The adaptation of three Manchette néo-polars to Machette-Tardi's graphic novels

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Abstract: Cultural adaptations have existed for a long time (Hutcheon & O'Flynn 2013). This article discusses adaptation from one narrative genre, the textual néo-polar crime novel, to another, multimodal comics. It explores three of Jean-Patrick Manchette's néo-polars that have been adapted by Jacques Tardi to three graphic novels: *Ô dingos, ô châteaux! (Folle à tuer), Le petit bleu de la côte Ouest* and *La position du tireur couché*. The analysis suggests that Tardi remains attached to the fidelity paradigm while he also exploits characteristic features of comics, and his own personal style. While Tardi seemingly wishes to be respectful to his former friend Manchette's novels, he creates adaptations that can be read without prior knowledge of the adapted works and which function as independent graphic novels in a recognizable Tardian style.

Keywords: adaptation, comics, graphic novel, *néo-polar*, transposition

1. Introduction

This article explores how three *néo-polars* by the French crime novelist Jean-Patrick Manchette are transposed in Manchette-Tardi's graphic novel trilogy, adapted and illustrated by the comics artist Jacques Tardi. Though seriality is a common feature of crime fiction, in particular of detective stories featuring famous investigators, Manchette's adapted *néo-polars* discussed here are standalone novels. All three albums contain a preface by publisher and film critics François Guérif, who brings up some key issues that seemed to intrigue both Manchette and Tardi. In the first adapted album (*Le petit bleu de la côte Ouest*), Guérif underlines the social criticism present in Manchette's book and its adaptation about 30 years later; in the second (*La position du tireur couché*), the cold wind of 'roman noir' is said to blow through the album which is devoid of good people and heroes; the third (*Ô dingos, ô châteaux!*) is, in turn, inspired by American road movies and westerns and Manchette's core themes: disrespectful humour, rough characters, and a sharp critical vision of society and capitalism.

The comic books are signed Manchette-Tardi on the cover, but they are referred to here as Tardi's adaptations. The analysed French corpus is presented in the following Table, which includes existing English translations in parenthesis.

Manchette's adapted text Gallimard	Year, chapters, and pages	Adaptation by Tardi Futuropolis	Year, pages

Ô dingos, ô châteaux! (*Folle à tuer*) (ODO) (*The mad and the bad*)	1972 Chapters 0−41 Pages 7−188	*Ô dingos, ô châteaux!* (ODOBD) (*Run like crazy run like hell*)	2011 Pages 5−96
Le petit bleu de la côte Ouest (BLEU) (*Three to kill*)	1976/2014 Chapters 1−24 Pages 17−188	*Le petit bleu de la côte Ouest* (BLEUBD) (*West coast blues*)	2005[1], 2008 Pages 5−88
La position du tireur couché (POS) (*The prone gunman*)	1981 Chapters 1−25 Pages 9−197	*La position du tireur couché* (POSBD) (*Like a sniper lining up his shot*)	2010 Pages 5−100

Table 1: Manchette's *néo-polars* and Tardi's graphic novels.

The transposition time between the *néo-polars* and the graphic novels is about 30 years for the first two adaptations and almost 40 years for the last one. It is worth noting that *La position du tireur couché*, the last novel that Manchette published while he was still alive (1942-1995), is generally considered to be his most accomplished work and the epitome of his vision of this kind of writing (Platten 2011, 95). On the contrary, *Ô dingos, ô chateaux!* is one of Manchette's first novels, which might explain why it was adapted later than his two more recognised masterpieces.

