7-2018

World Literature

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It could be argued that the most significant development in twenty-first-century global comics emerged from the pages of a regional newspaper in the suburbs of Århus, on the Jutland Peninsula of Denmark. In September of 2005, the *Jyllands-Posten*—a newspaper with a circulation of 120,000 readers—solicited representations of the Prophet Mohammed from members of a Danish newspaper illustrators’ union. Published in response to an author’s professed inability to secure an illustrator for a children’s book on the Qur’an, the resulting twelve images were amplified and disseminated digitally, setting off international protests in waves timed to republication efforts in the name of free speech. None of these was more visible than that of the French satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo*. Both horrifying violence, first in protests throughout the Muslim-majority world and later directed at the editorial staff of *Charlie Hebdo*, and the proliferation of images, on all sides of the spectrum from absolutist appeals to free speech to the aniconism of some Muslims, have emerged in the aftermath. Never have comics seemed more resonant, or more global, in their often violent impact on world events (Klausen 2009).

It is tempting to attribute this transnational fluidity to unique properties of the comics medium: its artistic genealogy in the pseudosciences of physiognomy and caricature, its powers of iconography as putative attempts toward a universal language, and its reliance on the art of condensation to deliver immediate and distinctive messages.1 Comics was indeed the preferred medium in responses globally, with rejoinders ranging from an initial Iranian-sponsored cartoon competition to depict the Holocaust, to near-ubiquitous expressions of the power of the satirical pen over the sword in editorial cartoons around the world in the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings. Yet, as

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1 Compare with McCloud 1994. McCloud makes a hard distinction between cartoons, single-panel image texts, and serial, narrative comics that the influence of the Mohammed cartoons belies—the layout of the original editorial itself can be interpreted as a comic in which the twelve cartoons can be read serially.
Art Spiegelman has reminded us in his essential essay “Drawing Blood” (itself one of the many republications of the original *Jyllands-Posten* images), the cultural and hermeneutic specificity of the Mohammed cartoons themselves were often lost in their international travels. One of the twelve images depicts a Muslim-Danish teenager named Mohammed, adorned in the kit of a local soccer team, pointing to a Farsi sentence in Arabic script on a chalkboard that reads “The *Jyllands-Posten* journalists are a bunch of reactionary provocateurs.” In a reference intently local and linguistic, the comic puns on the name of a local football team, Boldklubben Frem, and the Danish word for the future, *fremtid*, celebrating the grade-school-age Mohammed as the future of a multicultural Denmark. Impugning the free-speech posture of the editorial staff as a naked attempt to bait an embattled religious and immigrant minority within Denmark, and ironically anticipating its own misapprehension in translation and republication, the cartoon’s message was nevertheless no salve for the death threats leveled at its creator, Lars Refn (Spiegelman 2006). Whether distributed by outraged clerics first in Egypt and then globally, reprinted in the discernably Parisian context of willful outrage and militant secularism in *Charlie Hebdo*, or among the liberal readers of a “secular Jewish cartoonist [and] devout coward” in Spiegelman’s *Harper’s* essay, the cartoons that precipitated the crisis were (mis)read anew each time (2006, 43).

The cartoon crisis in turn precipitated reconsiderations from comics authors essential to contemporary graphic narrative, from Joe Sacco (Maltese-born, resident in America, chronicler of the Middle East and Balkan states) in the London-based *Guardian*, to Spiegelman (Swedish-born, resident in America, chronicler of Eastern Europe and New York) in Paris-based *Le Monde*, and Robert Crumb (American-born, resident in France, chronicler of US counterculture and the precincts of his own mind) in Paris-based *Liberation*. Guy Delisle, French-Canadian raconteur of his international (North Korea, Burma, Israel) misadventures in the wake of his French-born partner’s work for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), serves as both recorder and emblem of this twenty-first-century, polyglot welter of lineation in contemporary graphic narrative. In the pages of his 2011 travelogue *Jerusalem*, Delisle, himself often mistaken for Joe Sacco, finds himself having to contend with the experience of being a cartoonist in a post-*Posten* world (Fig. 36.1).

