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‘Badgers? We don’t need no steenkin’ badgers!’ Talbot’s *Grandville*, anthropomorphism and multiculturalism.

Mel Gibson

This chapter investigates how issues around multiculturalism are explored in the *Grandville* series of graphic novels by Bryan Talbot. *Grandville, Grandville Mon Amour* and *Grandville Bête Noire* depict a steampunk world in which animals are dominant and every species is considered equal, whether duck, fish or horse[1] [2] [3]. This does not stop intolerance or prejudice, however. Humans also exist within this world, but are a minority seen by the animals as lesser beings.

The setting for the series is a Europe in which France won the Napoleonic Wars and then invaded the rest of Europe, creating the French Empire. As a result, along with human-animal and inter-animal tensions there are also national ones. Here, Britain has been begrudgingly given independence after a campaign of civil disobedience and bombings. Consequently British animals, irrespective of species, are seen as problematic by the Empire and are labeled as terrorists. That the Empire is French does not, of course, signify that this is a book about Anglo-French relations, but that the genre allows discussion through distancing issues from their ‘real world’ settings.

The chapter will look at some aspects of the relationships and tensions between the British and the French, humans and animals and between animal species. These are not animal rights narratives, nor a simple reversal of human and animal positions. Instead anthropomorphism is employed as a lens to examine human interactions in our world. The initial inspiration for the anthropomorphic approach taken by Talbot in these books was the work of early 19th century French illustrator Jean Ignace Isadore Gerard who drew under the name of JJ Grandville. Grandville’s images, as Talbot says, “typically satiriz[ed] the contemporary mores of French

Society", and Talbot combined JJ Grandville's satirical intent, anthropomorphism and the notion of Grandville as a possible nick-name for an alternative Paris in creating the series[4].

In considering these relationships and tensions, the chapter first looks at how economics and multiculturalism are linked in *Grandville* and then turns to a brief consideration of how language and national identity operate. It next looks at Talbot's use of color and art as a mechanism for signifying difference and diversity. Finally, it will focus down on issues of cultural intolerance, dominance and the terrorist other.

These are multi-layered texts combining various genres and drawing on a very wide range of other texts, including novels and films, children's books, illustration and fine art, as well as comics. The central character Detective Inspector LeBrock, for instance, is a badger, with all the connotations of tenacity, loyalty and strength that the animal carries from literary references beyond *Grandville,* as Angela Cassidy suggests[5]. Talbot particularly references Badger of *The Wind in the Willow* who is wise, brave, and a skilled fighter[6] [7]. In addition, that actual badgers are currently under threat from government culls in Britain, gives an additional charge of vulnerability to the character[8]. The politicized elements of the series are just one aspect of the narratives, but significant, as this chapter demonstrates.

Multiculturalism, economics and *Grandville*.

There is no one way to read these narratives in relation to multiculturalism. For instance, the series can be seen as critiquing the swift growth of Islamophobia after '9/11' and the British '7/7' attacks and abortive bombings of '21/7', or as being about the changing nation state or empire and imperial legacy, or rights and activism.

This chapter works predominantly with European models of multiculturalism, especially that of Britain, in part because Talbot is a British comic creator operating within specific national

views and debates about multiculturalism, even when he applies such ideas to a wider stage. In effect, what Talbot explores in these texts is not various approaches to multiculturalism, but what Stuart Hall identified as the 'multicultural question', that is:

> […] whether it is possible for groups of people from different cultural, religious, linguistic, historical backgrounds, to occupy the same social space, whether that is a city, or a nation, or a region – applied by circumstances. What are the terms on which they can live with one another without either one group [the less powerful group] having to become the imitative version of the dominant one – i.e. an assimilation, or on the other hand, the two groups hating one another, or projecting images of degradation. In other words, how can people live together in difference? [9]

The *Grandville* narratives explore in particular how living together in difference might, or might not, work in a period of severe instability.

