



Word & Image

A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry

ISSN: 0266-6286 (Print) 1943-2178 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/twim20

Form(ul)ation of a novel narrative form: Nineteenth-century pedagogues and the comics

Philippe Willems

To cite this article: Philippe Willems (2008) Form(ul)ation of a novel narrative form: Nineteenth-century pedagogues and the comics, *Word & Image*, 24:1, 1-14, DOI: [10.1080/02666286.2008.10444071](https://doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2008.10444071)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2008.10444071>



Published online: 14 Sep 2012.



Submit your article to this journal



Article views: 121



View related articles

Form(ul)ation of a novel narrative form: nineteenth-century pedagogues and the comics

PHILIPPE WILLEMS

'[Our goal is to] carry through a difficult struggle against a type of literature that is loathsome by any measure.'¹ This manifesto prefaced a 1964 academic study entitled *La Presse enfantine française* (*The French Youth Press*), one of the final salvos fired in a campaign of censorship that held the French comic-book industry in a vise for nearly 20 years following the Second World War. Reflecting widely held views among francophone educators of the time, the periodical study drafted by members of the *Commission de surveillance et de contrôle des publications destinées à l'enfance et à l'adolescence* [*Children and teenager publications monitoring committee*] indiscriminately denounced comic books not only as the scourge of moral corruption that threatened the young readers of *Astérix*, *Spirou* or *Tintin*, but also as a force that caused them no less than to *unlearn* the teaching provided at school. The authors believed that two forces lay at work behind such an enervating influence. One was the potential immorality of themes contained in the so-called *bande dessinée*, or BD, though that liability, inherent in any narrative medium whatever, was already kept in check through legislation. The second factor, however, was more problematic, as no edifying endeavor could ever redeem it: it was the very nature of the *bande dessinée* as a narrative medium based on a largely pictorial delivery of information. Indeed, the report attributed to such a narrative form an inherent degenerative teleology, lamenting a perceived tendency:

... to eliminate the text gradually in favor of the image. The pictures constitute a sequence within which the action unfolds exclusively, while the text remains limited to the narrow confines of a caption or to brief direct speech appearing in the mouth [sic] of a character.... Reading a modern youth magazine no longer involves any intellectual activity; the image takes over, and this type of 'reading' consists in a passive abandon to sensory stimuli that exert violent impressions on the child's mind and bypass any critical process. Moreover, the concrete representation of the scenes depicted rules out the use of the reader's imagination.²

That the damning implications of this condemnation for other visual arts never publicly raised an eyebrow among these prominent educators' peers reveals the extent of the debate — or rather the blatant absence thereof — around the cultural value of the BD at the time. It underlines the implicit consensus within the academic community that education and the comics occupied diametrically opposite ends of the cultural spectrum.

This polemics died off with the 1960s — or, rather, shifted to new challenges from other semantic systems. Today the all-encompassing range of themes, graphic styles and narrative strategies of BD have established *de facto* this sequential art's pedigree as a major narrative form in francophone culture. While a whole segment of scholarly studies now devotes itself to virtually every kind of graphic literature,³ in the francophone world the education community long provided the main forum for arguments against its cultural value. In retrospect, the very relentlessness of the BD's detractors makes it all the more noteworthy to highlight the often overlooked, yet seminal role played by two distinguished francophone educators in the birth of this medium.

Arguably, Swiss cultural icon Rodolphe Töpffer (1799–1846) was the founding father of the *bande dessinée*⁴ and, by open declaration, Georges Colomb (1856–1945), a.k.a. Christophe, his most devoted disciple. They practiced their craft half a century apart and belonged to the highest educational institution in their respective societies. Both academics had a passion for storytelling and jeopardized their professional reputations by opening up their writing to the nascent modern visual culture. Neither could have anticipated the full cultural relevance of their experimental works. Not only did Töpffer's comics count among their readers one of the most prestigious thinkers of his time, but the theory that he built behind them also contains in embryo some of the most defining concepts of Western twentieth-century thought. As to Christophe's own influential brand of illustrated stories, they forever changed youth publications in France and generated a teaching method that shaped several generations of schoolchildren's understanding of the world.

Born in Geneva to painter Wolfgang-Adam Töpffer, whose renown extended to England and to France's imperial court, Rodolphe was expected to follow in his father's footsteps. After eye disease deprived Rodolphe of any future as a professional painter himself, he turned to writing, though his affliction still allowed him to draw. He engaged in literary studies and began a parallel career as an art critic, from then on playing an increasingly active role in the emergence of a Geneva school of painting.⁵ Destined to hold office as a member of the Geneva assembly, Töpffer occupied the first chair of rhetoric at the Academy of Geneva, concurrently teaching children and running his own boarding school. After an edition of

Demosthenes' political speeches, he published a series of short stories and novels that enjoyed success across Europe, tried his hand at playwriting, and produced increasingly political articles defending the royalist cause.

Like his early role models Rousseau and Rabelais, Töpffer advocated a pedagogical system keen on direct experience. For 20 years, the curriculum at his school included yearly vacation trips in the Alps. From these excursions he would bring back travel journals. Blending written text and sketches, and created to entertain his students, these yearbooks of sorts gathered names and events to consecrate the institution's communal identity. From these narratives, a more graphic project gradually branched out: caricature-based comic stories informed by Johann Kaspar Lavater's theory of physiognomy, a concept whose influence had stretched since the 1700s to permeate nineteenth-century culture from Goethe to Balzac to visual artist Daumier.

Töpffer's *histoires en estampes*,⁶ or 'picture-stories,'⁷ offer a captivating mixture of philosophical satire and slapstick humor, all wrapped up in an idiosyncratic and prescient narrative strategy. They modified his travelogues' initial proportion of image and words, from text-based accounts enhanced by illustrations to narratives driven more by image than by text — in effect blending the sequential format of the popular broadsheets called *images d'Epinal* (figure 1) with the more sophisticated image-word relationship found in newspaper satirical cartoons. 'Töpffer was the first to experiment with the picture-story in the full (modern) sense of the phrase,' explains leading Francophone BD theoretician Thierry Groensteen, 'that is, to combine analytical segmentation of the action with syntagmatic editing of the segments. From the outset, he went counter-current to tradition by making two key choices later validated by the art of the *bande dessinée*: maximal graphic homogeneity of the printed space on the one hand, and flexibility of the panel frames on the other. Rarely has the inventor of a new mode of expression shown such sure intuition of its objective resources straight away.'⁸ Töpffer's ambitious outlook on the potential of the graphic novel medium simply burst through narrow boundaries that had gone unchallenged until then (figure 2).

The eight picture-stories that he created over 20 years⁹ blend two stock resources of literary and theatrical humor: sociological satire and slapstick. Their themes invariably revolve around the comical struggles of bourgeois characters craving status, love or even, in one case, a proper *Bildungsroman* experience. The tight editing of the narrative sequences prefigures twentieth-century cinema storyboarding. Sensing that he had opened up a new narrative horizon, Töpffer started to circulate his *histoires en estampes* among his coterie of aristocratic friends. Already esteemed by prominent contemporaries Sainte-Beuve and Xavier de Maistre, who had introduced his writings to the Parisian literary scene, Töpffer owed the publication of these graphic narratives to the encouragement of none other than Johann Wolfgang von

Goethe, an endorsement that Töpffer wore proudly ever after.¹⁰ Until then, he had been holding back, reluctant to publish these books for fear of tarnishing his professional image. Even so, his first comic-strip novels¹¹ identified their author only as 'R.T.'¹²

Töpffer defined himself as a 'teacher who writes, not a writer who teaches.'¹³ His second published comic, *M. Crépin* (1837), satirizes dogmatism and prevalent pedagogical methods of the times. It stages a string of private tutors, each armed with a deliriously ludicrous program (figure 3). Its hero, a school director with a result-oriented approach, anonymously represents Töpffer himself¹⁴ (figure 4). While this satire takes his peers to task, it should be noted that his own pedagogical skills never were characterized as outstanding.¹⁵ However, while biographers agree that Töpffer was not a natural communicator in the classroom, his pedagogical intuition undeniably lay elsewhere: not in school, but at the drawing board.