Already disallowed from creating comics that might otherwise advance the mission of MSF due to the fallout over the Danish cartoons, Delisle’s avatar encounters a local man who confuses Canada and Denmark. “Canadians no like Muslims,” he explains, to which the confusion elicits a simple, if also complicated disavowal of the cartoons: “Uh . . . No, it’s
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the Danes. They’re the villains. We are nice, very nice. Bad Danes, Bad!" Delisle’s comics travelogues, potential agents of cultural communication, instead become records of their inability to effect that very connection, a theme that runs throughout Delisle’s corpus. Comics then, like any semiotic practice, remains radically open to the vagaries of context, reception, and hermeneutic instability, never more so than in their internationalization, threatening misunderstanding amid the seeming interpretive clarity of their visual impact.

Comics are thus caught between universalism and radical particularity, a global medium that resembles a universal language yet has an astonishing variety of local, cultural, and national practices. It should come as little surprise that the birth of comics is thus transnational in scope, the subject of much debate among scholars. While scholars once safely assumed comics to be a uniquely modern American art form alongside jazz, more robust considerations of other national traditions have established the truly global provenance of comics. Most scholars now agree with David Kunzle that Rodolphe Töpffer, Swiss caricaturist and author – encouraged by Goethe, writing in French – was the father of the comic strip, an innovation immediately and widely imitated and plagiarized on both sides of the Atlantic. A more capacious definition of comics as narrative, sequential images, most famously articulated by Scott McCloud, allows for an even more multinational and transhistorical lineage: the Lascaux caves and ancient Egyptian painting, Mayan codices and the Bayeux Tapestry, Christian stained-glass windows and Japanese serial woodblock prints. Such competing definitions yield multinational etiologies: Wilhelm Busch and Frans Masereel, Gustave Doré and Max Ernst, Katsushika Hokusai and Utagawa Hiroshige. Likewise, filiation travels across often-porous national boundaries, with Masereel and Otto Nückel influencing the "novels in woodcuts" of Lynd Ward, some of the earliest examples of what might today be termed graphic novels in the United States. The ligne claire (clear line) style developed by Hergé and his contemporaries finds its apotheosis as much in Chris Ware as in Joost Swarte. The early animation of Walt Disney’s studios, as much as the woodblock prints of Hokusai and Hiroshige, influenced the kaleidoscopic and prodigious imagination of Osamu Tezuka, who in turn influenced the animators of Pixar as much as the graphic narratives of Yoshihiro Tatsumi and Hayao Miyazaki. Even the Yellow Kid, once viewed as the solely American progenitor of modern comics, was sent by R. F. Outcault on a world tour after conquering the pages of the New York newspapers, employing Irish caricatures within German archetypes (Ball forthcoming).
There are vibrant and heterogeneous networks of comics creation, production, and consumption on six continents, a more variegated picture than any chapter-length essay could hope to contain. Translation into English (and, to a lesser degree outside of US contexts, French) is widely regarded as the entrance to and bellwether for international acclaim and success, yet US reading audiences of conventional as much as graphic literature have, with the exception of manga, remained largely resistant to reading international authors in meaningful numbers. (For these reasons, I place my focus here beyond the Anglo-North American axis most widely read in the contemporary United States.) "The range and varieties of [conventional] literature now in view raise serious questions," according to David Damrosch, "of scale, of translation and comprehension, and of persisting imbalances of economic and cultural power" (2014, 1). This is no less true for graphic narratives, even in the contemporary ferment of global comics production around the world.

As complex as the aforementioned networks of artistic affiliation remain, two distinct traditions outside the Anglo-North American axis bear first mention: Franco-Belgian bandes dessinées and Japanese manga. In the Franco-Belgian context, comics have long been referred to as le neuvième art, a respected medium that, if not on par with literature and the plastic arts, has nonetheless refused presuppositions of subject matter and audience. There is a long tradition of caricature reaching back to Honore Daumier and before, and French appetite for images with narrative content has proven durable in both the periodic press and bound volumes (McKinney 2008; Vessels 2012). Because French was spoken across national boundaries in Europe, artists from multiple national traditions could gain acclaim from a wide audience (with corresponding networks of production, distribution, and sales). Perhaps no artist received such acclaim as Hergé, the pen name of Belgian cartoonist Georges Remi, whose globe-trotting duo of Tintin and Milou, boy journalist-cum-detective and trusty canine, spanned the world both figuratively and literally (for a thorough overview of Hergé's career and influence, see Sanders 2017).

