**Towards an Ecographics: Ecological Storylines in *Bande dessinée***

**Abstract:**

What role do comics have to play in cultural conversations about and in the face of environmental collapse and mass extinction? This article takes *bande dessinée* as a case study to propose the concept of ecological storylines as part of an ecographics that recognises the specificities of comics as a drawn and narrative medium as well as its shifting place in culture. This is developed with reference to a range of graphic texts and along three axes. The article first explores drawing as material practice in ecographic engagements with radioactivity, gender and landscape. It then turns to redrawing as a mode of contestation as well as repair on a postcolonial planet, before closing with a discussion of flowlines across panels, pages, human and nonhuman bodies and across cityscapes, seascapes and petroscapes.

**Keywords:**

drawing; ecofeminism; environmental humanities; petro-culture; postcolonial ecocriticism; trans-corporeality

‘Imagine ce qui pourrait arriver si tout ce qui est fait à partir de l’arbre rejette l’être humain’ [imagine what could happen if everything that is made from trees rejects the human]. This is the premise of Didier Comès’ 1995 environmental comic *La maison où rêvent les arbres* [The House where Trees Dream], which uses the trope of a vengeful nature, here personified by trees, to make a plea against extractivism as environmental destruction, drawing on anthropomorphism as a step towards recognising the liveliness of the other-than-human. The comic ends with ink fading and the page becoming blank, a sign in this story of trees’ erasure of human narratives, feared by the young heroine just as her outline disappears.[[1]](#footnote-1) The ending of this eco-fable, in directing the reader’s attention to its own materiality, is also a reminder that all comic books are environmental, all cultural products made from and with ‘natural resources’. And as Stephanie LeMenager points out in the context of her discussion of Josh Neufeld’s 2008 *AD: New Orleans after the Deluge*, printing, and which is also part of this the circulation of visual art on paper, is one of ‘the oldest and most ecologically damaging industrial practices’, given the quantities of water and trees required.[[2]](#footnote-2) Some comics artists have engaged with the environmental impact of the comics creation and dissemination process, and their own response-ability.[[3]](#footnote-3) Philippe Squarzoni considers his carbon footprint as an internationally renowned author in his 2012 climate change documentary-memoir *Saison brune*; and Tom Tirabosco, whose work has long reflected his environmental awareness and activism, has launched with other Swiss creators the Charter of artists and cultural actors for the climate.[[4]](#footnote-4) While this article focuses primarily on comics as a medium of lines and marks, rather than from paper, ink, energy, it is written with two interlinked convictions: that comics have a role to play in telling ‘new narratives that are calibrated to the realities of our changing world’;[[5]](#footnote-5) and that this means, as an initiative such as Tirabosco’s shows, that we need to address the sustainability of how these stories are made, spread and read, and of our creative and academic practices as eco-citizens.

Taking *bande dessinée* as a case study, this article works towards what I term an ecographics, in the dual context of a proliferation of environmentally themed comics and of increasing academic interest. Comics have long been recognised as a tool for environmental education, as seen for instance from Barly Baruti’s early pedagogical work *Le Temps d’agir!...* (1982) [Time to act!...], conceived as a teaching aid about conservation in the Global South; to Djibril Morissette-Phan and Yasmine Phan’s *Un monde transparent guide le changement* (2021) [A transparent world guides change], a pedagogical resource about climate action created with young ‘environmental leaders’ for the Québec-based organisation ENvironnement JEUnesse.[[6]](#footnote-6) More broadly, the text-image medium has been mobilised to address green issues, comment on and take part in eco-politics and activism since its rise in the 1970s. One notable example is the 1970s-early 1980s anti-nuclear movement in Plogoff, Brittany, which was covered by cartoonist Nono for *Le Canard de Nantes à Brest* and *Oxygène*, and inspired science-fiction comics such as Enki Bilal and Pierre Christin’s 1976 *Le vaisseau de pierre* [Ship of Stone] and Claude Kerfriden’s 1983 *Ker-Is*. In fact, as in other media, science-fiction has offered striking, dark green and blue visions and speculations, for instance the post-atomic landscapes of Claude Auclair’s saga *Simon du Fleuve* [Simon of the River] (1973-1989, with Alain Riondet 1988-1989) or colonial exploitation beyond Earth in *Aquablue* (since 1988, created by Thierry Cailleteau and Olivier Vatine). It is in recent years that the environment has emerged as a rallying theme across comics genres, as part of wider cultural conversations about and in the face of collapse and extinction. Graphic engagements with the more-than-human world have been explored by scholars who have pointed to the medium’s ‘ecocritical potential’, as stated in the introduction to the 2020 special issue of *Closure* on ‘what grows in the gutter’, and as argued notably in Adele Haverty Bealer’s 2014 PhD thesis on ‘Graphic Environments’ or the edited volumes *Animal Comics* (2017; with, as the title indicates, a focus on animal studies) and *Eco-Comix* (2020).[[7]](#footnote-7)

As part of this research context, this article proposes the concept of ‘ecological storylines’ for an ecographics that examines both comics’ part in the (popular) ‘culture of nature’, and the medium’s potential for creative and sustainable engagements with the more-than-human world as naturalcultural, agentic – and changing.[[8]](#footnote-8) Tim Ingold’s theorisation of the environment as a ‘zone of entanglement’ of ‘interwoven lines of growth and movement’ is evocative here, in part because it takes drawing as a starting point for a reflection on life in an ‘open world’ of ‘formative and transformative *processes*’.[[9]](#footnote-9) ‘Storylines’ refers to the specificities of comics as a drawn *and* narrative medium. As Jared Gardner argues, the line is ‘unique as an element of narrative meaning’, not granting ‘unmediated access to an individual body in the act of mark-making’ yet ‘determined by physical specificities that cannot be ignored or effaced’, and as such enabling an embodied dialogue with the reader.[[10]](#footnote-10) An ecocritical approach to this turns our attention to ways in which comics can engage with the porosity of human bodies as part of – rather than apart from – the environment, and the potential for ecological visions, contestations, awareness and imagination in this decentring. This forms, of course, not only within panels but also across them, along the lines followed and traced in the sequential and plurivectorial readings that are characteristic of comics narration, as has been theorised by Thierry Groensteen.[[11]](#footnote-11) Moreover, the combined attention to narrative and formal aspects captured in a concept of ‘ecological storylines’ also points towards comics’ part in forming – and re-forming – cultural stories and images of the environment, and their history of entwinement with (and resistance against) anthropo- and androcentric, heteronormative, capitalist, colonialist and/or nationalist ideologies. Ecological storylines is therefore meant as a concept that is open to multiple dimensions and tensions at play in ecographics. This article will develop it with no aim at exhaustivity but with a view to approach a breadth of practices, through a range of *bandes dessinées* (and, beyond the book, some comics-related works) and along three axes: drawing as material practice; redrawing as a mode of contestation as well as repair; and flows across panels, pages, human and nonhuman bodies.

