

BD reportage or Exotic Travel Journal? ***L'Afrique de papa* and the Intermedial Gaze**

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« Je garde malgré tout en permanence un carnet sur moi, pour l'exercice,
pour faire travailler l'œil et remplir ma bibliothèque imaginaire ... »¹
Hippolyte

Introduction

Since the establishment in 1991 of France-Info's *Prix de la bande dessinée d'actualité et de reportage*, BD reportage has become a well-established nonfiction genre in France, evidenced by the creation in 2008 of the quarterly French review *XXI* that always features at least one BD reportage and by the surge in other magazines dedicated to BD reportage (Bourdieu 2012; Dabitch 2009; Pollman 2015; Argod 2014; Flinn 2018).² Originally published in *XXI* in 2009, *L'Afrique de papa* by French cartoonist Hippolyte (nom de plume of Franck Meynet) uses an intermedial blend of drawings, greyscale photography, and sketchbook reproductions to recount a two-week voyage he took to visit his retired father in the Senegalese seaside tourist retreat of Saly, located just south of Dakar. Reporting on « Papa's Africa » full of leisure and hedonism, Hippolyte also conveys his outsider's perspective steeped in observant reflection. The aesthetically bold result led to a second edition of the BD reportage as a one-shot album published in 2010 to launch Jean-Luc Schneider's newly created Reunion-based publishing house, Des Bulles dans l'Océan.³ However, the one-shot differs from the *XXI* version in its use of extra materials that frame the text with a substantial series of photographs (the majority of which are absent from the original) and scanned images of Hippolyte's *carnet de voyage* from his journey comprised of written observations and sketches. Meant to enhance the BD reportage, this added material also complicates the original by revealing omissions and thus foregrounding the meticulously constructed nature of Hippolyte's intermedial choices for his first BD reportage.

L'Afrique de papa, Hippolyte's first foray into nonfiction comics, marks a crucial turning point in his career and strong traces of lessons learned from both the two-week journey and the exploration of intermediality in *bandes dessinées* are found in his subsequent nonfiction work. In the foreword to the one-shot, Hippolyte explains that he had previously longed to produce *bandes dessinées* that were *carnets de voyage* before

the popularity of the genre became, in his words « quelque peu surexploité » (Hippolyte, *L'Afrique*, n.p.).⁴ Similarly, in the introduction to the original *XXI* version, Hippolyte singles out as a model the seminal BD reportage, *Le Photographe* (2003-2006), by Emmanuel Guibert, Didier Lefèvre, and Frédéric Lemerrier, as foundational to the development of his own approach, that, like *Le Photographe*, makes extensive use of photographs and drawings (Hippolyte, « L'Afrique » 169). However, Hippolyte makes sure to underline that his work is not simply the result of imitation: « C'est le but de l'acte créatif : intégrer ce qui a été fait et tenter d'aller plus loin. La différence avec Guibert vient du fait que ce sont mes propres photos, ce qui induit un regard et un axe narratif différent du sien » (Hippolyte, « L'Afrique » 169).⁵ In effect, *L'Afrique de papa* can be read as his working through of the challenges inherent to this form of travelogue.

Hippolyte's intermedial approach dovetails with and is a function of the multivalent nature of the narrative that mixes different modes of communication, different genres – mainly BD reportage and travelogue – different visual mediums, as well as different versions of Africa.⁶ While many point out that comics are, by nature, multimodal, employing verbal and visual modes of representation in addition to mobilizing layout as a field of signification, Hippolyte's nonfiction work is unequivocally and purposefully intermedial, being comprised of varied practices for engaging with the world, all of which are linked with ways of seeing and representing (Chute 2016; Kunka 2018; Køhlert 2019). In the foreword to the one-shot, Hippolyte explains that he always has his journal and camera on him so that he can « faire travailler l'œil » – this particular description of his artistic process is telling.⁷ Unquestioningly, he is referring to his ability to draw what he sees and to capture subtleties and shapes. Additionally, however, this description privileges the impact of sight on understanding. In fact, I argue that « faire travailler l'œil », a guiding principle for Hippolyte's artistic practice, becomes a central concern in *L'Afrique de papa*. In what follows, I examine Hippolyte's intermedial attempt to deliver a nuanced look of and beyond the exotic touristic view of Saly, an attempt that prompts Hippolyte to interrogate his own gaze and that has impacted his work since.

Reporting on Papa's Africa and Papa's Gaze

It is important to understand *L'Afrique de papa* in its original context – published in volume six of *XXI* as the featured BD reportage and flanked before and after with contextualizing information to guide readers' understanding of the text – since, presented as a piece of journalism, it is meant to shed light on a crucial contemporary issue overlooked in the 24-hour news cycle (Beccaria and Saint-Exupéry, « Foreword » 3). This BD reportage uses Hippolyte's journey to visit his retired father in Saly to inform readers of the neocolonial reality and drastically unequal power dynamics undergirding the hedonistic lifestyle and sexual tourism of the fishing village that was transformed in the 1980s through outside investment into a carefree, sun-soaked retreat for Europeans.

Loosely structured around Hippolyte's journey to, arrival in, and exploration of Saly with and without his father, the story centers on the lifestyle of Hippolyte's father and other European tourists and residents like him, a lifestyle that takes as a given (because of gross economic imbalances) the privileged right to the land and all its resources, including the people, for individual pleasure.⁸ Indeed, the title – *L'Afrique de papa* – all at once suggests a personal connection to the continent of Africa through familial ties, conveys ownership through possession, and links the current state of affairs to a paternalist and colonialist past whose effects persist even well after Senegal's independence from France in 1960, albeit in new configurations.⁹

As with other BD reportages published in *XXI*, *L'Afrique de papa* is directly followed by a two-page spread of information that allows readers to delve deeper into the story and the current event issues with which it engages. For *L'Afrique de papa*, the content of the left-hand page attests to the veracity of Hippolyte's portrait of Saly through professional aerial and landscape photographs provided by L'Agence France-Presse of the Western-style housing projects and beaches and a list of facts about the fishing village's transformation into one of the largest tourist destinations for Europeans in West Africa and the fallout of such rapid and largescale development, namely prostitution, pedophilia, and the spread of sexually-transmitted infections. The right-hand page features a range of other texts (essays, novels, a film, a photography book, and a *bande dessinée*) that provide more insight into themes touched upon, including critiques of the power imbalance between the global north and the global south, sexual tourism, Senegalese wrestling, and immigration. The information provided in these two pages leaves no doubt that Hippolyte's father's lifestyle is caught up in the socioeconomic and political complexities of neocolonialism and that, though Saly might stand as an impressive example of the predatory and exploitative potential of Western tourism, it is by no means the only example.

