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Lost in Translation: Narratives of Transcultural Displacement in the Wordless Graphic Novel

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> *He remembered the immigrant's fear of going unrecognized in a land of strangers, of being lost in the translation from there to here.*
>
> *(Chabon, The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay 381)*

Wordless graphic novels are a strange kind of comics. If they are comics at all. Often cited as precursors to the contemporary graphic novel, visual narratives without words epitomize the medium's fundamental emphasis on visual forms of narration and yet flout comics' central element of word-image relation.[1] The wordless graphic novel's aesthetic states of in-betweenness and precarious belonging, coupled with its reliance on visual rather than linguistic means of narration, make it a compelling case study for the transnational potential of comics. For the question arises: With their complete reliance on the language of pictures, are these wordless narratives not ideally suited for transnational communication and impact?

The following statement from George Walker's recent anthology of wordless graphic novels seems to assume as much:

> Imagine the advantage of writing a book that can be read anywhere in the world without translation. Free of the confines of words, books written in the universal language of pictures are understandable anywhere in the global village. A drawing of a stick figure needs no translation. Pictorial narratives are not new; the earliest known cave paintings told tales of hunting, the Egyptians used sequential images and all written languages evolved from pictures, our universal system of expression and communication.[2]

But is the matter really that simple? To whom does Walker's first-person plural possessive adjective "our" refer? Are pictures really a "universal system" and pictorial books "understandable anywhere"? In fact, Walker's reference to Egyptian sequential imagery provides an interesting case in point. Hieroglyphs are one of the most famous instances of the very necessity of translation; without the Rosetta Stone, modern readers would still wonder what these particular types of Egyptian pictures meant. Given this fact, it comes as no surprise that Scott McCloud sees them as precursors to writing rather than to comics. Even with Egyptian paintings, any attempt to read them from a modern point of view is already a process of translation, as McCloud's *Understanding Comics* illustrates. In his analysis of a scene painted for the Tomb of Menna, his captions are a veritable translation of the scene depicted in the individual panels.[3] On the surface, it is, of course, an indicator of the universal quality of the pictures that a twentieth-century American can decipher Egyptian symbols from 1500 BC. Yet, the amount of knowledge needed to make sense of the pictures and the relation between the Egyptian paintings and McCloud's words in these panels is a translation in the original sense of the word (lat. *transferre* meaning "to bring over, carry over"). For his translation, McCloud has to do more than simply determine what the pictures mean from a universal point of view; he has to decipher what the pictures meant to those who used them when and where they used them. He then has to bring the depicted information and the pictorial means over from one cultural context to another, thereby inevitably changing both the paintings' "original" meaning(s) and his understanding of sequential art. This hybrid transcultural exchange elucidates the fact that no matter how easily we recognize the denotative meaning of images, their connotative meaning is far from fixed. Or, in the terms of structural linguistics: An image's signifier may be universally recognizable, but the signified is not and always changes if we move from one semiotic context to another.

Turning to the medium of comics, manga offers a prominent example of the issues that arise from a reductionist, ethnocentric take on pictorial translation. As Jens R. Nielsen has shown with special reference to the large eyes typical of manga, images and symbols in comics are no less culturally dependent than any other pictorial material, and the translation of the "cultural conventions" and "semiotic agreements" embodied in comics is highly problematic.[4] In the Japanese context, the huge eyes do not so much signify cuteness, but are rather conventionalized signs representing mutual openness between character and reader.[5] It follows that the pictorial meaning of comics, including the wordless graphic novels that are the subject of this chapter, can never be universal, and that pictures require translation

just as much as conventionalized images such as letters and words. This may complicate a supposedly seamless transnational movement, but it also provides a powerful image of the dynamics of transnational contact and exchange.

Translation in the sense of movement from one semiotic context to another is also a central thematic aspect of several of the best-known wordless graphic novels. Although their strictly pictorial aesthetics clearly evokes ideas of universal access, these books problematize matters of transcultural and transnational communication in ways that ultimately reflect on their own medial self-awareness as liminal texts between visual art and comics. Frans Masereel's *The City* (1925), Lynd Ward's *Gods' Man* (1929), and Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* (2006) depict cultural exchange as a highly problematic process fraught with misunderstandings while simultaneously highlighting the transnational basis for their aesthetics. This duality is also emphasized by Michael Chabon's representation of *The Golem*, a fictional wordless graphic novel in his comics-themed novel *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* (2000). These narratives reflect their own precarious aesthetics through narratives of misunderstanding, isolation, and displacement, and they defy an overly simple reading of their culturally contingent pictorial aesthetics. Rather than treating images as a transparent form of communication, they use their supposedly greatest transcultural asset as a self-conscious means of negotiating aspects of transcultural (mis)understanding.