**Drawing**

While ecocriticism has largely (though by no means exclusively, particularly in recent years) focused on modes of writing the environment, comics shift our attention also to processes of drawing the more-than-human. How may mark-making and ‘the graphic enunciation that is the drawn line’ work to reflect on humans’ relationship to, and indeed the marks left by human activity on an environment in which they are entangled?[[12]](#footnote-12) I would like to explore this here through works by three artists – Emmanuel Lepage, Julie Delporte and Vincent Fortemps – that, in different ways, place an emphasis on drawing as material practice.

Emmanuel Lepage’s *reportages* powerfully evoke an artist’s experience of awe-inducing and extreme environments, such as the Kerguelen Islands (*Voyage aux îles de la Désolation*, 2011) and the Antarctic (in his 2015 *La Lune est blanche* [The moon is white], with photographs by his brother François). His 2012 *Un printemps à Tchernobyl* [A Spring in Chernobyl] is a rich text to address here because Lepage’s reflection on the process of drawing from nature also takes on the challenge of representing toxicity. The comic is about Lepage’s 2008 residence on and around the site of the 1986 nuclear disaster, a trip that he undertook with the aim of being ‘impliqué’ [involved] rather than ‘à côté’ [on the side].[[13]](#footnote-13) The journey takes place long after the horrific hyper-visibility of nuclear disaster, whose impact on the reader is here achieved through text only, in *récitatifs* quoting Svetlana Alexievitch’s seminal 1997 work of oral history *Chernobyl Prayer*, which Lepage reads on the train at the opening of the album.[[14]](#footnote-14) The *bande dessinée* recounts his process of confronting his preconceived ideas and images of a wasteland to the landscape and people he encounters.

One sequence is particularly striking as part of Lepage’s broader reflection through practice on modes of representation of a radioactive environment [Figures 1 and 2].[[15]](#footnote-15) Lepage is drawing from nature, dressed in protective clothing and carrying a dosimeter along with his tools. He talks of his surprise at finding not the ‘forêts noires, […] arbres tordus, décharnés, étranges ou monstrueux’ [black forests, twisted, scraggy, strange or monstrous trees] that he had imagined, but is instead pushed to grab his coloured pencils. A drawing of blues and bright greens dominates the spread, a landscape upon which are scattered *récitatifs* in which Lepage ponders on his powerlessness at not being able to see the reality of radiation beyond his human senses. This landscape is then mirrored in a phantom sketch on the next spread, the result of its transfer onto the following page in Lepage’s sketchbook, forming an accidental representation of the phantasmatic Chernobyl that the artist expected to see. This is juxtaposed in the strip above with a redrawing of a radioactive photo on a film that had been buried underground by photographer Pascal Rueff, the traces left by radiation on film becoming part of the comic’s concern with the process of mark-making, human and nonhuman, destructive and creative.

This comic, in tracing radioactivity across lines, panels and pages, not only reflects on drawing as materialising perception but also, crucially, lays out the limitations of human sensory perception when faced with the complex entanglements of nuclearity and its long-lasting effects. Lepage evokes Paul Klee’s famous aphorism that art does not reproduce the visible, rather it makes visible, and despairs at falling short of this when faced with a radioactive environment. Yet it is through the comics form that the artist tackles some of the ‘perceptual, ethical and aesthetic challenges’ posed by nuclearity,[[16]](#footnote-16) in rendering intangibility and invisibility in the aggregation of, echoes and tensions between frames, text and images, the interframe spaces functioning also as an inscription of that which the human eye cannot see.

While Lepage focuses on drawing a radioactive environment, in Julie Delporte’s *Je vois des antennes partout* [*Everywhere Antennas*] it is as un-contaminated space that nature emerges, away from the electromagnetic waves that the first-person narrator suspects are making her unwell, in a bodily reaction to ‘la modernité-fardeau’ [the burden of modernity].[[17]](#footnote-17) As part of her search for a place away from EM waves, she finds refuge in an isolated cabin in the woods, and later working at a small farm in Québec, developing a ‘rapport direct et magique’ [direct and magical relationship] with animals, after she had returned home to realise that she needed to leave again. She decides not to stay put – in a Faraday cage, or in a heteronormative relationship – but to lead a ‘nomadic’ life until she can find ‘un endroit pour moi’ [a place for me]. Her direct, embodied experience of the more-than-human world is, significantly, rendered through Delporte’s distinctive aesthetics of palpably hand-made strokes of colour pencils, with – in places visible – pieces of tape where a drawing has been affixed to the page. As the narrator is herself a ‘drawer’, this contributes to the feeling of a first-person ecographics, as an aesthetic rendering of a subjective and corporeal experience of the environment. Her time at her friend’s family cabin in northern Québec is a particularly evocative sequence. She is sometimes drawn with hair the same green as the vegetal around her; one page shows her outlines as if dissolved, her body no longer pencilled but a blank space (below the mass of yellow hair), carved out in the middle of dense strokes of blue and green, with the text talking of the sun burning her skin and mosquitoes biting her flesh. The hand-made aesthetics, including the pieces of tape assembling text, image and page, add to the reader’s perception of a direct yet mediated experience, graphically embodied and corporeally graphic, of seeing, smelling, touching and drawing the environment.

The narrator also, importantly, draws herself into a male tradition of seeking solitude in the wilderness – a foundational figure of which is Henry David Thoreau, whose *Walden* (1854) is one of the books she reads at the cabin. After stating that nature is not hostile, but full of secret desires, the narrator evokes the woods of childhood fairy tales, with an image of Little Red Riding Hood. An interesting sequence forms across *Je vois des antennes partout* and Delporte’s later comic *Moi aussi je voulais l’emporter* [*This Woman’s Work*], from the former’s image of the wolf prowling around Little Red Riding Hood, to the latter’s page showing only the empty red coat remaining on the ground, adjacent to the narrator’s words that she got her first lesson in sex the year she learned to read. On the next page, the red stain of the coat spreads under her body as a child when she was sexually abused by her cousin.[[18]](#footnote-18) The narrator later states that she wanted so badly not to be a girl, but a wolf or a dolphin, and a full-page drawing shows a young child about to pet a peaceful wolf (or wolf-looking dog), the predatory relationship redrawn as a trans-species alliance. *Moi aussi je voulais l’emporter* is a first-person meditation on life as a woman and resistance to patriarchal violence. Echoing the aesthetics of *Je vois des antennes partout*,the book features vivid, hand-drawn images of landscapes, those of creative women that serve as role models for the narrator: Tove Jansson’s island Lauttasaari, or Jo Manix’s St Malo beach, which is the narrator’s own childhood environment. Delporte’s embodied ecographics may therefore also be seen as tracing eco-feminist storylines, in the practice of drawing nature as what Stacy Alaimo has evocatively called ‘undomesticated ground’ – a space that is not idyllic but rather one in which to escape, and from whence to challenge, constraining ideas of ‘women’s nature’.[[19]](#footnote-19)