As a featured BD reportage in *XXI*, *L'Afrique de papa* had a set limit of thirty *planches* and a story about current events to transmit, two nonnegligible external constraints that undoubtedly influenced Hippolyte's decisions.¹⁰ The crux of *L'Afrique de papa* lies in Hippolyte's continual juxtaposition of his father's African paradise with the ongoing struggle to escape the economic hardships and lack of social mobility that the local population faces in direct response to the hedonistically-driven appetite for indulgence made possible, supported, and even encouraged by such an industry. While the first is predicated on the unrestrained and unapologetic pursuit of pleasure, the second is dependent upon an economy of black bodies and their performance, whether in the form of the local fishing tradition, sport – namely wrestling and soccer – or prostitution. Narratively and verbally, this duality is crafted through two key characters: Hippolyte's own father and Dodo, a Senegalese artist and musician whom Hippolyte meets on the beach at dusk while watching local Senegalese men during their daily wrestling practice. From the first moment through to the last moment that Hippolyte's

father appears, he repeatedly sums up his life with the phrase « Elle est pas belle la vie ! » (**Figure 1**).¹¹ Each time, he is also depicted with an arm or two raised, gesturing to all that is around him and taking up as much physical space as he likes. Conversely, Dodo offers an alternative summation: « Ici, pour t'en sortir, tu as le sport ou les Européens. Être un champion ou un étalon. C'est toujours ton corps que tu donnes ». ¹² Though Dodo's bleak account of the limited options for getting by made available to Senegalese through the use of their bodies occurs only twice (and is slightly altered the second time), its importance is indicated by the fact that these occurrences lie directly in the middle of the story (when Hippolyte meets Dodo) and at the end of the story.

These two versions of Saly manifest in the text intermedially and at multiple levels as a pronounced duality, which is instantly captured on the cover of the one-shot: on the top half, a high-contrast greyscale photograph of a Senegalese wrestler practicing a left jab with his fist extended horizontally across the frame; on the bottom half, a drawn panel of an energetic club scene dominated by a warm yellow with orange, red, brown, and pink in which older European men dance with scantily-clad African women. Many of the men have their arms raised as they dance with music notes and CFA francs floating around their heads and their red faces emphasizing their intoxication. The warm watercolors, jubilant atmosphere, curved bodies, and visual density of the bottom panel clash jarringly with the stark photograph. At the same time, the same gesture – a raised fist – connotes different meanings. In the top half, the wrestler's jabbing left fist is but a part of his composed movement, completed by his clenched right fist poised to deliver a second blow and his determined and focused expression. This fist represents a practiced and precise attack and a demonstration of force. In the bottom half, the fists of the dancing men fling out at various angles as extensions of their un-self-conscious and unrestrained delight. In contrast to the wrestler's calculated move, these raised fists are but one way in which the Europeans in Saly unapologetically take up space, and use it and everything in it for their own pleasure. Visually mimicking the wrestler's strong punch, the raised fists of the men at the club establish a complex subtext on the question of power in « Papa's Africa »; though the wrestler is undoubtedly physically strong, the carefree economic authority of the dancing men signaled by the floating stream of CFA francs encircling them cannot be denied.

In his review of *L'Afrique de papa*, Christophe Cassiau-Haurie latches on to the obvious binary between drawings and photographs as the guiding force for the two visions of Africa; yet, this facile assessment, which mischaracterizes in-text sketches, fails to address the complex play of focalization markers in the drawings (that let readers see « Papa's Africa » *and also* Hippolyte seeing such a vision) and the range of strategies employed for framing the photographs (that hint at Hippolyte's examination of his own gaze).¹³ In her analysis of photography in documentary *bandes dessinées*, Margaret Flinn explains that “[f]requent redundancies between the representation of a place or object in drawn panels and the photographs do not negate the bédéiste's hand as valid documentary

mediation, but the shift in style calls attention to the differing mediations: camera and hand” (Flinn 141-142). For Flinn, photographs in documentary comics, like documentary films’ « juxtaposition of different visual registers, » leads to « an aesthetic of intermediality that exceeds aesthetic positioning », and that thus « challenges the primacy of narrative as the most useful category for understanding what photography is doing in the comics text » (Flinn 142). In *L’Afrique de papa*, photographs have much more than a narrative function, and Hippolyte’s decision to encapsulate each photograph in a thick evidently-hand-drawn frame highlights rather than obscures their subjective framing.

As suggested by the cover, in addition to juxtaposing photographs and drawn panels, Hippolyte develops his multivalent and intermedial representation of the two worlds that cohabit Saly through design, layout, framing, and color. In all of his work, he mobilizes layout as an aesthetic, figurative, and narrative element composed of a collection of two-page spreads, intimately understanding that « [d]ifferent modes offer different potentials for making meaning » (Kress 79). The thirty *planches* are broken up into discreet sections: an introduction to the beach where wrestlers train as Hippolyte’s plane arrives; his journey from the airport to his father’s villa; his time on the beach first with his father and then alone; an afternoon and evening in which Hippolyte’s father introduces him to his friends, his lifestyle, and one of his favorite clubs, L’Étage; Hippolyte’s exploration of the fishing village and his description of other European tourists who dare to explore beyond the touristic circuit; and the denouement that crosscuts between photographs of a televised professional wrestling match and drawn panels depicting what transpires at L’Étage at the same time. Hippolyte purposefully plays with the relationship between the left- and right-hand pages switching between dynamic interactions between the two or purposefully repeating the same layout. Furthermore, there are only two moments in the text when Hippolyte opts for a more fluid layout, thus distinguishing their content as crucial. Not surprisingly, one such moment is Hippolyte’s encounter with Dodo while the other depicts Hippolyte’s arrival via plane in « Papa’s Africa ».