In relation to Britain, imperial legacy had an impact upon the development of multicultural policies. As Ali Rattansi states "In … Britain, there is an oft repeated shorthand history that suggests that the country treated its post-1945 immigrants … rather like it had treated them when they were 'natives' in the colonies' [so] treating the immigrants as if they needed 'civilizing"[10]. Certainly the notion of the British as in need of 'civilizing' is flagged up by the Empire at many points. For instance, the quotation featured in the title of this chapter reflects a French view of the British LeBrock[11].

Whilst the Empire contains diverse communities, assimilation rather than integration, social cohesion, or multiculturalism is the intended policy of those in power in the first book. The latter three imply retaining elements of 'home culture' and having an impact upon the host culture, but the former is about the total adoption of the host nation's culture. However, as outlined by Nira Yuval-Davis, Floya Anthias, and Eleonore Kofman, in the case of notions of

social cohesion an acknowledgement of ‘difference’ is typically found alongside a requirement that ‘others’ conform to the central cultural and value systems of mainstream hegemonic Englishness, such as learning English[12]. There are key examples of conformity in relation to culture in the *Grandville* series which show consequences of such policies.

The French Empire can be seen in the light of the Parekh Report, which asserted that Britain "is not and has never been the unified, conflict-free land of popular imagination"[13]. Talbot's narratives use his fictional Empire to comment on our world, to show that such a notion of the unified and conflict-free land is a myth employed to colonize, subjugate and repress, just as Hall stated. For Hall "All so-called modern, liberal nation-states thus combine the so-called rational, reflective, civic form of allegiance to the state with a so-called intuitive, instinctual, ethnic allegiance to the nation. That heterogeneous formation, 'Britishness' grounds the United Kingdom, the political entity, as an 'imagined community'"[14]. He further argued that "the neutrality of the state works only when a broad cultural homogeneity among the governed can be assumed"[15]. In the Empire the attempts to stop its decline deny everyone the possibility of creating new definitions of 'Frenchness' and so of potential futures. This limited 'Frenchness', as Hall suggested of 'Britishness', 'is literally driving some of its citizens crazy'[16]. The madness of some of Talbot's characters comes about, in part, as a result of their battle for national control.

The *Grandville* series offers an overarching narrative in which powerful individuals attempt to maintain power by manipulating tensions between the Empire and the British ex-colony, attempting, in effect, to demonize a specific ethnic group, the British, to distract attention from internal policies and the abuse of power. Wars beyond the Empire are also waged with that specific intention. These narratives may act as a critique of recent British and other governmental policies which might be seen as constructing the poor, the young, or those from

specific cultural groups as problematic and thus, as Phil Jones argues regarding young people in particular, 'othering' them[17].

Seen in this light, characters within the series who embrace a more multicultural approach are the heroes, in contrast to those aligned with the assimilation model of the Empire. This is particularly clear in the third book, where, after revolution in France, the ex-Empire industrialists, arms dealers and others, along with what could be described as 'old money' join together to try to undo the changes through waging, in effect, civil war. Their objections to the new and legitimate government include the government's wishes to introduce pensions, nationalize industries, introduce anti-pollution legislation and offer free schools and hospitals, paid holidays and other rights for workers[18]. Again, this can be seen as pithy commentary about social change and the erosion of such rights and resources in Britain in recent years. The narratives can collectively also be read as, as Hall et al argued in the 1970s, a time "when the whole basis of political leadership and cultural authority becomes exposed and contested"[19].

Hall argued that multiculturalism is "a deeply contested idea" and Rattansi states that multiculturalist policies have been largely rejected recently, placing this against a backdrop of changes to the nation state, deindustrialization, and the reduction of welfare state provisions[20]. In effect, Rattansi sees multiculturalism as a scapegoat, arguing that "many of the worries caused by growing economic insecurity, and more general social fragmentation, have been displaced onto issues of immigration. In the process, 'multiculturalism' appears to have become the container into which Western European nations have poured anxieties whose origins often lie in social and economic changes"[21].