It is through their ‘drawn-ness’ that Delporte’s landscapes ‘come alive’ on the page, to use the narrator’s words in *Moi aussi je voulais l’emporter*. Vincent Fortemps’s work is useful to address here to further this exploration of the ecological properties of linework and mark-making. Fortemps is part of the collective and avant-garde publishing house Frémok, whose artistic output, as Jan Baetens points out (in relation to its previous iteration Fréon, before its merge with Amok in 2002), places an emphasis on ‘the materiality of drawing’. None of Fortemps’s comics has an explicit environmentalist message; rather, they open themselves to an ecological reading precisely in their engagement with the texture of materiality. Baetens writes that ‘all the members [of the collective] try to discover the narrative potentialities of their own technique’, which in Fortemps’s case is drawing on rhodoid.[[20]](#footnote-20) Where his comics centre on a natural environment – mountains in *Cimes* [Peaks] (1997), the sea in *La Digue* [The seawall] (2001) and *Barques* (2007), the land in *Par les sillons* [Across the furrows] (2010) – I would argue that this leads to the emergence of more-than-human narratives, in an exploration of the dynamic materiality of landscape as ‘storied’, to use a term from material ecocriticism; ‘unflattened’, to draw on Nick Sousanis; and what I would call textured.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Fortemps’s comics can be characterised as haptic in the texture of their strokes and marks. The reader’s experience of graphic environments and path along ecological storylines is, unlike in Lepage and Delporte, not guided by a first-person narrative voice and body. The absence of text, that would provide an anchor, and the density of the lines, traces and scratches made on rhodoid, call upon the reader to actively engage with the image in its layers and thickness. *Par les sillons*, Fortemps’s longest work, is an illuminating example in this regard.[[22]](#footnote-22) It is a First World War narrative where the ruggedness of the image may evoke the grain and the ‘lived’ feeling of raw archival material. There are some iconic visions (aerial combat, a flag) but, crucially, these give way – space and time – to textured panels of the wasteland of war, its ravages etched onto the human bodies and the body of the land, as well as to haptic renderings, in sequences stretching over several pages, of leaves, tadpoles, spiders, herons, owls or dandelions. These are not contemplative pauses in the narrative of a war and a soldier’s return home, with nature serving as a simple ‘background’, to use Val Plumwood’s lexicon, for human actions.[[23]](#footnote-23) Rather, nature, as substance, forms the very fabric of the panels and pages, the emphasis on drawing as material practice gesturing towards the porosity of the more-than-human rather than the clear outlines of separate beings.

Fortemps creates haptic, elemental comics, and this is a graphic practice that he has taken to the stage in collaborative audio-visual concerts. Referring to his live drawing, he notes that while he tends towards abstraction, ‘ça finit toujours par faire des paysages’ [it always turns into landscapes].[[24]](#footnote-24) His stage practice performs a sense of landscape not as inert, stable or empty, but vibrant and emerging in the interaction of drawing, light, music and sound (what I have elsewhere analysed as intermedial resonance).[[25]](#footnote-25) On the project *Bar-q-ues*, which stemmed from *La Digue* and led to *Barques* (which gathers drawings made during the performance), it is quasi-abstract, turbulent audio-visual seascapes that form and morph.[[26]](#footnote-26) In a 2011 performance as part of the graphic-musical trio Hoye, it is soil, earth and telluric forces that are evoked. Shifting furrows on the land are reminiscent of panels from *Par les sillons*, cloth placed on the drawing table form mountain-like shapes in a fast-forward rendering of deep time, and the image keeps changing, always open to the experiencer’s ecological visions of a world in constant becoming.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Tellingly, Fortemps has drawn on a natural vocabulary to talk about his work: under the images, as under a rock, ‘ça grouille’ [it swarms]; he defines his narratives as being ‘comme matières fossiles et vivantes’ [like fossilised, living matter]; his chosen medium of drawing on rhodoid ‘favorise la sédimentation’ [favous sedimentation].[[28]](#footnote-28) These words gesture towards the idea I have developed here: that drawing as material practice may be deployed to trace ecological storylines, artist and reader engaging with the ecological properties of comics, and the graphic properties of the more-than-human world, as seen in Lepage’s creative response to the aesthetic and ethical challenges posed by nuclearity, the embodied eco-feminist-graphics of Delporte’s work, and the vibrancy of Fortemps’s textured landscapes.

**Redrawing**

As is already apparent from the discussion of toxicity, gender and backgrounding, and to draw on Serpil Oppermann’s articulation of ecocritical theory, the task of an ecographics does not lie solely in celebrating ways in which the medium and its practitioners can and have fostered a perception of nature as a ‘process of unfolding and dynamic flow’. It also involves contesting ‘ideological forces behind the discursive constructions of nature’,[[29]](#footnote-29) their material effects, and the medium’s own imbrication in this history. To explore this further, I shift the focus from drawing to redrawing, in a dual sense of exposing and repairing. Taking inspiration in particular from Mark McKinney’s examination of the colonial heritage of, and processes of redrawing empire in, *bande dessinée*, the following paragraphs develop an eco-postcolonial analysis of graphic representations of Congo as a more-than-human space.[[30]](#footnote-30)

This discussion cannot, of course, *not* mention Hergé’s *Tintin au Congo* (1930; 1946; 1970),arguably the epitome of the colonial *bande dessinée* and an album as infamous for its racist imagery and imaginary as for the carnage inflicted by the reporter on wildlife. The Belgian Congo emerges as a space of emptiness to which ‘civilisation’ should be brought (‘lorsque nous nous sommes installés ici, c’était la brousse’ [when we settled here, it was all bush], in the words of a missionary), but also of an excess of wildness to be mastered – killed, tamed, exhibited in zoos – and of a wealth of natural resources to be exploited (there are references to ivory, rubber and diamonds).[[31]](#footnote-31) Long a source of controversy, the comic has also been a target of parody, a recent example of which is found in Jean-Philippe Stassen’s ‘I Comb Jesus’.[[32]](#footnote-32) The *reportage* opens at the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium, with an image of the statue of a leopard-man, an iconic figure in European and American representations of Africa, turned into a tri-partite equation of African Blackness, animality and barbarism.[[33]](#footnote-33) *Tintin au Congo*, of course, features a leopard-man, which is pointed out by Kalonji, who is visiting the museum with Stassen. After referring to the legal proceedings launched in 2007 (by Bienvenu Mbutu Mondondo) to get the book banned in Belgium, Kalonji reflects on the parallels between the clichés drawn on and disseminated by Hergé and by contemporary journalists in the framing of Congo.

This is turned by Stassen into an interview of ‘Général Coco’ (the *boy* turned warrior) by a Tintin-like journalist, in a sequence that redraws imperialist representations to critique their continuation in a post-colonial context.[[34]](#footnote-34) The sequence re-uses the demeaning pidgin French often spoken by Black characters in colonial *bandes dessinées*, and redraws racist aesthetics in the representation of the Congolese’s facial features and attire, which includes the half-hat and saucepan hat of Hergé’s characters, but with their lances now largely replaced by rifles. Significantly, the Western framing of the Congolese relation to nature is represented as a binary between worship and commodification. Général Coco explains that his tribe are at war because the spirits of the volcano and the lake were unhappy with the neighbour tribe, in a reduction to, and a mockery of animism, signalled through text and image as being framed as a primitive belief system rather than a philosophical tradition. Général Coco goes on to tell the journalist about tribal wars fought to steal resources of ‘or et minerais d’ordinateur et téléphone GSM’ [gold, and computer and GSM phone ore], which is uttered three times in the space of four panels, shortened to ‘minerais de GSM’ [GSM ore], and with the addition of women, in the third instance.

