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Bande Dessinée On The Periphery

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of PhD in French

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Abstract

This thesis examines how Brittany and Corsica are represented in the medium of *bande dessinée*. Both are peripheral French regions with cultural identities markedly different from that of the overarching French norm, and both have been historically subject to ridicule from the political and cultural centre. By comparing a fair selection of *bandes dessinées* which are either set in Brittany or Corsica or feature characters from the relevant regions, this thesis sets out to discover whether representations of Brittany and Corsica differ according to the origin of the creators of the *bandes dessinées* and, if so, how. To facilitate this analysis, the *bandes dessinées* included for study have been classified as either external representations (published by mainstream *bande dessinée* publishers and/or the work of creators originating from outside the two regions) or internal representations (published by local Breton or Corsican companies and/or the work of local creators). It transpires that there are clear differences between mainstream and local *bande dessinée* authors and illustrators with regard to their portrayal of the local culture of both ‘outlying’ regions. External representations rely on broad stereotypes and received ideas, while internal representations draw on local folklore, regional history and regional identity to create works with more local relevance. In some cases internal representations are or were clearly aimed at a local market, while others aim both at local readers and at the wider *bande dessinée* market. Those aimed at a wider readership have an additional function, namely that of promoting their regional cultures in French culture generally and offering an alternative to the stereotypical representations presented by larger publishers of *bandes dessinées*.

Brittany and Corsica are examined separately, each taking up roughly half of the thesis. Each half has the same general structure, beginning with discussion of how historical events have shaped perceptions of Brittany and Corsica in French popular consciousness, followed by analysis of the respective external representations and lastly internal representations. There are also two case studies of representations of Corsica in wider visual culture.

Owing to its widespread appeal, its adaptability and its capacity to reflect popular opinion in different sectors of society, the medium of *bande dessinée* offers a potentially rich field for the investigation of social and cultural attitudes and prejudices. It is hoped that this thesis points the way to further research on the topic.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Copyright Notice

Every effort was made to acknowledge copyright of third-party images used in this thesis and to obtain permission to use them. They have been included here under academic fair dealing.

A Note on Referencing

On account of the large number of works by the same authors and/or groups of authors cited in this thesis, multiple works by the same author or authors have been assigned letters according to their date of publication, in order to aid identification of works referenced in footnotes. For the sake of consistency, this system of lettering has been applied to all works in the bibliography.

For example, there are twenty-six books in the series *Les Aventures de Bécassine* by Caumery and J.P. Pinchon. Each book is lettered according to its date of publication, from 1913's *L'Enfance de Bécassine* (a) to *Bécassine au Studio* (z), published in 1992. *L'Enfance de Bécassine* is referenced as follows.

First reference: Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), *L'Enfance de Bécassine*, 1993 edition (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1913), p. xx.

Subsequent references: Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), p. xx.

Introduction

The *bande dessinée* is, as Michel Porret attests, ‘un produit culturel de consommation massive, [...] certainement un pilier très solide de l’édition francophone’.¹ Evidence of this is provided by the rapid growth of the *bande dessinée* market in recent years. 1,137 albums were published in 2000;² the most recent figures given by the Association des Critiques et journalistes de Bande Dessinée show that 5410 albums were published in 2014.³ Although *bande dessinée* scholarship is a growing area of study, there are still aspects of the field in which little research has been carried out. One of these aspects is regionalism and regional identity in *bande dessinée*. There have admittedly been some works in the area of regional cultures and identity, for example Harriet Kennedy’s Glasgow Masters thesis on Québécois *bande dessinée*,⁴ Jean-Paul Champseix’s 1985 PhD on representations of Brittany in literature,⁵ and a 1992 thesis on *bande dessinée* representations of Occitania by Bernard Tabuce.⁶ There

¹ Michel Porret, ‘La bande dessinée éprouve l’histoire’ in *Objectif Bulles* ed. Michel Porret (Chêne-Bourg: Georg, 2009), p. 13.

² Porret, p.13.

³ Gilles Ratier, 2014, *l’année des contradictions: un rapport sur la production d’une année de bande dessinée dans l’espace francophone européen* (Paris: ACBD, 2015) p. 3. <
http://www.acbd.fr/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/RapportRatier_ACBD2014.pdf> [Accessed 30 August 2015].

⁴ Harriet Kennedy, ‘Nationalism in Québécois *Bande Dessinée*’ (unpublished Masters dissertation, University of Glasgow, 2011).

⁵ Jean-Paul Champseix, ‘L’Image de la Bretagne et du breton dans la littérature et la paralittérature française d’audience nationale de Chateaubriand à Bécassine’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Paris X, 1985).

⁶ Bernard Tabuce, ‘Paroles et images d’Occitanie dans la bande dessinée’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Montpellier 3, 1992).

is also a thesis currently in preparation at the University of Corte on representations of Corsica in press illustrations.⁷

In order to expand the scope of scholarly work on regional identity in *bande dessinée*, the aim of this thesis will be to examine representations of two peripheral French regions in the medium: Brittany and Corsica. The two regions were chosen for study for several reasons. Both Brittany and Corsica are on the extreme geographical periphery of the Hexagon, in insular or peninsular situations far from the political and cultural centre, Paris. Partly the product of this geographical distance, the two regions' specific cultural and linguistic heritages are distinct from that of mainstream France. This linguistic and cultural difference from the French norm has led to these regions being perceived as exotic or 'other' in the French cultural consciousness. This perception has meant that Brittany and Corsica have often been regarded with condescension or suspicion, or used as the source of humour, as in these 1831 remarks by the *sous-préfet* of Quimperlé:

La Basse-Bretagne, je ne cesserai de le dire, est une contrée à part, qui n'est plus la France. Exceptez-en les villes, le reste devrait être soumis à une sorte de régime colonial. Je n'avance rien d'exagéré.⁸

Taking each region in turn, I will include examples of external representation (created by mainstream publishers and/or by creators not from Brittany or Corsica) and internal representation (bandes dessinées set in or about the relevant regions made by creators from Brittany and Corsica). The intention is to examine these internal and external representations to discover if they differ depending on the backgrounds of the creators of each *bande dessinée*. If so, how

⁷ Magali Palazzo, 'La Corse en images : comment les différentes illustrations de la presse (régionale, nationale, internationale) construisent une représentation de l'île, de ses habitants et de sa vie quotidienne' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Corte, in progress).

⁸ Yann-Ber Piriou 'L'Identité culturelle bretonne', in *Centre et périphérie: Bretagne, Cornouailles / Devon: étude comparée [=] Centre and Periphery: A Comparative Study of Brittany and Cornwall & Devon*, sous la direction de / edited by Michael Havinden, Jean Quéniart & Jeffrey Stanyer, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1991), pp. 233-38 (p. 233).

do these representations differ, and why do the creators of both internal and external representations of each region present Brittany and Corsica in the ways they do? In sum: is there a noticeable difference between the way in which the mainstream French *bande dessinée* industry represents Brittany and Corsica, and how those regions use the *bande dessinée* to represent themselves?

Although there is existing scholarship on regional identity and visual culture, none of the smattering of research in this general area applies to exactly the same regions or the same media. Champseix's thesis studies Brittany, but in a general literary or paraliterary context rather than with specific reference to *bande dessinée* as in this thesis; Kennedy and Taduée study *bande dessinée* representations of other francophone regions than those treated here; Palazzo is studying images of Corsica, but those of press illustrations rather than *bande dessinée*. Although there is some crossover between *bande dessinée* and press illustration (see, for example, Pétillon's work for *Le Canard Enchaîné*),⁹ I would argue that they are not the same and did not develop in the same context.

As such, there is a gap in current research on regional identity in *bande dessinée*. This thesis is the first academic study of *bandes dessinées* produced in Corsica, and while there exist a few works touching on *Les Aventures de Bécassine* (e.g. Champseix's thesis), other *bandes dessinées* based on Breton culture are as yet unstudied. My work attempts to fill this gap.

Many of the works included have as yet been the subject of little or no academic research. Although massively popular at the time of original publication, *Bécassine* had been 'locked away like an embarrassing elderly relative', in the words of Charles Forsdick,¹⁰ and mostly ignored by *BD* scholars. Recently, a few studies have been published,¹¹ but their number is still small. Charles Forsdick's chapter in *The Francophone Bande Dessinée* is the most significant examination of *Bécassine* in English, examining *Bécassine*'s Breton identity and why the series

⁹ Vincent Baudaux, 'Pétillon au Canard' in *Neuvième Art* 13 (2007) 186-189 (p. 186).

¹⁰ Charles Forsdick, 'Exoticising the Domestique: *Bécassine*, Brittany and the Beauty of The Dead', in *The Francophone Bande Dessinée*, ed. Laurence Grove & Libbie McQuillan (Amsterdam : Rodopi, 2005), p. 23.

¹¹ See, for example, Marie-Anne Couderc (a), *Bécassine inconnue* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2000), and Hélène Davreux, *Bécassine, ou, l'image d'une femme* (Loverval: Labor, 2006).

is problematic for Bretons – one of the rare studies in either French or English to do so. There is also an interesting article by Annabelle Cone on the *Bécassine* albums published during the First World War.¹² Other scholarly books include Hélène Davreux's *Bécassine, ou l'Image d'une femme* which focuses on Bécassine's femininity, and Marie-Anne Couderc's *Bécassine inconnue*, a good introduction to the character from various angles. Published on the occasion of the character's centenary, Bernard Lehembre's recent large-scale study *Bécassine, une légende du siècle* contains useful information, but was published by Gautier-Languereau, the publishers of the original series. Lack of critical distance is therefore an issue. While it contains valuable material from the publisher's archives, the resulting document lacks any mention of objections raised by Bécassine's detractors, or any explanation of why the series is problematic from a Breton point of view. *Les Aventures de Bécassine* is undeniably a milestone in *bande dessinée* history and there remains much to be written on the character and the series.

There is virtually no secondary research on *Ololê* apart from a single article by Michel Denni,¹³ a Master's dissertation,¹⁴ and passing mentions in works on other *bandes dessinées*, notably Ory's *Le Petit Nazi Illustré*¹⁵ and Thierry Crépin's *Haro sur le Gangster*.¹⁶ Denni's article is the only research available on *Caouissin*'s short-lived attempt at a revival of his comic, *L'Appel d'Ololê* (1970-1973), consisting of a few sentences that note its existence and the number of issues.

Astérix, of course, has been the subject of much scholarly research, which includes *Astérix en Corse*. French identity in *Astérix* has attracted the attention

¹² Annabelle Cone, 'Strange Encounters During Wartime: *Bécassine chez les Turcs*' in *European Comic Art* 4.2 (2011) 181-197.

¹³ Michel Denni, 'O Lo Lê, Un Illustré Breton Sous L'Occupation' in *Le Collectionneur de Bandes Dessinées*, 83 (1997) 32-39.

¹⁴ Ronan Le Guen, 'O Lo Lê, journal des jeunes de Bretagne, périodique nationaliste et chrétien', (unpublished Masters dissertation, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, 1983).

¹⁵ Pascal Ory (b), *Le Petit Nazi illustré: vie et survie du Téméraire (1943-1944)*, (Paris: Nautilus, 2002).

¹⁶ Thierry Crépin, "*Haro Sur Le Gangster!*": *La Moralisation De La Presse Enfantine 1934-1954* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2001).

of several critics including Andreas Stoll, Maurice Agulhon and particularly Nicolas Rouvière, whose work I will reference in the relevant section. Inclusion of *Astérix en Corse* is essential to this thesis as the album is a seminal depiction of Corsica in French popular culture generally, not only in *bandes dessinées*.

René Pétillon, while also popular, has not received scholarly attention on the level of Goscinny and Uderzo. Academic study of his work is rare. However, an article by Anna Giaufret examines the linguistics of both *Astérix en Corse* and Pétillon's *L'Enquête Corse*;¹⁷ its inclusion of both works makes it particularly useful for the purposes of this thesis. I was unable to find secondary literature on any of the other mainstream *bandes dessinées* included in this study. DCL's *bandes dessinées* and the others included as internal representations of Corsica are regularly featured in Corsican newspapers, but there is no other secondary literature.

A wide range of *bande dessinée* works are included in this study, all of them with at least one point of interest which make the medium worthy of study, whether that be for its innovative aspects, its political context, its popularity and influence on the *bande dessinée* in general, or the reasons for, and implications of, the rapidly growing local *bande dessinée* industry on Corsica. Each work offers distinct avenues of study and it is hoped that the research carried out for this thesis will lead to further examination of the issues raised or the *bandes dessinées* included. Details of all of these *bandes dessinées* follows below.

Methodology and Scope of Research

A variety of methods have been used in conducting the research. The primary research method used is textual analysis of many *bande dessinée* publications, both in album format and in periodicals. In addition to this textual analysis, I have also undertaken archival research in Paris and conducted interviews in Corsica at a local *bande dessinée* festival.

¹⁷ Anna Giaufret, “‘Corsican Speak’ in Two French Bandes Dessinées, or How to Manipulate Communication Rules: A Pragmatic Analysis’, in *European Comic Art*, 4:1 (2011), 29-38.

There have been some limitations to the scope of my research. Firstly, since I do not speak Breton or Corsican, only *bandes dessinées* in French will be included: I have been unable to include examples written in either regional language. Secondly, for a number of reasons I have not been able to include every example of featured periodicals or series. In terms of representations of Brittany and Breton identity, I have examined the long-running series *Les Aventures de Bécassine*, from 1913-1939, the children's newspaper *Ololê*, published under Nazi occupation between 1940 and 1944, and its attempted revival as *L'Appel d'Ololê* (1970-1973). *Les Aventures de Bécassine* is the external representation, published in Paris; *Ololê*, published in Brittany, serves as the internal representation.

Bande dessinée representations of Corsica are more recent and more numerous, as the majority do not form part of a series, unlike the many albums of *Les Aventures de Bécassine*.

The following mainstream, external depictions of Corsica are included: *Lili, bandit corse* (1962); *Astérix en Corse* (1973); *L'Enquête corse* (2000); *Les Blagues corses 1: Canal hystérique* (2006); *Da Vinci corse* (2007); *Bienvenue chez les Corses ... (et Bonne Chance!)* (2012).

For an internal perspective on Corsica in *bande dessinée*, I have included works produced by local *bande dessinée* publishers. The vast majority of these are published by Distribution Corse du Livre (DCL): *Corsu* (five volumes, 1999-2007); *Paoli* (three volumes, 2007-2009); *Le Bagne de la honte* (two volumes, 2011); *Astrocorse* (2011); *Histoires corses* (2011); *Colomba* (2012); *Libera Me* (projected three-volume series, volumes one and two published 2012-2013); *Sampiero Corso* (two volumes, 2012-2014); *Aio Zitelli !* (2014) and *Aleria 1975* (two volumes, 2014-2015). Also included as a case study is *Le Procès Colonna* (2008).

Every *Bécassine* album published from 1913 until 1939 is included. At that point in time, *Les Aventures de Bécassine* ceased publication owing to the outbreak of World War Two. Writer Maurice Langereau died in 1941 and illustrator J.P.

Pinchon in 1953; the 1939 album was the last produced by this pairing and as such marks the last manifestation of Bécassine's 'golden age' of popularity. Nonetheless, there are other Bécassine books produced which are not included here: *L'Alphabet de Bécassine* (1921) and *Les Chansons de Bécassine* (1927), which are educational books aimed at younger children, and not considered part of the main series; an attempted revival in the late 1950s with different writers; and *Bécassine au studio*, an album originally serialised in 1950, drawn by Pinchon and written by an anonymous journalist despite being credited to Caumery,¹⁸ but only published in album format in 1992. Finally, the earliest Bécassine strips, published prior to Languereau's involvement (1905-1913) are not included. Gautier-Languereau published the first volume of *Les Historiettes de Bécassine*, which groups together these early strips from 1905-1908, in early 2015. Volume two, covering 1908-1913, is scheduled to appear at the end of the year. However, *Les Historiettes de Bécassine* was published too close to submission to be included in this thesis.

It has not been possible to source a complete collection of *Ololê*; research indicates that one may not exist. I was able to obtain six issues of *Ololê* and five of *L'Appel d'Ololê*. Although they are few in number, the issues provide a good overview of *Ololê*'s existence, including examples of early, middle and late issues which effectively show how the paper changed physically over its life (e.g. through variations in print quality and paper dimensions) and also indicate the development of the journal's editorial stance. Similarly, the issues of *L'Appel d'Ololê* included in this study cover a range of publication dates and topics.

As the works examined relating to Corsica are much more recent, it was easier to gather a greater number of sources. The entirety of DCL's *bande dessinée* publications are included, with the exception of editions translated into Corsican and *Le Beau Secret de Lunetta*; the former as my level of comprehension in Corsican is not high enough to evaluate the translations, and the latter as it is aimed at children, in contrast to all other *bandes dessinées* published by DCL.

¹⁸ Caumery & J-P. Pinchon (z), *Bécassine au studio* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1992).

Included is one album, *Aio Zitelli !*, which is published not by DCL but Albiana, a Corsican generalist publisher. It is included as all those involved in its creation also work together on DCL's catalogue, and it is very similar in content and form to the rest of DCL's publications.

There are, however, a number of French-language *bandes dessinées* published by Albiana and other smaller Corsican publishers which I have not included, either because they were out of print and difficult to source, or, though made by Corsican creators, they were not narratives based in Corsica.

I have included a wide variety of external, mainstream *bandes dessinées*. Most of the external representations of Corsica are single books that do not form part of a series. In the case of the *Lili* and *Astérix* series only the single albums relevant to the research question are included. *Les Blagues corses* and Jean-Michel Delambre's works are the exception as all volumes in these two series are set in Corsica. To avoid repetition I have included one volume of each series as a representative example. Since all albums are based on similar stereotypes, it has been unnecessary to include them all.

The publications included in the examination of representations of Corsica were chosen for several reasons. Those containing external viewpoints were chosen as they form a representative selection of the mainstream *bandes dessinées* based in Corsica, of which there are many; *Lili bandit corse* represents an example from the 1960s, a transitional period for public perceptions of Corsica, while *Astérix en Corse* and *L'Enquête corse* are the two most famous examples of *bande dessinée* set on the island. *Les Blagues corses* and *Bienvenue chez les Corses* are two examples of the several 'copycat' albums which were published in the wake of *L'Enquête corse*, while *Le Procès Colonna* and *Da Vinci corse* are examples of *bandes dessinées* by press artists.

For the internal *bande dessinée* perspective on Corsica, the focus is on the work published by Distribution Corse du Livre. Although there are, as noted, other publishers on the island, DCL is by far the most prolific and most successful Corsican publisher of *bandes dessinées*, presenting a specific representation of Corsica and Corsican identity. *Aio Zitelli !* is the only example of internal *bandes dessinées* not published by DCL. However, as noted above, its writer and artists

work most often with DCL; I have included it as I consider it in line with their other work.

Thesis structure

Each region will be examined separately, with representations of Brittany and Corsica each taking up roughly half of the thesis, Brittany being treated first, and then Corsica. This order has been chosen in line with the general publication dates of the works included: *Les Aventures de Bécassine* and *Ololê* are relatively early examples of *bande dessinée* while the publications focusing on Corsica appeared from the 1960s to 2015. I am aware that certain definitions of the term *bande dessinée* would exclude works such as *Les Aventures de Bécassine* and *Ololê* on grounds of form (for example their lack of speech bubbles in favour of text underneath the image). However, I consider them both *bandes dessinées* as works where the image and text have equal importance to the narrative.

Each respective half will follow the same general structure, beginning with the historical context for the relevant region and showing in particular how historical events have helped create popular perceptions of Brittany and Corsica.

We will then move on to examine the external representations of each region before proceeding to study the corresponding internal representations. There are also two additional case studies of visual culture with regard to Corsica beyond the objectives and observations of the aforementioned sections. One case study on historical representations of Corsica's most notable son, Napoleon Bonaparte, is placed before the section on Corsican historical context. Another, on *Le Procès Colonna* (2008),¹⁹ examines a work which straddles the distinction between internal and external representation. Overall conclusions will follow this last case study.

Two Historic Breton Outliers

The publications included in this study represent the most explicit examples of regional identities and cultures in *bande dessinée* for the regions concerned.

¹⁹ Tignous and Dominique Paganelli. *Le Procès Colonna*. (Paris: 12bis, 2008).

Bécassine is in something of a 'field of her own', being by far the most famous representation of Brittany in *bande dessinée*, and also significant as the first female *bande dessinée* 'star'. Indeed, *Les Aventures de Bécassine* is a landmark of the *bande dessinée* in general. The series is a prominent example of a French regional culture as portrayed by predominantly Parisian authors. It does not exist in isolation, but forms part of the more widespread exoticisation of regional culture by the French mainstream.

Ololê is also something of an outlier. Although, as Pascal Ory shows,²⁰ there were other children's journals available in France during the Occupation, *Ololê* was one of only two published in the Occupied Zone which survived until almost the end of the war. Many of the popular publications moved south into Free France, while the ones that remained in the north gradually disappeared, largely owing to the banning of American comics in Vichy France as the United States entered the war in 1941, the aryanisation of major publishing houses, and paper shortages.²¹ The other remaining publication was the incredibly popular, and now notorious *Le Téméraire*, which was published with the tacit, if not explicit, agreement of the German authorities and was overtly anti-Semitic, with an editorial line which coincided largely with the policies of the Nazis. Also, *Ololê*'s particular position in Brittany – a region with very different politics from those of the Parisian centre – gives it a different perspective on the Occupation from that of its only competitor.

Moreover, both incarnations of *Ololê* are interesting from an academic point of view as they contain work by several notable *bande dessinée* artists – Etienne le Rallic, in particular, links Bécassine and the journals, as he worked for *La Semaine de Suzette*.²² His illustrations also appeared in numerous pre-World War One journals, *Le Téméraire*, *Le Petit Vingtième*, *Coq-Hardi*, *Tintin* and various more minor post-World War Two publications. Also working for the publication were Marijac, founder of *Coq-Hardi* and creator of *Jim Boum, chevalier du Far*

²⁰ Ory (b), pp. 16-17.

²¹ Judith K. Proud, *Children and Propaganda: Il Était Une Fois-- : Fiction and Fairy Tale in Vichy France*. (Oxford: Intellect, 1995), p 14.

²² 'Planche du mois : Pierrot dans le riff, d'Étienne Le Rallic', *La Cité internationale de la bande dessinée et de l'image* September 2015, <<http://www.citebd.org/spip.php?article7386>> [Accessed 1 September 2015].

West, which appeared in *Cœurs vaillants*,²³ and Benjamin Rabier, an influential early *bande dessinée* artist who was a friend of ‘Caran d’Ache’ (aka Emmanuel Poiré), worked for several nineteenth-century journals and was famous for his drawings of animals including his most famous creation, Gédéon the duck, who featured in sixteen albums from 1923 onwards.²⁴ Henri Caouissin also had a connection – albeit a hostile one – to the *Bécassine* series, as he co-wrote an anti-Bécassine play, *Bécassine vu par les Bretons*, published in 1937.²⁵

Although it could be asserted that *Ololê* was a minor publication, the same cannot be said about its roster of artists, Henri Caouissin’s years at the popular children’s paper *Cœurs vaillants* in Paris allowed him to make contact with many celebrated figures in *bande dessinée*. The journal’s relative small circulation and readership has ensured that material by these important figures in the medium remains largely unseen and unstudied.

L’Appel d’Ololê also had a similarly small readership. However, it is interesting to see the differences between the ‘original’ *Ololê* and its later sister publication, particularly those suggesting its political stance. Thirty years after the war, *L’Appel* could not explicitly express the same Pétainist views as the previous version had expounded: what political standpoint replaced them? Did the publication remain relevant to the changed environment of Breton nationalism post-1945, reflecting changes in Breton society and identity? The answer to these questions will form the basis for my study of this minor but interesting publication.

²³ Michel Béra, Michel Denni, and Philippe Mellot. *Trésors De La Bande Dessinée*. BDM. (Paris: Amateur, 2004) p. 783.

²⁴ ‘Benjamin Rabier et la bande dessinée’ n.d.

<<http://www.benjaminrabier.com/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=114>> [Accessed 30 August 2015].

²⁵ Herri Caouissin & Léone Calvez. ‘*Bécassine*’ *Vue Par Les Bretons: Comédie Dramatique En 4 Actes De Léone Calvez Et Herri Caouissin*. (Pleyber-Christ: Éditions Ronan, 1937).

1. Centre Versus Periphery: The Beginnings of A Stereotype

The French Republic's attitude to its regions and regional languages has long been one of dismissal and derision: the state has taken a Jacobin attitude to national unity, prioritising French and 'French' (that is, a broad, national, culturally Parisian) culture. The French constitution states, 'la langue de la République est le français'.²⁶ Abbé Henri Grégoire presented his *Rapport sur la Nécessité et les Moyens d'anéantir les Patois et d'universaliser l'Usage de la Langue française* in 1794,²⁷ in which he advocated the imposition of French upon the populace, who at that time spoke a variety of what Grégoire termed 'patois'. He considered the languages of Corsica and Alsace to be 'très dégénérés', and listed thirty-three other dialects he believed it necessary to destroy. More than two centuries later, political attitudes to regional languages in France remain quaintly or intransigently similar to those expressed by Grégoire. Thus, during the 2012 presidential campaign, Jean-Luc Melenchon – a politician who had previously shown himself in favour of federalism rather than centralist ideals – described himself as 'fier d'être jacobin, ne parlant que la langue française - et l'espagnol, langue de mes grands-parents'.²⁸ This

²⁶ Constitution du 4 Octobre 1958-Article 2 <<http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/la-constitution/la-constitution-du-4-octobre-1958/texte-integral-de-la-constitution-du-4-octobre-1958-en-vigueur.5074.html#titre1>> [Accessed 5 September 2015].

²⁷ Henri Grégoire, *Rapport sur la Nécessité et les Moyens d'anéantir les Patois et d'universaliser l'Usage de la Langue française*, Convention Nationale (1794) pp.1-19.
<https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Rapport_sur_la_n%C3%A9cessit%C3%A9_et_les_moyens_d%E2%80%99an%C3%A9antir_les_patois_et_d%E2%80%99universaliser_l%E2%80%99usage_de_la_langue_fran%C3%A7aise> [accessed 5 September 2015].

²⁸ Maxime Caillon, Maela Koareg and 'We Transl8' 'Les défenseurs des langues régionales se mobilisent à l'approche de la présidentielle française', *France 24*, 4 April 2012

declaration is revealing as it suggests that in the eyes of members of the modern political apparatus it is only acceptable for a French citizen to speak languages other than French, if those languages do not originate within France's borders.

Derision of non-Parisian inhabitants of France has been evident since Conon de Béthune was mocked at court for his picardisms in the late twelfth century.²⁹ The centralist sense of superiority extends to all outlying regions. In a famous if contentious study the Romanian-born American historian Eugen Weber declared there was 'a great deal of evidence to suggest that vast parts of nineteenth-century France were inhabited by savages'.³⁰ It is true that, prior to modernisation with the introduction of the railways and the building of roads for other forms of transport, much of France remained unexplored and unknown by the administrative centre, despite the role of the provinces in the Revolution of 1789, the authority of centralist government of whatever stripe remaining largely unquestioned in France since the mid-seventeenth century; many areas were effectively wildernesses, sometimes proudly so. This ignorance of the wider France also applied in the opposite direction. Just as the urban elite could not access the 'savage' periphery, the people on the periphery had no way of accessing the centre, and often had no desire to do so. Rural regions were often autarkic, that is, self-sufficient, localised subsistence economies with no connection to wider markets. Self-sufficiency extended to local currency and measurements: standardisation was resisted for many years, and officialdom largely ignored local measures, except when attempting to outlaw them, usually as an attempt to facilitate trade. Extremely localised monetary standards in every region made commercial trade difficult outside cities; even when national coinage reached the countryside, different values were attached to each coin depending on the region or village.³¹

<<http://observers.france24.com/fr/content/20120404-defenseurs-langues-regionales-mobilisent-approche-presidentielle-francaise-occitan-basque-breton-toulouse>> [accessed 10 August 2015].

²⁹ See the lyric 'Mout me semont amors que m'envoise', in *Les Chansons de Conon de Béthune*, edited by Axel Wallensköld (Paris : Honoré Champion, 1921) p. 5.

³⁰ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1976), p. 3.

³¹ Weber, p. 34.

The lack of trade meant contact with the outside world was unnecessary as well as difficult, and the lifestyle of the peasant often bore no relation to that of urban dwellers. When urban citizens had reason to encounter the peasantry, therefore, they were often shocked by the people and their living conditions, expressing their reactions in such phrases as ‘populations two or three centuries behind their fellows’,³² ‘foulness, rags, miserable savagery’,³³ ‘living like beasts with their beasts’,³⁴ or when the peasant ventured into town, ‘suspicious, anxious, bewildered by everything he sees and doesn’t understand’.³⁵ The peasantry absorbed the urban elite’s derision and regarded themselves as inferior; in the Languedoc country girls were considered as a different race from town girls. As a result, for many years local midwives attempted to knead babies’ heads into roundness, in order to avoid the elongated head shape considered more suitable for townspeople.³⁶

Moreover, unsurprisingly, the wild people of the country did not speak or understand educated Parisian French, instead expressing themselves in a variety of languages, dialects or ‘patois’ to use the disparaging term first attested c. 1285 and coined by French speakers who considered themselves more cultivated. The French constitution’s assertion that the state was to be monolingual was ineffectual in large parts of the country. The situation of the peasantry, unassimilated into the French state, poor and backward, led to efforts by state officials to ‘civilise’ them: to teach prescribed French morals, social graces, literacy in the French language, an idea of the greater France beyond their *pays* and its governing laws.³⁷ To counteract their ignorance and superstition and to narrow the ‘enormous difference’³⁸ between them and the inhabitants of the cities, the rural population had to be successfully integrated into France proper, the pinnacle of which was Paris and its culture, central in location and importance. This desire to civilise internal barbarians was the impetus for centuries of state centralism.

³² Weber, p. 4

³³ Weber, p. 4

³⁴ Weber, p. 5

³⁵ Flaubert, cited in Weber p. 6.

³⁶ Weber, p.7

³⁷ Weber, p.5

³⁸ Léon Gambetta, cited in Weber p.5

Although centralist policies have had numerous long-lasting effects on many regional cultures all across France – particularly those with minority language communities such as Occitania, French Catalonia and the Basque Country – this study will focus on only two of these regions, those furthest from the political centre, as noted in the introduction: Brittany and Corsica. The historical context of *bande dessinée* representations of Corsica will be detailed in the relevant later chapter.

Brittany has been particularly affected by the Republic's policies on language and culture, given its Celtic heritage and its perceived geographical (therefore cultural) distance from the 'ideal' of Parisian culture. The quasi-independent duchy was one of the last acquisitions made by the Kingdom of France, being annexed in only 1532. It has a long history of resistance against centralised French rule and even today has a stronger regional identity than many other regions of France. In addition, Parisian attitudes towards Brittany and the Bretons have historically been particularly derogative, as described by Graham Robb:

[The guidebook] was complimentary about provincials, though, even here, Bretons were the exception: those benighted victims of aristocratic oppression were said to drink themselves into a state of suicidal fury, 'and the air oftentimes reverberates with the frenzied blows of a delirious head being bashed against insentient walls'.³⁹

Similarly, as Forsdick notes,⁴⁰ there is a tendency to 'use representations of Brittany in order to accentuate characteristics which supposedly belonged to the French provinces in their entirety' in French culture – the Bécassine albums are an example of this. Brittany became the province *par excellence* around the middle of the 1800s, '[Où] l'opinion conservatrice projette l'utopie réactionnaire d'une société agraire vivant sans conflits sous la houlette de ses maîtres

³⁹ Graham Robb, *The Discovery of France* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), p. 285.

⁴⁰ Charles Forsdick, 'Exoticising the Domestique: Bécassine, Brittany and the Beauty of the Dead' in *The Francophone Bande Dessinée*, ed. by Charles Forsdick, Laurence Grove and Libbie McQuillan (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), pp. 23-37 (p. 28).

traditionnels'.⁴¹ Some Bretons themselves contributed to the downgrading folklorization of their culture, a case in point being that of the Morlaisien novelist Émile Souvestre (1806-1854), who did much to popularize traditional Breton culture among a French readership through his reworking of folktales into charming stories in *Derniers Bretons* (1835-1837, 4 vols) and *Foyer breton* (1844) as well as in his prize-winning memoirs *Un philosophe sous les toits, journal d'un homme heureux* (1851).⁴²

Breton and Bretons have been shaped by many years of social and educational policy. A constant, however, has been the insistence on use of the French language throughout official life, enshrined in law with the Revolution but in de facto existence many years before (due to legislation such as the Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts, signed into law by Francis I in 1539). The focus on French monolingualism has had a 'trickle-down' effect on Breton society and also on wider French society's perceptions of the region.

Breton in Education

The French state's ambivalence to Brittany and particularly to the Breton language began in earnest with the 1789 revolution: Brittany was largely unaffected by the 1539 Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts (an early decree requiring the exclusive use of French in all legal acts, including local notarial and ecclesiastical deeds, as well as in state business so as to avoid linguistic confusion), and maintained a level of fiscal and judicial autonomy until the Revolution caused it to be withdrawn.⁴³ Subsequently the Breton language has been significantly affected by the constraints of a unified state education system, and was also affected in the years following the Revolution by inroads of the French army during the counter-revolutionary Chouannerie of 1794-1800 and

⁴¹ Catherine Bertho, 'L'Invention de la Bretagne: Genèse sociale d'un stéréotype' *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 35 (1980), pp.45-62 (p. 49).

⁴² Fañch Postic, Donatien Laurent, Jean-Francois Simon and Jean-Yves Veillard, 'Reconnaissance d'une culture régionale : la Bretagne depuis la Révolution' in *Ethnologie française* 33.3 (2003) 381-389 (p. 382).

⁴³ Mari C Jones (a), 'At what price language maintenance? Standardization in modern Breton' in *French Studies* 49.4 (1995) pp. 424-438 (p. 424).

wrangles between the state and the Catholic Church, who had controlled much of the education system in Brittany up to 1789. In January 1794, the eloquent bourgeois Bertrand Barère de Vieuzac (1755-1841) from Tarbes presented a bill regarding the language of the Republic. His attitude to Brittany is telling:

Là l'ignorance perpétue le joug imposé par les prêtres et les nobles ; là les citoyens naissent et meurent dans l'erreur : ils ignorent s'il existe encore des lois nouvelles.

Les habitants des campagnes n'entendent que le bas-breton ; c'est avec cet instrument barbare de leurs pensées superstitieuses que les prêtres et les intrigants les tiennent sous leur empire, dirigent leurs consciences et empêchent les citoyens de connaître les lois et d'aimer la République. [...]

Les lumières portées à grands frais aux extrémités de la France s'éteignent en y arrivant, puisque les lois n'y sont pas entendues.⁴⁴

Before the Revolution the clergy had run *petites écoles* for the children of the Breton peasantry. Although little is known of what was taught, Catholic doctrine appears to have formed an important part, and at least some Breton was used, along with some Latin.⁴⁵ After the Revolution, the clergy and nobility were banned from teaching,⁴⁶ and it was decreed that 'in all parts of the Republic, instruction is to be given only in French'.⁴⁷ This caused problems in a region where the only education available was provided by the church and on a national level, French instruction proved problematic in a republic where, according to a 1790 enquiry, '[...] Only one fifth of France could confidently speak French, under two thirds understood it, and over one third knew no French at all'.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Bertrand Barère de Vieuzac, 'Rapport du Comité de salut public sur les idiomes' Le 8 pluviôse an II (27 janvier 1794) <<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/francophonie/barere-rapport.htm>> [Accessed 9 September 2015].

⁴⁵ Maryon McDonald, *'We Are Not French!': Language, Culture, and Identity in Brittany*. (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 28.

⁴⁶ McDonald, p. 27.

⁴⁷ Article 7 of French law of 21/10/1793 cited in McDonald, p. 28

⁴⁸ McDonald, p. 29.

Barère's views were aired in the context of the Terror, a time of great uncertainty and upheaval for the new political entity of France. Therefore anything which might aid federalism or threaten national unity was seen as a threat to be fought against. Nevertheless, his report and others similar influenced state opinion on regional languages for many years to come. Although French was the definite language of instruction at the new *Lycées* in the early 1800s, elementary education received less attention and uptake was low.⁴⁹ According to Joël Cornette, by 1832 the Revolution and its aftermath had reduced education in Brittany to an abysmal level with 952 of the 1,475 communes in the province lacking schools of any description.⁵⁰ It appears that local languages were still in use in the lower educational ranks, as even officials based locally in Brittany were in agreement with Barère; an 1831 letter from the *Préfets* of the Côtes du Nord and Finistère to the Minister of Public Education vehemently supported the view that 'il faut absolument détruire le langage breton'.⁵¹

The debate surrounding the use of Breton in schools continued well into the twentieth century—until after the Second World War — and, despite modest French reforms beginning with the 1951 Loi Deixonne and subsequent pan-European legislation (the 1992 European Charter of Minority Language Rights, signed but still not ratified by France), the language issue continues to be contentious on a state level in France to the present day.

Reform Begins Early In The Third Republic (1870-1940)

The Third Republic is notable for its policies of aggressive centralism. These policies were an attempt to eradicate local culture in favour of transferring rural peasants' allegiances to the greater French motherland.⁵² One of the most important strands of reform was in education via Jules Ferry's education laws of the 1880s. These imposed the legal requirement for free state primary education

⁴⁹ McDonald, p. 36.

⁵⁰ Joël Cornette, *Histoire de la Bretagne et des Bretons*, t. 1: *Des âges obscurs au règne de Louis XIV*; t. 2: *Des Lumières au XXI^e siècle*, (Paris: Le Seuil, 2008) (2 vols): t. 2, p. 235.

⁵¹ Cited in J Gwegen, cited in Mari C. Jones (a), p. 424.

⁵² Caroline Ford (a), 'Religion and the Politics of Cultural Change in Provincial France: The Resistance of 1902 in Lower Brittany', *The Journal of Modern History*, 62.1 (1990), 1-33 (p. 1).

for both sexes (1881), soon revised to specify free primary education which was also secular in nature from the ages of 6 to 13 (1882), repealing the Falloux Act of 1850: all education was to be carried out solely in French. Schools had a more extensive aim than the simple education of children: in the countryside, as long as they did not become discouraged by the constant battle against what they saw as ignorance, teachers became ‘the great influence in the village’,⁵³ representing the government and carrying with them Republican (centralist) ideals and values. In addition to reinforcing the importance of the French language and their young charges’ identity as French citizens, teachers also had wider influence in the communities through their other activities; they performed myriad functions, as a ‘walking repertory of human knowledge’,⁵⁴ writing letters, doing secretarial work, land surveying, even providing medical services—including vaccinations—in an area with few doctors or midwives.⁵⁵ After building up a good reputation and rapport with locals by rendering services to the community, teachers then gradually spread the idea that the Republic was beneficial and should unquestionably exist, extolling the benefits of one large united homeland under common institutions.⁵⁶ Unthinkingly and simplistically applied, this notion unfortunately seemed to necessitate the subsuming of local cultures by the larger majority culture; Morvan Lebesque has accused teachers in the Third Republic of ‘cultural genocide’,⁵⁷ citing numerous examples of national policy harmful to preservation of the Breton tongue, e.g. the words of the Sous-Préfet of Morlaix to teachers in the Finistère in 1845: ‘Rappelez-vous, messieurs, que vous n’êtes établis que pour tuer la langue bretonne’.⁵⁸ Lebesque sums up laic education strategy in Brittany as ‘une rupture des racines, un saut de la Bretagne à la France. Devenir un autre pour être’.⁵⁹

⁵³ Jacques Castenet, quoted in Barnett Singer, ‘The Teacher as Notable in Brittany, 1880-1914’, *French Historical Studies*, 9.4 (1976), p. 635-659 (p. 635).

⁵⁴ Singer, p. 637.

⁵⁵ Singer, p. 637-9.

⁵⁶ Singer, p. 637.

⁵⁷ Singer, p. 655.

⁵⁸ *Sous-préfet* of Morlaix, cited in Morvan Lebesque, *Comment Peut-on Etre Breton?: Essai Sur La Démocratie Française* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970) 2001 edition, p. 97.

⁵⁹ Lebesque, p. 99.

Schooling peasants was beneficial in some senses, in that illiteracy rates were (officially, at least) lowered significantly. However, the dominance of the majority culture, in the form of the Republican teacher envoy, and the obligation to use the majority language did – unavoidably – affect Breton culture, Breton self-perception and ‘French’ perception of Bretons: assimilation by French culture was seen as a foregone conclusion.⁶⁰ Regional resistance to encroaching state apparatus was characterised in the press as ‘backward’. For example, in 1902 the local and regional press coverage of fervent, violent, widespread opposition to national educational reform in several communes in the Finistère was typical. Following the 1901 Law of Associations banning education by unauthorised religious organisations, the closure was ordered of all primary schools run by a local holy order, the Filles du Saint-Esprit. For over two months local people resisted, eventually necessitating military intervention. Their protest was successful and the nuns remained. However, government officials attributed events to religious fanaticism, superstition and manipulation by the clergy. The local and regional press described protesters:

Photographs of peasants shod in sabots and armed with sticks appeared in the pages of the illustrated press where specific references were made to chouannerie and the Vendée. The republican newspaper, *La Dépêche [de Brest]*, characterized the population of Saint-Méen as ‘ignorant and fanatical’, while *Bretagne nouvelle*, in an article entitled ‘Congregationists and Chouans’, went so far as to describe the peasantry of Saint-Méen as ‘savages’.⁶¹

Resistance to the French government’s internal *mission civilatrice* was, as in the above example, seen as both hopeless and a sign of uneducated peasantry.

In terms of self-perception, forced usage of French and denigration of Breton led eventually to the phenomenon of the ‘*complexe du Breton*’.

⁶⁰ Ford (a), p. 1.

⁶¹ Ford (a), p. 3.

The *Complexe du Breton*, The First World War And Culture Loss

By the outbreak of the First World War, Brittany remained a *pays* still populated by a peasant majority. Free education did not succeed in eradicating Breton: indeed, levels of French fluency in Brittany varied widely. However, characterisations of regional languages as ‘façons vicieux de parler’ and ‘le parler des sots’,⁶² along with years of anti-Breton sentiment in schools and in society at large, created a deep-seated inferiority complex among speakers of the language, many of whom had a low level of proficiency in French. The majority of children did not speak French until they attended school, and after their leaving school Breton resumed its role as the language of daily life. Older peasants’ knowledge of French remained low: lack of proficiency in the national language was a real source of shame, as in this researcher’s anecdote:

Dans une ferme près de Quimper, un homme de trente-cinq ans environ ne savait pas s’exprimer en langue française, tandis que sa femme et ses enfants soutenaient facilement la conversation. Comme nous en demandions la raison, il nous répondit en breton qu’il était le seul sot de la famille.⁶³

Breton speakers were left with a real conviction that their language was ‘good for nothing’⁶⁴ and that French was inherently superior; signs with legends such as ‘Il est interdit de cracher par terre et de parler breton’⁶⁵ reinforced the idea of Breton as socially unacceptable. But the biggest blow to Breton language was yet to come: the First World War.

Young Bretons were called up to fight in their thousands: the war killed many Breton men, with estimates ranging from a conservative 140,000-150,000 recently proposed by academic historians, to militant assertions of 240-250,000.⁶⁶ Cornette gives the total number of Bretons mobilised as 592,916.⁶⁷

⁶² J.B. Le Coye, cited in Lebesque p. 88.

⁶³ Henri Baudrillart, cited in Gaëlle Dupont, ‘Le parler Breton s’est perdu dans les tranchées’ *Le Monde*, 6 November 1998 p. 12.

⁶⁴ Donald McAuley, *The Celtic Languages*. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 377.

⁶⁵ McAuley, p. 377.

⁶⁶ McDonald, p.135.

The lower figure represents a death toll of approximately 22% of mobilized Bretons. For many it was the first opportunity to travel outside Brittany and the first time they found themselves in a situation where speaking and understanding French became essential. At the beginning of the war, regiments were grouped together along regional lines: ergo, soldiers were able to speak Breton amongst themselves. However, generals and officers spoke French; their orders had to be understood and obeyed. Soldiers therefore had to learn, or re-learn, French in order to be able to function. Failure could be disastrous, as in the case of François-Marie Laurent.⁶⁸ Lightly injured in the hand in 1914, he was told to seek help at the nearest medical post: medics judged his injury too minor and suspected him of attempting to desert his post. Laurent was unable to defend himself adequately, as he spoke little French. As a result he was court-martialled, and was killed by firing squad in October of that year. In all, fifty-one Bretons were ‘fusillés pour l’exemple’.⁶⁹

Breton soldiers were not universally popular; in the words of Marc Bloch, the celebrated historian and soldier, ‘[Les Bretons] nous parurent de bien médiocres guerriers...ils semblaient déprimés par la misère et par l’alcool. Leur ignorance de la langue ajoutait encore à leur abrutissement’.⁷⁰

The effects of World War One on Brittany and Breton were considerable: the heavy number of local casualties (1 in 17 of the population, double the number of casualties in France overall, according to some estimates)⁷¹ necessarily had a severe effect on the number of Breton speakers. In addition, those soldiers that returned alive had both a deep-seated sense of Breton as an inferior language and greater knowledge of French. Having seen the wider world outside the *pays*, they were convinced that French was essential for them and their children. Some moved to towns to look for work; in doing so they abandoned their

⁶⁷ Cornette, II, p. 418.

⁶⁸ Didier Deniel, ‘14-18, ce poilus fusillés pour l’exemple’ *Le Télégramme*, 11 November 2009 <<http://www.letelegramme.com/ig/generales/regions/bretagne/14-18-ces-poilus-fusilles-pour-l-exemple-11-11-2009-648663.php>> [accessed 10 August 2015].

⁶⁹ Anne Lessard, ‘Fusillés pour l’exemple : ils furent 51 en Bretagne’, *Le Télégramme*, le 15 novembre 2014. <<http://www.letelegramme.fr/histoire/fusilles-pour-l-exemple-ils-furent-51-en-bretagne-15-11-2014-10426033.php>> [Accessed 9 September 2015].

⁷⁰ Bloch, cited in Dupont p.12.

⁷¹ McDonald, p. 135.

traditional customs and abandoned Breton so as to assimilate into the wider French state. Those that remained in villages instilled in their children the importance of learning French for future success, further lowering the status of Breton and ending the era of monolingual speakers,⁷² thereby hastening the encroachment of French culture upon the rural environment. The war greatly hastened the process of Brittany's assimilation into the French nation-state, which had been in motion since late nineteenth century: soldiers were effective vectors for the transmission of French language and national culture.⁷³

Bretons In Paris: A *Pays* In Urban Exile

For many years, even prior to the First World War, Bretons had moved to urban centres –particularly Paris –for a variety of socio-economic reasons. Competition for jobs among members of a booming young generation in an increasingly modern and mechanised agricultural economy led to a high level of emigration out of Brittany. In the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, half of Breton emigrants headed for Paris: the men seeking jobs as unskilled labourers or navvies, the women finding employment in domestic service. In the early twentieth century, 100,000 servants in Paris were Bretonnes.⁷⁴ As an area with a high birth rate and persistent economic difficulty, in Brittany the emigration pattern shows a ‘classic demographic response’,⁷⁵ that is, overpopulated regions shedding children they could not afford to house and feed, and sending them to urban towns and cities into domestic service. Growing economic problems in agriculture in the nineteenth century led peasant children to emigrate at younger ages; domestic service provided a relatively ‘safe’ environment for young people who were forced out of their native regions, in addition to high salaries; and because servants had

⁷² Dupont p.12.

⁷³ Leonora Timm, ‘The Way We Were: Twentieth-Century Brittany Through the Eyes of Breton Language Memorialists’, in *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, Vol. 20/21 (2000/2001), pp. 417-445 (p. 417).

⁷⁴ Bernard Lehembre (a), *Bécassine, une légende du siècle* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 2005), p. 38.

⁷⁵ Theresa McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France, 1820-1920*. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1976), p.38.

little need or opportunity to spend their wages, they were able to amass large amounts of savings which then benefitted their families' economic situation back in the *pays*. In Brittany this scenario was reproduced so many times that female Bretons became synonymous with service in Paris; this led to the birth of the stereotype of the 'bonne Bretonne', or what Susan Yates terms 'la perle'.⁷⁶ However, the automatic association of Brittany with the servant class proved objectionable to some, along with employers' treatment of the women working within it. Morvan Lebesque objects to the convention of servants wearing their *coiffes* while working: firstly because they were used as part of a picturesque folkloric 'spectacle' for guests and secondly, 'pour que cette fille n'oublie pas ses origines'.⁷⁷ That is, that she is a servant by nature of her Breton birthplace, and the removal of her *coiffe* would imply that she was denying both her heritage and her natural (low) rank in the social pecking order. As long as a servant is dressed in traditional Breton garb, she remains part of the rural landscape even in an urban environment, defined by her peripheral origins and the connotations that come with them when her employer permits her to gain access to the privileged urban 'centre'.

The character of Bécassine, as a domestic servant, is a 'textbook example' of the ethnotype of a Breton girl or woman in Paris in the late 19th or early 20th centuries.

⁷⁶ Susan Yates, *Maid and Mistress: Feminine Solidarity and Class Difference in Five Nineteenth-Century French Texts* (New York: P. Lang, 1991), p. 3.

⁷⁷ Lebesque, p. 112.

2. Bécassine: *Devenir un autre pour être*

Les Aventures de Bécassine

The character of Bécassine was created for the 2nd February 1905 edition of the Catholic girls' newspaper *La Semaine de Suzette* as a way to fill a page which was unintentionally left blank.⁷⁸ She is notable for being the first major female character in *BD*, and also marks the transition between older-style *histoires illustrées* and *bandes dessinées* proper. Drawn from the outset by Joseph Pinchon,⁷⁹ the majority of the stories were written by Maurice Languereau, alias Caumery, who was the nephew of Henri Gautier, publisher of *La Semaine de Suzette*. Gautier and Languereau would later combine forces to form the publisher Gautier-Languereau. Gautier published the first two *Bécassine* albums in 1913 and 1915; all later albums were published by Gautier-Languereau. However, Caumery was not the first author of *Les Aventures de Bécassine*; from 1905-1913 the editor of *La Semaine de Suzette*, Jacqueline Rivière, wrote the series' stories.

Annaik Labornez, aka Bécassine, is a Breton maid in the service of the Marquise de Grand-Air, in Paris. Appearing in *La Semaine de Suzette* from 1905 until 1950, Bécassine became very popular; albums appeared regularly from 1913 to 1939, and periodically until 1962; there were toys, films and other merchandise. She was, and still is, one of few *bande dessinée* characters to have become popular in her own right, independently of the albums. Forsdick asserts that proof of this is twofold: she has inspired at least two pornographic parodies, and French neologisms such as *bécassinien* and *bécassinoclastes*.⁸⁰ To this I would add Pierre

⁷⁸ Lehembre (a), p. 13.

⁷⁹ Two albums were drawn by Edouard Zier, who replaced Pinchon while the latter was serving in the French Army during World War One: *Bécassine chez les allies* (1917) and *Bécassine Mobilisée* (1918).

⁸⁰ Forsdick, p. 24.

Caron's 1939 feature film, and Chantal Goya's hit single *Bécassine, c'est ma cousine*. Some further examples of the character's influence on popular French culture are a song that George Brassens named after her, and the creation of the character Pencassine, from the satirical programme *Le Bébête Show* featuring a cross-dressing puppet version of the Front National leader Jean-Marie Le Pen which played on his Breton origins. Even today figurines and toys are produced, and a children's animated film was released in 2001. The albums are still in print more than a century after Bécassine's début appearance. Gautier-Languereau began re-issuing the series in the 1970s and has released various editions repeatedly since.

Bécassine has proved controversial, particularly among Bretons, who have said that the character presents a stereotypical and prejudiced view of Bretons as stupid and backward. One notably violent reaction was that of Breizh Atao, the Breton independence group, who beheaded the waxwork of Bécassine shown at the Musée Grévin in Paris, in 1939.⁸¹

It is true that Bécassine is portrayed as a Breton stereotype, potentially becoming in Jungian psychology an archetype. She is dressed in traditional Breton clothes which she never removes: if she is required to wear something different, she places the outfit precariously on top of her dress and *coiffe* (for example, in *Bécassine mobilisée*, she wears her tram-conductor's cap on top of her usual dress, because 'je ne quitteras jamais le costume de mon pays').⁸² It is also true that she is shown as unintelligent, particularly in her first appearances: early stories tended to follow a formula whereby Bécassine receives an order and first misunderstands it, then follows it literally, whereupon disaster ensues.⁸³ However, as time progressed, the authors portrayed her more favourably. They began to show her kindness, her desire to please and her need to do the 'right thing'. She gradually becomes a more nuanced character.

In addition to her duties as a servant, Bécassine's adventures from 1913-1939 give her the opportunity to travel all over the rest of France and the world,

⁸¹ Forsdick, p. 29.

⁸² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (d), *Bécassine Mobilisée* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1918) 1980 edition, p. 15.

⁸³ Forsdick, p. 25.

doing various exotic jobs (pilot, tram conductor, driver, etc.) which were not commonly available to women and girls at the time of publication in a civilian context. She can therefore be seen in some ways as an innovative, modern role model for her readers.

Bécassine is an important area of study as she and the *Aventures de Bécassine* series is a prominent example of a French regional culture being portrayed by Parisian authors: for some of the series' readers, Bécassine's Brittany would be the only experience of rural life that they encountered. Hence the accuracy (or otherwise) of that portrayal has consequences beyond the pages of the books themselves. Given that the series is still a relatively unstudied area, with many studies that do exist focusing on Bécassine as a character and not the albums as a whole,⁸⁴ there is scope for our proposed broader assessment of how Brittany and the Bretons (Bécassine and others) are depicted in the albums more generally.

Why Is Bécassine Problematic?

One reason the character of Bécassine was (and is) objectionable to some Bretons is her stereotypical nature. She is both a perfect living equivalent of Baudelaire's dead *servante au grande coeur*⁸⁵ – unfailingly loyal and hardworking to a fault – and an example of the Bretonne-as-domestic-employee stereotype. It can be argued that by making the character Breton the authors sought to make her more realistic for the series' readers: many of the readers of *La Semaine de Suzette* would have had domestic servants working in their houses and so the image of the coiffed girl would be familiar and enable them to identify with the households represented in the stories. On the other hand, the fact that Bécassine never removes her *coiffe* or her local costume recalls Lebesque's assertion about the servant as exotic spectacle for the entertainment

⁸⁴ See for example Marie-Anne Couderc, *Bécassine Inconnue*. (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2000) and Davreux, Hélène. *Bécassine, Ou, L'image D'une Femme*. (Loverval: Labor, 2006).

⁸⁵ Charles Baudelaire, LXIX in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Paris : Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, 1857), pp.160-161

<https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Les_Fleurs_du_mal/1857/%C2%AB_La_servante_au_grand_c%C5%93ur_dont_vous_%C3%A9tiez_jalouse_%C2%BB> [Accessed 20 September 2015].

of the privileged cultural elite. In addition, while the character correlates exactly with the Breton maid ethnotype, she is not an accurate depiction of a Breton peasant emigrée, but rather a sanitised ‘Frenchified’ version: throughout the whole series she speaks little Breton – only three words, *Ma Doue beniguet*, a famous Breton phrase meaning ‘Mon Dieu béni’ and known in wider France. She is shown speaking French – incorrect French, but French nonetheless – as a child, which is unrealistic given the tendency for Breton children to speak only Breton until they started school. In outward appearance, Bécassine is Breton, but important elements of her supposed cultural identity, such as her native language are not shown to readers. In addition, the use of the *bande dessinée* medium was at the time arguably problematic. This is due to the historically low status of the medium: it was considered for many years an unintelligent popular form of little or no literary value. In the late nineteenth century the value of illustrated stories changed: previously deemed acceptable fare for adults, they were subsequently considered best suited for children, in other words, relegated to the nursery. This general opinion did not change until *bandes dessinées* began to acquire cultural legitimacy in the 1960s.⁸⁶ Any characters featured in such a low-status medium were also considered unimportant. Thus Bécassine—a character presented by the authors as good-hearted but unintelligent and Brittany personified—invited that somewhat dismissive judgement on the region as a whole.⁸⁷

Bécassine’s Beginnings: Proto-Bécassine and Caumery’s Reimagining

L’Enfance de Bécassine, the first Bécassine album, was published in 1913. It marks the point at which the character began to feature in more structured narratives, rather than self-contained strips without larger story arcs. That year also saw Maurice Languereau – alias Caumery – replace Jacqueline Rivière as the author of the Bécassine stories.⁸⁸ As Bernard Lehembre asserts, there are in reality two Bécassines: firstly, Rivière’s ‘proto-Bécassine’, ‘[qui] n’avait aucune

⁸⁶ Ann Miller, *Reading Bande Dessinée* (Bristol: Intellect, 2007), p. 23.

⁸⁷ Caumery & J.P Pinchon (a), *L’Enfance de Bécassine* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1913) 1992 edition, p. 9.

⁸⁸ Lehembre (a), p.15.

fonction éducative [...] elle était une simple récréation, accordée avec parcimonie aux jeunes lectrices’;⁸⁹ and secondly, Languereau’s revised version, ‘plus complexe et plus humaniste’.⁹⁰ Languereau’s stories are also more structurally complex, with stylistic variation such as changes in narrative style. Some albums are narrated in the first person, using the device of Bécassine’s fictional memoirs, while others are written in the third person using an unnamed narrator; a third group of albums mixes the two styles.⁹¹ After 1913, stories were first published as serials (two pages a week) then later published separately as a full album at the rate of one a year. Dates of pre-publication in *La Semaine de Suzette* are as follows:⁹²

Title	Date published in <i>La Semaine de Suzette</i>
<i>L’Enfance de Bécassine</i>	6th February-29th August 1913
<i>Bécassine en apprentissage</i>	5th February-27th August 1914 (album appeared in 1919)
<i>Bécassine pendant la (Grande) Guerre</i>	3rd February-24th August 1916 (reissued with new title given to all editions published from 1947)
<i>Bécassine chez les alliés</i>	1st February-23rd August 1917
<i>Bécassine mobilisée</i>	7th February-30th August 1918
<i>Bécassine chez les Turcs</i>	6th February-28th August 1919

⁸⁹ Lehembre (a), p. 16.

⁹⁰ Lehembre (a), p. 18.

⁹¹ Raymond Vitruve, ‘Bécassine’ *œuvre littéraire* (Paris: La Pensée Universelle, 1991), p. 67.

⁹² Table data taken from Bernard Lehembre (b) ‘Les Scénaristes de Bécassine II’, in *Le Collectionneur de bandes dessinées*, 106 (2005), 40-45 (p. 44).

<i>Les Cent Métiers de Bécassine</i>	5th February-26th August 1920
<i>Bécassine voyage</i>	3rd February-1st September 1921
<i>Bécassine nourrice</i>	2 nd February-21st August 1922
<i>Bécassine alpiniste</i>	1st February-23rd August 1923
<i>Les Bonnes Idées de Bécassine</i>	7th February-28th August 1924
<i>Bécassine au Pays Basque</i>	5th February-3rd September 1925
<i>Bécassine, son oncle et leurs amis</i>	4th February-2 nd September 1926
<i>L'automobile de Bécassine</i>	6th January-4th August 1927
<i>Bécassine au pensionnat</i>	5th January-2 nd August 1928
<i>Bécassine en aéroplane</i>	2 nd January-31st July 1930
<i>Bécassine fait du scoutisme</i>	4th December-19th June 1931
<i>Bécassine aux bains de mer</i>	3rd December 1931-30th June 1932
<i>Bécassine dans la neige</i>	1st December 1932-29th June 1933
<i>Bécassine prend des pensionnaires</i>	7th December 1933-5th July 1934
<i>Bécassine à Clocher-les-Bécasses</i>	6th December 1934-4th July 1935
<i>Bécassine en croisière</i>	4th December 1935-2 July 1936
<i>Bécassine cherche un emploi</i>	3rd December 1936-9th May 1937

<i>Les Mésadventures de Bécassine</i>	5th December 1937-24th April 1938
<i>Bécassine en roulotte</i>	1st December 1938-21st April 1939

L'Enfance de Bécassine

As the title indicates, the album focuses on Bécassine's entire childhood from birth until she leaves her parents' home to find employment. It is notable because it gives the character a 'back story' which had been lacking while the series was written by Rivière. The album introduces characters who reappear over the course of the series, such as Bécassine's uncle Corentin, and the Marquise de Grand Air. It also introduces the long-running conflict in the series between Bécassine and her cousin, the unfortunately named Marie Quillouch. Very close in age, the two children are portrayed as opposites and rivals from the outset. Bécassine is 'un gros poupon, rose et dodu' with a nose 'si petit qu'on le voyait à peine';⁹³ Marie 'ne laissait rien à désirer au point de vue du nez'⁹⁴ and her face is 'jaune'.⁹⁵ Their conflict continues throughout the book, as Marie plays various tricks on Bécassine and is generally portrayed as unkind and unpleasant, although the cleverer of the two. The girls' relationship in *L'Enfance* is an interesting one, as it sets up a long-running mutual dislike which is used in later albums to emphasise the differences between Bécassine's traditional Breton worldview and Marie Quilloch's modern ideas, a contrast which contributes to the impression of Bécassine's innate 'Breton-ness' and thus the misleading representation of Brittany as stuck in the past: Bécassine is described by her mother as 'C'te petite qui est la Bretagne à elle toute seule'.⁹⁶

Breton Culture

The plot of *L'Enfance de Bécassine* is simple and episodic, effectively a series of minor mishaps caused by Bécassine's incomprehension of the world around her,

⁹³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), p.1.

⁹⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), p.1.

⁹⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), p. 5.

⁹⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), p. 9.

much as in the older episodes written by Jacqueline Rivière. The album is of more interest, however, with regard to Breton culture. It portrays a number of supposed Breton 'customs', not always positively. For example, Bécassine's parents' anguish at her small nose is explained: '[...] on est, en effet, persuadé à Clocher-les-Bécasses que l'intelligence est en proportion de la longueur du nez'.⁹⁷

This local belief is described as 'une croyance bizarre':⁹⁸ on the first page of the album, the author has invented a Breton custom and almost immediately denigrated it. Further examples of local life are similarly described: Bécassine's mother hanging her on the wall to keep her safe is 'l'accrochage, qui est encore parfois pratiqué en Bretagne'.⁹⁹ The implication is that this is an outdated practice, still observed in Brittany, and that thus Brittany itself is an old-fashioned province.

The other characters are shown as less prone to stupidity, but still definitely marked as rural and Breton: their clothes are all traditional, the women coiffed and the men in knickerbockers; the inhabitants of the village are all farmers. Their spoken French is contracted (e.g. 'c't/c'te' for *cette*) — and occasionally grammatically incorrect: 'Ben, voyons, Bécassine, quoi que t'as? C'est-y que tu deviens folle?'.¹⁰⁰ Their distinctive speech patterns, being different from standard educated (Parisian) French norms, mark the characters as 'other' to the album's readership and bear similarities to the speech of the 'native' African characters in Hergé's *Tintin au Congo*, who also speak in childlike ungrammatical French (e.g., 'Li blanc, li très juste [...] ça, y en a très bon blanc').¹⁰¹ In addition, their speech is an element of class division. Only the peasants speak incorrectly: this emphasises the difference between them and other characters; for example the Marquis de Grand Air, who speaks in formal French at all times.

The villagers' encounter with the Marquis is the first example in the series where Bretons are contrasted directly with a Parisian: Uncle Corentin suggests holding a parade of Breton history to mark Lent's halfway point. The municipal council

⁹⁷ Caumery & J.P.Pinchon (a), p. 1.

⁹⁸ Caumery & J.P.Pinchon (a), p. 1.

⁹⁹ Caumery & J.P.Pinchon (a), p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Caumery & J.P.Pinchon (a), p. 19.

¹⁰¹ Hergé, *Les Aventures de Tintin, reporter du Petit "Vingtième", au Congo*. (Tournai: Casterman, 1931), 1995 facsimile edition, n.p. Speech altered in later editions, e.g 1974 p. 27).

visits the ‘très savant’¹⁰² Marquis for advice, as Corentin professes he is no good with history and adds that the rest of the council ‘ne le sont pas davantage’.¹⁰³ This initiative in itself is notable – why does the council go directly to a Parisian outsider for advice on how best to celebrate their own history? Why not consult an educated Breton? The clear inference is that the Parisian is their intellectual, as well as social, superior. Most striking, however, is the theme the Marquis advises the council to use: the union of France and Brittany (which he curiously dates to 1491, the year that the invading King Charles VIII of France intervened to quash the unconsummated marriage of Duchess Anne of Brittany to Maximilian I of Habsburg and married Anne himself, not 1532, the year that the States of Brittany assembled in Vannes recognised the French Dauphin as their Duke). The choice implies that the character (and therefore, the author) considers the Union with France the most important event in Breton history but is not over-concerned with accuracy regarding the legal niceties. There are many Breton historical events the author could have chosen, and yet Caumery chose to depict one which links Bretons to the French republic. The scene is a precursor to later albums where Bécassine displays patriotism towards the French state and not to Brittany; Brittany’s inferiority to greater France is clear. This inferiority is made explicit when the Marquis comments on the two girls playing the two states in the parade:

‘[...] La Bretagne est aussi grande que la France. Ça n’est pas vraisemblable. Il faut une enfant plus petite, pour la Bretagne.’¹⁰⁴

Representation of Centralised France

Depiction of Breton integration into the French state appears more than once in *L’Enfance de Bécassine*, always with positive connotations. For example, Corentin becomes mayor of Clocher-les-Bécasses, and is ‘très fier de cette dignité [...] Son écharpe tricolore est large comme une serviette’.¹⁰⁵ Brittany’s integration into the French political system is clearly considered beneficial for the village.

¹⁰² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), p. 8.

¹⁰³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), p. 8.

¹⁰⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), p. 30.

The state education system also features in the album as Bécassine starts school, taught by an archetypal example of a female *institutrice*, as described by Barnett Singer: ‘Women teachers were similarly dignified in the long dresses of conservative color they invariably wore. Their hair was usually done in a neat bun [...]’.¹⁰⁶

She is given a writing exercise: copying out ‘Paris est la capitale de la France’, a ‘beau modèle à copier’.¹⁰⁷ If the deductions of the readers of *La Semaine de Suzette* were correct, and Bécassine was born in 1885,¹⁰⁸ then she begins her education in 1891, a relatively early pupil of a school system governed by the far-reaching education reforms brought in by Jules Ferry.

As part of these reforms, an 1880 decree ruled that ‘only French is to be used in the schools’; the Finistère Departmental Council for Public Instruction accepted the decree in 1881, without any dispensation for Breton.¹⁰⁹ In post-Revolutionary France use of Breton in schools had continued to varying degrees, for example so as to allow children to learn the catechism for First Communion in rural areas where it was feared that the uptake of education would otherwise be low.¹¹⁰ The Ferry laws removed the possibility of Breton-medium teaching in public schools (although still available in Church-run schools, whose existence was threatened from the 1880s until the early twentieth century). Debate surrounding Breton usage in school was constant, beginning just after the revolution: for example, prior to the Ferry laws the Education Committee for Brest voted to forbid Breton in schools in 1836,¹¹¹ and at the same time the *symbole* (aka *ar vuoc’h*, ‘the cow’, in Breton) was in use in some areas.¹¹² This was a large piece of wood, or other object, given to any child caught speaking Breton at school; the child had to catch another pupil speaking it in order to pass the object on to avoid punishment. This piece of wood was sometimes replaced with a peasant’s clog

¹⁰⁶ Singer, p. 652.

