Down the Garden Path: Misleading Narratives in French and Francophone Video Games and Texts.

By
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Abstract

The cognitive benefits of playing have been established by many studies but video games are still widely considered a trivial activity compared to literary texts. There has been excellent scholarship on cognitive implications of navigating literary and ludic narratives. However, what is lacking is a comparative methodology and study to explore narratives within both art forms. My dissertation, "Down the Garden-Path, Misleading Narratives in French and Francophone Video Games and Texts," offers an interdisciplinary study to how authors design ludic works to actively engage users, and how users navigate different genres of challenging narratives.

I analyze narratives in a French video game (*Heavy Rain*) and Francophone texts (a classic modern novel, *La Chute* by Albert Camus, a postmodern experimental novel, *Le Condottière* by Georges Perec, and a play, *Incendies* by Wajdi Mouawad). These works subvert the user's expectations regarding the plot but also regarding genre conventions. Such misleading narratives are called garden-path narratives in the field of Cognitive Narratology, a field that takes into account the cognitive processes of reader or player—such as making assumptions and decisions— when analyzing narratives. A garden-path structure is a construction with one or several anomalies designed to mislead the user by subverting a first interpretation. Once the anomaly is recognized, the user has to reconstruct the cognitive environment by integrating the new information and revising the initial expectations.

I develop a transmedial analysis to uncover the core elements that make up the construction of garden-path narratives. My narratological methodology, which incorporates elements of Umberto Eco's notions of first/second readings, Rick Altman's following patterns, James Gee's literacy perspective on video games, game-theory notions of asymmetric-information games, and Roland Barthes' narrative codes, reveals the narratively complex

processes that are operative in GPNs. My integration of narratology and reception theory allows me to address both internal and external aspects of what is at stake in GPNs. I demonstrate how each author takes full advantage of their genre's specific characteristics to build unique garden-path narratives. By examining the concept of garden-path narrative in such a varied corpus, my study shows that video games can be as narratively complex as canonical literature, but also that literature can offer ludic, engaging cognitive experiences thanks to the use of garden-path narratives.

As a consequence, my dissertation also suggests the benefits of game-playing, via garden-path narratives, in a pedagogical context. Bringing a more nuanced view of video games and literature through an emphasis on their literacy challenges may encourage schools to adopt a more inclusive, game-like approach to teaching reading, and thus engage struggling students and enable them to develop better literary skills.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Summary of Research Question

My dissertation will study garden-path narratives in video games and textual narratives in order to understand the interrelations of discourse and story elements, and uncover narratively complex processes across genres. A garden-path construction induces its user into making critical perceptive and interpretive errors that need to be corrected to fully understand the whole narrative. A famous cinematic garden-path narrative is the movie *Sixth Sense*, in which (spoiler alert…) the viewer as well as the character played by Bruce Willis discover at the end that he was dead all along and not simply resentfully ignored by his wife who had stopped interacting with him. A garden-path narrative in literature is exemplified by the classic, best-selling 1939 mystery novel *And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie, whose plot centers around the murder of ten guests who have been invited to the house of mysterious hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Owen. At the end, the reader discovers that the character of Justice Wargrave, who was supposedly murdered too, was actually the murderer. It turns out that he orchestrated all the murders and drove those guests to commit suicide who had not been found guilty for murders they had been accused of in past trials. By purposefully withholding or twisting information and subverting expectations, this type of narrative forces users to actualize their expectations based on previous experiences with similar narrative genres. I use the term "user" to designate either the reader of a text or player of a game, as distinct from the author or designer and from intradiegetic characters. Garden-path constructions thus demonstrate "that cognition can get tripped up by following a strong first preference" (Jahn 70). These preferences and expectations are what makes up the user's cognitive environment, built from experience with similar genres

and stories.[1] A garden-path narrative, due to its deceptive nature, inherently poses the question of authorial design that creates a misleading narrative path. In turn, such a narrative also poses the question of the user's own navigation and expectations that are being challenged. Misleading narratives are games of asymmetric information between author and user. Asymmetric information is a concept in game theory that refers to an interaction in which one party has more and better information than another party involved. Given the uncertainty and challenge inherent in garden-path narratives, they have game-like qualities that engage their users by sustaining their drive for narrative, that is, their innate urge to navigate a narrative. This is essential to any work to be even considered as a worthy narrative in the first place and thus be actively navigated as such. Camus' *La Chute,* for instance, generates uncertainty because it is impossible to know where Clamence's testimony is leading and what his true intentions, though revealed at the end, really are.

My dissertation will explore the phenomenon of garden-path narratives in several genres focusing on authorial design and the user's challenging navigation. My corpus includes a video game (*Heavy Rain* by Quantic Dream), two novels (*La Chute* by Camus; *Le Condottière* by Perec), and a play (*Incendies* by Mouawad). It is important to address in this introduction that traditionally, theater is not considered as "narrative" due to its performative nature. However, Cinematic Professor and narratology scholar Rick Altman develops a transmedial theory of narratives. I will develop Altman's view in a later section of this chapter but, to summarize, his theory identifies two main elements required to create a narrative: a following pattern, i.e. a way to follow characters performing actions, and a framing aspect, that is, framing events as beginning, middle, and end (Altman *A Theory,* 28). Thanks to Altman's definition, non-

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[1] Wolfgang Iser and the movement of Reader Response would call these expectations the "horizon of expectations".

traditional media such as video games and theater can be considered as narratives, and I will be able to fully explore and analyze all works of my corpus through the prism of garden-path narratives.

Garden-path narratives, like other narratives, are constituted by the combination of 1) discourse elements, that is, the author's asymmetric-information games to twist how the narrative is expressed, and of 2) story elements, here the subversion of the user's expectations regarding content. Narratives are made up of story, "the content plane of narrative," *what* is told, and of discourse "the expression plane of narrative," *how* it is told (Prince *A Dictionnary,* 93). My research goal is to develop a comparative methodology that provides a structural analysis of garden-path narratives both in games and literature in order to map the core elements of such a structure across genres. By *structure* I mean

> the networks of relations obtaining between the various constituents of a whole as well as between each constituent and whole. Should narrative be defined as consisting of story and discourse, for example, its structure would be the network of relations obtaining between *story* and *discourse*, *story* and *narrative*, and *discourse* and *narrative*. (Prince 95, my emphasis)

My goal is to develop a new methodology that enables me to identify discourse and story elements that are used by garden-path narratives across genres. The interdisciplinary analysis based on neuroscientific phenomena will contribute to better understanding how authors universally design ludic works for users to be actively engaged, and how users may navigate and overcome the cognitive challenges of different genres of garden-path narratives.

Video Games and Texts: Programmed Narrativity and Active Navigation.

To fully explore and compare the questions of degree of authorial design, and of user's navigation across narrative genres, the works of my corpus are both video games and textual works — playing and reading being typically considered as respectively more active and more passive activities. Video game scholar and narratologist Marie-Laure Ryan, discusses the contrast between interactive video games and controlled textual environment:

> In a traditional mystery story, the detective performs difficult tasks of problem solving, but the reader does not have to put the story of the murder back together, though he can of course try to guess the solution. Since the actions of the detective are scripted by the author, this makes it possible for the author to control the process of discovery, and to manage the effects of suspense, of which the reader is the beneficiary. But in an interactive environment, the user becomes the detective, and it falls to him to reconstruct the embedded story. If the player is granted too much freedom and movement, there is a danger that he may discover cues in a less than optimal order, and suspense will be lost. (Ryan "Beyond Ludus…", 16)

Video games are also typically considered a less "serious" art form than literary texts, and universities in the Francophone world didn't consider scholarly work on video games "important" until recently (Perron 18). Movie critic Roger Ebert started a debate in the gaming community, linking the nature of these activities to their artistic value, when he wrote "Video games by their nature require player choices, which is the opposite of the strategy of serious film and literature, which requires authorial control" (Ebert 931). Here Ebert opposes video game and literature through their *nature* – that is, the format given to the user to navigate a work – in that, to him, video games' navigation strategy relies on players' choices and actions rather than true

authorial control in the sense that, with full authorial control, the user cannot modify anything about the narrative originally created by the author in the first place. Ryan does support Ebert's observation as she notes that in general —at least at the time of her 2007 article — "the narrative potential [in video games] is generally underdeveloped […]. Narrative is generally treated by game designers as 'just another tacked-on feature', like animation, sound, effects, and music, instead of forming the defining aspect of games" (Ryan "Beyond Ludus…", 13). However, Ryan acknowledges that video game and strong narrative can be compatible: "If by narrative experience one means the pleasure of immersing oneself in a virtual world, then this experience is fully compatible with the ambition of game designers, which is to create rich worlds that offer players extensive opportunities to exercise their agency" (14).

This degree of authorial control, or design, in Ebert's eyes, makes literature a higher artistic form than video games. Thus, we may draw the idea that the reader would be a more passive receiver compared to the player who is haptically participating in the game's unfolding thanks to game mechanics, such as buttons on a controller that the player physically uses and chooses. However, in his essay *S/Z* literary theorist Roland Barthes coins the term of "texte scriptible" ("writerly text"), defining literary texts as games to be navigated actively, making the reader an active "player" and not passive in a strictly authorially controlled work. Indeed, for Barthes "l'enjeu du travail littéraire […] c'est de faire du lecteur, non plus un consommateur, mais un producteur de texte" who must "jouer lui-même" within modern, writerly texts (Barthes 10). Navigating a narrative as a writerly text therefore means "c'est nous en train d'écrire avant que le jeu infini du monde (le monde comme jeu) ne soit traversé, coupé, arrêté, plastifié par quelque système singulier" (11). For Barthes, the goal of narrative analysis of writerly text is "remettre chaque texte, non dans son individualité, mais dans son *jeu*" (9, my emphasis), in its

plurality of meanings that the writerly reader will actively seek and interact with. The very nature of garden-path narratives, involving both authorial control and users' active navigation, confirms Barthes' conception of writerly texts as games to navigate and play, and therefore adds a more nuanced view to video games and literature studies as regards to user's navigation. To sustain opposition to Ebert's statement, video game studies actually acknowledge that video games do have a substantial form of authorial design, with the game developer creating pre-programmed narratives, as "chaque jeu possède une proportion plus ou moins grande de narrativité. Cette narrativité découlera de la combinaison d'une intrigue matérielle, *programmée*, avec l'expérience que le joueur aura de cette intrigue" (Marti np, my emphasis). Furthermore, Ryan observes that "To avoid [the lack of suspense or wrong order of cue discovery], games can control the order in which the player discovers the embedded story by imposing a more or less rigid linear progression through the space of the game world" (Ryan "Beyond Ludus…", 16). Theories from both artistic forms will thus enable a more flexible and novel approach to narratives across the genres, emphasizing a dialectic of userly freedom and authorial control.

Importance of Research Question

Narratives are the practice of telling stories. Critic Rick Altman underscores the importance of narrative in human life: "Stories constitute the bulk of sacred texts; they are the major vehicle of personal memory; and they are a mainstay of law, entertainment and history. […] An essential strategy of human expression and thus a basic aspect of human life, narrative commands our attention" (Altman *A Theory,* 1). Fictional narratives, a subsection of narratives, may be extremely powerful sharing tools, more so than factual narratives, in that they have the power to reach users beyond the current time and place from which the narrative first emerged. Aristotle indeed notes that epic and dramatic poetry, two major fictional narratives of classical

Greece, are a more philosophical and a higher medium than history "for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular" (Aristotle part IX). This unique capacity to transcend time and space is a capacity we can all recognize when ancient religious parables and myths, or classic literature works, are still globally shared and valued in our contemporary world. Therefore studying narratives is crucial in that it is a study of universally shared perceptions and expectations — as Bernard Perron says, to "savoir ce qu'une œuvre nous dit de la société, de l'humanité" (Perron 22).

Of course, when analyzing video games and texts, one may be reminded of the crucial debate between narratologists and ludologists when video-game studies emerged in the 1990s. As I explain later, my approach uses concepts from both fields to illuminate the complexity of garden-path narratives. In the narratology field, there have been no studies analyzing the phenomenon of garden-path narratives as a game between the author and user. Raphael Baroni, in *La Tension Narrative, Suspense, Curiosité et Surprise*, does explore productions that display elements of tension. Baroni offers a thorough survey of structuralist methods to analyze such narratives, and addresses the cognitive competences of the users when navigating tense narratives. My research differs from Baroni's in that I only investigate works that are purposefully misleading, i.e. inducing the user to actively make an interpretation mistake and forcing the user to reconstruct his previous interpretation, unlike Baroni who explores works that focus more generally on how a semantic production generates suspense (not necessarily based on a mistaken anticipation but rather based on the general feeling of anticipation of a resolution). My own research will expand upon Baroni's work in that I will analyze entire narratives, thus offering a close reading, notably through text-mining and visualization softwares, of complete narratives. More importantly, my own analysis will add to Baroni's work in that I will analyze

video games — Baroni left this art form out of his analysis, and actually did not mention it at all when listing what he left out (theater and oral storytelling), proving again the still common —yet less so today— bias towards video games in academia, perceiving video game as lacking narrative relevance. Addtionally, I will disprove Baroni's claim that performative art forms like theater or films (as in the film-like scenes in video games) hinder the elements of "curiosity", or drive, thanks to my analysis of novel examples of video games and contemporary theater. Consequently, I explore the phenomenon of garden-path narratives through the prism of neurolinguistics notions (which establish objectively measured, universal, and inherently human reaction to being misled), and through game theory concepts — unlike Baroni who ultimately focuses on the emotions conveyed by such narratives— to be able to fully understand the author's and user's strategies. Narratives can indeed be games in the sense of game theory definitions: a game is an "interaction among rational, mutually aware players, where the decisions of some players impact the payoffs of others" (*Game Theory* np). By this definition, both author and user are players, i.e. participants with different sets of strategies. My research will add to the field of narratology thanks to the use of game theory, which, according to game theorist Brams, has rarely "been applied to humanistic material; its principal applications have been to social sciences" (Brams 5). My approach resorts to game theory because it is a "tool ideally suited for penetrating the complex decision-making situations" (7), a tool that will thus be crucial in order to understand both the author's and the user's decision-making process.

Exploring garden-path narrative constructions across genres and addressing the questions of authorial control versus users' cognitive environment will be crucial to 1) map and identify elements of garden-path narrative structure — that is, its specific configuration of networks of relations between story plane and discourse plane as well as how these latter relate to the

narrative as a whole— across different genres, and 2) to discuss the game-like cognitive

challenges present across literary genres (classic novel, experimental novel, play) and video

games. As video game scholar Bernard Perron says :

> Si nous n'en sommes […] plus à nous demander ce qu'est un jeu en soi, cela ne
> nous empêche pas de nous interroger sur l'évolution du jeu vidéo et ce qui
> caractérise les diverses **expériences vidéoludiques**. […] Pour être féconde,
> l'analyse ne doit pas être une fin en soi, mais un moyen qui relève en dernière
> instance du plaisir : « plaisir de savoir ce qu'une œuvre nous dit de la société, de
> l'humanité ». (22)

The first two points will help provide a novel approach to narrative analysis and offer a practical

application of my methodology. Consequently, 3) my dissertation will enable a more nuanced

view of video games and literature through their common narrative challenges and may

encourage adopting a more ludic (that is, game-like) approach to the teaching of advanced

reading. Literacy scholar James Gee actually considers video games as highly beneficial for

cognitive development in that they require players to adopt new ways of thinking unlike most

educational programs that tend to shy away from sophisticated ways of thinking so as to simplify

the students' work. Finally, as a result 4) the conclusion of my work will also address the

potential value(s) of re-playing/re-reading a garden-path narrative whose structure is built to

mislead — i.e. unexpectedly challenge — the user.

This last point especially has pedagogical implications regarding reading strategies,

largely inspired by Umberto Eco's theories of naïve first reading /critical second reading in his

essay *The Role of the Reader*. Engaging and critical reading strategies are crucial to address here,

notably because studies have shown that video games keep attracting wider demographics

(Statista; ESA), but part of those demographics, such as boys across all racial backgrounds, are significantly lagging in reading skills and reading motivation compared to their female peers, in school and parenting environments that typically value traditional reading over playing (Hoff-Sommers). My methodology, analyzing traditional literature's and video games' narratives, may thus help encourage the use of video games as a literacy skill-building genre at the same level as literary texts and therefore potentially help those weaker students who are already part of the gaming demographics to be more motivated and thus gain more competence.

Chapter Description

My dissertation will have five chapters, this theoretical section being the first. My corpus will be composed of a video game and literary texts whose narratives are built as garden-path structures because they all present elements of investigation and mystery, and therefore of asymmetric-information games for the user and characters, challenging the user's cognitive environment. The video game I study in my second chapter, *Heavy Rain*, 2010, is developed by French studio Quantic Dream. I chose this game because, in addition to having a misleading narrative line, it relies heavily on narrative predetermined by the developers but also on the player's choices affecting said narrative. Towards the game's end, unexpected pieces of information appear in order to suddenly reveal crucial hidden parts that force characters and players to change their cognitive environment to grasp the meaning of certain narrative lines. This game, due to its highly narrative but also gaming nature, strongly questions the extent of authorial control versus the active navigation of the player.

In my third chapter, I will study *La Chute*, by Albert Camus, a novel from 1956. I chose this novel because it is first presented as a conversation by the narrator to help his interlocutor but which eventually appears to be a manipulative discourse to dominate the interlocutor. *La*

Chute is now a classic, but an analysis as garden-path narrative (and not mere unreliable narration as it has often been studied) has not been performed in previous studies. Camus scholars, such as Gerald Prince and Seymour Chatman have addressed the unreliability of Clamence's narration, but they have not analyzed this novel as a full garden-path, game-like narrative that goes beyond the notion of unreliable narration – the latter being only one of several ways to create a garden-path narrative.

My fourth chapter will explore *Le Condottière*, by Georges Perec written between 1957-60 but posthumously published in 2012. Perec is an author from OuLiPo (Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle, an experimental group founded in 1960s). It is a novel in which the author dives into the protagonist's psyche in great detail, providing a dizzying narration of his thoughts and feelings as he tries to understand why he just killed someone, seemingly for no reason. I chose this novel because it is one of Perec's least studied works yet it is a rich novel, full of garden-pathing processes, and it paves the way to Perec's later and acclaimed works.

In the fifth chapter, the last textual work is a play by Wajdi Mouawad, *Incendies* (2009). I chose this play because the plot, based on the Oedipus myth, relies on asymmetric information given to both characters and readers/spectators and where theatrical conventions, such as units of time and space, are subverted. This varied corpus will allow for an analysis of garden-path narrative strategies across the different genres of video games, novels, graphic novels, and plays. Finally, my conclusion will go beyond the specific results of the case studies to address more general literary and pedagogical applications of my methodology.

Literature Review

The concept of garden-path narrative, that is, misleading narrative, has been addressed before, although not much under this term and its implications, and not by systematically

analyzing varied case studies' structure, as my dissertation does. Raphael Baroni in his 2007 essay *La tension narrative, suspense, curiosité et surprise*, explores a corpus with a "perspective mettant en évidence la dimension émotionnelle des productions sémiotiques en général et des récits en particulier" (Baroni 18). Baroni focuses on the communicational processes used in the diverse productions he analyzes to the extent that they cause emotions (mostly of suspense, curiosity and surprise) among readers. While Baroni does analyze rhetorical devices similar to garden-path narratives that produce narrative tension (such as incomplete presentation of information), I address the ideas of curiosity and surprise not as the primary focus of my analysis but as collateral and integral components of garden-path narratives. Furthermore, Baroni claims to analyze *all* the possible fictional narratives across genres (Baroni 27), such as advertisements, films, or graphic novel, but he actually leaves out video games from his supposedly pan-narrative analysis. Thanks to my game theory approach, my research will also bring new elements to Baroni's analysis.

Because I am adopting a cognitive narratology approach for video games and texts, my dissertation situates itself in the former debate among ludologists — game scholars — and narratologists, trying to see which approach is more relevant for video games. Gonzalo Frasca, a video game developer and university scholar, was one of the first to address the methodological inadequacies of emerging video game studies in the 1990s. He concluded that both narratology and ludology were crucial to explore the complexity of gaming elements, player's input, and authorial control. As for the dimension of navigating a video game – and therefore having a certain level of literacy or familiarity with its genre – James Gee analyzed video games through a cognitive, pedagogical approach, in his work *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*. This work will be paramount for my video game analysis. Gee draws a

list of learning and cognitive benefits of games, such as the "situated meaning principle" which determines the construction of cognitive environment from signs that are discovered within an embodied experience, through physical actions like pressing buttons, and other haptic and sensorial elements of game mechanics. Regarding game structure, Alvarez et al (2014) established a morphology of games, using Vladimir Propp's method, according to their genres. As I have designed my own methodology to map garden-path narrative structure, I want to acknowledge the morphological tradition of mapping (or typifying) the structure of narratives — from Vladimir Propp, who designed formulas to map the series of actions based on the function of characters in folk tales (for example, yVW'A'BKStl'KM, a formula mapping different functions and actions of characters, Propp 101)— to Seymour Chatman who designed charts to map narratological elements mainly based on characters' actions. While they map the entirety of narratives, my work only focuses on mapping elements of garden-path narratives.

Regarding the textual works of my corpus, some critics have investigated parts of their ludic elements and narrative structures. Germaine Brée, in her comprehensive essay on the life and works of Camus, mentions the importance of the exact tone for Camus, and the ingenuity of the choice of Clamence's direct discourse to have a more powerful impact on the reader. However, Brée, whose essay was published in 1964, favors breadth over depth to offer a wider view of Camus' work, with a more descriptive method, rather than an actual structural analysis. Several other scholars have delved into the notion of unreliable narrator that Clamence represents. Prince in his 1982 essay *Narratology: the Form and Functioning of Narrative*, points out the reader is "led to conclude that Jean-Baptiste Clamence is quite unreliable: he's a confirmed liar; he constantly and systematically contradicts himself; and it becomes clear that most of what he says —if not everything—is not supposed to be taken at face value" (Prince

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Narratology, 13). Chatman, in his 1982 essay *Story and Discourse, Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, addresses the implied dialogue and narratee as a means to study Clamence's intentions as this interaction "provides the only real key to its central question, that is, whether or not Clamence's self-vindication is valid" (Chatman 259). Marcus also underscores Clamence's misleading discourse, in that, because of his confessions, "the reader gets the impression that Clamence's renewed examination of his life […] is a sign that he has reformed his ways and experienced deep repentance" (Marcus 317). However, there are few studies on the notion of game-like narrative in *La Chute*, or on both the story and discourse elements making up garden-path narratives per se. Abbou (2009) explored the hypertextual dimension —i.e. the dimension of interaction between the text and the reader—of *La Chute*, and he notes the ambiguity and traps embedded nature of Clamence's speech, which echoes my notion of garden-path narrative, but his study takes a more thematic angle rather than a structural one. L'Hermitte compares Clamence to Socrates, in reference to the Socratic method also called maieutics. Maieutics, in this context, is a dialogical method to assist participants and help them "give birth" to their own philosophical and intellectual arguments through the process of questioning their logic. However, L'Hermitte reaches his conclusion based on an erroneous definition of altruism, and part of my work in this chapter will be to disprove his argument since Clamence only offers a corrupted form of maieutics.

Perec's works — coming from the experimental literary group OuLiPo, "Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle" created in the 1960s, which favors constraints to generate literary creativity— are intrinsically ludic. There is not much literature on *Le Condottière* but the concept of misleading narrative has been studied in *La Vie Mode d'Emploi* or *Un Cabinet d'Amateur*. In his essay *The Poetics of Experiment*, Motte (1984) underlines the notion of play

from a structural and thematic viewpoint, calling the reader of *Vie mode d'emploi* a "puzzle solver" while Perec is the "puzzle maker" which can be extended to readers of *Le Condottière* due to its similar structural elements. However, Motte only touches upon these notions without addressing the dimension of readers' cognitive environment and how they change it. Other critics like Alison James explored Perec's works showing that the concept of chance is used as a life-guiding principle by some of the characters who chose to make their life more like a passive gambling game rather than a game in which they make decisions and strategies to win the game of life. There is much literature on the occurrences of actual games (like chess, crosswords, etc.…) as metaphors. For instance, Magné studies the value of puzzle from viewpoints of story (the content plane of the novel's narrative) and of discourse (the expression plane of the narrative). More recently, Gascoigne ("Perec et la Fiction Ludique") looked at how ludic rules influenced Perec's texts, such as the organization of the chapters based on a chess move algorithm, and how narration implies an interactive relationship between reader and text (43) similar to an actual game (44). I will use his definition of ludic text in the sense of texts whose rules of production and textual operations are non-conventional to the point of heavily impacting the reader's reception (43). Gascoigne also points out that the author is the one with more power in this narrative game (47), recalling my notion of asymmetric-information games. Gascoigne mentions the theme of the reader following the path traced by the author, following Paul Klee's introductory quotation to *La Vie Mode d'Emploi*: "L'œil suit les chemins qui lui ont été ménagés dans l'œuvre". This theme is definitely linked to my concept of garden-path narrative. However, Gascoigne sets it within the context of rules governing the novel, and if it matters that these narrative rules creating extra layers of meaning and ludic references are apparent to the reader or not, but he does not focus on the garden-path effect of tricking the user as a primary means of

constructing a narrative. Keating and Jongeneel explore the concept of misleading narration in Perec's works. Keating uses the analogy of the Gestalt movement regarding misleading perception (with the famous example of the image in which one can both see and old woman with a veil or a young woman with a hat) (Keating 221) to apply it to Perec's works' structural elements. Jongeneel studies the concept of fake and copy perceived as real in the misleading narrative of *Cabinet d'Amateurs*. These two essays will help guide my own analysis of my Perec corpus work.

Among analyses of *Incendies*, Grutman explored the interaction of myth and reality, focusing on the Oedipal archetype within the dimension of individual experience and implicit historical background – Lebanon's 1974-94 civil war. The classic critic Huizinga defined mythical imagery as a play with imagination to respond to unknown, existential questions, therefore my work will address this archetypal allusion Grutman worked on, but as a means, not an end, to analyzing and mapping the garden-path construction of *Incendies*' plot. Déry-Aubin explored the notion of recognition as defined by Aristotle. Even though this concept of recognition is key to my own research regarding garden-path narratives since these narratives imply a sudden revelation and recognition of wrong interpretation, Déry-Aubin's approach is not a structural analysis (i.e. analyzing the work according to the interrelationships between story, discourse and narrative). Moreover, her work focuses on how the effect of recognition eventually advocates for the involvement of the viewers/readers in real life's political and social matters, a notion rejected by Mouawad himself. Indeed, even though the feeling of political responsibility may emerge from his texts, it may be as a collateral result but not the goal Mouawad had in mind, as Mouawad says:

Rien d'autre que d'être du théâtre ! […] Je n'ai pas de mission. Je cherche vraiment

à faire en sorte que le […] spectateur […] regarde l'objet […] il faut [que l'objet]

soit sublime ou rien. […] C'est ainsi que la beauté de la pièce révèle ses messages,

même les plus violents. C'est un dialogue avec le public. De là, donc, peut surgir

beaucoup de choses. (qtd in Dubois np)

My work will take this factor into account and focus on garden-path construction and cognitive change resulting from ludic narrative structure.

Scholars have investigated the works from my corpus and the ludic, misleading aspect to a certain extent. However, my approach differs in that, thanks to video game studies and cognitive criticism methodology, the concepts from those fields will enlighten the dimension of literacy (reading and playing competence) across genres and will offer a novel approach to these works. Using a structural analysis methodology (Prince's notion of network between story, discourse, and narrative) linked with a cognitive narratology approach, my research will be able to thoroughly explore the garden-pathing complexity of each work while exploring its effects on the user's cognitive environment.

Key Concepts of Garden-Path Narratives

Garden-path constructions

The "garden-path" effect is a term coming from neuroscience referring to any stimulus whose construction traps the reader/hearer into committing a processing error which will require a revision and reconstruction of the stimulus to process it correctly.[2] Garden-path sentences are used in neurolinguistics or psycholinguistics to study the parsing process — i.e. the analysis of a

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[2] The neurolinguistics experiments displayed/orally played one word at a time with no punctuation to test the incremental processing of participants.

string of words, symbols, etc— of participants and to analyze how human brains handle interpretation mistakes and their recoveries, thanks to electroencephalography recording (with the means of electrodes on participants' skulls to measure their brainwaves). When realizing a syntactic interpretation error and going through reconstruction of the correct meaning, brains typically elicit a specific type of wave, called P600, proving physiologically that a process of reconstruction is occurring (Friederici et al). A famous example of garden-path construction is: "*The complex houses married and single soldiers and their families*" (Petrie et al). The navigation challenge lies in that "the complex houses" are typically incrementally processed as "houses" being a noun, "complex" as its adjective, and "married" the verb, because of the expected placement of such grammatical elements in a typical sentence, and "complex" is more frequently used as an adjective than a noun, whereas "houses" is more commonly used as a noun rather than a verb. However, the rest of the sentence does not make sense with this first cognitive environment, which indicates that the first perception of the beginning of the sentence was wrong. One has to revise it to reconstruct the actual meaning in the following way: "the complex" is the subject, "houses" the verb, "married and single soldiers and their families" the direct object of "houses". The processing trap here thus relies on the use of words that may have different grammatical categories (noun, verbs, adjective) and their frequency of use in those categories.

Another example of garden-path sentence is: "*The patient met the doctor and the nurse with the white dress showed the chart during the meeting*" (Gouvea et al). This sentence was used to test the processing preferences of participants according to their native language regarding ambiguous (squinter) sentences. This is a garden-path sentence in that some speakers would process "the doctor and the nurse" as the direct object of "met", "and" being processed as

a conjunction linking the two objects "the doctor" and "the nurse". However, the rest of the sentence does not make sense if we see "the nurse" as also the object of "met". "And" is actually a conjunction that introduces a second subject "the nurse with the white dress" and "showed" is the verb of this second subject. The processing trap here therefore relies on the ambiguity of the role of "and".

To provide one last example of garden-pathing structures, a garden-path sentence commonly used in linguistics studies is: "*the horse raced past the barn fell*" (Bever, 1970). The reader incrementally builds the meaning of the sentence, thinking at first that "raced" is the main verb because, in his cognitive environment, verbs are expected to directly follow the subject, while "fell", at the very end, is actually the verb. The appearance of "fell", until then missing, finally signals that the incrementally built meaning is wrong ("raced" is a past participle in an elliptic passive relative structure "that was raced") and requires revising our first expectation to reconstruct the meaning properly. The processing trap therefore lies in the omission of an explicit relative clause.

Through the observation of varied examples of garden-paths sentences used in neurolinguistic experiments, we can see that they all are some sort of asymmetric-information games relying on subverting the reader's expectations. The first sentence bets on the user building his interpretation on the most typical, frequent, grammatical nature of words, the second toys with the ambiguous syntactic role that "and" may have, and the third one purposefully removes information.

Additionally, because "successful text comprehension has been equated with the construction of an adequate *situation* model" (Nieuwland and Van Berkum 1098, my emphasis), i.e. the construction of a meaningful context and world knowledge surrounding this context,

neurolinguistics have explored what happens when the brain encounters a *semantic* anomaly. When the brain parses unexpected semantic elements depending on context (or none) given in sentences or short stories, related to the field of pragmatics, it produces a type of brainwave called N400, physiologically signaling an interpretive issue. In their study, Nieuwland and Van Berkum had participants listen to stories about someone engaged in a conversation either with a person (expected for a context of conversation) or with an inanimate object such as a yacht (unexpected given the context) in sentences such as "Once upon a time, a psychotherapist was consulted in her home office by a *yacht/sailor* with emotional problems" (1100). Based on their results, the neurologists were able to determine that semantically unexpected elements (here "yacht") elicited a larger N400 reaction than expected elements (here "sailor"), showing that unexpected elements in a given context produce a strong cognitive reaction in participants's brain. My own methodology will explore how narratives attempt to create these phenomena of both semantic "shock" and reconstruction of cognitive environment through garden-pathing and subversive textual strategies.

A powerful example of garden-path narrative: Old Boy (2003)

An example of garden-path construction, on a narrative level, would be the recipient of the 2004 Cannes Festival's Grand Prix, the Korean movie *Old Boy*, by Park Chan-Wook. The protagonist Oh Dae-Su, a married man and father of a little girl, gets kidnapped and is released fifteen years later, after a mysterious hypnosis session, and his family is gone. The protagonist's quest during the whole movie becomes that of his vengeance and to know why he was kidnapped, helped by a young woman he just met named Mi-Do who also becomes his lover. (Spoiler alert…) The antagonist, Lee Woo-Jin, is actually revealed fairly early in the story-line but his motives remain unknown until the end: Oh Dae-Su, who is a former classmate of Lee

Woo-jin, had revealed to a friend in high school that the antagonist and his sister had incestuous relationships, causing the sister to commit suicide. Lee Woo-jin wanted to avenge his sister's suicide by mentally torturing Oh Dae-Su. Thanks to a photo album whose first photo is that of Oh Dae-Su with his wife and young daughter, it progressively reveals Oh Dae-Su's daughter grew up and turned out to be Mi-Do, his lover. The antagonist's vengeance was not just to kidnap Oh Dae-Su for fifteen years, but rather to have both father and daughter grow old away from each other, be hypnotized so that, when they would meet again they would fall in love, leading to having a sexual relationship, unknowingly committing incest. The viewer as well as the protagonist are greatly shocked by this final revelation and have to completely reconstruct their cognitive environment and the very meaning of the kidnapping enigma, realizing their first interpretation (that of being kidnapped was not the real punishment, but rather being let out and eventually enabled to fall in love with his own daughter) was critically mistaken.

The reasons for this movie to be a powerful garden-path narrative thus rely on several elements, but the main one is the subversion of expectations regarding the relationship between Oh Dae-Su and Mi-Do, and the withholding of crucial information. Although the theme of incest between the antagonist and sister is addressed before the climax of the movie, the viewer has no concrete reason to think that Mi-Do is the hero's daughter. Of course, she is younger, but we often see the movie trope of an older man in a relationship with a younger woman. We think of the two main characters as typical fictional archetypes — i.e. universalized types of characters— that are very common in people's shared cognitive environment: he is the archetype of a mere antihero, that is to say, a flawed but sympathetic protagonist, and she is the archetype of the maiden, the innocent yet sexually desirable female character (Sloane 116). The viewer doesn't question the archetypes and roles they first appear as because these are conventional in many

fictions, and thus strengthen the viewer's typical, original cognitive environment. Also, the viewer doesn't think of questioning the nature of their relationship because most romantic relationships in movies or in real life are not incestuous. After the discovery of unexpected information necessary to resolve the enigma, the characters and viewers must integrate this new information and reconstruct their previous cognitive environment which is no longer valid, so that the protagonist can uncover the truth of his quest (discovering the antagonist's revenge goal was to have Oh Dae-Su unknowingly commit incest, and being kidnapped was just a means to be able to achieve this end), and so that the viewer can navigate the whole narrative's meaning. The characters' true archetypal roles then become clear: the protagonist appears as an Oedipal figure, and his daughter is similar to Oedipus' unsuspecting wife-mother, Jocasta. As in the garden-path sentences above, this example of garden-path narrative relies on asymmetrical-information games thanks to the antagonist and the screenwriter withholding of crucial information as well as relying on the viewer's/character's expectation of what is most typical, frequent, among romantic relationships — that is, the lovers being non-related people.

Mapping garden-path narratives

To perform a structural analysis, as defined by Prince, I need to map the relationships between the components of the narrative (discourse and story) as well as their relations to the whole narrative itself. Several important notions derive from the garden-path narrative structure and they are closely connected, as shown in Figure 1 below. To fully analyze a garden-path narrative and the reasons for its *navigation challenges*, i.e. the user being intentionally misled by the narrative, both *discourse* and *story* elements that contribute to building such construction must be addressed.
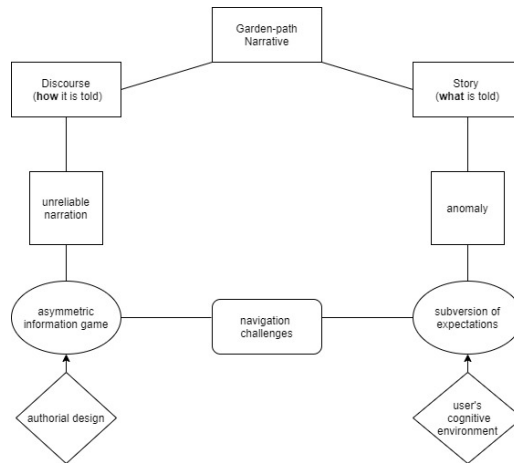
Figure 1

First, the key notions regarding discourse elements are those of *authorial design*, which is responsible for creating the *asymmetric-information game*. Such a game is created thanks to specific rhetorical and narratological devices to create an *unreliable narrator/narration*. Secondly, the key notions regarding story elements are those of the *user's cognitive environment*, that is challenged and questioned through the *subversion of expectations.* This subversion happens thanks to *anomalies* within specific codes and norms being subverted.

Discourse elements

Among key notions that are part of garden-path narrative discourse elements— that is, part of its expression plane contrary to the content, or story plane — *authorial design* is the programmed narrative elements and format designed by the author/video-game designer which are given to the user to navigate it. Beyond the actual, mere genre of the narratives (video game, novel, graphic novel, play…), elements of authorial design are the different elements that allow the author to express the story (for instance, a third-person narrator, the order of sequencing of actions followed by the narration, etc…). I have established that garden-path narratives present *navigation challenges* to the extent that they are misleading the user on purpose. At the discourse

level, navigational challenges arise due to the fact that the author designed an *asymmetric-information game*, that is to say an interaction in which one party (the author/designer) has more and better information than another party (the user) involved. Asymmetric-information games are created thanks to specific rhetorical and narratological choices that determine *how* a narrative and information are delivered. I will go into more details later but here is a summary of the main discourse elements that build asymmetric-information games. The question of *unreliable narration* —a narrative in which "a narrator whose norms and behaviors are not in accordance with the implied author's [the implied author being the implicit image of an author in the text] norms" (Booth in Prince, *A Dictionary*, 102) — is the issue from which the asymmetric-information game elements stem. The main discourse element among garden-path narratives that must be analyzed first is the type of following pattern, that is, the organization of portions of a narrative which "follows" one or several characters (Altman *A Theory* 22), by which Altman means the narrator helps us follow one or several characters, like a film camera would by focusing on characters. Among the elements of unreliable narration, we find the issue of alteration (such as postponing, twisting…) of narrative focalization. Narrative focalization is "the perspective in terms of which the narrated situations and events are presented" (Prince *A Dictionary,* 31). Focalization is crucial in order to assess the level of (un)reliability in a narrative.

Story elements

Among key notions that are part of garden-path narrative story elements — that is, part of its content plane as distinct from the discourse, expression plane — the notion of *user's cognitive environment* is of utmost importance. For a garden-path construction to mislead a user, there must be first an evaluation and assumption — from the author — of the user's cognitive environment, if the author wants to mislead and consequently cause the user's reconstruction of

it. The *cognitive environment* means the interpretive and perceptive preferences that the user has built from their experiences with previous similar situations/works/genres. In a garden-path narrative, parts of this previously-built cognitive environment have to be reconstructed because the narrative creates a *subversion of expectations,* that is, the interpretation and perception preferences that were anticipated by the user are actually wrong due to one or several *anomalies* –i.e. deviations from expected, common rules and behaviors—among story elements. While I will go into more detail later, below is a summary of the main story elements that participate in subverting expectations. As I mentioned earlier, in the example of the movie *Old Boy*, subversion of archetypes is a major device among my corpus. Sloane writes:

> We can consider archetypes to be universal categories of character that repeatedly appear in the stories we tell. As a result of their recurring appearances in folktales, in poetry, in literature, in film and television, and in video games, audiences are familiar with archetypal characters, making it easier for them to understand who a character is and what its role within a narrative should be (Sloane 114-5).

A more specific element that is related to the subversion of commonly-shared knowledge is what Barthes calls the *referential* code, which is "the code […] in terms of which a narrative or parts thereof refer to a given cultural background, to various stereotypical bodies of knowledge (physical, psychological, literary […]). An important function of the referential code is to activate models of what is vraisemblable (versimilar, lifelike)" (Prince *A Dictionary*, 82). For instance, in *Old Boy*, the non-prevalence of incest is part of the referential code that is subverted. As for archetypal roles, garden-path narratives tend to subvert the referential code to produce unexpected story twists when creating the content of an enigma to solve. When it comes to building the content of an enigma in garden-path narratives, one rhetorical device to analyze is

what Barthes calls the *hermeneutic code,* which is "the code […] according to which a narrative or part thereof can be structured as a path leading from a question or enigma to its (possible) answer or solution" (Prince *A Dictionary*, 40). Story elements of this code can be clues or obstacles to uncovering the truth within the narrative. For instance in *Old Boy*, the discovery of Mi-Do actually being Oh Dae-Su's daughter uncovers the true revenge of Lee Woo-Jin. Elements of the hermeneutic code may work in synergy with, or in opposition to, discourse elements of the asymmetric-information game. These story elements, in a way similar to Gee's notion of "situated meaning principle" mentioned earlier, are helping the user to understand the characteristics of the "possible world" the narrative creates, that is,

> a complete state of affairs; a set of individuals (e.g. humans, beings, and objects) together with their properties (including actions performed by them or situations involving them). Narratives comprise temporally ordered sequences of states of affairs that are taken to be actual/factual ("what happens") and that are linked to other state of affairs considered non actual or counterfactual and constituted by the mental activity of various characters (their beliefs, wishes, plans, hallucinations, fantasies, etc…) (Prince *A Dictionary*, 77)

The user as a component of textual strategy

Similarly to Barthes' code analysis of Balzac's *Sarazine* in *S/Z*, author and theorist Umberto Eco analyzed the communicative relationship happening between the author generating the text and the reader interpreting it.

> To organize a text, its author has to rely upon a series of codes that assign given contents to the expressions he uses. To make his text communicative, the author

has to assume that the ensemble of codes he relies upon is the same as that shared by his possible reader (hereafter Model Reader) supposedly able to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them. (Eco, *The Role* 7)

The Model Reader is the reader the author has in mind when generating the text, i.e. anticipating the reading competence, the encyclopedic knowledge, etc…that the Model Reader will resort to in order to navigate the narrative. Literary scholar Guillemette explains the concept of Model Reader further:

Although the text is a cloth woven from signs and gaps, the Model Reader, using his encyclopaedia, has the ability to fill in the gaps to the best of his knowledge, using his social baggage, his encyclopaedia and cultural conventions. The author has in fact foreseen a Model Reader who is able to cooperate in the text's actualisation in a specific manner. (Guillemette np)

Eco points out that narratives create two types of Model Readers: a naïve one, and a critical one. Indeed, "many texts aim at producing two model readers, a first level, or a naïve one, supposed to understand semantically what the text says, and a second level, or critical one, supposed to appreciate the way in which the text says so" (Eco *The Limits* 55). The naïve reader will perform a semantic interpretation, i.e. filling up the text with a given meaning (55). The critical reader will perform a critical interpretation, that is, "a metalinguistic activity — a semiotic approach — which aims at describing and explaining for which formal reasons a given text produces a given response" (55). Therefore, the author includes his two Model Readers (naïve and critical) "as a component of its structural strategy" (Eco, *The Role* 9). For instance, in the misleading narrative *Un Drame Bien Parisien*, Eco underscores that it can be read through

the lens of the two Model Readers: "both types of readers are inscribed within the textual strategy. The naïve reader will be unable to enjoy the story (he will suffer a final uneasiness), but the critical reader will succeed only by enjoying the defeat of the former" (10). Here Eco underlines the game-like quality of garden-path narratives in that the critical reader will successfully avoid the author's trap and therefore will succeed, compared to the naïve reader who, at the end, will realize his interpretation failure (hence the "uneasiness").

Navigating freedom of choice and restrictions

Eco reminds us that "you cannot use the text as you want, but only as the text wants you to use it" (10).
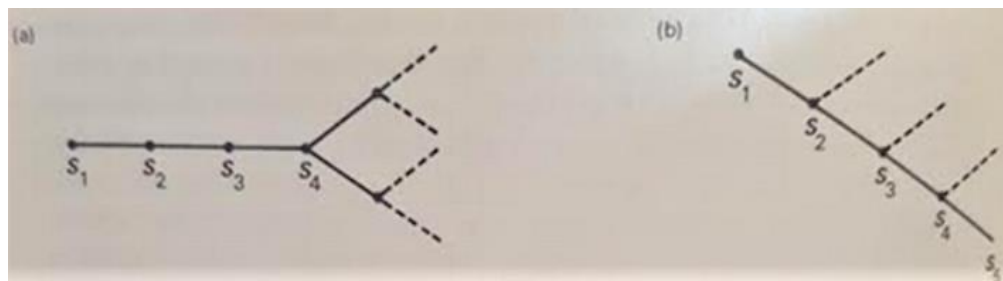
Figure 2

In the figure above, called "Figure 0.4" in Eco's essay, Eco establishes two schemes of open texts. Eco uses the terms sender/addressee which respectively means author/user in this context. Scheme a) shows that the sender leads the addressee step by step to a state of pluriprobability (many courses of events are given as equiprobable); the episode does not end or may end in various ways. Scheme b) shows that the sender offers his addressee continual occasions for forecasting, but at each further step he reasserts, so to speak, the rights of his own text, saying without ambiguity what has to be taken as 'true' in his fictional world. Typical from this point of view are detective novels. (34) The garden-path narratives (GPN) within each work, including in the video game, have a predetermined structure for a specific effect (the sudden realization that

an interpretive mistake was made, purposefully created by the author), therefore my corpus works are all scheme b).

Eco's presentation of interpretive choices reminds us of choices and decision-making skills in video games. To quote Hamlen's definition of adventure games again, these are categorized as "problem-solving within a storyline" (Hamlen 534), and problem-solving requires making decisions that will help solve a problem. In a garden-path narrative, just like in a video game, the user will have to wonder step by step what the next best interpretation is to continue successfully. Video game scholar Marti underscores that "chaque jeu possède une proportion plus ou moins grande de narrativité. Cette narrativité découlera de la combinaison d'une intrigue matérielle, *programmée*, avec l'expérience que le joueur aura de cette intrigue" (Marti np, my emphasis), pointing out that even if video games seem to offer more freedom of choice for the player than a text for a reader, games still have a high level of restriction so that the programmed narrative plot unfolds as planned, like a game tree in game theory. A game tree is a graphical visualization of a game, and "provides information about the players, payoffs, strategies, and the order of moves. The game tree consists of nodes (or vertices), which are points at which players can take actions, connected by edges, which represent the actions that may be taken at that node" (*Game Theory* np)

Though narratological tools have limitations when dealing with video games, Marti also commends them when focusing on the video games' plot:

Ces perspectives offertes par la narratologie littéraire nous semblent intéressantes au moment d'aborder l'analyse de l'intrigue dans le jeu vidéo. Posées en ces termes, elles permettent dès le départ de prendre en compte non seulement la *création* et le

fonctionnement de la structure matérielle du jeu, mais aussi *l'expérience narrative*

qu'il suppose, indissociable de l'expérience du jeu. (Marti np, my emphasis)

Marti's analysis of video games' plots echoes Eco's definition of critical interpretation: one has

to analyze the generation of a narrative, its structural components, and understand how they

affect the user's experience.

Collaboration and strategy: interpretive choices and narrative traps

Eco's critical reader is a collaborative one as the narrative causes the reader to form expectations

about the upcoming plot: "To wonder about the next step of a given story means to face a state of

disjunction of probabilities" (Eco *The Role,* 32). Facing these disjunctions of probability entails

that the reader makes interpretive choices, similar to a video game player making choices based

on the outcome probability of certain actions in a given environment. However, "not every

choice made by the reader at the various disjunctions of probability has the same value […] in a

novel such as [Ian] Flemings' […] it is easy to hazard what Bond will do as a first move and hard

to guess how he will succeed in getting out" of a trap (33).

Eco underscores the importance of expectations in that they are what makes the reader an

active element of the narrative: "To expect means to forecast: the reader *collaborates* in the

course of the fabula [story], making forecasts about the forthcoming state of affairs" (32, my

emphasis). To be able to form expectations — that is, a strong belief that something specific will

happen in the future —out of a new story, the Model Reader, just like the Model video game

Player, will "resort to intertextual frames" (32), which are "already recorded narrative situations"

(32), that the reader is able to access because of his previous experience with other texts, because

"no text is read independently of the reader's experience of other texts" (21). For example, Eco

mentions again *Un Drame Bien Parisien,* in which a couple is arguing and the sentence "la main

levée, l'oeil dur […] Raoul marcha sur Marguerite" causes the reader to expect that Raoul raised his hand to hit Marguerite. Therefore, "the reader was encouraged to activate this hypothesis by a lot of already recorded narrative situations (intertextual frames). To identify these frames the reader had to 'walk' so to speak, outside the text, in order to gather intertextual support" (32). Eco calls these "walks" outside the text "inferential walks" (32), they are "interpretative moves" that "are not mere whimsical initiatives on the part of the reader, but are elicited by discursive structures and foreseen by the whole textual strategy as indispensable components of the construction of the fabula" (32).

This dimension of textual strategy setting up the reader's specific expectations as part of the story's construction is a perfect description of garden-path narratives and their misleading nature. Without naming them as such, Eco addresses misleading texts that purposefully lure the readers down false "inferential walks" as part of the textual strategy: "There are texts aiming at giving the Model reader the solution he does not expect, challenging every overcoded intertextual frame as well as the reader's predictive indolence" (33). Eco thus acknowledges the subverting nature of garden-path narratives, in that they rely on the user's naivete and in that they subvert the user's expectations regarding how trustworthy the intertextual frames, taken for granted by the naïve reader, really are.

Naïve/Critical reader, first/second reading

Garden-path narratives aim at sending the reader down those misleading inferential walks as part of their textual strategy. Eco points out how such narratives produce the two types of readers possible: "a naïve model reader eager to fall into the traps of the narrator (to feel fear or suspect the innocent one)". Yet narratives want "to produce also a critical model reader able to enjoy, at a second reading, the brilliant narrative strategy by which the first-level, naïve reader

was designed" (Eco, *The Role* 55). A garden-path narrative, then, "at the same time provides [users] with a lot of clues that could have prevented them from falling into the textual trap. Obviously, these clues can be detected only in the course of a second reading" (55). A GPN thus functions on two levels of reading, the first reading being supposedly to create a naïve reader, hoping they will miss clues in order to fall into the textual interpretive trap, and such clues are supposedly for a reader performing a second reading, this time in a critical way. Navigating a GPN, just like reading a garden-path sentence, requires a second, more critical reading to fully "succeed" in identifying clues, to use Eco's words, and "defeat" one's inner naïve interpreter.

Eco's lexicon of "success" and "defeat" reminds us of games of course, which emphasizes the ludic nature of GPN, as the reader plays against the textual strategy but also against his own naïve reader.

Users vs. characters: cognitive environment and the learning values of narratives

An important point to keep in mind is that garden-path narratives, unlike mere sentences, may involve both users' and characters' reconstruction of cognitive environment. As we saw in *Old Boy*, the garden-path construction is created by the character of the antagonist who withholds information from the hero. The screenwriter, of course, also collaborates in not revealing the hidden information to the viewer until the denouement. The trap therefore works on the intratextual level (that of the characters) and on the extratextual level (that of the user). In the other works of my corpus, the same phenomenon occurs: garden-path constructions are created *by* characters, *for* the other characters to solve, and the author does not reveal the traps to the users until most of the story has unfolded, like the sentences I presented, whose ending indicated a wrong first interpretation. An example of asymmetry between what characters and users know

can be illustrated by the medieval novel *The Quest of the Holy Grail*: the narrator announces

from the outset that Gauvain's actions will doom him to fail his quest. Here the user has more

information than the character. In my corpus, most instances rely on both the user and characters

being equally misled, though an actively investigating user might notice clues to anticipate, if not

the actual revelation, at least that the narrative will be a garden-path narrative, and therefore

might be more cautious in his or her navigation of the narrative.

However, as I explained earlier under the concept of authorial design, the author is the

one who ultimately creates the garden-path construction. The author decides how many clues can

be given and how clearly they are given. Ultimately, in a narrative being created for users to

navigate, what matters is that the sudden revelation produces an effect on the user rather than just

on the characters. This effect is what Aristotle called "catharsis", or the purgation of certain

emotions for the user thanks to the experience of fiction (Aristotle part VI). The reconstruction of

the characters' cognitive environment becomes secondary because characters are the vehicles, or

a means, to unfold actions, reveal secrets, and solve enigmas. Of course, characters do matter but

what is even more important, in order to even have a narrative and not a mere portraiture, is that

actions happen *to* them or *through* them. As Altman puts it: people or objects "do not produce a

narrative until they are set in motion by a series of actions" (Altman *A Theory* 11) in accordance

with the traditional Aristotelian view: "Now character [i.e. moral character] determines men's

qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore,

is not with a view to the representation of [moral] character: character comes in as subsidiary to

the actions" (Aristotle part VI).

My dissertation will address, to a certain extent, the characters' reconstruction of

meaning, since the characters' experience is part of the narrative, and the character's own

reconstruction of meaning may be also a means to help the user navigate their own narrative's cognitive environment and reconstruct it. Nevertheless, overall, I will focus more heavily on the user's navigation and the extratextual level, since I adopt a cognitive narratological approach that examines the question of what impact narratives have on a user's cognitive environment. This impact is even more blatant with garden-path narratives, which are built specifically to produce a strong effect on users and play with their expectations, with uncertainty, as in a game. Also, the reason for focusing more heavily on user's navigation is to develop a novel approach to navigating narratives that can be used as a pedagogical reading method, i.e. a method centered on the users' active navigation strategy and based on universal human drives to understand their cognitive environment. Fictional narrative is indeed possible because of human nature. As Aristotle points out, fiction

> seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. […] Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity: such as the forms of the most ignoble animals and of dead bodies. The cause of this again is, that to learn gives the liveliest pleasure, not only to philosophers but to men in general; whose capacity, however, of learning is more limited. Thus, the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is, that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, 'Ah, that is he.' (part IV)

Aristotle underscores the two human instincts for narrative: "Imitation, then, is one instinct of our nature. Next, there is the instinct for 'harmony' and rhythm" (part IV), harmony here referring to a pleasing and consistent whole. A narrative is designed to fulfill both the author's and user's instincts for imitation and harmony. Because the narrative displays a fictional situation — that is, displaced from the actual reality — the user can contemplate the narrative from a safe place, removed from actual, immediate danger, and therefore can learn from it. While Aristotle theorized for the real world the natural tendency for humans to form fictional narratives such as epics, centuries before our era, neuropsychology and sociology confirm the natural and social dimension of narratives.

A Neuropsychological and Sociological Overview of Garden-Path Narratives' Implications.

In my dissertation, I look at the concept of narratives through the metaphor of navigational paths. This approach is not only adopted by literary theorists such as Northrop Frye saying that following a narrative is like "*taking a journey*" (Frye 89, my emphasis), but also in psychology, like clinical psychologist Jordan Peterson who describes the notion of story as "a map of meaning" (Peterson 66). Far from being a science describing the world as how things are, "the techniques of narrative, however – myth, literature, and drama – portray the world as a forum for action" (13). The human brain has evolved in such a way as to find patterns in its environment and to create order and harmony out of it to navigate the world more successfully. Peterson sums up the natural cognitive abilities of humans and their drive to create meaningful "narratives" and their expectations of being able to map a world that was unknown and unexplored, and make it familiar and therefore more likely to be successfully navigated:

The pattern-recognition and spatial capacities of the right hemisphere appear to allow it to derive from repeated observations of behavior images of action patterns that the verbal left can arrange, with increasing logic and detail, into stories. *A story is a map of meaning*, a "strategy" for emotional regulation and behavioral output – a description of how to act in a circumstance, to ensure that the circumstance retains its positive motivational salience (or at least has its negative qualities reduced to the greatest possible degree). (66, my emphasis)

Because of both hemispheres' specializations, humans seek out mental patterns in order to generate a meaning that can be generalized and used for later situations. The neuropsychological approach confirms Aristotle's view on human instincts for imitation and harmony. The world through narratives is seen as a "forum for action [which] is a place of value, a place where all things have meaning. This meaning, which is shaped as a consequence of social interaction, is implication for action, or – at a higher level of analysis – implication for the configuration of the interpretive schema that produces or guides action" (15). A narrative, as a "forum for action" thus implies a way of acting in given situations. Humans have evolved to create stable cognitive environments so as to navigate the world as safely as possible; the phenomenon of narratives is a way to do so. Indeed, narratives "guide our ability to understand the particular, bounded motivational significance of the present, experienced in relation to some identifiable desired future, and allow us to construct and interpret appropriate patterns of action, from within the confines of that schema" (Peterson, 24). Since my corpus consists of literary works and video games that have strong aesthetic elements, my focus excludes narratives as guides for actions (like religious or political narratives, for instance) mentioned by Peterson, but

I will nonetheless address the potential impact of GPN on users' life experience —such as questioning their own decision-making and perception process.

Narratives as interpretation games

Narratives allow us to relate to the world and share this worldview with others:

"Narratives of the known" – patriotic rituals, stories of ancestral heroes, myths and symbols of cultural or racial identity – describe established territory, weaving for us a web of meaning that, shared with others, eliminates the necessity of dispute over meaning. *All those who know the rules, and accept them, can play the game –* without fighting over the rules of the game. This makes for peace, stability, and potential prosperity – a good game. (Peterson 25, my emphasis)

Narratives are thus interpretation games that create meaning based on rules known and accepted by the ones participating in this game, whether it be a game of patriotic values, religious beliefs, or cultural identity. The fascination for play lies in the way play enables humans to potentially live and create a limited totality and harmony of perfection and order. Sociologist Roger Caillois considers that play – whether it be in young children playing as fighting enemies, in simulations of military strategies, in religious ritual organized according to symbolical objectives and rules, or in chess – is an activity that helps regulate instincts and institutionalize them in order to serve and stabilize society (Erhmann 38). Play is therefore integral to society's life. Historian Johan Huizinga actually wants to add Homo Ludens (Human being as the player) to the other anthropological nominations of Homo Faber (Human being as the maker) and Homo Sapiens (Human being as the thinker) because play is so paramount to human experience and evolution (Huizinga 17). Narratives are therefore games of interpretation offering navigational guidance.