The redrawing of colonialist storylines in a sequence about the Belgian/European framing of post-colonial resource warfare exposes the continuing dissemination of racist stereotypes that suggest, as Vicky van Bockhaven points out, that ‘there is a historical and cultural predestination for war and violence in Africa’.[[35]](#footnote-35) As such, this sequence also questions deterministic narratives of the so-called ‘resource curse’ that affects ‘poor little rich countries’.[[36]](#footnote-36) Intra-medial and parodical redrawing helps to contextualise it as historically produced and a legacy of colonial exploitation (which turned the ancient activity of mining in the region into large-scale extraction in the twentieth century). In tracing a line across the colonial era to the post-colonial context, the sequence reveals and contests seemingly ‘clear’ storylines and the ideological forces that shape them.[[37]](#footnote-37) An eco-postcolonial reading of these couple of pages (which are part of Stassen’s broader project of drawing nuanced and documented narratives of Africa) points towards the complexities that the clarity and legibility of too-familiar narratives and representations obscure, that of the interplay – in the contemporary context of the DRC – of a history of colonial intervention, international geopolitics, neoliberalism[[38]](#footnote-38) and, intertwined in all this, the unsustainable commodification of the environment into a resource to be plundered.

A different mode of redrawing is deployed in Barly Baruti and Christophe Cassiau-Haurie’s late 1990s-set *Le Singe jaune* (2018), one not so much of parody as of re-appropriation of *bande dessinée* tropes of an ‘Afrique irréelle’ [unreal Africa], in a postcolonial adventure comic that is anchored in the historical, political and environmental landscape of the DRC.[[39]](#footnote-39) Baruti talks of the importance of telling stories ‘de l’intérieur’ [from the inside], which, he adds, requires ‘un levier pour y entrer tout en permettant à qui me lit d’adhérer à la démarche’ [a way in that also enables the reader to join in and follow]. The ‘way in’ here is the titular yellow ape, meant to pique the reader’s interest in a quest for an exoticised animal on African soil, as it does that of Belgian reporter Paulette Blackman, who according to Baruti functions to personify the reader.[[40]](#footnote-40) The yellow ape turns out to be a hoax fabricated by a fake zoologist to launch an expedition to retrieve diamonds, the object of the quest morphing from one trope of adventure *bande dessinée* (a mysterious animal) into another (a treasure).[[41]](#footnote-41) The yellow ape is a narrative ploy devised to lure in and then be forgotten by the reader as they learn about colonial Belgium’s kidnapping of mixed-race children through the family history and experience of the character of Anaclet Verschuren. Anaclet is Paulette’s interpreter, and the biracial son of the Belgian colonist who hid the diamonds before he fled the country and abandoned ‘un trésor et… une famille’ [a treasure and… a family] (Anaclet, whom he left in an orphanage, and the boy’s mother).[[42]](#footnote-42)

Anaclet, as a *métis*, is an‘iconic [figure] of the colonial affrontier’ in postcolonial *bande dessinée* as theorised by McKinney, yet his genealogical search – which he does not explicitly formulate as such – remains in a sense unresolved as the album closes, his father too late to pick up his phone call.[[43]](#footnote-43) The *bande dessinée* finds another resolution in Anaclet’s decision to remain in the (fictional) village of Busingizi, at the outskirts of the Salonga National Park where the expedition took place. Anaclet develops a cultivation project of the medicinal plant Artemisia annua (the ‘vraie richesse’ [real wealth] of the region, unlike its cursed diamonds, or its ‘blood coltan’), in cooperation with the village’s inhabitants in what he describes as investment in a ‘structure d’avenir’ [structure for the future].[[44]](#footnote-44) As such, while *Le Singe jaune* is an album that seems at first to stay within the lines of familiar adventures stories, it redraws them precisely to trace a line towards future narratives of reparation and economic and ecological sustainability.

*Le Singe Jaune*’s gradual, rather than brashly parodical subversion of storylines of the adventure *bande dessinée* genre is also key to its representation of the natural environment of the rainforest throughout the album as more than a jungle constructed by and overlain with exoticising fantasies. Rather, the rainforest of the Salonga National Park is drawn as an ecosystem, neither inherently welcoming nor hostile to the human characters, in the sense that it does not revolve around them. The representation of the rainforest across the album works, I would argue, precisely towards decentring the anthropocentric and Eurocentric gaze that views tropical natural space as a screen onto which to project wildness or virginity.[[45]](#footnote-45) There is in fact a striking sequence in which nature returns the gaze, in a series of close-up panels on human and nonhuman (an okapi, and a Congo peafowl) eyes.[[46]](#footnote-46) The adventure unfolds in an environment that is not reduced to the background of or the stage for human actions, as emphasised in two panels where the characters’ conversations are audible in balloons but their image thwarted by elephants or okapis in the foreground [Figure 3].[[47]](#footnote-47) This, along with often wordless sequences of vegetal-filled panels – growing in a horizontal rather than vertical strip, or gradually stretching in size across the page – render a sense of the rainforest as a multispecies space with its own modes of expression and multi-linear networks of relations beyond the human.

Redrawing storylines may therefore be deployed to contribute towards a practice of decolonising the *bande dessinée* medium, contesting the ideology of colonisation and its endurances as ‘one where anthropocentrism and Eurocentrism are inseparable’.[[48]](#footnote-48) To explore further ways in which contemporary artists may not only redraw sedimented lines but also the outlines of new narratives, I would like to close this section by taking redrawing back to drawing, or rather ‘expanded drawing’ as comics and visual artist Daniel Sixte Kakinda characterises his praxis. Sixte Kakinda studied and was until recently based in Lubumbashi, which is known as the mining capital of the DRC, and mining – the environmental, political, economic and social entanglements of the DRC’s extractive past, present and future – has been a recurrent theme in his graphic work. *Intimate Moments/Monologue*, which Sixte Kakinda created in Japan, is an installation that reflects on the potentialities of lines in connecting people, media and countries. It continues Sixte Kakinda’s political and creative exploration of extraction from Congolese ground, with a focus on the uranium from the Shinkolobwe mines in the Belgian Congo that was contained in the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima on 6th August 1945. *Intimate Moments/Monologue* is a mixed media installation consisting of three videos and three large-scale drawings of Kakinda’s trip to and performance in Hiroshima Memorial Park. It was first exhibited as the artist’s graduation work in 2019 at Tokyo University of the Arts, and in his first solo exhibition at Gallery G in Hiroshima in 2020, with the addition of three paintings.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Connecting the components of the installation are pills (Japanese digestive tablets), which were dropped by the artist on the ground of Memorial Park throughout his performance. The visuals (video, drawing, painting) are soundtracked by the rhythm of Sixte Kakinda’s counting, evoking the memory of victims, as well as the nuclear tests whose names and dates appear on one of the screens and that were carried out by nuclear powers on indigenous and/or colonised territories. That Sixte Kakinda counts in Belgian French serves to inscribe the role of colonial Belgium in the making of the atomic bomb, and as such its location on the map of ‘nuclear geographies’ to which ‘empire has long been central’, as argued by Gabrielle Hecht.[[50]](#footnote-50) The three drawings, displayed in a sequence on a wall of the installation space, are inspired by the videos. They show pills on the ground; Sixte Kakinda standing in front of the memorial; and his hands and arms against a background that echoes both the tree foliage seen from below in the video where he moves to the rhythm of nuclear trials, and the ground littered with pills seen from above. The paintings in the Gallery G exhibition are inspired by one of the drawings and made of pills on a black background.

