Temenuga Trifonova

Abstract

This article argues that drawing in comics is, fundamentally, a narrative process. Thus, the turn in comics away from the literary, towards the visual arts (especially cinema) has also been a result of comic artists aligning their visual aesthetics with new innovative narratives: the visual turn is not merely a rejection of the literary or textual aspect of comics but a readjustment to new non-sequential narratives (like those of the *nouvelle vague*). Only in this way can we explain the paradox that nouvelle manga's self-proclaimed interest in storytelling over illustration does not seem to fit with the general critical agreement about a 'visual turn' in comics since the early 1990s. To call nouvelle manga 'cinematic', then, is to refer not only to particular visual techniques that we have come to associate with cinema, but also to a particular type of storytelling characteristic of the *nouvelle vague and* of Japanese cinema. There are undeniable similarities between *nouvelle vague*'s episodic narrative structure and what David Desser calls 'the classical paradigm' of Japanese cinema, best exemplified by Ozu's films whose narrational mode Desser compares to Kabuki plays and Japanese novels. Ozu's films disrupt narrative linearity, stress spatial manipulations, rely on temporal ellipsis, employ an episodic structure and avoid climactic moments to explore the mundaneness of daily life. Frédéric Boilet, author of the Nouvelle Manga manifesto, wanted nouvelle manga to use the everyday stories of Japanese manga to counterbalance the excessive emphasis on illustration he found in French BD. Paradoxically, however, the incorporation of everyday stories does not result in a greater emphasis on storytelling; just the opposite: in fact, nouvelle manga's loose, episodic narrative or lack of narrative has served to refocus attention on the visual plane.

Keywords
nouvelle manga
nouvelle vague
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visual turn
storytelling
global art

      'Nouvelle Manga' (NM) is an artistic movement that brings together the cinematic storytelling of Franco-Belgian BD (bandes dessinées)[1] with the everyday stories of Japanese manga.[2] The term was first used by Kiyoshi Kusumi, editor of the Japanese manga magazine *Comickers*, to describe Frédéric Boilet's graphic novels

perceived by the Japanese as graphically close to French *BD* but read like manga and permeated by the spirit of French cinema and literature. While traditional American comics and French BD originated with artwork as the focus, Nouvelle Manga uses a cinematic, panel-by-panel type of storytelling to portray stories of everyday life. Among the artists associated with the movement are Frédéric Boilet, Jiro Taniguchi, Kan Takahama, Kazuichi Hanawa, Kiriko Nananan, Hideji Oda, Nicolas de Crécy, Yoshiharu Tsuge, and Naito Yamada.

The cinematic nature of Nouvelle Manga has been seen as an instance of what Bart Beaty refers to as 'the visual turn' in comics, since the early 1990s, away from the literary and toward the visual arts (especially cinema). Although it is easy to trace Nouvelle Manga's cinematic character back to the French Nouvelle Vague, in what follows I will argue that what makes Nouvelle Manga cinematic is not only, or not necessarily, the use of particular cinematic techniques but rather the investment in a particular type of storytelling characteristic both of the Nouvelle Vague and of Japanese cinema.

In his Nouvelle Manga Manifesto Frédéric Boilet notes that currently there are three major markets of graphic novels—Japan, the United States and France— represented by three distinct 'genres' or 'national styles': manga, comics, and BD. However, he argues, this classification does not hold in any other artistic medium: e.g. cinema, literature, and visual art are all considered universal art forms. It is only in the field of the graphic novel that the 'genre' or 'style' classification is premised entirely on the comparison of the commercial output of manga, comics and BD, respectively. As soon as we leave aside the purely commercial products of these three national styles,

focusing instead on graphic novels d'auteur—adult comics about everyday life—it becomes obvious, according to Boilet, that the similarities between the three supposedly separate styles far outweigh the differences between them. He thus proposes the term 'La Nouvelle Manga' to refer to works that appeal to a wider and more diverse audience, rather than merely to manga fans or comics fans (mostly male teenage audiences).