Repetitive page layouts become a form of « iconic solidarity » typically used for depicting « Papa’s Africa » and thus serve as a marker of narrative focalization (Groensteen 17). To emphasize his father’s notion of the beach, for example, Hippolyte uses horizontal panels that span the width of the page and repeats them for three pages; this connotes an openness only interrupted, much to Hippolyte’s father’s dismay, by the locals (young men jogging as part of their daily wrestling training and vendors hoping to sell souvenirs to tourists) (**Figure 2**). Horizontal panels such as these, reserved for Hippolyte’s interactions with « Papa’s Africa », contrast with the smaller panels containing images – both drawings and photographs alike – of the local residents who, with the exception of Dodo, are confined to smaller spaces within the makeup of the text, a deliberate choice that foregrounds the privilege of Europeans in Saly.

Complementing the layout, color helps convey geographic locations and time of day, sets the tone, and serves as another marker of focalization. Scenes depicting the local population going about their daily routines feature colors that imply natural lighting – mauves and tans for sunrise and sunset, yellows for daytime, and blues and greys for nighttime – whereas pink is thematized to convey the skewed vision of « Papa's Africa ». When we first see Hippolyte's father, he is relaxing on his veranda framed by a pink-flowering bougainvillea and exclaims « Alors, elle est pas belle la vie ! » as a greeting to his son (Figure 1). The sarcastic tone of the two affixed text boxes of Hippolyte's narration – « ...le rêve » and « Bienvenue dans l'Afrique de papa »—leave little room for mistaking Hippolyte's impression of Africa with that of his father's.¹⁴ The pink of the flowers becomes a marker of what Kai Mikkonen calls « mind style » and what Silke Horstkotte and Nancy Pedri term as « aspectuality » (Mikkonen 114; Horstkotte and Pedri, 332). Pink as the marker of « Papa's Africa » figuratively alludes to *la vie en rose* vision of life in Saly for Europeans. Scenes showing Hippolyte's father and his friends (little more than carbon copies) are awash in the warm yellow of the sunny beach and blanketed in a rosy pastel palette maintained through Hippolyte's father's pink floral shirt and the constant presence of sunbaked, barefoot, and almost-nude Europeans wearing bathing suits as their everyday attire and often sporting rosy cheeks due to intoxication. Moreover, the projection of this mind style on Saly and what it ostensibly has to offer Europeans is enhanced by the pink exterior of L'Étage, Hippolyte's father's preferred club, and the pink skin-tight clothing of the Senegalese prostitutes there. Hippolyte critiques this lifestyle by exposing the exoticizing gaze at work in this mind style through a zoom effect on a European man at L'Étage eating a pizza while lustfully ogling the prostitutes (Figure 3). In eight panels on a single page, Hippolyte draws the same man, first as part of the scenery, then zooming in on his face as he consumes pizza and women, and finally moving in even closer to just his smiling, pizza-smearing mouth. These « memorable panels » that are « incongruent ... with their syntagmatic surroundings » suggest the grotesqueness inherent in such unabashed consumption (Horstkotte 41).

To be sure, Hippolyte, critical of « Papa's Africa », works to expose its hypocritical and exploitative nature by embracing Dodo's summation as the narrative frame for his father's lifestyle (the story starts and ends with wrestling) and by establishing a correlation between Senegalese wrestling and prostitution as the economy underlying such a lifestyle. Hippolyte's approach is most explicit in the denouement that crosscuts between photographs of a televised professional wrestling match and drawn frames of the scene at L'Étage at the same time. As an introduction to the match, Hippolyte juxtaposes equally-sized frames representing the two sides of Saly: the first is a drawing of his father home alone as he stumbles upon the match on television while the second is a densely-packed photograph of the hundreds of Senegalese fans in the stands eager to witness the match. Hippolyte's father pokes fun at wrestling and dismisses the muscled athletes (as he does those in training on the beach in Saly) as « feignants » or lazy idlers. Hippolyte

makes sure that the irony of such a statement is not lost; in contrast to the fit Senegalese wrestlers, prostitutes, and fishermen who work and train seemingly without rest, European bodies are often drawn as flabby, flaccid, and either leisurely loafing about or unreservedly partaking in physical pleasure. From the facial expressions in the scenes at L'Étage, it is clear that the Senegalese consider Hippolyte's father and those like him as the real « feignants ». Interestingly, just a few panels later, a photograph of a young Senegalese boy turning to look back directly at the camera provides an unsettling moment that both challenges the aestheticizing gaze of Hippolyte's camera and dramatizes the kind of looking perpetuated by Hippolyte's father, which Hippolyte thematizes on the adjacent page where there is an almost one-to-one parallel between the objectification of black female and male bodies (**Figure 4**). To complement the drawn images of the scantily-clad women heading to the club, the photographs of the male wrestlers are cropped to highlight their physical attributes. In both cases, Hippolyte crops out the women and men's heads, thus further exoticizing and eroticizing their bodies. Energy builds in both settings as Hippolyte's father, who stopped watching the match to dance at L'Étage, basks in his paradisiac version of Africa while the wrestlers prepare to battle.

Over the course of the final four pages, the depicted wrestling match becomes a dramatic metaphor for the internal struggle that some Senegalese face when deciding between either side of Dodo's equation. Hippolyte employs a staggered layout that repeatedly alternates between the photographs of the match that remain horizontally wider than drawn frames of yellow-washed close-ups of a black male body and an older European woman at L'Étage. Up to now in the text, prostitution was presented solely in the context of black women and white men. Here, however, Hippolyte reverses the situation, pointing out that it is not just European men seeking the attention of African companions, but also alerting readers to European women's participation in sexual tourism (Blanchard et al. 468-469). Juxtaposing wrestling with the close-ups of the man and woman points to the struggle for physical dominance and the submission of one body to another. Ultimately, the woman wins as is evidenced by the last strip giving way to a single centered drawn panel as the woman and man disappear into the night, a panel surrounded by the silent whiteness of the page due to the lack of a competing photograph. Though Hippolyte chooses not to represent himself in either location, his take on the situation occurs in text boxes superimposed over the staggered frames that riff on Dodo's equation: « Ici, pout t'en sortir... tu as le sport ... ou les Européens ...Être un champion ... ou un étalon ... C'est toujours ton corps qui t'aide... ou qui te perd ». ¹⁵ Though this closing statement communicates a strong critique of « Papa's Africa », there is a noticeable silence around the in-text representation of Hippolyte.