The value and benefits of play in cognitive development have been established.

Psychiatrist and clinical researcher Stuart Brown notes: "Play creates new neural connections and tests them. It creates an arena for social interaction and learning. It creates low-risk format for finding and developing innate skills and talents […] The great benefits of play, as I've said, are the ability to become smarter, to learn more about the world than genes alone could ever teach, to adapt to a changing world." (Brown 49). Brown emphasizes the benefits of play in that it enables the brain to make new neural connections in low-risk environments, i.e. in a non-life-threatening way, similar to narratives that map unexplored territory into explored, familiar grounds, and eventually learn more about the world and how to act in it. This echoes Peterson's definition of narratives as games that enlighten our comprehension of the world and, thanks to their communicative nature, allow us to share this comprehension to others, in a way "genes alone" cannot, to use Brown's words. These benefits of playing find an excellent terrain of experimentation in literary works and video games.

Garden-path narratives, literature, and games are of similar construction. They rely on agreed-upon rules recognized and, in principle, obeyed by players who actively navigate narratives/games according to the known rules; narratives/games carry meaning within a specific territory (space and time). Garden-path narratives and games also have similar consequences: as Brown said, games enable players to learn and adapt to a changing environment in a low-risk format. Since garden-path narratives require the users to adapt to the misleading narrative, they enable them to learn about possibilities of unexpected elements in supposedly familiar context and, because the trap is within a fictional environment, they offer a low-risk opportunity to adapt to an unexpected situation.

Video games, literature, and garden-path narrative: active navigational strategies

The value of game in literacy — that is, in the ability to read but also to develop competence and knowledge — is notably studied in video game scholarship. Literacy scholar James Gee notes the benefits of video games in that they "require the player to learn and think in ways at which [one] was not then adept" (Gee, 2). A game built so that the player desires to learn its rules, despite difficulty or effort, will function for a diverse population, and will help understand its mechanisms even if "different people "read" the world differently just as they read different types of texts differently" (6). That is why Gee considers video games as superior to contemporary school teaching methods that tend to over-simplify lessons to avoid demotivating their students, which has the disadvantage of neglecting sophisticated ways of thinking: "Of course designers could make the games shorter and simpler. That's often what schools do with their curriculums. But gamers won't accept short or easy games. So game designers keep making long and challenging games and still manage to get them learned. How?" (Gee, 3). My approach analyzes garden-path narratives, a type of narrative that reconciles the motivation of challenging oneself through playing and "serious" literature reading, just as Roland Barthes' notion of "writerly texts" mentioned earlier — which are texts that are to be navigated by readers as active "players".

One artistic movement, Oulipo, "Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle", founded in 1960 claimed the usefulness of constraints and rules to foster creativity. For one of its members, French author Raymond Queneau, "reading must be a conscious, a voluntary act of decoding" (Motte *Playtexts,* 21). Literary critic Wimsatt underscores that "language as an expressive apparatus of the human spirit, a partly conventional system of symbols, is […] parallel to the rules or norms of chess. An act of knowing or saying in language is parallel to a move in chess. The rules of chess are its language" (Wimsatt, 79). Through the rules of the game —whether it

be the game of chess or the ludic, garden-path narrative— a relationship, a conversation, emerges between the user and the ludic work.

Another Oulipo scholar, Dangy-Scaillerez, analyzes the particular elements of enigmas and mystery in Perec's works, noting that the functions given to characters determine a crucial part of the narrative's trap and plot, more specifically calling it the "système de personnages principaux, définis par la fonction qu'ils incarnent : la victime, le coupable, l'enquêteur, et, […] le suspect, fonction mouvante et ambivalente. Ces personnages sont à la fois indispensables et schématiques, leur présence conditionne l'intrigue et lui assigne ses limites" (Dangy-Scaillerez 75).

In my corpus, we will see that indeed these garden-path narratives with their asymmetric-information games, notably regarding the true function of certain characters, are set up as competition between the user and a misleading narrative.

Cognitive narratology and garden-pathing: take it from Aristotle

Cognitive-narratology scholar Manfred Jahn describes the implications of garden-path narratives for the field of narratology: "What makes the garden-path effect particularly relevant within the framework of narratological analysis is that 'garden-pathing' can be shown to occur in many types of narratives […] where [it is] in fact instrumental in creating a central effect" (Jahn, 70). This echoes Aristotle's *Poetics* advocating the principle of combining revelation, recognition (*anagnorisis*) with a reversal of a situation (*peripeteia*): "The best form of recognition is coincident with a reversal of the situation, as in the Oedipus" (Aristotle, part XI). The structure of the plot is key to set up those two elements: "A complex action is one in which the change is accompanied by such *reversal*, or by *recognition*, or by both. These last should arise from the *internal structure* of the plot" (part X, my emphasis). For instance, in *Oedipus*

Rex, the structure of the narrative is centered around the revelation that the prophecy given to Oedipus at the beginning of the play turned out correct. Oedipus did, indeed, unknowingly marry his mother and killed his father, and now that the truth is revealed, Oedipus experiences a dramatic reversal of situation regarding his fate.

Aristotle established that the most competent revelation — with a stronger effect on the audience's cognitive environment — is a recognition which occurs because of a reversal of situation, that is a combination requiring the revision and reconstruction of one's cognitive environment, suddenly going from ignorance to knowledge. These Aristotelian principles of *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* are part of the defining principles of the garden-path narratives I am exploring. The Aristotelian idea of structuring a story with these principles is related to the neuropsychology of narrative structures which sees the world as a "forum for actions", to use Peterson's concept. Aristotle asserts that "most important of all is the structure of the incidents. For tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and *life consists in action*, and its end is a mode of action" (Aristotle, part VI).

Methodology

The analysis of garden-path narratives necessitates addressing many concepts, as we saw: the authorial design — i.e. the textual strategy designed by the author—, the user's expectations based on the text information but also based on extratextual knowledge (thus going beyond a case of simple unreliable narration), and the elements of story and discourse of the narrative that create a garden-path effect. The study of garden-path narratives must take into account all those individual elements in order to make sense of them in a coherent, interconnected, system. GPN analysis is therefore a rich field for exploring these overarching features and, additionally, offers an opportunity to discuss, like Baroni in his essay on narrative tension, the notion of narrative

drive: The unexpected, suddenly revealed anomaly in a garden-path narrative explains both the subverted story elements *and* the rhetorical, discursive devices used to communicate the said story elements. Therefore, this anomaly is at the core of the narrative constructions, explaining both the content plane and the expression plane of a given narrative.

Second, the most important founding element for a narrative is the notion of *narrative drive*, the "reading practice required for narrative material and narrational activity to surface in the interpretive process " (Altman *A Theory* 11), because a narrative *must* drive users to perceive it as such to even be navigated in the first place, as "narrative exists wherever narrative drive leads people to perceive the presence of narrative material and narrational activity" (316). Without the narrative drive, there is no narrative to be perceived and therefore no narrative to be navigated by users. Humans, as Aristotle and Peterson assert previously, are naturally driven to actively create meaning out of the unfamiliar and turn it into a meaningful narrative. Garden-path narratives — because of their subversive, asymmetric-information elements — therefore produce a strong source for this needed narrative drive, making users actively engaged, as if playing a game against the construction itself. Interestingly, the user only becomes aware that they are in an asymmetric-information game when they realize they made a mistake due to misleading authorial design and subverted expectations.

Because of the dual dimension (authorial design/user navigation) as the cornerstone of any narrative construction, exploring garden-path narratives enables us to make a deep analysis taking into account narrative devices but also their cognitive implications on the users, acknowledging both the importance of the author's control and of the user's response to it. Thus, as I explained in the section on my research's key notions earlier, the concept of garden-path narrative allows one to analyze the work as a whole, with regards to both authorial practice,

user's navigational process, and drive. That is why I stated, fairly controversially I admit, that nothing in narratology makes sense except in the light of garden-path narratives.

Analytical tools: "Problem-solving within a storyline"

A definition that suits garden-path narratives well in terms of how the narrative structure supports the unexpected elements in the story comes from video game studies. Karla R. Hamlen, professor of educational research, explored game genres and the strategies used accordingly by players. Adventure games, such as the ones from my corpus, involve a strategy of "problem-solving within a storyline" (Hamlen 534). Similarly, garden-path constructions require problem-solving within their own context. This notion of "problem-solving within a storyline" may also be applied to texts that readers navigate actively. I now turn to the main analytical tools that will be used in my analysis of narrative problem-solving across genres.

Analyzing game-like narratives

My first case study is the video game *Heavy Rain*, which demonstrates that one can approach all narratives through ludic concepts and the prism of active navigation by the user across narratives. A game is inherently an *interactive narrative*, which is defined as "a time-based representation of character and action in which a reader can affect, choose, or change the plot" (Meadows 62). For instance, the book series *You Choose your own Adventure* offers examples of interactive narratives in that readers are invited to go to different pages depending on the decision they make when they are asked to choose. Meadows notes the similarities and differences between interactive narrative and traditional narrative:

> Interactive narrative is a form of reading that contains representations of a character
> and or opinion. This representation of character is generally something that follows
> a schedule of development that takes place over a period of time that can be

determined either by the reader or author. In this way, interactive narrative is very
similar to traditional forms. (62)

However,

Because interactive narrative contains a character (generated by the author) and a
reader, it is an intersection of multiple perspectives. These perspectives might be
the author and the reader, simultaneous readers, or simultaneous authors. In this
way, interactive narrative differs greatly from traditional narrative.

Meadows wonders what makes interactive narratives so "addictive" compared to other artistic

forms and concludes it is due to the "return on investment of attention that the person at the end

of the line feels, and that investment is entirely based on the interaction of the material they're

engaged with, what the narrative is, and how it appeals to their individual interests" (68). Like

Altman and other scholars before him, Meadows underscores the need for a drive to solve and

actively navigate a narrative. His perspective on interactive narrative in video games also applies

to any garden-path narrative, because,

as with mystery novels, the reader of an interactive narrative takes on a role that is
more closely aligned with that of an investigator, or perhaps someone engaged in a
conversation. In many computer games, the reader takes on a role of debugging, as
it were, the underlying structure of the story. The reader becomes the investigator
[…] making efforts, meanwhile, to understand the perspective of the author. It's a
process of reverse engineering. (68)

The term of "reverse engineering" — that is, the act of analyzing something in detail to discover

the concepts involved in its conception — corroborates Hamlen's approach of "problem-solving

within a story-line" needed to successfully navigate garden-pathing narratives. In the following sections, I will elaborate on the main narratological concepts and devices which will highlight my research.

Altman's following pattern and focalization

Because garden-path narratives are asymmetric-information games, the order of how sequences unfold and how the discourse organizes the narrative is of utmost importance. Rick Altman uses the term "following" units for a "series of segments each made up of that portion of the text where a character (or group of characters) is followed continuously" by the narration (22). Because garden-path narratives require a specific structure whose meaning is at first hidden, and is built upon an asymmetrical information trap, and therefore whose unfolding order is key, Altman's following approach is the most relevant narratological approach to map the works' constructions. "Revealing narrational activity while organizing the narrative material, the process of following contributes heavily to narrative rhetoric and meaning" (Altman *A Theory* 21). His approach is novel in that it focuses on which characters are followed by the narration, creating following units for each character followed, and how a narrative actually transitions from one unit to another, such transitions being called "modulations".

Altman's novel approach is a relevant analytical tool here because the "process of following simultaneously activates both character and narrator" (16) which allows our analysis to cover both plot and narrative structural elements:

With the introduction of following, concentrating attention on a particular character, we paradoxically also sense the existence of a narrational instance – someone, some thing, some system deciding who should be followed. **The process of following thus simultaneously highlights character and narrator, diegesis [story] and**

narration [discourse]. It is precisely this simultaneous emphasis on two different levels [internal and external to the story] that constitutes narrative. Without following, we have only an unvectored chaos, capable of producing narrative but not yet doing so; with following, we not only concentrate our attention on a character and the character's actions, thus satisfying the first set of conditions for the existence of narrative, but we also implicitly reveal the existence of a second narrational level [that of the external author's design]. (Altman *A Theory* 16, my emphasis)

Altman determines that there are three major following patterns based on focalization, that is "the perspective in terms of which the narrated situations and events are presented" (Prince *A Dctionary*, 31): single-focus, dual-focus, and multiple-focus pattern, which can be used across genres like visual art and not just textual material. The single-focus following pattern entails that the narration only follows one perspective (one character or one group). For instance, *La Chute* has a single focus pattern, that is the narration comes from a first-person perspective all along, though the interlocutor is present at all times, whose speech is indirectly conveyed through Clamence's direct discourse. The dual-focus pattern entails that the narration follows two opposing perspectives (two distinct individuals or two groups). *La Chanson de Roland*, following the group of Charlemagne on one side, and the enemy group of the Saracens on the other, has a dual-focus pattern. The multiple-focus pattern entails that the narration follows more than two perspectives. *Heavy Rain*, *Le Condottière*, and *Incendies*, have a multiple-focus pattern. I will use the term *focus* and *focalization* interchangeably.

Barthes' codes

As stated earlier in this introduction, Roland Barthes made the case for modern texts to be writerly texts, that is, like games to play, the reader thus becoming an active player to navigate a narrative. For Barthes, reading is to be actively engaged, finding the diverse systems of meanings:

> ma tâche est de mouvoir, de translater des systèmes dont le prospect ne s'arrête ni au texte ni à « moi » : opératoirement, les sens que je trouve sont avérés, non par « moi » ou d'autres, mais par leur marque *systématique* : il n'y a pas d'autre *preuve* d'une lecture que la qualité et l'endurance de sa systématique, autrement dit : que son fonctionnement. Lire, c'est trouver des sens, et trouver des sens, c'est les nommer. (Barthes 17)

Barthes wants the active reader to become a literary investigator, solving the puzzles given by a text. Lucien Dällenbach explores the diverse nature of narratives, using the metaphor of the mosaic for when the user has to piece together information to create a coherent whole:

> Non seulement [l'analogie de la mosaïque] ménage un écart maximal entre l'unité du tout et la pluralité discontinue du matériau de base ; elle suppose en outre un dessein global avec lequel les accommodements sont possibles : loin d'assigner d'avance et de manière dirigiste une seule et unique place à chacune des pièces, la figure finale tolère en effet une relative liberté de mouvement, de placement et de déplacement des morceaux, ce qui veut dire que sur le fond solide et immuable de la mosaïque, les substitutions restent permises, d'où un espace de jeu appréciable. (Dällenbach 499-500)

Dällenbach distinguishes mosaic and jigsaw puzzles, in that the mosaic is to be invented while the puzzle is to be reconstituted. Analyzing a GPN will therefore be like reconstituting a puzzle. To fully explore this jigsaw puzzle, Barthes developed in his essay *S/Z* an analytical approach thanks to five codes he coined: **hermeneutic**, **proaeretic**, **referential**, **symbolic**, and **semic** codes.

The **hermeneutic** code relates to elements of the story building enigmas and mysteries. It refers to all the elements of incomplete information, of mystery left unsolved. Barthes defines the hermeneutic code's units as follows : "unités qui ont pour fonction d'articuler, de diverses manières, une question, sa réponse et les accidents variés qui peuvent ou préparer à la question ou retarder la réponse ; ou encore : de formuler une énigme et d'amener son déchiffrement" (Bartes 24). The process of postponing the answer echoes the garden-path narrative key component of trap requiring reconstruction of the final meaning.

The **proaeretic** code refers to elements of actions happening as they form chronological sequences that move the plot forward, i.e. elements of actions that make the reader anticipate potential future actions. Barthes defines the proaeretic code's units as behaviors listed into sequences labeled from the specific behaviors happening: the "comportements s'organisent en séquences diverses, que l'inventaire doit seulement jalonner" (for example: "promenade, assassinat)" (26). This code is also relevant to garden-path narrative analysis since the specific order of sequences of action is part of the authorial design to create a misleading structure.

The **referential** code relates to elements of everyday life knowledge about the world that does not require any expertise and thus exists outside the text. It can also be referred to as "doxa" or "endoxa", defined by Aristotle as opinions about what is probable and that are shared by the great majority, what the public believes is possible (Herschberg Pierrot 428). These elements

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come from "types de savoirs mentionnés" (Barthes 27). This code is the most important code regarding my analysis of garden-path narratives, because the elements of referential codes may be subverted as part of the story elements to create another layer of misleading narration.

The **semic** code is "the code, or "voice" in terms of which a narrative or part thereof allows for the construction of characters (and settings)" (Prince *A Dictionary*, 87). The semic units ("semes") govern elements that bring layers of meaning that add connotations in a description. To take Prince's example, "given a male character who has long eyelashes and a soft voice […], the length of the eyelashes, the softness of the voice […] can be said to function as semes of femininity" (Prince 87).

The **symbolic** code focuses on elements building wider, non-literal systems of meaning in a text, using antitheses and other figures of speech/tropes as textual symbols. It is similar to the semic code but the symbolic code's elements govern the text on a broader scale, forming a system of opposing semantic elements on a deeper level.

Due to the nature of garden-path narratives — that is to say, the elements of asymmetric-information and subverted expectations — I will mostly focus on the hermeneutic, and referential codes, but I may allude to the last three codes, the proaeretic, semic and symbolic codes, whenever relevant. Whereas Barthes asserts that his five-code methodology is designed to reveal the plurality and richness of the text, and not to establish the fixed, core textual structure and strategy (Barthes 21), my research goal is to actually map the elements of garden-path narratives to uncover the similarities and differences in the diverse narrative strategies in my corpus of works. Since the narratives from my corpus are built around the same core concept of garden-pathing, they must have certain strategies and elements in common. Therefore, my work is to analyze those very diverse narratives under the same notions, using the same analytical

tools. Barthes' codes, because of their flexibility, are part of the tool kit that will allow me to

map the strategies of the garden-path narratives' story elements in all their diversity across their

different genres.

Gee's and Genette's notions about information regulations

Gee's notion of "**situated learning**" within a video game will be crucial in my analysis

of all my corpus. The concept of situated learning refers to how players learn to play a game

while playing it, i.e. learning in immersion and not resorting to any outside source of information

but the actual game itself. Gee enhances the importance of situated learning due to the nature of

the learning process for humans: indeed, humans are "poor at learning from lots of overt

information given to them outside the sorts of contexts in which this information can be used"

(Gee 113). The notion of situated learning thus questions the balance between overt giving of

information vs. immersion in learning how to play the game.

A further concept that I will use to analyze the reliability of the narrator and well as to

assess the extent of asymmetric-information game is Genette's "**paralipsis**" which is "omission

de telle action ou pensée importante du héros focal, que ni le héros ni le narrateur ne peuvent

ignorer, mais que le narrateur choisit de dissimuler au lecteur" (Genette 211). Like Barthes's

hermeneutic enigma, this is a key term for my research to analyze the asymmetrical information

games that are garden-path narratives.

Steps to analyzing

The writer/game designer (author) is creating a narrative for the reader/gamer (user) who

will be fooled in the first reading of a garden-path narrative (GPN), but who in a second moment

wants to understand how that could have happened, hoping to avoid similar garden-path

narrative failures in the reading/playing of different games in future readings/games, or even in

life in general.

Since GPN are set up as **interpretive games** by the author against the user, my goal is to identify the **competences** needed for the user of GPN to overcome **interpretive failures** planned by the author's textual strategy. My aim is to provide analytical tools to "win" the interpretive game by being a critical reader instead of a naive one, defeating the author's own presuppositions about their Model Reader, developing one's interpretation and perception skills. Of course, at the first reading, the reader doesn't know that they are in a GPN, so it is unlikely — and sometimes even impossible – to succeed at even presupposing an interpretive trap will happen. Just as in many **video games**, it is common, if not **necessary, for the player to fail a sequence in order to understand how to play and win it.** But in order not to be a naïve reader, it is necessary for the user to at least consider that they might be in a GPN, and observe critically as much as possible, just as players may extensively investigate the environment of the game before making any major decision.

My methodology to analyze my corpus works is two-fold:

1) I will identify what a critical user can focus on in their first reading to form likely expectations before knowing the narrative is a GPN: its title, its genre (novel, play, etc…), the recurring lexemes/sememes, the intertextual frames, and finally identifying the trap once it occurs.

2) For second reading stage, I will explore the active cognitive competences needed based on Eco's notions (and to use/add to Gee's work on video games' cognitive benefits) to perform a critical interpretation, i.e. "a metalinguistic activity – a semiotic approach— which aims at describing and explaining for which formal reasons a given text produces a given responses" (Eco, *The Limits* 55).

A crucial competence here is the "system **of long-distance** hypotheses hazarded by the reader about the final state of the fabula" (Eco, *The Role* 32, my emphasis). A critical user needs to keep track of the different hypotheses elicited that might evolve or be confirmed throughout the navigation of the GPN. In addition to a system of long-distance interpretation, what is necessary when navigating a GPN are the **incremental predictions** — Eco calls these "intermediate extensional operations" (31, my emphasis) — made continuously, step by step, throughout the navigation of the GPN. This necessary competence of updating one's interpretation according to the information given is key for a user to adapt and have a chance to succeed in critical reading but also in any other interpretive situations.

My analytical steps for the second reading are therefore the following, based on the aforementioned competences: GPN are asymmetric-information games, i.e. the narrator is unreliable. I will first identify which information was twisted or postponed and by which rhetorical means it was twisted or postponed. Then I will identify the **inferential walks** elicited by textual strategy that caused interpretive failures Finally, I will identify the **intertextual frames** and challenge them as potentially misleading. For instance, in the example of the movie *Old Boy*, the intertextual frame of the character's archetypes (young, innocent woman in love with older hero) is misleading, as it turns out to be instead a daughter in love with her father (the intertextual frame thus turns out to be an archetype from the Oedipal myth).

I hope to accomplish an interdisciplinary mapping of the specific garden-path narratives' performances across genres, by studying on the one hand discourse and story elements that contribute to navigation issues and, on the other hand, the potential need of reconstructing one's cognitive environment. My original analysis will bring to light the system of interrelationships between story, discourse, and narrative, so as to uncover the narrative structure of works that are

either part of the literary canon or newer ones. My two-step approach is specifically designed to narrow down the core elements of garden-path narratives regardless of format and genre of the works. Consequently, because of the study of both authorial design's and user's cognitive environment elements, my research offers a comprehensive approach to how garden-path narratives are created and how they may impact their users.

Chapter 2: *Heavy Rain*, by Quantic Dream, 2010

Introduction

Casual gaming, serious narratives

In this chapter I am going to apply my methodology to the video game *Heavy Rain* created by French studio Quantic Dream. *Heavy Rain* is a game in which the player controls four characters —who are a private detective investigating the kidnapping by a serial killer; the father of one of the kidnapped children; a journalist covering the serial killer mystery; and an FBI agent investigating the serial killer murders. The studio Quantic Dream has had a history of producing games that remind players of movies because of the many cut-scenes (i.e. scenes similar to movie sequences during which the player has no ability to play but just watch the scene as it unfolds). They also have produced games with mostly casual gameplay.

Casual gameplay is defined by Jasper Juul, in his essay *Casual Revolution* about the rise in popularity and market of casual games, with the following design elements:

- Fiction [with typically positive valence].

- Usability [ease of learning how to play the game].

- Interruptability [the player can interrupt the game with no or very little   cost regarding his progress].

- Level of difficulty [fair level of increasing difficulty for which players will keep playing without being demotivated or discouraged].

- Juiciness [content, graphic, positive feedback] of game. (Juul 30)

Heavy Rain has fair usability, as it uses simple game mechanics such as quick-time events (QTE), i.e. the screen explicitly prompts the player to press a given button quickly, or a

combination of buttons, to perform actions. The game also has high interruptability: there is very low cost for failing as players can restart a passage near where they failed if they need to. There is also very low cost for stopping playing the games at any time because of the system of automatic saving built into the game itself, therefore the player does not lose much of his progress if he or she interrupts and turns off the game.

Overview of interactive narratives

Due to its casualness, and the extensive use of cut scenes reminiscent of film making, *Heavy Rain* is often labeled as interactive narrative within the genre of adventure games (Clark np). *Heavy Rain* revolutionized the genre of adventure games' interactive narrative thanks to the complex narrative structure that player's choices could modify leading to different endings. Video game scholar Marie-Laure Ryan comments on the richness of the gaming experience brought by such narrative-heavy games in her 2015 book *Narrative as Virtual Reality 2*. She mentions *Heavy Rain* as a paragon of interactive narrative since the game "has been lauded for the complexity of its underlying narrative" but nevertheless "requires extensive problem-solving and control-manipulating skills that put it beyond the reach of users who just want a good story with easy interactions" (Ryan *Narrative,* 252). She also uses *Heavy Rain* to discuss the mechanics of games offering different endings:

> The game *Heavy Rain*, for instance, has multiple endings, all determined by the
> player's actions, but the causality of the relation is not a matter of narrative logic
> accessible through common sense reasoning (such as the player realizing that he
> cannot kill the dragon because he missed the chance to acquire proper weapons)
> but the product of fortuitous coincidence determined by multiple variables: if

condition a, b, and c obtain, the code implements ending 1; if a, b, and d obtain,

the code implements 2; and so on. (172-173)

The concept of interactive narrative is not a novel one, as interactive texts (such as *Composition No1* by Marc Saporta in 1962 or *Cent Mille Milliards de Poèmes* by Raymond Queneau in 1962) had existed long before video games; and within the history of video games, the first game to ever be considered as an interactive narrative was *Dragon's Lair*, released in 1983 (Sloan xvi). However, because of the technological constraints of the time, *Dragon's Lair* was limited "in terms of the capacity for interaction but showcased graphics similar to those seen in animated films. Subsequent graphical adventure games demonstrated how interactive narrative and animated characters could be combined to create games that would find mass appeal" (Sloan xvii). Although the genre declined in the mid-1990s, Quantic Dream revived the genre in the late 2000s thanks to their cutting-edge technology and film techniques applied to video game design, such as motion capture to design characters based on real actors' facial expressions and body movements, for a more life-like visual representation and immersive graphics.

The concept of interactive narrative when it comes to video games echoes, of course, the early debate in game studies between narratologists and ludologists mentioned in the introduction. Scholar Robin Sloan notes:

Although contemporary game criticism encompasses the study of both narrative

and play, these early critical discussions about the video game form highlighted

the complexity in reconciling storytelling and interaction. Traditional narratives

are explicitly authored (or at least controlled by a narrator) with a fixed order of

events and a carefully constructed development of characters. (Sloan 110)

Scholar Marc Meadows thoroughly explicates the notion of interactive narrative in his essay *Pause and Effect, the Art of Interactive Narrative*:

> An interactive narrative is a **time-based representation** of character and action in which a **reader** can **affect**, **choose**, or **change the plot.** […]
>
> Interactive Narrative is a form of reading that contains representations of a character and or opinion. This representation of character is generally something that follows a **schedule of development that takes place over a period of time** that can be determined either by the reader or author. In this way, interactive narrative is **very similar to traditional forms**.
>
> Because interactive narrative contains a character (generated by the author) and a reader, **it is an intersection of multiple perspectives**. These perspectives might be the author and the reader, simultaneous readers, or **simultaneous authors**. In this way, interactive narrative **differs greatly from traditional narrative**. (Meadows 62)

Meadows uses the term "reader" because he focuses on text-based productions, However, here I will extend it to the notion of "player", that is to say a person navigating a game —or "user", the term I use to refer to persons navigating garden-path narratives in general — since I am analyzing an actual video game labelled as interactive narrative.

Meadows establishes the four steps for what makes a narrative interactive: observation, exploration, modification, and reciprocal change:

- **Observation**: the reader makes an assessment.
- **Exploration**: the reader does something [explores the interactive narrative].

- **Modification**: the reader changes the system […] this is the leap from unintentional discovery to conscious change [reader performs output to act upon the original narrative].

- **Reciprocal Change**: the system tries to change the reader [by having the reader perform an action in reaction to an input from the narrative system]. (44)

As Meadows said earlier, traditional (i.e. non-interactive) narratives can be similar to interactive narratives: in both cases, the reader will "observe" the narratives in making assessments and expectations about it, and he will "explore" the narratives either by reading and turning physical paper pages, or scrolling through a digital text — or, in the case of video games, have his avatar/the character move through the time and space of the video game. The last two steps, however, set the main differences between interactive and traditional narratives: in interactive narratives, the reader can directly "modify" the system by providing their own input action upon the narrative, which in turn will prompt the narrative system to provide output to the reader, which will prompt the reader to continue the step of "reciprocal change".

I will explore this latter point in more details in the later chapters of my dissertation, but overall, it can be easily assessed that these reciprocal changes do not occur in traditional narratives regarding the system being directly modified by the reader. Nevertheless, the works from my corpus, including texts and video games, are garden-path narratives, that is, narratives designed to somehow mislead the user before requiring him/her to revise and reconstruct their cognitive environment. This element of garden-path narrative, whether it is in a video game or traditional text, therefore implies "modification", as stated by Meadows, during which the user

makes the "leap from unintentional discovery to conscious change" in their interpretations, when new information from the "system" requires radical changes in the user's cognitive environment.

Meadows underscores that "interactive plot structure is more of a system of connections than it is a curve or arc. Plot structures are, however, an analysis tool and do not have much to do with emotional punch or aesthetic interest" (63). While my definition of structure is the same as Meadows in the sense that structure is "the networks of relations obtaining between the various constituents of a whole as well as between each constituent and whole" (Prince *A Dictionary*, 95), I disagree with Meadows on its value because in some narratives, especially in garden-path narratives, structure does have to do with "emotional punch and aesthetic interest", to use Meadows' words, as my analysis will demonstrate.

Marie-Laure Ryan, in a 2007 article on digital textuality, reflects upon the value of narrative experience in video games and what she anticipates for the future of game narrative, bringing some games closer to literature:

> If by narrative experience one means the pleasure of immersing oneself in a
> virtual world, then this experience is fully compatible with the ambition of game
> designers, which is to create rich worlds that offer players extensive opportunities
> to exercise their agency. In the future, we may see complex characters that arouse
> emotions, clever dialogue that brings out laughter, situations that create ethical
> dilemmas, surprising turns in the plot, and we already have games with stunning
> visual settings that create artistic pleasure. When this happens, narrative will no
> longer be subordinated to gameplay —the game will be played for the sake of
> experiencing its narrative design. (Ryan, "Beyond Ludus…" 14)

Literature review

There has been excellent scholarship on the cognitive benefits of video games and on the value of narratology in video game analysis. Echoing Aristotle, Peterson, and Altman regarding the question of natural human drive for narratives, researcher Jesper Juul starts his 2010 essay *A Casual Revolution, Reinventing Video Games and Their Players* by addressing the need for humans to feel a "pull", a drive to solve problems or incomplete mysteries, in life or fiction: "A story's pull makes us want to know what happens […] these things pull us in. Video games are like stories, like music, like singing a song: you want to finish the song on the final note. You must play the game" (Juul 4). The drive to overcome obstacles from a game is similar to the drive to successfully navigate a narrative that displays enigmas and mysteries to solve.

I want to recall Hamlen's work here, for her definition of adventure games requiring a strategy of "problem-solving within a storyline" (Hamlen 534), necessitating choices and decisions to make during the navigation of a game to successfully complete it. Juul addresses the topic of decision-making regarding two considerations to take into account when playing: "the goal orientation consideration", i.e. you want to win the game, and "the game experience consideration", i.e. "You want the game to be fun and you know that this entails making sure there is *uncertainty* about the outcome" (Juul 126, my emphasis). Garden-path narratives, whether in texts or gameplay, display this core quality of planned uncertainty. Juul thus offers a solid foundation to start analyzing casual games. However, his essay focuses solely on two specific types of casual games "mimetic interface games [i.e. games that have sensors to record players' physical movements as input in the game] and downloadable casual games in part because they are tied to identifiable commercial distribution channels with identifiable actors" (148). Understandably, Juul chooses to only focus on easily identifiable games from the

emergent genre of casual games, and therefore does not analyze the more hybrid type of casual, interactive-narrative, adventure games, such as the game from my corpus, *Heavy Rain*.

Video game scholar Gee says that "video games teach us that a good game teaches the player primarily how to play that game and, then, to be able to generalize to games like it" (Gee 6). This notion of generalization is crucial in the study of garden-path narratives since, to be able to form expectations, one needs to be able to generalize among different situations. In garden-path narratives, users form (typically erroneous) expectations based on generalizations they make regarding the genre, the story, and the form of discourse of a narrative—and the garden-path narrative author will have anticipated his users to form such expectations. As I also mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, Gee coins another notion, that of "situated learning", referring to how players learn to play a game *while* playing it. This notion, echoing the notion of actualization in narratology, questions how information is given so players can successfully play the game while still being immersed. This is important when studying garden-path narratives, as the goal for a critical user in Eco's terms is to gather as much information as possible from relevant elements and make informed expectations, revising them if need be throughout the narrative based on new information, and thus the user learns to adapt his or her cognitive environment, that is, perform regular situated learning.

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, Frasca praised the use of both ludology and narratology to perform thorough and complete analyses of video games. Also, Roger Ebert called video games less serious art forms due to the lack of authorial design in games compared to literature and cinematography. In his article "La Narrativité vidéoludique: une question narratologique", researcher Marc Marti reframes this debate, shifting the perspective to the *degree* of authorial design in different game narratives. He develops prototypes of narrative

degrees in games, which depend "en particulier de la relation qui s'établit entre la thématique du jeu, sa structure matérielle, la façon de jouer qu'elle impose et par conséquent l'expérience qu'en retire le joueur" (Marti np). He mentions games, such as *Heavy Rain*, whose levels of narrative are defined as "plus proches des prototypes narratifs définis par la littérature […] Dans ces jeux à récit complet, *scénarisés préalablement*, l'intrigue prend un autre sens, plus intéressant du point de vue du narratologue" (np, my emphasis). Games such as *Heavy Rain*, with their high level of preplanned narrative, as Marti explains, remind us of movies. However, unlike literary texts or movies,

> au lieu d'imposer au joueur une intrigue unique, ces jeux laissent la possibilité de
> choix multiples et offrent ainsi la possibilité de mener à bien des intrigues
> complexes. Cette complexité est à comprendre comme une ouverture des
> possibles narratifs : le choix opéré par le joueur aux « embranchements » ouvre
> des possibilités narratives différentes. (Marti np)

Marti's concept of branching system— a system allowing different storylines to happen based on the players' choices— echoes Eco's notion of pluriprobability mentioned in chapter 1, according to which an interactive narrative will offer the possibility for different branches within its story. *Heavy Rain* does contain this pluriprobability since it offers different endings and different turns of events within the game. Besides, Marti explicitly takes *Heavy Rain* as an example in his article, and although such "interactive narratives" offer different outcomes as I mentioned, "il faut cependant noter que ce type de jeu repose toujours sur un *dénouement fixe et unique*. Les possibilités multiples s'appliquent à l'action et au(x) dénouement(s) qui en découle(nt)" (np, my emphasis). My research will add to Marti's general theory by performing a close analysis of the game's garden-path structure.

In such casual, interactive-narrative video games, the question of choices made by players to influence the narrative outcome is integral to the game experience. Game scholar Miguel Sicart, studies the implications of choices in that players have to "surrender" to a game cognitive environment: "Surrendering to a game means accepting the rules, the possible ways that the game can be played, and the importance of playing the game. This surrender happens through the fiction that helps players empathize with the formal system […] This surrender allows for a fiction to become a companion with whom we can start a conversation about values and morality" (Sicart 12). Similar to protagonists in movies or literary texts, video game characters controlled by the player while playing—also called "avatars"—act as "our guides through a fiction" (12). Therefore, characters and their morality may influence the players in their choices. Sicart notes that a character's company "is more than just a guide. It determines, to a large extent, the player's ethical presence in that world" (13). The question of the protagonist being the user's guide and point of reference regarding moral values through a narrative will be key to my work, not only in this chapter on games, but also in the later chapters where I discuss this aspect in textual works.

The availability of choices in interactive narrative video games has also been studied, notably by researcher Antranig Arek Sarian. Sarian analyzes the model designed by video game studio Telltale in their interactive narrative games based on the popular graphic novel franchise *The Walking Dead*. An "issue" observed by players of such games is that "it quickly became evident that the game has a simple branching system, and that there is very little underlying complexity to this system" (Sarian 18). However, "in the absence of strong consequences [i.e. of significant modifications to the story based on the players' choices], any meaning that a Telltale choice can express is to instead be found within the dilemma it poses", similar to thought

experiments. Therefore, "the primary function of both thought experiments and Telltale's choices are to prompt the chooser to consider specific scenarios or dilemmas that they may not have otherwise considered" (18). For instance, in *Heavy Rain*, not all dialogue options will have strong consequences on the narrative line, but instead may provide the chooser with options to control his character's tone or attitude towards a certain situation during a conversation, allowing for a more flexible interaction and for building the personality of the character in a more personalized way. The question of thought experiments in games recalls that of garden-path narratives (GPN) challenging the user's cognitive environment by subverting their expectations. Quantic Dream's *Heavy Rain* works similarly to Telltale's interactive narrative games, in that they rely heavily on the player making choices in dilemmas and dialogues to move the plot forward accordingly, whether it truly impacts the outcome or not. Sarian introduces different types of choices. The first category are *ludic-didactic* choices that "test the player's knowledge of these two characters, and that reveal to them whether or not they understand how they are feeling […] providing the player with a test to see whether or not they have learned about the internal state of these two characters, and then testing them on their knowledge" (20). The second category is *exploratory-narrative choices*, which "allow the player to role-play a persona and participate in the story" (20). For instance, during an argument in the group of characters, "the outcome of the argument is pre-determined, but the player can join in by choosing phrases and adding their voice to the cacophony of shouts and cries. This provides the experience of participating as a character in the group conversation" (21). The third type of choice is borrowed from the work of researcher Maria Sullima, in her 2014 article ""*Did you shoot the girl in the street?" - On the Digital Seriality of The Walking Dead*", analyzing the same Telltale franchise as Sarian. This last type of choice is called "decision points", which are choices that are

"ultimately re-absorbed into the largely linear narrative of the game but provide a short-term consequence that feels significant. These are major moral dilemmas. […] In [this type of choice], the player must respond to a variety of different 'trolley problem' thought experiments. At the end, the player is presented with a summary of how they responded to each 'Trolley Problem' with no judgement or commentary on the part of the game" (Sarian 21). Sarian quotes Miguel Sicart who "commends this approach", as the game, according to him, "presents ethical gameplay not in choices but in how these choices are interpreted" and players "are left alone with their choice […] and what they say about them" (21).

My goal here is *not* to analyze the importance of choices regarding how much they matter or how they impact the player's perception of morality. It is rather to discuss how these choices impact the player's cognitive environment to the extent that these choices are actually narrative *tools* that are integral to the author's *garden-pathing strategy*, designed to trap the players and to subvert their expectations. So, instead of analyzing choice-based games through the prism of thought experiment, my focus is to analyze choice-based games in terms of how some choices, made by the player, may actually deceive the player's expectations for the entire narrative.

Astrid Ensslin addresses crucial issues for my analysis. She acknowledges the importance of intertextual references in video games' success as "video games are often adaptations of other media, e.g. novels, drama, movies or TV series – and vice versa – and their success has been due partly to the recognizability of specific characters and settings" (Ensslin 57). She also establishes, following Konzack's work, that a

> comprehensive video game analysis needs to take into account 'technical, aesthetic and socio-cultural perspectives'. Thus, discourse analysis needs to look beyond the material and representational aspects of the game itself and focus on

the bigger picture: the textual ecologies surrounding individual games and gameplay in terms of other texts and media they refer to either explicitly or implicitly (52)

My methodology is akin to her vision of a comprehensive analysis, as my study of garden-path narrative (GPN) in the video game *Heavy Rain* will address the technical elements and format of video games, the aesthetic impact on the players, and the socio-cultural references that create intertextuality and allow players to form expectations. Since GPN are set up as **interpretive games** by the author against the user, my goal is to identify the elements creating a GPN, and to establish the different information available to the critical user for a first reading and then for a second reading, for situated learning to happen and for the user to be able to make predictions as rationally and accurately as possible. The second playthrough produces a more critical user but, due to the change of endings based on different choices, the users may still be naïve to a certain extent yet becoming more prominent every time they plays the game.

Methodology

As a reminder, my methodology will explore the elements that critical users can focus on in their first reading to form likely expectations before knowing it is a GPN: the title and synopsis; the genre and type of focus/following pattern; the semes; the intertextual frames; and finally, the GPN trap once it has sprung. My analytical steps for the second reading are therefore the following: Since GPN are asymmetric-information games, i.e. the narrator is unreliable, I will identify which information was twisted or postponed and by which discursive means it was twisted or postponed. Then, I will identify the **inferential walks** elicited by textual strategy that caused interpretive failures. Finally, I will identify the **intertextual frames** which are potentially misleading and challenge them.

Corpus analysis: Heavy Rain

Released in 2010 by French studio Quantic Dream, and written and directed by French Quantic Dream CEO David Cage, *Heavy Rain* is an adventure game with four characters the player will control to navigate the storyline and the game mechanisms. The game is visually realistic, since Cage used the technique of motion capture on human actors to create the characters' facial expressions and movements. This adventure game is labelled by Cage himself, and others, as "interactive storytelling" (*Reddit*) because it uses film techniques such as flashback (Ryan *Narrative,* 252), motion capture, actors, cut-scenes (i.e. scenes for the player to watch like a movie unfolding and not play), and storylines that can be modified *to a certain extent* by players' choices by means of dialogue options and actions. On account of the choice-based nature of the game which modifies the narrative, *Heavy Rain* has a high replay value in general as players want to experience different endings and different stories.

I will now go through my methodology for a first "reading", or playthrough (the video game version of "reading"), of the game.

First Reading

Title and synopsis:

The game story is about a serial killer, nicknamed the Origami killer by the media, who kidnaps children and hides them in underground places like sewers. The killer explicitly announces to the victims' parents that he wants to see how far the parents will go to save their child, and the killer sends a box to the parents containing origami figures with instructions to do dangerous challenges (hurting oneself, killing others, etc…) in order to get clues about the location of the children. The Children will eventually drown in accumulating rain water if they

are not found in time. In chapter 15, "Kick off Meeting", the player learns that the kidnapped

children will die once the level of rain reaches about six inches. The title *Heavy Rain* therefore

announces 1) the method of killing and 2) that the rain itself, a weather element that cannot be

controlled nor stopped, works as an ominous ticking clock which reinforces the helplessness of

parents. The importance of rain is also emphasized at the beginning of each sequence as, using

another technique of film, scene shift captions appear to indicate a change of time, place, and the

current inches of rain, to track the urgency of finding a missing child.

Genre/focus and following pattern

Heavy Rain is an adventure game that requires "problem-solving within a storyline" (Hamlen

534). The player embodies four characters, one at a time, and typically the point of view is a

third-person view, or external focalization, (i.e. the camera view shows the characters as the

player walks around but does not show a first-person view as if the perspective were through the

characters' eyes). Because the player controls four characters with four different perspectives,

the notion of "following pattern" proposed by Altman is relevant to analyze the order of

sequences the player goes through. *Heavy Rain* offers a multiple-focus following pattern: "often

a public event is used to justify a multiple-focus following pattern, with each individual

providing only one piece of a mosaic that is of necessity transindividual in nature" (Altman, *A

Theory,* 248-249). *Heavy Rain*'s plot centers around the investigation by the four characters from

different perspectives: Scott Shelby, a private detective; Ethan Mars the father of a kidnapped

child trying to find his son Shaun, Madison Paige, an investigative journalist; and Norman

Jayden, an FBI agent. Exemplifying Altman's "multiple focus", each of them provides a "piece

of the mosaic", in this case the crimes committed by the serial killer. *Heavy Rain's* story

therefore builds on a "transindividual" narrative structure and following pattern.

According to Altman, the benefit of analyzing a narrative through its following pattern is that

the process of following simultaneously activates both character and narrator. […]

With the introduction of following, concentrating attention on a particular

character, we paradoxically also sense the existence of a narrational instance –

some one, some thing, some system deciding who should be followed. The

process of following thus simultaneously highlights character and narrator,

diegesis and narration. It is precisely this simultaneous emphasis on two different

levels that constitutes narrative. Without following, we have only an unvectored

chaos, capable of producing narrative but not yet doing so; with following, we not

only concentrate our attention on a character and the character's actions, thus

satisfying the first set of conditions for the existence of narrative, but we also

implicitly reveal the existence of a second narrational level. (*Theory of Narrative*

16)

The latter remark on the benefit of following for revealing the existence of narrational instance

(some system deciding who should be followed and how much) shows that following is what

makes a video game a narrative, and it will be an important concept for the second stage of my

methodology when dealing with a second-reading approach.

Heavy Rain is divided into chapters accessible from the game's menu page, similar to a

movie's chapter menu on DVD platforms, so players can easily go back to a moment they want

to replay. There is a maximum of 52 chapters (*Fandom*) in each of which players typically

control one character—and sometimes more than one character in a row within the same

chapter.[3] However, depending on the gameplay and if characters die, certain chapters will not

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[3] Please refer to this website to read the chapters' descriptions but also see the chapters being played
https://heavyrain.fandom.com/wiki/Chapters

occur due to the disappearance of a character from the storyline.

A work's "following pattern" is made up of "following units" and the transition from one following unit to the next, or "modulation" (Altman, *A Theory,* 24). Altman lists three types of modulations: metonymic, by bringing the character into contact with the diegetic space (by mentioning that a character has entered the current storyline and by proceeding to focus on them instead); metaphoric (such as "meanwhile, back at the ranch", by explicitly mentioning that the focus has changed due to a different space or time), and hyperbolic, which is a transition with no logic, that jumps from one following unit to another "without any obvious justification" (24-5). I will use Altman's "following unit" to signify a portion of gameplay in which the player controls one character and therefore has access to that character's focus. Most of the time, there is a metaphoric modulation between two following units when these following units are two distinct chapters. This metaphoric modulation takes the form of a loading screen showing the character's face that is about to be controlled, and the chapter then starts with a scene shift caption to establish the day, time, and inches of rain fallen, explicitly stating a change of time and/or space. Sometimes, however, a single chapter will enable the player to control two different characters in a row, which then happens with metonymic modulation—i.e. the focus switches to a different character who was already present in the current sequence in which a previous character was being followed. This type of chapter therefore consists of two following units.

Since *Heavy Rain*'s narrative line can be affected by player's choices, it is hard to identify a central following sequence (a character can die, therefore eliminating the chapters the player would have gone through had the character still been alive), but in general, the following units alternate fairly evenly between characters. There is, however, an emphasis on Ethan as the most often controlled character (20 out of the 52 chapters; then Norman at 13 times, Scott at 12,

and Madison at 10). Ethan thus appears as the main character of *Heavy Rain*. Indeed, the player starts the game from his focus, and his background is revealed in the exposition sequences. His happy family life in a wealthy house suddenly turned to tragedy when one of his two sons, Jason, was run over by a car while Ethan was supposed to watch him. His wife divorced him and he ended up living alone in a shabby townhouse. Then his second son, Shaun, got kidnapped by the origami killer, centering the main quest —finding Shaun—around Ethan.

Semes

The semes, to use Barthes' term, are semic units that add connotations in a description. In *Heavy Rain*, the most prominent semes are the relationships between father-son, parent-children, innocence of children vs. cruelty of adults, and sacrifice for a loved one/cause. These semes, which all relate to the main mystery of the narrative and lay out the plot, occur through the following elements:

1. Ethan's love and sacrifices for his son

2. Ethan losing his first son in an accident

3. The killer kidnapping and killing children

4. The parents being dangerously tested to find their children

5. The twin brothers in the construction site, in which one boy dies in front of his helpless brother, and whose drunk, violent father did not want to save

6. Gordi Kramer killing a child

7. Charles Kramer bribing people to drop criminal charges against his son Gordi

8. Madison helping Ethan at great costs

9. Norman being willing to sacrifice his health and potentially his life to solve the investigation using a dangerous drug

These semes are important to note for my analysis as they participate in building characters and settings, since semes bring layers of meaning in a description. Semes may therefore be crucial for users to form certain expectations regarding the plot and the characters' actions.

Intertextual frames

The level of interactive narrativity was fairly groundbreaking when *Heavy Rain* was released, with many references to film-making, in addition to the visual realism, such as opening credits with names of actors and staff, finishing with the words "written and directed by David Cage" as a movie director would credit himself; long cut-scenes; and deep plot and character development. As Ensslin noted, video games are typically inspired by other forms of media and "instead of going for straightforward forms of narrative adaptation, which are ultimately bound to fail commercially due to video games' interactive and exploratory qualities, many game designers, film and media producers make use of transmediation [i.e. they get inspiration from different media] and […] 'collective intelligence' (Ensslin 57). Therefore, the main intertextual frames that players will resort to when navigating *Heavy Rain* come from the movie world.

Like Ensslin's reference to "collective intelligence", Altman, in his essay *Film/Genre*, notes that "genres constitute the structures that define individual texts […]. The interpretation of generic films depends directly on the audience's generic expectations" and that genre is a "contract, as a viewing position required by each genre film of its audience" (*Film/Genre* 14). Being able to identify a film to a genre (or several) thus allows viewers to draw expectations. The ability to form expectations thanks to the use of commonplaces and tropes is important in the experience of the viewer according to Altman, as: "the repetitive and cumulative nature of genre films makes them also quite predictable […] they guarantee a certain style, a particular atmosphere and a well-known set of attitudes. The pleasure of genre film spectatorship thus

derives more from the reaffirmation than from novelty" (25). Altman then concludes that, consequently, the audience "would rather enjoy their excitement in a controlled environment that they recognize" (25).

This notion of excitement in a controlled environment echoes Huizinga's notion of game: "This is the third main characteristic of play: its secludedness, its limitedness. It is 'played out' within certain time limits" (Huizinga 28), as "inside the play-ground an absolute and peculiar order reigns" (29). Like the audience watching a familiar film structure (genre?), what players enjoy is that a game "creates order, *is* order. Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection" (29). However, just as in a game or a narrative, the excitement would fail if the outcome was totally predictable. "[T]he element of tension in play […] plays a particularly important part. Tension means uncertainty, chanciness; a striving to decide the issue and so end it. […] It is the element of tension and solution that governs all solitary games of skill and application" (29). David Cage also agrees with the principle of pleasurable tension regarding the GPN elements of *Heavy Rain*: "very few people discovered [who] the killer [is] before we reveal it in the game. That was really a pleasure, because when you work on something that is a whodunnit kind of mystery, if people know after half an hour […] then you've lost" (Kietzmann). Cage uses the verb "to lose" to describe the failure of the author to mislead the user, reinforcing this idea that garden-path narratives are indeed asymmetric-information games between the author and the user.

Identifying the film genres in *Heavy Rain* will help analyze the potential intertextual frames that will allow the player to draw expectations (which then may potentially be twisted to create a GPN). *Heavy Rain,* being about a crime mystery, mostly uses topics and structures from films noirs. The term "film noir" was coined by critic Nino Frank "who noticed the trend of how

'dark', downbeat and black the looks and themes were of many American crime and detective films released in France to theatres during and following World War II" (*Filmsite*). Intertextual frames from film noirs that can be found in *Heavy Rain* are the crime element, or *seme*, and "feelings of fear, mistrust, bleakness, loss of innocence" (*Filmsite*). These latter semes are depicted in the fear of parents for their children, the fear of children when kidnapped, their loss of innocence, the mistrust among the characters to find the killer, and the distrust of Ethan towards his own perception of reality due to trauma from brain injury when he tried to save his first son from the car accident. There are also, in film noir, frequent references to women, here Madison, who "manipulate men and are often a step ahead of them" (Sanders 93). This last element can be found to a certain extent when Madison investigates the Origami killer's mystery and helps Ethan Mars in his quest first for the sake of her own investigation, though she genuinely develops feelings for him later; and another time she dances seductively at a private club to obtain a confession from a man.

Additionally, *Heavy Rain* also has elements of other genres such as drama and thriller/horror. Just as the film noir was coined and popularized in the 1950s, that era also "really started the trend towards representing children who felt neglected and alienated" and "depicted childhood as a time of innocence" (Sanders 99). In dramas like film noir, "childhood is a springboard to an abyss rather than future hopes and dreams" (99). This intertextual frame of childhood displayed as a dark, bleak time is first represented in *Heavy Rain* for Shaun, Ethan's son, who lost his brother and lives in a shattered family – and then gets kidnapped. The second instance of tragic childhood also appears for the twin brothers whose drunk father never cared to help and whose negligent, cruel behavior caused one of his sons to die drowning in front of the

other. The third instance is Gordi Kramer, the sociopathic son of the rich and influent Charles

Kramer, killing a child.

Regarding intertextual frames from the thriller/horror genre, the frame of the serial killer

is of course the most prevalent here. The 1990s introduced the serial killer as a new type of

movie villain, based on contemporary events such as the murders by Jeffrey Dahmer in 1992 or

Fred West in 1995. The 1990s movies had characters such as Hannibal Lecter in *Silence of the*

Lambs: "a serial killer who existed in an approximation of the real world – not an incarnation of

supernatural evil or a postmodern joke […], an all-too-real boogey man in a world which had

become fascinated with such characters, featuring them on nightly parade of news bulletin"

(Sanders 252). *Heavy Rain*'s Origami killer, as a child kidnapper testing parents' love, definitely

embodies this "all-too-real boogey man", also highly intelligent like Lecter, that the media love

to talk about. Some thriller/horror movies from the 1990s-early 2000s started to explore

children's darker experience of our modern world. Indeed, "the millennium saw divorce rates

around the worlds rise to their highest levels and the fracturing of the family unit became the

norm, particularly in Western culture. There have been numerous studies on the effect of divorce

on society and some quarters argue that society's ills can be sourced to the breakdown of the

nuclear family" (Sanders 258). The fracturing of the nuclear family due to divorce or tragic

circumstances is a trope in thriller/horror films to investigating the feeling of loneliness and

helplessness of children as they witness the fracturing of relationships with and among adults.

For instance, the critically acclaimed 2002 horror Japanese movie *Dark Water* explores the

sadness of alienation in a divorced family in which a single mother, Yoshimi, struggles as she

and her young daughter Ikuko live in an insalubrious apartment. *Dark Water* explores the theme

of children's fear of abandonment by their parents through the ghost of a little girl who, left by

her mother, drowned and died alone in a water tank, and who eventually takes Yoshimi away from Ikuko to find a new loving mother, leaving Ikuko all alone in turn. Like in *Heavy Rain*, water here is a symbol of fear and doom.

This link between children's fear and water has also been explored by the 1990 American miniseries *It*, based on Stephen King's novel in which a lone child is killed in the sewers by the villain. These intertextual frames from thriller/horror movies are found in *Heavy Rain* as well, regarding the fracturing of family bonds —with Ethan's divorce, the loss of his first son then his second; the drunk father abusing his twin sons; and Lauren whose son was kidnapped and whose husband disappeared afterwards resorts to prostitution to survive. *Heavy Rain* combines the semes of children's fear of abandonment and the imagery of water, since the kidnapped victims may drown in a secluded space. Additionally, the twin brother drowns because his dad did not care for rescuing him. All these tragic events involve innocent children helplessly waiting for their parents to save them from drowning.

Now to analyze the characters of Heavy Rain, I will use Jung's definition of the collective unconscious that host archetypes in people's minds:

> A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the personal unconscious. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the collective unconscious. I have chosen the term "collective" because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes common

psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us.

(Jung 15)

For instance, one well-known Jungian archetype in the collective unconscious is that of the hero, an admirable person battling adversity with great courage. The notion of collective unconscious is crucial when addressing GPN because archetypes, that is to say, a type of character or figure that is universally present in individual psyche and imagination, are a sub-category of this collective unconscious, and users of GPN may resort to their knowledge of archetypes to form expectations. Meanwhile, the author of GPN will have anticipated this collective unconscious to be shared by users, and therefore might subvert these specific expectations based on universally shared patterns. This definition of collective unconscious also relates to Barthes' referential code, or Ensslin's "collective intelligence" which contains elements of knowledge external to a narrative itself, which, it is assumed, all users have (knowledge of social norms, of the world…). In *Heavy Rain*, all four characters appear as protagonists, that is, "the character[s] that audiences will most closely identify with, who [are] most affected by the antagonist, and who [are] primarily responsible for driving the plot" (Sloane 117) because all four of them help the investigation by gathering clues and helping others, though again Ethan may be considered as the true protagonist due to the amount of time spent controlling him.

Heavy Rain is an adventure game centered around an investigation by multiple people whose perceived archetypes are commonly seen in thriller narratives. Scott Shelby appears as the archetype of the "guardian" protecting people from criminals, being a lonely and obstinate detective and a mentor to Lauren. Ethan is the archetype of the "hero" going on a quest to save his son, and father in crisis who has to be a hero for his son (his level of heroism and achievement depend on the player's choices and ability to play). Madison is the strong-minded

journalist yet compassionate and potential love interest for Ethan (she is thus the archetype of the guardian but also "maiden", although, through the player's playthrough, she is the one rescuing herself and does not need another character to do so for her). Norman Jayden is an efficient FBI agent struggling with severe drug addiction (the antihero, as a contradictory law enforcement agent with chaotic tendencies).

Identification of the anomaly

In chapter 37, "The Cemetery"[4] , a janitor tells Shelby and Lauren the tragic story of twin brothers. Lauren is the mother of a kidnapped child who wants to investigate with Shelby. A flashback starts in chapter 38 "The Twins" where the player can see the twins playing on a construction site. One of the twins is named John and the other is controlled by the player. John is the more adventurous of the twins, and insults his brother instead of calling him by his name, teasing and daring him to explore the dangerous parts of the site. John eventually falls into a broken pipe with water flowing dangerously. The janitor says that John died and the second twin was adopted by another family. In chapter 49 "Hold my Hand", the player controls the same twin again but has to convince his drunk father to help John, which he refuses to do. Based on the janitor's story, the player already knows that his attempt of saving John will fail, but now the player knows that the twins' father never tried to save his son (showing the origin of why the Origami killer wants to find a parent willing to save their children at all costs). John is overcome with exhaustion in the pipe and cannot hold on to his brother's hand any longer. His final words before drowning are "Do not forget about me Scottie". The nickname Scottie, for Scott, obviously refers to Scott Shelby, who turns out to actually be John's twin. Chapter 50 "Origami Killer" reveals Shelby as the Origami killer. He was never on the hunt for the killer but tried to

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[4] The number of the chapters are given assuming no chapter has been deleted due to an early character death.

destroy any evidence, still in the possession of the victims' parents, that could lead to him as a suspect. Hence, the interpretive failure that is the cornerstone of the GPN in *Heavy Rain* is the true motivation of Shelby, stemming from his deceitful identity. Now that I have identified the interpretive failure upon which *Heavy Rain*'s GPN is built, I will turn to analyzing elements of this GPN that a second reading allows to bring to light.