Dropped by the artist on the ground of Memorial Park, filmed, drawn, turned into paintings, the tablets function as a symbol of the Congolese uranium that made the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, making visible an ‘invisible link’ between the two countries. They are also material traces of Sixte Kakinda’s own memorial path, forming a large-scale drawing on the ground, connecting him to the city and its people. Finally, they symbolise ‘a way of relieving the earth from the bad behaviors of [humankind]’.[[51]](#footnote-51) This is a statement that evokes the geological era of the Anthropocene, whose universalism as ‘the Age of Man’ is as contested as its origin point debated, and any of which, from 1492 to the nuclear age, ‘is marked by racial inequalities’.[[52]](#footnote-52) *Intimate Moments/Monologue* draws on co-presence, a feature of both comics and installation, to trace lines (on site, on paper, in a gallery) between the DRC and Japan across space and time, mapping decentred nuclear geographies and expanding nuclear histories. Importantly, the link of destruction that is revealed turns into one of memorial and creative kinship, from and on the – contaminated, mined – ground of the Anthropocene. Expanding drawing here also means redrawing a post-nuclear and post-extractivist praxis, in the process of excavating the past, tracing its effects into the present, and sketching the outlines of an *after*. In his artist statement, Sixte Kakinda writes that ‘lines have a story we can read’,[[53]](#footnote-53) and markedly different contemporary graphic practices such as his own, Stassen’s, and Baruti and Cassiau-Haurie’s, draw lines along which to reread narratives – mineral, animal, vegetal and human – of the DRC on a postcolonial planet.

**Flowlines**

The discussion of extractivism brings us to the key questions that will guide the third axis that I wish to explore here: how might comics deploy lines to critique what Heather Houser, drawing on Ingold, characterises as the ‘straight linearity’ of narratives of endless growth?[[54]](#footnote-54) And how might they, by contrast, track the complex flows of substances and materials at play in what Stacy Alaimo has theorised as trans-corporeality, in the ‘interconnections, interchanges, and transits between human bodies and nonhuman natures’?[[55]](#footnote-55)

Jean-Marc Jancovici and Christophe Blain’s 2021 *Le monde sans fin* [The endless world] is a useful text to address the first question. The comic deploys lines to visualise and thus expose the narrative of a world of endless natural resources and relentless growth fed by ever-expanding flows of energy – ‘croissance’ [growth] comes back as a refrain throughout, uttered by a chorus of politicians and economists. This is seen for instance in the horizontal and vertical lines of speed and depth, such as planes for ‘voler super vite’ [flying really fast] and machines for ‘creuser super profond’ [digging really deep].[[56]](#footnote-56) A page lays out the narrative of the inexhaustibility of natural resources, as formulated in the first strip of two panels by economist Jean-Baptiste Say, best known for his formulation of the law of markets, and visualised in the next four panels. These stretch out horizontally to represent the expanse of various natural environments, emphasised by a human presence in the right-hand corner, small in the face of the immensity of the ‘American West’ to be colonised, the East European plains, the ocean, and a mine gallery to be dug.[[57]](#footnote-57) Other pages are divided down the middle, the interframe space between the right and left columns inscribing a temporal jolt between panels of ‘par le passé’ [in the past] and ‘aujourd’hui’ [today], from tree felling to mass deforestation, a lone boat to overfishing, and the rise in chemical spills and CO2 emissions in the shift from the rural to the urban.[[58]](#footnote-58) While it should be noted that *Le monde sans fin* turns into a pro-nuclear plea and draws on the gendered trope of a passive Mother Nature, it skilfully deploys verticality and horizontality across panels and pages to explain and expose the steep rise in the lines of its many graphs towards environmental collapse.

Guillaume Trouillard’s 2007 *Colibri* forms an interesting contrast, substituting straight linearity for a poetics of meandering in its critique of endless growth. The comic takes the reader on a fictional *dérive* from sewers to the sky across a megalopolis. It starts in a luxuriant forest that turns out to be a reserve to be preserved and disinfected, opening onto an ultra-urban environment whose streets are covered with billboards flogging herbicide or the ‘free wild’ of a safari, climbing to a high-tech gym at the top of a skyscraper where a man works out in front of virtual natural environments, leaving for a short burst in the sky to evoke space colonisation before landing back down and resuming its wandering, ending with the twitter of a caged hummingbird in a pet store. One sequence zooms out of the cityscape to follow the complex, looping motorway to its end point, all the way to the ravages that feed the megalopolis at the edge of an area undergoing deforestation, trees set on fire to make room for excavators. These are charged by rebellious animals that fall in battle and become corpses littering the landfill where rubbish pours out of the city’s sewer pipes, now part of the discarded waste of ultra-modernity. The sequence then shifts to tourists marvelling at the spectacle of an indigenous man fishing from the sewage. The disproportionate impact of pollution on indigenous communities is then tracked back to the history of the dispossession of native land, which the man re-inscribes on the urban concrete through narrative drawings that are viewed as little more than decorative by the tourists but take over the next three pages of the comic.[[59]](#footnote-59) *Colibri* was conceived by Trouillard as ‘un long plan-séquence’ [a long sequence shot], and the comics medium brings an aesthetics of fragmentation to its meandering as it follows the unidirectional logic of endless expansion and growth along its multiple, darkly absurd and environmentally unjust conclusions.[[60]](#footnote-60)

*Colibri*’s narrative by association troubles straight lines, making them loop, ‘sweep, snake, fragment’, to borrow Houser’s words about architect Kate Orff’s mapping of the oil industry.[[61]](#footnote-61) Comics that deploy this as part of an ecographics of water and oil are useful to turn to here to explore these tensions further. One powerful example of hydro-graphics is Anne Defréville’s 2019 *L’Age bleu: sauver l’océan* [The blue age: saving the ocean], a science fiction fable with an often-humorous tone despite the darkness of its subject matter. Following torrential rains of toxic particles in 2030 humans have evolved back into marine creatures, the comic offering an ecological take on the text-image tradition of anthropomorphised animals. *L’Age bleu* draws on sequentiality to render the movements of cause and effect at play in climate crisis and environmental collapse, represented in places with lines and arrows, and also pushes the deterministic timeline into an absurd dystopian direction, notably in two instances through a striking use of the ‘cadence’ of the *gaufrier* layout.[[62]](#footnote-62) The double-page prelude [Figure 4] shows a timeline of squares from bacteria to the ‘modern man’ across billions of years on the right-hand page and, on the left-hand page, accelerated retro-evolution to apes and to marine creatures in the space of a few months.[[63]](#footnote-63) Another double page sequence entitled ‘Recette pour refaire du pétrole’ [Recipe to make oil again] uses the same layout to go from fish and plankton millions of years ago to 21st-century peak oil culture, in a sequence of intensification and destruction on the left-hand page. On the right-hand page, this continues with CO2 emissions, greenhouse gas, fossil fuel derived particles, retro-evolution, and then, stretching back into deep and beyond-human time, marine-human creatures themselves turning into oil, before its discovery by new Earthlings in 300 million years.[[64]](#footnote-64) These double pages use the regularity of the *gaufrier* layout to, paradoxically, highlight dynamics of acceleration and deceleration. The co-presence of moments in time afforded by the comics format turns here into a collision of human and more-than-human temporalities, in a creative – and darkly humoristic – hijacking of the short-termist narrative of endless growth.