While a focus on everyday life has long distinguished French (and European) cinema from Hollywood cinema, until the early 1990s French BD was not interested in daily life stories, emphasizing instead the art work. Unlike French BD artists, who are mostly illustrators, a mangaka (manga artist) is, first of all, a storyteller. Rather than rehashing the same old adventure or sci fi stories, a mangaka writes stories rooted in everyday life, which explains their wide appeal to a diverse range of readers, not just 'otaku' (manga fans) but anyone who reads comics for the same reason they read literature or go to the cinema. In Boilet's vision of Nouvelle Manga, Japanese manga's traditional commitment to daily life has the potential to counterbalance the increasingly Hollywood nature of French/Belgian BD, which has restricted itself to established genres like science fiction, action films, historical films, or westerns. Recent film adaptations of French BD illustrate Boilet's point perfectly. *Immortal* (2004), an English language, French-produced sci fi film based on Enki Bilal's comic book *The Carnival of Immortals* is one of the first major films to be shot entirely on a digital backlot, blending live actors with computer generated surroundings. *Sky Fighters* (2005), *Top Gun* à la Française, based on Jean-Michel Charlier and Albert Uderzo's BD *Tanguy et Laverdure*, is about two air force pilots preventing a terrorist attack on the Bastille Day celebrations in Paris. *Largo Winch* (2008), based on the Belgian comic *Largo Winch*, is clearly intended as a

jet-setting James Bond-like franchise. *Blueberry* (2004), based on Moebius' comic book, released on DVD under the title *Renegade*, was marketed very much as a conventional Western**.**

Nouvelle Manga continues the legacy of the French Nouvelle Vague and Dogme, applying their principles to the world of comics. The Nouvelle Vague was characterized by a preoccupation with authenticity: filmmakers approached fiction as if it were documentary and documentary as if it were fiction, avoiding anything stagy or scripted. Their films were driven by two apparently conflicting tendencies: a predilection for truthfulness, spontaneity and improvisation and, at the same time, a tendency toward self-reflexivity. Their conception of plot and character was strongly influenced by the Nouveau Roman (Robbe Grillet, George Perec, Natalie Sarraute, Michel Butor), which dramatized the artifice of the linear plot and the 'three-dimensional character', the illusion of the omniscient point of view, and the blurred boundaries separating fiction from reality. Departing from the norms of the sterile 'cinema of quality'—technically polished costume dramas and literary adaptations—Nouvelle Vague directors made sincerity and intimacy the new standard of their personal films and sought to legitimize cinema as an art independent from literature: the main reason for their dissatisfaction with 'the cinema of quality' was precisely its overdependence on the script. In 'La camera-stylo' Alexandre Astruc used the metaphor of the 'camera-pen' to argue that cinema is a visual language the artist can use to express both abstract and concrete thoughts and feelings.

Between the 1960s and 1980s traditional BD underwent a process of modernization under the dual weight of the Nouveau Roman and the Nouvelle Vague: the

BD began to move away from conventional narrative[3] and to privilege the independent image over step-by-step narration, which resulted in greater evocative ambiguity.[4] The influence of Nouvelle Vague was only the first phase in what critics have described as a 'visual turn' in the history of comics, which reached its apogee in the 1990s when comic books artists began to draw inspiration from the visual and plastic arts rather than from literature. The rise of the small press based on the publishing model of the artist-run cooperative and the struggle for creative autonomy played an important part in the shift away from the traditions of the Franco-Belgian illustration schools and in the emergence of new genres, most notably autobiography as 'a rejection of genre and a turn toward the real and the self, toward greater authenticity' (Beaty 2007: 8). The French artist-run publishing co-operative L'Association was the driving force behind this transformation. By breaking with both the corporate and the genre model of comics production and repositioning adult comics as a function of the visual rather than the literary, L'Association (founded in 1990) provided

> a latter day BD parallel to the historical development of the New Wave in cinema, which challenged the anonymous studio production through the cinema d'auteur in the same way that L'Association promoted the status of BD author as total creator, limited budget productions, and everyday subject matter. (Beaty 2007: 140-141)