Raised in a family already doubly concerned with the reception of art, from aesthetic and commercial points of view, Töpffer was attuned to both ends of artistic production. Going countertrend to a Romantic culture very much focused on the role of the artist, he explored notions framed today as reader-response theory. Far from considering his early comics merely as an entertaining venture, Töpffer found in them a personal psychological center of gravity: not only a meeting point between writing and painting, but also an avenue for his compulsive drawing.¹⁶ Armed with his sensibility to both the visual arts and the printed word, he theorized and codified the medium he contributed to defining. Besides the sheer pleasure of reading his picture-stories — how often do you get to laugh out loud while conducting research? — a rewarding aspect of writing on Töpffer is the ease with which discrete axioms selected from his writings on sequential art readily coalesce to form a very basic yet substantial prototype of the structural linguistics later propounded by his future compatriot Ferdinand de Saussure.

Töpffer was the archetypal dilettante, and his œuvre highly idiosyncratic, in both variety and form. This singularity manifests itself most in his handwritten works and in the manner in which they readily challenged the traditional text/image dichotomy. Indeed, throughout his personal correspondence, his comic books, and also his *Essay on Physiognomy* (1845) — a uniquely formatted theoretical treatise laying out the principles of BD character animation — words and drawings alternate, not according to traditional conventions of proportion and layout but entirely to their relevance for the narrative thread (figure 5). 'The first requisite,' Töpffer explains, 'is to express one's meaning through the illustrations, and these, in turn, have merit only if they are drawn directly, by the pen of the author himself, and as they are needed in the course of the story.'¹⁷ This manner of proceeding puts verb and picture on the same level; the handwritten technique of the text, executed in the same ink line as the sketches, strikingly breaks away from



Figure 1. Image d'Epinal, reproduced in Jean-François Condette, 'Musée Aubois de l'histoire de l'éducation', *IUFM Champagne-Ardennes*. Available at: http://www.reims.iufm.fr/ressources_documentaires/mahe/collec.htm (accessed 24 June 2005).

the standard look of typesetting characters; the combination of the two gives the page a uniform and distinct personality.

Töpffer's *Essay on Physiognomy* sums up his *littérature en estampes* primarily in visual terms, as 'a series of sketches where accuracy is unimportant but, on the other hand, a clear, rapid expression of the essential idea is imperative.'¹⁸ Behind the deceptive simplicity of his line-drawing style, however, lay a profound reflection on communication. Indeed, composed the year before his premature death, the handwritten treatise *a posteriori* defines Töpffer's comic books as an experiment resting on a semantic equivalence between the verbal and the iconic. Boldly, it locates the core of the communication process not in the active properties of a given semantic system but rather in its passive essence: the precondition of skipping information to produce a message. 'The opportunity line drawing offers to omit non-essential details so that it may stress the important ones,' Töpffer writes, 'relates it to written or spoken language.'¹⁹ This correlation *en creux* between word and image sanctions the ellipse as the foundation of the narrative — an

approach concretized in the *histoires'* stripped-down pictures and text.

Töpffer did not want the text merely to back up the image or the image just to illustrate the text, but rather envisioned a tighter relationship between the two distinct narrative channels, for a binary, more efficient way to deliver information. An exegetic 1837 article on his first published graphic story,²⁰ *Notice sur l'histoire de M. Jabot* [Notes on 'The Story of Mr. Jabot'] (1833), opens with this oft-quoted prologue: 'This short book is mixed in nature. It consists in a series of autographed²¹ line-drawings, each accompanied by one or two lines of text. The drawings, without their text, would have only a vague meaning; the text, without the drawings, would have no meaning at all. The combination makes up a kind of novel, all the more unique in that it is no more like a novel than it is like anything else.'²² This hybrid form had grown from an equally double perspective. On the one hand, Töpffer believed that art should contribute to the moral edification of children and of the uneducated masses. He

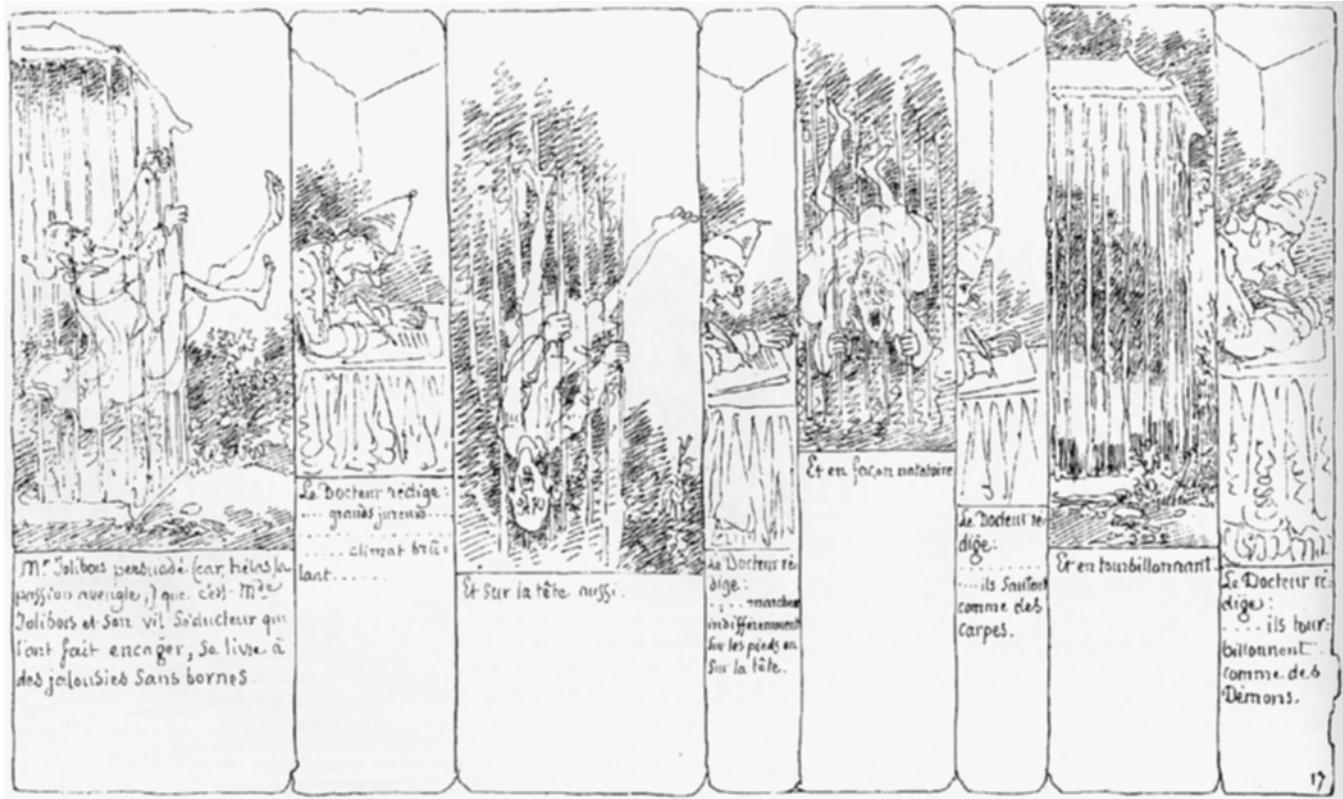


Figure 2. A full page from *M. Pencil* (1840).

envisioned a picture-based medium accessible to all and whose edifying function could counter the immorality of themes he deplored in the contemporary novel.²³ The second factor was his interest in physiognomy, a theory that he clearly condemned as philosophically pernicious,²⁴ but whose nomenclature of physical traits he found useful to the artist. Indeed, in it he saw a tool to structure his characters through standard

forms that could suggest psychological characteristics. This approach of sequential art as a system led Töpffer to a proto-structuralist conception of his experiment in communication.