This fragmentation and economic insecurity chimes with the world of *Grandville*, especially given the recent achievement of independence for Britain from the Empire. It also chimes

with the way that economic change is used within the books. War is used to shore up existing industry and stimulate industrialization. Simultaneously, animal workers are replaced with robots. For example, in the first volume Talbot depicts a protest demanding that troops leave French Indo-China [22]. Further, one of the first events LeBrock sees on checking into a hotel in Grandville is an arms dealers' convention and later an arms dealer confirms that war drives the Empire. [23] [24]

As to welfare state provisions and civil liberties, as suggested above, these are minimal given that the ruling elite sees them as eroding profits. That world's equivalent of '9/11' is a supposed terrorist attack on a building named Robida Tower in Paris[25]. Whilst the protagonists travel across Britain and France, the main focus is the city of Paris and the narratives show how the cosmopolitanism of that city, is, as Yuval-Davis, Kalpana Kannabiran and Ulrike Vieten argue with regard to multi-faith, transnational London, "confronted with new racialising strategies as a result of the 7 July 2005 terrorist murders and some of the governmental responses to them"[26]. The new French government, after the attacks, curtails civil liberties and puts severe restrictions on travel both around the Empire and beyond, again a comment upon our world.

Language and national identity.

In the first *Grandville*, the slipperiness of the concept of national identity is made clear in relation to language in one jarring moment. In this Talbot offers the reader an opportunity to reflect upon notions of cultural dominance and multiculturalism. When reading the original English language edition, the initial scenes introducing Detective Inspector LeBrock and his adjunct Detective Ratzi (a rat) show them investigating the murder of Honourable Citizen Raymond Leigh-Otter (an otter), which has taken place in Nutwood, fictional home of British classic children's character Rupert the Bear.

These British scenes focus on accent and the use of language. They involve a foul-mouthed Sergeant Nutkin (a squirrel) thereby drawing on and subverting *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* and further evoking notions of Englishness or Britishness through literature[27]. The scenes contrast Nutkin's use of slang and the way that he drops the letter 'h' from words with LeBrock's more standard use of language and Ratzi's upper-class English historical slang.

However, this initial use of British accent as an indicator of class or competence allows the author to create a purposively jarring moment when LeBrock and Ratzi later stand on Nutwood railway station. In response to Ratzi's question, "I say, DI, what's that funny lingo those coves are conversing in? Sounds jolly quaint, what?" LeBrock responds "Uh? Oh, you've never heard it before? It *is* still spoken in some rural communities. It's English"[28]. This makes one aware that one is reading, in effect, a translation from the French. Whilst this is playful, it disrupts expectations about linguistic dominance. Ratzi's style of speech, then, may be read as an indicator of class in England, but must be understood as French. That the English language continues to exist might be seen as evidence of multiculturalism in the policies of the Empire, but it is signaled as an old-fashioned and largely forgotten language. One could argue that this shows the impact of the assimilation model of the Empire on a colonized country.

Whilst that is the first key moment based around language and national identity in the series, later scenes also show the dominance of the French language in Britain, with several images juxtaposing the Houses of Parliament with the French language adverts on passing trams and a number showing street signs in French. This all serves to undermine the notion of national identity for those reading the book in English by detaching the English language from notions of Britishness.

Difference, diversity, color and art.

Talbot expresses national difference and diversity through a number of elements within the series, particularly his use of color and line, in the depiction of landscapes and characters. In relation to color, the first book of the series begins with an action sequence, a chase through a darkened, industrial cityscape (with the Eiffel Tower immediately locating the reader in France), followed by a sequence in a rural English setting. The England and France of the first *Grandville* graphic novel have distinctive palettes. In the former, the landscape is dominated predominantly by lighter and more delicate colors, with an emphasis on greens, greys and pale blues. The drawn style is flatter, reflecting that of the images in the *Rupert the Bear* series. This is also emphasized through the appearance of Rupert's father in several panels, depicted as mowing his lawn and trimming his hedges, stereotypical British activities. This is in contrast to the use of color and texture in the landscape of France, in which Talbot makes much use of dense browns, blacks and reds, plus the dark blues of night skies. In addition, the images of France emphasize depth and movement and have a more photographic 'feel' to their backgrounds. Thus color and depth are used to signify national difference and diversity.