Both *néo-polars* and comic books/graphic novels have earlier been described as popular literature or mass literature and accorded little value by literary critics or the cultural elite (Pons 1997; Groensteen 2012a). Today, these genres have achieved a higher status as their particular qualities are better recognised. Polars and comics are widely read by all kind of readers and in the 21st century, their cinematographic adaptations, especially Marvel's comics (e.g. Batman and Spiderman), have increased their popularity (cf. Ross 2010; Groensteen 2012b; Yildrim 2013;) Sometimes comics and graphic novels can be separated from each other (see e.g., Murray 2016; Wimmer n.d.), but in this article, the concepts comics, comic books and graphic novels are used synonymously. We focus on modifications in the narrative rhythm. As Table 1 shows, the length of each adaption is half the number of pages of the adapted text. Each page of these graphic novels contains between five and eight panels (i.e., frames). Before discussing the close relationship between Machette and Tardi, the characteristics of *néo-polar* novels, comics, adaptation, and the narrative structure of comics are discussed briefly.

2. *Néo-polar*, comics and adaptation

Literary critic Agnès Deyzieux (2002, 27) affirms that the French *néo-polar* addresses important social issues and political power structures and thus highlights existential contradictions in human nature in line with the *roman noir* tradition from which it springs (cf. Pons 1997). The *néo-polar* developed in the 1970s and Manchette is widely recognized to be the founder and foremost representative of this type of politically informed crime fiction. Although Deyzieux suggests that the *néo-polar* evolved in the 1980s, her article presents important insights into the social critique, political agenda and realist stance manifest in this

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[1] Album first published in 2005 by Les Humanoïdes Associés with a preface by François Guérif. New editions in 2008 and 2010 by Éditions Futuropolis; all these with a preface by François Guérif.

genre. *Néo-polar* authors consciously manipulated language, rhythm and narrative structure in order to convey their anti-authoritarian stance and challenge the literary establishment; this is a crucial aspect of their writing: it strived to offer readers a form of literature more realistic and efficient than the high-brow literature that dominated the literary field at the time, and which these authors perceived as self-obsessed and oblivious to the world (see Lee 2009; Platten 2011). The *néo-polar* is thus a specific literary subgenre with particular aesthetic features: bringing attention to the lower or marginalised groups in society, it foregrounds action and violence and deploys what can be called a behaviourist style, influenced by cinema and television. External focalisation and a factual writing style with neutral, third-person narration are typical behaviourist features (Desnain 2015). Manchette developed and adapted these aspects to French comics in 1977 when he worked with Tardi on the album *Griffu* (Deyzieux 2002, 27).

According to comics scholar Thierry Groensteen (2012ab), defining comics has been a complex issue ever since scholars started to develop comics theory in the early 1970s. Opinions diverge about the relationship between text and image. Groensteen describes comics as stories in images with a 'predominantly visual narrative form' (2007, 12, 2011a, 14). Scott McCloud emphasizes the importance of sequentiality when he describes 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' (1994, 9), following Will Eisner's notion of 'sequential art' (cf. Eisner 2008). McCloud (1994, 21) claims that Eisner's concise definition is adequate in most situations even though it is not fully comprehensive. In comics, the image and the text cannot be separated but they support each other, although text is, in fact, not a formal requirement. Groensteen (2013, 6−9) suggests that comics have of late learned to be silent as he notices a growing tendency in contemporary comics to use less text than before and let the images speak instead.

A similar discussion of value to the one applied to popular cultural products like comics and crime novels has been applied to adaptations. Because of the importance attached to originality and artistic creativity (see e.g., Van Camp 2007), adaptations have long been considered secondary to, and of less value than, the original work. However, in recent decades adaptations have come to be considered as valuable as the original texts or the adapted texts, the term preferred by Hutcheon (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013, xv). Today, fidelity may still play an important role for fan-culture loyalty, but adaptation studies are much less preoccupied with the idea of fidelity between the adapted text and its adaptation (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013, xxvi; Blin-Rolland 2010, 25; Gaudreault and Groensteen 1998).

An adaptation is one form of transposition, which means the transformation of an element of, for instance, one artistic or linguistic system to another (Hébert 2016, 20–23). The terms adaptation and transposition are used synonymously in this piece. A text that is transposed may be adapted without change or radically modified, as for instance, when a descriptive passage in the *néo-polar* is turned into dialogue or transformed into an image in the graphic novel. As shown below, examples of both strategies are found in the Manchette-Tardi graphic novels. Furthermore, the reader is an important factor in discussions of adaptation. Drawing on Philippe Lejeune's (1984) theorisation of the autobiographical pact, Hutcheon and O'Flynn (2013, 123) confirm that medium change involves expectation shifts between different readerships. The 'pact' concluded between reader and author depends on genre and influences the reader expectations (cf. reader experiences).