There are obvious continuities between Nouvelle Vague and Nouvelle Manga: the predilection for meandering, episodic stories, often interrupted by self-reflexive or

intertextual moments (Boilet's *Yukiko's Spinach*), the blurring of the distinction between perception, thought and imagination (Oda's *A Patch of Dreams*), an interest in the décor or the mood of the setting rather than in drama or character psychology (Taniguchi's *The Walking Man*), discontinuity editing (Boilet's self-conscious 'jump cuts'), the delinking of image from sound (Boilet), the concern with interart relationships (Boilet), genre hybridity,[5] the conflation of 'high' and 'low' culture (comics dealing with existential themes, e.g. *A Patch of Dreams*, *Doing Time*). 'Nouvelle Manga,' writes Boilet in his manifesto, 'is an author's initiative (as opposed to a publisher's or import library's initiative that would inevitably lead to translations, or imports, of best-sellers)' (Boilet 2001). NM revives the Nouvelle Vague notion of the 'auteur' but re-imagines the auteur as a figure fully immersed in the processes of globalization rather than furiously trying to resist them. The 'graphic novel d'auteur' (a term Boilet uses synonymously with NM) has the potential of becoming a global art form independent of geography and genre insofar as it explores everyday life and remains free from commercial restraints.[6] Paradoxically, Boilet sees Japanese manga as a way to 're-Europeanize' European comics and, precisely in doing so, 'globalize' them. In this respect, the NM manifesto echoes another call for a global, independent art cinema opposed to Hollywood: the famous Dogme manifesto.

Dogme was not so much an attempt to revive Danish national cinema as it was an attempt to challenge commercial filmmaking by rethinking global art cinema in a way that would loosen the association of art cinema with 'national cinema' (e.g. heritage films). By countering the dynamics of localism fueled by globalism, which stimulated the movement of national cinemas in the direction of the parochial and the local, Dogme

shifted the focus to the cinematic art itself and to the economic and social conditions of production. While the most well known Dogme films are those made by Danish filmmakers, the Dogme concept was eventually adopted by a range of international filmmakers (though they appropriated the Dogme rules selectively). Supporting film productions from the 'margins' (i.e. small nations), Dogme positioned itself as a challenge to Hollywood's illusionism, its marketing and distribution based strategies, huge budgets, stardom and special effects, and its genre film conventions. Influenced by Italian neo-realism, Vertov's Kino Pravda, and cinéma vérité, Dogme filmmakers sought to decompose the image, ignoring or blatantly violating the rules of continuity editing, playing with visibility and invisibility, dramatization and de-dramatization etc. In the 'Vow of Chastity' Lars von Trier echoed the Nouvelle Vague's earlier critique of a 'certain tendency in cinema', but also rejected the notion of an 'auteur' as a vestige of bourgeois romanticism: the 'director' of a Dogme film was not to be credited in recognition of the collaborative nature of filmmaking. Apart from the interdiction to credit the author, however, the 'Vow of Chastity' (the use of portable equipment, the documentary approach to fiction, shooting on location, an interest in slice of life stories rather than in highly dramatic or epic stories) was clearly informed by the Nouvelle Vague's desire for authenticity and intimacy. Dogme filmmakers proclaimed their intolerance for artifice and illusion, their commitment to capture 'the truth of reality', which demanded abandoning the usual trappings of Hollywood cinema: lighting, post production, props, sound montage, genre conventions, linear plot, establishing shots, psychologically motivated shots, shooting on a sound stage, etc.[7] Boilet's manifesto echoes the premise of the Dogme manifesto: the universal appeal of an art work is

defined by the universal register of daily life (whether autobiographical, documental or fictional) rather than by its commercial success. The borderline dividing the commercial graphic novel from the graphic novel d'auteur is, in the end, more significant than that between the three national styles of manga, comics, and *BD*.

Some critics have argued that unlike the Nouvelle Vague Dogme was not a spontaneous movement borne out of particular socio-economic conditions.[8] There was no obvious need for Dogme to come into existence when and where it did: Lars von Trier came up with the concept as a means of battling his own perfectionism and his difficulties in financing his films. This brings up the question: how do we account for the emergence of NM? Is NM the result of a desire to produce a new art form or is it rather a marketing strategy? Derik Badman is among the few critics who have reflected on the motivation behind Boilet's self-proclaimed new genre of 'NM'. According to Badman, Boilet 'is attempting a marketing/terminological action to expose works that fall outside the stereotypical genres and could be enjoyed by the typical adult (or at least those outside the "otaku" or "BDphile" community)' (Badman 2005). Badman calls Boilet's marketing attempt "noble" inasmuch as it has helped popularize works by lesser known daily-life mangaka like Taniguchi, Tsuge and Nananan, all three of whom have been retrospectively associated with NM (Boilet lists all three in his manifesto as influences). Indeed, Boilet's manifesto is clearly driven by marketing and distribution concerns. For example, Boilet writes that although a BD auteur like Mœbius is known within the Japanese comics industry and, to a lesser degree, by the general reading public,