In addition, he makes references to specific fine art in suggesting difference, as well as playfully challenging readers to identify the originals. Artworks from Britain and France feature throughout the books, with re-workings of paintings and other images significant both through dominating the composition of various panels in which the characters interact, and featuring in the backgrounds. The styles and schools are used to show national divides, but also tensions within France over art, thus acting symbolically as a representation of social instability in a shifting economic and political space.

To give examples of the reworking of images where characters interact, in the first book travelling to France by train via the Channel railway bridge, LeBrock and Ratzi enter a compartment, disturbing the two ducks seated inside[29]. The composition of the image directly

works with that of the painting by Augustus Egg, *The Travelling Companions*, painted in 1862. An English creator, then, features when England is still nearby.

However, once in France the choice of images changes. One example of reworking an image from fine art as part of the narrative draws on the painting Édouard Manet's 1882 painting *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*[30]. In this context, however, rather than a girl behind the bar, there is a tall, male hawk, and the reflection in the mirror is of LeBrock as he questions the bird.

In forming the backgrounds, art is incorporated in many ways, for instance, there are portraits throughout the first book of Napoleon re-created as a lion. In the third graphic novel, the central female character Billie (also a badger) works, in part, as an artist's model and at one point LeBrock is confronted by a number of paintings of her including an adaptation of Édouard Manet's 1863 *Olympia*[31]. Whilst this division is not totally consistent throughout the series, it does form part of the differentiation of cultures within it.

Art and ideology are significant within the narratives too, especially the third graphic novel which focuses on the use of art as propaganda in the hands of the state. A key plot point regards a commission for a huge figurative mural of the wider community working together on the side of the d'Orsay railway station (an action moving towards representing multiculturalism under the new government) and the sabotage of the project. This reflects two historical events. The first, as outlined by Talbot, occurred in 1933 when Diego Rivera was commissioned by Norman Rockefeller to design a mural. Rockefeller was "taken aback by the prominent inclusion [of] Lenin in a design which openly pitted socialist ideology against capitalism. In 1934, the mural was hammered into rubble [...] Thereafter, Rockefeller actively promoted abstract expressionism, a form that could carry no overt political message"[32]. The second was the use of abstract art as a propaganda weapon by the CIA during the Cold War

as a riposte to the figurative art of the Soviet Union and 'proof' of the freedom offered to artists in the USA [33].

A further representation of diversity and difference around characters is embedded in the series through the use of line and color. This is achieved specifically through the ethnic group, the 'doughfaces', a name intended both as an insult and a categorization. These characters are all from classic Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée*. They are colored in a different way to the animals, in fairly flat color, serving to emphasize difference. However, they are also a multicultural group, as, for instance, blue-faced Smurfs are included, and the style of the characters echoes that of the original artists. Smurfs walk alongside Tintin and other characters on the march for citizenship[34]. As such, Talbot makes the point that not all *bande dessinée* characters are the same and that the various species of animals' categorization of them as such is simply racist.

The first *bande dessinée* character introduced is Spirou, who is working as a bellboy in the Hotel Marianne. When Ratzi comments about the "dashed queer looking creatures" LeBrock explains that they are "Menial workers. Not allowed passports, y'know", adding that they have "Never been granted citizens' rights"[35]. T.H. Marshall defined citizenship as "full membership in a community with all its rights and obligations" and it is to this idea of citizenship that Talbot alludes[36]. The *bande dessinée* characters are intellectual equals of the animals, but their appearance has led to segregation. They are considered sub-human (or rather, sub-animal) and sanctioned economically and socially. Many are in fear of their replacement in their jobs by automatons, a threat used to keep them subservient. This acts as a comment on the treatment of those identified as 'different' by the dominant culture.