Second Reading

I will identify which information was twisted or postponed and by which rhetorical means it was twisted or postponed. I will then identify the **inferential walks** elicited by textual strategy that caused interpretive failures. Finally, I will identify the **intertextual frames** and challenge them as potentially misleading. For instance, in the example of the movie *Old Boy*, the intertextual frame of the character's archetypes (young, innocent maiden in love with older hero) is misleading, as it turns out to be a daughter and her father having unknowingly an incestuous relationship, and after this discovery, the father cuts his tongue off (the intertextual frame turns out to be an archetype from the Oedipal myth).

Asymmetric information game

Eco explained that a misleading work, or GPN, has clues that are usually spotted on second reading, creating first and second reading experiences of narratives, in which "a naïve model reader [is] eager to fall into the traps of the narrator (to feel fear or suspect the innocent one) but [the narrative] usually wants to produce also a critical model reader able to enjoy, at a second reading, the brilliant narrative strategy for which the first-level, naïve reader was designed" (Eco *The Role*, 55). A GPN like *Heavy Rain* "provides [players] with a lot of clues that could have prevented them from falling into the textual trap. Obviously, these clues can be detected only in the course of a second reading" (55). David Cage himself says that "[t]his is

something I really enjoyed in the writing. It was to make sure that every single thing of Shelby had these double meanings, and that if you do not know he's the killer, it's fine, it makes sense. But if you know, it takes another meaning" (Kietzmann). Cage's words therefore relate to Eco's theory of first and second reading, explicitly stating he wanted to create a GPN for *Heavy Rain*. I will now explore the different strategies that help build an asymmetric-information game.

After knowing the truth, certain narrative strategies appear as obviously part of the GPN asymmetric-information game. For instance, in chapter 49 "Hold my Hand", John hurls insults at his brother instead of calling him by his name "Scott". This behavior is not uncommon for siblings and therefore not suspicious to the reader who does not recognize it as a GPN textual strategy to postpone the revelation that Shelby was the murderer. However, more complex textual strategies are used to create a GPN; either in discourse (dialogues, thoughts), meta-discourse (keyword labels of dialogues and thoughts, visual storytelling), or story elements. When choosing to press the L2 button on the PS4 controller, the player can hear the inner thoughts of the character he controls. When we first play as Shelby, we are introduced to him going to a cheap hotel. Nothing is told about him or the reason for his presence there so far. Through dialogues with the receptionist and then Lauren —the mother of one of the killer's victims whose body was found on a wasteland— the player understands that Shelby is at this hotel to find Lauren to collect information about her son's murder. However, on a second playthrough (the video game version of Eco's "second reading"), it is important to look for any possible clues that could give away Shelby's intentions or to examine his thoughts and dialogue to see what information, if any, was twisted. As Cage said, he made sure Shelby's words and thoughts were relevant in both first and second playthroughs.

Thought and dialogue options appear as keywords summing up the gist of each of the options the player chooses from. In this chapter, I will refer to the options in the following manner for brevity's sake: [keyword] followed by the uttered thoughts/speech. One of Shelby's first thoughts available in Chapter 4 "Sleazy Place", the first chapter he appears in, is "[leads] Been looking for weeks, hope I hit pay dirt this time". This thought about having a lead indeed works both whether Shelby is actually trying to investigate to find the killer, or when Shelby is known as the killer trying to collect and destroy evidence. Another thought available as he enters Lauren's room is "[clues] gonna have to play my cards right if I'm gonna squeeze anything out of her". Again, this thought about finding clues works both ways, whether he is investigating or he is the killer. Cage says about writing the thoughts of Shelby: "We paid attention to check his thoughts and make sure that he does not lie at any point, although he does not say all the truth all the time [in his thoughts]. But all his dialogue can be read in two different ways. You can read it first without knowing who the killer is, and say, 'Oh, that's fine,' but once you know, it takes a different meaning." (Kietzmann np).

When talking to Lauren in Chapter 4 "Sleazy Place", Shelby automatically introduces himself as a private detective hired by "the families of the victims of the Origami killer to investigate the murders". If the player unlocks one particular ending's epilogue "A Mother's Revenge", he learns this is a lie and that Shelby was never hired (*Fandom*). Regardless, this is a believable introductory sentence that both a real detective or a murderer collecting evidence would say to make progress in their respective endeavors. Game theory scholar Brams defines rational choice as "given their preferences and their knowledge of other players' preferences, [a rational player] made strategy choices that would lead to better rather than worse outcomes" (Brams 5). From this definition, we can say that Shelby's lie is both a plausible and a rational

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choice for the character of Shelby. In order to pressure a reluctant Lauren who does not want to talk to him in her grief, Shelby can say things such as "[convince] the killer is walking around free as we speak, he'll kill again if he's not arrested". A dialogue option to obtain her collaboration is "[trick] If we do not find the killer there will be other mothers who will find their sons on a deserted wasteland". Both dialogue options are meant to pressure Lauren into providing information, a behavior that is expected from both a concerned detective and a killer. Both options also are completely true facts: the killer (Shelby) is walking around free, right in front of her, and he plans on killing again if he is not arrested, i.e. if no one finds any evidence that could lead to him. The key to the GPN appears actually early in the game: when Shelby goes to the shop belonging to the father of one of his victims in Chapter 10 "Hassan's shop", Cage says "one of his choices in the dialogue can be, '[[sympathize]] I also lost someone I loved' when he's talking to Hassan. And, in fact, this is the key to the story, because he's talking about his brother and this is why he killed everybody" (Kietzmann np). Shelby has therefore emitted no other lie in his dialogue and thoughts, except for the one lie about the families of the victims hiring him.

In addition to Shelby's speech and thoughts, I will analyze the peritext itself — "texts directly accompanying the primary text in question" (Ensslin 59). In this paragraph the peritext I will explore is the thought and dialogue options' keywords such as [leads]; [clues]; [convince]; [trick]— which are all truthful as well: Shelby, either as the detective or as the murderer, heard of a "lead" to find Lauren; he needs "clues". Interestingly, to "convince" can either be used as in the meaning 'to convince someone of something' i.e. making someone "believe that it is true" but also as in its second meaning 'to convince someone to do something' i.e. they persuade someone "to do it" (Collins dictionary). So [convince] here can either be seen, in the first

playthrough, as 'convince Lauren *to talk to you*', but in the second playthrough, it be can be read

as 'convince Lauren *that saying that you are investigating the murders is true*'. Similarly, [trick]

can mean 'trick Lauren *into talking to you*' or 'trick Lauren *into believing that you want to find*

the killer'. However, in "[trick] If we do not find the killer there will be other mothers who will

find their sons on a deserted wasteland", Shelby uses "we", not "I", which would be interpreted

either as 'I/Shelby and you/Lauren' if he is a real detective or interpreted as the equivalent of the

generic third person pronoun of 'one' if he is the murderer, which both are truthful.

As part of the textual strategy to create an asymmetric-information game, visual

storytelling matters in video game GPN. I will discuss the notion of following pattern here in the

sense of what the camera decides *not* to show to the player and who it decides to focus on in a

scene. This is important since, as Altman noted, the following patterns implies an authorial

decision to favor the following of one character over another, for certain reasons. The omission

of important information in a narrative is called "paralipsis", that is, the "omission de telle action

ou pensée importante du héros focal, que ni le héros ni le narrateur ne peuvent ignorer, mais que

le narrateur choisit de dissimuler au lecteur" (Genette 212). Cage creates paralipses and

perpetuates his asymmetric-information game by not showing certain actions that are key to the

GPN. In Ch. 32 "Manfred", for instance, in which the player controls Shelby, Shelby and Lauren

go to an antique repair store to ask the owner, Manfred, if he can verify his list of clients in case

one can be linked to the murders, since the killer is using an old typewriter and may be a

customer. Shelby asks Manfred to go look at his list. When Manfred leaves the main room, the

camera shows Shelby and Lauren in the same shot, then the camera focuses on Lauren alone

looking at a music box for fifteen seconds while, in the background a grandfather clock rings

twelve times loudly before showing Shelby and Lauren in the same place again. Shelby, who

actually killed Manfred at that moment, offers the thought option of "[Manfred] Been a while since Manfred went into his office, I should take a look". This thought is misleading, since it is presented as if Shelby needed to "take a look" to check on Manfred in order to *know* what is taking Manfred so long in his office, when Shelby actually knows that he just killed Manfred. However, there is no lie in this thought: it has been a while since Manfred left. Here, the purpose of Shelby going to check on Manfred is not to *know* what happened but rather to *show* to Lauren and pretend in front of her that someone else was there and killed Manfred. This thought, while purposefully misleading, is still relevant in the context of the user knowing Shelby is the killer since him going to Manfred's office when Lauren is watching is necessary to pretend in front of Lauren that the killer was here.

This in turn enables Shelby to destroy all the evidence against himself before the police arrives in the guise of — in front of Lauren— removing their fingerprints only to avoid being detained by the police and thus wasting time in their investigation). As he enters Manfred's office calling loudly his name, the camera shows Manfred's bloody, murdered body and a landline phone hanging from its cable with a female voice saying that the police "will be there in a few minutes". As Shelby enters the office, whose entrance is visible from the main room where Lauren stayed, he startlingly looks at the corpse, and then sees the phone announcing the police coming. When Lauren sees the corpse and wants to talk to the police, Shelby says that he'd rather avoid wasting twenty-four hours being interrogated about Manfred's death because they are running out of time to save Shaun Mars (Ethan's son, kidnapped by the killer). Shelby therefore orders Lauren to watch the front door and Shelby will remove the fingerprints so the police do not interrogate them.

Again, this scene works both way, one for Shelby being a dedicated detective and the

other for Shelby as the killer erasing evidence linking him to being at the store and being the Origami killer. As Kietzmann says, when interviewing Cage in the previously quoted interview, as "the camera cuts away, and you do not see that Shelby has gone and done something […] I thought that was pretty clever, because in retrospect, it changes your whole motivation for completing that scene. […] Now, when I think back on it, you're actually doing a bad thing" (Kietzmann). Chapter 50 "Origami killer" reveals all the actions the player did for Shelby (collecting the evidence from the victims' families) but now the player sees it with a different cognitive environment since the player now knows Shelby's motives. The chapter also shows actions omitted by paralipsis. For instance, the player now actually sees Shelby quickly killing Manfred in Ch. 32 "Manfred" in his office before Manfred could find out Shelby could be guilty of owning the known typewriter the killer has, and then Shelby proceeds to call the police himself to ensure that he and Lauren can flee quickly from the crime scene, which justifies cleaning their fingerprints and gathering evidence from Manfred's store that could lead the police to find Shelby as the killer. The player also now understands, by seeing a scene that was not shown before, that Shelby murdered a club owner who gave a confession to Madison, the female journalist, in Ch. 41 "Fish Tank", a chapter controlled by the character of Jayden, the FBI agent, and that Shelby also visited his mother at the hospital, making origami figures for her that Madison eventually used to refresh the memory of Shelby's mother in Ch. 45 "Ann Shepard".

We can thus see that Cage resorts to Shelby's discourse and thoughts, the game peritext (labels for dialogue and thought options), and paralipses to create an asymmetric-information game. Cage states, in effect, that he purposefully created a GPN:

So, there are clues here and there that you may notice or not, but once you know, definitely there are different hints that weren't there. So it's not coming out of

the blue, like, "Oh my god why is he the killer?" There are reasons and if you play again, there are different things that give you clues about this. But, at the same time, very few people discovered he is the killer before we reveal it in the game. (Kietzmann np)

The key of the GPN initially stems from the fact that Shelby's single lie in Ch 4. about his motivation (that is, pretending to be hired by the victims' families) was accepted without question. Now, to explore *why* there was no likelihood of the players questioning his lie and identity, I will turn to the concept of inferential walks.

Inferential walks

Eco points out that narrative users are "encouraged to activate [a certain] hypothesis by a lot of already recorded narrative situations (intertextual frames) [which the user has had experience with other texts or games]. To identify these frames the reader had to 'walk' so to speak, outside the text, in order to gather intertextual support" (Eco, *The Role* 32). These are "inferential walks" (32), "elicited by discursive structures [i.e. the linear manifestation of the text with its codes such as knowledge of basic dictionary, intertextual frames] and foreseen by the whole textual strategy as indispensable components of the construction of the fabula" (32). Inferential walks are therefore a crucial tool for creating a GPN. Since the key to the GPN, and main mystery, in *Heavy Rain*, is the killer's identity, the inferential walks I will mention are only related to the identity of the potential Origami killer throughout the different chapters, before the revelation of Shelby's true motives. I will list the inferential walks according to their chronological appearance and establish why they are plausible according to Brams' definition of rational choice. The next section of this chapter will address which intertextual frames may hinder or enhance the credibility of these inferential walks listed below.

Inferential walks	Reason(s) for being plausible
Ch. 3 "Father and Son": Ethan wakes up in a dark alley after blacking out, not remembering anything, and he has an origami figure in his hand.	Knowing the killer's preference to leave origami figures by his victims, this is a sign encouraging the hypothesis of Ethan being the killer.
Ch. 6 "The Shrink": Ethan has the option to tell his therapist about his black-outs, if so, the therapist will tell the police when he is interrogated.	This will increase the likelihood of the police hunting Ethan down as the murderer in the game, as this hypothesis is encouraged by a psychology professional.
Ch. 12 "Paparazzi": Ethan is thinking about his black-outs and think they might be linked to the killings, and he is afraid he might unknowingly be the killer and is testing himself as a parent.	This hypothesis is possible since in Ch. 6 Ethan tells his therapist that he feels guilty about his first son's death and that he has suicidal thoughts. Knowing the killer's preference for leaving notes asking questions like "how far would you go to save your child?" and since Ethan was in a coma due to brain injury after the accident and is deeply traumatized and guilt-ridden by his son's

	death, unknowingly adopting the identity of a serial killer to test his will to sacrifice himself seems a plausible situation.
Ch. 16 "Nathaniel": Jayden and his partner Lieutenant Blake interrogate a man named Nathaniel. His apartment is full of delirious messages on walls as well as ritualistic symbols and items. Nathaniel confesses that he hears voices in his head and he seems aggressive. Blake tries to pressure him to confess that he is the killer, suggesting that the voices in Nathaniel's head told him to kill the children.	Nathaniel is therefore introduced as a possible suspect.
Ch. 22 "Kramer's Party": Shelby interrogates Gordi Kramer the son of a powerful business man, Charles Kramer. Gordi was arrested earlier for killing a child by drowning him, though the charges were dropped because of his father's influence. In this chapter, Gordi, in a perversely proud tone, says that he is in fact the killer but that Shelby cannot do	Gordi therefore appears, due to his confession, personality and behavior, as a likely suspect.

anything about it because of his father's power.	
Ch. 25 "Police News": Ethan's ex-wife, Grace, tells the police that after Jason's death and after Ethan was no longer in a coma, he left one night and came back, mumbling about the rain and drowning. She says that Ethan didn't seem himself, and that the next day another victim of the Origami killer was found.	Grace's testimony mentions Ethan not being himself and talking about elements of the Origami killer's preferences (drowning, rain) before a new victim is found. This increases the likelihood of Ethan being perceived as the killer.
Ch. 26 "Shrink and Punches": At the therapist, Jayden and Blake interrogate him further and the therapist admits that Ethan mentioned having visions of people drowning, and that a small origami figure fell from his pocket one day in his office.	Ethan is described as prone to visions of drowning and had an origami figure, all elements of the killer's modus operandi. This convinces Blake to officially declare Ethan as the main suspect.
Ch. 27 "The Golf Club": Charles Kramer first offers money then threatens Shelby if the latter continues to investigate his son as a potential suspect for the Origami killer.	This preference for bribing and threatening seems to indicate that Charles wants to stop any investigations about his son to protect him from prison, and therefore may hint at Gordi being indeed guilty of killing the child, even though Gordi was not charged, which

	adds more to the hypothesis of Gordi being the killer.
Ch. 34 "The Doc": Madison gets trapped in Adrian Baker's house, a former surgeon who also owns an apartment linked to the Origami killer. Baker tries to assault and to kill her violently.	Baker's preference for violence and perversion, as well as his involvement in the apartment that Ethan had to go for one of the killer's challenges, could make him a suspect as the Origami killer.
Ch. 35 "Mad Jack": Jayden is investigating a lead about Mad Jack, a suspect who might have sold a car to the killer. Jayden goes to a junkyard run by Mad Jack who is a former prisoner. While exploring the place, Jayden finds evidence of a violent crime and the remaining bones of a man. Mad Jack says that he killed a police officer who was "asking too many questions" while pointing a gun at Jayden and trying to kill him.	Given Mad Jack's past and his preference for violence, as well as his suspicion of police officers' questions, Mad Jack could seem likely to be considered as a suspect for the Origami killer.
Ch. 36 "Eureka": Lauren and Shelby cross-list the name of "John Shepard" in both the client	John Shepard, whether it is a pseudonym or not, appears as a potential suspect.

list kept by Manfred and in the list of origami magazine subscribers.	
Ch. 39 "Flowers on the Grave": As Lauren and Shelby go to the graveyard to know more about John Shepard who is declared dead, they see Charles Kramer putting flowers on Shepard's grave. After hearing the story about the drowning boy, Lauren wonders if John Shepard's brother is the killer.	This seems to indicate a link between Kramer and the man claiming to be John Shepard –the man Shelby and Lauren identified as the killer.
Ch. 45 "Ann Shepard": John Shepard's mother, Ann, is questioned by Madison who wants to know the name of John's brother as he might be the killer. When Ann mutters his name to Madison's ear (which the players do not hear), Madison looks shocked, as if she already knows the person Ann talked about.	The only character the player sees Madison with many times is Ethan, therefore, Ethan once more appears as a likely suspect for Madison to be shocked about, especially knowing her preference of romantic feelings for him.
Ch. 47 "Solving the puzzle": Jayden identifies clues belonging to the killer. The killer's gun was from a police lockup and therefore the killer was or has been a police officer. Jayden also notices that the watch the killer was	This leads to Jayden to believe Lieutenant Blake, his current partner, could be the killer. This is even more likely since, when Blake is called a "unbalanced, psychopathic asshole"

wearing is the same that is given to police officers when promoted to lieutenants.	in the chapter, Blake says he takes it as a compliment.
Ch. 48 "Goodbye Lauren": Shelby tells Lauren to leave while he confronts the killer.	This indicates that Shelby knows who the killer is and is close to finding him. Shelby used to be part of the police force, so he would know Blake is a likely suspect and killer.

These different elements trigger inferential walks to create a complex narrative that deters the user from suspecting Shelby and thus from anticipating the key to the GPN.

Identify the intertextual frames and challenge them as potentially misleading.

Here I am going to examine the people presented as suspects in these inferential walks above and explore intertextual frames that could help decide which person is more likely to be the actual killer. Again, Shelby is not presented as a suspect by any of the characters so I will discuss his character later in the section.

Heavy Rain's story and format are largely inspired by American thrillers and horror movies, particularly by the figure of the serial killer which started to appear in American movies in the 1990s-2000s. I will thus refer to American movies of this period that had a wide-enough release to be well-known (part of the collective knowledge, or Ensslin's "collective intelligence") in the United States but in France as well, since Quantic Dream is a French studio. The movies must have been released by 2010 since it is the year *Heavy Rain* was released. The first column lists the different suspects from inferential walks, and the second column explores

what intertextual frames from movies may enhance or hinder the likelihood of the player

believing a suspect is actually the killer.

Suspects	Frames from movies
Nathaniel; Mad Jack; Baker:	Serial killers are typically presented as highly intelligent, calculating, with a taste of *mise en scene* for others to behold their crimes, and glorified by the media (*Silence of the Lambs* 1991, *Natural Born Killers* 1994, *Seven* 1995, *Red Dragon* 2004, *Zodiac* 2007). The Origami killer also creates elaborate *mise en scene* with symbols (origami figures, orchid), and also his modus operandi is an indirect, passive death (the children die from drowning in a secluded space, not from an active, violent act). Thus, the reclusive Nathaniel, the impulsively violent Mad Jack who conceals the corpse of the policeman, and the actively sadistic Baker eventually appear as unlikely suspects. These intertextual frames are therefore hindering the likelihood of the player

	believing that any of those men can be the killer.
Gordi Kramer:	He is a likely suspect until knowing this information due to his mysterious and dominating personality, and the fact that he is rich and influential could protect him from any legal issues. This type of calculating and all-powerful, rich, "villain" can be seen in classic, popular movies such as Lex Luthor in *Superman: The Movie* 1978, Catherine Tramell in *Basic Instinct* 1992, the masters of ceremony *in Eyes Wide Shut* 1999, or Patrick Bateman *American Psycho* 2000. These intertextual frames promote Gordi's personality as a potential clue to him being guilty.
Ethan:	The protagonist not knowing he is actually the antagonist or the protagonist having dissociative personality disorder (*Fight Club* 1999, *Identity* 2003, *Secret Window* 2004, *Shutter Island* 2010), or being confused about his reality while investigating (*Memento*

	2000), or even being an unknowing part of the serial killer's plan (*Seven* 1995) is an existing trope in these famous movies. These intertextual frames are therefore enhancing the likelihood of the player believing that Ethan can be the killer.
Blake:	Ann Shepard is around the age of Blake's potential mother, therefore it is believable that Madison, who keeps track of thorough details about the investigation, is shocked to learn Blake's name since he is supposed to be a member of law enforcement. Additionally, the trope of the killer hiding in plain sight and/or being himself a law enforcement officer (*Usual Suspects* 1998, *Bone Collector* 1999, *Gothika* 2003, *Saw* 2004) exists in enough popular movies for players to recognize it as a possible trope in *Heavy Rain* too.

	Therefore, these elements above enhance the likelihood of the player believing Blake can be the killer.

Because of intertextual frames promoting elements of guilt and suspicion towards Blake and Ethan, until the revelation of Shelby being the actual murderer in Ch. 50 (and the preceding chapter revealing that John Shephard's twin's nickname was Scottie), the GPN wants Blake and Ethan to remain as active suspects in the player's mind. However, Gordi and his family are dismissed slightly earlier. Though Gordi did say that he was the Origami Killer, his father Charles confesses in Ch. 44 "Kramer Party" that Gordi actually just wanted to mimic the serial killer's modus operandi. Charles also says that he puts flowers on Shepard's grave because he was the owner of the construction site where John Shepard died and felt responsible. Gordi is still guilty of killing the child he drowned, but he is not the Origami killer. So after Ch. 44, the Kramer family is definitely off the suspect list in the player's mind.

I mentioned the textual strategies that made the GPN an asymmetric-information game, and now I will investigate the intertextual frames and other knowledge that decreased the likelihood of the player considering Shelby as a suspect. Shelby being the killer was designed as a surprise for the player – and is a surprise that is most of the times successful according to Cage (Kietzmann). The reason why the trap of *Heavy Rain'*s GPN works as a surprise is because the authorial instance provided many intertextual frames competing with one another, and inferential walks that force the user to "walk" outside the text. These elements are indeed designed to fool the user down one of those inferential walks, or be fooled by the intertextual frames.

First, the fact that he is a private detective saying that he is investigating murders excludes him easily from being suspected since his function would be paradoxical. Beyond his lie, this referential code, that is to say elements of collective knowledge, to use Barthes' term about a detective's function (solving crimes) is therefore a crucial factor in *Heavy Rain*'s GPN. More importantly, because of this referential code, it is unlikely that we will even question *if* his official motivations are truthful. Blake is an officer, and his function would be paradoxical with being a suspect, but his personality makes him unlikable, contrary to Shelby who appears as a friendly figure. The fact that Shelby, a detective, is not likely to be suspected by the player, unlike Blake, an officer, is because Shelby was never framed as a potential suspect, and the game's author goes to great length to promote Blake as a suspect. Of course, many detective narratives' culprits are unexpected. For instance, in the famous Agatha Christie's *And then There were None*, the murderer is actually a judge. In both works, the referential code about the function of the culprit (a detective or a judge) embodying law enforcement is a strategy of the GPN. The reason why both culprits are nonetheless surprising in Christie's novel and in *Heavy Rain*, despite the possibility of the culprit acting contrary to his function, is because of the authorial control, in charge of the following patterns and of disseminating asymmetric information.

Secondly, Shelby is the second protagonist the player controls. He is presented as a private detective and his dialogue as well as his thoughts make him appear genuinely caring, and as the figure of the Jungian archetype of the "guardian", a "character that provides guidance to and protects the protagonist, similar to the description of the wise old man/woman or the mentor" (Sloane 117). He does not interact with other protagonists but his quest to find Shaun Mars makes him look like the protector of Ethan's son. Moreover, he is a mentor to Lauren who

becomes his investigation partner and friend. He also performs the prototype of the lonely, former cop from film noir, who is tough and violent when needed (to the Kramers and their men) yet is endearing and friendly (to the families of the victims and children). Therefore, Shelby's archetypal characteristics make him extremely unlikely to be suspected as the killer.

Thirdly, Shelby is a character the player controls, that is to say, the player is required to perform and achieve Shelby's goals. Since his objective is presented as morally good, i.e. finding a killer, the player believes he is helping Shelby performing morally good actions. The player therefore believes he embodies moral good and it will be his motivation throughout the game until the revelation of Shelby's true motives. Once the truth is revealed, the player not only has to reconstruct their cognitive environment regarding the identity of Shelby, regarding the story, regarding events that suddenly take a different meaning, but also regarding the player's own role and its consequences: he enabled Shelby, actually a murderer, to perform actions that were in fact morally wrong all along, and that were meant to ensure no one would find the murderer, the total opposite of his official motive. This morality question is explored by Sicart in his essay *Beyond Choices*, in which he writes about the game *Hitman*, a game in which the player controls an assassin:

> his [controlled character] company is more than just a guide. It determines, to a
> large extent, the player's ethical presence in that world. The values of this
> assassin are important in the fictional creation of that world: players explore those
> values and live by them. The company that they keep is not only the avatar or the
> game world. It is also their meanings and the interpretations that players give to
> those values and that world. (Sicart 13)

This is what Sicart calls the "player complicity" as, to progress, they "need to engage with different elements of the fiction in a way that requires their value-based engagement with one of the [characters]" (125). However, in *Heavy Rain*, the player did not know about Shelby's "values" and actual "ethical presence" in the world of *Heavy Rain*, so the player technically did not agree to those values as they were deceived. The fact that Shelby's motive is suddenly revealed therefore creates a moral 180-degree turn and enhances, not the questions of choice here, but rather the importance of critically questioning the narrative elements given to the players—instead of naively trusting them as Eco would say. It is a shock to the player when discovering the truth, and consequently discovering they were a mere tool in the killer's plan due to the misleading narrative. Even if video games give more agency to players to interactively participate in building the narrative, games like *Heavy Rain* nonetheless necessitate strong authorial control to offer a unique experience to players to experience the effects of the GPN.

Conclusion

Heavy Rain fully takes advantage of video game storytelling strategies but also of intertextual elements and devices to create a unique cognitive experience. The GPN here resorts to textual strategies (rhetorical devices, peritext, following pattern) as well as relying on users' expectations to trap them and force them to reconstruct their cognitive environment about the narrative, but also to evaluate their own enabling role in the story as the killer's enabler. The trapped players realize they not only did not question the unreliable information given but also did not question that they might be a tool in the killer's plan. Beyond just being fooled by the narration and having to reconstruct one's own erroneous interpretations, as in traditional GPN texts, the player's actions have true consequences in the narrative. The player is therefore

complicit with the killer, though not aware of this complicity the first time playing. If the player fails or chooses certain options, it might jeopardize other, morally good characters who could have helped to save Shaun and find the killer, and might lead to their failure and even their deaths. Shelby might never even be discovered as the killer by the characters—even though players will always know, thanks to Ch. 50's revelation, that Shelby is guilty. Indeed, if Ethan is in custody, and if Madison, Lauren and Norman are dead, Shelby will never be suspected by others, which the players can see if they unlock the epilogue called "Unpunished" (Fandom). The player thus feels responsible for the turn of events and for Shelby not being arrested, and thus being able potentially to continue his crimes.

All the player's actions and choices (or accidentally failed action like pressing the wrong controller button) dictate what kind of ending will happen. The most positive epilogue is "A New Life" in which Ethan found Shaun alive and is dating Madison, forming a new family. This is only possible if four actions were successfully completed: the player played so that Ethan avoided being killed or imprisoned, that he kissed Madison in a previous chapter and that she and Shaun survive. One of the worst epilogues, on the other hand, is "Helpless" in which Ethan is in jail, framed as the killer, and eventually hangs himself. This is possible if the player failed (or chose to fail) several elements: Ethan got arrested, and Shaun is dead due to a) Madison dying or failing to locate Shaun, or b) Norman dying, giving up due to his addiction issues, or accusing the wrong person. The change in cognitive environment in *Heavy Rain* is therefore twofold for the player: the player discovers that he was fooled regarding Shelby's identity, but also regarding his very own complicity with the scheme of the murderer and overall regarding his responsibility for the turn of events, significantly impacting the lives of the characters forever.

It is interesting to see that Cage also resorts to GPN strategies in Quantic Dream's latest

game, *Detroit: Become Human* released in 2018. In this game, for instance, the player controls

androids and one of them is Kara. Kara is a female android taking care of Alice, a little girl

whose drug-addicted father is violent and abusive towards her and Kara, and whose wife has left

him. Kara becomes sentient after seeing Todd becoming threatening towards his daughter.

Kara's quest is to protect Alice at all cost from her father and other dangers as they run away

from Alice's house. Towards the end of their quest, Kara, with the player, discovers that Alice

was actually a child android that Todd bought to replace his daughter whom his wife took with

her when she left him. Here again, Cage resorted to paralipsis (by purposefully avoiding showing

a magazine that Kara picks up early in the game advertising child androids) to create an

asymmetric-information game for his GPN. The main challenge is then for Kara (through the

player) to choose to accept Alice as an android and keep protecting her, or to reject her because

she is an android and to abandon her. Here again, a GPN is used to produce not only an

unexpected, entertaining narrative, but most importantly to produce an emotional impact on the

player, and to bring into play the player's moral choices. As I mentioned earlier in the

introduction of this chapter, I disagree with Meadow who claims that "plot structures […] do not

have much to do with emotional punch or aesthetic interest" (63). The use of GPN structures in

Heavy Rain, as in *Detroit*, definitely contributes to the emotional punch Meadows mentions. The

use of GPN textual strategy in both games shows continuity in Quantic Dream's creative path

and demonstrates the richness of narrative intertextuality, as well as the complex and varied

cognitive processes questioned and addressed in video games. In the interview, Cage admits that

"the main goal of *Heavy Rain* was to trigger different types of emotions and not ones you usually

find in video games. So, it was not about stress or fear or tension or frustration, it was about

empathy. It was about sadness, it was about depression, it was about making you feel uncomfortable. And, basically, enlarging the kind of emotions that you can feel". This powerful emotional effect on players directly recalls Aristotle's goal for tragedy, "catharsis", or the purgation of certain emotions (Aristotle "part VI" np). Another matter Cage mentions regarding the goal for the players' experience is also to question moral choices, as I discussed previously. In *Heavy Rain*, Ethan can choose to kill someone who also has children in exchange for information to find his son. Cage again attributes this design and moral questioning to wanting to create a whole new video game experience as

> it asks a very interesting question to the player. This scene was all about -- can we make killing someone in a video game something significant? Because in most games, killing people is what you do, so you do not care and you shoot zillions of people and you do not give a shit. Here, what I wanted to do was say, "Look, you just need to press this trigger, you kill this man and you get a reward. Do it." And we realized about 80 percent of people do not shoot, just because it's about role play. They feel they are Ethan, and they believe Ethan would not kill. And that's really interesting, because it's so easy and it's a part of saying, "This is not a video game." It's suspension of disbelief at some point and you forget that this is about a video game. And you do not kill anybody. Come on, it's just a bunch of pixels in a program. So you can shoot and get your reward and move on. (Kietzmann)

Such powerful narrative structures therefore change the players' attitude within the video game experience, as here the majority of players were more interested in role-playing —i.e. staying true to their characters' values, being immersed and making rational choices based on what they know of Ethan and his preferences—than they were interested in the typical "reward" (here

information) the player obtains in video games as he performs a task to make progress in his quest.

In the previously quoted interview with Cage, the latter says he and his team "always saw *Heavy Rain* much more like a format than just another game, so as part of the format, we have the grammar that we have established to tell a story" (Kietzmann). The technology design that allows *Heavy Rain* to bring such a complex narrative thus offers a new "grammar" to the video game genre, and this grammar is GPN with a moral twist for its players regarding their own role in the story. This new grammar can therefore be used to create many more new interactive narratives but also a new kind of cognitive experience in this new video game "format".

To end this chapter, I want to recall 2007 Marie-Laure Ryan's anticipation about future video game narrative experience, in which the player may find "complex characters that arouse emotions, clever dialogue that brings out laughter, situations that create ethical dilemmas, surprising turns in the plot […] When this happens, narrative will no longer be subordinated to gameplay — the game will be played for the sake of experiencing its narrative design" (Ryan "Beyond Ludus…", 14). *Heavy Rain,* released three years after Ryan's article, displays all these elements, and creates a whole new narrative experience for players, paving the way for a genre of games in which narratives are not just a secondary feature, but rather the powerful, driving force enhancing the gaming experience that challenges the players' cognitive environment.

Chapter 3: *La Chute*, by Albert Camus, 1956

Introduction

Camus and the game of manipulation

Many critics have analyzed *La Chute* by Camus and described it as one of the most mysterious works by Camus. Sartre thought that *La Chute* was "le plus beau et peut-être le plus incompris" of Camus's texts (qtd. in Ellison, 115). Other scholars have called *La Chute* "enigmatic", "the most allusive, textually complex" work by Camus (Ellison 116). Despite its qualities, "there are fewer books and critical writing on *The Fall* than on *The Stranger*" (Fitch 12). However, *La Chute*'s "complexity, its formal ambiguity and originality, and the many features that sharply distinguish it from the author's previous works" make it a unique novel in Camus's legacy, "resembling nothing that [Camus] had ever written before" (12-13).

La Chute is a monological novel whose narrator is also its protagonist, Jean-Baptiste Clamence, a former Parisian lawyer who confesses his faults to a stranger he met at a bar in Amsterdam. At the end of the novel, we discover that Clamence was revealing himself and his past misbehaviors to trap his listener into doing the same, thus exposing the other to his judgement. Clamence thus eventually establishes his moral domination over his conversation partner. While "years of commentary have uncovered many of [*La Chute*'s] secrets and progressively illuminated its dark recesses […] such a text invites a diversity of analyses precisely because of the indeterminate nature of its meanings" (Ellison 116). As Ellison says, even though Camus has been extensively studied, his work is still relevant today and requires analysis, as the 2019 publication of the literary journal *Lettres Romanes* dedicated to Camus's work shows. In the introduction to the issue, Amaury Dehoux insists on the "apport réflexif et le bénéfice éthique que le lecteur peut retirer de celle-ci [Camus's work]" (Dehoux 3).

Dehoux emphasizes that the two main strengths of Camus's work are "l'exigence camusienne d'un discours qui respecte la morale et la liberté" and the "fonction sociale de la littérature" (4). Because Camus valued morality, freedom, and the social dimension of literature, his work —and most notably *LC*— often engages with issues of manipulation : "le manipulé n'est pas libre : il adhère à un discours sans se rendre compte qu'il est piégé par un dispositif rhétorique qui le dépouille de toute autonomie réflexive" (5). The ideas of manipulation, freedom, and morality echo the process of creating a fictional narrative : "en tant que romancier, n'est-il pas lui-même amené à manipuler son lecteur ? Par le principe de la focalisation, la narration paraît en effet constituer un discours orienté, qui amène toujours le lecteur à partager un certain point de vue sur les faits" (5). The practice of designing a narrative, necessarily implying authorial control and therefore limiting the user's freedom, could thus be seen as an internal contradiction for an author like Camus who values real-life freedom and critical thinking. However,

> la lucidité de Camus lui permet d'éviter l'aporie. Conscient de la manipulation qu'implique la fiction, l'auteur français s'attache ainsi à disséminer les indices de celle-ci dans son texte, afin de concilier l'essence de l'art et la liberté critique de son lecteur. De cette façon, la manipulation se voit renversée : elle devient le moyen d'un éveil moral, la clé d'accès à une vérité essentielle de l'homme — sa liberté. Autrement dit, en un jeu autoréflexif, la manipulation romanesque devient le lieu d'une déconstruction de la pratique manipulatrice. (5)

Narratorial manipulation, in Camus, is therefore a way to question the practice of manipulation, inviting the user (reader) to play an (intellectual and moral) game in order to deconstruct the manipulative practice and its consequences on the user on the receiving side of the manipulation.

This analysis of narratorial manipulation echoes the manipulation happening in *Heavy Rain* that I studied in the previous chapter. In both *Heavy Rain* and Camus's work, the strategy of manipulation, here in the form of garden-pathing, is used beyond purely aesthetic and entertainment reasons, it is also used to provoke a moral and metaphysical dilemma. We saw earlier that in *Heavy Rain*, the adventure video game genre brings this moral dilemma to the user in the best way possible, that is, to show that the user (player) trusted the game objectives and helped Shelby to (unknowingly for the player) destroy evidence of his crimes, thus enabling a criminal to pursue his immoral deeds. We will see in this chapter that *LC*'s genre, a monological novel, is an appropriate format to provoke an existential dilemma.

Camus himself recognizes the existential power of narratives. In his 1957 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, a year after the publication of *LC*, Camus says:

> Je ne puis personnellement vivre sans mon art. Mais je n'ai jamais placé cet art au-dessus de tout. S'il m'est nécessaire au contraire, c'est qu'il ne sépare de personne et me permet de vivre, tel que je suis, au niveau de tous. L'art n'est pas à mes yeux une réjouissance solitaire. Il est un moyen d'émouvoir le plus grand nombre d'hommes en leur offrant une image privilégiée des souffrances et des joies communes. (qtd. in Servoise, 79)

Art, and here more specifically fiction, is explicitly described by Camus himself as a tool to move people by displaying the pain and joy of being human. Like Aristotle praising the process of cartharsis, Camus wants his individual readers to feel on the universal, human level, and create a shared experience of the world for the common good. Indeed, Camus rejects art as a solitary pleasure, and more importantly, he rejects the separation of mankind, and claims that art brings us all, him included, together, thus abolishing any form of human hierarchy. The

fundamental principle of equality in and through art is the most important distinction between Camus and his character Clamence, who actually instrumentalizes art and narrative to establish his superiority. Camus, as Dehoux observes, is thus an ardent defender of freedom and equality among humans. His use of manipulation is rather a way to deconstruct the very practice of manipulation. This approach to authorial creation and "manipulation" reveals Camus's intentions to stimulate the reader's cognitive abilities and critical thinking. To avoid being manipulated, Camus presents his readers with a challenge. Like Hamlen's definition of adventure game as a storyline with problem solving, *LC* gives a playground to its users to practice their problem-solving skills in order to triumph by exposing Clamence's game of deception.

The game-like qualities of *LC* have been recognized by Dehoux, who labels Camus's treatment of manipulation as an autoreflexive game, and most importantly by Camus himself. In the original printing of *LC* —but not in newer versions— Camus included an insert for the readers at the beginning of the novel which declares that *LC* is a "jeu de glaces étudié" since Clamence operates in such a way that, "le miroir dans lequel il se regarde, il finit par le tendre aux autres" (Gay-Crosier 771). Camus recognizes the disorienting complexity of his novel, but emphasizes that the one truth of *LC's* game is about "la douleur, et ce qu'elle promet." (771).

In this chapter, I argue that *LC* is conceived as a game for the reader. This aspect of Camus' novel has so far escaped the attention of scholars in the field. I will analyze this lesser studied element in *LC* and highlight some of its complexity. My methodological approach enables me to break down Camus's authorial strategy and show how it creates a garden-path narrative (GPN). Drawing on game theory and literary theory, as already demonstrated in the previous chapter on video game, I will identify the different types of games in *LC* as part of the GPN strategy.

Literature review

René Girard, one of the most prominent Camus specialists, notes that *La Chute* "can already be defined as a forgotten masterpiece. Camus is praised to the high heavens by some, while others deride his role as "directeur de conscience" of the middle class, but all of this is done with only passing reference, or no reference at all, to *La Chute*." (Girard, "Camus's *Stranger*" 91). *LC* is a text that has been studied by numerous scholars, although recently not as much as other Camus' works. Camus is still vividly relevant in the twenty-first century and, as Colin Davis would say "Whilst there has been a palpable revival of interest in Camus, much of it has been from a postcolonial perspective, […] and focusing on his conflicted attitude to Algerian independence" (Davis 37). However, many scholars are still intrigued by the rhetoric of *LC* and how *LC* is tied to Western culture. Some have focused on the rich intertextuality of *LC*. Allan Pasco notes the allusions to Biblical references, which are the most apparent in *LC*. He also uncovers references to "the French tradition, leaving no doubt of the culture required of the reader" (2). For instance, not only does Clamence's endeavor refer to John the Baptist, the Christian prophet who is "coming to announce a "new faith", but also to Jean-Jacques Rousseau who, in *Les Confessions*, "was confessing the unvarnished truth about himself, he explains further, to exculpate himself" (2). His analysis will be helpful when I address the interreferential frames the user may activate when navigating *LC*. Ellison argues that *LC* is written based on the concept of dizziness and that the allusion to many different references is responsible for the feeling of dizziness. While Ellison notes that many scholars have addressed the religious references, Ellison deciphers less obvious textual origins, notably one of Baudelaire's most "disorienting prose poems," "Assommons les pauvres," and his essay on laughter, *De l'essence du rire*, which explains the crucial link between the *fall* from Eden, the original sin in

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Christianity, and laughter, a leitmotiv in *LC* whose title refers to this original fall. In addition to studying the references in *LC* Ellison addresses the moral burden that *LC* poses and that further contributes to the dizziness of the reading experience:

> The question "is *La Chute* readable?" can be understood not only on the level of textual complexity—allusiveness, intertextuality, *mise en abyme* (literary mirroring or reflexiveness)—as a problem of interpretation, but also on the level of moral power: are we readers strong enough to "stomach" the discomforting negative truths uttered by the loquacious protagonist? […] Are we able to contemplate the mirror image of ourselves held up by a mad lawyer who purports to tell *our* story? (Ellison 117)

In the same sense in which I discussed Camus's celebration of freedom and his wish to offer a playground for his reader to perform critical reading and be confronted with the notion of freedom and control, Ellison states that *LC* is "a *mise en abyme* of the act of reading" (117). *LC* is, in this sense, "a text that stages the difficulty, or even the impossibility of a controlled and masterful reading" (118), and Camus engages in a game to test his readers' critical reading. *LC* proves itself to be a "disconcertingly complicated intertextual web" (121) with heavy moral implications for its readers. Alongside Pasco, Ellison's work will be most important regarding the recognition of intertextual frames. However, since so many scholars have analyzed cultural references and given the "impressive sum of criticism concerning the "hidden meanings" of *La Chute*," as Ellison says (121), my research on GPN, will not focus on the meaning and origins of intertextual sources but rather on how these references are used to create a GPN construction, and what inferential walks they generate.

     Scholars have also widely published on Clamence's discourse and mannerisms.

Germaine Brée, who addresses all of Camus's work in her book, mentions the importance of the exact tone for Camus, and the ingenuity of Clamence's speech to disseminate his content. However, Brée does not go into thorough details on this topic, favoring breadth over depth in order to give an overview of Camus's entire bibliography. Hustis notes the similarity of Clamence's speech with Dante's journey to the Inferno, a major intertext in *LC*. Hustis also mentions how Clamence's first "extension of sympathy inaugurates an allegorical journey" (Hustis 14), underlining that Clamence's conversation will be a dialectical trip. L'Hermitte postulates that Clamence is a modern Socrates, who performs the practice of maieutics, the Socratic method of conversing with someone to guide them until they eventually find the truth they are seeking. By addressing the concept of maieutics, L'Hermitte approaches *LC* as a narrative that changes the interlocutor's—and potentially the reader's— cognitive environment, just like my own GPN analysis. However, although the cognitive environment does change due to the discovery of Clamence's trap, as it evolves from mere conversation and confession to a fight for moral domination, L'Hermitte is mistaken: the mind game that Clamence is playing with his interlocutor/reader aims to reign over them; it is agonistic in nature —relative to fighting— and therefore cannot be interpreted as maieutics, which, in turn, is entirely dedicated to finding the truth.   Several critics address Camus's penchant, in *LC* and other works, for manipulative rhetoric. Indeed, Chatman mentions *La Chute* as an example of unreliable narration due to the narrator's (here Clamence's) own account of events (Chatman 149). Rey, in his 2019 essay, focuses on *La Peste*'s narration and how Camus manipulated his readers into thinking the narrator was not one of the main characters. Camus's correspondence explains why he decided to reveal that the reader had been misled from the beginning. It turns out in the end that the narrator, who had remained anonymous for the whole novel, is actually an active character in the

story. Camus says "je l'ai dit clairement « Il est temps d'avouer que le narrateur est le docteur Rieux lui-même »" (qtd. in Rey, 14). Camus wished to make the revelation crystal-clear (by literally saying so) and to deliver the secret of *La Peste* in an explicit way. We will see how similarly —or differently— *LC* operates in the revelation of the narrative's secret, i.e., how Camus springs the GPN trap. Rey concludes that *LC* eventually develops a full-blown *lying* narrator.

In another recent article on manipulation in Camus's works, Blondeau addresses the misleading speech of Clamence and its "tactique de retardement" (Blondeau 59). The ubiquitous nature with which he announces his strategy can either make you think of his good faith or of his propensity for manipulation. Either way, Blondeau points out how Clamence's "à rebours" rhetoric mirrors the term "juge-pénitent": "il est d'abord pénitent pour mieux être juge ; et la pratique précède la théorie puisque l'explication de l'étrange métier qu'il exerce à Amsterdam ne vient qu'à la fin." (61). Without focusing much on the notion of game, Blondeau does allude to it when addressing Clamence's strategy: "Son autocritique ne vise qu'à amener son interlocuteur à s'accuser à son tour. Alors, dans sa chambre, quand il sent que l'autre est mûr, *il abat toutes ses cartes*" (60, my emphasis). Clamence's maze-like rhetorics lure his interlocutor into his trap, "pour l'amener à « passer aux aveux ». Il *triomphe* à la fin" (61, my emphasis), as Clamence is a "vrai *comédien* qui donne vie au *personnage* qu'il a créé" (63, my emphasis).

Methodology

In this chapter, I will study *La Chute* through the prism of garden-path narratives, thus creating an interdisciplinary approach that will shed new light on *LC*. To show how relevant it is to resort to game studies when analyzing *LC*, I will first perform a close reading that will identify the different games taking place in *LC*. Second, I will still study *LC* as a planned intentional

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GPN since most readers have discovered *LC* as such without the *prière d'insérer* which warned the reader about Clamence's manipulation in the original edition.

This first part will explore the elements that a critical user can focus on in the first reading to form likely expectations before knowing it is a GPN: the title and synopsis; the genre and type of focus/following pattern; the semes and the intertextual frames; and finally, the GPN trap once it has sprung. For the second reading, my steps are the following: Since GPNs are asymmetric-information games (i.e. the narrator is unreliable), I will identify which information was twisted or delayed and by which discursive means.

In addition, I will address the scenario in which readers of the original edition had access to the temporary *prière d'insérer* and were thus aware of the narrator's intentions. The *prière d'insérer* reads as follow:

L'homme qui parle dans *La chute* se livre à une confession calculée. Réfugié à Amsterdam dans une ville de canaux et de lumière froide, où il joue à l'ermite et au prophète, cet ancien avocat attend dans un bar douteux des auditeurs complaisants. Il a le cœur moderne, c'est-à-dire qu'il ne peut supporter d'être jugé. Il se dépêche donc de faire son propre procès mais c'est pour mieux juger les autres. Le miroir dans lequel il se regarde, il finit par le tendre aux autres.

Où commence la confession, où l'accusation ? Celui qui parle dans ce livre fait-il son procès ou celui de son temps ? Est-il un cas particulier, ou l'homme du jour ? Une seule vérité en tout cas, dans ce *jeu de glaces étudié* : la douleur, et ce qu'elle promet. (Gay-Crosier 770-771, my emphasis)

In this section, I will demonstrate that even though the reader is warned by the *prière d'insérer* that the narrative will be a "game of mirrors", *LC* remains a GPN in the sense that Clamence's speech is ambiguous as to where the confession stops and where the accusation begins. The reader gets lost in Clamence's logorrhea and may get confused about what constitutes the narrator's calculated maneuver and what does not. Furthermore, since *LC* is a game of mirrors, the uncertainty lies in the way the interlocutor will play the game, and whether or not Clamence indeed wins the game. In this section, I will bring to light which elements are still part of a GPN even with access to the *prière d'insérer*.

Corpus analysis: La Chute

Notions of games in La Chute

Published in 1956, and thus one of Camus's last works, *LC* is a novel constructed as a soliloquy by its protagonist, Jean-Baptiste Clamence. Clamence is a former Parisian lawyer and now lives in Amsterdam, staying in a bar called Mexico-City where he meets his interlocutor. Before studying the different games in this novel, I will first point out the novel's references to games more generally. There are several, but as Camus described Clamence's speech as a "jeu de glace étudié" (Gay-Crosier 771), the most obvious game-like elements are related to role-playing. Clamence describes his performance as a lawyer not unlike a stage director would describe an actor's play: "l'exactitude de mon ton, la justesse de mon émotion, la persuasion et la chaleur, l'indignation maitrisée de mes plaidoiries" (Camus 22). Of course, as a lawyer, Clamence had to act in a certain way in court to ensure his clients' success. But it seems that Clamence's taste for performing does not stop at his profession; his whole life is staged. Girard points out that " playing the part of the generous lawyer outside of the court; the comedy gradually takes over even the most ordinary circumstances of daily life" (Girard, "Camus's

Stranger" 83): when Clamence speaks about how he loved doing favors for bystanders, he talked about helping out an old lady "avec un sourire qu['il] connaissai[t] bien" (26), putting on a face in order to play the part of the altruistic stranger, even though his real goal is to be "au-dessus" of others (28). When telling the anecdote in which he helped a blind man and then tipped his hat to salute him —which of course the blind man could not see— Clamence says that he tipped his hat for the public: "Après le rôle, le salut" (52).

By his own confession, Clamence acknowledges that, in his past, he had a tendency to role-play and therefore to put on a fake face in front of others. However, several passages indicate that this preference for role-playing continues at the present moment: "[son] métier est double, comme la créature" (14); his emblem would be "une double face, un charmant Janus, et, au-dessus, la devise de la maison: « Ne vous y fiez pas. » Sur mes cartes « Jean-Baptsiste Clamence, comédien. »" (52). He actually identifies with Janus, the two-faced god, noting that "la face de toutes [ses] vertus avait ainsi un revers moins imposant" (90-1). Not only does he state that his job is to role play, but also that he himself is duplicitous in general. Clamence also gives an example which, indirectly, advocates against trusting people, mentioning a man who, during World War II, wrote on his house that anyone was welcome: "Qui, selon vous, répondit à cette belle *invitation* ? Des miliciens, qui entrèrent chez lui et l'étripèrent" (16, my emphasis). This anecdote about inviting strangers in and trusting them functions as a cautionary tale to Clamence's interlocutor and foreshadows Clamence's fake intentions, mirroring the interlocutor *inviting* Clamence, a stranger, to stay and talk to him when they first meet. Clamence even says, then, that his interlocutor is "trop bon" (8), a common phrase that can also be taken literally here, especially following the anecdote. The interlocutor, like the trusting man, may be *too* nice for his own good, as this invitation will set up Clamence to start his project of moral domination.

When Clamence talks about his romantic relationships, he confesses his "amour du jeu": "je changeais souvent de rôle ; mais il s'agissait toujours de la même pièce. Par exemple, le numéro de l'attirance incompréhensible, du « je ne sais quoi » " (65). Clamence enjoys playing a role with his romantic partners. This seemingly harmless game of lust and seduction nonetheless eventually takes a darker turn, when Clamence hears that a woman he was with told someone else about his "insuffisances" (69). From that point, Clamence decides to seduce her again only in order to humiliate her: "[il] l'abandonnai[t] et la reprenai[t], […] la traitai[t] de façon si brutale" (69). This example shows that Clamence's games can take a more perverse and toxic aspect for others than simply putting on a fake face.

Clamence undertakes a similar role-playing game when he is imprisoned in a camp in Tripoli. Clamence describes another Frenchman in the camp who had enrolled to help fight against Franco's totalitarian regime in Spain. Clamence refers to him as "le genre Duguesclin" (130), a historical figure and a medieval knight, as if his campmate were taking on this role. When the man suggests the prisoners elect a new Pope from their midst, this new Pope will have the task to "maintenir vivante, en lui et chez les autres, la communauté de nos souffrances" (131). To elect the new Pope, the campmate asks who, among them, has the most weaknesses, to which Clamence responds by raising his hand "par plaisanterie". The campmate suggests they should elect him, and the rest of the prisoners "acquiescèrent, par jeu" (131). From Clamence's perspective this election is a mere game, despite the fact that the new Pope takes on the serious responsibility as gatekeeper of everyone's pain. Eventually, Clamence will abuse his power and steal water from dying people in order to ensure his own survival. When Clamence is the one dealing the cards, games can turn morbid, even lethal. Interestingly, while this Pope anecdote is told in passing by Clamence, it echoes Camus's *prière d'insérer* to the original edition: "Une

seule vérité en tout cas, dans ce jeu de glace étudié, la douleur, et ce qu'elle promet" (Gay-Crosier 771). When Clamence announces his strategy of moral domination to his interlocutor at the end, he is still honoring his papal functions of maintaining the community of suffering within himself and others: indeed, Clamence's goal is to invite his victim to consider his own sins, and thus the victim suffers from this moral burden as he becomes "plein de désolation" (Camus 145).

Finally, there is another reference to games after Clamence hears the laugh on the bridge and realizes that he is not as superior as he thought he was. Clamence decides the following: "Pour prévenir le rire, j'imaginai donc de me jeter dans la dérision générale. En somme, il s'agissait encore de couper au jugement. Je voulais mettre les rieurs de mon côté, ou du moins, me mettre de leur côté" (Camus 96). He then acknowledges that he wants to "déranger le *jeu*" (98, my emphasis), i.e. to make people uncomfortable by not acting the way he is expected to act in public or according to his prestigious reputation. Ellison, drawing on the theory of philosopher Gadamer in his analysis of *La Chute*, establishes that the notion of game "is nothing less than […] the mode of being of the work of art itself," because

> it is not the subject who controls the game but the reverse. In fact […] the game comes to be represented through the activity of subjects or players. The game as such fulfills itself much as a musical composition does—through performance or "realization"—and affects its performers in a similar fashion, by transforming them, by actively modifying their being. […] The playing of games fulfills its purpose only when the player becomes caught up [wrapped up] in the playing. (Ellison 126)

A game, by nature, as defined by Gadamer, overwhelms the player:

at the moment of his dramatic *Aufgehen im Spiel* [i.e. his getting caught up in the

game], [the player] loses the capacity to know what he knows, and in a strangely

literal sense, loses "himself" in the playing. The truth of the game takes on an

ironical reversal in which the manipulator of figures is himself manipulated. In

Gadamer's succinct terms, the fascination of game-playing results from the fact

that the game becomes master of the player (qtd. in Ellison 127)

This echoes Huizinga's definition of game. He writes that "the consciousness of play being 'only

a pretend' does not by any means prevent it from proceeding with the utmost seriousness, with

an absorption, a devotion that passes into rapture and, temporarily at least, completely abolishes

that troublesome 'only' feeling" (Huizinga 27). A game therefore imposes a *rapport de force*

upon its player to be fulfilled, setting the player against obstacles to overcome, against mysteries

to solve. Clamence's discourse about his domination over others and especially his romantic

conquests and his wish to disturb the game actually "reverses the ideal form of Gadamer's model

in that it shows Clamence's refusal to be controlled by the game and his exasperated attempts to

invent the rules himself" (Ellison 127).

Huizinga establishes the reason why it is unpleasant when one of the players disturbs the

game, to use Clamence's words: "[T]he least deviation from it 'spoils the game', robs it of its

character, and makes it worthless"; it breaks the rapture effect because a game "creates order, *is*

order. Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life, a game — because of its defining,

set rules— brings a temporary, a limited perfection" (Huizinga 29). The idea of "déranger le jeu"

and of shattering Clamence's image of himself comes from him hearing the laugh at the bridge

that made him realize that he is not above judgement. Indeed, Clamence notes that the laugh he

hears on the bridge was the type of laugh that "remettait les choses en place" (Camus 43), i.e. a

laugh that put him in his place. Clamence heard that laugh when he felt like he was dominating the city and felt "un vaste sentiment de puissance" (42), as if he is above his human peers. Many critics link the title of *La Chute* to its biblical source, that is, Adam and Eve's fall from Eden. However, Ellison convincingly ties Clamence's fall to the notion of laughter by evoking Baudelaire's essay *De l'Essence du rire,* in which Baudelaire "grounds laughter in the ego's sense of superiority" (Ellison 132). Baudelaire indeed gives the examples of someone laughing at a passerby who would trip and fall; his laughter comes from the laughing person believing in his own ability to avoid falling "*moi*, je ne tombe pas; *moi*, je marche droit" (Baudelaire in Ellison, 132). Laughing, and by extension in this context, establishing one's superiority over others, is Clamence's goal. Ellison points out the justly biblical origin of the feeling of superiority: just like Eve who ate the apple from the tree of Knowledge, and consequently realized she was naked, "one feels oneself above the others because one has lost the original innocence of Eden" (132). Ellison concludes, quoting Baudelaire, that, "in stating that 'le rire humain est lié à l'accident d'une chute ancienne, d'une dégradation physique et morale' […] Baudelaire provides Camus with the title of his book as well as the theological vocabulary which critics most often examine independently of its contextual relationship to the theme of laughter" (132). Clamence heard a laugh that contradicted his feeling of superiority, and it triggered his fall, that is his introspection to realize his need to feel superior while he actually is not superior, and to never suffer from the laugh again. This first laugh gives him the idea of being juge-pénitent, accusing himself first when confessing his sins to his interlocutors, to then again, be able to hear his interlocutor confesses their own sins, which gives Clamence the turn to laugh at them. He wants to have the last laugh which would give him the feeling of superiority he desperately seeks.

