Deathly Landscapes: The Changing Topography of Contemporary French *Policier* in Visual and Narrative Media

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation explores spatio-temporal shifts in twenty-first century French crime narratives, through a series of close readings of contemporary crime films, television, literature, and comics. The works examined rely on the formal properties of the *policier* genre but adapt its standard conventions, most notably with deviations in the use and function of space. In this dissertation, I demonstrate that the modern *policier* is one that embraces its spatio-temporal, social, and generic non-fixity. The textual/visual constructions of many hyper-contemporary crime narratives contain multiple modes of decomposition within: a decentralization of space, which moves the action away from the genre's traditionally urban location to boundless rural spaces and border zones; a de-concentration of the *policier* genre, through the incorporation of tropes from other literary styles and works; and a devolution of social cohesion and community identity in the narratives. Chapter 1 examines works where historic references and urban legends of the 19th century *fantastique* literary genre unfold in modern rural locations. The past and the present converge to problematize modern ideals, identity, and community unity in rural spaces where reason is pitted against the supernatural. In Chapter 2, the crime narrative location is again shifted, this time from urban cities to rural, self-policing communities. Highly stylized settings and geometric architectures delineate restricted zones, and the forbidden forest, a staple "scene of the crime" in classic fairy tales, takes on the sinister and foreboding properties of a primal danger zone. These rural spaces remain outside of

the law and untouchable to a classic detective figure, as communities reject patriarchal penetration of marginalized zones. Chapter 3 assesses transitional spaces in French adaptations of international crime fiction works. Border spaces and boundaries become fluid in reinterpretations of other nations' famous crime fiction styles (such as the American "Hardboiled" crime novels, British police procedurals, and the Swedish "Scandinoir"). In each of these chapters, I engage with a constellation of spatial, genre, literary, and film/media theories to address how space within the narrative and the narrative form itself are impacted by the incorporation of other generic properties; how the classic role of the detective is transformed by these spatial turns; and how these shifts are in part driven by socio-political realities in the search for a "modern French identity."

To Elaine, who put books in my hands,

Dolores, who put ink in my blood,

and Ruhle, who put words to paper.

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At times, the process of writing this dissertation was very similar to a police investigation. It was a puzzle that required patience, perseverance, logic, and just a little bit of luck to piece together. Fortunately, this *enquête* was not quite as bloody as the murders studied within these pages, and I owe a debt of gratitude to many individuals who made the challenge manageable and enjoyable. I am grateful for the guidance, patience, attentiveness, and humor of my advisor, Prof. Maggie Flinn, whose belief in my abilities has buoyed me throughout this process. She is a true mentor who has challenged me to think critically and creatively, and her own prolific and impressive research sets a benchmark of excellence to which I aspire. Many thanks to Prof. Patrick Bray, whose encyclopedic knowledge is awe-inspiring, and whose insightful comments have the precision of a surgeon's blade. I am thankful for the insights and encouragement of Prof. Jennifer Willging, who graciously shared her crime course resources and literary theory expertise, and for Prof. Dana Renga, whose lively conversations on film theory enriched my scholarship. Special thanks to *policier* sage Prof. Andrea Goulet at the University of Pennsylvania, who kindly read an early version of my proposal and suggested bibliographical resources. A great deal of research for this project was undertaken with generous support from the Department of French and Italian, The Office of International Affairs and the Phyllis Krumm Scholarship, the Council of Graduate Students, and the College of Arts and Science's Arts and Humanities grants program at the Ohio State University, which each provided funding that allowed me to travel

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Introduction

By examining patterns within the *policier* genre, this dissertation explores the interaction of spatio-temporal shifts and formal properties of the genre in twenty-first century French crime narratives. Through a series of close readings of contemporary crime films, television, literature, and comics, I demonstrate that the textual/visual constructions of many hyper-contemporary crime narratives contain multiple modes of decomposition within: a decentralization of space, which moves the action away from the traditionally urban *policier* location to boundless rural spaces and border zones; a de-concentration of the *policier* genre, by the incorporation of tropes from other literary styles and works; and a devolution of social cohesion and community identity in the narratives. Engaging with a constellation of spatial, genre, literary, and film/media theories, I will address how external tropes force a spatial shift that impacts the genre, the narrative form, and shapes the communities depicted within the narratives; how the classic role of the detective is transformed by these spatial turns; and how these shifts are in part driven by socio-political realities of the search for a "modern French identity."

I. The French *Policier* Genre

    a. Evolution of the genre

        The process of investigation replicated in crime narratives—the building of a case file, or the logic puzzle that reveals the identity of a perpetrator, for instance—is

constructed from a repository of well-established, repetitive motifs and characteristics

that can be traced to the detective literature of twentieth century predecessors, notably

Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* in 1841, which introduced the use of

deductive reasoning to solve a case file, the format of a locked-room mystery, a

detective's sidekick as narrator, and plot device staples such as "red herrings" to throw

the investigator or reader off of the true killer's trail. Poe's mystery also signals the first

preoccupation with the use of space in *policier* fiction, not only in the literal limitation it

puts on the investigation inside a locked room, but in the creation of symbolic space in

which the psychic realm of the investigation relies on the physical space of the crime

scene, limited here to a single space, inaccessible from the outside. Poe's mystery directly

inspired French writer Émile Gaboriau, considered the father of French crime fiction,

whose character Monsieur Lecoq (introduced in *L'Affaire Lerouge* in 1866) is widely

considered the first literary detective in a full-length French crime fiction novel.

Gaboriau's detective in turn influenced British author Arthur Conan Doyle's invention of

the iconic Sherlock Holmes character in 1887. This series of inspiration/creation neatly

encapsulates the crime genre itself, a chain of interpretation enacted within a stable

framework, with recognizable patterns yet individual flourishes (and it also denotes the

cross-cultural call-and-response characteristic crucial to the development of the *policier*

genre, as well).[1]

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[1] For a comprehensive approach to Poe's story as it relates to topographical and political spaces, see:
Andrea.Goulet's *Legacies of the Rue Morgue: Science, Space, and Crime Fiction in France*. Penn, 2015.

One of the first scholarly definitions of the genre can be found in Régis Messac's

1929 doctoral thesis, *Le 'Detective novel' et l'influence de la pensée scientifique* [*The*

'Detective Novel' and Influence of Scientific Thought]: crime fiction, according to

Messac, is "un récit consacré avant tout à la découverte méthodique et graduelle, par des

moyens rationnels, des circonstances exactes d'un événement mystérieux" (9) ["a story

devoted primarily to the methodical and gradual discovery of the exact circumstances of

a mysterious event, using rational means," my trans.[2]]. Within that template, various

exchanges and changes can be made, accounting for differences in sub-category, national

tastes and cultural preoccupations, which collectively make up the corpus of the genre in

any given country.[3] But the stable tropes found in crime fiction investigations, which

potentially act as limitations within the genre, allow for a measure of control on the part

of the reader or viewer by creating a schema, "a kind of mental template…to make sense

of related experiences in everyday life" (Chandler 7).

The conventions of the *policier* genre have, over the years, remained a

particularly steadfast template, and the classic structure of early-to-mid 20th century

crime fiction generally incorporated the discovery of a murder, the introduction of a

detective figure, an investigation (wherein the detective is normally challenged by either

the investigation or an external pressure), a turning point in the investigation, and a

denouement with capture or punishment of the culprit. This structure appears to be

consistent even across national lines. American author S.S. Van Dine codified the genre

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[2] All English translations in this dissertation are this mine unless otherwise indicated (where official translations exist).

[3] David Platten gives a particularly thorough chronological historiography of the French *policier* genre in his book, *The Pleasures of Crime. Reading Modern French Crime Fiction*. Rodopi, 2011.

for twentieth-century crime fiction writers with his "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories" in 1928, outlining a series of guidelines for crime fiction writers that included directives such as "the detective himself, or one of the official investigators, should never turn out to be the culprit," and "the culprit must be determined by logical deductions--not by accident or coincidence" (Van Dine).[4] These American "rules" of the genre are an example of the types of limitations placed on crime fiction narratives, which universally rely on the use of consistent and recognizable conventions; although there is vast variation on *policier* themes and sub-genres (such as "whodunit mysteries," police procedurals, psychological thrillers, hardboiled fiction, and so on), many of the conventions of crime fiction are universal and internationally interchangeable. Yet while British detectives like Agatha Christie's Miss Marple were often portrayed as dependable outsiders solving disruptive murders in sleepy villages, American antiheros and "private dicks" like Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlow dealt and dwelt in shadowy alleys, with an omnipresent threat of violence hanging over an urban cityscape. For their part, French authors of twentieth-century *roman policier* tended to combine the Brits' affinity for infallible detectives with the American's fascination with the gritty and urban.

b. The Scene of the Crime

Rural regions have long been incorporated into French literature and film, projecting nationalistic values and a kind of "authentic" French-ness in works ranging

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[4] See Appendix A: S.S. Van Dine, abridged list of "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories," 1928. The next year, American crime author Ronald Knox published his "Decalogue," a similar list of ten rules, many of which are more-or-less identical to that of the more verbose Van Dine; see: Knox, "Father Knox's Ten Commandments of Detective Fiction," Liverlight, 1929.

from *le Tour de France par deux enfants* (a 19th century *manuel scolaire* which saw two children visiting the French provinces), to heritage films and art cinema. The rural is often used as an avatar for simplicity, nationalistic values, and family ideals. In this conception of the rural, there is an insular community and a permanence of space and time that stands in stark contrast with the constant shifts in population and changing architecture of an urban landscape. British authors like Agatha Christie used small rural villages in this nostalgic and nationalistic fashion, whereas the French *policier* has more frequently been urban-set, focused on the city (and primarily the city of Paris). Andrea Goulet notes that Régis Messac called *policier* "le genre de la ville moderne" and that *policier* was "coalescing as a self-identified genre" at the same time as the Haussmann renovations of Paris (16), creating a firm and long-standing link between urban space, modernity, and the *policier* genre in France. Early francophone *policier* authors like Emile Gaboriau or Georges Simenon use the city explicitly in their works, with Gaboriau's Monsieur Lecoq, whose knowledge of side streets and alleys in Paris allows him to track criminals, or Simenon's Maigret, who maps his movements through Parisian *quartiers* with exhaustive lists of street names and neighborhood landmarks across the city (so much so that even today, bibliophiles can embark upon walking tours of the locations of Maigret's Parisian cases). In twentieth-century French *policier*, Paris is mappable and becomes a spatial core to which the process of investigation is linked. In the contemporary examples researched in this dissertation, however, the *policier* setting is shifted to a rural zone, brought about by the incorporation of other literary genres in which the setting is a decidedly more determinative force within the narrative, in the gothic countryside, the foreboding fairy tale forest, or borderlands and across national

boundaries. In these works, the rural functions as a space of the possible and the potential, and not a nostalgic/nationalistic rural space, or the urban, representational grid of Paris.

c. Spatial/Social Shifts in Modern Works

Scholarship on the crime fiction genre most frequently references time, rather than space, citing Tzvetan Todorov's essay "The Typology of Detective Fiction," in which he signals an innate duality of timelines within crime fiction, "the story of the crime and the story of the investigation," setting up an architecture of simultaneous yet diverging timelines, of past and present that crystalize only in the solving of the crime (44). In the case of contemporary French *policier* investigated in this study, Todorov's dual timelines are further articulated through the joint axes of time *and* space, which intersect with narrative form. French philosopher Henri Lefebvre argues in *La Production de l'espace* (*The Production of Space*) that all spaces are imbued with social relationships, in an "indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next: geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global" (8). For Lefebvre, space is both a product and means of production, which changes according to social circumstances (11). Lefebvre's spatial model includes the subjective, perceived space of everyday life (*le perçu*), the conceived, constructed space of urban planning (*le conçu*), and the lived space of the imagination (*le vécu*), which bridges the two as a space of knowledge (190). Broadly applied to the spatial construction of, and within crime fiction narratives discussed in this dissertation, the trace of Lefebvre's spatial triad is evident in

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both the narrative and the narrative form, in the materiality of space in the narratives (here rural space and border zones), in the architecture of the narrative form, and in the alternative space between and spanning the two in which cultural creation and critique takes place. The plurality of sub-genres, spaces, and communities are superposed, triangulated, with seemingly infinite combinations and intersections layered over the skeleton of the *policier*'s stable framework, a prism through which societal reality is filtered.

Crime fiction has long served as a tool for interpreting human experience. Interest in crime exploded in the 19th century, in part due to the invention of terms and institutions devoted to crime, as Dominique Kalifa outlines: "le [XIXème] siècle a inventé la police judiciaire, la statistique criminelle, la médecine du crime, la science du crime, la littérature du crime, le reportage du crime, et nombre d'autres innovations qui commandent aujourd'hui encore notre appréhension des réalités criminelles" (9) [the [nineteenth] century invented judicial police, crime statistics, forensic medicine, criminal science, crime literature, crime reporting, and many other innovations that still command our understanding of criminal realities"]. For Kalifa, the incomprehensibility of death becomes "lisible, dicible, socialement et institutionnellement maitrisable" (11-12) ["legible, able to be named, socially and institutionally manageable"], through the process of subjecting it to procedure, operationalizing it through investigation, categorizing it by type and intensity, inscribing it in a judicial or political context, and symbolically punishing transgressions of normative morality (Kalifa 69-72; 83). From the 19th century forward, this type of representation of crime in the social imaginary has

constructed a Durkheimian collective conscious and scale of normative morality, informing how a society represents the reprehensible in fictional form.

In these representations of murder, the success of the genre paradoxically relies on its ability to remain rooted in convention while simultaneously reinventing its form. For Raymond Queneau, co-founder of the *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle* group ("Oulipo") ["Potential Literature Workshop"], the artificial structure of a given text "opens the way to a vaster range of potential creation" (Lowenthal xii). Through the limitation of the rigid framework of *policier*, one can more easily scrutinize latent, variable structures within the works that are transformative in an Oulipian sense, expressing more than straightforward narrative and becoming, as cultural philosopher Walter Benjamin described of the detective novel, "an instrument of social criticism" (82). In this same idea of the Oulipian potentiality of texts, the unchanging framework of tropes like the procedural investigation allows for greater flexibility in mutable details such as non-linear time and space, as well as the incorporation of tropes from other literary genres, revealing implicit virtual communities and zones of resistance at the individual and national levels within contemporary works.

II. Autopsy of the Corpus

a. Cultural Forensics: Consumption and Production of *Policier* in France

Pulp fiction novels of the 1920s and 30s helped to cement the *policier*'s status as a "popular" cultural form in France, with early examples of the genre referred to as "la littérature de gare" (train station literature), considered disposable guilty pleasure reading.

The shape of "classic" *film policier* was largely determined by the tropes of popular

policier literature as well, with retellings of *les pulps classiques* like the 1931 novel *Pépé*

le Moko by Détective Ashelbé (the pseudonym of author Henri La Barthes) made into a

film of the same name by Julien Duvivier in 1937. In the 1930s, the rise of poetic realism

brought anti-heroes and a feeling of urban isolation to the cinema, and fed the 1940s *film*

noir[5] aesthetic, with morally ambiguous and troubled protagonists navigating the urban

"noirceur" of cynical post-war France. In the mid-twentieth century, suspense novels

continued to flourish in France, and works from authors like Boileau-Narcejac

(pseudonym of the writing duo Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac) were adapted to

films by Alfred Hitchcock and Henri Georges Clouzot (1954 novel *D'entre les morts*

became Hitchcock's 1958 film *Vertigo*, and 1952 novel *Celle qui n'était plus* was

Clouzot's 1955 hit *Les Diaboliques*). Throughout the twentieth century, *policier* literature

has driven the tropes in *policier* films, and both media formats have had high

consumption rates inside of France. Today, thanks to a growing readership of literature

and *bande dessinée* in translation, international exportation of *policier* films and

television, and major literary awards that have recognized genre fiction in France, there is

an opportunity to muddy the high/low binary that has traditionally placed *policier* at the

"low"/popular end of the scale of cultural valuation, and a greater ability to scrutinize

how modern tropes of the genre are mobilized across media (and internationally).

While only 2% of films produced in France annually are *policier* films, over 50%

of those produced are considered to have "significant budgets" of greater than €7 million

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[5] The term *film noir* was first used by Nino Frank, a French film critic, to describe American crime films in a play on the "Série-noire" imprint in the 1940s which published paperback crime thrillers (Turnbull, 28).

(which is almost double the average film budget in France of €4.4 million per film).[6] The

crime fiction genre is also above the national average of foreign distribution ratios, with

64% of films in the genre released outside of France.[7] Of the three films considered in

this dissertation, each was distributed in the U.S.; one is a big-budget studio film, *Ne le*

dis à personne [*Tell No One*] (2006), produced by EuropaCorp for €11.7 million (more

than double the average French film budget at the time of its production);[8] the second is

an average budget film *Ecoute le temps* [*Fissures*] (2006), produced for €2 million (just

slightly under the median budget of €2.6 million per film that year);[9] and the third is

small-budget, festival circuit darling, *L'Inconnu du lac* [*Stranger by the Lake*] (2013),

produced by Les Films du Worso production company for under €900,000.

In terms of television, the three series addressed in this dissertation, *Les*

Revenants [*The Returned*] (2012), *Les Témoins* [*Witnesses*] (2013)*,* and *Tunnel* [*The*

Tunnel] (2014) also have varied budgets, which correspond to their production models.

Les Revenants was produced for €11 million by Canal+, the major pay-cable channel in

France; *Les Témoins* was created for €7 million for France2, a national channel and

second highest watched television station overall in France (with smaller funding power

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[6] Figures courtesy of Unifrance. See: pg 4, 8: "The Top Selling French Film Genres: 1995-2014." *Unifrance/CNC*. 3 Feb 2016. http://medias.unifrance.org/medias/126/97/156030/piece_jointe/the-top-selling-french-film-genres-in-foreign-markets.pdf

[7] See: p 9, Unifrance/CNC "The Top Selling French Film Genres" above.

[8] CNC figures published in May, 2016 show an average film budget of €4.4 million in 2015, although when *Ne le dis à personne* was made, the average was slightly higher at €4.88 mil. See: *"2015: Films, television programs, production, distribution, exhibition, exports, video, new media." Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée*, 31 May 2016. http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/publications/-/ressources/9459748

[9] See: CNC "2015 results," above. For tax incentive purposes the threshold for "low budget" productions in France is considered "under €4 million."

than a premium channel like Canal+); and *Tunnel* is a mega-budget co-production between Canal+ and Sky TV in the United Kingdom. Sky Media is currently Europe's largest media company and pay-television broadcaster, and is the largest European television content investor with a programming budget of £4.6 billion annually,[10] which perhaps explains their willingness and ability to gamble on such large-scale projects. All three series play a role in France's recent move toward a "quality television" programming model. Quality television is a discursive category and designation of the alleged aesthetic superiority of certain television shows. In his 1997 book *Television's Second Golden Age,* Robert J. Thompson says, "Quality TV is best defined by what it is not. It is not 'regular' TV" (19). Shows considered in this category often highlight "cinematic" aesthetics, and challenge conventional modes of storytelling found on network television. American series like *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) and *The Wire* (2002-08) are often cited as early examples of quality TV in America, and premium cable channel HBO's slogan "It's not television, it's HBO" perfectly expresses this desire to elevate programming to the status of art. French productions are beginning to adopt an American-style structure with "showrunners" and writing rooms, and cable channel Canal+ in particular has become known as "une sorte de HBO à la française, [une] machine à fabriquer, comme le fait sa grande sœur américaine, des séries audacieuses, en rupture formelle avec la production hexagonale…" (Icher) ["a kind of French HBO, [a]

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[10] See Sky news release: "Sky creates Europe's leading entertainment company," *Sky Media.* 13 November 2014. https://corporate.sky.com/media-centre/news-page/2014/sky-creates-europes-leading-entertainment-company

machine that, like her American big sister, manufactures bold series, in a formal break from standard French productions...”].

Serial police dramas have long been a staple in French television, although primarily through American-exported, mass-market, procedurals like *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* [*New York section criminelle*] or *CSI: Miami* [*Les experts: Miami*]. While several long-running Francophone series have also been popular on French network television, they have often been centered around a female protagonist who must balance work and social pressures, a kind of *policier*/soap opera hybrid seen in current running shows like *Julie Lescaut* (1992), *Léa Parker* (2004), and the rather pejoratively named serials that point out that the protagonists are, in fact, women in law enforcement: *Alice Nevers, le juge est une femme*, (1993)*; Femmes de loi* (2000); or *Diane, femme flic* (2003). The recent “renaissance” in French television linked to the quality television model has led to a full slate of dramatic crime series in “gritty” contrast with its soapy genre predecessors. These shows have high production values, are exported to multiple countries, and play with format and expected conventions, including crime series like *Engrenages* [*Spiral*] (2005)*, Braquo* (2009), *Virage Nord* [*Match Day*] (2015); a cluster of political crime thrillers including *Les Hommes de l'ombre* [*Spin*] (2012), *Le Bureau des légendes* [*The Bureau*] (2015); and procedural co-productions such as *Jour Polaire* [*Midnight Sun*] (scheduled for release in late 2016, but already slated for worldwide distribution).

The production and distribution of literature, by contrast, is less demanding financially than film or television, and, although less widely distributed internationally,

policier literature is a robust segment of the market in France. The most recent

publication figures from 2015 show that the category of "*espionnage*, *policiers*, *romans*

noirs, *thrillers*" (broadly categorized as crime fiction), makes up 19.6% of the total

category of literature sold in France annually.[11] The category is hugely popular but also

well-received critically, with authors like Pierre Lemaitre and Didier Daeninckx winning

national literary prizes (and not simply prizes for crime fiction, but the Prix Goncourt,

one of the most prestigious of the "big six" French literary prizes);[12] Lemaitre won the

2013 Prix Goncourt for his novel *Au revoir là-haut* [*The Great Swindle*], and Daeninckx

the 2012 Goncourt de la Nouvelle for his novel *L'Espoir en contrebande* (not translated

into English). Two of Lemaitre's other works, *Alex* and *Travail soigné* [*Irène*], are

considered in this dissertation, along with decorated author Fred Vargas' *L'Armée*

Furieuse [*The Ghost Riders of Ordebec*], for their intersections of spatio-temporal shifts,

narrative deviation from the genre, and community representations.

Particularly since 2010, when international sales of crime fiction rose (in spite of

lower overall book sales globally), publishing companies have created specific channels

to bring international crime fiction abroad, such as the Pegasus Crime imprint,

established in 2011, specifically created to import crime literature in translation into the

U.S.; New York-based Le French Book publishing company (also founded in 2011) has

brought series by Jean-Pierre Alaux, David Khara, and Frédérique Molay to anglophone

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[11] 2014 figures cited in *Société nationale de l'édition* "Repères statistiques France 2015, données 2014."

[12] The "big six" include the *Prix Goncourt*, the *Grand Prix du Roman de l'Académie Française*, the *Prix Femina*, the *Prix Renaudot*, the *Prix Interallié* and the *Prix Médicis*. See: Unwin, Timothy. *The Cambridge Companion to the French Novel: From 1800 to the Present*. Cambridge UP. 1997, p. xxii.

readers; and U.K.-based Maclehose Press (founded in 2004) manages French literature in translation that includes major award-winning authors such as Lemaitre and Antonin Varenne. That crime novels in particular are sought after for translation is not wholly surprising: the same consistent framework of crime fiction primes a reader to recognize the structure and key elements of the genre, despite cultural specificities that "flavor" the works.

In terms of *bande dessinée* publishing, France has a long tradition of comic book readership, and it still continues to be a growing market (both in terms of production figures and in the emergence of scholarly work devoted to the analysis of the medium). According to Louis Wiart's breakdown of the *bande dessinée* publishing industry, in 2014, the total number of comic books produced was 3,946 *albums*, quadrupling the amount of annual production since 2000. Publication is dominated by five major publishing groups in France: Franco-Belgian Média-Participations Group (whose holdings include publishing company Dargaud, the single highest grossing individual comics publisher); les éditions Delcourt; l'éditeur Glénat; le groupe Hachette; and le groupe Madrigall (the resulting company from the Flammarion acquisition by Gallimard, whose holdings include major publishers Casterman and Futuropolis, among others [Wiart]). 39 million copies of comic books were sold in 2015 alone, marking a 10% increase from the years prior. Casterman, which has a specialized "Rivages/Casterman/Noir" imprint of classic crime novel one-shots, also has a vast selection of what they categorize "enquête bd" ["investigation comics"], from which the comic books *Bouche d'ombre* (2014), *Les Premiers* (2014), and *Princesse des glaces*

[*The Ice Princess*] (2014) are drawn.[13] *Bande dessinée* operates within the conventions of both the literary tradition (a focus on the detective and investigation), while playing on the visual conventions of film noir that were influential in developing an aesthetic within the genre; the analysis of these works will take into consideration their hybrid written/visual form.

   b. Scope of the Investigation

        Even with the myriad tools to assess and categorize crimes and corpses in *policier* narratives, defining the genre itself is still complicated, since, as film theorist Rick Altman argues, there are multiple ways in which a given genre's corpus can be identified.[14] He attempts to counter this problem by offering a dual semantic/syntactic approach to classification, to create "critical methodology which encompasses and indeed thrives on their inherent contradictions" (10). Altman takes into account the complexities of genre categories by creating an ideological approach that incorporates both semantic elements, the "common traits, attitudes, characters, shots, locations, sets," (10) and syntactic definitions, "secondary, textual meaning which those parts acquire through a structuring process internal to the text or to the genre" (16). If one considers *policier*, semantic elements of the genre could include elements like the inclusion of a murder, a detective, an investigation, but that does not sufficiently limit the corpus of media that might be considered as belonging to the genre of crime fiction (a soap opera or a science-fiction work could easily include these same elements); nor do purely syntactic

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[13] None of these three *bande dessinées* have been officially translated to English at present.
[14] While Altman's critique is aimed specifically at film genre, his insights are useful in the consideration of genre in other media as well.

distinctions, which might be assigned to narrative motifs such as the divide between public and private spheres, morality and mortality, or social unrest. Only by uniting Altman's two subsets do we have a more developed view of a genre, and one which takes into account its evolution. The framework of crime fiction, therefore, remains stable and upholds the goal of problem-solving through procedural investigation, but has flexibility to grow and encompass new trends and shifting social and political contexts. The complications that arise when defining genre account for my own broad use of Régis Messac's rather general definition of *policier* (mentioned earlier) for selecting works for inclusion in this dissertation, in that they all include the investigation of a mystery or murder, and have an investigator (some works feature traditional detectives working in conjunction with law enforcement, others include unwitting individuals drawn into solving the mystery, and still other narratives relegate the detective to a secondary, minor role). But these works also include syntactic distinctions as described above, so as not to exclude narratives that play with the conventions of the genre.

At this juncture, I should note that the focus of this dissertation is not, in fact, to chart a comprehensive breakdown of the characteristics of the vast variety of current sub-genres and their differences, but rather to explore how trends and shifts within the general *policier* genre appear across contemporary works in France, irrespective of sub-genre categorizations and media types. The corpus of this dissertation was, in part, limited by undertaking the comparison of four distinct forms of media; other contemporary works could very easily have been included in the comparisons between these works, but would have extended the scope far beyond the realm of manageable. The corpus of 12

contemporary crime narratives spans several sub-genres, with selections in literature, film, television, and comics (four works per chapter are compared, one from each category per chapter). Each of the four media types will be analyzed, with both literary and visual cultures dependent on a close-reading that takes into consideration fluctuating conventions, production models, and critical and popular reception of their respective formats. An effort was made to vary the selection of works according to those same factors of narrative, production and reception.

While much of the research on French crime fiction considers the implications of urban sites (and has largely been restricted to literary and film analysis), I will analyze how each of these four distinct media forms explore the shift from urban cities to rural and border spaces, enacted through the incorporation of classical literary frameworks. It is unusual that despite very different production, distribution and consumption patterns, hyper-contemporary works in four different media forms of the genre replicate the same tendencies and trends. Very little scholarship has been done on new, emerging works of French crime fiction, with fewer studies still addressing contemporary television and comic books (beyond reviews and blogs). My work here will specifically contribute to a discussion on the contemporary *policier* genre by bringing together film, television, literature, and comics, for a comprehensive assessment of the rural shift concurrent in the four media forms, which, to my knowledge, have not been formally compared for analysis in a single study of the genre.

c. Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1, "Pastoral and Paranormal: *Policiers* in the Liminal Space/Time of Rural France," compares crime investigations that are imbued with historic references and urban legends of the 19th century *fantastique* literary genre. Contemporary works in this chapter unfold in rural locations and abandoned spaces, where reason is pitted against the supernatural, evoking Freud's "uncanny." These un-modernized settings reach back to storied regional pasts, with legends, religious influences, and mythology bleeding into the present-day countryside. The mobility of the modern detective in a defamiliarized-yet-familiar space—where past and present converge—problematizes modern ideals, identity, and community unity. The binaries of city/country, past/present real/imagined are destroyed in a violent shattering in which literal cracks appear between zones and the past bursts into the formerly "rational" present.

In Chapter 2, "Into the Woods: From the 'Locked Room' to Locked Nature" the traditional crime narrative location is again shifted from an urban, patrolled city, to a rural setting, this time in isolated, self-policing communities within impenetrable, predatory hunting grounds. The construction of rural space is highly stylized, with settings shaped into geometric architectures to delineate restricted zones. The forbidden forest, a staple "scene of the crime" in classic fairy tales, takes on the sinister and foreboding properties of a primal danger zone for characters. Death and desire mingle while predators hide in these fairy tale forests that remain untouchable, outside of the law, and unimpeachable to a classic detective figure, as communities reject the patriarchal penetration of marginalized zones.

Chapter 3, "Visible/Virtual: Transgressing Geographic and Narrative Border Spaces," assesses international dynamics and transitional spaces in French adaptations of other international crime fiction works. Joint investigations and francophone characters interact in border-spaces, and boundaries become fluid, breaching clear delineations of nationality in the reinterpretation of other nations' famous crime fiction styles (such as American "Hardboiled" crime novels, British police procedurals, and the Swedish "Scandinoir"). These works take place in the border zones of France, in port cities, countryside, and across national lines, as characters interact with portals to the external. The translation to French cultural and linguistic contexts invites an exploration of authorship, adaptation, and cultural heritage in an increasingly transnational culture industry.

d. The Verdict

In each of the chapters, the *policier* narratives evaluated do not simply replicate a procedural mystery structure, rather, they subvert expectations and play with formula, precisely because decades of generic coding has, in a sense, trained the reader how to solve the puzzle. With all due respect to Todorov, who said "The whodunit par excellence is not the one which transgresses the rules of the genre, but the one which conforms to them" (*Typology* 43), I suggest quite the opposite is true for contemporary *policier*: that the "whodunit *moderne* par excellence" is one that embraces its spatio-temporal, social, and generic non-fixity. After all, as Bertolt Brecht mused,

le fait qu'une caractéristique du roman policier consiste à exécuter des variations sur des éléments plus ou moins constants élève ce même genre tout entier au niveau esthétique. C'est un des signes auxquels on reconnaît une branche cultivée de la littérature. (*Les arts* 86)

[the fact that a characteristic feature of the crime novel consists of implementing variations on elements which are more or less fixed is what confers aesthetic cachet on the entire genre. It is one of the hallmarks of a cultivated branch of literature].

"Cultivated" is perhaps a perfect polysemous descriptor of the genre, intimating both sophistication and hand-selection of the characteristics that carry the tradition forward. In the 175 years since Poe's *Murders in the Rue Morgue,* variations have been carefully weighed against the classical framework, and crafted for innovation and impact. The *policier* is, in essence, the ultimate artisanal genre.

Chapter 1: Pastoral and Paranormal: *Policiers* in the Liminal Space/Time of Rural France

> *Tout est faux, tout est possible, tout est douteux.*
> Guy de Maupassant, *Le Horla* (1887)

> ["Everything is false, everything is possible, everything is questionable."]

The contemporary *policier* narratives in this chapter unfold in rural locations, where reason is pitted against the supernatural. The countryside is imbued with a storied regional past, and historic references and urban legends are woven into the community mythology. The works in this chapter demonstrate that Todorov's dual timelines of crime fiction ("the story of the crime and the story of the investigation," [*Typology* 44]) are further articulated through the joint axes of time and space; an engagement with the past engenders a reaching back through time and a simultaneous pushing outward of fixed spatial boundaries, as if any given point on a timeline struggles to burst free from a stable position. 2006 crime thriller film *Écoute le temps* (*Fissures*) from first-time director Alanté Kavaïté, Canal+ network's 2012 television success *Les Revenants* (*The Returned*) from creator Fabrice Gobert, Fred Vargas' award winning 2011 novel *L'Armée furieuse* (*The Ghost Riders of Ordebec*), and author/illustrator duo Maud Begon and Carole Martinez's 2014 *bande dessinée* album *Bouche d'ombre* "Tome 1: Lou, 1985," each engage the past through blended timelines that invoke the 19th century literary genre of the *fantastique,* a blend of supernatural, fantasy, and horror. In these narratives, a

modern detective roams in a defamiliarized-yet-familiar rural space, where the past and present converge. In the shifted site of the *policier* (moving the detective from the labyrinth of the metropolis to the countryside), the past bursts through realms of the possible, and cracks appear in unstable categories and existing binaries of city/country, past/present, and real/imagined. These contemporary *policiers* use the literary framework of the *fantastique* to disrupt expectations in the genre and create a hybrid work that anticipates viewer/reader expectations and turns them into social commentary. Spatial memory becomes transmitted through sights, sounds, folklore, and family ties, embedding itself in the potential/possible supernatural space of rural regions and communities.