Literary scholar Karl Kroeber (2006) emphasizes the difference between visual and verbal storytelling in his comparison of how make believe functions in film and written texts. One major difference concerns temporal sequence; visual storytelling such as film focuses on the action that takes place before our eyes at that very moment (including what is not shown), and visual perceptions usually point forward as they lead on to what will be viewed next. Verbal storytelling is, on the contrary, not bound by the order of the events and makes extensive use of our imagination's capacity to move back and forth in time and imagine alternative outcomes. Kroeber (2006, 3−7) suggests that the most distinctive feature of verbal make believe is that it allows for structuring the telling of a story freely, without chronological constraints. Comics resemble both modes of narrative texts and cinema as they are stories in images (Groensteen 2007, 11; see also Groensteen 2013, 68). There is no actual sound or movement in comics but these effects are described visually by typographic tools (e.g., ideograms) and onomatopoeia (cf. Bocquel 2015). Comics and films have some similarities in their narrative sequentiality, using for instance changes of rhythm and picture angles (e.g., close-up, foreground); however, they divide, among other things, time and space in a different manner.

According to Groensteen (2013, 121), behaviourist narratives, which limit the reader's knowledge of the characters to their actions and utterances while denying access to their thoughts or feelings, still predominate in comics, though he identifies several means of expressing subjectivity in the genre. As mentioned, psychological aspects and introspection are usually downplayed or even absent from the *néo-polar* narratives, which are characterised by external focalisation and neutral, third-person narration (cf. below). Due to its greater emphasis on visual descriptions than many other literary genres, it can be argued that the *néo-polar* is close to the format of comics. It is worth noting that Jean-Patrick Manchette's novels have a specific visual quality.

3. Narrative structure and rhythm

Stories in images juggle telling stories with words and showing them with images, which create the characteristic narrative structure of comics. Texts are divided between captions, speech balloons and ideograms representing sound effects or onomatopoeia. As stories are shown in images, captions are often used to explain background, establish a chronology and remind the reader of key events to keep the plot together. With the images they contribute to creating a panel, an individual frame in the multiple panel sequence situated on a page, the double-spread, and the entire comic book (Peeters 2003; Groensteen 2007).

Another characteristic of comics is the use of repetition as a narrative principle. In comics, the procedure of repetition is needed to sustain the narrative continuity and it dialogues with different new elements to assure this; repetition greatly focuses on the central protagonist, the hero (Groensteen 2007, 115). Images, motives, characters and stage settings can be repeated from page to page and from one comic book to another in a particular comic series without disturbing the reader; for instance, in the comic book *Chihuahua Pearl* by Jean-Michel Charlier and Jean Giraud (later known as Moebius), the main protagonist *Blueberry* appears 274 times on 46 pages (Daures 2014).This example indicates that repetition is not considered disturbing when reading comics. In literary genres, however, repetition is generally avoided by use of pronouns, paraphrases and passive forms for stylistic reasons; comics can, of course, also have recourse to similar kinds of narrative processes, but

they do it less often, hence readers generally accept repetition (Daures 2014). Groensteen (2007, 117) nevertheless reminds us that the progression of a story is neither constant nor linearly organised and, thus, this interaction between repetition and new information cannot be mechanically adapted; comics accept several kinds of narrative strategies.

