

Publication

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This article questions and accounts for the collective management of "the relation to reality" among the amateurs - that is, the interpretative community of authors and readers - of so-called "realistic" Franco-Belgian Comics. My analysis aims at asking to what extent and in what ways this collective management, with its conventions and provisional agreements but also its tensions and controversies, can recursively inform ethnographic methods and theories as to their own collective management of "the relation to reality". To do so, I examine how the narrative conventions of realistic Franco-Belgian Comics are rhetorically maintained through a tension between two dimensions, which are constantly negotiated among the amateurs of comics: a strong expectation that both the drawings and the storyline faithfully represent "reality" in giving a meticulous and meticulously documented account of "it" on one side, and an acceptance of the interpretative dimension inherent in creative and artistic representations on the other. Questioning the tradition of ethnographic realism in the recursive light of this analysis, I argue in conclusion that this tension pertains to an ontological misunderstanding, and plead for an articulation of ontological multiplicity, i.e., multiple relations to multiple realities, and for granting both fictional beings of comics and ethnographic beings their own modes of existence.

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