this recognition is not due to sales of [his] work…but solely to the promotion of [his name], a campaign orchestrated since the end of the 1980s by the publishers, the press, booksellers and French institutions. There is, however, very little chance that [his] BDs…will reach a large readership in Japan...[because] [a]s often happens with Sci-Fi, the stories of Mœbius are very peculiar, one needs a certain culture and sense of nostalgia to appreciate them i.e. not only a background in BDs and 'Mœbius culture' but also a nostalgia for the BDs of the late 70s...a culture and a nostalgia that the majority of Japanese readers don't share. (Boilet 2001)

Boilet further insists that the emergence and success of Nouvelle BD, at the beginning of the 1990s, made possible by publishers like l'Association and Ego Comme X, was due precisely to the shift from the 80s commercial, genre-bound BD to daily life stories that appealed to a new readership beyond the narrow market of BD fans. While the work of Nouvelle BD authors is translated in other European countries and in the US, commercial BD has remained limited to the Franco-Belgian market.

Relying on a familiar marketing strategy, usually applied to film genres—hybridization of two or more genres to appeal to a wider audience—but applying it to different media (comics and cinema), Boilet seeks to legitimize NM through its association with cinema, particularly the Nouvelle Vague, with which NM shares a lot more similarities than it does either with traditional BD or mainstream manga. Boilet admits to being influenced by mangaka like Yoshiharu Tsuge, Naito Yamada, Kiriko Nananan, whose comics d'auteur are closer to the films of Yasujirô Ozu and Jacques

Doillon than to commercial manga or Luc Besson's films. By telling daily life stories, Boilet argues, BD becomes both more universal and, from the point of view of foreign readers, more 'French', part of a larger French culture, including French cinema. Indeed, the success Boilet envisions for NM is based on the proven marketability of French cinema in Japan, the second largest market in the world for French cinema.

Let us now look at some examples of NM. NM's inaugural work was Boilet's *Yukiko's Spinach*, an autobiographical manga recounting the romance between Boilet, a French mangaka living in Japan, and a Japanese girl, Yukiko. Boilet translates many of the techniques that made Nouvelle Vague cinema unique into the medium of comics. *Yukiko's Spinach* opens with a series of pages, consisting of 3 'bandes' corresponding to three slightly different points of view on the same street scene: the variation in the angle and/or scale of the 'shot' is minor and unnecessary from the point of view of the story i.e. it is the comics version of the jump cut as used, for example, by Godard in *Breathless*. The following pages are filled with obsessively repetitive drawings of Yukiko, again from different points of view and at different 'camera distances', which are not part of a story: none of them are immediately or conclusively identifiable as representing a particular moment in a chronologically unfolding narrative or, rather, the events they represent can be read both as taking place in the present and, at the same time, as manifestations of the author character's dream, memory or imagination. **[Figures 1 and 2]** The dialogue between Boilet and Jukiko in the restaurant is constantly derailed into a free association of thoughts and memories while, paradoxically, it remains grounded in an obsessive record of every minor gesture of the woman Boilet is in love with. The 'story' of their doomed relationship is conveyed not through a series of chronological

events but through a couple of actions that are extended in time through the distracted and at the same time fastidious record of little, insignificant movements and gestures. In a Godard-like fashion Boilet indiscriminately juxtaposes drawings of Yukiko, in the present, with drawings of her as she exists in his imagination and drawings of parts of her first in his notebook and then on his computer desktop as he edits the comics in which she is a character.

Boilet's photo-realistic method consists of photographing his subjects and landscapes, then using filters to make them appear as line drawing; he also includes some traditional line drawings in the book.[9] *Yukiko's Spinach* exhibits a number of recognizable Nouvelle Vague elements, such as self-reflexivity, fragmentariness, stylization, episodicity and intertextuality. Some reviewers refer to the book as 'a tender work of cinema,' 'a painting and a short movie at the same time, hung on several plates of a comic book,' while others refuse to call it manga precisely on account of its exclusively visual nature, claiming that 'it is mainly devoted to silent actions, and there is hardly any speech.'[10] Writing in *Libération*, Éric Loret praises the intimacy Boilet achieves through the use of 'a subjective camera' and directly invokes a comparison with French cinema: 'Yukiko in the hands of Boilet is the most beautiful girl in the world, beautiful like Anna Karina through Godard's eyes, beautiful like Maggie Cheung closely examined by Assayas.'[11] Robert Sparing praises Boilet's cinematic manipulation of time, 'shifting scenes back and forth to the beginning of the relationship and the end, sometimes placing dreamy imagery intermittent with the more linear panels.' Boilet uses computer graphics to achieve a certain stylized photorealism reminiscent of the fusion of documentary realism and stylization characteristic of the Nouvelle Vague: 'In combining

