New Drivers Club

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The first book from Van Manen's Compendium of Franco-Belgian Comics takes as a starting point the 'EC comic book format (48 pages, colour printing, hardcover). In order to demarcate itself from ready-made book stereotypes, the publisher L'Association christened the books with the coded name: "EC" as a way to point to the flattening routines and procedures of a normative and just-in-time book industry that dominates the French-speaking publishing landscape. During a single afternoon Manen purchased a selection of forty-eight second-hand 'EC' books. After carefully reading them he built a non-exhaustive, determinable index of the elements considered to generally define the tradition of Franco-Belgian comics. Displaying a variety of proto-memes, metanarrative devices, historical references and para-narrative elements such as hovering dark clouds, shark wings, self-referential bars, identity stereotypes, body-shaped hooks, and public library stamps, the Compendium presents itself as an orchestral comic book, where manifestations of this typology freed from the imperatives of specific narratives can be read as the in situ building blocks of the Bande Dessinée.