In the film *Écoute le temps*, twenty-something Charlotte has a slightly strained relationship with her mother, a rumored clairvoyant in her small rural village. When her mother is murdered, Charlotte leaves her work as a sound engineer to return to the country and try to piece together the details of her mother's life and death; her crumbling family home creaks and groans as it settles, and Charlotte—with the help of her sound recording gear—starts to hear the sounds of the past through the cracks in the walls. In the television series *Les Revenants*, a more tangible resurgence of the past occurs for inhabitants of a small village in the French Alps, when long-dead residents of the community inexplicably start returning to their homes, seemingly healthy and in their pre-death states from years prior. New loyalties and old wounds, both psychic and physical, emerge as the small town tries to come to grips with confusing and complicated reunions with the undead. In the novel *L'Armée furieuse*, the undead have a more

nefarious reputation, and reason is pitted against the supernatural when the deaths of several villagers in a small town in Normandy are blamed on a troupe of ghostly, zombie horsemen said to haunt the region. Jean-Baptiste Adamsberg, Vargas' well-known commissioner of police in Paris, agrees to investigate the crimes, traveling back to the region of his childhood in search of a rational explanation for the gruesome deaths (but without entirely dismissing the possibility of strange phenomena at work). And, in graphic novel *Bouche d'ombre*, Parisian high-schooler Lou must deal with the fatal fallout of a séance-gone-wrong, after communication with a dead relative causes a friend to take her own life. Lou is haunted by visions of the victim, who follows her to the countryside as she tries to collect her thoughts (and tries to summon clues with the help of hypnosis) to solve the mystery of what actually caused the young girl to kill herself. In each of these works, space is used to create doubling, mirroring individuals and places that are initially presented as separate but then become merged, distorting a binary division with movement through and across divided spaces and hostile boundaries. The seedy urban milieu of crime fiction, solidified in *roman policier* and film noir of the mid-20th century, is shifted to a return to a rural "home" and family outside of the city. While classic detectives roamed the streets of capital cities, tracking criminals through the labyrinth of the city, in an ever-increasing number of contemporary examples of the genre, the scene of the crime is shifted to a rural community, with a detective (or detective proxy) travelling from the urban and into the rural to confront strange crimes that defy expectations and flirt with the supernatural. These rural-set examples of the *policier* genre incorporate elements of *fantastique* literature, both genres which initially appear as distinct and separate; the disruption of boundaries between the two genres is

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replicated in the narratives, through use of rural space, time, and the resulting impact on communities within the space.

I. *Policiers* and the *Fantastique*

The incorporation of supernatural elements into crime fiction has generally been avoided as too broad of a shift outside of the genre format (a longstanding tradition of refusal exists, in fact, with S.S. Van Dine's "Twenty Rules" mentioning, in rule #14, that pseudo-science and the supernatural "are not to be tolerated in the *roman policier*." Yet Thomas Narcejac proposed that "le roman fantastique est inévitablement la tentation de tout auteur policier" (121), and infusion of the *fantastique*'s supernatural tropes into the framework of the *policier*'s hyper-rational set-up can make for compelling genre hybridity.

In the four contemporary examples of the genre in this chapter, the *fantastique* is admitted into the realm of the possible, with supernatural interventions that are often left ambiguous as to their "realness." These narratives test the boundaries of strict genre limitations but still remain crime stories: *Écoute le temps* includes a murder, an investigation, police, and multiple possible motives and criminals, but also incorporates elements of a psychological thriller, as Charlotte struggles to find her mother's killer with the aid of a sonically-haunted house. *Les Revenants*, by contrast, is a zombie/whodunit combination with a crime plot in reverse, the victims return at the beginning of the series in a deconstructed procedural that includes traditional crime elements sprinkled throughout (including a serial killer, police detectives, and murders, but not as the primary investigation, due to the *revenants'* arrival taking center stage). *L'Armée*

furieuse, like many previous novels in Vargas' popular Commissaire Adamsberg series, is often cited by critics for its flowery literary style and historical influence (a reasonable influence to cite, as Fred Vargas is the pen name of Frédérique Audoin-Rouzeau, a prominent French historian and archeologist). This particular installment of the series is no exception, as Adamsberg tries to make sense of murder investigations amongst reported sightings of supernatural ghost riders that harken back to medieval folklore. And graphic novel *Bouche d'ombre*'s main character Lou dabbles in the dual worlds of teenage party drama plus the occult, and different portals of contact with "the other side" that lead to her role as an amateur detective figure. These four narratives, in fact, have much in common with the literary genre of the *fantastique* of the 1900s, which included:

> l'intrusion, dans un cadre totalement réel (temps et lieu), de l'impossible, l'ambigu. Cette intrusion provoque le doute, l'hésitation (on n'y croit pas), elle est scandale (car impossible et non acceptée) et engendre la peur ou le malaise. Pour reprendre les paroles de Thomas Owen, auteur fantastique, "le fantastique est la présence inattendue de l'insolite dans le quotidien. (Danval 27)

> [the intrusion, in a totally real context (in time and place) of the impossible, the ambiguous. This intrusion causes doubt and hesitation (since we do not believe in it), it is scandalous (because it is impossible and not accepted) and it generates fear or discomfort. In the words of Thomas Owen, *fantastique* author, "the fantastic is the unexpected presence of the unusual in everyday life."]

Narratives in the *fantastique* register often take place in a recognizable setting in which supernatural events occur. Nighttime and moody weather play a scene-setting role and heighten narrative tension as space becomes hostile or unknown; there is often a confusion between fear and madness, in the difficulty of identifying what is "real."

The start of the *fantastique* literary genre is often attributed to Charles Nodier, an early 19th century author whose short stories[1] set the stage for a new genre that included mysterious and suspenseful supernatural tales, such as Guy de Maupassant's *Le Horla* (1887), Prosper Mérimée's *La Vénus d'Ille* (1837), and Théophile Gautier's various *récits fantastiques* short stories, including "La Cafetière" (1831). In Todorov's literary analysis of the *fantastique,* he outlines that the genre has a fundamental uncertainty, in that the reader cannot discern if the event is supernatural or rational (*Introduction,* 29), contrary to the similar genre of *le merveilleux*, which is *determinately* magic or supernatural.[2] In the *fantastique*, ambiguity is critical, and the genre itself rests somewhere between several other genres, such as fantasy and horror (and thus is, itself, an example of an unstable category). In the hybrid *fantastique*/*policier* examples in this chapter, we see the characteristics of the *fantastique* blended into the plot of a crime story, two genres that seem rigidly separate but that, in fact, combine as the narrative progresses. In a replication of this structure, the narratives themselves present clear binaries that then break down perceived divisions to meld together, including those between city and

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[1] Beginning with "Une heure ou la vision," published in *Les Tristes ou Mélanges tirés des tablettes d'un suicide*, Demonville, 1806.

[2] See also: "Le Conte littéraire." *Encyclopédie Larousse en ligne*, Ed. Isabelle Jeuge-Maynart. Éditions Larousse. larousse.fr/encyclopedie/divers/conte/36566

country spaces, the past and the present, the self and others, and real and imagined. These categories are established as separate and then united through movement or transition across boundaries, through literal cracks in divisions that then threaten the stability of the communities within by the intrusion of the *fantastique* into the real.

II. Space/time and the *Fantastique*

In *Écoute le temps,* the intrusion of supernatural sound into space creates a strange link between past and present and a tension in Charlotte (and the viewer) to accept or reject what is happening to her as real. Characters in *Les Revenants* question how and why a return of the dead could occur, and what it means that the situation breaches all rules of the natural order of the world they know. Similarly, in *L'Armée furieuse,* detective Adamsberg battles his natural instinct at reason, rational thought, and order, in the face of far-fetched folklore and ghostly visions. And in *Bouche d'ombre,* Lou grapples with grief and confusion as she is haunted by ghostly dreams from the past and the present. In each of these examples, tropes from the *fantastique* genre help to create a vacuum in which specific space, place, and identity are distorted and removed from rational thought and practice. Intrusions of the supernatural in each of these stories occur in a recognizable contemporary France, making the experiences all the more jarring. This recalls Todorov's definition of the *fantastique*:

> Dans un monde qui est bien le nôtre, celui que nous connaissons, sans diables, sylphides, ni vampires se produit un évènement qui ne peut s'expliquer par les lois de ce même monde familier. Celui qui perçoit l'évènement doit opter pour l'une des deux solutions possibles: ou bien il

s'agit d'une illusion des sens, d'un produit de l'imagination et les lois du monde restent alors ce qu'elles sont; ou bien l'évènement a véritablement eu lieu, il est partie intégrante de la réalité, mais alors cette réalité est régie par des lois inconnues de nous. Ou bien le diable est une illusion, un être imaginaire; ou bien il existe réellement, tout comme les autres êtres vivants: avec cette réserve qu'on le rencontre rarement. Le fantastique occupe le temps de cette incertitude […] Le fantastique, c'est l'hésitation éprouvée par un être qui ne connaît que les lois naturelles, face à un évènement en apparence surnaturel. (*Introduction* 29)

[In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of the product of imagination – and laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality – but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us. Either the devil is an illusion, an imaginary being' or else he really exists, precisely like other living beings – with this reservation that we encounter him infrequently. The Fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty […] The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event. (*Fantastic* 25)

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The hesitation to accept or reject the unexplainably supernatural in a familiar world governed by "the laws of nature," is echoed in each of the four works considered in this chapter. Themes of *la littérature fantastique* are replicated in multiple ways, with narrative details that recall many famous examples of the literary genre, including Guy de Maupassant's 1886 short story *Le Horla,* considered a key example of the *fantastique* genre, in which a bourgeois protagonist recounts a dread that overtakes him, slowly leading to an apparent haunting by a presence he calls "le Horla." As in *Écoute le temps* and *Bouche d'ombre*, in *Le Horla,* an unseen presence torments the protagonist, with trancelike states of illness and hypnosis that befall him. The story also follows a confessional diary format in *Le Horla*, much like Charlotte gleans information bit-by-bit in sonic episodes that link to written dates and comments in her mother's calendar, making up a virtual diary of her pre-death movements and meetings. Each of the *policier* narratives (as well as *Le Horla*) share the feeling of dread infused into an everyday setting, a rural space in which supernatural intrusion brings the terrifying into the mundane. For Maupassant's main character, deciphering the unseen presence in his life increasingly dominates every moment, causing the protagonist to doubt his own sanity and become ill; the intrusion of the supernatural, the unexplainable in the everyday life of the characters, is what heightens the tension of similar episodes in the contemporary *policier* works. And, just as with examples of *fantastique* literature, the settings found in the four modern works discussed in this chapter are not imaginary spaces; rather they are recognizable-yet-defamiliarized, with a homecoming and return of prodigal sons or daughters to a rural zone that is no longer familiar or welcoming to them.

Because of the expectations of the *policier* genre, which, as discussed in the introduction, follow a predictable pattern of investigation and discovery, the incorporation of generic conventions of the *fantastique* allows for a shift in expectations in the function and construction of the narrative, including in the expected outcome of the crime investigation. In these modern rural spaces, it is as if the countryside is a supernatural realm of possibilities. This is in stark contrast with cultural representations of the rural that depict the countryside as part of an "authentic" space of French-ness.[3] Here, an engagement with the past engenders a reaching back through time with a simultaneous push outward of fixed spatial boundaries, as if any given point on an axis of space and time pulses and struggles to burst free of stable position, often by what appears to be supernatural forces. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the *chronotope* places "time-space" as the organizing center of narrative events (250), and Bakhtin uses the image of a road as an example of how the chronotope functions:

> The road is both a point of new departures and a place for events to find their denouement. Time, as it were, fuses together with space and flows in it (forming the road); this is the source of the rich metaphorical expansion on the image of the road as a course: 'the course of life,' 'to set out on a new course,' 'the course of history,' and so on; varied and multileveled are the ways in which road is turned into a metaphor, but its fundamental pivot is the flow of time. (243-44)

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[3] This exists in genres ranging from travel writing and insistence on *terroir* and French product, to "heritage films" in which the countryside stands as an avatar of national values and nationalistic pride.

Literal displacement from the city to the country leads the character to engage with complex webs of time and space, in which traumatic events are replayed, relived and repeated. Characters are drawn into rural and enclosed spaces, namely, a claustrophobic, creaking house in the countryside in *Écoute le temps*, a walled-off Alpine village in *Les Revenants*, a backwoods Norman town in *L'Armée furieuse,* and the attic of a half-timbered medieval house, all in modern-day France. In each of the four works, carefully separated constructs of space (city/country, interior/exterior), time (past/present), reality (real/imagined), and identity (the self/others), are merged through literal cracks that appear and shatter the categories, replicating the destruction caused by the deaths in families and communities within the narratives.

III. The Spatial Divide: Shattered Halves

    a. Divided Space and Doubles in *Écoute le temps*

        Thriller film *Écoute le temps* is the first feature from Lithuanian-born expatriate and writer/director Atlanté Kevaïté, who builds a taut supernatural thriller around the main character of Charlotte Neris (actress Emilie Dequenne), a Paris-based sound engineer whose job takes her around the globe to record natural sounds for documentary films. Charlotte's mother (an unnamed character played by Ludmila Mikaël) resides alone in a small rural village, and through flashbacks in the film, the viewer learns that Charlotte harbors resentment toward her mother, who has visions and consults with local neighbors as the village clairvoyant/psychologist for their various problems. On a particularly traumatic occasion in the past, young Charlotte approached her mother, who was entranced in a fugue-like episode of paper cutting (scissors flying in a kind of

psychic collage-making process). As Charlotte approached the table, she was cut in the face by her semi-conscious mother, leaving a large scar across the little girl's eyebrow, and causing her father to leave his wife with their daughter in tow. Now, in the present, the adult Charlotte travels for work and rarely makes time to phone her mother, let alone return to the country for visits, and she regularly cancels scheduled trips at the last minute for job opportunities.

While Charlotte is at work on a film shoot, she receives a phone call notifying her that her mother has been murdered. After the funeral, Charlotte travels to the country to settle her mother's affairs in the small town in which she lived, and she is treated with cold, open hostility from odd neighbors such as bourgeois business magnate Mayor Bourmel and his wife, mentally disturbed neighbor Jérôme Blanc and his unwelcoming mother, probing organic farmer Julien, and ineffectual police lieutenant Brenot, all of whom seem to have strange connections to her deceased mother.[4] Charlotte is seen as an outsider, shunned by all except for Julien, as well as the mayor, who wants her to sell her mother's land. At the car repair shop, the pub, and the market stalls, neighbors stare warily at her from afar, watching for signs that Charlotte might know the stories and secrets they had confided to her mother in the past. The hostility of Charlotte's mother's neighbors sets up a clear dynamic of "us vs. them," and she frequently and insistently

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[4] Interestingly, character name and importance seem to have an inverse proportionality in *Ecoute le temps*: the villagers with last names all begin with the letter "B," as if their hostility toward Charlotte and her mother is interchangeable, unifying them. The only exception to this is the Viel family, whose son disappeared, which acts as a catalyst for the murder of Charlotte's mother. Julien and Charlotte, opposing forces on either side of the crime investigation have no last names; and murder victim "mother" has no given name at all (not even in publicity materials for the film).

identifies herself by her profession or as a Parisian, rather than as originally from her mother's town.

Upon Charlotte's arrival at her mother's vacant home—the scene of the murder, with marks still visible where the body was found—she hears the house settling, creaks and groans that progressively get louder. One night, she decides to record some of the creaks with her professional sound equipment, when she suddenly hears loud rock music blaring through her headphones. She rewinds the tape and resets her equipment, thinking that there has been an equipment malfunction, but the recording replays the same noises again as she fusses with the buttons on her recording gear. As Charlotte continues to record and adjust her equipment, the voice of her mother cuts into the music, saying "Charlotte! S'il te plaît, baisse un peu, j'ai mal à la tête!" ["Charlotte! Please, lower the music a little, I have a headache!"] Tears spring to the eyes of stunned Charlotte as her mother's voice fills the room, and she panics, thinking she is having a strange hallucination. Over the next few days, Charlotte frantically and obsessively listens as the house creaks, setting up her equipment to capture streams of sound from villagers' various conversations with her mother, in snippets of conversations from appointments or telephone calls from long ago.

Charlotte hears conversations that occurred between her mother and local community members, including Monsieur and Madame Viel, whose son Thomas disappeared and is presumed dead; she hears the mayor confess his wife's embarrassing infidelities, as well as his shady business dealings that include dumping chemicals on local properties; she also learns that slow-witted neighbor Jérôme had a potentially

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obsessive crush on her mother, and that farmer Julien was her mother's secret lover. Charlotte also hears her own interactions with her mother in terse conversations about how bored she is in the village, or in absentia via the dejected tone in her mother's voice when Charlotte telephones a last-minute visit cancellation, bringing a new layer of grief to her mourning process. The dusty and abandoned house where Charlotte arrived has suddenly sprung to life-after-death, with the devastating sounds of a personal past as well as community members' movements in the house, invisible to her but inhabiting the same physical space through sound and memory.

During these episodes, space has both an auditory and visual function, with play between the on- and off-screen visual spaces. In the beginning of the film, as Charlotte begins to realize what she is hearing, the camera pans across the empty room, with long tracking shots that follow the sounds of footsteps down the hallway into the kitchen, which appears empty to both Charlotte and the film viewer. Then, as the sound "invasions" become more frequent, the viewer is privy to the dual occupation of space in a way Charlotte is not, as we see both present and past with cross-cutting shots alternating between Charlotte listening to the sound streams and the original events from her mother's past playing out visually in the same space. Charlotte's overall movements become more and more isolated, first by her move from Paris to the country, then her refuge in the house rather than the town; and as her discoveries progress, the house itself also becomes a divided space, with Charlotte obsessively training her equipment on sound streams only in the living room space where the murder occurred, limiting her movements to the site of trauma. The sound events, now becoming visual events, are

presented visually as two distinct spaces, with the viewer alternating between seeing

Charlotte in the present, and Mother in the past. To underscore this division, Charlotte is

increasingly compared to her mother throughout the film, the two women seemingly

opposites, from Charlotte's initial rebellion and rejection of her mother's clairvoyance

and hometown to more progressive juxtapositions as distorted mirror images of each

other. In the opening moments of the film, Charlotte's mother is driving, with Charlotte

in the passenger seat, the two seen in silhouette in medium close-up. Rain and

conversation distract Charlotte's mother from watching the road, and suddenly,

something crashes into the windshield and across the road into the ditch. Charlotte's

mother panics and immediately tries to drive away, swerving on the wet pavement and

crashing into a tree. Charlotte is stunned and berates her mother for trying to leave the

scene, then the two get out of the car to walk to the side of the road, seeing what first

appears to be a huddled, bloodied human in the ditch, and then, in a much closer shot, the

viewer realizes that it is in fact, a large deer. The two women's reactions to the crash

position the mother and Charlotte as opposites, in both reaction and visual presentation:

the mother cries, shakes, and stares forward out of the windshield, while Charlotte is

calm and peers backwards out of the rear car window, both women locked into opposite

poses.

Yet the scene, shot from the backseat of the car, also shows the mother's face

reflected in the rearview mirror, making it appear as it the two women gaze in the same

direction. This opposite-but-mirrored positioning echoes their supernatural gifts, as well,

with Charlotte's mother able to see the future in visions, while Charlotte hears the past in

sound. Together, they are opposing, but complementary forces. With the intervention of the supernatural in the form of the sound recordings of the past, Charlotte increasingly and unwittingly moves through the house replicating the poses and positions of her mother, sitting where she sat, cutting paper strips for her web markers in the same fugue-like state and at the same table where her mother once silently did the same; these scenes are filmed in near identical shot sequences as well, except the mother is framed in long shots and close ups facing the left side, while Charlotte is filmed in the same shots facing right, creating another visual mirror of the two characters. This doubling is also referenced in the mother's death scene, when she is beaten across the head by her attacker, leaving a bleeding gash across her eyebrow in the same place where she inflicted Charlotte's scissor scar accidentally, many years before. On the same place in their faces, the mother has a bleeding wound and Charlotte has a scar, two temporalities of an injury that binds the two women together, since Charlotte's scar was the start of her separation from her mother, and the mother's wound marks the end of their distance, as Charlotte solves the mystery and mourns her mother. Seemingly separate spaces of city/country and the characters within them become linked—visually and sonically—through the past and the present via the invasion of the supernatural, as real and imagined combine.

   b. Separate Spaces and *Sosies* in *Les Revenants*

    Space, time, and the supernatural are equally central themes of the Canal+ television series, *Les Revenants*, in which deceased community members start returning unexpectedly to their families, years after their deaths. Having aired the second and final

season in 2015 (2016 in the U.S.), *Les Revenants* is widely considered one of the founding shows of the "quality television" renaissance in French television programming, with much international success, a strong international fan base, bold online presence, and positive critical reception for its unique storytelling that plays with format and expected conventions within the genre. In *Les Revenants,* complicated questions of identity blend with a literal engagement with the past for inhabitants of a small village in the French Alps,[5] when long-dead family members inexplicably start returning to their homes seemingly in their pre-death state from many years before. *Les Revenants* is not a crime investigation *per se*, more like a deconstructed procedural with investigative elements sprinkled throughout: the plot includes a serial killer, police inspectors, and the investigation of linked local stabbings, but these are secondary storylines compared to the larger mystery of the returned. The series is a kind of whodunit-in-reverse: rather than finding clues about the deaths, characters (and the viewer) are tasked with solving the riddle of the return, and dealing with the consequences that resonate within the community.

Inspired by the 2004 French film of the same name,[6] *Les Revenants* television series is the moody vision of showrunner Fabrice Gobert.[7] Twelve-year old Camille, confused, and looking exactly the same as on the day her school bus careened off a cliff

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[5] The series is largely filmed in the cities of Annecy and Seynod in the Rhône-Alpes region of France.

[6] The original film version was written, directed and edited by Robin Campillo, who also co-wrote the 2008 Palme d'Or winning film, *Entre les murs* with Laurent Cantet for production company Haut et Court (which also produced *Les Revenants* the series).

[7] Creator Gobert directed season one episodes 1, 2, 3, 4; Frédéric Mermoud directed episodes 5, 6, and 7, and both Gobert and Mermoud co-directed episode 8, the season one finale.

four years before, wanders home with no memory of the accident or the intervening years, arriving at her family home much to the shock of her still-grieving parents, Claire and Jérôme (now divorced), and twin sister Léna (who no longer is identical to Camille, due to the now-four year age gap between them). Camille's family must try to make sense of the homecoming, wondering if it could be divine intervention, hallucination, or something more sinister. Camille, too, must readjust to a world in which everyone moved on—and drifted apart—without her, in the grief and destruction created by her absence.

Simon is another of the returned, searching for his former fiancée Adèle. Ten years after his apparent suicide, Adèle has moved from their shared apartment to a suburban home with her *new* fiancé, Thomas, and her nine-year-old daughter Chloé (fathered by Simon, who was unaware that Adèle was pregnant with their child at the time of his death). When he manages to track down Adèle, it becomes apparent that his absence has been a severe source of trauma in her life. Adèle has an emotional breakdown when she hears his voice at the door, immediately assuming that she is hallucinating and speaking to a ghost; for Adèle's current fiancé, police inspector Thomas, Adèle's insistence upon Simon's return (unseen to anyone but her) signals a relapse into her former depression, suicidal behavior, and instability.

The other major plotline revolves around *revenant* Victor, a nearly-mute young boy, who follows local nurse Julie home from a bus stop. Julie is a survivor of an unidentified serial killer from several years before, but the trauma left her physically and emotionally scarred and estranged from her former partner, police officer Laure (colleague and neighbor of Thomas and Adèle). Victor, who very rarely speaks, appears

from the darkness behind a bus stop and latches on to Julie, who he believes is a fairy

godmother sent to protect him until he finds his parents. Victor is perhaps not as innocent

and helpless as he seems, though, since he seems to cause people to experience violent

visions, and by the end of the first episode is revealed to have been standing in the road at

the scene of Camille's bus accident (a situation made more complicated because this was

four years *before* the mass return, but more than thirty years *after* Victor was killed with

his family in a home invasion, making him the first—and presumably only—*revenant* for

at least four years, if not more).

Each revenant is linked to other community members, like Serge (a serial killer),

Toni (Serge's brother, a local barman who in fact, killed Serge when he found out he was

a murderer), Lucy (an outsider who travels to town and acts as a "sexual clairvoyant,"

relaying messages from the dead by sleeping with the bereaved, until she is attacked by

the reanimated Serge), and Pierre (who runs the local community center/shelter and leads

grief counseling groups, and who also happens to be dating Camille's mother Claire).

The community members are all linked in complicated ways both in life and in the

circumstances of their deaths inside the small Alpine village. Because so much of the

series deals with the reactions of families and the reintegration of the dead back into their

old lives, much of the time is spent in homes and zones of family life, linked by

atmospheric shots of the houses against icy blue-grey skies, towering mountains, and the

placid lake. The thematic use of rural space as a cold and hostile zone (versus the

welcoming and warmly lit spaces of home) is framed as such from the first scenes of the

first episode, with a division of indoor and outside spaces setting up zones of life and of death.

In the pre-credits opening scene of episode one, "Camille," the very first image the viewer sees is a school bus hugging a curve around the lip of an imposing dam, the path bending along a large blue-black lake, with no guard rails separating the bus from a precipitous drop. As the camera pans up, blue-grey snow-peaked mountains tower in the distance in the direction the bus is moving. Inside the bus, Camille stares out the window over the drop below, her reflection staring back as she listens to music in her headphones. The camera pulls back to show the rest of the bus, and a teacher interrupts Camille's daydreaming to distribute homework assignments to the large group of complaining students filling the seats. The bus continues down narrow roads when it suddenly swerves to the left and careens over the mountain side, pitched forward nearly perpendicular to the roadway. Anything picturesque about the snow kissed mountains and narrow, tree-lined lanes has suddenly and violently disappeared like the bus itself, leaving nothing but fog snaking over the dark water and bleak, seemingly unpopulated roads that resemble a ghost town. In the sequence that follows (still pre-titles), the larger theme of death and resurrection is added to the landscape.

After a black title-card shifts the timeframe to "aujourd'hui" ["present-day"], an establishing shot shows a warmly lit chalet at dusk, nestled between mountains with fog rolling in over the treetops. As the camera pushes in toward the windows, a slow dissolve transitions from the outdoor scene into a wood paneled hallway, with a framed display case of butterflies bathed in yellow light at the end of the hallway. The camera continues

to push in on the display case as ominous music plays and a mounted butterfly labeled "*victorina stelenes*"[8] begins to move, first with almost imperceptible twitches of the wings. Then, with rapid fluttering, the butterfly bursts out of the case and off of the pin that spears it to the display, shattering glass and flying free down the hallway. The viewer perhaps does not yet realize, but this sequence foreshadows some of the "rules" that govern the returned, with a sort of super-strength and resistance to injury, since the butterfly pulls itself off of a pin running through its body to flee the glass case. It also sets up the dynamic that the dead, previously partitioned in a separate realm, now burst free; moreover, it initiates the framework of the series with constantly shifting spatial and temporal realms, bouncing between people, places, and storylines in the past and present, hovering between life and death. By marking the butterfly incident as *aujourd'hui,* we realize that Camille's bus accident was in the past; yet immediately after the butterfly breaks free from its glass case, we return to Camille again, now in the present but looking exactly the same as the day of the crash, a disorienting shift that shocks the viewer for a second time, first in the abruptness of the original death, and then by the unexpected return in the temporal shift.

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[8] The *victorina stelenes* butterfly, also known as the "Malachite," is a tropical butterfly known for its distinctive green and black coloring and great variety in the oval lacelike patterns on their wings. Technically the first post-death *revenant* the viewer meets in the series, the butterfly is not native to the region where the village is located, and, like the individuality of human *revenants'* appearances and circumstances, it has distinctive characteristics that separate it from other samples in the case (as well as other Malachites, generally). It should also be noted that after bursting out of its display case, the butterfly hovers over a framed photo of Madame Costa, a *revenant* whose reappearance causes her husband to burn down the house with her locked inside; Madame Costa does not re-die, and later in the series becomes a figure to whom the other returned individuals seem to flock, like (reanimated) moths to a (literal) flame. And the link to the name of character "Victor" is a very early, yet crucial hint toward the character's importance among the revenants and the community (and the causality of the "returning").

In the present, Camille pulls herself over the ledge of an embankment at dusk, and walks along the same stretch of curved road from the accident, toward the twinkling lights of a town nestled at the base of dark mountains. Throughout the series, parallel editing weaves back and forth between a *revenant* and the family individuals affected by their absence, as well as between their lives before and after the death. Each episode focuses on a different individual, with the first episode, "Camille," concentrating primarily on Camille's family, showing us how they deal with her absence, and cross-cutting between Claire, the mother who sits before a shrine in her long-dead daughter's bedroom; Jérôme, the father, who sarcastically criticizes a proposed memorial for the dead students at a parent-survivor self-help group; and Léna, the twin sister, who gets drunk at a bar with friends and heedlessly hits on strangers. And then, suddenly, Camille returns home as if nothing happened, re-disrupting their already disrupted lives.

Like the pair in *Écoute le temps* of Charlotte and her mother, in *Les Revenants,* the living and the dead are juxtaposed in space and also paired in visual and thematic examples of mirrors and doubling, setting up a clear structure of equal halves, only to distort the reflection. A prime example is the psychically linked, time-lapse twins Camille and Léna, identical in flashbacks and photographs, but who now are visual echoes but not identical, due to the age span of four years that has grown between them. Likewise, in flashbacks of former couple Simon and Adèle, the couple spend their time at band gigs and in bed with matching grins, similar clothing, near identical facial profiles, and identical messy curls on their heads. In the present, they still resemble each other closely, with extremely pale coloring and drawn faces, but Adèle's hair is cut into a severe,

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straight page-boy, and their clothing creates another distortion of the pairing: when Thomas arrives at Adèle's house the first time after his return, he is dressed as he was when he died, in a black wedding suit. Meanwhile, Adèle is trying on a white wedding dress for her upcoming nuptials with *Thomas*. Simon and Adele are costumed as a bride and groom, part of a pair, but no longer belonging to each other. Even the show's marketing campaign included a series of character posters which underscores visual doubling in pairs consisting of one living and one *revenant* individual, showing a living person leaning over the local lake, while a dead character is reflected and reaches upward, offering an object to the living person. Each character in the series of posters mirrors the poses of the others, and the placement of the dead person's reaching arm is identical between poster pairs. Adèle leans over the water in her wedding dress as Simon holds a black rose up through the water; Julie, sitting in a childlike cross-legged pose, is offered a teddy bear by Victor; waitress Lucy kneels, holding a stab wound as serial killer Serge reaches up with a bloody knife. Visually, the living and dead are repeatedly paired, in distorted doubles that bridge life and death and bind each to the other.

The living and the dead are initially partitioned from each other in their first encounters, the visual frame split structurally and visually much in the way that *Écoute le temps* separates the living and the dead realms of Charlotte and her mother through sight and sound in the same space. In the first episode of *Les Revenants*, when Camille arrives home, she immediately goes to the kitchen to find food. Her mother Claire walks downstairs, freezing on a staircase upon seeing her dead daughter casually making a sandwich. A long shot shows Claire and Camille divided in the frame by a thick, floor-to-

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ceiling pillar that splits the frame in two, technically occupying the same space, but distinctly separated in the frame. Another example of this occurs later in the same episode, when Simon locates Adèle and knocks on the door of her home. Adèle refuses to answer, and the two characters are separated physically by a thick wooden door but also visually in the frame, with cross-cutting shots separating them in filmic space. The two characters do not appear in the same frame at the same time, but rather they are positioned identically in front of the door, with Adèle facing left and Simon facing right, only one in the frame at any time. Their shadows appear on the door in front of each of them, standing in like a spectral avatar of the unseen lover on the other side of the door. Simon begins to beat the door, screaming for Adèle to let him in. Adèle, convinced Simon is a ghost, begins mirroring his behavior, pounding the door with her fists and screaming for him to go away, the two acting and existing as identical but opposites.

A more subdued but equally divided first meeting occurs between characters Victor and Julie. Unbeknownst to Julie, Victor stands behind the glass window of a bus stop shelter and watches Julie as she stands in front of it, a thick metal bar separating the two vertically on screen. After a short bus ride (with Victor trailing Julie, unseen), Julie arrives home and enters the door to her apartment lobby. She crosses the frame to move toward an elevator on the right side of the screen, and the image is split evenly down the middle by the lines of a thick wall and the thick elevator doors. As Julie turns her back to the viewer and enters the elevator on the right of the screen, Victor enters the frame on the left, visible through glass windows, but with the wall creating a thick border between the two characters. Repeatedly, the dead and the living are separated by physical

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construction of the space. After their initial meetings, this division also occurs in mediated images of the *revenants* glimpsed in mirrors, through windows, or captured by surveillance cameras, as if living characters are able to glimpse into a realm that they should not be able to see, but it is less concrete than walls and barriers. Unlike the legends of monsters who stay hidden or vampires who don't appear in reflections, these dead become increasingly more visible as the supernatural invades the daily life of the families. The past and the present collide, as doubled characters begin to question the division between reality and the supernatural.

c. Restricted Regions and Repetitions in *L'Armée furieuse*

Fred Vargas' novel *L'Armée furieuse* blends police thriller, historic references, and urban legend in her mystery, with principal character, Commissaire Jean-Baptiste Adamsberg, relying on his instinct and emotional "tendencies" to solve the crimes in which he finds himself entangled. In *L'Armée furieuse*, Vargas pits reason against the supernatural, when the deaths of several villagers in a small town in Normandy are blamed on a troupe of ghostly, zombie horsemen, said to haunt the region. Adamsberg agrees to investigate the crimes, but struggles to dismiss the possibility of strange phenomena in the village. Vargas removes the action from Adamsberg's adopted home of Paris and sends him to Normandy,[9] to a remote rural village where historical fantasy, legends, and an "unmodern" setting create a defamiliarized space where reason and rationality are blurred.

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[9] This trip outside of Paris for the setting of the crime is not unique to this book, as many of Vargas' Adamsberg installments take place in remote settings, before returning him to his home base of Paris.