¹⁰⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), p. 36.

¹⁰⁸ Lehembre (a), p. 18.

¹⁰⁹ McDonald, p. 39.

¹¹⁰ McDonald, p. 36.

¹¹¹ McDonald, p. 46.

¹¹² McDonald, p. 47.

(*sabot* or, in Breton, *botoù koad*, ‘wooden shoe’) around the neck.¹¹³ Variations on this shaming punishment, use of which certainly lasted in parts of Brittany into the 1930s, were to be found in various French and Belgian provinces and overseas colonies. Beyond the francophone world similar practices were found in Welsh and Irish schools.¹¹⁴

By making the primary school teacher ask Bécassine to copy a text about Paris as a handwriting exercise (adding that ‘Il faut remplir toute la page’),¹¹⁵ the author is strongly reinforcing Brittany’s ties to the larger French republic, in opposition to local Breton culture; other features of the classroom include a large map of France. Bécassine’s speaking of Breton is never mentioned to readers, though it is reasonable to assume that, as a nineteenth-century peasant in Finistère, she would be mostly monolingual, at least until she reached primary-school age. While it can be argued that no depiction of post-Ferry education would have included regional languages (given the decree on French-only instruction), I would argue that in this example, the author is actively promoting French centralism over regional culture: ‘Paris est la capitale de la France’ is not a neutral statement in this context. Caumery could have included any French sentence in the story; indeed, the act of choosing to depict a Breton school scene at all can be seen as a deliberate effort to make a political point: firstly, because the language of instruction in Brittany was a bone of contention in the region at the time portrayed in the album, and secondly, owing to the status of teachers in rural communes as ambassadors of the Republic, imparting ideals of national unity.¹¹⁶

Overall, the positive depiction of the French state apparatus in the album is significant, whether through Corentin as mayor with his tricolour flag, the Marquis representing the Parisian elite, the parade, or Bécassine’s experiences

¹¹³ McDonald, p. 49.

¹¹⁴ On the Welsh Not: Gerald Morgan, ‘The Place of School in the Maintenance of the Welsh Language’ in *Comparative Education* 24.2, Special Number (11): Education and Minority Groups (1988), 247-255 (p. 248). On the Irish tally stick: Michael C. Coleman, ‘Eyes Big as Bowls with Fear and Wonder’: Children’s Responses to the Irish National Schools, 1850-1922 in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 98C.5 (1998), 177-202 (p. 185).

¹¹⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), p. 36.

¹¹⁶ See ‘Breton in Education’ above.

at school. It reinforces in readers' minds the power and the legitimacy of the Republic, reiterating the idea that centralism takes precedence over any regional identity. The book simultaneously shows the Breton characters as 'other' with a foreign local culture and identity while also paradoxically claiming them as part of the French nation.

Bécassine en apprentissage

Bécassine en apprentissage was published in album form in 1919, but was serialised after *L'Enfance de Bécassine* in 1914. Although three albums had been published since *L'Enfance* (*Bécassine pendant la grande guerre*, *Bécassine chez les allies* and *Bécassine mobilisée*- the album of *Bécassine chez les Turcs* appeared later in 1919), *Bécassine en apprentissage* is the continuation of Bécassine's life chronologically from the end of the début album. She travels to Quimper to enter into employment, working in a women's dress shop. The plot revolves around Bécassine's attempts and failures to be a good employee; eventually she leaves her post at the shop to enter into the service of Mme. De Grand-Air, thereby linking the story back to the previous album and indeed the pre-1913 Rivière proto-Bécassine. (Previous readers of the Bécassine stories would already know the Marquise's important role in the series).

There is less of a focus on Bretons and Brittany in this album, owing in part to the book's urban setting in Quimper. The majority of jokes at Bécassine's expense are due to her stupidity alone, with no reference to her rural origin. There are, however, occasional examples of misunderstandings or mistakes by Uncle Corentin, which are often implicitly linked to his rural mindset; denigration of the Bretons is still present.

For example, Corentin takes great pride in Bécassine's new place of employment, proclaiming that she will be working in 'un palais...DANS-UN-PALAIS'¹¹⁷ to general disbelief, since there is no palace in Quimper. It becomes apparent that he has misunderstood, and that Bécassine will be working at the 'Palais des dames', the aforementioned dress shop. Despite this, Corentin

¹¹⁷ Caumery & J.P Pinchon (f), *Bécassine En Apprentissage* (Paris: Gautier et Languereau, 1919) 1992 edition, p. 3.

maintains his belief that it really is a palace, and is sorely disappointed when they find the modest business.

The culture clash between urban and rural Bretons is shown when Bécassine, her mother and Corentin meet Mme. Quiquou, owner of the shop. Bécassine has learnt a long *reverence* and curtsies elaborately, proclaiming 'C'est le coeur battant et éperdu de ce grand honneur que j'entre, humble villageoise, dans ce somptueux palais'.¹¹⁸

Mme. Quiquou is stunned and infuriated, believing that the Labornez are making fun of her and wasting her time; it falls to Mme. Labornez to explain that the reverence was meant as a mark of respect and to admit the mistake: 'On s'est trompé, faute de connaître les usages de la ville, mais on avait bonne intention'.¹¹⁹ That the family is out of place in any urban environment, even a medium-size town like Quimper, is made clear. Bécassine makes it explicit: 'Je vois bien qu'j'étions [*sic*] trop bête pour entrer même dans un tout p'tit palais... j'sommes mieux à ma place avec les vaques (*sic*) et les dindons...Faut retourner chez nous!'.¹²⁰

The encounter is most effective in showing the Labornez's outdated ideas and views (epitomized by the elaborate reverence and in marking the backwardness of rural Breton culture compared to that of 'modern' urban Brittany; their ideas are explicitly linked to their rural peasant status.

Mme. Quiquou's reaction is an illustrative example of Breton city dwellers' attitude to the peasantry from the surrounding countryside: the rural population is 'despised',¹²¹ their language incomprehensible to urban Bretons, their customs and lifestyle ridiculed. Prejudice was rife and enduring, as shown in popular sayings and jingles such as 'Les pommes de terre pour les cochons, les épluchures pour les Bretons' recorded among French schoolchildren as late as the 1970s.¹²² The difference is accentuated even more as the authors describe

¹¹⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (f) p. 5.

¹¹⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (f) p. 5.

¹²⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (f) p. 5.

¹²¹ Weber, p.6.

¹²² Charles E. Holloway, *Dialect Death: The Case of Brule Spanish*. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997), p. 178.

Mme. Quoiquou as ‘Bretonne dans l’âme’, just as she describes herself: ‘Tout est breton ici, jusqu’à mon costume et celui de mes employées’.¹²³ However, Mme. Quoiquou is at ease in Quimper and with modernity. Her Breton-ness is at least partly for economic gain. She dresses in traditional dress, she says, because customers like it: ‘Je les habille à la mode de Paris, mais je ne les imite pas’.¹²⁴

Despite the positive portrayal of Mme. Quoiquou as prosperous and modern, I would argue that here also the authors imply anti-Breton sentiment. Her Breton identity appears to be for show: she has the trappings of a rural Breton peasant (*coiffe*, *sabots*, etc) but no knowledge of the culture, as is shown by her surprise and shock at Bécassine’s reverences.

Her stated reasons for dressing as a Breton also imply that her style of dress reinforces social barriers between her and her clientele: the pre-existing relationship between client and vendor, where the customer is in a position of privilege, is also a class-based relationship. It is solidified by Mme. Quoiquou’s different style of dress. By forgoing ‘Parisian’ clothes, she flatteringly signals to her customers that she is below them in social standing, implying that fashion is only for the urban ‘Parisian’ elite. Her garb is thus part of her sales pitch. The woman’s conscious choice to appear as Breton in order to underline class divisions is a revealing expression of the author’s treatment of Brittany and its people. The clear implication is that clear self-identification as a Breton, even for monetary gain, marks people as being of low social class.

In addition to the dress code for Mme. Quoiquou and her employees, the Palais des Dames itself is presented as innately Breton in its décor. However, this aspect is less successful: the store has been decorated with antique furniture and ornaments, which are considered outdated even by the supposedly old-fashioned rural Labornez family. Bécassine observes that ‘Il n’y a que des vieilles choses chez [Madame la Directrice]!’ and Corentin comments, ‘C’est très joli, on dirait un musée’.¹²⁵ They do not identify the shop as ‘modern’ Breton culture (i.e, modern by the standards of Brittany at the turn of the twentieth century). The obsolete appearance of the shop, in my view, can be ascribed to two

¹²³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (f), p. 6.

¹²⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (f), p.6.

¹²⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (f), p. 6.

possible scenarios. Firstly, Mme. Quoiquou's apparent ignorance of culture in rural Brittany (as evidenced by her reaction to Bécassine's *révérence* and compliments on entering). It is possible that she believes the 'boiseries sculptées, des armoires anciennes, des cretonnes à fleurs, des faïences du vieux Quimper'¹²⁶ to accurately represent current fashions in Brittany in the late nineteenth century, again revealing her lack of knowledge. Conversely, the old-fashioned *décor* may be deliberate; it may be part of a concerted attempt to present an obsolete version of Brittany as modern so as to underline the differences between the 'Breton' staff of the Palais des Dames and the modern, fashionable customers. Her actions are an illustration of a historical tendency in cities in Brittany to appropriate peasant culture,¹²⁷ exaggerating their uncouthness and taking the most exotic, picturesque (that is, backward) elements of the peasant world for town-dweller's use.

As previously noted, much of the plot in *Bécassine en apprentissage* focuses on mistakes made by Bécassine at work, without any reference to her Breton identity, owing to her ignorance of dressmaking and how to serve customers. Examples are legion: embroidering *idem* instead of decorating six items with the same legend, as ordered;¹²⁸ being unable to deliver an order to a house as she could not find it owing to her ignorance about odd and even house numbering being on different sides of a street;¹²⁹ making fun of a customer's large hands as she was unaware of appropriate euphemisms,¹³⁰ etc.

Most of the 'errors' linked to rural Breton naivety are instead committed by Uncle Corentin: it is he who teaches Bécassine her *révérences*;¹³¹ as a present he brings to the Palais des Dames a pair of live ducks which then escape, causing chaos and consternation among the customers.¹³² Despite Corentin's favourable characteristics (his kindness, his closeness to Bécassine, his position as mayor of Clocher-les-Bécasses and therefore his participation in the French state system),

¹²⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (f), p. 6.

¹²⁷ Weber, p. 6.

¹²⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (f), p. 13.

¹²⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (f), p. 19.

¹³⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (f), p. 29.

¹³¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (f), p. 5.

¹³² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (f), p. 30.

he is used here to represent the stereotypical backward Breton peasant. Derogatory portrayal of the Bretons is still present, even if not applied to Bécassine in this instance.

Moreover, in addition to the expected negative portrayal of provincial peasants, the album's treatment of Brittany is an interesting one. Most of the albums in the series which take place in Brittany focus on life in the countryside (*L'Enfance de Bécassine*, *Bécassine à Clocher-les-Bécasses*). Those that take place elsewhere have Bécassine as the only significant Breton character, thus using a Breton from a rural or agricultural background to represent the entire region. *Bécassine en apprentissage*, however, also depicts urban Bretons, as it takes place entirely in Quimper.

Among the townspeople depicted in the album, the majority are not dressed in regional costume; the customers in the Palais de Dames must be excepted, given that the ones featured heavily are either part of the nobility, or foreign tourists. The people depicted in crowd scenes are all dressed in standard, non-regional attire. The implication would seem to be that in urban Brittany, a sense of regional identity and difference no longer exists. However, those who are shown as dressed out of choice in Breton clothing while living in the city (ignoring the staff of the Palais des Dames, as they wear it under duress) – Mme. Quoiquou, the inn keeper Bogozier and his wife – are not portrayed particularly positively. Bogozier is unkind and grasping, wanting to employ Bécassine even though he makes fun of her, waiting his turn until Mme. Quoiquou tires of her continual mistakes and he is able to obtain Bécassine's service for free. His wife is similarly portrayed as hard and unfeeling.

As has been seen, for someone who calls herself 'Bretonne dans l'âme',¹³³ the shopkeeper is decidedly ignorant of her own professed regional culture. It is apparent that her appearance and the presentation of her premises is calculated in order to aid her business; she has no empathy or understanding of Bécassine, her supposed compatriot. By dressing like Bécassine and rest of the Labornez family, she is nevertheless given the same treatment as them by the author, who presents her as being on a lower social level than those dressed 'normally'. Even prosperous and successful people, if they consciously identify themselves as

¹³³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (f), p. 6.

Breton, are portrayed negatively by Languereau, even if they do not display the ‘innate Breton’ characteristics of stupidity, superstition, naivety, etc. that are mocked in preceding albums. The album continues the series’ tendency to mock regional difference, the humour softening the barbs to some degree.

Apart from the distinction of featuring an urban environment in Brittany, *Bécassine en apprentissage* is overall a generally unremarkable example of an early Bécassine album. Along with *L’Enfance de Bécassine* it performs the function of filling out Bécassine’s ‘back story’, helping create Maurice Languereau’s more nuanced version of the character. I would argue that it is one of the weaker early albums in the series as it features none of the exotic storylines or subtexts present in the albums immediately preceding it and, as Marianne Couderc notes,¹³⁴ while the album’s narrative is chronological, the album has a generally timeless quality; it features no historical events to anchor it in reality. The only progression present in the story is the ending when Bécassine is employed by the Marquise de Grand Air, so bringing the story up to date with her current situation.

1915-1919: Bécassine At War

The Bécassine featured in albums published during World War One is a more socially aware and engaged character than that shown in previous work by Maurice Languereau. Comedy derived from Bécassine’s lack of intelligence is largely absent: no longer an innate figure of fun, she instead becomes a friend in navigating the changes brought by war.

The four war albums noted above, *Bécassine pendant la (Grande) Guerre*, *Bécassine chez les allies*, *Bécassine mobilisée* and *Bécassine chez les Turcs*, effectively follow the chronology of World War One as it occurred in reality, forming a picture of a society gravely affected by sudden social change and national trauma. They each respectively feature a different aspect of life in wartime: work for the Red Cross; travel with soldiers to allied countries; the mobilisation of civilians; and the war in the east. Bernard Lehembre asserts that ‘...*La Semaine de Suzette* s’est singularisée en refusant de participer à toute

¹³⁴ Marie-Anne Couderc (a), *Bécassine Inconnue*. (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2000), p. 102.

entreprise de propagande':¹³⁵ it is true that Maurice Languereau did not attempt to mobilise the paper's readers, in contrast to l'espiègle Lili in *Fillette*.¹³⁶ However, as Pascal Ory notes, *Les Aventures de Bécassine* followed the example of Les Pieds Nickelés in *L'Epatant*, by engaging in 'le bon combat'.¹³⁷ Anti-German sentiment is rife, mostly through many references to 'sales Boches'.¹³⁸ In addition the albums show a very strong pro-military stance. Given *La Semaine de Suzette*'s Catholic, conservative editorial line it can be argued that Languereau's political viewpoint will be implicitly right wing, and moreover, the consistently anti-German, pro-French standpoint in all four books constitutes propaganda, despite Lehembre's diplomatically pan-European viewpoint. The war albums are by no means neutral.

Bécassine pendant la (Grande) Guerre

The first 'war' album appeared in 1915, under the title *Bécassine pendant la guerre*; it was given the longer title in later editions to distinguish it from events in World War Two (as *La Semaine de Suzette* ceased publication from the outbreak of that war until 1946, *Bécassine* played no fictional part in WW2). Reissues were given the new title from 1947.

The album begins in 1914, just before war breaks out, and follows Mme. de Grand Air and her entourage as they move from Dieppe to her chateau in Roses-sur-Loire, in order to set up a Red Cross military hospital there.

Humour is provided by Bécassine placing ludicrously illiterate signs around the Dieppe estate in order to dissuade any marauding German forces from looting – 'Tou le vin et empoisonai', 'un traisor et cachai ô fond' (of a well)¹³⁹ – and her unsuccessful attempts at becoming a nurse, for example mixing up doses of medication and sending a soldier into a two-day coma,¹⁴⁰ as well as occasional

¹³⁵ Lehembre (a), p. 99.

¹³⁶ Lehembre (a), p. 99.

¹³⁷ Pascal Ory 'La France de Bécassine', *L'Histoire* 10 (1979), 82-83, (p. 82).

¹³⁸ See for example Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (c) *Bécassine chez les alliés* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1916) 1994 edition, p. 5.

¹³⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (b), *Bécassine pendant la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1915) 1993 edition, p. 8.

¹⁴⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (b), p. 26.

practical jokes by soldiers at her expense. However, the tone of the story is generally serious. Mme. de Grand Air's nephew Bertrand and Bécassine's close friend Zidore are called up to fight, causing pain and anguish at either end of the social scale. Paris is attacked by German aircraft,¹⁴¹ but onlookers are miraculously saved by Bécassine as she responds to the call 'Mettez-vous à l'abri' by automatically putting up her umbrella: the bomb bounces off it and is deflected into a fountain, preventing damage.

The album ends in Alsace, which has been recently conquered by French troops; this gives the author the opportunity to refer to a previous time of French national peril, the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71). Alsace would in reality remain part of Germany until the end of the war. In the words of Graham Robb:

On the eve of the First World War, almost half of all recruits, and quite a few future officers, were unaware that France had lost territory to Germany in 1870. Alsace and Lorraine might as well have been foreign countries.¹⁴²

This view is not shared by Caumery and Pinchon in *Pendant la Grande Guerre*. Although the Alsatian children Bécassine meets are curious about her costume, 'qu'ils n'ont jamais vu que sur des images',¹⁴³ it is apparent that the children recognise her: '...nous lisons des journaux français, *La Semaine de Suzette*...Nous connaissons toute votre histoire: nous vous aimons beaucoup'.¹⁴⁴

Bécassine is moved by 'ces petites soeurs lointaines, redevenues françaises' and 'la valliance de nos soldats',¹⁴⁵ and it is in the supposedly already reconquered province that the album's most striking expression of patriotism occurs, as the album ends with a parade of French soldiers holding aloft their flag:

Froissé, troué de blessures glorieuses, il claquait dans le vent, étincelait dans le soleil. Et c'était l'image de la France meurtrie,

¹⁴¹ Caumery & Pinchon (b), p. 21.

¹⁴² Robb, p. 324.

¹⁴³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (b), p. 60.

¹⁴⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (b), p. 60.

¹⁴⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (b), p. 60.

mais héroïque, sûre de son droit, forte de sa bravoure, confiante en la victoire. Gravement, militairement, tous saluèrent.¹⁴⁶

As the war was continuing at the time of publication, the book could not have a usual ‘happy ending’ (e.g. the end of hostilities). As such, a strongly patriotic image containing a (fictional) partial victory for the French is the most positive ending possible.

Bécassine pendant la Grande Guerre does not contain as much social commentary as later albums published during the war largely, I would argue, because it was published early in the conflict and the effects on civil society were not yet being felt as keenly. A striking feature, for the purposes of this thesis, is that Bécassine’s regional identity as a Bretonne is ignored almost entirely and replaced by her strong self-identification as a French citizen first and foremost. For example, when before the war begins Mme. la Marquise tells her ‘Il faudrait ne pas être Française pour ne pas sentir inquiète en ce moment’,¹⁴⁷ Bécassine is mystified because ‘Pourtant, elle est française, bien française’.¹⁴⁸ None of the Bécassine war albums produced between 1915 and 1919 negatively portray those who identify themselves as Breton, nor do they show Brittany as backward. While this change can be seen as a positive step, given the tendency to mock Bretons in the rest of the series, nothing positive is said about Bretons’ regional identity either. Brittany and its people are largely ignored as an entity, and this in itself can be seen as problematic. Bécassine is now ‘French’ first, not a Bretonne, the implication being that her French citizenship takes precedence over her hitherto deeply held local loyalty and identity.

Bécassine chez les alliés

Published in 1917, *Bécassine chez les alliés* shows Bécassine travelling outside France for the first time. Once again she follows Bertrand de Grand Air and Zidore on a deployment, this time to England, via the north of France. Only the final portion of the album is spent in England; most of the album is set around Amiens, alluded to but never named, ‘vu qu’il [her contact, M. Croissant] m’a

¹⁴⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (b), p. 61.

¹⁴⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (b), p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (b), p. 1.

recommandé d’être bien discrète sur tout ce que je verrai dans la zone des armées’.¹⁴⁹ The album focuses on the military apparatus of the war, heavily featuring an allied camp.

Chez les Alliés has several notable aspects. Firstly, it is the first album to explicitly confront the hardships, both material and emotional, imposed on people by the war. For example, en route to the north, Bécassine witnesses a young child serving in the buffet car drop and break plates: threatened with sacking and a fine to pay for the breakage, he admits that his mother is a refugee and in poor health: without his wages ‘elle mourrait de faim’.¹⁵⁰ Bécassine completes his service and the soldiers who are present contribute to a collection for him. In five panels Caumery simultaneously depicts an example of the hardship endured by civilians during the war while explicitly praising the military through Bécassine as she exclaims ‘Comme ils sont bons et généreux, les officiers français!’.¹⁵¹

Similarly, difficulties on a more mundane level are also apparent. At the market, stallholders lament: “Tout rencherit, c’est effrayant. Qu’est-ce qu’on va devenir avec cette maudite guerre! [...] C’est une ruine! Le beurre...le fromage...les oeufs...la volaille... Tout, enfin, tout!”;¹⁵² fresh vegetables are unavailable to buy locally, leading Bécassine to go out into the country to find and pick food;¹⁵³ the local train station master has been replaced by an (ineffective) anonymous woman.¹⁵⁴

Readers are made well aware that times are hard on all levels of French society. However, Bécassine is a constant voice of optimism: ‘On se tassera, on se foulera, on s’arrangera. A la guerre comme à la guerre!’¹⁵⁵ As with the previous album, *Chez les alliés* is imbued with a feeling of national solidarity in wartime. Difference disappears: all are French together. Indeed, the album shows Bécassine rather positively as a character, even in comparison to the

¹⁴⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (c), p. 12.

¹⁵⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (c), p. 3.

¹⁵¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (c), p. 3.

¹⁵² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (c), p. 6.

¹⁵³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (c), p. 24.

¹⁵⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (c), p. 24.

¹⁵⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (c), p. 24.

representation of other similar characters. This positive portrayal is most notable when the story moves to the military camp. For example, it is useful to compare Bécassine – up until now, stupid, clueless, often dangerous – with the female stand-in station-master, who is unable to cope with her new responsibility. In contrast, Bécassine is chosen to act as an aerial photographer, flying over active war zones, and does it so well that she is awarded a medal.¹⁵⁶ I would argue that in this instance she is shown as an important example to her readers. Since the series was very popular, any depiction of a female character undertaking jobs or activities which would normally be uniquely male domains – and doing them well – would inevitably be very influential upon young, impressionable (predominantly female) minds. Maurice Languereau went on to use the same formula of Bécassine doing a ‘man’s job’, and more or less succeeding at it, repeatedly in the series, but her flying expedition is both the first time that the topos occurs and the occasion upon which she receives the highest level of praise for her exploits.

Overall, *Bécassine chez les alliés* portrays Bécassine very positively. It is the first album to present her as a genuinely complex, nuanced character. No overt Breton stereotypes are present; indeed, if Bécassine is ‘la Bretagne à elle toute seule’, Brittany is also shown in a sympathetic light. The overarching theme of solidarity in wartime remains. But if ‘*Unité*’ and ‘*Fraternité*’ are stressed, the issues underlying ‘*Égalité*’ are arguably still latent, as Bécassine’s Breton identity means that she remains subject to historical social prejudice which the war has not rendered obsolete.

Bécassine mobilisée

Bécassine mobilisée (1918) is the last of the ‘wartime’ books set entirely in France, and thus the last to reflect the social situation of France at the time. After the medical and military aspects of war treated in previous instalments, the album focuses on civilian mobilisation.

The war continues to take its toll on all of French citizens, so much so that a cash shortage obliges Madame la Marquise to stop employing Bécassine as a servant as she moves from Paris into a smaller apartment in Versailles. At the

¹⁵⁶Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (c), p. 21.

suggestion of her fellow-servant Julie, the daily help, Bécassine then decides to volunteer for the war effort, to be mobilized as a replacement worker, her previous exploit as an aerial reconnaissance photographer in the RFC having been entirely unofficial and due to a misunderstanding of French on the part of Major Tacy-Turn. While waiting to be called up, she becomes a ticket inspector on the tramway. She gives her wages to Mme. de Grand Air in a telling role reversal.

The main themes remain similar to those of the preceding albums. Bertrand de Grand Air is redeployed, and there are more shortages, of fuel in this instance, but the impression given is that the people are becoming accustomed to the situation. As Bécassine says, 'Depuis tant d'années qui dure cette maudite guerre, qui n'a pas donc conduit [à la gare] quelqu'un qu'il aime et qui part pour se battre?'¹⁵⁷

The album also continues the theme of Bécassine working in a normally male environment (here transport), found in its predecessor. She does not carry out her duties as expertly as she might do, and lets her sense of duty to Mme de Grand Air override her work responsibility when she is sacked for having taken the tram off its route (as if that were possible) in order to take her former mistress home in a storm. However, she is a generally adept ticket inspector. Her employment once again opens up a world of work to young girls who otherwise would not be exposed to it.

Her actual mobilisation is more a device for the author to critique French state bureaucracy than a story involving Bécassine. Having recalled his time working in a military hospital for *Bécassine pendant la Grande Guerre*,¹⁵⁸ Languereau satirically reveals his frustration with administrative officials who use absurd abbreviations and insist on much paperwork before allowing the slightest action to proceed.

Bécassine chez les Turcs

The final war-era album was published in 1919; the story was also serialised in *La Semaine de Suzette* after the war had ended, from February to August 1919.

¹⁵⁷ Caumery & J.P Pinchon (d), p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ Lehembre (a), p. 109.

In contrast to the previous albums, it concentrates on the situation outside France's borders, in particular, as the title suggests, on the Eastern Front. Ostensibly about Bécassine joining M. Bertrand in Salonica, most of the story instead features the journey of Bécassine and her companions, with many mishaps along the way. She never attains her final goal of meeting up with the soldier owing to a series of misfortunes as the group are hit by torpedoes,¹⁵⁹ shipwrecked,¹⁶⁰ picked up by a boat run by an Ottoman spy and member of the secret police,¹⁶¹ freed from capture¹⁶² and recaptured in Constantinople¹⁶³ – an episode leading to a grim depiction of a concentration camp rare in children's literature¹⁶⁴ – before finally being set free and finding allied lines, by which point, the author has declared victory in the Eastern Front and Bécassine is safely able to return to France.

Bécassine chez les Turcs is a curious addition to the World War One albums as, as previously noted, it is mostly situated outside of France. This allows it to feature prominently characters who would otherwise not appear; notably Arabs. As Annabelle Cone notes, Languereau and Pinchon tended to minimize the role played in World War One by non-Caucasian races in the four wartime albums,¹⁶⁵ no matter for which side they were fighting, and so their decision to include an apparently stateless Arab character is an interesting one. Other races appeared in later albums as Bécassine became more of a roving adventurer, 'Tintin in drag, with a *coiffe* rather than a quiff' as Forsdick calls her.¹⁶⁶ But when *Bécassine chez les Turcs* was published, the main characters in the preceding albums were overwhelmingly European. *Chez les Turcs* however features Ben Kaddour, a Muslim nomad from a nameless coastal town in the East, 'une ville

¹⁵⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (e), *Bécassine chez les Turcs*, (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1919) 1978 edition, p. 34.

¹⁶⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (e), p. 35.

¹⁶¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (e), p. 40.

¹⁶² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (e), p. 49.

¹⁶³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (e), p. 56.

¹⁶⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (e), p. 58.

¹⁶⁵ Annabelle Cone, 'Strange Encounters during Wartime: Bécassine Chez Les Turcs' in *European Comic Art* 4.2 (2011), 181-197 (p. 190).

¹⁶⁶ Forsdick, p. 23.

située au bord d'une mer très bleue et radieuse de soleil',¹⁶⁷ who was brought over for one of France's colonial expositions and remained. He follows Bécassine on her journey, believing her to be a talisman against German bombing. He speaks pidgin French and is treated as rather simple by the other characters, but is also protected by them, always considered worth saving from danger by the others.

Although, as has been seen, *Les Aventures de Bécassine* are primarily concerned with the internal 'other', the conflict between the norms of the Parisian centre and the culture of the peripheral regions, the introduction of Ben Kaddour means that *Bécassine chez les Turcs* features the conflict of the Parisian/French norm with both internal (regional) and external (foreign) 'others'. As Cone asserts,¹⁶⁸ there is the 'triple violence' of the forced internal assimilation of the Bretons, the conquest of North Africa and the global violence of the First World War. The album is an important example of France's *mission civilatrice* being portrayed in children's literature during the Colonialist period. However, the superiority of the French which might be expected is not shown. Just as the war changed the work environment and allowed women to take on new types of work, as is detailed in previous albums, it also disrupted the normal social hierarchy. Groups which would be marginalised in society under normal circumstances – for example women, foreign immigrants or youngsters – were able to assume the more 'powerful' positions of those they replaced.¹⁶⁹ The Bretonne and the Arab, both subject to assimilation into a larger empire, stand together on the same social level as they live through war.

However, once Bécassine and the rest of the group – Zidore, Stentor and M. Proey-Minans – leave Salonica, their last port of call in Turkey, Ben Kaddour disappears. The other characters are repatriated, but the Arab is never seen again. This is unusual in a series where most characters – even those with minor roles, e.g. Stentor – are featured in more than one album. Ben Kaddour, of mysterious foreign origin, has a mysterious foreign end. Much as he was cast

¹⁶⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (e), p. 14.

¹⁶⁸ Cone, p. 188.

¹⁶⁹ Cone, p. 189.

aside after being used for the Paris exposition, the character is once again discarded by the authors once he is no longer needed, without explanation.

Along with a general sense of war-weariness which pervades the album, the main thread which runs through *Bécassine chez les Turcs* is the breaking down of previous orders in society. At the end of the album, Bécassine returns to Paris and the Marquise, but in a break with the past she does not accept her job as a servant back. She is unsure, because ‘je sens qu’en place je m’ennuierais trop. Le ménage, le marché, la cuisine, ça paraît bien fade et monotone après des aventures comme les miennes’.¹⁷⁰ So instead, relying on her wealth of experience and still touchingly unaware of her orthographic shortcomings, she writes a job advertisement to place in newspapers: ‘Jeune fille ayant fé un peu tou les maitié y compris aviation, naufrage et course de chamo demande situation, mouvementée de preférance’.¹⁷¹ The inclusion of the job advertisement is interesting as it reveals a dissonance between Bécassine’s perceptions of reality and realistic expectations. There is nothing (theoretically) stopping her from obtaining an action-packed position, but the advertisement, written in incorrect, pidgin French, is unlikely to attract many offers of employment. The job request portrays her as an uneducated peasant at best, a person of low intelligence at worst. Bécassine, and those who know of her exploits, may consider her well-travelled and experienced in many fields, but to an outside observer the advertisement merely looks foolish. This short episode implies that, despite her wishes for adventure, her lack of intelligence will prevent her from a more prestigious position in future.

Nevertheless, the book’s ending is left open: we do not know what will become of Bécassine by the time of the next album in the series. This uncertainty mirrors the general situation of France at the end of World War One.¹⁷² It also reflects the reality of the domestic service sector, the decline of which would be one of the changes in the social hierarchy. Bécassine was not the only ex-servant at a loose end towards the end of the war. A definite ending with Bécassine in

¹⁷⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (e), p. 61.

¹⁷¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (e), p. 61.

¹⁷² The production schedule for the *Bécassine* stories is not clear. Although published in 1919, it is probable that Caumery and Pinchon were working on the album from before the armistice.

service to the Marquise, in a return to the France of 1914, would have been unrealistic and possibly, to the readers of *La Semaine de Suzette*, unbelievable.

Chez les Turcs thus closes the wartime chapter of *Les Aventures de Bécassine* on a note of uncertainty and with the central character looking forward to an unknown future, much like France herself, unsure of her position in the world. It is, in my opinion, the most fantastical of the four albums. Perhaps after three albums concentrating on difficulties caused by European warfare, the authors felt it necessary to produce one which described strife in more exotic locations as a counterbalance, mainly for escapism while acknowledging the global nature of the conflict. *Chez les Turcs* contains far more elements of adventure than many other albums in the series: never again would Bécassine be shipwrecked or kidnapped by foreign pirates. Its non-domestic setting allows it to be less realistic in its depictions of 'the East' generally, the Ottoman Empire and life therein, and to emphasise the exoticism present.

Bécassine In A Changing World

The wartime albums are most useful as an illustration of a world which was rapidly heading in unknown directions and had changed irrevocably from that of before the war. Their depictions of women's roles in the economy are particularly forward-looking. They are also significant examples of national identity and solidarity in children's literature, expressed with the aim of ensuring the enduring patriotism of the adults of the future. However, this national solidarity is also problematic from the point of view of this thesis. The series shows a world in which the war has strengthened French identity behind one cause, which overrides previous regional allegiance. Bécassine is a Bretonne, but for the first time identifies strongly with the French state. Her regional identity is diluted, consisting solely of her style of dress. First and foremost she is now French; her loyalty is to the wider nation, her regional culture forgotten and reduced to a *coiffe* and occasional memories of childhood. Her Breton identity remains less explicit in much of the series from this point.

Finally, the four wartime albums are the last in which Bécassine appears contemporary to the time of publication. After 1919 she begins a slow

metamorphosis into the ‘patent anachronism’ of later albums.¹⁷³ Up until *Chez les Turcs*, Bécassine changes along with the changing world: after this point the character’s situation remains the same, leaving her motionless and fossilizing as the world changes rapidly around her. Although she may still be adventurous—carrying out more jobs not traditionally associated with women, for example—her situation remains the same in that she always returns to service with Mme de Grand Air whereas, in contrast, *Chez les Turcs* ends with Bécassine having had an opportunity to leave service and to have become a modern citizen of the new Europe. Never again does she come so close to leaving; indeed she is never again given another real opportunity to do so. In addition *Chez les Turcs* is one of the few albums in which Bécassine travels widely. The majority of later albums take place within France, keeping Bécassine within domestic borders. As the war ends, so does Bécassine’s freedom of movement and freedom of association; the series reverts to show the author-publisher’s conservative, bourgeois outlook.

While Bécassine is in a timeless state of decline, so is the aristocracy which supports her. The decline of the French nobility is one of the strongest themes in *Les Aventures de Bécassine*. Mme de Grand Air never entirely recovers from the social upheaval brought on by war; although her financial fortunes go up and down, even in times of plenty French society has changed beyond recognition and her place within it is no longer assured.

Les Cent Métiers de Bécassine: Social Change, Climbing and Conservatism

Les Cent Métiers de Bécassine (1920) was the first album in the series to be created after the First World War. Peace having been re-established, the focus of *Les Aventures de Bécassine* moves from the problems caused by war to those caused by France’s position in a changed, if hardly post-conflictual, world. The author’s conservative political views and privileged outlook are evident.

The album follows on from the end of *Bécassine chez les Turcs*, with Bécassine considering some of the exciting jobs that her readers have suggested for her, as she requested. Should she be a lion tamer? An air hostess? A hunter in the

¹⁷³ The phrase is taken from Forsdick, p. 28.

Sahara?¹⁷⁴ However, the freedom of choice that she had in the previous album is quickly taken from her. She remains subject to Mme de Grand-Air's wishes, as the Marquise sends her instead to work as a cook, for her friend Mme. de Kercoz in Brittany. Regardless of her recent freedom brought on by social change in wartime, Bécassine returns to the status quo of service. She abandons her freedom of choice in order to please her mistress. As she says in her naively self-contradictory way:

“Être cuisinière, c'est pas une situation mouvementée; mais ça commence par un voyage, donc c'est mouvementé tout de même. Et puis l'important, c'est de faire plaisir à Madame, qui est si bonne”.¹⁷⁵

She sets off on a long journey to Brittany via sleeper train and tram, but never reaches Madame de Kercoz, owing to the lack of frequent trams in Brittany. Instead she meets Major Tacy-Turn by coincidence, briefly becoming his sporting companion. After the Major sacks her for being unsporting, she comes across a château owned by her friend Virginie Patate, a fellow tram ticket inspector in *Bécassine mobilisée*, obsessed with the virtues of the countryside, as her name (slang for 'potato') suggests. Her husband, Colas (aka Nicolas), has bought the château after becoming rich. She begins to work for the couple in various increasingly pointless positions until the husband loses a court case and with it his recently-found fortune.

Despite its title, the main focus of *Les Cent Métiers de Bécassine* is not Bécassine but the phenomenon of the *nouveaux riches*. Virginie first moved to Brittany having inherited a small farm, which she ran very successfully. Her husband, Colas, however, is unsatisfied with an agricultural life. He invents a chocolate substitute, which is very popular, leading to the couple becoming rich from the proceeds. Colas is portrayed by Caumery as a figure of fun, who is ridiculed consistently throughout the album, along with the trappings of the *nouveau riche* lifestyle, expense and the 'modern style' of décor. The wealthy

¹⁷⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (g), *Les Cents Métiers de Bécassine* (Paris : Gautier-Languereau, 1920) 1986 edition, p. 5.

¹⁷⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (g), p. 7.

author-publisher takes a clear conservative, traditional standpoint on matters of class.

Virginie Patate's husband Colas is shown as being obsessed with the trappings of a noble lifestyle to the point of absurdity so as to ensure it is known that he is worthy of his new place in society and in order to show that he is aware of all the necessary social conventions, despite his lowly working class origins. For example, he objects to being told 'Monsieur est servi' because 'Vous oubliez Madame et Mademoiselle. [...] Ne sont-elles pas servies, elles aussi? [...] Je suis aussi riche pour que, chez moi, on puisse dîner deux fois. N'oubliez pas'.¹⁷⁶

Colas eventually forces Bécassine and Virginie to have a second meal in order to conform to his perception of proper upper-class procedure. His obsession with class and horror of anything 'pas grand genre' – e.g. sending one's own post,¹⁷⁷ railings that are painted black and not gold,¹⁷⁸ his wife's friendship with someone of the servant class (i.e. Bécassine) – are ridiculed because they show by implication that, although he may have the money to provide an aristocratic lifestyle, he is not an aristocrat; he lacks the attributes of 'old money' such as discretion and refinement. His insecurity in his position is clear. Moreover, he appears unaware that those around him ridicule him and take advantage of this insecurity. The household staff treat him with disrespect, both explicitly (the majordomo refers to Colas as a 'parvenu' and a 'peasant') and implicitly by their behaviour. The staff as a whole live extravagantly off their masters's money, buying cognac and toasting their jobs in the household, as 'quand on est près du ruisseau, on remplit son seau', while participating in a sarcastic, overly elaborate ritual of service in front of their master. He is none the wiser, however, believing that their cries of 'Salut à notre bon maître! Vive notre bon maître!' are sincere and fitting of his position.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (g), p. 39.

¹⁷⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (g), p. 40.

¹⁷⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (g), p. 40.

¹⁷⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (g), p. 39.

Denigration of Modern Ideas

The constant mockery of Colas's ineptly run household is combined with portrayal of 'modern' taste and style as costly and garish. Modern art consists of 'des tableaux... On ne sait pas ce que ça représente, mais y a de bien beaux cadres...'.¹⁸⁰ Bathroom furniture is described as 'd'un modern-style effarant' by the narrator;¹⁸¹ the author's dislike of the *nouveau riche* phenomenon is clear and vehement.

Although the portrayals of Bécassine in the world of work outside domestic service in previous albums seem to imply almost liberal values, this first album written in peacetime has a far more conservative outlook. It appears that Caumery is willing to accept change in the post-war world, as long as the status quo in his chosen milieu, that is, the wealthy bourgeoisie, is maintained. The rise of the *nouveau riche* class is a threat to this status quo: the album's disdain for 'new money' is therefore, I would assert, a type of defence mechanism against a change in society which would remove much privilege and power from an upper class that was already under threat owing to previous global events, and whose position is further threatened by social change outwith its control.

Also present is depiction of another internal 'other' that stands in opposition to the established order: namely Virginie and Nicolas themselves. Just as Bécassine represents the other in the world of the aristocracy and *la haute bourgeoisie* by virtue of her low-class and provincial birthplace, the couple are also interlopers, 'other' not only by virtue of their plebian upbringing but by the potential threat that they pose through the power associated with wealth. Conservatism in *Les Cent Métiers de Bécassine* is not limited to the depiction of *nouveaux riches*; the album also contains the series' first reference to unionism and strikes.

Postwar Turbulence: Social Upheaval And Troublesome Workers

On her way to Brittany, Bécassine's train from Paris to Dinard suffers a mechanical fault and is stranded on the tracks. Services are already delayed owing to union action when the train's engineer, the brutish Lerouge (another

¹⁸⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (g), p. 37.

¹⁸¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (g), p. 38.

punned name, here indicating the character's socialist and unionist leanings), refuses to attempt a repair because of demarcation. As he states:

C'est une panne de frein. C'est pas mon affaire. [...] Vu que je suis un homme libre, conscient et syndiqué... mon syndicat m'a commandé de m'occuper de mon locomotive et de rien d'autre. Un homme conscient, syndiqué et libre obéit à son syndicat.... et que vous soyez contents ou pas, je m'en moque.¹⁸²

After a passenger succeeds in fixing the brake, Lerouge then refuses to take the train further, as 'Moi, je ne marche pas. J'ai fait mes huit heures. Mon syndicat m'a commandé de ne jamais travailler plus de huit heures. Je suis un homme libre, j'obéis à mon syndicat'.¹⁸³ Lerouge is an example of a militant railway worker as seen by a member of the bourgeoisie who is content with a simplistic and negative portrayal of the militant working class.

The incident is reminiscent of the large-scale French railways strikes of the late 1910s and early 1920s, particularly the general railway strike which began in February 1920. The background to the strike, as Adrian Jones explains, can be divided into two phases:¹⁸⁴ an initial phase (January-February 1920) consisting of drawn-out negotiations between workers and the railway companies and a second phase in which, after the contentious general strike, workers passed from passive unionism into active militancy.

Railway workers were traditionally one of the better-unionised workforces, both before and after World War One: railway companies had proportionally higher numbers of union members compared with other industries.¹⁸⁵ Prior to 1920, workers had been engaged in conflict with employers over minimum wage levels, conditions and living supplements. Previous strikes (for example 1898 and 1910) had been largely ineffective, causing minor traffic disruption at best. After 1918, however, the situation had changed for those on both sides of the dispute: for the railway companies, the war had caused major financial difficulty: the costs

¹⁸² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (g), p. 15.

¹⁸³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (g), p. 15.

¹⁸⁴ Adrian Jones 'The French Railway Strikes of January-May 1920: New Syndicalist Ideas and Emergent Communism' in *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 12.4 (1982), pp.508-540 (p. 510).

¹⁸⁵ Adrian Jones, p. 511.

of post-war reconstruction were huge, and companies already in debt to the government had to ask for more state aid.¹⁸⁶ Coupled with this was the necessity of expanding the railways workforce due to the eight-hour day law introduced in April 1919, legislation which put companies under severe financial pressure and thus hardened their attitude to the unions and workers' demands for improvement.

For the workers, and unions generally, the war also caused many changes. Three of the biggest railway unions, including the National Union, *employés* and the drivers and engineers had come together in 1916 to form a national federation, consolidating previously fragmented union activity. The demands of the war on the railways necessitated long hours and low pay, which eventually led to growing militancy amongst workers as patriotism gave way to discontent with conditions. Wildcat strikes became more and more common in the latter years of the war. Once the war ended, therefore, the unions were in a strong position for major industrial action as the hitherto fragmented union landscape had become more cohesive. Thus in 1920, various railway strikes were called with differing levels of success, culminating in the previously noted general strike, called by the CGT: it was a generally unpopular strike amongst the general public and failed quickly.

Caumery's Conservatism

The negative portrayal of Lerouge is another example of Maurice Languereau's conservatism: the oxymoronic statement of 'Je suis un homme libre... j'obéis à mon syndicat'¹⁸⁷ is both humorous and revealing. It is notable that Languereau portrays workers negatively while they are working, i.e., when they are *not* on strike. It can be inferred then that Languereau objects to the attitudes and new powers held by the unions (and thus workers) in addition to the strikes themselves. A dislike of leftist politics is perhaps to be expected given Languereau's advancing age and well-off lifestyle. If previous depictions of workers (e.g. the tram driver M. Lemboité in *Bécassine mobilisée*) are positive, that is probably because they know their place in the social hierarchy. Lemboité in particular is notably dissimilar to Lerouge in that his work is his life (hence his

¹⁸⁶ Adrian Jones, p. 511.

¹⁸⁷ Caumery & J.P Pinchon (g), p. 15.

nickname) and he obeys his ‘masters’ above him. Like his ridicule of the *nouveau riche* couple, Languereau’s treatment of the *cheminot* is another example of where the series expresses fear of change and disruption to the bourgeois status quo.

Bécassine Voyage

This album, published in 1921, is a departure from the series’ usual depiction of upper class life and wider society in France; as the title indicates, most of the action takes place far outside the hexagon’s borders, with only brief glimpses of Bécassine’s home comforts of Brittany and Mme. de Grand-Air. It follows Bécassine as she travels across America with Pierre Kiroul, nephew of Mme. de Kercoz, after the latter receives a mysterious diplomatic letter requiring that he visit a Mr Harris Brown in New York. In the course of their attempts to find and meet the mysterious Mr Brown – a mission in which they remain unsuccessful – Bécassine and Pierre travel widely in the US, including encounters with a Native American tribe, cowboys, working on a ranch, a job in a cinema and a trip to the seaside. Although Pierre Kiroul is technically Bécassine’s *maître* as he is above her on the social scale, Pierre is presented as a character similar to Bécassine in that he is full of ideas which often go awry and he is a keen traveller (e.g. Pierre’s constant desire to travel on ‘real’¹⁸⁸ voyages echoes Bécassine’s desire to travel and change her situation). He never treats her as a servant, staying in the same hotels and using the same transport. The dynamic of the album is similar to that of a modern ‘buddy movie’ or a Tintin album, with two friends embarking on unknown foreign adventures, rather than a conventional master/servant setup in which Pierre Kiroul experiences all the adventures and Bécassine provides a supporting role.

The album is also notable in that most of the other tropes in the series are absent. Bécassine is not presented as particularly naïve or stupid: things she does not understand or misuses are instead portrayed as either new, strange technology (e.g. Harris Brown’s dictaphone,¹⁸⁹ the folding hotel-room bed) or peculiarly foreign (the three-tier train) and therefore incomprehension is

¹⁸⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (h), *Bécassine voyage*, (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1921) 1993 edition, p. 7.

¹⁸⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (h), p. 21.

understandable. The album focuses on travel and the encounters of other, alien cultures. *Bécassine voyage* is one of the last albums in which the heroine travels outside of France's borders. In it, she changes social position and becomes the superior member of society in contrast to her position as 'other' in France: she is instead a member of the privileged (white) class in America, coming into contact with groups considered 'other'. She is now part of the wider, racial, cultural majority. While other albums in the series—in particular the earlier ones—show examples of an internal French *mission civilisatrice*, *Bécassine voyage* contains an external example. Bécassine and Pierre Kiroul meet a tribe of Native Americans, whose chief is ill. Bécassine's skills in first aid and natural remedies cure the chief of the tribe, and she is fêted.

The pair also meet a cowboy and his daughter, who appear to symbolize the rural poor in America, and a black train ticket inspector, complete with banjo. While portrayal of these characters is somewhat stereotypical, the relationships between them and the Bécassine-Kiroul partnership are generally positive: for example, when the train inspector is abused and called 'vilain nègre'¹⁹⁰ by a passenger, Bécassine takes the black man's side, also allowing him to practise his banjo while she takes on his duties (albeit unsuccessfully). It seems that, in a foreign setting at least, Languereau is prepared to show sympathy for an underclass and lower-class solidarity against oppression.

Relations with and depictions of the Native Americans are slightly more problematic: described – understandably, given the time of publication, but nevertheless pejoratively – as 'sauvages'¹⁹¹ and shown as violent,¹⁹² there are strong echoes of the later (1931) *Tintin au Congo* as Bécassine tends to the clan chief and his illness, both in her treatment of the Native Americans and in their reactions to his illness and to Pierre and Bécassine.

Bécassine voyage is a curious album in the context of the series, in that it is not framed by anything to anchor it as part of the Bécassine story arc: it could easily exist outwith the series and be an accomplished children's book in its own right. Its frantic narrative pace is also an oddity within the series, as is its relatively

¹⁹⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (h), p. 27.

¹⁹¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (h), p. 33.

¹⁹² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (h), p. 39.

weak storyline. Despite this, it offers an interesting look at foreign cultures as an external other, in addition to its notable modification of Bécassine's social position. Bécassine's status appears to be dependent on her geographical position: she enjoys much greater social privilege when outside of France's borders than when she exists within them. Outside of France, Bécassine is both freed from Mme de Grand Air's authority and not subject to the contemporary French social hierarchy. She is able to act according to her own wishes and desires, not bound by what her employer wants or what would be seen as acceptable or 'normal' in French society; notably, the social implications of being a working-class Breton emigrant in France are absent once she leaves.

Loulotte: A New Beginning For *Les Aventures de Bécassine*

In 1922, a new character was introduced to *Les Aventures de Bécassine*, rejuvenating the series by creating new narrative possibilities and giving Bécassine a new purpose in life beyond her servant position. This character is Louise-Charlotte, Loulotte for short; an orphan Breton baby adopted by Mme. de Grand-Air after the baby's mother, the Marquise's peasant god-daughter, dies from influenza. Although Mme. de Grand-Air is Loulotte's official adoptive parent, it is Bécassine who, appointed as her nurse and later her governess, performs most of the tasks needed to care for the girl. The two characters develop a very close relationship as Loulotte grows up under Bécassine's tutelage.

Maurice Languereau was inspired to create the character after the birth of his daughter Claude in his middle age, as she herself states:

L'année de ma naissance, mon père a introduit dans ses histoires une petite fille... qui s'appellait Loulotte, et qui est moi, Claude Languereau, donc voilà [...] Je suis contente et fière [d'être Loulotte].¹⁹³

Claude Languereau was born in 1921, and her fictional incarnation grew up in tandem with her, with her father taking inspiration from her life as the years

¹⁹³ Claude Canlorbe (née Languereau) speaking in 1999, broadcast on 'Bécassine', *2000 ans d'Histoire* France Inter, 16 March 2005. < <http://blog-histoire.fr/2000-ans-histoire/1739-becassine.html> > [accessed 15 August 2015].

passed: 'C'est notre vie familiale... nos vacances au Pays Basque, en Normandie... on suit exactement les pérégrinations de la famille Languereau en vacances'.¹⁹⁴

Loulotte's main function in the albums is to act as the 'model child' for the readers of *La Semaine de Suzette* through the various stages of childhood, from infancy until her entry into adulthood. However, although she is loving and kind, she is also wilful, occasionally disobedient and boisterous, causing her to be disciplined by Bécassine. Ergo, she is also an example of how not to act in society (though Bécassine will always comment on the correct way she *should* have conducted herself). Loulotte is effectively a character with which the readers can identify themselves and their lives.

Her addition starts a 'new era' for the series,¹⁹⁵ with more of a personal input from Languereau. It also shifts the focus of the series: previous stories were mostly simple and had no emotional element. However, the introduction of Loulotte gives the series a new focal point, allowing the characters to show emotion and affection towards the child and each other.

How Loulotte's Arrival Changes Bécassine

The new role of caring for the infant added a new dimension to Bécassine's personality: Caumery allows her a maternal instinct. As Hélène Davreux states, it allows Bécassine to fulfil the stereotypical feminine role of mother, despite the fact she has never been married.¹⁹⁶ It is Bécassine who acts as Loulotte's mother, even though she is officially only the nanny and governess: she provides affection and attention, educates and disciplines, ensuring the day-to-day running of Loulotte's life. The child's official 'mother', the Marquise, is more distant, performing the role of a father in the feminine atmosphere of the Grand-Air household.

Bécassine's new role also allows her to gain *de facto* membership into the Grand-Air family, rectifying her lack of close familial ties; although her own

¹⁹⁴ Canlorbe, *2000 ans d'Histoire*.

¹⁹⁵ Bernard Lehembre, speaking on *2000 ans d'Histoire*.

¹⁹⁶ Davreux, p.50.

parents are still living, as evidenced by an encounter in *Bécassine Nourrice*,¹⁹⁷ her many years spent away from her village has made their relationship with Bécassine distant at best.¹⁹⁸ Mme de Grand-Air and Loulotte function as an unconventional family unit, largely self-contained, into which the only male incursion is that of the inventor Adalbert Proey-Minans, a childhood friend of the Marquise. He, however, is a figure of fun and affection – ‘Tonton Nans’¹⁹⁹ – not a paternal replacement by the conventional standards of the time. He holds no power in the ‘familial’ arrangement; women are very much ‘in charge’.

The self-containment of the household extends into the wider world also: after becoming a nanny Bécassine’s world shrinks considerably. The globe-trotting of previous years is no more, as she spends more and more time constrained by her duties caring for Loulotte and is mostly confined to within France’s borders at best, even at times to Paris *intra muros*. Although Bécassine maintains her passion for travel, the centre of her world becomes Loulotte.

***Bécassine Nourrice* : Bécassine Falls In Love**

In terms of plot, there is very little movement in *Bécassine Nourrice*, especially in comparison to the frenetic pace of the previous album *Bécassine Voyage*. The album is mainly concerned with the changes brought on by Loulotte’s arrival and the adaptations that Bécassine has to make over the child’s first few months of life. It does however set the affectionate tone which remains for many years until the series’ end. Bécassine’s reaction to the child is immediate and strongly positive: ‘«Oh! La jolie! Oh! Le trésor!» Sa large face était tout illuminée de joie et de bonté’.²⁰⁰

Loulotte’s reaction in response is similar: she stops crying and begins babbling happily. It’s the start of a long and happy relationship for the pair, both of them outsiders in a world and a household of which they are both part and not part: for Bécassine, it is her workplace, not her home. Loulotte’s future once she

¹⁹⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i), *Bécassine Nourrice* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1922) 1993 edition, p. 56.

¹⁹⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i), p. 56.

¹⁹⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (j), *Bécassine Alpiniste* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1923) 1992 edition, p. 9.

²⁰⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i), p. 9.

reaches adulthood is uncertain. Mme. de Grand-Air consciously separates her from the trappings of aristocratic life early on: for example, when buying a pram for the baby, the Marquise reacts with horror to the suggestion of adding the Grand-Air insignia:

“Non, non, aucune couronne; veuillez livrer la voiture telle qu’elle est [...] Loulotte n’est pas marquise, elle n’est pas de ma famille; je lui ferai une enfance aussi douce que possible... je ne la laisserai pas dans le besoin, mais elle est destinée à une condition modeste: il faut y penser et l’élever en conséquence.”²⁰¹

We never learn Loulotte’s surname, so it is unclear whom the Marquise considers to be her ‘real’ family. However, despite her misgivings about the child’s class status, Mme. de Grand-Air provides her with a childhood equal to that of bona fide aristocratic progeny.

Bécassine spends most of the album adapting to her new role as a nanny and learning the conventions of her new job, in addition to caring for a young baby. For example, she is sent to a new section of the Jardin des Tuileries where nannies gather with well-to-do children: after verification that her charge is from a good family, she is admitted into the Club des Nourrices,²⁰² a social gathering for those serving in noble households. Bécassine, however, feels she has little in common with the club’s members, and decides to move on, caring for Loulotte in her own way.

Readers see her learning to care for the child in the most basic ways such as trying to make her sleep,²⁰³ and making sure she does not become ill from the cold.²⁰⁴ Although she asserts that she loves children (‘moi qui aime tant [les bébés]!’²⁰⁵), this is the first time the readers see any evidence to support this.

²⁰¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i), p. 17.

²⁰² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i), p. 27.

²⁰³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i), p. 38.

²⁰⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i), p. 16.

²⁰⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i), p. 9.

Bécassine Mère

At no point prior to *Bécassine nourrice* do readers see Bécassine in a maternal or caring setting. She is an only child (or at least, no siblings are ever mentioned) and she is never shown as caring for any younger cousins in the Quillouch family, nor any of the rarely-seen Grand-Air children or grandchildren. This, I would argue, is part of a tendency on the part of Caumery to remove any traditionally feminine traits from Bécassine. If we take the archetypal feminine roles as wife and mother, Bécassine thus far in the series has failed on both counts: her life is devoid of any involvement with children and she has no non-familial relationships with men.

She is also particularly unfeminine in appearance, with little hair (which is always covered by her *coiffe* in any case) and no discernible female form under her uniform; she is effectively sexless, an ideal state for a character considered a role model for children according to conventional bourgeois thinking. This lack of femininity also renders her somewhat one-dimensional, as a purely servile being with few desires of her own: her desire to serve her betters overrides all others. The introduction of Loulotte and the subsequent attribution of new womanly traits to Bécassine therefore also rejuvenates the character in addition to giving the series (and her life) a new direction.

From being a simple servant figure, with little emotional connection to anything outside her work, devoid of any real relationship with her family, Bécassine becomes a mother in all senses bar biological. In Loulotte she has been given a cause in which she is able to emotionally invest herself, revealing a new side to her which was previously unseen by readers. She becomes more human, less a one-dimensional cipher for the ideas of Caumery and the editorial line of *La Semaine de Suzette*. She gradually moves further away from Jacqueline Rivière's one-dimensional figure of ethnic ridicule. Conversely, it could be argued that the introduction of Loulotte merely provides Bécassine with another 'better' to serve, and that she invests herself in yet another relationship which is unequal; at this point in the narrative, Loulotte is an infant. There can be no guarantee that Loulotte will not in future abandon her loving relationship with Bécassine in favour of a servant-master relationship with clearer boundaries, just as other

Grand-Air children have done once they reach adulthood.²⁰⁶ There is a danger that Bécassine may once again over-invest herself in a relationship in which she is the lesser party, leaving her in a dangerous emotional position, and open to the author's ridicule once more.

Loulotte As Model Child

On a more positive note, with this new relationship the series now has a 'human interest' angle. As previously noted, Loulotte is a character with whom the series' young readers can identify. Whereas Bécassine, kind and as virtuous as she may be, is not a figure to emulate, given her poor, uneducated, regional background, and the Marquise is too old and authoritative to be an equal. In contrast, Loulotte is of a similar age to many readers of *La Semaine de Suzette*, and she is the series' clearest example of a character who 'moves with the times' in terms of fashion and behaviour. She grows up along with the readers, especially those born in 1922. Her arrival also brings the author and the series as a whole closer to the reader: children who appear in previous Bécassine albums are seen from a distance, treated in a paternalistic but non-emotional way (see, for example, the young girl in the slums of the Paris fortifications in *Bécassine chez les Turcs* or the 'liberated' children in Alsace, featured in *Bécassine Pendant la Grande Guerre*).

This distance from children can be explained by Maurice Languereau's lack of a family for much of his life: he married late and fathered his daughter Claude at the age of fifty-five. However, after her birth and the creation of her fictional twin, his personal interest in the life of this small child becomes clear. The albums featuring the girl have a 'personal touch' missing from previous albums, evidenced by Languereau's use of real life events experienced by his family as plots of albums, as asserted by Claude Canlorbe in her 1999 interview noted above. The post-Loulotte albums are also very modern in their treatment of children in contrast to the reactionary, conservative views on modernism expressed in *Les Cent Métiers de Bécassine* (see above). For example, in *Bécassine Nourrice* Madame de Grand-Air and Madame de Kercoz reject a

²⁰⁶ For an example of this, see Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (k) *Les Bonnes Idées de Bécassine* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1924), 1972 edition, p. 4.

prospective nurse, judging her treatment of the baby too harsh,²⁰⁷ instead expressing preference for ‘tendre indulgence’.²⁰⁸

Loulotte is not subject to the distant parenting of previous eras; indeed she is lavished with attention at all times and even slightly spoiled. Most of this can be attributed to Bécassine’s constant love and attention (the pair are never separated, even sleeping in the same room now that Bécassine has been relieved of her servant duties), but even the Marquise, despite her age and slightly distant relationship with the child, shows deep care for her well-being, especially on a physical level (e.g.: ‘Voilà qu’elle éternue, ne la croyez-vous pas enrhumée? Il me semble que ses mains sont un peu chaudes’).²⁰⁹

From the beginning of her life in the Grand-Air family, Loulotte brings modernity to the hitherto old-fashioned world of the Marquise and Bécassine, a trend which continues until the end of the series. She represents the first incursion of modern life into an environment which despite her presence, becomes increasingly anachronistic over time.

Bécassine alpiniste

Bécassine alpiniste (1923) is the first album in which we see some of Loulotte’s personality, as she grows from an infant into a toddler. For Bécassine it is the first album which gives her an opportunity to engage in her favourite pastime, travel, since 1921. It is also the first time readers see how the new pseudo-familial unit of Loulotte, Mme de Grand-Air and Bécassine relate to those in the wider world.

Loulotte is the driving force behind the album, as it is her illness which necessitates the alpine holiday which forms most of the narrative. In order to placate Loulotte, who has become unsettled and badly behaved, the doctor orders mountain air. Mme. de Grand-Air is sceptical about undertaking more travel, but M. Proey-Minans is enthusiastic, and plans a long, convoluted itinerary which takes in Venice and Constantinople before culminating in a trip to Mount Athos. The pair debate which destination to choose until Loulotte finds

²⁰⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i), p. 9.

²⁰⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i), p. 9.

²⁰⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i), p. 16.

a brochure for the fictional resort of Culmina in francophone Switzerland.²¹⁰ The Marquise grudgingly acquiesces and the group set off for the Alps. En route Bécassine is embroiled in a customs dispute when she shares a train compartment with a smuggler masquerading as a baby's nurse, and she is arrested. However, all is resolved when Loulotte, showing remarkable (not to say implausible) perceptiveness for one so young, spots the 'nurse', now devoid of his disguise, in a crowd, and the train is allowed on its way.

After this mishap, the group proceed largely without incident to their hotel in Culmina, although Bécassine is unsettled because she suffers from vertigo, and is unsure how she will cope in the mountains. Blissfully tempting Providence, M. Proey-Minans' servant, Auguste, assures her that 'il n'y a jamais de danger en Suisse' and she is reassured. Once the group has arrived, the holiday continues peacefully, with Bécassine embarking on mountain walks with Auguste and their very timid guide, Ildéfonse, whom he teases mercilessly.²¹¹ Leaning over a ledge, Bécassine falls off the mountain and into a gorge, saved only by her voluminous skirt catching on a branch. She is saved by Ildéfonse, who transforms from his previous timid state into a confident mountaineer.²¹²

After her near-death experience, we see Bécassine return to the day-to-day care of Loulotte. However, more drama is yet to occur, as M. Proey-Minans, incredibly myopic, loses his glasses and goes missing, necessitating a search party to be mobilised. He is eventually found confused and dishevelled in a chicken-coop, having mistaken the raised coop for a mountain shelter across a ravine. Following Proey-Minans' misadventures the trio spend a sedate fortnight or so more at the hotel, avoiding dangerous activity. However, a new group of holiday-makers arrive. They appear obsessed with dancing, particularly the foxtrot, and play the same record repeatedly. Eventually, the Marquise and M. Proey-Minans lose patience with the constant disruption and decide to leave the hotel as soon as possible, whereupon they, Loulotte and Bécassine return to Paris.²¹³

²¹⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (j), p. 9.

²¹¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (j), p. 40.

²¹² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (j), p. 49.

²¹³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (j), p. 63.

Bécassine alpiniste is a fairly minor album in the series in that it does not move the story forward: indeed the plot is thin, with most of the album concentrating on a few disparate events, and with most of main characters barely appearing. Its function appears to be to provide an amusing, inconsequential interlude in the story arc. It is nevertheless distinctive in being largely devoid of any denigration of Bécassine, apart from occasional reference to her now-standard stupidity (e.g. ‘...comme alpiniste je n’ai pas été brillante. Du reste, ai-je jamais été brillante en rien?’).²¹⁴

The album forms part of the series’ progressive repositioning in to a more domestic sphere as Bécassine’s world shrinks gradually. The album does, however, raise several interesting points in passing: firstly, as one of the first albums to visit another francophone region for an extended period of time, it starts a trend in mid-to-late period Bécassine albums of exploring the francophone periphery for its own sake. Given the series’ persistent negative portrayal of Brittany, the positive depiction of the Alpine region is interesting: the inhabitants of the Alps are also peasants (although readers see little of them, apart from at the end of the album), and in some ways the region is similar to Brittany with a large tourist trade and being isolated from other more urban areas of the country, so that its inhabitants enjoy an area-specific way of life. Were it not for a lack of coastline, Culmina could be Clocher-les-Bécasses. What makes this area different from Brittany? It is technically ‘abroad’, certainly, but its closeness, geographically, linguistically and culturally to France makes the distinction almost meaningless. In line with Bécassine’s apparent higher level of social privilege outside France, it appears difference from the social norm is only objectionable if the area falls within the Republic.

Also, Loulotte’s lack of aristocratic lineage is again raised, although Caumery takes the child’s side in this instance, as the person who objects (a young girl) is another member of the *nouveaux riches*. Her statement that Loulotte ‘n’est pas qu’une enfant trouvée’²¹⁵ is more than counterbalanced by Caumery’s depiction of her as proud, snooty and self-important, ‘laid... plutôt le caractère que la figure’.²¹⁶ Seemingly for Maurice Languereau, having no upper-class background

²¹⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (j), p. 63.

²¹⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (j), p. 56.

²¹⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (j), p. 56.

is preferable to having access to the trappings of aristocracy through non-traditional means, e.g. being ‘new money’. Despite his increasingly modern outlook in some areas (the raising of children, for example), his continued dislike of the modern moneyed class reiterates the series’ inherently old-fashioned nature.

Another more minor example of this old-fashioned outlook is Mme. de Grand-Air’s objection to the new holiday makers’ arrival. Her vehement dislike of modern dances has already been noted by Languereau in a previous album,²¹⁷ and it seems that her view has not changed. The group leave without questioning her objection to what is a fairly normal, though modern, holiday pastime, implying that the author agrees with her viewpoint. Fatherhood may have changed him in some ways, but not all.

Les Bonnes Idées de Bécassine : Loulotte Learns Her Place

Les Bonnes Idées de Bécassine (1926) is one of the series’ most ‘local’ albums, in that it is set almost entirely within Mme. de Grand-Air’s Paris apartment, and the main characters barely stray from it: the furthest away point reached is Rue Drouot on the other side of the river Seine. In contrast to Bécassine’s previous roving adventures, here she is kept in Paris, effectively under duress.