In order to "déranger le jeu" and be the one who laughs, Clamence wants to disturb the

bourgeois, his peers, whom he calls the "humanistes professionels" and "athées de bistrot" (99).

Clamence says, as another example of how he disturbed the game, that he wanted to break the

idolized image that his younger colleagues had of him, and therefore started to praise the use of

"amalgame" to defend his clients (99). In this context, to create an "amalgame" means to

intentionally mix different people into one same group to create confusion: here Clamence did so

by "défendre le voleur en faisant valoir les crimes de l'honnête homme". This passage shows that

Camus plays with real-life references, through Clamence, by ironically alluding to his own

famous argument with Sartre who had written to him in *Les Temps Modernes*, telling Camus that

he resorted to "cette pratique qu'on dénonçait tout récemment encore —sous le nom, je crois,

d'amalgame" (Gay-Crosier 1382) when criticizing Camus's essays. Clamence's breaking his

own adored image also reminds us of Camus himself who "was the first one to react against his

own cult" (Girard, "Camus's *Stranger*" 91) as Camus did not want to be worshiped. So here,

Camus is toying with the reader who has knowledge about Camus's life, displaying Clamence as

a comedian portraying Camus and the perception of Camus by his peers. In the next section, I

will explore other games taking place in *LC*.

Games of reconstruction

LC consists of Clamence's monologue because we never explicitly read the interlocutor's

words. Hence, the novel might be best described as ""implied dialogue": the missing words and

acts of the fictional interlocutor can be inferred from what is said by the narrator" (Hutton 60).

The first and most intuitive extratextual game —involving the reader as opposed to the previous

intratextual type of games involving the characters—that the reader encounters would therefore

be the mental reconstruction of the interlocutor's speech or actions. The missing pieces have to

be recreated by the reader, like a puzzle. Throughout *LC*, there are 42 acknowledgements, by

Clamence, of the interlocutor saying or doing something. Because of Clamence's reaction to the interlocutor's actions or words, the reader is able to infer if some information has been omitted. Inference sometimes requires external knowledge and thus shows different levels of difficulty. The following quote contains an eloquent example: "Comment ? Quel soir ? J'y viendrai, soyez patient avec moi" (Camus 36). Here, the reader can infer that the interlocutor asked Clamence to tell him more about that fateful evening Clamence had mentioned earlier — the night Clamence did not help a woman who jumped from a bridge and drowned. An example that requires more effort is the following: "Comment ? Ces dames, derrière ces vitrines ? Le rêve, monsieur, le rêve à peu de frais, le voyage aux Indes !" (19). Here, the interlocutor asked about who the women in the window are, but the real identity of the women, not explicitly stated by Clamence, requires external knowledge from the reader. Knowing that they are in Amsterdam where prostitutes were typically displayed in windows, and because Clamence alludes to sensual pleasures in the sentences following the reference, one can infer the women in the windows are indeed prostitutes. This particular detail is not particularly important for the overall comprehension of the plot, but it still is an example of how, in general, the reader's cognitive environment must actively adapt to win at Camus's fill-in-the-blank game and with its different levels of difficulty and importance involved in it. This echoes Gee's comment on video game and adaptability:

> However, automatization, [i.e. the fact that an action is performed without even
> considering changing or adapting one's strategy] gets in the way of new learning
> if it does not change and adapt in the face of novel conditions and new
> opportunities to learn, which requires the learner to bring back to conscious
> awareness skills that have become unconscious and taken for granted and to think
> anew about these skills and how they relate to specific sorts of problems. (Gee 66)

LC's readers must activate external knowledge to fully understand the text they navigate. The typical reader might think *LC* will provide everything one needs to navigate it —taking reading as a closed, passive activity— but soon discovers that one must actively resort to inference and external knowledge, developing a new type of reading skill to solve the problem posed by the omitted parts. Narratives are games of interpretation, and garden-path narratives make this game of interpretation even more challenging by twisting and delaying information, and call for an even more active reading.

The interlocutor's omitted parts can be listed in three different categories with increasing inherent levels of difficulty: non-verbal, verbal, and external references. Clamence often notes the interlocutor's non-verbal reactions to his speech. This is the easiest category— the one requiring the least amount of problem-solving skills to fill in the blank— since Clamence explicitly mentions the action performed by the interlocutor. There are only two instances, which are the following: "Vous vous taisez ?" (52) and "Ne riez pas !" (146), respectively indicating that the interlocutor stays silent when Clamence asks him to think about what his emblem would be; and the last one indicating the interlocutor is laughing at Clamence when he tells him his strategy and that he expects the interlocutor to confess very soon, too. The second category has varying degrees of difficulty and is the most common category of inference to make throughout the novel since LC is, after all, an implied dialogue. The easiest types of verbal omissions would be the following: "Si j'en suis capable moi-même ? Ecoutez, je voudrais l'être, je le serai" (36). Here, one can infer that the interlocutor asked the question Clamence repeats to integrate it to his direct, monological speech. These omissions, like the references to non-verbal reactions, are easy to infer since the context is immediate: it is purely within the context of conversation, either as a response to Clamence's speech, or as a question for him. A second example, still easy but not as

passive, is this sentence: "Non, non, je ne puis rester" (44), from which one can infer that the interlocutor asked if Clamence could stay. Here, the reader has to actively fill in the blank —by mentally inserting the interlocutor's question— to make sense of Clamence's speech. As Visi notes, "tout repose sur des sous-entendus du locuteur que l'interlocuteur, par le biais du lecteur, décryptera en tant que co-énonciateur" (Visi np). Another example of verbal category, of a higher degree of difficulty is the example we first saw "Comment ? Quel soir ?" (36). Here, though one can easily infer that the interlocutor asked Clamence to talk about an evening, the reader has to recall that the reference to said evening occurred two pages ago, in which Clamence had said "J'ai plané jusqu'au *soir* où…Mais non, ceci est une autre affaire et il faut l'oublier" (34, my emphasis). Therefore, some verbal omissions require active recovery of information from the previous parts of the texts. This is a form of internal allusion or reference of the text to itself which shows again that the reader must pay close attention and perform active reading in Clamence's scattered, incomplete discourse.

Finally, the last category of omission is external references, or what Barthes calls "referential code". This is the hardest category since it requires active problem solving outside of the text, which may either require the reader to bring out external knowledge thanks to their own educational memories, or the reader may simply have to do research thanks to reference works, to fill in the blank of the omitted part. An omitted part that does require external knowledge from the reader to reconstitute the full dialogue is the following: "L'enfer bourgeois naturellement […] Ici nous sommes dans le dernier cercle. Le cercle des…Ah ! Vous savez cela ? Diable vous devenez plus difficile à classer !" (18). Here, not only must the reader perform the mental effort to recognize the intertextual reference to Dante's *Inferno*, due to the mentions of "enfer" and "cercle", since Dante describes nine circles of Hell, each one being for a different sin, but must

also have the knowledge of who is destined for the last circle since Clamence does not spell it out this time, though he does confirm that the interlocutor's answer is correct— the answer is, the ninth circle is for those who committed treachery such as Judas or Brutus. If the reader recognizes this allusion to traitors, his cognitive environment will now have the seme of treachery activated in his mind and thus be more attentive to clues pointing at Clamence's future treason, helping perform a more critical reading that will potentially anticipate Clamence's treason at the end.

In addition to requiring the reader to fill in the blanks left by the interlocutor's omitted speech, the narrator plays the game of allusions, particularly regarding the painting he stole, *Les Juges Intègres*. The reader as well as the interlocutor discover this at the very end of the novel. At the beginning, Clamence mentions an empty space on the wall in the bar: "Voyez, par exemple, au-dessus de sa tête, sur le mur du fond, ce rectangle vide qui marque la place d'un tableau décroché. Il y avait là, en effet, un tableau, et particulièrement intéressant, un vrai chef d'œuvre. Eh bien, j'étais présent quand le maitre de céans l'a reçu et quand il l'a cédé" (9). This empty rectangle acts also as a physical representation of Clamence's omission games. Then, in the second chapter, Clamence says that he has to leave to meet with an expert in art trafficking and the "auteur du plus célèbre vol de tableaux. Lequel ? Je vous le dirai peut-être" (44). In this passage, Clamence does express his affiliations with a man performing illegal acts. In the fourth chapter, Clamence confesses that he has at home "un objet qui fait courir en vain trois polices" (95). Finally, in the last chapter, Clamence reveals that he has in his possession the painting *Les Juges Intègres* in his closet, and explains that it had been stolen in a cathedral in 1934, but later a drunk man sold it to the owner of the Mexico-City bar where Clamence goes. Clamence had then advised the owner to "l'accrocher en bonne place, et longtemps, pendant qu'on le cherchait dans

le monde entier" (135) —a reference to Edgar Poe's *The Purloined Letter* in which the key to the mystery is hidden in plain sight— and finally convinces the owner to give it to him to hide it in his room after he explained the whole theft story. This painting by Van Eyck did exist in real life and had indeed been stolen, as Clamence says, in 1934 in the Gand cathedral, and remains unfound. Clamence, in that way, links himself to an extra-diegetic real-life event, just like Camus links his life to Clamence's. External knowledge —that is to say, referential coding according to Barthes— is therefore a significant part of the types of games occurring in *LC*. Garden-path narratives are narratives that purposefully subvert the reader's expectations that the reader builds based on his experience and exposure to similar texts and themes. External knowledge that is activated while reading can therefore be either a help or a hindrance, depending on what the author's strategy is. I will now go through my methodology for a first naïve reading of *LC*

First Reading

Title and synopsis:

La Chute's title reminds us of the original fall from Eden in the Bible, in which Adam and Eve gained knowledge from the forbidden fruit, despite God's order to not eat it. This gain of knowledge against God's will marks the original sin in Christianity, which states that all human beings are born sinners. The synopsis of *LC* is that a former lawyer, Clamence, starts a conversation with a stranger and confesses his past and his sins of lust, pride, and fake altruism. Throughout the novel, Clamence tells anecdote after anecdote, asking for the sympathy of his interlocutor while he himself points out his past moral flaws. The synopsis is linked to the title in that Clamence seems to want to get redemption thanks to his confession, and to point out the modern man's disease: because contemporary philosophy establishes that men have free will and therefore, freedom, God no longer is omnipotent, and men must face responsibility for their

actions. Here, men's original sin is to be born free and therefore they are burdened by the weight of their choices and as a consequence, must face the judgement of others for their choices. Camus's view of existentialism means that all men are responsible for their actions. Later in the novel, when Clamence brings up the anecdote of the woman who falls in the river and whom Clamence does not try to rescue, the weight of Clamence's choice (his inaction) looms over him. The title *La Chute* seems to therefore refer to the biblical reference and that of the woman. However, the existentialist philosophy of Camus, insisting on humans' responsibility, displaces the biblical context to make it his own, so here, the fall in *La Chute* is existential, not biblical.

Genre/focus and following pattern

The novel consists of six chapters, with distinctive settings and tones and topics to navigate, though the following pattern is always the same, i.e., following Clamence and his interlocutor, and each chapter stops when they separate, except for ch. 5 that is a mere continuation of chapter 4's conversation at the end of which Clamence suggests they take a break but the interlocutor wants him to continue his story. The first chapter starts in the bar Mexico-City, with the narrator offering his help to the interlocutor. Once Clamence says he will leave him now, the interlocutor actually, in the implicit dialogue offered by Clamence, asks him to stay at the bar with him: "Vous êtes trop bon. J'installerai donc mon verre auprès du vôtre" (10). The interlocutor asking Clamence to stay, and later accepting his offer to help him find his way (14), then to invite him —as we can infer from Clamences's line "J'accepterai avec reconnaissance votre invitation" (14)— appears as prompts that trigger a branch of narrative and alludes to the path not taken, just like in *Heavy Rain* in which the player would activate a new quest by clicking on certain prompts to trigger different actions and to change the outcome of the storyline (the interlocutor could have refused Clamence's company, he could have refused his help to find

his way). We then follow the narrator and interlocutor getting out of the bar to walk through the streets along the canals of Amsterdam. Clamence, who had insisted on helping his interlocutor find his path to his lodging, then stops at a bridge and leaves his interlocutor there: "A demain, donc […] Non, vous trouverez maintenant votre chemin ; je vous quitte près de ce pont. Je ne passe jamais sur un pont la nuit" (Camus 19). In this chapter, Clamence discusses mostly concepts of relation to others, comparisons of humans to the animal kingdom, bourgeois tourists, and comments on the settings they are in—Amsterdam—with references to historical domination among peoples, like the Holocaust and the slave trade. This first chapter is fairly short (from page 7 to 20, a total of 14 pages) and coherent, that is, with not many digressions and interruptions.

The second chapter is slightly longer, from pages 21-45, for a total of 25 pages. No setting is explicitly given, but we can assume Clamence and the interlocutor are in Mexico-City since Clamence said earlier "Je serai certainement ici [Mexico-City] demain, comme les autres soirs, et j'accepterai avec reconnaissance votre invitation" (14). In this chapter, Clamence talks about his past as a lawyer and as a man exhibiting generous behaviors only in order to feel superior to others. Clamence's rhetoric starts to display more digressions, imperatives, and meta-discourse —comments on his own discourse— to control the conversation and the topics when needed: "Passons là-dessus. Parlons plutôt de ma courtoisie" (25) "Arrêtons-nous sur ces cimes" (27) "J'ai plané jusqu'au soir où…Mais non, ceci est une autre affaire et il faut l'oublier" (34). The interlocutor reactivates previous topics, for instance by asking about the "soir" (36) Clamence mentioned earlier. Strangely, while Clamence said previously that this evening was not going to be discussed right then, now Clamence says about it that "d'une certaine manière, je suis dans mon sujet" (36). The chapter ends with Clamence leaving his interlocutor to meet a

client and agrees to see him again the next day (44).

The third chapter goes from pages 47 to 76 (30 pages total), which is the longest of the novel, but is more straightforward —that is, no meta-discourse to redirect the speech and to artificially bring the attention to a topic in particular. Clamence and his companion are on a boat and this is where Clamence discusses his romantic past in detail, setting himself as a conqueror to dominate his lovers. It is in this chapter that Clamence mentions the anecdote of the woman who fell and whom he did not help (74-75). The end of this anecdote coincides with the boat arriving at its destination and abruptly stops the conversation. Again, they agree to meet the next day.

The fourth chapter is of fairly equal length, from pages 77-102 (26 pages), and just like chapter three, shows fewer digressions. Clamence and his companion are on a boat to visit the Marken island, an island close to Amsterdam. In this chapter, Clamence uses a lot of Christian imagery like calling his environment "un enfer mou" (78) and seeing "colombes invisibles" (79) in the sky. This is where Clamence confesses the moment when he discovered that he was not above judgement and then tries to provoke the judgment of others upon him by acting out, as if he had wanted to keep a certain control on this process and not leave it entirely to others. This chapter ends with the night coming and them going back to the boat to go back to Amsterdam.

The fifth chapter takes place in the boat going back to Amsterdam. It covers pages 103-124 (22 pages) so it is shorter than the previous one. The chapter ends on a meta-discursive comment by Clamence saying "Puisque nous sommes tous juges, nous sommes tous coupables les uns devant les autres […] Nous serions [crucifié sans le savoir] du moins, si moi, Clamence, je n'avais trouvé l'issue, la seule solution, la vérité enfin…Non, je m'arrête, cher ami" (123). In this chapter, Clamence links judgement of others to religion, which, besides, he calls "une grande

entreprise de blanchissage" (117). He also discusses the concept of *malconfort* —a medieval cell for prisoners set up as a torture device, too small to stand up and too narrow to lie down— (115) and how he applies it to his perspective in life. When they separate, they promise to meet again one last time before the interlocutor goes back to Paris.

The sixth and last chapter goes from page 125 to 153 (29 pages). Clamence is bed-ridden and actually reveals the game that he has been performing all along in the previous chapters. It ends with Clamence promising the interlocutor that he will eventually get burdened by Clamence's existential view about all humans carrying guilt and judgement, and will come back to tell him about his own past — which would be a significant change since the interlocutor has barely talked about his own life throughout the novel.

Each chapter constitutes a different step in Clamence's strategy —a strategy I will discuss later in more detail— inviting his companion to follow him physically but more importantly mentally. This following pattern is therefore single-focus, in Altman's sense of the term, though in a complex way since Clamence is both addressing the present and his past self, and the interlocutor's implicit remarks are manifest in this single-focus pattern too. The modulations between the following units (here the chapters are following units) are closer to that of theater, jumping from one specific scene to another, with either references to the environment (such as when Clamence says that they are now on a boat, which would be metonymic modulations), or no references at all to the environment at the beginning and this would be hyperbolic modulation.

Semes

The semes, to use Barthes' term, are units of meaning that add connotations in a description. The most prominent semes in this novel are religious imagery (Bree, Pasco, Ellison)

although this imagery is also used in existentialism, regarding the domination of others, judgment and responsibility. This can be found in the following elements, though this is not an exhaustive list:

1. the references to Dante's Inferno and Christianity

2. the recurring doves in the sky

3. Clamence's profession

4. Clamence's new position as juge-pénitent

5. Clamence's relation to women and people in need of his help

These semes are important for my analysis as they participate in building characters and settings, since semes bring layers of meaning to a description. Semes may therefore be crucial for readers to form certain expectations regarding the plot and the characters' actions.

Intertextual frames

Many critics have noted the rich intertextuality of *LC*. Pasco notes

> Camus takes his referent texts for the most part from the Bible and the French
> tradition, leaving no doubt of the culture required of the reader. For those with the
> requisite knowledge, his references in *La Chute* may stimulate a recall of previous
> readings elsewhere that arise as mental images, in effect, to lay alongside what is
> taking place in Camus's text. When all operates as it should, the image from other
> works joins with the textual references. (1)

Like Ellison's earlier definition of a game —i.e. "the game as such fulfills itself much as a musical composition does—through performance or "realization"—and affects its performers in a similar fashion, by transforming them, by actively modifying their being. […] The playing of

games fulfills its purpose only when the player becomes caught up [wrapped up] in the playing."
(Ellison 126)— Pasco observes that this intertextuality is obviously stemming from authorial
design but only exists thanks to the reader's cognitive processing and recognition of such
allusions: "[allusion] operates at the command of the writer but only when recognized in the
mind of the reader or audience" (Pasco 2). This echoes Riffatterre's take on the reader's
experience, as "literary competence, as a special variety of linguistic competence, rests upon
presupposition" (Riffaterre 16). Beyond the most obvious biblical allusions, other textual
references appear. The confession style, as well as the process itself that Clamence goes through,
reminds one of the most famous confession in French literature, Rousseau's autobiographical *Les
Confessions*, in which "[Rousseau] was confessing the unvarnished truth about himself, he
explains further, to exculpate himself. He wants to put himself on the side of those who laughed
not with but *at* him" (Pasco 2, my emphasis). Like Clamence, Rousseau was also not a
completely trustworthy narrator as, in *Les Confessions*, "there are also textual "ornaments" that
may incidentally hide the facts. There are edulcorations that slide over into ameliorations" (3).
The biblical elements, as well as allusions to other confession texts like Rousseau's, can imprint
on the reader the misleading idea that Clamence is trying indeed to confess his past sins in order
to be able to look back on his life and see how to improve as best he can, and to show himself as
an example of what a contemporary man can be.

Identification of the anomaly

In the final chapter, Clamence invites his companion over in his room where he lies in
bed. Clamence seems agitated and finally explains what his position as "juge-pénitent" entails.
At the end of chapter 5, Clamence mentions this moniker, "juge-pénitent", but stops the
conversation and promises his companion he will explain it the next day (Camus 124). In chapter

6, Clamence confesses: "Ce métier de juge-pénitent, je l'exerce en ce moment" (136). Then he continues,

> Ne croyez pas en effet que, pendant cinq jours, je vous aie fait de si long discours
> pour le seul plaisir. […] Maintenant, mon discours est orienté. Il est orienté par
> l'idée, évidemment, de faire taire les rires, d'éviter personnellement le jugement,
> bien qu'il n'y ait, en apparence, aucune issue. Le grand empêchement à y
> échapper n'est-il pas que nous sommes les premiers à nous condamner ? Il faut
> donc commencer par étendre la condamnation à tous, sans discrimination, afin de
> la délayer déjà. (137)

This first step in Clamence's strategy, that of condemning everyone at first, is indeed what Clamence did in the first chapter, by denouncing historical massacres and current vices of the contemporary men. Clamence adds some precision to this step: "Comment mettre tout le monde dans le bain pour avoir le droit de se sécher soi-même au soleil ?" (143), and his solution was "inverser le raisonnement pour triompher. Puisqu'on ne pouvait condamner les autres sans aussitôt se juger, il fallait s'accabler soi-même pour avoir le droit de juger les autres. Puisque tout juge finit un jour pénitent, il fallait prendre la route en sens inverse et faire métier de pénitent pour pouvoir finir en juge" (143-4). This step of accusing oneself first is indeed, what chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 have been.

The reader now knows that what comes next is that Clamence is ready to judge his companion: "[ma profession] consiste d'abord, *puisque vous en avez fait l'expérience*, à pratiquer la confession publique […] mais attention, je ne m'accuse pas grossièrement, […] Non, je navigue souplement, je multiplie les nuances, les digressions aussi, j'adapte enfin mon discours à l'auditeur, *j'amène ce dernier à renchérir*" (145, my emphasis). Here, Clamence

admits that his digressions, that I notably exposed earlier in the following-pattern analysis, are part of the plan, and that the previous chapters were only the instigations of his profession. However, Clamence says that he brings his interlocutor to "renchérir", i.e. to add, to top off Clamence's confessions, but we do not encounter such behavior here, so either Clamence has made even more ellipses than we established, or his current interlocutor is just not behaving as Clamence had planned. After analyzing in the section on levels of game in *LC*, the fill-in-the-blank game of the interlocutor's speech, we now know that the allusions to the interlocutor answering and pressing Clamence for more answers are now proof that the interlocutor was instrumentalized in Clamence's strategy to fill the "juge" position while Clamence was "pénitent" before being able to be judge again —as he says, after all, "je suis la fin et le commencement, j'annonce la loi. Bref je suis juge-pénitent" (124). We can thus see that Clamence's strategy is indeed full of rhetorical traps to involve his interlocutor into a game of moral domination without him even knowing it —and thus less likely to ever win it.

Clamence is the *maître du jeu* here when it comes to managing the narrative, and the fact that we do not hear much of the interlocutor, especially being judgmental as Clamence claims his victims to be first as they are the "juge", brings us to wonder if the lack of judgemental comments comes from the fact that Clamence is filtering his interlocutor's responses, relying on omissions, or if his interlocutor is just not behaving as Clamence wishes. Regardless, Clamence creates an asymmetric-information game to set himself up for winning, i.e. to come out as the one dominating the other, as he even physically feels this need as he sits up in his bed and declares "il me faut être plus haut que vous" (149). The reader as the interlocutor realizes that the whole narration was the strategy, and that they should not have trusted Clamence's seemingly genuine offer to help the interlocutor when they first met. Now that I have identified the

interpretive failure upon which *La Chute's* GPN is built, I will turn to analyzing elements of this GPN that a second reading allows to bring to light.

Second Reading

In this section, I will identify the elements of asymmetric-information game of *LC*, that is, which information was twisted or postponed and by which discursive means it was twisted or postponed to understand the cornerstone of *LC*'s GPN. I will also address inferential walks created by Clamence's rhetoric regarding his trustworthiness. Since so many critics have worked on intertextual references, I will not spend much time on the section of intertextual frames but will briefly acknowledge the referential codes, in Barthes's sense of the term, that might be part of the GPN strategy.

Asymmetric information game

I mentioned earlier that Camus had already produced at least one other GPN besides *LC*, which is *La Peste*. Literary scholar Rey includes a correspondence of Camus before *La Peste* was published in which Camus addresses the GPN nature of *La Peste*:

> Le narrateur est Rieux lui-même ce qui explique des tas de choses du livre. Je le
> disais dans les dernières pages mais sans doute n'était-ce pas assez clair. Aussi ai-
> je refait le début du dernier chapitre, et je l'ai dit clairement « Il est temps
> d'avouer que le narrateur est le docteur Rieux lui-même.» Et je lui fais justifier
> son ton d'objectivité par le fait que la souffrance des autres était la même que la
> sienne. Je tiens beaucoup à ça. *C'est le secret du livre, son retentissement, et c'est*
> *ce qui devrait obliger à le relire, si le livre est réussi* (qtd. in Rey, 14, my
> emphasis).

Here, just as when David Cage commented that *Heavy Rain*'s gaming twist would make players play a second time if not more, Camus underlines that he expects his reader to perform a *second reading* due to the GPN elements of his book once they discover the secret of it. And for Camus, the fact that his reader will perform a second reading shows that the book is well-made. This reminds us of Eco's words on first and second reading: "a naïve model reader [is] eager to fall into the traps of the narrator (to feel fear or suspect the innocent one) but [the narrative] usually wants to produce also a critical model reader able to enjoy, at a second reading, the brilliant narrative strategy for which the first-level, naïve reader was designed" (Eco, *The Role* 55). Camus, as Eco says, wants his reader to be critical and be able to discover the author's misleading strategy. As said in the introduction of this chapter, Camus included a *prière d'insérer* in the original edition but it was removed in later ones —as far as I have been able to research, it was removed as early as editions printed in 1958. As a consequence, most readers have not had access to this insert in which Camus offers a disclaimer about his narrator being unreliable and thus most readers have not been warned that the narrative will be misleading. Consequently, a second reading is definitely necessary and relevant in order to point out the elements of such an unexpectedly misleading construction. I will now turn to the analysis of Clamence's rhetoric to see to what extent it develops asymmetric-information games, that is, whether information has been twisted or postponed.

Unlike Shelby who lies once in Ch. 4 of *Heavy Rain* saying that he was hired by the victims' families to investigate the murders (when in fact he was not) and then relies on his position as private detective for people not to even question his motives, Clamence is a much different character. As Blondeau says "Sa confession obéit sans cesse au procédé de retardement : il diffère l'essentiel, ne révélant qu'à la toute fin en quoi consiste la profession de juge-pénitent

pourtant annoncée d'emblée" (Blondeau 57). He never explicitly *lies* about his intentions, he just *postpones* the true nature of them until the very end, once he announces that his whole speech to his companion for the past few days was never out of mere pleasantry (Camus 137) but rather it was part of his very strategy. Even the first, famous, sentence that Clamence utters "Puis-je, monsieur, vous proposer mes services, sans risquer d'être importun ?" (7) is not twisting his intentions since he never bothered his companion, but rather, the companion was the one requesting to meet Clamence at the end of each chapter. So Clamence was never "importun", because he knows how to hook his victims with their *own consent*. As Camus said in the *prière d'insérer*, Clamence only finds "des auditeurs *complaisants*" (Gay-Crosier 770, my emphasis). When Clamence suggests that he accompany his interlocutor to find his path, Clamence says "Votre chemin…eh bien…Mais verriez-vous un inconvénient, *ce serait plus simple*, à ce que je vous accompagne jusqu'au port ?" (Camus 14). The excuse that it would be simpler to go with the interlocutor rather than explaining it sounds sincere, considering that Amsterdam is a city with "canaux concentriques" (18) like a maze, therefore verbal directions might cause confusion while having a guide would be easier.

Clamence is also straightforward about his own nature: "je suis bavard, hélas, et me lie facilement" (9); and even foreshadows his duplicity early: he confesses his weakness for "le beau language […] le style comme la popeline, dissimule trop souvent de l'eczéma" (10); "mon métier est double, voilà tout, comme la créature" (14). He even says his business card should say "Ne vous y fiez pas" (52). While some critics have called Clamence "un narrateur menteur, non transparent ou non digne de confiance" (Rey 23), Clamence is fairly transparent about his true nature. However, this might be easily discarded by the interlocutor/reader since this duplicity is associated by Clamence to his professional context, and not his personal relationship developing

between himself and his companion. However, some information twisted is his own comments about his speech and the reasons for his specific rhetoric. For instance, when he mentions that his digressions are "oriented", at the end of the novel, it shows that his iterations about how he got sidetracked and now needs to redirect his speech to a topic closer to the heart of the subject are indeed a mere performance, like an actor—a title he endorses explicitly at the very beginning of the novel when discussing what his business card should read: "Jean-Baptiste Clamence, comédien" (52).

After bringing all these elements to light and after having exposed the asymmetric-information game elements, it is now clear that the one true lie —or shall I say the one erroneous, unspoken, assumption that Clamence expects his companion to hold and that he exploits to his own benefit— and that is the cornerstone of *La Chute*'s GPN is that Clamence's relationship to his companion is professional, and not one of pure company. Had the interlocutor known he was Clamence's "client"—that is to say the chosen victim for Clamence to perform his profession as juge-pénitent, that he had actually met in Clamence's "office", the Mexico-City bar— all along, he might have picked up on Clamence's warning about his profession's duplicity. Instead of being a willing, knowing, travel companion, and simply being his "cher ami", as Clamence calls him many times, the interlocutor was a *client* without knowing it, let alone agreeing to it.

Answering Camus's question : "Où commence la confession, où l'accusation ?"

In this part, I will discuss how relevant my GPN analysis is despite the fact that a reader may have access to the temporary *prière d'insérer* from the first edition. As discussed in a previous section, Camus had already published a GPN novel, *La Peste*. In this work, the GPN's secret is that the narrator, supposedly extra-diegetic yet homodiegetic, turns out to be a character

who is key in the plot and who is mentioned by the narrator as if he were a different person. Camus justifies the objective tone of his character because "la souffrance des autres était la même que la sienne" (qtd. in Rey, 14). The discovery of his identity is a surprise to the reader in so far as the narrator did not describe the plague situation as a personal experience although he could be entitled to, given that he lived through the experience he is narrating. Although it is a GPN, *La Peste* did announce from the beginning that a mystery was about to occur in the novel. Rey observes:

> au début du dernier chapitre de l'ouvrage, le lecteur apprend que le docteur Rieux, qu'il avait pris pour le protagoniste d'une « chronique » tenue par un « narrateur » anonyme, est en réalité l'auteur de cette chronique. Sans doute a-t-on alors oublié que, *dès le premier chapitre, Camus avait introduit un suspens en prévenant* qu'« on connaîtra toujours à temps » le narrateur de l'histoire. Qu'il s'agisse du docteur Rieux, qui l'aurait deviné ? Camus a en effet pris soin *d'égarer* notre perspicacité. (Rey 13, my emphasis)

Thus, in *La Peste*, Camus did give a clue that the novel was going to mislead the reader about who the narrator really is. Nevertheless, despite this clue, Camus still expected to trigger a surprise effect for his readers, as the true identity of the narrator is "le secret du livre, son retentissement, et c'est ce qui devrait obliger à le relire, si le livre est réussi" (qtd. in Rey, 14). Camus therefore meant to create a true GPN for his readers, despite an early warning, whose secret would be revealed at the end of the novel. This is a similar pattern to *LC*'s GPN, and more specifically to the original edition of *LC*, because of the temporary *prière d'insérer* at the beginning that warns the reader, and the ending revealing the true intentions of Clamence.

Although there is an early warning in both works, Camus still intends to create a trap for

his readers, according to his own correspondence, so how, to use Rey's terms, does Camus

manage to "égarer notre perspicacité" despite knowing from the outset that the narrative will be

misleading? This is what I will analyze in this section. Before I present my findings, here is a

reminder of the *prière d'insérer*:

> L'homme qui parle dans *La Chute* se livre à une confession calculée.
>
> Réfugié à Amsterdam dans une ville de canaux et de lumière froide, où il joue à
>
> l'ermite et au prophète, cet ancien avocat attend dans un bar douteux des auditeurs
>
> complaisants. Il a le cœur moderne, c'est-à-dire qu'il ne peut supporter d'être
>
> jugé. Il se dépêche donc de faire son propre procès mais c'est pour mieux juger les
>
> autres. Le miroir dans lequel il se regarde, il finit par le tendre aux autres.
>
> Où commence la confession, où l'accusation ? Celui qui parle dans ce livre
>
> fait-il son procès ou celui de son temps ? Est-il un cas particulier, ou l'homme du
>
> jour ? Une seule vérité en tout cas, dans ce jeu de glaces étudié : la douleur, et ce
>
> qu'elle promet. (Gay-Crosier 770-1)

As Rey mentioned for *La Peste*, Camus is a master of misleading his readers and creating GPN.

In *LC*, first of all, Clamence's speech is a true logorrhea that hypnotizes the interlocutor to draw

him into his trap, "noy[é] parmi la masse des digressions anecdotiques" (Gay-Crosier 1355).

Keefe notes that Clamence's discourse is about recalling his past and along with that offers "an

added dimension and complexity by the fact that part of what Clamence is describing in his own

past is a struggle with his memory. That is, a struggle in the past to remember incidents in his

still more distant past" (Keefe 541). Therefore, the chronology of the discourse is confusing in

itself because Clamence struggles with remembering. Ellision underlines how disconcerted the

reader of *LC* is "to the point of dizziness: he falls into the narrator's verbal maze and becomes entangled/enmeshed in the blanket of guilt that the récit weaves around the crimes of twentieth-century humanity" (Ellison 117). Hutton also notes that Clamence explaining his strategy —e.g. "je navigue souplement, je multiplie les nuances, les digressions" (Camus 145)— "becomes meta-metanarrative. Explaining that the narrative is a trap becomes itself part of the trap" (Hutton 66). As the *prière d'insérer* announces, and as Clamence confesses (Camus 156), "if Clamence's narrative aspires to be a mirror held up to his interlocutor, the meta-metanarrative instead makes of it a series of facing mirrors toppling us into a dizzying infinite regress" (Hutton 66). Therefore, the mere structure of *LC* contributes to creating a dizzying effect on the reader who, even if warned, gets lost in Clamence's continuous speech.

In addition, Clamence's rhetoric is meant to overwhelm his interlocutor. Beyond dizzying him through his endless speech Clamence's strategy offers subtle commands for his interlocutor to be more engaged and therefore fall more under the spell of his misleading speech. Throughout the entire conversation, Clamence will direct his interlocutor's attention not only to details of his stories but more importantly to the interlocutor's own experience, pushing him to perform recurring introspection starting in chapter 2, which is part of the juge-pénitent's strategy : "pesez bien cela" (Camus 30); "creusez votre mémoire" (70); "si vous en doutez, prêtez l'oreille aux propos de table […] Si vous hésitez encore, lisez donc les écrits de nos grands hommes du moment. Ou bien observez votre propre famille" (82); "je vous laisse choisir la case qui me convient le mieux" (125). By constantly exhorting his interlocutor either to reflect on his own life, or to judge Clamence or the rest of mankind, Clamence changes his interlocutor's —and by extension, the reader's— cognitive environment towards oneself and others, and sows the seeds of self-judgement in his companion.

In addition to Clamence slowly changing his interlocutor's cognitive environment and his dizzying rhetoric, there is another element that contributes to getting lost into Clamence's speech despite being warned by the *prière d'insérer* that Clamence is not to be trusted: Clamence's very duplicitous nature. He embodies the Liar's paradox:

> also called Epimenides' paradox, [The Liar] paradox derived from the statement attributed to the Cretan prophet Epimenides (6th century bce) that all Cretans are liars. If Epimenides' statement is taken to imply that all statements made by Cretans are false, then, since Epimenides was a Cretan, his statement is false (i.e., not all Cretans are liars). The paradox in its simplest form arises from considering the sentence "This sentence is false." If the sentence is true, then it is false, and if it is false, then it is true. (Britanica np)

Since Clamence openly announces throughout *LC* his duplicitous nature even without the *prière d'insérer*, his stance is that of the liar's paradox: he embodies contradiction and now that we know that he may be a liar in everything he says, there is no way of knowing what is true and what is not. Therefore, despite knowing that Clamence's speech is calculated, we readers cannot know where to draw the line between genuine words and performance, and, lost in the dizzying logorrhea, we can either take everything at face value or question everything —or both— when facing Clamence's masterful acting, blending the truth with the lies.

Now that I have established the challenges of *LC* even when knowing Clamence's intentions, I will turn to answering the question asked by Camus in his own insert: where does the confession start, where the accusation, which forms another GPN since the structure of Clamence's discourse is intricate and it is hard to draw the line between

confession and accusation.

Several elements may give indications as to where the line can be drawn. First of all, as mentioned earlier, the key to the GPN in *LC*, for the interlocutor and the reader who did not have access to the insert —the vast majority of the readership today— is that Clamence's relationship to the interlocutor is one of work (i.e. the work of his mission as juge-pénitent) and not one of pure companionship and friendship as we might have thought. The reason why the readers and the interlocutor may be fooled despite being warned about Clamence's misleading strategy, is because Clamence calls his companion "cher ami", not "cher client", which would be more accurate since "client" is what the interlocutor is, though calling him "ami" is part of the strategy. Clamence establishes different levels of familiarity with his companion, gradually increasing it throughout his discourse and how much he reveals about himself. Thanks to a textual analysis performed by the text mining software *Voyant*, we can see how the different steps unfold in Figure 1 below throughout the whole novel. The vertical axis is the relative frequencies of chosen terms, and the horizontal axis shows the texts divided into ten sections to be processed. Clamence starts by calling him "cher monsieur", since they are strangers, up until the third chapter, where he switches to "cher compatriote" starting page 47, and finally calls him "cher ami" starting chapter 4, explicitly marking a higher degree of relationship between them thanks to the time they spent together and how much Clamence has shared about his past. Clamence therefore allows a certain amount of time before marking a closer relationship to his companion.
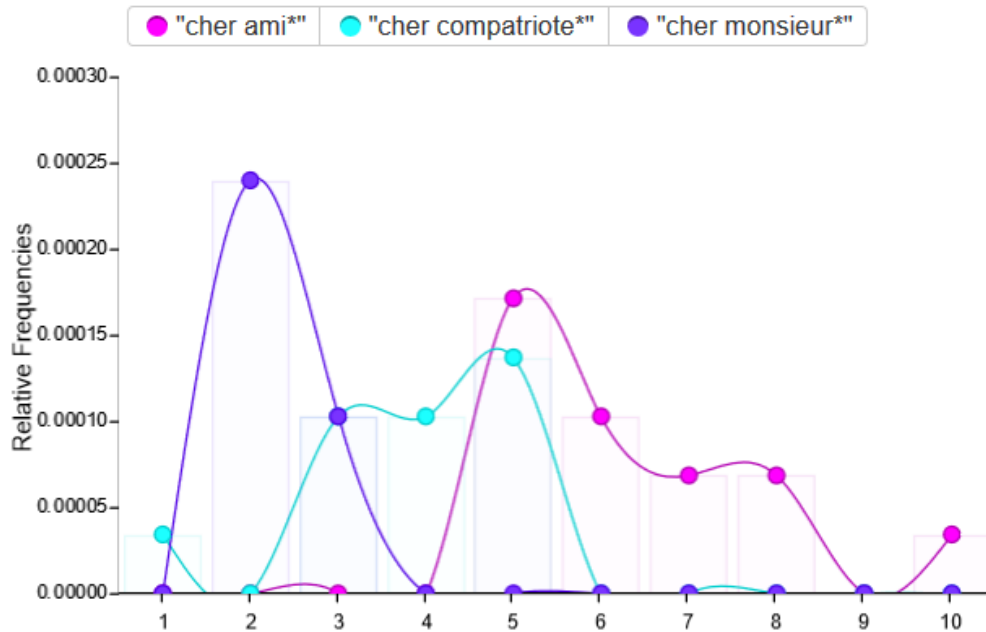
Figure 3

Calling his interlocutor "cher compatriote" allows Clamence to establish a relationship between him and the interlocutor versus the rest of the foreigners, therefore establishing a smaller appertaining group of French people among the crowd in Amsterdam. Then, Clamence narrows this group by calling him "ami", an even more intimate and exclusive denomination. As discussed previously, the fact that Clamence pretends to be a friend, not a juge-pénitent, with his companion, induces the anomaly on which the GPN trap relies on. Is Clamence lying? Well, actually, not really, if we look closely at his stance about friends. Page 77, Clamence calls the interlocutor "ami", and only two pages later, Clamence declares: "je n'ai plus d'amis, je n'ai que des *complices*" (79, my emphasis). And later, "ne croyez pas vos amis, quand ils vous demanderont d'être sincère avec eux" (88). So, while Clamence is being misleading by calling his companion a friend, a critical reader will notice that for Clamence the definition of friend now means an *accomplice* in his mission of juge-pénitent. Thus, as I suggested earlier in my first analysis of the GPN

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and my conclusion regarding the fact that the GPN relies on the companion being a *client (though being so unknowingly)*, not a friend, I will push the nuance even further and state that the GPN's key lies in the twisted —though explicitly revealed— definition of "friend" by Clamence. Germaine Bree does note, after all, that Clamence's dizzying discourse "subsume[s] his interlocutor's acquiescence and *complicity*" (Bree, *Albert Camus: La Chute* 10, my emphasis).

Let us now turn to other elements that might highlight the switch from confession to accusation. When analyzing the text through *Voyant* and factoring in the lexical field of judgement —thanks to using the formula "juge*" which takes into account words similar to "juge" like "juger" and "jugement"— Figure 4 clearly shows that the topic of judgement is greatly prominent in the second half of the novel, and obviously towards the end when Clamence explains his profession and strategy:
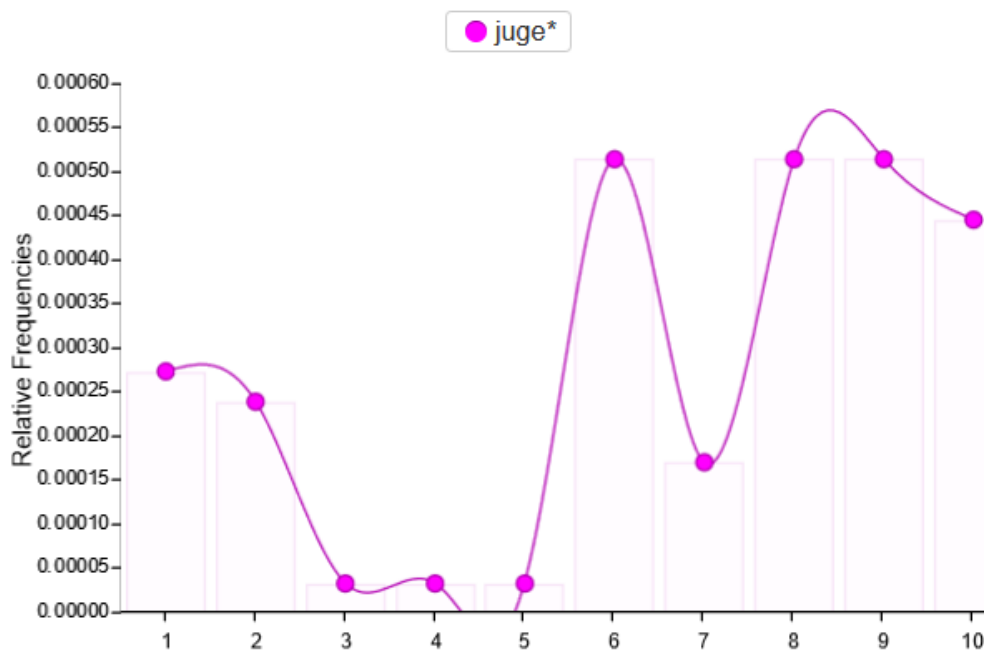
Figure 4

What is interesting thanks to this vizualisation analysis, is to see that the topic of judgement becomes increasingly prevalent around the same time that Clamence starts calling his companion "ami" (see Figure 1). Now that I uncovered that the term "ami", in Clamence's mouth, means "accomplice" to him (although again, an unknowing accomplice at first), these figures are strong evidence that there is a correlation between making the companion a friend, i.e. an accomplice, and the presence of the concept of judgement.

Finally, Clamence himself confesses one of his methods for implementing his strategy: "je passe, dans mon discours, du « je » au « nous »" (Camus 146). Although it is a metaphorical way for Clamence to say that he goes from accusing himself to accusing others —"nous" could encapsulate him and everyone else or just him and his companion— I will use Voyant to see what pattern emerges regarding the use of the pronouns "nous", in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5

Although the pronoun "nous" is used throughout the novel for a variety of contexts (referring to Clamence and his interlocutor, referring to other human beings as an impersonal pronoun), the

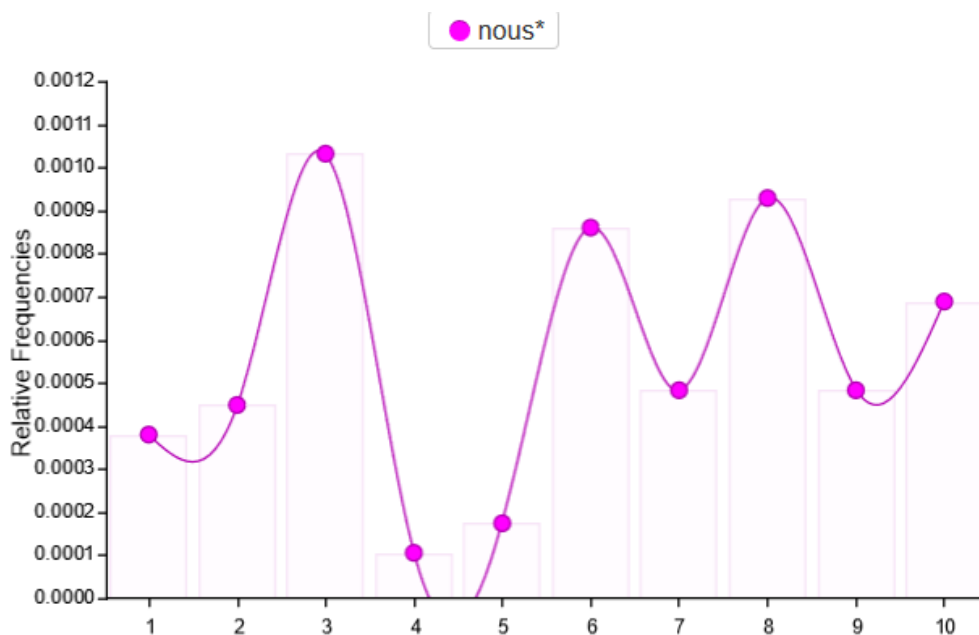analysis clearly show that "nous" is being used much more consistently after the same tipping point as when "ami" and the judgement topic start appearing as well. Therefore, here again, there is a strong correlation between these rhetorical phenomena in Clamence's discourse. The fact that Clamence insists on judgement, switches from "I" to "we" more consistently, and that the companion is called "ami" —which all starts happening in chapter 4— shows that the process of making his companion an accomplice —the person who enables Clamence to become judge instead of penitent as he once was— starts then, and, Clamence's accusation and judgement of this accomplice can start. Therefore, this is where the accusation starts, to answer Camus' own question in his *prière d'insérer*.

Coincidently, the accusation starts after Clamence told the anecdote about the suicidal woman jumping from the bridge, at the end of chapter 3. The topic of failing to rescue this woman frames Clamence's own accusation role, since it starts after this anecdote and ends with Clamence's final words which are a direct reference to this anecdote:

> Prononcez vous-même les mots qui, depuis des années, n'ont cessé de retentir
>
> dans mes nuits, et que je dirai enfin par votre bouche : « Ô jeune fille, jette-toi
>
> encore dans l'eau pour que j'aie une seconde fois la chance de nous sauver tous
>
> les deux ! » Une seconde fois, hein, quelle imprudence ! Supposez, cher maître,
>
> qu'on nous prenne au mot ? Il faudrait s'exécuter. Brr… ! l'eau est si froide !
>
> Mais rassurons-nous ! Il est trop tard, maintenant, il sera toujours trop tard.
>
> Heureusement ! (153)

Like the lawyer he once was, Clamence dramatically and emphatically ends his accusation, or his prosecution closing speech, so that he can reap the benefits and be the judge again, after being penitent for all this time.

At the end of the novel, Clamence discovers that his companion is a lawyer himself. In the passage above, Clamence calls him "cher *maître*", the title for lawyers in France. This term toys with the reader due to its ambiguity as it could also mean "master". After all, Clamence says that "il faut se trouver un nouveau *maître*, Dieu n'étant plus à la mode" (Camus 139, my emphasis). Clamence's strategy to be first penitent, offering his "services" (7) and be judged while confessing his faults, to then become a judge and a master ruling over his victims who are now penitent and being judged *by him*, echoes Hegel's dialectic of master and slave, in which "ultimately, the master comes to realize his dependence upon the slave for affirmation of his position as master. He discovers that he is in fact dependent upon the slave for determining his place in the universe" (Feilmeier np). In Clamence's strategy, he makes his client first a master/judge, unknowingly to the client, over himself to progressively turn the tables and eventually let Clamence become the master/judge over the client who is getting morally burdened by his own faults. Eventually Clamence, as the maître du jeu, always emerges as the master since he has the last word, or rather the last judgement, after he presented his own faults first. This is an example of an incomplete information game, in which a player (here the client) may not know about the other player's identity (they don't know Clamence is playing a game of acting like a slave on purpose) nor about his possible strategies or goals. Clamence purposefully creates this twisted master-judge/slave-penitent dialectic between himself and his clients because "au bout de toute liberté il y a une sentence ; voilà pourquoi la liberté est trop lourde à porter" (139). The fact that "il n'y a plus de père" (140) is a reference to the period of Enlightenment that promoted philosophy, science and reason, and therefore religion, and by extension God was no longer the locus of truth and morality. The allusion that there is no god anymore is also a reference to Nietzsche's famous passage:

God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How shall we console

ourselves, the most murderous of all murderers? The holiest and the mightiest that

the world has hitherto possessed, has bled to death under our knife, - who will

wipe the blood from us? With what water could we cleanse ourselves? What

lustrums, what sacred *games* shall we have to devise? Is not the magnitude of this

deed too great for us? Shall we not ourselves have to become Gods, merely to

seem worthy of it? (Nietzsche np, my emphasis)

Here Nietzsche mentions that men will have to invent new games, and wonders if this

responsibility will be too much for men, and perhaps men will have to become gods

themselves.   Clamence draws the exact same conclusion: since there is no god, no rule

anymore, people "inventent de terribles règles, ils courent construire des bûchers pour

remplacer les églises" (Camus 141). Throughout the whole novel, Clamence has pointed

out men's own "games" to replace God's absence to reign over others and become gods

themselves, such as authoritarian regimes, slavery, and war massacres. In this socio-

historical context, Clamence concludes one must find a new master. His strategy of juge-

pénitent allows him to "étendre le jugement à tout le monde pour le rendre plus léger à

[ses] propres épaules" while taking into account that "la sentence que vous portez sur les

autres finit par vous revenir dans la figure" (143). That is where the pattern of first the

confession, and then the second accusation, comes from, so that, after you show that you

are bearing your sentence, it cannot come back to you since you are already bearing it,

and therefore can freely judge others "pour triompher" (143). This pattern enables

Clamence to win his game every time, being the master of the game forever although it is

uncertain whether or not Clamence convinced his companion here. As Bree notes, "has

Clamence won him over to his cause? This is a point left to the reader to decide. In the last episode, the interlocutor apparently begins to question Clamence with some skepticism. And once, at a particularly crucial moment, he laughs. Clamence cannot stand laughter, which he construes as mockery. The listener, it seems, may not have taken Clamence's confession at face-value" (Bree, *Albert Camus: La Chute* 14).

I noted earlier that Clamence calls his companion "cher maître" at the end, which can either be a reference to his companion's title or the term in the dominating sense. Interestingly, the original manuscript had planned to have the companion be a police officer investigating the painting theft (Gay-Crosier 768), then the second version had him be a juvenile judge whose profession could "poser la question de la culpabilité des innocents" (1357), both of whom could legally arrest Clamence for his deeds, which Clamence begs for in both versions "arrêtez-moi Monsieur, je vous en supplie, arrêtez-moi" (768, 770). But finally Camus chose to have him be a lawyer like Clamence so that the interlocutor "devient un double du parleur : avocat, comme lui, et, comme lui, parisien. C'est sur cette solution que Camus s'arrêta ; elle achevait de donner au personnage et au récit toute leur ambiguïté : Clamence n'avait-il d'autre auditeur que lui-même ?" (Gay-Crosier 1358). This could be another trick to create a GPN to mislead the reader not knowing what to think at the end.

Whether the companion is real or not —which could explain the censoring of the interlocutor's discourse throughout Clamence's discourse, making it a true monologue and not an implied dialogue as discussed previously— the interaction is not going the way Clamence anticipated. As a true master of his game, he refuses to let another player win. Once facing his companion's skepticism, Clamence, for the first time, forbids his

companion to act a certain way —"Ne riez pas !"—(Camus 146) but even more importantly, Clamence forbids him to even think a certain way: "je vous interdis de ne pas croire que je suis heureux" (150). If the companion disagrees with the rules of the game, as Paul Valéry says, "'no skepticism is possible where the rules of a game are concerned, for the principle underlying them is an unshakeable truth…' Indeed, as soon as the rules are transgressed the whole play-world collapses. The game is over" (qtd. in Huizinga, 30). So far, the companion was a willing listener who asked for more information, but once he turns skeptical, and questions the rules Clamence expected — i.e. not to laugh at him but rather feel judged after judging Clamence, and not to believe that Clamence's moral way is the only way— Clamence has to resort to forcing his companion into something he disagrees with. However, as Huizinga notes, "all play is a *voluntary* activity" (25, my emphasis), therefore Clamence himself is breaking the rules of his own game by trying to coerce, instead of convincing, his companion to remain in the game.

L'Hermitte claims that Clamence is a new Socrates, performing maieutics—a type of dialogue with thought experiments to challenge and help the interlocutor to give birth to his own opinions (*Théétète* 14)— because "d'abord perçu comme un homme louche ne parlant que de lui- même, Clamence émerge enfin comme la figure même de l'altruisme" (L'Hermitte 102) in that Clamence "enseigne ainsi qu'il serait vain de regretter sa rencontre avec […] sa propre chute: cette dernière se donne paradoxalement comme élévation philosophique" (102) which would make Clamence into a noble, moral figure who helps others to rise and gain knowledge about themselves. However, Socrates explicates his method for maieutics as such: "moi-même je ne sais ni ne m'approprie rien

de tout cela, qu'à cet égard je suis stérile, que c'est toi que j'accouche et que, dans cette vue, j'ai recours aux enchantements […] jusqu'à ce que, grâce à mon aide, tu aies mis ta propre opinion au jour" (*Théétète* 127). Because Clamence has to eventually *force* his companion at the end into believing something he does not believe, Clamence is not performing an actual maieutic to change his companion's cognitive environment freely, but rather performs an agonistic —relative to fighting— type of dialogue, as his numerous uses of imperatives shows. While Socrates performed altruistic thought experiments for the benefit of his interlocutor, Clamence uses his rhetoric so that he "règne encore" (Camus 158), that is to say, for his *own* benefit to feel morally superior which happens *at the expense* of his interlocutor.

But even this moral fight, which could still be a fair game since there might be uncertainty as to who could win it, is corrupted by Clamence taking away his companion's free will to do and believe what he wants. The game is corrupted and therefore over. Just as Gee notes for video games, "You see a Darwinian sort of thing going on here. If a game, for whatever reason, has good principles of learning built into its design – that is, if it facilitates learning in good ways – then it gets played and can sell well, if it is otherwise a good game" (Gee 3). It seems that the interlocutor does not agree with Clamence's game principles and therefore does not want to play it. It might be because the companion does not seem to share Clamence's existential pain because after all, Clamence is motivated by the avoidance of pain: "la liberté est trop lourde à porter, surtout lorsqu'on souffre de fièvre, ou qu'on a de la peine, ou qu'on n'aime personne" (Camus 139). In the *prière d'insérer*, Camus even announces that the only truth in *La Chute* is "la douleur, et ce qu'elle promet" (Gay-Crosier 771). So maybe Camus creates

another level of GPN ironically for Clamence himself who must have assumed —due to

his first impression that the interlocutor is a cultured, bourgeois, Parisian, man like

himself— that his companion shared the same pain and therefore would be a guaranteed

player (and loser) of his domination game. If this is true, then this other GPN designed

for Clamence depends on the erroneous assumption that Clamence successfully embodied

"les traits communs, les experiences que nous avons ensemble souffertes, les faiblesses

que nous partageons" (Camus 145) and his companion would thus find a mirror in

Clamence's speech. However, the amibiguity of the conclusion belies Clamence's

assumptions.

Conclusion

Like *Heavy Rain*'s video game format, *La Chute* takes advantage of its own format, an

implied dialogue, to immerse the reader in Clamence's misleading and dizzying speech to better

drag him into the trap that will lead to a sudden change of cognitive environment, whether one

has access to the *prière d'insérer* or not. Similarly to *Heavy Rain,* too, *La Chute* offers some

form of open ending as to what will happen after the companion leaves, and also as to whether or

not the companion is real at all. I established that it seems clear that the companion refuses in the

end to play Clamence's game, by rejecting his principles, to use Gee's terms. But the reader, on

the other end, might want to surrender and play Clamence's game in his own real life, if he too

shares the same existential pain.

As Sicart explains about video games and their ethics, "Surrendering to a game means

accepting the rules, the possible ways that the game can be played, and the importance of playing

the game. This surrender happens through the fiction that helps players empathize with the

formal system of the game" (Sicart 12). Even though Clamence's companion did not surrender,

the reader might, as "This surrender allows for a fiction to become a companion with whom we can start a conversation about values and morality" (12). After all, Clamence is our guide, literally and metaphorically, in this fictional work, and like video game characters, his "company is more than just a guide. It determines, to a large extent, player's ethical presence in that world" and that way, allows the user to "explore those values and live by them" (13). As Booth notes, "the details of [Clamence's] self-revelation […] are not important here. The *method* is important, however; [because Clamence] can trick both his auditor and reader into undergoing the same spiritual collapse that he has himself experienced" (Booth 294). *La Chute* "calls upon its reader for completion […]. [The reader] will provide not an ending to an unfinished novel but his or her *own personal continuation to the mechanism of self-doubt that the work has set in motion* (Fitch 105, my emphasis). So just like in *Heavy Rain*, the different GPN strategies and the format itself of the *La Chute* offer a metaphysical dilemma —here, to accept or not Clamence's moral accusation— to GPN users who had their cognitive environment changed, from a purely interpretative aspect — that is, finding out Clamence's true motives in the story after being purposefully misled— but also from a potentially existential level too, should they accept Clamence's moral judgement upon themselves.

