

CHAPTER ONE:

Still Pictures, Moving Frame: Comics on the Edge of Cinema

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Published in 2010 by Éditions Sarbacane (Paris), *Travelling Square District* by the young Belgian cartoonist Greg Shaw emerged as an oddity in the field of contemporary comics. Loosely inspired by the works of OuBaPo (“Ouvroir de Bande Dessinée Potentielle” [“Workshop of Potential Comic Book Art”]),¹ Shaw composed an album that appears singular in many regards. First, it is singular to the extent that it presents itself as a profound meditation on the figure of the square, which determines not only the format of the book itself, but also the architecture of each page and the shape of each panel. Moreover, it is singular insofar as the contents of the entire album fit on its front cover, an actual matrix that delimits a perimeter outside of which

the point of view will never venture (Fig. 1). As many readers have noted, this urban panorama evokes New York, most notably because of the bridge depicted on the bottom left portion of the cover, which spontaneously and rather distinctly recalls the Brooklyn Bridge, and because of the imposing statue located in the forefront on the right, a carnivalesque version of the Statue of Liberty, represented as a naked and pregnant woman, proudly brandishing a cellular phone. However, with regards to his matrix-like album cover, Greg Shaw has indicated on more than

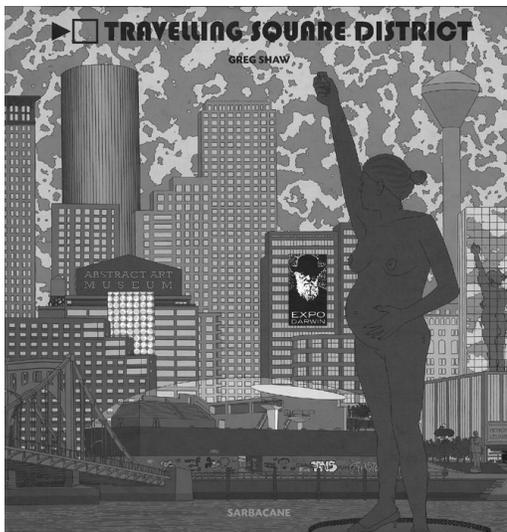


Figure 1: Cover of *Travelling Square District*. ©Éditions Sarbacane.

one occasion that he initially drew his inspiration from the city of Sydney.² From the starting point of this cover, which serves as its one and only backdrop, Shaw's opus unfolds according to a highly concerted bipolarity, alternating description and narration.

The pages with a descriptive intent employ the systematic design of 4 x 4 panels with identical dimensions. Wordless, they aim to actualize a spatial shift, a continuous setting in motion of the frame (this is the "travelling" to which the title of the work alludes), whose function is to span in detail the vast cityscape depicted on the album cover (skyscrapers, towers, metallic bridge, docks, and miscellaneous buildings), but also to interconnect the various sites where the plot—essentially a detective story—will gradually unfold.

Positioned facing each other, the pages with narrative intent are themselves structured as 2 x 2 squares of larger dimensions, with each frame occupying a surface equal to four smaller squares. Launched by a forward tracking shot or zoom on the last panel of the preceding descriptive page, such pages tend to favor, as a general rule, a wide and fixed framing. Their distinguishing feature is to encase the main characters, as expected "the husband, the wife, the cops, [and] the lover" (as they are listed on the back cover), among whom prominently features a certain Georg W. Ashry, an activist suspected of planning a bombing attack, but also, on a more personal level, a betrayed husband who decided to have his wife executed by a professional hitman. In a typically Oulipian approach, all the characters staged in the narrative pages of *Travelling Square District* are named on the basis of anagrams derived from the author's first and last names. Thereby, the name "Gregory Shaw" becomes respectively Roy Eggwhars (a police inspector), Gerry Wagosh (also an inspector), Georg W. Ashry (the presumed terrorist previously mentioned), Rosah Wygger (his unfaithful wife), Howy Beggars³ (the latter's lover, but also Ashry's accomplice in his criminal plot), Roger HG Ways (a police captain), Yorg Schwager (the hitman), etc. This is the same kind of genuine verbal prowess that Marc-Antoine Mathieu recently displayed in his highly singular publishing project entitled *Le Livre des livres* (*The Book of Books*, 2017).⁴

"START"

The entire dynamic of *Travelling Square District* likewise resides in this systematic alternation between description and narration, between tracking and fixed shots, between muteness and speech, etc. Let us now consider more attentively the opening pages of this work. On the first page, the initial visual event is not a frame but a pictogram inscribed in the left margin; this particular figure consists of a black equilateral triangle standing on one

of its angles and pointing on the right, toward the first panel of the page. This pictogram—the only sign of its kind on this first page—presents itself as the customary equivalent of an arrow and therefore takes on an essentially deictic function.

