitchell. University Press of Chicago, 1974: 182.

plante là. [...] Par acquit de conscience, je vérifie dans mon dictionnaire ce que j'ai déjà pigé. Yahud, ça veut bien dire juif.”⁶⁵ Introspectively Lefèvre questions how many such proselytizers roamed the hills of Afghanistan. With no twin or comparable scene in *Le Photographe*, this instance serves to stereotype the anti-Jewish sentiment known to be pervasive amongst Middle Eastern Muslims. Furthermore, this scene is a precursor to Lefèvre's three major trials with the Afghani people. First, his caravan abandons him. Then, when another caravan picks him up, they extort him for nearly all his money, all the while marching him at a grueling pace. Finally, Lefèvre finds himself the hostage of a corrupt police officer, and again becomes the victim of extortion. These misdeeds by a small cross-section of the Afghani people leave Lefèvre with a sour taste in his mouth, longing for his native land, but Lefèvre never attributes the abuses to these individuals' upbringings. Rather, Lefèvre remains constant in his humanistic objectivity, seemingly guided by his camera in order to document reality as it is. It is this humanism which distinguishes the collaboration of Guibert and Lefèvre and that of Schuiten and Peeters from the works of Christophe and Hergé, and subsequently results in the changes in stereotypes of Near and Middle Easterners.

⁶⁵ see Appendix 17. “But I'd better not be *yahud*. *Yahud* is *khalop*, really bad. He says that with a furrowed brow. And with that he just walks off. [...] Just to be sure, I check in my dictionary that I've understood correctly: Yahud does mean Jewish.” Translation by Alexis Siegel.

IV. Conclusion: Comics' Guide to Culture and Stereotypes

"He who has understood nothing about comics has understood nothing about the twentieth century."
-Ben Streepe

In his *Un objet culturel non-identifié* Groensteen proposes that the *bande dessinée* is an art that has no memory. This is a falsehood. Comics not only build upon each other within the tradition, but they are also thematically linked to literature in terms of representation. It is not simply a matter of shuffling in new artists and authors to rework old themes – the creation of a comic (its publication and printing) serve as a guidepost to the thoughts and values of the culture and generation from which it stems. As a guide to foreign cultures (and, thus, stereotypes of foreign cultures) *bande dessinée* has proven time and time again that it consistently re-presents stereotypes. Although these stereotypes shift ever so slightly, especially in the degree to which they are sensitively represented on the page, the pervasive stereotype of the 'treacherous Arab' can be traced all the way back to the dawn of the European comics movement.⁶⁶ But, beyond the stereotypes of the Near and Middle East (and North Africa), the *bande dessinée* has consistently relied upon characters that exhibit a certain foolishness. Cosinus comically attempted to broaden his horizons at every occasion, nevertheless, as a guide to other cultures he proved an utter failure. Christophe's readers learn from Cosinus' failed travels that it is not prudent to trust someone else's ideas about other cultures. Likewise, Hergé gave us two untrustworthy guides in Dupond and Dupont, whose false sense of understanding always landed them in awkward situations. Hergé signaled his readers to their fallibility by their dress, for the Dupondt brothers always don outdated or out-of-fashion garments. In similar manner, Schuiten and Peeters offer the malleable savant,

⁶⁶ In 1845 Rodolphe Töpffer's *Histoire de Mr Cryptogame* portrayed a scene in which the protagonist was captured and manhandled by Algerians.

Constant Abeels, as an outsider's window into the Boulachistani culture. Abeels discovers merely superficial qualities of the strange occurrences in Brüssel, such as the weight of each rock he finds on his desk, however he learns nothing of the culture of Boulachistan without the help of other specialists. Even Didier Lefèvre proves insufficient as a guide, for he knows nothing of the culture or language before arriving in Afghanistan, yet has enough gall to venture out on his own across one of the world's least forgiving landscapes.