the two almost seamlessly, he [Boilet] creates a photorealism that is, to a small degree, attempting not to be realistic.'[12] Boilet often delinks image from sound achieving an effect reminiscent of Godard's films:

> Sounds plays a role in a scene (page 31) where a repeated pair of sentences is at first shown with ellipses and only a word or two, but, as Boilet moves forward towards the sound, more words are shown until the complete sentences can be made out.[13] (Badman 2005b)

Not only does Boilet compose the panels so that we see through his (the author character's) eyes but he often shifts the compositional focus to create the impression of the character's wandering eye. The perspectival first person gaze is further complicated by the artistic gaze, producing a self-reflexive/meta-fictional effect:

> Throughout the book we see full page excerpts from Boilet's daily calendar where he writes notes and sketches. These pages not only serve as date markers for events in the book, they also add a layer of the story of the story. They create the illusion…of life being represented by art. […] A sketch of a hand in the date book on page 12 becomes Yukiko's hand on her collar on page 13. The notes precede the comic, yet the story precedes the notes. […] Towards the middle of the book, Boilet asks Yukiko about making a comic about her, and then a few pages later he is working on an earlier part of the story on his computer when she calls him. A

circular movement is created by this looking back upon an earlier page of the book.[14]

Boilet worked with female mangaka Kan Takahama on a 'sequel', *Mariko Parade*, which also contains the above mentioned Nouvelle Vague elements, but is even more self-reflexive. Takahama wrote and drew a framing tale to encompass a series of short pieces Boilet wanted to collect whose only connection is the use of his model. Takahama's contribution changes the entire context of the Boilet sequences: *Yukiko's Spinach* was about Yukiko/Mariko. **[Figure 3]** *Mariko Parade* is about Boilet's fascination with Yukiko/Mariko (Garrity 2012).[15] Most critics agree, however, that Boilet's short pieces remain un-integrated in the rest of the story.

Doing Time is Kazuichi Hanawa's autobiographical account of the author's three years spent in the Japanese prison system. Similar to Boilet's work, *Doing Time*, made up of black and sepia drawings and filled with schedules and pages of drawings of meals, resembles a collection of vignettes rather than a cohesive narrative. Instead of building a story, Hanawa drifts from subject to subject, day to day, creating the sense of an endless, featureless stretch of time. Tiny events, like getting something different for dinner, take on enormous significance and are recorded in fastidious detail (Garrity 2012).[16] In the Ozu-like film adaptation, which focuses on the cell Hanawa shares with four other criminals, Korean-Japanese director Sai explores in similarly painstaking detail the codes and daily routines of prison life: meals, laundry, cleaning, baths, exercise, making tissue-box holders in the workshop.

Evoking the atmosphere of resignation familiar to us from Ozu's films, as well as calling to mind Kurosawa's *Ikiru* (1952)—the story of a listless bureaucrat who undergoes a spiritual transformation when he learns he is dying of cancer—Jiro Taniguchi's manga *The Walking Man* embodies the precepts of *NM*, taking the low-key activities of everyday life and depicting them in the highly detailed drawing style more commonly associated with European comics (Arnold 2004). Like Ozu, Taniguchi uses associative allusions usually drawn from nature and reaffirms the cyclical, mythical or transcendental view of time, evoking nature's timelessness and indifference of nature and the insignificance of human beings (Desser 1988: 19).[17] There is no plot to speak of: the manga simply depicts an anonymous salaryman on different strolls through the city and countryside. Rather than build drama from significant events, Taniguchi—like Ozu—dramatizes the small moments of the man's life. Each chapter follows a walk in a different place, 'with emphasis placed on the weather, the changes of season, encounters with animals and brief, mostly silent exchanges with people' (Arnold 2004). **[Figures 4 and 5]** Taniguchi's subtle references to nature function in a similar way to Ozu's famous 'pillow shots', shots of nature—extreme long shots or close ups of fields, the sea, a garden, tree tops, etc.—sandwiched between the episodes that make up the narrative of the film. The purpose of these pillow shots is to let the viewer rest between episodes and reflect on what has happened, but also to place human events in the context of larger natural forces, and present human existence as part of the cycle of nature, over which we have no control. *The Walking Man* becomes especially cinematic when it sets up its scenes in imitation of the shot-reverse shot in cinema, with a panel of the man looking off into the distance followed by a panel of the thing he is looking at. The pages are