At the Marquise’s house in Roses-Sur-Loire, Bécassine becomes aware that many visiting family members of Mme. de Grand-Air, who had previously been friendly towards her, have become distant; for example using *vouvoient* instead of addressing her with the more familiar *tu*.²¹⁸ In addition, the Marquise’s previous openness with Bécassine has given way to coldness and formality: conversations stop when she walks into a room.²¹⁹ This new coldness also extends to Loulotte, as she is either ignored,²²⁰ or seen as an annoyance: Mme. de Grand-Air prevents her from playing with younger Grand-Airs, telling Bécassine, ‘Gardez-la dans votre chambre; elle va nous encore assourdir et il est inutile qu’elle soit

²¹⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i), p. 5.

²¹⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (k), p. 5.

²¹⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (k), p. 5.

²²⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (k), p. 5.

constamment avec la famille'.²²¹ Thus Bécassine is obliged to remove a protesting Loulotte ('Bébé veut jouer avec les autres'),²²² upsetting them both.

Overhearing conversations between the Marquise and one guest, the Baronne Kiné, it becomes clear to Bécassine that Loulotte's presence in the household is becoming strangely problematic. Once the visitors leave, the Marquise resumes her previously warm relationship with the child and with Bécassine, although the atmosphere is still tense, as she remarks '[Cette enfant] devient insupportable. Si cela continue, je ne pourrai la garder avec moi'.²²³ Madame informs Bécassine—though she has already guessed—that Baronne Kiné has asked the Marquise to hold the wedding of Baron Kiné's daughter Yolande at Roses-Sur-Loire. Bécassine is initially happy, until she is told that everyone, bar Loulotte – and thus, Bécassine – will be attending. Initially blaming lack of space, Madame admits that it is the bride who objects to Loulotte's presence as she is not a blood relative, adding that the Baronne believes the Marquise should place Loulotte in an orphanage rather than provide privilege to which Loulotte is not entitled.

In reaction to this, we see Bécassine lose her temper with the Marquise for the first time, in defence of the child:

Madame me permettra de dire toute ma pensée. La vraie raison, c'est pas la place, c'est qu'on a monté la tête à Madame contre nous, et celle qui a fait ce vilain coup-là, je le devine, c'est Mme la Baronne Kiné [...] Eh bien, si Madame [place Loulotte dans un orphelinat], elle nous chassera toutes les deux, car, plutôt que de me séparer de ma petite, j'aimerais mieux être la dernière des laveuses de vaisselle dans son orphelinat.²²⁴

The Marquise assures her that 'rien n'est décidé'; it is apparent that all of the house servants were aware of the situation and now feel free to express their sorrow to Bécassine; the housemaid, Marie, tells her to make herself indispensable to the household and to find ways to convince Madame de Grand-

²²¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (k), p. 5.

²²² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (k), p. 5.

²²³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (k), p. 9.

²²⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (k), p. 19.

Air to keep her and Loulotte (the *bonnés idées* of the title), while the Marquise and the rest of the household leave Paris for the wedding.

Left alone with Loulotte, two elderly, ineffectual domestics and a long list of precious heirlooms she must not break, Bécassine attempts to run the house but is hindered by a run of bad luck including illness, incompetency on the part of her replacement housekeeper (leading to the breakage of the prohibited items) and the uselessness of the schemes she thinks up to justify her employment. Eventually the Marquise returns from the wedding, having fallen out with Mme. la Baronne.²²⁵ The disagreement also has the effect of ending her plans to place Loulotte in an orphanage, and the status quo is restored.

Outsiders Together

On the most basic level *Les Bonnes Idées de Bécassine* is about exclusion. Expanding on Mme. de Grand-Air's comment in *Bécassine Nourrice* that Loulotte is 'destinée à une condition modeste',²²⁶ it takes it to its logical conclusion. However, after the previous albums featuring Loulotte had been very positive towards the child, the decision taken to produce a story which is relentlessly negative except for a farcical midsection is noteworthy. It places the author in an unusual position as the book seems to both support the behaviour of the aristocracy and, simultaneously, sympathise with Bécassine and her sorrow.

On the one hand Caumery is merely continuing with the albums' previous ideological line (in favour of social conformity and the upper classes), and thus implicitly supports the removal of Loulotte from the Grand-Air family environment. In previous albums, the aristocracy have usually but not always been paragons of intelligence and virtue, and nothing overtly negates this in *Les Bonnes Idées*. Conversely, this is perhaps the most obvious example of an album in which the aristocracy (particularly Baronne Kiné, but also the Marquise) comes across badly. The Baronne is the villain of the story, scheming to get her own way; her obsession with family lineage is shown in her name (i.e. '[de] qui

²²⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (k), p. 62.

²²⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i), p. 17.

né?') and her repeated remarks about Loulotte's parentage: 'Loulotte, n'est-ce pas?...Mais son nom de famille...Loulotte quoi? Loulotte qui? Loulotte née qui?'²²⁷

The Marquise is portrayed negatively in a more subtle way. She is, as always, the *ne plus ultra* of fitting aristocratic behaviour. Hence, when guests request that Loulotte be excluded from the wedding she complies, because conventionally only aristocratic stock would attend. However, her unwillingness to bend convention for a child who is legally hers comes across as unfeeling at best; similarly her seeming inability or unwillingness to defend Loulotte's right to attendance shows her in a very unflattering light. The reader is left with the impression that there is nobody in Loulotte's immediate legal family or environment who is willing to care for her or her interests; even in more positive albums the Marquise treats her primarily as an amusement. *Les Bonnes Idées* shows how quick and willing she is to cast the child aside when she becomes an inconvenience.

Beyond this, Mme de Grand-Air is also portrayed as weak: easily swayed by family members out to manipulate her, valuing social norms over the feelings of her adopted daughter and her most loyal employee. Even taking the most charitable view and assuming that the Marquise was perhaps herself manipulated and her guests forced her hand, the reader must conclude that she handles the situation very badly on an emotional level, treating Bécassine and Loulotte very harshly both while she is surrounded by family members and after the wedding arrangements have been made.

Bécassine's upset is palpable, not just for Loulotte, but for herself. Bécassine is well used to being excluded: she alludes to the other children in Clocher-les-Bécasses taunting her for her stupidity on several occasions. She is also accustomed to being the 'odd one out', an observer of the noble world she works in. However, by the time of *Les Bonnes Idées* she has worked for the Marquise for nearly thirty years: most of her life. On a practical level, Bécassine is more at home in the Marquise's properties than in Clocher-les-Bécasses by this point. By excluding her from life with the Grand-Airs at the wedding, Mme. de Grande-Air effectively excludes her from her own adopted familial unit. Bécassine has invested so much of her life in the well-being and smooth running

²²⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (k), p. 13.

of the Grand-Air household that she has very little to fall back on if she is dismissed: cast out from the Marquise's protection, she would have nothing.

Also left with nothing outside the Grand-Air framework is Loulotte. While Bécassine at least would have surviving family to return to, the child is rootless. It is rarely mentioned that Loulotte is also *bretonne*,²²⁸ at least in origin. Unlike Bécassine, she is seemingly unaware of her cultural background; even if she returned to her *pays*, she lacks the cultural awareness to integrate back into the peasantry. She lives in an aristocratic environment but is from peasant stock: *Les Bonnes Idées de Bécassine* is the closest she comes to being returned to her 'rightful' situation.

Bécassine au Pays Basque

The next album in the series is another in which the plot is merely a thin motivation for the group to travel to another region of France with a culture different from their own. Mme. de Grand-Air becomes unwell on a day out, and after protests from Bécassine, sees two doctors. One, Dr Guéritout, a fashionable charlatan, and her own doctor, Dr. Sandrogue. Having dismissed Guéritout's expensive treatment, she consults Sandrogue who advises sea air. Bécassine, Loulotte and the Marquise thus set off for the *Pays basque*. They invite Proey-Minans, who has recently founded 'L'Académie des Pays de France', as he has become interested in local customs and folklore of the French provinces. The trip is an opportunity for him to carry out an ethnographical study. The album's basic plot is the juxtaposition of M. Proey-Minans' expectations of life in the Basque Country and his disappointment when it becomes clear that for the majority of the inhabitants, traditional ways of life are no longer important, as their society modernises. While Caumery's treatment of an interest in regionalism is condescending, the fact that he acknowledges its existence at all is significant and may mark a development in his thinking.

²²⁸ Caumery & J. P. Pinchon (i), p. 6.

Mme. de Grand-Air, Loulotte, M. Proey-Minans and Loulotte stay in a hotel where silence reigns supreme and conversation between residents is rare:²²⁹ this is explained by the fact that most of the residents are English and, as such in Caumery's fixed view (cf. Major Tacy-Turn), reticent and prone to talking about the weather.²³⁰ In addition to this, most of the staff are foreign, thus rendering the hotel useless for the purposes of Proey-Minans' study: not only is nobody Basque, nobody is able to tell him anything about Basque culture either. Loulotte and Bécassine also struggle with this environment, as the insistence on silence renders caring for a small child difficult. Madame, however, finds it enjoyable, taking up the game of Mah Jong with a trio of English aristocrats,²³¹ and telling Proey-Minans that she will spend most of her time playing the game rather than taking walks or excursions. Therefore, he leaves the hotel and dressed in traditional Basque costume in the vain hope of passing himself off as a local, the better to conduct his 'fly-on-the-wall' research, takes a carriage to the nearby village of Loratzean, where he will continue his study.

Bécassine and Loulotte go to visit him the next Sunday, finding him surrounded by friends he has made; although initially viewed with suspicion as an outsider, particularly wearing the local dress, Proey-Minans' friendly nature has endeared him to the locals. He has begun learning the guitar, and has been introduced to the game of pelote. He takes Bécassine and Loulotte to watch a match, before the group attend Mass in a church very different from their own. After the Mass, Proey-Minans' new friends attempt to teach Bécassine how to play pelote: she tries and predictably fails, interrupting a political meeting with her attempt, as the ball hits a speaker on the head.²³²

Returning to the hotel in St-Jean-de-Luz, Bécassine has a chance meeting with her old friend Zidore, who until recently was working as a swimming instructor; however, she is disappointed to learn that he was unhappy with his work conditions and has given up the job. She believes that it will now be many years more until she meets him again. However, when the Marquise, Bécassine, and

²²⁹ For example, Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (l) *Bécassine au Pays Basque* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1925) 1980 edition, p. 27.

²³⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (l), p. 29.

²³¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (l), p. 30.

²³² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (l), p. 46.

Loulotte attend a bullfight, Zidore reappears as a new, if rather incompetent, bullfighter. This ends the story, as the group are summoned back to Paris by various events, and a delegation from Loratzean sees them off with local gifts, including a pelote bat for Bécassine and honorary citizenship of Loratzean for M. Proey-Minans.

Les Aventures de Bécassine as Ethnographical Document

As previously noted, *Bécassine au Pays Basque* is effectively a snapshot of the group taken out of their home environment and placed in a ‘foreign’ French region. The album is full of ‘local colour’. At least once M. Proey-Minans arrives in Loratzean, and features pelote, on a small and on a large scale, Basque music and song,²³³ banquets,²³⁴ and admiration of local geography.²³⁵ While the album resembles the previous *Bécassine alpiniste* in scarcely advancing the Bécassine narrative, it serves more fully the function of a quasi-guidebook to regions on France’s borders for young readers. Its viewpoint on the Basque Country is interesting: as previously asserted, much of the album’s plot derives from M. Proey-Minans’ disappointment at his holiday’s lack of Basque features. Even in St-Jean-de-Luz, where outside the hotel there are still women in mantillas and carts pulled by cows,²³⁶ he feels there is a lack of traditional culture. Everyone in the quasi-familial Grand-Air unit (bar the Marquise, who hardly appears) feels ill-at-ease both in the hotel and in St-Jean-de-Luz (see for example the constant silence), but things liven up considerably when the three are in Lorantzean, land of ‘real’ Basque traditions.

I would argue that M. Proey-Minans is, in this album, a mouthpiece for the views of Maurice Languereau. In *Bécassine au Pays basque*, local traditions are shown overwhelmingly positively. Every inhabitant of the village with whom the group forms relationships is shown in a positive light as a skilled sportsman, talented musician, or friendly company. Even on a religious level, the rural people are implicitly praised: their different, more conservative form of Mass, where the women are veiled and the sexes are kept separate, is described in positive

²³³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (l), p. 36.

²³⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (l), p. 62.

²³⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (l), p. 36.

²³⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (l), p. 22.

terms. In addition to this rustic difference, the episode at Mass also underlines the rural Basques' piety. It is explicitly stated that 'on est bon chrétien au pays basque', and heavily implied that this piety is laudable. The implication that the 'traditional' villagers are preferable is clear. Interestingly, though traditional Breton piety is also well-known, Caumery never shows Breton religious practice in the same overt manner as in *Bécassine au pays Basque*. Ignoring what was at the time of publication an important element of Breton regional culture is significant, and perhaps implies an unwillingness on the part of Caumery to depict Bretons in an unequivocally positive light, as 'good Christians' like the Basques of Loratzean.

There is some implication that villagers are backward and insular, harking back to the series' treatment of the people of Clocher-les-Bécasses: M. Proey-Minans is originally regarded by them 'non sans méfiance'.²³⁷ He wins them over by being friendly, but also by buying lots of sweets for local children from the local sweet-seller, earning him the latter's friendship; there is a slight implication that the villagers are mercenary. In addition, it is asserted that 'Personne à Loratzean ne savait'²³⁸ what an Academy was, when they are made aware of M. Proey-Minans' studies. The village notables consider him 'un savant'²³⁹ and are honoured that he has come to study their way of life. Here there is another clear implication of the dim-wittedness of provincial people. Their gratitude to M. Proey-Minans is also slightly questionable: he is shown in an inherent position of privilege, inherent because he is an urban (Parisian) outsider who has who has deigned to interact with those below him.

Exoticism and the Start of Decline: *Bécassine, son oncle et leurs amis*

Bécassine, son oncle et leurs amis (1926) is an interesting example of a Bécassine album as it combines several of the themes present over the series' lifespan into one book. It is also the beginning of another phase of the series: the household's slow slide into a decline from which it will prove unable to recover.

²³⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (l), p. 36.

²³⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (l), p. 37.

²³⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (l), p. 37.

The basic plot of the album revolves around the Paris Exposition of 1925. Bécassine and Loulotte are dismayed to learn that they will not be departing on holiday that year, owing to the Marquise's apparently straitened financial circumstances. However, Bécassine then learns of the important international exhibition of modern and industrial decorative arts being held in Paris that summer, which is still under construction. Loulotte and Bécassine decide that they will see the world as it comes to Paris, rather than leaving Paris to see new places. They then pass the next months watching the exposition being constructed between the esplanade of the Invalides and the approaches of the Grand and Petit Palais, exploring the site when possible. It is suggested to Bécassine that she becomes a guide for the exposition, allowing her free entry. After hesitation, she decides to accept, whereupon she receives a letter from her uncle Corentin, re-elected mayor of Clocher-les-Bécasses. He wishes to bring a group of villagers to see the exposition, and asks Bécassine if she will be their guide, if the Marquise gives her permission. The group arrive in Paris, and Bécassine takes them round the exhibits, with many mishaps and incidents along the way.

As previously noted, the album brings together numerous 'threads' present in previous albums and consolidates pre-existing themes. For example, the presence of the Breton group with their overt admission that they need Bécassine, 'débrouillarde comme une vraie Parisienne' to guide them in the 'foreign' metropolis allows the author to indulge once more his penchant for expressing stereotypical views of the peasants. They are portrayed making themselves conspicuous with a loud rallying cry in the city (a combination of 'Clocher-les-Bécasses' and the noise made by their pigs),²⁴⁰ unable to cross a busy road,²⁴¹ attempting to buy expensive jewellery and expressing shock at the price of 35,000 francs, which could buy fifty or sixty pigs in Brittany,²⁴² and being avaricious and grasping.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Caumery, J.P. Pinchon (m), *Bécassine, son oncle et leurs amis*, (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1926) 1976 edition, p. 36.

²⁴¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (m), p. 40.

²⁴² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (m), pp. 43-44.

²⁴³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (m), p. 55.

Social change is present in the financial affairs of both Mme. de Grand-Air and those of the peasants. As the Marquise finds herself in difficulty, the villagers of Clocher-les-Bécasses have had a stroke of good fortune, as the price of pork has risen significantly, meaning that the whole village has now converted to pig farming.²⁴⁴ This is in contrast to the village during Bécassine's childhood, where pig farming was carried out by a struggling minority. Their new-found wealth allows villagers to buy new, expensive clothes, and to consider travelling further afield (hence the trip to Paris). But, as shown repeatedly in the series, money alone does not confer social acceptance; even with their increased outgoings, the villagers are still backward, boorish and at odds with the urban environment around them. Despite their prosperity they are still looked down upon.

In addition to the negative portrayal of the Bretons in general, the ignorance of Bécassine is particularly obvious in *Son oncle et leurs amis*. She is repeatedly made to look a fool and shown to be ignorant; an example concerns the Paris Exposition itself. She has not heard of it when she is first told, because she 'ne lit jamais les journaux',²⁴⁵ so that she 'ne connaît rien des événements courants'.²⁴⁶ She is taken in by a joker who shows her round the site of the exposition, believing him when he tells her that towers have been built to imprison non-paying visitors,²⁴⁷ and that certain countries' pavilions are painted in colours to match national temperaments.²⁴⁸ She never sees through the joke, taking in good faith the man's business card (which announces him as 'Guy Lafarce, éditeur au journal *Le Pince sans rire*'),²⁴⁹ and storing it for future reference.²⁵⁰ It falls to Loulotte to save the tour group from mishap, instead of Bécassine. Even her fellow villagers make fun of her: the old man Lanec, usually mean with his money, insists on the party going to an upmarket Hindu restaurant, telling the others not to worry about the cost. When the bill for a staggering total of 475 francs comes, he tries to make Bécassine pay, as she has mis-spelt a word on the poster advertising her guide services. This error means

²⁴⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (m), p. 24.

²⁴⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (m), p. 14.

²⁴⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (m), p. 14.

²⁴⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (m), p. 21.

²⁴⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (m), p. 22.

²⁴⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (m), p. 22.

²⁵⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (m), p. 23.

that she has accidentally included food in her fee of 2 francs per person.²⁵¹ His joke leads to the group leaving Paris early, and indirectly to her uncle giving up his mayoral position.²⁵²

The central role of the 1925 Paris Exposition provides an interesting perspective on the position of characters usually considered the ‘other’. Bécassine, usually portrayed as the ‘other’ in contrast to bona fide Parisians, is here considered a Parisian by her Breton friends and relatives, elevating her from a position as an outsider to a part of the Parisian establishment. In this album, the position of other is given to the Breton visitors, who are very clearly outsiders; not just in dress, similar to Bécassine, but also in mannerisms and expectations. It appears that despite her continued ignorance, Bécassine has learnt Parisian ways, in the eyes of her friends and relatives at least, despite her insistence on her Breton identity.

However, the exposition means that the Breton group – the internal other – are deliberately examining the external other in a formal setting. This latter other exists both in the wider form of foreign countries’ international pavilions and the more Parisian setting of the group seeing items they have never seen and do not understand the significance of (as in Lanec’s attempts to buy priceless jewellery, above). Where then, does this place them? Where do they belong if they represent the other, but to a lesser degree than another foreign entity? As French citizens they might expect to be considered more favourably than the outright foreigner, but they are not, as is illustrated by the episode in the Hindu restaurant. The portrayal of the tour group in the album shows that attitudes towards Brittany in 1926, roughly halfway through the series, have not changed particularly despite a generally more rounded depiction of Bécassine herself.

L’Automobile de Bécassine: Self-Empowerment and Self-Deprivation For the Greater Good

L’Automobile de Bécassine (1927) is a simple album, mainly lighthearted and comedy-based. It does, however, contain a very overt illustration of Mme. de Grand-Air’s financial problems: she rents out most of her large home in Paris to

²⁵¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (m), p. 55.

²⁵² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (m), p. 62.

an American man, symbolizing the incursion of ‘new money’ into the heart of the Marquise’s world, and moves into an apartment in the remaining part of the building. She also lets most of her domestic staff go, including her car and driver, meaning she now has to take the metro and mix with the hoi polloi.²⁵³ With touching loyalty Bécassine laments this change, comparing her former life with the Marquise to a Paradise which has become inaccessible.²⁵⁴ With this as background, the rest of the story follows Bécassine and Loulotte as Bécassine enters and wins a competition run by a large jam company. Bécassine’s prize is a brand new car (although in reality it has been identified as a 1923 Excelsior ADEX Type C Torpédo),²⁵⁵ or the equivalent cash value. After deliberation she decides to take the car, and begins to learn how to drive with M. Bricole, a taxi driver and inventor she met during the war. She tactfully keeps her new acquisition a secret from Mme. de Grand-Air until she has passed her driving test, thereafter taking the Marquise on excursions,²⁵⁶ and eventually on holiday,²⁵⁷ with the help of M. Bricole and Loulotte. While on holiday, the Marquise tells the party that she has won a court case, which will ease her financial problems.²⁵⁸ She offers to buy Bécassine’s car from her, employ another driver and let Bécassine drive it whenever she wishes; Bécassine accepts, both restoring Mme. de Grand-Air’s transport and gaining a healthy cash injection for herself.

Superficially, therefore, *L’Automobile de Bécassine* is a positive album: all’s well that ends well. In addition, it also shows Bécassine learning a new skill, namely the ability to drive which many women of her background would not have at the time of publication. Winning the car is Bécassine’s ticket to freedom: her new autonomous transport combined with her more privileged employment as Loulotte’s nanny rather than a general servant gives her the opportunity to spend more of her time as she wishes.

²⁵³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (n) *L’Automobile de Bécassine* (Paris, Gautier-Languereau, 1927) 1992 edition, p. 37.

²⁵⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (n), p. 5.

²⁵⁵ See <http://www.gtdreams.com/mondial_auto_bd.php> [Accessed 10 September 2015].

²⁵⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (n), p. 51.

²⁵⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (n), p. 52.

²⁵⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (n), p. 63.

However, Bécassine does not take the opportunity presented to her. Instead she willingly gives up her car, and expresses joy at the cash she receives in return because now 'Loulotte aura un dot'.²⁵⁹ She takes nothing for herself: with the value of the car (twenty -five thousand francs) she could even leave service and lead a more independent life, and yet Bécassine chooses to give up her freedom for the Marquise and relinquishes her money to Loulotte. The gift of Loulotte's dowry is more understandable, as Bécassine has spent time worrying about what will become of Loulotte—her de facto adopted child—when she marries, especially if the Marquise is impoverished. Conversely, her wish to reinstate the Marquise's privileged lifestyle by giving up her own opportunities is another example of Bécassine's continued servile nature in the face of her betters.

L'Automobile is not the first example of Bécassine having the chance to change her situation but declining; as previously discussed, she also returned to the status quo of domestic service after World War One, despite showing fairly serious doubts about her wish to continue life as a servant.²⁶⁰ This example is, however, the first time where she makes an overtly conscious decision to stay in service; previously she had been more pushed into returning to Mme. de Grand-Air by circumstance, rather than desire.²⁶¹

Here she actively chooses to keep her low socioeconomic status. Why? Her motives are not made explicit, but given her overarching sense of social convention and sense of duty to her employer it can be inferred that either she believes it is not proper for someone of her social class to own a car, or she believes the Marquise is more deserving of the privilege of the vehicle. While this may show her in a flattering light from Caumery's point of view, it also reinforces her lowly status in relation to those around her as a peasant, as a Breton, as a woman.

I would argue that *L'Automobile* is an overt example of Charles Forsdick's assertion that over the timeline of the series Bécassine becomes a 'patent anachronism'.²⁶² In this album the world continues changing at an ever-faster

²⁵⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (n), p. 63.

²⁶⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (f), p. 63.

²⁶¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (g,) p. 6.

²⁶² Forsdick, p. 28.

rate, and yet once again Bécassine chooses to remain in the same situation and environment, even as she gets left behind by society. Outwith the Grand-Air household, the world with which Bécassine interacts is full of innovation (see for example M. Bricole's change of occupation from *fiacre* driver to motor taxi operator and driving instructor) and change (e.g. the modernised dress of the vast majority of characters, even Mme. de Grand-Air). Everyone else, even her staid, traditional mistress, is changing with the times. A car is the one of the newest, most modern elements of 1920s society, and Bécassine's effective rejection of it symbolises her larger rejection of modern society and her refusal to become an active part in it. As Loulotte grows older and becomes a modern young girl, the contrast between Bécassine and her charge will become more and more marked: *L'Automobile de Bécassine* gives us a glimpse of the anachronistic relic of yesteryear that the Bretonne will become. Just as her weekly home, *La Semaine de Suzette*, withered and died after falling into obsolescence in the 1960s, Bécassine's attempts to 'force differentiation or forge authenticity'²⁶³ will lead her ever further towards irrelevance.

Bécassine's Last Decade: Loulotte To The Fore

As *Les Aventures de Bécassine* entered its last decade of uninterrupted publication, several albums shifted the focus of the series from the eponymous heroine onto Loulotte. While previous albums had featured Loulotte prominently, numerous late albums are 'Les Aventures de Bécassine' in name only, featuring Bécassine in a minor, supporting role as part of 'Les Aventures de Loulotte'.

The type of story published also changes: from ones describing wider society for a young readership to very insular narratives, filled with small events which do not advance the series. This type of album forms the majority of the 1930s output, though there are some exceptions, e.g. *Bécassine à Clocher-les-Bécasses*, *Bécassine en croisière*, and to a certain extent *Bécassine cherche un emploi*.

The function of the albums which have Loulotte as the star appears to be more overtly moralising than the others, extolling either the virtues of Catholic

²⁶³ Forsdick, p. 25.

institutions, physical activity and collective identity (*Bécassine fait du scoutisme*) or the importance of obedience and correct social behaviour for young ladies (e.g. *Bécassine au pensionnat*). The stories, while instructive, are less exciting, and tend to have weaker, more pedestrian plots; in his 1991 study of the series, Raymond Vitruve leaves the last three albums (*Bécassine cherche un emploi*, *Les Méaventures de Bécassine*, *Bécassine en roulette*) out of his otherwise exhaustive overview, since they are shorter and ‘moins intéressant’.²⁶⁴

Bécassine au Pensionnat

Bécassine au pensionnat (1929) features Loulotte as she reaches the age of seven. After being caught in a sudden storm while on holiday, Mme. de Grand-Air, her friend Mme. de Bonaccueil, Loulotte and Bécassine all come down with bad colds. While the household is recuperating, Loulotte becomes increasingly needy and demanding,²⁶⁵ with the situation eventually culminating in a severe tantrum where the girl breaks her doll.²⁶⁶ Following this, Mme. de Grand-Air decides to send her to a boarding school for young girls in order to improve her behaviour and her ‘défauts des enfants gâtés’.²⁶⁷ Bécassine is upset by this idea, owing both to Loulotte’s perceived loneliness and to her own redundancy in the Grand-Air household, should Loulotte leave. As she cannot bear to be separated from her beloved charge, a plan is hatched to allow Bécassine to accompany Loulotte as she becomes a boarder. Bécassine becomes part of the boarding school’s staff, ‘adjoindue à la direction’. She is given the position of warden, and is ostensibly a person of authority to whom the pupils must defer.²⁶⁸ However, several of the pupils ignore this instruction and treat Bécassine with disdain, with one girl notably referring to her as ‘ma fille’ as one would traditionally address a servant.²⁶⁹ Other girls also bully Loulotte, mainly for her adoptive, non-noble background²⁷⁰ and her closeness to Bécassine.

²⁶⁴ Vitruve, p. 54.

²⁶⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (o), *Bécassine au Pensionnat* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1929), 1980 edition, p. 8.

²⁶⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (o), p. 11.

²⁶⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (o), p. 11.

²⁶⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (o), p. 23.

²⁶⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (o), p. 37.

²⁷⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (o), p. 38.

Very little occurs over the course of the album: there are diversions into anecdotes about the lives of minor characters (the cook Zélie,²⁷¹ the foreign pupil Inès,²⁷² the art teacher M. Lajoie²⁷³) but the main characters of Bécassine and Loulotte play relatively minor roles once they arrive at the school: the album's most dramatic moment is provided by an aborted parental visit to Inès.²⁷⁴ Bécassine and Loulotte's departure and return to Mme. de Grand-Air is similarly low-key: following an outbreak of whooping cough, the school is closed and pupils sent home. The purpose of *Bécassine au pensionnat* seems to be multi-faceted. Primarily, it serves as a warning against bad behaviour: Loulotte is a spirited young girl, and concern has been building over her conduct for some time. Bécassine in particular has noted Loulotte's unconventional behaviour several times in previous albums. A spell in boarding school, then, appears to be the culminative consequence of years of minor misbehaviour: as such Loulotte's experience of bullying can be seen as part of this punishment,

However, the album is also an instructive portrayal of communal living under authority and its advantages, particularly for children such as Loulotte who do not have siblings or experience of living with others their own age. It also reinforces the importance of submission to one's superiors (the school's mistresses) and discourages hurting others, even in revenge: Loulotte and her friends attempt to take revenge on her bully, but instead are found out and both parties are punished.

For the purposes of this thesis, *Bécassine au pensionnat* appears at first glance to be of little relevance, given Bécassine's very minor role in events. However, upon closer inspection it can be seen that despite Bécassine's anger when she is overtly denigrated (see the 'ma fille' incident above), there are still incidents when the author subtly undermines her. She is continuously servile and readily admits her own stupidity; for example, she declares herself 'ashamed' 'd'avoir tant parlé devant des personnes tellement plus savantes que moi',²⁷⁵ even

²⁷¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (o), p. 27.

²⁷² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (o), p. 40.

²⁷³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (o), p. 53.

²⁷⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (o), p. 62.

²⁷⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (o), p. 35.

though the reason for her speaking was to accept a compliment, self-effacingly underplaying her own contribution.

She is also shown to be less intelligent than the pupils of the school, the oldest of whom are aged eleven: in addition to the children making fun of her, Caumery shows her struggling to play the girls' games. She is hit during ball games, as she is unable to stop in time, always loses at blind man's bluff, and never wins while playing charades.²⁷⁶ Since the album is one of those written entirely in the first person, it is implied that Bécassine accepts her intellectual ineptitude. It is she who calls herself 'maladroite',²⁷⁷ who admits that in guessing games she 'devinai[t] rien du tout'.²⁷⁸ That Bécassine expresses these self-criticisms lends legitimacy to the author's low opinion of her.

Thus, although *Bécassine au pensionnat* is in many ways different to previous Bécassine albums in focus and style, it is also at its heart a classic example; the Breton tropes that are ever-present from the very beginning of Bécassine's life are barely attenuated. Although by the 1930s Bécassine may be used to the Marquise treating her kindly, the negative perception of Bretons remains the same. She is still considered stupid, even if the authors now temper their criticism by giving Bécassine positive attributes. Even as the albums diverge from previous formulae, the constant element linking them remains ridicule of Bécassine.

Bécassine en Aéroplane

Bécassine en aéroplane (1930) is one of the few albums which has no real discernible moral or instructive quality. Published in 1930, it is one of the series' weakest albums and is of limited use in study of *Les Aventures de Bécassine's* depiction of Brittany.

Bécassine and Loulotte are left alone in the house as Mme. de Grand-Air goes to visit a friend's château. Reading the paper one day, Bécassine finds a wedding notice announcing 'Les personnes qui n'auraient pas reçu de faire-part sont

²⁷⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (o), p. 44.

²⁷⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (o), p. 44.

²⁷⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (o), p. 44.

priées de considérer cet avis comme une invitation'.²⁷⁹ She takes this to mean that "je suis invitée à un mariage...chez des gens que je connais pas".²⁸⁰ Oblivious to Loulotte's incredulity, Bécassine prepares to attend the wedding which involves a trip in her former car, Fringante.²⁸¹ On the journey they meet Lolo, a young circus performer who is also serving as musician at the wedding reception. They become very friendly. The trio then arrive in the village in time for the wedding, Bécassine learns, of Gaston Delair and his fiancée Mlle. Dussol. All goes well until they are spotted by the groom's father who interrogates them as to why they have attended his son's wedding. Bécassine explains that she took the newspaper announcement as an open invitation, whereupon the assembled crowd laugh at her mistake, much to Loulotte's shame.²⁸² However, M. Delair Senior generously invites them to attend the reception. As Bécassine wishes the couple luck in their marriage, the bride, in tears, tells Bécassine that 'j'en ai bien besoin'.²⁸³

At the reception, the new Mme. Delair takes Bécassine aside and tells her that she is terrified of flying, which is an issue given how her husband and his family enjoy and have a long history of air travel, in balloons and in planes: 'Lui, c'est un Delair, et moi, j'ai une peur atroce parce que je suis une Dussol!' ²⁸⁴ Bécassine attempts to reassure Mme. Delair by telling of her experience of flight with Major Tacy-Turn during WW1. The young woman then asks her to ride in the plane with her, so she feels less scared: Bécassine agrees, and so she and Loulotte accompany the couple on their journey to the airfield, where they are obliged to leave Lolo and join the flight. Everything goes smoothly, until Bécassine discovers Lolo hiding on the plane, so as not to leave Bécassine. There is then a mechanical fault, and the group make an emergency landing, frightening the young bride once again. The fault is rectified, and the group set off again, with Bécassine serving as guide for the pilot. Stopping for lunch in a village, the plane lands in a field, killing a pig. The farmer who owns the field

²⁷⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (p), *Bécassine en aéroplane* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1930), 1980 edition, p.7.

²⁸⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (p), p. 6.

²⁸¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (p), p. 8.

²⁸² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (p), p. 22.

²⁸³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (p), p. 23.

²⁸⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (p), p. 27.

demands compensation for his animal, becoming increasingly aggressive. The group manage to appease him, despite his inflated financial demands, and enter the village where they find a visiting circus. By coincidence the circus is run by Lolo's long-lost parents. In order to pay the farmer for his lost pig, the group decide to put on a show in the circus and give him the money they earn. They then depart for Paris, but approaching Chartres Bécassine spots Mme. de Grand-Air's car on the road. Bécassine and Loulotte land to meet her. The Marquise is surprised and displeased to see her servant and her child descend from a plane with a group of strangers. She admonishes Bécassine for risking Loulotte's safety and for attending a wedding to which she was not invited. However, she agrees to fly back to Paris with Bécassine, and the group return home.

As previously asserted, *Bécassine en aéroplane* is a very light addition to the series. It does not change the direction of the series in any way, and most of the events are improbable, meant for entertainment only. There are only a few elements relevant to the question of depiction of Brittany, the most important being that the entire album is based on one of Bécassine's mistakes. None of the events would have taken place if Bécassine had not misunderstood the newspaper wedding notice. Her mistake is a 'classic' Bécassine error, harking back to her first ever appearance. Here too, she misunderstands the nuance of the French language, does what she believes to be the right thing, and calamity ensues (interrogation by M. Delair and the consternation of Loulotte). The implication is the same as ever: Bécassine is stupid and marks herself as 'other' by her incomprehension of something an intelligent French person would understand. She is saved by the kindness of others as M. Delair Senior lets her attend the reception and M. Delair Junior allows her to travel in the plane with his new wife.

She is also mocked for her stupidity by the crowd at the wedding, which notably includes not only her social betters – the bona fide wedding guests – but also other peasants. This is significant because it suggests that she is not being mocked for stupidity linked to her lowly social status; if that were so, then the other peasants would sympathise with her. The mockery of other peasants implies that the source of her stupidity is rather her Breton-ness, and as Bécassine is, 'la Bretagne à elle-même', her stupidity is applied to all her compatriots by extension. The only overtly positive action taken by Bécassine is

her agreement to accompany Mme. Delair on the plane and her later help in navigating for the pilot. But this positive action, and the bravery during the war which preceded it, is swiftly forgotten. It is also notable that despite her past experience of air travel – where, unusually, she did not endanger herself or others with her stupidity – her role in this flight is not an active one, barring a short period where she navigates. Her role is passive, serving as a sort of talisman for the frightened bride.

Apart from these few examples, there is little of interest in *Bécassine en aéroplane*; the album lacks one major theme, instead using smaller issues (long-lost family, the exoticism of itinerant circus performers, society weddings, etc.) to form a single narrative. Bécassine's stupidity is one of the few elements linking the album to the rest of the series.

***Bécassine fait du scoutisme*: Loulotte and Bécassine Do Their Bit For Catholic Institutions**

Bécassine fait du scoutisme (1931) is a typical album of the 1930s in that it features Bécassine only in a minor supporting role. Though Bécassine's name is on the cover, the indisputable star of the story is Loulotte; there is a noticeable trend around this time towards stories in which Bécassine stops being the focus of the narrative, instead fading into the background and serving mostly to facilitate activities undertaken by Loulotte. This is first evident in *Bécassine au pensionnat*, where Bécassine moves to boarding school to literally serve Loulotte in a domestic role. The reduction in prominence for Bécassine allows the *Bécassine* series to bring Loulotte's character development to the fore and makes the series more relatable, as Loulotte 'grows up' at the same time as readers.

After a chance meeting with one of her friends, who has been transformed from mischief-maker into exemplary young man by membership in the Scouts, Loulotte is gripped by desire to join the Jeannettes, the female equivalent of Scouts for her age group. Mme. de Grand-Air is unsure, troubled by the idea of 'allures garçonnières que nous voyons à trop de petites filles et de jeunes

filles'.²⁸⁵ After some discussion between the Marquise, M. Proey-Minans, who is fulsome in his praise of the organisation and a Jeanette *cheftaine*, who is passing by, she consents. Loulotte then prepares for entry into the Jeannettes, learning to recite her prayers, the Jeannette promise and complete basic tasks such as laying a table for two people and making up a parcel.

The rest of the album is then taken up with Loulotte's adventures with her Jeannette troop: describing the order of a meeting,²⁸⁶ with knitting, dances, exercise, stories and games; an invitation to a Jeannette camping and orienteering trip (which goes awry as Loulotte forgets the map to the campsite and she and Bécassine get lost). To the delight of everyone Mme. de Grand-Air, now converted to the cause, even invites the Jeannette troop to use a wing of her château as a dormitory and to camp in the grounds.

After *Bécassine fait du scoutisme*, Loulotte's membership of the Jeannettes is never mentioned in the series again, despite her fervent enthusiasm for the organization. As such, the album is not a major addition to *Les Aventures de Bécassine*. It functions rather as an advert for the French national scouting organisations, of which the Jeannettes were—and are—a wing. The album ties in with the narrative strand of 'Loulotte as exemplary child role model', if one disregards her infant tantrums and later misbehaviour. In much the same way that *Bécassine au pensionnat* was effectively *Loulotte goes to Boarding School*, *Bécassine fait du scoutisme* could be more effectively titled *Loulotte Joins The Brownies*. The positive attitude towards the organisation is understandable, given the links between the French Catholic Church and the Scouting organisations, particularly in Brittany where the movement first took root.

Scouting in France has a long and illustrious history, with many different independent organisations, leaving the French Scouting system particularly fragmented. Although it is not explicitly noted, it can be assumed that Loulotte joins the Guides de France, a Catholic scouting organisation founded in 1923 by Albertine Duhamel. The organisation was founded on the model of the Scouts de France, in order to offer a Catholic alternative to the Eclaireurs de France, the

²⁸⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (q), *Bécassine fait du scoutisme* (Paris : Gautier-Languereau, 1931) 1982 edition, p.13.

²⁸⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (q), p. 27.

French wing of Baden-Powell's non-denominational Boy Scouts. As in *Bécassine au pensionnat* the album is an example of collective youth activity that is rare in the series and in which Loulotte is seldom shown as participating. Loulotte's time in the Jeannettes brings noticeable benefits – new domestic skills, sustained contact with girls outwith her immediate social milieu – and no discernible negative influence, despite the Marquise's initial misgivings.²⁸⁷ Loulotte's involvement in a wider organisation for girls humanises her, increasing the likelihood of young female readers identifying with the character and increasing her usefulness as a tool for promotion of the publishers' ideals.

Bécassine aux bains de mer

A comedic, light hearted album, *Bécassine aux bains de mer* (1932) follows the Grand-Air trio as they travel to the seaside for their summer holiday, in the Hotel Splendide at Sablefin-sur-Mer. Loulotte (and Bécassine) make friends with a group of children also holidaying there; Bécassine learns to swim, and the children play a number of tricks on Bécassine and the imposing owner of the hotel, Charlemagne. Its main point of interest for the purpose of this thesis is the contrast between the Sablefin-sur-Mer portrayed in the early 1930s – in this album – and the town in the 1938 album *Les Méaventures de Bécassine*, where it is much changed and the circumstances of the hotel proprietor much straitened. The album serves to emphasise the changing world of the Grand-Airs and Bécassine, but otherwise is a minor addition to the series.

Bécassine dans la neige : Alpiniste, Again

Bécassine dans la neige (1933) follows the Grand-Air Christmas holidays in the Haute-Savoie, to which the group have travelled for the good of Loulotte. As will now be familiar, the album follows the formula of using a minor medical complaint as a pretext to justify a trip to a 'foreign' region of France in order to cure said complaint. The album is arguably even more formulaic than others, as it effectively recycles the setting of *Bécassine alpiniste*. The notable difference is that this time, Bécassine fails to learn to ski, rather than fails to be a

²⁸⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (q), p. 13.

competent hiker. The album also features the never-before-depicted event of Christmas. Apart from this there is little to distinguish the album. It follows the expected formulae and contains the usual tropes present in a mid-to-late series Bécassine album: the minor 'illness', the travel to a curative region, the appearance of M. Proey-Minans in the quasi-parental role for Loulotte, and the minor ridicule of Bécassine for her failure in new exploits. Both *Bécassine aux bains de mer* and *Bécassine dans la neige* are effectively recycled versions of previous albums, as noted. Combined with the other repeated plot points, these albums appear unimaginative in comparison to the more dynamic stories published in previous years. While there are arguably some positive aspects of repeating plot elements (positive reader reactions, for example), the reasons for such wholesale recycling of previous narratives are unknown. During the 1930s, the *Bécassine* stories do gradually become simpler in general and less engaging until the final album in 1939. The reference back to previous, familiar stories fits in well with this general slowing down of the narrative.

Bécassine prend des pensionnaires

Bécassine prend des pensionnaires (1934) includes both Loulotte-centric and ensemble elements in its plot. Loulotte is the impetus for all of the major events in the album, but, for most of the album, attention shifts to Bécassine and the minor characters. It is another holiday-based story. In short, Loulotte is rewarded for a strong academic performance with her choice of holiday destination; the Marquise thus takes her, Bécassine and new servant Mariette to a villa in Beaulieu-le-Lac. She then departs for a week, leaving the trio a large amount of cash as spending money. Bécassine asks Loulotte to hide a large portion of it, so that Bécassine will not overspend and it is not stolen. However, while hiding the money, Loulotte falls down the attic stairs, leading to concussion and memory loss; when Bécassine's money runs out, the group cannot find the rest. Mariette suspects a thief, and alerts the police, while Bécassine opens up the large villa to the town's tourists in order to make up their cash deficit. The group, now augmented by the inclusion of two tourists, spend a pleasant few days and Bécassine makes a substantial profit. The missing money is found by a local dog adopted by the visitors, upon which Mme. de Grand-Air returns, and after admonishing Bécassine for subletting a villa rented in her

name, takes the recovered money and places it in a savings account for Loulotte's dowry.

The album is full of low-level insults towards Bécassine and her intelligence, both self-inflicted and from others. Loulotte repeatedly plays up her governess' stupidity, for instance insulting her lack of geographical knowledge and her credulity.²⁸⁸ Bécassine herself admits her lack of ability in sciences²⁸⁹ and mathematics²⁹⁰ and refers to herself as 'inferior' to the relatives of Loulotte's classmates. She is servile, as is her custom, to an almost parodic level. The character remains as clichéd a representation of peasantry as in the first album, *L'Enfance de Bécassine*.

***Bécassine à Clocher-Les-Bécasses : A Retour aux Sources* For Bécassine and the Series**

The year 1935 saw the publication of the most overtly Breton album in the Bécassine series: *Bécassine à Clocher-les-Bécasses*. Although other albums feature Brittany, *Clocher-les-Bécasses* is a much more detailed examination of Breton culture than others. It is in a way, a counterpart to *Bécassine au Pays Basque*, a sort of *Bécassine en Bretagne*, describing an alien culture for the series' young readers, albeit the version of Breton culture as perceived by the Parisian Caumery.

Bécassine travels to Brittany to supervise the renovation of Mme. de Grand-Air's château just outside Clocher-les-Bécasses after a tenant abandons it due to rent arrears and debt. The work is awarded to the husband of Bécassine's cousin Marie Quillouch, although he is reputed to cheat clients; Bécassine and her uncle Corentin having been so begged to employ the suspect tradesman by Marie and the couple's children that eventually they concede. The rest of the album then details the rest of Bécassine's stay in her home village, with the renovation work in the background.

²⁸⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (t), *Bécassine Prend des Pensionnaires*, 1981 edition (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1934), p. 18.

²⁸⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (t), p. 6.

²⁹⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (t), p. 41.

Bécassine's extended visit allows the authors to present a detailed picture of the village, its inhabitants and its general culture and way of life. Bécassine has not seen Clocher-les-Bécasses for twelve years; Loulotte was a baby the last time the pair visited it, and she is now almost what would later be called a teenager. This gap in time allows both for great jubilation in the village,²⁹¹ and for significant changes to have occurred there in the interim.

This appearance, in the form of Corentin and a tour group visiting the Paris exhibition in *Bécassine, son oncle et leurs amis* presented a new, different Brittany. Clocher-les-Bécasses had become rich on the high price of pork; far-flung travel was possible, modernity in thought and style was encroaching on *la France profonde*. The villagers wanted to see Paris and the wider world and were developing an interest beyond their *pays*-as symbolised by their enthusiasm for the globe-spanning exposition. The days of prosperity, however, were short-lived. The global financial crisis which is affecting the Marquise to varying degrees each year has once again brought poverty to Clocher-les-Bécasses. Once more, a trip to Quimper is seen as a large expense. The effects of this renewed poverty are most obvious in the case of Marie Quillouch and her family, as they profited most obviously from the temporary building boom brought by prosperity.

Marie Quillouch

Marie is the most modern Breton character in the series, in dress, outlook, and aspirations. She dresses fashionably and aspires to be as urbane as any Parisian. However, for Bécassine's young fans she has been damned from the start as a rival and once again is not lauded; her attempts to stray from the Breton template of *coiffe*, cottage and farm are shown as laughable. For example, her trip to Paris to find a husband is a failure.²⁹² Bécassine describes Marie dressed in her Parisian clothes for the occasion: 'elle se croit belle et élégante, tandis qu'elle est... je m'arrête pour ne pas faire la médisante'.²⁹³

²⁹¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u), *Bécassine à Clocher-les-Bécasses*, (Paris : Gautier-Languereau, 1935) 1991 edition, pp. 27-28.

²⁹² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u), p. 32: see also *Bécassine, son oncle et leurs amis*.

²⁹³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u), p. 32.

Returning husbandless to her farm and Breton clothes, Marie becomes resigned to accepting the first possible marriage candidate. Louch arrives, an outsider to the village. The couple are ideally suited: 'ils ont absolument le meme regard'.²⁹⁴ This attraction, in addition to Marie's age and unattractiveness to village men because of her urban aspirations, leads the couple to marry, and Marie reverts to wearing 'la dernière mode de Paris'.²⁹⁵ After her marriage, she buys a car, learns to drive (badly),²⁹⁶ and begins to drink tea.²⁹⁷ However, Louch's stream of work soon dries up, leaving him, Marie and their three children in poverty and resulting in Marie and the children entreating Bécassine to award them the renovation work so as to ease their financial problems.

Marie Quillouch has been cast as the villain of the series ever since the first album.²⁹⁸ In early albums she was presented as Bécassine's polar opposite: Bécassine is round and happy, she is thin and miserable; Bécassine has a small nose, Marie's is long; Bécassine is rosy-cheeked, Marie is sallow, etc. As the two grew up, their opposition has changed from one of innate characteristics to one of character. Simple, traditionalist, kind-hearted Bécassine is good, ergo calculating, modern Marie is bad. The clearest manifestation of this viewpoint in *Bécassine à Clocher-les-Bécasses* is that Marie's unhappy life is directly linked to her desire for a Parisian lifestyle. For example: she has many years of fruitless searching for a husband, because her Parisian clothes make her ugly to the village men; she is unpopular because her pseudo-Parisian airs alienate her from the rest of the community. Even having found a mate, she is reduced to marrying an outsider because he is the only one who would take her. Marrying an outsider further removes her from her community, as he is not only non-Breton but also non-rural; he is not a farmer, he does not share her community's values. When rich, the couple are ridiculed for their non-Breton tastes, and when poor, they are ridiculed for having fallen. However, no sympathy is accorded to Marie by the authors; her misfortune and the village's treatment of her is portrayed as justified, even desirable. There is a strong impression that Bécassine, the

²⁹⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u), p. 35.

²⁹⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u), p. 36.

²⁹⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u), p. 37.

²⁹⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u), p. 37.

²⁹⁸ See Caumery & Pinchon (a).

villagers and Caumery all believe Marie's fate is fitting of someone in her socioeconomic circumstances.

Despite the passing years and the series' somewhat mellowed attitude towards Bécassine, the attitude shown towards Bretons in general remains the same. The treatment of Marie Quillouch clearly implies that a Breton trying to differ from the 'traditional' Breton stereotype is an aberration, and that attempted assimilation into Parisian life by a Breton constitutes 'ideas above one's station' which should be avoided. However, Marie Quillouch is not the only Breton object of ridicule in *Bécassine à Clocher-les-Bécasses*. The villagers who do conform to the author's desired traditionalist stereotype are also denigrated for their difference from the norm as he sees it (e.g. Conan Labornez discussed below). The traditional lifestyle of Clocher-les-Bécasses is held up for ridicule precisely because it is different from the Parisian standard: whether they conform or not, the Bretons are denigrated.

Bretons as Entertainment

As previously noted, *Bécassine à Clocher-les-Bécasses* functions as the Breton equivalent of *Bécassine au Pays Basque*. Functioning as a quasi-guide book for young readers, a scholarly level of detail cannot be expected. Instead the picturesque quaintness of the village is repeatedly reinforced, with normal events and characteristics being portrayed as exceptional or noteworthy. Loulotte, for example, is very taken with the exotic nature of life in Clocher-les-Bécasses,²⁹⁹ and the spectacle of women washing clothes in public, farm animals in the village square and above all, 'les coiffes, les gilets brodés... comme c'est joli, ces costumes!'³⁰⁰

There is a huge discordance between teenage Loulotte's life and life in Clocher-les-Bécasses. It is interesting to note that Loulotte, too, is a Bretonne – albeit one removed from the *pays* at birth – and moreover, a Bretonne who has been successfully assimilated into Parisian life, touching on the classic debate of nature versus nurture. If Breton-ness (and an accompanying inability to adapt to Parisian living) is innate, as in the case of Marie Quillouch, what makes Loulotte

²⁹⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u) p. 30.

³⁰⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u) p. 30.

different? An argument of nurture over nature is difficult to sustain, given that throughout Loulotte's life Caumery has constantly reiterated the fact that Loulotte is not aristocratic, whether through Bécassine's social pedantry ('Loulotte Presque-de-Grand-Air'³⁰¹), numerous children mocking her status of 'enfant adopté',³⁰² or Mme de Grand-Air's insistence that Loulotte is 'destinée à une condition modeste',³⁰³ and thus that 'il faut y penser et l'élever en conséquence'.³⁰⁴ If nurture were a consideration, the child would be considered a de facto legitimate Grand-Air. Since Loulotte retains her peasant roots despite living her entire life in Paris among the nobility, she has the same social standing as Marie Quillouch and even Bécassine. So she should be treated as her fellow Bretonnes are treated, and yet she is not. She is treated so differently that she has little understanding of her own culture, her viewpoint reduced to that of a Parisian on holiday. Loulotte's lack of comprehension does a disservice both to her and to Brittany. For the child, her lack of Breton identity – particularly when the series reinforces the importance of regional loyalty and consciousness in Bécassine – and her lack of social legitimacy leave her in a kind of self-awareness limbo. She lives as a Parisian but she is not Parisian, and come the age of majority she will have no claim on the trappings of the life she has led. She is a Bretonne, but she knows nothing of Brittany. It seems unlikely that she would integrate well into a rural society still washing laundry in *lavoirs* and clothed in *coiffes*, if she finds the sight of them so remarkable.

For impressionable minds learning about Brittany, Loulotte's simplistic view is unfortunate as it reduces a rich regional culture to a few basic markers: *coiffes*, embroidery, lack of technology and lack of barriers between man and his animals. Furthermore, only two of these markers can be considered uniquely Breton. Loulotte's view (and therefore the reader's view, since Loulotte is the example for readers to follow) is of a generic Brittany, stripped of most of its identity and left as a picturesque rural stereotype for tourists to mould into their own preconceptions. Charles Forsdick notes that the generic nature of Brittany presented in the series does not allow for variation within the rich

³⁰¹ See *Les Bonnes Idées de Bécassine*.

³⁰² See *Bécassine au pensionnat*.

³⁰³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i) p. 17.

³⁰⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (i) p. 17.

Breton culture.³⁰⁵ This is undoubtedly true. A glaring example of this oversimplifying standardization is the *coiffe*. In Bécassine's Brittany, every woman's *coiffe* is largely the same, regardless of the huge variety of *coiffe* styles depending on geographical location.³⁰⁶

Morvan Lebesque asserts that Brittany has been 'exotisée sur son propre sol',³⁰⁷ that is to say presented as a 'monolithic difference'³⁰⁸ standing in contrast to Paris, its varying customs recorded and presented for the entertainment of the Parisian centre, losing variation and meaning as customs are taken out of cultural and geographical context. The non-Parisian nature of the recuperated customs, stripped of context, is then used by Parisians as a means of distinguishing their way of life from that of the backward provincials: 'a screen on which is projected the superiority of the centre'.³⁰⁹ *Bécassine à Clocher-les-Bécasses* is the starkest example of this process, though other books in the series also present a culturally monolithic Breton culture to varying degrees—*L'Enfance de Bécassine* is another notable example. In *Bécassine à Clocher-les-Bécasses*, the presence of Loulotte, as a *bretonne*, and her reactions to life in Brittany magnify this exoticisation. She is a *bretonne* stripped of any relation to her cultural heritage and transplanted in Paris to be raised, just as Breton culture is processed by and presented to the centre.

A la recherche du temps perdu : Bécassine, The Bretons and A Homecoming

As already noted, twelve years have passed since Bécassine last visited Clocher-les-Bécasses. Her life in Paris has changed a great deal since 1923, and Clocher-les-Bécasses has also changed – from poverty to prosperity and back again. But life itself in Brittany remains largely the same as ever; the fleeting riches brought in the early-to-mid 1920s have left little trace. There are, however, elements of modernity present in the village such as non-traditional, urban-style

³⁰⁵ Forsdick, p. 30.

³⁰⁶ An example of a picturesque Brittany presented for urban consumption which *does* allow for regional difference can be found in newsreel video from the mid 1930s (thus analogous in date with *Bécassine à Clocher-les-Bécasses*), namely 'Bits Of France: Brittany' (1936) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8i8AD8-Kboc&feature=relmfu>> [Accessed 15 August 2015].

³⁰⁷ Lebesque, p. 62.

³⁰⁸ Forsdick, p. 30.

³⁰⁹ Forsdick, p. 30.

housing and the incursion of tourism,³¹⁰ for example. Bécassine's reaction to these small intrusions of the modern world is notable. There is disconnection between the version of Clocher-les-Bécasses she expects and the village she encounters. Her reaction to changes in surroundings is either to ignore or to rubbish them. Much of the time we see the village through Bécassine's eyes: when describing Marie Quillouch's courtship and marriage, for example. And thus, we are faced with the problem of the unreliable narrator. Bécassine projects her own values onto the situation and leaves the reader no other version of events; a case of Brittany 'exotisée sur son propre sol' for the sake of Bécassine's self-image.

The other villagers are no more positively portrayed than Marie Quillouch. They remain unchanged, if slightly aged, from their appearance in 1913's *L'Enfance de Bécassine*. The women (and girls) are all be-coiffed, the men are in waistcoats and cropped wide trousers; all wear sabots at all times. Their dress is demonstrably outdated and romanticised, as documentary evidence from the time of the album's publication shows.³¹¹ In reality, while women did still wear *coiffes* and traditional dresses, children and teenagers went bare-headed and dressed in more modern, standard clothes. The dress of the male characters is even more fictionalised; film of rural males in several villages shows them all dressed in full-length trousers (and cap if adult), except for ceremonial occasions such as weddings where more traditional-style hats and waistcoats are worn. Sabots are still worn by some, but not all subjects featured.

Just as their dress is romanticised, so is the villagers' character. They are presented as part of Brittany's monolithic difference, ergo as distinct from the Parisian centre as possible. Conan Labornez is miserly and his attitude towards his daughter remains particularly un-emotional (he refuses to pay 1 franc underpayment to read a letter from Bécassine, and further refuses to accept it when Uncle Corentin pays the fee- 'Prenez-la vous-même, notre oncle... vous avez payé, c'est à vous').³¹² Avariciousness is not limited to him alone, but extends to all the villagers of Clocher-les-Bécasses: 'Qu'on ne conclue pas de ceci qu'il est avare. Suivant l'expression courant à Clocher-les-Bécasses, il est

³¹⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u), p. 34.

³¹¹ See 'Bits of France: Brittany'.

³¹² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u), p. 25.

seulement “regardant à la dépense””.³¹³ The implication is therefore that all the villagers are equally ‘regardant’.

Conan is also shown as treating his daughter as he would his animals, another trait carried over from *L’Enfance de Bécassine* (where he takes her to the vet instead of the doctor, as it costs less): ‘il administra à Bécassine quelques tapes vigoureuses, comme il le fait à la foire pour éprouver la solidité d’un boeuf ou d’un cheval’.³¹⁴ Here he is a comic figure, adding ‘local colour’ and an example of the ‘happy, stupid Breton’,³¹⁵ performing in the same way that his daughter has throughout the series.

Even Corentin, the most favourably portrayed Breton character, is shown making a mistake worthy of Jacqueline Rivière’s proto-Bécassine: receiving a telegramme from Bécassine and Loulotte after their car breaks down in the next town (‘Accident auto. Pouvons plus marcher.’),³¹⁶ he sets off to rescue them in an ambulance, because he believes the two to be seriously injured, having misunderstood that the verb *marcher* has more than one meaning.

There remains one other explicit denigration of the villagers, made more explicit because the villagers effectively denigrate themselves: when Marie throws a tea party as a housewarming, she is described as ‘folle’ by her Uncle Corentin,³¹⁷ and the villagers decry her for making them drink the ‘sale tisane’ instead of cider. However, the reasoning for their dislike of tea – Corentin’s ‘c’est pas fait pour des paysans comme nous!’³¹⁸ – is revealing. Tea is not only too good for Marie Quillouch, their black sheep; the villagers also see themselves as unworthy of the drink, which is clearly marked as Parisian.

Bécassine à Clocher-les-Bécasses is one of the series’ most interesting albums, particularly regarding its portrayal of Bretons. It is the most important album in a group of several (including *L’Enfance de Bécassine*, *Bécassine en apprentissage* and to an extent *Bécassine, son oncle et leurs amis*) which explicitly portray and

³¹³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u), p. 26.

³¹⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u), p. 29.

³¹⁵ Forsdick, p. 29.

³¹⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u), p. 59.

³¹⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u), p. 42.

³¹⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (u), p. 37.

analyse traditional peasant life in Brittany. *Clocher-les-Bécasses* is particularly interesting owing to its late appearance in the series; it shows that, despite many years having passed since the first album featuring Brittany in 1913, and the author's gradual humanising of Bécassine from the simple two-dimensional proto-Bécassine to a rounded, fully-formed heroine, the series' view of Brittany remains unchanged. In addition to the maintenance of an anti-Breton, paternalistic view of the internal 'other', the depiction of Brittany in *Clocher* is even more problematic in my view than that of earlier albums. This situation is due to the passage of time especially since the Brittany depicted in 1913 was already stereotyped and problematic. Since *Clocher-les-Bécasses* remains unchanged 23 years later, the existing issues of stereotyping are augmented by the author's choice to ignore progress and show a Brittany even more untouched by modern civilisation. The album presents a deliberately inaccurate, outdated view of the region.

***Bécassine en croisière* : Far-flung Last Hurrah**

Bécassine en croisière (1936) is a curious amalgamation of many styles of Bécassine album. It combines intrepid global travel, the vaguely exotic maritime setting of *Bécassine chez les Turcs*, M. Proey-Minans' constant study and the cultural voyeurism of *Bécassine voyage*.

In order to gain entry to the French Academy and beat a fierce rival, M. Proey-Minans wishes to travel to Nossi-bé in the Indian Ocean and bring back a specimen of a hereto unknown plant. He invites Mme. de Grand-Air, Loulotte and Bécassine to join him on the voyage to avoid cabins on the ship being taken by spies wishing to sabotage his efforts. Loulotte and Bécassine accept.

Once they set off, Bécassine takes her role of anti-espionage agent only too seriously; she wrongly causes the arrest of an Arab shoe-shiner on suspicion of spying,³¹⁹ and insists on tasting all of M. Proey-Minans' food first, in case of poisoning. M. Proey-Minans, however, does not fall victim to spies (despite a false alarm caused by his forgetfulness). He is befriended by an American, Mrs

³¹⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (v) *Bécassine en croisière* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1936) 1982 edition, p. 15.

O'Relly, who is very interested in his expedition, wishing to start a zoo of her own. His attempts to rid himself of the tourist fail and she accompanies the group to Djibouti where she buys a baby leopard, conferring it to Bécassine to hand-rear; the leopard eventually becomes Bécassine's by default. The group finally reach Nossi-Bé where would-be zoo owner Mrs O'Relly belatedly discovers a fear of exotic animals, and leaves the gathering of them to the 'indigènes'.³²⁰ M. Proey-Minans's plant finding exhibition is unsuccessful and ended by a storm in which Loulotte and Bécassine catch colds and fever; after being told by Bécassine that pretty flowers cure illness,³²¹ a black crewman she met on the ship searches for flowers for Bécassine. While doing so, he unwittingly finds a specimen of M. Proey-Minans' plant, of which the latter takes possession, allowing him the entry to the Academy that he so desires.

Bécassine en croisière is, I would argue, Caumery's version of *Tintin au Congo* (1931). There are plot similarities (the trip to a far off country with one-dimensional, simplistic natives), and certain *planches* are strikingly similar (e.g. on page 58, where Mrs O'Relly is carried in a sedan chair by local men. Tintin is carried in the same manner in both original and modern editions of *Tintin au Congo*).³²² The few 'natives' who speak express themselves in pidgin French very similar to that of Hergés Congolese,³²³ and they esteem all whites, even Bécassine, as superior beings.³²⁴ Djibouti is described in similarly voyeuristic terms to Hergé's Congo – again the mud huts drawn by Pinchon are remarkably similar to those seen by Tintin – and is shown as a cultureless desert virtually empty of natural resources or attractions.³²⁵

As throughout the entire series, the album shows arguably typical racist attitudes of the era, notably regarding the Arab shoe shiner, who is both treated in exactly the same way as Ben Kaddour from *Bécassine chez les Turcs* (being referred to consistently as 'Arbi' and treated with disdain) and physically a

³²⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (v), p. 57.

³²¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (v), p. 61.

³²² Hergé p. 21 (1974 edition) n.p. (1995 Fascimile of original edition).

³²³ For example, Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (v), p. 22 "Ti guérie, bien manger, manger tout".

³²⁴ After learning about the flowers from Bécassine, Hamadou says 'Blancs tout savoir. Belles fleurs bonnes pour guérir maladies. Moi pas oublier' (Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (v), p. 61.),

³²⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (v), p. 40.

virtual carbon copy of the previous character. For the final time Bécassine is elevated to a position of privilege owing to the presence of other races in the story; the album is mostly free from overt references to her stupidity, bar one subtle implication that she is provincial and thus boring, while she is telling a story to Mrs O'Relly and company.³²⁶ She spends most of the album either being useful (to M. Proey-Minans or the children while they are ill) or joining in with the rest of the expedition group, reprising her role as intrepid globetrotter of the World War One albums.

It is hard not to see *Bécassine en croisière* as related to *Tintin au Congo*; Bécassine truly becomes 'Tintin with a *coiffe*'.³²⁷ Although the Bécassine album does not have the overarching theme of *mission civilatrice* of Hergé's *Congo*, the elements of simplistic racism, white privilege and touristic voyeurism are certainly present. The publication date of *Bécassine en croisière*, immediately succeeding *Bécassine à Clocher-les-Bécasses*, is interesting: one shows Bécassine in as natural a setting as possible (Brittany) and its successor sends her to one of the most exotic parts of the world. As always, she is be-coiffed, even while wearing her safari hat, as ostentatiously Breton as ever. The contrast late in the series between the ultimate 'home' album versus the farthest 'away' example emphasises both how far Bécassine has come and how little things have changed.

Bécassine cherche un emploi

The last album to feature members of Bécassine's family, *Bécassine cherche un emploi* appeared in 1937. It follows a visit to Paris by Marie Quillouch and Corentin, ostensibly to distract Marie from her problems at home: her husband's building work has dried up, he has travelled from Brittany to find work and she is struggling to get by with her children. After being asked to perform in a freak show at the circus, Marie begins to believe she has artistic talent and expresses a desire to have a career as a performer in a creative setting. Owing to Marie's lack of training or references,³²⁸ the search is largely fruitless until Bécassine, Loulotte, Corentin and Marie meet a jobbing artist on the banks of the Seine.

³²⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (v), p. 31.

³²⁷ Forsdick, p. 23.

³²⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (w), *Bécassine cherche un emploi* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1937) 1983 edition, p. 29.

This artist first shows them sketches he has made of Bécassine in order to make a cartoon featuring her (a classic *mise-en-abîme*),³²⁹ then suggests a tour of local studios to find Bécassine a part in a live-action film instead. The group find a film which needs three Breton extras for a wedding scene, and the three Labornez volunteer. Following the departure of the diva-like main actress, Marie is overjoyed to replace her in the part of the bride; Corentin returns to Clocher-les-Bécasses and Bécassine returns to Mme. de Grand-Air as Marie continues shooting. The film's opening screening is sabotaged by the former leading artist, who starts a riot in the theatre. As a result all future screenings are cancelled. Shortly afterwards, Corentin informs Bécassine that he has not seen or heard from Marie since her return to Brittany; however, fears are assuaged when Bécassine and Loulotte are served by Marie at a children's film show: she has found work as an usher in a cinema, and is 'contente' at having found a job which is 'presque artistique'.³³⁰

Bécassine cherche un emploi is the only album to portray Marie Quillouch in anything approaching a positive light: she is predictably annoying, stupid and mean-spirited, but on the other hand, she gets her wish, in more than one sense. In the short term, she has found work as an actress: the film is not a success, but its failure is not due to her incompetency. In addition, in her final series appearance Marie finally gets what she has wanted all along: she lives in Paris, she dresses like a Parisian, she is as much a Parisian as her cousin whom she has disliked for so many years.

The album is also notable because it is one of the few 1930s albums in the series that is not focused on the Grand-Air household, or even on Bécassine. More than anything it is Marie's album, with events set in motion by her financial difficulty, caused by her sudden desires and ending in the resolution of the long-running conflict between her and Bécassine, one of the most important elements of the series, and in her triumph over her general unhappiness in life. Although the general Breton tropes are still shown (Marie's desire to be an actress is ridiculed, she is still ugly and stupid, she is still a yokel in the metropolis), this album finally shows her in a favourable light as the main Breton character; she doesn't 'get her comeuppance' for wanting to ape the Parisians as in previous albums;

³²⁹ Caumery & J.P.Pinchon (w), p. 37.