Chapter 4 : *Le Condottière*, by Georges Perec, 2012

Introduction

Perec and the puzzle of reality

It is a truism to say that Georges Perec is among the most prolific ludic authors of contemporary literature. For Perec, "écrire est un jeu qui se joue à deux, entre l'écrivain et le lecteur, sans qu'ils ne se rencontrent jamais" (Gascoigne "Perec et la Fiction ludique", 44). Perec considers that

> le processus de création littéraire se partage en deux jeux distincts : le destinateur
>
> [here the author] s'oriente vers les réactions supposées du lecteur idéal (la
>
> projection du destinataire) ; le destinataire [here the reader] à son tour subordonne
>
> ses actions aux actions supposées du « destinateur projeté ». Les deux jeux se
>
> déroulent à deux niveaux différents, et à un seul acte expéditeur correspond la
>
> pluralité des actes individuels de réception. (Gascoigne "Perec et la Fiction
>
> ludique", 44)

This author/reader ludic relationship echoes the principle of garden-path narratives as I demonstrated earlier, in which the author theorizes a model reader/player, thanks to which the author attempts to produce a misleading narrative based on the anticipated, potential expectations from the readers.

Le Condottière is Perec's first novel, written between 1957-1960. It was rejected by publishers in 1960 and finally published posthumously in 2012 after being discovered when Perec died in 1982. The novel is about a forger painter, Gaspard Winckler, who killed his patron, Madera, after Winckler failed to paint the real-life painting *Le Condottière*. Interestingly, the

novel alternates the types of narration, going from the protagonist's introspection to a dialogue format with another person, Streten, trying to understand why Winckler killed Madera — something that Winckler himself is not sure of either until later in the novel. This novel is a GPN in that Winckler, like the reader, needs to navigate his own narrative to finally uncover the truth behind his crime. As Winckler walks himself and his interlocutor through his thought process, he understands that the murder is due to his own existential misery rather than Madera himself. Due to the themes of guilt, responsibility, and famous paintings, due to its garden-path nature and of its unusual format, this novel bears many similarities with Camus's *La Chute*, which was after all, published in 1956, not long before Perec started to write *Le Condottière*.

Perec is no stranger to creating asymmetric-information game-like garden-path narratives in his own novels. In his 1978 magnum opus, *La Vie Mode d'emploi*, in addition to referring to many games such as puzzles, chess, crosswords and more, the novel centers on a mysterious revenge that is revealed at the end: the protagonist Bartlebooth hires Gaspard Winckler to build hundreds of puzzles that Bartlebooth will solve as part of his life purpose before destroying the puzzles as part of a ritual. In the end, Bartlebooth dies while realizing that his last puzzle was meant to be unsolvable as the last piece, thanks to Winckler's devious fabrication, is in a W shape while the hole in the puzzle has an X shape, as Winckler avenged himself on Bartlebooth who had Winckler engage in a life of hard work only to see his work being destroyed by Bartlebooth. Even though the topic of a mysterious, impending vengeance is announced at the beginning of the novel, the sudden reveal of the actual nature of the vengeance comes as a surprise because the novel, more than 500 pages-long, overwhelms the reader with multiple side stories with recurring characters as well as long enumerations of objects and topics within the chapters, making it difficult to sort out what is of importance or relevance for the main plot. The

sudden reveal is also surprising, yet logical, because there are only very subtle, implicit, hints at Winckler's resentment regarding his life choices, so that only extremely active, critical readers, or second-time readers, would be able to anticipate and engage with the topic of upcoming revenge.

In another of his famous works, *W ou le Souvenir d'Enfance*, 1975, Perec presents two alternating narratives, one autobiographical and one fictional, about a dystopic island called W, whose citizens' lives are ruled by relentless public sporting events created by the governing caste. While Perec tells about his childhood, marked by the death of both parents due to the Second World War, notably his Jewish mother being killed at a concentration camp in 1943, his fictional tale narrated following a different character also named Gaspard Winckler, explains the rules and events in W's society in much detail. He builds a portrait of seemingly elite athletes competing to earn privileges such as better food, access to more care, and the prestige of winning titles, or competing to avoid the loss of previously earned titles and privileges. However, it is made clear that the ruling caste does not favor pure merit and engages in disruptions of the rules in order to create more randomness so that even the best athlete can still fear for his livelihood as the judges may decide to let a weaker, less deserving athlete win, for better entertainment. At the very end, the fictional narrative describes the society of W:

> Il faut les voir, ces Athlètes qui, avec leurs tenues rayées ressemblent à des
> caricatures de sportifs 1900, s'élancer coudes au corps, pour un sprint grotesque
> […] il faut voir ces rescapés du marathon, éclopés, transis, trottinant entre deux
> hales serrées de Juges de touche armés de verges et de gourdins, il faut les voir,
> ces Athlètes squelettiques, au visage terreux, à l'échine toujours courbée, ces
> crânes chauves et luisants, ces yeux pleins de panique, ces plaies purulentes,

toutes ces marques indélébiles d'une humiliation sans fin, d'une terreur sans fond,

toutes ces preuves administrées chaque heure, chaque jour, chaque seconde, d'un

écrasement conscient, organisé, hiérarchisé, il faut voir fonctionner cette machine

énorme dont chaque rouage participe, avec une efficacité implacable, à

l'anéantissement systématique des hommes, pour ne plus trouver surprenante la

médiocrité des performances enregistrées : le 100 mètres se court en 23''4, le 200

mètres en 51'' ; le meilleur sauteur n'a jamais dépassé 1,30m. (Perec, *W* 217-218)

This final harrowing description of emaciated, terrified Athletes in striped outfits, surrounded by

violent Judges, and who can only reach mediocre performances —performances that were until

then never disclosed— drops any ennobling pretense of what was at first presented as an elite,

patriotic sport competition.This leads to the strong realization that Perec's W fiction is actually a

metaphor for real life concentration camps, in which prisoners were forced into exhausting labor

and inhumane treatment, like his own mother was at Auschwitz.

On a lighter note, another GPN of Perec's is Un *cabinet d'amateur*. This 1979 short story

is about an exhibition of a famous, fictional painter's works —a painting representing the painter

in his studio as he looks at all the paintings he made throughout his career, some of said

paintings being actual paintings made by real-life painters and others being made up. The last

paragraph reads as follows: "Des vérifications entreprises avec diligence ne tardèrent pas à

démontrer qu'en effet la plupart des tableaux de la collection Raffke étaient faux, comme sont

faux la plupart des détails de ce récit fictif, conçu pour le seul plaisir, et le seul frisson, du faire-

semblant" (Auster 85). The twist here is that the main painting in the exhibition turns out to be a

forgery, and just like the forged painting, the narrator announces that many elements in the story

are fictitious, and he even announces that this very story is fake, too. The sudden reveal makes

this short story a GPN since, first, the long and detailed descriptions of the painting should have

brought to light more quickly the fact that the painting was indeed a forgery due to small, wrong

details. Second, the breaking of the immersion in the story is unusual, in that it is atypical for a

narrator to declare his story to be entirely fake.

On the same theme of forgery and treachery, another of Perec's GPN is *Le long Voyage*

d'Hiver, written in 1979 and published posthumously in 1993. In this short story, the protagonist

discovers a manuscript whose many passages seem to borrow from famous 19th-century authors

such as Rimbaud and Verlaine. At the very end, it is revealed that the manuscript was written

before these famous authors' works, which indicates that these artists actually plagiarized the

unknown manuscript and therefore are not the geniuses they are considered to be and should be

seen as frauds.

In many of Perec's works, but more particularly in the GPN that I mentioned above, we

can see his fascination with rules and forgery, with art forms, and more precisely with the

concept of reproductions and copies. While being passionate about painting, Perec claimed the

superiority of writing over visual art. For instance, as Gascoigne says regarding *La Vie Mode*

d'Emploi, and its long and extremely detailed descriptions in the narration,

> while Valène [a painter and one of the protagonists]'s picture is planned faithfully
>
> to respect the spatial frame of the apartment block, Perec's novel constantly
>
> escapes from those limits. It challenges by overflow and excess. […] Perec's
>
> writing challenges by its proliferating saturation of a space: his description of a
>
> given room, of the pictures on the wall, the furniture, ornaments and bric-à-brac
>
> can become so extended and prolific that the notion that Valène, or any painter,

could encompass such detail within any imaginable framed canvas comes to seem

untenable. (Gascoigne "Georges Perec", 295)

The systematic listings and over-detailed descriptions in Perec's *La Vie Mode d'emploi*, Koos

observes, "[resemble] a gigantic puzzle consisting of many fragments of description that aim at

reconstructing the entire history of an apartment building" which is "a fundamental concern of

Perec [that] seems to surface with this mania of observing and describing all, and its unspoken,

implied *fear of forgetting and disappearing*" (Koos 186, my emphasis). The process of

enumeration, which I will address later in my analysis of *Le Condottière* as an illustration of a

GPN strategy, is therefore tied, in Perec's work, to prevent anything (memories, people,

places…) from disappearing and being forgotten.

Eric Beck Rubin notes that "*W or The Memory of Childhood* is often read as an attempt

to address a void in memory caused by childhood trauma through the narrative technique of

deferring understanding or completion. It is an interpretation endorsed by Perec himself" (Rubin

114). Rubin explains that both narrative techniques (deferring understanding, i.e. creating a

GPN, and lengthy descriptions) allow Perec to address the void left by his mother's death, and

that the "novel's marriage of destruction and creation are Perec's means of illustrating the

psychological position of the indirect witness and of representing an ever-expanding void in

words" (112). Perec goes beyond the use of words and resorts to mere alphabet letters (their

presence, absence, and permutations) to convey meaning. Rubin notes that "M, on the other

hand, can stand for maman or mère ('mother' or 'mum')" (554-555), following David Bellos's

remark that Fritz Lang's 1931 movie, *M*, tells Georges's story of losing his mother in reverse

(the movie is about mothers losing their children). "Lastly (but not finally), W, the reverse of M,

is the name of the island concentration camp in Perec's novel, which recalls the one into which

Georges's mother disappeared. As with an upside-down flag, body buried face down, or any other symbol standing on its head, turning M into W symbolizes distress." (118)

Another important letter for Perec is E, as in his *Disparition*, a novel written without the letter E, or his epigraph in *W* which is "for E.". Rubin notes that "E turned ninety degrees makes W and M" (118), but also that, regarding the *W* epigraph,

> Georges told his adoptive sister Ela that E stood for her mother and Perec's aunt, Esther. […] Georges also told Ela the E stood for her (561). He also told her it stood for "eux," the French pronunciation of the letter and the word for "them" (562). By this he might mean his parents as well as, possibly, other victims of the Holocaust. [David] Bellos connects E to the story of the Golem (396). "E" is the first letter of the word *emet* 'truth' inscribed on the forehead of the Golem; when the letter is removed it leaves *met* 'death,' causing the Golem to turn into clay. Thus the E is read as the difference between life and death. At the same time, it is a hidden symbol. In Hebrew, the "e" sound is in the vowel marking, and as a rule, the markings do not appear under the consonants they modify. (117)

As we can see, Perec uses enumerations, words, as well as letters and cultural symbols related to them with a precise purpose, making him a master at designing mysteries and GPNs relating to existential questions in his works.

Literature Review

Perec is a major French author therefore much has been written about his work, although not many scholars have investigated *Le Condottière*. Monia Ben Jalloul has studied *Le Condottièrre*'s narrative style, which she describes as "une œuvre particulièrement déroutante.

Perec y brise non seulement la syntaxe, mais également l'énonciation qui voit défiler plusieurs

pronoms personnels dans une même arène énonciative" (177) as the narration shifts to different

pronouns (*je, tu, on*) multiple times regarding the protagnonist's experience, showing the chaos

in the protagonist's mind. Lucy Omeara alludes to *Le Condottière* in her article on crime fiction,

in which she notes that Perec, like other Oulipo authors, "instrumentalize[s] crime fiction's

constitutive concerns with truth, concealment, identity, loss and threats to stability in order to

produce a sustained exploration of author-reader relations in fiction" (36). She quotes Perec

regarding his love for detective stories :

> Le roman policier fonctionne explicitement comme un jeu entre un auteur et un
>
> lecteur, un jeu dont les intrications de l'intrigue, le mécanisme du meurtre, de la
>
> victime, etc. sont ouvertement les pions : cette partie qui se joue entre l'écrivain et
>
> son lecteur et dont les personnages, les décors, les sentiments, les péripéties ne
>
> sont que des fictions ne renvoyant qu'au seul plaisir de lire [...] est pour moi un
>
> des modèles les plus efficaces du fonctionnement romanesque. (Perec in Omeara,
>
> 37)

She shows that a mystery novel like *Le Condottière* establishes a game between the author and

reader, which I will explore in detail in my analysis. Another scholar, Loïse Lelevé, explores *Le

Condottière* and finds that

> tout est fait, semble-t-il, pour souligner la *nécessaire incertitude de la lecture*.
>
> Contre un discours de savoir s'établit une poétique ludique de l'enquête, dont les
>
> ambiguïtés *interdisent toute position de certitude*. […] qui redéfinit les rapports
>
> du narrateur et du lecteur. La présence du faux tableau induit aussi, dans un
>
> contexte postmoderne de recyclage des grandes références culturelles, *l'exigence*

d'un nouveau rapport aux œuvres érigées en « canon » incontournable (Lelevé

51, my emphasis)

Lelevé therefore analyzes how Perec's work challenges the reader's cognitive environment regarding the narration but also cultural references. The reader must become critical and question the information given to him or her, like in any true GPN.

Several other scholars (Gascoigne, Dangy-Scaillierez, Keating) have analyzed the mystery and detective elements, similar to GPN elements, in other Perecquian works but not *Le Condottière*. Dangy-Scaillierez explores the elements of detective mystery in *La Disparition*, *Les Revenentes, La Vie Mode d'Emploi* and *53 Jours* (19) but nothing is said about *Le Condottière* so my work helps bridge this gap in the literature while building on Dangy-Scaillierez's research to investigate Gaspard Winckler's character in my corpus analysis, as Dangy-Scaillierez rightly points out the importance of arbitrary rules and constraints made up by the characters, a typical trait in many of Perec's characters. Maria E. Keating investigates the concept of "trompe-l'œil" and "leurre" —which are similar to my concept of GPN— in *La Vie Mode d'Emploi* and *Cabinet d'Amateurs*, in her article. She defines "leurre" as a "représentation piegée de la réalité fictionnelle qui est après coup reconnue comme fausse par la narration" (223). Keating observes that Perec's endless enumerations, a literary process we mentioned earlier, are actually a tool for him to create hyper-realistic descriptions, and she further explains that la "question du réalisme s'intègre très souvent chez Perec, dans un souci de « faire basculer » la perception du lecteur, de *remettre en question une position de lecture stable*. En ce sens, elle relève d'une stratégie de trompe l'œil, utilisant l'effet de réel pour afficher le caractère artificiel des représentations" (222, my emphasis). Just as Lelevé did, Keating highlights how Perec's use of deception, though without mentioning the concept of GPN, challenges the reader's expectations and cognitive

environment thanks to different narrative processes. Gascoigne also investigates the game-like

qualities in *La Vie Mode d'emploi's* narrative. To Gascoigne, the relationship between

Bartlebooth and Winckler is a "parabole du lecteur d'une fiction morcelée, composée de

chapitres apparemment mal enchainés, d'un lecteur qui se trouve désemparé devant les astuces

du faiseur de puzzle qu'est le romancier ludique" (Gascoigne "Perec et la Fiction ludique", 47).

This description of *La Vie Mode d'emploi* as being a seemingly scattered novel, is fitting of *Le*

Condottière which is made of different parts going from first-person narrative to third-person, to

dialogue, and which author and friend of Perec, Claude Burgelin, describes as "un

embrouillamini" (Burgelin 9) or a "pelote embrouillée [où] des fils narratifs s'emmêlent, se

nouent, se perdent" (14).

Other scholars have investigated the game-like qualities of Perec's works due to this

authorial control. Alison James analyses the concepts of chance versus control in *La Vie Mode*

d'Emploi. She points out that the themes of puzzles and labyrinth are both games involving

spatial images but also both "have a temporal dimension, since they give rise to creative and

problem-solving processes." (157). James notes that like his characters who are self-imposing

constraints on themselves, Perec's Oulipo work also resorts to constraints in a paradoxical

endeavor that "sets itself against the disorder of the world that it nonetheless aims to represent"

(177). Game scholar Johan Huizinga asserts that in games "an absolute and peculiar order reigns.

Here we come across another, very positive feature of play: it creates order, *is* order. Into an

imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection" (29).

Perec's literary project emphasizes the notions of games in his works as they automatically imply

a sense of control, of order, in a chaotic, infinite reality. One danger James mentions regarding

characters setting the rules for their own games, is losing sight of them, like Bartlebooth: he

"gradually loses sight of the rules of his own game and is caught in a cycle of sterile repetition and ritual […] Caught in a labyrinth with no minotaur and no exits, Bartlebooth is at an impasse" (163). This point of self-imposed constraints in James' analysis will help shed light in my study on the fate of *Le Condottière*'s protagonist. Jacques Roubaud has also evoked the topic of constraint, as he remarks that Bartlebooth's constraining project and the fact that he died without completing the last puzzle is "a recognition of the failure […] of the project of this constraint, of the impossibility of this completion" (191).

Warren F. Motte analyzes the different types of games in ludic fiction, including Perec's. The relationship of writer/reader is an asymmetric-information game and "by forcing [the reader] to fill in the gaps and to speculate, these are the simplest forms of games" (26). Such active reading is required to successfully understand a GPN, and other scholars have concluded that the format and narrative in Perec's work involve active, critical reading. Noam Scheindlin analyzes how the changing format of *W ou le Souvenir d'Enfance* (alternating between autobiography and fiction) and omitted elements in the narrative show that the "text's refusal to *remain secure* in either the genre of fiction or autobiography emphasizes the undepictable at the expense of the represented content" which is a strategy to not only depict "the trauma of the writer's childhood in occupied France" but also to perform "an exploration of the limits of the ability of narrative to represent reality" (Scheindlin 353, my emphasis). The question of a stable reading was raised by scholars mentioned earlier, and such studies will be useful to address the notion of GPN in my research. Catherine Pochon investigates the destabilizing image of the mirror and of the double structure, similar to *W*, in *L'Homme qui dort*. She underlines the imagery of mirror, double, and the use of different pronouns in the narrative, which echoes phenomena happening in *Le Condottière*. Her analysis will help guide mine. Pryia Whadera analyzes the similarly

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destabilizing themes of double, copies, and fake in Perec's *Le Condottière* and *Un cabinet d'amateur*, notably focusing on the process of enumeration. Her analysis of copies and fake in such GPNs leads her to study how the element of paintings is used to subvert and change the reader's cognitive environment, "reminding us of how we see and occupy space and making us more aware of our own perspective and role in the world" (108). Whadera also analyzes *Le Condottière*'s protagonist's ramblings about his murder of Madera, which, to her, shows that "this killing drives him to relive each moment, wracked with guilt and regret" (154). I will have to disagree with Whadera here. My analysis will demonstrate that the constant reminiscence of artist forger Winckler's crime is not triggered by guilt and regret of the murder but rather by another type of existential obsession.

Methodology

In this chapter, I will study *Le Condottière* through the prism of garden-path narratives, thus creating an interdisciplinary approach that will shed new light on Perec's very first novel, while taking into account the playful nature of Perec's works as he designs here an asymmetric-information game narrative, even for his own protagonist who, through memories and dialogues, tries to uncover why he killed a man. Thanks to my methodology and a close-reading approach to Perec's narrative, I will uncover the different processes Perec uses to create an asymmetric-information game and garden-path structure, misleading or trying to have his reader get lost in the protagonist's dizzying stream of consciousness. As a reminder, a garden-path construction induces its user into making critical perceptive and interpretive errors, by introducing an unexpected element, i.e. an anomaly, that need to be corrected to fully understand the whole narrative, a narrative in which at some point, the user suddenly realizes his interpretation was wrong all along and has to reconstruct his perception of the narrative to experience it correctly. I

will use the same methodology of analysis as my previous case studies. This first part will explore the elements that a critical user can focus on in the first reading to form likely expectations before knowing it is a GPN: the title and synopsis; the genre and type of focus/following pattern; the semes and the intertextual frames; and finally, identifying the anomaly on which the GPN relies. For the second reading, my steps are the following: since GPNs are asymmetric-information games (i.e. the narrator is unreliable), I will identify which information was twisted or delayed and by which discursive means, and reveal how *Le Condottière*'s GPN also generates existential questioning as was the case in *Heavy Rain* and *La Chute*.

Corpus analysis: *Le Condottière*

Le Condottière tells the story of Gaspard Winckler, a forger painter, who undertakes the ambitious project, and fails, of forging the painting of *Le Condottière*, a 1475 real-life painting by Italian artist Antonello di Messina. Perec's *Le Condottière* was published posthumously in 2012 but was written between 1957 and 1960. Perec describes it in *W* as the "premier roman à peu près abouti que je parvins à écrire" (Perec 1975, 142). He also explains the source of his obsession for Messina's painting: Perec got hit by a schoolmate, leaving a scar on his face. The scar had for him "une importance capitale : elle est devenue une marque personnelle, un signe distinctif. C'est cette cicatrice aussi qui me fit préférer à tous les tableaux rassemblés au Louvre […] le portrait d'un homme dit *Le Condottière* d'Antonello de Messine" (141-2). There is an intimate connection between Perec and the painting he will write about in *Le Condottière*, which highlights this novel as a very personal work, intrinsically linked to Perec's identity.

In his correspondence with friend and writer Jacques Lederer, Perec talks extensively about his writing process of *Le Condottière* although it is challenging to keep track of all details

as the title changes multiple time: it is first called *La Nuit* (Lederer 255), then *Gaspard pas Mort* (361), and finally *Le Condottière* (566). Perec goes through different approaches, plots, and formats before finalizing his work, but some characteristics are present from the beginning: it is a "récit dédoublé" with elements of "interrogatoire", "roman policier", "monologue", and "enquête" (263). However, unfortunately for Perec, *Le Condottière* was rejected by publishers. Perec was extremely disappointed and in his December 4, 1960 letter to Lederer, Perec writes: "Quant au *Condottière*, merde pour celui qui le lira. Le laisse où il est, pour l'instant du moins. Le reprendrai dans 10 ans, époque où ça donnera un chef d'œuvre ou bien attendrai dans ma tombe qu'un exégète fidèle le retrouve dans une vieille malle t'ayant appartenu et le publie. […] Ai eu du mal à le digérer sur le coup. Ai été très vexé. Mais ce n'est pas grave" (570).

Despite being originally rejected for publication, and being one of the lesser known Perecquian novels, *Le Condottière* is a foundational work that deserves to be studied more, in that its themes and narrative format paved the way for Perec's most critically acclaimed novels like *W* which is made of two parts, one fictional, one autobiographical, as *Le Condottière* was supposed to be: "le bouquin se divise en deux parties – un roman […] et Je, en train d'écrire le roman" (Lederer 301). Claude Burgelin, a friend of Perec and author, notes that *Le Condottière* also shares many similarities with *La Vie Mode d'Emploi* regarding the protagonist's name, and the themes of revenge and painting (Burgelin 19), and with *Cabinet d'Amateurs* for the theme of forgery in painting and deception (24).

Interestingly, *Le Condottière* also exhibits similarities with Camus's *La Chute*, which I analyzed in the previous chapter, notably regarding the themes of guilt, freedom, judgment, and individual responsibility. *La Chute* was after all published in 1956, right before Perec started writing *Le Condottière* so it might have had some influence on him. Whether Perec was

influenced by Camus or not, like *La Chute*, *Le Condottière* shows GPN elements in that it displays "notions de double jeu" as Clamence deceives his interlocutor (Lederer 300), and it offers a dizzying deep dive into the protagonist's thoughts. Another similarity is that Perec's novel —just like *La Chute* was an atypical Camusian novel by its format of implied dialogue — Perec says about his novel that "[*Le Condottière*] ne ressemble à rien de tout ce que j'ai fait avant […] question histoire, un homme commet un crime et n'est pas condamné" (Lederer 310). Finally, like any GPN that unfolds until revealing the true meaning of the narrative, *Le Condottière* is described by Perec himself as a "roman s'élucidant en se faisant" (301).

First Reading

Title and synopsis:

The title of *Le Condottière* refers to a painting by 15th-century painter Antonello di Messina. It is a painting displayed at the Louvre Museum in Paris. The identity of the man portrayed is unknown but "Condottière" is a term describing a man who is the leader of mercenary armies. Even if the reader does not know about the special connection between this painting and Perec's childhood scar, and even if the reader has never seen the painting, the novel describes what the painting looks like: it is the portrait of a warlord, only his face shows, and his expression is that of a conqueror, a strong-willed, determined man. *Le Condottière* tells the story of Gaspard Winckler, a forger painter, who works for his patron Antonio Madera, and one day, decides to kill Madera seemingly for no particular reason, at the very beginning of the novel. The synopsis is linked to the title because Winckler tries to forge the painting *Le Condottière* but realizes that he failed at doing so. The novel is focused on Gaspard trying to figure out the reason that caused him to murder Madera but Gaspard also wonders why he himself chose such a painting to try to forge.

Genre/focus and following pattern

The following pattern, as a reminder of Altman's sense of the term, is based on focalization, or

focus, which is "the perspective in terms of which the narrated situations and events are

presented" (Prince, *A Dictionary* 31). The majority of *Le Condottière* is single-focused as it

mostly investigates Winckler's mind as he performs introspection, reminiscence, speculations,

and mental dialogue with himself in chapters from pages 33 to 111, 127-130, 149-158, and 201-

203. In the edition I use here (Seuil 2012) the chapters are unnumbered and untitled, and

indicated by a hard page-break only. The narration is single-focused but switches pronouns (*je,*

tu, il, on) to represent the protagonist's thoughts, notably his memories, his regrets in life, and

the murder of Madera. I will explore this pronoun-switching phenomenon in more detail later.

However, a few chapters (111-126, 131-149, 159-175, 187-200) are in the form of a

dialogue between Winckler and an interlocutor simply identified as Streten, engaged in a

dialogue that resembles a psychoanalysis session, as Perec wanted to suggest (Lederer 31). In

these chapters, we are offered both the perspective of Winckler and that of Streten, which makes

Le Condottière somewhat dual-focused. In these chapters, Streten interrogates Winckler to find

the reason why he killed Madera and why he was, overall, dissatisfied with his life. Most of the

time in these passages, Streten asks questions and Winckler answers. Additionally, a couple of

chapters are centered on describing, in third-person narration, the cellar where Winckler is

painting and the reproduction of Antonello di Messina's painting *Le Condottière* (pages 107-

109), or the life of Di Messina and other painters of the time (177-185).

One reason why *Le Condottière* was rejected by publishers is because they thought that

this novel was "bien écrit mais mal fait" (Auster 58), as its constant narrative shift was perceived

as a "pelotte embrouillée. Des fils narratifs s'emmêlent, se nouent, se perdent" (Burgelin 14).

However, I argue in this chapter that this interwoven narrative structure is a powerful tool to build an intense GPN, in line with Perec's literary interests which we established earlier, within the psyche of the protagonist who himself seeks the anomaly that would be the key to his own actions. Perec wanted to write a novel that would present elements of detective story, police interrogation, monologue, and investigation. The shift in focus helps bring out these elements, so as to consolidate the protagonist's own self-investigation into his mind.

Semes

The semes —semic units that add connotations to a description— in *Le Condottière* are those prevalent in Perec's typical texts: art, reproduction, mastery, deception, (self-imposed) constraints and control, identity crisis, and games. These semes can be found in the following elements of *Le Condottière*, though this is not an exhaustive list:

1. Winckler being a forger painter.

2. Lists of real-life artworks.

3. Description of painting techniques and specific gestures.

4. Winckler being the most masterful forger painter in the world (since he was the only one who could reproduce the famous and secretive smile of Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*).

5. Winckler's talented colleague and teacher, Jérôme, who has declining health and therefore loses his own mastery of forging.

6. Winckler seeking to reproduce the exact gestures of the painters whose works he is forging, constraining his body and art productions to specific rules.

7. Winckler feeling like a ghost as he cannot disclose his forger identity to the world.

8. Winckler resenting Madera for "forcing" him to remain a forger.

9. The lexical field of imprisonment, whether to describe the studio in which Winckler paints or when he tries to escape after the murder, going through underground tunnels and passages which he has dug himself.

10. Winckler creating superstitious games for himself to govern his life decisions —such as, if his girlfriend would pick up the phone, he would quit his job, but she did not, so he stayed at Madera's (Perec 2012, 77), a practice also referred to as "magical thinking" in psychiatry and which may be a sign of irrationality, or of high anxiety and control-seeking behavior in reaction to a sense of danger (Carhart-Harris np).

11. Winckler making plays-on-words and incorporating references to idioms, nursery rhymes, poems, and other playful linguistic phenomena in his internal monologue.

These semes are important for my analysis as they bring layers of meaning to a description and may therefore influence readers to form certain expectations regarding the plot and the characters' actions.

Intertextual frames

I mentioned earlier that *Le Condottière* (*Le C.*) displays a high degree of intertextuality with other Perecquian works, notably with *Un Cabinet d'amateurs* and *La Vie Mode d'Emploi* — which are written later but published before *Le C.* so readers would typically have a knowledge of these novels before knowing *Le C.*— for the themes of deception, forgery in art, and the protagonist's name. Burgelin in *Le C.*'s preface, underlines the similarities with *La Vie Mode d'Emploi* : "Regarde cher lecteur ces pistes qui se « ménagent » entre le texte de 1960 [*Le C.*] et le « romans » de 1978 [*La Vie Mode d'Emploi,* 'romans' is the subtitle of the novel]" (Burgelin 9). Burgelin notes that Perec explores the themes of art, deception and forgery extensively in all his novels including *Le Condottière.* Burgelin indicates that in 1955, an exhibition on artistic

forgery, "Le Faux dans l′art et dans l′histoire", was held from June 17th to July 16th at the famous

Paris museum, the Grand Palais, and Burgelin hypothesizes that Perec may have visited it or at

least been influenced by it somehow (16).

Gaspard Winckler —the protagonist in *Le C.*— is also a recurring character's name in

two of Perec's most influencial novels, i.e. *La Vie Mode d'Emploi* (*La Vie*) and *W, ou le*

Souvenir d'Enfance (*W*). In *La Vie*, Winckler, as mentioned previously, is a puzzle-maker who is

hired by his neighbor Bartlebooth to create puzzles based on Bartebooth's paintings. Bartlebooth,

once he solves the puzzles, destroys them as part of his life project. Winckler avenges himself as

the "vengeance du serviteur méprisé, de l'artisan humilié de voir la perfection de ce travail ne

servir qu'à une œuvre de mort (la destruction des images reconstituées)" (Burgelin 19). In *W*,

Gaspard Winckler is a man who deserted the army and who got forged identity papers and took

the name of a deceased boy. Later he and a man discusses the land of W, an island whose

citizens are obsessed with Olympics.

As a ludic fiction, *Le C.* provides numerous allusions to other texts. For instance, in the

sentence: "Où fuis-tu ? […] *N'importe où pourvu que ce soit hors du monde*" (Perec, *Le*

Condottière 43, my emphasis), the last clause is actually a direct quote from a famous Baudelaire

prose poem published in 1869, "Anywhere out of the World / N'importe où hors du Monde" in

which the poet tries to talk to his silent soul to know which place his soul would feel the best,

and the soul eventually answers chillingly "N'importe où pourvu que ce soit hors du monde".

Another major 19th-century literary work that is explicitly referenced (in addition to sharing

similar themes) is Oscar Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* in which a young and handsome

man wishes to look eternally young while his painted portrait transforms with aging signs and

bears the marks of his life full of vices. Winckler says, after seeing that his reproduction of

Messina's painting actually looks like himself: "Je l'ai réussi, mon propre portrait […] J'aurais cherché le portrait de Dorian Gray, je n'aurais pas fait mieux" (Perec, *Le Condottière* 193).

In the previous chapter on *La Chute*, we established that religious references, and mostly to Christianity, are some of the most well-understood and prevalent references in Western literature. One major reference to the Bible is when Winckler, who dug tunnels to escape his studio, identifies with Lazarus, (194) whom Jesus brought back from the dead, as told in the New Testament. Some references to intertextual relationships are playfully brought up as partly incomplete and to be completed by the reader. For instance, Winckler thinks to himself when trying to escape "Qu'est-ce que tu donnes pour que ça réussisse ? *Mon empire pour un*." (101, my emphasis), in which the last part is an incomplete version of the well-known quote from Shakespeare's *Richard III*, a play depicting King Richard III of England's ascension to power. Richard is a hunchback and has his brother—the true kingdom heir— killed to access the throne instead. At the end, Richard III is on a battlefield and lost his horse, and desperately utters "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse" to be able to flee and survive his opponents in Act 5, scene 4. A last reference that completely goes against the themes and tone of the other intertextual references listed previously is when Winckler, on his way to kill Madera, recalls his thoughts. He is mentally counting his steps on the staircase and narrates the following: "Marche à marche. Un deux trois. Quatre cinq six. […] Marche à marche. Sept huit neuf. *Un panier tout neuf*." (60, my emphasis). The last part is actually from a children's nursery rhyme "1, 2, 3 nous irons au bois" that sings sets of numbers to rhyme with the story that is told.

Identification of the anomaly

I will discuss Winckler's state of mind in the second part of this chapter in more detail but overall, throughout the novel, there are many occurrences of Winckler thinking or saying that he

does not know why he even killed Madera or contradicting himself several times. Winckler's search for the source of what triggered him to murder Madera is the novel's leitmotiv. The fact that the reason for killing Madera remains at first unknown even to Winckler, the actual murderer, is what makes *Le C.* a unique GPN, misleading both the reader and the protagonist responsible for most of the narration. The reason why Winckler killed Madera is also linked to the reason *why Winckler does not know why* he killed Madera.

Here, I refer to the historical person whom Antonello di Messina depicted in his painting as "the Condottière", whom Winckler, of course, must imagine through Di Messina's painting. And Winckler seems to think that he can imagine the real-life model of Antonello di Messina, just by understanding Di Messina's painting. After many questions from Streten, the dialogue between Winckler and Streten brings Winckler to link his painting of Le Condottière to himself as Winckler reaches the truth: "L'illusion longtemps entretenue de mon triomphe [as a forger] s'écroulait avec Le Condottière" (197). Therefore, the key to understanding Winckler's crime requires one to understand the painting of Le Condottière. Painting and murder are closely related: the reason why the painting of Le Condottière is a failure is because instead of exactly reproducing the historical person or model, the Condottière, who is a man of certainty, of confidence and of power, Winckler has painted his own facial features onto the portrait, the face of a nobody, and of an imprisoned man, the opposite of the Condottière, the opposite of what Winckler thought he himself was before the failure. Winckler therefore had to break free from his perceived jailor, Madera, who had sentenced him to a life of reclusiveness, since Winckler had to live in hiding due to his illegal profession:

> J'étais toujours là, impassible, aveugle. Il fallait que tout explose, d'un seul coup.
>
> Que tout éclate. Que les armes se lèvent, oui, enfin, que je sorte de ma torpeur, de

mon jeu, de mon sommeil…La révolte. La révolution. La lutte pour

l'indépendance ...Il fallait que je le tue. ...[Madera] me faisait vivre mais je

n'existais pas… Dans toute l'histoire, je cherchais mon visage, et je l'ai trouvé.

(198-199)

Madera's murder implied that Winckler no longer had to work as a forger, and the failing of the

painting showed him his true self, someone who yearns to get out of his secluded situation: both

events mean the termination of his career as a forger. Without failing at his task of forging *Le

Condottière* —due to the involuntary depiction of his own features on the painting, —"mon

visage que je ne voulais pas reconnaitre" (173)— Winckler would have remained "blind" to his

own situation, to use his own term, and would not have recognized his true condition of a non-

free man, and therefore would not have sought to break free from Madera's influence in the most

radical, permanent way possible.

However, the real GPN's anomaly in the novel is not just to find out why Winckler killed

Madera, but to find out *why he does not know why* he killed Madera. The novel is a unique GPN

in that the protagonist himself does not know why he committed a crime, another similarity

shared with Camus's novel *L'Etranger*. Winckler's ignorance of the reasons why he killed

Madera is correlated with him not knowing why he felt so happy and relieved when he murdered

his patron, and is the novel's leitmotiv. He finally uncovers the reason :

D'un seul coup…oh, pendant un millionième de seconde j'ai été incroyablement

heureux, incroyablement fier […] Comme si j'avais fait pour la première fois de

ma vie un geste naturel. […] Comme si Le Condottière lui aussi était mort, et mes

hantises, et ma peur…Comme si en même temps que s'écroulait le dernier bastion

de mon refuge, les raisons qui me l'avaient fait ériger s'écroulaient elles

aussi…c'est peut-être cela que je ne pouvais pas comprendre…c'est peut-être

pour cela que d'un seul coup j'ai été si heureux. […] *Mon tort était de croire que*

les choses pouvaient attendre. Et revivre à volonté. De croire que le monde s'était

d'un seul coup figé, le jour où j'étais devenu faussaire. C'était absurde (195-196,

my emphasis)

The process of recreating the Condottiere, and failing, showed him that he needed to break free

from this life forever, by performing a "natural", i.e. autonomous, personal, gesture, like a free

man, contrary to the contrived gestures that he had to make as a forger, which he only copied

from famous painters. And at first, Winckler could not comprehend why he felt happy murdering

Madera, but finally understood, thanks to failing his painting, i.e. failing at *reproducing* Di

Messina's gestures, that his life as a forger, which he had spent reproducing works of art —thus

repeating and reliving gestures of painters before him— had misled him into believing that he

could do the same with his own life, i.e. reliving life as he wanted the way he did as a forger

reproducing gestures from past painters. Therefore, Winckler realizes he created his own GPN,

misleading himself with this erroneous belief that life can be relived, reproduced at will. The

actual death of Madera proved to Winckler that one *could not* relive one's life. Winckler needed

to witness, to cause death to understand that his belief was wrong: life is finite, *things cannot*

wait, to use his terms. Once he subconsciously understood the absurdity of life being finite, and

once he broke free from the man who was enabling this existential belief which was born from

the nature of his work, Winckler finally felt happy, genuine, and free for the first time since he

had started his career. As Burgelin notes, "La souffrance du faussaire n'est pas d'être un menteur

ou un imposteur, c'est de s'être retiré de la vie" (Burgelin 20). Burgelin further describes *Le C.*

as a novel that "passe par une histoire d'enfermement et de sous-sol, et avant d'être récit d'une

libération, par la narration d'un échec. Il s'achève pourtant sur une promesse —et dans l'air des cimes. Georges Perec voulait qu'on le lût comme l'histoire d'une « prise de conscience »" (21-2), with the promise of a new beginning for Winckler.

Therefore, the anomaly of this GPN in the novel *Le Condottière* relies on the fact that the character was blind to his own existential misery caused by his very profession and his own decisions, and once he is no longer blind to it, can finally and consciously understand 1) why he killed a man, 2) why he wanted to paint *Le Condottière*, 3) that he made mistakes in his life choices, and 4) that he has a need to start his current life over, in order to finally be able to take responsibility for it, after twelve years of indifference and of deferring responsibility to others for his misery.

Second Reading

To fully explore the GPN dimension of *Le C.*, I will first identify the intertextual frames and challenge them as potentially misleading. Then I will analyze which information was twisted or postponed and by which rhetorical means it was twisted or postponed, to identify what creates asymmetric-information games. Finally, I will explore Winckler's numerous questions to himself when trying to uncover the truth, showing that he had built a GPN for himself unknowingly, and I will see if the questions are ever answered, a process which reminds us of what Perec wanted to do with *Le C.*, that is, writing a novel that has elements of self-interrogation, monologue, and detective story. Finally, I will show in the last section of this part how *Le C.* creates a game of hide-and-seek not only for the reader to understand the truth but most importantly for Winckler who struggles to understand.

Identify intertextual frames and challenge them as potentially misleading.

I mentioned previously that the name Winckler recurs in Perec's works, works which were written after *Le C.* but published before, well-known novels such as *La Vie Mode d'Emploi* and *W*. In *W*, Winckler is a man who deserted the army and got false identification documents using the name of a dead boy. Here, in *Le C.,* the name of Winckler is linked to the themes of forgery, identity, and living as someone else, which is actually in line with the character of Winckler. The character of Winckler in *La Vie* is a man avenging himself of his neighbor who hired him to create puzzles, and these puzzles once solved were going to be destroyed by the neighbor as part of a life project, annihilating Winckler's work of a lifetime. Therefore, there are elements of vengeance, humiliation from a patron, and existential doom attached to *La Vie*'s Winckler, similarly to *Le C.*'s Winckler.

I have already mentioned references to canonical works, a biblical allusion (Lazarus) as well as an allusion to a poem by Baudelaire, "Anywhere Out Of The World / N'importe Où Hors Du Monde," and to Wilde's *Dorian Gray*. These references to 19th-century works as well as the biblical allusion bring up the themes of existential crisis, identity, and of doom and death, which are also major themes in *Le C*. Like *La Chute*, the narration in *Le C.* playfully refers to intertextual frames that are incomplete and that a critical reader will know how to complete: I mentioned an incomplete reference to a quote from *Richard III*, "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse," which Winckler links to the counting nursery rhyme when he counts his steps to kill Madera. The reference to *Richard III* brings up the themes of identity, betrayal, legitimacy, and survival, also crucial themes in *Le C.* The nursery rhyme is therefore at odds among all the other references, as the incursion into such a childish intertextual frame seems to oppose the

gravity of the themes previously established. This contrast increases the impression of confusion in Winckler's mind, adding more challenge to the reader's interpretation of the narrative.

After analyzing the intertextual frames in the context of *Le C.*'s GPN, we can actually remark that these frames are helping more than hindering the reader's GPN interpretation, unlike most frames in the previous case studies, and they do not cause misleading inferential walks. This could be because the protagonist himself is so oblivious to his existential misery (linked to his identity and treacherous profession) that his consciousness is trying to signal to Winckler by any means possible that he has unresolved issues regarding all the themes from these external references. Understanding the intertextual sources here therefore may help guide the critical reader into forming correct GPN expectations, and even so before the protagonist might realize it.

So here I can affirm that the GPN does not subvert expectations based on the intertextual frames, unlike *Heavy Rain* or *La Chute*, but it does subvert expectations regarding the referential code, to use Barthes's term, i.e. the everyday life knowledge that is external to the text: it is unusual that a murderer does not know why he killed someone. The GPN here is more so for the protagonist than the reader because, unlike Shelby and Clamence, Winckler does not know more than the reader, or at least, does not understand more than the reader. Winckler, without realizing it, postpones information until he is ready to face the truth and to discover it. Perec creates an asymmetric-information game for Winckler who tries to wrestle with his memories, his aspirations, his consciousness, to understand the trap he fell in. In the following section I will analyze the different elements that participate to building asymmetric-information games.

Asymmetric information game

From the outset, the very first sentence of *Le C*. immerses its reader into the story,

"Madera était lourd" (33), situating the opening scene *in medias res*, at the heart of the plot.

Without providing any context as to this situation (Madera being heavy), the reader is forced to

make assumptions and read further to confirm or correct his expectations. Whadera analyzes the

opening lines as part of a postponing process of narrative information:

> we automatically assume that if the speaker can proclaim Madera was heavy, then
>
> Madera is being carried. If he is being carried, he must be unwell or, worse still,
>
> dead. The reference to blood in the first paragraph […] does not bode well for
>
> Madera. Some pages later, our suspicion is confirmed in a similar sentence:
>
> "Madera était mort" (34). Yet the details of his death are unclear. We then
>
> understand that Madera is dead because he was killed [by Winckler who explicitly
>
> acknowledges it on page 45]. (Whadera 153)

Piece by piece, the narration incrementally builds the reader's cognitive environment, similarly

to what video game scholar Anastasia Salter referred to as the "string-of-pearl method", in which

video game authors divulge information progressively to build obstacles —a process which

"allows the story to function both as motivation and reward" (Salter 43), as a truly engaging

GPN. In the opening pages, Perec operates a backward exposition scene: he focuses first on the

object of the action (Madera), then on the actions related to him (being carried, dragged, and

murdered), the location (the underground studio), and finally reveals the subject of these actions:

Winckler. Perec resorts to the string-of-pearl method to design his GPN which in turn requires

the reader to constantly reconstruct his cognitive environment. Perec here is playing on a

canonical scene of film noir, in which a man is sitting motionless in a chair with his back to the

detective or policemen entering the room to investigate: as they ask him to turn around hands up, we discover the man has been murdered. Perec is playing with this cliché to create his string-of-pearl entryway to the GPN. Also, Perec writes his opening pages like a detective novel: who is the victim, what is the crime, to finally reveal who is the murderer. But this revelation of who the murderer is, unlike in many regular detective novels, in the first few pages. The real mystery of this novel is not who or how, but *why*: the motives, which are unknown to the murderer himself, and the murderer himself is investigating to find out his motives.

Because the murderer is actively trying to uncover his own motives, the reader witnesses different approaches by Winckler to find out the truth. In the first part of the novel, more so than the second part during which Winckler is talking with Streten, Winckler is by himself and rambles, obsessing over his motives and over recurring phrases: "Coupable ou non coupable" (Perec 2012, 39, 71, 85); "A quoi ça sert une conscience ?" (51, 55, 60, 83) ; "Tu lèves le bras, tu le rabats" (65, 95, 103) ; "N'importe quoi de n'importe qui de n'importe quand" (83, 116, 142) ; "L'ambition monumentale. La monumentale erreur" (49, 129) ; "Peut-être. Peut-être pas peut-être. Peut-être surement" (184, 202). Burgelin describes Winckler's disturbed mind as an "espace de la prison mentale […] *le lieu du ressassement* et du tourment comme le point de départ de l'échappée à venir. Geôle d'où « je » sort en partie grâce au « tu »" (Burgelin 20, my emphasis). This switching between first and second person pronouns that Burgelin mentions is part of Winckler's internal soliloquy which I will now explore in detail.

Although I established that most of the narration is single-focus, from Winckler's perspective, an unusual element of this single-focused narrative is the switching of pronouns in Winckler's narration. This switching can be observed even in the first twenty pages of the novel. Ben Jalloul explains the switching of pronoun : " ces pronoms s'avèrent appartenir à un seul et

même personnage : Gaspard Winckler, un faussaire prisonnier de sa conscience perturbée".

(177). In the first two pages, the narration starts with "je" —"**Je** l'ai saisi sous les aisselles" (33)

— then changes to "tu" —"**tu** vois, **tu** te disais peut-être que c'était facile" (34)— and then

switches to "il" —"**Il** avait regardé tout autour de lui" (34). The narration remains in third-person

until page 39, where it switches back to "tu" —"Et alors ? qu'est-ce que ça peut **te** foutre ? ils

viendront **te** chercher. Et puis?" (39)— then to "on" — "On s'est cru le plus grand faussaire in

the world, hein ?" (42)— then "il" —"quelque chose qu'**il** n'arrivait pas à comprendre" (43)—

then "tu"— Où fuis-**tu** ? (45)— then on the same page "je" — "**Je** n'ai fait qu'accélérer un tout

petit peu le cours du temps"— then "tu"—"**Tu** as joué et **tu** as perdu."(49)— then "je" — "**mon**

avenir soudain s'est inscrit" (50) — then "tu" — "**tu** as tué un homme" (51)— and even on the

same page (53) goes from "je" —" Chère Geneviève. **Je** ne peux pas encore rentrer car."— to

"il" —"en avait-**il** eu sur le coup pleine conscience ?". Catherine Ponhon analyzes the use of

pronouns in Perec's *Un Homme qui dort*, which has a similar use of pronouns to *Le C.*'s.:

> "mon double — à qui je disais 'tu.'" Nous désignerons ce double par le pronom
>
> "tu." Cette énonciation à la deuxième personne du singulier permet *la*
>
> *distanciation et le dédoublement*. L'auteur peut être narrateur et personnage, sujet
>
> et objet, se regarder regardant. "Tu te regardes te regarder" (*Un Homme qui dort*
>
> 100). Le "tu" autorise un "je" masqué dans un jeu de miroir. "Tu" scrute ainsi le
>
> reflet de son visage dans le miroir. (Pochon 81, my emphasis)

As Ponchon notes, "tu" may be used in an otherwise first-person narrative to create some kind of

dissociation with oneself, to allow a character to objectify himself and analyze himself better,

with more distance. However, Ponchon does not address the use of "il" since it does not occur in

Un Homme qui Dort, but "il" seems to indicate an even greater level of dissociation, as unlike

"je" and "tu" which at least show direct dialogue and reference, "il" is an indirect address. *Le C.*'s narration multiplies pronouns to show an even greater need for Winckler to analyze himself, to understand himself, which is a struggle throughout the whole novel. This identity struggle underlines the fact that he has had to pretend to be someone else as a forger, copying painters, and was not able to fully express himself in his art. However, this strategy, as I will show later when analyzing Winckler's mindset regarding his crime, of dissociating himself, does not work. It is only during the dialogue with Streten, when Winckler consistently use the pronoun "je", that he makes progress in his understanding of the truth. "Tu" is Winckler's consciousness trying to show him the truth despite anything, even at the risk of hurting him. The tone of "tu" in *Le C.* is indeed typically mocking or deprecating : "Tu ne pouvais que te tromper." (50), "Tu t'es cru le plus fort." (42), " Tu as joué et tu as perdu. […] Premier accessit : Winckler, Gaspard, pour sa remarquable interprétation de la mort du cygne ."(49) The tone might sound harassing but it is actually his consciousness telling him that his ambition, notably of painting Le Condottière was too high: "L'ambition monumentale ? la monumentale erreur" (49). His consciousness puts him in his place.

Ben Jalloul analyzes Winckler's pronoun switching, ellipses, missing punctuation, and interrupted passages such as the following: "Un deux trois. Quatre cinq six. Et pendant tout ce temps-là – à quoi ça sert [ellipsis of "une conscience"] ? – une voix qui parlait au fond de sa gorge […] Une marche pour Ma. Une marche pour De. Une marche pour Ra. Une marche pour Tu une marche pour Vas une marche pour Tu une marche pour Er une marche pour Ma une marche pour De une marche pour Ra. Tu Vas-tu Er Ma De Ra " (Perec 2012, 60). Ben Jalloul sees this as a sign of

la perturbation du personnage, piégé dans le ressassement infini de la même idée,
à savoir trouver une signification au meurtre de Madera. Le morcellement des
phrases reflète une conscience tumultueuse et débridée. En effet, les phrases sont
rompues et les règles de la ponctuation sont transgressées : le rythme des phrases
épouse les actions du personnage. *Le lecteur assiste ainsi aux moindres faits et*
gestes de ce dernier, qui semblent ne plus pouvoir taire sa conscience libérée. Les
mots deviennent des relais nécessaires à une conscience qui a besoin de
s'exprimer en brisant volontairement la syntaxe et en créant des variations
énonciatives atypiques. (Ben Jalloul 178, my emphasis)

As readers have full access to Winckler's thoughts, the stream of consciousness that we witness
is, somewhat paradoxically, part of Perec's tools to build an asymmetric-information game.
Similarly to *La Chute* that had a dizzying amount of information from the protagonist
Clamence's logorrhea, here the information overload leads to confusion for the reader. Since we
are told everything, from Winckler's existential ponderings to his memories, to childish nursery
rhymes, to twisted expressions — e.g. "Un bon Titien vaut mieux que deux Ribera" [twist on the
idiom "Un 'tiens' vaux mieux que deux 'tu l'auras'"] (81); "un faussaire sachant faussé [twist on
the tongue-twister "un chasseur sachant chasser"] (173)— going through his head, nothing really
stands out. It is therefore challenging to determine what information is relevant to solve the
GPN. Keating, too, emphasizes Perec's "descriptions vertigineuses" (Keating 226) as one of the
tools to build GPNs —though Keating does not use the term GPN— by conveying phenomena
like uninterrupted thought process in a hyper-realistic way.

Winckler himself does not know where to look for the truth and oscillates between several
contradictory states of mind during the novel and this phenomenon also contributes to

misleading the reader (and Winckler himself) even further. "Je ne sais pas…c'est évident" (113) Winckler sighs when Streten asks him about his motives for killing Madera. It is clear to the reader, from this sentence and from virtually the whole novel, that Winckler himself is confused when he speaks of his crime. Another tool for building an asymmetric-information game, for both the reader and the protagonist, is Winckler's own inability to understand why he committed a crime, and his constant, sometimes utterly contradictory, back-and-forth attempts to identify the root of his act. There are five types of mindsets regarding the murder that Winckler goes through during the novel:

1. He has no idea at all as to why he did so (e.g.: "je ne sais pas" (111))

2. He thinks killing Madera makes no sense (e.g. : "Mais il fallait que la mort de Madera ait un sens, et plus j'exigeais que ce geste soit compréhensible, plus tout foutait le camp" (112))

3. He displays indifference (e.g. : "qu'est-ce que ça pouvait bien foutre un geste en plus ou en moins" (171)) or provides weak excuses for his crime (e.g. : "parce qu'il était devant moi" (115))

4. He provides some explanation (e.g. : "Le premier geste autonome, le premier acte de liberté" (184))

5. He states that killing Madera was necessary (e.g.: "J'avais besoin de le tuer (198))"

    As I performed a close-reading analysis of *Le C.*, I coded each instance, with values from 1 to 5 as shown above, in which Winckler discusses the potential reasons for the murder, that is, each reference of him pondering the reason for his crime. There are several occurrences of Winckler directly discussing his reasons, or lack thereof, and thanks to Excel Pivot tables, I was

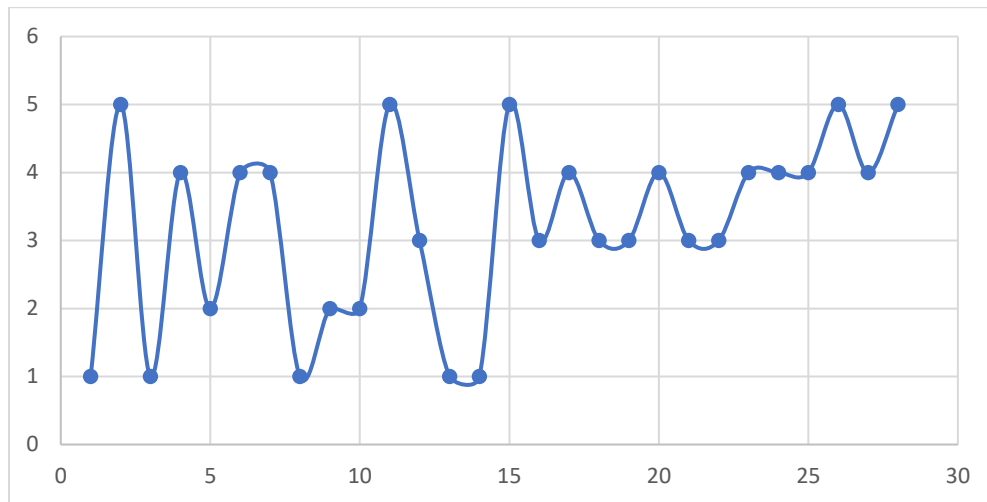able to generate a graph of Winckler's discourse to solve the mystery of his seemingly nonsensical crime:

Figure 6

As we can see from the table above, the first half of the novel shows a great range of states of mind, widely oscillating from 1 ("no idea") to 5 ("necessary") quickly followed by 2 ("makes no sense") or 1 again in close proximity, which denotes Winckler's disturbed and contradictory thoughts. However, we can see that the second half is much more consistent, and only ranges from 3 ("indifference or weak excuse") to later consistently with 4 ("some explanation") to 5 ("necessary"). It therefore seems that Winckler thinking that Madera's murder was necessary is actually grounded in possible hypotheses in the second half, unlike the first half in which Winckler sporadically changes his mind from 1 ("no idea") or 2 ("makes no sense") to 5 ("necessary") back and forth.

A game of hide-and-seek to find answers

As established previously, Perec wanted *Le C*. to be a novel with elements of monologue, investigation, and police interrogation. The narration reflects these perfectly thanks to the different characteristics that I established earlier, with Winckler's internal monologue, the

185

dialogue with Streten similar to a therapist or police interrogation, and Winckler's investigation into his own crime. Due to the nature of the plot, there are many questions during the novel, some of them repeated, that convey Winckler's obsessive, restless mindset. I will explore Winckler's questions to himself, and establish if they ever receive an answer, and how they help perpetuate the GPN. Indeed, as I previously stated, *Le C.* is a unique GPN in that the protagonist himself, not just the reader, actively tries to discover the proper interpretation of his actions. The GPN is created for the protagonist more so than the reader because, unlike Shelby and Clamence, Winckler is in the dark, not just the reader. Perec creates an asymmetric-information game of hide-and-seek for Winckler who tries to wrestle with his memories, his aspirations, his consciousness, to understand the trap he fell in, and Winckler interrogating himself is his first step in navigating the story of killing Madera. First, in order to explore Winckler's auto-investigation, I will address the questions that Winckler asks himself, focusing on single-occurrence questions, excluding the rhetorical questions —such as "Et alors?" (39)—, and the recurring questions which I will study as a category of its own. I will also bold certain sentences to highlight the gist of each question and analyze them in the light of the GPN.

- "A quoi pensait-il ? il lui semblait que plus rien n'existait que cette colère et cette lassitude" (37). This is the first question Winckler asks himself, inquiring about his own state of mind, showing he is **dissociated from the decision-making process that dominated him** when he killed Madera.