At the novel's outset, Valentine Verdermot, a provincial woman from the small village of Ordebec, takes a train to Paris to speak directly to Commisaire Adamsberg, to report the disappearance of a neighbor, Michel Herbier. At first, Adamsberg cannot understand why he is being asked to consider a missing persons case well outside of his jurisdiction, but the woman explains that this case has an unusual set of circumstances: the *gendarme* captain in Ordebec, Louis Émeri, refuses to investigate the case; also, the missing person is an enemy of the Vendermot's family, a particularly cruel man with a penchant for hunting female and young animals, thus the Vendermots are not above suspicion for the disappearance; and, perhaps, most intriguingly, the woman feels compelled to report the case because prior to Herbier's disappearance, her daughter Lina predicted the deaths of three local villagers (among them Herbier), after a vision that "l'armée furieuse" (literally, "the furious army") carried them away. "L'armée furieuse," a colleague explains to Adamsberg, is a group of supernatural ghosts belonging to *la Mesnie Hellequin* ("Hellequin's Horde"), a cavalry of rotting, vicious, zombies on horseback, doling out regional justice by seizing unpunished villains, and carrying them to Hell in the dark of night.[10] Vendermot's daughter, Lina, is one of few people with the "gift" to see the gruesome parade, which travels down the Chemin de Bonneval in the Forêt d'Alance in Normandy. No one in the town believes them, but the mother, who has faith in her daughter's vision, requests Adamsberg's presence to help prevent or explain the disappearance of the other "victims" Lina predicted, and to perhaps preemptively clear her name if others go missing as well. Adamsberg agrees to take the case, because,

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[10] La Mesnie Hellequin is based on actual historical legend, a variation of "The Wild Hunt" in European and Scandinavian folklore that reaches back to a storied past with Viking legends and religious influences in the countryside.

as he tells his son, he doesn't appreciate learning about future criminal deaths, even those

that are predictions: "je n'aime pas qu'on vienne m'annoncer des morts violents, de cette

manière ou d'une autre" (*Armée* 56) ["I don't like people coming to me and warning me

about violent deaths, no matter how they do it"]. Adamsberg is perplexed by the invasion

of the supernatural past, dropped in his lap in the present, via Lina's predictive visions

that show a potential future in which more disappearances and murders may occur.

Adamsberg takes a train and then a bus to travel to Ordebec, where he arrives

with little fanfare at "la place presque déserte de la gare routière," (69) ["the courtyard of

the almost-deserted bus station"] and begins to explore the quiet town and the Chemin de

Bonneval pathway. The town is depicted as almost anachronistic compared to the

bustling streets of Paris; in dusty, quaint Ordebec, directions are listed on "une vieille

pancarte de bois peinte à la main" (69) [an ancient hand-painted wooden signpost"], and

the Chemin de Bonneval is overrun with brambles. The first resident he encounters is the

eccentric, skeletal, but warm Léone, who fails to mention that she is, in fact, the

Comtesse d'Ordebec. Léone, who has just found the long-dead body of Herbier lying in a

pool of dried blood behind the local chapel, seems nonplussed at the discovery, and

invites Adamsberg to stay in her guest house after he misses the last train back to Paris.

At Léone's guest house, like Ordebec, "rien ne semblait avoir changé depuis des

décennies" (77) ["nothing seemed to have changed for decades"].

Adamsberg will be repeatedly delayed from returning to Paris, missing trains and

buses first by being summoned to speak to Captain Émeri, then by a brutal home invasion

and attack on Léone that leaves her in a coma. The town becomes a closed circuit, with

interwoven stories and histories in a sequence of cause and effect that can't yet be pieced together, but which Adamsberg feels compelled to explore, in spite of a colleagues' advice, "arrachez-vous à ce foutu *grimweld* avant qu'il ne vous attrape" (100) ["get out of that damn *grimweld* before it traps you there"]. In part out of concern for Léone, and in the larger murder mystery at play, Adamsberg is symbolically caught inside the perimeter of the *grimweld*, the road upon which the furious ghost riders carry their prey.

Léone's favorite expression, "[un] papillon qui bouge une aile à New York [...provoque une] explosion ensuite à Bangkok" (89) ["a butterfly wing that moves in New York [...causes] an explosion in Bangkok"] takes on new meaning for Adamsberg as he becomes more embroiled in the case:

> Le bourg d'Ordebec à lui seul fournissait plusieurs milliers d'ailes de papillons. Et autant d'événements en chaîne […] Et parmi cette masse énorme d'ailes de papillons, l'une d'elles avait vibré sous les yeux de Léo, qui avait eu le talent de la voir ou de l'entendre. Mais laquelle? (108-9)

> [The small town of Ordebec alone had offered many thousand butterfly wings. And just as many linked events […] And among this enormous mass of wings, one of them had fluttered in front of Léo, who had had the talent of seeing and hearing it. But which one?]

For Adamsberg, who is searching for the clues that Léone cannot express in her coma, staying in Ordebec becomes a necessity. It is a complicated sort of "homecoming" to Normandy, to investigate a case that isn't his case, in a town that very much reminds him of his humble, rural roots. He is separate from the villagers, invited and embraced by

some (particularly Léone and Lina), and resented by others, namely Captain Émeri, who describes the *Commissaire* as "disloqué, inclassable ou du moins inconforme" (87) ["dislocated, unclassifiable, or at any rate nonconformist"]. Adamsberg, however, feels a regional pull, citing the initial reason for accepting the case as the appeal of a country walk as respite from his cases in Paris, and sincerely insisting that "[Paris] n'est pas ma capitale. Je suis béarnais" (96) ["Paris is not my capitol. I'm from Béarn"], highlighting his regional roots at the expense of his adopted, adult home of Paris, where he practices his career.

Adamsberg frequently pauses his investigation to sit and enjoy the view; it is unexpected and rather charming to read, amidst bloody death scenes, passages in which the policeman "ôta chaussures et chaussettes et contempla le dénivelé des collines vert pale, les vaches posées comme des statues dans les prés comme pour server de repères" (99) ["took off his shoes and socks and contemplated the rolling, pale green hills, the cows posed like statues in the fields as it to serve as landmarks"]. Slowly, Adamsberg's Parisian-based team joins him in Ordebec, transitioning the city team to the small town. His efficient, if not ragtag team, far outside of their jurisdiction, and consisting of "un hypersomniaque qui s'écroule sans crier gare, un zoologue spécialiste des poissons, de rivière surtout, une boulimique qui disparaît pour faire ses provisions, un vieux héron versé dans les contes et légendes, un monstre de savoir collé au vin blanc, et le tout à l'avenant" (89) ["a narcoleptic who collapses without a peep, a zoologist who specializes in fish, especially freshwater, a bulimic woman who disappears to get supplies, an old heron with a knowledge of stories and legends, a know-it-all glued to his white wine, the

whole nine yards"]. They all take up residence in Ordebec to assist Adamsberg and continue their typical idiosyncratic habits in spite of the location change, as if Ordebec exists in a parallel universe from Paris. Occasionally assisting in their investigation is clairvoyant Lina's brother, Hippolyte, an eccentric genius who speaks using backwards-spelled words, refers to Adamsberg as "Grebsmada" (217), a reversal of his name that underlines this parallel, rural version of the *Commisaire* outside of Paris.

The slow, thorough, and contemplative style of Adamsberg is juxtaposed with his Ordebec counterpart, Captain Émeri, who is rash, irritable, and seemingly inept, and whose obsession with his ancestry contrasts with Adamsberg's humbler roots. Émeri gloats that he is named for his ancestor Louis Nicolas Davout, one of Napoleon's marshals, while Adamsberg's own ancestor was a conscript who died on the battlefield during the Napoleonic Wars. As an investigator, Adamsberg's investigation is exhaustive, while Émeri is incompetent, routinely showing up 10 minutes *after* the visiting Adamsberg discovers bodies or clues. Yet subtle comparisons between the two detectives create a kind of negative image, in which the two policemen are equal-opposites, much like Charlotte and her mother in *Écoute le temps*.

For example, Adamsberg, after finding Léone on the floor after her attack, assumes the role of an adoptive son, ordering local police to give her round-the-clock protection, and treating her with tenderness as he would a mother. He visits the elderly countess regularly while she is in the hospital, and he combs her hair, strokes her cheek, and reads to her on his lengthy visits. Léone only wakes to speak in his presence, and utters several key words that seem innocent ("'Ello, Flem, Sucre" [180], the English

greeting, the name of her dog, and "sugar"), but which eventually reveal the identity of her attacker, the murderer who is splitting the skulls of the village men from Lina's vision, picking them off one by one. After Léone's attack, Adamsberg treats her as a mother figure, his violent "birth" transmitted through her blood that covered his hands and clothes. Adamsberg becomes a sort of spiritual brother to Émeri, whose own maternal link to Léone came years prior when she saved him from drowning as a child. Émeri calls Léone his "mère d'eau […] comme une Vénus" (93) ["water mother [...] like a Venus"] after she pulled him free from being trapped beneath the ice of a frozen pond when he was three-years old. The two men are linked in this symbolic and violent transmission of maternal pseudo-birth, one through blood and the other through water. They are parallel detectives, drawn together as Adamsberg tries to solve the murders, and they meet at the apex of the case's solution: Adamsberg's investigative powers reach a fever pitch as he pieces together Léone's words with his own visual memories to determine that Émeri is in fact the killer and Léone's attacker. The restricted space of the village of Ordebec is further shrunken down to an interview room, where the truth is revealed in a face-to-face questioning that places each detective across a table from each other, trading barbs and working at cross-purposes. The adopted sons of Léone past and present collide, as Adamsberg sifts through the supernatural to determine what, in fact, is real, and what is legend. The *fantastique* was admitted into the rural space, in the realm of the possible. But as more and more of the Paris police team occupies the rural zone and space is restricted to the small interview room that replicates the Paris headquarters of Adamsberg, it is as if the portal of "the possible" is closed; by closing off the space, the rural/possible is returned to the detective's rational, real space (in part linked to the

spatial order associated with the city, rather than the wild expanse of the unknowable and unmappable *grimweld* and the rolling hills that extend farther than Adamsberg can see.

d. Delineations and *Doppelgängers* in *Bouche d'ombre*

"Lou 1985," is the first volume of artist Maud Begon and author Carole Martinez's *Bouche d'ombre* series. This graphic novel weaves separate temporalities and realities into the life of teenage Lou, a teen in Paris who becomes embroiled in investigating the suicide of a friend. The comic bridges several disparate locations that span time zones and realities: the story opens *in medias res* in what appears to be a medieval French village with half-timbered buildings and an abbey, where monks welcome a mute orphan named Louise from the back of a wooden carriage. Young Louise's scarf is carried off by a breeze, and she chases after it, exploring rooms of the abbey with a black cat by her side, and finding a room with a partially covered painting with green-hued and bloodied feet (5).[11] In the next panel, the viewer is shifted into a modern apartment where Lou (a dead ringer for Louise), is shocked awake, seemingly after witnessing the previous images as a nightmare; this is illustrated by a graphic match from one scene to the next, with wide-eyed Louise and Lou mirrored in a straight-on, eye-level mid close up of the girls' faces, Louise in the past/dream, and Lou in her bed in Paris.

Lou begins her day meeting with a group of friends, jogging past the Eiffel Tower, and drinking coffee at a café terrace before school. While studying an extract of

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[11] The bloody feet are a segment of Matthias Grünewald's 1512 depiction of the crucifixion of Jesus in the central panel of "Isenheim Altarpiece," a sculpted triptych altarpiece in the Unterlinden Museum in Alsace.

Victor Hugo's poem "Ce que dit la bouche d'ombre"[12] and discussing Hugo's interest in the supernatural, the friends dare one another to participate in a séance at friend Marc's home, a half-timbered house that visually recalls the medieval-era buildings in the opening of the book. In addition to its literal time link with the medieval dream, the house's décor, dark and somber with candelabras and a wall-sized family tree, makes the attic feel radically removed from the contemporary Paris the group jogged through earlier in the story. Rather than the sunny yellows, crisp white, and bright red used for images of Paris streets, Lou's apartment in daytime, and the group's classroom, images of the attic—like the medieval abbey of the dream—are primarily dominated by purple, brown, and black, marking a visual separation between spaces and times. In the attic, the group of friends sits around a large table with their arms all outstretched to place a finger on a glass, which they plan to use to communicate with a spirit through a Ouija board. A large frame with an overhead perspective shows a symmetrical grouping of eight outstretched arms as seen from above, recalling the spokes of the carriage wheels from the medieval dream and creating another visual bridge between the past and the present while the teens try to conjure a spirit (18).

Among the participants of the séance are Céline and her nervous cousin Marie-Rose, who is living with Céline's family after the death of her mother in Haiti. Marie-Rose expresses her trepidation at participating in the séance, but is pressured into playing along. The séance, which begins innocently enough, seemingly conjures the restless spirit

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[12] Hugo's poem, drawn from *Les Contemplations* (1856), is a long rumination on death written during his time of political exile in Jersey, during which time he became interested in spiritualism and communication with the dead. The implications of the use of this poem will be discussed in detail further, later in this chapter.

of Marie-Rose's mother, who appears to berate her daughter for having come to France and leaving younger sisters with family back in Haiti. The spirit apparently uses the Ouija board to reveal, letter by letter, that the ghost is "[la] mère de celle qui est partie en abandonnant ses petites sœurs, qui ont besoin de ma Rosie" (19) ["the mother of the girl who abandoned her little sisters, who need my Rosie"]. Lou stops the session quickly when Marie-Rose accidentally breaks the roving glass in her distress and runs out of the room, inconsolable. The rest of the friends are left considering what happened during the session, but none of them admit to playing a cruel trick on their friend.

After some thought, Marie-Rose later insists on a second séance to try to determine the wishes of her mother's spirit, but the second session ends even more violently than the first. Rather than simply accusing Marie-Rose of abandoning her sisters, this time the alleged ghost makes the group spell out cruel insults in a slow process of spelling out the phrase "Tu n'es plus ma fille, salope…salope."(27) ["You are no longer my daughter, bitch...bitch"]. When Marie-Rose again bolts from the house, she sees the same word, "salope" written in bold, red letters on the brick wall opposite Marc's house (27). In a graphic match from the image of the brick wall to the following frame, the red-chalked "salope" appears scrawled across the walls of Lou's bedroom later that night as a graphic manifestation of her fitful sleep thinking about the afternoon's incident. As Lou tries to sleep, she reminds herself that "les fantômes n'écrivent pas sur les trottoirs à la craie rouge" ["ghosts don't write on sidewalks in red chalk"], and addresses an invisible Marie-Rose, saying, "ce n'était pas ta mère, Marie-Rose. Non pas ta mère" (19) ["it wasn't your mother, Marie-Rose. No, not your mother"]. In this frame,

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the image of Marie-Rose, in a childlike pinafore and with ribbons in her hair, appears in the bedroom next to Lou. Lou asks how Marie-Rose entered her attic room, and her friend suddenly becomes transparent, seems to stretch as tall as the room (and the *bd* frame), and she disappears (leaving a ribbon behind, with the same black cat from the medieval dream sitting on the bed). Lou assumes she is dreaming and returns to fitful sleep. The next morning, Lou runs into friend Nassim, who tells her that Marie-Rose committed suicide the evening before, leaping from her bedroom window in the middle of the night.

After Marie-Rose's funeral, Lou once again sees Marie-Rose in her bedroom, and thinks she is having a hallucination as she interacts with the presence she had previously thought was part of her dream. Shaken, she decides to leave Paris and travel to the country by train, in a large frame that shows a train head-on, turning a curve into the scenic countryside with trees and greenery framing tracks, an image which echoes the journey of Charlotte to her mother's home in *Écoute le temps*, clairvoyant Lucy's bus ride into town in *Les Revenants,* and Adamsberg's trip to Normandy by train. In each of these works, the physical transportation moves an outsider into the countryside to assess the supernatural elements at play. For Lou in *Bouche d'ombre*, this trip is no exception. She travels to the home of her aunts, a small, ivy-covered cottage ringed by a large garden. In the garden sits her aunt's large camper with the words "Mademoiselle Josette, Voyante, Medium, Tarot," beside which the spirit of Marie-Rose appears yet again (39). In the company of her aunts, for the first time, Lou does not question what she saw, but tells her aunts that her friend's ghost came to visit her. In Paris, the appearance of the girl

was considered a dream, a daydream, or a hallucination, but in the space of the countryside, Lou is able to accept the possibility of supernatural intrusion into her reality. In fact, the spirit's presence becomes more and more persistent after her admission of its presence and arrival to the countryside. When first introduced, Marie-Rose appears sporadically, framed in extreme close-ups in the images of Lou's bedroom at night (28-29). After Lou confesses she has seen the ghost to her aunts, Marie-Rose follows Lou through the town, her entire body visible in each frame of the pages (39-40). As Lou walks in the rain, Marie-Rose is her ghostly shadow, and the girl's face is reflected in a distorted mirror image of Lou, staring back at her in the shiny plaque on the side of a building. The plaque announces the services of a psychologist, and Lou enters, determined to undergo hypnotherapy to try to reconstruct the events leading up to Marie-Rose's death, to determine why the ghost might be "visiting" her.

Lou is thus haunted by the ghost of Marie-Rose in child form, an invasive past that breaks into the present. But there is also a willful incorporation of the past through this hypnosis session. Visually, the hypnosis session pairs Lou's conscious and subconscious, spanning the past and the present as she travels through her memories, and dividing Lou herself into a doubled presence. On page 42, in the middle tier of the page, a close up of Lou's eye reflects the therapist's swinging pendulum as her hypnosis begins. The point of view of the images begins to shift between first and third person, with each frame alternating between Lou's perspective (seeing the therapist's office from her point of view) and an external third-person perspective, seeing Lou in the chair or observing the whole room at a distance. This switching of perspectives continues into the next page,

where there is a matching middle tier of frames that show close-ups of both the therapist's green eye and Lou's blue eye, in the same placement as the previous page. Combined, the two-page spread has a symmetry of these fragmented pieces, which, when observed as a whole, create the illusion of Lou's complete face—the open left eye filling a frame on the left page (in the present) and the closing right eye filling a frame on the right page (as she falls into an altered state that takes her into the past). The pendulum appears again, this time larger, spilling over into neighboring frames as Lou imagines herself leaving the office and walking back through the events leading up to Marie-Rose's death (44).

At first, these scenes have a straight-forward narrative sequence of events, with images from a party Lou attended and a drunk conversation she had with Nassim, followed by a conversation observed between cousins Céline and Marie-Rose as they arrived at the séance at Marc's house. The two girls arrived hand in hand, and Marie-Rose discusses her trepidation at "waking the dead" in front of a tapestry depicting Marc's family tree. Next, an overhead image of the group of friends sitting around the Ouija board recalls the same image from the séance, with the friends' arms arranged like the spoke of a wheel. The word "mère…mère" ("mother") appears graphically across the page (47), ending the straightforward narrative. At this pivotal moment of the séance, the appearance of the mother (upsetting Marie-Rose and potentially causing her to take her own life), Lou begins to see disjointed images of the night of the séance after that point. The images are fuzzy in her mind, manifest visually by scribbled out edges rather than hard lines between frames, a large amount of negative space left in the white gutters, and

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images placed asymmetrically (47), in contrast with the fairly regular frame layout that came before. As Lou recalls more details of the evening, the point of view zooms further and further in on details with each successive frame: it begins with an exterior, low angle frame of the attic from the exterior; then the group of friends sitting around the table in silhouette; the faces of Céline and Marie-Rose appear in close up; and then an extreme close-up of the finger of Céline, colored red with the chalk that wrote "Salope!" on the wall outside the house (48). The background of the successive frames change to gray, and the character of Céline, the apparent writer of the chalked word, is filled in with the same red color as the chalked words "Salope" written across the frames, standing out graphically against the monochrome background of the large, horizontal frame as Lou realizes that Céline was the cause of the "spirit."

After this moment of realization, Lou's point of view shifts again: the sudden, remembered discovery changes the focus from Lou's own point of view to Marie-Rose's emotional state and a reimagining of what happened next. Lou sees Marie-Rose's mother comforting her, leading her home, grabbing at her shirt as Marie-Rose climbs out the window and over the narrow balcony; then, an image of Marie-Rose's mother embraces the daughter in her arms inside a coffin (49). Suddenly, Lou has returned to the present time in the therapist's office, preparing to leave and discussing her receptiveness to the hypnotherapy session (50). The past and the present converge in the altered state of hypnosis, which allows Lou to understand that the séance was not supernatural, even if the ghostly presence remains so.

Lou eventually returns to Paris to confront Céline about her involvement in Marie-Rose's suicide and notices that Céline's bedroom walls are covered in sketches, revealing a family story that is far more complicated than that of a visiting cousin from Haiti (62-64). Rather, the drawings reveal (and Céline explains) that Marie-Rose is the illegitimate daughter of Céline's father, making them secret half-sisters. Their father brought Marie-Rose to France after the death of her mother in Haiti, raising her as part of the family (much to the displeasure of his wife, as well as daughter Céline). Céline's jealousy flames when Marie-Rose became the target of her own crush, Marc's affections, spawning the revenge plot of the séance to hurt Marie-Rose.

At the beginning of the *bande dessinée,* the two sisters are presented as completely different in appearance and demeanor. Marie-Rose is quiet, conservatively dressed, the "jolie fille avec la coupe afro" (8) ["the cute girl with the afro"], while Céline is "punk et chiante" (8) ["punk and annoying"] with a pink-tipped mohawk and a bad attitude. Yet the secret sisters are almost always positioned side-by-side in frames, their visual differences apparent but their positioning almost nearly mirroring the other. Particularly during Lou's hypnosis session, the sisters are seen facing forward and side-by-side in conversation, with a close up of the two holding hands as they enter the séance, and mirrored again in two frames that position them side-by-side as seen from the front and then the back, a distorted mirror image of two distinct halves that make the whole. This is made visually explicit when Lou analyzes Céline's drawings later. Amidst sketches of Céline's father and a pregnant Haitian woman, two pieces of paper are tacked to the wall, each with half of a face: on one page, the left half of Marie-Rose's face, and

on the other page, the right half of Céline's face, both sketches joined in the middle to create one complete face with nearly-identical features, except for their distinctive hairstyles and shading to represent Marie-Rose's dark skin beside Céline's pale skin (63). Lou's hypnosis follows the trail of clues that reveal the graphic and psychic combination of previously distinct identities. Through travel from the city to the country, Lou is able to work through the visions of the past in the present, and negotiate reality in the seemingly supernatural. However, just as with Adamsberg's investigation, when Lou shuts out the rural possible and retreats to the memory of the urban space, she is able to map the details of the events in her mind, applying logic to the sequence of events and transforming the supernatural into a solution to the crime.

IV. Fluidity and Cracks between Life and Death

In the works discussed above, the city and the country are initially presented as distinct spaces, the past and the present as isolated temporalities, and the real and the imagined as separate states of reality. Cracks between these binaries distort the certainty of their separation, in literal and figurative breaks and displacements, with a violence and trauma of movement between zones that replicates the violent and unnatural invasion of the supernatural into the present for characters, separating life and death. In *Écoute le temps,*[13] Charlotte's travel between city and country is interrupted by the violent car crash that opens the film, with shattered glass and a bloody deer marking the trauma of the two worlds colliding; the second instance of her travel between spaces is compelled by the traumatic death of her mother, and she takes the train from Paris to the countryside, the

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[13] The title of the film for distribution outside of France, *Fissures*, alludes to how prominent of a theme these cracks actually are within the narrative.

tracks like jagged sutures across the land. The appearance of cracks also links the city and country through her work, first showing us deep fissures etched into the earth on a job location, where she records the bubbling spring beneath the ground (at the instant she also receives the phone call about her mother's death). This sequence foreshadows the technical process that she will undertake later inside the country house to try to record her mother's past, and, while she is recording, the crew's voices start bleeding over the natural sounds, mimicking the sonic invasion that will occur during her time in the country home. This link to nature is in sharp contrast with the bucolic ideal of rural life; rather it is linked to the fluidity of movement between unstable zones, often accompanied by water. For Charlotte, the bubbling spring marks the moment of her mother's death, compelling her to return to the country. But water is also a larger problem in the community that has the potential to create more deaths in the future: Charlotte's mother's house itself is located on a prime area of land "full of holes" that the mayor wants to use for his chemical dumping, and residents, such as Julien's mother, are getting sick (although it is not explicitly stated, Julien intimates her illness came from drinking the water).

The house where Charlotte's mother lived has tears and gaps opening in the walls, floors, and ceilings, and each crack allows Charlotte to record different sounds of the past. The fissures that allow the sounds to escape are the medium by which she is able to work on solving the crime, but also are the catalyst for her confusion of real and imagined. As the house crumbles, the supernatural seeps through into Charlotte's formerly rational world, with a violence that nearly crushes her beneath falling beams and chunks of bricks and plaster, as if the physical space could no longer tolerate the

supernatural intrusion. Previously separate realms collide, smashing them into one unified space. In the penultimate sonic episode, Charlotte, after weeks of obsessive recordings, is about to discover her mother's killer. Rather than hearing the sounds and seeing Charlotte as we have for the other recording sessions, for this interaction, the viewer sees the scene as it occurred, watching as Charlotte's mother confronts Julien for having covered up the hit and run accident that killed young Thomas Viel in an identical accident to the one that killed the doe in the opening images. Rather than the sounds of the past (the mother) in the sights of the present (with Charlotte), the interaction is flipped, with the sound of Charlotte's ragged breathing and the creaks and groans of the house layered over the visual scene of her mother and Julien interacting in the past. The past and present, vision and sound, mother and daughter, real events and their supernatural reconstruction, all fuse together as Charlotte finally finds the solution to the murder: Julien killed her mother to keep her quiet about a different, accidental murder, in which he struck the young Viel boy with his car, then buried the body and hid the evidence. The violence of both murders, one by car crash and one by blunt force trauma, is a physical fracturing replicated in the violence of the house's disintegration in the present day, as Charlotte listens. As the solution to the murder (the disintegration of her family) comes together for Charlotte, the family home falls apart around her shoulders. Violent fissures signal the transfer between zones, marking the displacement of life to death in the past, brought back to life in the present (if only temporarily).

Les Revenants follows this same pattern of violent cracks that signal movement between zones and states of being. Like Écoute le temps, Les Revenants opens with an

unexpected vehicle crash (Camille's bus accident, as discussed earlier), and as for

Charlotte, the travel between zones is interrupted by an unexpected intervention, with

Victor standing in the road, much like the doe that caused Charlotte's mother's car

accident. Although we do not see a smashed bus, we hear the shattering of glass and the

crunch of metal that marks a violently tragic death of many of the town's children. While

the dead return across metaphysical borders, attempts to leave or enter the town are

thwarted, beginning with the bus crash, and ending with Julie and Laure attempting to

escape the town with Victor, but realizing that the road leads them in endless circles,

blocking their exit.[14]

    While Camille is the only returned member from her specific accident (or, at the

very least, she is the only returned from the crash who is explicitly seen and discussed in

the series), other dead individuals return at the same time. Yet at the same time the dead

are returning, the water level behind the town's enormous dam begins to lower.

Engineers and city officials scramble to find the cause, assuming that there is a breach in

the dam's construction, and they search with sonar, underwater cameras, and divers to try

to find fissures that may be allowing the water to escape at an alarming rate. The town's

inhabitants become increasingly anxious about the dam, which had previously flooded

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[14] The only exception in season 1 is the character of Lucy, who travels into town via bus, and is, in fact, the only character we see able to travel across the town's physical borders, perhaps explaining why she later gains control of the *horde* towards the end of the season.

the valley in the early 1900s, killing any individuals who did not evacuate their homes.[15] The search for cracks in the dam also reveals a different unsettling fact: as the returned are appearing, more and more wild animals begin drowning themselves *intentionally* in the lowering waters; as nature is depleted, humanity is augmented, in form of the returned dead and the sight of the previously flooded "old town," which begins to resurface from beneath the lake as the water level lowers. A ghostly church spire of the drowned town pierces the surface of the lake, like the dagger serial killer Serge uses to tear the flesh of his female victims (echoing the marketing posters in which the dead reach up from the lake to their living counterparts). Just as the butterfly bursts forth through the glass case upon its reanimation, the number of *revenants* seems to be multiplying, bursting free from whatever unknown zone they had previously occupied, moving from death to life.

This tearing also signals the *return* to a state of death and decay after the return as well. The families and the viewer finally become re-accustomed to the *revenants* as normal community members, who have returned as they were *prior* to their death (rather than as the traditional "undead" of zombie movies). But slowly, as the season progresses, the *revenants'* flesh starts to crack, and their actions start to inflict psychological and physical harm on those around them. Slowly, but steadily, *revenants'* skin increasingly begins to peel and pull away with decay, and Simon, held in a prison cell, eats a piece of

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[15] *Les Revenants'* filming location for the dam is Tignes' Lac du Chevril in the Savoie region. Beneath the lake lies the town of Old Tignes, intentionally flooded in 1952 by the French government for the installation of the hydro-electric power generating dam (seen in the series), against residents' opposition. Tignes residents were forcefully expelled from the town before its planned flooding, and the ruined buildings of the old town can still be seen when the lake is very occasionally drained for dam repairs. Ironically, the dam was reportedly never used to produce power for France, as the country changed over to primarily nuclear power shortly after completion of the Tignes dam.

flesh from his stomach to conceal his rotting skin from a guard. The structure of the serial

drama reinforces this shift from the "normal" undead to "zombie-esque," with episodes

initially titled by a character name in the first few episodes ("Camille," "Simon,"

"Victor,") to characters whose category status is questionable or in flux ("Julie," and

"Lucy," who both apparently had survived attacks by a serial killer, and "Adèle," who

attempts suicide at least once; all three become fluid members of the living/dead

categories). Another episode is titled with a pair of living and dead killers, "Serge &

Toni," the serial killer and his brother who killed *him*. And finally, the last episode, titled

"La Horde," mimics the season's transition from individual, non-threatening *revenants* to

the shuffling group of zombies with decaying bodies and nefarious motives. Fissures in

space and a tearing of flesh signal the movements across states-of-being as individuals

move to the town and transition back to life after death (and back to death again as they

begin to re-decay).

In *L'Armée furieuse,* we see the same fracturing of past and present and life and

death. The displacement from the city to the country is necessitated by crimes in which

the culprit splits the skulls of his victims with an axe (in the case of the murders

attributed to the "armée furieuse"), or smashes Léone's head against the flagstone floor,

"comme un oeuf qu'on a lancé par terre, et écrasé" (181) ["like an egg someone threw on

the ground and crushed"]. Physical cracking signals movement between life and death.

The cracking of Léone's skull, an event which baptizes Adamsberg in her blood, is also

mirrored in Émeri's own link to Léone, which came from her rescue of him through the

cracked, fissured surface of an icy pond. Adamsberg and Émeri's symbolic brotherhood

of blood and water is replayed and reversed by their actions, however. While Adamsberg washes his hands clean of blood and attempts to solve the murders and the attack on Léone, Émeri continues to kill his victims and re-bloody his own hands. Their inverted blood/water and water/blood doubling provides the resolution to the *policier* puzzle, with disquieting implications of Léone's butterfly theory: in saving Émeri the innocent boy in the pond in the past, Léone saved the life of a future murderer. The mystery requires the dual insider/outsider status of Adamsberg, for whom "c'était dans les interstices presque immobiles d'une enquête que se logeait parfois les perles les plus rares. Comme les petits coquillages se glissent dans les fissures des rochers, loin de la houle de la haute mer" (64) ["it was in these almost immobile interstices of an investigation where the most rare pearls lodged themselves. Like little shells that slip inside the cracks of the rocks, far from the swells of the open sea"]. Water, with its ability to distort, erase, or reveal, is simultaneously dangerous, linked to rebirth and trauma, and the site of truth.

The traumatic shattering present in *Écoute le temps*, *Les Revenants*, and *L'Armée furieuse* also appears in *Bouche d'ombre* at the moment of the (faked) supernatural intervention during the first séance. Marie-Rose shatters the glass that glides over the Ouija board (20), echoed visually when she later leaps to her death from her apartment and lands on the roof of a car. Lou unknowingly jogs past the scene in the morning; the body has been removed, but the dented car upon which her friend had landed has a visibly smashed windshield (31). Physical cracks that lead to the movement between life and death states are also evident in the comic book form, with word bubbles that infringe on the borders of multiple frames, permeable boundaries between frames and gutters, and

the dissolving of separate spaces when the metaphysical imposes on the real. Images of ghostly apparitions like Marie-Rose and the black cat from the medieval dream stretch across multiple frames, cutting across the gutter and breaking frame boundaries with a continuity of movement rather than a consistency of form/format. This is present in several episodes where altered states meet reality, such as Lou's dreams, the ghost visits, or her hypnosis session. In the first dream at the opening of the book (the medieval Louise sequence discussed previously), lyrics from the 1984 song "Un Autre monde" by French rock group Téléphone float across the panels of each time/setting. Lyrics like "Je rêvais réalité" ["I dreamt of reality"] are inked in red beside dreamworld Louise in the medieval time, and "ce soir dansent les ombres du monde, je rêvais de notre monde" [this evening the shadows of the world dance, I dreamt of our world"] are written beside the now-awake Lou in 1985 (6). A painting in the dream that startled Lou awake, Grünewald's crucifixion image (based on accounts of Saint Briget of Sweden's mystical visions), shows the feet of Jesus punctured by thick nails, the skin split with copious blood flowing in rivulets (5), startling Lou back to present day reality, and also referencing a life after death that will play out as the dead return through the rips in time to Lou to tell their stories. At the end of the comic, new ghosts invade Lou's bedroom, where she sleeps next to the same spectral cat that arrived with Marie-Rose's ghost. Lou sleeps soundly, and Louise, the young girl from the medieval dream lies by her side; an old woman ghost sits in a previously empty chair; and a well-dressed but faceless female ghost stands in the corner. The two new specters discuss the fact that Lou is a "portal" to the spirit world, and that she is a "réceptacle qui nous contient toutes…elle est une petite

cimetière à elle toute seule" (70) ["a vessel that contains us all...she is a little cemetery all

of her own"].

The fluidity of altered states, of dreams and hypnosis, allows the supernatural to

seep through like water, referenced in the Victor Hugo poem that Lou recites in class,

which also appears at the end of the book (71). The poem, "Ce que dit la bouche

d'ombre" (from which the comics series borrows its name) was published in 1855 as part

of Hugo's *Contemplations* collection. A narrator seeks to find the separation between the

physical spaces of life and death, anchoring the physical space to the supernatural search

in a conversation with "la bouche d'ombre," a mouth of shadows from the abyss, and a

metaphor of death. "À l'endroit où le cap se prolonge en presqu'île/Le spectre

m'attendait; l'être sombre et tranquille." [At the place where the Cape extends itself into

a peninsula/The ghost waited for me; a shadowy and quiet being"]. The ghost waited for

the narrator unexpectedly, just as Lou is visited without warning by her multiple ghosts.