As Groensteen (2007, 2013) demonstrates, repetition is related to rhythm, which in comics is imposed by the contiguity of the panels. The rhythm is further affected by alternation and progressivity, where, in the first case, colouring − even black, white and grey −, various angles, or points of view alternate, whereas in the second, actions are zoomed out or in. Rhythm in comics cannot be measured directly as the speed of actions (i.e., the number of panels dedicated to an action); it is a complex phenomenon and rather a question of tension perceived by the reader while following the plot and interpreting the verbal and pictorial story with all its iconic signs (Groensteen 2013, 149–150). As said above, the plot is divided into narrative sequences which are carefully distributed in panels, pages and double-spreads. These breakdowns create the general atmosphere of the comic book and have an impact on the rhythm (cf. Peeters 2003). Occidental comic books are generally read from left to right and downwards following a 'Z-path' (Cohn 2013), which gives a specific importance to how the pictures are situated on the page and the double-spread; the first image in the top left corner, the last picture in the bottom right corner and the picture in the middle of the page are particularly important. Especially from the point of view of reader perception, the double-spread is an important unit in order to create narrative meaning. The two pages create a double-spread dialogue with each other but do not have the same narrative importance; for instance, when an intriguing action is situated on the last panel in the bottom right corner, it invites the reader to turn to the next page to see how the story continues (Groensteen (2007, 35). The comic artist makes these choices to sustain the dynamic of the story during the creation process bearing in mind the construction of meaning by the future reader (Groensteen 2012b, 118).

As for narrative structure and rhythm in *néo-polars*, these are characterised by action, short and witty dialogue, and violence. Descriptions, introspection and interior monologue are minimized, foregrounding the characters' actions instead of their thoughts, feelings or motivations. Psychological explanations to their behaviour are seldom given. According to literary theorist Yves Reuter (2005, 34), Manchette was an exceptionally skilful literary stylist who brought the behaviourist style to perfection in his later novels. The narratives manifest a rapid and intense rhythm. In accordance with the long tradition of noir comics that traces back to the 1920s and the early years of the American hardboiled crime novel, the *néo-polar* subgenre readily lends itself to adaptation. Jacques Tardi, among other comics artists, has made several adaptations of *néo-polars* (Deyzieux 2002, 349).

4.   Manchette and Tardi

Jean-Patrick Manchette was born in 1942 and died in 1995. This famous crime novelist coined the term *néo-polar* in the 1970s and is generally considered the best representative of this specific sub-genre. Manchette was also familiar with comics as he wrote chronicles in the comics section of the *Charlie Mensuel* magazine in the late 1970s (Manchette1996), collaborated with Jacques Tardi (born in 1946) to write the album *Griffu* (1978) − first published in 1977 in the *BD, hebdo de la BD* magazine −, and translated the graphic novel *Watchmen* by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons into French (1980). In addition to

visual and spatial devices, Tardi uses linguistic means to convey meanings related to rhythm and the voice of the narrator in *Griffu*; on some occasions the present and the past are mingled and, for instance, the story ends with a sort of narrative loop that creates an ambiguous ending (cf. Groensteen 2013, 109).

Some 30 years later, Tardi decided to adapt three other texts by Manchette. Most of Manchette's novels have been made into films over the years, but in Tardi's opinion, the cinematic adaptations are catastrophic failures because they betray Manchette's bleak and disturbing universe by changing significant details such as the portrayal of the main characters (Artus 2010). Tardi hence seems to abide by the idea of staying true to the sense of the original when adapting a novel, at least in the case of Manchette. In 2015, comics artist Gérard Cousseau and publisher Pierre-Marie Jamet organized an art exposition with 74 black and white original pages of the *Le petit bleu de la côte Ouest* album.[2] Cousseau summarizes Tardi's style and compares it with Manchette's texts, arguing that they both focus on the essential with no extra frills. Tardi, however, is very precise with documentation of real places, like the description of different districts in Paris. In a supplement to the Canal BD edition of his 1998 comic book *Le mystère des profondeurs* (The Mystery of the Depths), Tardi acknowledges that Paris is an important source of inspiration for him; he likes to walk around with his camera taking pictures of the city. Specific places, corners or buildings spark his imagination, but he claims to be less interested in recreating realist pictures of these places in his work than in creating atmosphere (Tardi 1998).