From this narrative system based on the conjunction of two distinct orders of language Töpffer isolates the smallest unit: the sign itself, an omnipresent term in *Réflexions et menus propos d'un peintre genevois* [Musings of a Geneva painter] (1830–46) and



Figure 3. The Crapin children and two of their tutors, *M. Crapin* (1837).



Figure 4. M. Bonnefoi celebrated by the Crépin family, *M. Crépin* (1837).

in the *Essay*. In its specific purpose of animating characters, Töpffer's nomenclature articulates his pictorial sign around two categories. Physiognomy as applied through pictorial signs calls for distinction between 'permanent' and 'non-permanent' signs — that is, the rendering of invariable morphological features that embody character traits (shape of the forehead and chin, for instance) and of variable temporary expressions of emotions (position of eyes and mouth) — in a way that foreshows the twentieth-century animation studios' translucent celluloid layers technique. Indeed, the most complex and meaningful element of Töpffer's character-based narratives is the human face. It serves as a template for interchangeable elements in as many syntagms as possible variations of human feelings. The artist changes the facial expression of his characters by selecting one or several paradigmatic elements — that is, any particular variation in the shape of the eye, mouth or nose, or in the proportion thereof, to create the appropriate combination. As a linguist-artist, Töpffer conjugates faces; he declines noses and mouths to perform acts of communication.

The modern reader will notice, however, that Töpffer's theoretical treatises do not consider the sign as a whole, but concern themselves mainly with its figurative, non-verbal dimension — a concept that Töpffer's definition situates halfway between what later theories of linguistics will designate as a Peircean *icon* or a Saussurian *symbol*. Like Saussure's symbol, Töpffer's graphic sign rests partly on an arbitrary choice: line drawing represents the real only by a convention; it filters out inessential information to retain only the meaningful. To him, line drawing offers superior power in representing volumes than color or relief, which in real life can create optical illusions and blend separate figures together.²⁵ Citing as example the manner in which religious imagery impresses its message upon the most illiterate mind, Töpffer observes that 'the line is ... an artificial means of imitation, but it fits our

intuitive way of observing so well that it is the one ... that most quickly expresses the clearest ideas to our intellect and evokes objects in the most spontaneous manner.'²⁶ No doubt, Töpffer's visual handicap, whereby black spots impaired his vision, also played a part in this focus on minimalist line drawing and clarity.

Töpffer's graphic sign also partakes of the icon as Peirce will later define it: it operates by visual analogy, by 'imitation graphique'.²⁷ Indeed, he argues that conventional as an ink line may be, the figures in his picture-stories evoke objects by the visual resemblance they bear to them — an analogy that, contrary to the symbol, does not require learning a code to identify the figure. 'The outline is a space within which I capture the substance of my donkey,' the artist explains. 'As my eye follows the contour of its spine, my pencil traces it on paper.... We now have a figure of a donkey identifiable enough that no one would mistake it for anything else, so long as one has seen a donkey before. On this point I insist.... Show it to a three year-old child: he might have trouble naming it, but he will recognize it without a doubt.'²⁸ Strongly biased towards the pictorial by the weight of physiognomy, this pre-linguistics sign is still in the raw — Töpffer indiscriminately uses the words *trait*, *signe* and *symbole* throughout his writing — and combines properties that more scientific theories will refine later.

Scott McCloud's 1993 *Understanding Comics* — a study entirely realized in comics form — maps out possible degrees of relationship between images and words in a 'pictorial vocabulary' diagram, a triangle whose vertices he defines as 'resemblance' (iconic), 'meaning' (symbolic) and 'picture-plane' (abstract). 'Most comics art,' he concludes, 'lies near the bottom — that is, along the iconic abstraction side where every line has a meaning.'²⁹ Töpffer's graphic sign fully occupies this 'resemblance-meaning' plane, never to relate to a 'picture-plane' level that still remains unknown to

quelquefois bien plus vive ou bien plus comique que l'on n'aurait pu s'y attendre; c'est évidemment récréatif. Après tout ces visages vivent, parlent, rient, pleurent; tels sont bons gens, tels mauvais gens, tels insupportables. Ah voici toute à l'heure. Sur la page une société avec laquelle nous étions en rapport, de façon que nos sympathies et nos antipathies sont en jeu. Pour nous, nous avons toujours préféré ces partenaires à des partenaires de Whist ou de bridge.



Tous ces partenaires en vingt qui ont du bon assez de l'intelligence de quoi, ou encore une naïve fatuité parfaitement suffisante pour les rendre en tout temps parfaitement d'anglaises et contentes de leur destinée, et on les laisse tels quels. L'on en voit au-

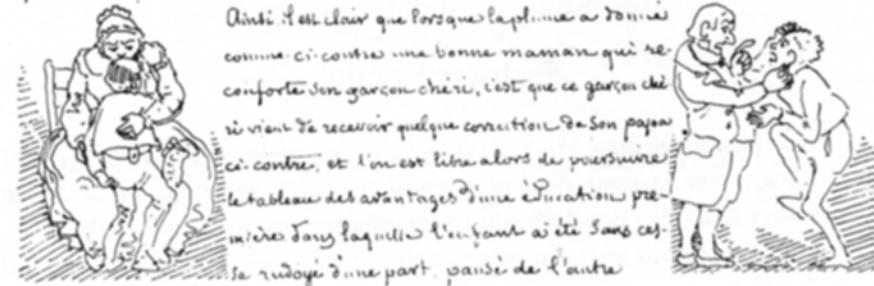


si de qui l'autre, le nerf, la bonté ou quelque autre triste signale quelque défaut ou quel que vice qui menace leur barbare ou aimé de leurs proches, et l'on cède au désir de les



en débarrasser.

Presque toujours aussi, parmi ces partenaires l'un en l'écurera ainsi, mis en rapport avec les autres peuvent donner l'idée à une siameuse plaignante; alors on les assemble, on les complète, on trouve la scène qui a précisé celle-là, on invente celle qui doit suivre, et l'on est dans l'heure de composer une histoire sur abstramps.



Ainsi l'est clair que lorsque l'animal a donné comme ci contre une bonne maman qui reconforte son garçon chéri, c'est que ce garçon devrait recevoir quelque correction de son papa; ci contre, et l'on est libré alors de poursuivre le tableau des avantages d'une éducation première. Tant l'enfant a été sans ces deux rudiages d'une part, passé de l'autre.

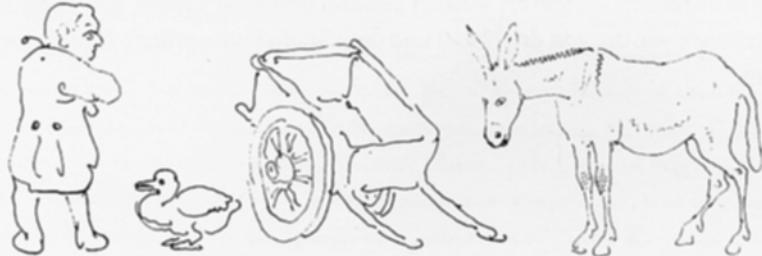
Figure 5. A page from the *Essai de physiognomonie* n.p. (1845); *Essay zur Physiognomonie* p. 30.

mid-nineteenth-century European culture. Thus comes in a basic law of Töpffer's system: any drawn face — essentially, a sign made of signs — necessarily produces meaning. In this eminently modular system, a face put to paper inherently has an expression of some kind; the blank face is an impossibility, as absurd to the Swiss scholar as the idea of a meaningless symbol.³⁰ Bursting at the seams with meaning and orders of representation, Töpffer's *signe graphique* stands opposite the purely visual, non-semantic dimension of the sign such as abstract painting will make its substance 60 years later.

Finally, in its double iconic and symbolic value, the Töpfferian sign necessarily partakes of a differential system.