To further extend this analogy, on the rare occasions that a *bande dessinée* character is allowed a degree of autonomy, they are closely monitored. For instance, in the third volume,

the narrative begins with industrialist co-conspirators attempting to control both population and industry using a secret team of scientists including a 'doughface', based on Philip Mortimer of *Blake and Mortimer*, who is killed when he threatens to go to the police. As one of the conspirators says, "A doughface speaking like that to his betters? Infernal impudence!"[37] This can also be seen in the light of debates about the 'other' in that, as Anne-Marie Fortier articulates it, the us and them can be played out as: "'We' have culture, 'they' are culture; 'we' are citizens, 'they' are a people'" [38]. That Talbot applies such a model to animals in commenting upon *bande dessinée* characters who can be seen as very representative of a particular comic culture serves to push this point home further.

Talbot moves far beyond the articulation of an ethnic other when the theme of human rights emerges in the third book of the series. This is derided by many animal citizens, one of whom comments, on seeing the *bande dessinée* characters march, "It'll be pets demanding equal rights next"[39]. With a few minor alterations to the group referred to, one can clearly hear the words of a racist commenting upon an ethnic minority in a way which homogenizes all members of that minority. Referring to the *bande dessinée* characters as just that, and as little better than pets, echoes imperial legacy in regarding them as innately inferior. This reference to pets does not signify a simple reversal of animal and human positions in an animal rights context, given the animals and humans in the series are similarly intelligent. The depiction of the *bande dessinée* characters here explicitly addresses notions of suppressing an ethnic minority.

The issue of rights and equal opportunities regarding the *bande dessinée* characters may link to a notion of multiculturalism as racialized. Whilst the *bande dessinée* characters come from within the Empire, their position is very similar to that of the guest worker, without rights or security and their 'racial' difference is used to marginalize them. Talbot's depiction of the *bande dessinée* characters here avoids the weakness critics implied regarding some

multicultural policies in that he does not represent them as sharing a common culture, or even color, thus working against essentialism. He also emphasizes, through the differences between the British and the *bande dessinée* characters that not all groups are groups in the same way in relation to communities, economic structures or culture.

Them and us. Cultural intolerance, dominance and the terrorist other.

Intolerance of the British is flagged up throughout the series, as some of the comments by French citizens indicate. For instance, when LeBrock asks for a Full English Breakfast, the waiter returns to reply that "The chef says that he'd rather slash his own wrists, sir. He respectfully suggests that you stick your Full English Breakfast up your hairy English bottom"[40]. Similarly in the bar at the Folies-Bergère the response to LeBrock's question also indicates the tensions between France and Britain, as the bird says "British, are you? Why don't you just piss off back where you came from?" [41]. Perhaps inevitably, the French are not welcome in Britain either. LeBrock holds a moral high ground throughout the series, in working across nations and with all citizens.

LeBrock is also an excellent investigator, perhaps in part because of his position as someone from a minority culture (who additionally has outsider status through being working-class) for, as Tariq Modood argues "minorities can be the bearers of distinctive knowledge. ... They have a take on their societies that the majority does not experience and offers to the majority a very different perspective on their shared society, its institutions, discourses and self-image. They hold a critical mirror up to that society" [42]. Such a critical mirror represents a dialogue which indicates "that multiculturalism is much more than toleration or the co-presence of mutually indifferent communities"[43]. LeBrock is successful because he engages in dialogue with all, so uncovering new insights.

Class, as mentioned above, is another factor in the series, and LeBrock reflects this in a number of scenes, including one where he is sat unhappily at a dinner table contemplating the huge range of cutlery. In addition, he is also concerned about the manners of the hostess, who clearly sees him as a 'bit of rough', as the ethnic, national and classed 'other'[44].

The increasing tension around Britons visiting France is noted by the British Ambassador in Paris, who says: "It's just cynical exploitation, designed to sell newspapers. All that nationalistic claptrap spouted by Napoleon's government. Disgusting I call it. Bloody opportunistic politicians whipping up Anglophobia!"[45]. The reference here is clearly to Islamophobia, a neologism used generally to refer to prejudice against, hatred towards, or fear of Muslims or of ethnic groups perceived to be Muslim. The term also incorporates economic and social discrimination and the positioning of Islam as a violent political ideology rather than a religion. It is still very much a debated term but it does offer a shorthand for the increasingly hostile attitudes and incidents that developed during the 2000s, attributed by commentators to the aftermath of the '9/11' and '7/7' attacks. Here, using a similar term to reflect Anglo-French relations allows Talbot to comment directly upon increased intolerance and prejudice. He also points to the culpability of the media in making one of the villains a newspaper proprietor.