Comics and the wordless graphic novel

There is broad agreement that the relation of words and images is crucial for any definition of comics. Most prominently, Robert C. Harvey claims that "when words and pictures blend in mutual dependence to tell a story and thereby convey a meaning that neither the verbal nor the visual can achieve alone without the other, then the storyteller is using to the fullest the resources the medium offers him."[6] This plea for the essential bimediality of comics and the central aspect of medial hybridization is, in fact, central to many definitions of comics.

In *Comics and Sequential Art*, Will Eisner describes sequential art as "an art and literary form that deals with the arrangement of pictures or images and words to narrate a story or dramatize an idea." This "image-word mix [. . .] presents a montage of both word and image, and the reader is thus required to exercise both visual and verbal interpretive skills." Like Harvey, Eisner claims that "in the skillful employment of words and images lies the expressive potential of

the medium." Once "coupled with words," images "form a precise message to be understood by the reader." Despite this emphasis, however, Eisner concludes his heavily illustrated chapter on "Imagery" with the acknowledgment that "[i]t is possible to tell a story through imagery alone without the help of words," and he illustrates this with a largely pantomimic *Spirit* story.[7] His stance on pure pictorial storytelling remains ambiguous, though. On the one hand, he praises the silent comics drawn by Norwegian artist Jason: "Readers of any language can reflect on [their] universal themes." On the other hand, he concludes on a more tentative note: "Images without words, while they seem to represent a more primitive form of graphic narrative, really require some sophistication on the part of the reader (or viewer). Common experience and a history of observation are necessary to interpret the inner feelings of the actor."[8] Through Eisner's cautionary remark, universal reflection and specific interpretation are cast as two very different processes, such that the superficial accessibility of wordless pictures inevitably leads to much more complex, and ultimately more precarious, processes of translation.

In his meta-comic *Understanding Comics*, McCloud defines comics as "[j]uxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer." This definition suggests that words are not a necessary condition for comics while simultaneously drawing attention to the very centrality of the verbal. His stand-in character may claim that "it doesn't have to contain words to be comics," but the inclusion of "pictorial and *other* images" is significant here and points to a certain hierarchy of the worded over the wordless.[9] Still, by putting sequence at the center of his definition, McCloud includes wordless graphic novels in his definition of comics—but makes it clear that we are dealing with a special case. For McCloud, wordless picture sequences are not so much comics as a hybrid between visual art and comics. In a panel that shows an excerpt from *Gods' Man*, he says: "Woodcut artist *Lynd Ward* is such a missing link. Ward's silent '*woodcut novels*' are powerful modern fables, now *praised* by comics artists, but seldom recognized *as* comics."[10]

For these theoreticians of comics, word/image relation emerges as the core of the dominant definition, leaving open only a marginal space for the rarer special cases—like the wordless graphic novel, which is indeed a much less common instance of sequential art. Ironically, in the context of bimedial comics, it is this "purer" form of pictorial storytelling that emerges as the strange or hybrid kind, as a mongrel between visual art and comics. Hovering between inclusion in the medium of comics and the demand to be taken on

their own separate terms, wordless graphic novels defy discrete classification and construct a medial space of in-betweenness.

Transnational silence

In-betweenness is the watchword here, as wordless graphic novels also provide us with a rich history of texts that highlight transnational exchange, an aspect that often goes unnoticed in general accounts of comics. The transnational element in wordless graphic novels has also been alluded to by Walker, who stresses the relation between the early wordless graphic novel and the class struggles and protest movements of the 1920s and 1930s.[11] Beyond this, I want to claim that we can also find a recurring sense of displacement, alienation, and the perpetual need to translate unknown cultural codes and disjunct experiences in the wordless narratives analyzed in this chapter.