Indeed, in Töpffer's theory, the role of resemblance in decoding graphic utterances is only relative, and a process of distinction may take over in cases of ambiguity — for example if the formal integrity of the sign is compromised. Töpffer illustrates the elliptic representational power of line drawing with the image of a donkey partially hidden by trees and argues that 'the least trained eye is able to fill in the gaps ... the viewer's mind compensates for the blanks, makes up for them, completes the picture from personal experience, without effort, and with accuracy'.³¹ Töpffer's intuition stops short of making explicit the mnemonic process involved in identifying the incomplete sign, but his visual aid strikingly evokes one

tableau traité. Non toutes les conditions d'un art complexe et avancé la figure d'un homme, d'un animal ou d'un objet, ne manquera jamais de la reconnaître immédiatement. Si, extrait à la manière du simple trait graphique, elle s'offre ainsi au ses regards l'étude d'accessoires est réduite à ses caractères essentiels.



Voici un homme, un oison, une charrette, voici Surtout un âne, car c'est un animal à quatre pattes, à longues oreilles, à grosse poitrine, abruti, nul ne saurait s'y tromper; mais colorer, achever cet âne; que par ses teintes il se confondra plus ou moins avec des teintes énervantes; que par ses formes il se combine avec d'autres formes, ainsi qu'il pourra arriver dans un tableau, déjà cet âne ne sera plus, pour le petit enfant du moins, de compréhension aussi intuitive qu'il l'est, réduit même à ces termes, c'est à dire fait de quelques traits pas trop bien alignés.



Que si je romps la forme d'ensemble, la clarté demeure la même, car, outre que les caractères principaux demeurent, la simplicité graphique, ne distrait pas de l'objet principal, et l'œil le moins exercé supplie les lacunes du cœur bien mieux qu'il ne ferait. Si ces traits, d'une part, distrayent par leurs détails, tandis que d'autre part ils uniformiseraient par leurs tons de grise aiguës s'harmonisant avec la grande grise.

Figure 6. Figures in the *Essai*, n.p. (1845); *Essay zur Physiognomie* p. 16.

customarily used to illustrate Saussurian semiology in linguistics courses (figures 6 and 7). Manifestly, to Töpffer, as to Saussure, an incomplete set of signs remains readable as long as its elements do not resemble others in the same paradigm. Misreading the constitutive strokes of an awkwardly drawn ‘cat’ shape as representing a dog or a donkey, for instance, rather than a man or a cart, manifestly partakes of the process of comparison involved in possibly mistaking the word ‘cat’ for ‘bat’ or ‘cap,’ but not for ‘tiger’. A possible clue to this underlying principle emerges at the juxtaposition of this passage with the following chapter of the *Essay*, devoted to sketches of the human face.

Given the wide range of human emotions, Töpffer remarks, precisely ‘reading’ a given drawn facial expression without contextual information may prove difficult. ‘To identify a given expression forthwith is somewhat challenging,’ he goes on, ‘but to characterize it by comparison is easy for anyone willing to apply one’s curiosity.’³² While Töpffer does not explicitly establish a graphonomic link between the presence of an incomplete icon and the act of recognizing a facial expression, the natural progression of his reasoning from one to the other suggests kinship between the two ideas, albeit at some subliminal, intuitive level. Undoubtedly, the grid structure of Lavater’s classification determined Töpffer’s equal concern for



Figure 7. Rendition of the parallel between the Töpfferian and the Saussurian signs.

both the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic. Overall, Töpffer's intuitions regarding the narrative power of the image, the arbitrary dimension of the sign, and the concept of interrelationship of elements within the system bridged linguistic theories more than 200 years apart, taking up on Locke and anticipating modern semiotics.

Thus, not only did Töpffer give his novel form of sequential art a grammar, a depth, a theory and the full force of a narrative medium in its own right but he also anticipated linguistic concepts that would determine much of the next century's Western intellectual endeavors. Goethe's favorite comic-book artist exerted his influence in multiple arts and lands. As Wiese reports, Tolstoy confessed he was strongly influenced by Töpffer's *Bibliothèque de Mon Oncle* [My Uncle's Library] (1832) when he wrote *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth* (1851–57),³³ and Toulouse Lautrec's *Cahier de Zigzags* (1881) descends from Töpffer's *Voyages en Zigzag*.³⁴ Playwrights Alfred Jarry³⁵ and Jean Cocteau, François Caradec tells us, also paid tribute. Of his tour around the world, Cocteau would later reminisce, 'From the onset, we were to adopt the pace of the Perrichon³⁶ and Fenouillard families, of Mr. Vieuxbois and Mr. Cryptogame. More, even, than Jules Verne's, these characters created by Töpffer and Christophe begat the spirit of adventurous poetry that has guided us since childhood and roused the devil in our flesh.'³⁷ Behind this second accomplice of the devil in Cocteau's flesh hid an anonymous character, himself far from immune to Töpffer's influence: the assistant manager of the Sorbonne botanical laboratory at the turn of the century, Georges Colomb.

Destined to become a twice-decorated Professor emeritus at the Paris Académie des Sciences, Colomb is better known under his pun-pseudonym of Christophe, a precaution that he adopted in an attempt to shield his professional reputation from the double stigma attached to tinkering with images and humor. As *Vox populi* would have it, however, his activity as a

cartoonist overshadowed his academic work. An admirer of Rabelais himself, Christophe proudly claimed Töpffer's legacy: 'Töpffer, my master and my model, this first-rate pedagogue who did not consider it demeaning to fit his playful pencil to the other end of his quill and pen for us *Mr. Vieuxbois*, *Mr. Pencil*, *Mr. Cryptogame*, and that witty, scathing satire of doctrinaire pedagogues entitled *The Crepin Family* [sic].'³⁸ For all his heartfelt assertion of Töpfferian lineage, though, Christophe could hardly have been more different from his spiritual master.

Georges Colomb practiced his profession in a very different cultural paradigm from the one that Töpffer had known. By the early 1880s, primary education in France had become secular, free, and mandatory for both boys and girls. Between the 1830s and the 1890s, the literacy rate had doubled to around 90%.³⁹ Correspondingly, the publishing world had evolved, responding to an increased segmentation of readership. Growing literacy, for instance, meant that the simplistic *image d'Epinal* had slowly become irrelevant to adults, to whom narratives with more sophisticated content were now within reach; it now almost exclusively addressed children. Simultaneously, since Töpffer's initial diminutive print runs, satirical comics had become a mainstream — indeed, mass-production — affair. Pictorial satirical magazines appeared and multiplied, and the early BD had become the domain of caricaturists such as Daumier, Cham, Doré or Nadar. Clearly, the social and political themes in French comics destined them for an adult readership. This, however, would change with the marketing of Christophe's comic books to a new target audience: schoolchildren.

Just as Töpffer had been born into the visual arts, Colomb spent his childhood with school as the main horizon. As biographer Caradec tells us, he grew up on the other side of the Swiss border, in the Northeastern secondary school where his father, the headmaster, taught mathematics, wrote textbooks and schooled him. Colomb too had wanted to be a painter, but settled instead on a scholarly career to please his father, choosing natural sciences because it was a domain in which 'there is much to draw'. Contrary to Töpffer, Colomb had a knack for making scholarly materials plain to students at all levels, a skill doubled by an unsurpassed ability to draw figures on a blackboard. Among his first students was 12-year-old Marcel Proust, whom he reportedly esteemed for managing to obtain the equivalent of B grades in his class in spite of repeated health-related absences.⁴⁰ However, Colomb himself was a better teacher than student; he twice failed the *agrégation* — the exam necessary to teach at university level.

Colomb redeemed this first academic misstep with an illustrated doctoral dissertation noted as an outstanding advancement in botanical studies, and whose defense consecrated his superior lecturing skills.⁴¹ Besides his concurrent appointments as a high-school science teacher and as a lab assistant at the Sorbonne, later to turn into an assistant-manager position, Colomb started to publish in scientific

journals and subsequently gained much recognition as a public lecturer. In 1887, however, his life took a major turn: finding his salary insufficient for a comfortable life with his family, Colomb began illustrating non-academic books. Soon, the imaginative artist was publishing cartoons and *histoires en images*⁴² in various titles of a developing youth-magazine market, most notably four series that ended up in book form.⁴³ Despite the pseudonym, the success of this parallel career became increasingly difficult to keep at bay from his hierarchy's awareness. While officially a don't-ask-don't-tell policy prevailed, Christophe's playfulness ended up taking a toll on Colomb's evaluations. In spite of discrete manifestations of support, the free-spirited educator beloved by his students became perceived largely as a maverick within the ministry of education's tightly normalized structure.