2 The encyclopedic range of global comics is perhaps best encapsulated in two volumes, which have been valuable resources for the writing of this chapter: Paul Gravett, 1001 Comics You Must Read Before You Die: The Ultimate Guide to Comic Books, Graphic Novels and Manga (2011) and Tim Pilcher and Brad Brooks, The Essential Guide to World Comics (2005). See also, as a companion to this essay, Mazur and Danner 2017.

3 Nonetheless, the readership of comics in the United States is decidedly more international than that for conventional literature. According to one account, "only about 2 percent of books published in the US are works in translation, but in the graphic novels business, more than half the titles sold here are foreign-language imports." Brian Mann, "Americans Say Oui, Oui to Foreign Graphic Novels," www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=92647469 (accessed August 13, 2017).
Hergé’s clear line would be imitated and adapted by cartoonists all over the world: by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo in *Astérix*, by Peyo in the Smurfs (perhaps the popular cultural resonance, after Hergé, most profoundly felt around the globe), and by generations of later creators.

France has also sustained award structures, most notably the Angoulême Grand Prix, now having been awarded for more than forty years, with its attendant centers of study and international festival, celebrating an increasingly global (if nonetheless male-dominated) roster of comics creators. The list of Grand Prix winners includes notable French creators such as Moebius (Jean Giraud), surreal fantasist of science-fiction comics, and Jacques Tardi, most widely regarded for his historical fantasy series *Les Aventures extraordinaires d’Adèle Blanc-Sec* (*The Extraordinary Adventures of Adèle Blanc-Sec*; 2010a) and the gritty, unrelenting account of war’s privations *C’était la guerre des tranchées* (*It Was the War of the Trenches*; 2010b). French publishing has also sustained experimental and alternative strains in comics creation, most notably through the publishing collective L’Association and the Ouvroir de bande dessinée potentielle (Workshop of Potential Comics), or OuBaPo movement. L’Association has published some of the most discussed comics in French, including Guy Delisle’s travelogues, David B.’s expressionistic graphic memoir *L’Ascension du haut mal* (*Epileptic*; 2006 [1996]), the early work of two of the most discussed contemporary cartoonists in France, Joanne Sfar and Riad Sattouf (most widely read by English-speaking audiences for Sfar’s *Le Chat du rabbin* [*The Rabbi’s Cat*; 2007], published originally by Dargaud, and Sattouf’s *L’Arabe du futur* [*The Arab of the Future*; 2015], originally published by Allary, respectively), and Marjane Satrapi’s bestselling memoir *Persepolis* (2007) about growing up in revolutionary Iran and expatriating to Austria. This short list itself is notable for its transnational span, incorporating story lines that bring Algeria, Libya, Syria, and Iran into the orbit of contemporary France and the francophone world. Simultaneously, however, we might read Sattouf’s and Satrapi’s exemplarity, in particular, as a function of what postcolonial scholar Sarah Brouillette has termed “strategic exoticism”: “postcolonial authorial self-consciousness as comprised of a set of literary strategies that operate through assumptions shared between the author and the reader, as both producer and consumer work to negotiate with, if not absolve themselves of, postcoloniality’s touristic guilt” (Brouillette 2007, 7). Both Sattouf and Satrapi shuttle between French and competing or disjunctive national and ethnic selves, yet both ally themselves strongly with French republican and cultural identities in their respective memoirs. Despite this conservative strain, however, in some of the most widely read works,
L’Association has simultaneously fostered a rich and diverse experimental comics tradition alongside these widely read graphic narratives. This distinct, generative, and commercially successful comics industry continues to thrive in the contemporary francophone world.

As in the Belgian-French context, Japanese manga have production, distribution, and consumption networks that can properly be said to compose a distinct national tradition. The comics industry in Japan is voluminous, comprising by one scholar’s estimation, 40 percent of the market share for books and magazines, a remarkable fifteen manga sold per capita in the nation.4 Unsurprisingly, given such figures, manga are marketed, distributed, and read widely across age groups and subgenres exist based on the reader’s gender, age, and even profession. Indeed, even page composition and reading order are distinctly Japanese, proceeding in the inverse order (“back” to “front” and right to left, in the order prescribed for Japanese script), an issue that has bedeviled translators and republishers for Western audiences. Although cross-readership by age and gender is common, two of the most widely exported, mainstream genres are shōnen and shōjo manga, books targeted at boys and girls under the age of eighteen, respectively, often with distinct subject matter and artistic styles.