Hippolyte and His Gaze in Papa's Africa

Describing Hippolyte's portrayal of his father's version of Africa, the editors of *XXI* and *Des Bulles dans l'Océan*, as well as reviewers of *L'Afrique de papa* (taking their cue from the editors), remark upon Hippolyte's silence and his recourse to drawing in his sketchbook rather than responding to his father (Cassiau-Haurie 2010; Bourdieu 2012). This is due in large part to Hippolyte's own representation of himself within the narrative as a character with little to no dialogue and almost never without his camera and sketchbook. On the one hand, this silence boosts reader identification with Hippolyte; on the other, it hints at a broader reflection on subjectivity and the gaze. As with other practitioners of BD reportage, Hippolyte chooses to include visual depictions of himself in the story-world to highlight his subjectivity and to authenticate the story being told (Sacco xiii; Bourdieu 5; Pollman 500). When we first see Hippolyte, he is on the plane for Senegal, absorbed with filling in his sketchbook-cum-*carnet-de-voyage*, a deliberate choice meant to solidify a direct link between what the character is doing and the end result that the reader is in the process of reading. The other few scenes that include drawings of Hippolyte fall into two categories. The first consists of scenes in which his father introduces him to his lifestyle. In these scenes, Hippolyte visibly contrasts with other Europeans; he always has on much more clothing than those around him and even a hat to shield his eyes and he tries to take up as little space as possible, quietly huddling in his seat, lingering on the edges away from others (including his father), calm in his demeanor, and often sketching or writing rather than contributing to conversations. The second category consists of the two-page spread in the center of the text depicting Hippolyte's encounter with Dodo. Over these two more loosely-organized pages, Hippolyte provides four drawings of himself as he watches wrestlers practice at dusk on the beach, each time also supplying a drawing of Dodo.

The importance of this moment for Hippolyte cannot be overstated and he goes to great lengths to encode important lessons learned while finding the intermedial means to walk readers through such a life-altering encounter. At first glance, one instantly notices the much less rigid layout and the co-presence of at least three different modes of visual communication (greyscale photographs, detailed drawings with color, and sketches) and two different modes of verbal communication (Hippolyte's narration and speech balloons). Working through the various elements, one realizes the profound narrative experimentation taking place as Hippolyte grapples with having his own gaze under scrutiny. The yellow background of the two pages continues from the previous section in which static frames depict Hippolyte's father's version of the beach, thus establishing that Hippolyte is still on the beach, but his father is not. The pages start with

greyscale photographs in two columns with Hippolyte's narration between them that describes the images captured by his camera: « Quand la journée tire à sa fin, les lutteurs se retrouvent et commencent leur échauffement final. Ils laissent derrière eux les maisons 'africaines' des toubabs et leurs différents joujous high-tech. Ils vivent leur vie » (Hippolyte, *L'Afrique* 13) (**Figure 5**).¹⁶ The photographs, all the same size, generate a narrative flow: the first strip contains a medium shot of a man jogging to join others already gathered and a long shot of the men gathered; the two photographs in the second strip are taken from much closer to the men and show various pairs in mid-practice; the third strip features a photograph from equally close of other men watching attentively while waiting their turn, but rather than follow up with a second photograph, Hippolyte provides a drawing of himself holding his camera while writing in his book with someone behind him who says, via speech balloons, « Ils n'aiment pas trop être pris en photo tu sais ... comme des curiosités » (Hippolyte, *L'Afrique* 13).¹⁷ This comment, in the moment, sparked a shift in Hippolyte, which he reproduces in the text by interrupting the continuation of photographs; the purposefully uneven layout of the photographs signifies the immediacy and impact of the comments. The framing of this first drawn floating panel obscures the identity of the person making the comment and provides dramatic irony in that the character Hippolyte is unaware that he is also being observed. The next floating panel, on the left-hand side of the next strip, continues to depict the storyworld, this time from another angle showing the character Hippolyte and the man, who turns out to be Dodo, with the wrestlers in the background. In this panel, the character Hippolyte's camera is slung by his side and he has switched to sketching in his journal as Dodo goes on to explain, in speech balloons, that « Ici, c'est une parenthèse dans Saly ... c'est un moment à eux, pas un show » (Hippolyte, *L'Afrique* 13).¹⁸ To demonstrate that he understood what Dodo meant, Hippolyte not only draws himself as sketching rather than taking pictures, but he also chooses to include reproductions of his sketches to finish out the page.

The visual shift from more detailed storyworld panels to floating pencil sketches, some with shadowing or watercolor, attempts to vouch for Hippolyte's realization that while he works to capture what he sees, his act of gazing is itself a kind of spectacle for others (Dodo as well as the readers) to watch. Up to now, his in-text incarnation had been an almost silent observer whose desire to capture and to convey « Papa's Africa » privileged his outsider status as ostensibly less intrusive and less exploitative than that of other Europeans in Saly. Yet Dodo's simple remarks shatter this assumption, making Hippolyte aware of his own gaze. The shift from photographs to sketches on the page represent different modes of looking. For while there is indeed a « temporal aspect of image 'capture' characterized by the quickness of both the sketch and the camera's shutter », as Margaret Flinn suggests, there is also a different physicality associated with each activity (Flinn 143). The interruption and unevenness in layout of the photographs at the beginning of the page and the sketches following Dodo's comments work as a kind

of indexicality of Hippolyte's actions in the moment. Readers supposedly have the proof that Hippolyte's desires are different from those of his father. Yet his presence during the wrestlers' daily practice represents an intrusion and the narrated text accompanying the two-page spread reveals Hippolyte's quest for access in the moment. Rather than respond verbally to Dodo's comments in the text, Hippolyte shifts to sketches and narrative text that describes the importance of wrestling in Senegal. It is as though, having been deprived of his camera out of the desire to avoid being seen as treating the wrestlers as curiosities, Hippolyte cannot help but fill the void with other forms of representation (verbal descriptions and sketches).