organized in the 'rhetorical style': 'tall panels are used for trees, wide panels for scenic vistas, smaller wider panels for the man's head looking off panel at something, single panel pages for slowed down moments' (Badman).[18]

Since Boilet derives NM's legitimacy as a new genre from its association with cinema, it makes sense to ask: is NM 'more cinematic' than manga or BD? On one hand, even traditional BD borrows a range of techniques from cinema: plan general/panorama (a wide angle shot used for scene setting); plan moyen (a full length shot, used to situate characters within the general décor), plan americain (a shot from the knees upwards often used for dialogue involving several characters), plan rapproche (medium shot focusing on dialogue between two characters), gros plan (close up), plongee (high angled shot), contre-plongee (low angled shot), travelling (a series of shot showing progression within the same background cene).[19] On the other hand, critics often distinguish manga from traditional BD precisely in terms of manga's cinematic nature, which they date back to the years following WW2 when Osamu Tezuka

> helped revolutionize the art of comics in Japan by decompressing story lines…drawing novelistic manga that were hundred, even thousands of pages long, and incorporat[ing] a lot of cinematic techniques (camera angles, creating a sense of movement via the page layouts). […] The result was a form of comics with far fewer words than American or European comics…that uses far more frames and pages to depict an action or a thought. (Schodt 1996: 25)

Schodt attributes the particular type of storytelling characteristic of manga precisely to manga's cinematic style:

The cinematic style enables manga artists to develop their story lines and characters with more complexity and psychological and emotional depth. Like good film directors, they can focus reader attention on the minutia of daily life—on scenes of leaves falling from a tree, or steam rising from a bowl of noodles, or even the pregnant pauses in a conversation—and evoke memories and associations that are deeply moving. (Schodt 1996: 26)

The cinematic genius of mangaka is evident in their masterful layouts:
They have learned to make the page flow; to build tension and to invoke moods by varying the number of frames used to depict a sequence; to use the cinematic techniques of fade out, fade in, montage and even superimposition. Like Japanese poetry, Japanese comics tend to value the unstated; in many cases, the picture alone carries the story. (Schodt 1983: 20-21)

The manga reader 'scans' rather than 'reads' manga 'in contrast to the American comic, which is read slowly to savor lavishly detailed pictures and to absorb a great deal of printed information' (Schodt 1983: 23).

On the other hand, some critics claim that it's meaningless to talk of a 'cinematographic style' in comics. According to Christiansen, 'What in comics is called the cinematographic style is the particular dynamisation of the graphic language…using

graphic equivalents to those narrative devices, e.g. close up, chiaroscuro, point of view and dynamic editing of camera-angles' (Christiansen 2000: 107-108). However, Christiansen argues that cinematographic devices in comics cannot be treated as 'cinematic style' because they are necessarily inflected by the limits of each medium. For instance, while cinema (and he means the classical cinema of continuity editing) hides the labor of production and allows the viewer to enter into the diegesis and identify strongly with the characters and the action, the comics reader is never quite as immersed in the work. Cinematic transparency is a function of two features of the film medium that it does not share with comics: movement and indexicality. By contrast, comics are made up of still images and 'foreground the presence of enunciator [the narrator's construction of the diegesis or the artist's pencil] which blocks the identification process in making it more difficult for the spectator to create the illusion of being…the unique origin of all identification' (Christiansen 2000: 115). Since identification is not so strong, the elements that suture the viewer to the visual narrative—eye-line matches, matched cuts— are not that essential in comics, which are generally characterized by elliptical cuts (temporal jumps) between successive images that are significantly more jarring in cinema (though used by Nouvelle Vague filmmakers for that very reason).[20]