While scholars dispute whether manga is best understood as an outgrowth of earlier Japanese graphic traditions – one that could reach as far back as twelfth-century chōjūgiga (animal scrolls) – or is properly understood as a modern phenomenon, the consensus central figure in the medium is Osamu Tezuka. Building on important early compositions such as Shin Takarajima (New Treasure Island) and Metropolis, Tezuka’s first breakthrough success was Tetsuwan Atomu (Astro Boy; 2015), the story of an orphaned robot boy who later goes on to fight crime and promote justice. Astro Boy not only had a galvanizing effect upon comics production within Japan and throughout Asia, but its subsequent televised anime series in Japan in the 1960s and its Americanized remake in the first decade of the twenty-first century continue to have rippling effects for comics creators and consumers globally. Tezuka is also remarkable both for his prodigious productivity and his stylistic ecumenism, helping to invigorate, complicate, and even invent a variegated array of genres. Among the most important titles, all of which were subsequently adapted as anime, are Jyanguru Taitei (Kimba the White Lion), a talking animals parable about

4 See Schodt (2013 [1998]). These figures are from 1995, what many scholars regard as the peak of the United States’ appetite for imported manga, although sales figures have rebounded in recent years.
the natural and manmade worlds; Ribbon no Kishi (Princess Knight), a *shōjo* tale of a cross-dressing princess; Black Jack, concatenated *shōnen* tales of a mercenary surgeon; Buddha, an exuberant if idiosyncratic retelling of the life of Siddhārtha Gautama; and Hi no Tori (Phoenix), an unfinished fable more than forty years in the making of reincarnation spanning twelve volumes and as many disparate temporal settings. In sum, Tezuka’s corpus runs to more than 150,000 pages with an equally powerful and voluminous impact on the medium, both in Japan and abroad.

The history of manga and its global phenomena – from *Doraemon* to *Pokémon*, *Naruto* to *Dragon Ball* – deserves, and has begun to receive, its own separate histories. A number of ambitious narratives beyond these familiar names have also received global attention, for example the daring visuals and post-apocalyptic imaginings of Katsuhiro Otomo’s *Akira* (Otomo 2009 [1982]), one of the titles that could be said to have properly begun the craze for manga among English-speaking audiences. Essential publishing houses Drawn and Quarterly and Fantagraphics have both released the work of historically important and contemporary *mangaka*, most notably Yoshihiro Tatsumi’s dark early tales and monumental autobiography in *Kuroi Fubuki* (*Black Blizzard*; Tatsumi 2010) and *Gekika Hyoryu* (A Drifting Life; Tatsumi 2009) respectively, Keiji Nakazawa’s searing account of the Hiroshima bombing in *Hadashi no Gen* (Barefoot Gen), and the contemporary works of Seiichi Hayashi and Moto Hagio, among many others. Successful women artists also have generated global audiences, from Machiko Hasegawa’s postwar domestic scenes in *Sazae-San*, to both the short stories and long-running narratives of Rumiko Takahashi, to the collaborations of the all-women collective CLAMP. While many unconventional and experimental artists, like Yoshiharu Tsuge, still struggle to find translators, other ambitious creators have made major statements to global audiences. Taiyo Matsumoto is one of the most impressive, if not most visible, of these. Beginning with *Tekkonkinkreet*, his breakthrough adventure parable of two street kids in the pan-Asian metropolis of Takaramachi, Matsumoto’s more recent work has looked at social outcasts in greater psychological depth, drawing American, European, and Japanese influences into a surrealistic line and style that is at the same time distinctly Japanese and *sui generis*. GōGō Monster follows the paths of *hikikomori* middle schoolers – socially reclusive children who distance themselves from the at-times-rigid Japanese educational system – while the six translated volumes of the recently completed and translated *Sunny* trace the assembled lives of orphaned children. Matsumoto manages to transport the reader into a sense of wonder and possibility of both the physical and spiritual world through
the eyes of those cast off from a stifling normalcy, likewise blending styles toward a singular possibility for comics’ visual rhetoric. Indeed, as distinct as bande dessinée and manga are, creators like Matsumoto point toward contemporary efforts to bring the two traditions together, chiming with other instances of comics’ transnational histories. Various termed manfra or nouvelle manga, this work is daring and fresh but has struggled to find translators and stay in print for English-speaking audiences, as in the example of works by Frédéric Boilet (2012) and Kiriko Nananan (2010). With greater exposure, this teeming diversity of contemporary manga will continue to enrich global readers’ understanding of a tradition inspiring, and inspired by, global comics.