On the accompanying page dedicated to Dodo, the tension of Hippolyte's desire to differentiate himself from « Papa's Africa » while also wanting to learn and capture all that he can play out through composition and repetition. As with the previous page, Hippolyte eschews a grid pattern, presenting instead a more fluid layout featuring drawings, sketches, and photographs. There is no doubt that this page is about Dodo since he and his guitar are represented no less than eight different times; the page is roughly divided into four bands starting with a detailed portrait of Dodo and ending with two photographs of him.¹⁹ Hippolyte also includes himself in two of the drawings of Dodo; these two floating panels represent their conversation in the storyworld. In both instances, Hippolyte is seated below Dodo on the seawall as he learns from him while sketching him implied by the repetition of Dodo's portrait in the second strip. The framing in these storyworld panels suggests Hippolyte's status as pupil and cast Dodo as a wise sage, all of which works together to posit Dodo's knowledge about himself and his take on life in Saly as authentic. The floating narrative text that captions the first portrait of Dodo explains that he is not a wrestler but an artist from the interior of Senegal who has come to Saly to profit from booming tourism. For him, dusk on the beach when he plays music is, after a whole day of « faux-semblants » or subterfuges, « une parenthèse enchantée » (Hippolyte, *L'Afrique* 14).²⁰ Over the course of the second strip, Hippolyte provides three different portraits of Dodo that run into one another as he plays guitar and describes his family to whom he sends money and who he rarely gets to visit. The following strip starts with a storyworld panel that depicts Dodo asking, « La prostitution? » followed by a speech balloon with an ellipsis and no pointer to determine whether it is Dodo's hesitation or Hippolyte's. Nevertheless, the fact that Dodo asks the question implies that Hippolyte has already prompted him to speak on this topic. Hippolyte does not completely withhold the fact that he is responsible for introducing the topic to the conversation, but he abstains from representing himself as the topic's origin. To accompany Dodo's take on prostitution as a means to get by, Hippolyte inserts two more sketches of wrestlers from his journal. Juxtaposing sketches of men wrestling with Dodo's comments can be read as a metaphor for the struggle that prostitution might represent for those looking to get by (which, as previously mentioned, is what happens during the denouement). These sketches have the added function of foreshadowing Dodo's next

statement, the one that Hippolyte pits against his father's motto, that, to get by, Senegalese either have sports or Europeans and that in either case, it is always one's body that one gives.

This summation's cold calculatedness and Dodo's own unaccounted position within such an equation seem to be brushed off or even undermined in the last strip that begins with a narrow column of floating text attributed to Dodo and two photographs of him that, in juxtaposition with the many colorful and expressive portraits above, feel crammed into the bottom of the page. In the text, Dodo laughingly reveals that since he is neither handsome nor strong, he paints and writes songs. He then goes on to tell Hippolyte, « [m]ais moi si tu veux tu peux me prendre en photo ! » (Hippolyte, *L'Afrique 14*).²¹ As with the sketches of the wrestlers, the abundance of sketches of Dodo before the two small photographs suggest a hungry camera. That is to say, the immediacy of the two photographs after Dodo's permission stand in opposition to the entire rest of the page where Hippolyte tried multiple times, ostensibly unsuccessfully, to capture Dodo's image. The return to photography right away, without any hesitation, and the diagonal bookending photographs on these two pages imply Hippolyte's dissatisfaction with only sketching and hint at his reliance on the mediated gaze supplied by the camera as a means of objectively interacting with Senegal. Put another way, the aestheticizing gaze of Hippolyte's camera is meant to be distinct from the hedonistic appetite of the European tourist gaze conveyed through the focalization of « Papa's Africa », but perhaps it is not. For example, in the back and forth between wrestling and prostitution during the denouement, Hippolyte's consumption of wrestling is much like his father's; while Hippolyte's father's experience of the match is mediated through the television, Hippolyte, who was physically in attendance (and ostensibly the only non-Senegalese person present based on the photographs presented in the text), his experience of the match is also mediated, though through his camera, not a television. Furthermore, the decision to crop the photographs of the male wrestlers so as to generate an explicit comparison with prostitution, rather than differentiating his gaze, reinforces its exoticizing power. In this way, his photographs mimic passages about black male bodies in some French colonial novels in which “while not overly homoerotic, might point to a homoerotic voyeurism which allows a predominantly European male authorship and readership access to a covert and indirect erotic engagement with black male bodies” (Everett 8).

Another key moment when these tensions play out is during Hippolyte's visit to the fishing village during Tabaski, the Senegalese term for the Muslim holiday Eid al-Adha. This two-page spread features nine photographs in the top half of the left-hand page flanked by drawings of the village mosque and school and seven photographs in the bottom half of the right-hand page under drawings with a sketch-like quality of those gathered at the foot of a giant baobab where the sacrificial steer is being butchered. The minimal scale of the photos gives priority to the drawings, which suggests that Hippolyte

internalized Dodo's lesson. Through text boxes superimposed on the drawing of the sacrifice, Hippolyte is sure (and quick) to inform readers that since his presence intrigued those gathered, he was invited to get closer and that the villagers demanded that he take their photo near the sacrificed animal. In spite of this avowal, there exists a palpable tension in Hippolyte's presence and his photographer's gaze, to which he seems to allude, or at least to the impossibility of being certain when he explains that « [l]es villageois semblent heureux que je m'intéresse à eux » (Hippolyte, *L'Afrique* 20).²² Though a far cry from the sexual tourists in Saly, Hippolyte is nevertheless a consumer of Africa and of Africans. As with the photographs of Dodo, the text box informing readers that the villagers asked to be photographed instantly triggers a rapid succession of photographs from a range of various angles and proximities to the animal that are equally crammed into the lower third of the page. These traces of Hippolyte's physical movement in the moment do not suggest the quiet Hippolyte character who restricts his presence. Here, Roland Barthes's observation of and concern for photographers' bodies and actions seems apt: « [f]or me, the Photographer's organ is not his eye (which terrifies me) but his finger: what is linked to the trigger of the lens, to the metallic shifting of the plates (when the camera still has such things) » (Barthes 12). It is both Hippolyte's eyes and fingers that work to capture the scene.