In further references to Islamophobia, as mentioned, the first volume allegorizes the various mobilizations of political rhetoric surrounding the '9/11' and '7/7' attacks. In the series, the result of an attack on the Robida Tower is described as Ground Zero a direct reference to '9/11'[46]. Here, the British are positioned by the French media and politicians as dangerous extremists who failed to integrate, again returning to the Empire policy of assimilation, and indeed are positioned as having continued terrorist activities after gaining independence. The books offer reflections and analysis of other 'Empires' of the past and present and the way that they deal with ethnic minorities and foreign powers.

The larger narrative in the first book links the murder of the Honourable Citizen Raymond Leigh-Otter with Robida Tower and the machinations of various powerful French figures, initially identified in the book as the Knights of Lyon, in their attempts to maintain (or gain) hegemonic power. For instance, Jean-Marie Lapin (a rabbit), a minor right-wing politician, became the French Prime Minister by promising a "War on Terror" and a hard line against "British Anarchy"[47]. However, Lapin and others used automatons to destroy the Robida Tower to ensure their rise to power.

The series explores the ways in which those in power may try to 'create' a notion of an 'alien' enemy to control or unify their population from the first book onwards. In doing so Talbot also starts to articulate what Fortier asked: "When does 'respectable diversity' turn into unrespectable 'difference'? What kinds of mixing are acceptable, which are not?"[48]. For the Knights, the shift from diversity into difference is marked by what one of their number describes as decadence, citing alongside atheism and the use of drugs, that "promiscuity and inter-species fornication are rife!"[49]. Talbot shows LeBrock and Billie, the central badger couple of the later volumes, falling in love across national lines and also offers images of mixed animal couples (who may be French or English) as a positive counterpoint to the Knights' viewpoint. Their view is also articulated by other characters, like the ducks who turn Billie down when she is working a prostitute because she is "not even water fowl"[50]. Whilst in the real world a badger and a duck are physically incompatible, in Grandville they are, so the comment above is about prejudice rather than practicality. In a further point, another member of the Knights cites Britain's oil as the motivation for starting war, again referring obliquely to events in our world.[51] In the third volume, in addition, crossing class boundaries is seen as problematic by at least one authority figure.

The Knights of the first book, and their successors, fear both 'mixing' and fragmentation (as represented by Britain's independence). The concerns of such characters can be seen as

related to some of the more excessive commentaries on multiculturalism made in the mid-2000s in Britain. For instance, Modood states that Muslim migrants were seen as enacting a policy of "cultural separatism and self-imposed segregation ... and that a 'politically correct' multiculturalism had fostered fragmentation rather than integration"[52]. This view of fragmentation and radicalism as emerging from multiculturalism was taken to extremes. For instance, according to Modood, media commentator William Pfaff argued that the "British bombers are a consequence of a misguided and catastrophic pursuit of multiculturalism"[53]. Here again, multiculturalism takes the blame for changes caused by economic shifts.

In the first graphic novel, finding that the recently declared war on the Communards in French Indo-China is failing to unify the Empire as they hoped, the Knights plan other terrorist actions framing the British in addition to Robida Tower, which they hope will lead to a war on Britain and so to both access to resources and sales of munitions. The focus is to be the bombing of the Trans-Empire Song Contest. This is a reference to the Eurovision Song Contest, a contest and institution that can be seen as both cross-cultural and multicultural. The increasing excessiveness of the Knights' actions flags up to the problematic nature of calls for social cohesion and integration in the world beyond the books.