Professor of literature Viviane Alary (2007) describes Tardi's style as a 'Tardian' singularity of line-drawing, phantasmagoria, and breath in her analysis of the series *Aventures extraordinaires d'Adèle Blanc-Sec* (The Extraordinary Adventures of Adèle Blanc-Sec) and other graphic novels such as *C'était la guerre des tranchées* (It Was the War of the Trenches) and *Le cri du peuple* (The Voice of the People). Tardi often uses returns and variations of the same shapes, and inserts panels inside other panels to remind readers of past actions (Alary 2007, 76). Tardi's phantasmagoria deals with themes like war and death, and what interests us here, themes present in crime thrillers and *néo-polars*, such as corpses, mysteries to solve and different levels of social criticism (Alary 2007, 82). Furthermore, the Tardian style illustrates the changing rhythm of the narrative: inside and outside scenes alternate, passages with and without text accelerate or slow down actions, and dialogues and captions with temporal indications guide the reader (Alary 2007, 85–86; see also Peeters 1998, 145–148).

As Alary (2007, 77–82) points out, Tardi has done several adaptations of novels, especially by Léo Malet, but also Didier Daeninckx, Daniel Pennac, Géo-Charles Véran, Benjamin Legrand and Jacques Vautrin. It seems quite obvious that he is interested in the *néo-polar* and noir genres, which is hardly surprising given that he belongs to the same generation as Manchette and they grew up frequenting the same underground intellectual milieu filled with jazz music, comics, and popular fiction (Arthus 2010; see also Groensteen 2013, 109). Tardi's predilection for these genres is seen in his works' abundance of motifs pertaining to the theme of death. In the adapted novels under discussion here, death is often present: twenty deaths and ten violent assaults are shown in the adaptation *La position du tireur couché* alone, where we also see a killed cat, dog, and bird.

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[2] http://www.quaidesbulles.com/le-festival-2016/expositions/expositions-2015/article/manchette-tardi/

5. Transpositions related to the narrative rhythm in Tardi's adaptation

Very few parts of the novels are left untransposed. These consist primarily of descriptions of background information or descriptions of characters arriving to some specific place. These events are deleted or transposed in one or a few images. For instance, the nine-page description, in chapter 5 (p. 41–50) in BLEU, of Georges Gerfaut waking up in the morning and going to work on the day after his return home from a trip, during which he helped a mysterious man into the hospital, is shortened to one single page with 5 panels in BLEUBD: all of the text is situated in captions or inside the panel on a note from his wife and on the pages of the newspaper he reads before leaving for the office. Tardi thus concentrates on the essential part of the plot.

Likewise, in ODO, chapters one and two (p. 9–17) – the contract killer Thompson has already been introduced in chapter zero − describe the event when Michel Hartog, an architect and the guardian of his nephew Peter, arrives to a mental asylum to fetch the young girl Julie Ballanger to take care of the boy. These chapters cover only three pages in ODOBD (p. 7–9). In the last panel of the sequence (ODOBD, p. 9), the Lincoln comes out through the gates surrounding the asylum. Between these panels, the entire visit is presented in a reduced and slightly modified form in panels and dialogues between Hartog, asylum inmates, guards, doctor Rosenfeld and Julia. Doctor Rosenfeld's last directly uttered words are given in a caption spread over two panels, which intensifies the impression of Hartog's need to depart as soon as possible, since the second panel shows the car leaving while the doctor's words still hang in the air.

Contrary to such reduced parts in the adaptations, some key events are spread out on several pages and therefore carry more weight. For instance, in BLEU, after the first encounter between Gerfaut and the killers, three short chapters describe Gerfaut's escape and return to Paris where he meets his friend Liétard (p. 63–77). These events are squeezed into five pages in BLEUBD, whereas the next chapter (chapter 11, p. 79–92) takes as much place in the adaptation as it does in the adapted text, i.e. 14 pages (p. 28–42). The killers chase after Gerfaut and, they meet again in a violent confrontation where Gerfaut is badly wounded and one of the chasers burned to death. We are at the midpoint of the story. It is like breathing, first speeding up, and then relaxing before the big physical challenge. Interestingly, Tardi has reversed the fate of the killers: Bastien burns to death in BLEU, whereas Carlo dies in BLEUBD. This is not the only case where Tardi, for no apparent reason, changes who speaks and acts in a certain situation; there are several instances of utterances being assigned to a different character in the adapted version (see e.g., BLEU, p. 69–70 and BLEUBD, p. 27–28).