³³⁰ Caumery & J.P.Pinchon (w), p. 47.

her desire is fulfilled. Therefore in my view *Bécassine cherche un emploi* is, for once, fairly positive towards Brittany and the Bretons.

Les Méaventures de Bécassine

Just as *Bécassine chez les Turcs* is one of the few examples of children's literature to reference concentration camps,³³¹ so *Les Méaventures de Bécassine* (1938) is one of the few to portray its heroine's internment in a mental hospital.

The album begins innocuously enough with a cameo appearance for another Paris world exposition, where Bécassine represents Brittany in the parade by mistake.³³² Loulotte, the Marquise and Bécassine then decide to go back to Sablefin-sur-Mer, a seaside town they previously visited in *Bécassine aux bains de mer*. They take the trip to escape workmen who are renovating Mme. de Grand-Air's house. When they arrive, they find the hotel that they previously stayed in has closed, its owner having been reduced to opening a small guesthouse in its place; new houses have been built on the land he was forced to sell off, leaving the town's geography much changed. Despite this the group have an enjoyable time with the other holidaymakers and helping the owner Charlemagne to run the guesthouse. All goes well until Bécassine is given a day's holiday for a day trip. On the bus for the neighbouring town she sees a local doctor and his patient, a nervous-looking Breton woman, after which she is treated with surprising kindness by other passengers. This kindness continues as Bécassine is met off the bus and taken on a tour of the town, even being bought several pairs of shoes that she expresses desire for, then taken to a large house in the town which, unknown to her, is a mental hospital. She then spends time with other guests, whom she considers slightly odd, including a woman who recites La Fontaine backwards. Only when the doctor whom Bécassine saw on the bus arrives does she appreciate the nature of the large house she is in. The staff of the mental hospital realise that she is not the Bretonne they were expecting, and that the other woman is missing. Bécassine is released, very shaken, and the other Bretonne found hiding in local woods; the night in the

³³¹ Cone, p. 193.

³³² Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (x), *Les Méaventures de Bécassine*, (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1938) 1991 edition, p. 18.

open air has apparently helped her mental state. The album then ends with Mme. de Grand-Air being sent a bill from the mental hospital for Bécassine's stay, board and several pairs of shoes.

Les Aventures de Bécassine do not shy away from uncomfortable subject matter in any of the war albums – particularly *Bécassine chez les Turcs* – or again in *Les Bonnes Idées de Bécassine* for example. Nevertheless, this album is particularly unsettling. No reason is given for Bécassine's internment apart from mistaken identity, and no apology is given for the upset caused: and Bécassine is nothing if not upset, 'fatiguée et hebetée'.³³³ Given that Bécassine described her time in a Turkish concentration camp as 'pas trop mal, ma foi',³³⁴ her visible upset is particularly striking.

In terms of the portrayal of Bretons, the album is undoubtedly negative primarily because no-one realises that Bécassine is not mentally ill, therefore implying that her every-day behaviour can be considered subnormal. In addition, however, the album once again treats Brittany as monolithic, literally reducing Bretonnes to their *coiffes* (when the doctor asks where his patient is, the bus driver indicating Bécassine responds 'Là, devant...on voit sa coiffe').³³⁵ Bretons are 'all the same', so alike as to be interchangeable. The inclusion of the mental institution trip is also rather baffling: it serves no particular educational or moral purpose. Therefore, the intention appears to be the equation of Bécassine's behaviour with that of the mentally ill.

Bécassine en roulotte: Changing Times

Bécassine en roulotte (1939) would prove to be the last Bécassine album within the canonical series before war broke out and occupation forced *La Semaine de Suzette* to cease production in 1940. By chance, however, the album brings the series to natural close; it does not feel like an abrupt ending. A poignantly appropriate ending, instead of giving the impression of a deliberate stop the story brings a conclusion to a narrative thread which began in the late 1920s and ran through every album to varying degrees thereafter. That thread is the

³³³ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (x), p. 46.

³³⁴ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (e), p. 58.

³³⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (x), p. 39.

gradual decline of the Marquise de Grand Air and her household, in finances, health and relevance.

Another striking element of the album's plotline, is its lack of movement. The other Bécassine albums have plots propelled by movement: although her range has narrowed over time and she repeatedly returns to the status quo of service, Bécassine is always travelling. Even in her very first outing in 1913 includes her leaving Clocher-les-Bécasses for Quimper.³³⁶ *Bécassine en roulotte*, however, is relatively static. There is no mention of a planned summer holiday for Mme. de Grand-Air, Bécassine and Loulotte.

Instead, Bécassine and Loulotte go on a series of day trips, to local castles and landmarks,³³⁷ eventually coming across an exhibition of modern camping gear and caravans.³³⁸ Initially unimpressed, they meet M. Proey-Minans there. He is struck by the idea of a caravan and of using one for his scientific research. He therefore buys one and offers to take Bécassine and Loulotte out on various research trips, also taking the Marquise to visit her friend Mme. de Kercoz en route. All goes fairly smoothly until the trio deliver Mme. de Grand-Air to her destination and set off alone. They come across a group of gypsies, who elect M. Proey-Minans as their king, with Bécassine and Loulotte as princesses.³³⁹ There is a police raid on the gypsy camp, leading to the arrest of M. Proey-Minans as the leader of the group. He is eventually let off after showing his identity papers and being severely admonished by police: the group return to the chateau of Mme. de Kercoz where a depressed and ashamed M. Proey-Minans begins writing a new book on gypsy life in his caravan.³⁴⁰ Things return to normal, and as Bécassine says, 'J'ai repris goût à la roulotte depuis qu'elle est immobile, et ça me fait conclure qu'une roulotte est agréable surtout quand elle ne roule pas'.³⁴¹

This last statement is revealing, and symbolic of the state that Bécassine and her milieu find themselves in at the end of the series. For Bécassine, it shows just

³³⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), p. 63.

³³⁷ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (y), *Bécassine en roulotte* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1939) 1985 edition, p. 13.

³³⁸ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (y), p. 24.

³³⁹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (y), p. 44.

³⁴⁰ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (y), p. 47.

³⁴¹ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (y), p. 47.

how much her world – and her world view – have shrunk since the days of the First World War or the 1920s. Compare the feisty Bécassine of *Bécassine chez les Turcs*, unsure of her future but excited by her adventures, by technological advance and by her freedom to choose her own destiny, with the outmoded, tired version present in the last album. Of course, Bécassine has always been old-fashioned: a deliberate picture of an outdated Brittany for effect. However, despite her old-fashioned clothing, Bécassine's mentality moved more or less with the times - this is particularly evident in later albums where Loulotte is growing older and more independent. It is the Marquise who objects to change (Loulotte joining the Jeannettes, for example), not Bécassine; Bécassine repeatedly undertakes 'modern' occupations (driving, flying planes); she is unfazed by innovation, even if she has trouble utilising it.

But in *Bécassine en roulotte*, she rejects modernity, in the form of the caravan: she likes it most when its primary function is removed. Furthermore, on a symbolic level, she rejects the movement of this new innovation, the freedom to travel that it presents. By refusing movement she accepts stasis, stasis which will lead to ever-increasing irrelevance for her and her lifestyle.

The Decline of the House of Grand-Air

In line with Bécassine, Mme. de Grand-Air has gradually lost relevance through the course of the series. Her fading power and privilege is affected by forces outwith her control, principally by World War One and the resulting rupture of social hierarchies, and then by the financial crisis of the Great Depression. Her financial situation begins to become precarious in 1914 and remains so thereafter, with seemingly only temporary reprieves and improvement in fortune. The Marquise shown in *Bécassine en roulotte* has fallen particularly from grace: a caravan, eating by the side of the road with the *hoi polloi*, is not the place of a member of the nobility. But times are changing – indeed, they have changed – and the Marquise's difficulty in adapting to a world where birthright means little further emphasises her growing distance from modern life.

Bécassine as Anachronism

Bécassine is an anachronism; this is undeniable in the sense that she is presented as an ethnotype of all Brittany and all Bretons. This presentation is one of the most problematic aspects of *Les Aventures de Bécassine*, as previously noted. Her clothing was beginning to fall out of fashion in the time of *L'Enfance de Bécassine* and by 1939 she appears hopelessly outdated in style. In addition to her sartorial irrelevance, the last album shows her as socially irrelevant also: her journey to 'patent anachronism' is finally complete. She is a domestic servant in a world in which servants are increasingly uncommon, working for an employer who has lost much of the wealth she held at the start of the series. The world and social context in which Bécassine operates has been profoundly changed by war and the resulting upheaval, and yet Bécassine, seemingly unchanged by all that has happened to her, continues to work in exactly the same way she began in 1905. The character has lost much of her relatable quality along with her social relevance.

To conclude, Bécassine is the most significant representation of Brittany in mainstream *bande dessinée*, both because of her incredible popularity in the early years of the twentieth century and because of what she represents. Looking at each album from 1905-1939, we can see clearly how the character of Bécassine evolves, from simple vessel for jokes in Jacqueline Rivière's proto-Bécassine, to a more fleshed-out character with a developed mythology and symbolism as an icon of French visual culture under Maurice Languereau. What this icon represents also changes throughout the series. At first, she acts as a cipher through which her writers can represent an anachronistic, projected version of Brittany and Breton identity, a vision of Brittany informed by many years of stereotypes, prejudice and cultural isolation. This cultural isolation works in both directions: Paris is as isolated from the reality of twentieth-century Brittany as Brittany is from the political centre. First presented in *L'Enfance de Bécassine*, *Bécassine en Apprentissage* and revisited later for *Bécassine à Clocher-les-Bécasses*, this version of Brittany and Bécassine is most problematic when the character is examined from the perspective of regional identity. The albums repeat stereotypes which were old at the time of publication; their inclusion reinforced and arguably still reinforces the validity of mainstream perceptions of Brittany as backward and 'savage', while also

introducing these perceptions to a new, young audience, perpetuating anti-Breton sentiment for several generations if not years to come.

Bécassine's Breton identity ceases to be the primary focus in later albums, though it is still present as the base for her inherent stupidity and anachronism. In the 'war' albums, *Bécassine pendant la guerre*, *Bécassine chez les alliés*, *Bécassine mobilisée* and *Bécassine chez les Turcs*, Bécassine is represented as totally French, an emblem to which her young readers can relate. She too faces hardship, lack of food, bombing so that the readers and their families are not alone in their experience of the war. In her becoming this vessel for French nationhood, her Breton identity is totally erased. On one hand, this can be seen as a positive development: wartime Bécassine is strong, capable, and patriotic, a far cry from the bumbling servant in earlier albums. One can also argue that Bécassine's transformation represents the acceptance of Bretons into the republic as 'French' in a wider context during the war. On the other hand, erasure of regional difference is problematic: Languereau seems to attach little value to Bécassine's regional identity as he summarily ignores it and subsumes Bécassine into the French state and identity from which the earlier albums deliberately set her apart.

Once the war ends, the series becomes more of a chronicle of changing times for France's aristocracy with the decline of the Grand Air household serving as a metaphor. Bécassine's Breton identity is once again in the background, but still important as the underpinning for her socioeconomic situation and as an explanation why the decline of the aristocracy is a worrying development. She is Breton, therefore she is a servant, therefore she needs her employers to remain prosperous or she is left with nothing.

From the birth of Loulotte in 1922, the focus of the series shifts from Bécassine to the young girl. Her appearance allows Bécassine to become a surrogate mother, and gives the readers another character with whom they can identify. As Bécassine becomes less important in her own series, earlier questions of her identity and her 'Breton-ness' fade as the stories gradually modernise. In later years, the series begins to lose steam in line with the Grand Air household; narratives are recycled and stories become less nuanced. Bécassine's adventures eventually grind to a halt in 1939, when she is happiest when staying put. The

series comes full circle: from Third Republic anachronism to French patriot and early action hero, surrogate mother to ageing servant who remains an anachronism, now even further removed from the reality she is meant to represent. Through all the changes Bécassine has 'lived' through, she herself has not changed. She still embodies a version of Brittany which is subjugated and backward: but thirty years later she is even more outdated than she began.

Having examined the most popular external representation of Brittany, I will now move on to study an internal perspective on Brittany in *bande dessinée*: *Ololê*, a journal with a particularly regionalist view of Breton identity.

3. *Ololê* : Breton Pride in Wartime

Symbolically named after a rallying call used by Breton shepherds, *Ololê* (also rendered as *O Lo Lê* and *Ololé*)³⁴² was a Breton children's newspaper launched in November 1940 by the brothers Herri (aka Henri) Caouissin (1913-2003), an ex-*Cœurs vaillants* employee, and Ronan Caouissin (1914-1986), a printer, together with the militant writer Vefa (aka Geneviève) de Bellaing (1909-1998). It was published in Landerneau until 28th May 1944. There has been very little written on this Catholic nationalist publication to date; indeed the 2004 reference work *BDM Trésors de la Bande Dessinée* lists only one relevant article.³⁴³ The paper's owners brought together various *bande dessinée* artists such as Étienne Le Rallic (1891-1968) and the Belgian Raoul Thomen (1876-1950) to illustrate stories which focused on Brittany and its heroic history: for example *Le Corsaire des Iles*, which was the supposedly true story of an eighteenth-century Breton sailor, or *Matilin an Dall*, concerning a blind Breton soldier from the 1800s.

The paper was very conservative and Catholic in tone. Given Brittany's strong Catholic heritage combined with the Caouissins' long-standing connection with the Abbé Jean-Marie (Yann-Vari) Perrot's cultural and nationalist Bleun-Brug ('Heather flower') association and Herri's membership of the increasingly nationalist Seiz Breur ('Seven Brothers') art movement, this is perhaps to be expected.³⁴⁴ Along with this religious conservatism *Ololê* was also politically conservative, showing overt support for Marshal Pétain, for example, publishing the following birthday greeting in issue 20: 'Fête du Vénéré Maréchal Pétain, ce grand soldat qui, en

³⁴² Michel Béra, Michel Denni, and Philippe Mellot, *Trésors De La Bande Dessinée. BDM* (Paris: Amateur, 2004), p. 783.

³⁴³ Béra et. al, p. 783.

³⁴⁴ For Bleun-Breug see Kristian Hamon, *Les Nationalistes Bretons sous l'Occupation* (Ar Releg-Kerhuon : An Here, 2001), p. 26. For Seiz Breur see Fañch Postic et al, p. 386.

demandant l'armistice en juin dernier, a sauvé la France du désastre où les forces du Mal l'avaient entraînée'.³⁴⁵

The paper also heavily criticised the Allied bombardments. Politically *Ololê* expressed similar but less overt views to those of the German-backed *bande dessinée* publication *Le Téméraire*, in line with right-wing tendencies common amongst members of the Breton independence movement of the 1930s and 40s. After the Liberation of France, this political standpoint proved problematic.

Michel Denni attests that *Ololê* was 'Bretonnant, réac, mais pas collabo' (Pro-Brittany, reactionary, but not collaborationist),³⁴⁶ citing a lack of anti-semitism and absence of racism in the paper, although this is highly questionable, given that lines such as 'Bernstein, je n'aime pas ce nom-là'³⁴⁷ ascribed to ordinary Bretons appeared in the paper (see below).

Ololê was revived in the 1970s, under the title *L'Appel d'Ololê*. This reincarnation was more a pictorial magazine than a newspaper, and aimed at both adults and children (subtitled 'L'Illustré culturel des jeunes et des familles de Bretagne'). Strips from its previous incarnation were reprinted, notably *Matilin an Dall*. Predictably, *l'Appel* did not replicate *Ololê*'s Pétainist views, but a stronger element of Breton nationalism and overt Catholicism took their place. The magazine continued for twenty-six issues before ceasing publication. Michel Denni cites publication dates of 1970-1972, but further research has shown that issues appeared throughout 1973, with the final issue appearing in 1974.³⁴⁸

The Caouissin brothers wished to create a Breton equivalent of *Cœurs vaillants*, a new journal for young people which was Catholic in tone and Breton in character. Just as *Cœurs vaillants* represented itself as the '100% French weekly', *Ololê* was the '100% Breton' equivalent. It ran for one hundred and thirty issues, of varying

³⁴⁵ Michel Denni, 'O Lo Lê, Un Illustré Breton Sous L'Occupation', in *Le Collectionneur de Bandes Dessinées*, 83 (1997) pp. 32-39. (p. 37).

³⁴⁶ Denni, p. 38.

³⁴⁷ *Ololê* no. 75, 12 July 1942, p. 1.

³⁴⁸ Denni, p.32. A complete collection is for sale via Ebay.fr as of August 2015: the seller shows the cover of issue number 26, with the publication date of 1974.

page lengths, depending on the availability of paper: size ranged from a simple double-sided sheet to a maximum of twelve pages.³⁴⁹ According to Michel Denni,³⁵⁰ the paper's estimated print run began at five thousand for initial issues, progressing through seven thousand to a peak of eight to ten thousand. In addition, special issues had a print run of up to twenty thousand copies. However, Thierry Crépin estimates sales figures at a mere three thousand;³⁵¹ accuracy of either print run or sales figures is difficult to verify. A complete run of issues for *Ololê* was unavailable for study (and may not exist), as was a complete set of its successor. As such, analysis of the publication's *bande dessinée* series as whole story arcs is impossible, and instead this analysis will largely focus on the non-serial elements and the historical/political system at the times of publication. However, Denni does provide a table overview of the paper's *bande dessinée* content,³⁵² which shows that *Ololê* published twelve series of *bandes dessinées*: mostly historical adventures, but also incursions into Westerns, science fiction and fantasy. In addition, seven serialised 'romans illustrés' appeared over the lifetime of the paper.

Henri Caouissin: Bona Fide *Bande Dessinée* Pedigree

Henri Caouissin worked extensively in publishing prior to the founding of *Ololê*. Beyond *Cœurs vaillants* he also had a relationship with the Abbé Perrot, who had been the editor of the Catholic publication *Feiz Ha Breiz (Faith And Brittany)* since 1911. In 1933 Perrot gave up the position to Caouissin, and Henri began changing the paper: he extended the title to *Feiz Ha Breiz Ar Bugale (Faith And Brittany for Children)* and introduced a *bande dessinée* element, namely the strip *Per Ar C'Holin* featuring a fictional rabbit.

Caouissin also wrote for theatre (and later, produced films). He co-wrote with Léone Calvez a bilingual four-act comedy entitled *Bécassine vue par les Bretons* (1937), intended to be performed in Breton where possible as a response to *Les*

³⁴⁹ Denni, p. 32.

³⁵⁰ Denni, p. 32.

³⁵¹ Thierry Crépin. "*Haro Sur Le Gangster!*": *La Moralisation De La Presse Enfantine 1934-1954*. (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2001), p. 114.

³⁵² Denni, p. 38.

Aventures de Bécassine. The play is described as ‘une réponse magnifique à ceux qui ont tenté de ridiculiser les Bretonnes en les représentant sous les traits d’une marionnette frisant la bêtise, l’ignorance’.³⁵³ Of Bécassine herself, the editor notes: ‘Ce personnage répondant au nom grotesque de « Bécassine » est devenue légendaire, et a été utilisée par certains pour bafouer la Bretagne’.³⁵⁴

The play features Mona, a teenager from Finistère, who enters service in order to send home money to her orphaned younger siblings and elderly grandmother. The Breton characters are staunchly Catholic and shown as simple yet loving; her grandmother begs Mona not to leave for service, offering to keep working herself. The overarching impression is of a girl sacrificing her own happiness amongst her own people for the sake of others: Mona is portrayed as almost saintly.

When she arrives in Paris, she becomes the servant for a teenage, modern girl, Nicole, who decries her bad luck because she has a Breton servant and not a fashionable English one. Her friends roundly ridicule Mona by comparing her to Bécassine. However Mona responds in a controlled manner, with an anti-Bécassine speech, stoutly extolling the virtues of Brittany and the Breton people. The play finishes in a role reversal, as Mona wins a million francs with a lottery ticket that her employer gave her for New Year; Nicole tells her that her family is financially ruined (we are never told exactly why). Thus the downtrodden servant wins her way out of service and also wins a more privileged life than her previous masters, and Paris proves to be a rather disturbing place of opportunity for some and ruin for others.

A Traditionalist Journal In Ideology and In Form

In line with Henri Caouissin’s links with the Abbé Perrot, the Breton autonomist movement of the 1930s and Catholicism, *Ololê* advertised a particular brand of Breton nationalist identity with its right wing stance that was supportive of

³⁵³ Herri Caouissin & Léone Calvez. ‘*Bécassine*’ *Vue Par Les Bretons: Comédie Dramatique En 4 Actes De Léone Calvez Et Herri Caouissin* (Pleyber-Christ: Éditions Ronan, 1937), ‘Note de l’éditeur’ [no page number].

³⁵⁴ Caouissin & Calvez, ‘Note de l’éditeur’ [no page number].

traditional values, staunchly religious, and rather old-fashioned. It was aimed squarely at young Catholics. The editorial board of the publication was populated by important members of the local Catholic apparatus and local nobility; the bishop of Quimper recommended the journal to priests and church youth clubs. Beyond the expected elements of *bande dessinée*, details of holy days, lives of the saints and constant small references to Catholicism were also featured.³⁵⁵ The conservative stance of Caouissin (and therefore *Ololê*) also manifested itself in anti-communism, as evidenced by the republication of *Tintin au pays des Soviets* (1929-1930).³⁵⁶ The first Tintin story³⁵⁷ was republished not only in incomplete form, ending at page 70 of the album but also without prior permission from Hergé, although the Belgian did reclaim royalties which the Caouissin brothers paid.³⁵⁸

In addition to a traditionalist political viewpoint, *Ololê* was also a return to older forms of *bande dessinée*. The strips do not feature speech bubbles, in contrast to other *bande dessinée* series published during the medium's 1930s 'golden age'. Instead they look very similar to *Les Aventures de Bécassine* with *Images d'Epinal*-style pictures and blocks of accompanying text. This conscious decision to reject modern practices foreshadowed a later trend of 'de-Americanisation' of children's titles in the occupied zone of France during the Vichy era notably affecting the most popular titles, *Le Journal de Mickey*, *Robinson* and *Jumbo*, whose *bande dessinée* elements were replaced with old-style *récits en images* in the summer of 1942.³⁵⁹ Thierry Crépin describes the change in format of these papers and others as 'sans doute imposée par Vichy'.³⁶⁰ Henri Caouissin's decision to avoid the so-called 'American' style of exciting stories with speech bubbles and vibrant colours, in addition to adding to the general air of nostalgia for a France and Brittany of

³⁵⁵ For e.g., "Le Miracle de St. Yves", *Ololê* 75, (12 July 1942).

³⁵⁶ Crépin p. 111.

³⁵⁷ *Ololê* no. 64 (15/03/42) cited in Denni, p. 36. Notably this was not the only time Caouissin reprinted material from other sources. He reprinted a single page of a Mickey Mouse *bande dessinée* translated into Breton in *L'Appel d'Ololê* no. 7.

³⁵⁸ Denni, p. 36.

³⁵⁹ Crépin, p. 111.

³⁶⁰ Crépin, p. 111.

yesteryear, may have helped the publication to avoid later interference from the Germans and the Vichy administration.

Ololê, Cri d'Espérance

Ololê was developed by Caouissin into a brand beyond a simple publication. Also created was a publishing house (Editions d'Ololê of Landerneau), which published albums of strips which originally appeared in the paper, alongside novels, both illustrated and plain-text.³⁶¹

The paper also gave rise to youth groups: in 1943, together with the Abbé Perrot, Caouissin created a quasi-scouting organisation for children aged eight to seventeen, named the Urz Goanag Breiz (UGB: Order of Hope for Brittany). There were two sections, Les Loups for boys (Bleizi in Breton) and Les Hermines (Erminigou) for girls. The group had as its patron the Marquis Régis de l'Estourbeillon (1858-1946), founder and leader of the conservative Breton political party and cultural association Union Régionaliste Bretonne (URB), created in 1898. *Ololê* published sections and stories for both youth groups, urging loyalty to the Breton cause: adherents to the Urz Goanag Breiz were required to be Breton, to read *Ololê* and to sit an exam on Breton culture.³⁶²

The movement was inspired by a visit to Wales made before the war by Herri Caouissin and the Abbé Perrot, during which they had encountered a similar, Welsh-speaking group, the Urdd Gobaith Cymru (Welsh League of Hope, aka Welsh League of Youth) founded in 1922.³⁶³ The Breton initiative proved very popular, as is shown by the publication of the names of new groups in the paper.³⁶⁴ Christophe Carichon cites groups mainly in rural and maritime areas, but also particularly successful groups amongst the Breton diaspora: in La Flèche, Angers and Paris.³⁶⁵ An *Ololê*-

³⁶¹ See for example Job de Roince, *Le Mystère du château de taureau* (Landerneau: Editions Ololê, 1943).

³⁶² Denni, p. 36.

³⁶³ Christophe Carichon, *Scouts Et Guides En Bretagne, 1907-2007* (Fouesnant: Y. Embanner, 2007), p. 165.

³⁶⁴ See for example *Ololê*, issue 93, 10 January 1943, p. 1.

³⁶⁵ Carichon, p. 165.

funded *bagad* (Breton traditional pipeband) was even formed, named the Olleiz Matilin an Dall after the blind musician and star of one of the paper's *bandes dessinées*.³⁶⁶

Although Carichon asserts that the UGB is 'considérée, à tort, comme un mouvement de scoutisme breton',³⁶⁷ the movement (and the journal) were to have lasting effects on Breton society, owing to the Urz Goanag Breiz serving as the inspiration behind Bleimor (Sea Wolf), a Breton scouting organisation founded in Paris in 1946 by Pierre Géraud (Kéraod).³⁶⁸ Later Breton personalities such as Alain Stivell were members,³⁶⁹ and in 1956 Géraud (Kéraod) went on to be one of the French and German Catholic scoutmasters who founded the larger faith-based scouting organisation, the International Union of Guides and Scouts of Europe aka the Union Internationale des Guides et Scouts d'Europe (UIGSE), also known as the Union Internationale des Guides et Scouts d'Europe - Fédération du Scoutisme Européen, (UISGE-FSE), or simply as the Fédération du Scoutisme Européen (FSE).

Henri Caouissin was also involved in Bleimor, founding the scouting publications *Sked* and *Sturier* with Géraud and his wife after the Second World War.

Olleiz's Unique Position During The Occupation

The imposition of the Vichy regime had a devastating effect on the *bande dessinée* industry in France, causing many publications to flee to the Southern 'free' zone in an attempt to survive; the situation further south was also difficult, however, and several did not last long. Faced with financial hardship and political censure, a number of publishing houses such as Albin Michel and Gautier-Languereau, home to

³⁶⁶ Carichon, p. 163.

³⁶⁷ Carichon, p. 163.

³⁶⁸ Bruno Béthouart, Review of Christopher Carichon, *Scouts et Guides en Bretagne, 1901-2007*, « Comptes rendus », *Revue historique*, 649 (2009), 127-228. < <http://www.cairn.info/revue-historique-2009-1-page-127.htm> > [Accessed 15 August 2015].

³⁶⁹ Yann Bévant, 'Nations in tune: the influence of Irish music on the Breton musical revival in the 1960s and 1970s' in *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 29: 2009, ed. by Kassandra Conley et. al (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011), 30-44 (p. 37).

La Semaine de Suzette and *Les Aventures de Bécassine*, simply decided to stop publication of their children's journals altogether.³⁷⁰

Of those that remained in the northern zone, none continued publication after early 1943, as Pascal Ory shows.³⁷¹ The majority, from many publishing houses of long standing, had disappeared by the middle of 1942. This demise was due in part to difficulties in procuring paper and ink since the Germans' political and military difficulties had led them to pay closer attention to the provision of paper supplies, prioritising pro-German newspapers over the children's press. This led to the sporadic use and subsequent disappearance of colour printing, shrinking page-size, decreasing numbers of pages and lower ink quality. Also problematic was German political interference. Notably, *bande dessinée* publishers were subject to measures of aryanisation: Editions Montsouris (Les Editions du Petit Echo de la Mode), for example, were affected by laws governing the Jewish ownership of businesses from 1940 (e.g. 'toutes les entreprises juives devaient être déclarées et placées entre les mains des commissaires-administrateurs, et non plus seulement celles qui avaient été abandonnées par leurs propriétaires en fuite').³⁷² One attempt to launch a new publication was made with *Etc.*, which began in December 1943. However, the paper ceased publication after issue number 3.³⁷³

Eventually, *Ololê* stood alone in the occupied zone, outlasting even the unashamedly Pétainist *illustré Fanfan La Tulipe* (May 1941- March 1942). In 1943, having forced the withdrawal of all other competitors from the market in the occupied zone, the occupation authorities introduced *Le Téméraire*, an openly pro-Nazi and anti-semitic journal, on good quality paper, with exciting adventure stories

³⁷⁰ Crépin, p. 72.

³⁷¹ Pascal Ory, *Le Petit Nazi Illustré: Vie Et Survie Du Téméraire (1943-1944)* (Paris: Nautilus, 2002), p. 16-17.

³⁷² Crépin, p. 82.

³⁷³ Gilles Ragache, 'Un illustré sous l'occupation : *Le Téméraire*', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 47.4 (2000), 747- 767 (747) <<http://www.cairn.info/revue-d-histoire-moderne-et-contemporaine-2000-4-page-747.htm>> [Accessed 15 Aug 2015].

and bright, engaging colours; it was the only paper to outlast *Ololê* and to run to the end of the occupation.³⁷⁴

At the Liberation both Caouissin brothers were arrested for collaboration and *Ololê* was banned along with their publishing house. After their release, the Caouissins went on to found Editions Brittia, where they published albums and films. Henri rejoined *Cœurs vaillants*, becoming in 1956 editor-in-chief of the Catholic publication which had at last reappeared officially ten years before (on 19 May 1946) after a tumultuous existence during World War Two when it was banned in the Occupied zone (June 1940) and thereafter appeared (sometimes jointly with its sister comic for girls *Âmes vaillantes*) variously in Clermont-Ferrand, Lyon, Cairo and Casablanca.³⁷⁵

Appel d'Ololê: Peacetime Renaissance

Ololê resurfaced in 1970 with the launch of *Appel d'Ololê*. Similar in theme and content to its predecessor, but with notable differences, it offers an interesting example of traditionalist Breton identity in a much changed post-World War Two world.

Appel d'Ololê appeared in a two-colour magazine format, with sixteen pages per issue. It appears to have been funded almost entirely by subscriptions and donations from well-wishers. Present in many issues is an appeal for more donations and subscriptions, as well as a listing of those who have given money. However, the pool of donors appears to be all too finite. There is a remark in no. 12 that

Des donateurs renouvellent leur geste. *Ololê* leur temoigne sa gratitude, mais se permet de lancer son appel aux 'autres'. *Ololê* a le vent en poupe [...] mais pour poursuivre normalement sa croisière, il a besoin du... carburant!³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ Crépin, p. 72.

³⁷⁵ See '*Cœurs Vaillants (Après-guerre)*', *Bédéthèque* n.d. <<http://www.bedetheque.com/revue-Coeurs-Vaillants-apres-guerre.html>>. [Accessed 25 September 2015].

³⁷⁶ 'La chaîne d'amis continue', *L'Appel d'Ololê* 12 (1971) p. 2.

While in issue 21 there is a note concerning gaps in the production of issues, due partly to illness but also to financial problems; some subscribers are yet to pay their fees and this has prevented production.³⁷⁷

Nos fidèles lecteurs doivent s'inquiéter d'*Ololê*. Mais outre la grippe qui a mis en difficulté l'équipe rédactionnelle, il faut dire que nombre de bons Bretons n'ont pas encore compris que nous ne pouvons apparaître sans avoir payé les frais de fabrication du précédent numéro [...] Or, combien de d'abonnés sont en retard de plusieurs mois dans leur versement annuel (qui part de la date d'inscription pour un an).

Comment voulez-vous qu'*Ololê* vive dans ces conditions? A cause de ces retardataires, chaque fois nous nous disons, 'Sera-ce le dernier?' [...]

The magazine is for the most part a Caouissin 'family affair', edited by Henri and also including page layouts by his sons Youenn and Gildas.³⁷⁸

Letters from readers show that this new incarnation has found favour amongst readers of the original *Ololê*, as well as younger enthusiasts. Some of the printed dedications from donors also show a clear link between readerships of both publications:

'50f, "pour sauver si possible *Ololê*"'³⁷⁹

'Pour qu'*Ololê* continue: 50f'³⁸⁰

Although much of the content was taken directly from the original *Ololê*, and the stories are similar in theme, there are new elements to the later publication as well. For example, there are more reader contributions, in the form of frequent

³⁷⁷ 'Truez! Pitié...réabonnements en retard', *L'Appel d'Ololê* no. 21 (1973), p.2.

³⁷⁸ *L'Appel d'Ololê* 17 (1972), p. 2.

³⁷⁹ *L'Appel d'Ololê* 10 (1972), p. 2.

³⁸⁰ *L'Appel d'Ololê* 10 (1971), p. 2.

letters, reviews taken from other publications, family announcements of births, marriages and deaths, and news items relevant to Breton nationalism and pan-Celtic nationalism (e.g. exchange trips between Brittany and Ulster despite the start of 'The Troubles',³⁸¹ or manifestations of Breton national identity in other media³⁸²) and Breton songs. Nevertheless since the two publications share common themes, staff and political standpoint, I will analyse them together, in order to avoid repetition.

Ololê and Catholicism

To repeat, both of Henri Caouissin's publications are heavily entwined with, and influenced by, the Catholic Church. This is unsurprising for reasons already explained. Indeed, the Church had a notable influence on Francophone *bande dessinée* in general as, for example, in the cases of the Belgian Catholic paper *XXe Siècle*, original home of Hergé's Tintin,³⁸³ and *Cœurs vaillants*, founded by three clergymen and overtly Catholic in tone,³⁸⁴ as well as being the first French publication to publish Tintin stories.³⁸⁵ *Ololê* and *Appel d'Ololê*, however, are particularly forthright in their particular brand of Catholicism, deliberately linking religious piety with Breton nationalism.

References to the Church, saints and faith are common in both publications. For example, there is a double-page feature in *Appel d'Ololê* no. 17 on 'Mammou Breiz - Mères Bretons'³⁸⁶, Breton saints who are also mothers of saints, and also non-sanctified but notable maternal figures: e.g. Azo de Quinquis, the mother of St. Yves, and Jeanne of Flanders. There is news of a more modern religious nature also: a report from a concert of Gregorian chant given by Breton monks in Paris

³⁸¹ 'Fraternité Celtique dans la joie Pascale', *L'Appel d'Ololê* 17 (1972), p. 13.

³⁸² 'Enfin, Alain Barrière chante sa Bretagne...et en Breton!', *L'Appel d'Ololê* 17 (1972), p. 13.

³⁸³ Frederic Tuten, *Tintin in the New World: A Romance* (New York: W. Morrow, 1993), p. 1.

³⁸⁴ For examples, see Mark McKinney, *History and Politics in French Language Comics and Graphic Novels*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), p. 47-49.

³⁸⁵ Laurence Grove (a), *Text/image Mosaics in French Culture: Emblems and Comic Strips* (Aldershot, Hants England: Ashgate, 2005), p. 20.

³⁸⁶ 'Mammou Breiz- Mères Bretonnes', *L'Appel d'Ololê* 17 (1972), pp. 6-7.

(‘archi-comblé’ with ‘beaucoup de jeunes’)³⁸⁷ and a Christmas Mass given in Breton. The traditionalist Catholicism of the editorial line is clear in the description of this Mass: ‘Quelle différence entre cette célébration liturgique et les “messes” quelque peu anarchiques en langue vulgaire, où tout sens du sacré a disparu’.³⁸⁸

Ololê also includes features and guides to notable examples of the local Catholic heritage or ‘patrimoine’ and religious festivals: for example, *Ololê* issue 38 (31st August 1941) features a lengthy description of the Church of St-Anne-La-Palud in Plonévez-Porzay, in the Finistère, as well as its famous local pardon: ‘le plus célèbre et le plus beau Pardon de Bretagne’,³⁸⁹ a pardon being a typically Breton mass pilgrimage on saints’ feast days.

In the same issue, there is also a moral tale penned by Henri Caouissin in the sermonizing tradition, ‘Jean-Pierre Guermeur, le blasphémateur’,³⁹⁰ which centres on a young man who is as far from a ‘good Breton’ as is possible. He has several things counting against him. His parents left Brittany for Paris in order to ‘earn more’; no mention of socio-economic pressures is made, the implied motive for their emigration being avarice. After his parents’ deaths Jean-Pierre becomes a ‘sans-dieu’ and member of an atheist organisation; he publicly rubbishes the value of Breton traditions, calling traditional Bretons ‘arriérés’. At an atheist meeting where he is speaking, he asserts that if there were a God, He would show him a sign. There is a sudden lightning strike; Jean-Pierre is unaffected but is then struck on the head by a bird, possibly symbolizing the Holy Ghost. This blow paralyses his optic nerve and leaves him blind. He renounces his atheism and goes on pilgrimage to St-Anne-La-Palud during the Pardon. A miracle occurs, he regains his sight, and as in medieval mystery plays is inspired to become a priest after the intervention of St. Anne. It is a prime example of *Ololê* conflating Catholic piety and Breton identity; Jean-Pierre renounced not only his faith but the traditions of his *pays*. On regaining his faith and his sight, he becomes a priest, specifically ‘dans une paroisse

³⁸⁷ ‘Enthousiasme pour 3 musiques sacrées’, *L’Appel d’Ololê* 12, 1971, p. 16.

³⁸⁸ ‘Enthousiasme...’, *L’Appel d’Ololê* 12, p. 16.

³⁸⁹ ‘Brudeta ha kaera Pardon Breiz- Le plus célèbre & plus beau Pardon de Bretagne’, *Ololê* 38 (31 August 1941), pp. 1-3 (p. 1).

³⁹⁰ ‘Herri C’, ‘Jean Pierre Guermeur, le blasphémateur’, *Ololê* 38, 31 August 1941, pp. 1-3.

bretonne de la banlieue parisienne’, implying that he has also regained a sense of Breton pride along with religious belief and missionary zeal.

Ololê no. 90 (29th November 1942) contains a lengthy feature on a local school for blind children, run by the local Church; describing how the school caters for blind children in understandably sentimental terms, it then describes how the children’s mothers cry with gratitude, because ‘votre enfant est sauvé’.³⁹¹ The repeated implication of gratitude, charity and blind children’s lack of opportunities outside of the school, combined with the information that it is run by the Gabrielite Brothers (with a girl’s school run by the linked Daughters of Wisdom) means that the article represents an advertisement for the Church’s charity, good works and kindness towards the unfortunate. Blindness is portrayed as a heavy burden, which only the Church can and will alleviate.

Issue 93 (10th January 1943) is an Epiphany edition, with a large part of the paper (approximately two pages) taken up with an Epiphany story, ‘The Three Pilgrims’.³⁹² The issue’s brightly coloured, vividly illustrated front page banner is filled with a text on ‘Notre Étoile’, which describes how, just as the Three Wise Men had the Christmas star to light their way, readers of *Ololê* also have their own guiding star: the Celtic Cross.

Vieille de plus de mille ans, elle rayonne à nouveau sur le Terre d’Arvor et symbolise notre amour de Dieu et de la Bretagne [...] Notre guide qui nous maintiendra dans la voie... ou nous marcherons sans faiblir en fervents Chrétiens et vaillants Bretons.³⁹³

In the issues of *Ololê* and *Appel d’Ololê* available for study, the above instances are the most explicit examples of Catholic influence. Despite the many years between the two publication runs, the pious tone remains the same. The Catholicism of *L’Appel d’Ololê* is largely unchanged from that of its 1940s antecedent, although after Vatican II its conservatism became an increasingly minority view. This sense of

³⁹¹ Frère Constant-Joseph des Frères de Saint-Gabriel- Nantes ‘O Lo Lê à l’école de ceux qui ne voient pas’, *Ololê* 90 (29 Nov. 1942), p. 4.

³⁹² ‘Les Trois Pélérins’, *Ololê* 93 (10 January 1943), pp. 1 & 4.

³⁹³ ‘Les Trois Pélérins’ *Ololê* 93, p. 1.

isolation is alluded to in the new item on Breton monks in Paris, with the distaste shown towards the practices of the modern Mass. Frequent items involving the clergy, whether as writers or protagonists, underline the importance of the Catholic apparatus in the life of the readership.

Ololê and World War Two

Ololê's history is primarily problematic because of the background of Henri and Ronan Caouissin in the Breton independence movement. The role of Brittany and Bretons in the Occupation is debated and contentious, and a detailed examination would be outwith the remit of this thesis. However, the two brothers are noteworthy for having been part of the pre-war Breton movement. Consequently, a short overview of the pre-1945 Breton independence movement and the political environment which gave rise to *Ololê* is needed. In contrast to the modern (post-1968) Breton independence movement, the earlier autonomist movement was notably more right-wing.

The Breton autonomist movement has its roots in the nineteenth century, notably involving attempts at the legitimisation of the Breton language (for example those of Charles de Gaulle, uncle of his more famous namesake)³⁹⁴ in the mid-late 1800s. During this time, the first Breton journals and organisations were born, e.g. *Feiz Ha Breiz* in 1865 and the Union Régionaliste Breton (URB, Brittany's first political party) in 1898. With the beginning of the twentieth century, the movement began to be more politicised: the Parti National Breton (PNB) was founded after a split with the URB in 1911. Culturally, the Bleun-Breug movement was founded in 1905 by the Abbé Perrot, who also resuscitated *Feiz Ha Breiz*.

After the First World War, a younger generation of activists appeared, regenerating a movement decimated by the losses of the war. Breton language and culture came to the fore. The aforementioned group of Breton artists and musicians, Seiz Breur (The Seven Brothers) included both Caouissin brothers and the acclaimed sculptor

³⁹⁴ McDonald, p. 56.

and member of the PNB militia Yann Goulet.³⁹⁵ 1923 saw Morvan Marchal create the Breton flag, the Gwenn-ha-Du,³⁹⁶ and in 1925 the noted Breton language activist Roparz Hemon founded the literary journal *Gwalarn*.³⁹⁷

In the 1930s Breton politics turned towards fascism, notably with the forming of a new Parti National Breton (not to be confused with the earlier party of the same name, which ceased to exist in 1914). This new PNB was the result of a split from the left-leaning federalist Parti Autonomiste Breton (PAB) in 1931.³⁹⁸ The new PNB, with associated paramilitary wings (e.g. Bagadou Stourm, the militia of which Yann Goulet became head) existed until 1944.

By the start of the Second World War, therefore, the Breton independence movement was generally right-wing with fascist tendencies. Several high-profile members of the movement have been noted as having collaborated with German or Vichy forces, and were tried at the Liberation as collaborationists (e.g. Roparz Hemon).³⁹⁹ As previously asserted, historiography of the period is unreliable and controversial, and it is difficult to state that any Breton collaborated with Nazis for certain.

According to Kristian Hamon, Henri Caouissin was a member of the Landerneau Kommando, an anti-resistance organisation with links to the occupying German forces.⁴⁰⁰ He was also investigated by police for dissemination of nationalist

³⁹⁵ Douglas Johnson, 'Yann Goulet', *The Guardian*, 6 September 1999.

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/1999/sep/06/guardianobituaries2>> [Accessed 15 August 2015].

³⁹⁶ Frans Schrijver, *Regionalism After Regionalisation: Spain, France and the United Kingdom* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), p. 223.

³⁹⁷ John T Koch and Antone Minard, *The Celts: History, Life, and Culture* (Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO, 2012), p. 121.

³⁹⁸ Christopher S. Thompson, *The Tour De France: A Cultural History*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 73.

³⁹⁹ Christopher Hutton, *Linguistics and the Third Reich: Mother-tongue fascism, race and the science of language* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 139.

⁴⁰⁰ Kristian Hamon, *Les Nationalistes Bretons Sous L'occupation* (Ar Releg-Kerhuon: An Here, 2001), p. 98.

tracts,⁴⁰¹ and, after the liberation, investigated as part of an investigation into the death of the Abbé Perrot and its aftermath.⁴⁰²

Therefore, *Ololê* did not exist in political isolation. A particular set of circumstances helped create an opportune moment for Herri Caouissin to publish his paper and also created a readership for *Ololê*. Hamon cites a report which asserts that *Ololê* and *L'Heure bretonne* (the organ of the second PNB) were distributed by the same network,⁴⁰³ which suggests a similarity in the viewpoints of both publications. The paper also appears to have been politically favoured, at least at times: the ink quality of the publications is largely of high quality – not as remarkably vivid as that of the Nazi-backed *Le Téméraire*, admittedly, but still in very good, bright condition even seventy years after publication, and markedly better than that of papers published in the southern zone. Like paper, ink was hard to procure under the Occupation, and so this print quality implies an inside connection to the occupying administration. In addition, despite the eventual prohibition of youth groups by the Germans, the UGB was allowed to continue without any real opposition.⁴⁰⁴ This tolerance suggests a political connection, or at least ideological sympathy on the part of the Germans. In terms of content, the war does not often appear overtly in *Ololê*: this is in contrast to its counterpart and partial inspiration *Cœurs vaillants*, where references to the present conflict were more common.⁴⁰⁵ This discretion is helped in part by the paper's concentration on folklore and historical fiction rather than contemporary, modern themes.

However, among the issues available for study, there are occasional references to the changes brought by war and the Occupation. Issue 90 features a page on Breton prisoners of war and Breton refugee children: it thanks *Ololê*'s readers for their spontaneous sending of Christmas presents for prisoners. They have sent *Ololê* books, magazines, even money.⁴⁰⁶ In response, the paper has published an article

⁴⁰¹ Hamon, p. 187.

⁴⁰² Hamon, p. 220-221.

⁴⁰³ Hamon, p. 98.

⁴⁰⁴ Carichon, p. 166.

⁴⁰⁵ McKinney, p. 49.

⁴⁰⁶ P. Péron, 'Le Noël des Prisonniers Bretons', *Ololê* no. 90 (29 November 1942), p. 2.

by P. Péron, 'ex-prisonnier 60.963', describing his pain at being separated from his family at Christmas while in a Stalag. He tells readers:

Pensez à chaque papa exilé, plus que jamais en ces mois noirs. [...] Même si vous n'avez pas de parents prisonniers (ce qui doit être bien rare), pensez à votre camarade, votre voisin, qui lui, en a.⁴⁰⁷

For the ex-prisoner, the way to encourage those who have exiled relatives is to invoke Brittany: he asserts that in 'oflags et Stalags' '[Des] Bretons... causent avec joie de leur village, de leur ville, de leur pays. Ils revivent leur bonheur perdu. Tout ce qui touche leur pays est passionnant' and so he appeals for donations of books pertaining to Brittany to be sent to prisoners.

The usefulness or legitimacy of this appeal is impossible to verify. However, it shows a clever tactic on the part of the editors. By ascribing Breton pride to the prisoners of war, they engender more sympathy for them; they also promote Brittany and Breton-ness by portraying Breton identity as a force positive enough to negate the difficulties of being imprisoned in a camp.

In the same issue is an 'SOS d'une "Hermine" de la Mer'.⁴⁰⁸ It describes a letter from a young female reader of *Ololê* ('Hermine' is an allusion to the magazine's club for girls),⁴⁰⁹ who lives on one of Brittany's islands that is remote even by Breton standards in 1942. She writes to say that winter is coming and that she has no winter clothes so that, if the winter is very cold, 'nous ne pourrions tenir'. She and *Ololê* appeal therefore for donations of old clothes, and particularly jumpers, for the reader to alter to fit. The reader ends by pleading poverty and a prayer in both Breton and French.

It is implied that the reader's difficulties are (at least partially) caused by the war, as the editors write 'ceux d'entre nous qui le peuvent [c.-à-d. qui peuvent contribuer], moins touchés par les restrictions...'

⁴⁰⁷ Yvon et Annaig, 'Le "S.O.S" d'une "Hermine" de la Mer', *Ololê*, no. 90, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁰⁸ 'Le "S.O.S" d'une "Hermine" de la Mer' pp. 2-3.

⁴⁰⁹ The club is named after the medieval Breton chivalric order and heraldic emblem of the stoat's spotted tail which was revived in 1923 as the symbol of Brittany on its new flag.

Again it is impossible to verify the existence of this cold, isolated reader. In my view, the existence of a real girl in need is doubtful, as the article contains numerous allusions to characteristics which make the letter-writer an ideal reader of the paper and member of the traditional Breton movement. She reads the paper; she is a religious Catholic, she speaks Breton and she is a Bretonne living in a remote, insular location, and, given the high profile of Breton sailors, this affiliation can only count in her favour. As she appears to be the ‘ideal’ of an *Ololê* reader, fabrication by the paper seems likely.

Although *Ololê* did not overtly sympathise with the Nazis, as has already been intimated there are instances of anti-semitism in some of the stories such as ‘Le Signe de l’Hermine’ in issue no. 75.⁴¹⁰ It is the story of a young child star of cinema, who is cast as Jewish, as she is given the name Ryane Bernstein. As things become more difficult for Jews in France, her parents decide to flee for America and Hollywood. Ryane is ostensibly enthusiastic, but on the day of their departure the girl disappears. Readers find her having run away to Brittany, where she has made new friends. Listening to them discuss their pride in Brittany, she is upset because she is not Breton and cannot share their joy. Suddenly she collapses, hitting her head on a rock. When she awakes she is with an old woman who tells her that she found her unconscious and spotted a mark on her foot, which proves she is not Ryane Bernstein at all, but a child of noble parents who was stolen from Brittany in infancy, and so can join in the Breton pride of her friends.

The story is anti-Semitic on several fronts. Ryane’s parents refer to her as their ‘golden goose’, implying that they are avaricious in keeping with one stereotypical view of Jews. The Breton characters refer to their new ‘friend’ in derogatory terms because of her name – ‘Bernstein, je n’aime pas ce nom-là, tiens!’ – and refer to her as an ‘étrangère’, to whom Brittany is of no interest. Strikingly, Ryane is herself made to express anti-Semitic views and to condemn her ancestry. She says, ‘Son nom était celui d’un sans-patrie, d’une race qui n’a d’amour que l’or !’, again emphasizing Jewish avarice. There is also a tacit implication that Jews kidnap children from ‘good’ French families. Ryane’s interest in ‘Doue ha Breiz’ also

⁴¹⁰ *Ololê* no. 75 p. 1.

indicates that she will convert from Judaism to Catholicism, and thus believe in the 'true' God. Yet again, Brittany and Breton culture are shown as 'saving' a character, as in the story of Jean-Pierre the blasphemer. Here instead Brittany saves Ryane by removing her Jewish identity and giving her everything of which she lamented her lack. Instead of a 'sans-patrie' she becomes a Bretonne with a rich national history; she now feels a love for Brittany and its culture. Finally, 'Le Signe de L'Hermine' is a prime example of explicit Pétainism in a fictional *Ololê* item.

***Ololê* and Pétain**

As previously noted, *Ololê* was overt in its support of Maréchal Pétain. He featured numerous times throughout the paper's lifespan: Denni cites issues 20, 35, 45, 63, 65 and 74 as examples.⁴¹¹ He is always portrayed favourably, as in the previously cited example of the paper printing a birthday greeting to him, with the telling text 'Enfants, n'oubliez pas que si votre papa ou votre aînés ne sont pas tombés dans cette guerre, c'est à lui que vous le devez car il n'a pas permis que se prolonge l'inutile sacrifice...'.⁴¹² Frequent references are made to Pétain's benevolent nature, for example when visiting war orphans in issue 65.⁴¹³ In the issue containing his birthday greeting, his portrait is featured on the same page as that of Pope Pius XII, suggesting equivalence for both men in *Ololê*'s esteem.

Fictional characters also expound admiration for the Maréchal: the Breton characters in 'Le Signe de L'Hermine' are joyous at his policies:

– Tu sais la nouvelle, Efflam, le Maréchal Pétain a promis la
résurrection des provinces.

– Chic alors, notre Bretagne déjà si belle, va devenir une merveille...⁴¹⁴

⁴¹¹ Denni, p. 37.

⁴¹² *Ololê* no. 20, (27 April 1941), cited in Denni, p. 37.

⁴¹³ Denni, p. 37.

⁴¹⁴ *Ololê* no. 75 p. 1.

The paper also repeatedly denounces the Allies, particularly their aerial bombardments and the consequences thereof with references to the funerals of victims and articles counting the number of dead. One example cites 500 dead in Rennes, 483 in Saint Nazaire, 334 at Lorient, 254 in Brest and 82 in Morlaix.⁴¹⁵

Given the right-wing nature of the political environment which spawned *Ololê*, anti-Semitic content, although distasteful, is not particularly surprising. Unlike the matter of ink and paper supplies discussed earlier, it does not necessarily imply involvement or collaboration with the occupying forces, since the political standpoint of the publication is likely to have been the same even if the contemporary political system had been different.

Pétain and those behind *Ololê* also shared numerous common values; so again, the paper's celebration of the Vichy regime is predictable. Both *Ololê* and the Maréchal supported regionalism, traditional morality and 'Christian' values, as well as a belief in the value of the rural population and lifestyle (as in Vichy's 'retour à la terre'). Politically, the armistice of 1940 suited the right-wing elements of the Breton movement, within which are counted the Caouissins and *Ololê*; and as such, despite the published missives bemoaning the restrictions and problems that the war has brought, I would argue that the Vichy era- or at least, the policies brought about by Pétain and the Vichy government- was seen as a largely positive change by the Breton movement of the time, particularly in contrast to the staunchly centrist governments that came before.

Plus ça change, plus c'est (presque) la même chose : Changes After Ololê's Reincarnation

Understandably, *L'Appel d'Ololê* could not expound the same political views as its predecessor, at least not overtly, even if the editorial team still held them in private. Furthermore, without World War Two and the German Occupation to create content and provide a common cause, what would *Appel d'Ololê* use to fill its pages? This section will explore the solution the editors chose.

⁴¹⁵ *Ololê* no. 104 cited in Denni, p. 37.

Some of the *bande dessinées* published in *Appel* were replications of strips found in *Ololê*, notably *Goneri*, *filleule de Cadoudal*, and *Matilin an Dall*. However, also included were new *bande dessinées*, the majority still in the Bécassine-like *histoire en images* format of the 1940s. Already old-fashioned then, the presentation was markedly anachronistic by the 1970s and can only be interpreted as representing a definite stylistic choice to remain traditionalist and backward-looking in the face of modernity. In an awkward hybrid of homemade modern *bandes dessinées* and *images d'Epinal* a few series have both below-image text and superimposed speech bubbles: for example *Le Secret d'Enora Le Malestroit*. In the issues available for study, the new series are exclusively of the swashbuckling, 'cloak and dagger', heroic genre. *Appel d'Ololê's* sole nod to contemporary stories is *Le Glaive de Lumière*, a long-form multipart text story written by Herri Caouissin and his wife. It is the story of a group of youths who are searching for centuries-old Breton artefacts in modern Brittany. The story itself has few markers to identify it as modern, but the timeframe is shown by the illustrations of teenagers in semi-fashionable 70s clothing: polo-necked jumpers (some decorated with a 'BZH' motif), boys' hairstyles à la Claude François, the girls with long, blow-dried hair and wearing trousers. Other than that, the magazine's fiction is decidedly focused on Brittany's glorious past.

In non-fiction, however, the Caouissins achieve something of an innovation with their recurring *Brittia* feature. *Brittia* portrays events from Breton history (the birth and marriage of the Duchess Anne, royal conspiracies, etc) in the form of a modern newspaper, written in the present tense, with modern reconstructed photos. Although the events are all hundreds of years old, further emphasising the magazine's obsession with the past, it is well executed and engaging. *Brittia* was also the name chosen for the Caouissin brothers' later film company, founded in 1952.⁴¹⁶

Many issues of *L'Appel* are themed; that is to say, they have a full page illustration of a theme on the front cover, and then a factual feature on that theme inside,

⁴¹⁶ 'Henri et Ronan Caouissin', *Ouest en mémoire* 16 March 1984 <<http://fresques.ina.fr/ouest-en-memoire/fiche-media/Region00354/ronan-et-henri-caouissin.html>> [Accessed 1 September 2015].

covering multiple pages and occasionally even the majority of the issue. Examples include ‘La Puissance Bretonne’ (issue no. 6, 1970), ‘Georges Cadoudal’ (no. 10, 1971 – this issue was so popular with readers that the editors were still publishing letters of praise a minimum of two issues later), and two issues on Scotland: one being on the era of the Jacobites (no. 12, 1971), and the other featuring modern Scotland (no. 23, 1973). The latter is a particularly accomplished, if ultra-tartan tourist feature about the Highlands, including information such as the differences between English porridge (sugared) and Scottish (salted), and a substantial text on Highland Cows, with photos.⁴¹⁷

In its quest for a cause to replace that of the war, *L’Appel* is most vocal on the issue of environmentalism and climate change, running pessimistic articles on *inter alia* declining fish numbers,⁴¹⁸ the plight of the hedgehog,⁴¹⁹ and the destruction of local hedges leading to agricultural apocalypse.⁴²⁰ The saving of the Breton land is repeatedly linked to Breton pride, thus repeating the trope found in the previous *Ololê*.

A final, striking difference between the two publications is the much increased reader involvement in the latter incarnation. As previously stated, if we are to judge by the repeated pleas for donations and subscriptions, *L’Appel* appears completely dependent on reader funding. There are also far more letters published from readers than in the previous incarnation, a phenomenon which strongly suggests that a fair proportion, if not a verifiable majority, of readers are adults who once read the original paper and still hold the same principles, along with a minority of other regional language activists and children. It is unclear if *L’Appel d’Ololê* achieved much of a following outwith its wartime readership, despite some elements of change and modernisation. It cannot be said to have been a picture of the modern Breton autonomist movement in the early to mid-70s, in that it remains faithful to the right-wing traditionalist views which, by the time of its publication,

⁴¹⁷ Somewhat amusingly, the section is titled “Les Highland Cows”, as the authors make no attempt to translate the term.

⁴¹⁸ Appel d’Ololê no. 12, p. 6.

⁴¹⁹ Appel d’Ololê no. 17, p. 4.

⁴²⁰ Appel d’Ololê no. 10, p. 14.

had been overtaken by a leftist majority view, as the Breton nationalist movement regrouped post-WW2. As René Galand notes, '[b]y the end of 1945, Breton nationalism as a viable political ideal was dead',⁴²¹ owing to the political affiliations of the right-wing nationalists, of which the Caouissins and their backers had formed a part. Postwar activists consciously moved away from any association with their predecessors and political movements stressed their links to the political left;⁴²² by the time *Appel d'Ololê* resurfaced it espoused a minority view which had lost virtually all relevance and power.

Conclusions

In summary, *Ololê* is one of the strongest expressions of regional identity which uses the *bande dessinée* medium. Although it is undoubtedly a minor publication, as is evidenced by its relatively low circulation figures, its niche market and the small area of distribution, several factors make it an interesting publication for study. Firstly, it is a counterpoint to the representation of Brittany shown in *Les Aventures de Bécassine*. Henri Caouissin was clearly concerned with the depiction of the region in the Bécassine series, so much so that he felt moved to co-write a play in response. The Brittany of *Ololê* is not the antithesis of *Les Aventures de Bécassine*'s version; they are thematically quite similar. Instead, Caouissin's publication validates a 'traditional' version of Brittany, where being religious, living rurally and connecting with your history is acceptable, or rather something to be celebrated. For Bécassine, her Breton identity means she is not really French; everything that is Breton in the series is negative and shameful. For the creators (and readers) of *Ololê*, their Breton identity also means they are not French; in this case, however, regional difference is not a defect, but reinforced and presented as a cornerstone of identity.

Ololê represents only one version of Breton identity: Caouissin's Brittany is not everyone's Brittany. This idiosyncrasy becomes clearest with the appearance of *L'Appel d'Ololê*. Post-war Breton activism has moved politically to the left, and

⁴²¹ René Galand, 'Poets and Politics: The Revival of Nationalism in Breton Poetry since World War II', *World Literature Today* 54.2 (1980), 218-222 (p. 218).

⁴²² Galand, p. 218.

Caouissin's wholesale projection of 1940s content—albeit with small or token attempts to modernise, e.g. with new clothes for characters and a focus on environmental issues – is far removed from contemporary expressions of Breton identity. At the time of original publication, *Ololê* was more current in its viewpoints, and had the backing of some powerful figures in the Breton movement, e.g. the Marquis de l'Estourbeillon and Abbé Perrot; it was part of a wider movement around Breton identity. Even so, it must be acknowledged that even in its day *Ololê*'s representation of Breton-ness was not universally accepted.

Nevertheless, from another perspective, *Ololê* is also interesting because it was not created in isolation. Despite its calculated differences from mainstream *bande dessinée* publications of the time, i.e. in its old-fashioned layout, *Ololê* arose out of Henri Caouissin's experience with *Cœurs vaillants*. The involvement of the Catholic Church in *Ololê*'s production also echoes the Church's role in francophone *bande dessinée* as a whole; the religious nature of the publication is not surprising. Caouissin's attempt to create a Breton *Cœurs vaillants* appears to have been a success. *Ololê* was never going to reach the material success of *Cœurs vaillants* – for one thing, it was aimed at a much smaller, specific market – but the outreach to the Breton community and youth groups was remarkably successful. The influence on later Breton scouting is evidence of this.

Ololê's situation during the Occupation is very similar to that of the Nazi-backed *Le Téméraire* and similar questions about its survival arise. *Le Téméraire* outlasted *Ololê* by a matter of weeks: the existence of a tiny, regional publication almost to the end of the Occupation is remarkable. Was it backed by the Germans behind a Breton or French front, like *Le Téméraire*? The political context in Brittany even before the defeat of France makes German involvement seem plausible, and the arrest and exile of the Caouissin brothers at the Liberation indicates collaboration on some level, but there is no definitive proof.

The link of its creators to the pro-Breton movement and arguably to the Germans during the Occupation goes some way to explaining why *Ololê* was ignored for so long and why there is little secondary literature studying it. Its political connections do not override its value as an expression of cultural identity which is rare in *bande*

dessinée: it is a very clear, unapologetic representation of a singularly Breton identity.

Brittany is not the only region of France to have its culture and identity expressed in *bande dessinée*; more recently, Corsica, at the other geographical extreme of metropolitan France, has also featured heavily in the medium. I will now move on to discuss how internal and external representations of Corsica differ in *bande dessinée*, how Corsican culture is represented in the French mainstream, and how local publishing is challenging these representations and stereotypes.

4. Corsican Context: The Development of Twentieth-Century Corsican Nationalism

In contrast to the situation in Brittany, agitation for autonomy and regional power may seem a relatively modern concept in Corsica, at least since the demise of the islands's two short-lived independent governments, namely the Corsican Republic (founded 1755) whose army was defeated by French forces on 8th-9th May 1769 and, secondly, the even shorter-lived Anglo-Corsican Kingdom (1794-1796) that was again crushed by France.⁴²³

Whereas in Brittany dissatisfaction with France's centralised administration has existed for hundreds of years, even pre-dating the 1789 Revolution, large-scale Corsican opposition to French centralism is inevitably more recent given that it was only in April 1756 that France began occupying large Corsican towns at the request of the Republic of Genoa, after signing the Treaty of Compiègne. Corsican antipathy to France has developed on a large scale only after the Second World War, although more minor seismic tremors in the local political landscape have been intermittently discernible for over two hundred years. The situation on the island is the consequence of several complex, culminating factors, many of them unique to Corsica. The movement for regional autonomy and independence in Corsica has had an important impact on the image of the island in general French public opinion and as such many representations of Corsica in the media, including those in *bandes dessinées*, are influenced by this public perception. For this reason, the following section gives an overview of the development of the Corsican autonomist and nationalist movements from the 1950s until the late 1970s when they developed into clandestine, violent nationalist groups which continue to exist today. An overview of the non-violent development of Corsican identity, such as that

⁴²³ See Peter A. Thrasher, *Pasquale Paoli: an Enlightened Hero, 1725-1807*, (London: Constable, 1970), John Michael Peter McErlean, 'Le Royaume anglo-corse (1794-1796): Contre-révolution ou continuité?' in *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 260 (1985), 215-35.

achieved through the media, song and language learning, is also given in the relevant later chapter.

At the outset a summary of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century regionalism in Corsica may be useful. It was at this point that Corsican literature began to proliferate. Meic Stephens comments:

It was now that the Corsican identity was re-awakened, in the cultural sphere. Under the influence of the *Félibrige* and the renaissance in Provençal poetry, magazines like *Cirnea*, *A Lingua Corsa*, *Revue de la Corse*, and *A Muvra* began publishing poetry in the Corsican language. A number of writers emerged, including Santu Casanova, ‘the Mistral of Corsica’, and C.-A. Versini, Jean-Pierre Lucciardi and Carulu Giovini, members of a literary movement which by the end of the First World War had become more or less autonomist in character.⁴²⁴

To Stephens’ list we can also add *A Tramuntana*, founded by Santu Casanova in 1896. A right-wing regionalist journal written entirely in the Corsican language, *A Tramuntana* was published until 1919.⁴²⁵

A largely minority movement benefiting from a growth in local cultural awareness, the autonomist cause revived just before and immediately after the Great War with the appearance of two publications: firstly, the hugely influential independentist manifesto *A Cispia: antologia annuale*, written by schoolteachers Saveriu Paoli & Ghjacumusantu Versini and first published in March 1914 with its ringing declaration ‘La Corse n’est pas un département français: C’est une nation qui a été conquise et qui renaîtra!’;⁴²⁶ and secondly, the cultural and political weekly founded in 1920 by

⁴²⁴ Meic Stephens, *Linguistic Minorities in Western Europe*, Llandysul (Dyfed): Gomer Press, 1978, p. 333.

⁴²⁵ Jean-Paul Pellegrinetti & Ange Rovère, *La Corse et la République: la vie politique de la fin du second Empire au début du XX^e siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), p. 33.

⁴²⁶ See Jean-Marie Arrighi, ‘Langue corse : situation et débats’ in *Ethnologie française* 38, (2008) 507-516 and Jacques Thiers, ‘Le corse: l’insularité d’une langue’, in *Vingt-cinq communautés*

the Parisian immigrant Corsican Petru Rocca and named after the wild mouflon mountain sheep, *A Muvra*.⁴²⁷ Three years later, in 1923, Rocca founded the Partitu Corsu d'Azione, which in 1927 became the Partitu Corsu Autonomista (PCA) calling *inter alia* for official recognition of the Corsican language and the reopening of the University of Corte, founded in 1765 and shut only three years later following the first French Conquest.

As Marie-José Dalbera-Stevanaggi and Georges Moracchini note, Corsican is a latecomer to the literary scene since it was not a written language before the nineteenth century, and the *loi Deixonne* of 1951 made no provision for the teaching of Corsican in schools.⁴²⁸

Social and Economic Context in Corsica

Corsica's geography is extremely mountainous and this, together with what was until the 1940 the malaria-ridden nature of the lower plains in the east, historically limited the island's economic development for centuries to certain types of agriculture, notably goat herding and viticulture (see below) but also olive and chestnut production as well as forestry. Lack of economic opportunities for young people of working age and an extended hike in the birth-rate meant that, in parallel to the large-scale exodus from Brittany, there grew a tradition of emigration to the French mainland, with many Corsicans finding employment in the French civil service, particularly the colonial service. As Ramsay notes, a 'life cycle' of youth spent in Corsica, twenty or so years posted overseas, then retirement back in one's village of origin, became commonplace.⁴²⁹

linguistiques de la France, ed. Geneviève Vermes, (Paris : L'Harmattan, 1988, 2 vols) t. I, Langues régionales et langues non territorialisées, pp. 150-68.