The critical stance, however, was not unilateral, and Colomb's innate pedagogical sense and free spirit led him to shake up one or two educational conventions of his time. In the introductions to his forty-something textbooks, making his own Montaigne's axiom that a well-made head is better than a well-filled one, he challenges immemorial practices full on:

Some young people ... believe that they are educating themselves by picking up a book and trying to retain everything they read. They memorize, as they would an excerpt of a classical tragedy or a Bossuet funeral oration, the distinctive characteristics of birds and mollusks. But they would never think of observing a sparrow or a snail.... They do not know anything, because their knowledge consists in words that they do not always understand. They will realize that later on, once they need to start building upon the base of their previous education ... and they will become aware that this base is quite fragile and shaky.⁴⁴

Students, he charges, are too often 'victims of the official education provided to them, as it was to me, an education that sometimes rests on gross misconceptions and on views of pure convention.'⁴⁵

Through his *histoires en images*, Christophe follows in Töpffer's footsteps in spirit more than in letter. His own brand of BD does not display the spontaneity and innate command of the medium that freed his master's sequential art from traditional boundaries. Rather, Christophe falls back on a traditional *image d'Epinal* waffle-iron layout that does not always exploit the infinite editing possibilities of the medium; his graphic style is less elliptic and idiosyncratic — closer to classical conventions of anatomical proportion and perspective. Moreover, his longer narrative texts — in standard printing characters, not handwritten, and back outside the image, rather than part of it — reverse Töpffer's chosen proportions of image and word.

Contemporary criticism customarily characterizes this subservience to the classical word/image dichotomy as a regression that, in contrast, brings out the modernity of Töpffer's narrative strategy.⁴⁶ Its regularity and the invariable quantity of written text impose one unique reading pace on different types of actions whose assumed length may be very

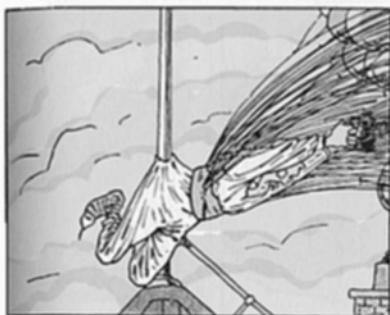
different, with little margin left to change narrative gears. However, Christophe's form of storytelling participates no less in the evolution towards modern comics. Indeed the quasi-systematic uniformity of Christophe's page drives to the brink the layout of the somewhat elliptical *images d'Epinal* story by forcing it to carry a fast-paced narrative. His work also integrates innovations brought about since Töpffer by the graphic narratives of Gustave Doré or Nadar, notably in the use of chiaroscuro effects and of codes symbolizing movement (figure 8). Though very sparingly, he also breaks away from the standard proscenium view that characterized Töpffer's panels, to use varied shots, most notably to experiment with bird's-eye views of scenes. Finally, rather awkwardly, he experiments with the use of speech balloons in the last two panels of his third series, *Professor Cosinus* (1893–99) — the only time he will use them in his whole career.

Where Töpffer initially liberated the image in this hybrid narrative form, Christophe sets the word free. Brimming with wit, his text is not relegated to a supporting role but instead exploits its own distinct resources, featuring dialog between characters, playing up regional and social idiolects, and continually flaunting rhetorical tropes. In fact, a secondary education — such as the Third Republic now proudly provided by law to every child in the nation — is required to understand the vocabulary and classic style of Christophe's prose, as well as the constant cultural references that pepper it. Latin quotations left untranslated alternate with references to fine points of ancient history. Entertaining while reinforcing elements learned in the classroom at the time, Christophe's narratives articulate perfectly with the *école républicaine* program.

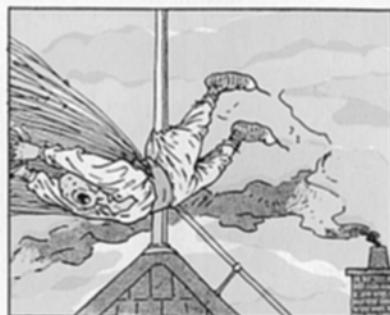
Matters of education permeate Christophe's stories at several levels. His *Professor Cosinus* openly spoofs a scholarly type — loosely based, according to Caradec, on contemporary star scientist Henri Poincaré.⁴⁷ Whereas Töpffer cast himself as education hero, Christophe introduces a certain measure of self-satire in this series. *Professor Cosinus* tells the misadventures of a mathematician struggling with a series of obstacles preventing him from carrying out his plan to travel round the world. With each attempt, it becomes increasingly obvious that the quirky professor's fate is never to make it farther than the very gates of Paris. Dangerously oblivious to his own environment once his mind is engaged in solving a theoretical problem, Cosinus is the archetypal absent-minded professor, the very prototype for such a character in francophone BD throughout the following century.

From its outward appearance onward, the book's paratextual materials unambiguously lay the cards on the table. The full title, which can be translated as 'Professor Cosinus's single-mindedness,' immediately announces a pull between polar opposites, between reason and fancy. The original cover illustration depicts the main character in a less-than-dignified position: on his back and rolling off an embankment in the northern outskirts of Paris (figure 9). He falls down in an attempt to hold on to the tail of a scornful flying griffin — the

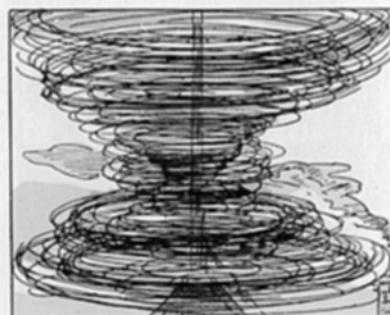
De l'inconvénient qu'il y a à s'appeler Zéphyrin.



Revenons au vrai Cosinus qui, fiché sur un paratonnerre et dominant de cette situation élevée les événements et les hommes, est comme son nom l'y prédestinait, devenu le jouet des zéphyrs et s'est métamorphosé en girouette, appareil symbolique et fétal généralement construit en zinc et non en professeur de sciences exactes.



Un vent violent s'étant élevé, Cosinus trouve que le moment est opportun pour protester contre une situation aussi peu faite pour accroître son prestige aux yeux des populations. Il ouvre donc une large bouche et lance quelques exclamations indignées contre l'ineptie du sort et la stupidité du vent.



Mais le vent s'étant engouffré dans sa bouche ouverte, Cosinus se trouve, bien malgré lui, transformé en cuiller anémométrique, et tout le système, ballons et savant, se met à tourner avec une vitesse V, autour du paratonnerre considéré comme pivot. Cosinus commence à regretter vivement la situation de girouette qui lui semble plus calme.



Les bâtelles des ballons ayant fini par s'enrouler autour de l'axe de rotation, le système, de mobile qu'il était, devient aussitôt fixe et le calme commence à rentrer dans l'esprit de Cosinus. Or, à quelque distance de là, fumait la cheminée d'un boulanger qui venait d'allumer son four.



Cette figure est destinée à montrer le danger qu'il y a à accumuler des substances explosives dans le voisinage d'une cheminée qui lance des flammes. Il serait cependant injuste d'accuser Cosinus d'imprudence, car il y a lieu de penser qu'il n'a pas librement choisi son paratonnerre.



... or le mélange d'hydrogène et d'air étant détonant, il n'y a rien d'étonnant à ce que les ballons d'hydrogène détonent; aussi Cosinus se trouve-t-il subitement transformé en « savant filant » et traverse-t-il paraboliquement l'espace avec la rapidité d'un bolide lancé d'une main sûre.