This is combined across the album with a graphic exploration of the swirling flows of trans-corporeality. With the surface usually seen from below in a dark colour scheme, the comic inverts the usual representation of the depths of the ocean. It investigates the ocean not as a space that is far removed from human activities, ‘so vast and powerful that anything dumped into it will be dispersed into oblivion’, but as a space of human-marine flows, water carrying the ‘banal objects [that] pollute for eternity’, such as plastic bags and household appliances, traces of human ‘civilisation’ that the protagonists mistake for artworks as they swim among them in their search for an antidote to retro-evolution.[[65]](#footnote-65) Toxic flows are rendered by chromatic contamination, such as on a double page showing only the balloons of the protagonists as they get caught in oil, black spilled across the spread, only the blue edges of the image remaining.[[66]](#footnote-66)

While *L’Age bleu* submerges the reader deep in the ocean, the stickiness of oil occasionally troubling the fluidity of its hydro-graphics, petrol takes centre stage in Fred Blanchard and Jean-Pierre Pécau’s *La malédiction du pétrole* [The scourge of oil] (2020). Gone is the ambiguity of an earlier petro-comic such as Morris and René Goscinny’s 1962 Lucky Luke album *À l’ombre des derricks* [In the shadows of the derricks], where the US oilman wonders whether inventing derricks was ‘un bien ou un mal’ [a blessing or a curse].[[67]](#footnote-67) This is a question to which *La malédiction* provides an unequivocal answer, in its interruption of the sequential reading flow to weave, in Groensteen’s sense of *tressage*, a network of images of evil and death across the comic.[[68]](#footnote-68) The book’s focus is on geopolitics, and the environment is little mentioned beyond the ravages of oil spills on wildlife. However, I would argue that a text such as this cannot be read today without an awareness of the toxic environmental, social, cultural, political, economic and technological entanglements of oil. The colour scheme makes the book itself appear drenched in oil, rendering (perhaps unwittingly) the oiliness of petroleum-based ink, and (explicitly) that its readers ‘live in oil’.[[69]](#footnote-69)

*La malédiction* is a comic that looks sticky with oil from cover to cover, making omnipresence hyper-visible. In Jean-Denis Pendanx’s 2017 *Au bout du fleuve* [At the end of the river], by contrast, it is gradually that the subterranean spills across the surface of the book. The *bande dessinée* follows Kémi, a young Beninese’s search for his twin brother Yao to the Niger Delta, an area devastated by the fossil fuel industry and where Yao went to find work. Oil drives the storyline since the start, but it is at the entrance of the Niger Delta that it can no longer be contained in engines or barrels and flows across the comics pages. It sticks to Kémi’s hand when he takes it out of the water, and some of his first images of the area are of a child playing in a Shell barrel, a woman getting contaminated water and a pipeline, before he finally sees his brother, his face burnt in front of a burnt forest.[[70]](#footnote-70) *Au bout du fleuve* offers an evocative – what LeMenager calls ‘lively’, in the sense of ‘eliciting visceral knowledge’ in the reader – representation of a soaked environment.[[71]](#footnote-71) It frames in close-ups on faces and in expansive panels of landscapes, and colours in fire and tar, harmful ‘interchanges between body and place’, humans and environment bearing the visible traces of toxic trans-corporeality shaped by material, political, economic and social forces.[[72]](#footnote-72) In tracking oil to an area mired in the so-called resource curse, where the global flows of capitalism are felt in the flesh of the human and the nonhuman, the *bande dessinée* tells a glocal story of the Anthropocene, one not of ‘universal’ but planetary issues, to draw on Gayatri Spivak.[[73]](#footnote-73) *Au bout du fleuve* is a petro-comic that, unlike *La malédiction*, does not have a didactic narrative voice warning its readers of the ravages of the fossil fuel industry. Yet its final image, a wordless splash page of the Delta at sunrise, evokes the idea that the horizon of a post-oil future is also necessarily one of environmental justice.[[74]](#footnote-74)

I would like to close this section by returning to Trouillard, as the dynamics of tracking flowlines across panels, pages and bodies finds another form in his 2013 album *Welcome*, eschewing plot to give rise to a multiplicity of ecological storylines.[[75]](#footnote-75) Conceived as an inventory for his new-born, the comic adapts the tradition of naturalist taxonomy for our age of anthropogenic climate change and sixth mass extinction. Series of double pages form graphic and thematic sequences, for instance when an inventory of jellyfish is followed by one of plastic bags and another of the turtles that eat them, or a spread of gas masks by one of mushrooms and then another of mushroom clouds. Beyond the sequential assemblage of the spreads, plurivectorial readings emerge across the book: overfished species and endangered apes, oil rigs and 4x4, or pesticides and bees. Refugee tents, in their sequence of barbed wire and miradors, may also be related to the multitude of double pages that together evoke the climate emergency. *Welcome* calls upon the reader to make links in all directions, the reading process itself rendering the multi-linearity of the more-than-human world and of environmental collapse. *Welcome* is also a book that takes us back to the idea of the materiality of drawing. Its last pages list the broad range of techniques and materials used by the artist, including by recycling plastic wrappers or advertisements, in a continuation of the formal ecographic experimentation that Trouillard has been developing throughout his oeuvre. To close this section on Trouillard’s own words, the analysis of comics’ ‘ecocritical potential’ and the relevance of the medium in these conversations and debates, needs to be combined with a sense of the urgency and necessity of ecographics *for the comics medium*: ‘je n’arrive pas vraiment à écrire sur d’autres sujets de toute façon (et honnêtement, j’ai du mal à réaliser comment on pourrait faire autrement à notre époque)’ [I can’t really write about other topics, anyway (and honestly, I don’t really see how you could do things differently today].[[76]](#footnote-76)

**Conclusion**

This article has proposed the concept of ecological storylines as part of an ecographics that recognises the specificities of comics as a drawn and narrative medium as well as its shifting place in culture. This has been developed along three axes, opening with drawing as material practice, in Lepage’s mark-making as a reflection on the experience and representation of a radioactive environment, Delporte’s first-person and embodied eco-feminist graphics, and the texture of Fortemps’s dynamic landscapes. It then turned to redrawing in the dual sense of contesting and repairing, in Stassen’s, Baruti and Cassiau-Haurie’s and Sixte Kakinda’s markedly different retellings of narratives of the DRC as a more-than-human territory on a postcolonial planet. The analysis then took extractivism towards a discussion of flowlines, in the contestations of illusions of endless growth and explorations of trans-corporeal flows in *bandes dessinées* that deploy tensions between lines in their navigation across cityscapes, seascapes and petroscapes. While it referred to a range of texts, both fiction and non-fiction, this article has not aimed at exhaustivity. Rather, it intended to show the potential of a concept of ecological storylines for the analysis of comics’ part in cultural narratives and representations of the environment and the medium’s distinct capacities for engagements with the more-than-human world. It is hoped that broader applications may be drawn, and questions raised, some of which I would like to gesture towards in this conclusion.