The second volume moves towards revealing high-level government corruption in Britain and delves further into the history of the fight for independence and looks at the guilt of various high level government figures in a massacre of British citizen-soldiers. Here Talbot argues that elites in both countries have been attempting to shore up their own power at the expense of the wider population. The intolerance of the 'other' actually masks an 'us' and 'them' based around power elites and class. Again, Talbot argues optimistically that in contrast to the elites, the general public will, even given their small acts of intolerance towards each other, support a broader international unity.

The discussion of difference and the need for common ground, is shown in conversations between Billie and LeBrock in the later books, a huge contrast to the intolerance of the ruling classes. This too might be seen as having parallels in the world outside the series, in that, in the critiques of multiculturalism Fortier identifies, it was argued that some commentators saw tolerance as problematic, seeing it as "a sign of the nation's weakness and an affront to the nation's narcissistic love: we should resent the other and the diversity that he/she brings"[54]. In contrast, Talbot focuses in a romantic and optimistic way on the possibilities for understanding and reconciliation at national, international and personal levels.

To conclude, what Talbot suggests through the *Grandville* series is what Fortier described as "how messy, slippery and fragile 'racial' differences actually are, how porous cultural boundaries can be, how fluid cultural practices are and how experiences of racialized or culturalized differences are uneven across class, gender, and urban/regional divides"[55]. The complexity of the multicultural mix of the series demonstrates that 'difference' can take many forms (not exclusively 'race' or religious ones), and acts as a counterpoint to prejudice. Species and 'race' relations are conflated here, but the aim is to make points about human intolerance, not about animal rights. In addition, the use of various styles of art in making the first book, and the re-workings of kinds of art within all the books also show complexity, diversity and difference.

Throughout the series, the tensions between the various groupings of characters are explored in ways which can be seen as linked with the scapegoating of multiculturalism in Britain, and of various groups of people, in times of instability, particularly in urban environments. As such, Talbot sees multiculturalism as a potential tool in creating new ways of acknowledging diversity and difference, new ways of being French, or animal, or human, rather than a dangerous policy leading to cultural collapse. It is conservatism and control which leads to chaos here.

Further, in Grandville, the narratives suggest that the creation of a dangerous ‘other’ might be a governmental and national policy or strategy. In drawing on alternative history and anthropomorphism, Talbot makes direct comments on the impact on communities of using fear as a way of controlling a diverse population. Talbot, whilst creating adventure stories, flags up ways in which those who have power may seek to maintain it, particularly through attempting to create divisions, waging what they position as ‘just’ wars, and through the manipulation of economic and media structures. He sees the latter as maintaining or creating stereotypes, here of the ‘British terrorist’, in much the way that the Parekh Report identified that the media coverage of Islam typically juxtaposed the adjective Islamic, with ‘militant’, extremist’ ‘fundamentalism’ and ‘terrorism’[56].

Talbot also depicts an erosion of civil liberties and a resistance to human rights for all citizens, using the curtailing of travel, the violent disruption of peaceful marches and the *bande dessinée* characters to make these points. Further, he suggests that the result of such policies may be revolution and the collapse of existing national structures. Policies of assimilation, or of social cohesion, become, from his point-of-view, a rallying point for individual and groups against those imposing such policies, even when, as in the case of the English language, the battle is lost.

His pessimism about entrenched powerful elites, always the enemy here, is counterbalanced by a romantic faith in the potential and ability of some members of the general population to start overcoming prejudice, to make connections and respond to change. He also firmly positions himself as believing that diversity and difference can create strength and that acknowledging it is a political necessity. These narratives, then, suggest a need for, as Helen Davis notes summarizing aspects of Stuart Hall’s work, “A multiculturalism that recognize[s] the real cultural diversity which is the essential condition of the modern world”[57].

[1] Bryan Talbot, *Grandville* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009).

[2] Bryan Talbot, *Grandville Mon Amour* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2010).

[3] Bryan Talbot, *Grandville Bête Noire* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2012).

[4] Talbot, *Grandville Bête Noire,* 99.

[5] Angela Cassidy, "Vermin, Victims and Disease: UK Framings of Badgers In and Beyond the Bovine TB Controversy" *Sociologia Ruralis* 52, 2, (2012): 192–214.

[6] Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (London: Methuen, 1908).

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