⁴²⁷ Pellegrinetti & Rovère, pp. 241-47.

⁴²⁸ Marie-José Dalbera-Stevanaggi & Georges Moracchini, 'Corsican', in *Encyclopedia of the Languages of Europe*, ed. Glanville Price, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 103-5.

⁴²⁹ Robert Ramsay, *The Corsican Time-Bomb* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p. 25.

The almost obligatory emigration of young workers from an impoverished area into a more powerful, more prosperous one is not a uniquely Corsican phenomenon — indeed it appears at first glance very similar to the migration patterns from Brittany to Paris. However, in contrast to the Bretons' situation, where a majority of workers were employed in menial service positions in Paris, émigré Corsicans instead integrated successfully into French state apparatus. They also worked in a vastly more privileged milieu than Breton servants, in a service which offered security and relatively high social status.

That said, it should be noted that depopulation is an age-old problem in Corsica. Already in the 1520s there was a 'dépopulation [...] effrayante' according to historian J.-M. Jacobi.⁴³⁰ Moreover, while earlier emigration may have been temporary, in the first half of the twentieth century emigration from Corsica was often permanent, as Meic Stephens notes:

According to the *Journal officiel de la République Française* [...] for 2 April 1957, which published the text of the French Government's 'Regional Programme for Corsica', the population of the Island during the first half of this century fell from 320,000 permanent residents in 1900 to just under 200,000 in 1950. During the same period, the population of Sardinia, not exactly the most prosperous of Italian regions, increased from 680,000 to approximately, 1,500,000.⁴³¹

Writing ten years later, Jacques Thiers endorses this view and finds the situation little changed:

Il faut ajouter à cela une importante émigration: 260 000 personnes environ dans l'Hexagone (soit plus que la population actuelle de l'île), ce qui fait entre autres de Marseille la première ville corse ; les Corses

⁴³⁰ J.-M. Jacobi, *Histoire générale de la Corse depuis les premiers temps jusqu'à nos jours (1835)*, (Paris: Aimé André, 1835 (2 vols)), vol. I, p. 311 <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k65585675>> [Accessed 23 September 2015].

⁴³¹ Meic Stephens, 1976, p. 335. These statistics match those produced by the Société pour l'Équipement Touristique de la Corse (SETCO) for the years 1936-1954 discussed below.

sont également nombreux à l'étranger, en Amérique du sud notamment.⁴³²

For many years, therefore, after the French conquest some Corsicans benefited greatly from French rule and administration. This accounts for the lack of widespread anti-centralist feeling for much of Corsican history, although Corsica was subject to the same republican, centralist policies as Brittany or any other peripheral French region. During the Second Empire and for much of the Third Republic there was, superficially at least, no significant feeling of oppression, despite Corsica having had only a few decades of independence in its history, with virtually constant rule by distant, foreign powers.

Politically, too, Corsica was an eager participant in the French republic. Although local politics bore little resemblance to the democratic process on the mainland, Corsica notably and repeatedly lent enthusiastic support to the leader who most symbolises France, General de Gaulle.

De Gaulle's Free French broadcasts had much influence in Corsica, and the resulting Corsican Resistance began to identify with those Free French stationed in Algiers. The exiles provided the island's Resistance forces with weapons, supplies, and a communication link: after a Corsican uprising in June and July 1943 in opposition to incoming German troops, de Gaulle lent his support to the Resistance, along with General Giraud and other members of the Free French who aided the Corsicans in their final successful insurrection against the recently arrived German occupying forces in September and October 1943. On the 4th of October the last occupying soldiers left the island and de Gaulle declared 'La Corse a la fortune et l'honneur d'être le premier morceau libéré de la France'.⁴³³

Despite the influx of 15,000-20,000 predominantly anti-Gaullist *pieds-noirs* (see below) after 1957, when they accounted for approximately 9% of the population of the island, the majority of the Corsican electorate remained staunchly Gaullist until

⁴³² Jacques Thiers, p. 163.

⁴³³ J.B.Fusella and L. Calisti, 'Octobre 1943 : la Corse, premier département libéré', *l'Express*, 28 June 2004. Web. <http://www.lexpress.fr/informations/octobre-1943-la-corse-premier-departement-libere_656419.html> [Accessed 5 April 2013].

the General's resignation in 1969. However, in the years following the end of the war, a process was set in motion that was to have a profound effect on Corsica and would eventually create the armed Corsican struggle: decolonisation. Indeed according to Meic Stephens,⁴³⁴ the years 1957-1965 were marked by growing Corsican dissatisfaction with the slow implementation of the French government's Regional Programme for Corsica, opposition to the introduction of *pied-noir* refugees, and resentment at the constant refusal to recognise the status of the Corsican language, leading to a sizeable abstention of the island's electorate (44%) in the presidential elections of 1965.

Decolonisation in the late 1950s and 60s removed the need for the colonial service, in which many Corsicans were employed, as noted previously. The loss of this apparatus affected not only those who had been employed by it, but also the prospects of the majority of young educated Corsicans. A major gateway to prosperity was removed and left a vacuum as nothing emerged to replace it. This lack of an economic alternative threw sharp relief on economic conditions on the island. Employment opportunities were few and Corsica did not experience the rising levels of affluence enjoyed by much of Europe. This, combined with a sense that the island was neglected in terms of infrastructure gave new impetus to the simmering, but hitherto minority dissatisfaction with centralized state control as it became more generalized and the first post-war pressure groups were formed.

In addition to the loss of the Colonial Service, the process of decolonisation also gave rise to another series of events which were to have far-reaching consequences for the island: the war in Algeria between 1954 and 1962. Corsica and Algeria had close ties; in addition to the help sent from Algeria to the wartime Resistance, many Corsicans had lived and worked in Algeria,⁴³⁵ with claims during the conflict that there were up to 100,000 Corsicans in Algeria, in addition to up to 25% of white people living in the country having some Corsican ancestry.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ Meic Stephens, pp. 335-38.

⁴³⁵ Peter Savigear, 'Separatism and Centralism in Corsica' *The World Today* 36.9. (1980), pp. 351-355 (p. 352).

⁴³⁶ Ramsay, p.27.

In 1962, as the Algerian War ended, there was a mass exodus of *pieds-noirs*, that is the white, ethnically European population of Algeria. The colonising population, whose growth had been encouraged since the nineteenth century by the French government, surpassed one million by the point of independence, although the exact figure is impossible to verify. Although some 200,000 *pieds-noirs* chose to stay in Algeria after independence⁴³⁷, they were heavily outnumbered by those who left, over a million of whom returned to France, especially in 1962-63; Baillet cites a figure of 1,013,000.⁴³⁸ The French government was overwhelmed by this massive, sudden influx of people. They had planned for a total of only 400,000 returning citizens, phased over five years.⁴³⁹ A large number of fleeing *pieds noirs* arrived in Corsica, numbering in the tens of thousands.⁴⁴⁰ In economic terms, their timing was fortunate, coinciding with increased state-level development of agriculture, intended to reinvigorate the island's largely moribund economy. Many of the new arrivals had experience of commercial agriculture in Algeria, and they took advantage of the new opportunities presented to them to acquire farming land and create new businesses.

These new opportunities arose owing to the creation and works of SOMIVAC (Société d'économie Mixte pour la Mise en Valeur Agricole de la Corse) in 1957. Conceived by the short-lived centre-left coalition led by socialist Guy Mollet, this quasi-state body was set up as part of the French government's late-1950s regional action plan for Corsica, an attempt to recognise and remedy the difficulties specific to the island. SOMIVAC's goal was to develop post-war Corsican agriculture through the provision of loans to farmers and practical measures such as irrigation systems, electricity supply and improved roads. SOMIVAC's most ambitious project was the development of the island's eastern plain. The plain had been mostly unused by Corsican farmers, and consisted of large areas of *maquis* and malarial swamps. The area had been cleared of malaria by American troops in the 1940s, but the plain

⁴³⁷ <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2008/05/DAUM/15870> [Accessed 19 September 2015]

⁴³⁸ Pierre Baillet, 'L'intégration des rapatriés d'Algérie en France' *Population*, 30.2 (1975) pp. 303-314 (p. 303).

⁴³⁹ Baillet, p. 303.

⁴⁴⁰ 18,000 according to Meic Stephens (1976, p. 336).

remained unutilised. In the early 1960s, SOMIVAC cleared the *maquis* and provided infrastructure in the form of irrigation and electrification for a huge area of fertile land, opening it up for potentially lucrative new types of agriculture: the land was very different in character to the mountainous terrain Corsican farmers could previously access. In economic terms, the development of the plain seemed sensible and successful. However, the coincidental influx of displaced *pieds noirs* made the enterprise problematic for SOMIVAC. Corsicans argued that the new arrivals were being given advantageous treatment over native farmers,⁴⁴¹ citing the financial contribution required to access a piece of this new land. SOMIVAC requested a payment of 60,000 francs:⁴⁴² this was an unobtainable sum for most Corsican farmers. Those from Algeria, however, had easier access to capital as they arrived in Corsica armed with their compensation for property left in Algeria, money which they were able to invest in these new businesses, leading to higher non-Corsican take-up: up to 32% of the new land was claimed by investors from Algeria.⁴⁴³ Moreover, instead of using the land to introduce diversified agriculture, many *pied-noir* investors used the land for viticulture, an industry which was already significant on the island. Thus, as Willis states:

In the eyes of many Corsicans, SOMIVAC had failed doubly, by depriving Corsicans of the full benefit of the new farmland and by failing to diversify agricultural production.⁴⁴⁴

Although some analyses consider the intervention of SOMIVAC a success,⁴⁴⁵ it is difficult to ignore the anger which the new agricultural development evoked in many islanders. Some of an autonomist bent claimed that SOMIVAC was a tool of French colonialism: regardless of the truth of the claim, it is important because

⁴⁴¹ Ramsay, p. 39.

⁴⁴² Ramsay, p. 39.

⁴⁴³ F. Roy Willis, 'Development Planning in Eighteenth-Century France: Corsica's Plan Terrier', *French Historical Studies*, 11.3 (1980), pp. 328-351 (p.349).

⁴⁴⁴ Willis, p. 349

⁴⁴⁵ See for example William B. Cohen, 'Legacy of Empire: The Algerian Connection', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Imperial Hangovers (1980), 97-123 (p.101).

public opinion largely agreed with this view.⁴⁴⁶ Another cause for anger was the new arrivals' incursion into the island's viticulture: the wine produced by *pieds-noirs* was not of particularly high quality and it was felt that the focus on quantity over quality would harm the reputation of Corsican wines.⁴⁴⁷ As the new farms were more technologically advanced, they could also produce more wine than older pre-existing operations: in summary, the outsiders were thought to benefit while the Corsicans lost out.

The effects of, and reactions to, SOMIVAC are of importance primarily because of their consequences, namely the significant development of local patriotism and a growing sense of Corsican public awareness of resentment towards the French authorities. In addition the work of SOMIVAC was also an important issue for the nascent autonomist groups, as the issue of farming the eastern plain became a cornerstone of the pro-Corsica groups' arguments.

However, SOMIVAC was not the only cause for concern amongst Corsicans in the late fifties and sixties: a second quasi-state body was set up to develop another of the island's industries, that of tourism.

Another part of the Mollet administration's April 1957 regional plan, SETCO (Société pour l'Équipement Touristique de la Corse) was effectively intended to do the same for tourism as SOMIVAC had been supposed to do for agriculture. At the time, Corsica's economy and population were in a steep decline. The picture in general was bleak. The population had fallen from 237,000 to 175,000 between 1936 and 1954,⁴⁴⁸ and the portion of Corsica covered by *maquis* had grown dramatically between 1913 and 1957. Notably, the island had a very weak secondary sector and despite having a warm climate that was theoretically ideal for tourists, the island had very little infrastructure geared towards holiday-makers: transport links to the mainland were inadequate, and those that did exist were expensive. There was a lack of accommodation and of a trained workforce. Moreover, the finance required to set up tourist infrastructure was unavailable on Corsica, another consequence of

⁴⁴⁶ Ramsay, p. 39.

⁴⁴⁷ Ramsay, p. 39.

⁴⁴⁸ Pellegrinetti & Rovère, p. 385.

the island's depressed economy. SETCO set out to change this, and at first was positively received by the Corsican public, although Jongman & Schmid note the activity of the Corsican separatist group Comité pour l'Indépendance de la Corse (CIC) as early as 1962.⁴⁴⁹

However, a few years later in the mid 1960s, public opinion began to turn against SETCO. Corsica was by then a fixture on the tourist map, but the industry had also brought new problems. The rapid growth in hotel building, combined with loosely-enforced planning regulations, led to the destruction of sites of natural beauty, as did other public and private initiatives mentioned below. Development of mass tourism was seen as having a negative impact on the natural environment of Corsica and Corsican communities.⁴⁵⁰

Moreover, there was concern that the local population was not gaining from this new industry. Newly created jobs were not being filled by Corsicans; locals found themselves in menial positions while the more lucrative senior employment was taken by people brought in from the mainland, and overall control of the new businesses was rarely in Corsican hands. As was the case with the changes brought by SOMIVAC, outside interests were seen to be profiting while local people saw little benefit.

In summary, Corsica's already precarious economic landscape was hugely affected by events beyond the island's borders and control in the 1950s: decolonisation and Algerian independence. Attempts to compensate for the loss of the colonial civil service and reinvigorate traditional industries, while economically successful, did not gain the support of the local population and provoked protest, planting the seeds of the Corsican autonomist movement still in existence today.

⁴⁴⁹ Ramsay, p. 42; Albert J. Jongman & Alex P. Schmid, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1988), p. 543.

⁴⁵⁰ Joseph Martinetti, 'Les Tourments du tourisme sur l'île de beauté' in *Hérodote* 127 (2007), 29-46 (p. 38).

Even nowadays, the economic situation of Corsica can be summarised by the expression ‘une île pauvre et chère’, with a higher cost of living than the rest of France, a significant proportion of the population living below the poverty threshold, and 20% of jobs being seasonal since they are tourist-related. Statistics from the INSEE show that the fall in unemployment between 1997 (16%) and 2008 (8%) due to the boom in tourism has since reversed as a result of the global financial crisis. Unemployment in late 2012 was up to 9.4% in Ajaccio and up to 9.7% in Bastia, though it has since recovered slightly.⁴⁵¹

Beginnings of Corsican Concern

By the early sixties those concerned by the situation in Corsica had begun to organise themselves. The majority were ostensibly apolitical groups, mainly concerned with economic and social issues, of which there were several, as previously noted. Though not officially affiliated to a political party, their interests and collective action nevertheless implied a quasi-political agenda. A second area that would prove relevant to subsequent political developments, and to which we will shortly return, was a revival of interest in Corsican culture and language led in the 1950s by the Centre d’Études Corses founded at the Faculté des Lettres d’Aix-en-Provence in 1957.⁴⁵²

First of the former set of bodies was the Ajaccio-based *groupe du 29 Novembre*, a collection of local businessmen and professionals. The initial issue which provoked the group’s creation was a threat of closure to the island’s railway – an important transport link between the two major cities of Ajaccio and Bastia, allowing transport which would otherwise be difficult over the mountainous terrain. Transport in general was an issue, particularly the inefficiency and high cost of running ferries and other marine transport between the island and the mainland.

⁴⁵¹ See ‘Taux de chômage trimestriel par zone d’emploi en France métropolitaine’, INSEE, 16 July 2015 <http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/detail.asp?reg_id=99&ref_id=chomage-zone-2010> [Accessed 23 September 2015].

⁴⁵² Fernand Ettori, ‘L’Enseignement de la langue corse’ in *Langue française* 25 (1975), 104-111 (p.105).

They were also concerned that the 1957 regional action plan which created SOMIVAC and SETCO was not providing Corsica with effective solutions to existing problems. The *groupe du 29 Novembre* was effectively a pressure group, attempting to influence government decisions and to focus more attention on the island's developmental needs. The *groupe* was not the only one of its type: it had a counterpart in Bastia, DIECO (Défense des Interêts Economiques de la Corse), with which its organisers arranged joint public meetings and shared much common ground: they worked together on the railway, but also fiscal issues (e.g., tax breaks for Corsica, to compensate for the depressed economy) and fledgling regionalist concerns, in their drive for the island to be considered separately from the Provence-Côte d'Azur area, with which it was grouped under government regional development plans in 1960. In their initial objective, the pressure groups were successful in that the railway was granted a reprieve in 1961. On other issues, there was less success, although a regionalist Congress of 1963 did engender the CAPCO (Comité d'action et de promotion de la Corse). This committee was riven by internal discord and quickly disbanded, foreshadowing future intra-autonomist disagreement and splits.⁴⁵³

An important event in the context of developing popular regionalist and autonomist feeling in the early 1960s was the successful protest against the installation of a nuclear power facility at Argentella. Ten thousand people gathered against the project, and faced with this opposition the government halted development of the nuclear base. The project at Argentella combined with the perceived anti-Corsican discrimination of the *pied noir* resettlement and SOMIVAC led to a growing distrust of France's policy towards the island, and a feeling that Corsica was used as a testing ground for projects that mainland France did not want.⁴⁵⁴ The anti-nuclear protests were an important event in recent Corsican history as they marked one of

⁴⁵³ Xavier Crettiez, *La Question Corse* (Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 1999), p. 92.

⁴⁵⁴ Crettiez, p. 32.

the first mass pro-Corsica protests, symbolising a ‘forte prise de conscience des Corses qu’ils avaient le pouvoir de s’émanciper’.⁴⁵⁵

The protest movement becomes fully politicised

In the mid-1960s the organisations of dissenting voices had evolved to the point of presenting regionalist candidates at local elections. Regionalists had no real success in the political arena, and in September 1965 the pro-Corsican movement changed tack with the formation of the Marxist Front Régionaliste Corse (FRC), a development which immediately caused a split in the movement and which led in 1967 to the creation of a splinter group, the autonomist Action Régionaliste Corse (renamed in 1973 Action pour la Renaissance de la Corse / Azzione per a Rinascita di a Corsica, ARC), although its ideas had already found expression the previous year through the newspaper *Arriti*.

The FRC and ARC are of particular note because in contrast to previous pressure groups, who had worked to improve Corsica’s lot within the French state, they presented their grievances as a minority identity issue. The FRC, which had more of a presence on the mainland than in Corsica itself, stood on a Marxist platform of ending internal colonialism (that is, uneven development within a nation state, in this case France) through Corsican ownership of infrastructure. The ARC, based in Corsica, also considered the island as subject to internal colonialism, but did not share the FRC’s Marxist ideology. The ARC demanded recognition of the Corsican people as a distinct ethnic group and autonomy for the island. The emphasis shifted from working within the French entity for the improvement of Corsica to seeking independence as a means to that goal using rhetoric of a more separatist flavour. Corsican activists were defining themselves in opposition to the larger state, insisting on Corsica-specific ethnic and cultural otherness.

⁴⁵⁵ E Simeoni, interviewed in Jean-Paul Cappuri, ‘Comment la Corse a su s’affranchir d’une base nucléaire a l’Argentella’, *Corse Matin*, 14 April 2010.

<http://www.corsematin.com/article/corse/environnement-comment-la-corse-a-su-saffranchir-dune-base-nucleaire-a-largentella.5333.html> [Accessed 14 August 2015].

The ARC, led by Edmond and Max Simeoni, rose significantly in the public consciousness for around a decade after its 1967 launch, aided by developments in the French government's treatment of the regions, in particular de Gaulle's failed 1969 referendum, proposing both economic and cultural regionalism, and Pompidou's watered-down version. The group distinguished themselves after 1968 by moving from passive protest – rallies, round tables, press conferences – to more militant direct action, such as a road tax boycott in 1969. As the sixties drew to a close, the French state's ineffectiveness with regard to Corsica was provoking more protest among the general public. Autonomist groups used this to their advantage, carrying out more attacks, such as bombing SOMIVAC offices in protest at agricultural policy. The situation on the island was increasing in intensity, provoking worry from some quarters and increased radical fervour from others.

The 1970s: the development of Corsican culture and violent Corsican resistance

The 1970s saw an explosion of militancy and violent direct action amongst Corsican autonomists, but also witnessed a flourishing of Corsican culture encapsulated in the term *riacquistu* or reappropriation of the native language and customs. This cultural movement was particularly strong amongst students, notably the University of Corte, which will be discussed in detail in the later chapter on local Corsican *bande dessinée*. On the political front, tensions continued to grow. In 1971 the FRC published *Main basse sur une île*, a regionalist, Marxist manifesto. It described pre-revolutionary Corsica as a fertile, prosperous land with plentiful produce to export, portraying the French republic as a colonial force which stopped Corsica exporting to Italy and therefore killed its economy, leaving the island destitute while all of Corsica's wealth left for the mainland. The manifesto also decried the French system of administration, and the failed development plans of the 1950s, espousing a move towards collective ownership and socialism and blaming capitalism systems for Corsica's problems: 'Le groupe opprimé, c'est le peuple corse. Le groupe

opprimeur, c'est la bourgeoisie capitaliste française, aidé de ses valets, les bourgeois féodaux corses'.⁴⁵⁶

In turn, in 1974 the ARC also published a manifesto, *Autonomia*, which similarly decried internal colonialism, claiming the French state had pushed Corsica into a situation of dependency and had deliberately run down its industries and agriculture; culturally the ARC accused France of deliberately repressing the Corsican language and the island's culture. As a solution, they proposed internal autonomy for the island, reinforced their demands for recognition of a '*peuple corse*',⁴⁵⁷ and advocated devolution of all powers bar defence and foreign affairs to a Corsican assembly.⁴⁵⁸

In writing their manifesto, the ARC (and others) were influenced by the Hudson Institute report, secretly commissioned by the French government in 1970 and made public by the ARC the following year. The report, largely based on a topographical survey, concluded that to successfully develop Corsica and reduce economic pressures, either the situation should remain as it was, with increasing tourism and development, risking increasing frustration among the population, or Corsicans should be allowed to develop their own plans with the support of the French government. Broadly, the report recommended either massive immigration to Corsica to 'accélérer la disparition de l'identité culturelle corse' or a programme to 'conserver et restaurer l'identité culturelle...en développant le potentiel de l'île dans son contexte'.⁴⁵⁹ The report concluded that '[La Corse] intéresse peu la France'.⁴⁶⁰

The ARC's exposure of the secret report further mobilised those angered by its findings. In 1973, another environmental scandal came to the population's attention, the 'boues rouges' toxic waste dumping off Corsica's coast by the giant

⁴⁵⁶ Front Régionaliste Corse. *Main basse sur une île* (Paris: J. Martineau, 1971), p. 120.

⁴⁵⁷ Azzione per a Rinascita di a Corsica, *Autonomia: pour que vive le peuple corse* (Bastia: Arritti, 1974), p. 90.

⁴⁵⁸ Ramsay, p. 86.

⁴⁵⁹ Cited in Crettiez, p. 34.

⁴⁶⁰ Crettiez, p. 33.

Italian chemical, petro-chemical and pharmaceutical company Montedison with the tacit agreement of the French government. The ARC were involved in protests from a very early stage, beginning in January 1973. In mid-February there were mass protests; thousands of people protested in the islands' large towns, and conflicts with police left several injured. Although the mass protest was similar to that of 1960's anti-nuclear movement, it was not as successful: Montedison was ordered to stop dumping waste only in 1974.⁴⁶¹ However, the affair further reinforced the existing anti-French feeling which had been growing for over a decade.

This awakening of national consciousness, particularly among the young, was to have a profound effect on Corsican society as the decade wore on, including a radical backlash in the form of local anti-separatist movements, including the Ghjustizia Francèsa e Corsu (GFC) active in November 1975 when it was responsible for one attack at Picanale, and the Action pour la Corse Française (ACF), active in February 1977.⁴⁶²

Aléria, the ARC and the birth of the FLNC

The year 1975 was marked by a scandal on the island, as it was discovered that some wine-makers were adulterating their wine with sugar. In protest at this, and Corsica's economic and social situation in general, Edmond and Max Simeoni led

⁴⁶¹ Jean-Paul Cappuri, 'Bastia: des boues rouges aux fûts toxiques' 22 September 2009 <<http://www.corsematin.com/article/haute-corse/bastia-des-boues-rouges-aux-futs-toxiques.19973.html>> [Accessed 3 August 2015].

⁴⁶² Jongman & Schmid, pp. 543, 546.

an ARC occupation of a wine cellar owned by *pied-noir* Henri Depeille.⁴⁶³ Depeille claimed he was not part of those winegrowers who used sugar in their wines.⁴⁶⁴

The cellar was occupied on the 21st of August by a group including the Simeoni brothers and several other figures who were to become important in the later Corsican nationalist movements, such as Léo Battesti. On the 22nd of August large numbers of riot police and soldiers moved in to end the occupation. The ARC was surprised by the large government reaction, with interventions from the *préfet* and a huge military response ordered by Michel Poniatowski, Minister of the Interior, comprising some two thousand CRS riot police and gendarmes in light armoured vehicles. Edmond Simeoni, believing that the government was bluffing and would not shoot, ordered that if they were fired upon, the occupiers should shoot at the encroaching police only with hunting rifles.⁴⁶⁵ The order was not obeyed by all and some automatic weaponry was used. In the ensuing battle, two police officers were killed, and one ARC member, Pierrot Susini, was seriously injured, his foot being torn off. The occupation was one of the first major examples of violent Corsican direct action, 'le détonateur de la violence en Corse'.⁴⁶⁶

In the aftermath Dr Edmond Simeoni, aged forty-one, was arrested together with his brother and ten others, and sent to Fresnes prison. They were later accused of 'action against the state', and Simeoni received a five-year prison term. The ARC was banned by the government, a decision that was met with protests, particularly

⁴⁶³ Christophe Laurent, 'Evènement de 1975: Décès de Henri Depeille, propriétaire de la cave d'Aléria', *Corse Matin*, 10 June 2010. <<http://www.corsematin.com/article/corse/evenerment-de-1975-deces-dhenri-depeille-proprietaire-de-la-cave-daleria.904.html>> [Accessed 31 July 2015]. Meic Stephens (p. 339) notes that the protestors were also demanding the release of a comrade, Dominique Capretti, imprisoned for displaying autonomist posters.

⁴⁶⁴ Henri Depeille quoted in *Terrorisme en France: les événements d'Aléria*, The Factory, France 3. 2000. INA. <<http://www.ina.fr/video/I04257838>> [Accessed 8 April 2013- no longer online as of 3 August 2015].

⁴⁶⁵ Léo Battesti, quoted in *Terrorisme en France*.

⁴⁶⁶ Gérard Koch, photographer present at Aléria, quoted in *Terrorisme en France*.

in Bastia where one French policeman was killed and seventeen other people injured.⁴⁶⁷

A general strike paralysed the island on 1 September as a demonstration of solidarity against Michel Poniatowski, the Minister of the Interior. The Prefect of Corsica, Gabriel Gilly, and the Sub-Prefect, Jacques Guerin, were dismissed and replaced by a Corsican, Jean Riolacci.⁴⁶⁸

The events of Aléria were not the very first example of Corsican political violence: since the mid-1960s there had been isolated bombings, as noted above, by early radical groups such as the Comité pour l'Indépendance de la Corse (CIC). However, the Aléria occupation was very influential, firstly as the culmination of many years of growing tension but also because soon after Aléria political violence became commonplace as the autonomist movement shifted to clandestine, radical nationalism. Many of the militants present became major figures in the Front de Libération Nationale Corse, or FLNC.

On the 5th May 1976 the FLNC was formed, with the founding group including former members of the Fronte Paesanu Corsu di Liberazione (FPCL),⁴⁶⁹ Ghjustina Paolina and the ARC. At first ideologically similar to the ARC, and invoking the same nationalist historical figures,⁴⁷⁰ the newer organisation diverged from its predecessor in radicalising the ARC's ideas of autonomism within the French state to a policy of all-out independence. The FLNC's endorsement of violence also moved it further from the position held by the ARC, who have subsequently denounced the FLNC's methods.⁴⁷¹ Since the late 1970s and the formation of the FLNC, nationalist violence has been the most visible form of resistance in Corsica, though not the only one. (Christophe Mondoloni gives a useful chronology of

⁴⁶⁷ Christophe Mondoloni, *Corse, Renaissance d'une nation* (Albiana: Ajaccio, 2013) p. 426. Crettiez, p. 47 gives a slightly lower figure of sixteen injured.

⁴⁶⁸ Meic Stephens, p. 340.

⁴⁶⁹ Founded in 1973 per Mondoloni, p. 425.

⁴⁷⁰ Crettiez, p. 68.

⁴⁷¹ Crettiez, p. 75.

Corsican political movements including various non-violent parties.)⁴⁷² The FLNC was particularly active in the 1970s and 1980s, before splitting into various warring factions in 1990 leading to a fratricidal conflict.

The FLNC typically attack property rather than people: the number of bombings perpetrated is high, but casualties are low. Typical FLNC targets are tourist developments, police stations and other buildings they see as representative of the French state. Numbers of militant attacks have reduced in recent years: the number of active militants in the movement is small, and the FLNC recently announced its gradual demilitarisation.⁴⁷³ However, the balaclava-wearing nationalist remains the emblematic figure representing Corsica for many.

Napoleon Bonaparte is also an emblematic figure for many, representing the French nation-state. Although he was born in Corsica in 1769 to parents with links to key nationalist figure Pasquale Paoli, his key role in the government of early post-Revolutionary France made him an significant symbol of the French Republic. The following case study discusses representations of Bonaparte in historical European visual culture.

⁴⁷² Mondoloni, pp.421-428.

⁴⁷³ 'Corse:le FLNC annonce qu'il dépose les armes', *Le Monde*, 25 July 2014.

<http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2014/06/25/corse-le-flnc-annonce-qu-il-depose-les-armes_4445252_3224.html> [Accessed 5 August 2015].

5. Historical representations of Napoleon Bonaparte: An Early Case Study

France has a long history of text/image culture, spanning hundreds of years, from the medieval illustrated manuscript and Renaissance book of symbolic emblems – iconic images used to depict saints and moral messages – to the present-day *bande dessinée* and associated innovation. One particularly influential aspect of this culture is the *image d'Épinal*, a medium so enduringly popular that it has become one of France's shared popular cultural artefacts. The term *image d'Épinal* became synonymous with nineteenth-century popular prints⁴⁷⁴ and by extension, came to denote things that were traditional and morally virtuous, simplistic, clichéd and often over-optimistic.⁴⁷⁵ Jean-Michel Massing states, somewhat debatably, that the French expression *sage comme une image* has its roots in this popular conception of *images d'Épinal*,⁴⁷⁶ reflecting the 'uplifting moral nature' of many contemporary prints.

In its original sense however, *images d'Épinal* refers only to those prints produced at the Fabrique Pellerin, located in the town of Épinal in the Vosges department of France. The Pellerin printworks were founded in 1796 by Jean-Charles Pellerin, initially manufacturing playing cards and engravings. The firm grew in influence as it passed down from Jean-Charles to his son Nicolas in 1822, then in 1854 to Nicolas' son Charles – who switched production from woodcuts to lithographs – and finally to Charles' son Georges, who introduced print manufacturing on an industrial scale. Although the Imagerie d'Épinal still exists today, it now operates on a much smaller scale; its omnipresence on the market was threatened by new technologies that emerged after World War One and its influence was diminished.

⁴⁷⁴ Laurence Grove (b), *Comics in French: The European Bande Dessinée in Context* (revised edition) (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), p. 84.

⁴⁷⁵ Jean-Michel Massing, Review of *Images d'Épinal* by Denis Martin and Bernard Huin, *Print Quarterly*, 4.2 (June 1997) 208-211 (p. 208).

⁴⁷⁶ Massing, p. 208.

The Imagerie rose to prominence at the same time as Napoleon Bonaparte, and it is the prints produced on the subject of the self-declared emperor that are of most interest in relation to Corsica. Various *images d'Épinal* were produced in relation to Napoleon during his reign, for example, *Union entre la France et l'Autriche* (1810)⁴⁷⁷, an allegorical image made in celebration of his marriage to Marie Louise of Austria, or *Saint Napoleon, Officier Romain*,⁴⁷⁸ on which the following prayer is inscribed:

Faites, ô Dieu-puissant, que par les prières et l'exemple de votre bienheureux Martyr NAPOLEON, dont nous célébrons le triomphe, nous soyons affermis dans l'amour de votre saint nom. Nous vous en supplions par Jésus-Christ Notre Seigneur. Ainsi soit-il.

The representation of Bonaparte as a saint is in line with contemporary links made between Bonaparte and the divine, evidenced by the creation of the Feast Day of Saint Napoleon the 15th of August, Bonaparte's birthday, created in 1806.⁴⁷⁹ Lack of contemporary satirical images of Napoleon can also be explained by the strict nature of prior censorship during Bonaparte's reign.

Although prior censorship was common in Europe in the nineteenth century, Goldstein asserts that 'nowhere were [battles over political expression] as intense or as prolonged as in France',⁴⁸⁰ a situation that he attributes to a combination of a highly politicised population and a succession of repressive political regimes. Each government which instituted prior censorship preserved the restrictions of previous administrations and added its own, creating an ever-stronger tool of repression and adapting the law to the needs of a changing press.⁴⁸¹ An example of this is the particularly strict censorship during Napoleon's times in power, both in the

⁴⁷⁷ Jean Mistler, François Blaudez and André Jacquemin, *Epinal et L'Imagerie Populaire* (Paris : Hachette, 1961) p. 91.

⁴⁷⁸ Mistler et. al. p. 99.

⁴⁷⁹ Phillip Dwyer, *Citizen Emperor: Napoleon In Power* (New Haven: Yale, 2013), p. 213.

⁴⁸⁰ Robert Justin Goldstein (a), 'Fighting French Censorship, 1815-1881' *The French Review*, 71.5 (1998) 785-796 (p. 785).

⁴⁸¹ Thomas Cragin, 'The Failings of Popular News Censorship in Nineteenth-Century France', *Book History* 4 (2001) 49-80 (p. 52).

Consulate (1799-1804) and the First Empire (1804-1815). Napoleon's Decree of 5th February 1810 banned works considered a direct threat to the existing government and attempted to control the dissemination of information through state-controlled newspapers, handing censorship to a state office under the control of the Minister of the Interior, an organisational structure which was largely maintained by later regimes.⁴⁸²

Publishers of caricature and images were particularly affected by the censorship laws: prior censorship was abolished for text only in 1882, while visual works remained suppressed until 1881.⁴⁸³ The authorities' fear of caricature was based on the assumption that while the illiterate 'masses' could not read the printed word, they could understand pictorial representation, and as such the caricature was considered particularly dangerous.⁴⁸⁴ Surveillance was zealous and powerful. As founder and head of the Épinal printing company Jean-Charles Pellerin found himself a target of the regime several times. Even after the fall of Napoleon and restoration of the Bourbon monarchy, in 1816 his house and store were raided and several depictions of Napoleon Bonaparte were seized, including a framed portrait, engravings and posters, depicting such scenes as battles, Napoleon receiving foreign guests, and the baptism of Napoleon the Second. The seized images were used as evidence when Pellerin was subsequently tried for sedition against the Bourbon government.⁴⁸⁵ After being tried repeatedly for sedition, manufacture and sale of Napoleonic imagery, Pellerin petitioned in court for permission to sell pictures of Bonaparte, arguing that he was now a historical figure, and that the Épinal printworks should be allowed to compete with the production and sale of Napoleonic images occurring elsewhere. He was denied permission twice, as the judge believed that the dissemination of Napoleonic imagery in rural areas would

⁴⁸² Cragin p. 52.

⁴⁸³ Robert Justin Goldstein (b), 'Nineteenth-Century French Political Censorship of Caricature in Comparative European Perspective (1)' , *Caricatures et Caricature*, (2008) n.p.
<http://www.caricaturesetcaricature.com/article-25316973.html> [Accessed 10 August 2015]

⁴⁸⁴ Goldstein (b) n.p.

⁴⁸⁵ Barbara Ann Day, 'Political Dissent and Napoleonic Representations During The Restoration Monarchy', *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, 19.3 (1993) 409-432 (p. 409).

be politically dangerous.⁴⁸⁶ Although Pellerin was unsuccessful in his bids, other manufacturers continued to print images related to Bonaparte, and an underground trade in these works flourished under the Bourbon regime.

Pellerin's production of Napoleonic images and the flourishing of the clandestine market after 1815 are evidence of a strong visual culture surrounding Bonaparte both during and after his rule.

Napoleonic Satire

Despite the popularity of depictions of Napoleon in France, there is a notable dearth of contemporary French satirical images; the work Pellerin was tried for producing was pro-Bonaparte -hence the Bourbon regime's objection to its dissemination. That is not to say that satire targeting Napoleon does not exist, merely that much originated from non-French artists belonging to opposing nations, particularly English and German. The rarity of 'home-grown' satire can be explained by the repressive nature of the Napoleonic era's press censorship as well as by patriotism in time of war and the successful quelling of the royalist Chouannerie in 1800. In contrast, foreign satirists frequently depicted Bonaparte. The long-established British tradition of caricature found much inspiration in the life of Napoleon. For example, English caricaturist James Gillray drew *The Plumb-pudding in Danger; - or - State Epicures taking un Petit Souper*, which shows grotesque versions of Napoleon and William Pitt the Younger carving up the world for their respective empires; Pitt takes the sea and Bonaparte slices up Europe.⁴⁸⁷ George Cruikshank, another celebrated English artist, repeatedly caricatured Napoleon, for example in *Snuffing Out Boney!* (1814), depicting a Cossack attacking a miniature Bonaparte with a candle snuffer, in reference to Napoleon's ill-fated Russian campaign in 1812.⁴⁸⁸ Cruikshank published another etching after the treaty

⁴⁸⁶ Day p. 410.

⁴⁸⁷ Peter Campbell, 'At Tate Britain', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 23 No. 12., 21 June 2001.
<<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v23/n12/peter-campbell/at-tate-britain>> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

⁴⁸⁸ George Cruikshank, *Snuffing Out Boney, an etching*. 1814. British Museum.
<http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pd/g/george_cruikshank_snuffing_ou.aspx> [Accessed 10 Aug 2015]

of Fontainebleau, *The Corsican Whipping Top in Full Spin* (1814), in which Napoleon's victorious enemies the Duke of Wellington, Blücher, Tsar Alexander I and Francis I of Austria dismember his body while the new king of the Netherlands observes, Bonaparte's wife Marie-Louise escapes and the devil carries their son Joseph to hell.⁴⁸⁹ *The Corsican Whipping Top in Full Spin* was also later translated and exported into France, with some differences: the image was reversed, and a dialogue attributed to Napoleon's elder brother Joseph, known as the King of Naples and Sicily ('Ah, mon cher frère de Naples...'). The caricature was also re-titled, becoming *Le Sabot Corse en pleine déroute*,⁴⁹⁰ replacing the reference to one children's game with another involving the sabot, the emblematic peasant clog often used to denote the French periphery and its inhabitants. Coming after Napoleon's removal from French rule, the title change was perhaps intended to emphasise Bonaparte's non-French pedigree and reduce him to the ranks of the provincial peasant populace.

Britain was not alone in producing Napoleonic satire. Artists from many countries in Europe created anti-Bonaparte caricatures. Germany was also a major source, including an example where a Prussian plays with Napoleon in the style of a cat with a mouse, before swallowing him.⁴⁹¹ The Netherlands and Italy also produced various caricatures.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁹ George Cruikshank, *The Corsican Whipping Top In Full Spin!* 1814. Brown Digital Repository, Web <<https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:232048/>> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

⁴⁹⁰ Anonymous, after George Cruikshank: *Le sabot Corse en pleine déroute*. 1814. The British Museum. http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1643302&partId=1&people=171606&peoA=171606-1-9&page=1 [Accessed 10 August 2015].

⁴⁹¹ Anonymous, Caricature allemande à 6 compartiments, où l'on voit un brave Allemand qui, à l'instar du chat avec la souris, s'amuse à tourmenter Napoléon de diverses façons, avant de l'avaler n.d. Gallica. <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6954143k.r=Le+chat+et+la+souris.langFR>> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

⁴⁹² Anonymous, *t'ziekbed van Napoleon, de 1.e* : n.d. Gallica. <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6955671x>> [Accessed 10 August 2015]. Anonymous, *Caricature italienne contre Napoléon déchu*. n.d. Gallica. <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69541173>> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

In addition to European satirical images, some French caricatures of Napoleon do exist, firstly from the period between his initial 1814 abdication and exile to Elba following the treaty of Fontainebleau in April and his return to the One Hundred Days of power starting on 1st March the following year. Then, after Waterloo and his subsequent definitive exile, there was a flood of hostile caricature until Napoleon's death in 1821.⁴⁹³ The most vitriolic satire appeared after the defeat at Waterloo, so hostile that it provoked protests from caricaturists, as Goldstein asserts:

[A]t a meeting of caricaturists in 1814, one artist expressed his 'indignation' at the 'disgusting productions which each day adorn our walls and which violate both good taste and good sense' and demanded that some action be taken to curb the 'vile hucksters' who threatened to 'heap discredit and scorn' on the profession of caricaturists.⁴⁹⁴

Several of these post-Waterloo caricatures are titled *Napoleon Déchu* and depict the emperor humiliated in defeat, e.g. *Caricature contre Napoleon Déchu*.⁴⁹⁵ Others have similar themes but are more specific, showing the emperor controlled by his enemies, particularly the Duke of Wellington, e.g. *L'Écolier battant la Retraite devant son Maître*⁴⁹⁶ and *Le Duc de Wellington tenant l'empereur Napoleon sous son genou*.⁴⁹⁷

Although the assertion that French caricature of Napoleon is 'rare' may seem contradictory when evidence such as the material above is presented, it must be considered in the wider context of European caricature and satire at the time of his rule. Compared with the flood of English, German and Russian caricature which

⁴⁹³ Robert Justin Goldstein (c), *Censorship of Political Caricature* (Kent, Ohio and London: Kent State University Press) 1989. p. 100. .

⁴⁹⁴ Goldstein (c), p. 101.

⁴⁹⁵ Anonymous, *Caricature contre Napoléon déchu*, n.d. Gallica.

<<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6954134m>> [Accessed 10 August].

⁴⁹⁶ Anonymous, *L'Écolier battant la retraite devant son maître*.n.d. Gallica.

<<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8414044r>> [Accessed 10 August].

⁴⁹⁷ Anonymous, *Le Duc de Wellington tenant l'empereur Napoléon sous son genou*. n.d.

<<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84140381.r=Duc+de+Wellington.langEN>> [Accessed 10 August].

appeared throughout Napoleon's career, not to mention similar artwork from other European countries, the French satire created from 1814 onwards is a relative trickle. Although vicious once it did appear, the stringent censorship laws and consistently draconian enforcement of those laws was effective in stifling criticism of Napoleon Bonaparte in visual culture for much of his rule and thereafter, especially during the Second Empire.

Napoleon as a Corsican?

Despite the life of Napoleon providing much inspiration for many foreign satirical artists for several years, the majority of caricaturists concentrated on his military decisions and actions as French ruler. With the exception of *Le Sabot Corse en plein déroute* as detailed above, there does not appear to have been much emphasis on his regional origins or Corsican identity. In English or other European caricature this is to be expected, as the division between the Parisian centre, seat of the Republic, and the divergent periphery is a context specific to the French political system. However, in the French caricatures that did eventually appear, the general absence of centrist or anti-regionalist views is more surprising. The absence of geolinguistic and social bias seems remarkable, primarily, given Napoleon's – and Corsica's – relatively recent 'Frenchness': Bonaparte was born in 1769, the same year as Corsica was conquered definitively by France. In addition, the Bonaparte family were of Tuscan ancestry and supporters of Pasquale Paoli, the Corsican nationalist leader and famous patriot. Indeed Paoli was Napoleon's 'boyhood hero',⁴⁹⁸ and his father fought in Paoli's forces against the French. Despite the family's later conflict with the Corsican leader and subsequent forced exile to the French mainland, their involvement with the Corsican nationalist cause was significant. This involvement with anti-French forces does not appear to have been problematic in the Bonaparte family's rise to power. The phenomenon of a Corsican rising to become not just the ruler but Emperor of the French nation is significant in itself: given the gleefully mocking nature of much of the French anti-Bonaparte caricature that appeared following his exile to Elba and after his defeat at Waterloo, it is surprising that more was not made of the disgraced leader's Corsican identity, as a

⁴⁹⁸ David Nicholls, *Napoleon: A Biographical Companion*. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1999) p. 193.

way of separating the French republic from the defeat or of ridiculing Bonaparte's eligibility or ability to lead the French people.

Bonaparte continues to be a source of inspiration for creators of text-image culture: the *bande dessinée* database Bédéthèque lists sixty five albums (including stand-alone publications and those forming part of larger series) which feature Napoleon.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁹ Napoleon keyword search, *Bédéthèque*

<<http://www.bedetheque.com/search/tout?RechTexte=napoleon&RechWhere=0>> [Accessed 25 September 2015].

6. *Bande Dessinée* Looking In: External Perspectives on Corsica

The image of Corsica in modern visual culture can be roughly divided into two eras. Firstly, that of earlier representations which focus on the historical Corsican concerns, e.g. the system of honour and vendetta, which lasted until the early 1970s. The most famous of these is *Astérix en Corse*.⁵⁰⁰ An interesting, lesser known example of this early modern representation is *Lili Bandit Corse* (1962), by Bernadette Hiéris and Al G. The second, popular, stereotypical image of Corsica has remained generally consistent since the beginning of the post-1970 militant independence movement. In current popular culture the island and inhabitants are generally depicted in one of the following ways: a population of balaclava-wearing, machine gun-toting nationalist militias, many of whose members are constantly in schism and creating splinter groups; an insular community which intensely dislikes outsiders, even those who consider themselves Corsican; an intricately complex family-based society with a myriad of social rules for members of the community; a corrupt political environment which bears little resemblance to the party-political system on the mainland. Frequently several of these stereotypes appear together.

This chapter will examine representations of Corsica and Corsican culture in mainstream *bande dessinée* produced outside of Corsica and therefore presenting an external perspective. Corsica has inspired many varied examples of *bande dessinée* based around the island and its people, from comedies (the series *Les Blagues corses* by Panetier and Fich),⁵⁰¹ to historical biography (*Napoleon Bonaparte, Une Jeunesse Corse*).⁵⁰² The detailed examination of every externally-produced *bande dessinée* is beyond the scope of this study. Instead I will concentrate on several representative albums which show the breadth of available *bandes dessinées* set in Corsica: two of them are well-known, canonical albums, others being more obscure. Each has something different to offer in an analysis of the portrayal of Corsican culture, and so, while at first sight the choice of works for study may appear disparate, the different examples of *bande dessinée* together

⁵⁰⁰ Goscinny & Uderzo (a), *Astérix en Corse* (Paris: Dargaud, 1973).

⁵⁰¹ Laurent Panetier & Fich, *Les Blagues corses 1-4*, (Paris: Delcourt, 2006-2009).

⁵⁰² Jean-Baptiste Marcaggi, *Napoléon: Une Jeunesse Corse* (Malakoff: Rubicon, 2010).

present a more representative picture of the whole spectrum. The selected albums are *Lili, bandit corse* (1962) by ‘Bernadette Hiéris’ and Gérard Alexandre,⁵⁰³ *Astérix en Corse* by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo (Dargaud, 1973), René Pétillon’s *L’Enquête corse* (Albin Michel, 2000),⁵⁰⁴ *Bienvenue chez les Corses... et bonne chance!* (12bis, 2012) by Pido and Soffritti,⁵⁰⁵ *Les Blagues corses 1: Canal hystérique* (Delcourt, 2006) by Laurent Panetier and Fich,⁵⁰⁶ and Jean-Michel Delambre’s *Da Vinci corse* (Le Cherche Midi, 2007).⁵⁰⁷ I have divided the works into two groups roughly based on publication date (before or after the development of large-scale political violence in Corsica). Within these groups, the works will be treated in general order of popularity or cultural impact – i.e. *Astérix en Corse* is followed by *Lili Bandit Corse*, as the former is far more well-known than the latter, and discussion of *L’Enquête Corse* precedes examination of other more modern representations which were influenced by Pétillon’s album.

Astérix in Corsica

The version of Corsica represented in *Astérix en Corse* is of interest particularly because of the popularity of the *Astérix* series in general. The album is significant as it presents Corsica and Corsican culture to a very wide audience.

On a basic level the album is of course about Corsica: it is set there, features mostly Corsican characters, and features many ‘Corsican’ traits. However, beyond this there is nothing specifically ‘Corsican’ about the authors’ treatment of the island. The island exists within the same framework as all the other places in the series; it functions as part of a process which always ends the same way (*Astérix* and *Obélix* return to Gaul with a celebratory banquet and life returns to normal). Corsica is treated as a canvas onto which the authors project well-known tropes and

⁵⁰³ Bernadette Hiéris & Al. G *Lili, bandit corse*, 1980 edition (Paris: S.P.E, 1962).

⁵⁰⁴ Pétillon (a), *L’Enquête corse* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000).

⁵⁰⁵ Pido & Soffritti, *Bienvenue chez les corses...et bonne chance!* (Paris: 12bis, 2012).

⁵⁰⁶ Panetier & Fich, *Les Blagues corses 1: Canal hystérique* (Paris: Delcourt, 2006).

⁵⁰⁷ Jean-Michel Delambre (a), *Da Vinci corse* (Paris: Cherche Midi, 2007). A second volume in the series appeared in 2009.

stereotypes of the region, with very little subversion; the same projection is applied to the other ‘foreign’ regions in the series.

Astérix and Identity

Goscinnny and Uderzo’s *Astérix* is one of the world’s most successful comic series. The diminutive Gaul and his rotund friend Obélix have featured in thirty-four albums, which have been translated into 107 languages⁵⁰⁸ and have sold 350 million copies worldwide since 1961.⁵⁰⁹ Also spawning several successful films and a theme park just outside Paris, the series has become an institution of French national culture.

Questions of identity feature heavily in the series: the issue appears repeatedly and is explored in numerous different ways; particularly, the issue of French national identity. Notably, though the series is quintessentially French, both the authors are the children of immigrants: Albert Uderzo’s parents were Italian and René Goscinny was the child of Polish Jews. Asked in 1961 to create a series based on French history to counteract the American influences heavily present in the children’s press at that time, the pair decided to set it in Gaul, projecting modern concerns on to the ancient setting. As Nicolas Rouvière notes, *Astérix le Gaulois* presented the authors with a way to ‘construire leur « francité »’ (construct their own Frenchness),⁵¹⁰ parodying the accepted clichés of French folklore. In addition, as immigrants – and particular as expatriates, as in René Goscinny’s case –, the authors’ perspective on that French history and folklore is a unique one. As Goscinny states:

J’ai vécu à l’étranger nanti d’une culture française... et la France, vue de l’étranger, est une chose très spéciale, qui correspond peu à la

⁵⁰⁸ Nicolas Rouvière (a), *Astérix Ou les lumières de la civilisation*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2006. p. 1.

⁵⁰⁹ ‘Thank you Asterix !’ *Asterix.com* <<http://www.asterix.com/news/in-the-limelight/thank-you-asterix.html>> [Accessed 15 February 2013]- is no longer online as of September 2015.

⁵¹⁰ Rouvière (a), p. 4.

réalité. [F]atalement j’ai toujours eu les yeux braqués sur les caractères spécifiquement français.⁵¹¹

Identity and the ability to define oneself are of constant importance in the series: Obélix in particular lacks a familial structure of identity. He is unsure of ‘where he comes from’ and his lack of a definite point of origin causes anxiety, as in this classroom exchange with Panoramix:

“Alors Obélix! Qui étaient nos ancêtres ?”

“...”⁵¹²

Identities in the series are multifaceted and complex: in contrast to *Les Aventures de Bécassine* it is not simply a question of ‘us versus them’ but also ‘who are we?’.

Post-occupation repositioning: Astérix the Gaul and de Gaulle

Astérix le Gaulois emerged at a time when French collective identity was being bolstered and reformed, under a re-elected Charles de Gaulle and the newly formed Fifth Republic. After the trauma of WW2 and German occupation, de Gaulle attempted to rebuild France, restoring ‘order and respect for the authority of the state, personified by himself’,⁵¹³ as well as restoring France as a powerful entity on the world stage. His strategies to achieve this included economic reforms, movement into a freer Common Market and setting growth targets for modern industries (such as aviation and the manufacture of computers) as well as cultural initiatives such as the 1961 creation of *maisons de la culture* by his charismatic minister André Malraux and more recognition for the arts. Although in 1940 he had also legitimised the idea of a collective French Resistance against the German occupier, by 1959 de Gaulle saw Germany as an ally and sought Franco-German cooperation as the foundation for the European Economic Community as a bulwark against Anglo-American policy (and, implicitly, its culture), culminating in

⁵¹¹ Pivot, Bernard, ‘René Goscinny s’explique’, *Lire* no.8. 1976 n.p.

⁵¹² Goscinny & Uderzo (b), *Comment Obélix est tombé dans la marmite du druide quand il était petit* (Paris: Editions Albert René, 1989), cited in Rouvière (a), 33.

⁵¹³ François Bédarida, ‘De Gaulle and the French Resistance 1940-44’, in *De Gaulle & Twentieth Century France*, ed. by H. Gough and John Horne (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), 19-34 (pp. 33-34).

1966 with the French departure from NATO. On a cultural level the key work expressing growing French resistance to Anglo-American linguistic and cultural imperialism in the form of *franglais* during the 1960s was *Parlez-vous franglais?* (1964) by the academic René Etiemble.⁵¹⁴ By reinforcing both France's confidence in itself and its political prestige, de Gaulle positioned himself as the figurehead of a new French identity.

Asterix le Gaulois was created as this new identity was taking root. This goes some way to explain the series' popularity and enduring impact: readers saw themselves and their country in the self-sufficient village which resisted all attempts at invasion by a powerful enemy army – i.e., the Romans, tacitly representing the cultural imperialism, if not for long the military presence, of that other superpower, the USA. The village also collectively resists all attempts at the exertion of external authority, as an undefended small entity surrounded by a larger enemy, who partitions territory in order to govern it as one whole: parallels with the French experience of Nazi expansion likewise are not hard to discern, the invited inference being that France will resist all forms of takeover, in the 1960s as in the 1940s.

This view of *Astérix* representing de Gaulle is asserted by Andreas Stoll in *Astérix, L'Épopée burlesque de la France*.⁵¹⁵ Nicolas Rouvière, in contrast, does not see Gaullist ideology in *Astérix*; rather he sees some aspects of Gaullist policy in the actions of the Romans.⁵¹⁶

Astérix and Resistance

Whether *Astérix* is Gaullist in ideology or not, it cannot be denied that Goscinny and Uderzo make repeated references to the wartime Resistance and occupation: as Sébastien Farré notes, *Le Combat des Chefs*, with its division of the Gaulish population between those who acquiesce to Roman power and those who resist, is a

⁵¹⁴ René Etiemble, *Parlez-vous franglais?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964).

⁵¹⁵ André Stoll, *Astérix l'épopée burlesque de la France* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1978).

⁵¹⁶ Rouvière, (a) p. 135.

clear metaphor for France under Nazi occupation.⁵¹⁷ With the later album *Le Bouclier arverne*, the authors make reference to the collective French amnesia surrounding the events of the Nazi Occupation and the defeat of France in 1940. The characters Alambix and Abararacourcix, cannot utter the word ‘*Alésia*’, as it reminds them of the defeat of Vercingétorix and subsequent Roman occupation – but they rejoice in the major Gaulish victory at *Gergovie*.

Alégia? Ch’est quoi Alégia? Hmmm??? Qu’êche que vous lui voulez à Alégia? Nous ne ch’avons pas où ch’est Alégia!⁵¹⁸

The references to resistance, Vichy and collaboration are a few examples of the many times Goscinny and Uderzo make use of pillars of collective French memory and identity in their stories. For example, the series is deeply rooted in former national perceptions of French history and ancestry: it was inspired by, and partly a parody of, history textbooks used during the Third Republic. These manuals featured Ancient Gaul as the cradle of modern French civilisation and the Gauls as ancestors of all French citizens. The authors also use meta-parody by discussing Gaulish school textbooks in *Astérix*. Just as in centralist Third Republic education everything is Gaul-centric: geography lessons involve studying the rivers of Gaul; trigonometry is learnt by finding the volume of a menhir;⁵¹⁹ history classes focus on ‘nos ancêtres’. *Astérix*’s history is France’s history; the world *Astérix* inhabits is clearly based on a parody of Third Republic France.

Collective identities in *Astérix*

While national identity features heavily, regional identity and difference is also an integral part of the series. *Astérix* and *Obélix* travel widely throughout what is now France, and many regions and cities are represented, under their Roman names, in the albums- Paris, but also Lyon, Cambrai, Marseille, Brittany and others. As well

⁵¹⁷ Sébastien Farré, ‘D’Aplusbégalix à Alambix: les métaphores de la collaboration durant les années *Astérix*’ in *Objectif bulles: Bande dessinée & histoire* (Chêne-Bourg: Georg, 2009), pp. 181-202 (p. 197).

⁵¹⁸ Farré, p. 197.

⁵¹⁹ Goscinny & Uderzo (b), *Comment Obélix est tombé dans la marmite du druide quand il était petit*. (Paris: Editions Albert René, 1989) p. 6.

as parodying French national history, the series also portrays stereotypes and preconceptions of smaller, more local collectives. For example, in Massilia the people speak with a pronounced Marseille accent, use Franco-Provençal words and have a clichéd ‘southern’ temperament, prone to exaggeration and violence.

Romaing! Si tu nous empêches de jouer la partie, si tu touches la bouchon, je te promets qu’à Massillia, ça va être terrible ! LA RÉVOLUTION ! L’ÉMEUTE ! LA MASSACRE ! LA GUERRE! LA GROSSE CATASTROPHE!⁵²⁰

The authors’ humorous use of popular song parodies and cultural references – e.g. *Lutèce est une blonde* (parodying the words to Mistinguett’s famous hit of 1927, *Ça C’est Paris*) or Prévert’s *Barbara* relocated in time to Brivatus Portus, Roman Brest – links the regions, each with their own distinct customs and culture, back into the common ‘French’ whole in a process of cultural homogenization. Use of popular culture and stereotypes also creates a sense of familiarity for the reader and reinforces a sense of collective identity.

Astérix and the Other

Relations between the Self and Other form an integral part of Astérix. A great number of the albums in the series involve travel outside Gaul, giving Astérix and Obélix opportunities to encounter many other foreign cultures – Goths, Vikings, Ancient Britons, etc.

As Astérix and Obélix meet various foreign peoples, the albums explore the stereotypes surrounding each group, generally treating populations collectively. Each race in the series is distinguished by a unique name suffix: Gaulish names end in *-ix*, Scandinavian in *-af* or *-sen*, Egyptian in *-is*, Greek in *-as*, etc. Physically too, races of people are similar. ‘Southern’ peoples-Greeks, Spaniards, Corsicans- are short and have dark hair; more ‘northern’ people, like the Vikings, are tall and blond. These common factors allow the reader to identify the identity of each

⁵²⁰ Goscinny & Uderzo (c), *Le Tour De Gaule d’Astérix* (Paris: Dargaud, 1965) p. 32.

character quickly and easily. The tongue-in-cheek use of collective physical characteristics by Goscinny and Uderzo continues the tradition of the long-discredited pseudoscience of physiognomy – the idea that one’s appearance is indicative of one’s moral condition – in art, as illustrated in the 1700s by Charles Le Brun and discussed by *bande dessinée* pioneer Rodolphe Töpffer in 1845.⁵²¹

Astérix en Corse (1973)

Astérix en Corse was published in 1973. It is both a ‘home’ and an ‘away’ album, as the action is evenly split between Gaul and the Mediterranean island.

The story begins on the anniversary of the Battle of Gergovia in the Auvergne,⁵²² when the villagers, along with a large reunion of relatives from all over Gaul, traditionally offer their neighbours in nearby Roman camps a celebratory fight.⁵²³ The Romans in turn traditionally desert the camps in order to avoid the Gaulish attack.⁵²⁴ This year, however, the Roman escape plan is foiled by the surprise arrival of a visiting praetor, accompanied by an exiled Corsican prisoner. The praetor leaves the prisoner in the care of the local centurion, forbidding him or his soldiers to abandon the camp.

In an attempt to circumvent this order, the centurion tells the prisoner he is free and prepares to leave. However, the Gauls have heard movement inside the camp and, prepared for battle, storm it.⁵²⁵

In the midst of the battle, Astérix spots the Corsican prisoner, whom he correctly if vaguely identifies as ‘pas un Romain’.⁵²⁶ Astérix and Obélix are fascinated by this exile, whom they invite back to the village for a feast. The Corsican, somewhat

⁵²¹ Grove (b), p. 94.

⁵²² The battle took place in 52 B.C. near the modern-day village of Gergovie, near Clermont-Ferrand, between the armies of Julius Caesar and Vercingetorix. It resulted in a Gaulish victory over the Romans.

⁵²³ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 10.

⁵²⁴ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 8.

⁵²⁵ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 13.

⁵²⁶ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 14.

ludicrously named Ocaterinetabellatchitchix,⁵²⁷ invites the pair back to Corsica – ‘le cauchemar des Romains’⁵²⁸ – to see how the Corsicans resist Roman rule. The group travel to Massilia (Marseille) and pass clandestinely into Corsica, narrowly avoiding being robbed by pirates. Astérix and Obélix become part of the Corsican resistance as the Roman rulers of the island realise that Ocaterinetabellatchitchix has returned. A corps of soldiers is sent out into the Corsican *maquis* to recapture the fugitive, but fail: a large number of Corsican rebels gather and start a pitched battle with the Romans, defeating them for the time being. After celebrating the Corsican victory, Astérix, Obélix and Idéfix return to Gaul and the customary banquet.

Corsican Stereotypes

Humour in *Astérix en Corse* is mainly derived from stereotypes, be they Gaulish, Roman or Corsican.

In particular the album’s portrayal of Corsican relies on several well-known tropes: the culture of the vendetta, the complicated honour system, the complexity of family relationships, Corsicans’ supposed sensitivity to criticism, and the system of warring clans which later became entwined with nationalist conflict.

Vendetta

The vendetta has a long and complex history in Corsica. Recorded by numerous nineteenth-century travellers and inspiring several literary writers of the period,⁵²⁹ it is an example of what Roger Gould calls ‘institutionalised vengeance’, a phenomenon which traditionally occurs in either:

⁵²⁷ A reference to the Tino Rossi song (*O Catarinetta Bella*) *Tchi Tchi*.

⁵²⁸ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 14.

⁵²⁹ Celebrated French literary works drawing on the Corsican vendetta include the three novels *La Vendetta* (1830) by Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), *Colomba* (1840) by Prosper Mérimée (1803-1870) and *Les Bandits* (1852) by Alexis Ponson du Terrail (1829-1871), together with the short story ‘Vendetta’ (1883) by Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893).

(1) Arid, mountainous or jungle regions where bureaucratic mechanisms for dispute resolution are weak or absent, or (2) “stateless” domains within industrial societies in which recourse to legal authorities is unavailable, as in illegal markets or marginalised communities.⁵³⁰

Corsica corresponds fully to the first scenario, as a mountainous terrain that is geographically isolated from any large power base or government (be it that of France or historically, Italy). It also partially matches the second criterion, as a ‘marginalised community’, since it is once again situated far from the administration or resources of its governing larger state.

The reasons for vendetta can be numerous: murder, attempted murder or use of lethal force or conflicts over material interests. In Corsica, the conditions of the terrain and lack of fertile land have led to the development of a complicated system of compartmentalised land ownership and control, with individual families owning small, specific parcels of land, control of which has over centuries been passed down on death. For many years the remaining land was collectively managed and rotated.⁵³¹ This practice, combined with the need to use both coastal and mountainous land for grazing and agriculture meant that land owners in traditional Corsican society were often in conflict, creating an environment where transgression and the resulting vendetta was more likely.

Vendetta is not a simple system of ‘an eye for an eye’: instead it is a self-limiting set of social protocols, a sort of ‘mutually assured security’. This is largely due to its characteristic belief in collective responsibility for offences. Thus, if for example, a man is shot dead by his neighbour, it is not only the neighbour who is at risk of being killed in vengeance but also the neighbour’s wife, children, parents or even more distant members of the familial group; Gellner gives the example of the

⁵³⁰Roger V. Gould (b), ‘Revenge as Sanction and Solidarity Display: An Analysis of Vendettas in Nineteenth-Century Corsica’, *American Sociological Review*, 65.5 (2000) 682-704 (p. 683).

⁵³¹ Stephen Wilson (b), *Feuding, Conflict, and Banditry in Nineteenth-Century Corsica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 35.

Berbers,⁵³² where in the case of a grievance the ten closest patrilineal relatives are ‘immediately’ at risk of revenge attacks, because they are seen as ‘equally culpable’.

As such, in societies with a culture of vendetta or institutionalised vengeance, individual aggression is contained and checked by the threat of harm to one’s wider kin if the aggression is escalated.

The system is also self-perpetuating in that, if a crime is committed, passivity on the part of the victim would be detrimental to his or her interests. By retaliating as per the terms of traditional vendetta, the aggressed show that they are not weak and will not accept the status of a victim, now or in the future. They may act to preserve social honour, or may act for purely strategic reasons.⁵³³ Effectively, the (fairly certain) prospect of vengeance acts as a deterrent. This is useful in communities such as Corsica where external frameworks for non-violent retribution are either unavailable or mistrusted and unreliable.

Vendetta in *Astérix en Corse*

Vendetta-type feuds appear several times throughout *Astérix en Corse*. Ocaterinetabellatchichix is feuding with Figatellix and the rest of his clan: although he was captured by the Romans in Figatellix’s village, he does not think Figatellix denounced him.⁵³⁴ Instead, the Ocaterinetabellatchichix family and the Figatellix clan have been quarrelling for many years, but no one knows why:

Les vieux disent que le grand oncle de Ocaterinetabelatchichix a épousé une fille du clan Talassotérapix dont il était amoureux d’un cousin par alliance d’un aïeul de Figatellix...mais d’autres assurent que c’est à cause d’un âne que l’arrière-grand-père de Figatellix avait refusé de payer au beau-frère d’un ami intime des Ocaterinetabellatchichix sous prétexte qu’il était

⁵³² Ernest Gellner, ‘Trust, Cohesion, and the Social Order.’ in *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, edited by D. Gambetta (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988) pp. 142-57 (p. 146), cited in Gould (b), p. 684).

⁵³³ Gould p. 684.

⁵³⁴ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 26.

boiteux (l'âne, pas le beau-frère d'Ocaterinetabellatchitchix) ... c'est très grave en tout cas.⁵³⁵

Although the rationale cited may appear confusing, this is a classic example of a vendetta occurring over ownership. The ownership may be of material goods (the donkey) or of a more hypothetical nature (the disputed bride), but on a basic level the fight is over rightful possession of property.