The poem further links death to a natural space, with references to "la forêt…l'orage…le

rocher dans les flots… l'eau du fleuve et les arbres des bois…l'océan" ["the forest...the

storm...the boulders in the waves...the water of the rivers and the trees of the woods...the

ocean"], personified with mouths, voices and instruments in a dialogue with their creator;

all of nature lives, and speaks: "Tout parle…Arbres, roseaux, rochers, tout vit! Tout est

plein d'âmes" ["Everything speaks...Trees, reeds, boulders, everything lives! Everything

is filled with souls"]. And like Lou, spirits surround everything in the "éternel murmure"

["the eternal whisper"], closing the first volume of a planned tetralogy of *bande dessinée*

with the images of Lou's ghosts (a promise for the future of the narrative of the series

itself), and the formal poem structure (like the ghosts, a revisiting of the past, as the poem previously appeared in small fragments earlier in the book, when Lou recited it in the classroom and the words visually wove across multiple pages [10]). The metaphysical is made real through the fluid space of altered states and permeable boundaries, and by the construction of the narrative which separates the real and the imagined, combines them, and then realigns the perception of their division.

In each of these works, space is used to open up time, breaking boundaries and tearing the fabric of space/time to bring the past into the present, with hauntings and invasions of beings from the supernatural realm. The division between categories is undone, cracked and broken like the bodies of the dead, with fluid passage between previously fixed groupings often including the imagery of broken glass, pooling blood, and references to water that highlight the play of opacity/transparency and the literal ooze of life through fissures and tears. Through literal cracks, one sees the destruction of binaries, the fluidity of movement between categories that grows more important, and flows in multiple directions. Water takes on multi-faceted symbolism in the realms of time and space, a conduit between life and death, and past and present. The fluid movement between categories allows for the potential of multiple *possible* worlds, with water refractive like Deleuze's time crystal: past, present, and potential space merge, meld, and bounce off of one another. In his *Cinéma I: L'image mouvement,* Deleuze characterizes water as "le milieu par excellence où l'on peut extraire le mouvement de la chose mue, ou la mobilité du mouvement lui-même: d'où l'importance optique et sonore de l'eau dans les recherches rythmiques" (112-13) [water is "the most perfect

environment in which movement can be extracted from the thing moved, or mobility from movement itself. This is the origin of the visual and auditory importance of water in research on rhythm" (*Movement* 77)]. In these examples, where water displaces death, there is a lack of visual and auditory movement, or only the hint of it; we do not witness metamorphosis to experience what Deleuze calls "liquid perception," rather, it is recounted to the reader/spectator (such as Émeri's recounted childhood story of the icy pond, or Julien telling Charlotte that the water made his mother ill), or it is merely implied in the narrative (the *revenants'* return seems linked to the lowering dam level). The emphasis is placed *not* on the movement through water, but rather on the fissures through which water seeps slowly, not in rushing bursts but in small drops, after having held movement in stasis (perfectly visually encapsulated by the opening credits of *Les Revenants,* in which deer and small forest animals hang suspended in the murky, unmoving water of the lake, beneath which lies the drowned, flooded town). Death lies beneath still waters, waiting for a boundary to be pierced, and for cracks to allow the slow seepage of the supernatural into the real, and the dead back to life.

V. Detective Skills and Procedural Mapping

After divided spaces and doubled characters are established, these categories are broken down by cracks and movements between them. In each of the works, a clairvoyant figure is a secondary character whose visions allow the protagonist to work through their process of mapping clues, through logic and scientific process. Charlotte's mother in *Écoute le temps*, Lucy in *Les Revenants*, Lina in *L'Armée furieuse*, and Lou and her aunt Josette in *Bouche d'ombre* are all imbued with the gift of supernatural sight.

Characters are compelled to explore the mysteries of their respective regions through these visions, but ultimately the investigating protagonist uses mapping as an important tool to maintain a link to the rational. Just as in the tradition of a standard *policier*, the narrative is broken into segmented clues for the reader to try to construct a timeline and motive alongside (or in place of) the detective figures. Within the *fantastique* structure of supernatural, the role of a detective figure emerges with emphasis on the heuristic value of an analytical, investigative process, through the spatial mapping and evaluation of clues that become crucial to solving the murder investigation, thus shifting the *fantastique* genre coding back into the realm of the procedural, and privileging the role of the detective to glean, chart, rationalize, and give meaning to scattered clues.

In *Écoute le temps,* as Charlotte links more sound events to specific people and dates, she cross-references each one, marking their placement in chalk on the tile floor, and ripping at the cracks and tears to try to find the exact moment of her mother's death, ignoring chunks of the house as it crumbles bit by bit. The separate spaces of past and present collide in the space that formerly represented family, and as Charlotte's tracking of interrelated sound episodes becomes more complex, her notes fill the whole house. She begins to realize that these interactions are tied to specific locations in the house, and she tracks correlations between the conversations and dates that are mentioned in the audio or that are noted in her mother's datebook. Working around the clock to find clues to the killer's identity, she links separate events with twine string across the rooms, furiously narrowing each timeline down to isolated moments, and tagging the intersecting coordinates with strips of newspaper and color-coded white, red, green, and yellow cloth.

Time is the medium by which Charlotte is haunted by intrusions of past events in the house, but it also serves as a stylistic device, abridged in ellipses between scenes, which are somewhat disorienting to the viewer. As the film opens, sequences shift in time and space, from Charlotte and her mother in a car collision with a deer, to Charlotte on the job site when she receives the phone call announcing her mother's death, then to her mother's funeral, to Charlotte's travel to the country, and to different days when she listens to sound intrusions in the house or visits with neighbors to glean clues of their connections to her mother. There is no real indication of elapsed time among these episodes, nor the order in which they originally occurred, leaving the viewer to piece together their temporal significance—much as Charlotte must construct a web to piece together the mystery of her mother's murder. The crime cannot be solved without the graphic representation of space created by Charlotte, using the tools of her trade: her sound equipment and her rational, physical mapping of space with chalk measurements, written tags on webs of string, and cross-referencing strands allow her to find intersections of time and space to find specific moments. This technical training, mapping of a supernatural timeline, allows her to catch the murderer.

In *Les Revenants*, graphic markings and the characters' use of categorizing tools work to reveal, map, and solve, and, in the absence of a strong, primary detective figure, the tasks are shared by the spectator. Victor, who first appears to be simply one of several revenants, is revealed to be a key character, linking different groups of revenants and bridging deaths in both the past and present. This is foreshadowed in his first appearance at the bus stop where he meets Julie: Victor, standing behind the bus shelter glass, is

positioned next to a lit advertisement on the left wall of the shelter, a poster of flowers in the shape of a skull reflected on either side of the glass around him like a pair of butterfly wings. The doubled image of flowers and skulls around the young boy underscores the link between nature and death that pervades the entire series and links him to the *victorina stelenes* from the opening sequence, trapped behind glass and prepared to burst through. Other visual clues unlock the story of the revenants for the living: Julie becomes attuned to Victor's uncanny abilities when she finds his drawings of her neighbor's death by apparent suicide; Léna discovers Simon is a revenant when she finds his photo tacked to a corkboard wall at a bar; Simon's death-by-suicide is revealed in daughter Chloe's crayon drawings; and Thomas pieces together the movements of Simon and the other revenants by combing through security footage throughout the town and in Thomas and Adèle's house. Most importantly, scientists and engineers relentlessly test and examine the walls of the village dam with a series of technical equipment to find the leak that threatens to drown the city (and which marked the beginning of the returning dead), a technical act meant to staunch the flow of both returning and impending death.

Visual cues also play a vital role in the series structure: the intrusion of the *fantastique* is deeply embedded in realism, and the supernatural is meted out in small doses, a progressive mini puzzle for characters—and the spectator—to try to piece together clues and learn the rules, such as the revenants' continuous hunger, their inability to sleep, their inability to be killed or injured. These *revenant* zombies are not the decaying, shuffling undead from countless horror movies. They do not appear to be menacing or seem to crave human flesh, they simply return home as if their absence were

a long nap. Some of the series' most clever moments hinge on our expectations in regards to the inclusion of undead characters, however. The opening bus crash sequence, eerie slow-motion opening credits of empty landscapes and animals suspended underwater, suspenseful ethereal music from post-rock Scottish band Mogwai, and horror-movie tactics all work together to set a distinctly "odd" tone: the viewer is primed to watch the shadows that fill the frame, or watch figures in the background in the moody, gloomy atmosphere (which, thematically and visually, with an Americana-themed diner, mythical town legends, murky waters, and a perpetually icy grey sky, earns its frequent comparisons to *Twin Peaks* aesthetics). The series flips horror tropes on end by ramping up the suspense and revealing something mundane, slowly retraining the viewer *not* to expect ghosts lurking in the shadows; rather, we know who the ghosts are, because they are simply returning to normal, everyday lives.[16] Eventually, though, these false visual cues lull the viewer into thinking that *Les Revenants* is simply a family drama about the behavior of victims and survivors. And then, brilliantly, subtly, and quite disturbingly, everything begins to change. The dead become less and less benevolent, and the images of the undead that we had originally expected early in the season, those shuffling, scary hordes of decaying zombies, actually start to appear, culminating in the aptly named episode 8, "La Horde," with the newly patchy-fleshed *revenants* congregating in the forest at dusk, ambling in packs through the thick fog, destroying property and threatening the villagers with ultimatums and destruction. The viewer, in the absence of

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[16] Amusing visual cues that push back on viewer expectations include: Claire, standing at the bathroom sink, opens the cabinet mirror, and for a moment it appears that there will be a classic horror reveal of something or someone behind her when the mirror swings shut; instead, the image that appears in the mirror is Claire's paunchy ex-husband, not a ghost. The indistinct apparition behind the window? Just Camille spying on her now-older sister, jealous over a boy. The figure emerging from the inky black night behind the bus stop? Only Victor, a little boy looking for his mother.

effective police, is tasked with tracing the destruction of the community through visual cues and behavioral tics of the *revenants*, and by linking their increasingly connected storylines through the small portions of the stories that are given to us in flashbacks that led to this point.

The emerging truth drawn forth from cloudy details is true for Adamsberg, as well, in *L'Armée furieuse.* Word associations and mental images give Adamsberg the sensation "de picotement dans la nuque" (100) ["a tingling at the nape of the neck"] when he is unable to associate them to hard evidence. Indistinct clues nag his mind, like references to sugar that seem to come up in conversation frequently just after he finds sugar lump wrappers on the path where the first body was found. As Léone tells Adamsberg*,* "il y a beaucoup de détails dans le monde…Et comme chaque détail ne se reproduit jamais sous la même forme et met en branle d'autres détails, ça va loin…" (73). ["there are many details in the world...And since no detail is ever replicated in the same shape and it always sets in motion other details, it goes on and on"]. Adamsberg's theory, unlike that of his colleagues, is to consider his feelings

> comme des faits avérés. Adamsberg rétorquait que les sensations *était* des
> faits, des éléments matériels qui avaient autant de valeur qu'une analyse
> de laboratoire. Que le cerveau était le plus gigantesque des labos,
> parfaitement capable de sérier et d'analyser les données reçues, comme
> par exemple un regard, et d'en extraire des résultats quasi certains. (115-
> 16)

[as solid facts. Adamsberg retorted that feelings *were* facts, material elements that had as much value as a laboratory analysis. That the brain was the most gigantic of labs, perfectly capable of classifying and analyzing received information, such as a look, and to extract from it near-certain results].

This insistence on a mental process is linked to the physical plotting of space, as Adamsberg can only piece together disparate clues when he physically moves through space, logging clues as he walks through the countryside he has diligently studied in maps. Long sequences of specific directions lend the reader some familiarity with the topography of the village, like lengthy directions for the Chemin de Bonneval, such as "il part du lieu-dit les Illiers, àpresque trois kilomètres d'ici, puis il traverse une partie de la forêt d'Alance. A partir de la Croix de Bois, il change de nom" (60) ["it starts from the hamlet of Illiers, about three kilometers from here, then crosses a part of the Alance forest. Starting at the Croix de Bois, it changes names"]. To finally solve the case, Adamsberg must exert a physical energy to match his mental one, walking while he actively pieces together clues:

> Il marcha lentement dans les rues […] C'est en ces moments qu'Adamsberg, presque inaccessible à l'anxiété ou à toute émotion vive, se tendait comme une corde, servant les poings, s'efforçant de saisir ce qu'il avait vu sans le voir, ou pensé sans le penser […] attendant que la fluette image remonte en vacillant à la surface…" (393-94).

[He walked slowly through the streets [...] It was in these moments that Adamsberg, almost impervious to anxiety or any strong emotion, was as tense as a rope, clenching his fists, trying hard to grasp what he had seen without seeing, or thought without thinking [...] waiting for the wisp of an image to flicker back up to the surface].

By valorizing the mental skill set of a detective (and a reader), physical space spans the present as Adamsberg walks, and the past in maps and directions given earlier in the text. This space is then linked to Adamsberg's mental map of clues from his recollections, and the lexical map is sprinkled throughout the chapters for the reader to revisit. As a result, Todorov's *policier* timeline unfolds forward and backwards in equal measure, in the mental representation of both the character and the reader: "the story of the crime and the story of the investigation" become simultaneous through the schematic spatial plan.

Like Adamsberg, Lou in *Bouche d'ombre* connects seemingly innocent events and references in a mental mapping process, through hypnosis, which appears visually to the reader/viewer of the comic book. What initially was presented as supernatural, the séance, is revealed to be sibling jealousy that provokes Marie-Rose to take her own life. The *fantastique* assumed as real is rationalized by attributing meaning to the clues formerly locked in Lou's memory, and which are pieced together in a visual process for the protagonist and the reader-viewer. Graphic markings through the comic book format helps the reader and the character map and solve clues. The image of the Grünewald alterpiece from Lou's medieval dream also appears as a literal puzzle in the therapist's office, a work in progress that Lou helps complete by finding a puzzle piece on the floor.

Repeated images and words are linked in the visual mapping as Lou translates and transposes the memories of the dead, building the truth one clue at a time.

Roland Barthes said that "detective work consists in filling in, backwards, the fascinating and unendurable interval separating the event from its cause; the detective, emanation of the entire society...becomes the modern figure of ancient solver of riddles" (189). The act of mapping and detection allows characters to transform the grief and intrusions of the supernatural into rational logic and resolution, revealing an underlying structure of the framework of the narrative itself: the past invades the present, life leads to death, death becomes life, and the present subsumes the past. Divided categories are broken down with fluid yet violent movement between them, and the graphic mapping of details can be, once again, linked back to Todorov's dual timeline, beginning at the center and moving simultaneously backward and forward; a symmetrical flow of movement, as if Todorov's timeline were stabbed in the middle, like a pin in the symmetrical, reanimated butterfly of *Les Revenants*, beating its wings and potentially causing an explosion in Bangkok. Christina Ljungberg calls narrative palindromes "chiastic figurations that arrest the habitual tempo-linear sequence…Because they can be read both backwards and forwards, palindromes emerge as multilayered, multidirectional, and polytemporal mappings reflecting the notorious instability of human lives…" (247). Indeed, in each work considered in this chapter, the use of space underscores the horrific nature of what violence and injustice humans, and not the supernatural, can do to each other in the past and the present, and the ramifications of instability that such actions pose for the future.

Chapter 2: Into the Woods: From the "Locked Room" to Locked Nature

> *La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers*
> *Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;*
> *L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles*
> *Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.*
> Charles Baudelaire, "Correspondances."[1]
>
> [Nature is a temple whose living colonnades
> Breathe forth a mystic speech in fitful sighs;
> Man wanders among symbols in those glades
> Where all things watch him with familiar eyes].[2]

While the first chapter explored how time interacts with space, breaking it wide

open and allowing for the possibility of intrusion by outside, supernatural forces, this

second segment, by contrast, examines rural spaces depicted as a closed circuit,

threatened from within. In the four works examined in chapter two—Alain Guiraudie's

2013 film, *L'Inconnu du lac* (*Stranger by the Lake*); Marc Herpoux and Hervé Hadmar's

2014 television series *Les Témoins* (*Witnesses*); Stéphane Piatzszek and Léonard

Chemineau's 2014 graphic novel, *Les premiers* "Tome 1: Le choc"; and Pierre

Lemaitre's 2011 novel *Alex*—the traditional crime narrative focus is shifted from urban,

police-patrolled cities to isolated, rural spaces. In rural zones, voyeurs and predators

pepper the periphery like a virtual version of Foucault's "Panopticon," wherein members

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[1] Baudelaire, Charles. "Correspondances," *Les Fleurs du mal.* Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, 1857: 19.

[2] Baudelaire, Charles. "Correspondences," *Collected Poems.* Trans. Richard Wilbur. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004: 56.

are policed by an all-seeing community. Yet in these four works, the represented space remains paradoxically outside of the law, untouchable to detectives who are rendered symbolically impotent in his or her failure to enact the heroic "savoir" role so standard in detective fiction. This chapter will explore community sensibilities in reimagined versions of Charles Perrault's fairy-tales, with a predatory Big Bad Wolf lurking in the forest, a *Barbe Bleue* gleefully dispatching curious lovers, a vulnerable Sleeping Beauty waiting in the woods, and characters awakening and transforming into unnatural beasts and predators under the cover of darkness.

The locations of the four works considered in this chapter vary: Alain Guiraudie's erotic thriller film, *L'Inconnu du lac,* takes place at a secluded rural lake in France, where men sunbathe on the rocky shores and cruise for sex in a nearby grove. For the all-male community, this rural, enclosed space in the shadow of the trees appears to serve as protection and respite from normative masculinity and morality of the outside world. The traditional crime narrative's focus is shifted from an urban, homosocial police fraternity to that of a rural, homosexual playground rife with sex and murder. Indeed, the film's scenery reflects this shift: the lake retreat is closed off from the world, and represented in tri-level planes with mountains towering above the lake's reflective surface, a seemingly placid mirror that hides what may lurk in murky waters below. The same play between opacity and transparency is also a key motif in television mini-series *Les Témoins,* set in the grey, bleak winter of northern France. Investigators Sandra Winckler (theater actress Marie Dompnier in her first lead television role) and Paul Maisonneuve (played by

versatile veteran actor Thierry Lhermitte) search for clues in the small industrial town of Le Tréport. Bodies have been raided from cemeteries across the region and arranged neatly in show houses, with the corpses of an unrelated man, woman, and teenaged girl staged among the furniture in the immaculate model homes (*maison témoins*). The rise of a small community's secrets, unearthed like the cadavers, is set against lifeless, abandoned neighborhoods and breathtakingly vast expanses of the seaside surroundings. High angle shots of the city show dark shadows that steal over the buildings down below, a creeping darkness that silently settles over the village.

A foreboding darkness also sets the tone for what appears to be a simple missing-persons case in the Casterman graphic novel *Les Premiers* "Tome 1: Le Choc", the first collaboration between author Stéphane Piatzszek and artist Léonard Chemineau, which blends science, fantasy, and the crime procedural in the setting of a (formerly) quiet town near Perpignan in the south of France. Major Benjamin Lesnick of the gendarmerie is troubled by unsolved disappearances in nearby villages and plagued by feverish nightmares that feature violent, cannibalistic Neanderthals. As the missing-persons case grows more complicated, Lesnick's visions begin to affect his waking life. The configuration of police procedural starts out in a straightforward manner, with investigations and arrests unfolding in a small farming community; yet little-by-little the story incorporates hallucinations and dream-spaces into the investigation, and the violent visions transform Lesnick into a predatory beast, luring him from the safety of his farm into the dark forest.

Equally inevitable and unavoidable doom can be found in the trajectory of the

main character *Alex*, in author and screenwriter Pierre Lemaitre's award-winning thriller

novel of the same name, which follows police Commandant Camille Verhœven, drawn

outside of his Paris jurisdiction in a race against the clock to find a young, beautiful, and

mysterious woman who was kidnapped from the sidewalk in broad daylight. As the

victim Alex escapes her prison and transforms into a cold-blooded murderer, the reader is

moved from sympathy toward the woman and fear of her oncoming death, to horror at the

grotesque revelation that she is a savage murderer (and indeed the casual nature with

which she commits such atrocities).[3] The book switches perspectives and timelines

between Verhœven as he searches for clues, and Alex, as she moves among unknown

locations and tight, claustrophobic spaces, first left for dead in an abandoned warehouse

far outside of the city, and then as the investigation tracks her revenge killings across the

map.

In *L'Inconnu du lac*, *Les Témoins, Les Premiers,* and *Alex,* depictions of rural

spaces are anything but bucolic, with potential danger skulking just outside of view.

Rural space and the forbidden forest, a staple "scene of the crime" in Charles Perrault's

fairy tales, take on the sinister and foreboding properties of a primal danger zone, and

construction of space is highly stylized, with settings shaped into geometric architectures

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[3] To wit: "Alex est allée au cinéma, diner chez Chartier, acheter de l'acide pour batterie" (*Alex* [Fr] 203) ["Alex went out to a movie, to dinner at Chartier and to buy some battery acid" (*Alex* [Eng] 199)]; later, after a gratuitous and gory description of a fresh murder victim, "[Alex] attrape une revue et entame les mots fléchés" (*Alex* [Fr] 230) [Alex "picks up a magazine and starts on the crossword" (*Alex* [Eng] 226)].

and restricted areas. In each of the four works, with locations in France stretching from the northernmost port city of Dunkirk to the southernmost suburbs of Perpignan, shifting the location from a traditionally urban space to the rural regions of France, traveling in forbidden zones, and the consequences of dangerous desires all become central to re-mapping the modern *policier* and contemporary anxieties within marginalized communities.

I. Geometric Spatial Configurations in *L'inconnu du lac*

The use of highly structured spatial configurations, represented by geometric configurations and containment, contrast the pursuit of control (often linked to the detective's priority of deductive reasoning and order), and the very uncontrollable state of nature itself with violence inside the community—and at its most literal cellular level—within the body. Film *L'Inconnu du lac,* a small-budget, festival circuit darling, earned director Guiraudie *Un Certain Regard - Prix de la mise en scène* at the Festival de Cannes in 2013, a nomination for *Meilleur réalisateur* at the César awards in 2014, and the stamp of "best film of the year" by *Cahiers du Cinéma*. The accolades bestowed upon Guiraudie reflect his success in designing a meticulous structure upon which to build an exploration of homosexual desire and murder. The film takes place over the course of ten days, as protagonist Franck (Pierre Deladonchamps), a young gay man, visits an unnamed lake[4] frequented by nudists and similarly minded strangers. At the lake, space is

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[4] While the lake in the film is unidentified, the filming location was le lac de Sainte-Croix near les Gorges du Verdun in the southeastern region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur. Guiraudie mentioned in an interview that he was inspired by personal knowledge of a similar remote and mountainous lake site along the Tarn River (Mandelbaum).

arranged in layers of concentric circles: the lake at the center is surrounded by a circular strip of beach; the beach surrounded by a ring of dense bushes and trees; the forest encircled by fields and clearings where the men cruise for sex. In the clearings, men pace at various speeds, filmed in deep focus and circling in different planes of the frame, like Saturn's moons orbiting any man who enters the scene. This clearing space is also surrounded by a parking lot with haphazardly parked cars facing in every direction and one singular pathway snaking past the trees. The start of each day replays nearly identical sequences of Franck moving through and across each layer of the location toward its centermost point: every day he parks his car, weaves through the woods toward the beach, and swims in the lake; finally, this progression moves back outward, with Franck meeting men in the clearing for sexual encounters, and finishing the day in the outer ring of the parking lot as darkness envelops the forest. The parking lot is filmed from a high-angle, with the same exact shot used as the only distinguishable marker to separate days, with only slight variations in the numbers of cars until the fifth day, when the body has been discovered in the lake. Guiraudie constructs the entirety of each of the ten days with countless repeated shots and motions, each varying only slightly, creating a symmetrical framework in which the film's plot unfolds.

The closer Franck and other characters move toward the center circle (the lake), the more spatial order appears in the frame. Each day as Franck enters the forest from the parking lot, he passes the chaotically parked cars and weaves through the trees toward the beach, filmed first from behind, moving in a semi-circle from right to left on screen; this

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is nearly always followed by a cut to Franck centered and filmed straight-on, moving again from right to the left, but completing the circle, as he is now facing the camera. As he approaches the beach, the lake laps at the shore and trees are more sparsely scattered, with sunbathers appearing across the frame in deep focus; each day different men are placed at three planes of space, distributed evenly across the beach. Once Franck reaches the lake, he engages in conversation with a portly, middle-aged man, Henri (Patrick d'Assumçao), who stays fully clothed in his own corner of the beach, away from the others. Henri and Franck sit beside one another, centered and framed side-by-side in a medium shot throughout the film. The farther Franck and the others move from outside of the setting (the parking lot) to the inside (zeroing in on the lake), the more symmetrical and balanced the staging appears onscreen. It is fitting that the men become more at ease as they move toward the lake to *drague* one another, penetrating different rings spatially, toward the explicit goal of meeting what Henri refers to as "one of your own," a kind of membership in the utopian community of no-strings-attached fornication. This same trajectory of movement in and out, repeated *ad infinitum*, a physical movement of penetration in filmic space, mimics not only the sex act itself, but also mirrors Franck's attraction/repulsion with a tanned stranger named Michel (Christophe Paou), after he sees Michel drown his lover Pascal at the end of day two. Franck knows that Michel is dangerous, that he murdered his lover and shows no remorse, yet Franck's lust for him overrides his judgment, and he continues to return to see Michel each day. Just as the chaotic visual organization of the lake site became more organized as the zones are penetrated, the fear and shock expressed by Franck after witnessing the murder is

transformed into calm and centeredness, as an increasingly relaxed Franck penetrates and is penetrated himself.

Circles are not the only geometric figures that dominate the film, however. Triangular mountains tower above the lake, and tri-level spaces invoke an unsettling depth and breadth of the location. The mountains loom over the space below, closing the lake and its forest off from the outside world. The lake surface reflects the mountains on the water's surface, obscuring unseen danger that may lurk just beneath—a rumored giant *silure,*[5] or Michel, who dips and disappears beneath the water, and even Pascal's dead body, unseen and undisturbed in the depths of the lake for several days. Triangles of love and jealousy dominate the storyline, between Michel/Franck and multiple third parties. Indeed, most interactions between men at the lake are driven by a triangular desire, similar to René Girard's concept of *désir mimétique* [mimetic desire], coined in 1961 to explain imitation in social constructs. An individual assigns desire to an object or person through a mediated form of desire, that is to say, in imitation of another individual's desire toward the same object.[6] In the film, as Franck has sex beneath the trees, there is often a third party nearby, a watcher hovering above them, masturbating until instructed to leave. One particularly persistent "watcher" figure is the minor character of Eric, who follows Franck and various partners, then actively pursues him until cornering him on the beach on day nine, saying "Je suis content de te voir seul, enfin. Tu ne peux pas savoir

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[5] The *silure* is a type of giant, omnivorous genus of catfish found in Europe and Asia that can grow between five to eight feet long.

[6] See: Girard, René. *Mensonge romantique et Vérité* Romanesque. Grasset,1961.

comment j'ai envie de toi," ["I'm happy to run into you alone, finally. You have no idea how much I want you"], and Franck is aware that Eric's desire has built from having seen him with other men, particularly Michel. The resulting coupling of Eric and Franck on the beach also has an unseen watcher, with Michel later appearing from the woods and intimating that he has witnessed their tryst. Another perhaps more crucial triangle exists among Henri/Franck/Michel. Henri, middle-aged, recently divorced, and confused about his own sexuality, is attracted to Franck for companionship rather than sexual desire, growing protective as Franck professes his love and infatuation with murderous Michel after only a few short days. This triangle will in fact lead to Henri's own murder by Michel, as he essentially sacrifices himself, leaving his protective corner of the beach to reveal that he knows of Michel's crimes.

For Franck and Michel, their own attraction follows a triangulation, although the model is perhaps not as linear as philosopher Girard's: Franck desires Michel, in spite of the fact that he witnessed the drowning of Pascal. While Franck's desire for Michel exists without the *autre*/other of Pascal himself (who is killed at the end of day two), Franck is in part compelled to be with Michel because of the *murder* itself; thus the specter of death—and Freud's concept of death drive, or *todestrieb*[7]—is in fact the mediator of the Franck/Michel relationship. This Franck/Michel/Death triangulation will culminate in the arrival of Inspector Damrodeur (Jérôme Chappatte), who emerges from the bushes (presented virtually identically to that of sex-watcher Eric in terms of entrance and

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[7] See: Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Trans. James Strachey. NY: Norton, 1975.

fashion choices, dressed daily in a purple shirt as he watches from the trees) becoming the catalyst for the film's third act. As the inspector appears from out of the darkness to ask questions about various alibis and motives, he creates an instability in the power dynamic between Franck and Michel—Franck, who knows about the murder and lies to the inspector, and Michel, who knows that Franck witnessed the event, and wonders how much his lover will reveal in an investigation, triggering a series of events that will lead to the massacre of multiple characters in the film.

Not only do these triangulated relationships drive the narrative, but each scene between the different triads is meticulously constructed in a pyramid of movement as well: a character enters the frame solo, joins up with a single partner, is interrupted by the arrival of the third party, who takes one of the pair away, leaving one individual on screen again (from 1-2-3-2-1 characters onscreen, repeated through each of the ten days). Additionally, the shots are often framed so that the movement of the bodies is also a pyramid, moving from high to low, starting with the singular character shot from below, dominating the frame as he is standing or walking; the character moves to sitting position with the first partner; the positions progress to laying on the ground, either sunbathing or having sex; then characters stand again, and walk away. This incredibly structured composition, character groupings from 1-2-3-2-1 people, with simultaneous movement of high-medium-low-medium-high, is repeated so frequently that it becomes a cycle, repeated day after day. Three characters cannot co-exist in the same space, plane, or level, much like the impossible object of a "Penrose triangle," a design of three separate

"L" shapes that meet at right angles to form a triangle that can only exist in 2-dimensional renderings. Yet if one simplifies the lines of a Penrose triangle, it becomes a version of a Möbius strip, an infinite loop with no beginning or end, a triangle transformed into a never-ending circle (much like the interchangeability of days at the lake, or indeed Franck's own ambiguous ending, hunted by Michel). In *L'Inconnu du lac*, time is circular, interactions triangular, and spatial configurations combine and mediate both in an infinite loop of repeated images.

II. Dominant Natural Landscapes and Jagged Divisions within *Les Témoins*

The 2014 television series *Les Témoins* also includes a similarly hyper-structured geometry in the landscape, this time in northern France, with sweeping helicopter shots that show square, flat fields bordered by jagged forest tree lines, and sharp white chalk cliffs casting shadows on the softly scalloped coastline below. The diverse landscape, grey and sunless in winter, provides a unique and fittingly gloomy location for a mystery series. Director and screenwriter Hervé Hadmar, explains the choice of the north as setting for their moody crime drama: "Ça souffle et soudain, le ciel vire à l'orage: on ressent physiquement le caractère imprévisible du destin. L'idéal pour un thriller" (Groussard and Jarry) ["The wind changes and suddenly the sky turns stormy: one can physically feel the unpredictable quality of destiny. It's perfect for a thriller"]. Hadmar and co-writer Marc Herpoux (creators of short-lived but critically acclaimed Canal+ series, *Pigalle, la nuit*) produced six episodes of *Les Témoins* to air as a mini-series in

March 2015 for France 2, at the cost of 6.65 million euros over 78 days of filming.[8] The series was a success in primetime programming for France 2, with a weekly average of 4.34 million viewers per episode,[9] beating TF1's longtime ratings buster *Les Experts* (the French title of American series *CSI*). *Les Témoins* became only the second subtitled television program to run on Channel 4 in the UK during evening primetime hours, and the show debuted to largely favorable reviews in the US as well, after being released as streaming content on Netflix in May, 2015; a second series was commissioned for 2016 by France 2.[10] The show is filmed in the real-life industrial coastal town of Le Tréport and the port city of Dunkirk, in the Seine-Maritime *département* of Haute-Normandie. Sandra Winckler tries to balance her home life with partner Eric and eight-year old daughter Chloé, and her demanding job as lieutenant in the *police judiciaire* in Lille. Sandra is put in charge of the investigation into the bodies displayed in the show homes, and discovers clues linking the victims to former police chief Paul Maisonneuve, retired and convalescing in a rehabilitation center two years after a serious car crash that may have been a suicide attempt. Maisonneuve reluctantly agrees to assist on the case, and the two investigators begin to research links among the strange murder tableaus in the show homes and a group of local businessmen, the male "father" figures found in the grisly displays of cadaver "families."

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[8] "*Les Témoins*: macabres découvertes au coeur d'une nouvelle série de France 2." *TéléObs,* 17 Mar. 2015. http://teleobs.nouvelobs.com/actualites/20150317.OBS4770/les-temoins-macabres-decouvertes-au-coeur-d-une-nouvelle-serie-de-france-2.html

[9] Jérôme Roulet, "*Les témoins*: un final sous tension attendu par 4 million de personnes." *Toute la télé*, 2 Apr. 2015. http://www.toutelatele.com/les-temoins-un-final-sous-tension-attendu-par-4-million-de-personnes-70327

[10] The show has also been exported to Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and Russia, and discussions of an American remake are underway.