Figure 8. A full page of *L'Idée fixe du savant Cosinus* n.p. (1899).

mythical animal traditionally symbolizing exploration and the search for knowledge. The graphic novel opens on a double epigraph by Rabelais — one of them under his early pseudonym of Alcofribas Nasier — hinting, beyond the twin ideals of humanism and humor, at the double identity of its author. A tongue-in-cheek preamble then boasts, ‘This remarkable volume comes full of fresh and philosophical insight. It is at once educational and edifying... The reader is invited to tread on the turf of pure knowledge and to mine it unreservedly for assorted practical lessons, insofar as it is possible to mine a lesson from turf!...’⁴⁸

While the implicit irony confirms to the young reader the cover’s promise of entertainment, the foreword’s very language and deconstruction of a mixed metaphor also obliquely inform others that the story is not solely reserved for juveniles, and that its lighthearted humor can withstand the educator’s scrutiny. The proportion of cultural references within the graphic-literary narrative situates the book upstream of a francophone tradition of making children’s comics accessible to adults. Indeed a staple

of comic-strip novels within the so-called Franco-Belgian school — the major strain of European comics — the anchoring of diegeses within researched historical/geographical, technological/scientific, or social/political contexts contributed to sparing them the trap of cultural ghettoization through infantilism. Likewise, occasional satire of institutions, politicians or bureaucrats, as well as a couple of private jokes manifestly aimed at members of the Parisian scientific community, wink towards the adult segment of the public. This adult-friendly approach provided a model that helped secure the cultural status that the BD enjoys within francophone culture today, alongside the novel and film. Setting the tone for generations of comics artists to come, Christophe slipped entertainment spiked with culture to unsuspecting youngsters.

Like Töpffer, Christophe theorized his chosen medium of expression, though in an unpredictable manner, and with a truly improbable cultural impact. In a remarkably unusual turn of events indeed, his own brand of graphic literature influenced not only his outlook on pedagogy but, ultimately, science

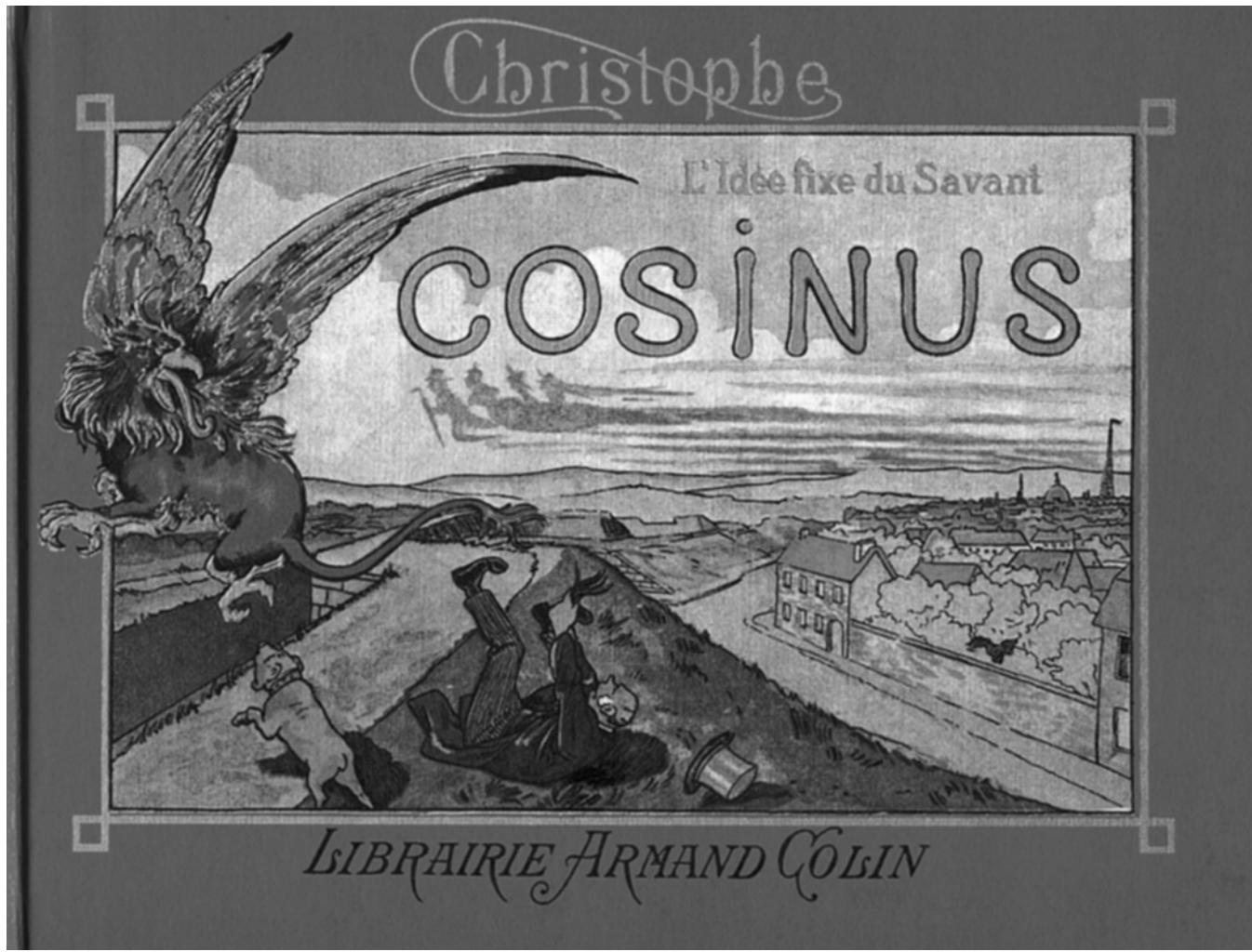


Figure 9. *Cosinus* Cover.

teaching nationwide. A proponent of a modern form of pedagogy through the pictorial, Christophe created over 40 natural-science textbooks, one of them considered avant-garde at the time: *Leçons de Choses en 650 gravures* [A Science Course in 650 Pictures], fashioned in the same format as his *histoires en images* (figure 10). To be sure, the presence of the image in an educational book was no novelty in itself in turn-of-the-century France. In fact, as Jacqueline Lalouette reminds us, some educators even worried openly that excessive recourse to the image in science textbooks would alienate children from direct experience — create, so to say, ‘des leçons de choses sans les choses’ [lessons about the physical world without the physical world].⁴⁹ However, Colomb innovated by changing the proportion between verb and icon, thus creating a new level of interaction between the two, apparently moving away from the logocentrism that characterized education — and also from his own brand of graphic fiction.

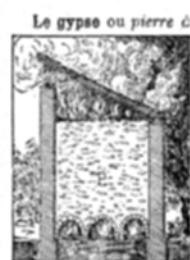
Though cutting-edge, Christophe’s comic-book-inspired textbook represented no aberration within the

Third-Republic educational landscape, and its sheer longevity — 35 reprints and one English edition⁵⁰ between 1896 and 1929 — speaks for itself. The preface to *Leçons de Choses* spells out its pedagogical strategy:

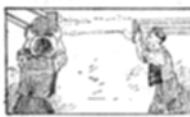
Rather than the standard long, and sometimes vague, text that does little to stimulate the interest of the pupil ... we have adopted the system of the ‘image’ accompanied by a short, yet clear, caption. Among other benefits, this system has the merit of developing the child’s sense of observation by unburdening his memory. Indeed, once he holds the pupils’ attention, the teacher can, by explaining each scene and pointing out the role of each character, instill in them a host of notions that they will assimilate without effort. When on the next day he tests them on the lesson, they will have to perform a short yet true exercise of oral narration rather than merely struggle through reciting the exact words of a lesson that is often less understood than purely memorized.⁵¹

The presence of quotation marks around the word *image* as late as in the 1929 edition speaks volumes on the novelty, the

Gypse ou pierre à plâtre.



70. Un jour à plâtre : P est du gypse que l'on empile au-dessus de voûtes* formées elles-mêmes de pierres à plâtre de grandes dimensions. On allume du feu sous les voûtes. L'eau s'échappe en vapeur par le toit.



72-80. Avec le plâtre gaché, on fait des ornements, des moulures*, des corniches*, des statues (voir n° 19).