Comics, *bande dessinée*, and Manga all serve as guides to culture. Their production becomes the studies of the time of their composition for future generations, revealing a unique side of cultural interpretation. Clearly, stereotypes manifest themselves in juxtaposed pictorial images, and both the written and spoken word can easily forge reductive thought about a group of people. Stereotypes, however, are disputable (referring back to Pickering's reading of Allport, just as categorical designations are disputable), fluid, evolving, and show a tendency to shift based on a wide variety of social, political, and economic factors. I have found that stereotypes in the comics remain pivotal in the production of character types, and for the critical purposes of this essay, stereotypes serve to mark changes in trends of the representational art of comics. Although stereotypes seek to fossilize thinking within categories, they change from generation to generation and seem to depend heavily on one's exposure to a given culture.

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Appendix 2: *Maus* - Vladek's Speech and Stubbornness



Appendix 3 : *Persepolis* - Karl Marx and God



Appendix 4 : A Contract with God – The Miserly Jew





Appendix 6 : *Slam Dunk* – Sakuragi's Teenage Emotions (read from right to left !)



Appendix 7 : *Lucky Luke* – Framing a Narrative to Create a Caricature

This edition of the *Lucky Luke* series is called « Le pied-tendre » or ‘the tenderfoot’ and recounts the fictional tale of a seemingly weak man living in the Wild West.

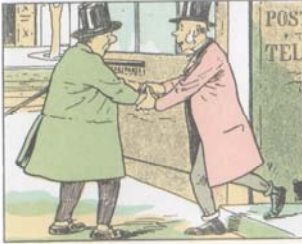


Appendix 8 : *Maus* – A Photograph of Vladek in Concentration Camp Attire



Appendix 9: Le Dixième Chant de *Cosinus*

Le septième voyage de feu Cosinus.



— Tiens! Bricoché!... mais je vous croyais mort, mon savant ami. — Si peu mort, illustre collègue, que je repars. Je viens de télégraphier au Sénégal qu'on envoie mes bagages à Téhéran, car je m'en vais par l'Est, cette fois; c'est bien décidé.



— Qui parfaitement, par l'Est... entendez-vous bien?... L'Ouest et le Sud ne m'ont pas réussi... La Providence, mon illustre collègue, a probablement sur moi des vues qui font que je dois passer par l'Est... J'obéis aux vues de la Providence!



Et voilà pourquoi, un beau matin, Scholastique pénétrant dans la chambre de son maître, le trouva en train d'essayer un costume turc destiné à lui permettre de passer inaperçu au milieu des sectateurs de Mahomet.



C'est ainsi costumé que feu Cosinus fit ses adieux à la domesticité de sa maison et partit, suivi de Sphéroïde toujours nègre, et de plus, muni d'un chapeau que son maître avait payé 6 fr. 30 pour le préserver des chaleurs torrides des plateaux de l'Asie.



Après une heure de marche, feu Cosinus aperçoit la Porte dorée : « Enfin! s'écrie-t-il, je vais sortir de Paris... Est-ce que le sort se serait lassé de me poursuivre? Béné soit le ciel! » et feu Cosinus s'élance...



... Et feu Cosinus disparaît dans un abîme qu'il n'avait pas vu et que le Sort (*Fatum*, en latin), toujours jaloux des lauriers qu'il allait sans doute conquérir, avait creusé sous ses pas... que Sphéroïde emboîte sans hésitation ni murmure.

La Cosinusomyomachie (ou le combat de Cosinus contre les rats).



Tout cela cause une certaine surprise à feu Cosinus dont la chute a été amortie, mais dont les appels désespérés restent sans écho, malgré l'aide vigoureuse que leur fournissent les hurlements de Sphéroïde.



Cosinus s'étant souvenu du proverbe : « Aide-toi et le ciel t'aidera », s'est décidé à chercher une issue; mais il fait de fâcheuses rencontres et se heurte à une avant-garde dont Sphéroïde affamé tire immédiatement parti.



Par malheur, le gros de l'armée, suivi d'une réserve considérable, ayant dessiné une attaque de vive force sur les intrus qui ont envahi son domaine, Cosinus et Sphéroïde n'hésitent pas à prendre courageusement la fuite.