The small town setting of Le Tréport creates a perfectly creepy setting for the action of *Les Témoins*, with nature scarred by the past and the city's ghosts; empty tombs create gaping pits in the landscape, and WWII era German-dug tunnels snake beneath the soil (which are not only referenced by police officers in the series, but which truly exist, ruins of elaborate defense complexes left behind by the Nazis under much of Normandy); meanwhile, massive bunkers from the same era rise up from the sand, creating strange geometric figures that seem to balance on a corner as if dropped from the sky.[11] Ghosts of the ugly historical past create a landscape in which new traumas unfold, with abandoned and uninhabited spaces giving the impression of an endless ghost town. In opening segments of many of the episodes, the use of helicopter shots and wide angle shots in deep focus fill the frame with both natural and man-made features of the town, underscoring an emptiness and lack of movement within the landscape. The dominant cliffs and the sea are repeatedly displayed at such a large scale that small movements like motor traffic or pedestrians are invisible, swallowed whole by the vastness of nature. Newly constructed housing developments stand empty, a series of identical boxy houses sitting vacant in silent neighborhoods, ghost towns left abandoned in the wake of massive deindustrialization in the region. Herpoux notes that "Les effets de la désindustrialisation, ces lieux de vie désertés ont participé à alimenter nos histoires de fantômes et de maisons

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[11] These mammoth remains of Germany's Atlantikwall lie haphazardly beneath cliffs along the coast, primarily due to controlled demolitions by local French authorities to prevent rockslides and potential falling dangers on public beaches below. The bunkers are essentially pushed off the cliff by explosives, deeply embedding in the sand wherever they land. Such is the case of the seemingly gravity-defying *blockhaus of Sainte-Marguerite-Sur-Mer*, as well as the *blockhaus du Hourdel* (Cayeux-sur-mer), which plays a key role in *Les Témoins*. See also: cultural theorist Paul Virilio's *Bunker archéologie*, a 1975 collection of his essays and photographs of bunkers in Normandy.

hantées" (Groussard and Jarry) ["the effects of de-industrialization, these deserted living spaces helped to fuel our ghost stories and haunted houses"]. As Sandra and Paul work to solve the mystery of the staged corpses, they move through these haunted spaces, handheld camera work keeping them tightly in the frame as they cross through lifeless and abandoned areas, then switching back to long or extreme long shots to show nature creeping back in and reclaiming what should be or might have once been human, lived-in spaces.

Le Tréport itself sits beneath the towering cliffs, and the town is linked to clifftops via a funicular railway that passes up the cliff front and through a tunnel. At the end of the pilot episode (which ends on a cliffhanger of Paul being shot at while he descends the cliff in the glass car), Sandra follows a hunch about the gunman, and discovers that two criminals from Paul's era at the *police judiciaire* have escaped prison after a massive fire; the prison roommates Grég Serano (who killed his wife over an extra-marital affair) and Kaz Gorbier (a dentist by day and face-painted rapist and murderer by night) both have fled the prison and seem to be targeting Paul, taunting him with pictures of his dead wife's tomb, attempting to shoot first him, then his son, and targeting Sandra in a car accident, sending Paul the message that "les fantômes sont de retour." During their pursuit of Serano and Gorbier, locations like Serano's family farm and Paul's childhood home are shown to be abandoned and in disrepair, cobwebs strung across rooms, broken tiles and rotting wallpaper falling beside sagging doorframes, and mold and leaves burst through gaps in the brick and plaster. Small trees snake up through

cracks in courtyard pavements, and dry leaves scatter across bedroom floors. What formerly were family houses filled with life and movement are now simply containers of decay, with crumbling and creeping rot growing insidiously beneath the foundation, the opposing forces of life and death, the past and the present, and good and evil seeping into zones that previously represented home and family.

In those oppositions, horizontal and vertical axes are constantly evoked in images. In the show home in episode one, Sandra surveys the crime scenes from behind tables and kitchen counters, as the three disinterred bodies slump over in chairs and onto counters as if sleeping. At the crime scene, the sagging and splayed bodies contrast with the sharp lines of the austere white and chrome kitchens in the show home, with metal grates and appliances that create hard angles, and the crisp dark stripe of backsplash cuts across an otherwise colorless kitchen (identical in each show home along the block, and making each crime scene indistinguishable). Severe and prominent lines cut across the frame in each of these houses, with alleys, hallways, and pathways leading, pointing, or sometimes speeding toward a far-off point in the distance. Throughout the series, both in interior and exterior locations, shots are framed in one point perspective, with parallel lines that recede to a vanishing point in the distance. Hadmar uses this shot repeatedly in scenic shots of the coast, with the horizon creating a bold horizontal line with parallel angular lines that meet at a central point in the center of the frame. One of the more dramatic of these shots is the opening credit sequence: Sandra stands, facing the camera, centered in an extreme long shot on the boardwalk by the sea. The camera switches

between a front-angle shot of her body and face, and a long shot of a small shed at the end of a wooden planked walkway. The path stretches out in front of her, flanked by small cabanas, a line of identical roofs extending into the distance on the right, while the rocky beach and the sea line the path vertically to the left. The image is constructed so that it is a one-point perspective with a vanishing point obscured by the shed, and the horizon in the background cuts a sharp horizontal line against the angles that all seem to point toward the shed door. The shot sizes tighten on Sandra's face into a close up as she reaches the door, peering inside as a wolf emerges snarling from the shadows. The construction of the image pushes the eye to the center, pointing Sandra to the shed door as if her journey to it is inevitable, and Sandra and the wolf become locked in a stare down at the vertex of the angles.

Similarly, in the first sequence of episode three, the camera pulls back from the dark back of Paul's coat to reveal that he is standing in front of a new crime scene. The road stretches far into the distance, the exaggerated towering triangular roofs and boxy two-story houses replicated seemingly into infinity, with a mirror image of houses across the road. The sidewalk leads to a 45-degree angle toward the vanishing point, with a thick, horizontal line of crime scene tape cutting across the center of the frame. Paul stands in the center of the image, at the intersection of the vertical and horizontal axes, just as he is at the center of the bifurcating investigations of the show home body stagings and the targeted attacks by the two escaped criminals. Similarly, during the car accident scene mentioned above (the final scene of episode three), when Sandra is driving home at

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night, the viewer sees a red stop light from Sandra's point of view, and a dark and empty

street reflects the neon light from shop signs and stoplights across the pavement,

stretching into the blackness of night in the distance. Sandra's attention is caught by

headlights that obscure her vision in the mirror; a truck squeals its tires as it drives away,

then circles to face the driver's side door of Sandra's car. As Sandra peers into the lights,

the truck speeds up and slams into her car, flipping her from a perpendicular angle. Just

as with the construction of the credit sequence or the image of Paul at the crime scene,

Sandra is positioned where vertical and horizontal axes meet, as she claws her way out

from under her car and over broken glass and twisted metal. The clean lines and

horizontal and vertical framing, so crisp and visually organized in the show homes and in

the landscape, are tools used by the director to direct the eye in the image, almost

sanitizing the true violence and destruction at play in those same locations; by contrast,

this violent crash pinpoints Sandra at the epicenter of the violence, as she is the individual

repeatedly throughout the series who is able to see beyond what is on the surface.

The recurring visual motif of horizontal and vertical axes are often accompanied

by the transparency of windows and glass, as well as virtual imprisonment behind rigid

bars and poles; there is both a symmetry and (literal) brokenness in the contrast of

pointed shards of glass and hard, straight lines. Throughout the series, Sandra is framed

in doorways, windows, and behind gates and poles, stooping behind a glass door to

examine clues, or peering through cracked and dusty window panes. Bars and panes

appear across her body within the image repeatedly, segmenting her image in jagged

shards of broken glass with a kind of violence of the image that recalls the fate of Kaz Gorbier's tortured and slaughtered young female victims. One is acutely aware that Sandra too could become a victim of this violence as both a woman (a typical target of brutality) and also as a police officer involved in the case. In these moments, the construction of the fictional world through visual cues and recurring motifs foregrounds the stakes for Sandra and her team. But the repeating imagery of windows, reflections, and frames within the image also create a cinematic *mise-en-abyme*, a frame-within-a-frame that "splits the *oeuvre* in which it is contained. It creates a disorder in the unity of the systematic spatial organization and constructs an 'additive set' (*ensemble agrégatif*) of two different spaces which generate discontinuity, rupture, tear" (Duarte 93). Like the two axes meeting at a vanishing point that seems to stretch into infinity, the *mise-en-abyme* replicates the same image over and over into infinity, just as the series of victims are re-victimized in Le Tréport. Graves are desecrated and traumas replayed among characters in the series (namely Paul, who must again try to face the death of his wife and his own attempted suicide; and Laura, the daughter of Paul's first love Juliette, who was raped by five local men before giving birth to Laura, and then murdered for trying to confront her rapists). Young Laura is, in fact, the person responsible for staging the bodies in the show homes, creating macabre family scenes with the dead bodies as a way to attract Paul's attention and enact revenge upon the men responsible for her mother's death. The ringleader of the rapists, Henri Norbert, is a Janus-faced pillar of the community and, not coincidentally, the owner of the property development company building the show homes (as if the plot were not already complicated, he also happens to

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be killing his fellow co-rapists for blackmailing him over his involvement as the orchestrator of Juliette's murder many years ago).

Laura, tracking Norbert, arranges the bodies in approximations of the nuclear family she never had, highlighting the split between appearance and the real; at her own home, Laura has a large dollhouse, with dolls and figures resting in the rooms not unlike her show home scenes. The dollhouse, itself a *mise-en-abyme*, looks much like Norbert's multi-story glass walled office building, made of beams and reflective glass with an open plan, like a diorama with tiny figures inside, pawns in a game. The glass building of Norbert's office has the effect of a bisected film set as Laura watches from a distance, each level visible and connected by stairways, room dividers, and transparent glass walls, seen from the side. This same type of "visible" interior is used by Alfred Hitchcock with *Rear Window*'s voyeur-friendly apartment building, Jerry Lewis' famous set in the 1961 film *The Ladies Man*, or Jean-Luc Godard's open plan factory set in 1972's *Tout va bien*. The cutaway set, like a glass dollhouse, "forces us to comprehend the situation structurally rather than linearly, to take the whole into account rather than each of the parts [...] consecutively" (Monaco 247). In other words, the frame-within-a-frame breaks Sandra down, pulling her in separate directions (pressures of the job slowly deteriorate her domestic happiness, while the investigation becomes more complicated by revelations of Paul's past transgressions on the job); conversely, the multiple threads of Laura's revenge plot, her motives for corpse-staging, and Norbert's involvement are seemingly separate threads that come together, observable for the sum of its parts rather

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than divided components, the clues stitched together by the visual and thematic link between Laura's dollhouse, the show homes, and Norbert's transparent office building. Sandra and Paul may not have seen all of the solution yet, but the audience is clued in by a literal transparency of the clues presented in images.

A *mise-en-abyme* creates a recursive image, retreating into infinity, and fractal patterns can emerge in the re-division of a figure's own image that repeats itself at every scale. One such figure is a Koch snowflake, a fractal which begins with a triangle, then expands outward as it replaces each of its lines with a smaller scale version of itself, growing and expanding, and gaining in complexity as it unfolds into infinity; unfortunately the expanding, all-encompassing revenge that Laura seeks results in a replayed pattern of victimization. Her plan to kill Norbert, while successful, also ends with her being stabbed by the man who murdered her mother, at the same location of the bunker on the beach. Of course, the replication of form plays out in the serial format of the show, as well, with all but the final of the six episodes placing a new horror in the first minutes of each episode and a cliffhanger ending.[12]

These cycles of confrontation and action that both begin and end each episode, make the final episode's opening and closing moments more poignant and markedly different from the rest; the final episode opens with Kaz Gorbier sitting in the police cell,

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[12] Episode 1 opens with the discovery of bodies in a show home and closes with Paul being shot at in the funicular; early in episode 2 Sandra discovers that rapist/killer Gorbier isn't dead, and closes with her car accident; episode 3 opens with another discovery of bodies at a show home, and closes with Sandra's cemetery shootout with Serano; episode 4 begins with Gorbier killing police and kidnapping his family, and closes with Sandra confronting Laura's wolf in the cemetery; episode 5 begins with Sandra and the wolf (continued), and closes with the reveal that Laura is the body snatcher.

finally resolving at least one branch of the investigation. Later, in the very last images of the episode–marking a close to the first series—Sandra and Paul say farewell and walk away from each other in opposite directions, each figure getting progressively smaller and smaller, their bodies blending into the crowd and less in focus until the credits begin. One might imagine that had the image not faded to black, the characters would continue into the vanishing point, as the final theme song begins to play the fitting lyrics by artist Tricky: "We don't, we don't, we don't die/far we go away somewhere/where we go away don't know/time is not mine, we meet sometime/you rest in peace, your soul release."

III. Personal Fragmentation Represented in the Narrative Space of *Les Premiers*

The release of the soul, albeit involuntarily, is a theme of *Les Premiers "*Tome 1: Le Choc*,"* the 2014 graphic novel from writer Stéphane Piatzszek and artist Léonard Chemineau, centered on small-town police officer Benjamin Lesnick's transformation from crime-fighting police detective to homicidal cannibal. As the character descends into madness, he suffers repeated bouts of nightmares, hallucinations, and violent outbursts in increasingly rapid cycles. From the beginning of the narrative, Benjamin's capability for violence is signaled by a dream that carries into his waking life. The first two pages open with a group of Neanderthal men sitting in the doorway of a dark cave. A violent brawl erupts between them in a two-page spread dominated by sprawling bodies, splashes of deep red blood, and onomatopoeia that spills over into the following page, revealing that the scene comes from his nightmare as he wakes to answer a middle-of-the-night work phone call. The call is to bring Major Benjamin Lesnick in for a briefing

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as part of a task force researching the kidnappings of at least four local farmers, taken in the dead of night. While gesturing to a map of nearby villages, Benjamin's superior officer tells the assembled team that the case is unusual in that these middle-aged men have vanished, taken by what one witness called "une ombre qui poussait des grognements" (14) ["a shadow that grunted and grumbled"]. As the case is stalled, Benjamin splits his time between his apartment and his father's farm, surrounded by trees and hillsides in the village of Estagel, near Perpignan in southern France. Villages and landscapes are depicted in inky blacks, greys, and dark blues at night, peaceful as Benjamin stares out from the barn into the night sky, with the moon illuminating the fields.

Suddenly, the police are called to Pezilla-la-Rivière, where Lesnick rushes over in just enough time to see a local man looking deranged, and standing on the parapet of a bridge before jumping to his death and taking a victim with him. The sequence on the bridge stands out in stark contrast to previous pages at the farm, where the gutter was white and the frames fairly regularly distributed in size and shapes. On the bridge, however, the first transformation into madness seen in the comic, the gutter space is black, an absence of light that continues through the nighttime sequence, and the framing of the images changes to extreme close-ups of the killer's face, with close up images of his teeth and black, soulless eyes. The motif of transformation and grotesque associated with the body will continue as Benjamin visits the killer's psychologist, and notices framed illustrations on the wall of children with animal bodies, men's bodies with bird

heads, and hybrid creatures tortured by young women (all shown in increasingly close inserts of the images through Benjamin's point of view).

Comics theorist Thierry Groensteen calls comics a "system" insofar as they are a "totality" of processes and tropes that create a coherence within the work, with the tools of "spatio-topia, arthrology, and braiding" as a means to uncover what he terms an "iconic solidarity" of the images; that is to say, one should consider both the composition of images and the relationship between multiple images across the work (6). Piatzszek and Chemineau use the comics form and the space between and across frames and panels to map meaning, tracing police officer Benjamin's transition and imitating his dissociated mental state in the breakdown of spatial structures, much like the visual representations of geometry found in *Les Témoins* and *L'Inconnu du lac* mentioned above. As Benjamin descends into madness, the layouts of the pages subtly shift; he becomes progressively more unstable, and the visual organization begins to unravel. Rather than the white and black gutter of each page as tied to night and day settings, Benjamin's dreams and hallucinations are increasingly on all-black backgrounds. Gridding, "a primary repartition of the narrative material" that divides the comic book page into individual frames (Groensteen 144) is replaced by dream space chaos, with a lack of borders. Images take up full panels with several frames bleeding together, and no formal boundaries—such as gridding or the negative space of "gutters"—separate the spaces between the images. One such example is when Benjamin shoots a bird and eats the still bleeding body (a major moment that marks his inability to control the onslaught of his cannibalistic impulses to

come). The reader sees the full panel through Benjamin's eyes, a point of view shot of his hands, one holding a gun and one holding a disemboweled bird. In the foreground of the page, the same bird appears large and is superimposed over the image as if Benjamin is simultaneously looking at it in his hand and raising it to his mouth, a split in his rational conscious and the now-dominant madness; the following page signals the complete loss of control and the permanence of his affliction, with another full page spread, the bird head now larger in the top let corner of the page and a tiny figure of a woman laying inside in its mouth. Overlapping images in a Z formation (again without formal boundaries of a frame or color differentiation) show the same image of a woman zoomed in three times, her body growing larger and larger until she fills the entire lower-right quadrant of the panel, close to where Benjamin's face would be positioned off of the page (since the image of the woman is seen from Benjamin's perspective). Written across the image is "mange-moi…" (76-77) ["eat me..."], as Benjamin's cannibalistic impulse bleeds into reality.

Throughout the graphic novel, recurring motifs appear in Benjamin's dreams. In a sequence where he discovers that the beings he keeps imagining are actually images of Neanderthals, the graphic novel's artist, Chemineau, makes use of close-up framing and character reactions, with repeated use of extreme close-ups of body parts (wide eyes, partial expressions, or shaky hands). These are intercut with "inserts" of Neanderthal-related objects and images found in Benjamin's search (drawings, internet pages, museum artifacts). There is a fragmentation of Benjamin's identity as the dominance of Neanderthal proclivities take hold. As Benjamin sleeps, he sees monstrous figures in

another two-page spread, with deformed zombie-like versions of Neanderthal faces; he sees tiny spidery creatures with round faces and stretched humanoid limbs sitting between the monsters' teeth. The spider creatures "look" outward toward the reader of the comic book, shushing the viewer, and Benjamin appears in a frame, sleeping nude between the teeth, and curled up in the fetal position beside their black faces and blank eyes (32-33).

As the dreamscapes and waking transformations are presented in full page or double page spreads with images zooming in progressively, the physical setting of Perpignan also changes from a background element to a critical element of Benjamin's breakdown. The more he becomes infected, the larger the rural scenery grows, changing from small, contextualizing "establishing shots" early in the book to an all-encompassing landscape that begins to swallow Benjamin whole, bringing him in to a literal cave and trapping him there (just as the scenery of *Inconnu* and *Témoins* closes in around Franck and Sandra, invisible or dwarfed in extreme-long shots that show the visual and geographic dominance of unmappable expanses of the countryside). In the beginning of the *Les Premiers*, images of the town are generally presented in small, even frames, with fields and farms or roadways seen from high angles and from a distance. These generally appear in one to two small frames per page at the beginning of each new scene, with regular borders, and a white gutter on the page. Conversely, the less organized the panels become—signaling Benjamin's madness—the natural spaces in or near Perpignan's

woods that correspond to Neanderthal dreams become larger on the page. The landscape grows, the madness increases, and *human* Benjamin disappears on the pages.

Benjamin frequently finds himself wandering in the forest; he finds a cave-like opening at the base of an enormous tree, inside which is a woman who violently tries to attack him, and finds the body of journalist Axèle, partially eaten. After the death of his father and this discovery of the cave from his visions, Benjamin returns to the farm and goes on a rampage in which he kills two lawyers who have come to repossess the land due to debt. The police are tipped off about Benjamin's violence by the local museum docent, and the Captain finds him hovering over the body of lover Jeanne, whom he attacked but had not killed. Benjamin flees into the night, followed by the police Captain and a museum worker, who now believe that locals are mutating into "des hommes des origines" (the final, full-page panel shows many transformed creatures in the night climbing the hills into the forest, too numerous to count; the future of the village, dimly lit in the center of the page, is clearly in peril). The recurring motifs, divisions, and structure of the comic present the major themes through the distribution of space, both across the comics form and in the rural landscape itself.

IV. Spatial and Moral Peripheries in *Alex*

As in *Les Témoins* and *Les Premiers,* replications and divisions structure much of *Alex*, the 2013 novel by Pierre Lemaitre. *Alex*, the second book of "Commandant Camille Verhœven Trilogy" (although strangely, the first to be translated into English, effectively spoiling the ending of the first book for readers in the US and UK) won several prizes for

its narrative innovation, including the 2013 Crime Writer's Association International Dagger prize. The story begins as a conventional detective story, with the victimization of a female character in a brutally violent kidnapping, a police investigation of the crime, and a race against the clock to find a beautiful woman with a mysterious past. The investigation is led by police Commandant Camille Verhœven, a 4'11" investigator with a tragic past of his own, his pregnant wife having been kidnapped and murdered four years prior. Haunted by the loss of his wife, Verhœven must overcome the desire to project his personal tragedy onto the current kidnapping case. A third person omniscient, matter-of-fact narration is highly descriptive, with rapid shifts in point of view alternating between Verhœven and kidnap victim Alex. The book is divided into three sections, each representing a different positioning of Alex ranging from victim (during her captivity), to criminal (during the far-flung investigation into her disappearance), to hybrid victim/mastermind at the twist ending that upsets the reader's entire conceptualization of the character. *Alex* somewhat reverses a typical investigation timeline, with three separate narrative acts that work from the present (Alex's incarceration) onward, while hurtling to a resolution that identifies an original crime in the past. The timelines slide backwards and forwards, hinged at a central point, a spiral from which everything moves outward, or returns inward to the center; events rotate around the fixed trauma that sent Alex spiraling out of control, spatially represented by the use of maps and the saturation of locations that move Alex and Verhœven from Paris to outside zones and back.

A long list of specific locations appear in *Alex*, both as Verhœven's team first searches for the kidnapped girl, and later, after her escape from captivity, they must retroactively research killings across France as Alex moves outward from Paris. The story's "mappable" geographical points keep Paris as the central hub where the investigation begins. Verhœven "scrute et détaille un plan de Paris" (*Alex* [Fr] 47) [Verhœven "pores over a map of Paris" (*Alex* [Eng] 48)] desperate to find Alex's movements before her initial kidnapping. He tries desperately to plot the past on a map, with all the possibilities that might have led her to the scene where she was taken, the *point zero* of the story:

> Sur son plan, il a souligné les axes qui convergent vers le lieu de l'enlèvement. Quatre itinéraires possibles que la femme peut avoir empruntés avant d'être enlevée. La place Falguière ou le boulevard Pasteur, la rue Vigée ou, en sens inverse, la rue du Cotentin. Elle peut aussi avoir pris un bus, le 88 ou le 95. Les stations de métro sont assez loin du lieu de l'enlèvement mais reste une possibilité. Pernety, Plaisance, Volontaires, Vaugirard… (*Alex* [Fr] 48)

> [On his map, he has marked out the main roads leading away from the scene of the abduction. There are four possible routes the woman could have taken before being kidnapped. Place Falguière, boulevard Pasteur or rue Vigée-Lebrun or, from the other direction, rue du Cotentin. She might have taken a bus—either the 88 or the 95. The nearest *métro* stations are

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quite some distance from the scene, but can't be discounted: Pernety,

Plaisance, Volontaires, Vaugirard…] (*Alex* [Eng] 48-49)

The sheer number of possible options makes Paris unnavigable for the investigators, who

are unable to contextualize the locations on the map in terms of what came before or after

the abduction; Verhœven prefers to work on cases "où les morts sont derrière vous et pas

devant" (*Alex* [Fr] 21) ["cases where the deaths are behind you, not in front" (*Alex* [Eng]

220]), unlike a kidnapping, with "[la] mort à venir" (*Alex* [Fr] 181) ["death still to come"

(*Alex* [Eng] 178)]. Verhœven and his team members "sont tous les trois devant le grand

plan de Paris. Ils ne disent rien et comme ça finit par ressembler à une prière sournoise,

Camille s'ébroue" (*Alex* [Fr] 73-74) ["The three of them are standing in front of the huge

map of Paris, not saying anything, and when the silence starts to feel like a furtive prayer,

Camille snorts" (*Alex* [Eng] 74)]. The fact that the map is illegible for locating the victim

makes it seem as if the three are praying before a tomb, for a victim who may be already

dead. Later their map-assisted raid on an abandoned building outside of the Porte de

Clichy proves to be fruitless; after studying "les plans" [maps] and dispatching R.A.I.D.[13]

agents to all four corners of the abandoned area (*Alex* [Fr] 97), they learn that Alex is

being held elsewhere, and, after a chase on the *périphérique* that leads them away from

the city*,* the kidnapper commits suicide (thereby eliminating the only person to know

Alex's whereabouts). The *périphérique* border, the roadway acting as an unofficial

dividing line between the city of Paris and its suburbs, marks not only where Alex is held

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[13] R.A.I.D. = Recherche, Assistance, Intervention, Dissuasion, a special ops task unit of the *police nationale*; similar to U.S. Special Weapons and Tactics teams (SWAT).

captive, but after escaping from an abandoned building north of Paris, Alex continually moves across this dividing line to commit murders and then retreats back to the safety of Paris.

Alex, changed from the hunted to the hunter, leaves the police stunned by the geographic expansiveness of her crime activity, "[un] sacré tableau de chasse," says Verhœven (*Alex* [Fr] 215) ["one hell of a hunting ground" (*Alex* [Eng] 210)]. He envisions the media organizing "une carte de France (la même à peu près que celle que Camille a déjà dans son bureau parsemée de petites épingles de couleur) …la promesse d'un *road movie* meurtrier 'à la française.'" (*Alex* [Fr] 270) ["a map of France (more or less like the one in Camille's office) scattered with little coloured pins [...] the promise of a murderous road movie '*à la française*'" (*Alex* [Eng] 266-67)]. Alex's traveling murder spree (with three killings before her kidnapping and three after) stretches across France: first, Champigny-sur-Marne, a southeastern suburb of Paris, where she committed the first murder of Pascal (son of the revenge-seeking kidnapper); the police link her method of torture and the use of sulfuric acid to a former victim, Stefan, in Faignoy-lès-Reims, a town 140 kilometers east of Paris, with "huit cent habitants, deux rues principales," (*Alex* [Fr] 210) ["population 800, two streets" (*Alex* [Eng] 205)]. Police then find links to victim #3, Bernard, in Étampes, 50 kilometers south of Paris; Alex skirts outside the boundaries of Paris again to kill a man named Félix in Porte de la Villette; she travels to just outside of Toulouse, where she savagely murders Jacqueline, the middle-aged proprietor of a "discreet" brothel (which Verhœven deems "un peu province" for the

media to have noticed (*Alex* [Fr] 270) ["a bit, well, provincial" (*Alex* [Eng] 266)]; finally, she goes on the road with truck driver Bobby, on her way toward the border between France and Germany, through the town of Sainte-Menehould and stopping at a service area on the *autoroute* just outside of Metz, where she'll commit the final murder in her series; she tells herself, "Ce voyage vers la frontière, c'est tout de même un tournant doulereux…Le début de la fin" (*Alex* [Fr] 275) ["This ride to the border is a painful turning point, the beginning of the end" (*Alex* [Eng] 272)]. Each killing takes Alex farther and farther outside of Paris into increasingly more rural locations in which she (purposefully) loses her identity, but she retreats back to her "safe zone" in between each ordeal, returning to Paris "chez elle, à l'abri" (*Alex* [Fr] 187) ["Home, safe" (*Alex* [Eng] 183)]. She uses Paris to return to herself between each murder, to heal her body, to rest, regroup, and reformulate her next move.

These are not random killings, however; Alex specifically targets individuals who played a role in her abuse and molestation as a child, when she was essentially "rented out" to men by an abusive half-brother, Thomas. Enacting her revenge, the murder trips remove her from a place of shelter into a zone where she must confront the tormenters of her past, moving her geographically away from the center but psychologically toward the core of her trauma, the spiral becoming a vortex. After killing Félix, Alex "cherche des repères mais il est difficile de s'y retrouver dans ce paysage nocturne. Elle n'avait pas vu non plus que l'autoroute passe tout près…Paris est de l'autre côté" (*Alex* [Fr] 252) [Alex "looks for landmarks but it is difficult to find her bearings in this nocturnal landscape.

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She hadn't noticed that the autoroute was so close—it must be the road they took coming here...Paris is on the other side" (*Alex* [Eng] 249)]. Later, she notes that the service station where she completes her last kill "enjambe l'autoroute […] de l'autre côté du pont, c'est le sens inverse, le retour sur Paris" (*Alex* [Fr] 279) [the service station "straddles the autoroute [...] On the other side of the bridge is the opposite direction, the road back to Paris" (*Alex* [Eng] 275)], marking the opposition between her task at hand and her trajectory back toward the center, back toward herself. The sense of directions, of danger outside of Paris, and civilization within, is not exclusive to Alex. For Verhœven, nature and weather are associated with violence and brokenness, abandoned buildings with rain pouring through the walls, "[le vent] siffle, ça mugit douloureusement, on dirait les gémissements d'un désespéré" (*Alex* [Fr] 121) [the wind "whistles and howls painfully, sounding like the moans of someone in despair" (*Alex* [Eng] 123)]; "les grandes salles baignent dans une lumière diffuse, verdâtre, qui descend, comme en poussière, par les verrières et les fenêtres éventrées" (*Alex* [Fr] 164) ["vast rooms bathed in a diffuse, greenish light that falls like dust from the skylights and the shattered windows" (*Alex* [Eng] 164)]; a thunderstorm puts "une menace dans l'air" (*Alex* [Fr] 222) ["danger in the air" (*Alex* [Eng] 218)]; in Verhœven's mother's former art studio, on the outskirts of the forêt de Clamart, "le vent s'engouffre dans la pièce. Un pan du toit est effondré, à l'angle de l'atelier, on a la vue sur la forêt" (*Alex* [Fr] 294) ["wind whips through the rooms. Part of the roof has caved in; through it you can see the forest" (*Alex* [Eng] 289)]. The studio, the reader learns, is also the site of his wife's death (in the

previous installment of the trilogy). He revisits the scene in an attempt to confront his personal tragedy, but finds the woods still frightening:

> La nuit ici est plus fraîche que Paris, c'est peut-être lui qui a froid […] En réalité, il avait peur de la forêt. Aujourd'hui encore, ces grands arbres – Il a cinquante ans, Camille, ou pas loin. Alors le coup du Roi des Aulnes,[14] il a passé l'âge. Mais il est haut comme à treize ans et, du plus fort qu'il y résiste, cette nuit, cette forêt, ce pavillon esseulé, ça lui fait de l'effet. (*Alex* [Fr] 288-289)

> [The night is chillier here than it is in Paris, or perhaps he is simply cold […] The fact was, the forest had scared him. Even now, the tall trees…Camille is fifty years old, or very nearly, so he's a little old to be scared of the Erl King. But he is no taller now than he was at thirteen, and however much he tries he still finds the darkness, the forest, this isolated house disturbing]. (*Alex* [Eng] 284)

Verhœven feels too old to be afraid, but nature stirs up a childish fear within him. The same division between adult and child, between reason and emotion, underlines the childish nature of Alex, emotionally stunted in her youth, and using her adult body to seduce those who desired her child body.

When Alex is afraid, she reverts to this childish place, "elle bégaye, comme enfant, comme adolescente" (*Alex* [Fr] 43) ["she's stammering, like a child, like a

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[14] "Le Roi des Aulnes," or *Erlkönig*, is a figure in Germanic folklore who preys upon small children in the woods.

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teenager" (*Alex* [Eng] 44)]; the only personal items that link her aliases to her true identity are a box of childish trinkets, a veritable treasure chest of girlish memories cherished and revisited, with

> des choses assez bêtes et même franchement futiles, des cahiers d'école, de collège, des relevés de notes, des lettres, des cartes postales, un bout de journal intime […] Il y a aussi des bijoux fantaisie, des vieux stylos plume asséchés, des barrettes qu'elle aimait bien, des photos. (*Alex* [Fr] 202-03)

> [silly, insignificant [things]: exercise books from school, report cards, letters, postcards, a diary she's been keeping on and off [...] There's costume jewellery, too, dried up old fountain pens, hair clips she used to like, photographs]. (*Alex* [Eng] 199)]

Alex sadly throws out these personal items when she reaches the end of her plan, travelling to Villepinte, an industrial zone "[le] plus anonyme sur terre, plus esseulé aussi" (*Alex* [Fr] 283) ["there's no place more anonymous, more forsaken than this" (*Alex* [Eng] 279)] in order to commit suicide and frame her brother for her murder. Alex puts her precious collection into trash bins on a deserted road, preparing for her death and graduating past the adolescence she could not forget: "Ci-gît la vie d'Alex, fille malheureuse, meurtrière souvent, organisée, faible, séductrice, perdue, inconnue…Alex qui est cette nuit une grande fille" (*Alex* [Fr] 286) ["Here lies the life of Alex, unhappy, murderous, methodical, weak, seductive, lost, no police record. Tonight Alex is a big girl" (*Alex* [Eng] 281)]. Back in her hotel room, Alex twists and dances in circles around

the room, retracing the murders, becoming increasingly drunk as she reenacts her killing poses and spins around the room, hurtling down the vortex that pulls her past her own crimes back to the central point of her creation, the rape and disfigurement that left her emotionally crippled and physically scarred. Alex finally stops spinning, looks in the mirror at her body, and, "en elle, la fêlure craque, elle sent que ça s'effondre, qu'elle est rattrapée" (*Alex* [Fr] 296) ["Something inside her snaps. She feels a crack open up, feels herself sucked inside" (*Alex* [Eng] 292)].