82. Le plâtre gaché avec de l'eau gommée devient dur, se poli facilement et ressemble au marbre. C'est le stuc.



77. Lorsqu'on gache* avec de l'eau du plâtre en poudre, on forme une bouillie qui dureit peu à peu.



78. Cette bouillie demi-liquide est appliquée sur les murailles.



81. Le médecin enveloppe de bandes de toile enduites de plâtre les membres cassés, pour les empêcher de remuer.

TEXTE A APPRENDRE

Le plâtre s'obtient en calcinant*, puis pulvérifiant* la pierre à plâtre.

Le plâtre gaché* avec de l'eau forme une bouillie qui dureit à l'air.

Les murs, surtout les murs intérieurs, en sont souvent enduits. On le coule aussi dans des moules pour faire des statues, des ornements.

Le stuc (imitation de marbre) est du plâtre chê avec de l'eau gommée.

TEXTE A APPRENDRE

Comment on fait une statue de marbre.



83. Le sculpteur commence par modeler*, d'après nature, la statue avec de l'argile plastique.



84. Dans l'intervalle de deux séances, pour que l'argile ne se dessèche pas, on recouvre la statue de linge mouillé.



85. La statue étant complètement modelée en terre, on en prend un moule en plâtre divisé en plusieurs pièces.



86. On retire la statue du moule et on remonte toutes les pièces du moule dans lequel on coule du plâtre liquide.



87. La statue de plâtre sera alors de modèle à un ouvrier nommé professeur, qui dégrossira* le bloc de marbre.



88. Cet le sculpteur lui-même qui met la dernière main à la statue et l'achève à l'aide du ciseau.

Figure 10. A double page from *Leçons de choses en 650 gravures* (1896).

experimental dimension, of such an approach in the 1890s. This bold teaching method endeavors to do no less than abolish age-old practices and stimulate analytical process rather than solely memory. ‘Always approach your textbook as if you suspect it to contain some false information,’ he provocatively recommends second-graders in another textbook.⁵² In effect, then, Colomb completed the education project that Töpffer had laid down half a century earlier but never concretized. He produced a truly didactic form of graphic narrative.

Acquisition and transmission of information thus lie at the core of Colomb’s lifework under the guise of textbooks, public lectures, historical research, popular science volumes, or his comical yet highbrow narratives for educated youngsters. That these very stories begat a pedagogical method, not only officially sanctioned by the government but also anticipating teaching strategies of the late twentieth century, certainly tells us that we are far here from the instrument of intellectual devolution denounced in early 1960s France.

What happened, then, between the 1890s and the mid-twentieth century? As a result of Christophe’s commercial success, French comics multiplied and shifted from an adult form of entertainment to an exclusively children’s market for roughly the next 60 years, and American comics came to

dominate the francophone market until the 1950s, when the work of the Commission screened many out. On a purely formal level, a major change came from the advent of the speech balloon, a feature that allows for tighter, more lifelike editing of dialogs. In that regard, the authors of the anti-comics study identified increasing reliance on colloquial style and onomatopoeia as elements of negative influence on readers-in-training. In hindsight, it seems clear today that, though overall driven by good intentions, this wholesale condemnation of the BD not only reflected cultural biases but also betrayed research relying on pathologically incomplete surveys and second-hand opinions.⁵³

Today, select French and Belgian Fine Arts schools offer BD curricula, and it is not uncommon to have graphic fiction discussed on literary shows, alongside traditional novels and philosophical essays. Though ranking much lower within the mainstream nineteenth-century cultural hierarchy, the graphic narratives of Töpffer and Christophe clearly emerged from pursuits in perfect synch with some of their century’s most eminent intellectual endeavors. These early comics indeed belong to both ends of cultural production, high and low, and the underlying theories of narration developed by their authors stand at the crossroads of pedagogy and linguistics; they prefigure such assorted later concepts as structuralism,

communication theory and storyboarding. To both Töpffer and Christophe, sequential art was not a diversion from academic pursuits but, on the contrary, part of a reflection on efficient methods of communication. Ultimately, the birth of comics is intricately linked to the history of modern pedagogy in the francophone world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author is indebted to Larry Schehr and Andrea Goulet for their fruitful comments and suggestions in the development of this article.

NOTES

1 – Claude Bron, Professor at the Ecole normale cantonale de Neuchâtel, ‘Preface’, in *La Presse enfantine française*, by Jacqueline and Raoul Dubois (Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Editions H. Messeiller, 1964), p. ii.

2 – Dubois, p. 24.

3 – The phrase ‘graphic literature’ directly translates the expression *littérature dessinée*, credited by Harry Morgan to the *Société civile d'études et de recherches des littératures dessinées*; he defines it in the following manner: ‘graphic literatures include sequential images, i.e., images whose succession defines a story, and so-called synchronic images, within which several phases of a story are represented. To this [I] have added standalone images that allow the reader to deduct the before or after of the depicted event, *daily panel-* or *cartoon-style*. Whenever sequential images appear on separate pages, we designate them as image cycles [for instance, by Goya, Hogarth, Cruikshank, Masereel, Lynd Ward, etc. (387)], when several images are laid out on one same page, we talk about *bande dessinée*.’ Harry Morgan, *Principe des littératures dessinées* (Angoulême: Editions de l’An 2, 2003), p. 149.

4 – Though the origins of the *bande dessinée* are sometimes traced back as early as the origin of pictorial art itself, only one major rift concerning its genesis truly divided BD historians until the end of the twentieth century. Scholarly studies have tended to recognize Rodolphe Töpffer as the first to articulate the basic structure and codes that would shape future BD; conversely, more mainstream, journalistic accounts have often located the birth of the medium with Richard Felton Outcault’s *Yellow Kid* strip in the daily *New York World* of 25 October 1896. This position has receded proportionately to the development of academic comics studies, and the consensus around Töpffer has solidified.

5 – See Marie Alamir-Paillard, ‘Rodolphe Töpffer critique d’art, 1826–1846: de la subversion à la réaction’, in *Töpffer*, ed. Daniel Maggetti (Genève: Editions d’Art Albert Skira, 1996), pp. 67–132.

6 – ‘One can write stories in chapters, paragraphs, and words: that is “literature” proper. One may also write stories through a succession of graphically represented scenes [like those created by Hogarth and Rowlandson]: that is pictorial literature’. Rodolphe Töpffer, ‘Essai de physiognomonie’ (1845), *Essay zur Physiognomie* (Siegen, Germany: Machwerk Verlag, 1982), p. 6. Translation mine.

7 – As translated by Töpffer’s first anglophone scholar, Ellen Wiese, *Enter: The Comics. Rodolphe Töpffer’s Essay on Physiognomy and The True Story of Monsieur Crépin*, trans. and ed. Ellen Wiese (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965).

8 – ‘Naissance d’un art,’ in *Töpffer. L’Invention de la bande dessinée*, by Thierry Groensteen and Benoît Peeters (Paris: Hermann, 1994), pp. 65–142 (p. 98). Translation mine.

9 – Double dates indicate years of the first version and of the first book publication: *Histoire de M. Vieux Bois* (1826–1839); *Le Docteur Festus* (1829–1840); *M. Cryptogame* (1830–1845); *M. Jabot* (1831–1833); *M. Pencil* (1831–1840); *M. Crépin* (1837); [*Histoire de Jaques* (sic)] *Histoire d’Albert* (1844–1845). Five other stories, *Histoire de M. Boissac*, *Histoire de M. Vertpré*, *Histoire de M.*

Trictrac, *Histoire de M. Saitout* and *M. Trictrac* were started but never brought to term.