The dominance of the bande dessinée and manga lineages has obscured the diversity of comics production in Europe and Asia and its visibility for global audiences. In the context of Continental Europe, fumetti in Italy, historietas in Spain, a comics tradition reaching back to Wilhelm Busch in Germany, and thriving contemporary comics scenes across the continent, from Eastern Europe to Scandinavia, remain vibrant. The animal fables of Jason and Jansson in this last example stand out as just some of the exemplary texts that have achieved global audiences. Likewise in East and Southeast Asia, active comics scenes continue to produce exceptional work. Manhwa in Korea and manhua in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan have begun entering global markets and are poised for increased distribution in translation. From Southeast Asia, Indonesian graphic novelist Lat stands out for both his insouciant line and his intimate portrayal of rural Muslim communities amid encroaching industrialization in titles from the 1970s and 1980s like Kampung Boy (Lat 2006 [1979]) and Town Boy. More recently, Singaporean cartoonist Sonny Liew, already well established as an artist and writer through work at DC, Marvel, IDW, and First Second, has completed an imaginative retelling of the city-state through a near-encyclopedic, multiply awarded archive of comics history in his masterful The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye (Liew 2016), which blends the form of fictionalized biography, speculative fiction, and coffee-table book. In a South Asian context, a similarly bracing approach to narrative and mixed media is also in evidence in works like The Barn Owl’s Wondrous Capers and Corridor by Calcutta-born Sarnath Banerjee (respectively Banerjee 2007 and 2004; see also Lent 2015).

Contemporary graphic narrative from the Middle East is equally teeming with talent. In addition to Satrapi’s and Sattouf’s striated tales of growing up and growing distant from the region’s revolutions, Joe Sacco’s graphic journalism and scholarship in works such as Palestine (2001) and the bravura Footnotes in Gaza (2009) have shaped much of the scholarly discussion around
the region (Worden 2015). Another outside vantage point is compellingly limned in Emmanuel Guibert, Didier Lefèvre and Frédéric Lemercier's *The Photographer* (2009), which strikingly blends photojournalism and graphic memoir to countenance war-torn Afghanistan at the height of the Soviet occupation. Views from the inside likewise often run to familiar themes, such as the cruelty of state violence in the wake of the failed 2009 uprisings in Iran in *Zahra's Paradise*, pseudonymously written and drawn by Amir and Khalil (2011). All of these works share a narrative frame that seeks to make the region perceptible to a Western audience, as in Amir and Khalil's comparison of the Iranian police to the KKK or in its use (following Satrapi) of Michelangelo as an art-historical allusion to revolutionary violence. A noted departure from these accounts is the work of Israeli artist Rutu Modan, whose two graphic novels *Karov Rachok* (*Exit Wounds*; 2007) and *HaNeches* (*The Property*; 2013) step away from these narrative conventions. *The Property* centers on a heritage tour that morphs into both a family drama of discovery and multi-generational erotic journey, with its protagonist expressing a metatextual desire to become the "Satrapi of Warsaw." In one crucial scene, she is swept up in an enactment of a roundup of Jews for an otherwise blasé and disaffected Israeli youth group, gently mocking Israeli claims to victimhood and seeking out storylines that extend beyond, yet are still somehow contained by, the shoah and its traumatic resonances. Tellingly, the protagonist Mica Segal responds to this scene with the ejaculation "What the fuck?," spoken in English but written in Hebrew, rhetorically evading a conventional Israeli identity at the same moment the ersatz soldier's regard suffuses her panel with the cautionary yellow of the youths' *Judensternen*. The novel thus plays on our expectations of the region, allowing a more complex picture of its interstices to begin to emerge.