At this precise moment of the reading process, we have already encountered this singular form on two occasions and in two distinct fashions. Its first occurrence is visible on the cover of the volume itself, in the top left corner, near the title displayed in capital letters. In this particular instance, a transparent, square shape is adjoined to the opaque triangle, on its right side: a black frame encasing a portion of the sky striated by a cloud fragment. These constitute two extradiegetic forms affixed to the very surface of the cover and placed in a highly strategic location, in the immediate vicinity of the focal point that the album title usually represents. In terms of page layout, these two shapes conform to the same centering operation as that of the written text: In this case, it is as if the triangle and the square were somehow comprised or integrated within the title of the work itself, which grants them a certain amount of visibility despite their small size relative to the surface in which they are inlaid.

The double figure of the triangle and the square reappears on the inside cover of the volume, in the same area of the page (Fig. 2). The same urban panorama is again depicted here, this time shrouded in a veil of obscurity, as if filtered through a cinematic day-for-night effect. Only a tiny portion of this space eludes this overall darkening: It is precisely the sky fragment already framed on the cover, albeit highlighted. Indeed, the black frame around the square has disappeared, as it is no longer necessary due to the surrounding darkness. As far as the triangle itself is concerned, its color has changed from

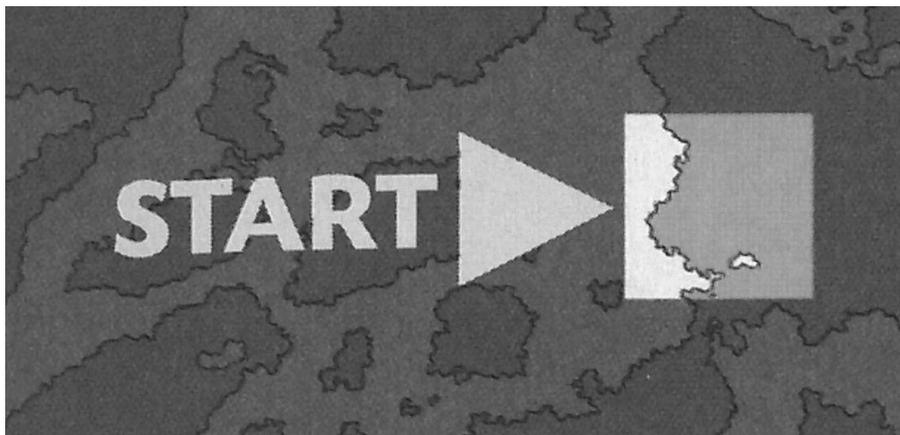


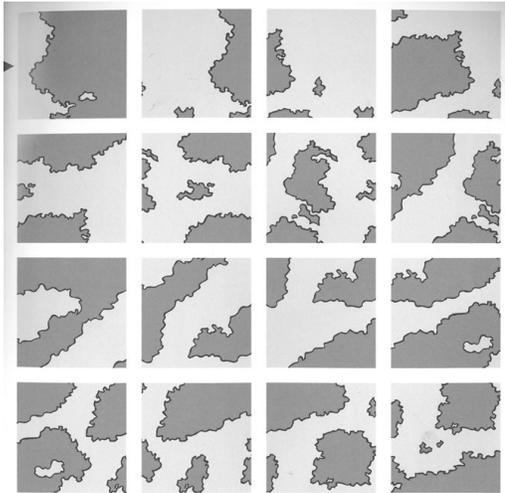
Figure 2: The triangle and square pictogram on the inside cover (detail of page). ©Éditions Sarbacane.

black to beige in order to heighten its definition in contrast with its backdrop. Although the book title, as well as the mentions of its author and publisher, are no longer present, this does not mean that this intermediate page remains void of any textual element. In fact, just before the triangle and in the same color, the page displays a verb in the imperative form, typed in capital letters.