Zéphyrin a trouvé un refuge étroit et provisoire dans une anfractuosité de la muraille, d'où il essaie de repêcher son sac à provisions submergé sous un flot de rats. Cosinus conteste l'utilité de pareils animaux, qu'il appelle « stupide engence et race également stupide ».



Malheureusement l'anfractuosité correspond à un regard donnant sur la rue et par lequel se précipite tout à coup un Niagara d'une violence extrême et d'une odeur extrême aussi. Cosinus, projeté sur le sol, conteste l'opportunité du Niagara. Le Niagara lave complètement le deuil de Sphéroïde.



Cosinus trempé, mais débarrassé des agressifs rongeurs, ne conteste plus rien et se remet à errer mélancoliquement dans la nuit. Le chapeau de Sphéroïde s'étant déplacé, la silhouette du sympathique animal rappelle vaguement celle d'un chameau qui serait bas sur pattes.

De l'utilité des instruments de précision.



Arrivé à un endroit où quelque lumière filtre, Cosinus tire sa boussole de poche pour s'orienter. Sphéroïde observe les mouvements de l'aiguille qui lui paraissent mystérieux et même incompréhensibles.



Mais voilà que Sphéroïde, arraché à ses études magnétiques, donne de la voix. Qu'est-ce? une lumière... une étoile peut-être! Cosinus, qui sait profiter des moindres circonstances, tire son sextant de poche pour faire le point.



Cosinus découvre en faisant ses calculs qu'il doit être par 12° 21' 34" de longitude Est et 15° 32' de latitude Nord. Ce résultat ne laisse pas que de le surprendre, car alors il se trouverait dans les environs de Bombay.



Or l'étoile n'était autre que la lampe d'un égoutier en tournée d'inspection. « Tiens! Un zouave! » interjette cet homme aquatique. Puis il ajoute aussitôt : « Dites, m'sieu l'zouave, est-ce que vous avez une permission, pour vous ballader dans les égouts? »



Cosinus avoue « qu'ayant pénétré d'une façon fortuite, imprévue et verticale dans ce qu'un fameux poète a appelé l'intestin du Léviathan, il n'a pas eu le temps de se munir d'une permission ». L'égoutier déclare aussitôt à Cosinus qu'il va le conduire où l'attend le nommé Lévy dont il parle.



Quant à Sphéroïde qui, lâchement, a abandonné son maître dans le danger, il a filé droit devant lui et a fini par arriver, décoloré, à Asnières où débouche le grand égout collecteur. Là, il lie connaissance avec quelques individus de son espèce et fait un mauvais usage de sa liberté.

Cosinus tombe sous le glaive des lois.



Conduit devant la justice de son pays représentée par le commissaire de police, Cosinus est mis en demeure de donner l'adresse de ce Lévy, que, de son propre aveu, il devait rejoindre et qui ne peut être, comme lui, qu'un anarchiste dangereux.



Cosinus ne comprenant rien à cette question, qu'il qualifie irrévérencieusement de saugrenue, et ayant affirmé qu'il ne connaît aucun Lévy, le commissaire procède aussitôt à l'inventaire méthodique des pièces à conviction.



Or les pièces à conviction étaient habitées par une arrière-garde de rats d'égout dont l'un, s'étant adressé au nez du greffier, périt foudroyé par une absorption exagérée de nicotine. Cosinus propose aussitôt de payer de ses deniers le vétérinaire.



Cette offre ayant paru blessante pour les agents de l'autorité, Cosinus est absous, faute de preuves, du crime d'anarchisme, mais condamné à une amende de 30 fr. 54 pour insulte au greffier, accrue d'une indemnité de 43 francs octroyée audit greffier pour la restauration, devenue urgente, de son appareil olfactif.



Nous avons laissé M^{me} Belazor et Mitouffet au fond du port de Marseille. On les en a retirés avant que l'asphyxie ne fût complète et nous assistons à leur embarquement motivé par un renseignement qu'on leur a donné et duquel il résulte qu'un bicycliste est parti la veille pour le Sud oranais : « Plus de doute! C'est lui! il nous fuit! » dit M^{me} Belazor.