10 – Töpffer never met Goethe, who died soon after discovering his work. Interaction took place through the double mediation of common friend Frédéric Soret and Goethe’s secretary Johann Peter Eckermann. In 1832, Soret wrote to Töpffer: ‘Mr. von Goethe found your [M. *Cryptogame*] quite amusing, and what appeared to strike him most, besides the novelty of your drawings, was your ability to exhaust a subject, to extract from it all that it could possibly offer.... Goethe said: “Nothing so droll! Nothing so peculiar! Yet therein lie the seeds of much talent and imagination; from an artistic point of view, selected sketches and images clearly suggest all that Mr. Töpffer [sic] could accomplish if he would apply all the care of which he is capable”’ (*Correspondance*, Vol. 2), Soret, *Correspondance complète*, ed. Jacques Droin, Vol. 2 : 11 juillet 1820–début août 1832 (Geneva: Droz, 2004), p. 413. David Kunzle provides a very insightful account of Goethe’s relationship to Töpffer’s work in *The Early Comic Strip : Narrative Strips and Picture Stories in the European Broadsheet from c.1450 to 1825*, History of the Comic Strip Vol. 1 (Berkeley–Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 29–35.

11 – The phrase is borrowed from Kunzle, p. 5.

12 – These initials, however, Kunzle tells us, were easily identifiable to the small Genevan high society. ‘*Jabot* and *Festus* were little less than a handicap, and his [Töpffer’s] opponents [to his promotion as tenured professor] derided him as the author of nothing better than caricature albums’ (p. 38).

13 – Quoted in Groensteen and Peeters, p. xv.

14 – ‘Rodolphe Töpffer’, Archives d’Etat, *Site officiel de l’Etat de Genève*, 5 June 2005. Available online at : <http://etat.geneve.ch/dt/site/interieur/archives/master-content.jsp?componentId=kmelia66&pubId=1050&nodeId=2193>

15 – ‘Since [Genevan contemporary of Töpffer’s and nineteenth-century historian] Gaullieur ... Töpffer’s biographers have highlighted the weakness of the professor’s pedagogical flame’, Daniel Maggetti and Jérôme Meizoz, ‘Un Montaigne né près du Léman’, in *Töpffer*, ed. Daniel Maggetti (Genève: Editions d’Art Albert Skira, 1996), pp. 133–88 (p. 185). Translation mine.

16 – Töpffer’s doodling activity culminated in what he himself called his ‘crises’: a frenzy of trance-like graphic activity that would make him sketch figures and motifs for hours on end, automatic drawing bouts of sorts from which he would emerge deplored the damage they caused to eyes that he otherwise constantly tried to spare. See Philippe Kaenel, ‘La Muse des croquis’, in *Töpffer*, ed. Daniel Maggetti (Genève: Editions d’Art Albert Skira, 1996), pp. 27–66 (p. 60).

17 – *Essai de physiognomonie*, p. 5. Translation mine.

18 – Ibid., p. 14. Trans. Wiese, p. 5.

19 – Ibid., p. 20. Trans. Wiese, p. 9.

20 – Translated, without an introduction, as *The Comical Adventures of Beau Ogleby* in an anonymous British edition c.1842.

21 – Autograph: an inexpensive nineteenth-century lithographic process used before the era of wood engraving, not in art, but for ‘ordinary documents or ... street-corner grocer bills’, and with which, contrary to engraving, the artist could write or draw on paper with a pen and without having to reverse the page. ‘Should this process be applied to artistic endeavors, this compositional advantage would free the artist from one of his greatest, most encumbering difficulties, from one of the truest obstacles that he could encounter: the obligation of engraving backwards landscapes and figures.’ Rodolphe Töpffer, ‘Notice sur *Les essais d’autographie*’ (1842), in *Töpffer. L’Invention de la bande dessinée*, by Thierry Groensteen and Benoît Peeters (Paris: Hermann, 1994), pp. 166–73 (pp. 171–2).

22 – Last two sentences translated by Wiese, p. 13.

23 – ‘The antidote to a novel honoring the unlawful liaison above holy matrimony would not be a parody of that novel. It would be an entirely different novel-in-pictures, in which the author adopts the thesis of the first and translates it visually, showing earnestly but with humor that the consequences of such a course are shocking to common sense, pernicious

- for the soul, odious for the individual and for society' (*Essai*, p. 10; trans. Wiese, p. 4).
- 24 – Ibid., p. 66. Trans. mine.
- 25 – *Réflexions et menus propos d'un peintre genevois ou Essai sur le Beau dans les arts*, 1848 (Paris: Hachette, 1858), p. 60. Trans. mine.
- 26 – Ibid., p. 66. Trans. mine.
- 27 – *Essai de physiognomonie*, p. 12.
- 28 – *Réflexions*, p. 60. Trans. mine.
- 29 – Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 51.
- 30 – *Essai de physiognomonie*, p. 24.
- 31 – Ibid., p. 18. Trans. mine.
- 32 – Ibid., p. 26. Trans. mine.
- 33 – Biographer Ernest J. Simmons's *Introduction to Tolstoy's Writings* concurs: 'It is very likely that the *Bibliothèque de mon oncle* of the Swiss writer, R. Topfer [sic], may have inspired Tolstoy to write about childhood, although no direct traces of borrowing from this work are observable.' Ernest J. Simmons, *Introduction to Tolstoy's Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). Available at: <<http://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/smmnsej/tolstoy/chap2.htm> (accessed 8 June 2005).
- 34 – Wiese, pp. ix–x.
- 35 – 'Töpffer's books had a great impact on Jarry's childhood.... They were seminal to his *Théâtre mirlitonique* [his entire theater works].... The tribute subheading to *L'Objet aimé* [The Beloved One] ... reads, "The first suicide of Monsieur Vieux Bois, from Töpffer's book".' François Caradec, 'La Littérature en estampes', in *Rodolphe Töpffer*, ed. Pierre Horay (Paris: Pierre Horay, 1996), pp. 5–10 (p. 9). Trans. mine.
- 36 – The main character in Eugène Labiche's 1860 satirical comedy *Le Voyage de Monsieur Perrichon*.
- 37 – François Caradec, *Christophe* (Paris: Pierre Horay, 1981), p. 102. Trans. mine.
- 38 – Caradec, *Christophe*, p. 92.
- 39 – James Smith Allen, *In the Public Eye: A History of Reading in Modern France, 1800–1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), Table A.7, n.p.
- 40 – Caradec, *Christophe*, pp. 72–4.
- 41 – Ibid., p. 81.
- 42 – The prevalent French name for early comics throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, to be replaced by *illustrés* after the advent of the speech balloon in the 1920s and, finally, *bandes dessinées* in the 1960s.
- 43 – *La Famille Fenouillard* [The Fenouillard Family] (1889–1893); *Le Sapeur Camember* [Sapper Camember] (1890–1896); *L'idée fixe du savant Cosinus* [Professor Cosinus' single-mindedness] (1893–1899); *Les malices de Plick et Plock* [The Mischievous Plick and Plock] (1893–1904).
- 44 – Quoted in Caradec, *Christophe*, p. 122. Trans. mine.
- 45 – *Vercingétorix. Histoire du Pays gaulois depuis ses origines jusqu'à la conquête romaine* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1945), pp. 9–10. Trans. mine.
- 46 – Cf. Groensteen, *Învention*, p. 91; 'L'apport graphique de Christophe à la bande dessinée', in *Actes du colloque Christophe* (Besançon, France: Cêtre, 1991), pp. 43–64 (pp. 48–53).
- 47 – Cf. Caradec, pp. 132–5.
- 48 – Georges Colomb, 'Preface', in *Leçons de choses en 650 gravures*, 32nd edn, *L'Enseignement par l'image* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1929), n.p. Author's trans.
- 49 – Jacqueline Lalouette, 'L'Illustration des livres de leçons de choses (années 1880–années 1960)', in *L'Image pour enfants: pratiques, normes, discours (France et pays francophones, XVIe–XXe siècles)*, ed. Annie Renonciat (Poitiers: La Licorne, 2003), pp. 87–105 (p. 93).
- 50 – *Object Lessons, Illustrated by 650 Engravings*, trans. Seymour G. Gubb (Armand Colin, 1897) (Caradec, *Christophe*, p. 233).
- 51 – Georges Colomb, 'Preface', *Leçons de choses en 650 gravures*. 32nd ed. *L'enseignement par l'image* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1929), n.p.
- 52 – Caradec, *Christophe*, p. 121. Trans. mine.
- 53 – See Morgan, pp. 203–49 for a thorough analysis of the Dubois study's flaws.