The transnational dimension of wordless graphic novels is already apparent if we look at the creative minds behind the books, for all of them are subject to—and agents of—"the broad array of cultural crossroads shaping the work of border-crossing authors, artists, and cultural forms that straddle multiple regional and national traditions."[12] Frans Masereel was a Belgian-born artist working primarily in France, and his work *The City* was first published in Germany. Shaun Tan is an Australian artist of part-Malaysian descent, while Lynd Ward was a US-American heavily influenced by European artists like Masereel. With Chabon, we have a Jewish American author who writes about the displaced European Jew Josef "Joe" Kavalier in mid-century America. The fact that all of these illustrators and authors are published by mainstream publishers in the United States makes it deceptively obvious that we are dealing with a quintessentially transnational phenomenon. Yet, when Shelley Fisher Fishkin claims that "places hard to categorize" and "figures who have been marginalized precisely because they crossed so many borders that they are hard to categorize" will be more central to a transnational American studies, she speaks in terms that connect the aesthetic position of the wordless graphic novel with its tendency to focus on exactly these transnational actors and locales.[13] The transnational is a double-edged sword; just as much as it facilitates exchange and global understanding, it also leaves in its wake those subjects stuck in a transnational limbo between spaces. And the same holds true for the wordless graphic novels in the focus of this chapter: While their visual aesthetics are deceptively simple and transparent, they speak of the perils

of not-belonging. Their narratives are thus ironic testaments to the difficulties of understanding one another across cultural and national borders.

Alienated and anonymous: *The City*

Often cited as the fount of twentieth-century wordless graphic novels, Masereel's woodcut narratives also set the scene for the transnational lineage of this wordless comics genre. Masereel's sympathy with the international labor movement can already be seen in his first book, *The Passion of Man* (*25 Images de la Passion d'un Homme*, 1918). This short sequence depicts a worker's life literally from the cradle to the grave. Born to a single woman and reared in poor circumstances, he becomes a worker and later a leader of the labor movement. After the protagonist is arrested and convicted by the capitalist authorities, the short narrative ends with him awaiting execution. Less overt in its political message, but equally sociological in focus, *The City* (*Die Stadt*, 1925) is the depiction of life in a(ny) modern metropolis.[14] For David Beronä, Masereel's choice of a line from Walt Whitman for the epigraph of his book—"This is the city and I am one of the citizens, Whatever interests the rest interests me"—indicates that Masereel "captures the pedestrian activity seen in any large city at the turn of the century."[15] The first three panels seem to depict a movement to the city, beginning with a man sitting in nature outside an industrial city before showing trains and commuters in a train station; the rest of the book deals with a lateral movement within the nameless city in associative sequence.[16] The 100 disjointed woodcuts depict juxtaposed, alienated, and anonymous subjects in urban life. Blue-collar and white-collar work, consumption, leisure, and entertainment go hand in hand with military parades, sexual orgies, and murders and deaths. There is no sequence in a straightforwardly narrative sense of connecting one scene logically with the next; rather, the narrative isolation of the individual panels stresses the isolation of the individuals and the respective social groups. But without knowledge of European culture between the wars, these individual panels would hardly be understandable. More basically still, it is not even clear whether we are dealing here with succession or simultaneity, whether the different scenes take place at the same time, within an hour, a day, a month, or a year.[17] This almost imagist aesthetics, together with Masereel's expressionistic visual style, connects the book to the essentially transnational phenomenon of modernism. The setting is equally ambiguous. Given that Masereel was Francophone, it comes as no surprise that in the few instances when actual words are depicted, they

are in French; but apart from that, his evocative woodcuts of inner-city scenes, department stores, military parades, and political speeches could portray Paris just as well as interbellum London, Berlin, or Moscow.[18] The city of the book's title emerges as the anonymous city of modernity, where various transnational and transcultural movements and phenomena converge and diverge and where the differences between concrete instances of urban modernity become blurred. This space, however, is no place of transnational utopia; it is rather a chaotic geography of anonymity and alienation.

Stranger in a strange land: *Gods' Man*

In 1929, the wordless graphic novel "immigrated" to the United States when, after a visit to Germany, Lynd Ward began to work in this idiom. Just like Masereel, Ward used woodcutting, and just like Masereel's, Ward's style is heavily influenced by modernist expressionism. However, compared to Masereel's stark black-and-white compositions that rely heavily on black spaces and sharp contrasts, Ward's frequent use of white lines in his black spaces creates a much more nuanced, less drastic visual effect—and he tells an actual story.