“START”: Such a scriptural element does not belong to the categories of the speech balloon nor the narrative caption. Rather, it seems more like a direct address or injunction directed toward the reader, which designates the starting point of a process about to be undertaken. One should note that the redundancy between the word “START” and the triangular pictogram is only superficial. While the verbal element alludes to a beginning, or the engagement of a process, the pictogram associated therewith rather tends to signify the act of playing, according to audiovisual signage (“PLAY” rather than “START”). Yet a reader never really “plays” a comic book (in the same way as he or she would “play” a record or a DVD). From the onset, this sign alludes to the fact that Shaw’s album will be the site of formal procedures and effects referring to specific practices associated with moving images (cinema, video). Furthermore, in such a context, the alliance between the triangle and the square has a potentially ironic implication, in that the square, according to the same system of signs, indeed designates the idea of stopping. What these two conjoined pictograms therefore invite us to conceptualize at once is the paradox of a process interrupted as soon as it is initiated, as if stymied from the onset.

Celestial Path

Responding to Greg Shaw’s invitation, let us begin to play by examining more closely the first page of the volume. The terms of the challenge with which the author faced himself (and, consequently, his reader) seem clear from the beginning: How can one endeavor to represent a regular and continuous movement of the frame using fixed images? One recalls that this is the same question that Régis Franc previously addressed—albeit on a smaller scale—in *Intérieurs* (*Interiors*, 1979), a work based on an uninterrupted circular panorama (Groensteen 2011, 71). In this regard, besides, Shaw does not opt for an easy solution. In order to acquaint his reader with his moving frame device, the artist indeed chooses a purely arbitrary movement, a celestial tracking shot deprived of any anthropomorphic point of reference (Fig. 3). After the triangular pictogram (the sign of a process set in motion and the reminder of a forward reading path), the frame thereby enters into an ample and continuous movement, which will only be interrupted at first on the



**Figure 3: The opening celestial tracking shot of *Travelling Square District*.
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transition and serves as a cue to the mobilization and orientation of the frame, both laterally and vertically. Thus, the second frame reveals and completes the cloud that, in the opening frame, was only partially visible, along the left edge of the frame.⁵ In the third frame, while the whiteness of the cloud becomes dominant, the indication of continuity resides in a minuscule fragment of sky situated just above the lower edge of the frame, slowly gliding toward the right border. Finally, in the fourth frame, the relative apportionment of blue sky and clouds becomes more evenly balanced; the markers of continuity in this instance consist of sky segments carved by the boundaries of the frame (its two lateral borders and its bottom edge). Understandably, in this opening sequence, as in all pages of a descriptive nature, Shaw quite consciously plays with a powerful domino effect (Peeters 1998, 39); in this particular instance, he tends to give a literal meaning to the famous principle of “iconic solidarity” that, according to Thierry Groensteen, constitutes a “law” of the figurative language that is specific to comics (2011, 23–25).

In the transition between the fourth and the fifth frame, Shaw grapples with a new and rather thorny issue: how to negotiate, in such a configuration, the transition not between the frames this time, but between the strips. In this respect, the artist once again favors a radical solution that breaks with established conventions. As the reader’s gaze naturally “falls” onto the fifth frame or descends upon the strip below, Shaw chooses to impart an upward

bottom of the third page. If the pictogram placed in the margin invites us to unfold a conventional reading from left to right, Shaw effectuates a striking deviation in the first strip by displaying a movement that actually spreads from right to left.

How does the author communicate such a contradictory movement, which produces an obvious interference with the standard reading path? The representational tactic that he employs here is as simple as it is efficient: Shaw ensures that each new panel retains a fragment of the preceding one (sky or cloud, blue or white zone). Between two frames, a repeated iconic fragment marks the

trajectory to his framing, expressed through two graphic indicators of continuity (the fragmentation of the blue zone by its bottom edge and the emergence of a smaller blue zone, which trickles down along the edge of the left border). On all counts, the relationship between the fourth and fifth frames follows the overall articulation of the first strip; whether lateral or vertical, its first objective is to meet the reader's gaze against the grain.