The specialness of this experience is underscored through manipulation of the photographs in the addition of red for both the blood of the sacrificed animal and the shirts of some of the young participants. These « memorable » photographs, treated differently than the rest of the photographs, suggest a certain reverence for the subject of the camera's lens, yet still confine the people in small-scale frames pushed to the edge of the page. One potential signification of these choices might be found in the use of pink in the drawings on these pages, here a metaphor for the reach of « Papa's Africa ». Though this event takes place in the traditional village whose existence predates the development of the tourist enclave, it is not out of reach of the tourists. It is, however, at the periphery, a marginal « backstage » space where tourists in search of « authenticity » are « an obvious intrusion » (Urry 10). As with Hippolyte's presence during Dodo's « parenthèse enchantée », his presence on the morning of Tabaski in the fishing village and the implied hesitation in his narration of the scene, attest to his awareness of the tensions of such encounters. As an interesting counterpoint to his own experience and an attempt to downplay his encounter as spectacle, on the next page following the « memorable » photographs, Hippolyte offers a rare one-page vignette that comments on tourism from which he, his father, wrestlers, and prostitutes are absent. Additionally, unlike the rest of the text, this left-hand page does not visually correspond to its right-hand companion, establishing a unique occurrence. In the text box at the beginning of the page, Hippolyte explains sarcastically that certain tourists « osent 'l'aventure'... » by visiting the fishing village (Hippolyte, *L'Afrique* 21).²³ The vignette depicts a European couple whose bohemian beachwear imply that they are perhaps a different type of tourist than those

represented by Hippolyte's father. Over the course of the page, the couple superficially take in what the village might have to offer. They browse in a shop where the owner, a silent, but welcoming host, offers them tea only to be met with clichéd remarks from the woman about the supposed differences between Western feminism and polygamy. The couple also discuss how the cheap price of the clothes means nothing to them, but would be a great sum to the shop owner in front of him; without making the purchase, they leave offering an insincere promise that they will pass by later (an echo of Hippolyte's father's strategy on the beach with vendors). While this scene might also represent clichéd stereotypes about Western tourists, one can read Hippolyte's desire to distance himself and his own practices from such superficial behavior.

Reframing the Report

This desire is much more prevalent in the one-shot version of *L'Afrique de papa* published by Des Bulles dans l'Océan whose self-stated mission includes introducing readers to the various kinds of Africas that exist today.²⁴ While the extent to which writers and cartoonists have control over the paratextual spaces of their work is not always obvious, given the content of the inside covers and front and back matter, one could convincingly argue that Hippolyte worked closely with the Des Bulles dans l'Océan's editor on the entire project. Ultimately, the one-shot adds a total of twenty-four extra pages to the original text. The photo collages of the inside front and back covers generate a nuanced tableau of local geography, traditions, culture, and people. The Senegalese landscape, flora, and fauna are complemented by local people happily posing for the camera. Hippolyte even includes a small photograph of himself. These photographs not only paint a much different picture than that of Hippolyte's father but also work to frame the constructed perception of his father's African paradise. Additionally, Hippolyte provides scanned images of his *carnet de voyage* preceding the text and full-page reproductions of his photographs directly following the text. Though the genre of *carnets de voyage* is steeped in an exotic view of the other and the elsewhere, Hippolyte's scanned pages display a self-reflexive and self-conscious approach to cultural difference. The scanned pages are ripe with dense text and detailed sketches which, together, speak to the time and effort Hippolyte employed to understand and examine the complexity and richness of his experiences. They also tell a slightly different story than the one presented in the BD reportage. First, the hand-written title page of the *carnet*, « Carnet de mai: Sénégal, Gambia, Casamance, 2008 » belies the sole focus on Saly. Second, though the densely-packed handwriting is difficult to read, there is one page on which Hippolyte reproduces a conversation between his father, someone named Adam, and his mother. This small detail, the presence of Hippolyte's mother during the journey, is easy to miss and begs the question of what else Hippolyte omitted from the BD reportage. Similarly, directly following the somber end of *L'Afrique de papa* in which the young Senegalese

stallion succumbs to the older European woman and leaves the club with her, ten full-page photographs offer a counter narrative that celebrates local culture. All but the last two photographs show the local population on the beach using it and enjoying it for their own purposes. However, I would argue that the doubly twinned nature of the last two photographs once again recall the dual nature of life in Saly. Hippolyte establishes a correlation between the two through composition, for in both instances the two people in the photograph are turned away from the camera. While the left-hand photograph of two local boys walking together suggests a positive easiness, the proximity of the right-hand photograph of two older European women walking along the beach hints at a potentially bleak future for the two boys. To end the text with the photograph of the two women – a photograph that also appears in *L'Afrique de papa* – echoes the ending of the BD reportage, thus leaving readers to ponder the price of such a leisurely stroll.

Drawing from a preexisting interest in *carnets de voyage*, inspired by Emmanuel Guibert's use of photography in *Le Photographe*, and encouraged by Patrick de Saint-Exupéry, Hippolyte mobilized his first BD reportage, *L'Afrique de papa*, to explore the many possibilities of an intermedial approach to storytelling. This process has had a profound impact on the rest of his work and Hippolyte gestures to the importance of *L'Afrique de papa* in the foreword to the one-shot version stating that working with Patrick de Saint-Exupéry at *XXI* was « très important dans l'approche que je me fais maintenant du récit de voyage » (Hippolyte, *L'Afrique*, n.p.).²⁵ This intermedial approach invites readers to work through both his journeys and the self-reflective process of recounting his experiences, at the center of which is a theorization of the gaze. For example, the zoom effect for the scene in which the man eating a slice of pizza at L'Étage draws readers' attention to the violence of his neocolonially-tinged masculine gaze; in a sense, readers witness Hippolyte's gaze of the man's gaze. This technique has become a hallmark of Hippolyte's nonfiction work for two primary reasons. First, the zoom effect, whether through photography (as is the case in *Les enfants de Kinshasa*) or drawing (as is the case in *La fantaisie des Dieux: Rwanda 1994*), works to authenticate what one has witnessed. Second, and more importantly, this technique, I argue, is a telling byproduct of Hippolyte's coming to terms with and working through his own gaze. The two-page spread in the center of *L'Afrique de papa* that abounds with images of Dodo conveys the palpable desire to capture Dodo through sketches, drawings, and photography. As explained, this pivotal scene shapes how Hippolyte *sees* Senegal and also how he *understands* it. For Hippolyte, « faire travailler l'œil » at work in *L'Afrique de papa* is an intermedially embodied practice directly linked to one's cognitive process. While this does not result in total knowledge, it can, and should, help us interrogate our own gaze.