The duality of Alex's identities is replicated in the structure of the book itself: the investigation and murders play out across three sections that dole out clues slowly for the reader to assess the character and her motivations. Here, it is perhaps useful to note that the spiral is also a symbol of the Hegelian dialectic in philosophy, with reasoning based on the concept of the dialectical spiral: thesis, followed by anti-thesis, then synthesis (*aufheben*, the third stage, necessary for "overcoming" the second negative phase, and relieving the first two categories of their "incompatibility" [McTaggart 2-7; 95]). This same concept maps well onto the plot construction of Lemaitre's novel, as Alex moves from being presented as victim in the first section, to a second stage of antithesis (Alex as cruel villain), and ultimately becoming a synthesis of both stages, a hybrid villain forged by victimization in a process necessary in order to move past her trauma, a belated "working-through" of her childhood in the vein of Freud's *Nachtraglicheit*.[15] Alex is both child and adult, victim and villain. Her invisible yet omnipresent duality of identity

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[15] Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit* first appeared in the unpublished writings for *A Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895), though he also discussed repressed memory and deferral in *Studies on Hysteria*, published earlier that same year.

recalls Derrida's concept of *différance* (a synthesis of actual and virtual, wherein the graphic difference of an A rather than an E in the French spelling of the word "différence/différance" is aurally imperceptible). Just as the written letter A in Derrida's différance "ne s'entend pas, il demeure silencieux, secret et discret comme un tombeau" (*Marges* 4) ["it is not heard, it remains silent, secret, and discrete as a tomb" (*Margins* 4)], Alex's story is silenced by adults who did not act upon hearing of her abuse (including her mother, school teacher, and best friend). And, like Derrida's purely graphic indication, Alex's traumatic past is revealed to Verhœven through writing, with "écriture enfantine" (*Alex* [Fr] 327) ["the handwriting is childlike" (*Alex* [Eng] 319)] in the now-dead Alex's journals revealing her secrets. Like *différance*, her writings are put forward by "une marque muette, par un monument tacite, je dirai même par une pyramide" (Derrida *Marges* 4) ["a mute mark, by a tacit monument, I would even say by a pyramid" (Derrida *Margins* 4)], a pyramid compared to Hegel's "body of the sign," as described by Derrida:

> Le corps du signe devient ainsi le monument dans lequel l'âme serait enfermée, gardée, maintenue, tenue en maintenance, présente, signifiée. Au fond de ce monument, l'âme se garde vive, mais elle n'a besoin du monument que dans la mesure où elle s'expose — à la mort — dans son rapport vivant à son propre corps. (*Marges* 95)

> [The body of the sign thus becomes the monument in which the soul will be enclosed, preserved, maintained, kept in maintenance, present,

signified. At the heart of this monument the soul keeps itself alive, but it needs the monument only to the extent that it is exposed--to death--in its living relation to its own body.] (*Margins* 82-83)

For Alex, the literal body, site of trauma and means of revenge, is, as Hegel proposes, merely a container, preserving and maintaining her soul, keeping itself alive in service of the mind until she is complete with her mission. Throughout, passages in the novel underline this split between body and the mind, or evoke the spiral once again: as her body shuts down during her captivity, "son cerveau s'enroule autour [de la] certitude" (*Alex* [Fr] 45) ["her mind coils around this thought" (*Alex* [Eng] 46)]; "elle comprend que son esprit est en train de se diviser en deux, quelqu'un qui est là, l'autre qui n'y est pas" (*Alex* [Fr] 76) ["she realises that her min dis beginning to divide into a person who is here and another who is not" (*Alex* [Eng] 77)]; "elle sentait que son esprit commençait à divaguer, que son cerveau devenait un électron libre, sans maîtrise, sans attaches, sans repères" (*Alex* [Fr] 78) ["she could feel her mind starting to wander, her brain becoming a free electron, with no self-control, no ties, no bearings" (*Alex* [Eng] 79); "[la] cage contraint votre corps et envoie votre cerveau dans la stratosphère" (*Alex* [Fr] 87) ["The cage constrains the body and catapults the brain into the stratosphere" (*Alex* [Eng] 89)].

Each time she fights against this split between body and mind to stay alive, forcing her body to maintain itself until she can escape, then heal itself in order to take her to the end of her plan, for when she no longer needs her body. As Alex takes an overdose of pills, "son corps est ici mais son esprit est déjà ailleurs. Il roule sur lui-même. Tout s'enroule

autour de sa vie, ce qu'il en reste se replie sur soi […] Ce qui va se passer maintenant ne concerne plus que son enveloppe; instants comptés, instants sans retour, la conscience d'Alex est déjà ailleurs" (*Alex* [Fr] 297) ["Her body is here, but her mind is already elsewhere. It curls into a ball. Everything coils around her life; what remains turns in on itself [...] What will happen now concerns only this mortal coil; these last moments, the moments from which there is no way back. Alex's mind is already elsewhere" (*Alex* [Eng] 293)]. The police find her wrapped tightly in bedsheets "on dirait le corps d'une Egyptienne" (299) ["she looks like an Egyptian corpse about to be mummified" (*Alex* [Eng] 295)], with imagery again evoking the tomb/pyramids of Derrida and Hegel. The psycho-physical imposes on Alex's already confined space of movement, which folds in on itself to the level of the body

Similarly, in the other three works, the same restriction of movement brings the resolution to the level of the body: in *L'Inconnu du lac*, the zones of the lake constrict until Franck is unable to move beyond a crouch, hunted into the forest and frozen as night falls. In *Les Témoins*, both of the police inquiries result in the confinement of Sandra and Paul: Sandra and Laure are hunted by Norbert's henchman Damien, and sealed into a locked bunker in a tunnel at the beach, much like the encapsulated zones of *L'Inconnu*; meanwhile, Paul is imprisoned in the basement of a model home in a model village behind the woods, given a cocktail of muscle relaxants that leave him temporarily paralyzed. In *Les Premiers*, Benjamin's hallucinations dominate his physical space until he gives into his infection-like Neanderthal violence; he retreats into his own mind, and

to the cave in the forest where other cannibalistic beasts await. Movement in and across

open spaces tighten, trapping the primary characters (with varying results across the

works: Alex dies but enacts her own final justice by elaborately framing her half-brother

for her murder; Franck's ending is ambiguous but seemingly doomed as he is hunted in

the dark forest by Michel; Paul and Sandra are spared from their respective perils—if

only until the next case; and Benjamin dies, but his "human" mind returns temporarily

and he is lauded for sparing his lover and colleague Jeanne's life). Wide open spaces fold

in on themselves like spatial origami, with the circles, triangulations, and spirals

compressing, folding in, reducing the multiplicity to the singular, the community to the

individual.

V. The Conflation of Life and Death, Danger and Desire

With this restriction of space to the body, it becomes crucial to interrogate the role

of body-ness in crime fiction in general. Bodies are of particular importance in a *policier*,

with the corpse often the basis of an investigation. In the works mentioned in this chapter,

geometric figures of triangles and circles, vectors and lines recall the sexual body,

masculine phallus and feminized roundness or inverted "lack" (recalling Freudian

kastrationsangst, or castration anxiety),[16] and literal anatomical depictions also explicitly

link sexuality to death. Danger lurks in the allure of curves and peaks glimpsed through

the trees in *L'Inconnu du lac,* the naked men cavorting in the fields and clueless to the

threat of death. *Les Témoins'* concentration on motherhood leaves little to the

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[16] In Freud's conception of child development, the child perceives mother's lack of a penis, initiating the
fear of castration, see Freud, Sigmund et al. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of
Sigmund Freud,* Vol. 5. Hogarth, 1900.

imagination with the dark tunnel-like passages and birth metaphors appearing throughout the series: Sandra's body slides into the closed tunnel of an MRI machine for a scan after her car accident, leading to the revelation that she is pregnant (an overhead shot of the highway exit ramp earlier in the episode, as well as the computer scan of zones of the brain are both reminiscent of the shape of the female reproductive system, the loops and ovals of the highway and the partially highlighted connective hemispheres of the brain shaped like ovaries and fallopian tubes); the funicular tram leads into a dark tunnel leading to cemetery and tomb of Paul's wife; unmapped tunnels left behind by the Nazis make the perfect escape route for the criminals, but also trap Sandra and Laura, where Sandra realizes that if she dies, so too will her unborn child; and Laura, at the bunker site of her mother's murder, peers from beneath a triangular rock formation, staring at the man who is likely her father, and who stole her chance at family from the moment of her traumatic conception. For Benjamin, during sex, the sight of his lover's vagina morphs into a cave of death; as Jeanne sits astride him, successive frames show images zooming in until her vagina morphs into a cave, where Neanderthals sit around a campfire, devouring bleeding flesh. Benjamin's own sharp teeth will later graze the flesh of his lover as he licks and caresses her nude back once he has transformed fully into a primitive beast; Alex uses her appearance and the promise of sex to seduce the men she meets (her former rapists, who do not recognize her as a grown woman), to lure them somewhere private and kill them; she flirts, poses, and promises, then swiftly beats and tortures them with acid. Sex is the cause of her trauma, and sexuality is the solution to her plan, by strategically placing her sexualized body in front of the targeted individuals.

Through these references to gendered bodies, spatial positioning suggests the conflation of sexuality and murder, desire and danger.

In addition to Alex's most literal enactment of gender as a weapon, with sexual ecstasy replaced by a brutal climax of gory death, in the other three works, gender and/or sexuality is also linked to this conflation of life/death. In *L'Inconnu du Lac*, Guiraudie nearly eliminates the corpse completely (Pascal's body is discovered and removed by helicopter off-screen, seen only from a distance as the chopper moves above the mountains). We do not see the initial murdered body, nor signs of any death until the final few moments of the film. However, throughout the film, sunbathing men, nude and lying prostrate, side-by-side on the beach, could easily be mistaken for rows of corpses, splayed and awaiting autopsy. This same visual motif of life mistaken for death (and vice versa) appears in each of the murder scenes. In the first, when Michel drowns his lover in the lake, Franck witnesses what he thinks is a couple playing in the water, but horseplay turns to malice when one shouts "arrête!" and then disappears under the surface of the lake for far too long (in a highly technical and stunning long take for which the director hired a trained scuba diver). During the second murder, when Michel kills Henri, Franck again witnesses the couple glimpsed through bushes, in a scene staged absolutely identically to several previous scenes of various couples having sex in the forest. This blurring of perception links the sounds, signs, and poses of sex and death, with *la petite mort* ("the little death," idiom for orgasm) transfigured into actual death by throat-slitting,

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with Michel performing a macabre alternative to the sex act, essentially feminizing Henri by creating a gaping, bleeding cavity-like wound by phallic stand-in of the knife-blade.

In *Les Témoins,* there is a repeated inversion of life and death: bodies are visible where they shouldn't be, and missing from where they ought to be found. Journalists ask the chief inspector not about the living, but rather, "Quelles mesures avez-vous prises pour protéger nos morts?" ["What steps have you taken to protect our dead?"]. Unlinked bodies are staged as idealized nuclear families in large, pristine houses, while the living families represented in the show almost exclusively have broken or fragile home lives. Sandra learns that her partner Eric has had an affair, while he tells her "la famille idéale, ça n'existe pas" ["the ideal family doesn't exist"]; Paul's suicide attempt and the death of his wife have created a strained relationship with son Thomas; Kaz Gorbier kidnaps and terrorizes his ex-wife and son for having moved on without him after his incarceration; the families of the women and teenagers whose loved ones were disinterred to be staged in show homes are undone by both the grief of loss and the re-traumatization of the exhumation (which had nothing to do with them; they were pawns in a revenge against the male figures); the relatives of the "family men" who are implicated in the rape of Laura's mother are destroyed by the duplicity of people whom they thought they knew. Killers like Kaz, Norbert, and Serano take pleasure in murder for control; Kaz wants to sexually possess the bodies of young female victims, and tells his ex-wife that he will make love to her after he drowns her; Norbert wields his financial power to cover his

sexual deviancy, Serano murders his wife after being cuckholded. The link between sexual drive and violence sets off the entire chain of events and the resulting body count.

Desire is thus equated to danger in multiple ways, and pleasure equated to death. The notion of dangerous desire has long been a staple of literature, including in the *conte de fée.* In fairy tales, lessons of morality were woven into children's fiction as a way to depict sexuality and the consequences of desire, with "strange men, [often represented] in a fashion that incarnates the bestial and excessive in masculine sexuality…their appetites—the sexual above all—are uncontrollable and boundless" (Beasley-Murray, 202). This is particularly true of the well-known (and oft-psychoanalyzed) figure of *Le Petit Chaperon rouge,* first published by Charles Perrault in 1697, about a naïve young girl who is charmed by a cunning wolf as she travels through the forest. The dangers for young girls approaching sexual maturity must be instructed to them through the fairy tale, as Pierre Rodriguez explains:

> le sens du conte est évident et, comme de juste, il se confond avec la
> morale de l'histoire: les petites filles courent grand risque à sortir du droit
> chemin pour s'amuser, elles tomberont immanquablement sous la dent
> d'un grand méchant loup habile à dissimuler sous de belles paroles son
> immonde appétit. Dès lors le conte apparait comme un message codé pour
> les besoins de la bienséance mais nul ne peut s'y tromper: le loup n'est
> qu'un mâle jouisseur et sanguinaire dont les agapes au lit n'ont rien de
> platonique. (41)

[the meaning of the story is obvious and, as one might suspect, it is indistinguishable from the moral of the story: little girls are at serious risk if they stray from the straight path to have fun, they will inevitably fall into the jaws of a big bad wolf skilled at concealing his unsavory appetite with sweet talk. Therefore, the story appears as a coded message out of a need for decorum, but make no mistake about it: the wolf is a pleasure-seeking and bloodthirsty stud whose feasts in bed have nothing platonic about them].

If the conceit of the naïve young girl is transposed to the adolescent sexual infatuation of Franck in *L'Inconnu du Lac*, then the *Grand Méchant Loup* is easily transposed to mustachioed and murderous Michel, who charms his way into Franck's arms with a carnal appetite that goes beyond sex. In fact, a visual link between Franck and the Red Riding Hood character is created with Franck first entering the lake in a bright red tee-shirt, standing out in stark relief against the green of the trees, the white of the beach, and the other lake revelers' pale, naked bodies. Again, danger and pleasure collide in Michel, a *bzou*—a charming wolf-man—who smiles toothily as he leads Franck into the woods, and from whom Franck requests *bisous*/kisses each time he orgasms. In their final cat-and-mouse game where Franck is hunted by Michel, as total darkness envelopes the forest, Franck calls out Michel's name, first softly, then louder, and finally pleadingly, either in fear or desire, the two sounding the same. The film ends with Franck's fate unknown, but presumably he will go into the belly of the beast like *Le Petit Chaperon rouge*, and not wholly unwillingly.

There are several versions of the predatory wolf in *Les Témoins*, as well: Killer Kaz Gorbier nicknames himself "le loup parmi les loups" ["the wolf among wolves"] with a keen ability to stalk and prey upon young women; Gorbier's accomplice Serano has a wolf tattoo on his hand, and watches Sandra and Paul from the woods; Sandra unearths a childhood drawing she made of herself facing down a snarling wolf in the woods. While researching the show homes, Sandra does not believe witnesses who keep saying they saw a wolf nearby, until she too sees one running through the cemetery at night. Even at Sandra's sighting, the spectator is unsure if it is real or fantasy (until much later when we discover that the wolf is real, the "pet" of Laura's friend, Carl, who accompanies her on grave digging expeditions). While everyone claims to have "*seen the wolf*," it is worth noting that the same expression, "avoir vu le loup" in French also carries the idiomatic meaning that an individual is no longer sexually innocent. The dangers for young girls approaching sexual maturity must be instructed to them, a role taken on by fairy tales, but generally by parents as well. Sandra watches with some trepidation as her eight-year old daughter Chloé imitates her mother putting on makeup, applying red lipstick, and "playing" at femininity, and later recounts a fairytale about a princess chased by a beast hiding in the dark. But Laura, who has no mother to oversee her development or to warn her of risks, is the ultimate naïve Red Riding Hood character, girlish and stunted, as illustrated by her childish room with dolls, children's books, and a large dollhouse. Laura, a redhead (whose birth name is Valérie Le Roux), wears a red coat as she plots against the evil "king" of business in Le Tréport.

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Ming-Hsun Lin says that "typically a fairy tale heroine inherits the biological mother's beauty and virtue. Though the mother may die, help comes to her daughter from natural forces or magic used by a good fairy or godmother who can be regarded as an avatar for the absent biological mother" (95). Paul comments in episode three that Laura reminds him of his first love, saying "vous ressemblez à quelqu'un que j'ai beaucoup aimé, et qui avait votre âge lorsque je l'ai rencontré" ["you look like someone who I loved very much, and who was your age when I met her"], and unbeknownst to him, Laura's mother Juliette *was* that same first love. Sandra fulfills the role of godmother, trying to stop Laure from killing Norbert and to prevent her death. When Sandra is unable to fix the extent of Laura's injuries from the gunshot wound, she comforts Laura, cradling her in her lap and covering her with her jacket. Laura, close to death, asks Sandra if she has children, and Sandra speaks of her daughter and her recently discovered pregnancy as Laura slips away. Rather than the absent mother or evil stepmother of fairy tales, Sandra is the present mother, protective and reassuring, offering comfort and caresses that Laura did not have in life. Sandra, as mother figure and not a youthful innocent, is not at risk from the wolf (the wolf in fact assists in her rescue from the bunker, thanks to Paul's idea to use it as a super-efficient bloodhound). Laura on the other hand, prior to her death, posed a threat to the "wolf" rapist Norbert (to whom she relates her assumption that he is her father, based on his red hair). She lures Norbert to the beach to confront and ultimately kill him as vengeance for her mother's death, destined to share the tragic fate of both her mother and Red Riding Hood.

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In *Alex*, not only is Alex *not* instructed of the risks in adolescence, but the authority figures of an older brother and mother are the very two people who most put her at risk, subjecting her to abuse and disfigurement at the hands of multiple pedophiles. Alex, like Laura, is doomed by her need for justice, although she attempts to reclaim her agency by the means with which she plans her death and creates a trap for her half-brother. In the book *The Monstrous-Feminine*, Barbara Creed asserts that the Red Riding Hood figure has a dangerous connotation, "[suggesting] symbolically the *vagina dentata* with its reference to the red riding hood/clitoris and its emphasis on the devouring jaws of the wolf/grandmother" (108). Alex is indeed the ultimate vagina dentata figure, with disfigured genitals and brutal slayings as the payoff of male lust. Creed goes on to cite Bram Dijkstra's analysis of paintings in 1996's *Idols of Perversity*, where he noted that paintings that contained wild beasts with growling jaws positioned near a woman's genitals also "suggested the *vagina dentata* which turn-of-the-century men feared they might find hidden beneath woman's gown" (Dijkstra 294; Creed 23). Alex encounters rats snapping at her naked body in the kidnapper's cage; moreover, the invocation of the rats' "dents affilées" ["sharpened teeth"] pointed in her direction (*Alex* [Fr] 216), with tails "comme un serpent" (*Alex* [Fr] 122) ["like a snake"], and the use of her own blood to feed them and get them to gnaw through the cage's ropes, all suggest a violent sexuality; so too does her spearing and crushing of the same rodents, foreshadowing the eventual destiny of the men on her kill list.

Like Dijkstra's assessment of beasts in paintings, *Les Témoins'* Sandra is also confronted by snarling beasts near her genitals throughout the series: in the opening credits with the wolf in the shed, baring his teeth at her waist level; the same wolf later in a cage at Laura's house and also in the cemetery; an entire variety of assorted animals, taxidermied, are frozen in snarling expressions beside and behind Sandra's body, surrounding her in a storage room of a local orphanage where Laura grew up. Along with Laura and Alex, Sandra is aligned to the *vagina dentata,* not because of a revenge plan, but through convention-challenging behaviors that threaten masculine power in her refusal to conform. When Sandra's partner Eric tells her he wants her to quit her job in order to have "une vie de famille harmonieuse [et] normale" ["a normal, harmonious family life"], she compares his criticism to blackmail and rages that he, like her colleagues, are sexist, saying "Si je ne change pas de taf, tu pars ailleurs avec la petite? Tu savais que je voulais faire ce métier! Tu pensais que je passerais ma vie à faire traverser les vieilles? Ça vous emmerde tous qu'une nana puisse faire ce que je fais" ["If I don't change jobs, you'll take off with our daughter then? You knew that I wanted to have this career! You thought that I would spend my life helping old ladies cross the street? It pisses you all off that a chick does what I do"]. Sandra's refusal to conform to the norm of feminine domesticity but rather to work—and thrive—in a male dominated field, culminates in the shedding of the high heeled boots she wears throughout the entire series (even while limping after the car accident). As she tries to run on the beach to save Laura, Sandra finally gives up on her fashion statement (in a rare moment of levity, shouting "ces godasses de merde!" ["these shitty shoes!"] and flinging them over her

shoulder). She chooses a mission more critical than maintaining the superficial appearance of femininity and what Judith Butler would term the "performance" of her gender. In Butler's essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," she proposes that gender and sexuality are constructions, a shared reality of expected behavioral roles in society. Gender is constituted through "stylized repetition of acts" (270), a culturally ingrained illusion and interpretation of roles within social conventions that fall within certain realms of acceptability, and any performance that is not able to be neatly categorized will be "punished." That the performance can be evaluated, however, shows an underlying knowledge that it is a construct, which undermines the stability of the system. If roles are performed, then they may also be replaced or reformed (Butler 273-75). For Sandra, this small rejection of her high-heeled boots is perhaps a step toward reforming her role and presumably re-conceptualizing her place both in the workforce and the home.

The *appearance* of femininity as a strategy is central in *Alex*, whose alignment with Red Riding Hood matches Creed's assertion of a dangerous connotation through her sexuality. As the ultimate femme fatale, Alex dispatches those men (and one woman) whose actions eliminated her sexual agency in childhood. The tool with which she traps the perpetrators is through the *performance* of a hypersexualized identity. The accepted realms of femininity have long played a part in female identity. In the context of Louis XIV's court at the time of Perrault's writing, Heather Kirkman explains:

Female virginity was a requirement of the aristocratic marriage de raison, which was central to forging profitable social and economic alliances. For this reason, a woman's "honor" was a serious issue that affected family name and livelihood, as well as the dignity of court society as a whole. In this respect, Perrault's concern with the chastity of French noblewomen is an extension of his vested interest in defending court society...The tragic ending of Perrault's version, which culminates in Red Riding Hood's death, demonstrates the dire consequences of a young woman's choices. (144)

For Alex, the consequences are not those of her own actions, rather the consequences of the repeated cycle of rape and abuse in her formative years. These themes of sexual postponement and *vagina dentata* overtones exist in Perrault's *La Belle au bois dormant* as well, with implications of the thorns that protect the princess in the forest (Creed 107). In *La Belle au bois dormant* "Une si grande quantité de grands arbres et de petits, de ronces et d'épines entrelacées les unes dans les autres, que bête ni homme n'y aurait pu passer," (Perrault *Belle*) ["so great a quantity of trees, large and small, of brambles and thorns, interlacing each other, that neither man nor beast could get through them" (Perrault *Sleeping* 11)]. The thicket protects the princess in the forest until her one true love arrives, a prince for whom the interlacing brambles and thorns "s'écartèrent d'elles-mêmes pour le laisser passer" ["made way for him to pass of their own accord" (Perrault *Sleeping* 12)]. The idea of sexual agency appears in Perrault's tongue-in-cheek "Moralité" for the tale as well:

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Attendre quelque temps pour avoir un époux,

Riche, bien fait, galant et doux,

La chose est assez naturelle,

Mais l'attendre cent ans, et toujours en dormant,

On ne trouve plus de femelle,

Qui dormit si tranquillement.

La Fable semble encore vouloir nous faire entendre

Que souvent de l'Hymen les agréables nœuds,

Pour être différés, n'en sont pas moins heureux,

Et qu'on ne perd rien pour attendre ;

Mais le sexe avec tant d'ardeur,

Aspire à la foi conjugale,

Que je n'ai pas la force ni le cœur,

De lui prêcher cette morale. (Perrault, *Belle*)

[Some time for a husband to wait

Who is young, handsome, wealthy and tender,

May not be a hardship too great

For a maid whom love happy would render.

But to be for a century bound

To live single, I fancy the number

Of Beauties but small would be found

So long who could patiently slumber.

To lovers who hate time to waste,

And minutes as centuries measure,

I would hint, Those who marry in haste

May live to repent it at leisure.

Yet so ardently onwards they press,

And on prudence so gallantly trample,

That I haven't the heart, I confess

To urge on them Beauty's example.] (Perrault, *Sleeping*, 16)

By invoking the hymen (in line 8 of the French version, although the English translation lessons the sexual undertone of references and wordplay in the original) and a deferred sexuality, Perrault intimates that woman's "hedge" is kept inactive until her awakening by the prince, who penetrates the forest space because he is permitted to do so. Alex does not have this gentle sexual awakening, since as a child she is thrust into sexual activity underdeveloped, by force, and then continually prostituted until she is disfigured by one of the perpetrators. She mutates into a *vagina dentata* figure, unable to engage in sexual activity or reproduce because of her mutilated genitals, and thus unable to fulfill the fairy tale princess' role of *selecting* a suitor or indeed of motherhood. Moreover, the *vagina dentata* is often associated with the "Terrible Mother," who is destructive, all-consuming, and the antithesis of motherhood, "the alluring and seductive [figure] of fatal enchantment" (Neumann 80). Medusa, the Gorgon with snakes for hair who petrifies men

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who look at her is also a projection of the Terrible Mother (Neumann 22), her terrifying stare similar to the "simple regard [...qu']Alex fait à la perfection" (*Alex* [Fr] 17) ["a look (...that) Alex does perfectly" (*Alex* [Eng] 19)] toward her prey.

Like the *vagina dentata* imagery, in many North American Indian tribes, folklore describes a toothed, meat-eating fish residing in the vagina of the Terrible Mother, who "becomes a woman" when the teeth are broken off by a man (Neumann 168). Besides the very literal implications of her damaged sexual organs, Alex becomes the *vagina dentata/*Medusa figure, murdering anyone linked to the sexual violence of her childhood, reacting against the "suitors" who stole her virginity and left her brutally scarred, both physically and emotionally. The violence enacted upon Alex as a child transforms her into a beast, and her own sense of justice is found by reinstating a deferred sexuality; Alex has her revenge on her former torturers, slips away to a hotel room at peace with her actions, and falls into a "restful sleep" of suicide to frame her brother and mother for their evil deeds.[17] She is a Sleeping Beauty with a backwards timeline, ending in a permanent slumber because she was kissed and cursed in childhood, no happy ending for the "princesse" of the tale. These links between the dangers of sexuality and the narrative construction as a fairy tale are dependent upon the location of the fairy tale forest, the "uncultivated" forest and expansive countryside where the scenery is dominant by its size, unpredictability, and an acartographic nature. In each of the works, the characters are unable to plot their trajectories geographically and within the narratives. Control is

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[17] Alex's nickname for her cruel mother is the "Queen Mother," while, ironically, Perrault's *ogresse* in *La Belle au Bois dormant* is the cannibalistic Queen Mother who "felt well satisfied with her cruel deeds" and tries to eat the princess and her children.

wrested from Franck, Sandra, Benjamin, and Alex, who are *pushed* from those forest

paths, becoming prey to the wolves hidden amongst the trees.

VI. Community Dangers and Patriarchal Critique

        In dialogue with Perrault's fairy tales*,* these four works employ a *conte*

moralisateur ["moralistic tale"] function, instructing a universal reader on the dangers

that lurk within a larger community. The danger in the isolated nudist-homosexual

community of *L'Inconnu du lac* comes from within, from a killer hidden within their

midst. This, in conjunction with characters' frequent casual and unprotected sex with

strangers and the lakegoers' generally hedonistic vibes are compelling enough evidence

to assign the film meaning as a parable of AIDS within gay communities.[18] I would

suggest, however, that the largest threat to the community is posed by the internal

community politics at play, with group members' inability or unwillingness to divulge

what they know of the murder or of other individuals at the lake to the police. Inspector

Damrodeur asks questions with no real progress, and he in turn is also murdered by

Michel, stabbed as he attempts to enter the footpath into the woods. Not only does he fail

to enact order, he is wholly unable to penetrate the forest area, rendered symbolically

impotent as he is penetrated by Michel's stabbing blade. The lake community enacts their

own codes and rules that change according to individual interpretations (men can only

flirt on one side of the beach, can only have sex in one portion of the forest, watchers

must leave a couple when asked to do so), yet they seem unperturbed by the death of a

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[18] The director talks about this link to AIDS culture in an interview with *Slant* magazine. See: Osenlund, Kurt. "Interview: Alain Guiraudie." Slant Magazine. 24 Jan. 2014. http://www.slantmagazine.com/features/article/interview-alain-guiraudie

fellow lake-goer, and more upset by the inspector's probing questions than by the notion that a killer had been roaming free amongst them. The arrival of the police creates Michel's expanding need for violence. Like a fairy-tale, the lake community proposes its own sense of law and order, wherein community membership foster behavioral codes and the rules are fluid; for outsiders like the police inspector, the community remains uniquely unknowable, stuck in an infinite loop of inertia and isolation. Film often operates as an articulation of the perception of "imaginary relationships" filtered through the political and financial contexts that create it (Althusser 109). Perhaps this kind of outsider/insider unknowability and internal conflict, then, translates contemporary anxieties of patriarchal penetration of marginalized groups and communities. While the January 2015 gunmen attack at French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo prompted American broadcasters at Fox News to largely fabricate reports of "No-Go Zones" in Paris, France did, until recently, maintain an *Atlas des Zones urbaines sensibles* (ZUS), comprised of 750 zones that faced high percentages of immigrant populations, public housing, unemployment rates, and often elevated crime. The list of ZUS "Sensitive Urban Zones" was eliminated in January 2015, with neighborhoods in France reevaluated to rank by poverty levels alone, and given the more politically correct title of "Quartiers Prioritaires" or priority neighborhoods. Nonetheless, social and political marginalization and resulting disenfranchisement amongst community members in these areas, leads to a sort of invisibility, wherein the community becomes an "anti-lieu," unseen and ignored except in terms of negative attributes. As Mustafa Dikeç points out, "la banlieue" has become "a shorthand term to denote the darker inhabitants of social housing

neighbourhoods in the peripheral areas of cities" (25), just as the term "urban" came to

represent the collectivity of African American communities in the coded racial language

of the United States. Although *L'Inconnu du lac* presents an entirely different

marginalized community (itself, in fact, the exact inversion of the perception of urban

banlieues by representing rural, middle-class, white homosexuals on vacation), the shared

instinct of community members to close ranks and deny access to patriarchal order does

reflect existing angst in France.

Similarly, *Les Premiers* supports this theory by showing the violence within the

community and within man himself, allegorizing the violence as an uncontrollable and

invasive virus. Not only is the detective unable to stop the kidnappings and murders, he

becomes part of the problem, first taking street drugs which seem to accelerate his

hallucinations, then he devolves into a violent creature who can't stop the primal nature

and unknowability of what lies within the self. Like *L'Inconnu*, the detective is the

catalyst of violence, and is then destroyed, with Benjamin shot by colleagues (those

detectives also fail, with Jeanne not noticing her partner's transitional behavior, and

Captain Valère's refusal to heed the advice of a journalist or a museum worker, whose

theory that individuals were transforming would have prevented the loss of lives). Rather,

because of a genetic "inheritance" that overrides his morality and humanity, Benjamin

becomes a violent predator; his desire to kill and the lack of control of the Neanderthal

urge is finally triggered by the death of his father and a generational shift of power. The

literal challenge to his place as rightful head of household by debt collectors who want to

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reclaim his family farm causes Benjamin to lose control and begin his murder spree, with violence as a reassurance of his masculinity after the death of his father. The erupting internal violence comes as a reaction to the challenge of his patriarchal power, thus his masculinity in general, and the need to defend it is a primal response that links him to "early man."

A similar internal violence is reflected in the female revenge narratives in *Les Témoins* and *Alex,* although as a reaction against patriarchal power, and defiance against the small town secrets and forced silence of women and victims of sexual violence. In *Les Témoins'* Le Tréport, the village is swallowed by tragedy and small town politics; the dead are disrespected, unearthed, built over, and forgotten, but the past comes back to haunt the villagers through living carriers of memory, just as the town and indeed the country would have had to confront post-World War II trauma. There is also a female legacy of victimhood for characters like Laura in *Les Témoins* and Alex in *Alex*; while *Les Premiers'* Benjamin inherits land, debt, and aggression, Laure inherits the female "baggage" of victimhood from her mother, and Alex is forced into a shamed silence by her mother after her abuse. Whatever "girl-power" credit might be earned by female characters who triumph over monumental obstacles (albeit via extreme measures in these two tales of vigilante justice), it is quickly undone by the realization that sexual violence is still used as a catalyst for the majority of contemporary crime fiction, a crime trope at the expense of female and minority characters.

Even Sandra as a female detective is both empowered and embattled, with *Les Témoins* the most recent in a long line of psychodramas with female police protagonists stretching back to Helen Mirren's portrayal of devoted, dogged, and occasionally dodgy DCI Jane Tennison in 1991's groundbreaking *Prime Suspect* series from the United Kingdom (with Tennison arguably the patron saint of modern female detectives who followed, such as Gillian Anderson's DSI Stella Gibson in *The Fall*, Olivia Colman's DS Ellie Miller in *Broadchurch*, Mariska Hargitay's Sergeant Olivia Benson on *Law & Order: SVU,* and even Nordic Noir leading ladies Sofie Gråbøl as inspector Sarah Lund on *Forbrydelsen* [*The Killing*] and Sofia Helin's detective Saga Norén in *Bron/Broen* [*The Bridge*]). These tough, powerful, and "flawed" female detectives are victims of their own successes at work, often unable to balance the job with home and family life; they fight against troubled beginnings and past traumas, and their police work relies not only on their detective competencies but on their ability to be maternal and empathetic. In short, they must be seen as "masculine" enough to be respected as competent leaders by their peers, but "feminine" enough to retain a sense of self as a woman (and maintain a role as romantic partner/mother sufficiently). But this is further compromised by the problematic violence against women within the storyline. In her work on females in televised crime series, Joanne Clarke Dillman says:

> Because narrative demands merge with sadistic patterns, these television
> dramas are exemplary conduits for stories with gendered power struggles.
> They speak to and exploit the powerlessness that the average woman feels
> in relation to gendered violence, even though they include an active

woman character who works to bring cases to justice in the televisual

realm. The shows do not probe the origins of, or alter the course of, the

gendered and sexual violence that is a fixture of our mediated lives;

instead, they reproduce the horror scenarios of this gendered violence as

"given." It is just the way things are: women get killed, detectives work to

find the killer. (89)

Violence against women is replayed in gory and egregious depictions of rape, torture, and

murder; indeed, in *Les Témoins,* through contact with the victims, Sandra realizes that she

can fulfill her childhood desire to be a "princess who saves people," but that she equally

has the potential to be a victim as well. *The New Yorker* television critic Emily

Nussbaum, in a searing takedown of season one of American high-concept crime drama

True Detective, critiques the disposability of female bodies in the show and others like it,

comparing it to Gillian Anderson-fronted British series *The Fall*, which, by contrast,

"overflows with complex female characters, and not merely the killer's victims but their

families, the murderer's wife, his daughter, and his mistress. Beautiful as *The Fall* looks,

it's harder to watch than *True Detective*, because there is a soul inside each body we ogle.

When women suffer, their pain isn't purely decorative" (Nussbaum).