Using the same figurative stratagem, the remainder of the page translates yet a new lateral movement from right to left (frames six, seven, eight, and nine), followed by a downward movement, this time unfolding in the same direction as the reading path (frames twelve, thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen), and a final descending movement (frame sixteen). In this first page, which undoubtedly has a programmatic importance, the four modalities of the tracking shot are therefore exemplified: the lateral movement toward the left or the right, and the vertical movement, either upward or downward—yet without any crossing of the two patterns, as any type of movement always remains in a straight line, for obvious reasons of legibility.⁶ From the outset, this says everything about the vast, descriptive scrolling maneuver in which the point of view will engage from the beginning to the end of the volume.

The notion of spanning the celestial vault without visualizing any reference to the Earth below clearly alludes to cinema and, more specifically, to the experimental side of filmmaking. Faced with the opening page of *Travelling Square District*, one cannot refrain from thinking about certain sequences of *La Région centrale* (*The Central Region*, 1971), the monumental work of Canadian filmmaker Michael Snow. One may indeed recall that Snow's film presents itself as a systematic exploration of the almost infinite possibilities granted by the movement of the cinematographic frame, here deployed in all possible and imaginable directions (laterality, verticality, rotations, zooming effects, etc.).⁷ Toward the eighteenth minute of the film, after having meticulously explored a vast mountainscape, deserted and ordinary, the remote-controlled camera that Snow blindly operates gains some altitude; it frees itself from the Earth's surface, detaches itself from any anchor, and, for more than ten minutes, fixates its mechanical and mobile eye on a blue sky scattered initially with thick clouds. Between Shaw and Snow, the area of convergence does not solely lie in the choice of a common motif; it also resides in the notion of a "celestial journey" made through a fluid, relatively slow and, above all, uninterrupted movement. Better yet, while the movement of the frame is evidently simulated in *Travelling Square District*—as opposed to the actual movement in *La Région centrale*—the clouds serve in both cases as the obvious indicators of this movement.⁸

Façades and Grids

Accommodating within its space a broken and rather complex trajectory, the first page of *Travelling Square District* announces the promise of a gradual descent toward Earth, in search of a material anchor after this initial feat, as well as more immediately legible points of reference; it also seeks the human figure, the main subject matter of the more narrative side of Shaw's work.

This is indeed what happens on the following page, on the surface of which the downward movements occupy ten of the sixteen panels. An architectural tracking shot now replaces its celestial counterpart. Within this second page, just as in the next one, Greg Shaw obviously remembers the broad camera movements, both independent and descriptive, by which many classic Hollywood films often begin. Most readers will undoubtedly have in mind the opening of *The Lost Weekend* (Billy Wilder, 1945) or the even better known and more striking beginning of *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), in which the filmmaker starts with a wide-angled, panoramic shot of the city of Phoenix, then eventually manages, thanks to progressive tracking shots and subtle crossfades, to single out a building, then, within this building, a particular hotel room where Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) has just spent an intimate moment with her lover.⁹ Moreover, it is worth noting that the reference to Hitchcock (the director of *Psycho*, but also, more appropriately, that of *Rear Window* [1954]) seems openly assumed by Shaw. Indeed, in a subsequent descriptive page of *Travelling Square District*, frames ten to fourteen depict a statue that unmistakably resembles the master of suspense.

Another clear reference is the repeated allusion to Georges Perec, in this instance in the form of a graffito. These are doubtless hints to the historical OuLiPo movement in general, and more specifically to Perec's own *La Vie mode d'emploi* (*Life: A User's Manual*, 1978), a "panoptic" description of everyday life in an apartment building, and a multifaceted and experimental novel that may have inspired *Travelling Square District* in one way or another.¹⁰

The third page of the album is entirely devoted—and this is a rather remarkable characteristic—to a downward tracking shot that spans the façade of a single building. The representational difficulty that such a setting may pose evidently resides in its strong uniformity, as opposed to the fantasy or the instability of the clouds previously depicted. In such an instance, how can a graphic artist give the illusion of a moving frame? To solve this particular problem, Shaw engages here in a rather subtle play on borders. Not only does he neutralize the lateral borders of these sixteen panels (so as to once again produce a straight-line trajectory), but he strives to resolutely activate the lower border of the panels. As the frame progressively moves over the surface of the building, new windows are thereby uncovered, most often in three

phases: first, in a discreet and fragmentary fashion near the bottom border, then in a more straightforward manner, before appearing in full as the result of a progressive discovery—a process that is repeated several times. There again, the sheer literal principle of “iconic solidarity” prevails; should any one of these panels be missing, the very movement of the frame would fall into illegibility.