The dormant feud is reignited when the Corsicans mass to do battle with the Romans. Ocaterinetabellatchitchix takes command, but just before the men charge, Figatellix appears and queries Ocaterinabellatchitchix's right to command the army,⁵³⁶ asserting that he will not fight 'sous les ordres d'un merle': this provokes Ocaterinabellatchitchix to state outright 'c'est toi qui m'a vendu!',⁵³⁷ despite his previous assertion that he did not believe Figatellix had denounced him.⁵³⁸ Although the two men suspend the argument for the battle, they resume after the Romans have been defeated, until Astérix interjects himself and forces them to settle and shake hands.⁵³⁹ As Astérix and Obélix depart, another argument begins amongst the Corsicans:⁵⁴⁰ as well as underlining the eternal nature of quarrels on Corsica, the panel also reiterates the lack of effect that Astérix and Obélix have on their surroundings: just as each album ends in the same way and everything returns to normal in Gaul, Corsican life returns to normal instability as soon as the pair leave the island.

Honour

Closely bound to the concept of vendetta is the importance of honour in Corsican society. In real life feuds could start over the smallest of conflicts – such as one

⁵³⁵ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 26.

⁵³⁶ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 40.

⁵³⁷ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 40.

⁵³⁸ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 26.

⁵³⁹ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 46.

⁵⁴⁰ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 47.

which began over a child's cap⁵⁴¹ – and escalate into lethal battles, as the victim felt dishonoured by the slight, and wished to restore his social standing. The notion of honour was historically of great importance in Corsican society. As Benson asserts, writing in 1825, '[e]very Corsican has a set of fixed principles of action, and determinate notions of honour, from which he seldom swerves'.⁵⁴²

These 'fixed principles of action' go some way to explain the self-perpetuating nature of the vendetta, as noted above. In addition to the notion of honour relating to past slights or conflict, honour also applied to family relationships, particularly relationships between women or girls, their male family members and men external to the familial group.

Women could be dishonoured simply by coming into contact with men unrelated to them, whether the encounters were overtly sexual or not: however, incidents involving a sexual element were subject to particularly harsh consequences. Men were killed for having seduced or 'abused' (i.e., raped) women: according to Wilson 'the seduction and abandonment of girls was always a common cause of "enmities"'.⁵⁴³ He also notes that, rather than allowing the duty to be delegated to their father or male relatives, women avenged their own dishonour, as in the case of the unmarried Maria-Angela Masconi who tracked her rapist's movements for several months before lying in wait by a roadside and shooting him.⁵⁴⁴ Nevertheless, a large number of cases involved male family members avenging their sisters or other female relatives.

Girls and honour in *Astérix en Corse*

Perhaps understandably given its intended readership, the album avoids detailing all the complexities of the Corsican customs surrounding women and honour. The

⁵⁴¹ Wilson (b), p. 92.

⁵⁴² Robert Benson, *Sketches of Corsica; Or, A Journal Written During a Visit to that Island, in 1823: With an Outline of Its History, and Specimens of the Language and Poetry of the People* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1825) p. 51, cited in Wilson (b), p. 91.

⁵⁴³ Wilson (b), p. 109.

⁵⁴⁴ Wilson (b), p. 109.

issue is, however, effectively tied in with the story's humorous, clichéd portrayal of Corsican men as aggressive and oversensitive to any perceived transgression.

Ocaterinabellatchitchix tells Astérix to warn Obélix to be careful, as he is interacting with Chipolata, the sister of Carferrix, and 'Carferrix n'aime pas qu'on manque de respect à sa soeur'.⁵⁴⁵ Astérix is confused, as he is unaware that Obélix has been disrespectful:

“Si, il lui a parlé. Et avec le sourire. Attention !”

“!?!”⁵⁴⁶

The reader then sees what happens when one shows disrespect to Carferrix's sister: a Roman soldier comes to the door, which is answered by Chipolata. The soldier begins to state his intentions, but is interrupted by an angry Carferrix appearing in the doorway and revealing his knife:

“Tu as parlé à ma sœur.”

“Ah?...Je ne savais pas que...”

“Je n'aime pas qu'on parle à ma sœur.”

“Mais elle ne m'intéresse pas, votre sœur... je voulais simplement...”

“Elle te plaît pas, ma sœur ? “

“Mais si, bien sûr, elle me plaît... “

“AH, ELLE TE PLAÎT, MA SŒUR !!! RETENEZ-MOI OU JE LE TUE, LUI ET SES IMBECILES !”⁵⁴⁷

This encounter shows humorously how much store is set by female honour, while also showing how incendiary mixed-sex relations can be in Corsica as depicted by Goscinny and Uderzo. It is also an example of the capacity of conflict to escalate quickly in honour situations, as noted by Stephen Wilson: before the young Roman

⁵⁴⁵ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 30.

⁵⁴⁶ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 30.

⁵⁴⁷ Goscinny & Uderzo (a) p. 32.

soldier has even had time to justify himself, Carferrix has drawn his weapon and is sharpening it threateningly.

Nationalism in *Astérix en Corse*?

The map at the front of every *Astérix* album, usually a map of Gaul, is in this case a map of Corsica. If Gaul is the nation in *Astérix*, is the implication that Corsica is also a nation? The album is not stridently pro-Corsica, but there are references to the autonomist movement. The Corsican resistance to Roman rule in *Astérix en Corse* can be seen as a metaphor for the French resistance against the Nazi occupation, in much the same way as can the Gaulish resistance, as noted above, as it forms part of the *Astérix* series narrative as a general metaphor for French history. In the album's local context however, the Corsican resistance can also be seen as a representation of Corsican nationalism confronting the French state.

Although the album predates the events at Aléria which are seen as the first events of major armed Corsican resistance,⁵⁴⁸ there are references in the narrative which reflect more modern nationalist tropes. Goscinny and Uderzo make reference to the political clans who are often in conflict, for example at the meeting between the clans in the cave to form a unified force in battle against the Romans⁵⁴⁹ or again in Ocaterinabellatchichix's surprise that *Astérix* has managed to solve inter-clan conflict.⁵⁵⁰ The clan system is older than modern Corsican nationalism (and is part of the vendetta and honour systems detailed above), but the frequent conflicts are echoed in modern nationalist schisms, the frequency of which is a modern-day Corsican stereotype.

Goscinny and Uderzo also reference corruption in the Corsican political system; the Corsicans allude to elections where the ballot boxes are already full before votes are cast.⁵⁵¹ There is also an explosion in *Astérix en Corse*, caused by a pungent local cheese, which destroys a large ship. However, this appears accidental and is not

⁵⁴⁸ See section 'Corsican Context'.

⁵⁴⁹ Goscinny & Uderzo (a), p. 36.

⁵⁵⁰ Goscinny & Uderzo (a), p. 47.

⁵⁵¹ Goscinny & Uderzo (a), p. 25.

linked to the wider anti-Roman resistance. It may be a reference to the less-frequent pro-Corsica violence perpetrated before Aléria,⁵⁵² but it is not an unquestionably clear reference to nationalist violence. The depiction of the explosion may function as a way to reference nationalist violence in a way that is less overt than directly depicting violent conflict – as the incident with the soldier, Chipolata and Carferrix references historical conflict over women without explicitly referring to rapes and murders which took place in reality.

Astérix en Corse is the best example of traditional stereotypes of Corsica expressed in *bandes dessinées*. With a print run of 1.3 million,⁵⁵³ its popularity means that the version of Corsica presented by Goscinny and Uderzo is at the forefront of public perception of the island, just as *Les Aventures de Bécassine* represented Brittany for readers of *La Semaine de Suzette*. Although primarily based on traditional stereotypes, it also features tropes which will be taken up and expanded in later *bandes dessinées*, such as the inter-clan quarrels which become intra-nationalist violence in Pétillon's *L'Enquête corse*.

Lili bandit corse (1962): An Early Representation

Lili bandit corse appeared just as the first pro-Corsican movements were beginning to form in the early 1960s, and predates *Astérix en Corse* by more than a decade. Although it is much less well-known than such mainstream *BD* albums about Corsica as *Astérix en Corse* and *L'Enquête corse*, the album is of particular interest because it presents a somewhat more 'realistic' view of the island in the early 1960s than does *Astérix en Corse* in 1973 with its use of historical metaphor to represent the present, in that *Lili bandit corse* acknowledges the existence of modern society on Corsica (at least in the cities and large towns) rather than representing the entirety of Corsica as rural and old-fashioned.

First created in 1909 by Joseph Valle and André Vallet, Lili (initially styled as 'l'espiègle' or 'mischievous' Lili) appeared in *Fillette*, a girls' Catholic newspaper

⁵⁵² again cf Corsican Context section

⁵⁵³ 'Chronologie astérixienne', <<http://www.asterix.com/galerie/expositions-virtuelles/loupe/06.htm>> [Accessed 30 July 2015].

which ran from 1909 until 1968, in competition with Bécassine and *La Semaine de Suzette*. Unlike Bécassine, Lili outlived her journal, with stories appearing until 1998.

Although published in *Fillette's* last decade, *Lili bandit corse* largely maintains the newspaper's traditionalist outlook: for example, Lili and Monsieur Minet exclusively use the formal *vous* form of address with each other, even though the narrative clearly implies a much closer relationship between the two characters⁵⁵⁴. Its depiction of Corsica is equally traditionalist, relying on familiar tropes to entertain the reader: although, as noted, urban Corsica is shown as modern and firmly anchored in the present, most of the narrative is set in rural areas which are depicted as unchanged from the nineteenth century.

Monsieur Minet, a historian, goes on a research trip to Corsica, deliberately staying in the remote *maquis* areas and lodging with Corsicans. During the trip he stays with a harridan-like woman, Madame Zulafatore, and her unmarried daughter, and the two women hatch a plan to ensnare M. Minet in marriage to the daughter. He secretly escapes one night and takes off into the *maquis* with his bodyguard leading to the abandoned mother and daughter declaring a vendetta on Minet and believing him to be a member of a rival Corsican clan, the Micino. The vendetta sparks a manhunt for Minet; meanwhile, in Paris Lili is concerned about Minet's lack of contact, and after being visited by Corsicans who know her name and her relationship with Minet, decides to travel to Corsica and rescue her friend. Despite both being in the same area of Corsican *maquis* at the same time, the pair do not meet each other until their respective returns to Paris. However, M. Minet does successfully escape the vendetta against him, and Lili finds a new potential husband for his spinster pursuer.

⁵⁵⁴ M. Minet is ostensibly Lili's guardian; her parents have left her in his care since they travel frequently and cannot care for their daughter. However, the dialogue in *Lili, bandit corse* implies a close relationship between the two, with Lili being apparently romantically attracted to Minet.

The Corsicans in *Lili bandit corse* are presented more positively than those depicted in *Astérix en Corse*; notably, they are hospitable to a fault, allowing several strangers to stay in their homes indefinitely without harbouring the ulterior, self-interested motives of the Zulafatore women. The vendetta theme is very important in the album, and the idea of injured female honour is reinforced several times. The idea of a vendetta seems to be largely accepted. Though the Zulafatore women are ridiculed for their desperation in finding a husband, and for launching a vendetta against the wrong man, they are not condemned for having a vendetta in the first place. Particularly interesting is the treatment of the *maquis* in the album. It is acknowledged that modern cities exist on Corsica and scenes are set within them (e.g. Ajaccio), underlining the fact that Corsica is not an entirely rural society. However there is a clear demarcation between urban Corsica and the rural areas- the city is modern, situated firmly in the early 60s, and looks just like Paris. Outside the cities the island is oddly timeless. The population is engaged in subsistence farming, the villagers dress in nineteenth-century clothing and have no apparent links to, or involvement in, modern life. While there existed a divergence in living conditions between urban and rural areas at the time of the publication of *Lil bandit corse*, due to the depressed rural economy, the album exaggerates the backwardness of rural society. This old-fashioned way of life is accepted, with no value judgement made on its backwardness by the album's creators. The mainland characters are given armed Corsican guides, but whether this is for safety or navigational aid is not explicitly stated. There is no implication of criminals using the *maquis* to evade authorities (as is shown in both *Astérix en Corse* and *L'Enquête corse*) and indeed the characters from the mainland explicitly say how much they enjoy staying, exploring and picnicking in the *maquis*.⁵⁵⁵

Corsica's links to Italy are constantly reinforced in the album; its status as a French region is ignored. The most prominent secondary character is Italian, and linked to a Corsican family of the same name; all the Corsican characters have Italian names and pepper their speech with Italian phrases. The Corsican language is mentioned,

⁵⁵⁵ Hiéris & Al. G, p. 39.

although it is referred to as a patois - to the authors of the album, it seems that for patois one must read 'Italian'.

The Corsica of *Lili Bandit Corse* is nevertheless, in general, portrayed as idyllic. All the visiting characters express how much they enjoy their stay, even as they are being pursued by bands of angry natives. The villains of the story—the Zulafatore mother and daughter—are not reprehensible on account of their peasant nature, or their Corsican identity; instead, their flaws are their desperation and grasping femininity. Indeed, one of the few negative aspects of the albums is the problematic depiction of women. The Zulafatore women are ugly, boring harridans, who are disliked even by members of their own clan; Lili herself is shown using her 'feminine wiles', making herself pretty to distract the men searching for her and to gain access to the Zulafatores, and acting coquettishly to gain favour with local men (as she tells her guide, 'vous allez voir qu'il existe d'autres armes moins bruyantes et plus... élégantes!').⁵⁵⁶ The plot presents a confused picture of acceptable femininity with women who, whether they are, like Lili, independent but non-working or, like her air hostess friend Perlina, engaged in the workforce simultaneously call their close male friends *vous*, a usage which for the early 1960s seems excessively formal - and who find it acceptable to flirt with strangers in order to achieve their desired outcome. To add to the confusion, those non-heroic women who attempt to use flirtation with strangers for their own benefit are without exception portrayed negatively.

In general, *Lili bandit corse* is a useful album for anyone examining depictions of Corsica in visual culture as it offers a view different from that of the more famous 'Corsica' albums, and also exists in a transitional period before the popular image of Corsica altered to include bombing and militancy. It uses some of the same tropes as are found in more famous *bandes dessinées* on the same subject (e.g. rural isolation, intense hospitality) but also inverts them, particularly in its depiction of the *maquis* as a pleasant, welcoming place to camp or explore rather than as the wilderness populated by criminals presented in later albums.

⁵⁵⁶ Hiéris & Al. G, p. 18.

L'Enquête corse (2000)

In contrast to *Astérix en Corse* and *Lili Bandit Corse*, *L'Enquête corse* (Pétillon, 2000) presents a more modern, contemporary view of Corsican culture. While the authors of the two earlier *bandes dessinées* look to the past for inspiration, whether evoking the tropes of French national education, nineteenth-century received ideas or representations of more recent national trauma, Pétillon concentrates on the island's present situation at the end of the twentieth century, using black humour to laugh at various section of Corsican society— nationalists, tourists, the police. The album was a best-selling success, selling over 400,000 copies in France by 2009,⁵⁵⁷ with 15,000 of them in Corsican by 2003.⁵⁵⁸ It was also adapted for the cinema, the film version released in 2004 starring Jean Reno and Christian Clavier.

The story follows Jack Palmer, a private investigator as he is sent to Corsica by a lawyer of Corsican origin who has migrated to Paris in order to locate local militant Ange Léoni regarding an inheritance. The Corsica he encounters is full of stereotypical inhabitants, all of whom are resistant to outsiders entering their closely knit society. That Palmer is not welcome is made clear on his first day in the village of Rossignoli: a busy café falls silent as he enters. He asks the patrons if they know Ange Léoni, and is met with collective silence.⁵⁵⁹ With a sigh, he asks where the toilets are and again the room is silent. Later that night, a man comes to his hotel window:

J'étais au café quand vous êtes venu... nous autres Corses, nous n'aimons pas trop les questions. Surtout étrangères! Mais j'ai réfléchi:

⁵⁵⁷ Delphine Peras, 'Le Phénomène Pétillon en Corse', *L'Express*, 22 October 2009

<http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/le-phenomene-petillon-en-corse_796494.html> [Accessed 1 August 2015]

⁵⁵⁸ Éric Pelletier, 'L'Enquête (très) corse', *L'Express*, 23 October 2003

<http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/italique-l-enquete-italique-tres-italique-corse-italique_819105.html> [Accessed 30 July 2015].

⁵⁵⁹ Pétillon (a), p. 8.

votre demande me paraît légitime. Je vais vous renseigner... les toilettes, c'est dans la cour à gauche.⁵⁶⁰

The importance, and difficulty, of belonging on the island is shown in an exchange with Palmer's hotel receptionist:

“Vous connaissez un nommé Ange Léoni, originaire de Rossignoli?”

“Je ne connais pas grand monde par ici....nous ne sommes en Corse que depuis cinq générations.”⁵⁶¹

Thus, from the outset of the album, Pétillon represents Corsica as a closed society, in which integration is almost impossible for non-Corsicans. As Palmer continues his search for Léoni, he experiences many clichéd and violent aspects of life in modern Corsica, including kidnapping, bombing, vendetta, and attacks on property owned by non-Corsicans. After a long and complicated narrative, Palmer finally finds Léoni, largely by chance, and returns to Paris, where he meets the solicitor who instigated his journey.

“Alors, mons pays, tu l'as trouvé comment?”

“C'est une île compliquée pour un continental.”

“Pour un Corse aussi.”⁵⁶²

This final exchange underlines what is, in my view, one of the album's most effective aspects: Pétillon's Corsica, as a closed society run on its own terms, is largely incomprehensible to those who are not Corsican, and even to those Corsicans who have emigrated in contrast to the islanders who live within their native environment and who appear to take every eventuality in their stride. The inability of those of whatever origin living outside Corsica to comprehend the island society's peculiarities underlines the otherness of Corsica as presented by Pétillon: the society can only be understood and successfully navigated by members of a very

⁵⁶⁰ Pétillon (a), p. 10.

⁵⁶¹ Pétillon (a), p. 7.

⁵⁶² Pétillon (a), p. 52.

narrowly defined group comprising those who are both ‘native’ Corsican and geographically present within the society.

Although Jack Palmer is the story’s main character, we do not see the action solely from his point of view. For much of the album, Palmer is either merely a silent observer of events or altogether absent. The absence of Palmer allows Pétillon to show events outside the main storyline, from the viewpoints of the other people involved. This technique allows Pétillon to depict a more detailed and comprehensive picture of life on the island, featuring the police, militants, bomb victims, ‘continental’ residents (i.e., those from mainland France), and ‘ordinary’ Corsicans.

Armed Militancy

Nationalist violence forms the basis for the narrative of *L’Enquête corse*. The album features a large amount of militant activity: kidnapping,⁵⁶³ repeated bombing of local businesses,⁵⁶⁴ and car-bombing targeting especially property owned by non-Corsicans,⁵⁶⁵ although a series of cafés and other local buildings with links to Léoni are also bombed. It also features much intra-factional quarrelling and the proliferation of splinter groups, which are formed at the slightest disagreement,⁵⁶⁶ and represents the pro-Corsica movement as a myriad of small, constantly shifting groups, competing for dominance like the proverbial rats in a sack in a small theatre of conflict rather than united against their oppressor:

“Je vois bien que vous êtes des militants corses! Mais quels militants?”

“Canal Inattendu! Nous voulons interroger le continental qui cherche Léoni!”

“Pas question! C’est l’affaire de Corsa Corsica!”

⁵⁶³ Pétillon (a), p. 11.

⁵⁶⁴ Pétillon (a), p. 15.

⁵⁶⁵ Pétillon (a), p. 27.

⁵⁶⁶ Cf. Pétillon (a), p. 12: “Lâche-moi la grappe ou je crée un mouvement dissident!”

“Ah! Non! C’est l’affaire de La Concoctée!”⁵⁶⁷

When Palmer is kidnapped by nationalists, there is an intra-militant disagreement as three splinter groups – Canal Inattendu, Corsa Corsica and La Concoctée – all claim the right to interrogate the detective, given that Ange Léoni has stolen money from each of them in turn and each is also trying to locate him along with Palmer.

Palmer has thus inadvertently become involved in an intra-nationalist conflict in which various splinter groups endeavour to use the detective as a pawn to lead them to Léoni. For example, a member of a new militant group, La Réconcoctée, gives Palmer a tip-off which sends him unknowingly to a meeting between all the other splinter groups which aims at ending the current nationalist violence. The nationalists believe him to be spying on behalf of Ange Léoni, and the meeting is sabotaged, ending in a shootout.

Ange Léoni comes out of hiding in the *maquis* and is hosted by various nationalists for protection, until he overstays his welcome: since the nationalists cannot deny him traditional Corsican hospitality, they decide the only way to rid themselves of their guest without losing face is to kill Léoni. Palmer is further used for the militants’ benefit when he is invited at gunpoint, again by a rival militant, to dine with Léoni at the house that he is currently occupying. Palmer’s surprise arrival eventually culminates in a siege situation between Léoni and the police. Léoni agrees to be arrested, but he sets the terms for his incarceration, including the date of his release, and in order to restore peace orders the French government to pay a large financial settlement to the groups from which he stole money. Here Léoni uses the emblematic language of 1970s nationalism, alluding to ‘les emprunts que j’ai dû leur faire pour mener mon combat contre la mainmise coloniale française’,⁵⁶⁸ to blur the lines between nationalism and financial crime. Even after the money is returned to the nationalists and Léoni is imprisoned, the difficulty of

⁵⁶⁷ Pétillon (a), p. 13.

⁵⁶⁸ Pétillon (a), p. 50.

splitting the money leads to another intra-group war and more bombing. Pétillon's implication is that violence in Corsica is constant and unchanging; that there will always be conflict between clandestine groups despite efforts to the contrary.

Culture of violence

Violence is a constant presence in the islanders' lives. When violent incidents occur, they are barely noticed and rarely remarked upon. Pétillon emphasises the everyday nature of disruption in two particularly effective ways. Firstly, there is the way the local population is shown as being so used to explosions that they pay little attention to them despite the repeated use of the onomatopoeia 'BOUM': secondly, Pétillon underscores the mundane nature of violence in the narrative by depicting an incident during Palmer's visit to a law practice in Ajaccio.

While waiting to see a lawyer, Palmer sits in with the receptionist. She receives a couriered parcel and once unwrapped, it becomes apparent that the lawyer has been sent a miniature coffin, obviously betokening a threat on the lawyer's life. Palmer is alarmed: however, the receptionist merely removes the coffin from its box and places it in her desk drawer, which is already full of identical miniature coffins.⁵⁶⁹ Seconds later gunfire is heard in the lawyer's office, and a computer comes sailing through the adjoining door. The lawyer is unworried and invites Palmer in, dismissing the altercation as 'un petit incident de routine', implying that he is frequently subject to attack in his office.⁵⁷⁰

Ineffectual forces of authority

Throughout the album, the police are shown as an ineffectual body, in particular when local gendarmes come across several vehicles' worth of black-clothed militants wearing balaclavas. Instead of arresting any of the militia, they ignore them and prefer to arrest Palmer on the false pretence of an expired identity card. When he protests, the police chief tells him that arrest is his only way to escape

⁵⁶⁹ Pétillon (a), p. 31.

⁵⁷⁰ Pétillon (a), p. 32.

kidnap.⁵⁷¹ After yet another bombing, the anti-terrorist police division arrive to take over from the *gendarmerie*, which sets off an intra-police quarrel, preventing both police forces from actually investigating the explosion and strongly suggesting that factionalism is endemic to Corsica, no matter what its inhabitants' attitude to the French state may be.⁵⁷²

The incompetent policing in *L'Enquête corse* is similar to the lack of authority on the part of the Romans in *Astérix en Corse*: the Romans are also shown as bumbling and ineffective, with little knowledge of local culture (as in the previously-cited example with Carferrix and the young soldier), no enthusiasm for the job and lazy leadership. Pétillon's police appear to have given up trying to navigate the complexities of Corsican criminality and are not respected by the locals. The lack of external authority in both albums is – whether deliberately or not – grounded in reality. The island in both stories effectively regulates itself, with only occasional and badly managed incursions by external forces of authority. In *Astérix en Corse*, those forces are indisputably external: the Romans are deliberately set apart, shown as making no attempt to assimilate into local society, but rather seeking to impose their authority irrespective of the population's views. Pétillon's police can also be considered an external force, since the police force is part of the French civil service and as such, members of the police may be given a position anywhere within the area governed by France, wherever they may originate from. Their lack of understanding and competence may be attributed to the fact that many of their number will be genuine outsiders, non-Corsicans, but their otherness is also compounded by their status as French civil servants. Their jobs as enforcers of French law imposed on the Corsican population, in other words as symbols of the French state, mark the police as the other. The opposition between the police and the rest of the population is visually represented on the cover of the album: a large group of police stand on the left, with a helicopter and a city in the background, along with a few stereotypical tourists. On the right Pétillon has drawn a large group of militants in balaclavas waving a Corsican flag in a rural setting, with in the background a fire-fighting plane in the place of the police helicopter. They are

⁵⁷¹ Pétillon (a), p. 14.

⁵⁷² Pétillon (a), p. 17.

accompanied by four local characters exactly mirroring the position of the tourists. Jack Palmer stands straight on, facing out, exactly in the middle between the two groups, who are in direct opposition to each other.

The cover distills the album's entire narrative into one image: Palmer's position in the middle reflects his position in the story, where the police are suspicious of him associating with nationalists and the nationalists are suspicious of him associating with the police. He is from the continent, so should in theory be grouped together with the police and the tourists. However, he is a private investigator rather than a representative of the state, and does not share the same goals as the police; nor can he be comfortably grouped with the police and tourists as he is not 'anti' militant. He is merely pulled in conflicting directions by other people, whether they be the nationalists or the police, while trying to complete his work in a society he does not understand.

Although based on stereotypes, the picture of Corsica presented in *L'Enquête corse* is a complex one. Jokes and the absurdity of events in the narrative may be exaggerated for comedic effect, but everything that occurs is within the realm of possibility. The album is full of small jokes and visual references which show that Pétillon has a close understanding of the intricacy of the Corsican nationalist environment and has attempted to show the nuances of the situation, rather than a one-dimensional approximation. His realistic depiction of the complicated links between nationalist groups and the so-called Corsican mafia is an example of this. The character of Ange Léoni, a figure equally involved in financial crime and nationalism, is symbolic of the Corsica of the 1990s, where, as Pierre Péan asserts, 'la frontière entre "natos" et mafieux était poreuse, la deux formes de la violence se trouvant souvent imbriquées'.⁵⁷³ In addition to their armed activities Pétillon also depicts nationalist racketeering as something 'tolerated' by the French state implying a degree of corruption on its part too, a favourite topos of journalism on the mainland.⁵⁷⁴ The characters are caricatures, but their situation is realistic.

⁵⁷³ Pierre Péan, *Compromissions* (Paris: Fayard, 2015) p. 17.

⁵⁷⁴ Péan, p. 17.

For all its humour, *L'Enquête corse* is a detailed, nuanced representation of modern Corsica. Although the stereotypes from earlier publications are still present, particularly insularity and vendetta, in this case these old tropes are modernised and applied to the present: for example the old-fashioned clan conflict of *Astérix en Corse* is present in its modern form of internecine militant disputes. Pétillon's Corsica is not timeless or anachronistic; it is a modern society firmly anchored in the present day. *L'Enquête corse* is the first exemplary *bande dessinée* representation of Corsica since the development of the Corsican nationalist movement. Pétillon and his work are popular in Corsica as may be judged by the reactions of attendees at a 2009 appearance on the island when one woman asserted that *L'Enquête corse* is 'le seul livre au niveau d'*Astérix en Corse*' and another claimed Pétillon to be Goscinny's equal.⁵⁷⁵ *L'Enquête corse* is one of the few mainstream *bandes dessinées* to be translated into Corsican from French, the other being *Astérix en Corse*.

The popular success of *L'Enquête corse* has led to the album influencing many other *bande dessinée* creators in the years since its publication.

Other *Bandes Dessinées* Published by Mainland Publishers

In addition to Pétillon's best-selling work featuring Corsica – *L'Enquete corse* and the subsequent sketchbook volume *Bon Baisers de Corse et d'ailleurs* (2003) – published by Albin Michel, and *Astérix en Corse*, issued by Dargaud, several other major French publishing companies have released books set on the island. The majority of these works have appeared after 2000 in the wake of the success of *L'Enquete corse*, the influence of which is clear in several albums. As representative examples of these subsequent works, in the following section three of these albums, from three different publishers, will be included for study: *Bienvenue chez les Corses... et Bonne Chance!* (12bis, 2012), *Les Blagues corses 1: Canal hystérique* (Delcourt, 2006) and *Da Vinci Corse 1* (Le Cherche Midi, 2007). These more recent albums draw narrative inspiration from the same sources as Pétillon's work, but some are more directly influenced by Pétillon than others.

⁵⁷⁵ Peras, n.p.

Bienvenue chez les Corses... et Bonne Chance! (2012).

Bienvenue chez les Corses is the only mainland-published album written by a Corsican, Eric Fraticelli, alias 'Pido', a comedian and actor who appeared in the 2004 film version of *L'Enquête corse* as a member of an FLNC cell. *Bienvenue chez les Corses... et Bonne Chance!* is also the title of Fraticelli's 2009 stand-up show.

The album is ostensibly the story of Pruneau, a French gendarme who is transferred to Corsica, and his struggle to acclimatise to policing an environment very different to that on the mainland. However, the album's various subplots are of equal importance to the main narrative; much of the album details the lives of 'ordinary Corsicans' rather than that of Pruneau. Most of the narrative is comedic, despite the violence and nationalist tensions depicted. In contrast to *l'Enquête Corse*, the jokes are simpler and there is less black humour.

Pruneau's basic ignorance of Corsicans and the island's culture puts him in direct opposition to the islanders immediately. For example, when he learns of his imminent transfer, he corrects his superior who calls Corsica 'un beau pays':

"Région....c'est une région, mon capitaine."

"Évitez ce mot, là-bas dites 'pays'."⁵⁷⁶

However, very quickly upon his arrival on the island he meets and falls in love with a local girl. His attention is not welcomed by the girl's father (a caricatured version of Pido), who exclaims:

'JE VAIS TUER TOUT LE MONDE! MA FILLE AVEC UN PINZUTU, ET UN GENDARME EN PLUS!⁵⁷⁷

News of the romance also shocks the girl's mother, who is so overcome that she is rushed to hospital. However, when Pruneau accidentally blows up the police station by answering the phone when surrounded by seized explosives, the father gladly

⁵⁷⁶ Pido & Soffritti, p. 8.

⁵⁷⁷ Pido & Soffritti, p. 35.

welcomes him as his son-in-law, as everyone assumes that the explosion was an insider's deliberate attack on the police.

Alongside this main narrative, Pido details the lives of various inhabitants of the island: his own and those of his friends, the 'ordinary Corsicans', local politicians seeking reelection, tourists, traffic police and members of clandestine militant groups. Every group is portrayed in a stereotypical, caricatured way. Pido and his friends are insular, while one of the group supplies explosives to militants; politicians are corrupt, and the population is so used to vote-rigging that they object to being able to vote only once; traffic police ignore speeding offences and other crimes being committed, and hide from the public while on patrol; tourists are ripped off by being let un-modernised dwellings and are unable to cope without modern conveniences; militants carry their weapons openly and constantly wear their emblematic balaclavas.

Bienvenue chez les Corses again presents an entirely stereotypical view of Corsica and its people.⁵⁷⁸ Every modern Corsican trope is present: ineffectual policing, a population oversensitive to insults, typical insularity, constant militant activity (or assumed militant activity, as in the example of the destroyed police station), vote-rigging and complicated local politics, etc. Many of these tropes are used in the same way as in *L'Enquête corse*, and as such Pétillon's thematic and narrative influence is clear, but *Bienvenue* is a much less nuanced version with a simpler plot and many more comedic elements. Pido's decision to depict Corsica this way in 2012 is surprising. Although the *bande dessinée* *L'Enquête Corse* is very popular in Corsica, the 2004 film adaptation was markedly less so, in part due to its less nuanced humour.⁵⁷⁹ The humour in *Bienvenue chez les Corses* is very similar to that of the *L'Enquête Corse* film; since Pido is Corsican, he is likely to have known how simplistic portrayal of Corsica was received on the island only eight years earlier.

⁵⁷⁸ The title may be intended as a reference to *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis* (2008), a film based on regional stereotypes of northern France, the second-highest grossing film of all time in the French domestic market.

⁵⁷⁹ Several people I interviewed at the Ajaccio *bande dessinée* festival expressed dislike of the film in contrast to the original *bande dessinée*. One reason repeatedly cited was the simplistic humour and lack of complexity in the portrayal of Corsican life.

The album's stereotypical depiction of Corsica is in sharp contrast to that found in the other albums by Corsican creators, particularly in its depiction of militant activity. Militant autonomist movements are mentioned in only one series of the locally produced Corsican *bandes dessinées*,⁵⁸⁰ and then in a serious light. While other Corsican creators may use some of the same tropes as Pido, no other album involving a Corsican creator is so entirely based on mainland stereotypes of Corsicans.

Les Blagues corses 1: Canal hystérique (2006)

Les Blagues corses (2006-2009), by Parisian Laurent Panetier and Belgian Stéphane Ficher (Fich) is a four-volume series, of which *Canal hystérique* is the first. Rather than an overarching narrative, the album consists of single-page, titled jokes on different themes, for example, 'La Grange qui Brûle', featuring a farmer arranging the burning of his own barn for insurance purposes,⁵⁸¹ and 'Erreur Typique',⁵⁸² where a group of militants burst out of their van and open fire, believing they are being attacked, when the van in fact has a blown-out tyre.

Each joke features a stereotypically Corsican figure or figures such as, in the examples given above, the militant independence movement and farmers playing the system for financial gain, but also many others, such as the traditional polyphonic singing group and men who are overprotective of female relatives. The title of the volume is also a reference to the FLNC group Canal Historique.

Although the album relies entirely on accepted stereotypes, the creators make use of a far wider range of tropes than Pido does in *Bienvenue chez les Corses*. As such *Canal hystérique* provides a more detailed, although still comedic and entirely stereotypical, view of life in Corsica, which has been extended over three more albums with narratives and humour based on the same stereotypes.

⁵⁸⁰ Frédéric Bertocchini, Miceal O' Griaifa & Michel Espinosa, *Libera Me* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2012-2013).

⁵⁸¹ Panetier & Fich, p. 13.

⁵⁸² Panetier & Fich, p. 34.

Da Vinci corse (2007)

Jean-Michel Delambre is a press cartoonist from Liévin in northern France who has worked for the mainland French periodicals *Le Canard Enchaîné*, *Marianne*, *Le Parisien* and the Ajaccio-based *Journal de la Corse*, amongst others. *Da Vinci corse* is the first of two books he has published about Corsica. Like *Les Blagues corses*, *Da Vinci corse* does not have an overarching narrative. In this case the album consists of full-colour strips, from one to three panels long. All of Delambre's characters invariably wear balaclavas and so are clearly marked as members of the independence movement. Many of the strips feature jokes based on militancy or explosions (*Da Vinci corse* adopts *L'Enquête corse*'s constant visual and verbal motif of a stylised 'boum' to represent explosions). Although the balaclava-wearing militant is one of the most emblematic images of Corsica, *Da Vinci corse* does more than rely solely on single-level stereotypes. Several strips are satirical, placed in a contemporary political timeframe so that, for example, repeated references are made to Nicolas Sarkozy. Others are farcical visual gags that still have a satirical edge, e.g. a Corsican version of Miss World, Miss Balaclava,⁵⁸³ or references to popular culture, as in the strip *Pub*: 'Avant de vous faire plastiquer, exigez le label du seul vrai FLNC. FLNC, parce que j'le vaux bien' – a reference to L'Oréal's 'Because I'm Worth It' slogan.⁵⁸⁴

Although it may be argued that *Da Vinci corse* presents a particularly one-sided stereotypical view of Corsica since the entire cast of characters consists of FLNC militants, its representation of the island is more complicated than the visual trope suggests. Constant inclusion of the militant's balaclava lessens the impact of the symbol significantly, particularly since the characters in balaclavas are depicted as being engaged in mundane, non-violent tasks, although admittedly these connotations of harmlessness and familiarity could in themselves be seen as sinister and subversive. The album is the only non-Corsican work among those included for study which treats militants sympathetically, with occasional references to the rationale behind the continuing conflict: in the strip 'Loi "Littoral"', a militant

⁵⁸³ Delambre (a), p. 25.

⁵⁸⁴ Delambre (a), p. 9.

explains that ‘sans nous, “L’île de beauté” serait devenue “l’île de béton” !’⁵⁸⁵, making reference to one of the main concerns of the developing Corsican independence movement in the 1960s and ever since, namely the rapid development of tourist accommodation on the island and its adverse environmental impact. *Da Vinci corse* is also the only externally-published album so far examined to link events outside the island to life on Corsica (for example, with references to the policies of Nicolas Sarkozy, as detailed above, or to global issues such as climate change). The other albums show Corsica as being entirely self-contained, deliberately set apart from the culture on the mainland. *Da Vinci corse* instead shows the island in a wider French, European and global context.

Conclusions: The Outsider View of Corsica in *Bande Dessinée*

The last three case studies presented above suggest that *bandes dessinées* published in mainland France this century are consistent in their representation of Corsican culture. Primarily, in mainstream *bandes dessinées* Corsica is always humorously treated, albeit sometimes with a satirical edge. The same stereotypes are presented repeatedly in mainland albums by different authors, often in very similar ways, alluding to all of the following: ineffectual policing in the face of militant violence and general apathy; the black-balaclava-wearing militant; insularity; a population oversensitive to insult; constant and routine autonomist violence; and vendetta. At the cusp of the new millennium *L’Enquête corse* presents the most detailed version of Corsican society, a level of detail which is marked when comparing the album with those it later inspired. Pétillon’s work is the only external representation that is not entirely presented for comedic effect. Comedy is present but is not the book’s sole purpose. Pétillon appears to have made a concerted effort to present an informed and informative version of Corsica. Significantly, *L’Enquête corse* is the only modern album published on the mainland which has also been published in Corsican.⁵⁸⁶ The later mainland depictions are clearly aimed purely at a mainland French readership whose prejudices are reassuringly flattered through a reworking of all the old clichés. Nevertheless the

⁵⁸⁵ Delambre (a), p. 7.

⁵⁸⁶ Pétillon (b), *L’Inchiesta Corsa- L’Enquête corse* en v.o (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001).

influence of *L'Enquête corse*'s narrative is clear, as two of the three mainland albums included for study effectively lift Pétillon's stereotypes wholesale; and representations have remained static since 2000 in that over a decade later, in 2012, *Bienvenue chez les Corses* uses exactly the same tropes as *L'Enquête corse*. There is no attempt in these later works to make narratives more realistic or relevant to life in Corsica as time progresses, and as such it seems unlikely that the intended readership for such an unchanging stereotypical representation is Corsicans themselves. The partial exception to this is Jean-Michel Delambre's *Da Vinci corse*. This album, although containing various standard stereotypes, also places Corsica and events in a wider context; Delambre's characters are also concerned with the outside world. Additionally, Delambre's work for the major Corsican newspaper *Corse Matin* and his wider experience of Corsica allow him a deeper knowledge of the culture there and also increase the likelihood of a Corsican readership for his works.

Bandes dessinées produced on Corsica draw inspiration from very different sources from those that motivate the *bandes dessinées* published by mainstream companies, and in doing so locally-published works represent Corsica in a radically different way from the mainstream. To examine the differences in representation to be found in locally produced *bandes dessinées* I will focus mainly on the output of the most prolific publisher of *bandes dessinées* on the island, Distribution Corse du Livre (DCL).

7. *Bande Dessinée* Looking Out: Internal Perspectives on Corsica

Resumé of Books in Study

Below are summaries of each internal *bande dessinée* representation of Corsica examined in detail for this thesis, from the early *Corsu* series to the *Aleria 1975* diptych, published in 2015. The albums are listed in chronological order of publication by year. Since DCL publications cover a wide range of themes and subject matter, plot summaries are useful in giving a picture of the breadth of DCL's production before analysis of the industry as a whole and its significance later in the chapter. Also included alongside plot summaries is relevant information on the albums' place within the catalogue and any wider thematic or other significance.

Corsu (1999-2007)

Corsu is a five-volume series written and illustrated by Éric Rückstühl. It is the only *bande dessinée* series published by DCL for a general readership which has no involvement from Frédéric Bertocchini. (The only other *bande dessinée* in DCL's catalogue not written by Bertocchini is *Le Beau Secret de Lunetta* by Sylviane Fabre-Franceschi and Marie-Rose Franceschi, which is aimed at children.) It is also one of DCL's earliest forays into publishing *bande dessinée*, the publication of the first volume, *Corsu, le chasseur d'éclaircies nocturnes* (August 1999) predating the release of *L'Enquête corse* by over a year.

The series depicts the life of Toussaint Campara, nicknamed Corsu. He is a *mazzeru*, a folk figure also depicted in one story in *Histoires corses*; he has premonitions of others' deaths, and once he dreams of their death, the person concerned invariably dies very soon afterwards. The series follows his attempts to cope with his 'condition', mixing in other stories from Corsican folklore and genuine historical events which have affected Corsica over the years.

Corsu 1: Corsu, le chasseur d'éclaircies nocturnes (1999)⁵⁸⁷

The first volume opens as Corsu and a group of his friends go hunting for wild boar. Through conversation with his friends, the reader learns that he is very involved in caring for his elderly father, whose health is gradually failing, living with him and helping tend the family farm; he is also still in mourning for his first love, Sérena, who died in a traffic accident many years before.

The group shoot a boar on the first day, but are staying overnight in the *maquis*. In another of his premonitions Corsu dreams that he is out hunting boar, but instead shoots a woman by mistake. He runs to retrieve the body, and sees it is that of a woman he does not know. The next night, he has another dream, this time featuring a goat with his father's face. In this premonition, however, he wakes up just before the goat is shot, suggesting that his father will not yet die.

Taking his father to Bastia the next day, he stops at the memorial marker on the road where Sérena was killed, and in a flashback tells the story of how he met Sérena on her holidays in Corsica in 1975. The pair became friends after Sérena helped Corsu and his friends repair a car, travelling on her motorbike to fetch more fuel. She left the group once the car was running; suddenly Corsu had a waking premonition of her death that night. Later, on their way back from the local dance, Corsu and his friends heard a crash; it was Serena's motorbike. She had been killed and Corsu's prediction had come true.

⁵⁸⁷ Éric Rückstühl (a), *Corsu 1: le chasseur d'éclaircies nocturnes* (Ajaccio: DCL, 1999).

Back in the present, Corsu and his father are in Bastia, on a windy day. Corsu leaves his father safe in the car and runs his errands, envisaging the possibility of leaving his father, Corsica, and—he hopes—his constant visions of death behind. Walking down by the port, he remembers the boat ‘Le Liban’ which sank in a collision off Corsica in 1903, leaving many dead. He decides that he could never leave the island. Suddenly, he sees a woman in the street; it is the woman who died in his dream. He introduces himself and tells her the story of his premonition. She asks how he became a *mazzeru*; in a flashback we see him as a young boy hunting boar. An old man, also a *mazzeru*, tells him that *mazzérisme* is his destiny and he cannot escape it. That night he has a dream in which he kills a boar by his own hand; when he looks at its face, it is that of his mother. He has become a *mazzeru*, and his mother dies three days later.

He finishes his story, and looks up; the woman has gone, running to catch her ferry. Despite his certainty that she will die, Corsu feels some relief, because he has at least warned her.

*Corsu 2: La Confrérie des Ombres (2001)*⁵⁸⁸

Volume two opens on the night between Hallowe’en and All Saints Day. Corsu is dreaming of the dead awakening all around him, to take up their lives for one night of the year. He awakes to his father complaining that there will be no one to continue their traditional way of life; whether he means farming or *mazzérisme* is unclear. Corsu’s sons arrive from the mainland to visit for the Autumn school holidays. The older, Francesco, is a boy model and wannabe star, who wants to leave for Ajaccio almost as soon as he has arrived at his father’s house. The younger, Grégoire, is a quiet school student.

Corsu takes his sons to pick chestnuts, a local tradition for All Saints day, while showing them local landmarks and relating stories about the presence of the dead amongst the living. He also tells them that on the site of the family farm, there was once a prehistoric village. The three visit a small church on the farm to pray for their ancestors; Grégoire expresses a desire to live in Corsica with his father.

⁵⁸⁸ Éric Rückstühl (b), *Corsu 2: La Confrérie des Ombres* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2001).

On the way back to the house, Corsu finds an obsidian knife, which leads him to tell his sons about prehistoric life on their farm. He takes the boys to see the site of the ancient village. On their arrival home, they hear on the news that the woman Corsu saw in his dream and met in Bastia in book one, Terzulia, has gone missing from the Bastia ferry, having fallen overboard.

Corsu tells his sons about his vision of her death, and wonders if Terzulia was the earthly incarnation of Erzulie, a Haitian voodoo goddess of love who occupied her body. He resolves to recover Terzulia's body from the sea and save her soul from possession by Erzulie, bringing her back to life. Corsu leaves on his quest, followed by Grégoire. The pair spend the night in a prehistoric grotto. Suggesting links between *mazzérisme*, shamanism and a form of totemism, Corsu explains that, when he saves souls in his visions, he imagines himself as an animal. This time he chooses to be a cat, while Grégoire decides to be a crow.

The cat and the crow enter the world of the dead, arriving at the river which separates life and death. There they see a large number of hooded figures, the *confrérie des ombres*, Brotherhood of Shadows, featured in the book's title. Corsu and Grégoire attempt to cross the river to save Terzulia from death, but are stopped by a large group of other *mazzeri*, whom the pair successfully fight and defeat. Grégoire notices that, though vanquished, the members of the *confrérie* have nevertheless not moved from the river; Corsu explains that they are waiting for him to lead them, to take them to Terzulia's body. The *confrérie* are all the dead from the past, emerging to take Terzulia back with them so she can join their ranks. Corsu and Grégoire awake, and the boy asks to be a *mazzeru* like his father.

Falling asleep again, they find themselves at the head of the procession of the dead, looking for Terzulia's body.

Grégoire tries to take Terzulia's body from the procession and fails, flying away as a crow in frustration. Before Corsu can act, Terzulia emerges from the river, convincing Corsu that she is in fact the goddess Erzulie, as a human would not be able to escape the river of death. He knows that she will destroy the world of the dead, and that he must escape.

Eventually Corsu returns home and back to the world of the living. We learn that his ex-partner and mother of his sons, Lydie, has returned to Corsica. In a short flashback we see how Corsu and Lydie met; she is from Martinique, a dancer performing in Corsica. The couple are happy together until the arrival of their children, a turn of events that by its unexpected nature seems to provide a possible sequel hook to the next volume for at the end of the flashback, volume two ends.

Corsu 3: Stantara, l'homme debout (2003)⁵⁸⁹

It is winter in the Corsican mountains. Corsu and Lydie have been separated for a number of years, and Lydie lives on the mainland with their children. Grégoire, hitherto a quiet student, has been suspended from school; he is violent, skipping classes, and mixing with bad influences. His mother sends him to spend some time with his father in Corsica.

Corsu meets his friend, another *mazzeru*, who also has visions and dreams of death. He tells Corsu that he has been hunting Grégoire in his sleep, because he has disrupted the land of the dead and taken it from the *mazzeri*. Corsu vows to free his son from his fate. Grégoire arrives in Corsica, and tells his father that since he became a *mazzeru*, he is having repetitive nightmares and cannot sleep, hence his truancy and violence.

Corsu takes Grégoire to see an old woman, Santa, who lives in a perfectly preserved historic house, and sees the past in each object within it. She has a sculpture depicting a sea monster dragging souls into the abyss, which attracts Grégoire's attention. She also gives them an old oil lamp, telling them that these objects are the solution to their problems.

Returning from work one day, Corsu's jacket implausibly begins to talk to him, telling him that a recent spate of people lost at sea is not accidental, but due to Terzulia, in the form of a sea monster, hunting human souls. If Corsu manages to kill Terzulia, the deaths will stop and Grégoire's soul will be liberated from the land of the dead.

⁵⁸⁹ Éric Rückstühl (c), *Corsu 3: Stantara, l'homme debout* (Ajaccio: DCL 2003). *Stantara* is the Corsican word for prehistoric standing stones.

Corsu and Grégoire buy a ticket for the ferry from Bastia. When the boat hits rough seas, the pair jump overboard to find Terzulia. They become trapped in nets which rise from the ocean floor, freed only when Corsu's dead lover, Sérena, appears and cuts through the nets. They spot the sea monster, exactly as it is depicted in Santa's sculpture. Corsu conjures an oil lamp and throws it down the monsters' throat, burning it from the inside and killing it. Terzulia emerges from its body and tells Corsu she will give the land of the dead back to the *mazzeri*. Washing up on a beach, Grégoire sees a crow and asks it to leave him alone from now on. The crow leaves and Grégoire feels liberated instantly.

Corsu 4: Vizzavona (2005)⁵⁹⁰

At this point in the Corsu series it is effectively split into two parts. Volumes one, two and three form the subsection *Le Mazzerisme*; volumes four and five form *Le Diaspora*. The later volumes focus less on Corsu and his family and more on historical narratives featuring real or realistic events.

In *Vizzavona*, Corsu has received a lady's heirloom in the form of a letter written in 1900 by a certain Jean-Roch Rughigoni, a local boy who witnessed the building of the railway tunnel at the mountainous eponymous village. Rughigoni writes of the hard conditions the workers endure while building the railway infrastructure. As Corsu reads his letter, the story is told in flashback.

Jean-Roch's father is against the arrival of the railway, as he believes it will bring malaria to the mountains from the Corsican plains, where it is endemic. He also worries about the deforestation of the island for building materials and that the railway will put inn-keepers and couriers out of business.

Jean-Roch has dreams of leaving Corsica, but does not dare tell his father. His brother, Fanfan, vows to help his brother start his new life overseas, preferably in America. The brothers hatch a plan to rob one of the many Italian railway workers, then Jean-Roch will leave on the next available ship and Fanfan will flee to the *maquis*.

⁵⁹⁰ Éric Rückstühl (d), *Corsu 4: Vizzavona* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2005).

However, when they carry out their plan, it goes wrong and the worker is killed. The brothers split up as planned, with Jean-Roch now fleeing the gendarmes who act quickly, as the brothers left a shepherd's cloak and shepherd's shears at the scene, and villagers saw them flee. To add to their misfortune, the man they killed was the fiancé of their cousin, Ana; now the brothers are also subject to a vendetta and a curse which condemns each of their descendants to die around the age of majority, i.e. at twenty-one. Jean-Roch must leave Corsica. First he works in Marseille, but it is not safe for him, so he is given false papers and goes to work on a merchant ship under the name of Émile Tanguy. He travels around the world for many years, hearing of the death of Fanfan along the way. His merchant ship is wrecked off Landsend, and Jean-Roch takes the opportunity to leave and join another ship, working as a cook and heading for America, his original planned destination.

Back in the present, Corsu wakes up, having fallen asleep reading the letter. He visits the woman who sent it to him, Lucrece Poli-Rugnigoni, the great-granddaughter of Fanfan. They meet at the spot where Fanfan and Jean-Roch committed their crime. Lucrece tells Corsu that her son was killed a week ago in a hunting accident, at the age of twenty-one: the curse has come to pass. She is worried that the descendants of Jean-Roch in the United States will also be killed by the curse, in particular the daughter of her cousin John Rugnigoni. She asks Corsu to try and lift the curse. He enters the abandoned railway tunnel where he has a vision of John asking him to tell him how his daughter will die. There is nothing he can do; Corsu does not have the power to lift or give curses. He leaves Lucrece at the tunnel, unable to help her.

*Corsu 5: Casabianca (2007)*⁵⁹¹

The final volume in the Corsu series opens at the Teghime war monument near Bastia in summer 2008. An old man dressed in naval uniform is hitchhiking to Bastia. Walking along the promenade in Bastia, he clutches a book containing his memoirs. He comes across Grégoire and some friends, and begins talking to them about his

⁵⁹¹ Éric Rückstühl (e), *Corsu 5: Casabianca* (Ajaccio:DCL, 2007).

life, giving Grégoire a copy of his book. He realises that Grégoire can see into the past. The two go to talk in the restored cabin of the French WWII submarine *Casabianca*. The old man explains that the rest of the boat has been scrapped, but that a veterans' association has managed to salvage the cabin. He tell Grégoire the (true) story of the *Casabianca*, sunk off Toulon in 1942. Despite the armistice between France and Germany, the boats in the harbour, including the *Casabianca*, are fired on by the Germans. The *Casabianca*, however, manages to escape. Grégoire texts and asks his father to come to what remains of the *Casabianca*. There Corsu meets a local historian who helped restore the cabin. Grégoire drifts away and in his daydreaming sees the *Casabianca* rise up, whole, from the sea. When he returns to reality, he finds a video on his mobile phone showing an old shipwreck, with cannons. The historian explains that the video shows the wreck of 'L'Orient', a French ship which was sunk in 1798 on the orders of Admiral Nelson, and commanded by Luce de Casabianca, a member of the family after whom the submarine was named. The historian explains how 'L'Orient' was destroyed in battle.

Corsu and Grégoire take the old man home, where we discover that his family have been looking for him, as he often wanders off. His house is full of memorabilia; the group learn that he was part of the force that liberated Corsica in 1943.

The album ends with Corsu and Grégoire at the war monument in Teghime, looking towards Elba, talking about 'L'Orient', the *Casabianca* family and their place in history.

The Corsu series is an exception in DCL's catalogue in several ways. As previously mentioned, it is effectively two series in one. The first three volumes revolve around Corsu's *mazzeru* ability, his respect for Corsican tradition and folklore while also struggling with challenges that these traditions and his abilities cause in his personal life. Volumes four and five feature Corsu as more of a supporting character: his abilities (or those transmitted to Grégoire) act as a pretext for travelling back in time and exploring bigger stories from Corsican history, with none of Corsu's personal life included. Thematically, the series ties in well with later DCL publications; folklore, traditions and local history are central to the entire series'

narrative, similar to the stories of *Colomba* (based on Prosper Mérimée's novella of 1840), *Histoires corses*, and many other later *bandes dessinées*.

In terms of format, *Corsu* is the only publication to deviate, at least in part, from DCL's hardback, full-colour standard. Volumes one, two and three are paperback, while having the same dimensions as a standard hardback *bande dessinée*. Volume one is additionally in black and white. It is not until volume four that the series appears in the more familiar hardback colour format. There is a clear progression in publication quality from the start to the end of the series. Volume one is paperback, with no colour. Two and three are coloured, with the colour allowing more variation in style and layout. Four is hardback with glossy paper, and five is hardback with glossy paper but also full-colour printed back and front cover inlays filled with historical information. Volume five in particular has many photos and details of input from historians and military experts. It is clearly intended as a work of local history more than a simple story. The format progression of *Corsu* suggests a growth in importance (and ergo budget) of the *bande dessinée* medium for DCL throughout the series' lifespan. The books both gradually conform to mainstream *bande dessinée* format conventions and become more expensive to produce, with higher-quality paper, inks and binding.

***Paoli* (2007-2009)**

Paoli is a three-album series written by Frédéric Berthocchini, illustrated by Rückstuhl and coloured by Jocelyne Charrance. Similarly to the later *Sampiero Corso* series, *Paoli* uses the *bande dessinée* medium to tell the life story of a leading Corsican historical figure, in this case Pasquale Paoli. As already indicated, Paoli (1725-1807) was a Corsican leader who founded the short-lived independent state of the Corsican Republic (1755-69). He wrote the Corsican constitution, and was head of the elected Corsican Diet. Paoli's republic had its own university, based in the capital at Corte, and printed its own money. The Republic did not cover all of the island; the Genoese still controlled the coastal cities. In 1767, the Genoese gave their claim to Corsica to France by signing a treaty at Versailles, without Paoli's knowledge. Subsequently France invaded the Corsican Republic to claim their 'legitimate' property. Paoli's forces held out until May 1769, when they

were soundly beaten by the French and the state was conquered. In 1769, Corsica was officially made a province of France.

Paoli's three volumes each cover a different period of the eponymous hero's life; their respective titles are fairly self-explanatory.

Paoli 1: La Jeunesse de Paoli (2007)⁵⁹²

Volume one opens with the death of Paoli's mother in 1730, when he is five years old. Soon afterwards, a rebellion against the Genoese begins, in which Pasquale's father Ghjacintu is involved. Ghjacintu leaves Pasquale in the care of his older brother Clémente and leaves to join the revolution. Two years pass until the Genoese arrive in Paoli's village, and he learns that his father has been imprisoned in Bastia, condemned to death, but finally deported to Genoa. Ghjacintu returns to the village in 1735, whereupon an early Corsican constitution is written. Corsica degenerates into civil war. In 1736, a 'king of Corsica' arrives to head the rebellion. Theodore Neuhoff is a baron from Westphalia. His reign is short-lived, but produces the Corsican flag: a black moor's head on a white background. In 1739 Pasquale, Clémente and Ghjacintu go into exile in Naples.

There, as patriotic as ever, young Pasquale is trained as a soldier. He also becomes a freemason. He finally returns to Corsica at the age of thirty in 1755. Anti-Genoese feeling is still strong throughout the island with the exception of the coastal cities of Bastia, Ajaccio and Bonifacio. On his arrival, Pasquale is elected the head of a new Corsican republican state. Only days into his term, he hears of a plot against him. He employs a twenty-strong bodyguard and someone to taste his food in case of poisoning. He grows increasingly paranoid. He sends his childhood friend Ghjà to form a militia to find his opponent, Matra, who is supported by the Genoese. An internal conflict begins, until in 1757, at a convent in the mountains, the forces of Paoli and Matra enter into battle. Matra is killed, and Paoli's position is significantly reinforced, though not yet secure.

⁵⁹² Frédéric Bertocchini & Éric Rückstühl (a), *Paoli 1: La jeunesse de Paoli* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2007).

*Paoli 2: Le Père de la Patrie (2008)*⁵⁹³

The independent Corsican Republic is now in full operation. Senior Vatican clergy are invited to the island, in part to gain external support but also to try and attract more members of the Corsican Church to Paoli's cause. The social situation is worsening; bread is scarce. Nonetheless Paolist forces continue to conquer Genoa-controlled villages and expand the state's territory. The desertion rate in Paoli's army is increasing, however, as is the number of assassination attempts made on his life.

In an effort to open up the new Corsican Republic to the wider world, Paoli sends out the first ships bearing the Corsican flag in 1762. In 1763 the Republic's area of influence is growing in Corsica, despite continued territorial battles with the Genoese. Louis XV sends Valcroissant, a secret agent of the French, to commence negotiations. Paoli begins to consider signing a treaty with the French king, eventually signing in 1764. In 1765 he is visited by a young James Boswell, who is very supportive of the Corsican government, as an exemplary version of democracy.

As a show of power, in 1767 Paoli decides to send an expedition to claim the island of Capraia, at that point controlled by Genoa. The expedition is a success, and Corsica occupies Capraia until 1769.

In May 1768, at Versailles, France and Genoa sign a treaty in which Genoa renounces its sovereignty over Corsica and gives the island to the French. Without Paoli's knowledge or input, France has effectively bought Corsica, 'comme un troupeau de chèvres'.⁵⁹⁴ Paoli prepares to defend his republic against this new, larger enemy.

⁵⁹³ Frédéric Bertocchini & Éric Rückstühl (b), *Paoli 2: Le père de la patrie* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2008).

⁵⁹⁴ Bertocchini & Rückstühl (b), p. 50.

*Paoli 3: Ponte Novu (2009)*⁵⁹⁵

May 1768. The French have by now sent two battalions of soldiers to Ajaccio to reassert control over Corsica. Paoli finds himself and the Republic at war against an army much more powerful than that of Genoa.

The French army gradually takes more and more territory, pillaging in their wake. Despite this, Paoli's forces do win a significant victory in battle for the village of Borgu, where seven hundred French troops are killed.

James Boswell sends artillery from Scotland to reinforce the Corsican weaponry, but none of the local men know how to use the new weapons. Boswell sends two Scottish captains to show the soldiers how to operate their new cannons.

1769. The French army have begun burning the *maquis*, which greatly disadvantages the Corsicans as their knowledge of how to navigate the countryside was previously a major strategic advantage. More and more of the Corsican population are pledging allegiance to France, often for financial gain. The French attack the village of Murato, where Paoli is residing: someone has betrayed him. Paoli escapes, but leaves all of his battle plans and strategy on display in his rush to leave. The French general finds the plans, and learns of all of Paoli's strategic plans.

The French plan on conquering the capital Corte, attacking from many fronts. The French kill hundreds of Corsicans, trapped by their own defensive wall that they built on a bridge, Ponte Novu; it is a massacre. Paoli visits Corte, informs the people that the French are coming, then leaves Corsica in defeat. He lives in exile in England for twenty years, returning only in 1790 after the French Revolution, recalling Rousseau's description of the French invasion of Corsica:

L'expédition de Corse, inique et ridicule, choque toute justice, toute humanité, toute politique et toute raison... Son succès la rend encore

⁵⁹⁵ Frédéric Bertocchini & Éric Rückstühl (c), *Paoli 3: Ponte Novu* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2009).

plus ignominieuse, en ce que n'ayant pu conquérir ce peuple infortuné par le fer, il l'a fallu [sic] le conquérir par l'or.⁵⁹⁶

The series ends in 1790. Bertocchini does not mention the last years of Paoli's life, therefore excluding his second exile in London after the end of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom (1794-96), where he died in 1807. This ensures that the series ends on a positive note, ignoring the short-lived later Kingdom and re-conquering by France.

***Le Bagne de la honte* (2011)**

Also written by Frédéric Bertocchini and illustrated by Eric Rückstühl is a two-volume series set in a children's prison (*bagne*) near Ajaccio. *Bagnes pour enfants*, also called *colonies horticoles* or *maisons de redressement*, were developed in the nineteenth century under Louis-Philippe in order to collect those considered as delinquent children. These included orphans, beggars, those guilty of minor crime and the poor in general. Conditions were harsh and death from disease and violence was common.

Le Bagne de la honte mixes documented prisoners at the Ajaccio *bagne* and fictional characters in a fictional story based on historical fact.

***Le Bagne de la honte 1: Castellucciu*⁵⁹⁷**

Set in 1855, volume one follows a group of six children and teenagers from all over France as they sail from the mainland to Corsica and the *bagne* de St. Antoine, called 'celui de la mort' by the local population.⁵⁹⁸ The children are to be kept

⁵⁹⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Affaires de la Corse, 1764-1765', in *Œuvres inédites, suivies d'un supplément à l'histoire de sa vie et de ses ouvrages*, ed. Victor-Donatien Musset-Parthay (Paris : Peytieu / Dupont, 1825 (vols)), vol. 1, pp. 403-419 (pp. 418-19), cited by Frédéric Bertocchini & Éric Rückstühl (c), p. 51.

⁵⁹⁷ Frédéric Bertocchini & Éric Rückstühl (d), *Le Bagne de la honte 1: Castellucciu* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2011).

⁵⁹⁸ Bertocchini & Rückstühl (d), p. 18.

there until their twentieth birthday, when they will be freed, having been (in theory) re-educated by the French state:

Si l'administration française vous a envoyé ici, c'est pour vous remettre sur le droit chemin, pour parfaire votre éducation et faire de vous des bons et parfaits citoyens. La France a honte de vous, mais le temps du redressement est arrivé.⁵⁹⁹

The prisoners are ordered to build a road at Castellucciu, and also work in the fields. Injuries are frequent and typhoid and malaria deaths common. Hierarchies emerge: Xavier, an older inmate, designates Joachim, the youngest at eleven years old, as the target for his violence. The prisoners find different ways to cope with the bad conditions, the disease and the violence, some finding solace in religion, for example. Four older detainees attempt to escape, but are recaptured and two, including Xavier, are sent to solitary confinement. Joachim meets a local girl and is allowed by one lenient guard to have a secret friendship with her, disobeying both the rules of the prison and the girl's father.

On Xavier's release from solitary confinement, he immediately begins harassing Joachim once again. Another guard, who is in conflict with Joachim's protector, gives Xavier a knife and encourages him to kill Joachim, whom he then sends alone to the barn, where Xavier lies in wait. The album ends with a cliffhanger as Xavier prepares to stab his enemy.

Le Bagne de la honte 2: Francesca⁶⁰⁰

Book two opens with Joachim attempting to fight off Xavier. He is rescued by the guards. Xavier shows no remorse, and is transferred to an adult prison on the mainland, where he hangs himself.

⁵⁹⁹ Bertocchini & Rückstuhl (d), p. 23.

⁶⁰⁰ Frédéric Bertocchini & Éric Rückstuhl (e), *Le Bagne de la honte 2: Francesca* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2011).

Four years pass. Joachim has now become the most powerful and respected inmate, popular because he rid the prison of Xavier. He has only one enemy, Adolphe, a previous target of Xavier's, whose dislike of Joachim stems from Adolphe's belief that Xavier was his only friend in the *bagne*: he is resentful of the fact that Joachim's actions caused Xavier to leave. Joachim is able to continue seeing the Corsican girl called Francesca whom he befriended. The pair are now in love and are planning to marry in three years once Joachim is released. His relationship with Francesca is now an open secret; on one of his visits to her he is followed by Adolphe, who tips off Giocanti, the guard who encouraged Xavier to kill Joachim and provided the weapon. Giocanti catches Joachim and Francesca together, and accuses Joachim of rape. The prisoner is sent to solitary confinement for a month; on his release he is weak and sickly, and he loses his place at the top of the inmate hierarchy. Giocanti works him mercilessly, before he is sent before a tribunal and convicted. Francesca's father gives his consent for the relationship, having been told of conditions at the prison by his daughter, and gives back the fifty francs he was paid for capturing escaped inmates. Joachim becomes weaker, and eventually is sent to the infirmary. Francesca dresses as a prisoner and sneaks in to be present as Joachim dies from his illness, implied to be typhoid.

Le Bagne de la Honte is an almost entirely pessimistic view of life in one specific social group in Corsican society. Though it is set in Corsica the narrative plays out entirely within the confines of the *bagne* (although on rare occasions inmates are taken to fields or to beaches, glimpses of Corsican society outside the prison are rare and the focus remains on the inmates and their guards). In addition, the inmates are not local but are instead imported to the island. As such it is not a representation of Corsican culture, but rather can be seen as a depiction of a specific period in Corsican history, along with the *Paoli* series for example. There is implicit criticism of the *bagne* system and the French administration of the island in the negative depiction of the prison guards—mainly Corsican natives—and the director of the prison, who is a civil servant and therefore represents the state.

Histoires corses (2011)⁶⁰¹

Histoires corses is a collection of short *bandes dessinées* (varying in length between 4 and 9 pages) by a group of creators, many of whom have had other work published by DCL: Frédéric Bertocchini, Eric Rückstühl, Michel Espinosa, Frédéric Federzoni, Alain Luciani, Marc Armspach and François Plisson. According to Frédéric Bertocchini,⁶⁰² all the creators met around the annual Ajaccio *bande dessinée* festival and began to work together on various projects, finally deciding to work on a collection of stories taking inspiration from Corsican history and folklore, with each scenario written by Frédéric Bertocchini and each illustrator drawing one story (with the exception of *Senèque en Corse*, written and illustrated by Alain Luciani). The six stories are compiled chronologically, from pre-history to the more recent past, with the last story set in 1957.