Yet, as troublesome as it is that women and sexual violence are still used as the

basis for many crime narratives today, if one strips away the excess of violence to reveal

marginalized groups that resist–or at the very least shine a light upon—centers of

phallocentric control, then perhaps rather than simply "reproducing the horror scenarios"

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as Dillman suggests, characters' acts of resistance become a counter-hegemonic critique of normative and patriarchal values. In the four works examined in this chapter, structured spatial configurations, the reduction of the community to the individual level, and the restriction of space to the body, all work to replicate a restriction of power of marginalized groups, who thus transcend the role of gratuitous props of the tech-torture porn of *CSI* or the *procedural-ad-nauseum* of the *Law & Order* franchise. The transformation of even minor characters becomes a central site of resistance: Alex elevates her role from victim to mastermind in order to unmask her torturers and break her silence in *Alex*, Henri sacrifices himself to protect Franck by speaking his knowledge of Michel's crimes in *L'Inconnu du lac*, Laura fights against the silence and stigma of her mother's rape and murder in *Les Témoins*, and even the minor character of journalist Axèle in *Les Premiers* is willing to risk her life in the pursuit of truth after the police tell her to stop sharing information with the public. These characters resist expectations of silence and internal politics as a direct reaction to patriarchal power, in a desire to enact order beyond institutional control.

Jack Zipes proposes that "Fairy tales are informed by a human disposition to action—to transform the world and make it more adaptable to human needs, while we also try to change and make ourselves fit for the world." According to Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," film (and perhaps here we might take a large liberty in extending his theory to include other popular medias such as television, novels, and comics), allows for the democratization of culture, shifting the

function of entertainment from a distraction to the revolutionary potential of social transformation. This form of cultural awareness challenges and subverts the dominant ideology through a self-reflexivity, by consciously assessing the construction and the illusory nature of the represented (Benjamin 243; 246-47). In this examination of the spatial dynamics of dangerous desires in the four contemporary works of this chapter, unexpected sociological implications and political explorations are revealed by bridging the borders of fairy tales, and marginalized communities. The spatial organization presented within these four works is undone by the unpredictability of the humans acting within their larger communities, driven by desire or by the removal of agency that desire (theirs or someone else's) forces upon them.

Chapter 3: Visible/Virtual: Transgressing Geographic and Narrative Border Spaces

> "On doit échapper à l'alternative du dehors et du dedans: il faut être aux frontières. La critique, c'est l'analyse des limites et la réflexion sur elles." Michel Foucault (*Dits et Écrits: Tome II*, 1384).
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> ["We have to move beyond the outside-inside alternative; we have to be at the frontiers. Criticism indeed consists of analyzing and reflecting upon limits." (Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" 45)]

Identity and trans-cultural movement have been a large part of France's literary heritage in a long-standing tradition of travel narratives dating back to the Crusades, and particularly popularized in France in the early nineteenth century, through travelogue/literary hybrid works from French Romantic authors like Gérard de Nerval (*Voyage en Orient,* 1851), Victor Hugo (*Le Rhin*, 1842), and Alexandre Dumas (*Le Corricolo,* 1943), who explored faraway destinations and evoked what C.W. Thompson calls the "elusive energy" in the resulting stories, an energy "mostly experienced as existing *elsewhere*, whether in time, in space, or in the deepest recesses of nature and of human personality" (386, emphasis original). In many contemporary crime fiction adaptations of international works, including the film *Ne le dis à personne*, television series *Tunnel*, novel *Travail soigné,* and comic book *La Princesse des glaces,* the culturally specific "elsewhere," spatial and moral, is shifted and transposed to a French context in visible and virtual spaces, through the adaptation itself and in the representation of space within the narratives (which include the same shifts toward rural

French spaces as examined in chapters one and two). In each of the previous chapters, a shift to rural space and the incorporation of literary characteristics from outside genres into the narratives demonstrate that rural zones are the realm of the "possible." In this chapter, the spatial shift extends even beyond the expanse of the countryside, to the borders of France, where the narrative limits of the *policier* interact with external influences. Francophone characters interact in literal border spaces, in port cities and hinterlands, and in the intersections of the visible and invisible. Transgressions of clear spatial, structural, and moral boundaries within the narratives create a mise-en-abyme of the adaptation process itself, in which the French and the originary works, first presented as separate and distinct spaces, merge; the French works "absorb" spaces and other national traditions in a selective appropriation that reinterprets, remaps, and recalibrates characteristics of well-worn crime sub-genres.

National and cultural borders are of particular importance in an increasingly global artistic market, in an era where a runaway success can inspire an entire international trend in a given genre. Such was the case in 2005 with the publication of Swedish crime author Stieg Larsson's first volume of the Millennium Trilogy; the resulting explosion of the *Nordic Noir*[1] into American and European markets created a flurry of literary crime fiction set in Sweden, and spawned inter-cultural appropriations in

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[1] *Nordic Noir* is an umbrella term for the moody, atmospheric crime fiction produced by the countries of Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden or Iceland; generally, they feature characters and situations that are morally complex, and tend to highlight the cold weather and Scandinavian landscape. The kick-off to the international popularity of *Nordic Noir* was Larsson's *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* novel, but the success of the subgenre was cemented soon-after by the Danish runaway hit television series, *Forbrydelsen/The Killing* (2007), particularly after its exportation to England.

film, television, and graphic novel remakes in Anglo- and Francophone markets. France

has itself recently earned the reputation of being the source of "the next big thing"[2] in

crime fiction, with a renewed visibility of French mysteries abroad, generated by

television and film exportations to U.S. digital networks like Netflix and Hulu, as well as

signal-boosting literary recognitions like the Crime Writers Association's International

Dagger Award, which honored French author Pierre Lemaitre for his novel

Sacrifices/Camille in 2015, just two years after his first Dagger win, when he shared the

award with compatriot Fred Vargas (Lemaitre for the novel *Alex,* Vargas—herself a 4-

time winner of the Dagger—for the novel *L'armée furieuse/The Ghost Riders of*

Ordebec).[3] Contemporary digital mobility allows these cultural products to be developed

and disseminated quickly, driven by international economic forces, transnational

production models, and a rapacious global appetite to consume the latest trends in

popular media forms.

Replicating trends across borders and reinterpreting popular media is the focus of

this chapter, with adaptations of international crime fiction translated to (or engaging

with) French cultural and linguistic contexts, inviting an exploration of authorship,

adaptation, and heritage in an increasingly transnational culture industry. International

dynamics and transitional spaces are featured in explicit ways in the four works discussed

in this chapter, which include the film *Ne le dis à personne /Tell No One* directed by

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[2] See article: Clark, Nick. "Well It Is Called Noir...How French Crime Writers Killed the Competition." The Independent. 17 July 2013. http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/well-it-is-called-noir-how-french-crime-writers-killed-the-competition-8714642.html

[3] Lemaitre was also shortlisted for the prize in 2014 for *Irène,* the English translation of his debut novel *Travail Soigné*, discussed in this chapter. The annual International Dagger Award recognizes the best crime novel not originally written in English.

Guillaume Canet (2006), Canal+ television series *Tunnel*/*The Tunnel* (2013, on-going), novel *Travail soigné*/*Irène* by Pierre Lemaitre (2006), and comic book *La Princesse des glaces*/*The Ice Princess* by author Olivier Bocquet and illustrator Léonie Bischoff (2014). These translations, adaptations, and international co-productions breach clear spatial delineations of nationality in their reinterpretations of other nations' famous crime fiction works and distinct styles, including the French take on the American "hardboiled" crime novel, British police procedurals, and the *Nordic Noir*.

Director and screenwriter Guillaume Canet's 2006 international hit *Ne le dis à personne,* based on the 2001 American novel *Tell No One* by Harlan Coben, swaps Pennsylvania for Rambouillet, a heavily forested commune in rural north central France, where protagonist Alexandre's wife Margot is murdered by the lake where they played as children. Eight years after her death, Margot reappears via cryptic emails to Alex, who simultaneously must decode the messages and fight wrongful accusations of murder leveled against him. Actor-turned-director Canet, who snagged the film rights to the novel after an initial American production fell apart (Saner, n.p.), worked closely on adapting the novel to film with the approval of author Coben, who is one of the most successful mass-market writers of American pulp/crime fiction (with 8 consecutive #1 New York Times bestsellers and over 60 million copies of his books in print worldwide). Canet staffs the film version with an all-star French cast featuring François Cluzet, Marie-Josée Croze, André Dussollier, and Jean Rochefort. The whodunit thriller, produced by Luc Besson's EuropaCorp production company, grossed $22 million in France, $2.3 million in the U.K., and $6 million in the United States, and received nine

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Cesar nominations in 2007 (garnering four wins: best director for Canet, actor for Cluzet, soundtrack, and editing).

A second commercial success with exportation to both the United States and the United Kingdom is television border drama *Tunnel/The Tunnel*, based on the 2011 Swedish/Danish television series *Bron/Broen* ("The Bridge"). The ten-episode bilingual *Tunnel* is a joint venture between Canal+ and U.K. television network Sky Atlantic that aired in October (UK) and November (FR) in 2013 to generally positive critical reviews. Led by showrunner Ben Richards and a team of both French and English writers, British actor Stephen Dillane stars as Karl Roebuck, Detective Chief Inspector of Northbourne Police, and French actress Clémence Poésy is Elise Wassermann, Capitaine of the *Direction centrale de la Police judiciaire* (DCPJ). Mirroring the plot of the original Swedish/Danish version, the two inspectors must learn to work together when the body of a politician is found on the line of demarcation between their respective countries (the Swedish/Danish Øresund Bridge connector is transposed to the Channel Tunnel, or "Chunnel," the rail tunnel that links Kent, in the United Kingdom, with Pas-de-Calais in France). Karl and Elise's combined team must work together to capture the "Truth Terrorist" serial killer as he enacts a series of bizarre and politically inspired crimes according to sociopolitical "truths," announced via website. Ultimately, killings that seem unrelated are all linked to an elaborate and very personal revenge plot that creeps insidiously into the detectives' lives.

Like *Tunnel,* novel *Travail Soigné* by Pierre Lemaitre deals with a series of murders that seem arbitrary but which are, in fact, linked to a single killer with the goal

of infiltrating the lead detective's home life. *Travail Soigné*, Lemaitre's first novel and the first in his "Trilogie Verhœven" series,[4] introduces Commandant Camille Verhœven of the *Brigade criminelle* ("La BC," which generally deals with murder and kidnapping cases). Verhœven and his team are called to a particularly gruesome crime scene, where the bodies of two dismembered women are linked to several cold cases. Despite an apparent difference in the killer's *modus operandi* in each murder case that Verhœven revisits, the existence of a fake fingerprint inked on the bodies with a rubber stamp explicitly connects these latest slaughters to that of five previously unsolved cases. Verhœven, who relies on a kind of natural instinct, realizes through a word/image association in a dream that one of the images in a case file reminds him of the descriptions of the murder in James Ellroy's famous crime novel *The Black Dahlia*. With the help of a local librarian and a literature professor, Verhœven maps the killer's body of work across several international novels, as each detail of multiple crime scenes replicates a fictional murder with exacting precision. Lemaitre, a former professor of literature, revisits the modern canon of crime literature with his "*Romancier*" ["Novelist"] serial killer, as Verhœven examines crime scene files with murders ripped from the pages of Bret Easton Ellis's controversially violent *American Psycho* (1991), James Ellroy's American true crime novel *The Black Dahlia* (1987), Scottish author William McIlvanney's Glaswegian "tartan noir," *Laidlaw* (1977), Swedish duo Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö's first book of the "Martin Beck series," *Roseanna* (1965), and

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[4] Although *Travail soigné* is the first book in the trilogy, it was published second in the U.S./U.K., translated *after* the release of Lemaitre's second book *Alex* in Anglophone markets. Due to the publishing decision to translate them out of sequence, much of the shock at the twist ending of *Travail soigné* is lost to English readers, since the beginning of *Alex*, the *second* novel, reveals the ending of the *first* novel in detail.

Emile Gaboriau's French classic *Le Crime d'Orcival* (1867)*,* spanning 124 years of the genre.

Graphic novel *La Princesse des glaces* also interprets a novel in the *Scandinoir*, the Swedish subgenre of the *Nordic Noir*. Based on bestselling Swedish author Camilla Läckberg's 2003 debut novel *Isprinsessan* (*The Ice Princess*), the French *bande dessinée* adaptation undergoes a double translation process from Swedish to French language and a cross-media adaptation from novel to visual form. But unlike many cross-cultural translations (such as *Ne le dis à personne* and *Tunnel*) that convert the place and space of the originary text to a familiar national construct in the target culture, Bocquet and Bischoff preserve Fjällbacka, Sweden as the scene of the crime, eschewing a setting-shift to France or a Francophone region that would diegetically justify the language choice of French in the comic. *La Princesse des glaces* features plucky heroine Erica Falck, who returns to her hometown (the aforementioned Fjällbacka) and is drawn into the investigation of her childhood friend Alexandra's murder. Author Läckberg's series has been published in over 50 countries, translated into 33 languages, and made into telefilms and a feature length film in Sweden; her *Isprinsessan* novel was translated into French in 2008, winning France's *Grand prix de littérature policière* award and *le Prix polar international* in the same year. In 2014, Casterman Publishing, one of the largest publishers of graphic novels and comic books in Europe, commissioned artist Léonie Bischoff and writer Olivier Bocquet to adapt Läckberg's first three Erica Falck novels into a graphic novel series, beginning with *La Princesse des glaces,* the first book. The

invisible is quite literally made visible in the adaptation from novel to graphic novel and in the use of space across the comic book format.

I. Divided Borders of, and within, the Narrative

The concept of the invisible made visible is central in each of the four works discussed in this chapter. Besides the literal border crossing in the adaptation from international crime fictions to France or to a francophone context, dividing lines between spatial boundaries are effaced, along with linguistic, social, and national borders. Invisible boundaries are first made visible by the division of space in which the characters move, as they are forced to transition between zones and to maneuver through the dangers that these border spaces often present. Yet unseen entities secretly surveil or technologically transmit what would be private into the public sphere, creating an intersection in the previously divided spaces. Protagonists in these works (a blend of professional detectives, and individuals who undertake their own investigations) face personal traumas that force them to confront, translate, and ultimately unify the previously separate spaces.

French anthropologist Marc Augé uses the term *non-lieu* ["non-place"] to describe undefined spaces "qui ne [peuvent] se définir ni comme identitaire, ni comme relationnel, ni comme historique […et] qui ne sont pas eux-mêmes des lieux anthropologiques" (*Non-lieux* 100) ["which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity […and] which are not themselves anthropological places" (*Non-place* 77-78)]. Augé concentrates on those in-between zones of anonymity in what he calls "supermodernity," such as airports, supermarkets, etc. Augé contends that "le

lieu et le non-lieu sont plutôt des polarités fuyantes: le premier n'est jamais complètement effacé et le second ne s'accomplit jamais totalement— palimpsestes où se réinscrit sans cesse le jeu brouillé de l'identité et de la relation" (*Non-lieux* 101) ["place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten" (*Non-places* 79)]. In each of the four works of this chapter, there are multiple sets of distinct spaces that must be reconciled: distinct geographic spaces are linked within the narrative, becoming *non-lieux* in which the represented zones are both/neither country and/nor city, actual and/nor virtual; in addition, physical spaces of trauma are merged with the mental space in which the investigations occurs. That these hybrid zones are enacted in French adaptations of other works provides yet another framework that relates to the palimpsests that Augé indicates: the "originary" international works are largely derivative examples of the genre (as will be discussed in detail later in this chapter). Thus the rewritten/reformulated French *policier* works, critically and popularly praised for their innovations, re-inscribe the resulting works in the tradition of innovation within the genre, and as *French* works, effectively skipping a link in the chain of cultural interpretation. In the hybrid zones created by these mergers, protagonists reclaim or mourn what was lost, and rebuild an identity in a potential/possible space, much like the abstracted space of "un espace quelconque"/"any-space-whatever" that Gilles Deleuze uses to describe the de-territorialized space "présent dans le fond [mais qui] perd ses coordonnées" (*L'image-mouvement* 137) ["present in the background [but which] loses its coordinates." (*Movement* 96-97)], and which serves as "un espace de conjonction virtuelle, saisi

comme pur lieu du possible" (*L'image-mouvement* 155) ["a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as the pure locus of the possible" (*Movement* 109)].

 a. Reconciling Divided Spaces in *Ne le dis à personne*

At the beginning of *Ne le dis à personne*, city and country spaces are visually and thematically opposed, with the open countryside juxtaposed with the closed-off, encircled city. The film opens with an establishing shot of an idyllic dinner in the French countryside, with lights twinkling and laughter swelling around a huge wooden table behind a modest country home at dusk. Wine, food, and cigarettes cover the table, as a group of family and friends' voices overlap with snippets of inside jokes, stories, and plans for the future. Alex, who has just finished schooling to become a pediatrician, coos over a friend's new baby as his wife Margot adoringly looks on. His sister Anne also cuddles a sleeping infant, and friends Charlotte and Marc tease Alex and Margot about when they plan to start a family, as the couple exchanges knowing smiles across the table. More than an introduction to the cast of characters central to the plot, it is a scene that gives the impression of warmth and plenitude, the French countryside promising fecundity and wholeness, community, and summer evenings spent in the company of friends and family. Alex teases the baby's parents about the perils of raising a child in the city, joking "La pauvre! Vous lui faites bouffer du pot d'échappement à longueur de journée..." ["Poor thing! You feed her exhaust fumes all day long"]. This first comparison of the warm dinner space to the depiction of a quasi-hostile, industrial Paris is sharp in contrast, and sets up a divide between city and country.

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The following day, Alex and Margot celebrate their anniversary at the lake where they spent their childhood, Lac Charmaine. An expansive aerial shot of their blue station wagon highlights the vastness of the scenery, and tracks their drive along a tree-lined road on their way to the lake, where a bower of blossoming pink flowers forms a pathway to a tree that has their initials "M+A" carved inside a heart on the trunk. Alex and Margot skinny-dip in the lake as night falls, but the peace and tranquility of the country retreat are interrupted later that night. After a minor spat about communication, Margot swims back to shore leaving Alex on a floating pontoon in the middle of the lake. From there, he calls out apologies, and watches as Margot climbs out of the water onto the dock and walks out of sight. Alex hears Margot cry out in the distance, and swims furiously to shore, but is knocked unconscious by an unseen assailant just as he reaches the dock. The film fades to black, then picks up eight years later to find Alex living and working as a pediatrician in Paris, and preparing to commemorate the eighth anniversary of Margot's death. Alex's Parisian apartment and workplace are angular, symmetrical buildings with white walls and expansive glass windows; the effect is sterile and devoid of warmth, as if to replicate the doctor's closed-off state of mind post-Margot. As Alex meets his sister's partner Hélène for lunch, she begs him not to distance himself, saying "ne te coupe pas de moi, si tu te coupes de *moi*, tu te coupes de tout le monde" ["Don't shut me out, if you shut *me* out, you'll shut everyone out"]. He rarely visits friends and family except to honor the "anniversaire morbide" of Margot's death each year, when he visits her parents.

The blank space between the night of her death and Alex's present are lost to the viewer and to Alex himself, a blacked-out wasteland of unseen grief. But Alex is able to mentally access these memories, during a montage sequence that brings the past and the country (both idyllic and traumatic) into the present and the city of Alex's apartment. Earlier in the day, police informed Alex that they found the bodies of two men and a bloody baseball bat buried on the same site where Margot was allegedly killed by a serial killer. They ask for a blood sample from Alex to compare to DNA on the baseball bat, and later that night, Alex rips the bandage off of his inner elbow, exposing the physical wound and getting drunk. He drinks glass after glass of liquor, and thinks about Margot and the past, in a flashback that shows a beaten up Alex watching Margot's coffin slowly slide into the oven of the crematorium. A quick cut follows, showing Margot and her father pulling up to Alex and Margot's wedding in a decorated car. This quickly cuts back to the present-day with a close-up of Alex's bloodshot eyes, which then transitions to the image of a line-up of family and friends, clapping from the church steps as Margot arrives at the wedding. A sound bridge of family members clapping carries over an image of the door of the crematorium closing behind the coffin, before quickly reverting back to the lineup of friends and family, this time in eye-level close-ups, looking toward the camera as it pans right over their faces one by one. There is an incomplete dissolve that fades in and out over the tracking shot as the camera passes by, overlapping the faces of friends and family from the separate temporalities of the wedding and the funeral, standing shoulder to shoulder.

The two separate events of the wedding and the funeral are combined into one space within the flashback, in Alex's mind, as the camera pans past the combined wedding/funeral attendees: Margot's father Jacques looks at the camera with a serious face, and stands next to Alex's sister-in-law Hélène, who weeps but wears what appears to be her wedding celebration clothes and hat; friend Marc claps and smiles in the background, and his wife Charlotte smiles toward the camera. As the camera is still panning, Jacques' face reappears laughing clapping, then Charlotte appears again with a tear rolling down her face; Hélène returns, this time smiling and laughing in the line-up, while Marc, to the right and behind her, grimaces toward the camera with a furrowed brow. As the dissolve lightly fades in and out over the faces, Alex's inebriation confuses the two events, their joy and grief intermingled in the same visible space. The lineup of friends and family cuts to an expansive shot of the tree at the lake, the camera panning up and rotating as if to replicate the dizziness of drunk Alex, whose face reappears in the present as he lies down on the bed. The images cut back to the lake space, with the child versions of Alex and Margot holding hands, looking at the carving of the heart and initials for the first time, and then quickly cutting back to a point of view from inside the crematorium oven, watching Alex and the same line of friends facing front, the camera and spectator positioned behind the coffin. Margot's face appears laughing at the lake (the same day before she was murdered), and a quick cut back to the previous shot inside the oven goes dark as the door closes, and plumes of fire blast from all four sides onto the coffin. The past and present bleed together, taking markers of joy and trauma and dissolving them together. Merged timelines bring Margot's life and death together in a dream-like *non-lieu* made visual for the viewer of the film.

The stripped-down, moody soundtrack, created by pop-rock musician Matthieu Chedid, also helps to blend the separate temporalities and their respective spaces. From the official soundtrack, the piece *Huit ans plus tôt* blends sounds of rain, Alex's laughter, lapping water and birdsong, then incorporates animal-like groans and coos with a layer of sharp, shrill strings and the sound of furious swimming (Alex's frantic attempted rescue of Margot), which all end abruptly in silence, timed to correspond to Alex's blackout on the dock and quick cut to a black screen in the film. By contrast, the piece *Huit ans plus tard*, which picks up as Alex drives to work 8 years later in Paris, uses sparse electric guitar chords strummed one string/note at a time, pulled apart and meandering (like Alex, swallowed by the city and the absence of life and family without Margot). Composer Chedid (also known as -M-) is perhaps best known internationally for his recording of the song "Belleville rendez-vous" for Sylvain Chomet's animated film *Les Triplettes de Belleville* (2003), and for his genre-bending, experimental albums. Canet's choice of a young, avant-garde French musician is offset by two English language songs of the past, woven into the soundtrack at key moments and mirroring the same spatial and temporal division existing in Chedid's works, of past and present, country and city, and also the French and American context of the film itself. American soul song "For your precious love" by Otis Redding (1965) becomes the recurring love theme of Alex and Margot (even used in the film's trailer over images of the lake and countryside), and "Lilac Wine" by Jeff Buckley (1994) narrates Alex's hybrid funeral/wedding memory from the apartment in Paris, and links it to the country space of the past:

> "I lost myself on a cool damp night / I gave myself in that misty light /
> Was hypnotized by a strange delight / Under a lilac tree / I made wine

from the lilac tree / Put my heart in its recipe / It makes me see what I

want to see / And be what I want to be / When I think more than I want to

think / I do things I never should do / I drink much more that I ought to

drink / Because it brings me back you / Lilac wine is sweet and heady, like

my love / Lilac wine, I feel unsteady, like my love / Listen to me, I cannot

see clearly / Isn't that she, coming to me nearly here?"

The "heady" brew in the song is made from the lilac tree under which the narrator is able

to recall a woman he lost; this aligns with Alex's ability to reclaim the blacked-out space

of the 8 year ellipsis (filling in the details post-attack for the viewer), and transports him

visually from his city apartment to his own "lilac tree," to the grove where he and Margot

met as children, where their love blossomed beneath the flowers. Grief is made visible in

the audio/visual memorial, and points to the fluidity of the mental boundary of grief

around the country space, used as a physical boundary to keep him in the city—at least

until Margot reappears in email form, on the anniversary of her death.

Alex receives an anonymous email with the subject heading "M+A" and the same

hash mark lines as the lake tree, which marked the years of Alex and Margot's

relationship. The email includes a website hyperlink, and a message that reads "clique sur

ce lien, date anniversaire 18h15" ["click on this link, anniversary date 6:15 p.m.].

Initially, the link does not function, at least not until the next day at the exact time

indicated. When Alex is able to open the link, he sees a woman who appears to be

Margot on a live CCTV feed, staring at the camera in the middle of a crowded public

area. Stunned, Alex immediately drives from Paris to the home of Margot's parents,

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where he plans to ask Margot's father about identifying Margot's body. Is Jacques certain it was her? Is it possible that the body could have been another woman? Drawn back into his trauma and into a rural space, Alex drives to Margot's family home, and an aerial shot of Alex's blue station wagon driving along the tree-lined road matches the shot from the beginning of the film with the couple's journey to the lake, replaying the same images from previously in the film and creating a temporal loop in the crossing of the physical boundary from country to city.

Alex must again cross between city/country zones after the police find photos of a badly bruised Margot hidden inside a safety deposit box, the key recovered alongside the bloody bat and bodies found near the lake. Alex, confused by the photos, visits Margot's best friend Charlotte at her photography studio to ask if she had taken the pictures. With no new information, Alex leaves Charlotte's studio, but later that evening she is murdered, and Alex—having been the last person to visit her, and already a police suspect in Margot's reopened murder investigation—is chased by police across town. Alex, who is leading his own investigation into the mysterious emails, does not want to be arrested before a scheduled meeting with "Margot," so, after being tipped off by his attorney, he jumps out of his office window to run from the police as they arrive at his clinic. Alex runs across a parking lot, down a hallway, and down a flight of stairs, with a shaky camera facing him, translating the urgency and instability of the character's situation as the scenery wobbles behind him. Alex runs toward the *périphérique* expressway that encircles the city of Paris, separating the city proper from the suburbs and beyond. Alex darts dangerously across rows of high-speed traffic in a thrilling chase

sequence that enables his escape across the city border.[5] On the other side of the highway, he runs through a labyrinthine marketplace, through stalls and terraces, and finally escapes Paris with the help of a former patient's father, Bruno, a thug whose friends in the *banlieue* help create a diversion in order for Alex to slip out of Paris and out of police surveillance. Concentric rings of space lead outward from Alex's sheltered and closed-off life post-Margot, growing increasingly larger as he works his way outward, and back to the rural space where he can re-write the past.

b. Bisections and Translations in *Tunnel*

The themes of distinct and separate spaces which are linked by trauma in *Ne le dis à personne* are also central in television series *Tunnel,* which opens with a Channel Tunnel employee making a gruesome discovery at the English Channel midpoint: a French politician's corpse is lying on the dividing line approximately 15 miles from either shore, her waist exactly on the midpoint line, meaning that half of her body lies in England, the other half in France. The first words spoken in the series are an emergency operator who asks "Is she on the French or the UK side?" for purposes of police jurisdiction, but it becomes quickly apparent the two separate countries will be forced to unite to work on the crime. When investigators try to remove the body it comes apart in two pieces, split at the waist at the national boundary. Leading the inquiry are two investigators who appear to be polar opposites: Elise Wasserman, a Frenchwoman, is by the book, methodical, cautious and humorless; Karl Roebuck, an Englishman, is

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[5] The filming of the chase scene closed the périphérique between porte de Clichy et porte de Clignancourt in both directions, reportedly for the first time ever; the production was granted one filming day (of a requested two) by the préfecture de police and Mairie de Paris, resulting in a fifteen hour shoot with eight cameras poised to capture the massive auto accident scene in one take (See: Cicolella and Hasse).

impulsive, instinctual, spontaneous, and gregarious. Their dual investigation bounces between the port cities of Folkestone (Kent, England) and Calais (Pas-de-Calais, France); the industrial buildings of the ports are a constant reminder of the near-permanent flow of people and objects, moving between countries yet largely unseen as the train carrying carloads of people moves beneath the waters in the tunnel.

Even the body itself reinforces the division of space, as the autopsy reveals that it is in fact two bodies, with the top half belonging to the politician Marie Villeneuve, and the bottom half is that of a runaway named Gemma Kirwan. The two women are extremely different: Marie is a white, French, middle-aged, rich, right-wing politician; Gemma is a black, Welsh, young, runaway prostitute. Yet they, like the investigators, are fused together by a twisted murderer, who posts a video online that shows the moment when the investigators tried to remove the body from the tunnel, and it came apart. Through this website, the serial killer, dubbed the "Truth Terrorist"/"Terroriste de la Vérité" by the local media, announces five "truths" as part of a twisted political manifesto, with each truth announcing a set of corresponding victims. His speeches and website text are written in both languages, and his victims are chosen on each side of the tunnel, forcing the investigation to ping-pong across the Channel with each new crime scene.

The Truth Terrorist weaves a web of murders as he zigzags across the border, underlining the invisible divisions that exist within the communities of the nation's borders, as well. Within each space, highlighted by the Truth Terrorist's murder targets, are divisive politics and divided communities, segregated by their age and their mental

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health (with the elderly and the mentally ill both relegated to special homes, drugged, and quietly forgotten), or by their race and social status (riots at the borders of cities and poorer suburbs where disenfranchised minority youths square off against sometimes unjust police forces, and a black prostitute or a black child (whose family requires social welfare benefits) are deemed by news media and social media users to be "worth" less than a white politician or a young white girl. References to the Second World War also reinforce this idea of national-divide-with-internal-scars, with France's complicated history (as a country split in half during the war) looming in every reference. Characters meet at the war museum (*le Musée Mémoire*) in Calais; Elise is cornered by an anti-Zionist gun nut, who spits "Wassermann, c'est juif! T'as bien du sang juif?" ["Wassermann, that's Jewish! You have Jew blood, don't you?"] in episode two. A journalist who is questioned about contact with the Truth Terrorist compares the police questioning to the Third Reich, and Karl's rebellious teenage son Adam professes his admiration of the Truth Teller's moral outrage (much to his father's objections) in episode five, saying that the Truth Teller's collateral damage is comparable to Winston Churchill: "Churchill killed real people, too! 25,000 at Dresden, and he still tops the charts of most popular Britons." The Truth Terrorist's series of murders re-open the wounds of a long history of division in Europe, across borders and inside them, and the previously separate spaces of France and England are joined through murder as well as the discrimination that spans and exists in both countries; they are united in trauma and unrest, and the investigation's focus quickly becomes less about geographic divides and instead focuses on a common humanity.

Because the murderer traverses national lines with a meticulously designed plan that alternates between French and English victims, Karl and Elise's travel between zones is so frequent that the locations are not even addressed; it is difficult to even track which country each successive strike of the Truth Terrorist is occurring within, and the victims appear interchangeably French or English (there is no real indication except for infrequent verbal cues about victims' identities). The viewer sees Karl and Elise in transit, but there are few striking differences in the geography of the two countries' port cities, and the dialogue remains bilingual throughout. The dual spaces merged as one are replicated in the linguistic divide as well. Because the series takes place half in a French investigation room and half in an English police department, episodes switch between French and English depending on the location and the characters speaking. In the original series, *Bron/Broen*, characters communicate through receptive bilingualism, because the linguistic commonalities of North Germanic languages Swedish and Danish—particularly in the Øresund region, with easy travel between capital cities—allows for individuals in both nations to be mostly mutually intelligible[6] when speaking in their native languages, with Danes and Swedes "likely to use their native language rather than a lingua franca when speaking to each other" (Schüppert 3). Such possibilities do not generally exist between French (a Romance language) and English (a Germanic language with Latinate lexical influence), so early episodes of *Tunnel* are constructed with large blocks of French dialogue in half the scenes, and exchanges in English in the other half.

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[6] According to Schüppert, "the mutual intelligibility between spoken Danish and Swedish is asymmetrical. Danes tend to encounter fewer problems when they hear a Swedish person speak Swedish, than vice versa" but that Malmö and Copenhagen inhabitants (which is where *Bron/Broen* takes place) had higher "contact indices," and therefore a higher rate of comprehension (7-8).

Karl's first attempt at greeting the French officers at the initial crime scene begins with "Bonjour…bonjour…uh…parlez-vous anglais?" ["Hello…hello…uh…do you speak English?"], with the detective speaking French haltingly and with a *very* thick British accent. Elise immediately cuts him off and begins speaking to him in fluent and almost imperceptibly accented English, rattling off technical crime scene terms and jurisdiction details (whereas Karl could not fully manage a greeting in French). The language divide is at first a complication in the investigation, and an interview with producers of the drama makes clear that the same complications arose behind the cameras as well, describing the bilingual process as

> a nice idea, but a clerical cluster bomb: the scripts, for starters, were translated more times than a meeting of the European parliament. They were written by both French and English writers, then flipped into the other language so that all of the editorial team could understand what they were discussing. The French characters speak French, the English characters, English. (Elise, conveniently, is bilingual). So, when an English writer was writing for a French character, that also had to be translated, and vice versa. The "foreign" sections will then be subtitled back for their respective audiences, probably at around the moment when The Tunnel's script editors all jump off a cliff. (Wilson)

The linguistic divide between the investigating teams allows for characters in the story to have inside jokes and make overt cultural stereotypes about each nation, without the other group understanding: the French call Karl "le rosbif," while Karl describes Elise's personality in relationship to Obélix, the French comic book character from *Astérix*:

"[Elise] fell into the magic potion but instead of [it giving her] strength, it took away her social skills." In the first episode, Karl tries to drive to the police station in France and gets lost, and tries to find someone who can speak to him in English. The vast majority of Karl's time in the Calais crime room has him standing behind groups of French speakers and waiting for snippets of the conversation that he can piece together (and inevitably he asks a question that has already been discussed). From the beginning, representative of their respective nations, Elise and Karl are two very different detectives, and their respective countries are presented as distinctly separate spaces, begrudgingly brought together through the murder in the tunnel.