- "Leonard [de Vinci] était mort, Antonello [de Messine] était mort et moi-même je ne me sens pas très bien. Une mort bête. Victime des évènements. Victime d'une malchance, d'une maladresse, d'une faute. Condamné par contumace. A l'unanimité des voix moins une – laquelle ? " (38). Here Winckler resorts to the lexicon of justice to explore his own

case: he feels that he is being sentenced by a jury in absentia, i.e. that he is sentenced even though he did not show up to his own trial. His question to himself **shows that he bears some intuition of his innocence regarding his crime**, that at least one person was able to judge that he should not be sentenced, unlike the rest of the jury. This provides some insight that deep down, Winckler knows he had reasons to kill Madera, even though it is not clear to him yet. At the time of the question, he cannot identify who this benevolent jury member is, but it is actually solved later, in an almost verbatim sentence at the end of the novel: "Petit à petit condamné sans recours. A l'unanimité des vois moins une. La sienne" (185). The answer to the question comes right after Winckler realizes that Madera's murder was his "premier geste autonome, le premier acte de liberté, la première évidence de la conscience" (184) to put a stop to his forger career that made him live like a ghost. Once Winckler grasps that he had to break free from his miserable condition, he understands his crime, and is now at peace with himself.

- "Quelle illusion l'avait bercé ? Celle de pouvoir un jour, au terme d'une carrière incontestée, réussir ce que jamais faussaire avant lui n'avait osé tenter" (58). Here, Winckler shifts his interrogation onto the subject of the painting, which shows that he is now aware that he was deluded in his undertaking of painting Le Condottière because he was being arrogant and thought he would be able to achieve something that no one else did before, **i.e., that he would become someone, as opposed to a nobody forger**. Now that he acknowledges the illusion, he is free from it and finally able to reflect on it, instead of being under its spell as he was until then.

- "A quoi rimait l'insensé désir de recréer, par-dessus l'inévitable torrent des siècle, la gueule lumineuse […] de ce ruffian ?" (61-62). Winckler is now questioning his own obsession, that he qualifies as irrational, with **recreating** the painting of Le Condottière.

- "Avait-il eu conscience qu'encore une fois ça avait été sa propre image qu'il recherchait ? avait-il su que c'était son propre visage qu'il suscitait, qu'il arrachait aux siècles" (68). Although this idea of Winckler reproducing his own image in the painting is confirmed and reinforced later in the novel, this is the first time his consciousness brings it up. But Winckler, at the beginning at least, does not ponder over it. This passage suggests that he is not fully aware at first of his existential struggle regarding his identity, because he later finally uncovers that for him, being a forger is "vivre avec les morts, ça veut dire être mort, ça veut dire connaitre les morts, ça veut dire être n'importe qui" (142). If he wants to be someone, **someone alive and not simply repeating the gestures of dead artists**, he needs to stop being a forger.

- "Ne pose plus de questions. Ou bien ne les résous pas. Pourquoi est-ce soudain rassurant?" (70). Winckler feels relieved when he thinks about not solving his constant questioning. This is because, deep down, he knows that solving his questions (why he killed Madera, why he felt happy doing so, why he chose Le Condottière, etc…) means to understand that his whole life was made of his bad choices which led him to feel so miserable. He later understands that when killing Madera, who was "le dernier bastion de mon refuge, les raisons qui me l'avaient fait ériger s'écroulaient elles aussi" (196) — because Madera was the one hiring and therefore enabling Winckler's forgery life—he needs to take responsibility for his choices, and start over. He sees that him being a forger is not just a job but "ma vie toute entière. Ma raison d'être […] ma définition" (197).

Having your whole life torn apart is a scary thought and therefore not facing it might seem, in the short term, **reassuring because it maintains the *status quo* and defers responsibility** for existential misery.

- "La décision prise une fois pour toutes d'être entièrement et de n'être que cette absence, ce creux, ce moule, ce répétiteur, ce faux créateur, cet agent mécanique des œuvres du passé. Que voulait-il ?" (71). Winckler wonders what brought him to become and remain a forger while he clearly sees that it hinders his sense of identity. To his question about **what he wanted** by becoming a forger, he finds the answer much later: because his profession allows him to reproduce masterpieces and relive artists' gestures and moments in time, his **profession led him to think his own life was also able to easily be repeated**, relived at command, as he believed "que les choses pouvaient attendre. Et revivre à volonté" (196).

- "Était-il libre ? était-il prisonnier ? " (75). Winckler wonders about his condition as a forger and realizes that he never felt free. He realizes that his own profession condemns him to repeat other artists' gestures and therefore he is not master of his own actions when painting : "Je devais rendre compte de quelque chose qui existait déjà, je devais créer un autre langage, mais je n'étais pas libre : la grammaire et la syntaxe existaient déjà, mais les mots n'avaient aucun sens" (151). He acknowledges that "je passais ma vie à la recherche exacte de gestes que d'autres avaient faits avant moi, mieux que moi" (117). The very nature of his profession —which Winckler said is not just a profession but his existential definition and reason of being— makes him not free but a slave to past artists and their techniques that he has to copy: there is **no room for freedom, creativity, and individuality**.

- "Dans le monde entier, quelle image laisserait-il?" (78), is another question showing his yearning for individuality and for personal legacy, which, as a forger of other artists, is by nature refused to him, living in a "monde de fantomes" (67). He even notes: "j'étais le plus grand faussaire du monde, parce que personne ne savait que j'étais faussaire" (117). His existential misery is such that anything that would be a free, autonomous gesture, as opposed to all the repeated, copied gestures of his forged work, is **considered as a victory for his individuality and identity**, just like Madera's murder: "J'avais besoin de gestes qui n'apartiennent qu'à moi" (118).

- "A trente, à trente-trois ans ? pouvait-il prendre conscience ?" (83). This question shows Winckler's concerns about starting to be conscious of his existential misery and that it might be too late for him to understand and improve. Not only we can see that he does understand this dilemma, but he **finally decides to take action**: "Je ne serai plus jamais faussaire…je tenterai de ne plus jamais me prendre à mes propres pièges" (194).

- "Puis vint Mila. Le premier étonnement, le premier mépris, minuscule, sans gravité. Pour la première fois, il avait eu soudain envie, d'un seul coup, de ne pas jouer. Être lui. Qu'est-ce que ça voulait dire ?" (83). Winckler remembers when he once felt like he wanted to be himself when he fell in love with Mila, while still being a forger. Here he still struggles to understand what it meant to be yearning to be himself and why he felt that way. We now understand that it was the first sign that he was not happy as a forger and that it had **already tainted his sense of self and identity**.

- "N'avait-il jamais été libre ? Avait-il fallu que Jérôme meurt, avait-il fallu que Geneviève se sépare de lui, avait-il fallu que le Condottière soit un échec, avait-il fallu que Madera meure, pour qu'enfin il s'en aperçoive ?" (97). Winckler wonders at first about his

freedom, and then if the **constant failures in his life were signs** that he needed to be able to finally understand his existential misery of **not having a proper identity and freedom**. He says later that by killing Madera he was showing he wanted to "rompre d'un seul coup. Tout casser. Ne rien laisser subsister de tout ce que j'avais fait" (111).

- Killing Madera : "Un geste inutile ou un pas en avant ?" (103) At this point in the novel, Winckler is still hesitant about the meaning of his crime which he thinks could either be **perfectly absurd or a catalyst** to move forward in his life. While the murder could technically have been avoided by Winckler —like when he suggested "Il fallait que je le prenne ce foutu téléphone et que je lui [Madera] hurle ma colère, mon désespoir, ma lassitude, ma certitude" (199)— the murder is nonetheless also a step forward in his life : "Je l'ai tué sans rien dire, comme un lâche….ça ne fait rien. J'ai compris et ça suffit" (199). Just like Clamence in *La Chute*, Winckler **needed to first understand the absurdity** of his forger condition which condemned him to existential misery, to **then be able to take responsibility** to exit this condition.

  Now, let us turn to Winckler's two recurring questions throughout the novel:

- "Coupable ou non coupable ?"; this question occurs three times (39, 71, 85) and shows Winckler's inability to process his crime and even understand if the murder makes him guilty of it or if somehow he could be judged not guilty. Later he answers this question : "Maintenant, je découvre que je suis coupable […] coupable de ne pas savoir pourquoi, de ne pas vouloir savoir" (116). He judges that his guilt is not to have killed Madera, but **rather to have been blind to the reason why** he even wanted to kill him, guilty of rejecting any feelings and thoughts that were signs from his consciousness that he needed to leave his forger life: "qui s'est caché la tête dans le sable pour ne pas voir ce qui se

passait ?" (97). To Winckler, it is clear that creating this life of misery and annihilating his sense of self is a bigger crime than killing a man who simply enabled this misery. This solves the novel's GPN as Winckler finally discovers where his sense of guilt really comes from.

- "A quoi ça sert conscience ?" ; this recurring question appears four times (51, 55, 60, 83). The word "conscience" in French can both refer to moral conscience or psychological consciousness, a double meaing on which Perec is able to play. Throughout the novel, Winckler ponders the purpose of having a conscience/ consciousness. Twice he attempts to answer his question about the purpose of a conscience/consciousness : "était-ce pour se protéger que la conscience se souvenait ?" (61, 97). Later Winckler realizes that his crime was in fact "le premier geste autonome, le premier acte de liberté, la première évidence de la conscience" (184). Earlier I showed how his conscience/consciousness, actively harassing him, in the passages using "tu" in his own internal monologue, could be seen as cruel but it was actually trying to wake him up to his miserable condition, i.e. **to protect him**. His conscience/consciousness suggests him to perform more instrospection to free himself psychologically of his existential struggle, while he is digging a tunnel to escape Madera's underground studio: "Creuser ta vie peut-être comme tu creuses ton salut ? Retourner en arrière et recommencer. Comprendre" (65) By pushing him hard, his consciousness is progressively getting Winckler to get his head out of the sand and face his reality, so as to then be able to take action.

Because of this self-investigation, the narration creates a game of hide-and-seek for the protagonist with his own consciousness. Winckler is striving but also dreading to uncover why he killed Madera; furthermore, he does not even know why he does not know why he killed him.

This ambiguous mindset echoes what Perec writes in *W*, when talking about his writing process :

"Une fois de plus, je fus comme un enfant qui joue à cache-cache et *qui ne sait pas ce qu'il craint ou désire le plus : rester caché, être découvert*" (Perec 1975, 14, my emphasis).

I will now explore the other elements of this game of hide-and-seek as part of the GPN structure. One of the first signs that his consciousness is trying to "seek" what is "hidden" in Winckler —i.e. his repressed existential misery—lies hidden in why he felt certain emotions about Madera when he killed him, and why he wanted to paint Le Condottière. After killing Madera, Winckler realizes that "il lui semblait que plus rien n'existait que cette **colère** et cette **lassitude**" (Perec 2012, 37) and that around him, it feels like " un univers pour la première fois **cohérent**, un univers **rassurant**" (47). When Madera was around him while Winckler was painting Le Condottière, Winckler felt "hors de [lui], sans savoir pourquoi" (51). Winckler also interrogates his feeling of "**insensé désir**" (61) to reproduce the painting, which he answers a little later : "C'était tellement évident que ce qui l'avait attiré ait été cette image immédiate du triomphe, cet exact contraire de ce qu'il était lui-même" (62). When thinking about not solving his burning questions and introspection, he felt **reassured** (70) without knowing why, as not solving the questions actually postpones the moment of facing his responsibility and of breaking from his whole life to start over. When he learns that his friend and mentor Jérôme is sick and cannot work anymore as a forger, Winckler feels unknowingly depressed: he was "**affolé** par cette espèce de déclin immédiat, ce déclin prévisible, cette présence soudain insupportable du tremblement dans ses main, cet atroce supplice d'une vue imprecise. Jérôme ne pouvait plus travailler" (87). He eventually deems this the "**agonie** terriblement lente d'une vie soudain inutile" (89-90). The death of Winckler's mentor also leads him to turn to alcoholism without knowing why (92) which shows that Jérôme's death and the realization that Jérôme had no more

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purpose when he retired triggers an emotional reaction that Winckler does not understand, and that his coping strategy is not to seek the truth but rather to bury it under his addiction.

In his correspondence with Lederer, Perec mentions the need for Winckler to speak and get things off his chest to even be able to understand his condition: "il faut que ce soit un combat, une lutte. Il faut justement que Gaspard parle, alors qu'il le refusait absolument. Il faut qu'il sorte tout ce que représentait pour lui Madera" (Lederer 409). Perec wants his novel's narration to be similar to psychoanalysis, explaining itself as it unfolds (301) and with the protagonist uncovering his truth as he speaks, sometimes referred to as a "talking cure". Winckler also realizes that "l'échec du Condottière, la mort de Madera. La même chose : ce même déferlement de **haine** et de **folie**" (Perec 2012, 99). Finally, Winckler identitifes that as he killed Madera, he felt "cette **joie** soudaine…cette joie irradiante, **totale**, **insensée**. **Incompréhensible**. Tellement **compréhensible**. N'est-ce pas, Gaspard Winckler, tellement compréhensible ?" (105). As he describes his emotions, he paradoxically first feels joy in a sudden way, wholesome yet nonsensical, but at the same time he gets a hint that this joy is somehow understandable. Here his consciousness is trying to bring to his attention the fact that, if he deigned putting the pieces of this emotional puzzle together, he should be able to understand his sudden joy, though he does not at that moment. Finally, another type of feeling Winckler does not understand is the **loneliness** he suddenly feels after he ran away from the crime scene, Madera's underground studio: "Et d'un seul coup, sur la route, en pleine nuit, je me suis senti seul. Ça ne voulait rien dire" (112) although he is able to make a connection with this feeling and Jérôme's plight: "Pas n'importe quelle solitude. La solitude comme Jérôme à Annemasse, la solitude complète, sans appel, **parce que je ne pouvais plus me raccrocher à rien**, parce que je ne savais plus comment j'allais vivre" (103). This is a significant step for Winckler who, while breaking free but not

knowing yet how badly he wanted to quit his forger job, experiences distress and loneliness because his whole life was built around his profession and his relationship with patrons like Madera. Ultimately, all these emotions are explained once Winckler faces the truth of his existential misery. The emotions were clues, at the time, in a GPN to Winckler because his fear of facing a new life, though necessary to his happiness, was overwhelming and blinding him to the truth, since he had to give up everything and only now realized that all his decisions, not someone else's, had led him to this life. In the next section, I will analyze Winckler's realization that he himself set up traps to create his existential misery.

Winckler describes his profession as being "cette absence, ce creux, ce moule, ce répétiteur, ce faux créateur, cet agent mécanique des œuvres du passé" (71). He feels that his life is hollow because he only performs other artists'gestures, repeatedly and mechanically. The mechanical, systematic character of his life takes a toll on him, and is a leitmotiv throughout the novel, most notably throughout the repeated occurrences of him performing the same gestures, similar to a robot: "Tu lèves le bras, tu le rabats" (65, 95, 103), or references to his gestures in general (37, 65, 77, 103, 104, 111, 112, 115, 116, 117, 118, 125, 168, 169, 171, 184, 196) which either point to his painting gestures or to his crime —sometimes ambiguously so that the reader cannot distinguish which type of gesture Winckler is referring to. Winckler mixes up the two types of gestures, which shows he inherently links Madera's murder to the nature of his profession: "J'avais besoin de gestes qui n'apartiennent qu'a moi" (118). Because Winckler spent his life to reproduce other artists' gestures, he became fed up, and the murder of Madera, which is not a gesture related to painting like the ones Winckler complained about, is assimilated to a type of autonomous gesture, and therefore Winckler is happy about it.

Winckler eventually realizes that he is the one who set up his mechanical lifestyle:

"J'étais prisonnier de moi-même" (199). He acknowledges that he is responsible for creating his

prison, not Madera, as he is the one who made decisions to become and stay a forger and

organize his whole life around it, including his sense of identity. "j'avais tout organisé […] pour

qu'il n'y ait pas d'issue. Tu comprends : pris à mon propre piège" (118). He remained a prisoner

of this reclusive life. At first, when Winckler complains that he was coerced into accepting being

a forger, his consciousness rightfully reminds him:

> Mais tu sais bien que les choses ne se sont pas passées comme cela. A quoi te sert
>
> de te plaindre ? Tu as voulu ce que tu as été. Tu as été ce que tu as voulu. Tu as
>
> accepté ton sort, d'un bout à l'autre, entièrement, non pas parce qu'il fallait bien
>
> que tu acceptes quelque chose, non pas en victime, mais à coup sûr parce que
>
> l'organisation que tu as faite de ta vie, de ton travail, de tes loisirs, était encore
>
> celle qui était la plus apte à te satisfaire. (73)

Becoming a forger means to take shortcuts when it comes to the artistic, creative process:

Winckler is only *copying* others before him; by choosing to be a forger, "il avait accepté le

monde dans ce qu'il y avait de plus facile" (75). Winckler mistakenly made the seductive nature

of his work (the reproduction at will of masterpieces) his principle of life in that "mon tort était

de croire que les choses pouvaient attendre. Et revivre à volonté" (196). During a dialogue,

Streten points out Winckler's hypocrisy when he complains about trying to be himself: "Tu

voulais combattre à visage découvert ? Mais tu avais truqué les cartes, ne le savais-tu pas ? Tu

cherchais une victoire et tu n'acceptais pas le combat" (130). Streten implies that Winckler

cheated his whole life due to his work as a forger: cheating because his profession is illegal but

also cheating because he was never an artist, he was simply *copying* geniuses before him,

without putting up a fight of his own, to use Streten's words, without doing anything freely, out

of pure artistic, personal creation, and talent. With the help of Streten, Winckler realizes that his failure of the painting Le Condottière —i.e. painting some of his own features into the portrait of the Condottière— is what opened his eyes: "je voulais mon visage et je voulais le Condottière…La victoire sans combat, la certitude sans médiation" (162). Indeed, Streten underlines that Winckler was bound to fail : "Tu cherchais ce regard clair comme une épée, tu oubliais qu'un homme, avant toi [the original painter of Le Condottière, Antonello di Mesina], l'avait trouvé, en avait rendu compte, l'expliquant parce que le dépassant, le dépassant parce que l'expliquant" (128). Winckler was therefore not able to depict Messina's painting precisely because he himself did not master the "regard clair", and lacked a stable sense of self and of direction.

I will now turn to the painting itself and its relationship to Winckler as part of the hide-and-seek game in the GPN. Lelevé analyzes this relationship between Winckler and the painting and points out that this novel is about elucidating the enigma of Winckler's crime. She defines elucidation as "mise en ordre du réel" (Lelevé 55), and she underlines that what really matters in *Le C*. is not "le secret final mais la construction du récit" (57). Lelevé explains that the painting of Le Condottière "fonctionne comme un indice" in Winckler's self-investigation, and is the mirror of his consciousness (59). As he observed his finished painting, Winckler notes : "Je ne l'avais jamais vu avant…un rat…un rat avec des yeux sournois…n'importe quoi…n'importe quel homme…c'était un type sortant du bagne au bout de quinze ans" (Perec 2012, 159). Shortly after finishing his Condottière's reproduction, he looks at himself in the mirror:

> En pleine nuit je me suis regardé dans la glace. C'était moi, c'était mon visage,
> ces années d'efforts, ces nuits sans sommeil…c'était moi, anxieux et avide, cruel
> et mesquin avec des yeux de rat. *L'air de se prendre pour un Condottière*. L'air

de se croire le maître du monde, à la croisée de tous les chemins. L'air de se

croire inaccessible, et libre, et fort. C'était moi. L'angoisse, l'amertume, la

panique. (163, my emphasis)

Until he failed at reproducing the painting, Winckler was feeling like a Condottière, a

powerful and confident warlord, but his painting revealed his true inner self : "à la place d'un

chef-d'œuvre de la Renaissance, à la place du seul portrait que j'ai vraiment voulu faire, celui de

la sérénité, de la force, de l'équilibre, de la maîtrise du monde, un clown déguisé, un pitre dans la

force de l'âge, crispé, anxieux, perdu, vaincu, définitivement vaincu" (126). Unlike the man

depicted on the original Condottière, Winckler is struck seeing his own face, lacking serenity,

confidence, and mastery over his own life. Winckler even says : "je l'ai réussi, mon propre

portrait…je l'ai eu, mon visage…J'aurais cherché le portrait de Dorian Gray, je n'aurais pas fait

mieux" (193). He refers to Gray's cursed portrait that gets old instead of Gray himself showing

marks of age and of his decadent lifestyle. Gray, throughout Wilde's novel, is afraid of seeing his

portrait's evolution, and like Winckler, is afraid of seeing his true self. Like Dorian Gray's

portrait, the failed Condottière reveals to Winckler all the information he needed: instead of

being this powerful, almighty forger he thought he was, he simply is a powerless, pathetic, and

bitter man who spent his whole life in a form of self-imposed prison. More importantly, he was

not Di Messina, an artist who was actually able to depict Le Condottière's confidence because he

understood and mastered such a trait himself, as Streten pointed out (128). So in addition to

revealing to Winckler his true self of existential misery, Le Condottière revealed to Winckler that

he was not almighty like he thought he was, like his profession —that required him to cheat to

rise to the levels of artistic geniuses by merely copying— led him to believe.

"L'échec du Condottière, la mort de Madera. La même chose" (98), Winckler thinks.

Once he realizes that he has failed at his painting and killed a man to find a new sense of self, Winckler even says "Faussaire est mort, vive Gaspard" (193). His metaphorical death as a forger was through killing his patron but most importantly through failing at the forgery. Like Dorian Gray, seeing his portrait caused the death of his forger self: "lui [Dorian] il en est mort. Moi aussi…Mais d'une manière différente" (193). Olga Amarie —who studies Perec's *La Vie Mode d'Emploi* but whose analysis is pertinent for to *Le C.* due to the similar themes— explores the concept of the last gaze:

> The final gaze is watching something disappear forever. Perec […] [does] not emphasize nostalgia and loss but a new beginning. The psychological effect in literary works or real life, I argue, is that a person gains a degree of self-reliance or self-sufficiency during the very last moments before going blind. Seeing, blindness or death are on display in Perec's works and illustrate a particular dynamic of endings and new beginnings. (Amarie 96)

One difference here in *Le C.* is that Winckler does not go blind but rather sees clearly for the first time his true self in his painting. However, the gaze that Winckler directed to his failed painting is, as we showed, a gaze that reveals the death of his illusion about being a powerful, confident man like le Condottière, the death of his forger career, and consequently the death of Madera. Winckler's final gaze on his forger identity does bring him, at last, a sense of self-reliance, and offers him the impetus for the new beginning he was yearning for.

Amarie also brings up the actual topic of art reproduction in society: "The process of mass production reaches the art object in its very center, as shown in the 1936 essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* by the German cultural critic Walter Benjamin. According to Benjamin, the very authenticity of a piece of art and its power of effect are being

compromised by the era of reproduction" (98). Amarie uses Benjamin's term "aura," which is defined as "a general concept associated with any object of perception and technology. It means waning, but also a quality of being unique" (96). She then points out, referring to reproduction, "The "aura" of the work [of art being reproduced] disappears with its loss of uniqueness" (98). Just like Winckler destroyed the uniqueness of the works of art he copied, his constant adoption of others' gestures in his profession destroyed his own "aura", his own uniqueness as a person. That is why to be himself, he must no longer be a forger, a copier. In the last paragraphs of *Le C.*, the narration takes on a prophetic tone, announcing Winckler's next steps in his new life:

> Tu iras vers le monde, cherchant l'ordre et la cohérence. Cherchant la vérité et la liberté. Dans cet au-delà accessible gisent ton temps et ton espoir, ta certitude et ton expérience, ta lucidité et ta victoire. Peut-être chercher dans les visages l'évidente nécessité de l'homme. Peut-être chercher dans les objets et les paysages l'évidente nécessité du monde. […] Dans l'incomplétude du monde. […] Vers cette perpétuelle *reconquête* du temps et de la vie. (Perec 2012, 202-3, my emphasis)

For the first time, Winckler's consciousness (using "tu") is not mocking him but rather encouraging him and hopeful for him. He is finally at peace with himself while nonetheless understanding that the world cannot be perfectly mastered, the way he thought he did as a forger. While he now knows that his life is finite, and not reproducible like his forgeries, he will try his best to organize the world and his life, and will undertake a more fulfilling purpose, and *conquer* back the time and life he missed out on, like a true Condottière.

Conclusion

Like *Heavy Rain* and *La Chute*, *Le Condottière* takes advantage of its own unique format —an internal soliloquy, a dialogue with Streten, and some third-person passages— to immerse the reader into Winckler's dizzying GPN which will lead, not only the reader but Winckler himself, to a change of cognitive environment, after Winckler understands his existential misery, which unveils the reason for his murder, the reason for choosing the particular painting he chose to forge, and the reason why he did not know the reason for his murder.

The asymmetric-information game is craftily constructed by the uninterrupted flow of Winckler's narration, restless, unrestrained and irrational, in its switching of pronouns, the free use of punctuation and grammar, plays-on-words, etc… The switching of pronouns notably establishes a dissociation within Winckler's mind, regarding himself at the moment of the narration but also regarding who he thought he was: he pictured himself as a confident, powerful man, master of his own identity, like the Condottière on the canvas that he tries to reproduce. The uninterrupted, irrational flow of thoughts presented to the reader are paradoxically also part of the GPN's asymmetric-information game as, because of the excruciating level of details in the narration, nothing in particular stands out as of importance or relevance. This textual strategy, in addition to working to mislead the reader, also misleads Winckler himself, as he becomes lost in his thoughts, memories, and emotions.

However, this constant, dizzying narration is also the sign that Winckler feels free at last, utterly unrestrained, after breaking from the last elements —i.e. Madera and the failed painting— that would keep him a forger. This GPN is directed as much towards the protagonist as the reader, and Perec masterfully creates a game of hide-and-seek intradiegetically for his own character and extradiegetically for the reader. Once Winckler truly finds himself, he wins this

game of hide-and-seek with himself, echoing the feeling of what Perec describes in *W* regarding not knowing what he desired or dreaded the most as an author: to be found or remain hidden in his fiction. Winckler, like Perec, also wondered if he wanted to be found out or remain hidden as a forger, and we progressively discover what he is truly yearning for, i.e. to be found out — a yearning that had started when he became a forger as his profession soon made him miserable. His conscience had tried to alert him but he kept burying his true feelings, ultimately losing sight of who he is and what he truly wants. At the end of the novel, Winckler now knows he wants to be found out, to find himself.

At one point, Streten said that Winckler could not master the painting of Le Condottière because he could not understand it and go beyond it. This notion echoes what Perec himself said of his novel *Le C.* while writing it : "En fin de compte, je ne parviens à le maîtriser qu'imparfaitement, suffisamment pour l'écrire, pas assez pour le comprendre" (Lederer 263). In both *Le C.* and in Perec's real life as an artist, there is an urge for mastery, for controlling life, by detailing it as closely as possible. Leonard K. Koos quotes Perec from his *Récits d'Ellis Island* about the figures of enumeration : "one could only try to name the things, one by one, flatly, to enumerate them, to number them, in the most banal way possible, in the most precise way possible, trying to forget nothing" (Koos 186). Unrestrained, relentless enumeration and dizzying narration convey Perec's "mania of observing and describing all, and its unspoken, implied fear of forgetting and disappearing" (186). Anna Kemp analyzes Perec's *Les Lieux d'une Ruse* which is similar to *Le C.* in that, like Winckler, who is restlessly trying to interpret the world around him through his irrational thoughts, *Les Lieux*'s narrator is having psychoanalysis sessions and when he does eventually make a "breakthrough, this is not enabled by a successful decoding of dreams, memories, or symbols, but […] what makes the narrator's progress possible are the

routines and rituals that structure the [psychoanalysis] sessions, providing a secure environment in which the encounter between analyst and patient takes place" (Kemp 559). Similarly in *Le C.*, it is only when engaging in dialogues with Streten that Winckler makes breakthroughs in his situation and solves his own GPN. Kemp refers to *La Vie Mode d'Emploi*'s Bartlebooth who is obsessed with puzzle-solving, but this can be applied as well to Winckler from *Le C.*:

> The psychical function of Bartleboothian puzzle-solving [or Winckler's obsession with reproducing Le Condottière] may be understood in Winnicottian terms as a militant fantasy of self-sufficiency. In Winnicott's [an influential pediatrician and psychoanalyst] account, one outcome of severe neglect is that the child, and later the adult, attempts to mother itself with its own mind. In such cases, compulsive mental activity becomes the defensive response to inadequate care. The child 'collects impingements', imposing demands and constraints on itself as a means of producing the holding environment necessary for growth, creativity, and a sense of being real and alive. (563)

Kemp also makes the connection between Perec and his manic characters. Because of the war which took his parents, "for Perec […] there is no secure place of origin, no attic full of childhood memories, no parental embrace to hold him together, and so he finds himself in bits and pieces, falling through space, with nothing to cling to" (564). This impression of having nothing to cling to is also conveyed in *Le C.* by Winckler who explicitly talks about his fear of leaving his forger profession (Perec, *Le Condottière* 113).

We can see that Perec explores the value of GPN to convey existential questionings of his own through his character Winckler. Just as in *Heavy Rain* and *La Chute*, the impact of *Le Condottière's* GPN goes beyond toying with the reader on a mere interpretative level, it also

triggers existential questions for the reader to ponder over. Winckler created his own GPN by drowning himself in erratic thoughts and shutting down his consciousness/conscience. While creating his GPN, he was refusing to see his unhappiness as a forger and more importantly, the responsibility he could have had to take action to prevent his misery. For the longest part of the novel, Winckler remains in his own mind games, dissociating himself while playing hide-and-seek with his own conscience/consciousness to postpone the moment of revelation he was dreading: his life as a forger was just a pantomime of reliving other artists' lives while he himself did not live his own life fully. He was in hiding due to his illegal trade but also due to his lack of action, constantly waiting for someone to make a decision for him. Indeed, Jerome suggested Winckler become a forger and Winckler indifferently followed, Genevieve broke up with him and he did not fight to be with her, Madera hired him and Winckler never told him he wanted to quit. The one true choice Winckler made, choosing to paint the Condottière, finally reveals a choice of his own, a choice that eventually leads to his artistic failure, in turn revealing his existential failure. Once Winckler understands this, he can unravel his GPN, and finally can answer the question about why he killed a man. After successfully navigating his own GPN, Winckler announces that he will be finally able to start anew, authentically and faithfully to himself. Perec's *Le Condottière* therefore demonstrates the power of GPN, showing how Winckler could frame his very own misleading narrative of his own life until his consciousness/conscience, triggered by the traumatic event of murdering Madera, as well as by Streten's interrogation, took over to help lead him to his path, to his truth, and to the solution of his GPN. The GPN here is therefore a tool of maieutics in order to, however painful and lengthy the process might be, assist Winckler in finally reaching the end of this garden path, and to start a new, authentic path of his own.

Chapter 5: *Incendies*, by Wajdi Mouawad, 2003

Introduction

Mouawad's poetic games

Wajdi Mouawad is a Lebanese-born Quebecois author and playwright. In *Voyage pour le Festival d'Avignon*, Mouawad discusses how his origins and his departure from Lebanon during the 1975-90 Civil war —first to France and then to Quebec in 1983— has influenced his writing and his reflections on being an author. When he is asked about why he writes in French, Mouwad answers "parce qu'il y a eu la guerre et qu'on a quitté le Liban […] si cette *phrase* n'avait pas existé, actuellement je parlerais arabe, je vivrais à Beyrouth" (Mouawad et al., 65, my emphasis). This formulation shows Mouawad's poetic outlook on life, as his discourse here places a rhetorical emphasis on a *sentence*, more so than an emphasis on the actual events themselves which determined the course of his existence. Also, Lebanon's current borders were drawn from the Sykes-Picot Agreements, signed after the first World War. France played a major role in the creation of the new Lebanon as it is France who "a doté le Liban de sa constitution, de son armée, de ses institutions démocratiques et de ses frontières pendant la période mandataire", the French mandate going from 1920 to 1943 (El Boujemi 148), hence the prevalence of French language in Lebanese society.

As a child in Lebanon, Mouawad had learned to handle firearms and dreamed of owning his own Kalashnikov and being part of a Christian militia like so many adult men around him at the time. When his family moved to France, he no longer had access to his beloved guns: "à force d'impatience, j'ai tendu la main et j'ai attrapé le premier objet qui pouvait un tant soit peu, ressembler à une kalashnikov, et ce fut un crayon Pilote taille fine V5" (qtd. in Farcet 165). As Charlotte Farcet says in her postface to *Incendies*, had he stayed in Lebanon, Mouawad "aurait

pris les armes, […] et aurait pu tuer. En troquant son arme contre un stylo, il a donc échappé au sang" (Farcet 166). Writing, for Mouawad is therefore an attempt to experience the world, a world that is "arraché par la guerre, par l'Histoire, monde de l'enfance et de l'enchantement" (167). When writing about the war in his works, Mouawad "n'a d'ailleurs pas seulement en tête la guerre du Liban, il écrit alors que la guerre en Irak a commencé, avec en mémoire celle de l'ex-Yougoslavie, du Rwanda […] le temps donc se dilate pour devenir symbolique […] il rejoint même celui du mythe " (Farcet 157), transcending the specific time and place to move readers/audience universally. To reach his audience, Mouawad indeed favors mythical, poetic figures rather than figures that are explicitly political and contemporary: " « surtout [...] ne pas parler de politique. Au contraire. Utiliser une langue incompréhensible à la politique. » cette langue est celle de la poésie" (qtd. in Farcet 170). Mouawad advocates poetry as a way to put the world into perspective and gather others around shared experiences and emotions, rather than divide by political, partisan language.

By generating poetic catharsis in his plays, even in plays tackling violent, traumatic themes as in *Incendies*, "lorsqu'il quitte la salle, le spectateur ne se sent ni piétiné, ni perdu, ni asphyxié, mais plutôt, dans son bouleversement, apaisé, consolé" (Farcet 160). Mouawad's cathartic theater allows that, "à un instant donné, de nombreux spectateurs se trouvent au même lieu, submergés par une émotion semblable" (162), creating an emotional and spiritual community through the audience sharing a cathartic experience. Jane Moss mentions that starting at the end of the 20th century which saw the rise of genocides and global wars, theater became centered around the question of witnessing horror, and about collective trauma, creating a type of theater that "dramatizes the story of those who suffered history" (Moss 175). Mouawad opposes in his plays "une force contraire aux violences de l'Histoire, en se faisant lieu de parole, de

transmission [in order to] redonner de la cohérence au milieu de l'incohérence" (Farcet 163).

Mouawad's wish to create a cathartic community relates to the same feeling of belonging that any game generates among the diverse participants of a game: "the feeling of being "apart together" in an exceptional situation, of sharing something important, of mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world and rejecting the usual norms, retains its magic beyond the duration of the individual game" (Huizinga 31). Huizinga acknowledges the seemingly magical feeling of belonging to a community born out of games or poetry and the benefits it creates in society, as poetry "in fact, is a play-function. It proceeds within the play-ground of the mind, in a world of its own which the mind creates for it" (141) and poetry does not merely fulfil "just an aesthetic function: in any flourishing, living civilization, above all in archaic cultures, poetry has a vital function that is both social and liturgical" (142).

Mouawad's writing in general, and *Incendies* in particular, operates on a mythical plane due to its references to mythical figures and its settings that cross a specified time and space across the different generations of the characters' family. Huizinga asserts that

> myth is always poetry. Working with images and the aid of imagination, myth
>
> tells the story of things that were supposed to have happened in primitive times. It
>
> can be of the deepest and holiest significance. It may succeed in expressing
>
> relationships which could never be described in a rational way. […] In it, the line
>
> between the barely conceivable and the flatly impossible has not yet been drawn
>
> with any sharpness. (Huizinga 151)

In addition to avoiding the divisiveness of political statements by choosing a poetic language, and in addition to creating catharsis, Mouawad's poetry in his plays also allows him to create mystery and keep his audience actively engaged in trying to solve the mysteries behind the

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poetic language: "what poetic language does with images is to play with them. It disposes them in style, it instills mystery into them so that every image contains the answer to an enigma" (Huizinga156). Mouawad's theater is inherently favorable to generating enigmatic, misleading, garden-path narratives.

As I mentioned in my introduction to this dissertation, theater is traditionally not considered as an actual narrative, since there is technically no given narrator, but Altman's principles of framing (beginning, middle, and end) and of the following pattern (which is followed during a sequence of action at a given time by reader or spectator) allow for art forms like theater to be analyzed as a narrative. In my current analysis, I will focus solely on the textual production of the play *Incendies*, that is the dialogue and paratextual information such as scenes' titles and stage directions, but I will not consider nor refer to actual stage performances. Using Altman's transmedial narratology principles, my analytical methodology designed in chapter 1 is therefore applicable to a play like *Incendies* to study its GPN elements.

Literature Review

Although *Incendies* is a fairly recent play, much literature has been written about it. It also drew high levels of attention after well-known movie director Denis Villeneuve adapted Mouwad's play into a movie in 2010 which was nominated for Best Foreign Film at the 2011 Academy Awards. *Incendies* is a powerful play which tells the story of the twins Jeanne and Simon whose mother Nawal just passed away and left a will that asks them to find their father who they thought had died in a war in Nawal's birth country —unnamed though it highly resembles Mouawad's native Lebanon during the civil war[5] — and their brother, whom they

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[5] Occurring between 1975-90, the civil war stemmed from conflicts across different groups in the Middle East, mostly among Christian and Muslim militias.

never heard of until then. Jeanne, a Ph.D. student in mathematics, is tasked with finding their

father and Simon, an amateur boxer, is tasked with finding their brother. Simon is visibly upset

that their mother never told them about these unknown relatives, and recollects that she had

stopped talking to them altogether five years prior when she came back from a public trial she

attended in Quebec. Before the twins start their journey, the play shows Nawal's growing up in

her home country, giving birth to a son when she was 15, Nihad, and being forced to abandon

her child because her lover —and father of Nihad— Wahab, is from a different ethnic group.

Nawal tried her whole life to find Nihad. After reading Nawal's will, Jeanne and Simon

eventually undertake their respective quests, traveling to Nawal's home country, and Jeanne

finds out that her father, Abou Tarek, was a prison interrogator and torturer, and raped Nawal

who then gave birth to the twins in her prison cell. Eventually Simon finds out that his brother is

Nihad but it is revealed to him later that Nihad, who was an elite sniper for a militia, was

captured by the opposing foreign army and changed his name when he became the torturer, Abou

Tarek. The twins therefore realize in horror that their father and brother are one and the same

person.

The notions of the past, memory and origins are crucial in *Incendies*. Scholars the likes of

Tanya Dery-Aubin, Rainier Grutman, Ronald M. Green, Rita Bassil El Rami and Gaëtan Dupois

have investigated such questions. Dery-Aubin finds in her analysis that "l'expérience tragique

chez Mouawad décrit l'accablement d'une catastrophe déjà advenue à laquelle il est non

seulement impossible d'échapper, mais qui habite également le quotidien des personnages"

(Dery-Aubin 31). Dery-Aubin also mentions that Mouawad's play "s'inscrit dans une volonté de

sensibilisation où le théâtre ne cherche pas seulement à faire appel à des émotions fortes, mais

est aussi au service d'un projet engagé de sensibilisation qui sollicite l'intelligence du public"

(37). However, Mouawad has always rejected the term of "engagé" and the notion that his work could be political, and in that Mouawad strives to write a poetic language that goes beyond politics. Grutman asserts that *Incendies* offers "une transposition théâtrale, une interprétation donc, non pas du conflit mais de l'effet qu'il a eu sur ceux qui l'ont connu et qui en ont été victimes" (Grutman 104). The plot of *Incendies*, centering around the twins trying to find their family in their mother's birth country "montre la mémoire collective obligeant l'individu à se situer par rapport au passé familial et national, à se savoir, en situation. Dans *Incendies*, la découverte de ce passé produit un renversement d'identité qui va au-delà du cercle immédiat de la famille et est intimement lié à l'histoire du pays maternel" (106). Green studies *Incendies* through the prism of Kierkegard's concept of hereditary sin which states that "none of us is born without a deep relationship to our past. Although we are free to choose our paths in life, we do not do so in a vacuum. We are "situated freedoms," unavoidably shaped by the deeds of those who went before us: our parents, other family members, our communities, even the whole human race" (Green 223). Grutman's and Green's notion of situation for characters is more related to existential quandry like the ones found in Greek tragedy, unlike Dery-Aubin's analysis. In this light, like the mythical Antigone and her father Oedipus, Nawal and her three children "are connected, through guilt and blame. Emotionally and morally charged silences permeate their relationships" (Green 225).

The question of silence in Mouawad's play and its connection to the past has also been studied by scholars such as El Ramy, Dupois, and Campmas. El Ramy analyzes the superimposition of the different periods and generations of Nawal's family (Nawal in her twenties on the same stage as her own adult daughter) as "là pour nous enfermer dans le cycle de violence" (El Ramy 129), echoing the never-ending cycle of war, vengeance, anger, and

decimated families that Nawal's country witnessed. One way of getting out of the cycle of violence, and of the silence into which Nawal sunk after her dreadful discovery —the man who raped her and father of her twins is actually her lost son— is the act of promising: Nawal promises her grandmother that she will get an education once she can leave her village as a young girl, the twins promise after Nawal's death in Quebec to find their lost family members, and these promises act as "une sorte de deuxième oracle, formulé cette fois par le personnage lui-même contre son propre destin" (130) as, by promising to get an education, Nawal seeks to escape the fate of the other women in her family who remained uneducated and unfree. Dupois, too, analyzes the notion of silence in *Incendies*: "il existerait « des silences lourds et des silences vides », ce qui laisse entrevoir les possibilités d'un dévoilement du sens et de la transmission d'une pensée dans l'acte même de se taire" (Dupois np), like Nawal, in her will after her death, who tries to transmit to her children the knowledge beyond the silence that she failed to break herself before she died, after she learned that her lost son was her rapist and the father of her twins, due to the taboo of incest she suffered. "Le silence serait ainsi plurifonctionnel dans l'esthétique mouawadienne : il représenterait aussi bien l'absence de connaissances, le dévoilement de vérités et l'éclosion d'une parole cachée, que la possibilité d'une réflexion" (np). The twins must decipher the source of their mother's silence —in fact caused by the trauma of realizing her lost son is also the father of her twins— to uncover the truth about their family, and eventually be able to heal and love the memory of their mother. Aude Campmas also studies the concept of silence in the play as the twins inherit from it —both symbolically from Nawal's mutism and hiding of information, and materially when Jeanne listens to the recordings of her mother's silence at the hospital—through a more psychoanalytic prism: according to psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Mária Török, "des parents à secrets peuvent transférer à

leurs enfants une lacune dans l'inconscient même, une nescience laquelle devient fantôme

inconnu introduisant phobies et obsessions" (Campmas 483). The knowledge deficiency that the

twins have about their past at the beginning, because of the information Nawal hid from Simon

and Jeanne, is indeed a true burden which broke their relationship with their mother before she

died, and can be seen in Simon's aggressive, obsessive behavior. The question of misleading

language and silences will be crucial in my analysis regarding the playwright's construction of

the asymmetric-information game in *Incendies*.

In *Incendies*, many references to mathematics occur. Catherine Khordoc analyzes in

depth the actual mathematical theories in *Incendies*, that is, the theory of graph —a mathematical

concept which states that one can draw a polygon to establish which points of said polygon are

visible to the other points, a concept that is often applied for museums to know where to post a

security guard in a spot where the guard can watch as many rooms as possible when on duty

(Khordoc 309). The other mathematical theory in *Incendies* is the Collatz conjecture (311), a

number theory paradox which states that under certain circumstances, 1+1 always equals 1,

unlike the typical mathematical sum of 1+1 =2. These mathematical theories are crucial in the

creation of *Incendies*' GPN, as I will demonstrate in my case study later. Aude Campmas is also

one of the scholars who has investigated the theme of mathematics in Mouawad's work.

Campmas points out that "Mouawad aime les équations et les figures géométriques comme

autant de métaphores de la famille car elles rendent lisible, l'invisible, exprimable, l'indicible"

(Campmas 480). Another scholar, Céline Lachaud, also underlines that, in Mouawad's works,

"La pièce de théâtre est en quelque sorte considérée comme une équation que le public se doit de

résoudre lors du spectacle" (Lachaud 334). The theme of mathematics enables Mouawad to

inject even more mystery, as mathematics can be seen as a symbolic language that only initiates

understand. Lachaud also studies this notion of intelligence and deciphering by characters in *Incendies*, which is seen as a means of self-defense but which also triggers an enigmatic quest for knowledge by Nawal and her twin children. (354).

Due to the Oedipal allusions and the traumatic experiences occurring in *Incendies*, scholars have also brought to light elements and theories from psychoanalysis. Greg Graham-Smith refers to psychoanalysis scholar Jacques Lacan, who also used mathematics to define his own psychoanalytical theories. Graham-Smith uses Lacan's notion of Boromean knot, "Lacan uses this symbol to stand for the three separate but interrelated spheres of the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic, representing the undifferentiated realm of infant life, the illusory wholeness of self-awareness corresponding to the Imaginary, Mirror Stage and, finally, the movement into one's culturally mandated role by which one attains social legibility through the filiating structures of language" (Graham-Smith 60). The knot is: "composed of three rings linked in such a way that no two alone are connected. Only when all three come together does the linkage occur. In this case, to undo one is to undo them all" (60). Later, Lacan added a fourth ring, the sinthome, which locks up the psyche and creates hidden traumas that need to be unlocked in therapy. In *Incendies*, "the missing father/brother may be seen as the fourth element – the supplement, the lock, the carceral symptom which acts as a violent psychic correlative to Nawal's literal imprisonment" (61) which, once discovered and unlocked, can finally free the twins from the unsaid, traumatic truth, and their family can heal. Graham-Smith also mentions the Lacanian concept of the Name of the Father, although he does not dwell on it. I will attempt to develop these notions more fully than Graham-Smith as they highlight the narrative's GPN richness. Marylin Matar studies the value of specters in Mouawad's plays as "the burial of the dead is a quest for a long-lost past, a means to reclaim a piece of oneself and rebuild memory and

history alike" (Matar 470), and notes that the twins' quest to gather the pieces of their mysterious family history together is a way to recompose their mother's psyche, and therefore perform reconciliation after Nawal's death (475). Esther Pelletier with Irene Roy investigates, among other things, the powerful evocation of symbols and trauma by everyday-life objects, thanks to the Freudian notion of *unheimlich* (Pelletier and Roy 116) such as sprinklers (showed as both everyday life object and prop tool to enhance violence when they spit blood during the telling of a bus attack).

As mentioned previously, there are many allusions to the Oedipal myth due to the unknowingly incestuous rape by Nihad of his mother. Pelletier, Khordoc, Lachaud, and Graham-Smith note similarities with this myth but there are other mythical references such as Nawal being struck by silence, similar to the mythical figure of Philomela whose tongue was cut out to prevent her from denouncing her abuser, which obliged her instead to weave her story into a tapestry (Graham-Smith 61); and even Pandora as the first woman, opening a box of worldly evils like Nawal, the first woman of her family to be educated and who eventually reveals a world of war, incest, and violence to her twin children (355). Of course, neither Pandora nor Nawal actively created these curses but the mere outcome (releasing them into the world/into the lives of Nawal's children) remains the same. Nieves Marin Martincobos noted that, by setting his Oedipus-like story in a war-zone reality, Mouawad manages to demystify the Oedipus myth and reveals the universal tragedy of human existence (Martincobos 231). Alessandra Ferraro explores the rewriting of *Oedipus* in *Incendies* notably through the themes of blinding and the double recognition of the twins who not only have to understand that their father is their brother but also that this father figure is a violent torturer. Ferraro points out that the incest is, unlike in *Oedipus*, not the fruit of a magical curse but rather because of choices both of them made: Nawal decided

to abandon her child as her mother threatened to ban her from living in the village if she kept him, and Nihad chose to be a violent torturer after being taught to fight in the war at a very young age and after becoming indifferent to others' misery because he could not find his own mother. Similarly, Lydie Parisse also explores the topic of *Oedipus* in her-article, basing her analysis on Levinas's concept of violence and the Other. Quoting Levinas, violence "ne consiste pas tant à blesser et à anéantir qu'à interrompre la continuité des personnes en leur faisant jouer des rôles où elles ne se retrouvent plus" (Parisse 340). The notion of the Other in Levinas is primordial to self-consciousness: "la seule relation humaine possible est celle du face-à-face avec le visage de l'autre […] il est celui qui ne fait pas partie de mon monde, que je ne peux comprendre ni sentir à partir de ce que je suis, auquel je ne peux m'identifier, et cependant, pour que j'existe en tant que personne, la reconnaissance de l'altérité est primordiale" (340-1). Parisse shows the importance of alterity in *Incendies* as it determines the uncovering of the true origin of the twins and consequently their own identity and that of their mother. These critics have studied separate cultural and mythical reference elements used in the creation of *Incendies*'s GPN, however my task is to bring the diverse aspects of the narrative together under the overarching concept of GPN in order to shed new light onto *Incendies* and to reveal the complex connections and layers that built such a GPN.

Finally, Michael Devine, who studies the concept of fluid identities in *Incendies* and one of its companion plays, *Littoral*, outlines the different devices in *Incendies* that relate to this notion, noting that Mouawad uses both "primarily literary or distinctively theatrical" devices (Devine 2). Theatrical devices are, for instance, unity of place, casting of characters, sound, while literary devices found in theater are "elaborate poetic style", "multi-layered narrative and the over-all length" of the play (3). Devine's charting of such devices will be of much help for

my own groundwork. Lastly, Manon Pricot analyzes *Incendies* via the prism of epics, most notably under the notion of "épopées refondatrices" (Pricot 6) which, similarly to the GPN process of cognitive reconstruction, involves three narrative steps: the simplification of events (not enough knowledge), then arising of confusion after acquisition of more information, and finally, the reconstruction of the world view based on the previous two stages. (6). Pricot shows that the last step is what creates a rich, polyphonic narrative, that requires the reader/audience to be actively engaged to interpret the GPN correctly, which will be useful for my own analysis to build upon.

Methodology

In this chapter, I will study *Incendies* through the lens of garden-path narratives, thus creating an interdisciplinary analysis that will shed new light on Mouawad's well-studied play, as he designs here an asymmetric-information game narrative, even for his own protagonists who are sent on a mysterious quest to find their brother and father. Thanks to my methodology and a close-reading approach, I will uncover the different processes Mouawad uses to create asymmetric-information games and a garden-path structure misleading or trying to mislead his reader/audience, because the play's format breaks the usual links between past and present, and because of the contradictory information gathered by the characters, I will use my methodology here similarly to my previous case studies. This first part will explore the elements that a reader can focus on in the first reading to form likely expectations before knowing it is a GPN: the title and synopsis; the genre and type of focus/following pattern; the semes and the intertextual frames; and finally, identifying the anomaly on which the GPN relies. For the second reading, my steps are the following: since GPN's are asymmetric-information games I will identify which information was twisted or delayed and by which means. I will also study how intertextual

frames may hinder or help interpret *Incendies'* GPN. Then, I will identify what makes Nawal herself an enigma. Finally, my research will reveal how *Incendies*'s GPN also generates existential questioning for the reader/audience, just as *Heavy Rain, La Chute*, and *Le Condottière* did.

Corpus analysis: Incendies

Incendies is a play that starts in Quebec, when twin siblings, Simon and Jeanne, are at the notary to hear their mother Nawal's will, as she just passed away. The notary, Hermil Lebel who was a friend of their mother, reveals that her will requests that the twins find their father and unknown brother back in her home country — an unnamed place, which nevertheless evokes Lebanon — before being able to bury her properly. Jeanne, a Ph.D. student in mathematics, is the first to undertake her quest, to find her father, but Simon, an amateur boxer, is reluctant to do so until much later due to his deep resentment for his mother who had often acted strangely around them, and who had stopped talking altogether five years prior.

Incendies is the second play from Mouawad's tetralogy *Le Sang des Promesses* which includes *Littoral* (1999), *Incendies* (2003), *Forêts* (2006), and *Ciels* (2009). All plays are centered around the themes of family and its conflicts/secrets, identity, and the violence that may be attached to these themes, with the Lebanese Civil war as an implicit historical background. The civil war occurred from 1975 to 1990, after tensions rose with the migration of Palestinians to Lebanon following the creation of Israel in 1948, and a further wave of Palestinians after their expulsion from Jordan in 1970 after the Cairo agreements in 1969 (El Boujemi 151). It started as an opposition between the Lebanese National Mouvement, a left wing movement supporting the Palestinians to promote Arabic unity and religious equality (151), versus the Christian Phalangists (a right-wing party and militia) who wanted to focus on Christians' interests in

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Lebanon for their independence from Arabic imperialism, particularly against the hegemony of Syria (152). The war involved, among other groups, Christian and Muslim factions from Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, and Syria.

One of the most notable events in the war was the 1982 Chabra and Chatila refugee camp massacres, during which Palestinian refugees, many of whom were women and children, were killed by the Lebanese Phalangists. This massacre happened in retaliation for a terrorist attack against the Lebanese Phalangist Headquarters —supposedly perpetrated by Palestinians— which killed the Christian President of the Lebanese Phalange and other Phalange members.

One day, as Farcet relates it, Mouawad himself met Josée Lambert, a war photographer who traveled to Lebanon during the war. Talking to her, Mouawad realized that he had never been taught about the civil war of his birth country, notably during which the South Lebanon Army, a militia who collaborated with the Israeli Army that then occupied Southern Lebanon, ran a clandestine prison, Khiam, that jailed and tortured prisoners for mere suspicions of political opposition (Farcet 138). Lambert tells Mouawad about women she met during her journeys, like Souha Bechara, a resistant who shot at the South Lebanon Army chief and who was in Khiam for ten years, or about Diane, raped multiple times while at Khiam in exchange for her arrested grand-mother to not be tortured (141). Mouawad becomes "hanté par Khiam et son ignorance: il y a tout une part de son pays, tout un pan de son Histoire, qu'il ne connait pas" (141). Lambert, talking about her encounters with Lebanese women tortured during the civil war, recalls that a woman said to her torturer "comment peux-tu faire cela? Je pourrais être ta mère" (142). Mouawad was struck by this sentence and "dans l'obscurité de la coulisse, lui apparait une histoire, celle d'une femme torturée et violée par son propre fils" (142), leading to the creation of

Incendies. This play is built around this haunting sentence which will be the key to *Incendies*'s GPN on several levels. I will now go through my methodology for a first reading of *Incendies.*

First Reading

Title and synopsis

The story presented is Jeanne and Simon, twin siblings, who are at the reading of their mother Nawal's will in Quebec after she passed away. In the will, Nawal asks, without context nor explanation, that Jeanne find their father whom they thought was dead, and that Simon find their unknown brother in her home country, unnamed (though it is clearly Lebanon). Her notary, Hermile Lebel, helps the twins in their quest and informs Jeanne that Nawal met their father when she was really young. The next scene shows Nawal and Wahab, teenagers in love in Nawal's home country, and Nawal is pregnant by him. However, Wahab is from a different cultural background (implicitly Palestinian) and is forced to run away, while Nawal is forced to abandon her son once he is born. She puts a clown nose in his diapers as a memory of her happy times together with Wahab. Nawal then leaves her village with her friend Sawda to escape the typical fate of the village women, that is, remaining uneducated and lacking freedom. Jeanne is fascinated by this quest but Simon is reluctant at first as he never forgave his mother, who never spoke to him again after she attended a public trial in Quebec at a Court about war criminals from her home country. Once Jeanne discovers that Nawal had been a resistant in the civil war back in the home country, and eventually raped in prison by a man called Abou Tarek, and shockingly discovers that she and Simon are the children of rape, Simon finally starts his own quest to find their brother.

The title of the play, *Incendies*, refers most explicitly, within the play's events, to the fire from the terrorist attack of a bus in which Nawal was, on her way to the fictional village of Kfar

Ryat when looking for her son. This is based on a real-life event of April 13th 1975, at the beginning of the civil war, during which Lebanese Phalangists attacked and incinerated a bus of Palestinians in retaliation for the murder of Christians by Palestinians, and triggered further fights and massacres (El Boujami 152). Mouawad, when asked about his title using plural instead of singular, says "quand j'avais fait *Incendies*, j'avais tout d'abord choisi le titre au singulier, puis, vu qu'il y avait plusieurs personnages et plusieurs points de vue j'ai ajouté un 's'" (Torchi 122-123). His paratext, when dividing the play into acts, shows also several "incendies": "Incendie de Nawal" is from pages 13-48, "Incendie de l'enfance" is 49-74, "Incendie de Janaane" is 75-106, and "Incendie de Sarwane" is 107-132. Nawal, Jeanne and Simon are all metaphorically "burning" on the inside, as they all suffer from not knowing something, and they all have quests to complete and truth to find out (Nawal to find her first son, Jeanne/Janaane to find her father, Simon/Sarwane to find his brother).

Genre/focus and following pattern

Incendies is a play and therefore is a "hybrid form combining elements of live performance with written literature" (Devine 2). As previously mentioned, I will only focus on the published text and not on actual theatrical performances adapting the text since some may cut or rearrange parts or adopt different stage directions than the text includes. Focusing on the published text instead of actual performances also enables me to take paratextual information such as the titles of acts and scenes into account for my analysis.

There are 4 acts and 38 scenes: 11 scenes in the first act "Incendie de Nawal", 9 in the second "Incendie de l'enfance", 10 in the third "Incendie de Janaane", and 8 in the last act "Incendie de Sarwane". Pelletier and Roy explain the social and political context of playwrights in Quebec such as Mouawad, part of the movement called "théâtre migrant":

…après la montée nationaliste des années 1970 où les artistes du théâtre

québécois se consacrent majoritairement à la définition d'un "moi collectif," la

défaite ressentie après l'échec du référendum pour l'indépendance de 1980 ouvre

la voie à une génération de nouveaux auteurs et metteurs en scène qui délaissent

la quête identitaire collective au profit d'une quête de soi où l'on privilégie

l'exploration des territoires intimes. Cette nouvelle dramaturgie s'exprime dans

des récits imprégnés, entre autres, par la mémoire et la recherche de repères,

structures artistiques où se côtoient réalisme et métaphore. La narration sert de

moteur à l'action provoquant une crise de l'échange dialogué. […] À travers ces

multiples transformations qui ont eu cours à partir des années 1980, s'est

développé ce qu'on a appelé le "théâtre migrant," produit par des auteurs

d'origines diverses venus s'établir au Québec, et qui se sont distingués par leur

façon de poser un regard critique sur la culture québécoise tout en y intégrant la

leur. (Pelletier and Roy 112-113)

Now let us turn to the focus and following pattern of *Incendies*. Because of the diverse scenes

following different characters, *Incendies* is clearly a multiple-focus narrative. Interestingly,

Incendies mingles characters of different time and space, for instance in scene 14, when Jeanne

and Simon in Quebec listen to the recorded silence of their mother while at the same time Nawal

appears on stage when she was 19 in the home country teaching her friend Sawda the alphabet

(Mouawad, *Incendies* 54), so modulations in between following units are often metonymic —

i.e., "bringing characters into contact with diegetic space" (Altman 24)— different timelines and

characters sharing the same diegetic space at once. I will elaborate on that point later.