La Dame de Bonifacio, drawn by Federzoni, is a fictionalised account of how the titular woman—a skeleton found in a cave near Bonifacio in 1972 and dating from 7000-6500 B.C., the ‘doyenne des Corses’⁶⁰³—may have come to die. In Bertocchini’s story her death is caused by other women in her village, jealous over her beauty, her power over the men of the village and her hunting skill. The reasons for inventing this story are not clear, as the creators acknowledge it is entirely fictional, and indeed explain that the real Dame de Bonifacio was congenitally disabled with joint problems, so much so that she would have been unable to live independently outwith the community.⁶⁰⁴ As the story has very little grounding in reality its value is questionable; however, its inclusion does provide a natural ‘starting point’ for the books’ chronological approach to Corsican popular history.

Senèque en Corse (Alain Luciani) imagines how Seneca the Younger (c. 4 B.C.–65 A.D.) lived during his exile to Corsica, having been accused of adultery with the

⁶⁰¹ Frédéric Bertocchini, Michel Espinosa, Frédéric Federzoni, Éric Rückstühl et. al, *Histoires corses* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2011).

⁶⁰² Bertocchini, Espinosa, Federzoni, Rückstühl et. al, p. 3.

⁶⁰³ Bertocchini, Espinosa, Federzoni, Rückstühl et. al, p. 10.

⁶⁰⁴ Bertocchini, Espinosa, Federzoni, Rückstühl et. al, p. 10.

emperor Caligula's niece and banished by the emperor in 41 A.D.⁶⁰⁵ Luciani's plot is inspired by several of Seneca's writings which indicate that he did not enjoy his exile on the island (although Luciani does not source his quotations) through such statements as 'Se venger est la première loi des Corses, la seconde, vivre des rapines, la troisième, mentir, et la quatrième, nier les dieux'.⁶⁰⁶

I Giovannali (Bertocchini and Plisson) recounts a violent massacre during a crusade against the Giovannali sect on Corsica in 1364, in which the community is cornered, defeated and the men burnt alive.⁶⁰⁷ The Giovannali were a dissident Franciscan sect who lived in an egalitarian community with shared property (including women) and goods, and were accused of various outlandish rites and superstitions. Eventually Pope Urban V sent troops to Corsica and the sect was violently wiped out.⁶⁰⁸

L'Embuscade de Sampiero Corso (Bertocchini and Rückstuhl) realistically depicts the death of Sampiero di Bastelica (1498-1567), the famous Corsican-born soldier and mercenary. Having had many patrons in both France and Italy throughout his life (notably the de' Medicis and Pope Clement VII), in the 1550s di Bastelica unsuccessfully attempted to foment a Corsican uprising against the island's Genoese rulers. In 1564, with the backing of Catherine de' Medici, he landed in Corsica once again at the head of a small band of mercenaries. After victories in a number of small skirmishes but with decreasing support among the indigent local population, he was ambushed and decapitated by a group of Genoese-backed attackers including several of his wife's cousins.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁵ 'Lucius Annaeus Seneca-Biography', European Graduate School.

<<http://www.egs.edu/library/lucius-annaeus-seneca/biography/>> [Accessed 20 August 2015].

⁶⁰⁶ Bertocchini, Espinosa, Federzoni, Rückstuhl et. al, p. 18.

⁶⁰⁷ Bertocchini, Espinosa, Federzoni, Rückstuhl et. al, p. 25.

⁶⁰⁸ George Renwick and T.G. Ouston, *Romantic Corsica, Wanderings in Napoleon's Isle* (London:T.F. Unwin, 1909) p. 101.

⁶⁰⁹ 'Histoire- temps modernes' Les Services de L'État de la Corse du Sud <http://www.corse-du-sud.gouv.fr/histoire-r33.html?page=rubrique&id_rubrique=33&id_article=86&masquable=OK> [Accessed 20 August 2015]

La Confrérie des Morts (Bertocchini and Armspach) tells of how a man became a *mazzeru*, the magical Corsican folk figure described in the earlier series *Corsu* and whose name is probably derived from ‘killer’.⁶¹⁰ This later version of the story is less fantastical and more realistic in the retelling of this folklore. *Mazzeri* are people who hunt in trances at night; whichever animals they kill are spiritual doubles of living people, who will soon die in reality. *Mazzeri* are unaware of their affliction and not held accountable for their actions. There are different ways of becoming a *mazzeru*: one is by being ‘badly baptised’, that is, the priest or godparents make an error in the ceremony; another is by being called by an existing *mazzeru* to assist in their nocturnal hunt.⁶¹¹ *La Confrérie* gives an alternative version of the *mazzeru* ritual; instead of hunting alone, the story’s *mazzeri* travel in groups, transporting a coffin and holding a secret mass before burying it in the square in front of the village church.⁶¹² There they are observed by a non-*mazzeru* man who, after witnessing the burial, becomes a *mazzeru* himself.

The final story, *La Streghe bianca* (Bertocchini and Espinosa) is a standard ‘white lady’ ghost story; a young man meets a beautiful girl on the road at night and insists on driving her home, though she resists; the next day he returns to her house, only to find it in ruins and her grave in the nearby cemetery. The creators place the story within the wider ‘white lady’ legend, citing Normandy, the Pyrenees and Canada as having a similar ghost tradition, admitting by implication that there is nothing specifically ‘Corsican’ in the story, except its setting.

The intended readership of *Histoires corses* appears to be primarily non-Corsican; the background of each story is detailed in turn after the respective *bande dessinée*, allowing anyone to understand the narratives’ relation to Corsica and the island’s folklore. To outsiders, the nuances of certain stories – particularly *I Giovannali* and *La Confrérie des Morts* – would indeed not be evident without the supplied added information. The stories are too short to permit any analysis in real

⁶¹⁰ Jacqueline Simpson, ‘Witches and Witchbusters’, in *Folklore*, 107 (1996) pp. 5-18 (p. 14).

⁶¹¹ Philippe Pesteil, ‘Contribution à l’étude d’une reconstruction identitaire séductive. Le Mazzeru corse’ in *La Ricerca Folklorica* 44 (2001) pp. 107-116 (p. 107).

⁶¹² Bertocchini, Espinosa, Federzoni, Rückstühl et. al, p. 40.

depth; however, their simplicity and the creators' explanations make them—and the history they detail—very accessible to outsiders, and in my view this is important. The *Histoires corses* depict Corsican history without referring to the standard tropes found in more famous *bandes dessinées*; there is no autonomist violence, no vendetta. (It can be argued that *L'Embuscade de Sampiero Corso* involves vendetta but the feud between di Bastelica and his enemies exists outside the Corsican insular context.) In addition, some of the stories are based on folklore or historical events which are not well-known outside the island – the *mazzeri* phenomenon and the demise of the the Giovannali sect are the best examples of this. The publication of these stories as *bandes dessinées* creates an accessible, mass-market alternative view of Corsica, providing a more nuanced picture than do the repeated stereotypes of more famous *bandes dessinées* and other types of popular culture. Frédéric Bertocchini's foreword to the collection, in which he expresses a wish to promote and salute Corsican *bande dessinée* while citing the Ajaccio festival and the increasing number of creators depicting Corsica,⁶¹³ underlines that as of 2011 there exists a developing movement in *bande dessinée* towards representing Corsica in a way that is liberated from standard stereotypes.

***Astrocorse* (2011)⁶¹⁴**

Astrocorse is another collective work from DCL (written by Frédéric Bertocchini and Nathalie Massei, illustrated by Frédéric Federzoni and coloured by Bruno Pradelle). In contrast to *Histoires corses* it appears to be aimed at a Corsican public. The book takes the form of a horoscope, with signs of the zodiac replaced by their Corsican equivalents, viz. *muvra* (goat), *porcu* (boar), *cursini* (a Corsican dog breed) *rampichinu* (nuthatch) *acula* (eagle), *vacca* (cow) *cuppulata* (tortoise) *euprocte* (Corsican salamander), *cervu* (stag), *sumeru* (donkey) *farfalla* (butterfly) and *salmo truittea* (trout). Each 'sign' has a horoscope (written by Nathalie Massei) and a few pages of *bande dessinée* (Bertocchini and Federzoni), in which anthropomorphised animal versions of each sign show one of the traits assigned by its relevant horoscope, in a 'real life' situations: for example, the goat (*muvra*),

⁶¹³ Bertocchini, Espinosa, Federzoni, Rückstühl et. al, p. 2.

⁶¹⁴ Nathalie Massei, Frédéric Bertocchini, Frédéric Federzoni et. al, *Astrocorse* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2011).

deemed ‘impulsive’⁶¹⁵, is shown fighting an American buffalo who has challenged him; the ‘diplomatic’ nuthatch (*rampichinu*) saves a fish from being eaten by two feuding cats by shaming them for ‘fighting like humans’.⁶¹⁶

The humour in *Astrocorse* is relatively whimsical and as such can be understood well by non-Corsicans. However, unlike *Histoires corses* the publication offers no explanation as to why each sign has been chosen or each animal is thought to have its ascribed characteristics. Several of the animals are native to or symbolic of Corsica (the boar or *cursini* for example) but in other cases the choices seem arbitrary. As it appears the readers are assumed to have prior knowledge of the situations and traits depicted, *Astrocorse* is of limited appeal to non-Corsicans, although the self-deprecating humour of its introverted gaze is of interest.

***Colomba* (2012)⁶¹⁷**

Colomba (adapted by Frédéric Bertocchini, illustrated by Sandro and coloured by Pascal Nino) is an adaptation of the 1840 novella of the same name by the cultured Parisian archaeologist, historian and author Prosper Mérimée (1803-1870). The short story explores the Corsican tradition of vendetta.

The album opens at a funeral, that of Colomba della Rebbia’s father. Colomba believes her father to have been murdered by Barricini, a local lawyer and mayor. She declares vendetta against him and his family. Two years later, Colomba’s brother Orso della Rebbia, a lieutenant in Napoleon’s Imperial Guard, returns to Corsica after many years. He is now the head of the family after his father’s death; he plans to marry Colomba off, put his affairs in order and then leave Corsica:

Je me sens redevenir sauvage depuis que j’ai mis le pied dans l’île.
Mille affreuses pensées m’agitent, me tourmentent.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁵ Nathalie Massei, Frédéric Bertocchini, Frédéric Federzoni et.al, p. 9.

⁶¹⁶ Nathalie Massei, Frédéric Bertocchini, Frédéric Federzoni et.al, p. 44.

⁶¹⁷ Frédéric Bertocchini & Sandro, *Colomba* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2012).

⁶¹⁸ Bertocchini & Sandro, p. 13.

He knows that Colomba expects him to avenge their father's death and fulfil the vendetta, but he is not willing to do so. Colomba is obsessed with her plan of vengeance and paranoid lest the Barricini family harm her brother. She assembles a group of protective guards to accompany Orso into their home village, and refuses to pass the Barricinis' house in case they fire on Orso. He is displeased and believes the idea to be ridiculous. Colomba also gives food and munitions to the family of a local bandit; Orso is angry that she is supplying gunpowder to a criminal, who is hiding in the *maquis*. But in Colomba's view he has committed no crime; it was vengeance that prompted Brandolaccio to kill the man who killed his father. She continues to encourage her brother to avenge their father, without success. He finds the way of life and customs in Corsica increasingly backward, increasing the conflict between brother and sister.

After a funeral wake in the village which is attended by Barricini, his two sons, Colomba and Orso, there is a confrontation between the families and the local *préfet*. Colomba brings in witnesses who claim that a letter exonerating the Barricinis is forged. The *préfet* asks that the families desist from hostilities for three days, when he will bring the crown prosecutor back from Corte and the matter will be settled legally.

Two days later, Orso goes to collect an Irish colonel and his daughter, whom he has befriended on the voyage from the mainland, in order to host them in his house. En route, however, he encounters the Barricini sons, and there is a shootout. Orso kills both brothers with a single bullet. Having avenged his father's death despite himself, he is left with the choice of surrendering himself and going to prison or leaving to hide in the *maquis*. He chooses the latter option, giving up his hopes of leaving Corsica and marrying the Colonel's daughter.

Colomba is a rare example of an internal representation of Corsica which uses the same tropes as the external depictions. It could be considered a 'hybrid' representation: internal in terms of the DCL production team, but external in that it is based on a narrative originally written by an outsider. It is very similar to the pre-nationalism representations of Corsica; the themes of vendetta and honour systems are used as in *Astérix en Corse* and in particular *Lili Bandit Corse*, where

the characterisation of Corsican culture is equally traditionalist. This depiction is perhaps not very surprising, considering that *Colomba* is a faithful representation of an 1840 novella written by a French author; the tropes used in the narrative will align with stereotypes which were current at that time. What is surprising, in my view, is that DCL decided to publish it. *Colomba* presents an entirely different version of Corsica to that found in the rest of DCL's catalogue and does not seem to fit with the professed aims of the creators (see below) to present a non-stereotypical view of Corsica. As previously noted, the system of vendetta was nevertheless very real in nineteenth-century Corsican society: it is possible that the creators consider it a portrayal authentic enough in plot to fit well with the rest of their catalogue.

***Libera Me* (2012-2015)**

Libera Me is a projected trilogy written by Frédéric Bertocchini and Miceal O'Griaifa, and illustrated by Michel Espinosa. Books one and two have so far been published as of May 2015. The story takes place in the early 1980s during the Troubles in Ireland and an intense period of Corsican militant activity. It follows two main protagonists: Liam, an Irish republican, and François-Marie Fillippi, a Corsican militant.

Libera Me 1: Ribelli

Book one is titled *Ribelli* (Rebels). The two men's paths cross by accident: Liam is hiking on holiday in the Corsican *maquis*, and François-Marie is being hunted by police as part of a wider police anti-militant operation; he is suspected of a bomb attack on a holiday villa in Porto Vecchio.⁶¹⁹ Liam and François-Marie meet briefly; Liam covers François-Marie's tracks once the police arrive in his wake. The police beat Liam and leave him injured in the *maquis*. Unknown to Liam, Letizia, the sister of François-Marie, is also hiding in the *maquis* and sees everything that happens. She rescues Liam and he wakes up in the Fillippi family home as they learn that François-Marie has managed to evade capture. Because Liam helped

⁶¹⁹ Frédéric Bertocchini, Miceal O' Griaifa & Michel Espinosa (a), *Libera Me 1: Ribelli* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2012) p. 15.

François-Marie escape the police, he is welcomed into the Fillippi family until he recovers.

Meanwhile, François-Marie escapes to Dublin with the aid of Devlin, a Sinn Fein activist. François-Marie joins Devlin's IRA cell at a university, not explicitly named but likely to be University College Dublin, given UCD's historic ties to Catholicism. Liam decides to stay in Corsica and joins the clandestine autonomist movement.

Both men gradually become more involved with each other's movements: François-Marie is present when the IRA cell kneecap a loyalist teenager on the day of Republican hero Bobby Sands' funeral; Liam hides weapons from the police, and takes part in an FLNC press conference celebrating the election of François Mitterrand on 10th May, 1981 (Mitterrand having promised an amnesty for Corsican political prisoners and a new statute for Corsica). Liam's involvement in the FLNC is not welcomed by all; some of the local activists believe he does not belong in the FLNC as he is an outsider. Despite this conflict, Liam becomes an active member of the FLNC and a solo operator by blowing up a tourist villa in Cargèse, and spraypainting it with '*Libertà FLNC*' (Freedom-FLNC). Letizia, with whom he is now in a relationship, witnesses the bombing, and embraces him. The implication is that Liam is now definitively part of the Corsican autonomist movement, and that he will remain in Corsica.

Meanwhile, François-Marie and the rest of the IRA cell attend an Orange March on the 12th of July (the major event of the Loyalist year, as it celebrates the victory of William of Orange at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690). The cell witness some Loyalist paramilitaries beating a young Catholic man to death within sight of the police. In revenge, François-Marie vows to find the man he saw kill the victim. The album ends with the cell tracking down the man. François-Marie initially plans to kneecap him; however his friends are dissatisfied with this option, insisting the man must be killed. François-Marie shoots the man in the head at point blank range.

Libera Me 2: Clandestini (2014)⁶²⁰

Book two takes place in 1987, six years later. François-Marie and Devlin are in Tripoli attending a political gathering of rebels from various countries including Basques, Irish, Kurds, Palestinians etc. Liam is also in Tripoli, waiting to transport a cargo of weapons back to Corsica from Libya. The three meet unexpectedly, and the reader learns that Liam and Letizia have one child and are expecting another.

Liam safely transports the cargo back to Corsica, where his group of militants discover that several of the weapons are obsolete, dating from the Algerian War.

In Ireland, an IRA attack on a police station is foiled by the British SAS. All eight members of the IRA group are killed. Just as Devlin's IRA cell learns of their deaths and discovers that the British were tipped off by someone in the cell, their building is ambushed by the British. The group escapes, but only by shooting dead a policeman who seemed to recognise Fiona, a member of the cell.

Meanwhile in Corsica, Liam and his brother-in-law Jacques are preparing to attack the prefecture in Ajaccio with a rocket launcher. Upon firing it, there is an accident and Jacques is badly hurt; he loses the feeling in his legs. Liam feels responsible because the rocket launcher is one he brought back from Libya, and it is obsolete. He wants to retire from active FLNC service, but Jacques grows angry and insists that he continue.

The story moves to Gibraltar in early 1988. Three IRA activists are suspected of planting a bomb on the Rock; the police corner them and shoot all three dead. Again, they have been tipped off by someone within the IRA. Following their deaths, Devlin's cell is in disarray. They are preparing to blow up London Bridge, but Devlin also suspects Gary, one of the group, of being the British mole. He sends François-Marie to follow Gary to see if he tips off the security services. At the same moment another militant, Keiran, is arming the explosives near London Bridge when he is shot by an unidentified member of the cell.

⁶²⁰ Frédéric Bertocchini, Miceal O'Griafa & Michel Espinosa (b), *Libera Me 2: Clandestini* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2013).

In Corsica Jacques is now paralysed after the Ajaccio accident while Liam is still struggling with his guilt. He agrees to take part in one last attack – blowing up an empty tourist complex – before leaving the FLNC.

Instead of the empty building they were expecting, however, the group find that the caretaker and his family still live in the complex. Wanting to avoid casualties, Liam stays with the family while other members of the group lay out the explosives.

In London, François-Marie follows Gary to find him with Keiran's body together with his killer, Fiona, who is the British mole. Gary and Fiona shoot each other, so reducing the cell to just Devlin and François-Marie.

Liam and another militant continue to guard the caretaker and his family, but begin to argue and fight. In the course of the fight, their balaclavas are removed, so they are easily identifiable. The other militant, later named as Francis Rossi, now feels that he and Liam must kill the family to prevent them identifying the group to the police. Liam disagrees, and attempts to stop Rossi from shooting them. In the struggle, Rossi is shot and killed. Later, Liam explains to the rest of the group what happened, and tells them he is leaving the FLNC. The group accept his explanations, but inform him that the dead man's family are claiming vendetta against him, and that they will give him time to leave Corsica before announcing their intention to find Francis Rossi's killer.

Seven months later, Devlin and François-Marie are still in London, ready to carry out the final attack that was being planned when they found the mole, namely a bombing at a concert at the Docklands in London. François-Marie is unhappy, as he does not want the thousands of casualties that such a bombing would cause. Devlin tells him that collateral damage is necessary in a war; François-Marie realises that Devlin is using him so as to be able to blame the deaths of many thousands of people – something that is anathema to the FLNC – on him alone and/or the FLNC. The two men face off; we hear gunshots, before the final panel shows Devlin overlooking the crowd.

With the third and final volume, *Guerrieri*, still forthcoming as of September 2015, *Libera Me* is significant for several reasons. Within DCL's catalogue it is a rare example of a work of fiction; although heavily inspired by real events, the narrative is fictional as was stressed by Frédéric Bertocchini in his interview in Ajaccio. *Astrocorse* is the only other fictional album published by the current team of creators since 2007. However, *Astrocorse* is episodic rather than a cohesive narrative. *Histoires corses*, some of which is based on folkloric stories, is also arguably a work of fiction. However, I would argue that it is set apart as the authors did not pen the stories themselves but adapted and illustrated existing traditional narratives.

In the wider context of *bandes dessinées* in general, *Libera Me* is significant as it is the first realistic representation of the modern Corsican nationalist movement. As seen in the previous chapter 'External Perspectives on Corsica', there are many representations of militant nationalism in mainstream *bandes dessinées*, but those representations are stereotypical and do not examine the reality of clandestine nationalism in detail, instead using the nationalist movement as a source of humour. In contrast, there is no humour in *Libera Me*'s representation of 1980s Irish and Corsican nationalism. The plot has many adventure and thriller elements, but it also shows some of the negative sides of involvement in the movement: danger, injury, long separation from family members. As it is set in the 1980s, it cannot be said that *Libera Me* is an accurate reflection of the current Corsican nationalist movement. Much has changed since the era in which the story is set. For example, it pre-dates the 1990 schism detailed in the previous chapter on the development of Corsican nationalism, and the subsequent internecine conflict. Nonetheless, *Libera Me* is valuable as the most detailed and realistic depiction of Corsican nationalism in the *bande dessinée* medium to date.

***Sampiero Corso* (2012-2014)**

Sampiero Corso is a two-volume series, written by Bertocchini, illustrated by Rückstuhl and coloured by Rémy Langlois. It follows the life of celebrated Corsican historical figure Sampiero Corso (born Sampiero da Bastelica, 1498-1567), and expands upon the short depiction of Corso's death in *Histoires corses*. Corso was a soldier allied with the French monarchy and therefore an enemy of the Genoese, who controlled Corsica from 1284. Corso is renowned for leading Henri II's invasion of Corsica in 1553, in alliance with the Ottoman Empire, raising a revolt against the Republic of Genoa and holding several Corsican settlements as French possessions even after Genoa regained Bastia and Calvi. Corsica was returned to Genoa in 1559 by the two treaties of Cateau-Cambrésis, and Corso was exiled. However, he returned in 1564 to attempt another revolt. He was less successful than in his previous attempt; Genoa put a large price on his head, and Sampiero was killed in an ambush in 1567 near Bastelica as detailed in *Histoires corses*. The series claims to be historically accurate, suggesting that apart from invented dialogue, all events recounted in the books happened in reality.⁶²¹

DCL's series is not the first *bande dessinée* adaptation of Corso's life; in 1952, the Communist newspaper *L'Humanité* printed a *bande dessinée* serial, also called *Sampiero Corso*, based on Jean Catulle-Mendes' 1938 book *Sampiero Corso 1498-1567* and illustrated by Marcel Tillard.⁶²²

***Sampiero Corso 1: Le Colonel* (2012)⁶²³**

Book one traces Corso's early life, as he leaves Corsica to train as a soldier in Florence with the aid of the Medicis. Even at this early stage, he is obsessed with freeing Corsica from Genoese rule.⁶²⁴ He fights in the Italian Wars alongside his friend Giovanni de Medicis aka Giovanni dalle Bande Nere / Jean des Bandes Noires

⁶²¹ For a historical study, see for example Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1949 (2 vols)).

⁶²² Victoria Beck Newman, ' "The Triumph of Pan": Picasso and the Liberation', in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 62.1 (1999) pp 106-22 (pp. 116-17).

⁶²³ Frédéric Bertocchini & Éric Rückstuhl (f), *Sampiero Corso 1: Le Colonel* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2012).

⁶²⁴ Bertocchini & Rückstuhl (f), p. 14.

(1498-1526). In reward, he is given the title of Colonel. Giovanni soon dies in battle, and Sampiero continues his career as a famous soldier for the French. In 1528 he receives a message from Francesco d'Ornano. The Ornano family support the Genoese, and the da Bastelica and Ornano families have been feuding for many years. However, Francesco's message asks Sampiero to marry his newborn daughter, Vannina, as soon as she reaches maturity, in the hopes that the marriage will lead to peace between the two families. Sampiero accepts, agreeing to marry Vannina in around fifteen years.

Many years pass as Sampiero Corso's fame grows and his loyalty to the French king deepens. Finally, thirty-three years after he left home for Florence, Corso returns to Corsica to marry Vannina d'Ornano. Despite his agreement to marry her, Sampiero still strongly dislikes the Ornano family because of their continued links to Genoa. Both he and Vannina realise their marriage is more political than for love.

*Sampiero Corso 2: Vannina d'Ornano (2014)*⁶²⁵

Book two opens with the birth of Sampiero and Vannina's first son, Alfonso, the future *maréchal de France* (1548-1610) who will play a prominent role in the French wars of religion. The authors date his birth to 1547: all subsequent dates cited are based on this choice. Soon after Alfonso's birth, on Christmas day 1547, Sampiero returns to Bastia, in order to meet the city's Genoese governor. Instead, he is arrested, avoiding a trial only after the intervention of the French king, Henri II.

The narrative jumps forward to 1553. Sampiero is planning to invade Corsica and take it from Genoa for France and Henri II. He negotiates an alliance with Admiral Dragut of the Ottoman Empire. As part of a broader Franco-Ottoman campaign against Sicily, Naples and Elba their combined forces invade Corsica on August the 21st. Three days later, Bastia falls. Sampiero's attempt to take Calvi fails, however. He redirects his troops towards Ajaccio, where they claim victory easily. The Ottoman forces leave to fight elsewhere, however, weakening Corso's position. In October 1553, Genoa sends four thousand soldiers to combat the rebellion, and the

⁶²⁵ Frédéric Bertocchini & Éric Rückstühl (g), *Sampiero Corso 2: Vannina d'Ornano* (Ajaccio, DCL: 2014).

civil war intensifies. Genoa regains Bastia as the French soldiers are ravaged by malaria and the Republic gradually retakes the territory lost to Sampiero Corso. By the end of 1554, Corso leaves Corsica, the Genoese having taken Bastia and St-Florent and reinforced Calvi. However, Bonifacio, Corte and Ajaccio are still in French hands. By 1559, the treaty of Cateau-Cambr sis hands Corsica back to Genoa and Corso's rebellion definitively fails.

Obsessed with relaunching his campaign, in 1562 an ageing Sampiero travels to Algiers to obtain safe passage in his attempt to rekindle the Franco-Ottoman alliance. While he is there, he is informed that Vannina is selling all of his assets in Marseille. Enraged, he sends the messenger back to try and persuade her to stop; he fails.

While Sampiero is negotiating with the Sultan, Vannina attempts to flee for Genoa with her two sons. She is caught and imprisoned. When her husband finally returns to France in 1563, he demands an explanation for her continuing loyalty to Genoa. For her treachery he condemns her to death: she asks that he kill her himself rather than send her to the executioner, and he complies in July 1563.

In 1564, Sampiero returns to Corsica to attempt another rebellion at the likely behest of Catherine de Medici. The island is split between those who support Genoa and their pro-France opponents. In addition, the Ornano family have a price on Sampiero's head since they wish to avenge Vannina's death.

His invasion is at first successful, taking much territory from the Genoese forces. By 1566 however, promised reinforcements fail to appear and his forces begin to weaken. Finally in 1567 Sampiero Corso falls into a trap set by the Ornano family and is ambushed at a spot between Cauro and Eccica-Suarella where he is shot dead. The Ornanos remove his head and display it on the ramparts of the Ajaccio Citadel. The legendary Corsican patriot has failed once again.

*Aio Zitelli! Récits de guerre 14-18 (2014)*⁶²⁶

Unlike the rest of the local *bandes dessinées* included in this thesis, *Aio Zitelli!*, a collection of eight short stories portraying various aspects of Corsican soldiers' experiences during World War One (written by Frédéric Bertocchini, with *mise en scène* by Marko, illustrated by Iñaki Holgado and coloured by Nuria Sayago) is not published by DCL: instead it is co-published by Le Musée de la Corse in Corte and Albiana, Corsica's biggest publisher of general works (although they only publish a small number of *bandes dessinées*). The book first appeared alongside two major 2014 exhibitions based on World War One and shown at the Musée Régional d'Anthropologie de la Corse: *Les Corses et la Grande Guerre*, *L'Umana ambizione & Notre siècle*, and *Au coeur des tranchées*. As such, its publication forms part of a wider cultural commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the First World War. *Aio Zitelli* is a Corsican battle cry: for example, it is inscribed on the gates of the Ajaccio citadel, which currently is occupied by the French army.

Aio Zitelli! 1: Vers la guerre, Vers la mort tells the story of a middle-aged army reservist called up to an infantry regiment, as he receives his mobilisation notice, leaves his family, and heads for the front: it is the first time he has left Corsica. He is very conscious that he is heading for almost certain death. More widely, through the eyes of the main protagonist *Vers la guerre* tells the story of Corsican conscription in general. Men of all ages join his regiment, from teenagers to 'vieux' like him, leaving family and livelihood behind and raising the question of who will harvest their grain and vines when they are gone? The countryside areas 'se vidaient d'un trait' so that there are few men left as huge numbers leave to join the French war effort.

Aio Zitelli! 2: Tire, mais tire donc! illustrates a story extracted from a real WW1 letter, which tells of an attack on enemy lines in the Dardanelles in graphic detail, as a single soldier fights his way through repeated hails of bullets and shell fire, climbing over dead and dying soldiers, and shooting some of the injured in the head. He is also injured in a shell explosion, but manages to reach a field post and

⁶²⁶ Frédéric Bertocchini & Iñaki Holgado, *Aio Zitelli !: récits de guerre 14-18* (Ajaccio: Albiana, 2014).

receive aid, despite losing three litres of blood which has pooled in his boots; he tells his brother, to whom the letter is addressed, to share the letter so that the whole family will learn what three days under constant fire is like.

Aio Zitelli! 3: Nous étions des taupes... tells the true story of the 373rd regiment of reservists, the *taupes Corses* (Corsican moles), mostly middle-aged soldiers who were stationed in the Vosges region in the Winter of 1915. They are thirty metres from the German trench, defending a small mountain; both sides are hungry and freezing, shelling is constant. The Germans are slowly advancing, and the Corsicans have orders to dig in and defend their position at all costs. Faced with the prospect of German attack, the Corsicans decide to attack the Germans from behind, and begin digging underground tunnels to get behind the enemy line. The attack is successful, decimating the German soldiers. The 373rd regiment was able to resist the German advance, building other tunnels as in their first attempt, and held their position until 1916.

Aio Zitelli! 4: Une Formidable Nouvelle is a fictional story juxtaposing the text of a letter received by a Corsican soldier, Santoni, from his wife, which serves as narration, and the images of the soldier attacking enemy trenches just after he receives the letter. The letter tells how worried she, their family and the rest of the village are about him and his *camarades*. Everyone is praying for them; other women in the village, who have not heard from their sons for some time, ask whether perhaps Santoni has some news from them.

With bitter irony the juxtaposed text and images compare the wartime lives of those in the trenches and those left behind. The letter talks about the bad rain they are having in the village while accompanying it are panels showing the regiment under heavy shell and gunfire. It describes the women of the village going out to hunt boar, and following trails of blood, as we see Santoni wading through dead and injured soldiers after a mortar explosion. Santoni's wife finishes her letter as he approaches the nearby trench; she announces that he is going to be a father, and expresses hope that he will be present at the birth of the child. As he reaches the trench, there is a large explosion, and Santoni is killed instantly, holding the letter and a photograph of his wife.

*Aio Zitelli! 5: Like *Nous étions des taupes...*, *Fusillé pour l'exemple* is another true story, that of Joseph Gabrielli, a shepherd from rural Corsica. Illiterate and mentally disabled, he is injured at the front and sent to the field hospital. He gets lost and is unable to find his way back; he is eventually found hiding in a cellar in the Somme, and accused of desertion; he is found guilty, sentenced to death and killed within the hour. In addition to his mental disability, Gabrielli also speaks French badly. During his interrogation he is unable to express himself clearly or defend himself, and his interrogators find it hard to understand him. The defence that he is able to give – that he got lost and that he is ‘ici pour défendre la France’ – is insufficient to save him. He is executed by firing squad.*

Execution *pour l'exemple*, execution of soldiers for insubordination, desertion and not following orders, applied not solely to Corsican soldiers, of course, but also to soldiers from many regions of France where knowledge of French was historically low – notably Brittany, as seen in an earlier chapter.⁶²⁷ Orders were given exclusively in French, so soldiers misinterpreted orders they did not fully understand and were punished severely, as an example to the remaining soldiers. Many soldiers from these rural, traditionally non-Francophone areas, who were also overwhelmingly poor, suffered this fate. Their executions contributed to the very high death toll per population, particularly in Brittany and Corsica: exact numbers of deaths are difficult to verify, with figures varying depending on the source of information. Pellegrinetti and Rovère cite around 25,000,⁶²⁸ while *Main basse sur une île* gives a figure of 35,000 deaths, also claiming that this death toll, based on a population of 250,000, means that Corsica lost the ‘[p]roportion double de la moyenne nationale par rapport à la population’.⁶²⁹

Aio Zitelli! 6: Ma Chère Soeur is a three-page story illustrating an authentic letter from a corporal from Ajaccio, the Corsican capital, to his sister. The letter is taken

⁶²⁷ See ‘Centre versus Periphery’

⁶²⁸ Pellegrinetti & Rovère, p. 226.

⁶²⁹ Front Régionaliste Corse, p. 15.

from a book gathering letters from Corsican soldiers, also published by Albiana.⁶³⁰ The corporal tells his sister that he is now occupying a German trench, but that the last forty-eight hours have been difficult, that he has not slept for twenty-four hours, and that food is scarce; he dreams of eating Corsican sausage and goats cheese.

Aio Zitelli! 7: De ma prison, je vois la méditerranée uses fictional characters to tell an authentic story, that of German tourists who were at sea when war was declared, were arrested on suspicion of being spies and interned on their arrival at Bastia. Over time, the tourists are joined by German soldiers, prisoners of war. The German narrator acknowledges that he is safer in prison on Corsica than in the German trenches, and that an escape attempt is pointless – on an island, where would he go? The Germans are treated well by their captors; the narrator can see that the local population are suffering from the loss of the male inhabitants who would normally tend the fields. As elsewhere in the allied countries, the prisoners replace them, waiting like the locals for the war to end so that they can resume their previous lives.

Aio Zitelli! 8: Une messe pour notre petit, the final story, takes place in Ajaccio in May 1918. The Morettis learn that their son, Pascal, has been lost at sea after his ship hit a mine and sank. The Morettis, racked by grief, go to arrange a Mass for Pascal with their priest. As the three discuss his death, a ship docks in the port, and a child runs to find the Morettis; Pascal is not dead, but has just disembarked from the boat, safe and sound. The apparently miraculous story in fact echoes the experience of several Corsican families, who were told relatives were lost, only for the ‘dead’ soldiers to arrive home alive, weeks or months later.

Although *Aio Zitelli!* was not published by DCL, I include analysis of it in this thesis because it is written, illustrated and coloured by people who are used to collaborating for that publishing house on works that focus on Corsica. The album’s subject matter is similarly Corsica-centric and in my view thematically fits in with DCL’s other publications. It is a quasi-historical document in that it describes real

⁶³⁰ Jean-Claude Fieschi & François Petreto, *Le Mémorial des poilus corses*, (Ajaccio: Albiana/Corse Matin, 2013).

events much as does *Aléria 1975* discussed below. The latter series was published by DCL; this suggests that DCL are happy to publish similar types of *bandes dessinées* to *Aio Zitelli!*, which I would suggest is published by Albiana either in order to reach a wider non-Corsican readership or, since the book's publication is linked to the mounting of two exhibitions in Corsican museums, because Albiana have a publishing agreement with Le Musée de la Corse which DCL do not. There is no thematic reason that *Aio Zitelli!* could not have been published by DCL since it uses the same personnel and subject matter.

Aleria 1975 (2014-2015)

Aleria 1975 is a series of two books, written by Frédéric Bertocchini, illustrated by Michel Espinosa and coloured by Nuria Sayago. As per the title the series tells the true story of the events in Aléria in 1975 concerning the occupation of a *pied-noir* immigrant's wine cellar by Action pour la Renaissance de la Corse / Azzione per a Rinascita di a Corsica (the former *Action Régionaliste Corse*, ARC) and the subsequent police intervention, resulting in the deaths of two policemen. In the aftermath of the events the ARC was forcibly disbanded by the government in late August 1975, and the Corsican militant movement became radicalised with the 1976 founding of the FLNC movement (Front de Libération Nationale Corse/ Fronte di Liberazione Naziunale Corsu) as a direct result of the events at Aléria. For a more detailed overview of events, see the earlier chapter 'Corsican Context'.

The story represented in the series is based on interviews conducted by Bertocchini with several of the people present at the occupation: Edmond Simeoni (leader of the ARC), Léo Battesti, Ghjuvan' Battista Rotilj Forcioli, Pierre Poggioli, Pierre Susini, Ghjuvan' Carlu Antolini and Ghjacumu Fieschi. Bertocchini also used the texts of real radio broadcasts, as well as real speeches and TV interviews by Simeoni in the story's dialogue.

The first book of the series, *Escrocs Fora! (Crooks Out!)*, begins with a brief overview of Corsican protest up to 1975—decolonisation and its effects, the growing discontent in 1960s Corsica over ‘*la question Corse*’, the cost of living, unemployment, transport links to the mainland and other protests such as the successful campaign against the installation of a nuclear power station in 1960. It then briefly outlines the growth of regionalist groups and parties in Corsica from 1960-75: the *Front Régionaliste Corse* (FRC), the ARC and the concept of *riacquistu*, i.e. the reclamation of Corsican language, literature and song, and the quest to reclaim an overtly Corsican identity; finally, the historical overview details some of the political violence of the early 1970s in Corsica, against the French state and *pied noir* property.

The story then moves to an ARC rally in August 1975, where Edmond Simeoni addresses the 8000-strong crowd on the ARC’s plans for the decolonisation of Corsica, bilingualism, job creation in Corsica and other policies looking forward more generally to a statute of internal autonomy for Corsica.

A few days later we see a group of ARC militants, including all of those interviewed by Bertocchini, gather in the Corsican countryside to begin their occupation of property belonging to the *pied noir* farmer Henri Depeille. Simeoni explains the plan: wake the occupants, force them to vacate the house, then occupy the cellar for three days, after which the group would hold a meeting, with the media present, to explain their actions. In sum, as per the dialogue: ‘On arrive, on expulse, on occupe’.⁶³² Simeoni is clear that he wants no physical violence to occur, and that he wants the group to be armed with hunting rifles and not automatic weapons.

The group arrive, the Depeille family leave and the occupation begins as expected. Despite having had no contact with the press or the French government, on the afternoon of the first day Simeoni is informed that eight squadrons of military

⁶³¹ Frédéric Bertocchini & Michel Espinosa (a), *Aleria 1975 1: Escrocs Fora !* (Ajaccio: DCL 2014).

⁶³² Bertocchini & Espinosa (a), n.p.

police have arrived in Corsica and that the telephone lines to the house have been cut on the orders of the Minister of the Interior, Michel Poniatowski. State intervention now seems a certainty. The ARC group prepare for the arrival of state forces and talk to the press about the occupation. Then around 5 a.m., the French CRS riot police begin arriving, in armed vehicles and military helicopters. The state forces move in, flying in more men and calling in a warship off the coast of Corsica. The occupants respond by arming themselves and standing guard around the property, and by staging a fake hostage-taking, threatening to kill the 'hostage' (a member of their own group) if the police do not move back. This works temporarily: the police retreat. Seeing the success of this manoeuvre, the occupants then take some real hostages, four local Arab farm workers. Simeoni leaves the property to speak with the *sous-préfet*, Guérin, who is present behind police lines. After some discussion Guérin gives Simeoni until 4 p.m. to leave, or face the consequences. The album ends as Simeoni informs the rest of the group of these new conditions, and asks those who are not prepared to fight, to leave the occupation. Just beyond the gates, the CRS wait to move in.

Aleria 1975 2: Dernière Sommaton! (2015)⁶³³

The opening of volume two changes perspective; it is narrated by the *préfet*, Gabriel Gilly, in voiceover. The reader sees events from the anti-ARC perspective for the first time.

Visually, *Dernière Sommaton* opens at 10.15 p.m. on the 22nd of August 1975. The voiceover, however, is taken from a speech given by Gilly the next morning in Ajaccio. To emphasise the different perspectives present in the album (i.e. events as seen from the ARC's point of view versus events seen from outside), the authors change the colouring of each narrative: events narrated or illustrated from the point of view of the police or media are in greyscale, while the ARC's perspective remains in full colour.

⁶³³ Frédéric Bertocchini & Michel Espinosa (b), *Aleria 1975 2: Dernière Sommaton !* (Ajaccio: DCL 2015).

The narrator states that the occupiers threatened to kill their hostages if the police do not move back; the police retreated a hundred metres further away from the property. In what he terms a 'gesture of good will', the *préfet* has held several meetings with Edmond Simeoni via the *sous-prefet* of Bastia, Jacques Guérin, who is present at Aléria.

The *préfet* states that Corsicans are 'infuriated' by the actions of the ARC, that Corsica's economic future is threatened by this ideology, and that members of the ARC are also involved in the wine-adulteration that they accuse Henri Depeille of participating in.

The action moves from Ajaccio back to Aléria. Some of the occupants are allowed to leave to buy more provisions, as more government forces move in.

Edmond Simeoni makes a last speech to the press, denying any 'provocation' on the part of the ARC and stating that they are in a position of legitimate self-defence. He then asks that the press and all supporters who were not part of the original occupation leave. Some occupants are worried that the government forces will soon attack: Simeoni is doubtful, as he believes they are merely trying to intimidate the occupiers. He nevertheless orders that, if they are shot at, the occupiers should in reply shoot only with hunting rifles and not automatic weapons.

Simeoni is summoned by *sous-prefet* Guérin. Guérin tells Simeoni to give himself up and end the occupation, since he erroneously believes that the ARC will not shoot back. Simeoni reiterates that if force is used against the ARC they will defend themselves. An assault is now inevitable. Simeoni frees the hostages, paying the farm labourers their daily wage. The militants assume that this means the assault is near; some soldiers outside take it to mean the opposite and that the ARC will soon surrender.

Simeoni gives a final order that the occupiers should shoot only with hunting rifles and should not shoot first. Guérin gives three warnings over a megaphone; there is no response and so the government forces move in and begin shooting. When the occupiers see that they are being attacked with real bullets and not blanks, they

begin to shoot back. One begins using an automatic weapon, against orders; Pierrot Susini of the ARC is badly injured, losing a foot.

Close by, protestors hear the assault and begin attacking the police, attempting to move towards Aléria. At the occupation, a gendarme is injured, and Edmond Simeoni (a doctor) moves to treat him before he is airlifted out. He also asks for Susini to be taken to hospital.

In all, two gendarmes die, which angers Guérin who states that in France, it is not proper to attack the police. It also angers Simeoni, who places the blame on Guérin and those in Paris who ordered the assault.

Simeoni is ready to give himself up, and obtains freedom for the other occupiers on condition that they give up their identity cards to the police. A group of militants refuse to leave on principle. Simeoni reasons with them, arguing that he did not bring them to Aléria to die, and that they should give up now before the situation gets any worse. He gives himself up, speaking to the press as he leaves: he reiterates his regret that people died, and remarks that the political situation (in Corsica) has seriously escalated after the events.

Meanwhile, the remaining occupiers decide to ram the perimeter gates and escape. They shoot in the air on approach, and the police part to let them through. They drive into the *maquis* and separate, forced into hiding.

Simeoni is taken to an army camp near Bastia for interrogation, where a mob of soldiers attempts to attack him. He is moved for his own safety and flown to Paris. In Bastia that night, violence erupts in support of the ARC; on the 27th of August, the ARC is dissolved but the violence continues. A few months later in May 1976, the FLNC holds their first *nuit bleue* across Corsica, Nice and Marseille. As the final page of the album attests: from this point nothing in Corsica will be the same.

Corsican *Bande Dessinée* Production and Political Identity

In November 2014 I attended the twelfth Festival International de la Bande Dessinée in Ajaccio, in order to investigate recent developments in the industry. In addition, the festival presented the opportunity to meet the creators of many locally produced *bandes dessinées*. Many live on the French mainland and work together albeit remotely. Thus, physical gatherings are rare; the festival gathers the largest number together every year.

Since 2002 the Ajaccio festival has taken place annually, with the exception of 2008 and 2011. It is one of two major annual *bande dessinée* festivals on Corsica, the other taking place in Bastia. Even though both events are officially supported by the Corsican regional government, the two festivals are very different in character. Meeting in an official cultural centre, guests of BD à Bastia regularly include major figures from the mainstream *bande dessinée* industry. In March 2015, for example, those present included Wilfrid Lupano and Grégory Panaccione, Edmond Baudoin, Xavier Mussat and Riad Sattouf. The Bastia festival focuses primarily on *bande dessinée* produced outside of Corsica, bringing mainstream artists to the island. The organisers of the Festival International de la Bande Dessinée d'Ajaccio likewise state that 'L'objectif est de privilégier les rencontres et les contacts entre les auteurs de renom et le public insulaire'.⁶³⁴ To this end, guests at the most recent festival included many creators published by important mainstream companies, such as Jean-Luc Sala, François Gomes – both published by Soleil Productions – Éric Puech and Philippe Bercovici (published by Albin Michel and Dupuis, respectively). In contrast to BD à Bastia, however, the Ajaccio festival focuses far more on locally-produced *bandes dessinées*: during the 2014 event, eleven of the thirty-six authors present were Corsican and/or involved in local production, primarily with publisher Distribution Corse du Livre (DCL). The two festivals ostensibly offer similar

⁶³⁴ 'Qui sommes-nous?', <<http://festivalbdajaccio.com/index.php/qui-sommes-nous>> [Accessed 20 August 2015]

facilities: the opportunity to meet authors and have books signed, various exhibitions, and creative workshops aimed at school-aged children. However, according to a member of the public whom I interviewed at the Ajaccio festival,⁶³⁵ the festivals are structured differently: whereas in Bastia the public queue to meet creators at specific places and times, in Ajaccio the structure is much more fluid. There are no queues, and instead creators and the public circulate and meet freely throughout the festival. Attendances at both festivals are similar, attracting crowds in the thousands.⁶³⁶

Owing to the focus on local production at the Ajaccio festival, attendance at the 2014 event presented an ideal opportunity to conduct interviews with the creators of the locally-produced *bandes dessinées* which are examined in this thesis, and to investigate the motivations and creative processes of those involved in local production. More generally, I also wanted to see for myself the environment in which the flourishing Corsican *bande dessinée* scene began and continues to grow, so as to gain a sense of the dynamics of how the local publishers operate, and to obtain as many examples of locally-produced *bandes dessinées* as possible for inclusion in my research. Although many Corsican *bandes dessinées* are available via Amazon UK (stocked in Amazon's warehouses in France), there appears to be a delay between books being published in Corsica and their appearance for sale online. Since *bande dessinée* festivals are important opportunities to sell books to large numbers of people, it seemed likely that the fullest and most up-to-date selection of albums would be available to buy at the festival.

Who was interviewed?

I conducted a total of six interviews at the festival over four days: five with creators and one with a member of the public. Most of the interviews took place at the festival during breaks in signing sessions, with the exception of my first interview, which was conducted in an Ajaccio café the day before the festival began. This first interview, the only one definitively arranged in advance, was 45

⁶³⁵ Interview with Anonymous, 28 November 2014.

⁶³⁶ 'Le public plus que jamais au rendez-vous', *Informateur Corse Nouvelle* 12 December 2014 p. 17.

minutes long. The other five lasted between four and fifteen minutes each. In most cases I was introduced to interviewees by the festival organisers; in others it was suggested that I approach the interviewees myself directly. Every prospective interviewee I approached agreed to participate in my research. My pool of interview subjects included the majority of DCL's creator contingent and around half of the overall representation of Corsican *bande dessinée* creators present at the festival. I interviewed the following people:

A. Eric Rückstühl

Born in Dijon in 1957, Rückstühl has been writing and illustrating *bandes dessinées* for many years. He began working as a newspaper illustrator before publishing *bandes dessinées* with Éditions Vents d'Ouest and Rombaldi. He began publishing work set in Corsica in 1993, with *Ghjuva*, published by Albiana. Most of his work is now published by DCL. He wrote and illustrated the five-volume series, *Corsu* (1999-2007), and has also illustrated several series written by Frédéric Bertocchini (*Paoli*, *Sampiero Corso* and *Le Bagne de la honte*), as well as participating in the collective one-shot album *Histoires corses*.

Rückstühl has been awarded several prizes: the 1986 Prix de la Poste and 1999 1er Prix de la BD Scolaire, both at Angoulême; at the Ajaccio BD festival volume two of *Paoli* was awarded the Prix Méditerranée and *Le Bagne de la honte* won the Prix de la Ville d'Ajaccio.⁶³⁷

B. François Plisson

François Plisson (born 1961) is a Breton painter, sculptor and musician. He began working in *bande dessinée* in the late eighties after attending the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Notable works of his include the series *Tristan le ménestrel*, which ran from 1987-1995, and the adventure series *Taanoki* (2000-2002). More recently, together with Hélène Cornen, the writer of *Tristan le*

⁶³⁷ 'Éric Rückstühl (BD)', *Lire en pays autunois* n.d.

<http://www.lireenpaysautunois.fr/index/detail_auteur/210.html> [Accessed 26 March 2015].

ménéstrel, he has published several volumes of a series based on the folklore of Brittany, *Les Korrigans d'Elidwenn* (2005-present). The majority of his work is now self-published by Les Editions de la Fibule, which brings together Plisson, his son Luc Plisson, Cornen and two other authors, Franz Drappier and Jean Torton. The group often work collaboratively. In terms of Corsican *bande dessinée*, François Plisson illustrated some of *Histoires corses*.

C. Pascal Nino

Nino, from Réunion, works primarily as a colourist for a wide range of authors and publishers, but he also writes and draws *bande dessinées* occasionally. His colour work outside of DCL includes the historical series *Les Contes d'Ankou*, set in Brittany and published by Soleil and the science fiction *bande dessinée* *L'Ectis* (Nuclea2). He has coloured several DCL volumes, including the three albums of *Libera Me*, *Colomba* and the forthcoming albums *Mateo Falcone* and *Les Frères Corses* (both expected 2015).

D. Michel Espinosa

Michel Espinosa is a *bande dessinée* illustrator originally from Marseille, where he first worked as a graphic designer before moving into cartoons and animation. It was not until the mid-2000s that he had some short pieces published in the *bande dessinée* magazine *Lanfeust Mag*; he published his first album, *Oukase*, in 2007 with Bamboo Productions (with whom Pascal Nino has also worked). *Oukase* was expanded into a three-album series (2007-2009). For DCL, Espinosa has illustrated the *Libera Me* series, the two volumes of *Aléria 1975* and *Histoires corses*. Along with Rückstuhl, Pascal Nino, Bertocchini and several others, he forms part of the group L'Académie des Furieux de la BD.

E. Frédéric Bertocchini

The longest and only pre-arranged interview was held with Frédéric Bertocchini. Bertocchini is an author outside of the *bande dessinée* medium; he has written a

history of Ajaccio,⁶³⁸ a history of Bastia,⁶³⁹ and two histories of Athletic Club Ajaccio, one in 2000 and one in 2010.⁶⁴⁰ In addition he holds a DEA in ancient history and has published several other books of Corsican history and local interest. He is also a journalist for various radio and television stations – notably the Ajaccio station Alta Frequenza, but also Europe 1, France 3 Corse and its Corsican language offshoot Via Stella. His first *bande dessinée* publication was *La Jeunesse de Paoli* with Eric Rückstühl in 2007. Since then he has written every *bande dessinée* published by DCL in addition to several for Ajaccio publishers Le Quinquet, Corsica Comix and Albiana, and the Swiss company BD Force. The vast majority of his works are set in Corsica. He is the founder of the Festival International de la Bande Dessinée, of which he was president from 2002 until 2011. To date he has had nineteen albums published by Corsican companies, with three more set to appear in 2015. He is one of the very few native Corsicans to work in local *bande dessinée* production, one other being Frédéric Federzoni, author of the *Petru Santu* series (Corsica Comix) and contributor to DCL's *Histoires corses* and *Astrocorse* (both published in 2011).

The one member of the general public whom I interviewed wished to remain anonymous.

⁶³⁸ Frédéric Bertocchini & Philippe Martinetti (a), *Ajaccio au fil du temps* (Ajaccio: DCL, 2011).

⁶³⁹ Frédéric Bertocchini & Philippe Martinetti (b), *Bastia au fil du temps* (Ajaccio:DCL, 2011).

⁶⁴⁰ Frédéric Bertocchini (a), *A l'Ours ! la Grande Histoire de l'A.C. Ajaccio*, (Bastia: unknown publisher, 2000), Frédéric Bertocchini (b), *L'ACA: un seculu in rossu è biancu, 1910-2010* (Ajaccio: Albiana, 2010).

What Does The Corsican *Bande Dessinée* Landscape Look Like?

As previously noted, there have been a large number of *bandes dessinées* published by Corsican publishing companies in recent years. The total number of albums published including those released by DCL, Albiana, Corsica Comix and Le Quinquet stands at thirty-three since 2007 alone; fourteen by DCL, ten by Corsica Comix, six by Albiana and three by Le Quinquet. This number does not include *intégrale* (omnibus) editions or box sets (which often include extra sketches or historical information) or Corsican editions of works initially published in French. If these works were included the total would rise to forty-eight. If we include the volumes of the *Corsu* series written and illustrated solely by Éric Rückstühl before 2007 or miscellaneous works published by Albiana between 1995 and 2005, the total number of *bande dessinée* albums published by Corsican companies is fifty-six.

The publication rate has increased significantly since 2007, with four or five albums published each year to date. This is a very high rate of productivity, particularly considering the small independent nature of most of the companies. Even Albiana, the most ‘mainstream’ of the four, is small by comparison with equivalent companies on the French mainland.

In addition, it must be noted that despite the variety of publishers, all of these albums have been produced by the same, relatively small group of people. The vast majority of the creators in the local production scene are interconnected. For example, the group headed by Frédéric Bertocchini, L’Académie des Furieux de la BD, consists of twelve writers, artists and colourists: Bertocchini, Miceal O’Griaifa, Michel Espinosa, Éric Rückstühl, Pascal Nino, ‘Duke’ Sandro, ‘Gartxot’ Marko, Olier Taduc, Al Coutelis, Éric Puech, Thierry Diette and ‘Harald’ Olier. On their website, the group self-identifies as follows:

[C]omposée de douze auteurs de BD, scénaristes, dessinateurs, coloristes.
Une association d’auteurs qui travaillent en harmonie dans plusieurs

domaines, plusieurs genres, chez différents éditeurs, et qui ont décidé de s'associer pour partager des travaux, des projets, des dédicaces, des festivals. Voici les membres de l'Académie, les douze hommes en colère, qui ne se prennent pas au sérieux, mais qui proposent des bandes dessinées de qualité et professionnelles.⁶⁴¹

To this end, the twelve have worked together in various combinations, although not always on Corsican *bandes dessinées*, to which nine of the twelve have contributed.

To these nine we can also add other people who are not members of L'Académie but have worked with some of its members for various publishers: Frédéric Federzoni, founder of Corsica Comix, contributor to DCL's *Astrocorse* and *Histoires corses* and the Corsica Comix publication *Petru Santu*; Bruno Pradelle, colourist for several DCL titles and *Petru Santu*; Rémy Langlois, also a colourist for several DCL titles; Nuria Sayago, colourist of *Aiò Zitelli!* for Albiana, *Kirsten* for Le Quinquet and the *Aléria 1975* diptych for DCL. There are only a few 'outliers' who have not worked on more than one example of local *bande dessinée* or for more than one publisher: Desderiu, artist for two of the *Petru Santu* albums; Nino (to be distinguished from Pascal Nino, colourist for two Corsica Comix albums); Jean-Bernard Pouy, colourist for a single *Petru Santu* album; Natalie Massei, whose only *bande dessinée* work is *Astrocorse*; Iñaki Holgado, artist for *Aiò Zitelli!*, and the Breton polymath François Plisson, whose work on Corsican themes has so far been confined to artwork for some of *Histoires corses*.

The local *bande dessinée* industry in Corsica is, therefore, centred on a relatively small group of highly active individuals, working together to sustain an increasingly prolific industry.

⁶⁴¹ 'Qui sommes-nous?', L'Académie des furieux de la BD <<http://academie-des-furieux.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/Qui%20sommes-nous%203F>> [Accessed 14 May 2015].

Success of the local industry

As a whole, locally produced *bandes dessinées* are clearly popular with the indigenous population: this can be seen in the attendance at, and longevity of, the Ajaccio festival, but we can also measure it in terms of sales. Unfortunately, official numbers here are difficult to find: however, in his interview, Frédéric Bertocchini quoted a figure of 30,000 sales for the *Paoli* trilogy, and he recently announced that the fourth print run of volumes one and two of the series, as well as all volumes of the Corsican-language editions of *Paoli*, had sold out.⁶⁴² Based on these numbers, as Bertocchini noted during interview, one in every ten of the Corsican population owns a copy of *Paoli*.

In the main *bande dessinée* outlet in Ajaccio, a wide selection of Corsican *bandes dessinées* was available, including a large number of DCL titles, but also an equally large quantity of the *Petru Santu* series, other Corsica Comix series, along with some *Astérix* albums translated into Corsican. Notably, there was also a selection of *bandes dessinées* about Corsica produced by mainstream publishers in addition to copies of *L'Enquete corse*, Pétillon's later sketches and interviews published under the title *L'Intégrale Corse*, and several copies of Jean-Michel Delambre's works. This suggests that depictions of Corsica in the *bande dessinée* medium are popular in general in the Corsican market; it was particularly surprising to see new copies of Delambre's *Da Vinci corse*, as this work appears to be currently out of print and unavailable elsewhere.

The different local companies diverge in their approach to publicity. Corsica Comix appears to concentrate its efforts on the local readership, with little or no attempt to attract non-local attention. In contrast, DCL creators visit many festivals around France and Europe to promote their books outside Corsica; for example, they attend many regional *bande dessinée* festivals on the mainland (recently, for

⁶⁴² Frédéric Bertocchini, 'Attention Les Amis', [Facebook post], 4 August 2015

<<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10152986139855544&set=a.10150314117175544.350182.537005543&type=3&theater>> [Accessed 25 September 2015].

example, festivals in Semur and Chablis)⁶⁴³ and conduct signings in bookshops. The Le Quinquet team have also promoted their works outside of Corsica on the mainland, but their last album was published in 2012, with no new developments recently. Albiana, in addition to publishing works which are of local interest, is also a larger, more general publisher and so its *bandes dessinées* are promoted to a wider readership. Its most recent publication, *Sargasses*,⁶⁴⁴ is an expanded, redrawn re-publication of a 1980s *bande dessinée*, that is not particularly aimed at a local readership, while *Aiò Zitelli!*, more directly relevant to the Corsican public, also holds general interest as it concerns the history of France in the First World War and was released in the centenary year of the outbreak of the conflict as part of the worldwide commemoration. The album has also been translated into Spanish.

A Local Industry of Non-Locals

In addition to being a small yet prolific group, the members of the creative group behind the rise in Corsican *bande dessinée* production are notable because only a few of them are Corsican by birth. Those native to Corsica include Frédéric Federzoni and others behind Corsica Comix, and Frédéric Bertocchini. The others are either French from outside Corsica or foreigners (for example, Miceal O’Griaifa, from Ireland; Iñaki Holgado, from the Basque Country; and Nuria Sayago, who is Argentinian). Some have links to Corsica: Bruno Pradelle, for example, has a Corsican mother, while Éric Rückstuhl married a Corsican woman.

Of the five creators whom I was able to interview in Ajaccio the only Corsican was Frédéric Bertocchini. He is also the most prolific of the creators, being the sole writer of almost all of DCL’s output, all of Albiana’s and all of Le Quinquet’s, and therefore of a large part of Corsican *bande dessinée* production as a whole.

⁶⁴³ See for example ‘Du 17 au 26 Avril, 10eme festival BD A SÉMUR’, *Ville Sémur en Auxois* < http://www.ville-semur-en-auxois.fr/Du-17-au-26-avril-10eme-FESTIVAL-BD-A-SEMUR_a912.html> or ‘Bulles de Chablis’, *La bande du 9* < <http://www.labandedu9.fr/evenement-bulles-de-chablis-124.html>> [Accessed 12 July 2015].

The notable lack of Corsicans involved in a local industry which produces work so heavily based on Corsican history and shared cultural experience raises various issues. I would argue that the current set-up of the industry (with particular reference to the situation at DCL) raises the following questions in particular: firstly, does the lack of Corsican involvement have an impact on how Corsica is represented? And secondly, does it matter that Corsicans are a minority in a creative environment which mediates a very visible representation of their own history and culture? These questions are also relevant to the works examined in this thesis in relation to Brittany- although the publishers of *Ololê* were Breton, not all artists and writers were from the area. We can also see that in the case of Brittany, having non-Bretons create a highly visible representation of the region (*Les Aventures de Bécassine*) did indeed affect how the region was depicted, as the authors projected their own received ideas on to the fictional Bretonne they created.

What Does The Local *Bande Dessinée* Industry Produce?

We can split local *bande dessinée* production broadly into three potentially overlapping types: humorous, historical—whether based on fact, mythic or totally fictional—and literary adaptation. The output of Corsica Comix is exclusively humorous; Albiana's output is generally mixed – of those titles still available from the publisher, three are historical, two are fiction, one is humorous and one details what at the time of publication in 1999 was a relatively 'current affair', the *affaire paillotes* scandal of 1999.⁶⁴⁵ Two of Le Quinquet's three *BD* publications are literary adaptations, the remaining title being a retelling of the 1972 Andes Flight disaster. DCL publishes historical works almost exclusively, the exceptions as of June 2015 being two literary adaptations—one of Mérimée's *Colomba* and one forthcoming volume of Dumas' *Les Frères Corses*—plus one foray into humour with *Astrocorse*.

⁶⁴⁵ Philippe Antonetti, *Opération Paillote* (Ajaccio: Albiana, 1999). For information on the *affaire des paillotes*, see Michel Arrivée, 'L'affaire des paillotes corses, ou le festival de la performativité dévoyée : aveux truqués, dénégations mal récusées, ordres implicites in *Linx* 52 (2005) pp. 73-83 < <http://linx.revues.org/192>> [Accessed 6 August 2015].

With the exception of Le Quinquet's three releases, all of the *bande dessinées* produced by local publishers as of June 2015 have some connection to Corsica, whether they be based on Corsican folk history, Corsican culture more generally, or adaptations of literary works about Corsica.

Why Become Involved in Corsican *Bande Dessinée*?

In an attempt to address the above issues, in my interviews I asked each creator why they decided to become involved in Corsican *bandes dessinées* at all. Bertocchini and Rückstuhl gave the most detailed answers, while the others seemed to have given the idea little thought. Pascal Nino and François Plisson both gave simple answers which were essentially the same: they knew Frédéric Bertocchini, he asked them to get involved with DCL's *bande dessinée* output, and they agreed. In the case of François Plisson, who to date has contributed to just one DCL title, I was unsure as to how involved he remained as of 2014. His interests and the work he had for sale appeared to me to diverge considerably from DCL's ethos. He has concentrated on works for children, mostly based in fantasy. However, his presence at the Ajaccio festival indicated to me that he was still interested in promoting his work in Corsica and that he was still on good terms with Bertocchini and the other organisers of the festival. Pascal Nino has worked as a colourist for a variety of publishers – previously Soleil, currently Bamboo editions and DCL. His DCL input is only part of his work overall; he gave the impression that his work on Corsican *bandes dessinées* was part of a larger whole and that he attached no greater importance to it than to any of his other work.

Although Michel Espinosa gave a similar answer to Nino and Plisson in that he also was asked to illustrate *Libera Me* and agreed, in his case however, there was an added dimension since he is a native of Marseille, a city with a historically large Corsican diaspora community. He works with DCL partially because he knew Corsicans in Marseille as a child, and was interested in an opportunity to work with a Corsican writer (Bertocchini), as well as an Irish one (Miceal O'Griafa). Since

contributing to *Libera Me* Espinosa has also illustrated the *Aléria 1975* series; his involvement with DCL continues.

Bertocchini and Rückstuhl gave the most interesting and complete answers to this question. Rückstuhl's interest in Corsica began when he met a Corsican woman, now his wife. His goal in making *bandes dessinées* about Corsica was to 'informer le continent sur ce qui est réellement la Corse', to 'lutter contre les idées reçues', such as those represented in popular mainstream *bandes dessinées*, in particular those 'faites pour la vente', which he sees as 'soulless'; he cited *Les Blagues corses* as an example of this, although he notes that many publishers release books of similar character and that the issue is more widespread. In contrast, he sees DCL's mission as follows:

[N]ous cherchons vraiment à connaître la Corse, par l'âme, par les histoires réelles, et ma démarche est de ne pas faire les poncifs, mais d'aller beaucoup plus loin, et faire découvrir une Corse réelle, et qui a une histoire bien à elle.⁶⁴⁶

For Bertocchini, the reasoning behind his move into *bande dessinée* was similar. He had been organising the Ajaccio *bande dessinée* festival since 2002, and created the *Paoli* series, together with Rückstuhl, in order to commemorate the two-hundredth anniversary of Pasquale Paoli's death, in 2007. *Paoli* sold well, and Bertocchini decided to keep exploring Corsican history through *bandes dessinées*: hence the publication of all DCL's albums since. In his words, the entirety of DCL's *bande dessinée* output, whether it be literary adaptation, fictionalised history, folklore or illustrated accounts of historical events, forms a whole: 'on réalise une grande fresque historique sur une histoire de la Corse en bande dessinée'.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁶ Interview with Michel Espinosa, November 2014.

⁶⁴⁷ Interview with Frédéric Bertocchini, November 2014.

His goal, globally, is to ‘faire connaître l’histoire de la Corse’ just as Rückstühl aims to do; he told me that on a personal level his work is also a reaction to mainstream representations of Corsica, to stereotypes, and is a way to reinforce Corsican heritage:

[C]’est vrai qu’on a eu envie vraiment de répondre à ça et de montrer comment la Corse, c’est pas que des voyous, c’est pas que des bandits, c’est pas que des terroristes; la Corse c’est aussi un territoire à part par rapport à la France, il y a une culture, il y a une langue, il y a une histoire, il y a un patrimoine qu’on veut protéger, et à travers les bandes dessinées que nous réalisons... elles permettent de préserver le patrimoine de la Corse.⁶⁴⁸

As can be seen, those interviewed who were not Corsican, or did not have a family connection to Corsica, appeared to have no real motive in working on Corsican themes other than having been asked to contribute by a friend (Bertocchini). Those that have clear goals are those with the closest links to the island. Does this affect how Corsica is represented? I believe it must do, but not necessarily in an ideological sense. Éric Rückstühl’s *Corsu* series is important as a precursor to DCL’s later publications, and its subject matter functions well as part of Bertocchini’s *fresque historique*. However, Rückstühl no longer participates in the writing of any other DCL work; his role is limited to illustration. Almost all of DCL’s post-*Corsu* *bandes dessinées* are therefore written by one person,⁶⁴⁹ who has the closest links to Corsica and the least distance from the events that DCL’s work depicts – or their cultural connotations. The scenarios of these works therefore represent the perspective of one person, not a group. Bertocchini’s role as writer, organiser and loudest advocate for DCL’s recent *bande dessinée* output also raises a further issue: can one talk about a local ‘industry’ if the major publisher’s releases in that industry are spearheaded by one man, and the other publishers release books on a far more limited scale and far more sporadically? To this question I would reply in

⁶⁴⁸ Interview with Bertocchini.