Does this argument apply to NM too? Of course, NM is also composed of still images and lacks the indexicality of a photographic image (though this is more complicated in the case of Boilet's photo-realistic method). Still, there is arguably a definite continuity between NM by Boilet, Taniguchi, Hanawa or Oda and, on the other hand, film adaptations of NM. For example, *Man without Talent* (1991), based on Tsuge Yoshiharu's autobiographical manga, is about a destitute mangaka who takes up the art

rock business by setting up a shop in a shed by the river. The film, like the manga, emphasizes the slow, visual pacing of the narrative rather than focusing on grand dramatic events. *Blue* (2001), based on the manga by Kiriko Nananan about an introverted schoolgirl who falls in love and starts a relationship with one of her classmates, is also distinguished by its deliberate pace, calm tone and long uninterrupted takes that set it apart from more conventional films. *Strawberry Shortcakes* (2006), based on the manga by Kiriko Nananan, tells the story of four girls living in Tokyo. The nonlinear presentation of the women's stories reinforces the connection between the characters, creating a resonance between their lives, their feelings and disappointments. Like the manga, the film has an episodic feel, skipping from one character to the next without fully developing their situation.

We need to remind ourselves that drawing in comics is fundamentally a narrative process. Thus, the turn in comics away from the literary, toward the visual arts (especially cinema) has also been a result of comic artists aligning their visual aesthetics with new, innovative narratives (Beaty 2007: 248). The visual turn is not merely a rejection of the literary or textual aspect of comics but a readjustment to new non-sequential narratives (like those of the Nouvelle Vague). Only in this way we can explain the paradox that NM's self-proclaimed interest in storytelling over illustration does not seem to fit with the general critical agreement about a "visual turn" in comics since the early 1990s. To call NM 'cinematic', then, is to refer not only to particular visual techniques that we have come to associate with cinema, but also to a particular type of storytelling characteristic of the Nouvelle Vague and of Japanese cinema. There are undeniable similarities between Nouvelle Vague's meandering, episodic, de-dramatized

narrative structured around a series of loosely connected, fleeting moments and what David Desser calls, in *Eros plus Massacre*, 'the classical paradigm' of Japanese cinema, to be distinguished from the modern paradigm of the postwar humanists, represented by Kurosawa, and from the modernist paradigm, exemplified by the Japanese New Wave. The classical narrative is "chronological, episodic, cyclical, mythic, transcendental," the modern "chronological, causal, linear, historical, individual" and the modernist one "achronological, arbitrarily episodic, acausal, dialectical, anti-mythic and anti-psychological, metahistorical" (Desser 1988: 17). The classical paradigm (which is not limited to a particular historical period) is best exemplified by Ozu's films whose narrational mode Desser compares to Kabuki plays and Japanese novels. Ozu's films disrupt narrative linearity, stress spatial manipulations, rely on temporal ellipsis, employ an episodic structure, avoid climactic moments to explore the mundaneness and uneventfulness of daily life (Desser 1988: 17-18). All these strategies provoke in the viewer (and in the reader of this type of manga) the special Japanese response of 'mono no aware', an intuitive understanding of the passing of time and its inevitability (this is especially true of the work of Taniguchi and Hanawa). Boilet imagined Nouvelle Manga as using the everyday stories of Japanese manga to counterbalance the excessive emphasis on illustration he found in French BD. Paradoxically, the incorporation of everyday stories does not result in a greater emphasis on storytelling; just the opposite: Nouvelle Manga's loose, episodic narrative or lack of narrative has served to refocus attention on the visual plane.

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Endnotes

[1] Definitions of BD cover a wide range. See, for example, Hatfield, C. (2009), Grove, L. (2010) and Carrier, D. (2000).

[2] Manga are the result of the hybridization of Japanese print traditions with the cartoon style of humor magazines like the British *Punch* and American newspaper strips. Japanese manga differ from Anglo-American comics in several ways: 1) slower pacing;

2) a great variety of types of manga; 3) the use of fewer panels per page and fewer narrative caption boxes.

[3] A further overlap between non-conventional BD and literature exists via the Ouvoir de Bande Dessinee Potentielle (The workshop for potential BD) or OuBaPo and its model OuLiPo (Ouvoir de literature potentielle) of Raymond Queneau and George Perec. As Grove explains,

> Within OuBaPo there are two categories: generatrices, works that create meaning, and transformatrices, works that transform meaning. In the first category are BDs that can be read upside down, back to front, via the folding of the page or in multiple directions; in the second, works featuring the implantation of cases by other authors or the removal of certain cases from the work [e.g. the removal of the letter 'e' from Perec's *La Disparition*]. (2010: 161)

[4] Even though it uses cinematic techniques (camera angles, subjective points of view, montage) BD also differs from cinema: it consists of static images and jump cuts. Laurence Grove insists that despite the movement away from conventional narrative and toward the visual, the BD remains a hybrid medium: once the text becomes entirely redundant, the BD will have evolved into something else (Grove 2010: 55).