Modulations can also be metaphoric, that is drawing a parallel between two characters'

similar actions in a different temporal setting. Such modulations "depend on a quality shared by the characters" (24). For instance, scene 16 shows first Jeanne interacting with Antoine, the nurse who took care of Nawal at the hospital before she died, and then showing him a photo of her mother with Sawda. As soon as Antoine examines the photo, the stage directions indicate that Nawal and Sawda appear on stage investigating to find Nawal's son, just as Jeanne is investigating about her own mother (59). Even more intensely, such a metaphoric modulation happens several times *within* a single scene. For example, scene 17 starts with Nawal and Sawda, 19 years old, at the orphanage in Lebanon. Then, as Nawal wonders where her son is, the next line is Jeanne, at the hospital in Quebec, wondering what her mother is looking at the photo taken, and then Nawal, in her sixties in her hospital bed in Quebec, says her dying words "Maintenant que nous sommes ensemble, ça va mieux" (a line she repeated through her whole life and which Antoine witnessed during his work shift). Stage directions then indicate it is nighttime with Antoine running to Nawal's room as he hears her say her dying words (63). Metaphoric modulations, transitioning from one following sequence to another thanks to similar actions between characters that are actually separated by different times and different places, are therefore greatly used *within* scenes to signal a fateful bond among the different characters, their plots, and what is at stake in each period of time. Another way metaphoric modulations are used in the play is *between* scenes. Many times, scenes start with high similarities with the previous scene. For instance, scene 9 ends with a ringtone from a cellphone while the scene happens in Nawa's home village, before cellphones were invented, and scene 10 starts with Lebel picking up his phone in Quebec. An example of a performative device used in the play to convey the metaphoric modulation between present and past time is scene 19, when Lebel tells the story about the bus attack on the road to Kfar Rayat while in his backyard, in Quebec, with

construction workers using piledrivers nearby. As Lebel recalls a violent part of the story where militians are shooting at the bus with machine guns, the piledriver's sound increases and Lebel's sprinklers spit out blood instead of water, merging into Nawal's timeline telling her own experience of the bus attack to Sawda. These passages, like many more in the play, perform a constant interweaving of following units between time and space, which I will comment on later in the second part of my analysis. Finally, occasionally, there are hyperbolic modulations (i.e. defined by Altman as an abrupt switch from one following unit to another without a character or a thematic link), as in scene 13 ending with Sawda and Nawal, then 19 years old, leaving their birth village whereas scene 14 starts with Simon talking to Jeanne at her place in Quebec in present days. We can therefore acknowledge the wide diversity of modulations across the following units, which I will elaborate on later while developing my second reading portion.

Semes

The semes —elements adding layers of connotation to a text— in *Incendies* are, like in most plays from *Le Sang des Promesses*, semes of family, war and conflict, violence, knowledge, cycles repeating themselves, pairs, mathematics, visibility and blindness, silence, choices and promises. This is illustrated in the following characteristics of the play:

- **Choices and promises:**

1. Nawal chosing to abandon her son in order to avoid banishment from the village.

2. Jeanne chosing to find her father while Simon first chooses to not be involved.

3. Sawda's story about a woman who was forced by a militia member to choose which one of her three sons would be spared while the other two would be killed (85).

4. The different promises made throughout the play: Nawal's will asking for her grave not to be engraved until a promise she made (at the time when the twins read the will, they do

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not know what promise she refers to) is fulfilled; Nawal's promise to always love her son; Nawal's promise to be educated and to come back to write the name of her grandmother on her grave; Sawda's promise to Nawal to always be her support; Lebel's promise to maintain Nawal's will intact; the twins wanting to honor the requests in their mother's will.

- **War, violence, and cycles repeating themselves:**

5. The civil war in Nawal's country and the graphic descriptions of massacres and torture throughout the play.

6. Nawal's grandmother wanted Nawal to escape the cycle of anger within the generations of uneducated women in her family by leaving the village and getting an education.

7. Constant conflicts and deaths due to cyclical revenge and grudges.

8. Malak, a peasant who knows about Nawal, asking Jeanne who she got her information about her mother from, and trying to go back to the original source of information.

9. Leitmotivs repeated throughout the play: "Maintenant que nous sommes ensemble, ça va mieux" ; "1+1=2" ; "l'enfance est un couteau planté dans la gorge"

- **Pairs:**

10. The unknown brother and father.

11. The twins.

12. Nawal and Sawda being inseparable

13. Sawda being known as "la fille qui chante" while Nawal is "la femme qui chante".

- **Mathematics and knowledge:**

14. Nawal promising her grandma to learn how to count, read and write, and write on her tomb.

15. Nawal teaching Sawda to read and write as Sawda always wanted to be educated.

16. Sawda teaching Nawal to sing.

17. Jeanne being a Ph.D. student in mathematics

18. Jeanne's multiple mentions of 1+1=2, with Lebel and Simon

19. Jeanne's lecture on graph theory and the polygon of visibility.

- **Blindness and silence:**

20. Simon's coach telling him he lost his fights because he does not develop his peripheral vision.

21. Simon refusing to look at what is in the red notebook that his mother willed to him

22. Nawal being struck by silence after a war crimes trial.

23. The tapes from Antoine recording Nawal's silence.

24. Jeanne not answering Simon's calls.

Intertextual frames

War holds a central space in Mouawad's plays, including *Incendies*. When writing the play, Mouawad

n'a d'ailleurs pas seulement en tête la guerre du Liban, il écrit alors que la guerre

en Irak a commencé, avec en mémoire celle de l'ex-Yougoslavie, du Rwanda, et

celles d'un passé à peine plus lointain. Des détails en témoignent comme

l'évocation des machettes, inexistantes pendant la guerre du Liban, ou l'histoire

de cette mère devant choisir entre ses trois fils, rapportée pendant la Seconde

Guerre mondiale. (Farcet 157)

This interweaving of multiple wars without any distinction implies the creation of actions

transcending time and place, similarly to the simultaneaous present-past modulations in the

following pattern I exposed earlier. The historical figure of Souha Bercha definitely echoes with Nawal's character, however, although Mouawad strongly claims that "Nawal n'est pas Souha, d'elle vient son geste, les deux balles tirées sur Chad [a war leader], mais elle n'a pas son âge, pas son histoire, pas ses convictions et les violences dont elle est victime ne sont pas les mêmes" (Mouawad qtd. in Farcet 157).

Other intertextual frames in *Incendies* are musical texts. Nawal and Sawda recite the Arabic poem *Al Atlal* when they eventually part ways, which Nawal asks Sawda to sing every time she misses Nawal (92). *Al Atlal*, "the Ruins", is one of the most famous Arabic poems, and "traite de la révolte des femmes, ou du moins de l'émancipation des femmes face aux hommes" (Lachaud 117). Mouawad also includes two modern pop songs in scene 32 when Nihad, a young sniper in Nawal's home country, who turns out to be her longlost son, is listening to his Walkman while shooting people and taking pictures of his casualties. The first song is the beginning of "The Logical Song" by the British band Supertramp (Mouawad, *Incendies* 107), a song about a young man who is at first idealistic and progressively becomes weary and cynical after seeing what the world is really like. The second song is "Roxanne" by the British band The Police (110), a song about a desperate man who does not want to share his female lover with other men. Finally, other intertextual references on a first reading before the revelation of the GPN anomaly, are ancient Greek myths. Nawal, who mysteriously became silent after she went to a trial of Lebanese war leaders, and who then gave the quest to her twin children to discover the truth about their missing family member(s), may echo Philomela who, after her tongue was cut out to prevent her from denouncing her rapist Thereus, weaved her story into a tapestry (Graham-Smith 61).

Identification of the anomaly

Very early in the play, readers know that Nawal had to abandon her first born when she was 15, but regretted this and spent her whole life trying to look for him. Jeanne finds out that their father is the Kfar Ryat interrogator and torturer Abou Tarek, who raped Nawal in prison. Once Simon starts his quest, with Hermile Lebel as a travel companion, they find out the name of the twins' brother, Nihad Harmanni, who was recruited as a soldier in the home country at a very young age. After Simon talks to Chamseddine, Chief of the Resistance who took Nihad in as a fighter, Simon comes back, silent. Before repeating anything from his conversation with Chamseddine, he asks Jeanne: "Tu m'as toujours dit que un plus un font deux. Est-ce que c'est vrai ? [..] Un plus un, est-ce que ça peut faire un ?" (Mouawad, *Incendies* 120). To which Jeanne actually answers that according to a conjecture, the Collatz conjecture, that within some parameters, 1+1 can equal 1:

> Il y a une conjecture très étrange en mathématiques. […] Tu vas me donner un
> chiffre, n'importe lequel. Si le chiffre est pair, on le divise par deux. S'il est
> impair, on le multiplie par trois et on rajoute un. On fait la même chose avec le
> chiffre qu'on obtient. Cette conjecture affirme que peu importe le chiffre de
> départ, on arrive toujours à un. (121)

As she is about to finish her mental calculation with numbers to announce that the result always reaches 1, she stops, horrified: "Peu importe le chiffre de depart, on arrive toujours à…Non!" (122). To explain Jeanne's sudden horror, Simon then explicitly recalls his conversation with Chamesddine which happened earlier: their brother Nihad had lost hope to find his mother and left Chamseddine. Nihad was captured by the Foreign Army and was trained to work at the Kfar Ryat prison. When Simon asks if Nihad worked alongside their father, Abou Tarek the war torturer who raped their mother at Kfar Ryat, Chamseddine reveals explicitly:

"Non, ton frère n'a pas travaillé avec ton père. *Ton frère est ton père*. Il a changé de nom. Il a

oublié Nihad, il est devenu Abou Tarek […] Le fils est le père de son frère et de sa sœur" (124,

my emphasis). This horrific revelation strikes both twins with shock and silence. Now that I have

identified the key to *Incendies*'s GPN, I will turn to analyzing elements of this GPN that a

second reading brings to light.

Second Reading

I will now fully explore the creation of *Incendies*' GPN, by identifying which information

was twisted or postponed in *Incendies* and by which rhetorical means it was twisted or

postponed, building an asymetric-information game for both the readers and the characters,

seemingly creating an intradiegetic GPN for Simon and Jeanne, and an extradiegetic GPN for the

reader. I will then identify the inferential walks elicited by textual and dramatic strategy that

caused interpretive failures. Then, I will identify the intertextual frames and challenge them as

potentially misleading. Finally, I will explore the other enigmas of Nawal as a person.

Asymmetric-information game

The twins are the characters with whom the reader enters the story, as they discover

Nawal's will at the same time as the reader. Thus, the twins are the ones providing the original

cognitive environment to the readers, they are the ones giving information and context about

their experience with their mother, mostly regarding their birth and events before she died, and

since they undertake a quest which will change their own cognitive environment forever by

learning that their brother is also their father, it is crucial to understand what the twins have

known or believed originally before uncovering and exposing the truth, in order to explore how

the GPN is built for both the characters and the readers. Because the readers are privy to scenes

from Nawal's past and the twins are not, readers have a greater degree of knowledge in this

asymmetric-information game compared to the twins.

I will now draw the list of information that the twins originally know or believe (from their mother's and Lebel's telling them) about their mother and themselves:

- They were born at a Quebec hospital, in the summer (100).

- Their names are Jeanne and Simon Marwan (16).

- Their father died at war for his country and Nawal "l'a follement aimé" (100), based on what Lebel said, retelling what Nawal told him.

- The twins and Lebel acknowledged that they do not know much about Nawal (20).

- Nawal was emotionally distant with the twins, as Simon refers to her as "une brique" (20).

- Nawal wrote her will five years ago (20) as Lebel notes.

- For ten years she went to a series of public trials at the International Court about crimes that happened in her birth country, and she stopped talking overnight for five years before dying (23).

- Nawal never mentioned that the twins had a brother (23).

- The day Nawal suddenly stopped talking, she had attended a trial at the International Court (58).

Now let us turn to what the *readers* know in addition to what the twins originally know, but the twins do not have access to this information, or at least they do not have access to it at the same time as the readers do:

- Nawal was pregnant at 14 from Wahab whom she deeply loved in her home country (33).

- Nawal had to abandon her son when she gave birth at 15 due to her mother threatening to banish her (37).
- Nawal slipped a clown nose in her son's diapers as a memory of her happy times together with Wahab (40).
- Nawal left her village for the last time with her close friend Sawda at 19 (53).
- Nihad is a young, cold-blooded, sniper who does not hesitate to kill anyone (109, 115).

Now, I will turn to the different clues, spoken and material, that Nawal left for the twins' quest. Nawal is the one initiating the GPN for her twin children. Instead of telling them explicitly the truth —that she was unknowingly raped by her abandoned son who got her pregnant with the twins— she gives her children a quest, i.e. finding their father and their brother, as well as material belongings which work as mysterious clues, since they are given without any context or explanation. To Jeanne, Nawal bequeathed a canvas jacket with the number 72 on the back, to Simon a red notebook (17). Other possessions linked to their mother's past are a photo that Jeanne has showing Nawal and Sawda in front of a bus going to Kfar Ryat when Nawal was around 40 years old; and tapes given by Antoine, a nurse at the Quebec institution in which Nawal died. Antoine recorded the silence of Nawal, ever since she had stopped talking. In her will, when Nawal tells her children about finding their father and brother, she asks them to give an envelope to each of them when they find them: "Lorsque ces enveloppes auront été remises à *leur destinataire*, une lettre vous sera donnée" (18-19, my emphasis). Here, the word "destinataire" is in the singular form which might seem like Nawal is giving a clue that brother and father are the same addressee. However, French grammar dictates that, even

though one mentions plural (two) envelopes, because each addressee (brother and father) only has *one* envelope to their names, then "leur destinataire" must be in the singular form. Luckily for Mouawad, this passage works for a first reading, in which the reader understands that one addressee receives one envelope, and works for a second reading as well, as both addressees are actually the same, single entity. Therefore, even though Nawal did lie before to her children about their place of birth and their father being dead, Nawal has not lied in her will, just like the notary Lebel ensures (22), but merely, and misleadingly, laid out separate roles (father/brother) for what is in reality a single person (her first son). One material clue that only the readers know about, and not the twins, is the clown nose given from Nawal to Nihad in his diapers when she abandoned him.

I will now explore the different steps that are necessary, for both the characters and the readers, to piece together incrementally the identity of the father/brother. Jeanne who is fascinated by the mysteries that her mother left behind her is the first one to undertake the quest to find her father, while Simon first refuses his own quest. As a mathematician expert in graph theory involving graph visibility —a theory about how the different points of a polygon are visible or not to any other points of the polygon— Jeanne has a drive to explore complex situations: "je croyais connaitre ma place à l'intérieur du polygone […] Aujourd'hui j'apprends qu'il est possible que du point de vue que j'occupe, je puis aussi voir mon père ; j'apprends aussi qu'il existe un autre membre à ce polygone, un autre frère. Le graphe de visibilité que j'ai toujours tracé est faux" (30-31).

Thanks to her expertise and love for pure mathematics but also her pragmatism, Jeanne appears very open-minded to any and all solutions to her mother's quest, unlike

Simon. "Mon père est mort," she says, "Ça c'est la conjecture. Tout porte à croire qu'elle est vraie. Mais rien ne la prouve. Je n'ai pas vu son cadavre, pas vu sa tombe. Il se peut, donc, entre 1 et l'infini, que mon père soit vivant" (31). However, when Antoine asks her what happened the day Nawal stopped talking, Jeanne says that there is "aucune logique" to it and that "rien" in particular happened during the trial that would have caused her to become mute (58). When pressed further about what else she found, Jeanne says "Rien, une petite photo [that of Nawal and Sawda on their way to Kfar Ryat]. Elle me l'avait déjà montrée" (59), showing that, despite her open-mindedness, Jeanne does not recognize the importance of some information and clues. Nonetheless, Jeanne makes progress as she travels to Nawal's birth country, and here is a list of her progress in acquiring information from beginning to end:

1. Jeanne, with Simon, learns that they have a brother and father who are alive (18).

2. Jeanne, with the help of Antoine who enhanced the photo, discovers that her mother was in the region of Kfar Ryat in the 1970's (65).

3. Lebel indicates that Nawal had a phobia of buses and proceeds to tell the violent anecdote of the bus attack that Nawal witnessed (72).

4. Jeanne learns from Mansour, Kfar Ryat prison-turned-museum guide, that her mother was in prison in Kfar Ryat and called "la femme qui chante," in cell number 72, which explains the jacket with the number 72 on it, left by Nawal for Jeanne (82).

5. Jeanne is told by the former prison janitor, Fahim, that Nawal was raped in prison by Abou Tarek, a war torturer (94).

6. Fahim tells her that after many rapes, Nawal got pregnant from Abou Tarek and gave birth to a child in the winter (94). Fahim gave the child, hidden in a bucket, to a peasant named Malak, for him to care for the child.

7. Malak, on the contrary, tells Jeanne that Nawal gave birth to twins, one boy whom he named Sarwane and one girl he named Janaane (100), her birth name and that of Simon.

8. Simon indirectly reveals to her that their father Abou Tarek is in fact Nihad, their brother (122)

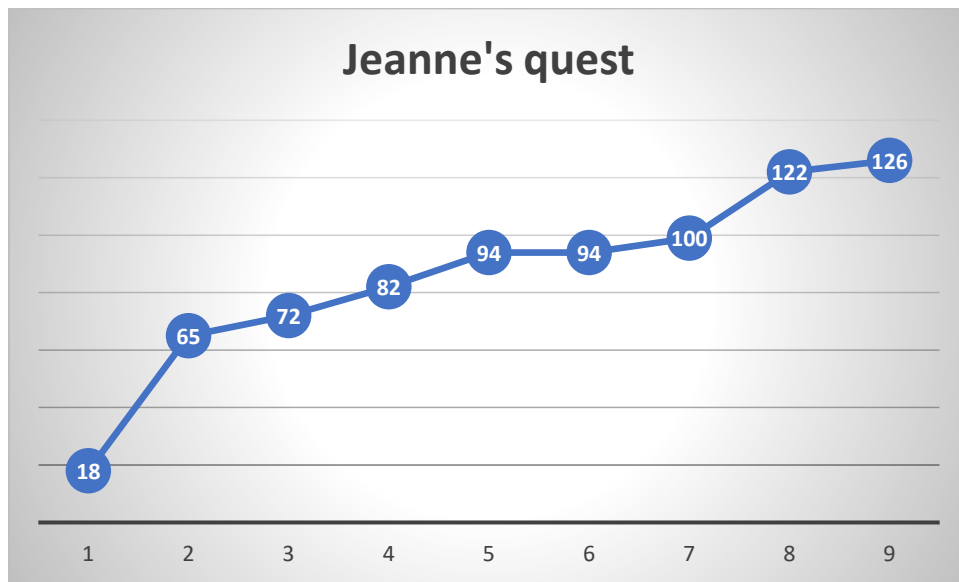9. Back in Quebec, Jeanne gives Nawal's letter to their father (126).

Figure 7

Figure 7 represents the nine-step discovery of Jeanne, with the numbers on the graph being the page number where the discovery appears in the play. I generated the chart above to produce a visual representation of her discovery process throughout the pages regarding her quest, i.e. giving Nawal's letter to her father, showing the path of reconstruction of cognitive environment regarding their own identity and their mother's, from the moment she learns that

she has a brother and father who are still alive, to the moment she gives Nawal's letter to her brother and father, accomplishing her promise to her mother. As we can see, Jeanne as well as the readers go through a steady, incrementally traumatizing discovery of the identity of the twins' father and of Nawal's life. Thanks to Simon's own discovery, she finds out their father is also their brother, and that the twins are the fruit not only of a rape but of incest. Jeanne learns the name of her father, and what kind of man he is, *before* even knowing that he is her father. Jeanne has background information about a man, whom she already pictures as evil due to the story of him raping his mother in prison, leading to —what is assumed to be— her older brother's birth. Therefore, her cognitive environment about Abou Tarek is already constructed negatively towards him due to him being a rapist. Originally, Jeanne knew nothing about her father except that her mother loved him deeply and that supposedly he died at war. This information was a lie, Nawal conflated the stories of Wahab —who did die in the war and whom she did love, and who is the grandfather of the twins, not their father— and her son. Jeanne's reconstruction is thus threefold: she needs to reconstruct her cognitive environment about what she thought she knew about her father: he did not die at war and her mother did not love him; her father is a rapist; but also that the rape by Abou Tarek created not a putative older brother but actually created her and Simon.

Now let us turn to Simon's quest. Unlike Jeanne who simply does not recognize at first glance the importance of some information while trying to uncover the truth, Simon plainly at the very start rejects his mother's quest. He makes himself willfully blind to his mother's promise and his duty towards her will, by submerging himself in boxing. It is only after Jeanne —who started her quest before Simon— calls him in Quebec from Nawal's home country and reveals to him that their mother was raped (at the time, Jeanne only thinks that Nawal gave birth

to their brother) (96)— that Simon, still in Quebec, finally opens the red notebook his mother left

him (101) and at last starts his own quest of finding their father in Nawal's home country. Here

is the list of the information steps that Simon take, from beginning to end:

1. Simon, with Jeanne, learns they have a brother and father who are alive (18).

2. Jeanne tells hims that Nawal was raped in prison and she wrongly assumes that their

   brother was the fruit of this rape (96).

3. Simon in Quebec reads Nawal's testimony at Abou Tarek's trial, being privy to

   extremely graphic and sensory descriptions of Nawal's rapes in Kfar Ryat (101-3).

4. He learns in the testimony that Abou Tarek is their father and therefore he and Jeanne

   are the fruit of rapes in prison (103).

5. Nawal's ghost comforts Simon and tells him his real name is Sarwane and Jeanne's

   name is Janaane, Abou Tarek is his father's name, and encourages him to continue to

   finally seek his brother's name (106).

6. Simon and Lebel, having travelled to Nawal's birth country, discover the brother's

   name, Nihad Harmanni (113).

7. Simon hears from Chamseddine, the Resistance leader, that Nihad fought for the

   Resistance (122).

8. Chamseddine then tells Simon that Nihad became disillusioned with life as he had

   failed to find his longlost mother, and left Chamseddine. Nihad was then captured by

   the Foreign Army and worked as an interrogator at the prison of Kfar Ryat (123).

9. Simon, who first thought that Nihad simply worked with Abou Tarek, is told by

   Chamseddine that Nihad is in fact Abou Tarek, as he changed his name when he

   worked for the Foreign Army (124).

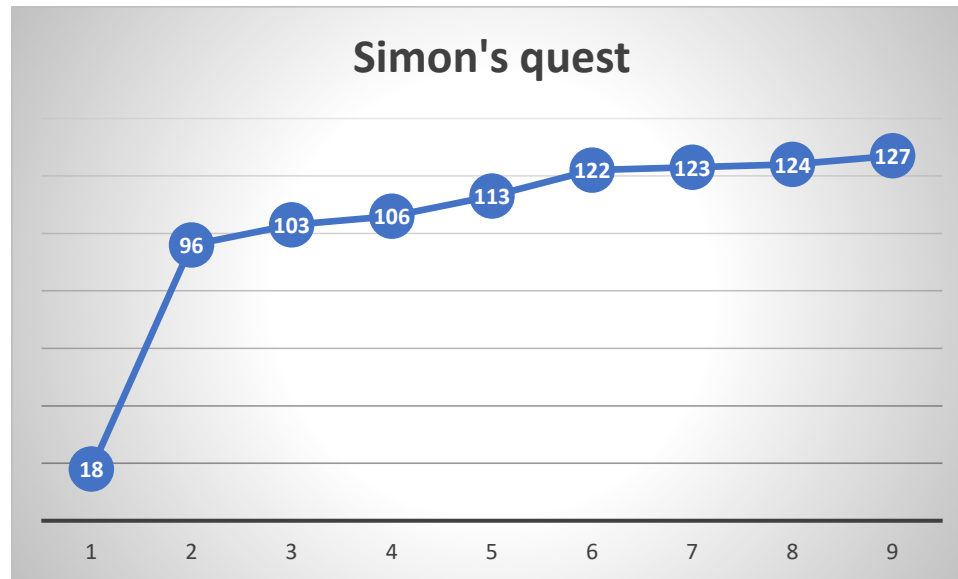10. Back in Quebec, Simon gives Nawal's letter to their brother (127).

Figure 8

Because Simon initially rejected his mother's quest, there is a much starker curve at the

beginning, going from simply knowing about the existence of a father and brother to Jeanne's

announcement that this brother is the fruit of Nawal being raped in prison. This announcement

seems to prompt his interest in the red notebook and he finally starts his quest, i.e. finding his

brother. The chart above also shows steady incremental learning about his brother's identity

throughout the pages after the start of his quest. Now, unlike Jeanne, Simon learns his brother's

name knowing it is his brother, and progressively learns more about him. Throughout the scenes,

Simon first learns that Nihad was taken from the orphanage by Chamseddine's Resistance to

become a soldier and was trying to find purpose in his life while looking for his mother, then

Simon learns that Nihad eventually lost all hope and became cruel and cynical and as a result,

became a "machine à tuer" (123). Therefore, before even knowing that it was his brother who

committed rape and incest with his mother, Simon's cognitive environment is even more

impacted by Abou Tarek's actions than Jeanne's has been, since he got to read the details of the

tortures and rapes, unlike Jeanne. Regarding the brother, Simon has access to information that depicts Nihad humanely, with emotions and hopes, unlike Abou Tarek who is described with the gruesome acts of torture and rape. Once Simon learns the truth behind his mother's garden-pathing quest, Simon's cognitive environment has to reconstruct the mental representation of his brother, going from a young man victim of circumstances, with hopes and dreams, to a monstrous rapist and incestuous man.

The steps to gather information —the background information that Nihad was a young hopeful man who turned cruel and that Nihad was actually Abou Tarek their rapist father— occur in merely three pages, within the same scene, while Jeanne's information —finding out that Abou Tarek is a torturer and cruel man and that he is her father— occurs in seven pages, across three different scenes. That is why Simon experiences a faster, and thus even greater, shock than Jeanne did when she found out that she and Simon were the product of a rape: he stays silent for days, after integrating the truth and processing the graphic details of Abou Tarek's rape from the notebook as integral to his brother's identity.

I will now turn to the cognitive shift that the reader goes through while navigating the GPN in *Incendies*. In addition to knowing everything that the twins learn, readers have a seemingly advantaged position in that they have also access to Nawal's past. I say "seemingly" because some of this additional information can actually be misleading for readers, but I will explore this phenomenon in the next section. The reader is indeed privy to Nawal's relationship with Wahab, her fight with her mother, her grandmother telling her to get an education, her friendship with Sawda, Nawal looking for Nihad everywhere, her plans with Sawda to kill Chad, etc. Contrary to Jeanne and Simon, the reader has access to scenes with Nihad's past. The reader witnesses two scenes showing Nihad as a young sniper, getting to know his personality more —

he loves 1980's music; he likes Elizabeth Taylor; he thinks his shooting is art, which he compares to his other activity of taking pictures of his dead victims; he enacts a dialogue as if he were a celebrity guest on a talk-show, displaying child-like arrogance. In the paragraph about material clues, I mentioned that the reader has knowledge of a material token which is the clown nose that Nawal put in Nihad's diapers when she gave him away. This nose will appear again in scene 35, a scene that the reader has access to but not the twins, although Simon had previously had access to Nawal's testimony against someone she thought was simply Abbou Tarek at the time, the father of her twins.

Scene 35 contains Nihad's final words during his International Court trial. Nihad still shows the same boyish arrogance at his trial though with more explicit cruelty this time, as he actually thanks his rape and torture victims for enabling him to take "great" pictures of his crimes (124). When Nihad pulls his clown nose out of his pocket at the trial, that is the moment of revelation for Nawal who finally recognizes her son, who happens to be her rapist and father of her twins. Nawal's cognitive environment experiences an obvious traumatic shift, going from the negative mental representation of Abou Tarek, her rapist, to integrating the information of him being also Nihad, her cherished son whom she sought and promised to love no matter what (40). Nawal's cognitive environment reconstruction is even more violent than Simon's because Nawal actually knew Abou Tarek from harrowing real-life experience, but only knew Nihad in her idealized thoughts of a mother for the son she abandoned when he was an infant. Before going to prison, she tells Sawda that she thinks about him everyday: "il a vingt-cinq ans, l'âge de tuer et l'âge de mourir, l'âge d'aimer et l'âge de souffrir, alors à quoi je pense quand je te raconte tout ça? Je pense à sa mort évidente, à ma quête imbécile, au fait que je serai à jamais incomplète parce qu'il est sorti de ma vie et que jamais je ne verrai son corps là, devant moi" (88). She

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always thought of Nihad with unconditional love, sorrow, and worry for his livelihood and life. Most of all, she thinks of him as already dead or soon to be dead because of the on-going war in her country. So that once she recognized her son in her abuser in Court, she had to reconstruct her previous cognitive environment on several levels: her son is alive, her son is now in front of her, her son was a torturer, her son was her rapist, her son is the father of her twin children.

In her letter to Nihad, Nawal indeed expresses the confusion and extreme paradoxical emotions she felt as she reconstructed her cognitive environment: "A l'instant, tu étais l'horreur. A l'instant tu es devenu le bonheur. Horreur et bonheur. Le silence dans ma gorge" (128). So, the reader, in addition to factual information about Nawal and Nihad, has access to Nawal's internal emotional process —from the moment she gave birth to Nihad to the moment she recognizes him— which her children do not have access to. Simon had read Nawal's testimony, but he has no access to the conclusion of the trial nor to Nawal's experience when she recognized Nihad. At the end of the trial scene, the stage directions summarize the play by these four actions: "Nawal (15 ans) accouche de Nihad. Nawal (45 ans) accouche de Jeanne et Simon. Nawal (60 ans) reconnait son fils. Jeanne, Simon et Nihad sont tous trois ensemble dans la même pièce" (125), showing the articulation of the plot and what led to Jeanne and Simon finding Nihad, the very purpose of the quest announced at the beginning.

Inferential walks

As a reminder of Eco's theory of inferential walks, he points out that narrative users are "encouraged to activate [a certain] hypothesis by a lot of already recorded narrative situations" (Eco, *Role of the Reader* 32). However, one thing that *Incendies* actually subverts from the start is the units of time and place, challenging expectations for the structure of a typical play (typically, scenes do not mix representations of past and present actions at the same time). As

indicated in my earlier analysis of the play's following units, the interweaving of following units (e.g. Nawal as a teenager present at the same time as her adult children in the scene) participates in creating a GPN and requires the reader to be actively engaged to navigate the narrative properly. The following pattern modulations are also part of the GPN in that they can be misleading. For instance, in scene 4, Lebel tells Jeanne that Nawal met Jeanne and Simon's father when she was very young, and the very next line is the memory of Nawal calling for Wahab (32). In the next scene, Nawal announces to Wahab, her true love, that she is pregnant by him (33). The juxtaposition of these following units, especially inserting Wahab's name right after Lebel mentions Jeanne's father, who is actually Nihad and not Wahab, who is actually her grandfather, is a misleading device as the reader might think that a modulation between scenes is metonymic (bringing Wahab into the diegetic space after mentioning the father figure) when the modulation is actually metaphoric (the modulation relies on the shared characteristic that is in fact about Nawal being very young like Wahab, not about the true father figure of the twins). We can infer that Nawal lied to Lebel by saying that Wahab was the twins' father, or perhaps Lebel himself made the assumption that Wahab was the twins' father when Nawal talked about loving Wahab in her youth. This type of misleading process of scene juxtaposition therefore hinders the identification of the anomaly behind the GPN. However, the modulations can also be highlighting and helpful in interpreting elements correctly. For example, at the end of scene 30 Nawal's ghost is guiding Simon toward the discovery of his brother's true name (106) and the next scene is Nihad as a sniper (107). This metonymic modulation helps identify the character of Nihad as the missing brother, Nawal's abandoned son.

The interweaving of following units which bring together different times and spaces, in addition to providing explanations about Nawal's past, conveys the relevance of this past to the twins' present. As Déry-Aubin remarks,

> l'originalité de Mouawad tient sans doute à ce que la trame narrative qui dévoile
>
> le passé et l'action au présent du protagoniste sont intrinsèquement entremêlées
>
> dans une mise en représentation qui démontre l'interconnexion de l'histoire et du
>
> présent. Si la tragédie interroge le pouvoir d'action des individus face au destin
>
> inéluctable d'une fin malheureuse qui les attend immanquablement à la fin de la
>
> pièce, l'expérience tragique chez Mouawad décrit l'accablement d'une
>
> catastrophe déjà advenue à laquelle il est non seulement impossible d'échapper,
>
> mais qui habite également le quotidien des personnages. (Déry-Aubin 30)

This approach of mingling time and space also echoes Nawal's desperation when, as a young woman in her home country, she tells Sawda, in shock, about the traumatizing bus attack: "Il n'y a plus de temps. Le temps est une poule à qui on a tranché la tête, le temps court comme un fou" (Mouawad, *Incendies* 73). The intertwining of past and present scenes conveys the chaos of Nawal's life, ridden with traumatic events, and the repeated assaults by Abou Tarek in Kfar Ryat when she was in her forties, that happened so many times that "le temps s'est fracturé" (103). In the postface of *Incendies*, Farcet notes that because of such mingling of past and present, and of elements of wars across the worlds, "le temps donc se dilate pour devenir symbolique" (157), like atemporal myths and legends.

Nawal's story is, as a matter of fact, deemed legendary by the people in her home country after she left her village, and her tale relies only on oral narratives rather than written ones, as when Nawal discovers at the orphanage that there are no longer any registers keeping track of

orphans (62). When Jeanne, during her quest in Nawal's home country, talks to Abdessamad, a man who knows all the stories of Nawal's village, he tells her that he knows "les vraies et les fausses" (77), announcing that whatever Jeanne will hear might be true or might be false, as villagers may make up rumors, or modify details of events. Abdessamad calls the story of Nawal who left with Sawda a legend (78). The legend says that one night, Nawal and Wahab were separated by force, which the reader knows is true (39), but then Abdessamad goes on to add that the legend says that people will hear the lovers' laughs if one waits until dark in the forest, adding a magical, supernatural element to it. Jeanne is not sensitive to the supernatural, legendary aspect of her mother's story, so that when Abdessamad emphatically says that Kfar Ryat is located "en enfer", she pragmatically asks him "plus précisément" (79) where to actually find the village. In the prison of Kfar Ryat, Nawal was mostly known as "la femme qui chante" —for example, Malak does not know Nawal Marwan but knows la femme qui chante (98), and the same for Chamseddine (118)— a name depicting her function and characteristics, rather than identifying her as a real-life individual, with a legal name. When Chamseddine tells Simon that Nihad is in fact his father, he compares Nawal's story to a cosmological, mythical tale: "Tu entends ma voix, Sarwane? On dirait la voix des siècles anciens. […] et les étoiles se sont tues en moi une seconde lorsque tu as prononcé le nom de Nihad Harmanni tout à l'heure. Et je vois que les étoiles font silence à leur tour en toi. En toi le silence, Sarwane, celui des étoiles et celui de ta mère" (124). Even Hermile Lebel invokes cosmological phenomenology, as he believes that Simon finding out the truth will help him become a talented boxer: "C'est dans le cosmos, ces affaires-là !" (105).

Just as Abdessamad warned Jeanne, due to the mythical, legendary aspect of Nawal's story, there are facts that are mixed, twisted or simply completely wrong when Jeanne

investigates her mother's life, sending Jeanne on misleading inferential walks. Jeanne learns that

Sawda is called "la fille qui chante" in the legend (78), so Jeanne assumes that when she is told

about "la femme qui chante", it refers to the same person. However, Fahim, the former prison

janitor, tells Jeanne that *Nawal* was "la femme qui chante" (93) and that if others said that it was

Sawda, then "ils vous ont menti" (93). Jeanne, not atuned to epithets, usually found in myths,

epics, and legends, infers that "la femme/la fille qui chante" are one and the same person. Fahim,

the former prison janitor, also tells Jeanne that her mother gave birth and put her child in a

bucket covered with a blanket. Fahim said that he did not look inside, and since the river was

frozen, he gave the bucket to a peasant instead of killing the child (94). Therefore, because

Jeanne believes that there is only one child and that he was born in winter, she assumes that it

must be her older brother. However, when Jeanne meets Malak, the peasant to whom Fahim gave

the bucket, he tells her that he looked inside the bucket and that Nawal gave birth to *twins* and in

the summer, certifying that she and Simon are the children born in prison (100). Malak maintains

his story and simply says, to explain the discrepancies between his story and Fahim's that

"Fahim s'est trompé […] Fahim n'a pas bien regardé" (100). With no argument left that could

explain the discrepancies and could still confirm Jeanne's hypothesis that she and Simon are *not*

born from a rape in prison, Jeanne resorts to telling a story of her own, i.e. what Nawal had told

her about their father, that he died for his country and that they were madly in love with each

other (i.e., the story of Nawal and Wahab). Again, Malak dismisses Jeanne's origin story: "c'est

ce qu'elle vous racontait ? C'est bien, il faut toujours raconter des histoires aux enfants pour les

aider à dormir" (100). Therefore, Nawal's original and only lie about who their father was, as

well as the contradictory tales and symbolic names used across the different versions of Nawal's

story, are part of the GPN's generation of inferential walks. The discrepancies are not "un

obstacle à l'enquête mais un obstacle à la compréhension de Jeanne, à l'identification des personnages dont on lui fait le récit" (Pricot 34).

Another element that creates inferential walks is that Nawal presented the quest as one to find two distinct entities, as I stated earlier, that is, the father and the brother. In addition to the misleading, yet still true statement, since Nihad is indeed both a father and a brother, referential coding also plays a significant part in the twins' and the reader's expectations: a brother is usually not the father of his siblings. Because it is statistically not within the norm, and that it is also a societal taboo in most cultures, incest is not, typically, a commonly activated topic in people's cognitive environment when it comes to family relations. The referential code of family hierarchy and relation is therefore subverted here, and is a primary component of the GPN's inferential walks.

Nawal, thoughout her life in her home country, uses the lexicon of mathematics to describe the traumas happening around her. She describes the never-ending war and retaliations as "une addition monstreuse que l'on ne peut pas calculer" (86). She also talks about Abou Tarek's men fearing him and wonders how monsters could fear another monster, and suggests that future generations "sauront peut-être résoudre l'équation" (102). A leitmotiv throughout the play is the phrase "1+1=2", as I mentioned before. Like the referential coding of family hierarchy, the basic mathematical knowledge of 1+1=2 is, true in general, yet wrong in this context, when applied to Jeanne and Simon's quest for father/brother: there is mention of one father, one brother, therefore it seems to them that there are two distinct people to find. So common mathematical knowledge can also prevent one from interpreting the truth and can generate misleading inferential walks. Simon, angry at Jeanne for undertaking the quest, tells her that she won't find the answer as it is not a math problem, but "he will be proven wrong, and to

some extent the problem is mathematical" (Khordoc 309). Eventually Simon is the one leading

Jeanne to the truth symbolically, as he first asks her about the Collatz conjecture (under certain

circumstances and calculations, 1+1 can equal 1 instead of 2) instead of bluntly telling her the

truth, just as their mother did for them since she, too, thought that "il y a des verités qui ne

peuvent être révélées qu'à condition d'être découvertes" (Mouawad, *Incendies* 131). Nawal gave

her children the truth in the guise of a *monstrous addition*, to use her terms, as both reality and

mathematical conjecture confirm the horrific truth that in the twins'context, 1+1=1, father and

brother are the same. Similarly, although the graph theory's polygon —a polygon in which

certain points are visible to other points while some points are not visible— "might be

considered a figure of destiny in a metaphorical sense, it would be more significant to view it as

a lack of knowledge or of truths yet undiscovered rather than as a figure of fate" (Khordoc 310).

The visibility polygon is a symbol of the play's GPN, as "the play is structured like a polygon,

for which a visibility graph could be drawn, but that the shape of this polygon evolves as

different layers of the family's tragic history are uncovered" (311). Before the ultimate

revelation, Jeanne and Simon cannot, indeed, see Nihad, Wahab, and the different pieces of their

mother's past. Contrary to Jeanne thinking that there is *no logic* explaining her mother's sudden

silence after a trial (Mouawad, *Incendies* 58), or to Simon thinking that his mother was insane

(23), finding out the truth enables the twins to understand that their mother's silence and

behavior does have a rational grounding and explanation. I will explore this notion of rational

choices further in the final section of this chapter, when exploring all the enigmas of the play, in

order to see if they are solved at the end.

   Now I will turn to see if the semes I listed in the first section of this chapter help or

hinder the decoding of the GPN's anomaly, and if they create wrong inferential walks. The

semes I listed were the following: family, war and conflict, violence, knowledge, cycles

repeating themselves, pairs, mathematics, visibility and blindness, silence, choices and promises.

All the semes are related to finding out the truth: because of conflicts between Nawal and

Wahab's people, Nawal had to abandon her son, who in turn was raised as a soldier and was

exposed to war violence early on. The lack of knowledge and constant retaliations between

people only tear people apart. However, Nawal, in the final scene "Lettre aux jumeaux",

encourages them to use their new knowledge of their family to shift their cognitive environment

regarding their birth:

> Où commence votre histoire ? À votre naissance ? Alors elle commence dans
>
> l'horreur. À la naissance de votre père ? Alors c'est une grande histoire d'amour.
>
> […] Lorsqu'on vous demandera votre histoire, dites que votre histoire, son
>
> origine, remonte au jour où une jeune fille revint à son village natal pour y graver
>
> le nom de sa grand-mère Nazira sur sa tombe. Là commence l'histoire.
>
> (Mouawad, *Incendies* 132)

Therefore Nawal wants her children to think that the beginning of their story starts when

Nawal made use of her education, writing on her grandmother's grave before leaving her home

village, even when men made fun of her, spat on her for writing, and she had to defend herself

using a book to fight off a threatening man (49). This episode marks the beginning of her

liberation and this is what she wants her children to remember, too, rather than to remember the

violence and atrocities. Another seme was the trope of pairs: Nihad and Abou Tarek are their

own pair, being a single entity but taking up the double function of rapist/father and lost son.

Nawal and Nihad, because they were separated at Nihad's birth, did not recognize each other at

Kfar Ryat. Their "blindess" to their blood relationship echoes the myth of Oedipus who, to

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punish himself for not reconizing his parents, pierces his eyes. Nawal, once she reconized her son at the International trial in Quebec, chose to stay silent, and now is making her children promise her to defeat the cycle of violence and hatred which started at Nawal's separation from Nihad. War in Mouawad's play tears families apart and, in Nawal's case, led to a tragic, accidental violation of the taboo of incest in the family hierarchy, due to the lack of knowledge and separation. When the truth is uncovered at the end of the play, a critical reader can notice another leitmotiv which was not apparent at first, which is the emphasis on roles in the family. Indeed, a similar structure is repeated throughout the play underlining that someone *could be or is not* a member of the family. Jeanne says to Simon "je suis ta sœur, pas ta mère, t'es mon frère, pas mon père" (56) to which Simon answers that it is all the same —i.e. that as a brother he has authority on her like a father would. The woman forced to choose which one of her sons will be spared says to her abuser "comment peux-tu, regarde-moi, je pourrais être ta mère" (85). The war photographer implores Nihad not to kill him as "je pourrais être votre père, j'ai l'âge de votre mère" (109). All these lines echo the real-life plea of a tortured woman whom Mouawad heard of when talking to war photographer Josée Lambert, a plea that sparked the very plot of *Incendies* (Farcet 142). Of course, Nihad could have never anticipated that he would capture his mother as an enemy, since he had tried to find her his whole life and failed, so the chance of finding her as his victim seemed even slimmer. However, had he chosen to abide by that leitmotiv of treating older strangers like his own parents, with mercy, he would have avoided committing his tortures on his mother and his incest. Finally, another wrong inferential walk for a character, occasioned by misleading semes, is Nihad's interpretation of the clown nose. Nawal slipped a red clown nose in Nihad's diapers when he was taken away from her. To Nawal, the clown nose symbolizes her love for Wahab, as he got it for her as a souvenir of a street show they attended

together, and Nawal laughed so much during the show, and Wahab loved to hear her laugh (78). The clown nose is therefore supposed to represent Nawal's and Wahab's relationship at its best, at its most carefree, innocent moment, and represent their love and fondness for each other. In the play, we can see that Nihad develops a high sense of putting on a show in any circumstance, whether it is at war pretending to be a TV show guest, or playing and singing music, of making a show of his killings by taking pictures, or singing at his own trial. To him, the clown nose is what triggered his taste for performing a certain persona and certain actions:

> le spectacle, moi, c'est ça ma dignité. Et depuis le début. Je suis né avec. On l'a
> trouvé, paraît-il, dans le seau où on m'a déposé après ma naissance. Les gens qui
> m'ont vu grandir m'ont toujours dit que cet objet était une trace de mes origines,
> de ma dignité en quelque sorte, puisque, d'après l'histoire, il m'a été donne par
> ma mère. Un petit nez de clown. Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire ? Ma dignité à moi est
> une grimace laissée par celle qui m'a donné la vie. Cette grimace ne m'a jamais
> quitté. (125)

Nihad interprets his mother's gift as the inheritance of a grimace, an ironic symbol of mocking laughter in a life of misery and violence. His only way of finding meaning with this gift, this symbol of his dignity as he says, that fits with his current life is that a clown nose is a prop for performing, for putting on a show and transforming reality in his imagination —like he does when pretending to be on a talk show, or taking "artistic" pictures of dead people— since his reality is that of war and abandonment. Because of his situation in a war country, his early abandonment, as a young man turned soldier, Nihad's cognitive environment could not have helped him recognize Nawal's gift the way she intended it to be, i.e. as a token of love and joy which he never experienced, but rather he interprets it as an encouragement to endorse a

grimace, hiding his distress behind a mask of absurdity, of cruelty, to save his dignity, to save his life, and survive the atrocities of the war, leading Nihad to eventually turn into the monster Abou Tarek.

Identify the intertextual frames and challenge them as potentially misleading.

I will now go back to the intertextual frames listed in the first section of this chapter and question them to see if they help or hinder the deciphering of the GPN. The intertextual frames of war are obviously setting up the context for Nawal's past. The fact that elements of different wars over the world (Iraq, Lebanese civil war, Rwandan genocide) are intermingled to convey the never-ending nature of human conflicts and the cycle of violence and of retaliation, constantly tearing families apart in the present because of actions that took place in the past. Regarding actual texts, the poem *Al Atlal* —sung by Nawal and Sawda as they were fighting as resisters in the civil war— about women's liberation from men, sheds light on the burden that women have had to bear, fighting for their freedom from men in general, but also fighting for the freedom of their country like Nawal and Sawda did. Additionally, Nawal, beyond the grave, is trying to free her children, most notably Jeanne, from the burden of anger that generations of women in Nawal's family have had to carry due to their lack of education and lack of freedom. In the final scene, which is also the reading of Nawal's final letter to Jeanne and Simon, she says: "les femmes de notre famille, nous sommes engluées dans la colère. J'ai été en colère contre ma mère tout comme tu es en colère contre moi et tout comme ma mère fut en colère contre sa mère. Il faut casser le fil" (131). So this intertextual frame, though it does not help nor hinder the solving of the anomaly of the GPN, does enhance the purpose of Nawal's will: she sent her children into that quest to free the burden of their family, just like her own family and other woman before Nawal carried a generational burden of lacking freedom and education.

Another intertextual frame was the song *Logical Song* by Supertramp, sung by Nihad. The lyrics at the beginning go as follows:

> When I was young, it seemed that life was so wonderful / A miracle, oh it was beautiful, magical/ And all the birds in the trees, well they'd be singing so happily / Oh joyfully, playfully watching me / But then they send me away to teach me how to be sensible / Logical, oh responsible, practical / And they showed me a world where I could be so dependable / Oh clinical, oh intellectual, cynical/ […] Please tell me who I am / I said, watch what you say or they'll be calling you a radical Liberal, oh fanatical, criminal. (Supertramp np)

This song echoes Nihad's own life (116), going from being a little boy to becoming a young Resistance sniper, leading him to become increasingly cynical and cold-blooded, killing anyone he chooses to (Mouawad, *Incendies* 115). We can also witness a shift in his mindset between when he was Nihad fighting for Chamseddine and the moment he becomes Abou Tarek: at first, even though he shoots everyone, he shoots them in a way that kills people instantly so as not to make them suffer (115), which shows some degree of mercy. However, when he leaves Chamseddine after giving up any hope of finding his mother and to find out who he is, as the song puts it, and after he is taken by the Foreign Army to work at Kfar Ryat for interrogations, he becomes a torturer, actually making people suffer to get confessions from them, which proves a major shift in his mindset. This intertextual frame helps trigger the reader's cognitive environment that what is described in the song —the turning of a young man into a cold-blooded, cynical being— will happen to Nihad. Nihad will go through the same mental journey, going from a lost, hopeful, abandoned boy seeking his mother, to later becoming a totally different man, choosing a different name, Abou Tarek, after his experience in the war.

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The other song in the play, *Roxane*, is about a man's anguished love for a woman. Before singing it, Nihad says, in his fake talk-show guest persona, in broken English, that he wrote this love song during the war after the woman he loved died from an enemy sniper, and he felt "a big crash in my hart. My hart colaps. Yes I crie. And I wrote this song" (110). Because Nihad has a performer persona in every scene where he appears, it is difficult to establish if the story about his lover being killed is true or not. However, even in his fake interviews, Nihad has always told the truth no matter how cruel, like acknowledging that he kills children (115), so it seems fair to assume that Nihad indeed lost his lover to war and felt crushed by her death. Therefore intertextual frames are a way for Mouawad to bring up "des idées politiques fortes qui soulignent le texte, mais aussi les sentiments intérieurs des personnages" (Lachaud 117). Similarly to the Logical Song, this reference to Roxane helps hinting at Nihad's desperation of having lost someone, whether it be a lover or his mother.

The myth of Pandora takes another layer of meaning after the revelation of the GPN's key: in addition to acquiring knowledge, Pandora also opened the sacred box which released evils and curses on the Earth, similarly to Nawal who, through her revelations about her abuse and traumas, brings shock and horror into her children's life. Finally, the other myth identified was Philomela who, after her tongue was cut off so that she could not accuse her rapist, weaved her story into a tapestry, finding a way to communicate beyond words. The reader, after discovering the truth, can take in all the similarities between Nawal and Philomela. Nawal became silent and, unlike Philomela who was forced to be mute, Nawal chose to remain silent about Nihad's incest, after she recognizes her son as her abuser at the trial. However, like Philomela, Nawal finds a way to communicate with her children despite her abuse-induced silence. Beyond the grave, Nawal gives a quest and material clues to Simon and Jeanne so that

they can finally weave the symbolic tapestry of Nawal's past as they go through their investigation, in order to decipher the truth themselves.

Interestingly, after uncovering the key to the GPN, i.e. that the missing brother is also the father, a new intertextual frame arises: the myth of Oedipus. Just like Oedipus who did not recognize his father and killed him, and did not recognize his mother and married her, Nihad "a cherché sa mère, l'a trouvée mais ne l'a pas reconnue. Elle a cherché son fils, l'a trouvé, et ne l'a pas reconnu" (124). Just like *Incendies* resorts to mathematical logic to first hinder then help the GPN resolution —usually 1+1=2, therefore father and brother must be two people, but then we discover the Collatz conjecture of 1+1=1, therefore father and brother can be the same person— Oedipus also involves mathematical logic: "[*Oedipus Rex*] is full of equations, some of them incomplete, some false" (qtd. in Khordoc 312). Oedipus killed Laius when he was alone, while Jocasta tells him that Laius was reportedly killed by several bandits: "While Oedipus knows that Laius has been murdered, he does not know by whom. And if Laius was supposedly murdered by several thieves, Oedipus knows that he was alone when he killed someone, on the side of the road, in similar circumstances" (Khordoc 313), leading him to think that, since he was alone and not with others, that he could not be Laius's murderer: "In no circumstances can one be equal to more than one." Oedipus' guilt or innocence rests now on a mathematical idiom" (qtd. in Khordoc 313). Like Malak, the peasant who was given the twins by the prison janitor, who reveals to Jeanne in *Incendies* that she and Simon were born from a rape, Oedipus finds out about his origin from a shepherd who was given Oedipus as a baby and who gave the baby to a servant, instead of killing him, and the servant gave the baby to Oedipus's adoptive parents. Another link to Oedipus is also the cycle of violence and curse on a family. Originally, Laius was the tutor of Chrysippus, the son of the King of Elis. One day, Laius kidnapped and raped

Chrysippus, which cast a curse upon Laius: he will be murdered by his own son, Oedipus, and his own son will also marry his own mother, cursing his son's children and their descendants with the incestuous plague of social taboo and higher-risk genetics. This cycle of doom reminds us of that of Nawal's country's civil war:

> Il y a deux jours, les miliciens ont pendu trois adolescents réfugiés qui se sont aventurés hors des camps. Pourquoi les miliciens ont-ils pendu trois adolescents ? Parce que deux réfugiés du camp avaient violé et tué une fille du village de Kfar Samira. Pourquoi ces deux types ont-ils violé cette fille ? Parce que les miliciens avaient lapidé une famille de réfugiés. Pourquoi les miliciens l'ont-ils lapidée ? Parce que les réfugiés ont brûlé une maison près de la colline du thym. Pourquoi les réfugiés ont-ils brûlé la maison ? Pour se venger des miliciens qui avaient détruit un puits d'eau foré par eux. Pourquoi les miliciens ont-ils détruit le puits ? Parce que des réfugiés avaient brûlé une récolte du côté du fleuve au chien. Pourquoi ont-ils brûlé la récolte ? Il y a certainement une raison, ma mémoire s'arrête là, je ne peux pas monter plus haut, mais l'histoire peut se poursuivre encore longtemps, de fil en aiguille, de colère en colère, de peine en tristesse, de viol en meurtre, jusqu'au début du monde. (Mouawad, *Incendies* 61).

The fact that Oedipus did not recognize his mother and married her, just as Nihad did not recognize his mother and raped her, shows how the seme of visibility versus blindness prevails in both works. However, *Incendies* emphasizes speech over vision: Oedipus learning the truth will pierce his eyes, becoming blind, while Nawal suggests that Nihad, both as her son and her abuser, will choose to become mute after knowing the truth (129). Because *Incendies* focuses on the problem of sharing a common experience, of transmission of knowledge, conflicts and love

across generations (Nawal and her children) and different ethnic groups (during the civil war in Nawal's home country), speech more so than vision is at the heart of *Incendies*' plot and GPN: had Nawal's and Wahab's families not hated each other, Nawal would have never abandoned her baby, she would have never been raped unknowingly by him, she would not have borne the weight of trauma and thus would not have acted distant to her twin children, she would not have become mute after recognizing her son is her rapist.

Obviously, the theme of Oedipus and the trauma attached to it brings up the frame of Freud's famous psychoanalytical Oedipal complex, enunciating that a young boy will unconsciously have desire for his mother while symbolically wishing to kill his father perceived as a rival in his early infant stage. Beyond Freud's theory, another prominent psychoanalyst, Lacan, appears relevant, as pointed out by Graham-Smith when studying language and the concept of self in *Incendies*. Graham-Smith mentions the Lacanian notion of "Law of the Father", also known as "Name of the Father". In Lacan's work, a symbolic father figure stands for authority and order (Graham-Smith 59). Lacan's notion of Law is

> the Law which, in regulating marriage ties, superimposes the reign of culture over
> the reign of nature, the latter being subject to the law of mating. The prohibition
> of incest is merely the subjective pivot of that Law. […] This law, then, reveals
> itself clearly enough as identical to a language order. *For without names for*
> *kinship relations, no power can institute the order of preferences and taboos that*
> *knot and braid the thread of lineage through the generations*. And it is the
> confusion of generations which, in the Bible as in all traditional laws, is cursed as
> being the abomination of the Word and the desolation of the sinner. (Lacan 278-
> 279, my emphasis)

For Nihad, it is more so about not knowing the name of his mother rather than that of the father. Because of his separation from family, he only knows Nawal as a prisoner, as "Whore number 72" (Mouawad, *Incendies* 127). Without the name of his mother, Nihad cannot abide by the Law Lacan talks about, the law regulating mating and relationship between generations within a family, which prohibits incest. Because he was abandoned and thus has no idea of his mother's name and identity, Nihad cannot behave according to this law of order which dictates an order of preferences. In addition to the lack of Name of the Mother, his violent upbringing, his disillusionment turning into indifference turning into cruelty, and his refusal to treat his victims like his own parents, as the war photographer asked him to do before Nihad kills him, Nihad — having never known his own benevolent father Wahab and mother Nawal—draws his own Law of the Father from his other symbolic father figures, Chamseddine, the head of the resistance described as a violent man (Mouawad, *Incendies* 91) and the Foreign Army who trained him as an interrogation torturer. Nihad becomes a torturer and rapist, perhaps due to his upbringing, but still actively made these choices. However, because of Nihad's lack of knowledge about who his mother is, he does not have access to this crucial kinship nomination and eventually, he *accidentally commits the taboo of incest*, bringing a curse to his lineage, to Simon and Jeanne. His abandonment and his violent upbringing, outside of his control when he was a young boy, potentially doom him, just like Oedipus, who is also an abandoned child, was doomed to fulfill his curse. This intertextual frame only truly appears at the end of the first reading, but it might be possible for a particularly critical reader to notice the different elements and semes alluding to the myth of Oedipus (abandonment, separation of a child with his parents, fate, cycle of hate, blindness, etc…) and to potentially draw the hypothesis that Nawal will suffer the same fate as Jocasta, Oedipus's mother, helping solving the GPN's anomaly before it is revealed explicitly.