On some occasions, the adaptation entails shifts or changes of focalization or point of view (cf. Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013). In POS, the narrator describes Terrier entering his friend Stanley's house where a killer has captured Stanley and placed him on an anti-personnel mine in the kitchen; Dizzy Gillespie's record is playing in the background. The chapter begins with a brief mention of Stanley's predicament before the narrator switches to Terrier (p. 152–155). In POSBD (four panels, p. 79–80), there is a mild change of frame and context as no music is heard and the reader first sees Terrier entering the house, then moving forwards (picture angles changing from the front view to a back view) and finally surprising and attacking the killer (both shown from the front). Terrier's movement is accompanied with one short capture text spread over the last three panels in the bottom right corner of the page, which intensifies the rhythm and makes the reader turn the page in order to see what happens

in the confrontation between Terrier and the killer. It is only after their fight that Terrier and the reader discover what has happened to Stanley.

Sometimes changes of focalization or point of view are more startling. In ODO, the contract killer Thompson's client Hartog is revealed quite late in the book (chapter 34, page 162) – the reader can, however, deduce who he is from the story –, whereas it is shown on the second page in ODOBD as it would be obviously difficult to hide his identity in an image. On the contrary, a picture of the target, Peter, is described verbally in ODO (p. 8), whereas it is not even shown in ODOBD (p. 6, panels 5–7). This maintains a similar mystery in the story, even if the hidden identity is no longer that of the client but that of the target. In the same album, there is another change related to showing pictures for narrative reasons. In ODO, Julie discovers the picture of the Moorish Tower (*la Tour Maure*) on page 41 (chapter 7), and the building is named on page 48 (chapter 9), whereas in ODOBD the picture with a caption disclosing its name is viewed through the reader's eyes at once (p. 21, panel 3). In ODO, the Moorish Tower is mentioned again by Thompson when he visits Hartog to gain more information of the place (chapter 34–35, p. 163, 165–166). In ODOBD, the picture is again viewed through the reader's eyes, but it is Thompson who now shows the picture to the reader (p. 83, panel 4). Thus, the reader is even more engaged with the story and at the same time the importance of the picture and the place is repeated.

The final rhythmical aspect to be explored here is the procedure of repetition (cf. Groensteen 2007, 20013; Daures 2014). As seen above, rhythm is created by alternating angles and points of view and by progressing actions through zooming, but also by repeating texts, dialogues and images in identical or slightly modified ways. The most remarkable repetition is the loop (*boucle d'histoire*) that can be found at the beginning and end of BLEU and POS and which is transposed directly to BLEUBD and POSBD. In BLEU, Gerfaut drives on the highway around Paris at high speed early in the morning with no exact direction. He has drunk Four Roses Bourbon and listens to West Coast blues music. In BLEUBD, the text is transposed directly but the first and the three last pictures appear in reversed order (p. 5, 78). Moreover, the opening and closing scenes both have black gutters separating them from the rest of the graphic book; together these devices highlight the picture mode and create the illusion of an infinite loop. In the novels, chapter division plays a similar role but is less prominent. In POS and POSBD, the loop is made in a slightly different way. The POS starts and ends with almost the same text describing a cold and icy wind striking Terrier, who in the initial scene waits for his target in Ireland. At the end of the novel, the narrator explains Terrier's destiny, which repeats the initial event where the sniper lines up his shot ('*prend la position du tireur couché*'), but here Terrier is dreaming. The following two images illustrate the loop in POSBD.
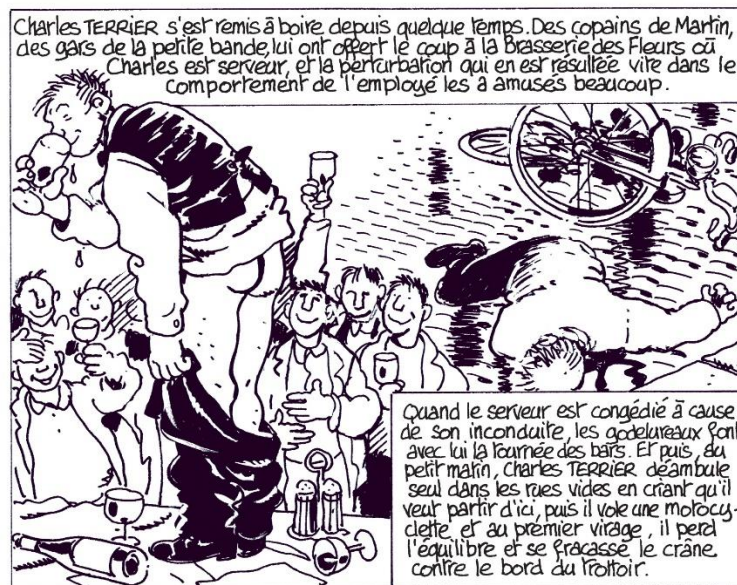
Figure 1. Terrier's father
La position du tireur couché, Manchette (texte), Tardi (ill.). Futuropolis, 2010, p. 30.
© Tardi / Futuropolis / Dist. LA COLLECTION