Segmenting the façade of the skyscraper in continuous fragments and thereby producing, in passing, various effects of *surcadrage* (a frame within frame) in repeated succession, this third page—like many others within the album—tends to make the original figurative material more abstract. In so doing, it sometimes evokes, in its very regularity, some of Paul Klee’s works such as *Static-Dynamic Gradation* (1923) or *Ancient Sound, Abstract on Black* (1925), with the latter painting also adopting a square format, which perhaps is not an insignificant similarity. In its conformation, such a page is also reminiscent of the well-known grid structure, which Rosalind Krauss, in a notable essay, considered as “emblematic of the modernist ambition of visual arts” (1981, 167) and in which she sought to identify “the omnipresent form of [twentieth-century] art” (1981, 169).¹¹

Spread over three pages and no fewer than forty-eight frames, the majestic framing movement with which *Travelling Square District* begins can only produce an intense effect of mystery or suspense: What is this continuous tracking shot seeking to find, what is it chasing exactly, and what will it capture in the end?

Flowing Down the River

In the final section of *Travelling Square District*, Yorg Schwager knocks out Georg W. Ashry, who had hired his services, before drowning him in his bathtub. Through this action, the hitman rids himself of an “inconvenient witness,” in his own words (“un témoin gênant”). The last two narrative pages of the book show us, in a fixed and medium shot, the same character as he is finding refuge in what looks like a peep show building near the river.

Following this ultimate plot twist, Shaw’s work ends like it started: with three strictly descriptive pages spanned by a moving point of view. Quite notably, the antepenultimate and penultimate pages of the volume enclose and concentrate compelling downward motions in their lower portions (panels twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen on the first of these two pages, and panels eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen on the second). As he reaches the end of his narrative, Shaw engages in a final reflection through images on the possibilities that a moving frame may offer to the

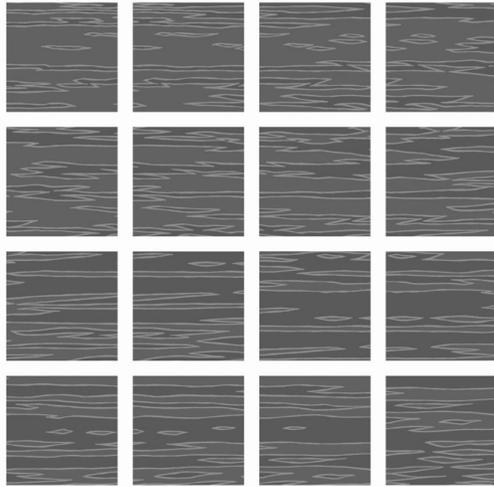


Figure 4: Spanning the flow of the river.
©Éditions Sarbacane.

mobile frame can acutely reformulate itself. In this instance, Shaw relies on the same device as in the opening of the volume; between two consecutive panels, he strives to maintain, in an overlapping fashion, a marker of graphic continuity that allows one to determine the direction followed by the frame. Yet this is not the main point. A more remarkable factor is that in this closing segment, Shaw sets out to constrict the movements of the frame by restricting them to two options: Either the tracking shot progresses from left to right (as in the first fifteen panels), or it proceeds from high to low (as in the last panel). In other words, nothing comes to hamper the wandering of the gaze on this final page. It removes any friction between the movements produced by the frame and the standard trajectory of the reading process. In such a composition, the reader's gaze only has to glide, to let itself be carried by the flow of the water until the last panel. This device functions as an implicit invitation to slide out of the narrative and to disengage from the relatively demanding design that presided over the structure of the work to that point.

For a Para-History of Cinema

From its title to the devices that it employs (horizontal or vertical tracking shots, zooms, long takes, but also, in some of the narrative episodes, flashbacks with subtle shifts from color to black and white), as well as in the various references that it evokes implicitly or explicitly (Vidor, Wilder, Hitchcock, Snow, etc.), Shaw's album is evidently deeply infused, in the very

language of comics. For this purpose, the author focuses his point of view on a site located, topographically speaking, at the antipode of the sky that was explored within the frame of the first page. Thanks to the aforementioned downward motions, he now directs his gaze onto the water in the river, with which the perspective aligns in the last frame of the penultimate page (Fig. 4).