Je ne sais si vous êtes de mon avis; mais il m'a toujours semblé que le langage et le rouls avaient dû être inventés par les marins pour vexer les pauvres terriens habitués à l'élément solide, et qui, prenant sur l'élément liquide des attitudes abandonnées, offrent ainsi à MM. les marins un spectacle gratuit et réjouissant.

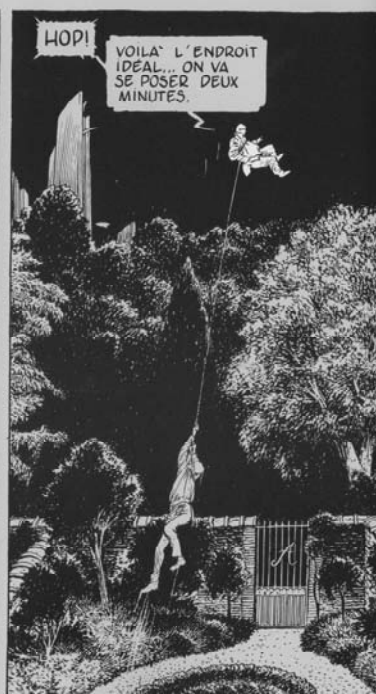
Appendix 10 : *Grain de sable* - Misperceptions



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OH, TU SAIS, JE COMMENCE A M'HABITUER... CA N'A PAS QUE DES INCONVENIENTS.

CE N'EST PAS DE CA QUE JE PARLE... ELSA AUTRIQUE, TU L'AS VUE QUAND MEME ? JE N'AUROIS JAMAIS CRU CA D'ELLE... DEUX A LA FOIS !!!

MAIS QU'EST-CE QUE TU RACONTES, TOI ?



NON, JE T'ASSURE, C'EST PAS DES BLAGUES... J'AI MEME L'IMPRESSION QUE C'EST TRES IMPORTANT.



JE COMMENCE A AVOIR FAIM, MOI.

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Appendix 11 : Kicking an Arab



Appendix 12: *Grain de sable* - Confused Directions



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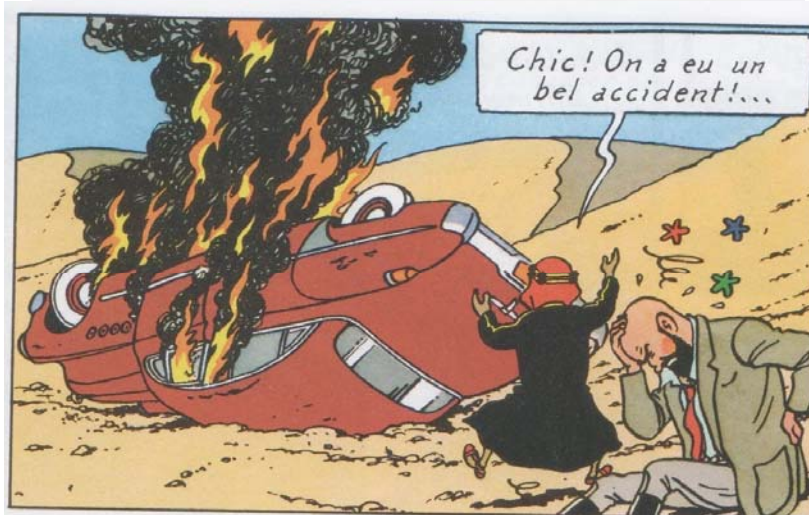


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Appendix 13: *L'Or noir* - A Fetish for Violence