In POSBD, the text is transposed directly but it is accompanied with a repetition of a picture of Terrier's father shown above (POSBD, p. 30), who had also got a bullet in his head and ended up as a drunken waiter in a bar. The exact same image is repeated at the end (POSBD, p. 100) to illustrate that Terrier's destiny goes in line with his father's, thereby creating another kind of never-ending loop.

Figure 2. Terrier – like father, like son
La position du tireur couché, Manchette (texte), Tardi (ill.). Futuropolis, 2010, p. 100.
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Indeed, the novel presents the same conclusion about Terrier's destiny in narrative text, but the repetition of the image reinforces the impression by its visuality

6. Conclusion and discussion

One striking feature of Tardi's adaptations is their closeness to the adapted novels. Tardi seems to follow the fidelity paradigm in his adaptations. Most alterations concern descriptions of secondary characters and places, which have been omitted or transformed into images to save space and condense the story. Tardi focuses on the central storyline and eliminates unnecessary divergences. A similar aim for concision may explain the reordering of certain events or text segments in the comics, as when the reader learns about Stanley standing on a mine only after Terrier has eliminated the one responsible for this situation (POSBD). Still, there is no univocal rule imposing a systematic shortening of the narrative passages; some incidents occupy as much space or perhaps slightly more in the graphic novel as they did in the original texts, whereas others are heavily condensed.

The behaviourist style of Manchette's stand-alone novels are transposed to graphic novels, where Tardi recreates the *néo-polar* atmosphere and stories with much graphic violence, using for instance repeated images of subsequent instances of different deaths; there are very few indications of characters' feelings or thoughts in either medium. We suggest that one of the reasons for the closeness of the adaptations can be traced back to similarities between the specific aesthetic and narrative qualities of the *néo-polar* and comics and also to Tardi's style and predilection for crime narratives. A further example is Léo Malet's fifteen-novel series *Les Nouveaux Mystères de Paris* with its private detective Nestor Burma of which Tardi made some adaptations in collaboration with Emmanuel Moynot and Barral (published by Casterman). Nonetheless, Tardi exploits specific narrative devices of comics to reinforce certain effects, as for instance when he resorts to adding repetition of images. The change of medium also allows for changes regarding the order in which essential elements of the story are presented: to heighten the suspense, the comics version postpones/advances the revelation of central characters' identity (e.g., the name of the intended murder victim). While Tardi seemingly wishes to be respectful to his former friend Manchette's novels, he creates adaptations that can be read without prior knowledge of the adapted works and which function as independent graphic novels in a recognizable Tardian style.

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