Like the clouds on the opening page, the murky (grayish/greenish) water of the river presents itself as a relatively amorphous surface upon which the entire question of the

heart of its apparatus, by cinema, either traditional or experimental. In a manner of speaking, *Travelling Square District* could be labeled as a “para-cinematographic” work, to the extent that this album applies its mechanics and reveals its actual stakes only in relation to or in proximity with cinema. In this regard, *Travelling Square District* benefits from a comparison with a work such as *Cinema Panopticum* (2008) by the Swiss graphic artist Thomas Ott, a completely wordless album in black and white that follows a little girl wandering in a fairground. Destitute, she ends up in a remote fairground stand, where she can view—thanks to slot machines that closely resemble the kinoscope device invented by Thomas Edison in the 1890s—five different stories, one after the other (in chronological order: “The Hotel,” “The Champion,” “The Experiment,” “The Prophet,” and “The Girl”), which present themselves as various fantastic fictions filled with strange characters. In other words, this album derives its very substance from the moving pictures that unfurl in front of the little girl’s gaze, sometimes intrigued and sometimes frightened, whose point of view the reader is led to share. Moreover, the relationship between Thomas Ott’s work and cinema is not only a matter of narrative pretext. Indeed, it is worth noting that *Cinema Panopticum* became the subject of an actual art exhibit at the Bologna Film Archive in March of 2009—an initiative so rare that it deserves to be emphasized. Perhaps even more surprisingly, the work of the Swiss graphic artist also constitutes the visual subject matter of a kind of hybrid spectacle, a “comics-concert” conceived by the Skeleton Band, a folk-rock group from Montpellier that performs on stage while the frames from *Cinema Panopticum* are projected on a screen and organized in sequences, as a backdrop. Evidently, this is a rather singular display where the comics image turns into, not a filmic image per se, but at the very least an image traversed and transported by light.

One should also connect the present analysis to the radical experiment that is Marc-Antoine Mathieu’s *3 secondes* (2011). This is a virtuosic album that responds to the ambitious challenge of detailing the scene of a crime in a single “playful zoom,” which is dizzying, uninterrupted, and particularly rich in plot twists and visual rebounds of all kinds. Additionally, it is a hybrid work, as it also exists in digital version, between comics and video.¹² After having typed a password available on the inside cover of the hard copy of the book, the reader/spectator is put in control of the zoom around which the work is organized. He or she is invited to use a cursor in order to “bend time (toward the right in order to speed it up, the center to slow it down, and the left to reverse it)” —all temporal manipulations in which cinema engaged from its beginning,¹³ and which later left their marks in films by directors as

diverse as René Clair (*Entr'acte*, 1924, on a script by Francis Picabia), Jean Epstein (*The Fall of the House of Usher*, 1928), or Dziga Vertov (*Kino-Glaz*, 1924; *Man with a Movie Camera*, 1929), to cite only works from the 1920s.

Anecdotally—although this connection seems particularly revealing—one of the pages of *3 secondes* mentions, as an almost subliminal detail (the spine of a book only fully visible in one frame) or a nod, the name of Greg Shaw himself, in the vicinity of other artists to whom Mathieu likes to refer and whom he counts among his acknowledged influences, such as Nikki de Saint-Phalle, M. C. Escher, Anish Kapoor, or Jeff Koons.¹⁴

At the very least, one can conclude that we are dealing here with graphic works that are genuinely haunted by cinema as a device and a mode of representation. At any rate, are such visual objects not positioned in the margins of the history of cinema? In such, do they not share the inherent characteristic of bringing the limits of this history into question? More radically even, do they not argue in favor of extending the perimeter that is generally allocated to it? One can at least wonder, quite simply, if works of this kind do not call for the development of a para-history of cinema, a field of inquiry that would encompass all graphic projects that are, in one way or another, permeated, possessed, or obsessed by cinema.

Translated from the French by Fabrice Leroy,
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Endnotes

1. OuBaPo is a comics movement with variable membership that was created in 2002 by Thierry Groensteen and Jean-Christophe Menu. It conceives itself as the graphic prolongation of the OuLiPo (*Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle* [Workshop of Potential Literature]), the illustrious collective founded in 1960 by Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais. Like its literary predecessor, the OuBaPo promotes the idea of creation under predefined constraints. For an overview of these constraints (random consecution, overlaying, iconic restriction, textual iteration, etc.) and the formal plays that they may generate, see OuBaPo 2003. For a history and a general description of the movement, see Menu 2011.