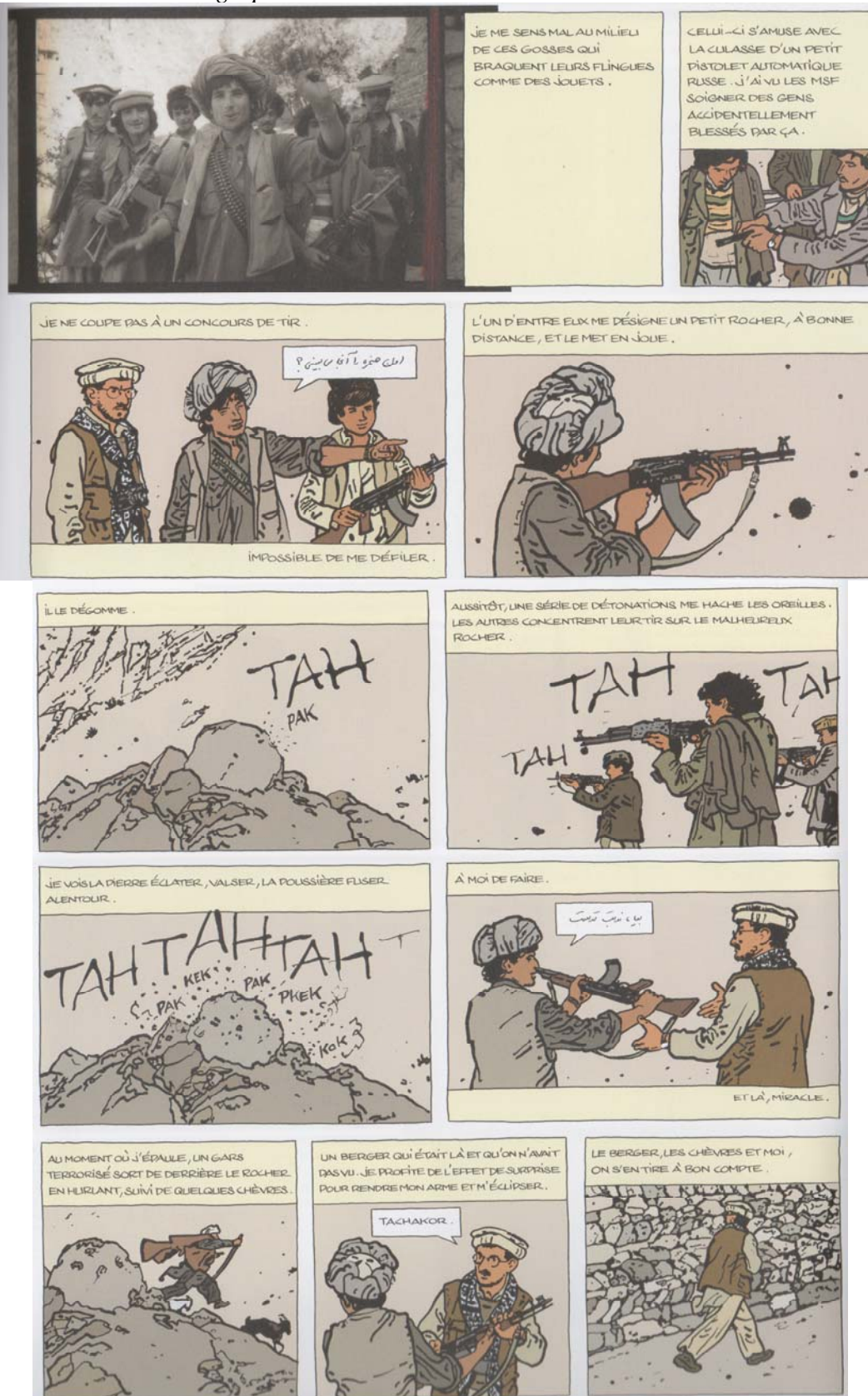
Appendix 14 : *Grain de sable* - Ransacking the Morgue