Befitting the Americanocentric and Eurocentric impulses in the medium, graphic narrative accounts of the wealth of national and cultural traditions within the African continent that have also achieved global audiences tend largely to be written by white creators or expatriated creators of African descent. Belgian cartoonist Stassen's *Deogratias* chronicles a portrait of the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide that manages to be both magical realistic and brutal in a manner that begins to acknowledge the awfulness of the conflict (Stassen 2006). Likewise, David Mairowitz and Catherine Anyango's graphic adaptation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* reimagines that famous fantasy of the soi-disant "dark continent" (Mairowitz and Anyango 2010). Historian Trevor Getz and illustrator Liz Clarke's *Abina and the Important Men* takes up this imperative directly, offering a graphic account of
a nineteenth-century African woman who challenged her enslavement in the British-held Gold Coast, trying to recapture a life incompletely recorded in documentary remnants (Getz and Clarke 2015). In so doing it gives visibility to an archival history otherwise rendered as an act of silencing, attempting to right the erasure of stories of the poor, powerless, and illiterate, and the historiographical and canonical decisions that entrench and expand those silences. Yet simultaneously it renders African voices through Western narrative and visual imaginations, explicitly framing its story for consumption in the English-speaking classroom. Ivorian writer Marguerite Abouet and her husband, French-born Clément Oubrerie have created one of the most compelling graphic accounts of Africa in their six-volume collaboration Aya de Yopugon, translated into English and published in two volumes: Aya: Life in Yop City and Aya: Love in Yop City. Set in a middle-class suburb of Abidjan during the pre-Civil War Côte d’Ivoire economic and cultural renaissance, Aya turns more on the romantic travails of its protagonists – one subplot traces a coming-out narrative in Paris of a gay, expatriated hairdresser – and the richly rendered details of a cosmopolitan Ivorian social and cultural life than on the more explicit conflicts in much of African graphic narrative. It points toward the richness of an efflorescence in African comics written by African artists for African audiences that is only just now reaching international readers.

Likewise, South American cartoonists with multinational trajectories are achieving greater visibility throughout the medium. Italian comic-book creator Hugo Pratt taught and forged some of his earliest creations while in Argentina; in the tradition of Quino’s Mafalda and Pepo’s Condorito, Argentine-born Liniers has released several translated volumes of his acclaimed Macanudo, and more recently through TOON Books, his children’s tale Escrito y Dibujado por Enriqueta (Written and Drawn by Henrietta); the Chilean-born director and screenwriter Alejandro Jodorowsky has completed ambitious collaborations with Manuel Moro while in Mexico and with Moebius while in France; all ensuring that Latin American comics both reach and extend well beyond a global Spanish-speaking audience. Among the most compelling contemporary South American authors and artists, the Brazilian twin brothers and collaborators Gabriel Bá and Fábio Moon have composed several ambitious volumes: Daytripper (2011), a metafictional romp through the alternate lives of a writer, cataloged at the age of his death, and Two Brothers, an adaptation of Brazilian novelist Milton Hatoum’s Dois Irmãos (The Brothers, 2000), which narrates the fratricidal impulses of a genealogical struggle replete simultaneously of Faulkner and García Márquez.
And in a confluence of a density of talent and the conduit of the English language, comics from Oceania continue to have an outsized impact on world literature. Two creators from a long list stand out most distinctly: New Zealand’s Dylan Horrocks and Australia’s Shaun Tan. Horrocks is the author of *Hicksville*, a narrative of a fictional comics scholar’s investigation into the biographical roots of a conventional comics artist. That search leads to a transnational, polyglot, Borgesian fantasy of a New Zealand comics library that houses every graphic narrative in every language ever published. *Hicksville*’s ideal comics library spans creators across mediums and is enacted in a hyper-referential narrative that itself spans the medium across national boundaries.\(^5\)

Widely regarded as a tour de force, due in part to its fluency with the broad sweep of the medium’s history, *Hicksville* has been hailed as a masterwork in the medium. Likewise, Shaun Tan’s magisterial *The Arrival* expresses an analogous impulse toward universalism. It relates the wordless narrative of an immigrant in a strange land, the language and customs of which seem both complete in and of themselves and inscrutable to the protagonist and, performatively, to Tan’s readers as well (Fig. 36.2). Tan’s influences read like a partial catalog of Horrocks’ fictional library: Max Ernst and Raymond Briggs; Art Spiegelman, David B., and Chris Ware; the Ellis Island archives and Australian painting; Francisco Goya’s *Los Caprichos* and Vittorio De Sica’s *The Bicycle Thief* (see Tan 2010).