[5] Nouvelle Vague films mix different genres: e.g. thriller, BD, cine-roman, journal, adventure story, love story, prose poem, advertising, journalism, musical comedy.

[6] The fact remains that although NM artists work in a global style of comics *d'auteur*, as opposed to the commercial, genre oriented comics tradition, many of them are published

not only in alternative editorial structures like *Spore* in Japan, Ego Comme X in France and Fanfare/Ponent Mon in the US, but also in mainstream magazines: e.g. Boilet has published in *Big Comics* in Japan.

[7] Despite the obvious continuities between the French New Wave and Dogme (e.g. the shared interest in loose, personal, ambiguous stories), one cannot overlook one significant difference between them. Nouvelle Vague promoted the notion of the auteur, in the context of the newly recognized excellence of American genre cinema, while Dogme rejected both the auteur, promoting in its place an acknowledgement of the collective nature of filmmaking, as well as the constraints of genre and American cinema's dominant position in world cinema.

[8] See Jack Stevenson's *Dogme Uncut: Lars von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg, and the Gang That Took on Hollywood*.

[9] Some critics overlook Boilet's use of edited photos, claiming that they can still see the artist's actual effort involved in the work, as opposed to a simple photoshop filter (see Jonathan Ellis' review). Others criticize Boilet for being overly fond of montage techniques at the expense of storytelling, and sarcastically point out that the only reason to like the book is that it's filled with pretty pictures of a Japanese girl (see Joanna's review). Kelly Sue DeConnick finds the characters 'woefully underdeveloped' but the artwork 'stunningly beautiful'.

[10] *Slightly Biased Manga: Manga Only If I Like It*. [online] Available at:

http://slightlybiasedmanga.com/category/series/yukikos-spinach/ [Accessed 17 February 2012]

[11] Baka-Updates. [online] Available at:

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[12] Robert Sparling, *Yukiko's Spinach*. [online] Available at:

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2012]

[13] Derik A Badman, 2005. [online] Available at:

http://madinkbeard.com/archives/yukikos-spinach-by-boilet   [Accessed   17   February

2012]

[14] Badman rightly observes that in contrast to the visual experimentation invoked as

defining 'NM' in Boilet's manifesto, the page layouts here are 'almost all regular: three,

four, or six identical panels per page. There are the occasional variations but always with

rectangular panels and no bleeds. […] On two occasions he overlaps panels, both are at

the conclusion of sex scenes, an effective place to have larger panels breaking out of

bounds.' Ironically, what Badman finds impressive about Boilet's work are its formal

aspects (mostly the first person view), rather than the story or the characters, precisely the

two aspects NM was supposed to emphasize.

[15] Shaenon K. Garrity, *Mariko Parade*. [online] Available at:

http://shaenon.livejournal.com/41787.html [Accessed 17 February 2012]

[16] Shaenon K. Garrity, *Doing Time*. [online] Available at:

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[17] Twice in the course of *Ikiru* the protagonist sings the famous 1915 "Gondola Song,"

which perfectly sums up Ozu's mono no aware attitude (the awareness of the transience

of all things):

Life is brief.

fall in love, maidens

before the crimson bloom

fades from your lips

before the tides of passion

cool within you,

for those of you

who know no tomorrow…

[18] Derik Badman, *The Walking Man*. [online] Available at:

http://www.comicbookgalaxy.com/review_101705_walkingman_DB.html [Accessed 17

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[19] Cinema and BD are also related historically: the golden age of American film, for example, the 1930s and 1940s, corresponds to the golden age of the superhero comic strip. Both postwar cinema and BD went through similar types of experimentation with established conventions.

[20] According to Christiansen,

> One reason why these intervals are not disruptive in comics is the unit of the page which constitutes the tableaux of the comics and which (at least in mainstream comics) creates a coherent diegetic space and a mental structure in which to place the series of images. (Christiansen 2000: 117).