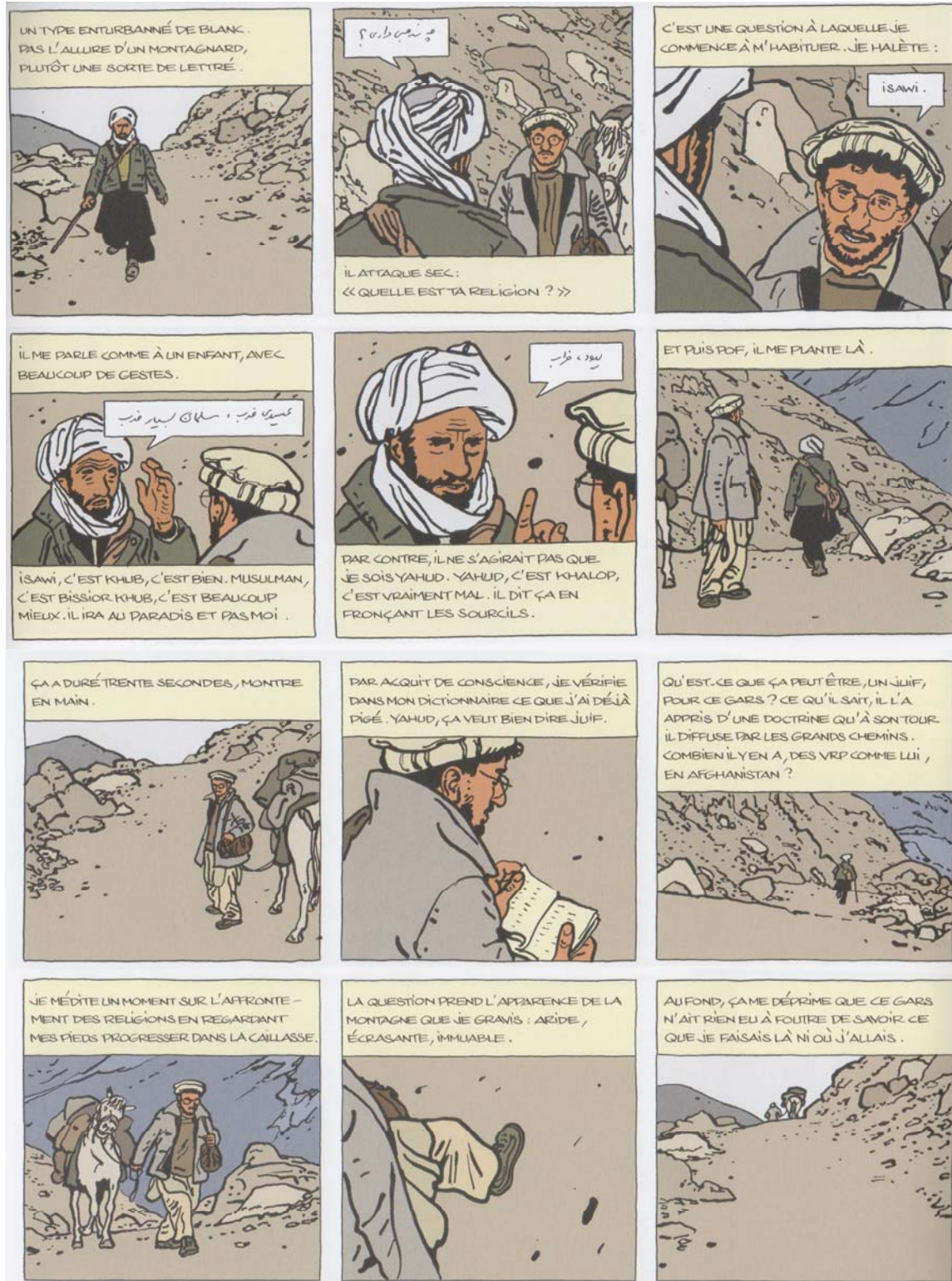
Appendix 15 : *Le Photographe* - Textual Violence



Appendix 16 : Le Photographe - Teens with Guns



Appendix 17 : Le Photographe - Proselytism



Vita

At the age of five Brandon Thomas would not go to sleep at night until he received permission from his mother and father to wear his Batman or Superman costume. He has been a comics fan ever since.

In high school Brandon would read *Alien vs. Predator* instead of reading the materials his teachers assigned to him. He still graduated with honors. His undergraduate education was marked by a period of depression because he was compelled to study many things that were not comics. Graduate school offered him the opportunity to study subjects and mediums of his own choosing. He is currently writing and drawing political comics featuring his two dogs, Sandy and Lucky, and his two cats, Mala and Diego.

Brandon's love for the comics is rivaled by his love for martial arts, which he has practiced for fourteen years. Despite the longevity of these two relationships, his wife, Jessie, is more important. Together with their animals, Brandon and his wife live in Louisiana.