With *Gods' Man*, we have both the first modern American wordless graphic novel and yet another depiction of modern urban life. After a perilous journey, a quintessential Romantic artist arrives at an unknown city with an unknown semiotic code—capitalism.[19] At an inn, the artist must learn that he has to pay for everything, food included, and that his art is not a valid currency unless transferred into money. Everything is owned by somebody, and everything has a price in this system of monetary exchange value and the trading of proprietary goods. A Mephistopheles figure comes to the rescue, buys a painting, and thus enables the artist to pay for his meal. The masked figure seems to recognize the artist's talent and offers him a brush that promises to make him a better painter. In the next six panels, we see the historical trajectory of this brush in a markedly transnational sequence that encapsulates the history of Western art. The first panel depicts an ancient Egyptian holding the brush while painting, and the next panel shows a Greek artist using the brush to paint a vase. While a medieval monk is at the center of the next panel, the fourth panel clearly depicts Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), one of the most famous precursors of woodcut art. The sequence ends with a Renaissance artist and a modern painter with an easel and the brush. After hearing this story (which we only see in its pictorial translation), the painter in *Gods' Man* (literally) signs the pact with this story's devil and,

in best Faustian fashion, is soon rewarded with commercial success. Later on, however, he has to leave the city and start a new life in nature, where he lives with his wife and child. This Romantic idyll is terminated, finally, when the devil cashes in on his outstanding debt; he claims the artist's life. With its story of an artist failing in a strange and corrupting city, *Gods' Man* highlights the problems inherent in transcultural contact, emphasized through its metaphorical narrative and its emphasis on the incongruity of semiotic systems. Even a transnational tool such as the brush, imbued with the aesthetic history of Western civilization, cannot prevent the artist from failing to find a place in the transnational realms he discovers.

Explicitly transnational: *The Arrival*

Shaun Tan's recent *The Arrival* depicts cultural exchange as a no less complex endeavor, but it represents it in more hopeful terms than did Masereel or Ward. In many respects, this contemporary wordless graphic novel is much more similar to "comics," as the term is commonly understood, than its historical precursors: It consists of drawings rather than woodcuts, and even though there are numerous full-page images, it frequently features sequences of multiple panels on a single page. The story itself (naturally) does not feature any word balloons, but its panels feature many letters from a clearly foreign language unintelligible for both the reader and the protagonist.[20] As such, *The Arrival* reduces words and letters to their pictorial basis, for the protagonist and for us, and highlights the semiotic problems that arise when entering alien spaces.

At its core, *The Arrival* is a classic, straightforward story of migration. A father has to leave his family to make a living in a foreign city across the ocean. After he has become accustomed to this strange place, his family follows him, and the book ends with a panel in which the protagonist's daughter helps a new immigrant. This hopeful conclusion and the family's translation of their past into their new life is especially stressed on two structurally similar pages. On the very first page, we see nine panels that depict some of the family's belongings: a paper-bird, a clock, a hat, a bowl, a child's drawing, a kettle, a cup, a suitcase, and a picture of the family that the father will put in this suitcase. The last part of *The Arrival* starts with a strikingly similar succession of panels, but in the first seven panels, the old items are replaced by the retro-futuristic appliances of the nameless city, and the new paper-animal and drawing are also reminiscent of the visual code of the family's new home. These sequences show a successful

transnational exchange by indicating how the family has adopted the new codes without entirely losing its old ones. The circularity of *The Arrival* is also a vivid illustration of what Fishkin describes as the typically transnational, the "endless process of comings and goings that create familial, cultural, linguistic, and economic ties across national borders."[21]

What distinguishes *The Arrival* from classic nineteenth- and twentieth-century immigration narratives is twofold. First, its narrative and particularly its visual style are decidedly antinaturalistic. Mixing surrealism with classic imagery and historical accuracy with an idiosyncratic retro-futurism, the book visually represents both an objective reality as well as a subjective experience of migration. Second, it uses its reliance on elastic visual codes to freely mix various narratives of migration and set its transnational narrative in an unspecified locale. Just as "the" city of Masereel's book is an amalgam of different (European) cities between the wars, so too is "the" arrival an assemblage of several arrival experiences of the turn of the century.[22] Next to allusions to Australian immigration history, several panels evoke the heavily mediated immigration experience of the turn-of-the-century United States, in particular Ellis Island—thus invoking the context in which the very term "transnationalism" was coined, in 1916, by Randolph Bourne under the impression of immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[23] *The Arrival*'s blending of several iconic migration movements speaks to a wide range of transnational audiences, something that may also be read as a shrewd move to appeal to as many consumers as possible. Nonetheless, while clearly drawing on the US perspective, Tan's blending of this perspective with the globally lesser-known Australian experience also decenters the hegemonic understanding of "America" as the quintessential space of modern immigration.