⁶⁴⁹ The exception is Miceal O Griaifa who wrote *Libera Me* with Bertocchini

the affirmative, arguing that there is indeed a local *bande dessinée* industry: although Bertocchini is instrumental, and is certainly the driving force behind DCL's releases and promotion, his decision to use the *bande dessinée* medium – and not, for example, simply to write books on Corsican history – removes his ability to work alone since he does not illustrate his own material, and he needs others to successfully create this visual representation of Corsica that he wishes to promote. Since the group who work collectively for DCL has remained largely constant – growing in number but with few leaving – I would argue that Bertocchini, the artists and colourists form a cohesive group which does not simply consist of one author and a group of 'artists for hire'.

Political Objectivity and Memorial Sites in Corsican *Bandes Dessinées*.

Although violence in Corsica has massively reduced since the 1980s and 1990s, issues of autonomism and nationalism have not disappeared. For the local population historical events are still influential, holding powerful connotations and evoking strong ancestral memories. The emphasis on historical events in DCL's *bande dessinée* catalogue is revealing here. Pierre Nora's definition of *lieux de mémoire* as 'a significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community'⁶⁵⁰ suggests that much of Corsican history constitutes *lieux de mémoire*; the weight of memory makes it harder to assess the political neutrality of the depiction of events in DCL's output.

The issue of political objectivity and the weight of memory is particularly relevant in relation to those DCL works that depict the more recent past, events in which the key figures are still alive and whose effects are in some cases still felt today. In the case of *Libera Me*, the authors and illustrator are consistent in their assertion that the series is completely fictional, although it includes allusions to real events such as the hunger strikes during the Troubles in Northern Ireland or the election of François Mitterrand in 1981. When interviewed, Michel Espinosa stressed that he and the other authors aimed at objectivity:

⁶⁵⁰ Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory* volume 1 (New York: Columbia, 1996) p. xvii.

Il n'y a pas de méchants, il n'y a pas de bons d'un côté ou de l'autre...
on essaie de faire neutre dans le récit [...] et dans le débat surtout.⁶⁵¹

DCL's other foray into recent history, *Aléria 1975*, is difficult to see as politically neutral. Firstly, its title is also the name of an association set up in February 2014, with Edmond Simeoni as president, to commemorate the events and date of the Aléria occupation. The aims of the association's first meeting are detailed in the following press release:

Il n'y a pas de culte ou d'exaltation patriotique; un simple rassemblement autour d'une stèle, dans un climat de respect pour les victimes, et bien entendu pour toutes les victimes du conflit en Corse ; nous allons revisiter ensemble, brièvement, l'itinéraire de la Corse depuis cette date, en souligner les évolutions et évoquer des perspectives, à la fois préoccupantes et porteuses d'espoir.

Le programme de ce 22 Août 2014 est le suivant :

- 18h30 : Inauguration et bénédiction de la stèle
- 19h30 : Intervention du Dr Edmond Simeoni
- 20h15 : Partage autour du bar (da beie é da manghjà)
- 21 Heures : Serata é Festa culturale, incù parechji gruppi, cantadori é cantatrice. (So tutti invitati.)

Nous invitons les femmes et les hommes de notre Pays, attachés à la démocratie, aux principes de l'humanisme, au peuple corse et à la création d'une société de progrès, à participer à cette manifestation ; elle s'inscrit, avec le respect de toutes les sensibilités politiques, dans la volonté de recherche d'une grande démarche unitaire et progressiste des Corses de l'île et de la diaspora ; elle est indispensable pour contraindre l'Etat au dialogue, puis pour émanciper

⁶⁵¹ Interview conducted with Michel Espinosa, Festival International de la Bande Dessinée d'Ajaccio, 28 November 2014

l'île—sans violence—et construire un avenir de développement équitable, de paix et d'ouverture sur la Méditerranée, l'Europe et le monde.

V'aspittemu pè issa mossa di a fratellanza.⁶⁵²

The main commemorative act of the association is the erection of a glass memorial to the occupation at the site of the events. However, the *bande dessinée* album is closely linked to the association; the cover image of the book is used to promote the association's Facebook page, for example, and to feature other promotional activities. Ergo the *bande dessinée* must be considered part of this wider commemorative effort, which is still controversial, at least in some quarters: the events of Aléria, like much of Corsican history, retain a powerful political charge. Only a few weeks after the erection of the glass memorial, it was destroyed and the Corsican flag flying nearby was pulled down.⁶⁵³ Aléria is not just an ideal *lieu de mémoire*, but also a physical, concrete example: both the erection of the memorial stèle and its subsequent destruction are potent political acts even decades after the occupation.

With regard to the objectivity of the series itself without consideration of the wider memorialisation, Bertocchini based most of the dialogue on meetings with the surviving ARC members. Inevitably therefore, there are questions about the reliability of participants' memory after nearly forty years. In addition, the objectivity of the depiction of events is also debatable; how honest were the occupants in their recounting of events? Bertocchini does include real dialogue from contemporary speeches, news and radio broadcasts in order to present the government's view of the occupation at the time: this is useful as an attempt to

⁶⁵² Charles Monti, 'Aleria 1975: "Un simple rassemblement dans un climat de respect" ' *Corsenetinfos* 21 August 2014 <http://www.corsenetinfos.fr/Aleria-1975-Un-simple-rassemblement-dans-un-climat-de-respect_a10897.html> [Accessed 2 July 2015].

⁶⁵³ Michèle Mignot, 'La stèle d'Aleria détruite à coups de masse!' *France 3 Corse Via Stella* <<http://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/corse/2014/09/21/la-stele-d-aleria-detruite-coups-de-masse-555312.html>> [Accessed 3 July 2015].

show both sides of what was a very divisive event. However, the personal involvement of the occupiers in the *bande dessinée* creation gives the work the sense of a historical record, a document of memorialisation. I would describe *Aléria 1975* as an assertion of cultural identity, as with all of DCL's *bandes dessinées*, but also as an assertion of political identity, something which is rare in the publisher's catalogue.

The *Paoli* series also depicts various *lieux de mémoire*. The most concrete example of this is volume 3, *Ponte Novu*, most of which recounts the battle where Paoli's independent Republic was defeated in the eponymous location on 8th and 9th May, 1769. As with *Aléria*, another real geographical place, the cultural memory of the battle of Ponte Novu still holds enormously powerful political connotations and abiding memories in Corsica; the site is a classic *lieu de mémoire*, at the same time 'material, symbolic and functional'.⁶⁵⁴ The importance of Ponte Novu in Corsican cultural memory can be seen in its importance to Corsican autonomists and nationalists: for example, it is mentioned as a key date in various major documents and speeches, including Max Siméoni's *Je suis nationaliste corse*,⁶⁵⁵ Edmond Siméoni's speech in Copenhagen in 1978 and the FLNC speech read before the trial in 1979.⁶⁵⁶ In addition to Ponte Novu itself, the *Paoli* series depicts other *lieux de mémoire*, namely that of Paoli's Corsican Republic as a whole and the town of Corte (which would later become important as a cultural centre, as discussed below).

Ponte Novu and *Aléria* (and the events which took place there) are the most significant *lieux de mémoire* in modern Corsican regionalist discourse; their depiction in *bandes dessinées* adds another layer of memorialisation to their status as cultural icons, allowing another form of access to the cultural meaning of the *lieux de mémoire*. For, as Nora remarks:

Lieux de mémoire thrive only because of their capacity for change, their ability to resurrect old meanings and generate new ones along

⁶⁵⁴ Nora, p. 14.

⁶⁵⁵ Mondoloni, p. 279.

⁶⁵⁶ Mondoloni, p. 373.

with new and unforeseeable connections (that is what makes them exciting).⁶⁵⁷

It can also be argued that the *bandes dessinées* *Aléria 1975* and *Paoli: Ponte Novu* are themselves *lieux de mémoire*, given Nora's assertion that 'all *lieux de mémoire* are, to borrow from the language of heraldry, objects *en abîme*, which is to say, objects containing representations of themselves'.⁶⁵⁸ DCL's historical *bandes dessinées* are clear examples of objects *en abîme*.

DCL's Publications as Cultural Expression: Projected Identity, Language and Media

I have argued above that Corsican *bande dessinée* production constitutes a local industry, despite the dominance of one man (Bertocchini). His central role does, however, raise some questions regarding the construction and promotion of identity present in DCL's output, which I will attempt to address in the following section along with some wider questions impinging on the structure of Corsican identity.

The Corsican language is a cornerstone of modern Corsican identity. Debates over the validity, existence and survival of the island's Italo-Romance language have raged for many years and a detailed examination is beyond the scope of this section. However, as a summary overview it may be said that Corsican is spoken by an estimated 240,000 people overall.⁶⁵⁹ It is not a unified language: there are several spoken varieties which are dependent on geographical location. Instead of moving to promote 'standardisation' of one variety of the language over the others activists promote a 'polynomic' system where each of the mutually intelligible varieties has equal status within one language. To this end, education in Corsican is carried out in the local variety and grammar publications accept spelling variations

⁶⁵⁷ Nora, p. 15.

⁶⁵⁸ Nora, p. 15.

⁶⁵⁹ Paul Cohen 'Of Linguistic Jacobinism and Cultural Balkanization: Contemporary French Linguistic Politics in Historical Context' *French Politics, Culture & Society* 18.2 (2000), 21-48 (p. 24).

as long as they follow a coherent system.⁶⁶⁰ The Corsican language has been at the centre of pro-Corsican activism for decades, particularly from the 1970s onwards. This overt linkage of language and nationhood is also echoed in a wider French context, for example the famous assertion in the French Constitution that ‘la langue de la République est le français’, or in Raymond Barre’s idea of French:

La première des valeurs fondamentales de notre civilisation est le bon usage de notre langue. Il y a, parmi les jeunes, dans la pratique loyale du français, une vertu morale et civique.⁶⁶¹

As Cohen asserts, French has ‘long stood at the heart of definitions of citizenship, of society, and of the nation’. It is a ‘cultural icon...symbol of the republic...source of national pride’.⁶⁶² In much the same way, the Corsican language has come to be an integral part of expressing ‘Corsicaness’, a measure of one’s Corsican identity: for example, militants were known to apologise for speaking French instead of Corsican in nationalist political contexts. We can see this in Edmond Simeoni’s opening to his speech to an audience that included members of the French and international press at Furiani in August 1977, at the founding of the political party *Unione di u Populu Corsu*:

Salute fratelli è surelle corsi! Salut amis sincères du Peuple Corse! Aujourd’hui je serai contraint de parler français et je le déplore car je sais, je sens, que la qualité du message s’en ressentira, mais la courtoisie la plus élémentaire.... m’y oblige devant la presse française et internationale que je remercie fraternellement de sa participation...⁶⁶³

⁶⁶⁰ Anne Judge, *Linguistic Policies and Survival of Regional Languages in France and Britain* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p. 102.

⁶⁶¹ cited in Cohen, p. 21.

⁶⁶² Cohen, p. 21.

⁶⁶³ cited in Mondoloni, p. 330.

In the same speech we find a clear assertion of the ideological link between language and nationhood both in a Corsican context and generally, suggesting that Simeoni is seeking to link the local struggle for autonomy to a much wider campaign: 'la langue constitue le lien essentiel entre l'homme et sa terre, ce qui explique les agressions séculaires du colonialisme contre elle'.⁶⁶⁴

Language also played a significant part in the larger flourishing of Corsican cultural activity (aka the *riacquistu*, 'reacquisition') after May 1968. The first Corsican grammar was published in 1971,⁶⁶⁵ the same year as the founding of *Scola Corsa*, which campaigned for the right to teach Corsican in school; the 1970s also saw the launch of *Ghjurnate Corse* or 'Corsican days', annual gatherings at Corte which attracted thousands of militants and nationalists,⁶⁶⁶ and the foundation of *universités d'été*, also at Corte, run by *Scola Corsa* and other political organisations, which led to the reopening of a university – the Università di Corsica Pasquale Paoli – in Corsica in 1982.

The reinforcing of a modern Corsican identity built around the use and knowledge of the Corsican language has led to its deliberately increased use in Corsican cultural expression, notably by musical groups such as *A Filetta* and *Canta U Populu Corsu*, who since the 1980s have reinvigorated the *paghjella*, or Corsican form of polyphonic song. Their performances of the *paghjella* were part of a deliberate 'cultural reconstruction',⁶⁶⁷ closely entwined with political and linguistic activism; the groups also performed new, political songs about 'oppression, resistance and autonomy'.⁶⁶⁸ The links between song, language, politics and identity meant that,

⁶⁶⁴ Mondoloni, p. 353.

⁶⁶⁵ Philippe Marchetti & D A Geronimi, *Intricate è cambiarine: manuel pratique d'orthographe corse* (Nogent-sur-Marne: Beaulieu, 1971).

⁶⁶⁶ Alexandra Jaffe, *Ideologies in Action: language policies on Corsica* (Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999) p. 126.

⁶⁶⁷ Caroline Bithell, 'Polyphonic Voices: National Identity, World Music and the Recording of Traditional Music in Corsica', *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, 5 (1996), 39-66 (p. 42).

⁶⁶⁸ Jaffe, p. 127.

at least for a time, singing the *paghjella* ‘became equated with expression of nationalist engagement’.⁶⁶⁹

This cultural renaissance flourishing around the Corsican language and, therefore, Corsican identity has led to the creation of a media environment in Corsica which uses the Corsican language; there is a Radio France offshoot in Corsica, France Bleu Frequenza Mora RCFM, which broadcasts in Corsican and French. There is also Alta Frequenza, which styles itself as ‘un média corse indépendant, donnant la parole au peuple’,⁶⁷⁰ and which also broadcasts in a mixture of French and Corsican and has two additional webradio stations, one of which, ‘Alta Canzona Corsa’ broadcasts only songs in Corsican, as the name implies. In terms of television offerings relevant to Corsica, France Télévisions has two channels, both under the France 3 banner. France 3 is France Télévisions’ regional offering, with programmes such as news and weather varying according to location. In Corsica, France Télévisions offer France 3 Corse, a standard regional station broadcasting mostly national programmes with concessions for local weather, news and magazine programmes, and a news programme in Corsican: France 3 Corse was decoupled from its predecessor Fr3-Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur-Corse in the late 1980s, and moved from Marseille to Ajaccio. More recently, France Télévision launched a separate service, France 3 Corse Via Stella (‘via satellite’), as a digital television channel: in addition to the Corsican-language news programme *Sei Ore*, which is also broadcast on the ‘standard’ France 3 Corse, Via Stella produces much more Corsican-language content across a wider range of programme genres and broadcasts very little national programming. Martinetti and Lefèvre assert that the creation of the media landscape in Corsica, ‘investi par la mouvance nationaliste avec la bienveillance de Paris’,⁶⁷¹ has helped to create and disseminate a regionalist discourse, citing Xavier Crettiez’ discovery of ‘éléments de connivance’ between the FLNC and the new media channels: for example, Corsican television has regularly transmitted FLNC

⁶⁶⁹ Bithell, p. 43.

⁶⁷⁰ ‘Historique de la radio’, Alta Frequenza <http://www.alta-frequenza.com/la_radio/historique> [Accessed 7 July 2015]

⁶⁷¹ Joseph Martinetti & Marianne Lefèvre, *Géopolitique de la Corse* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2007), p. 162.

press conferences. For Martinetti and Lefèvre, Corsican television media '[v]olontairement ou sous pression terroriste, servent d'organes de diffusion des différents partis ou mouvements nationalistes légaux et clandestins'.⁶⁷² As such, the local media (in the cited case France 3 Corse, but extending to other media outlets, such as Radio Corse Frequenza Mora and the newspaper *La Corse*,⁶⁷³ are not always politically neutral. The development of local media is closely bound to historical language politics and the cultural identity created around them.

These media outlets are instrumental in the promotion of Corsican *bandes dessinées*: Bertocchini has been interviewed various times on the news programme *Corsica Sera* about his *bande dessinée* works, and *bandes dessinées* are also promoted in magazine programmes without Bertocchini's involvement.⁶⁷⁴ Alta Frequenza, where Bertocchini is a journalist and regular contributor, regularly features publicity for locally produced *bandes dessinées* on the air and on its website.⁶⁷⁵ Both France 3 Corse/Via Stella and Alta Frequenza are regular sponsors of the Ajaccio *bande dessinée* festival.⁶⁷⁶

Like the local *bandes dessinées* produced by other publishers, the works in DCL's catalogue are part of the cultural landscape that arose from the language activism of the 1970s and continues today. Bertocchini's involvement in various

⁶⁷² Martinetti & Lefèvre, p. 162.

⁶⁷³ Martinetti & Lefèvre, pp. 163-164.

⁶⁷⁴ see for example 'La BD Kirsten chroniquée a la télévision' *France 3 Via Stella* n.d. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nnpq5qTHFUE>>, 'La BD historique corse sur France 3 Via Stella' *France 3 Via Stella* n.d. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xSTqT5twzA>> [Accessed 20 August 2015].

⁶⁷⁵ For example, Maria Lanfranchi (a), 'BD Aléria 1975 vue par Pierre Poggioli' *Alta Frequenza*, 27 December 2014 <http://www.alta-frequenza.com/l_info/lactu/bd_aleria_1975_la_reaction_de_pierre_poggioli_72407>
Maria Lanfranchi (b), 'La BD historique Aleria 1975 vue par Edmond Simeoni' *Alta Frequenza*, 11 November 2014 <http://www.alta-frequenza.com/l_info/lactu/la_bd_historique_aleria_1975_vue_par_edmond_simeoni_70953> [Accessed 20 August 2014]

⁶⁷⁶ 'Nos partenaires', *Festival BD d'Ajaccio* <<http://festivalbdajaccio.com/index.php/nos-partenaires>> [Accessed 10 July 2015].

forms of local media opens up many opportunities for promotion of his *bande dessinée* work, increasing its visibility to the Corsican public. In addition, owing to the close links between the local *bande dessinée* industry and other media outlets – particularly the willingness to promote local *bandes dessinées* on a regular basis and the annual sponsorship of the Ajaccio *bande dessinée* festival – I consider local *bande dessinée* production to be an expression of cultural identity in line with that expressed by France 3 Corse/Via Stella and Alta Frequenza, i.e. a collective effort rather than one person's representation of Corsican identity. Given the questions surrounding the political neutrality of Corsican media in general, not to mention the historic links between them and the politics of Corsican language and identity, the version of Corsican identity projected by DCL's catalogue as part of this collective effort cannot be seen as definitive; it is one version of Corsican identity, of which there are many, all equally valid.

8. *Le Procès Colonna* - A Modern Case Study

In November 2003, the trial of Yvan Colonna, so-called *berger de Cargèse*,⁶⁷⁷ began in Paris. Colonna stood accused of the murder of Claude Érignac, the *préfet* of Corsica, in February 1998. Érignac was the first *préfet* killed since Jean Moulin in 1943;⁶⁷⁸ the incident was regarded as the most serious example of political violence since the beginning of unrest in Corsica in the mid-70s. Additionally, Colonna had been on the run since May 1998, leading to a massive manhunt by French police until he was found on Corsica in July 2003.⁶⁷⁹ The significance of the murder in political terms and the long hunt for Yvan Colonna led to much media and public interest in the trial with numerous press outlets reporting from court. One of those media outlets was *Charlie Hebdo*, which sent both a journalist and an illustrator to cover events.

The pair – journalist Dominique Paganelli and artist Bernard Verlhac, aka Tignous⁶⁸⁰ – subsequently released *Le Procès Colonna*,⁶⁸¹ a day-by-day illustrated account of the month-long trial.

The killing of Claude Érignac and its investigation are significant events for both France and Corsica, affecting many areas of French state apparatus and the administration of the island. As the murder, investigation and trial form an important part of recent Corsican history, *Le Procès Colonna* is a useful addition to the existing body of work featuring Corsica in *bande dessinée* and related media forms. Paganelli and Verlhac's work is particularly of interest as a rare *bande dessinée* depiction of Corsican militant activity. In addition, the book's

⁶⁷⁷ Acacio Pereira, 'Le parquet général de Paris a requis le renvoi du procès du commando Erignac' *Le Monde*, 8 July 2003 p. 10 in Europresse
<<http://www.bpe.europresse.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/WebPages/Search/Result/Result.aspx>> [Accessed 9 August 2014].

⁶⁷⁸ John Henley, 'La Corse, of course', *The Guardian* 10 July 2003
<<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jul/10/france.worlddispatch>> [Accessed 9 August 2014].

⁶⁷⁹ 'Il y a 15 ans, le préfet Erignac était assassiné à Ajaccio', *Le Point*, 5 February 2013
<http://www.lepoint.fr/societe/il-y-a-15-ans-le-prefet-erignac-etait-assassine-a-ajaccio-05-02-2013-1623840_23.php> [Accessed 29 July 2014].

⁶⁸⁰ 'Tignous', *Bédétheque* <<http://www.bedetheque.com/auteur-5034-BD-Tignous.html>> [Accessed 9 August 2014].

⁶⁸¹ Tignous and Dominique Paganelli, *Le Procès Colonna*. (Paris:12bis, 2008).

unconventional format of text-image interaction, thereafter bound in the classic *bande dessinée* form of large hardback, leads to questions as to whether *Le Procès Colonna* is a *bande dessinée* or an example of a distinct illustrated medium. The following section is a case study of *Le Procès Colonna*, the events it depicts and its place within the existing corpus of *bande dessinée* about Corsica.

Background: The Murder of Claude Érignac and Initial Investigation

Claude Érignac was killed on his way to a concert, in a busy Ajaccio street, on the 6th of February 1998. He was shot three times, once in the neck and twice on the ground, and killed almost instantly. Witnesses described one gunman, but also other men acting suspiciously, one being a man with a walkie talkie, another being a man on a motorbike. On the 9th of February, an anonymous group of Corsican nationalists claimed responsibility for the killing.⁶⁸² The announcement was credited as genuine, as it included information on the gun, a Beretta, used to shoot Claude Érignac and identified the weapon as one of two stolen during a previous nationalist attack in Pietrosella, where two gendarmes had been kidnapped in 1997.

The link to the Pietrosella incident led police to re-examine various claims of responsibility they had received after the kidnapping, and police began pursuing militant nationalism as a line of enquiry. This line initially concentrated on a *piste agricole*, the involvement of militants working in agriculture. Marcel Lorenzoni, former leader of the FLNC-Canal Historique and head of an agricultural union, was arrested on 9th February 1998 for "détention illégale d'armes et association de malfaiteurs en relation avec une entreprise terroriste".⁶⁸³ For several months the investigators considered the *piste agricole* the most likely scenario and arrested several people linked to FLNC-Canal

⁶⁸² Jacques Follorou, 'Les enquêteurs estiment avoir "bouclé" le dossier Erignac', *Le Monde*, 27 May 1999, p.6, in Europresse

<<http://www.bpe.europresse.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/WebPages/Search/Result/Result.aspx>> [Accessed 29 July 2014].

⁶⁸³ 'L'assassinat du préfet Érignac : Chronologie', *L'Express*, 14 October 2004

<http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/chronologie_488549.html> [Accessed 9 August 2014].

Historique, Michel Lorenzoni and his newly-formed splinter group from FLNC-Canal Historique's legal wing, A Cuncolta.⁶⁸⁴ Police would continue pursuit of the *piste agricole* until mid-1999.

In late 1998 the new *préfet* of Corsica, Bernard Bonnet, passed several notes to the Parisian prosecutor dealing with the investigation,⁶⁸⁵ in which he cited various pieces of information given to him by an 'informer'. The notes implicated a totally separate group of militants, including Yvan Colonna's brother, Stéphane. This information appears to have been ignored, with investigations concentrating on the militant involvement in the Pietrosella kidnapping and the presumed *piste agricole*.

In May 1999, police arrested several other militants after tracing their mobile phones on the night of the Érignac murder;⁶⁸⁶ those arrested include Alain Ferrandi, named as the 'chef incontesté' of those responsible in the Bonnet notes passed to the investigation in late 1998.⁶⁸⁷ When questioned by police, four of those arrested admitted their part in the killing, and by the end of May several nationalists had been indicted: Alain Ferrandi, Didier Maranelli, Pierre Alessandri, Martin Ottaviani, Marcel Istria, Vincent Andriuzzi and Joseph

⁶⁸⁴ Benhamou, Guy, 'Qui a tué le préfet de Corse? Enquête sur un engrenage meurtrier. La mort de Claude Erignac serait liée aux luttes de pouvoir qui secouent le FLNC-Canal historique', *Libération*, 23 April 1998. <http://www.libération.fr/evenement/1998/04/23/qui-a-tue-le-prefet-de-corse-enquete-sur-un-engrenage-meurtrier-la-mort-de-claude-erignac-serait-lie_233786> [Accessed 9 August 2014].

⁶⁸⁵ Stéphane Durand-Souffland, 'Au procès Colonna, les notes disparues du préfet Bonnet', *Le Figaro*, 18 May 2011 <<http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2011/05/18/01016-20110518ARTFIG00671-au-proces-colonna-les-notes-disparues-du-prefet-bonnet.php>> [Accessed 9 August 2014].

⁶⁸⁶ Pascal Ceaux and Jacques Follorou, 'Affaire Erignac: les policiers pensent avoir arrêté le "groupe opérationnel"', *Le Monde*, 24 May 1999 p. 8 in *Europresse*. <<http://www.bpe.europresse.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/WebPages/Search/Result/Result.aspx>> [Accessed 29 July 2014].

⁶⁸⁷ 'Le lent cheminement des notes adressées au procureur Dintilhac', *Le Monde*, 28 May 1999 p. 9. In *Europresse* <<http://www.bpe.europresse.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/WebPages/Search/Result/Result.aspx>> [Accessed 29 July 2014].

Versini.⁶⁸⁸ Yvan Colonna, named by Alain Ferrandi as the gunman who killed Érignac, fled in the night of 23rd-24th May 1999 and remained on the run until his capture in 2003.

Following the indictment of the seven men, the police arrived at a probable scenario: the commando travel to Ajaccio in separate vehicles. Didier Maranelli drives alone, parks and takes up position. Another car, driven by Martin Ottaviani, carries Colonna, Ferrandi and Alessandri, all three of whom are armed; two of the guns are those stolen in Pietrosella. Ottaviani drops the three others near the theatre where Érignac is due to arrive, and they separate, waiting for the concert to start and the *préfet* to arrive. Maranelli spots Érignac's car as he and his wife drove to the concert, and alerts Colonna, Alessandri and Ferrandi. Ferrandi sees the car approach; Érignac drops his wife at the theatre and goes to park the car. As he returns to the theatre on foot, Colonna and Alessandri approach, and just after 9 p.m., Érignac is shot dead. The three men are then picked up again by Martin Ottaviani and driven home, Didier Maranelli having left Ajaccio earlier, after signalling Érignac's arrival. Marcel Istria, although not a direct participant in the murder, is accused of returning to the crime scene in the aftermath, and tipping off Alain Ferrandi about subsequent police investigations.⁶⁸⁹ The police believe Vincent Andriuzzi and another militant, Jean Castela, to be the 'intellectuals' of the commando, as implicated in the notes passed by Bernard Bonnet. The case was closed in 2001, with the case against Yvan Colonna thereafter being treated as a separate investigation, and the other members of the alleged commando being tried separately.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁸ 'Il y a 15 ans, le préfet Erignac était assassiné à Ajaccio', Le Point, 5 February 2013
<http://www.lepoint.fr/societe/il-y-a-15-ans-le-prefet-erignac-etait-assassine-a-ajaccio-05-02-2013-1623840_23.php> [Accessed 29 July 2014].

⁶⁸⁹ Pascal Ceaux and Jacques Follorou, 'Les enquêteurs ont établi le scénario probable de l'assassinat du préfet Claude Erignac. Une reconstitution devait avoir lieu mercredi 23 juin à Ajaccio' Le Monde 24 June 1999 p. 13 in *Europresse*
<<http://www.bpe.europresse.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/WebPages/Search/Result/Result.aspx>> [Accessed 29 July 2014].

⁶⁹⁰ 'Le cas Colonna disjoint de l'enquête sur l'assassinat d'Erignac.', *Libération*, 31 October 2001
<http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2001/10/31/le-cas-colonna-disjoint-de-l-enquete-sur-l-assassinat-d-erignac_382301> [Accessed 10 August 2014].

The Book

Le Procès Colonna deals only with the trial of Yvan Colonna and not the legal process involving the group as a whole. Although the authors were present for every day of the thirty- four day trial, they do not claim to have included every detail, but rather, '[C]e qui nous a touchés. En un mot nos impressions de ces trente-quatre journées d'audience'.⁶⁹¹

Although not comprehensive, the account of Verlhac and Paganelli is nevertheless very detailed; they include not only descriptions of significant characters in the trial – each member of the opposing legal teams, many witnesses, the defendant and the family of Claude Érignac – but also smaller details, such as the presence of cartoonists and illustrators covering the trial, whether for other media outlets⁶⁹² or out of apparent personal curiosity (as in the case of René Pétillon, 'venu pour prendre des notes'). The authors suspect the possibility of another *Enquête corse* (See figure 1).



Figure 1: Tignous (Bernard Verlhac) drawn by René Pétillon during the trial; illustration in Tignous & Paganelli, *Le Procès Colonna* (Paris: 12bis, 2007), p.101. © 12bis

⁶⁹¹ Tignous & Paganelli, p. 3.

⁶⁹² For example, illustrator Brig, working for France 3 Corse.

Additionally, the authors continue to take notes during breaks in proceedings, noting down overheard comments from the public, journalists and police, and covering events which occur outside court. For example, in figure 2:

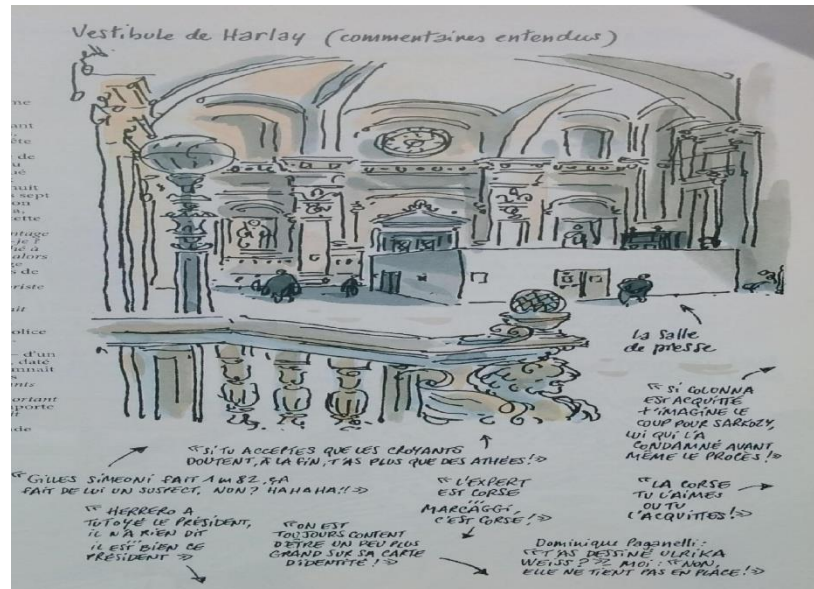


Figure 2: Vestibule de Harlay (commentaires entendus) ; illustration in Tignous & Paganelli, *Le Procès Colonna* (Paris: 12bis, 2007), p. 23. © 12bis.

“Si Colonna est acquitté, t’imagine le coup pour Sarkozy, lui qui l’a condamné avant le procès?”

“La Corse, tu l’aimes ou tu l’acquittes!” ⁶⁹³

And in figure 3:

⁶⁹³ Tignous & Paganelli, p. 23. A reference to a Nicolas Sarkozy quote: see Jacques Dejean, ‘Comment Nicolas Sarkozy dit aimer la France’ *Liberation* 25 November 2009 <http://www.liberation.fr/politiques/2009/11/25/comment-nicolas-sarkozy-dit-aimer-la-france_595510> [Accessed 20 September 2014].

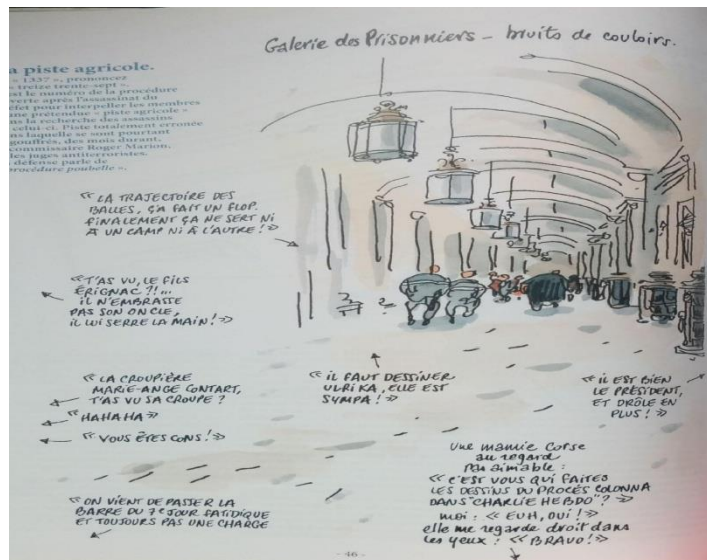


Figure 3: Galerie des Prisonniers-Bruits de couloirs. Illustration in Tignous & Paganelli, *Le Procès Colonna* (Paris: 12bis, 2007), p. 46. © 12bis.

Une mamie corse, au regard pas aimable: “C’est vous qui faites les dessins du procès Colonna dans *Charlie Hebdo*?”

“Euh, oui!”

Elle me regarde droit dans les yeux: “Bravo!”⁶⁹⁴

Verlhac and Paganelli include discussion of all major aspects of the investigation in their narrative: testimonies from other members of the group, who admitted their role in Érignac’s murder; major political figures, such as Claude Guéant, Nicolas Sarkozy’s chief of staff and minister of the interior, questioned about state interference and participation in the investigation;⁶⁹⁵ important members of French police forces, including Roger Marion, former head of the Division Nationale Anti-Terroriste and thus of the investigation;⁶⁹⁶ a wide range of defence witnesses, both those that were present at the crime scene and those who stood as character witnesses (for example, Yvan Colonna’s father, Jean-Hugues),⁶⁹⁷ and various figures from Colonna’s past. The authors pick no sides,

⁶⁹⁴ Tignous & Paganelli, p. 46.

⁶⁹⁵ Tignous & Paganelli, p. 97.

⁶⁹⁶ Tignous & Paganelli, p. 52.

⁶⁹⁷ Tignous & Paganelli, p. 14.

depicting positive and negative elements from both prosecution and defence. The result of the trial, Colonna's conviction for murder, is noted at the very beginning of the book. There is an implicit suggestion from the authors that the following work is therefore entirely balanced and impartial; whether this is true is hard to discern, as throughout the work there are no certainties represented. Prosecution witnesses contradict each other, defence witnesses contradict each other and themselves, even when they saw events from the same angle; all defence witnesses agree that Colonna is not the man whom they saw shooting Claude Érignac, but no alternative gunman is posited. This lack of certainty also mirrors the trial and legal process itself: there are not necessarily any certainties in legal cases, and indeed this idea is written into the French penal code, quoted in *Le Procès Colonna*:

La loi ne demande pas compte aux juges des moyens par lesquels ils se sont convaincus, elle ne leur prescrit pas de règles desquelles ils doivent faire particulièrement dépendre la plénitude et la suffisance d'une preuve ; elle leur prescrit de s'interroger eux-mêmes dans le silence et le recueillement et de chercher, dans la sincérité de leur conscience, quelle impression ont faite, sur leur raison, les preuves rapportées contre l'accusé, et les moyens de sa défense.

La loi ne leur fait que cette seule question, qui renferme toute la mesure de leurs devoirs : "Avez-vous une intime conviction ?" ⁶⁹⁸

Le Procès Colonna is not a unique work, either in its illustration of the trial or its written description. As noted above, various illustrators drew events from the trial for various media outlets. There were also written *chroniques judiciaires*, such as the daily blog posts for *Le Monde* by Pascale Robert-Diard.⁶⁹⁹ What is

⁶⁹⁸ Tignous & Paganelli, p.110. Cf. Article 353 of the French penal code cited in Pascale Robert-Diard, 'Avez-vous une intime conviction?', *Chroniques Judiciaires, Le Monde*, 11 February 2010, <<http://prdchroniques.blog.lemonde.fr/2010/02/11/avez-vous-une-intime-conviction/>> [Accessed 11 August 2014].

⁶⁹⁹ Pascale Robert-Diard, 'Colonna' *Chroniques Judiciaires, Le Monde* 2007-2009 <<http://prdchroniques.blog.lemonde.fr/category/proces-colonna/>> [Accessed 11 August 2014].

significant is the inclusion of information and events from the sidelines such as public reactions and graffiti outside the courtroom. The level of detail included a detailed layout of the courtroom,⁷⁰⁰ illustrations of crime scene photos shown to the court,⁷⁰¹ and Claude Érignac's widow taking notes and drawing as various witnesses testify.⁷⁰² These extra details help represent the trial as a wider historical event, by noting and showing the level of public interest, the political interests at stake, and the behaviour of those at court when caught unawares.

At its base, however, the significance of *Le Procès Colonna* is not as a *chronique judiciaire* since paradoxically the trial is not the important element of the narrative. It is the story not of a trial but of a clash between centre and periphery, between two separate political environments operating within the same republican system, and the lack of mutual comprehension between them.

The disconnect between the Parisian court's perceptions of the Colonna trial (the court, in this case, being a representation of the political centre in microcosm) and the perceptions of the Corsicans present is striking. A difference in perceptions is, of course, to be expected from the respective legal teams, but it is Verlhac and Paganelli's depiction of public comments and reactions which reinforce the inherent opposition between Corsica and the mainland most effectively. Mutual incomprehension has trickled down from the apparatus of the French state to the wider French public. As an example of small-scale differences in perception, below is a conversation between a Parisian member of the public and a Corsican, after the Parisian notes him wearing a pro-Yvan Colonna t-shirt (figure 4).

⁷⁰⁰ Tignous & Paganelli, p. 12.

⁷⁰¹ Tignous & Paganelli, p. 21.

⁷⁰² Tignous & Paganelli, p. 12bis.



Figure 4: Comité de Soutien. Illustration in Tignous & Paganelli, *Le Procès Colonna* (Paris: 12bis, 2007), p.5. © 12bis.

“C’est le fan club!?” (accent parisien)

“Non, le comité de soutien d’Yvan!!” (accent de Cargèse-Corse-du-Sud).⁷⁰³

The difference in language implied by the punctuation is small but important, highlighting the opposition between the immediate Parisian outraged conclusion that a Corsican (alleged) criminal would have a fan club, versus the equally vehement riposte that it is in fact a legitimate supporting organisation.

If we consider the trial as inherently expressing a conflict between France’s political base and the peripheral regions, the trial’s progression (as shown by Verlhac and Paganelli) bears this out. The roles of centre and periphery are preserved intact; there is a power imbalance between the prosecution case and the defence. The majority of prosecution witnesses are high-powered representatives of organisations who are influential in Corsica, directly or indirectly: current and former heads of anti-terrorist police,⁷⁰⁴ civil servants, and even members of the French political elite,⁷⁰⁵ whose presence is made more

⁷⁰³ Tignous & Paganelli, p. 5.

⁷⁰⁴ For example see the testimony of Roger Marion, head of the Division Nationale Anti-Terroriste (DNAT), (Tignous and Paganelli, p. 52).

⁷⁰⁵ Tignous & Paganelli, p. 97.

problematic by their close connection to Nicolas Sarkozy, and his comments about Colonna's guilt before the case came to trial.⁷⁰⁶

The defence witnesses, conversely, have no link to state organisations or centralised power. The majority are Corsican, members of the public who happened to witness the crime, members of Colonna's family, friends and colleagues, spouses and former partners of the other militants, who have already been convicted of participating in the murder. They are at an immediate disadvantage, and the authors make this clear in their depiction; prosecution witnesses respond seriously and smoothly to questions and are shown as calm under aggressive questioning from lawyers. In contrast, defence witnesses are nervous, unsure of their answers, or portrayed as comedy figures as the court laughs at their testimony⁷⁰⁷ or as they address the judge as *tu*.⁷⁰⁸

Le Procès Colonna cannot offer an opinion of Yvan Colonna's part in the Érignac murder, at least not overtly. However, although it is an impartial account at first glance, it could be argued that the author's choices of which parts of the trial to depict show a bias; all eyewitnesses to the crime represented in the book (all of whom are defence witnesses) agree that Yvan Colonna is not the man they saw shoot Claude Érignac; the prosecution case for Colonna's conviction, as depicted in *Le Procès Colonna*, is very circumstantial. Readers of the book have no way to verify this version of events, unless they also followed the trial in real time. As time passes and the detail of events becomes harder to verify, Verlhac and Paganelli's work becomes less useful as an impartial *chronique judiciaire* and becomes more important in its role as a *bande dessinée* representation of how relations between France and Corsica are affected when Corsican violence directly affects the French state.

⁷⁰⁶ 'Les avocats d'Yvan Colonna vont porter plainte contre Nicolas Sarkozy pour violation de la présomption d'innocence', *Le Huffington Post*, 28 March 2012
<http://www.huffingtonpost.fr/2012/03/28/avocats-yvan-colonna-plainte-nicolas-sarkozy-2012-presomption-innocence_n_1385975.html> [Accessed 13 August 2014].

⁷⁰⁷ Tignous & Paganelli, p. 94.

⁷⁰⁸ Tignous & Paganelli, p. 18.

The Book in The Corsican Corpus

Le Procès Colonna is in several ways an unusual addition to the existing corpus of *bande dessinée* on Corsica. Firstly, although published and marketed as a *bande dessinée* album, it is hard to definitively categorise the work. The ratio of text to image in the work varies throughout; some pages are fully illustrated with no accompanying text,⁷⁰⁹ as in figure 5,

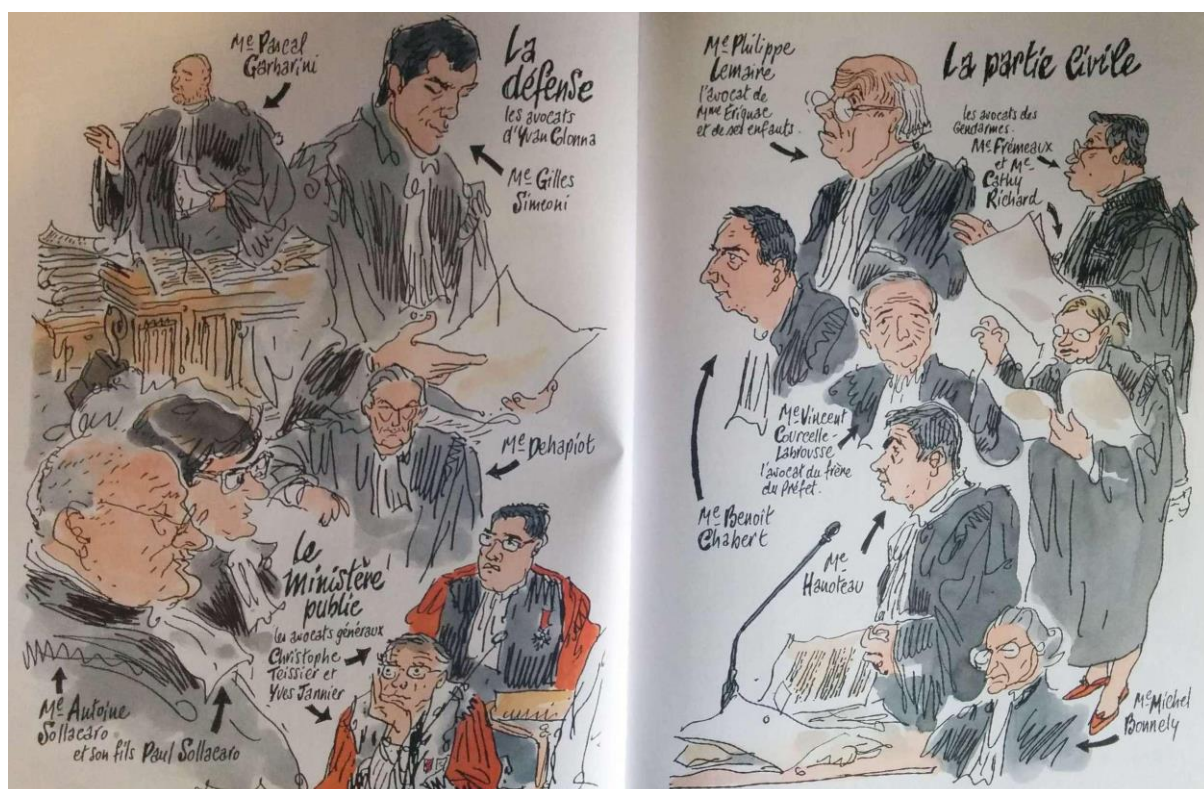


Figure 5: Double page illustration in Tignous & Paganelli, *Le Procès Colonna* (Paris: 12bis, 2007), p 10-11. © 12bis.

while others are dominated by text, with only incidental illustrations:⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁹ Tignous & Paganelli p. 10-11.

⁷¹⁰ Tignous & Paganelli, p. 110.



Figure 6: Text and illustration in Tignous & Paganelli, *Le Procès Colonna* (Paris: 12bis, 2007), p. 110. ©12bis.

In examples such as figure 5, the work functions as a standard, modern *bande dessinée*. It lacks the strips and panels of traditional *bande dessinée*, but the full-page illustration with minimal text is a technique used by many modern *bande dessinée* creators, as for example in figure 7, from Paolo Cossi's *Medz Yeghern*.⁷¹¹

⁷¹¹ Paoli Cossi, *Medz Yeghern: Le Grand Mal* (Paris: Dargaud, 2009), n.p.

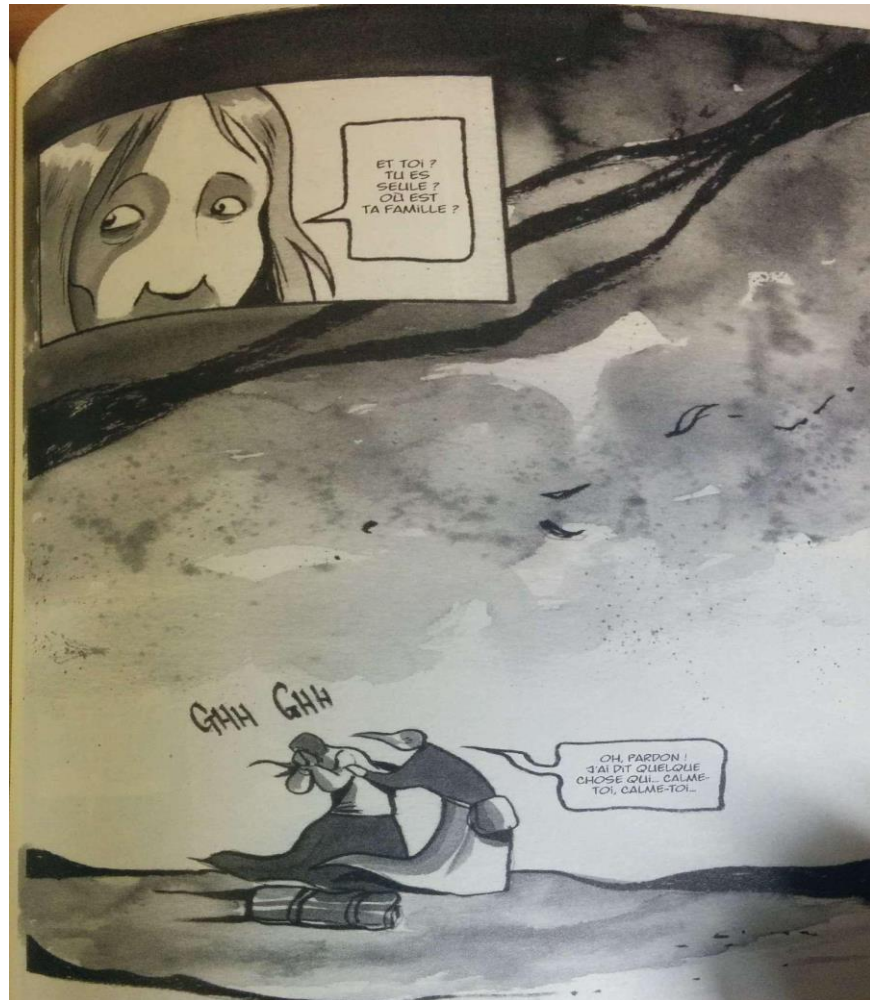


Figure 7: Full-page illustration in Paolo Cossi, *Medz Yeghern: Le Grand Mal* (Paris, Dargaud: 2007), unpaginated ©Dargaud.

In such examples, the image is an integral part of the narrative. However, on pages such as fig. 6, *Le Procès Colonna* has more in common with older-style *illustré* stories, where the text carries most importance and meaning, with the single illustration serving to add visual interest. With this in mind, is *Le Procès Colonna* a *bande dessinée* or another form of illustrated book? I would argue that its classification as a *bande dessinée* is most appropriate and not merely because the formal definition of the term is as yet far from fixed. Although the authors rely heavily on textual explanations of the narrative, the illustrations are equally, if not more important—if the illustrations were removed, large parts of the narrative would be lost.

If we consider *Le Procès Colonna* part of the *bande dessinée* corpus, it is unique, to the best of my knowledge, as a primary source *bande dessinée* featuring Corsica. Other *bandes dessinées* which feature Corsica are either fiction (e.g. *L'Enquête corse*), fictionalised retellings of real events (e.g. *Libera Me*) or depictions of historical events many centuries in the past (e.g. *Histoires corses*). Additionally, it is the only *bande dessinée* featuring Corsica and published in Paris which portrays Corsican independence movements and militants in a sober, non-stereotypical way. Yvan Colonna and the other militants, lacking balaclavas and explosives, also lack the power of the stereotypical Corsican militant bogeyman as depicted by the mainstream. Without this power, Colonna also loses his menace. He is an 'enemy of the state' in the most literal sense but portrayed as a normal defendant stripped of his danger and significance. A contemporary primary source allows analysis of representation of modern Corsica which moves beyond the comedic and / or stereotypical depictions of mainstream *bande dessinée* into more complex representations.

Le Procès Colonna is a particularly valuable object of study for the purposes of this thesis because of the book's many unusual aspects. These include its role as an illustrated primary source, the text-image format, and the questions of continued relevance as the events it depicts recede further into the past. It is also important as a document in which the 'internal' and 'external' views of Corsica, as detailed in previous chapters, come into direct opposition. In this way, it stands apart from those representations which are clearly internal and those which are clearly external, being instead a representation which presents two versions of Corsica, how those versions differ and what the consequences of this difference are in a highly-charged situation—a criminal trial. Having examined representations of Brittany and Corsica from internal, external and, in the case of *Le Procès Colonna*, mixed perspectives, I now move on to general conclusions that can be drawn from this thesis.

9. Conclusion

The goal of this thesis is to evaluate how the French peripheral regions of Brittany and Corsica are depicted in the medium of the *bande dessinée*. Geographically distant from France's cultural and political centre, both regions have developed locally-specific linguistic and cultural heritages that are distinct from that of the French mainstream. As such, Brittany and Corsica have both been seen as 'other' by those in closer contact with France's republican centre; this perception and the regions' cultural specificities have been used in mainstream culture as a source of humour and negative stereotypes, much as has happened at times elsewhere in the world. The historical French perception of Brittany as strange and backward has proved enduring: Ronan le Coadic cites the playground song 'des pommes de terre pour les cochons, les épluchures pour les Bretons', still sung in the 1970s, while politician Charles Pasqua remarked in 1992, 'Les Bretons, c'est comme les cochons, plus ça devient vieux, plus ça devient con'.⁷¹² The Hudson Institute report, secretly commissioned by the French government and discovered by the ARC as noted in the section 'Corsican Context', specifically cites the use of Corsica as a source of humour in the French cultural context in 1970: 'Les Français prennent la Corse comme sujet de plaisanteries, racontent des histoires corses, mais ils n'y s'intéressent pas vraiment'.⁷¹³

Regional culture and language has also historically been problematic from the point of view of the French government: the development of education, particularly during the Third Republic, prioritised use of French by all citizens and in the process actively denigrated regional languages including Breton and Corsican. In the case of Breton, suppression of the language also included disparagement of local culture, as in the following example of education in the Côtes d'Armor (known until 1990 as the Côtes-du-Nord), described by retired Breton teacher Kloada An Du in her 1992 memoirs:

⁷¹² Ronan Le Coadic, 'Bretagne et tabou' in Nicolas Weill, *Que reste-t-il de nos tabous ?* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004), pp.153-166 (p. 156).

⁷¹³ Cited in Crettiez, p, 33.

Il y avait, à gauche de la classe, les tableaux de lecture et, à droite, un autre tableau, sur lequel il y avait deux dessins : d'un côté, un Breton en costume traditionnel, mais pas du coin, [portant] *bragoù bras* et *botoù koad*, et, de l'autre, un cochon. Sous le Breton, [l'institutrice] écrivait le nom des enfants qui avaient parlé breton et sous le cochon, le nom de ceux qui étaient sales. Nous pensions BRETON = COCHON.⁷¹⁴

In Corsica, the Corsican language was not included in the provision of the original *loi Deixonne* of 1951 authorising (minimal) teaching of regional languages in schools: it was included only in 1974 as the law was revised. The Corsican language became an integral part of the cultural movement of *riacquistu* (reacquisition) in the 1970s; the language became a marker of Corsican identity.

Official attitudes to Brittany and Corsica have filtered down to French society in general, leading to negative stereotypes and jokes such as those noted above. This thesis aims to assess how these attitudes have influenced representations of those regions in the *bande dessinée* medium, a popular art form that, while not culturally specific to France alone, forms a significant part of the French cultural landscape. In order to do this I have examined various *bandes dessinées* which depict one or other of the regions in question and which provide both external and internal representations. For the purpose of this thesis, external representations are *bandes dessinées* produced about Brittany or Corsica by mainstream publishers and authors, predominantly based in Paris; internal representations are *bandes dessinées* produced about Brittany and Corsica by creators and/or publishers based in the respective regions themselves. More specifically, I hope to have shown the extent to which the depiction of both regions differs depending upon the origin of the creators of the relevant *bandes dessinées*. How does the Parisian *bande dessinée* industry choose to represent the regions, and how do authors and illustrators in Brittany and Corsica,

⁷¹⁴ Cited in Le Coadic, p.155. *Bragoù bras* = 'baggy trousers'; *botoù koad* = 'wooden shoes, clogs', the significance of which has been explained above.

culturally positioned as ‘other’, use a medium so important to French cultural consciousness to represent themselves and their local society? In general, mainstream publishers rely on stereotypes and received ideas to ensure a wider appeal, while local publishers tend to avoid a stereotypical approach, instead presenting more realistic portrayals. Local *bandes dessinées* can function as a reaction against mainstream portrayals, representations of local history and experiences, outright expressions of regional identity, or indeed all of the above.

An examination of various examples of internal and external *bandes dessinées* has shown that there are clear differences between the representations of Brittany and Corsica originating from the French mainstream and those which originate from within local production markets. In the case of Brittany, *Les Aventures de Bécassine* presents a picture of Brittany which draws heavily on received ideas about the region current at the time of publication: the Bretons as depicted dress oddly and indulge in strange local customs (see, for example, the hanging of baby Bécassine on a hook for safety reasons in *L’Enfance de Bécassine*);⁷¹⁵ Brittany is presented as the rural Other to Parisian modernity. We see Bécassine being taught in a Third Republic classroom, copying out ‘Paris est la capitale de la France’,⁷¹⁶ a clear reference to the educational reforms of the 1880s and their Republican mission. Bretons are presented in opposition to Parisians for the purposes of ridicule, primarily through the depiction of Marie Quillouch, who aims unsuccessfully for Parisian sophistication. As for the character of Bécassine herself, while she begins the series as a one-dimensional Breton stereotype, the character develops nuances over the life of the series, becoming increasingly patriotic during the First World War, and taking advantage of the opportunities presented to her by technology: driving, flying aeroplanes, undertaking international travel. However, while Bécassine takes part in the increasingly modern world, she remains static particularly in her style of dress and personality: she is always drawn in the same emblematic Breton costume in opposition to the fashionable Parisians around her. The Bécassine of 1939 draws on the same cultural basis as the Bécassine of 1905.

⁷¹⁵ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), p. 7.

⁷¹⁶ Caumery & J.P. Pinchon (a), p. 36.

In contrast, *Ololê* and its later revival *L'Appel d'Ololê* show a very different Brittany. *Ololê* is a product of a specific type of Breton identity, politically right-wing and traditionalist Catholic, to which historical circumstances gave relevance at the time of publication, as the papers' ideological stance converged with that of the occupying forces and their French collaborators. Instead of looking outward for validation, as *Les Aventures de Bécassine* compares Brittany and the cultural centre, *Ololê* looks inward, promoting Breton identity on its own terms. Content is drawn almost entirely from issues of local interest (primarily religion, but also, for example, the Breton language and folklore). *Ololê* does not draw on the political centre's stereotypes of Brittany but instead promotes a version of Breton identity based on local knowledge and experience, where reference to the centre is unnecessary.

In the case of Corsica, similar results are to be found. *Bandes dessinées* produced by mainstream publishers draw heavily on established Corsican stereotypes. There is a marked difference in how Corsica is portrayed in *bandes dessinées* produced, dependent on whether the date of publication occurs prior to or after the outbreak of widespread political violence. Earlier examples of *bande dessinée* portray a romanticised, timeless Corsica, most notably in *Lili Bandit Corse*, where inhabitants of rural Corsica are depicted dressed in very old-fashioned clothing and the society adheres to ancient customs (notably the vendetta), but urban Ajaccio is shown as a modern 1960s city. *Astérix en Corse* represents Corsica in a similar way, concentrating on the stereotypes of vendetta and the honour system, particularly in relation to women. In the *bandes dessinées* examined which were published after the events at Aléria and the development of clandestine Corsican nationalism in the 1970s, however, this romanticised Corsica is replaced by more violent stereotypes: constant bombing, nationalist infighting, a society closed to outsiders. The vendetta is still present, but is recast as part of the intra-nationalist conflict. The success of *L'Enquête Corse* and the many similar *bandes dessinées* released in its wake shows that decades after the assertion of the Hudson Institute, Corsica is still a popular source of humour in mainstream French culture, and that that humour adapts as stereotypes alter over time as the image of Corsica in French popular consciousness changes.

As with *Ololê* in Brittany, internal representations of Corsica in *bandes dessinées* also look inward when depicting Corsica. DCL's catalogue, based heavily on retelling historical Corsican narratives, forgoes popular stereotypes and instead faithfully portrays events significant to local cultural consciousness: locally-produced *bandes dessinées* depict a nuanced Corsica, with more to offer than violence or danger. Recent local publications have portrayed more recent history, e.g. *Libera Me*'s picture of 1980s nationalism or the visual account of *Aleria 1975*. With these publications, local creators engage with the recent stereotypes of Corsican nationalism shown in mainstream *bandes dessinées* like *L'Enquête Corse* and its derivatives, but do not use them as a source of humour. Instead the nationalism and violence shown in both works is realistic. In the case of *Libera Me* they are used to propel a fictional thriller narrative, while *Aleria 1975* acts as a commemorative publication for an event which has affected the lives of many Corsicans in the decades since 1975.

Significantly, in contrast to the internal representations of Brittany which functioned entirely on a local level without seeking a non-local audience, 'by Bretons for Bretons' being the watchword, the creators of internally-produced Corsican *bandes dessinées* intend their work to reach a wider, mainstream French audience, although naturally they also heavily promote their work on a local level, e.g. on local radio and television. Frequent appearances at signings and festivals on the mainland show their simultaneous desire to promote their version of Corsica to non-Corsican readers.

The implication of this research is that, by producing *bandes dessinées* about regional cultures within the framework of the French republic, regional creators can and do successfully utilise the conventional francophone *bande dessinée* medium to promote those local cultures, subverting traditional French narratives on regional cultures as still regularly expounded in the mainstream media. They can take advantage of an established audience and the apparatus already constructed to publish and promote *bande dessinée* to disseminate a message which differs from the pre-existing traditional narratives and promotes their chosen form of regional identity. Creators' motives may differ: we can see this in the various examples of *bande dessinée* which are examined in this thesis. Henri Caouissin used *Ololê* as a tool to reinforce Breton regional identity during foreign occupation: although he eschewed more modern techniques in favour of

a very traditionalist form of text-image interaction, it seems unlikely that he would have created *Ololê* if he had not first had some experience with *Cœurs Vaillants*; his experience of *bande dessinée* publishing and his ability to gather highly competent artists are integral to the successful publication of *Ololê*. Its success can be seen in the growth of associated youth groups and continued production under difficult circumstances. The longevity of the paper's appeal, even decades after the version of Breton identity espoused therein had ceased to be politically or culturally viable, can be seen in the number of readers who returned to Caouissin's later publication, *L'Appel d'Ololê*, and donated money specifically in remembrance of the original *Ololê*.

While some of those involved in local Corsican *bande dessinée* production did not associate any great importance to the question of Corsican identity in the albums, others, notably Frédéric Bertocchini and Éric Rückstühl, expressed a clear desire to promote Corsican culture through their *bandes dessinées*. Rückstühl has been promoting Corsica in the medium since the mid-1990s, longer than anyone else currently working with DCL; the loudest voice in Corsican *bande dessinée*, Bertocchini is its biggest supporter, heavily promoting works published by DCL and other relevant publishers in the local media. For the non-Corsican reader, the *bandes dessinées* published by DCL offer a representation of Corsica which is far removed from that offered by the mainstream *bandes dessinées*, even those which are popular with Corsican readers (i.e. *L'Enquête Corse*, *Astérix en Corse*). However stylised or fictionalised, DCL representations are more complex and show aspects of Corsican life and society that readers on the French mainland would otherwise rarely encounter. For Corsican readers, this opportunity to see a more 'realistic' version of Corsica portrayed in *bandes dessinées* also resonates; in my interview with him, an anonymous member of the public at the Ajaccio festival asserted that Corsican *bande dessinée* production was important because 'il faut pouvoir s'exprimer';⁷¹⁷ he saw the work of DCL as an important manifestation of Corsican cultural expression. The popularity of DCL's catalogue is a reflection of the success of this cultural expression: as noted in the chapter on Corsican production, thousands of copies have been sold. In addition, as of July 2015, DCL have sold out of the entire

⁷¹⁷ Interview conducted with attendee of the Festival International de la Bande Dessinée d'Ajaccio, 28 November 2014.

print run of some series and are reaching the end of others, particularly *Paoli* and *Le Bagne de la honte*. The first and second volumes of *Le Bagne de la honte* have been reprinted once and twice respectively; a fifth edition of *Paoli* will be published in 2016.

On a deeper level, DCL's choice to publish *bandes dessinées* of which the subjects are so closely tied with modern Corsican identity is significant and points to a desire to disseminate a specific kind of Corsican identity.⁷¹⁸ This decision is not surprising, since those working on DCL's *bande dessinée* output are a small group containing very few Corsicans—Frédéric Bertocchini is the only consistent native Corsican creative presence at DCL making *bandes dessinées*. the cultural identity of the native Corsicans involved will naturally come to the fore, as they are most heavily invested in Corsican culture and society. This explanation also applies to the work of Henri Caouissin: *Ololê* and *L'Appel d'Ololê* do not express a universal Breton identity but instead that of Caouissin, his family and collaborators. That his perception of what it meant to be Breton was shared by many in the 1940s (and considerably fewer in the 1970s) is not particularly important: the version of 'Breton-ness' expounded by Caouissin found a willing audience and as such was for a time an effective vector for Breton regional identity. Similarly, while the *bandes dessinées* published by DCL show a specific representation of Corsican identity, the undeniable popularity of that representation makes local Corsican *bande dessinée* a useful vehicle for the promotion of Corsica and Corsican identity. Creators from other regions of France could also use the *bande dessinée* medium effectively for similar purposes.

The research presented in this thesis generally expands the field of *bande dessinée* scholarship by studying several works which have previously received little academic attention, despite the popularity of those works with *bande dessinée* enthusiasts. In addition, this research also adds to the more specific field of academic study of the regional cultures of France as expressed in *bandes dessinées* and wider visual culture. Since the present research includes only a

⁷¹⁸ Subjects of DCL *bandes dessinées* include: Pasquale Paoli, the emblematic figure of historical resistance repeatedly invoked by the ARC, FLNC and other nationalist groups; and the events of August 1975 in Aleria which ignited Corsican political violence and so deeply affected Corsican society.

small sample of relevant *bandes dessinées*, particularly in the case of Brittany, there remain various possible avenues for future research. These include, for example, examination of more recent *bande dessinée* depictions of Brittany. Brittany has been the subject of many *bandes dessinées* in recent years. Of particular note here are: the work of Bruno Le Floc'h, involving the modern retellings of events in historical Breton society by a Breton creator;⁷¹⁹ the 2014 silent *bande dessinée* *Un Océan d'amour*,⁷²⁰ which, while depicting a familiar traditional Brittany, is innovative in its choice of form; and *Plogoff* and *100 Maisons: la cité des abeilles* by Delphine Le Lay and Alexis Horellou which both show a Brittany stripped of traditional stereotypical markers such as *coiffes* or *sabots*, instead representing a realistic version of life in post-war and 1970s Brittany and the issues which affected those communities, namely rural Plogoff and its anti-nuclear movement and the community which built and funded its own housing in response to a housing crisis in 1950s Quimper. The issue of Breton identity is still important in these albums, particularly in *Plogoff*, where the villagers actively resist attempts of the political centre to impose its will and are actively and violently repressed. To these should be added the recent work of Weber and Nicoby, *Ouessantines* and *Belle-Île en père*,⁷²¹ which both feature Breton women returning to remote Breton islands and the problems that they face in being accepted by the insular communities. Identity, and what it means to be Breton, is central to both albums.

Other avenues for future research include further study on the reception of *bandes dessinées* in Corsica. Although I carried out interviews for this thesis in Ajaccio, the sample size was very small and the group of interviewees was demographically uniform in that all were male, all between the ages of thirty and fifty, with the majority involved in production of *bandes dessinées*. A wider survey of *bande dessinée* reception on Corsica with a larger, more diverse sample would be valuable, particularly in assessing wider audience perceptions of how Corsican identity is expressed in the medium. A pool of interviewees including women, members of the public who did not attend the Ajaccio *bande*

⁷¹⁹ See for example Bruno Le Floc'h, *Trois éclats blancs* (Paris: Delcourt, 2004). This album won the Prix René Goscinny in 2004.

⁷²⁰ Lupano & Panaccione, *Un océan d'amour* (Paris: Delcourt 2014).

⁷²¹ Weber & Nicoby (a), *Ouessantines* (Grenoble: Vents d'Ouest, 2013), Weber & Nicoby (b), *Belle-Île en père* (Grenoble: Vents d'Ouest, 2015).

dessinée festival, men of a wider age range and—ideally—children would give fuller, more representative data

The questions investigated in this thesis could equally be explored in the study of any other region in France or indeed any other region in the francophone world. The world influenced by France, its language and culture is vast and many places outside metropolitan France have developed local scenes of production of *bandes dessinées* and more general visual culture, notably Quebec and francophone Africa. The importance of *bande dessinée* as a mass cultural product, its broad appeal and its capacity to reflect and adapt a wide range of popular opinion make the medium an ideal sphere for the investigation of sociocultural attitudes and prejudices. This thesis forms one part of the exploration of how francophone communities, regions and nations are represented and choose to represent themselves.

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