The two pages in Figure 36.2 typify the journey of *The Arrival*’s protagonist, lost in a world filled with signifiers (a mysterious script, sunbursts, the arrows of the bottom left-hand tier, even the human gesture of the pointed finger) which promise to yield the possibility of communication yet frustrate its transmission. Even with the inclusion of the pagefold (see Figure 36.2), the reader struggles like the protagonist to read the scene, order the panels, or make sense of the novel’s written script that is familiar yet impenetrable. Other pages foment this confusion, reading across the two-page spread or presenting a series of related images – the shifting shapes of clouds seen from the deck of the immigrant’s steamer, a procession of weathered faces of immigrants in passport portraits that look out from the novel’s endpapers – that impel the reader’s eye in the direction of nonlinearity. While a surface-level reading makes the protagonist’s story into an everyman’s tale – a universal narrative of displacement and homecoming – Tan insists upon

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5 Horrocks’ most recent effort, *Sam Label and The Magic Pen* (2015) literalizes this transnational urge, the titular character having the ability to enter the fictive worlds of everything from thirteenth-century illuminated manuscripts to *hentai*.
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singularities in his composition, meticulously cutting up the English alphabet and reassembling it to produce both familiarity and strangeness, and slipping a portrait of his own Malaysian-born, Australian immigrant father into those selfsame endpapers. Likewise, Tan’s commentary on immigration strivs for
the universal, but like Lars Refn’s caricature of the schoolboy Mohammed in the *Jyllands-Posten*, needs also be understood within a discrete national and cultural context of its original Australian publication: the specificity of Australia’s draconian “stop the boats” policy and incarceration of refugees in the far-flung, punishing Pacific detention centers in Nauru and Manus Island. Tan’s wordless narratives are then both a graphic Esperanto – something the protagonist’s sketched pictures in the figure above strain toward – while simultaneously the novel’s silent, claustrophobic panels remain a culturally singular embodiment on the page of the remoteness of these specific Australian island detention centers and the policies that perpetuate a national system of indefinite and inhumane detentions. *The Arrival* thus serves as a synecdoche for thinking of global comics as world literature, riven between the local and the transnational, the discrete and the universal, oscillating within an unresolved dialectic of the medium’s visual and verbal communicative possibilities.

The languages and libraries of Shaun Tan and Dylan Horrocks imagine a cosmopolitan comics culture effortlessly spanning linguistic and national boundaries that, for all of comics’ transnational genealogies and contemporary expression, nonetheless still feels like a distant horizon. This is both a measure of the heterogeneous strengths of global production in comics on six continents and an imperative to begin assembling an archive of comics’ “world literature” that resists the urge to reify a static canon, particularly one that marginalizes the work of women, artists of color, and creators from the Global South. Prominent and omnivorous readers of comics such as Paul Gravett (London-based author, scholar, and archivist of global comics) and Bill Kartalopoulos (New York-based publisher, editor of the *Best American Comics* series, and guest editor most recently of *World Literature Today*’s special issue on international comics) are poised to deliver what is still sadly lacking on bookshelves: a comprehensive, multivolume anthology of transnational graphic narrative. In the context of an imperiled liberal order and rising nationalism, of nullified global accords and transnational unions, amid the construction of rhetorical and physical walls between nations, such a world literature is desperately needed.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the many scholars and colleagues who helped buttress my incomplete knowledge of global comics, including but not limited to Jack Ayres, Jan Baetens, Alex Bates, Lan Dong, Charlotte France, Hugo Frey, Bill Kartalopoulos, Aaron Kashtan, Martha Kuhlman, Tahnee Oksman, Kerry Roeder, Nhara Serrano, Stephen E. Tabachnick, and Benj Widiss. Lucille Duperron’s French and Assaf Gamzou’s Hebrew both saved me from embarrassment and helped me better understand comics I only had access to in translation. Much of what I’ve written here is a pale reflection of their deeper expertise; any errors are my own.

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