The history of comics’ imbrication in but also resistance to and reformulation of ideological narratives of nature and their material effects, which has been touched upon here, warrants further investigation. What histories of the medium would form if we were to track ecological storylines, on the page as well as in relation to comics’ broader place in material culture? One may think here for instance of diving into the 1960s petro-comics archive of *Total Journal* (1966-1968), whose contributors included Jean-Claude Mézières, Pierre Christin and Jean Giraud; or an extractive history of Congolese comics from the Union Minière du Haut Katanga, and post-independence Gécamine’s children’s magazine *Mwana Shaba Junior* (1964-1992), to the engaged human-mineral graphics of Lubumbashi artists such as Tetshim or Sixte Kakinda’s own collective Les Mines Lushoises. Moreover, as evoked in this article, tracing ecological storylines and formal and artistic experimentation may call upon each other. What further possibilities does intermediality – itself a process of tracing lines between art forms – offer for drawing and redrawing contact zones between media, species, epistemologies, temporalities or spatialities? Beyond the printed book format, one may also turn to the ecocritical potential of digital word and image, in particular for the immersive and participative narrative experience onto which its storylines may open. Finally, the concept of ecological storylines can be productively applied to specific nation-territories, to question the place of the environment in national narratives and the marks they have left on more-than-human territories. What ‘fragments’ of the ‘narrative corpus’ – to use Serenella Iovino’s lexicon – of, for instance, France as a human *and* non-human text do contemporary *bande dessinée* artists tell, and what storylines of toxicity, sustainability and resistance do they draw?[[77]](#footnote-77) What ‘eco-cartography’ of France do they trace, as a postcolonial, post-industrial, nuclear, multispecies – and *bande dessinée* – territory?

If this article has multiplied examples, it is with the aim not to apply ecocritical theory to, or illustrate it with, comics, nor to single out a few *bandes dessinées* as key texts of an ecographics; but rather to give a sense of the breadth of and explore what emerges from graphic engagements with the more-than-human world. Ecological storylines is meant here as a capacious concept that draws our attention to ways in which line-tracing and mark-making have been part of narratives of the environment and can indeed be part of the ‘new narratives’ that we need to sketch. Comics are taking their place in environmental cultural production, as a medium that has straddled lines of, variously, accessibility, experimentation and pedagogy, and whose practitioners have begun to extend the medium’s inescapable self-reflexivity as ‘material text’, made of lines and marks and pages,[[78]](#footnote-78) towards a reflection on its materiality as naturalcultural product, made with ink, paper, water, energy. This calls upon us as comics readers to engage with what Martin Puchner calls a ‘protocol for environmental reading’, in never forgetting that literature and print culture have been ‘complicit with the resource-extracting way of life’, and thus key to ‘understanding how we arrived at this critical moment’, but also to sketching new stories ‘for the future’.[[79]](#footnote-79) Ecological storylines can draw our eyes to and call upon us to trace sequences of cause and effect, the marks we make, and our own positionality in the complex, multi-linear relations and multispecies narratives of which humans are but a part.