A monstrous comic book: *The Golem*

Joe Kavalier's *The Golem* is a very different kind of wordless graphic novel. Neither its author nor the book itself actually exists, as they are both part of Michael Chabon's historical novel *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*. This wordless narrative resides within a comics narrative consisting of *nothing but* words. Chabon's novel about the creation of comics in the Golden Age of Comic Books is a narrative of cultural displacement that also highlights the transnational element in comics culture. The art school–trained Joe escapes the Prague Ghetto and arrives in New York in 1938, where he begins a comic

book franchise with his cousin, the "enterprising thief" Sam Klayman "Clay."[24] After a short period of success reminiscent of the classic Golden Age creative duos, Joe vanishes from the face of the earth for 13 years. During this time, he creates a 2,256-page long wordless graphic novel about the mythical creature that facilitated his original escape from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia:

> There were no balloons in any of the panels, no words at all except for those that appeared as part of the artwork itself—signs on buildings and roads, labels on bottles, addresses on love letters that formed part of the plot—and the two words THE GOLEM! which reappeared on the splash page at the start of each chapter, each time in a different guise, the eight letters and exclamation point transformed now into a row of houses, now into a stairway, into nine marionettes, nine spidery bloodstains, the long shadows of nine haunted and devastating women. Joe had intended eventually to paste in balloons and fill them with text, but he had never been able to bring himself to mar the panels in this way.[25]

This passage characterizes *The Golem* as a hybrid, or a transitional form, between the comic books and woodcut novels of its day. Its treatment of the splash page and the inclusion of letters in its artwork are highly reminiscent of a popular comic book series of the 1940s, Will Eisner's *The Spirit*. But everything we learn about its style transcends the visual style of its day and rather evokes artists like Ward and Masereel: "the queasy angles and stark compositions, the cross-hatchings and vast swaths of shadow, the distended and fractured and finely minced panels of his monstrous comic book."[26] Moreover, its book-length format also connects it to Ward's woodcut novels, an influence Will Eisner acknowledged when he coined the term "graphic novel": "In 1978, encouraged by the work of the experimental graphic artists Otto Nückel, Franz [*sic*] Masereel and Lynd Ward, who in the 1930s published serious novels told in art without text, I attempted a major work in a similar form. In a futile effort to entice the patronage of a mainstream publisher, I called it a 'graphic novel.'"[27] *The Golem*'s transitionality is not restricted to questions of style and format, though. The fact that the narrative was conceived with speech bubbles and now hovers between the "original" comics idiom and a strange wordless variant connects Joe's narrative with the transnational experience it "translates." Moreover, *The Golem*, this "monstrous comic book," remains unpublished, and therefore in a perennially transitional state. It remains open what exactly makes the book "monstrous," but there is good reason to believe that it might refer to more than a diegetic creature or the sheer size of the book. Mirroring the number of US states in 1954, *The Golem* is told in 48 chapters, and it blends this "American"

structure with a narrative that relates specifically Euro-Judaic traditions. The book at once translates a foreign culture's experience and emerges as an utterly idiosyncratic text that defies comprehension. When he sees the book for the first time, Sam has problems "deciphering the action from the flow of wordless images across the page" and has to ask Joe about the content. Without words, the "precise" meaning (Eisner) of the pictures is hard to grasp for Sam, who lacks both the cultural background knowledge of this "awful lot of Jewish stuff" as well as a medial literacy in this kind of visual narrative.[28]

The definite article of the book's title once more refers to something more ambiguous than it may seem, but this time the ambiguity is even more a part of the very subject to which it refers: the mythical Golem, this transnational Jewish figure. Shortly after his arrival in the United States, Joe draws a Golem for his pitch meeting with a publisher, and the novel emphasizes the relation between the Golem and the American superhero.[29] Chabon not only imagines a strikingly Jewish backdrop to the Golden Age of Comic Books: He emphasizes its transnational background. As indicated by the novel's narrator, the Golem—"from Rabbi Loew's to Victor von Frankenstein's"—is a serial figure that is transhistorical, transgeneric, and transnational.[30] From myth to fiction, from comics to art, and from Europe to America, it is a wayfarer between disparate places. Furthermore, its being made of clay, its silence, and its reliance on words that vanish in its body all emerge as powerful metaphors for its inclusion in Joe Kavalier's wordless graphic novel. In *Kavalier & Clay*, the golem lays the basis for a narrative that "escapes" from the confines of nationalized languages, but the fact that it is never published marks it as little more than a utopia—or, more positively, as an irreducibly transitional space, much like that of the transnational itself.