Notes

1 « Despite everything, I always keep a notebook on me, for exercise, for working my eye and filling my imaginary library... ». All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

2 Patrick de Saint-Exupéry, co-founder of *XXI* with Laurent Beccaria, singles out Joe Sacco, Emmanuel Guibert, and Jean-Philippe Stassen as key figures in the emergence of BD reportage, citing 2000 as an important year for the genre due to the publication of *Le Photographe* and *Déogratias* (Beccaria and Saint-Exupéry, 2012, 5).

3 The press release for *L'Afrique de papa* on Des Bulles dans l'Océan's website features the cover image and many high-quality reproductions of key planches (<https://dbdo-editions.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/L-afrique-de-papa-DBDO.pdf>). Quality reproductions from the *XXI* version can be found in Christophe Cassiau-Hauric's review of *L'Afrique de papa* for *Africultures* (<http://africultures.com/lafrique-de-papa-9576/>).

4 « somewhat overused ».

5 « It's the goal of the creative act: integrating what has been done and going further. The different with Guibert comes from the fact that these are my own photos, which entails a gaze and a narrative axis different than his. »

6 Many comics studies scholars point to the difficulty of categorization of such texts. For example, Benjamin Woo problematizes Joe Sacco's self-applied term « comics journalism » while Nina Mickwitz and Margaret Flinn advocate for the term documentary comics rather than comics journalism (Woo 201; Mickwitz 2016; Flinn 2018).

7 « make his eye work ».

8 In the short introduction to *L'Afrique de papa* in *XXI*, readers are informed that Hippolyte's father, a former travel agent and car salesman who was twice married and twice divorced, sold his house in Haute-Savoie and, for the same price, purchased a small villa (part of which he rents out) that stretches along the Atlantic beach eighty kilometers south of Dakar (Hippolyte, « L'Afrique » 168).

9 See Pascal Blanchard, et al., editor., *Sexe, Race & Colonies* (La Découverte, 2018), in particular, the preface by Achille Mbembe and Jacques Martial and the third and fourth sections on « Décolonisations » and « Métissages ».

10 In *Grands reporters: 20 histoires vraies*, the massive 2012 anthology of twenty of *XXI*'s BD reportages (six hundred and fifty-four pages in total), all but two tell their true tale in thirty

planches. The two exceptions are Jean-Philippe Stassen's *Les visiteurs de Gibraltar* at twenty-nine planches (published in the very first issue of *XXI*) and a collaborative effort by Emmanuel Guibert, Alain Keler, and Frédéric Lemerrier, *Des nouvelles d'Alain*, at thirty-nine pages divided into four chapters, originally published in installments from the fall of 2009 to the spring of 2010 (issues 8, 9, 10, and 11) and often alongside another thirty-planches BD reportage.

11 « Isn't life grand! »

12 « Here, to get by, you have sports or Europeans. Being a champion or a stallion. It's always your body that you give ».

13 « Les scènes avec les Européens passent essentiellement par des dessins et croquis. La photographie retrace les tranches de vie et les rencontres faites par Hippolyte durant son séjour au Sénégal. Le travail des pêcheurs sur la plage, l'entraînement des lutteurs, les scènes de marché, telle est l'Afrique d'Hippolyte. Celle qu'il était aussi venu chercher et qu'il est condamné à observer à travers l'objectif d'un appareil » (n.p.). « The scenes with the Europeans go through drawings and sketches. Photography recounts slices of life and encounters that Hippolyte made during his trip to Senegal. The work of the fishermen on the beach, wrestlers' training, market scenes, such is Hippolyte's Africa. One that he had come in search of and that he is condemned to observe through the lens of a camera ».

14 « ...the dream ». « Welcome to Papa's Africa ».

15 « Here, to get by, you have sports or Europeans. Being a champion or a stallion. It's always your body that helps you or that wastes you ».

16 « When the day draws to a close, the wrestlers regroup and start their final warm-up. They leave behind them the Toubabs' 'African' houses and their high-tech toys. They live their life ».

17 « They don't very much like being photographed you know like curiosities ».

18 « This here is an aside in Saly ... it's their moment, not a show ».

19 One of the photographs of Dodo also graces the back cover of the one-shot album published by Des Bulles dans l'Océan.

20 « an enchanted aside »

21 « but me if you want you can take my photo! »

22 « The villagers seemed happy that I was interested in them ».

23 « risk 'the adventure' »

²⁴ According to the press release for *L'Afrique de papa* on Des Bulles dans l'Océan's website, Jean-Luc Schneider wanted to promote stories from the Indian Ocean and Africa to demonstrate the range of Africas in existence today and he wanted to create beautiful books in a digital era. He chose *L'Afrique de papa* as the first title since it pleased him for what it reveals about Africa, and, overall, for the ways in which the story is told and realized.

²⁵ « very important in the approach that I now have for travel writing. »

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Figures



Figure 1. Hippolyte's arrival in Saly and the reader's introduction to Papa's Africa.