1. Didier Comès, *La maison où rêvent les arbres* (Tournai: Casterman, 1995), 60, 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Stephanie LeMenager, *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 121. Digital comics, of course, remove the need for paper; however, one also needs to consider the environmental impact of the life cycle of e-books, including the devices on which they are read. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Response-ability relates to acting responsibly and responsively, to the ability to respond to and accountability towards the more-than-human world. See Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See <https://charteclimatculture.ch/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Deborah Bird Rose et al., ‘Thinking Through the Environment, Unsettling the Humanities’, *Environmental Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2012), 1-5 (3). <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3609940>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See <https://enjeu.qc.ca/projets-et-evenements/jeunes-leaders-environnement/bd/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Cord-Christian Casper, ‘What Grows in the Gutter? – About this Issue’, *Closure* 7 (2020) <https://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/closure7/about>; Adele Haverty Bealer, ‘Graphic Environments: Performing Ecocriticism at the Confluence of Image and Text’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Utah, 2014; David Herman (ed.), *Animal Comics: Multispecies Storyworlds in Graphic Narratives* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); Sidney I. Dobrin (ed.), *Eco-Comix: Essays on the Environment in Comics and Graphic Novels* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Alexander Wilson in *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1991). For Donna Haraway’s seminal concept of ‘natureculture’ see for instance *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Tim Ingold, ‘Bindings against Boundaries: Entanglements of Life in an Open World’, *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 40, no. 8 (2008), 1796-1810 (1796, 1801). <https://doi.org/10.1068/a40156>. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Jared Gardner, ‘Storylines’, *SubStance* 40, no. 1 (2011), 53-96 (62, 64). <https://doi.org/10.1353/sub.2011.0008>. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Thierry Groensteen, *Système de la bande dessinée* (Paris: PUF, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Gardner, ‘Storylines’, 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Emmanuel Lepage, *Un printemps à Tchernobyl* (Paris : Futuropolis, 2012), 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Lepage, *Un printemps*, 3-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Lepage, *Un printemps*, 112-115. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Kyveli Mavrokordopoulou and Ruby de Vos, ‘Introduction – Of All Things Nuclear: On the Aesthetic Dimensions of the Atomic Era’, *Kunstlicht* 39, no. 3-4 (2018), 5-12 (12). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Julie Delporte, *Je vois des antennes partout* (Toronto: Pow Pow, 2015). The book is printed on recycled paper. It does not feature page numbers. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Julie Delporte, *Moi aussi je voulais l’emporter* (Toronto: Pow Pow, 2017). The book is printed on recycled paper. It does not feature page numbers. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Stacy Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Jan Baetens, ‘Of Graphic Novels and Minor Cultures: The Fréon Collective’, *Yale French Studies* 114 (2009), 95-115 (108). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (eds), *Material Ecocriticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); Nick Sousanis, *Unflattening* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015). Texture is part of Ingold’s lexicon for instance in ‘Binding against Boundaries’. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Vincent Fortemps, *Par les sillons* (Brussels : FRMK, 2010). The book does not feature page numbers. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Atelier Multimédia Bellegarde, ‘Vincent Fortemps’, YouTube video, uploaded 13 January 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MskB5t6HeJg>. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. See Author, ‘Becoming Musicomic: Music and Comics in Resonance’, *Modern Languages Open* (2019) <https://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.235>. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. For *Bar-q-ues*, Fortemps worked with Christian Dubet, Alain Mahé, Gaëtan Besnard and Jean- Francois Pauvros. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Hoye, performance at La voix est libre – Festival Jazz Nomades, May 2011. Hoye is formed of Vincent Fortemps, Jean-François Pauvros and Alain Mahé. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Gil Pressnitzer, ‘Vincent Fortemps : des griffures dans le temps’, *Esprits nomades* <https://www.espritsnomades.net/arts-plastiques/vincent-fortemps-des-griffures-dans-le-temps/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Serpil Oppermann, ‘Theorizing Ecocriticism: Toward a Postmodern Ecocritical Practice’, *ISLE* 13, no. 2 (2006), 103-128 (117, 118). [https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/13.2.103.](https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/13.2.103.%20)  [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Mark McKinney, *The Colonial Heritage of French Comics* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), and *Redrawing French Empire in Comics* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Hergé, *Tintin au Congo* (Tournai: Casterman, 1960), 36. The reference to zoos in on page 48, via the character of MacDuff. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Jean-Philippe Stassen, *I Comb Jesus et autres reportages africains* (Paris: Futuropolis, 2015), 38-40. ‘I Comb Jesus’ was first published in 2010 with the title ‘L’Étoile d’Arnold’. The volume includes another reference to *Tintin au Congo* in ‘À l’école de l’art’ (126-127), in a scene that redraws Anton Kannemeyer’s own parodical redrawing of the album in his 2014 *Papa in Afrika*. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Vicky van Bockhaven, ‘Leopard-men of the Congo in Literature and Popular Imagination’, *Tydskrif vir letterkunde* 46, no. 1 (2009), 79-94 (80). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Stassen, *I Comb Jesus*, 38-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Van Bockhaven, ‘Leopard-men’, 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Sudhir Chella Rajan, ‘Poor Little Rich Countries: Another Look at the ‘‘Resource Curse’’’, *Environmental Politics* 20, no. 5 (2011), 617-632 (619). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. On the fusion of *ligne claire* aesthetics and imperialist ideology, see Ann Miller, ‘Les *héritiers* *d’Hergé*: The Figure of the *Aventurier* in a Postcolonial Context’, *Shifting Frontiers of France and Francophonie*, ed. Yvette Rocheron and Christophe Rolfe (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004), 307-319 (307-308). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. See Rajan, ‘Poor Little Rich Countries’. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Barly Baruti and Christophe Cassiau-Haurie, *Le Singe jaune* (Grenoble: Glénat, 2018). Christian Jannone, ‘L’Afrique irréelle dans la bande dessinée franco-belge de 1940 à nos jours’, *Agora* *débats/jeunesses* 11 (1998), 73-82. On the evolution of the adventure genre in *bande dessinée*, see Miller, ‘*Les héritiers d’Hergé*’. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Alexis Seny, ‘Barly Baruti : ‘« Si à la fin de la lecture le lecteur finit par oublier « le singe jaune », on aura gagné le pari ! »’, *Branchés Culture* <https://branchesculture.com/2018/03/07/barly-baruti-le-singe-jaune-bd-album-jungle-bas-congo-metissage-enfant-soldat-interview/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. On these tropes in Franco-Belgian adventure comics from the 1950s to the 1990s, see Jannone, ‘L’Afrique irréelle’. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Baruti and Cassiau-Haurie, *Le Singe jaune*,12. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. McKinney, *Redrawing Empire*, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Baruti and Cassiau-Haurie, *Le Singe jaune*, 97-98. An image on page 108 in the dossier included in the book shows a bloody phone keypad etched out of the back of a human body sitting at a mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. By contrast, it is worth mentioning here Jean-Christophe Deveney and Christian Rossi’s *Niala* (Grenoble: Glénat, 2021), an erotic comic that purports to redraw and subvert colonial adventure comics, yet whose sex-positive and ecological message is drowned in sexist, racist and anthropocentric views of the Black female body and the jungle as tropes for ‘desire’. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Baruti and Cassau-Haurie, *Le Singe jaune*, 49-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Baruti and Cassau-Haurie, *Le Singe jaune*, 47, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2015), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. See Daniel Sixte Kakinda, ‘*Intimate Moments/Monologue*’, <https://dsixte.wixsite.com/xdlab/intimate-moments-monologue-1>, and G Gallery, ‘シクステ・カキンダ個展 / *Intimate Moments*: Sixte Kakinda Gallery Talk’, YouTube video, uploaded 19 August 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7-PdCepUe0>. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Gabrielle Hecht, *Being Nuclear: Africans and the Global Uranium Trade* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2014), 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. G Gallery, ‘Sixte Kakinda Gallery Talk’. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Cheryl McEwan, ‘Decolonizing the Anthropocene’, *International Relations in the Anthropocene: New Agendas, New Agencies and New Approaches*, ed. David Chandler, Franziska Müller and Delf Rothe (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021),71-91 (79). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Daniel Sixte Kakinda, ‘Statement’, <https://dsixte.wixsite.com/xdlab/statement>. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Heather Houser, ‘Drawing the Line on Oil in Petrochemical America’, *Environmental Humanities* 13, no. 1 (2021), 21-24 (31). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Christophe Blain and Jean-Marc Jancovici, *Le monde sans fin* (Paris: Dargaud, 2021), 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Blain and Jancovici, *Le monde sans fin*, 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Blain and Jancovici, *Le monde sans fin*,57. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Guillaume Trouillard, *Colibri* (Bordeaux: La Cerise, 2007), 42-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Didier Pasamonik, ‘Guillaume Trouillard : ‘‘Mon récit se présente comme un long plan-séquence à trame ouverte’’’, *ActuaBD*, 25/12/2007,<https://www.actuabd.com/Guillaume-Trouillard-Mon-recit-se-presente-comme-un-long-plan-sequence-a-trame-ouverte>. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Houser, ‘Drawing the Line on Oil’, 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Thierry Groensteen, *Bande dessinée et narration : système de la bande dessinée 2* (Paris : PUF, 2011), 153-160. Groensteen discusses a comic by Robert Crumb where the compression and stretching-out of time also renders anthropogenic transformation of a natural landscape. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Anne Defréville, *L’Age bleu: sauver l’océan* (Paris: Buchet Chastel, 2019), 8-9. *L’Age bleu* is printed on recycled paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Defréville, *L’Age bleu*, 58-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Stacy Alaimo, ‘States of Suspension: Trans-corporeality at Sea’, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 19, no. 3 (2012), 476-493 (477), doi:10.1093/isle/iss068. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Defréville, *L’Age bleu*, 62-63. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. René Goscinny and Morris, *Lucky Luke: À l’ombre des derricks* (Paris: Dupuis, 1962), 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. See for instance Groensteen, *Système*, 173-186. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. LeMenager, *Living Oil*. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Jean-Denis Pendanx, *Au bout du fleuve* (Paris: Futuropolis, 2017), 87-88, 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. LeMenager, *Living Oil*, 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*, 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Gayatri Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in An Era of Globalization* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012). Spivak’s concept of planetarity is put forth as highly productive for ‘Decolonising the Anthropocene’ in McEwan’s chapter of this title. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Pendanx, *Au bout du fleuve*, 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Guillaume Trouillard, *Welcome: inventaire pour l’enfant qui vient de naître* (Bordeaux: La Cerise, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Jean-Charles Andrieu de Levis, ‘Guillaume Trouillard’, *du9* <https://www.du9.org/entretien/guillaume-trouillard/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Serenella Iovino, *Ecocriticism and Italy: Ecology, Resistance, and Liberation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Gardner, ‘Storylines’, 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Martin Puchner, *Literature for a Changing Planet* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2022)71-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)