Nawal as a puzzle, finally completed

Nawal herself is an enigma, to many people around her including her twin children.
Simon says that after attending a trial in Quebec, for no apparent reason she stopped talking five
years before dying (Mouawad, *Incendies* 20). In her will, her vocabulary, as well as her burial
requests, appear odd. She calls her twins "enfants jumeaux nés de mon ventre" (16) and tells
them that "l'enfance est un couteau planté dans la gorge. On ne le retire pas facilement" (17).
She asks that until her twins complete their respective quests that there should not be a tomb nor
should they engrave her name anywhere. She justifies her requests because there should not be
any "épitaphes pour ceux qui ne tiennent pas leurs promesses. Et une promesse ne fut pas tenue.
Pas d'épitaphe pour ceux qui gardent le silence. Et le silence fut gardé" (18). From the outset,
Nawal sets up enigmas about herself and makes her twins'quest resemble a puzzle to be
completed in order to reconstruct her past, herself, and their relationship with her: why did she
stop talking overnight; why does she use such mysterious terminology; what promise did she not
keep, and why did she remain silent about something?

Nawal stopped talking five years before dying after going for ten years to a series of trials
of war crimes (23). Interestingly, Lebel says, Nawal also wrote her will five years before dying
(20). An active, critical reader or character could draw a parallel between these two events as
they coincide in time, a parallel which we eventually discover at the end. However, Simon,
blinded by resentment and rage for his distant mother, does not even want to investigate and
simply concludes that his mother became insane (23). The explanation of her sudden mutism
after a trial is solved much later in scene 35 when we witness Nawal recognizing Nihad at his
trial thanks to his clown nose and then she is struck by silence (125).

Besides her mutism, Nawal's cryptic language is a challenge and can also be explained at

a second reading. Simon wonders why Nawal only refers to them as "the twins", which after a first reading, is rational, too: Nawal only wanted her *twin* children to have access to her will, to her past and truth, not *all* of her children which would include Nihad, too. The phrase "l'enfance est un couteau planté dans la gorge" is also cryptic and its origin will be revealed promptly, as Wahab was the first one to say it when he was taken away from Nawal (38), and then Nawal says it when she prepares to have her child taken away from her (39). This is to convey that childhood and family origin are something that is imposed, not chosen. Being able to remove the knife from one's throat, like Nawal tells Simon that he has finally removed it, after finding out the truth, in her final letter means to be able to make choices, and have the opportunity to escape the cycle of doom that started generations before him in Nawal's war-ridden country.

Regarding the failed promise and continuous silence mentioned in the will, Nawal had promised to love her son no matter what happens: "quoi qu'il arrive, je t'aimerai toujours" (40), which she repeats like a litany right after giving birth to Nihad. However, after recognizing Nihad as Abou Tarek, in one of her two letters to Nihad, Nawal acknowledges that she failed her promise "puisque je te haïssais de toute mon âme" (128). Regarding her silence being kept, some scholars identify the reason as Nawal not being able to tell the truth to her twin children "précisément parce que l'expérience traumatisante de l'Histoire ne peut être expliquée, mise en mots par Nawal à ses jumeaux" (Dupois np). However, the silence Nawal talks about in her will is not the silence she was struck by in Court out of mere shock, but rather the *choice* of remaining silent which she willingly made: "là où il y a l'amour, il ne peut y avoir de haine. Et pour préserver l'amour, aveuglément j'ai choisi de me taire. Une louve défend toujours ses petits" (Mouawad, *Incendies* 129). Therefore, the silence that Nawal wants her twins to understand is not only the taboo origin of the twins that she never told them, but also, and

actually rather, to understand that, by not talking, Nawal was protecting her love for her son

Nihad so that she could not hate him. According to game theory scholar Brams, a rational choice

is defined as "given [a player's] preferences and their knowledge of other players' preferences,

they made strategy choices that would lead to better rather than worse outcomes" (Brams 5).

Therefore here, Nawal's silence is rational in that she preferred to feel love for Nihad, that is, she

preferred to fulfill her promise to him instead of denouncing him as her rapist, as she says so

herself: "Et pour préserver l'amour, aveuglément j'ai *choisi* de me taire. Une louve défend

toujours ses petits" (Mouawad, *Incendies* 129, my emphasis). Similarly, it appears rational now

why she presented the two family functions (father/brother) of Nihad as separate entities in her

will, because she cannot reconcile both figures, the abuser and the son, and therefore has to

address them separately, just like she does in her letters to Nihad —i.e. one from Jeanne to the

father where she violently accuses him for his horrific abuse, and one from Simon to the son

where she lovingly comforts him. Once the twins have "brisé le silence" (Mouawad, *Incendies*

133) Nawal asks them to engrave her name and put a tomb on her grave: "only having come full

circle, breaking the cycle of violence, can Nawal return to her name as habitus. Her name, the

embodied signifier, "Nawal", can now replace the inhuman calculus of the number 72" (Graham-

Smith 62).

Before knowing the truth, Simon says that he does not feel like she even was his mother,

and that it seemed like she had a brick instead of a heart (Mouawad, *Incendies* 20), as she does

not act the way a loving mother would; but after the revelation, Simon loves his mother deeply.

Matar recalls Freud's notions of *heimlich* and *unheimlich* to analyze the two perceptions of

Nawal, before and after the quest: according to Freud, "« heimlich » signifie « faisant partie de la

maison, de la famille », qu'il est lié à « l'intimite du foyer, éveillant un sentiment de bien-être

paisible, de repos confortable ». Il l'oppose à l'« unheimlich », ce retour de la chose familière sous une forme étrange et angoissante, de sorte que le personnage ne la reconnaıt plus" (Matar 474). Once *unheimlich*, Nawal is now *heimlich* to her children thanks to the completion of the quests: all the puzzle pieces are gathered to recompose Nawal's story truthfully. While she used to be *unheimlich* to the twins, provoking lack of understanding, anger, and resentment, because of her emotional distance and silence, Nawal can now become a figure of love, comfort, and peace, in her children's minds and hearts. Once the GPN is resolved, the cognitive environment of all characters has been reconstructed, even that of Nihad who, beyond Nawal's grave, receives both his mother's hate as she writes as his victim (for the rapist he was), and unconditional love for the son he was.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Incendies* is a very rich GPN on several levels. Mouawad takes advantage of contemporary theater devices, such as displaying two different times and spaces at once, using stage directions and props to convey the chaos of war, breaking the logic of time and space due to atrocities and never-ending, timeless, violent cycle through generations, to convey the influence of the past on the present. The GPN operates for the children on one level, for the readers on another as they have access to more information that can also be misleading, and for Nihad, too, even though we do not have access to his thoughts when he discovers that "Whore 72" as he called Nawal (Mouawad, *Incendies* 127) was his mother. The GPN functions also for Nawal as we follow her past self, struck by shock when she eventually recognizes her son thanks to the prop of a clown nose which appears in court. Nawal gave a quest to her twin children to find their father and brother, one and the same person, which is a garden path in itself, but also to solve the enigma of Nawal's behavior all these years that her children resented her. Once the

truth is revealed, her children have a new-found love and peace regarding their mother. They recompose their mental image of Nawal with admiration and fondness, which is what Nawal wants to promote in her family, and as Matar notes "une réconciliation a lieu avec le visage perdu de la mère" (Matar 475). Her last words encourage her twin children to consider that their origin story is actually born from a love story with Nawal and Wahab, and that everything started when Nawal fulfilled her promise to get an education. Nawal promotes love even for Nihad, whose letter "to the son" is presented (Mouawad, *Incendies* 127) *after* the letter "to the abuser" (126), to end on the feeling of unconditional motherly love, as she also does in her final letter to the twins, which is the final scene. Thus, Nawal breaks the cycle of violence and anger, and ends her story on the notion of love, and her going back to her children's origins is finally presented in a positive, loving light. This contrasts with the semes of never-ending cycles of violence that regularly occurred in the play.

Because the reader has access to more information than Jeanne and Simon, due to being privy to Nawal's past as it is enacted, the reader witnesses the events beyond mere reported facts. The reader *experiences with* Nawal her internal conflicts and dilemma, her emotions, her love for Wahab and the cherished memories of him, her fusional friendship with Sawda, and the shock she felt when recognizing the clown nose. Clearly, the reader is the true repository of Nawal's story, knowing much more about Nawal and her emotions than her own children have known. However, Jeanne and Simon develop an internal and symbolic connection with Nawal that the reader does not, which is the sharing of Nawal's silence, as both of them remain silent when finding out the truth. Their very last appearance shows the twins listening to Nawal's recorded silence (132). As Dupois remarks, "le silence constitue le réel héritage maternel, l'espace de la réconciliation, et surtout de la consolation" (Dupois np) as shown by Simon asking Jeanne to

play the recording of Nawal's silence again, like a soothing lullaby (132). Ironically, with theater being a spoken art when performed on stage, silence holds a significant place in *Incendies*. As a matter of fact, silence pervades the original inspiration of Mouawad for *Incendies*, i.e. the actual war testimonies of Lebanese women who were jailed in Khiam —the real-life Kfar Ryat—, and who were tortured and raped during the Civil War. In the postface to the play, it is said that Mouawad heard about Diane, who suffered these atrocities when war photographer Lambert presented her work about Lebanese women during the war. "Diane n'est pas la seule femme à avoir été violée à Khiam, mais elle est une des rares à avoir osé en parler […] En réalité, la majorité des femmes détenus là-bas nient qu'il y ait eu des agressions sexuelles […] pour ne pas être marginalisées ou pour ne pas jeter la honte sur leur famille, les femmes choisissent le silence" (Lambert qtd. in Farcet 141). In the play, silence, at first a consequence of trauma and of intentional hiding of information, is what eventually unites Nawal's children with her memory: "retrouver par l'expérience du silence une identité commune et la renouveler, de même que de refonder une unité humaniste collective sont peut-être les nouvelles ambitions du théâtre contemporain; ce qui nous invite à réfléchir de façon urgente à la manière dont l'art permet de (re)penser le monde aujourd'hui" (Dupois np). By the characters' silence, as well as Mouawad's refusal to give the names of the real-life factions and countries being recounted, Mouawad "brouille les pistes et rend plus forte, plus claire, l'idée d'un combat fratricide" (Farcet 151) since, after all, "la question qui hante l'écriture de Wajdi Mouawad, « comment tout cela a-t-il commencé ? », est précisément celle à laquelle nulle réponse n'est possible pour cette guerre" (Farcet 155). *Incendies*, and Mouawad's preference for an intricate presentation of information, hidden, postponed, or twisted, i.e. a GPN, thus shows his attempt to draw a visibility polygon (168) and to solve the complex equation that is human life, by

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exploring the universal themes of family, identity, love and conflicts.

Because of Nawal's quest, the twins are forced to restructure their cognitive environment about the identity of their father, brother, and mother, to finally understand their mother's *sinthome* —the behavioral manifestation of past trauma, here, Nawal is stuck in silence and emotional distance— and the cycle of violence and anger that the silence and distance come from, in order to be able to overcome their emotional issues and heal. This practice of restructuring one's cognitive environment to overcome dysfunctions, is a crucial element of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, or CBT —a form of therapy based on talking between patient and therapist— as "the goal of cognitive therapy is to change dysfunctional cognitive structures (i.e., schemata) that result in biased information processing and increased symptomatology" (Hope et al. 2). Beyond the grave, Nawal's garden-path quest intradiegetically performs the restructuring process of CBT family therapy thanks to her letters to her three children, and thanks to the reported tales of Nawal's past, which comfort her three children and gathers them in her love and silence as a shared inheritance. Nawal's last words to Nihad are about silence and they are soothing: "au-delà du silence, il y a le bonheur d'être ensemble. Rien n'est plus beau que d'être ensemble" (Mouawad 129), echoing Nawal's actual dying words: "Maintenant que nous sommes ensemble, ça va mieux" (63). Similarly, extradiegetically, Mouawad wants his readers/audience to also feel this feeling of comforting and of belonging. His play provides "à la fois un espace de consolation et de partage, une « communauté », qui, aux heures présentes et passées de l'Histoire, celle du Moyen-Orient du moins, semble encore impossible" (Farcet 163), inviting the reader or audience to become a community, intellectually and emotionally bound by the garden-pathing artistic experience of the play.

Finally, it is crucial to mention that —in reaction to the fatal explosion of long-time

stored dangerous chemicals in a warehouse in a Beirut port that occurred on August 4th 2020, and

which caused more than 150 deaths, thousands of wounded, and left hundreds of thousands

homeless (Hubbard and El-Naggar np)— that Wajdi Mouawad wrote a column in the well-

known French newspaper *Le Monde* in which he used the same themes and sometimes verbatim

passages from *Incendies* to convey the anger and desperation of the Lebanese people towards

their government officials. As Hubbard and El-Naggar say, Lebanese people believe that such a

fatal incident was "the latest and most dangerous manifestation of the corruption and negligence

of the country's leaders" (Hubbard and El-Naggar np) and many riots and protests have risen

against the Lebanese government, already criticized for the on-going economic crisis:

"demonstrators erected gallows and conducted ceremonial hangings of cardboard cutouts of

President Michel Aoun, Nabih Berri, the speaker of Parliament, and Hassan Nasrallah, the

secretary-general of Hezbollah, the powerful militant group and political party" (Hubbard and

El-Naggar np). After several days of protests, the Prime minister and his government resigned.

Mouawad agrees with his fellow Lebanese, stating that "à Beyrouth, cette explosion pose

un point final à toutes les mascarades" (Mouawad, "Cette explosion" np). He compares this

explosion to the infamous bus attack of April 13, 1975 which started the Civil War and that also

pervades *Incendies'* plot. Mouawad denounces President Aoun and other officials' uselessness

and corruption, criticizing a ruling class "qui ne dirige que ses propres intérêts et les intérêts de

ceux qui l'ont placé à la tête du pays," naming the collapse of the economy, education, and basic-

need issues like lack of electricity and water that happened under their rule and destroyed

Lebanon's former prosperity. Silence and speaking, like in *Incendies*, is present in the column, as

Mouawad describes the explosion as "indicible" but also denounces the empty words of the

officials: "lequel saura-t-il tenir un autre discours que celui qui consistera à dire « Non, ce n'est

pas notre faute! La preuve : nous avons nous aussi les larmes aux yeux et nous pleurons avec

vous ! » […] Que pourront-ils dire encore qu'ils n'ont pas dit ? Quels mensonges dont ils n'ont

pas encore usés ?" (Mouwad, "Cette explosion" np). Mouawad resorts to powerful images and

metaphors from *Incendies* to express his people's anger and disillusionment: "Tout est détruit.

Même le temps. Pas seulement le béton. L'avenir. Il n'y a rien," echoing Nawal's desperate

words about the war atrocities in which time is unstable (Mouawad, *Incendies* 73). Mouawad,

despite his claims against the label, might be "engagé" after all. However, Mouawad maintains

hope for his people, and just as Nawal's GPN of what war and separation of families can create

put her children through traumatic revelations in order to finally heal the family's cycle of

violence and anger, the 2020 explosion is the last straw and reveals the cycle of corruption of

the Lebanese government —"chefs de pères en fils, cauchemars de ce pays" (Mouawad, "Cette

explosion" np)— in order, hopefully, to put an end to it: "il faut donc voir dans cette horreur qui

vient d'arrriver un levier pour cesser l'horreur […] Si la guerre civile fut cette monstruosité,

l'explosion qui vient d'avoir lieu est la monstruosité qui l'annule, ramenant ainsi Beyrouth à

zéro" (Mouawad, "Cette explosion" np). Here, Mouaward interweaves past and present like in

Incendies. Mouawad concludes his column with the soothing words echoing Nawal's last letter

to Jeanne et Simon: "À présent […] il faudra réapprendre à avaler sa salive. C'est un geste

parfois très courageux, avaler sa salive. À présent il faut reconstruire l'histoire. L'histoire est en

miettes. Doucement, consoler chaque morceau, doucement guérir chaque souvenir, doucement

bercer chaque image" (Mouawad, "Cette explosion" np), using almost exactly word for word

Nawal's speech comforting Simon about the fact that he had finally removed the symbolic knife

of childhood from his throat, so as to be ready finally to heal and reconstruct his family story

and his new-found love for his mother (Mouawad, *Incendies* 130-131). *Incendies'* message is,

more so than ever, relevant today. Mouawad claiming that sometimes horror is a leverage to ending a cycle of horror, and most of all, Mouawad promoting love and healing to reconstruct ourselves together after a necessary anger against injustice, are still part of the values that he celebrated in *Incendies*. Therefore, whether in fiction or in a journalistic piece, Mouawad uses his poetry to go beyond political language and creates a type of writing that is "lieu de parole, de transmission [pour] redonner de la cohérence au milieu de l'incohérence" (Mouawad et al 11), exploring and solving fictional and real-life garden-path narratives.

Conclusion

I have shown how each case study builds its narrative as a garden path, creating asymmetric information and subverting expectations. A garden-path narrative— just like the garden-path sentence used in neurolinguistic studies mentioned in the introduction, "The complex houses married and single soldiers and their families" (Petrie et al)— purposely misleads its user while still making sense after the user goes through it again. Garden paths present one or several anomalies (in the sentence, "complex" is actually a noun, "houses" a verb, and the rest is the object of the verb "houses"). While still remaining technically correct, they rely on the user's predictable cognitive environment in order to build the deceptive garden path, because most users will perceive the most common possibilities (in most sentences, "complex" is an adjective, "houses" a noun) and therefore will err by taking for granted their assumptions based on what grammatical category for each word is more frequent. Neurolinguistic researchers have proven that "the revision process consists of two sub-processes, namely diagnosis and actual reanalysis [and that these subprocesses] may be involved at varying time points depending on the type of garden-path" (Friederici et al. 305) when the user processes temporarily ambiguous sentences.

Thus, garden-path structures are indeed inherently misleading, but a critical, active user can potentially navigate them correctly. If users pay attention to the many clues, by operating recurring "diagnosis" — i.e. updating the cognitive environment when necessary— they have a chance to not fail at interpreting the structure correctly on the first try. In a narrative, on the first reading, these clues can be, as I showed, the semes, the genre and its typical rules, intertextual frames, the following pattern of characters, and the modulation between following sequences. A critical user will also search for any foreshadowing signs of an asymmetric information game.

These signs are any textual strategy that would help postponing or twisting information while still being correct. Once the anomaly is apparent and once it is confirmed that the given narrative is a GPN, then we can reconstruct our cognitive environment and perform a second navigation to fully understand what was missed yet still makes sense organically, just as on a second reading, the reader of the GP sentence stated above will notice that he misinterpreted the grammatical category of the words "complex" and "house." Baroni, in his essay on narrative tension and suspense, focuses on the emotional state of GPN's critical users: "l'anxiété produite par la perte de contrôle du flux de l'information est partiellement compensée par l'effort d'anticipation de l'interprète, ce qui représente un retour à une certaine forme de « contrôle passif »" (Baroni 128). When navigating asymetric-information games, GPN's users need to perform critical analysis to regain some sort of control over the misleading authorial control providing asymmetric information. That way, critical users have an opportunity to "win" this game, whether by anticipating the anomaly fully or or at least by realizing that the GPN's author is providing asymmetric, misleading information, *before* the author explicitly provides the resolution of the GPN.

By developing an interdisciplinary analysis used to study video games, a canonical soliloquy novel, an experimental novel, and a play, I have demonstrated how each author chose a genre that takes full advantage of its specific format and devices to build a unique GPN. In chapter 2, *Heavy Rain* is a video game whose story is about an investigation, as the player embodies a private detective, a father whose son was kidnapped by the serial killer, a journalist, and an FBI agent. The anomaly was that the private detective Shelby was in fact the serial killer, posing as someone hired by the victims' families to retrieve any evidence that could lead to the killer's identity. I demonstrated that the GPN relied on intertextual frames from movies and

detective stories. These frames created inferential walks that would mislead the player to think of someone else as the killer. Interestingly, the serial killer only lied once in the whole game, pretending to be hired by the families of the victims, but after this initial introduction, he never lies and neither does the peritext (the text giving missions to the players to perform, or revealing the inner thoughts of the character, or the label summarizing the dialogue options for the player to choose from). Moreover, Shelby's discourse has a double meaning that fits both the speech of a true detective (in the first playthrough one does not suspect him) and of a criminal (the second playthrough, where one knows that he is the killer).

I also highlighted that the information asymmetry comes primarily from omissions and paralipses in the game, whether it be Shelby not revealing his true purpose or the following pattern not following Shelby while he kills Manfred in the antique store. However, the semes and incremental building of information about the killer's portrait helps the critical player piece elements together and solve the GPN. For instance, we learn that the killer was a former police officer, and so was Shelby, as signaled by his old badge in his apartment, or we know that the killer lost his brother and Shelby does mention at the beginning that he lost someone dear to him. *Heavy Rain* takes full advantage of video game strategies like the camera following a character or not, but also of intertextual elements such as the referential code of a detective typically not being the serial killer he is investigating and other devices to create a unique cognitive experience. The GPN here consists of textual strategies (rhetorical devices, peritext, following pattern). It also relies on users' expectations to trap them and force them to reconstruct their cognitive environment about the narrative only once the anomaly is revealed.

In chapter 3, *La Chute* is a novel in the form of an implied dialogue between Clamence, the narrator, and an interlocutor, but really is a soliloquy as the interlocutor is never speaking

directly. Clamence intimately confides in the interlocutor, his travel companion, whom he calls a friend, and confesses his past mistakes and behaviors that he deemed worthy of guilt and judgement from others. The anomaly is that Clamence was actually performing his function of judge-penitent the whole time, attempting to burden his interlocutor with his existential dilemmas to, in turn, dominate him morally, in the form of a friendly conversation. The friendly face was part of the textual strategy to mislead the interlocutor and reader into the trap of moral submission. I showed that the GPN relies on the semes being misleading in that they refer to Christian religious imagery and therefore seem to indicate that Clamence is indeed performing a sincere confession similar to the Catholic sacrament. Clamence never lied; he only postponed explicit information about his true intentions. A critical reader could anticipate the anomaly and solve the GPN before it is explicitly revealed by noticing that Clamence defines the word "friend" as "accomplice," i.e., someone who is part of his very own mission. This definition is clearly stated in the novel (Camus 79) but can be easily overlooked by the reader and interlocutor alike because Clamence purposefully offers a dizzying narrative, with endless details on his deeds and emotional states, which makes it difficult for the reader to notice what can be a clue and what is not. We can overlook this definition, too, because of Clamence's rhetoric resorting to the use of the pronoun "we", assimilating the interlocutor to himself and then talking about his misdeeds against others in the past, in a way to make the interlocutor think that he is on Clamence's side, not on the side of the other people. Clamence said he once tried to dominate when he was a lawyer and thought highly of himself. Clamence's goal in his conversation with his companion is still about dominating, but now, instead of thinking that he has the moral high ground, he resorts to being penitent first, presenting his flaws from the outset, so that in turn his interlocutor feels the drive to judge himself, leading Clamence to always have the last judgement

upon others.

In the third chapter, I also answered the question —perhaps rhetorical but still nonetheless posed as a challenge by Camus— from the original edition's insert, in which Camus, though announcing Clamence's duplicity from the beginning, wonders or challenges the reader to point out at what point in the novel the accusation begins. Thanks to my textual analysis through *Voyant* and a close-reading approach, I was able to show that the accusation starts in the fourth chapter of *La Chute*, as Clamence uses the term "dear friend" and officially makes his interlocutor a partner in his judge-penitent game. Additionally, because Clamence embodies what I presented as the Liar's Paradox (if a liar states that he is lying, then his statement is true, making him paradoxically not a liar), I addressed the fact that readers know that he has a tendency to perform or not be truthful, yet the surprise of the revelation of his true intention still works as intended, as part of Clamence's plan, precisely because of his rhetoric, of his dizzying details, of his friendliness, of his sincerity about his character: after entrusting us with his difficult, humbling confession, why would he want to mislead the interlocutor? Who would fool a "friend" and take advantage of him? Well, Clamence does, as his plan of moral domination precisely needed to make his interlocutor feel like a friend, an equal or even someone morally superior to him while he, Clamence, presents his confession, so that he can then take the opposite role of judge while his interlocutor is implicitly invited to judge himself, in turn becoming the penitent.

Chapter 4 is on *Le Condottière*, an experimental novel centered on the protagonist, Winckler, who tries to piece together why he killed his patron, Madera, after failing to reproduce a Renaissance painting called *Le Condottière*. The reason for Madera's murder is a mystery to both the reader and character and the anomaly lies in the fact that Winckler is the best forger in

the world but, unbeknownst to himself, viscerally resents this identity, all the while still actively maintaining his status quo, remaining a forger and fighting the voice of his consciousness/ conscience that signaled his fear of change. Similarly to *Heavy Rain* and *La Chute*, I demonstrated that *Le Condottière* takes advantage of its own unique format — made up of a contradictory internal soliloquy, dialogue, and third-person narrative passages— to sustain a GPN for the reader but also the character himself, generating a game of hide and seek by having Winckler postpone the moment to truly listen to his consciousness/conscience, to face the information —being a forger has made him miserable— that he needs to solve his own mystery. The asymmetric information game is created, as in *La Chute*, by switching following patterns between types of narration (describing Winckler's point of view going from "I" to "you" to "he") and by the constant, important amount of information which makes it challenging to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information, so that the outpouring flow of Winckler's thoughts actually hinders solving the GPN and is evidently a tool for a misleading textual strategy for both the reader and character. The semes and intertextual frames, on the other hand, overwhelmingly help solve the GPN thanks to references to literary figures who were doomed because of one fatal flaw in their own character, such as Dorian Gray and Richard III, or what Aristotle calls "harmatia" or the single great error or frailty in the hero's nature. I also addressed the fact that, even though *Le Condottiere* was written before Perec's famous works like *La Vie Mode d'emploi* or *W ou Le souvenir d'enfance*, it was published much later, therefore it is very likely that readers of *Le Condottiere* will be familiar with references to Perec's famous works and have them in mind as they navigate the narrative. Winckler is a recurring name in Perec's works, used for characters linked to false identity and to revenge, therefore these Perecquian intertextual frames help anticipate the reason for the GPN to exist. The referential code of Winckler being a

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successful man also hinders solving the GPN since typically, if a man encounters success he would not resent the source of this success (Winckler resents Madera for enabling his success as a forger, just as Winckler in *La Vie Mode d'emploi* resents Bartlebooth for keeping him working for decades). The GPN here performs maieutics that assists Winckler in finally reaching the end of this garden path, to start a new, authentic path of his own, leaving his profession of forger, of copycat.

In chapter 5, *Incendies* is a play about Simon and Jeanne, twin siblings, who have the mission to find their unknown brother and father per their dead mother Nawal's request. The anomaly is that the father of the twins, a rapist named Abou Tarek, is in fact the lost, first son of Nawal. I have shown that *Incendies'* GPN is created thanks, on the one hand, to an asymmetric information game on several levels, with twins knowing less about Nawal's past than the reader who, in turn, knows less than Nawal, with twisted information about characters' true identities, but also, on the other hand, because of the complex following pattern which can induce the reader in error when piecing relationships and the chronology together. The semes of violence, cycles, and blindness and silence could, overall, help solve the GPN for a critical reader who notices the insistence on war and conflict tearing nations apart, and which can also do the same within family units, literally making a mother and a son strangers and enemies to each other. Furthermore, the absolute silence/non-communication in a family could refer to the ultimate taboo of incest. But the intricate following pattern within and across scenes requires active attention and therefore the attention to semes might suffer, hindering the solving of the GPN. Another element that hinders solving the GPN is the referential code of family hierarchy and the taboo of incest: typically a son is not his mother's rapist and is not his siblings' father. The taboo nature of incest therefore hinders the reader's, but also Jeanne and Simon's, quest for the truth.

My analytical approach was specifically designed to narrow down the core elements of garden-path narratives, regardless of format and genre of the works. Consequently, because of the study of both authorial design's (structure, discourse elements) and user's cognitive environment elements (expectations purposefully subverted), my research offers a comprehensive approach to how garden-path narratives are created and how they may impact their users (players/readers). My work has demonstrated the diversity of how to build effective GPN thanks to the specific discourse elements and story elements within each genre. More importantly, I want to stress how each genre (video game, soliloquy novel, experimental novel, play) echoes the very story elements and the core existential questions addressed in each work, and how each genre's specific characteristics are linked to the anomaly of the GPN.

Indeed, in chapter 2 on *Heavy Rain*, the anomaly is that the detective is the killer but with this comes the surprise that the player was unknowingly enabling the killer that the player thought he was helping arrest. Video games are all about the player making choices within a given work, and the player's input and modification of the game environment are inherently the mode of navigation of this medium. The narrative anomaly reinforces the question of choices in video games (authorial control versus player's input): here the player's input was in fact a strategy within authorial control to perform actions to tell the story of Shelby. The question of choice in the narrative and the genre (video game) also enhanced the core theme of the story itself: the killer is giving challenges to parents to save their children, in order for Shelby to find a parent who would choose to save, even sacrifice himself, to save his son, something that Shelby's hateful father had chosen not to do, which had caused Shelby's brother's death. Therefore, the question of choices is at the center of *Heavy Rain*, whether in its medium, in what is at stake in the story, or in its revelation of the GPN. The GPN also invites the player to think

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deeper about the role of players within video games, which have traditionally given goals for the player to complete, without questioning whether those goals are truthful or not. *Heavy Rain* at the time, 2010, broke new ground in the video game storytelling world, paving the way for more narratively rich and cognitively demanding games.

In chapter 3, the anomaly was that Clamence was in fact trying to morally dominate his companion while in the middle of an apparently friendly conversation and confession. Similarly to *Heavy Rain's*, *La Chute's* format supports its core story element: an implied dialogue, but omitting the interlocutor's voice so that only Clamence's speech is heard, is the necessary format for Clamence to try and dominate his interlocutor. Camus chose the monological genre as it is the key to creating the GPN but also enhances what is at stake, namely that the interlocutor should be morally dominated by Clamence because Clamence needs to first provide a confession to feel penitent and judged by his peers, to then be a judge of his peers. The whole pseudo-dialogical format of the novel serves Clamence's purpose and heightens the core themes of *La Chute* which are moral judgement (being judged by others for our actions) and hierarchical relation to others (domination, submission). Clamence being self-centered, his goal being purely self-serving, his core mission being about dominating others, all of this makes an implied but subverted dialogue a necessary medium to sustain these story elements.

In chapter 4, *Le Condottière*'s protagonist is Winckler, a man who struggles to face his existential misery. The revelation comes later after he has navigated his thoughts, emotions, and reasoning, with the support of the voice of his own conscience/consciousness and likewise the support of his friend Streten. This experimental novel shifts narrative points of view and offers access to a constant stream of consciousness into Winckler's panicking mind. Winckler being lost in his own thoughts, not knowing what to hold on to in order to find the truth, was the main

reason for the GPN to exist, which hid the truth behind the reason for the murder of Madera, his patron. Here again, as for *Heavy Rain* and *La Chute*, Perec chose this novel's format as it was necessary to accurately convey Winckler's misery, his mental struggle with himself. Perec was initially criticized by publishers for writing a disorganized narrative, but in fact he created a narrative as close to human inner speech as possible: disorganized, shifting, uncertain, contradictory, forming incomplete thoughts. The format supports what is at stake in the novel, i.e., the difficulty of facing one's own responsibility and one's fear of taking action. To find the truth, to solve the GPN, the reader has to incrementally navigate his inner state and disentangle his thought process.

In chapter 5, *Incendies* is about twins who have to uncover the truth about their own past and incidentally about their mother's past. The play breaks traditional units of place and time by presenting characters in different years, in different locations, but appearing in the same scene on the stage. Mouawad's unusual format for *Incendies*, like that of *Heavy Rain*, *La Chute*, and *Le Condottière,* supports the core issue of the play, and the key to the GPN: war destroys generations of men and women, it creates unstable times and uncertain notions of space and territory, which the play conveys literally thanks to its unusual following patterns. Conflicts break ties between people, at the country level but also at the family level, as between Nawal and her son Nihad due to the actual conflict between her family and her lover Wahab's family when she was 14, but also between Nawal and her twin children when they are adults: because of the trauma Nawal experienced, which impacted her behavior, her bond with Jeanne and Simon was at first broken, too. Ultimately, her children had to piece together the puzzle of their story, of Nawal's country's history, to heal and modify the memory of Nawal, and to finally hold their mother fondly in their hearts. The format of intertwined past and present also echoes how the

present (Jeanne and Simon starting in Quebec then traveling to Nawal's home country in the present day) cannot escape the past (Nawal and her story starting when she was 14 in her home country to when she dies in her 60s in Quebec). It also illustrates that generations are more intertwined than we think: literally, the first son of Nawal, Nihad, is also the father of her other children, Jeanne and Simon.

In all works of my corpus, we can see that the author's choice or crafting of format is not gratuitous, but rather it conveys meaning in addition to the story: it supports the core issues and is a clue as well to finding the key to the respective GPNs. Video game studies refer to the notion of "ludonarrative harmony" when the game format and the way to play it support the story's ideas. To demonstrate ludonarrative harmony, "a game's procedural rhetoric should align with its aesthetic themes […]. In other words, the ideas being communicated by the gameplay [the way you play the game] should agree with the ideas being communicated by the narrative and art" (Yust 46). For instance, a game about creating peace would present ludonarrative dissonance if the way to carry out the goals and story was to cruelly kill everyone in the game. All case studies in my dissertation show ludonarrative harmony, delivering their garden-path narrative in a coherent, rational way.

As per Aristotle's rule, "the unraveling of the plot, […] must arise out of the plot itself, it must not be brought about by the Deus ex Machina" (Aristotle part XV), i.e., it must be derived from the necessary and/or the probable elements of the story. Throughout my chapters I have demonstrated that all characters situated in the GPN acted as rational agents, per the game theory definition —a rational choice being a choice made based on the agent's preference (a goal to achieve) and knowing other agents' preferences. The authorial control in *Heavy Rain* made Shelby's deception rational and therefore probable, knowing his preference (retrieving evidence

against him) and others' preferences, including the player's (people trust a detective). Clamence's deception in *La Chute* is rational and therefore probable, knowing his preference (dominating others), and his interlocutor's potential preference (being talked to as an equally superior person, trusted by Clamence as a friend). Winckler's self-deceptive narration in *Le Condottière* is rational and therefore probable, knowing his conflicting preferences (afraid to act on his own responsibility, since he is a forger and plagiarist, and preferring the status quo instead of abandoning his career as forger and freeing himself). *Incendies*'s revelation is rational and therefore probable, knowing the different agents' preferences: Nawal wanted to find her first son Nihad at all costs, and Nihad was raised in cruelty and became indifferent to others' suffering due to his very own suffering, hence Nihad's preference for violence. Nawal's quest is also rational as she knows that some truths are better discovered by those affected and not simply told to them, and furthermore, knowing her daughter's preference of solving mysteries, Nawal knew that Jeanne would uncover the father's identity. Furthermore, knowing her son's preference for fighting, Nawal bequeathed him a notebook narrating the atrocities and violence she suffered, triggering her son's will to fight for the family's truth. None of these revelations in all these diverse GPNs are Deus Ex Machina, and therefore they build meaningful, coherent narratives.

My work shows how subversion of expectations can be done effectively and in a probable way across diverse media, by fully exploring the richness of each genre to support such narratives and enhance story elements to build the respective GPNs. This is a point I want to illustrate here by addressing a recent controversy in the gaming world, and attempt to comprehend why there is such a divided opinion on the issue of misleading narratives. In June 2020, the sequel to the 2013 video game *The Last of Us* (*TLOU*) by studio Naughty Dog, called *The Last of Us Part II*, (*TLOU2*) was released. This section on *TLOU2* is crucial to providing a

counterpoint to my corpus in regard to the construction of rational, probable misleading GPNs. I

will now present a summary of the plot of the first, original game, *TLOU* to provide context.

　　TLOU opens in modern-day society in America, where an epidemic starts suddenly,

turning people into deformed, monstrous killers infecting others by touching or attacking them.

The main character is Joel, who lost his daughter when trying to escape the first monsters, and he

feels responsible for her death. The game cuts to 20 years later, Joel lives in a quarantined zone

run by an oppressive military organization, and there is no hope for a cure. There is a militant

group against the military called the Fireflies and they force Joel to smuggle a young girl named

Ellie across the country because Ellie shows no reaction to the infection and could therefore help

create a cure. At first Joel, who became cynical and indifferent to the world after his daughter's

death, does not want to bond with Ellie but progressively learns to enjoy her company, and she

becomes a daughter figure to him. At the end of the game, Joel learns that the Fireflies' surgeon

needs to perform an operation on Ellie that will kill her, to create the cure. Joel decides against it

and kills the Fireflies members to rescue Ellie and save her life. The game ends as Joel lies to

Ellie, not disclosing to her that the only way to get a cure would be for her to die from the

operation, as he refuses to lose a new "daughter." It must be stated, too, that Joel's choice to

rescue Ellie and risk the downfall of Mankind to save her life instead "is not an interactive one

but a choice the character makes without player input. It is the game system's decision to

provoke reflections on the value systems held by players." (Harilal 3)

　　The first game, *TLOU,* was a highly acclaimed game among both critics and players, with

respective scores of 95/100 and 9.2/10 (*Metacritic* "The Last of Us"). It was praised for its visual

realism but also its strong storytelling, quality voice acting, and for the father-daughter

relationship developed between Joel and Ellie (Robbins). It was nonetheless criticized, notably

regarding the last, cruel action of Joel, as the developers did not give players the choice to decide for or against rescuing Ellie, or to decide for or against giving a chance to mankind to find a cure. However, it has been recognized that *TLOU* "intentionally switches perspectives to heighten tensions and create dissonance between its playable characters and the player themselves," precisely to prompt players to reflect on moral choices and cognitive environment in video games (*Games as Literature*, 00:15:39).

The sequel on the other hand has provoked a stark debate and disagreement among players and critics, with critics rating the game at 93% approval versus 5.6/10 among players (*Metacritic* "The Last of Us Part II"). What was novel in the presentation of *TLOU2* gameplay is that this time, the gameplay is divided into two different perspectives to play, that of Ellie and that of a new character named Abby. Abby was the daughter of the surgeon killed by Joel at the end of *TLOU* and seeks revenge to kill Joel and Ellie. The action takes place four years after the end of *TLOU*. Ellie actually overheard what Joel did at the end of the first game, and their relationship is strained. Joel rescues a group to which Abby belonged and, thinking he can trust them, reveals his identity and Abby kills him, early in the game. Ellie now wants to avenge Joel's death and looks for Abby. The game alternates sequences where one plays as Ellie and then plays as Abby, forcing the player to adopt the perspective of Ellie's enemy for about half of the game's duration.

While both players and critics praised the groundbreaking visual realism, it was mostly players who complained about the storytelling:

> Many have taken issue with the writing more generally, saying the game's cast
> behaves unrealistically and that the same characters would have never been made
> in the first game. These gamers have complained about the "laziness" of the

story's premise, feeling it's simply an inadequate follow up to its predecessor.

With revenge motivating the entirety of the game's plot, some feel the nuances

and understated dramatic moments of the first game have been foregone in favor

of a more played out tale of vengeance (Larson np)

The players claim that their negative reaction does *not* stem from Joel, a beloved character, dying, as players would have been fine with it if only, rather, his death had not been so "rushed and anticlimactic [sic]" (morder np). So while some critics have recognized the issues the players mention —"in trying to subvert expectations, *The Last of Us Part II* discards the best aspects of its predecessor to provide a rote revenge tale that is ill-considered" (Donnellan np)— most critics find *TLOU2* stellar, with the *Washington Post* calling it "an astonishing achievement —a searing demonstration of how a video game can marry heart-stopping gameplay, gorgeous environmental storytelling and anxiety-inducing moral complexity" (*Washington Post* np) or another source stating that "Naughty Dog has reached a new, seemingly unreachable level of narrative design" (CD-Action np). So why is there such a divide between critics and players regarding the quality of the narrative, and regarding the subversion of expectations, in *TLOU2*? Based on my methodology, it appears that there is indeed a sharp difference between the semes of *TLOU* and *TLOU2*. *TLOU* had semes of loss, grief, and learning to trust and bond with others (Joel's character's journey with Ellie), and in the end, Joel seemed to even defy the objective of the game (which was to bring Ellie to the Fireflies to find a cure and save humanity) in order to serve a more important sub-goal in his eyes: protecting Ellie no matter what. *TLOU*'s following pattern was also fairly straightforward: the player embodies Joel for most of the game, only switching to Ellie towards the end when Joel is sick. The following pattern in *TLOU* therefore remained centered on the protagonists, on characters the players are invested in thanks to their

well-written personality and the common goal both characters try to achieve together.

TLOU2 on the other hand was much different: the semes are those of damaging vengeance, cycles of violence, and blinding rage after a loss. The following pattern also differs significantly from *TLOU*'s. Instead of Joel's incremental progression towards a set goal, the game splits into two perspectives of similar length, making the player first controlling Ellie, then Abby, then some back and forth until the ending is played as Ellie. One player explains that

> This game is not *The Last of Us Part II* […] *The Last of Us Part II* does not tell
>
> the ending of the original *The Last of Us*, it is a completely separate game that has
>
> nothing to do with story, characters and messages of the first game. Developers,
>
> marketing and anybody else affiliated in the creation of *The Last of Us Part II*
>
> tries to trick audience and fans of the original game, especially the fans of the
>
> original. From the simply misleading manipulation of the trailers of the game with
>
> the goal of misinforming the viewer, making him believe that this game is what
>
> he expects it to be [indeed, the trailer showed that Joel would be alive longer in
>
> the game], to the more radical decisions such as replacing the characters of the
>
> original with the bland, alternate and poorly written versions of themselves.
>
> (kojimbek np)

So it seems that part of the reason why there was such a negative reaction was that players expected *TLOU2* to be somewhat similar to *TLOU*, however neither the following pattern nor the semes are remotely the same in the two games. The discourse as well as the story elements are too far from what was presented in the first part, and some have felt that the change in characters is more of a Deus Ex Machina than an actual, organic change in the characters' personality. Eminent screenwriter John Truby explains that, to subvert expectations regarding a

GPN leading to a character's change in personality and goals, one still has to follow some rules based on an equation:

> Character change is what your hero experiences by going through his struggle. At the simplest level, that change could be represented as a three-part equation […]: W x A = C. Where W stands for weakness […], A represents the struggle to accomplish the basic action in the middle of the story; and C stands for the changed person. (Truby 32)

Truby takes the example of Coppola's movie *The Godfather*, in which the protagonist's weakness (W) is that he is unconcerned and afraid of the Mafia world. His struggle (A) is that he eventually has to take revenge for his father's near assassination, later resulting in him, the son, becoming a tyrannical, cold-blooded ruler (C) (34). Truby mentions that "this is a radical change no doubt. But it is a totally believable one" (35) precisely because his C was necessary to accomplish A; his C is aligned with the semes of vengeance and domination of the narrative.

Now, Joel's weakness (W) in *TLOU* was being wary of creating real emotional connections with others, and he was desperately cynical due to his daughter's death. His struggle (A) was to form a bond with Ellie, which he eventually reaches at the end of *TLOU*, which changes (C) him into a father figure again, caring for Ellie like his own daughter. However, Joel was still nonetheless wary of everyone, as his goal was to protect Ellie at all costs. Looking at *TLOU2*, many players complained that Joel's death [killed because he willingly revealed his identity to a group of strangers] was unrealistic precisely because at the end of *TLOU* Joel is still cynical of others, yet his attitude has only changed towards Ellie, not toward anyone else. That is why some have complained of "poor character verisimilitude […] [i.e.] characters routinely making decisions and mistakes that are inconsistent with who they are" (The Closer Look

00:34:56). If Joel had changed so much in between games, the narrative should have foreshadowed that his new weakness is now trusting too much in others. Because of the lack of internal game evidence that Joel has a new weakness (W) and struggle (A), *TLOU2* failed at creating an effective, rational GPN, and instead created an impression of Deus Ex Machina. Also the change of semes in *TLOU2* (now about how revenge and cycles of violence only engender more pain and horror) disappointed players of *TLOU* precisely because *TLOU* did not have these semes. However, most critics did not mention these as issues, experiencing *TLOU2* more as a standalone narrative rather than a sequel to *TLOU*, while it appears that players who were strongly emotionally attached to *TLOU*, and to the cognitive experience that carried through the narrative, were disappointed that *TLOU2* did not offer a similar cognitive experience and found its GPN artificially contrived.

On that note, many complained that *TLOU2* designed a purposefully harrowing cognitive experience for players. Indeed, many criticized the fact that the game, rather than providing choices to the players, forces them, by virtue of authorial control, to engage in uncomfortable actions in regard to killing other characters. Some felt that the developers forced players to not enjoy Ellie's gameplay —thus forcing players to emotionally distance themselves from Ellie and empathize more with Abby— because Ellie now uses a knife *by default* to stealthily and gruesomely eliminate enemies by stabbing them (*Games as Literature* 00:05:34-00:06:50). This is an important difference from *TLOU* in which Joel could simply render an enemy unconscious instead of having to kill by default as Ellie does in *TLOU2*. Players have denounced *TLOU2* for trying to "emotionally manipulate them into feeling guilty for things that they are not responsible for" (*Games as Literature* 00:11:05) because they are forced by the authorial control of the game format and tools, and are not given the choice to decide how merciful or cruel they can be. But

the same authorial control happened in *TLOU*, in which, in the end, the players were required to "continue the puppet show acting out [Joel's] will even if it's not their own. […] The player is simply acting out [Joel's] story and *[his] choices*" (00:15:39-00:15:59, my emphasis). While such dissonance between characters and players, as in *Heavy Rain*, offers interesting insight for players and invites them to reflect deeply on video games and the role of the player, the player should not be burdened by the *responsibility* of a character's actions. The role of the player is ultimately "not to carry [the characters'] sins but to examine how their actions make us feel as we perform them, how that reaction contrasts with theirs and why that is" (00:20:30-00:20:37).

  TLOU2's GPN offers a counterpoint to my own study of GPN in my corpus. Indeed, *TLOU2* makes mistakes in setting up the GPN, which my corpus masterfully, in four different ways, avoids, producing GPNs that do not create the user's objections found in *TLOU2*. *TLOU,* unlike its sequel*,* also follows the Aristotelian norms for rational development in building its own GPN, as Joel's change in personality — and therefore the unexpected change in the game's final goal— was also necessary, rational, for him to overcome his initial weakness and face his personal struggle. This brief analysis of *TLOU2* underscores the central importance of my corpus's deployment and crafting of GPN based on rational, probable elements. Because of interactive control, video game players often "take for granted how much [they] tend to identify [with] characters" (00:14:16), and because "popular game design [has historically been] largely centered around positive feedback loops and constant success on the player's part" (00:17:53), players are not currently accustomed to embodying characters whose goals players utterly disagree with. And just as at the end of *TLOU,* when the authorial control forced players to rescue Ellie even if the player actually wanted to save humanity, *TLOU2* "not only continues this approach, it doubles down, by switching perspectives early on and splitting into two distinct

halves with different protagonists" (00:16:55-00:17:05). My dissertation methodology helps

resolve the issue in the lively, recent debate dividing critics and players: yes, players are right

when they say that *TLOU2*'s GPN is not as strong and rational as in *TLOU*. However, critics are

also right when they conclude that *TLOU2* designed an astounding, unprecedented narrative

experience in the history of video games thanks to the cognitive challenge *TLOU2* poses to their

players by offering immersive, conflicting, emotional experience into two opposing characters

who commit immoral acts while triggering empathy. So *TLOU2* differs from *TLOU*'s and my

corpus's GPNs in that it is not based on rational, probable anomalies, but similarly as in my

corpus, *TLOU2* does produce a challenging cognitive experience that subverts the typical

player's expectations, not only regarding the story but also the very nature of the video game

genre.

Consequently, my dissertation offers support to studies of video games's narrative

richness, and cognitive complexity. My GPN analysis reveals extremely diverse and rich

cognitive challenges across genres, whether it be a video game or a literary text. The French

video game *Heavy Rain* set an example of cognitively and narratively complex games, before

TLOU or *TLOU2*, challenging players into reflecting on their cognitive experience, and learning

to balance their identification with characters, in highly authorially controlled games, similarly to

literary texts.

With video games like *Heavy Rain*, I mentioned the inherent value of replaying such a

game as choices (of dialogue and of actions) produce different endings and thus players are

rewarded with new endings as they replay the game making different choices. But re-navigating

GPNs in general is also of utmost importance to fully understand and appreciate a narrative in all

its complexity, since now that the user knows the anomaly, it may help shed light on elements

the user may have missed during the first reading. My methodology is based on Eco's principle of first reading and second reading. Even for the first reading, I offer tools to perform a critical reading (making connections with the title, semes, intertextual frames…) and a chance, for a particularly active and critical user, to solve the GPN anomaly before it is explicitly revealed, which means that there is potentially a chance for the player or reader to regain some control within a purposely misleading, asymmetric game created by the author. This is what Barthes praised in *S/Z*, with the ambition to "remettre chaque texte, non dans son individualité, mais dans son jeu" (Barthes 9) as he deplored when readers are not active participants in the text : "Ce lecteur est alors plongé dans une sorte d'oisiveté, d'intransivité et, pour tout dire, de sérieux : au lieu de jouer lui-même, d'accéder pleinement à l'enchantement du signifiant, à la volupté de l'écriture, il ne lui reste plus en partage que la pauvre liberté de recevoir ou de rejeter le texte." (10) Playful narratives like GPNs encapsulate this drive, this call for action, for games played against authorial control.

Eco posits that texts like GPNs (without using such a term) "displays an astute narrative strategy in order to produce a naïve model reader eager to fall into the traps of the narration (to feel fear or suspect the innocent one) but usually wants to produce also a critical model reader able to enjoy, at a second reading, the brilliant narrative strategy." (Eco *The Limits*, 55) Eco mentions that a misleading text "while step by step deceiving naïve readers, at the same time provides them with a lot of clues that could have prevented them from falling into the textual trap. Obviously these clues can be detected only in the course of a second reading." (55) For instance, in *Incendies*, a particularly critical reader may have inferred the anomaly (i.e. the father of the twin is also their brother) and recognized the myth of *Oedipus* in their cognitive environment before the anomaly is explicitly revealed, thanks to the theme of abandoning a

child, the semes of pairs and identity, and leitmotivs of characters underlining possible family relationships with strangers: a woman says to her abuser that she could be his mother, the war photographer tells Nihad he could be his father before Nihad kills him. But for most readers, as Eco states, a second reading is necessary to notice the coherence and meaning of all these different elements, to finally understand that many refers to the myth of *Oedipus*.

Some education professionals have embraced the concept of second reading as part of their undergraduate literary criticism pedagogy, such as Virginia Commonwealth University Professors Marcel Cornis-Pope and Ann Woodlief, who designed their course by following notably Barthes and literary theorist Stanley Fish's principles. They want students to experience all the complexities of a text, and not just the superficial layers. They designed reading practices for their students with pre-reading questions (e.g. what to expect, etc…), then post-first reading questions (e.g. what students have learned, etc…), and finally, post-second-reading questions (e.g. how the second reading may have changed their first impression, etc…) (Cornis-Pope and Woodlief np). This approach encourages university students to read and think critically, as they must revise assumptions and judgements as new information arise, questioning discourses, and be able to draw new conclusions and abandoning former ones, similarly to what my GPN methodology does. However, literacy is developed before college-level and therefore it would be beneficial to offer such methods among younger students, to introduce the ability to navigate narratives actively as early as possible, as I discuss some literacy studies on elementary/middle school levels below.

I mentioned in my introduction that the demographics of video game players are increasing while those of students engaging in reading textual material are decreasing (Steinkuehler 61), and that, among this gamer demographic, some, in particular young boys of all

racial and socio-economic backgrounds, are universally struggling with reading skills in a school system that overtly prioritizes literary canons over video games when teaching narrative analysis and overall literacy (Hoff-Sommers, Spires, Steinkuehler). Just like video game scholar Gee concluded, Constance Steinkueler asserts that "gaming is a narrative, hewn out of the "verbs" made available within a game design. Unlike television, books, or any other media that came before them, video games are about a back and forth between reading the game's meanings and writing back into them. In effect, games are narrative spaces that the player inscribes with his or her own intent." (61). Steinkuehler concludes that

> video games and literacy actually have a strong mutual relationship. They are
>
> symbiotic, in a close association in which both benefit. Why, then, is there such
>
> immense disconnect between games and classrooms? Parents and teachers
>
> typically loathe video gaming and go to great lengths trying to curb it rather than
>
> cultivate it. Handheld video game devices are an unwanted sight in school
>
> hallways, let alone classrooms. Teenage boys, the most avid consumers of games,
>
> do more poorly than girls on basic measures of reading and writing. (61-62)

She then illustrates her findings with a participant, Julio, an eighth-grader, who is passionate about video games and who, at home, "avidly reads novels based on video game narratives and even wrote three books of his own around his two interests" (32), but in school, Julio refused

> to finish a single reading assigned in class and would often complain about his
>
> teachers, his assignments, the classroom, the school, and his entire identity there.
>
> […] His distaste for the class only grew over time, with the teacher eventually
>
> sending him for special education testing as a punitive measure when she found

him increasingly noncompliant and unwilling (interpreted as unable) to engage.

(62)

What Steinkuehler's study found was a stark difference of literacy level depending on the reading material. When tested using the Qualitative Reading Inventory-4, a standardized literacy test, Julia was diagnosed with fifth-grader reading level based on his comprehension of a passage from a social studies textbook, i.e. three grades below where he should have been. When given a fifth-grader level game-related online manual, he again performed similarly. However, when he was tasked to pick a text of his own, Julio "selected a grade 12 text and performed at independent level. In other words, when he got to choose what to read, he read four grades above his diagnosed reading level." (62) Steinkuehler found that the explanation of level difference lay in Julio's self-correction level: "when Julio was allowed to self-select a topic, one that he intended to use to improve his subsequent gameplay, he persisted in the face of challenges, struggling through obstacles until he got the meaning. He cared. On the assigned texts, he did not." (63).

These findings are crucial for developing engaging, inclusive, literacy classes for low-performing students, and to engage in complex narrative analysis. My approach, which looks at GPNs offering asymmetric-information games, could help in encouraging this kind of demographic whose performance lags on reading skills to approach texts more like games. GPNs, due to their misleading, playful, asymmetric nature, requiring that they be actively solved for the reader to regain some kind of control over them, have what Altman claims is the most important aspect of a narrative: that it automatically produces a narrative *drive*, a *motivation* to be navigated, to problem-solve and win the asymmetric information game. GPNs would thus be excellent choices to create this engagement in reading classes.

Another education scholar, Hiller Spires investigated gaming literacy with students and found that, in the context of a video game, "low-achieving readers maintained their confidence level as they navigated the quests, using images to supplement their comprehension of texts" (Spires 127). She mentions the Narrative-Centered Learning Theory, a theory that makes participants engage in rich, interactive, narrative to increase content learning:

> simulating actors in a play, readers actively draw inferences and experience emotions prompted by interactions with the narrative text. […] Narrative continues to be appropriated as a dynamic tool for exploring the structure and processes of game-based learning related to engagement. […] In essence, game players are drawn into a rich narrative as they are confronted with learning disciplinary content to solve problems. (128)

As I mentioned in my introduction, the benefits of playing and of games have been scientifically proven in that "play creates new neural connections and tests them. […] It creates low-risk format for finding and developing innate skills and talents [and learning] to adapt to a changing world." (Brown 49). Garden-path narratives, like games, enable users to learn and adapt to a changing environment and unexpected situations.

My approach, which looks at GPNs offering asymmetric-information games, can help in encouraging certain demographics lagging in reading skills to approach texts more like games, with more engagement and more interest, leading to potentially higher skill development. The application of my work on GPNs to reading comprehension problems in an elementary/middle school educational setting is a separate independent project that I would hope to pursue in the future, or that I would want to see more education scholars and professionals look into to provide more inclusive, engaging learning methods.

To conclude, my specific transmedial analysis of garden-path narratives has enabled a better understanding of *Heavy Rain*, *La Chute*, *Le Condottière*, and *Incendies*, and demonstrated their diverse complexity and narrative richness due to the construction of successful GPNs. My dissertation helps bridge the infamous gap between video games and literature, by demonstrating that video games can be as narratively complex as canonical literature, but also that literature can offer ludic, highly engaging, challenging cognitive experiences thanks to the use of garden-path narratives. Garden-path narratives, by their nature, create the narrative drive that Altman mentioned when listing the necessary traits for a production to qualify as a narrative: if there is no drive, no motivation for the reader or player to navigate a narrative, this narrative does not fulfill its goal of being navigated. While my selection of works comes from French-speaking authors, the complex notions I have developed, as well as the concept of GPN, have larger applications outside of the French-speaking narrative world, as I showed in my brief analysis of *The Last of Us 2*. My study is original in that there is little to no scholarship that has examined the concept of garden-path narratives across genres, especially through a transmedial approach that treats video games and literature on the same narrative level.

The central accomplishments of my dissertation include the development of an interdisciplinary narratological approach. My methodology, based on Eco's inferential walks and intertextual frames, Altman's following patterns and narrative drive, Gee's literacy perspective on video games, game theory notions of asymmetric-information games and rational choices, and Barthes' codes, reveals the narratively complex processes that are operative in GPNs, whether in discourse or in story elements across genres. My blending of narratology and reception theory, which addresses both internal and external aspects of what is at stake in GPNs is applicable to both traditional and non-traditional narratives. I demonstrated the narrative complexity and

coherence in the video game *Heavy Rain,* showing that games can be as narratively rich as literary texts. I identified patterns that solve unanswered questions in the canonical novel *La Chute*. I demonstrated the narrative coherence of *Le Condottière* which was first rejected by a French publisher *precisely* because of its structure, perceived by the editor at the time as incoherent. I offered a deep narrative analysis of play *Incendies* to understand how its format as well as its story elements sustain such a masterful GPN, whose poetic, mysterious language is still relevant today in the face of the 2020 Beirut lethal explosion. My dissertation also accomplishes the uncovering of how powerful, ludic, garden-path narratives can deeply impact users' cognitive experience by challenging their expectations and making them an active participant in elaborating the narrative's structure.

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