2. On this issue, see for instance the interview that the author granted to the website Génération BD in 2010 (last consulted 22 September 2020): <https://www.generationbd.com/interviews/20-interviews-ecrites/1242-interview-bd-qgreg-shawq-traveling-square-district-sarbacane.html>. Last consulted 9 April 2022.

3. Although not a perfect anagram of “Gregory Shaw,” “Howy Beggars” contains the letters that make up “Greg Shaw.”

4. In this work outside of the norms, the first and last names of the author are used to designate, thanks to a similar anagrammatic play, the authors of various imaginary works, whose covers are incorporated in the body of the book itself. Thus, the full name “Marc-Antoine Mathieu” becomes, rather poetically, “Mathieu Mainraconte,” “Maurice-Nathan Moite,” “Maria Toutenmachine,” etc. We will come back to the connections between Mathieu and Shaw in more detail, later in this chapter.
5. Not surprisingly, this first frame corresponds exactly to the portion of sky delineated by the square with black borders located on the upper left side of the book cover. As it were, this frame was already precarved in the matrix image of the album.
6. To be completely precise, Shaw refrains in principle from any form of zigzag. Therefore, a lateral movement made in a given direction cannot be immediately followed by another lateral movement in the opposite direction. In other words, every directional shift in a particular dimension (lateral or vertical) must be announced, and, in a sense, buffered by a change of direction in the other dimension. Here lies a supplementary constraint, more discreet, yet effective.
7. On the complex device that governs *La Région centrale* and on the multiple effects of movement that it allows, see de Loppinot 2010, 81–93.
8. At the end of the first sequence of *La Région centrale*, around the thirtieth minute of the film, the filming apparatus only captures an empty, cloudless blue sky, a pure monochrome surface whose contact seems to reduce the camera to an apparent immobility.
9. In an earlier period of film history, one can also think of the beginning of *The Crowd* (King Vidor, 1928), with its ample vertical tracking shot focusing on the façade of an imposing New York skyscraper.
10. The sentence by Paul Klee that Perec places as the epigraph of his preamble (“The eye follows the paths that have been managed for it in the work”) certainly takes on a particular resonance for the reader of *Travelling Square District*. For a stimulating re-reading of *Life: A User’s Manual*, more specifically on the subject of the relations that it weaves between the parts and the whole, see Joly 2013. In the realm of comics, Perec’s “architectural” composition, with its transversal cuts into cityscapes and its inventories of objects, has most notably inspired Chris Ware’s *Building Stories* project (2012).
11. This correlation appears even more interesting insofar as one of the narrative threads weaved by *Travelling Square District*, as previously noted, involves a bomb attack on a Museum of Abstract Art (a building located on the left middle side of the cover). Let us also recall that the double question of painting and abstraction constitutes a paramount notion in *Parcours Pictural (Pictural Itinerary)*, an album that Greg Shaw published in 2005. For a more general and more recent perspective on the grid motif, see Higgins 2009.
12. The digital version of *3 secondes* is available at the following address (last consulted on March 16, 2022): <https://youtu.be/00xwHWeifPE>.

13. On the subject of early cinema, one thinks especially of a maneuver that some of the Lumière cameramen would perform upon the projected film. In this regard, see Félix Mesguich's testimony: "In Boston at the Grand Opera House, in front of a packed audience, I show a new film, *Baths at Milan, Italy*, which I have just received. For the first time, on a whim, I take the chance of having the divers come out of the water, by turning the crank backward. The room erupts in overwhelming applause, and it is such a resounding success that my wages are increased. This is a surprise that I was not expecting; it proves that sometimes one benefits from beginning with the end" (1933, 12). As we know, the same process of reversing the reel was often applied to another well-known Lumière film, namely *Demolition of a Wall*. With regards to a frantic acceleration of time, the most exemplary film of this period is of course *Onésime Horloger* (*Onésime, Clockmaker*, 1912) directed by Jean Durand.

14. Mathieu's homage to Shaw can also be explained by the fact that the author of *3 secondes* has himself favored, in this particular work, the form of the square, much like his predecessor (in the format of the album, and in page layouts consisting of 3 x 3 squares). Reciprocally, Shaw has made his admiration for Mathieu quite clear by stating unequivocally that "this is undoubtedly the author that has put me on the path of experimentation." (See the 2010 interview mentioned in Note 2.)

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