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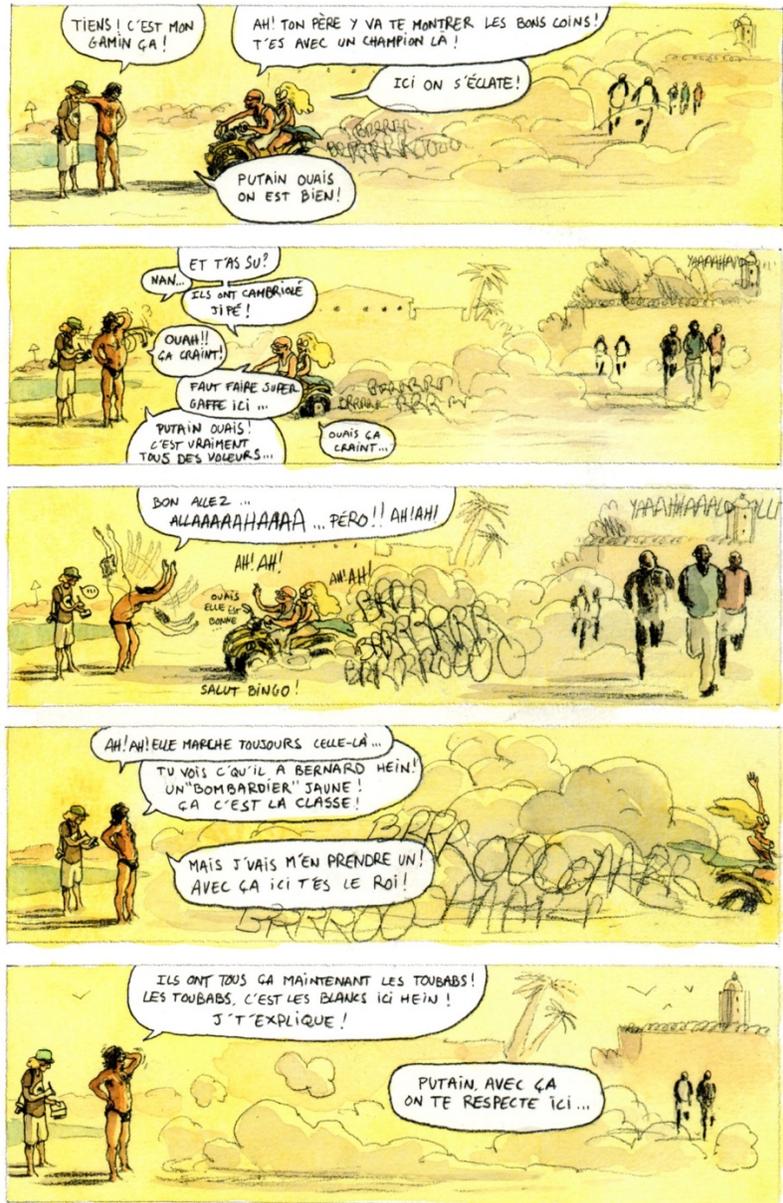


Figure 2. Papa's expansive notion of the beach.

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Figure 3. The zoom effect to critique the exotic gaze and consumption of Papa's Africa.

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Figure 4. Crosscutting between wrestlers and prostitutes as the denouement begins.
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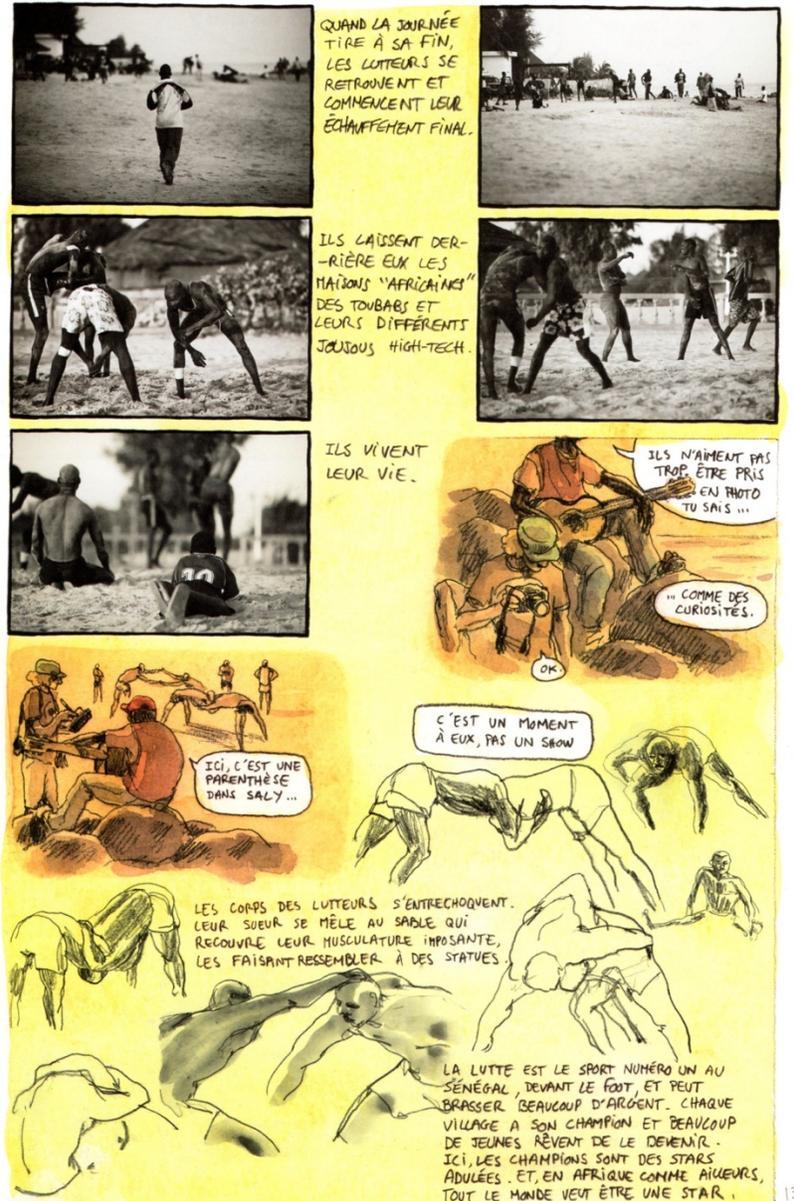


Figure 5. Left-hand page of Hippolyte's intermedial account of meeting Dodo.

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