Conclusion

All of the narratives considered here revolve around cities, these transnational hubs of modernity, and all of them locate their narratives in spaces marked by transnational and transcultural phenomena of migration, exchange, and transition. They blend cities (*The City*), highlight the very absence of national markers (*Gods' Man*), freely mix various (trans)national narratives of migration (*The Arrival*), or represent the concrete transnational experience of European migration to the United States (*The Golem*). They do so, however, from a decidedly Western perspective, and their visual aesthetics are only universal

insofar as they are relatively accessible to Western audiences. But wordless graphic novels should not be seen as pretending to transcend these limitations. It is less the genre's emphasis on a universal visuality than its medial state of in-betweenness that makes the wordless graphic novel a fitting locus for transnational narratives—for narratives that appropriately stress states of hybridity, liminality, and transitionality. Wordless graphic novels highlight narratives of transnational contact and integrate them with visual aesthetics that emphasize the fits and breaks in transnational translation; they construct a transnational potential while always stressing its limits. In the end, even though the wordlessness of wordless graphic novels also facilitates transnational access, it demands a form of transnational reception that pays close attention to the complex process of pictorial translation and does not take the smooth translatability of visual narratives for granted.

Notes

1 See Walker; Beronä. I would like to thank the editors for their immensely helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
2 Walker 9.
3 Cf. McCloud 13–15.
4 My translation; Nielsen 339. See Mark Berninger's contribution to this volume (Chapter 15) for an exploration of one sort of translation of manga's "cultural conventions."
5 Cf. Nielsen 356. This is important insofar as the predominantly Western association of large eyes with cuteness often leads to a disturbing connection between childish connotations and the sexualized content of many manga.
6 Harvey 4.
7 Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art* xi, 1–2, 7, 9, 10.
8 Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art* 18, 20.
9 McCloud 9, 8. In his historical overview of comics, McCloud refers to William Hogarth's silent picture sequence *A Harlot's Progress* (1731) but, significantly enough, follows up on this with a reference to Rodolphe Töpffer's picture series and their employment of word-image relation, calling Töpffer "the father of the modern comic in many ways" (17).
10 McCloud 18.
11 Cf. Walker 10.
12 Fishkin 32.
13 Fishkin 31, 30.

14 While *The Passion of Man* was first published in Masereel's home country Belgium, *The City* was first published in Germany by Kurt Wolff after he had published German editions of Masereel's earlier works. It was also Wolff who convinced Thomas Mann to write an introduction for *Passionate Journey* (*Mon Livre d'Heures*, 1919) and Hermann Hesse to write one for *The Idea* (*Idée*, 1920) (cf. Walker 20–1; Walker reprints all of these works).

15 Beronä 36.

16 Masereel panels 1, 2–3.

17 In fact, the rising/setting sun in panel 40 opposed to the moon in panels 85 and 100 seems to indicate that we are dealing with different times, but the relation between them remains indeterminate.

18 Masereel panels 4–5, 11, 23, 53.

19 Here, Ward might have been influenced by the narrative structure of Masereel's *Passionate Journey*, which also opens with a young man entering an unknown city.

20 Cf. Bradford 29.

21 Fishkin 24.

22 Like Ward, Tan also draws explicit attention to his influences—but this time not as part of the diegesis, but in the form of a (written) "Artist's Note" at the end of the book, where he cites scholarly, historical, and artistic sources that he used for *The Arrival*.

23 Cf. Mayer 17–18.

24 Chabon 7.

25 Chabon 578.

26 Chabon 578.

27 Eisner, *A Contract with God* ix–x.

28 Chabon 579, 583.

29 For a fuller account of the relation between Judaism and the creation of American superheroes, see Fingeroth.

30 Chabon 582. On the concept of the serial figure, see Denson and Mayer. On the relation between Frankenstein, comics, and serial figures, see Denson.

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