The opening title sequence reminds the viewer that the first body (Marie/Gemma), split at the waist, joins the two countries in death as two halves of a whole. Each episode opens with a fluid travelling shot down the empty, dark tunnel, followed by a fade-in on a close-up, panning shot that slides over the woman's corpse, separated at the waist and split across the midpoint line. Over these images, Charlotte Gainsbourg (daughter of notorious French chanteur Serge, and British model Jane Birkin) sings the series' theme song. The singer embodies the 50/50 French/English divide even in her own heritage, and her song alternates between lines in both languages, much like the murders will play out, back and forth between the two. Gainsbourg's breathy voice echoes over slow, eerily twinkling bells, like a music box winding down:

Venez dans mes bras	[Come into my arms]
Closer to me, dear	
Donnez-vouz à moi	[Give yourself to me]

Set aside all fear

Restons enlacés, pour l'éternité   [Let's stay, embraced for eternity]

Yes, you will be mine, 'til the end of time.

Although each line switches between French and English, they are paired, with meaning extended from the French line to the English one: lines one and two beckon the subject inward and "closer"; lines three and four assuage fears of succumbing to the embrace with imperative commands "Donnez-vous" and "set aside." Lines five and six, however, are duplicated, *both* emphasizing the permanence of their intertwined state, by repeating the "eternity" of the French line with the repetitive "til the end of time" in the English line that follows. The rhyme scheme also shifts at these lines as well, going from perfect rhymes in an ABAB scheme—A [French: bras], B [English: dear], A [French: moi], B [English: fear]—to "half rhymes"[7] in the *same* language/line in lines five and six, pairing vowel sounds with a scheme of C [French: enlacés], C [French: éternité] in the same line, phrase five, and D [English: mine], D [English: time] in phrase six. The separate spaces that divide French and English in lines 1/2 and 3/4, replicate the geographic (and attitudinal) divide in the beginning of the series, but the parallel of lines five and six in their meaning, composition, and shift in rhyming pattern reflects the unified, interlaced French and English investigation teams—imperfect as they may be—as Karl and Elise truly become partners throughout the series.[8] The dialogue in the episodes also reflects

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[7] "Half rhymes" pair words with near, but not matching vowel sounds *and* final consonants that would constitute a perfect rhyme. Half rhymes are also sometimes called approximate rhymes, imperfect rhymes, slant-rhymes, or lazy rhymes.

[8] Even the title of the series reflects this, with an unusual lack of masculine article "le" in the French title *Tunnel*, whereas the English title, which generally does not require an article with standalone nouns, uses *The* Tunnel.

this shift as the series advances. Rather than the chunks of all-French and all-English

scenes that kept the languages and characters separate and divided in the early episodes,

in later episodes Elise speaks more English or translates more readily for Karl, and Karl

begins to learn more French. Karl transitions from not being able to greet the

investigators in episode one, to translating for Elise when she does not know the English

word for the birds called *hirondelles*. "They're called swallows, in English," Karl tells

her, in episode ten, without hesitation. And, in the final exchange of the season (after an

explosive finale to be discussed in detail later), the detectives part ways, with Elise saying

"bye, then" in English and Karl replying "au revoir" in French, fully unified as a team,

with the division of linguistic, social, and national borders erased by their partnership.

c. Narrative Boundaries Rewritten in *Travail Soigné*

While Pierre Lemaitre's *Travail soigné* is not strictly an adaptation in the classical

sense, the same theme of separate spaces linked by trauma appears in the narrative, and

the invisible/visible play of boundaries is manifested in the narrative form itself. The

crimes move from the outskirts of Paris to much farther afield, as the murder squad, led

by Commandant Camille Verhœven, realizes that the killings are similar to international

crime fiction novels. Verhœven is first called to a crime scene in Courbevoie, a commune

5 miles outside of the city of Paris. He and his team travel to an abandoned factory

compound, with workshops converted into upscale loft apartments. The team finds, in

one of the lofts, "un spectacle que le pire de ses cauchemars eût été incapable d'inventer"

(*Travail* 25) ["a scene he could not have imagined even in his worst nightmares" (*Irène*

18)], with dismembered body parts and organs littering the residence, and blood sprayed

from floor to ceiling. The scene is described in horrifying detail, with a level of violence that one Washington Post reviewer says "reaches a level of ugliness that amounts to pornography" (Anderson). The details of the scene are indeed of an extreme and visceral violence, so much so that the response team *in* the narrative are all retching and trying to avoid entering the apartment, where a woman's head is nailed to the wall, fingers are cut from hands and fanned out like the petals of a flower, and a second woman's throat is pulled through her mouth, amongst other horrific acts. The furnishings in the loft seem staged and seem very meticulously designed (including an imported wall-length sofa, a cowhide wall covering, a dalmatian-print bathroom wallpaper, a large painting of a human genome, and an American television comedy playing on an old VCR tape. Additionally, there is an inked thumbprint on the wall, a synthetic print made from a rubber stamp, which links the case to an unsolved murder case in Tremblay-en-France, a commune 12 miles outside of Paris. The thumbprint and the specificity of the furnishings lead Verhœven and his team to identify an entire series of cold cases that are perpetrated by the same individual. With the help of a local bookseller, they identify the scene in Courbevoie as a replication of Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* novel, and the unsolved murder in Tremblay (in which a young girl is found nude, her face carved into grotesque smile), is a perfect match for James Ellroy's *The Black Dahlia*. Verhœven reads from the back of Ellroy's book, and sees that the plot description is an exact match for the Tremblay case, minus the location: "Le 15 juin 1947, dans un terrain vague de Los Angeles, est découvert le corps nu et mutilé, sectionné en deux au niveau de la taille, d'une jeune fille de 22 ans: Betty Short, surnommée « le Dahlia noir »..." (*Travail* 111) ["June 15, 1947: a naked, mutilated corpse is discovered on a patch of waste ground in

Los Angeles; the body is that of a young woman of twenty-two: Betty Short, nicknamed 'The Black Dahlia' [...] It was the nude, mutilated body of a young woman, cut in half at the waist" (*Irène* 112)].[9]

Verhœven goes to a bookstore in Paris, where, upon entering the shop he remarks that "On pénétrait ici moins dans une librairie que dans une culture. Passé la porte, on était dans l'antre des spécialistes, quelque chose à mi-chemin du cloître et de la secte" (*Travail* 157) ["It felt less like walking into a bookshop than stepping into another universe. Crossing the threshold was like entering the refuge of the specialist, part monastery, part cult" (*Irène* 169)]. The bookstore is a portal to a seemingly infinite number of murders and murder inspirations. On a second visit to the bookstore, "Camille imagina le nombre de morts que devaient représenter tous les livres présents dans la librairie de Lesage. Vertige" (*Travail* 191) ["Camille shuddered to think how many murders might be contained within the pages of the books in Lesage's shop" (*Irène* 212)]. Every cold case in France is skimmed for identifying features that could *potentially* be related to crime novels from all over the world, and the police team realizes that they need an expert to assist in creating some boundaries. Verhœven finds a crime fiction scholar, Professor Fabien Ballanger, to help him identify classic *policier* works, although that proves somewhat complicated. Even within the genre of crime fiction, the boundaries between categories and subcategories are fluid, and distinctions like "classic" are constantly shifting (and subjective). Prof. Ballanger has difficulty creating a list for

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[9] Just as *Travail soigné* and *Tunnel* share the plot that a series of unrelated murders turn out to be linked to one killer, it is notable that key to both investigations is a case in which a woman's body is bisected at the waist, highlighting the segmentation at play within the narrative spaces.

Verhœven, in a discussion of actual crime works, saying that

> La définition de ce qu'est un classique, en cette matière, est très
> approximative. À mon sens, elle est même plus sociologique et historique
> que littéraire [...] C'est affaire de sociologie dans le sens où, pour un
> public moyennement averti, certains livres sont considérés comme des
> chefs-d'œuvre même quand ce n'est pas le cas aux yeux de spécialistes.
> C'est aussi affaire d'histoire. Un classique n'est pas forcément un chef-
> d'œuvre. *Nécropolis* de [Herbert] Liebermann est un chef-d'œuvre mais
> pas encore un classique. *Les Dix Petits Nègres* [d'Agatha Christie], c'est
> l'inverse. *Le Meurtre de Roger Ackroyd* [de Christie] est à la fois un chef-
> d'œuvre et un classique. (*Travail* 222)

> [In crime fiction, what constitutes a 'classic of the genre' is moot.
> Personally I think the choices are sociological and historical rather than
> strictly literary [...] Sociological in the sense that the reading public often
> considers certain books to be masterpieces in the teeth of critical opinion.
> Historical in the sense that a classic is not necessarily a masterpiece.
> [Herbert] Lieberman's *City of the Dead* is a masterpiece, but it's not
> considered a classic. The opposite is true of [Agatha] Christie's *And Then*
> *There Were None*. Now, [Christie's] *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is both
> a masterpiece and a classic.] (*Irène* 249)

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Verhœven is not impressed by this non-response and presses, "Il me faut des catégories" (*Travail* 222) ["I need you to be categorical" (*Irène* 249)], urging the Professor to create some sort of parameters so that the project would not spin into a boundless free-for-all.

After drafting a list of what they consider to be the most influential and important crime fiction novels of the last century, Ballanger and Verhœven cross reference cold case crime scene features with the books on the list, and find three other murders that match the killer to works of fiction, including William McIlvanney's novel *Laidlaw*, in which a girl is found strangled in a park in Glasgow Cross, Scotland, wearing a denim jumpsuit and yellow platform shoes; Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö's *Roseanna* matches a crime scene where a woman with a fake birthmark painted on her thigh is strangled and dumped in a canal; and Emile Gaboriau's *Le Crime d'Orcival* matches a body found floating in the Seine near Fontainebleau, wearing a vintage gown that matches the description of the novel's period clothing. The locations of the crimes are scattered just outside of Paris in every direction (plus the murder in Scotland), so the investigation is constantly on the move and without a "targeted" area that could help Verhœven identify a killer or indeed a pattern to the victim or book selections. Verhœven must constantly choose between diverging paths in the investigation, sometimes literally: "Verhœven aborde les rues endormies qui conduisent en bordure de forêt. Une rue à droite, une autre à gauche" (*Travail* 399) ["[Verhœven approaches] an intersection where roads fork left and right, running along the edge of the forest" (Irène 438)].

Suburban areas where the crimes take place are subject to eroding borders as well, with construction and industry encroaching on previously rural landscape, including

Verhœven's deceased mother's art studio (which will become a key location in the final standoff with the killer):

> Montfort était en fait un lieu-dit, ultime trace d'un village autrefois situé à la bordure du parc forestier qui borde le bois de Clamart. Gagnée aujourd'hui par des programmes immobiliers, longée par des résidences prétentieuses, la lisière du bois n'avait plus l'aspect en quelque sorte frontalier que Camille avait connu lorsque enfant, il y accompagnait sa mère. L'atelier était l'ancienne maison de gardien d'une propriété qui s'était évaporée dans une succession d'héritages mal gérés et dont il n'était resté que ce bâtiment dont sa mère avait écroulé toutes les cloisons. (*Travail* 134)

> [Monfort was a hamlet, the last vestige of a village that had once stood on the edge of Clamart forest. These days, the area was ringed by housing developments and grandiose mansions, and the forest no longer felt like the untamed wilderness Camille had known when he had gone there with his mother as a child. The studio was the old gatehouse of an estate that, through the mismanagement of a succession of heirs, had gradually disappeared until all that remained was this lodge.] (*Irène* 140-41)

Not only is this suburban space a site of urban encroachment, but it also signals an encroachment of narrative layers. As an aside, both *Montfort* and *Monfort* are accepted spellings of the hamlet's name, and while "Monfort" without a "t" is consistently used in

the English translation of the novel,[10] the spelling switches between both in the French

novel, starting off as *Montfort*, and ending as *Monfort* late in the work. It is a

linguistic/graphic "tell" that, in fact, if noticed, might tip off an astute reader that the

narrative is being told by two distinct individuals, because what appeared to be a mise-

en-abyme of crime fiction in the Lemaitre novel, is in fact, far more complicated: the

bookstore location, the discussion of genre by the characters, the graphic spelling change

of *Monfort* all signal the importance of a fictional narrative space that seemed distinctly

separate initially (Verhœven's reality and the crime fiction novels replicated by the

murders), but in fact there is a confusion of ontological levels that erases what the reader

has come to interpret as the borders of the narrative.

Lemaitre revisits and reworks each of the foreign crime novels within his own

work, a mise-en-abyme further cemented by a plot twist in the last act, when it is revealed

that the entire book—the same one that we've been reading—is a manuscript written by

"*le Romancier*" ["The Novelist"] character, writing about the murders and Verhœven's

search for him, and describing in detail his killings as he replicates his favorite crime

novels. It is only in the final chapter of *Travail soigné* that the reader truly "meets"

Camille Verhœven, who is searching for his missing, pregnant wife; until this point, it

has been a representation of Verhœven within the doubly fictional story, the manuscript

within the novel, making the entire investigation a subjective retelling by *le Romancier*,

and eliminating narrative borders through the elaborate mise-en-abyme.

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[10] The lack of inclusion of this detail in the English translation is potentially a stylistic choice rather than an accidental omission, as Anglophone readers would not necessarily be aware of the dual spelling of the town's name.

In his study of the work of science-fiction writer Philip K. Dick, Umberto Rossi discusses a similar structure in one of Dick's novels, *The Man in the High Castle,* which contains a novel-within-the-novel. Rossi notes that the introduction to Dick's book distinguishes between three textual levels of the novel's structure, which I propose is also shared by Lemaitre's work: "the *fictional* reality described (or built) in the novel, the *hyper-fictional* reality that is alternative to that fictional reality, and the reality of the reader--or, in [scholar Carlo] Pagetti's terms, primary text, secondary text, and zero text" (84). Rossi furthers Pagetti's model by underlining that the "process through which the duplication of reality levels inside the literary text can trigger a scission of the zero text" (84), in which the levels of truth in the works are questioned, which "leads to a splitting of the zero text," or the reader's reality (85). Indeed, when Verhœven finds the manuscript and begins to read passages from the first page, the actual reader of Lemaitre's *Travail Soigné* identifies the passages as the same phrases from earlier in the book:

> [Camille] recule la chaise et s'assoit lourdement. Il a mal à la tête. Il se masse les tempes et reste ainsi une longue minute, dans le silence, regardant fixement le dossier à sangle puis il se décide à le tirer vers lui. Il défait, avec peine, la sangle. Il lit:
>
> > —*Alice… dit-il en regardant ce que n'importe qui, sauf lui, aurait appelé une jeune fille* [...]
>
> Il tourne quelques pages:
>
> > —*Une horreur, lâcha Louis. Sa voix était altérée. Un carnage* [...]

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Entre le pouce et l'index, il attrape une petite liasse de pages et la
retourne:

> *Maman travaille sur les rouges. Elle en applique des quantités*
> *incroyables. Des rouges sang, des carmins, et des rouges profonds*
> *comme la nuit.*

Camille saute plus loin:

> *La jeune femme, de race blanche, âgée d'environ 25 ans, portait*
> *des traces d'un violent passage à tabac* [...]

Camille renverse soudain tout le dossier d'un geste et retourne vers lui la
dernière page, les derniers mots:

> [...] *Sur le coin de la table, un dossier fermé dont le cartonnage*
> *rouge s'était bombé quand on en avait serré la sangle.* (*Travail*
> 355-356)

[Camille pulled out the chair and sat down heavily. His head was
pounding. He rubbed his temples and sat for a long moment in silence,
staring intently at the folder. Finally, he pulled it toward him and struggled
to open the strap. He read:

> "Alice...," he said, looking at what anyone other than him would
> have called a young girl [...]

He flicked through the loose pages.

> "It's carnage," Louis said in a strangulated voice, struggling to find
> the words [...]

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He grasped a sheaf of pages between his thumb and index finger and turned them over.

> "Mama is working with reds. She applies liberal quantities—blood reds, carmines, reds dark as night."

He flicked forward.

> "The victim, a Caucasian woman of about twenty-five, had clearly been subjected to a brutal beating [...]"

Camille suddenly flipped the whole manuscript over, and read the words on the final page:

> "[...] On one corner of the table lay a red cardboard folder whose bulging contents strained against the elastic strap."] (Irène 407)

In this passage, the reader suddenly realizes that each of the book snippets that Verhœven reads are direct quotes pulled from prior sections of Lemaitre's book itself, and that the previous chapter just ended with the same sequence of Verhœven opening the folder to find the manuscript. What was believed to be the primary text is actually a secondary text, as the book from pages 1 through 354 are a subjective, invented, hyper-fictional reality within the fictional reality of the novel. The "scission" in the zero text is caused by the division of virtual space/real space upon the reader's realization that the novel is a recursive loop that appropriates the international works as a tool of manipulation even within its own story.

Dr. Viguier, a psychologist who works with Verhœven, studies the novel and notes the discrepancies from the truth:

Dans son livre, moi, je m'appelle Crest et j'ai vingt ans de moins. On voit

aussi apparaître trois de vos agents sous les prénoms de Fernand, Mehdi,

et Élisabeth mais sans nom de famille [...] Et aussi un étudiant du nom de

Sylvain Quignard qui est censé vous mettre sur la trace du livre de Chub, à

la place du professeur Didier qui, ici, s'appelle Ballanger. (*Travail* 373)

[In the 'novel,' he calls me Crest and shaves about twenty years off my

age. We have three officers called Fernand, Mehdi, and Élisabeth, none of

whom have a surname [...] Then there's a student called Sylvain Guignard;

in the book, he's the one who tells you about Chub's book rather than

Professor Didier–whom he calls Ballanger.] (*Irène* 418)

Many of the characters that the reader has followed over the course of the investigation

are inventions or exaggerations, and as for the investigation details, *le Romancier* used

facts, guesswork, and rewrote the manuscript as he went along to ensure accuracy of the

story. It also helps that *le Romancier* is the journalist, Philippe Buisson de Chevesne, who

had been antagonistically following Verhœven and reporting on the murder case, so he

had access to details of the investigation throughout.

Along with the five classic novels that Chevesne/*le Romancier* references in his

manuscript is the inclusion of an obscure crime fiction work, a pulp novel called *Le

Tueur de l'ombre* [*Shadow Slayer*], published in the late 1970s by a vanity press, and

written by Philip Chub, an alias of the same man, Philippe de Chevesne. In the book, a

pregnant woman is beaten and her baby is forcibly removed by cesarean section, and both

are murdered as revenge against the father in the book named "Christian." Verhœven

realizes that his missing, pregnant wife Irène is Chevesne's next victim, and that

Chevesne sees Verhœven as the role of "Christian" in the manuscript's fictional novel.

The psychologist tells Verhœven that "On sait depuis longtemps que Buisson règle un

compte meurtrier avec l'autorité, sans doute avec l'image du Père. D'un côté, il rabaisse

l'autorité; d'un autre, il l'admire. Cet homme est contradiction des pieds à la tête. Il vous

a choisi pour incarner son combat. C'est sans doute pourquoi, à travers Irène, il tente de

vous faire du mal" (*Travail* 374) ["Buisson's murderous rage is rooted in a strong

antipathy toward authority, toward the figures of the Father. He sneers at authority and

yet admires it. The man is a walking contradiction. He has chosen you to symbolize his

struggle, and that is undoubtedly why, through Irène, he wants to hurt you. It's classic

cognitive dissonance" (*Irène* 418)]. This dizzying mise-en-abyme introduces a *fourth*

level to Rossi and Pagetti's conception of narrative space: along with the zero text of the

reader, there is a primary text (Lemaitre's fictional novel), the secondary text (*le

Romancier*'s manuscript within Lemaitre's fictional novel), and a *tertiary* text (*le

Romancier*/Chub/Chevesne's invented/fictional novel within *le

Romancier*/Chub/Chevesne's manuscript within Lemaitre's fictional novel).

Verhœven races against the clock to find his family but is ultimately too late. In

the final pages of Lemaitre's novel, the squad races out of Paris and goes to Verhœven's

mother's studio in Monfort, where he finds that *le Romancier*/Chevesne/Chub has

enacted exactly what was described in the *Le Tueur de l'ombre* story: he has beaten and

killed Irène, prematurely excised the baby, and crucified him. The murder of Verhœven's

wife and son is described in detail in the doubly-virtual space of the tertiary text (*Le

Tueur de l'ombre novel in the manuscript), indicating to the reader what he planned to do to Verhœven's family in horrific detail. The scene in which Irène and the baby's bodies are found, however (in the primary text, in the final pages of the book), only alludes to details of the murder scene, but indicates that what Verhœven finds at Monfort is identical to the scene from the Chub novel. In the absence of gore, the scene is perhaps more shocking and disturbing than the other highly graphic murders throughout the book because, in spite of its lack of detail, it relies upon the reader to recall, and visually fill in the details of horror. The complicated narrative structure influences what is made "visible" to the reader, with many strata of virtual spaces intersecting with the real, an elaborate breakdown of genre and narrative/reality borders that are constantly in flux throughout the work.

d. Francophone Sweden and *La Princesse des glaces*

Although *La Princesse des glaces*, the adaptation of Camilla Läckberg's *Isprincessen* novel, has a far more conventional narrative structure than *Travail Soigné,* the format of the work is also unique in its use of narrative space in the comic book form, as well as the linguistic particularities that create a distinction between the borders of France and Sweden. Erica Falck is a non-fiction author who comes back to her hometown of Fjällbacka after the death of her parents, intending to manage their affairs and return to her home in Stockholm. While she is sorting through photos, though, she finds pictures of her childhood best friend, Alexandra, a successful art gallery owner, and decides to pay her a visit. When she stops by, however, she finds the door of her friend's family home

ajar, and upon entering to investigate, she finds the frozen corpse of Alexandra, her wrists slit in a bathtub that has frozen solid in the chilly Swedish winter.

Erica intends to return to Stockholm, but Alexandra's family unexpectedly asks her if she would be interested in writing a short text about her friend's life, a kind of extended obituary to publish in the *Bohusläningen* daily newspaper. They also insist that despite all appearances, there is no way that Alexandra would have killed herself, because she seemed very happy, and she was afraid of blood and would not have been able to go through with cutting herself. Erica decides to investigate and meets with Alexandra's husband of 15 years, Henrik, who gives her photos that include old school pictures (which Erica doesn't recognize, as Alexandra was one year ahead of her in school). When the autopsy results come back, the news is surprising: Alexandra was three months pregnant, and she had a fatal dose of sleeping pills in her system at the time of death. A murder investigation is opened, and Erica decides to stay in Fjällbacka indefinitely, eventually meeting with police officer Patrick Hedstrom, with whom she uncovers complicated family and community secrets (and with whom she falls in love).

After another citizen, Anders Nilsson, commits suicide, Patrick and Erica discover his paintings, which make evident the fact that he was the secret lover of Alexandra. By tracking photographs and family connections, the two deduce that Anders Nilsson and Alexandra were in the same class at school, and learn that both were sexually abused as children by Nils Lorentz, the children's school teacher and oldest son of a prominent family in town. Lorentz molested and raped Alexandra, Nilsson, and Lorentz's adoptive younger brother Jan, as well. When Alexandra became pregnant at 12 years old, the Lorentz family

paid the girl's parents hush money, enough to move away and pay for expensive private

school fees in Göteborg, where Alexandra's parents raised the baby as their own daughter.

The children never revealed their secret, but Alexandra "voulait tout raconter [...] Elle

pensait qu'il fallait 'faire la paix avec le passé,' 'sortir les squelettes du placard.' Toutes ces

idées à la mode aujourd'hui" (117) ["wanted to tell everything [...] She thought that it was

necessary 'to make peace with the past,' 'let the skeletons out of the closet.' All these

fashionable ideas of today"]. Anders' mother Véra was concerned about her son's fragile

mental health and reputation with the stigma of being an abuse victim (and about her own

reputation as having helped cover up the abuse). When Alexandra refused to change her

mind about revealing the abuse, Véra killed her to keep her quiet, to preserve the status quo

and protect her son, paradoxically, by murdering his lover and staging it as a suicide. What

she did not realize was that the murder would lead to her son Anders' own suicide, and that

she would also kill Alexandra's unborn child.

The adaptation's narrative captures Läckberg's intended split between Erica's

domestic life as she falls in love with Patrick and sharpens her newfound crime

fighting/investigation skills, but Bocquet and Bischoff make some dramatic changes

beyond a standard consolidation necessary to abridge a novel to comics form. In his

narratological approach to literature-to-film adaptation, Brian McFarlane addresses fidelity

in adaptations, marking a clear distinction between "elements of the original novel which

are transferable…essentially, narrative" versus "those which involve intricate processes of

adaptation because their effects are closely tied to the semiotic system in which they are

manifested–that is, enunciation" (20). In literature, enunciation is affected by person and

tense; for the comics adaptation, elements such as mise-en-scene, use of panels, gutters, dialogue bubbles take over this function; in short, it is the showing, rather than the telling, that belongs to the category of enunciation in comics adaptations. Bocquet and Bischoff's adaptation introduces Läckberg's multiplicity of secondary characters via preface, placing each character's past and present incarnations side by side like a yearbook or police line-up photos, a frequent trope in Francophone *bande dessinée* (for example in Uderzo and Goscinny's *Astérix* series, which always opens with the name, image, and an introductory blurb/origin story for each of the major characters in the installment). Dialogue and scene order are changed, and character motivations made more explicit; flashbacks to Erica and Alexandra's youth are added to the plot and occur in a purely visual form, with youthful versions of the two girls superimposed across panels in which a present-day event occurs: Erica watches out a car window on her way to the police department in one frame, and in the next two frames, across the snowy present-day scenery, the two young-versions of Erica and Alexandra braid each other's hair and swing on swings, in a totally different color palette to distinguish the two temporalities as separate (30). A similar overlay of memory occurs at the funeral, where Alexandra as a child runs among the tombstones in a Halloween outfit (44), and again as Erica talks about Alexandra's shift in attitude she was 12-years old, and the young Alexandra and newfound friends lounge on a raft in water next, floating next to Erica's face (58). These visual flashbacks portray Alexandra in outdoor spaces (in the country, in graveyards, or lakes), whereas in interior spaces, she is shown in framed photographs, paintings, scrapbooks, and police reports, with her image "captured" and locked in the moments of trauma (her childhood abuse and death), just as

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Verhœven is trapped within fictional levels in *Travail Soigné,* or Alex is walled-in in the city spaces of *Ne le dis à personne.*

In outdoor scenes, Bischoff's artwork renders the architecture and snowy landscape of Sweden's east coast in rich watercolor detail. In interviews, Bocquet and Bischoff frequently speak about spending time exploring the actual city of Fjällbacka, with the goal of adequately capturing the sites and the ambiance of Sweden. Bischoff says that their visit to the region "donne un véritable côté exotique à l'album car il y a de l'authentique suédois dedans" (Smars). ["lends an exotic quality to the comic book because there is a genuine Swedish-ness in it"]. *La Princesse des glaces'* setting outside of France privileges the authenticity of the Swedish destination, while exoticizing the foreignness of the Swedish landscape, ultimately reducing it to "not France" with the defining quality of cold weather central to the scenery (with snow on nearly every page in some form or another, and ice or the cold referenced in conversations and even in the title of the book). Through this concentration on weather, there is a paradoxical decentralization of space in the creation of a Francophone, transnational comic book, yet a re-centralization in its singular vision of the "other" culture in which Sweden is synonymous to snow.

At the level of language, there is a cultural disconnect, with a somewhat surprising lack of *vouvoiement* (use of the formal "*vous*" personal pronoun) in the French dialogue between passing acquaintances and strangers. In France, at least, this would be an unthinkable breach of social mores; it is jarring to read characters introducing themselves in the informal French *tu*, a destabilization of boundaries between individuals. But the usage appears more logical when one considers that the French *vous* equivalent in Swedish,

the polite *ni*, has not been used since social reform in the 1960s, whereas the informal

Swedish *du*, the equivalent of the French *tu*, is used between everyone. There are many

examples of this informality in the graphic novel: Alex's family greets Erica after a 25-year

absence, saying "Je ne sais pas si tu te souviens de nous..." ["I don't know if you remember

us…"] (20), immediately referring to her as *tu*. In another segment, police officer Patrick

follows up a line of inquiry with a social worker, and upon meeting each other they

immediately address each other as *tu* in spite of being at a professional appointment,

saying, "Voilà, je t'ai sorti le dossier..." ["Here, I got the file out for you…"] (90). For

French speakers, it is nearly impossible to divorce preconceived nuance from these

exchanges, as the use of *tu* could be an indication of familiarity, or, between strangers,

could be seen as a generational marker or even purposeful disrespect. But in this

translation, the choice mirrors Swedish linguistic properties and is not necessarily intended

to carry any of the "baggage" of the target language; instead it breaks down social borders

that only exist in the adapting culture of France (effectively blending Swedish social

construction into the French language "rules").

Because of their three-book development deal with Casterman up front, Bocquet

and Bischoff have the distinct advantage of knowing what happens next in the book series,

which allowed them to move certain storylines earlier to dramatic effect. Bocquet explains:

"on a décidé d'insérer des personnages qui vont mourir dans le troisième [livre], pour

qu'on ait plus de temps de s'y attacher" ["we decided to add in characters who are going to

die in the third [book], so that there is more time to become attached to them"] (Smars). By

anticipating storylines of later books and inserting characters from the third novel into

earlier installments of the comic, the adaptation works outside of the book's narrative to strengthen its own plot in a larger, serial storytelling arc. By working across the narrative borders of the individual books, and unfolding plot, characters, and clues across several books, Bocquet and Bischoff develop a narrative "payoff" (to borrow a term from television scholar Jason Mittell), allowing for a more complex enjoyment with the investment of time and delayed pleasure across the series as a whole. Mittell (writing about narrative complexity in contemporary television) says that the complexity of the formal structure creates a "reconceptualization of the boundary between episodic and serial forms, a heightened degree of self-consciousness in storytelling mechanics, and demands for intensified viewer engagement focused on both diegetic pleasures and formal awareness" (Mittell 35; 38-39). I would argue that the visual storytelling mode of the comic book shares these benefits through its intricate narrative framework as well.

As an articulation of this narrative seriality present in the *bande dessinée*, Bischoff's artwork uses a technique that comic theorist Thierry Groensteen calls "braiding" (*le tressage*), a series of connections and communications across—and between—multiple frames, panels, and pages, in "[echoes] of anterior terms" (147) that cross the boundaries of the comic's gutter spaces with repeated visual motifs that appear throughout the work. Alexandra's life and death, past and present, body and mind, are repeatedly juxtaposed visually throughout the comic book. For example, in two particularly striking and gruesome full-page panels, the victim's body is compared pre- and post-death: the first full-page spread is a warmly lit image of Alexandra lying nude in bed, the sheets gently rumpled against the soft roundness of her body. This image is comparable to a blue-tinged,

gory image of her body post-autopsy two pages later, lying on a stark and cold medical

table, lifeless and confined by hard lines and angles in a medical suite. Dialogue bubbles

are superposed across both panels, but the related conversations are swapped, with the

medical examiner's autopsy commentary, such as "on lui a trouvé une énorme dose de

somnifères dans le sang" ["we found a large dose of sleeping pills in her blood"] (32),

woven over a seemingly post-coital Alexandra. In the second image, a lover's description

of Alexandra's body lingers above the gutted corpse, with pillow talk phrases like "j'aime

ta bouche, j'aime ton ventre" ["I love your mouth, I love your belly"] hanging above the

peeled-back flesh of her emptied-out corpse (34). The positioning of the bodies and the

opposing dialogue, switched from each image and crossing the comic book gutters, visually

invokes life and death, past and present, body and memory in the clash between the two

spaces, one private between lovers, one private between the body and the medical

examiner.

   One might consider this type of braiding the visual equivalent of a poetic

enjambment, the running-over of a sentence or phrase from one line of poetry to the next.

"Enjambment" is a fitting term, as it comes from a French verb (*enjamber*) meaning to put

one's leg across, or to straddle. In *La Princesse des glaces*, there is both a figurative and a

literal *enjambement*, with the body and limbs carried over across gutters and pages,

segmented and co-existing spatially and thematically, such as the triptych of images that

show portions of Alexandra's body as it had been found in the bathtub: the first frame is a

medium close up of Alexandra's face and chest, the second pulls back to see her head to

torso in the bathtub, and the third shows her arm that has fallen over the side of the tub, and

which spills to the edge of the frame in a pool of dark red blood (69). Although Groensteen's *tressage* generally appears more frequently and intermittently throughout a comic book than a poetic *enjambement* (which spills over a single line of poetry), both are compositional divisions that create a spatial link between form and meaning. This erasure of diegetic borders in the text is an aesthetic echo of the larger cross-cultural project, a division of space and "braiding" of cultures across borders as the source novel is re-interpreted and remapped, "absorbing" Sweden into France through the Franco-Belgian tradition of *le neuvième art.* In this instance, borders within the narrative are crossed, visually and linguistically, creating a kind of hybrid Franco/Swedish space in which the drama unfolds.

II. The Invisible-made-Visible by Surveillance and the Technological *Non-lieu*

Just as the crossing of gutter space in the comic is the visual signal of sectionality and segmentation linked to Alexandra's death in *La Princesse des glaces*, crossing between spaces poses danger and fragmentation for the characters in each of the four works. At key transition points, warnings and notices flag the borders that are about to be crossed, signaling the danger that potentially waits on the other side. In the beginning of *Ne le dis à personne,* as Alex and Margot drive to the lake, they must first remove a chained sign from the entrance, which reads "*entrée interdite*," as if to preempt their trauma to come. The first shot of *Tunnel*'s Chunnel is a dark service entrance that looms in the background behind wires, with warnings in French and English posted above and just inside the gaping portal cautioning "*entrée interdite*, no trespassing" also, written in both languages. Hissing and alarm bells sound as a worker's truck passes the signs on its

way to the midpoint, where he will make the gruesome discovery of the body. *Travail soigné*'s Verhœven signals the danger in traveling out of the city, saying "Boulevards périphériques, grandes artères, avenues, canaux, hauts lieux de passage. Il s'en passe des drames et des vilenies, des accidents et des deuils, dans ces endroits-là. À l'œil nu, tout y défile sans cesse et rien ne semble y arrêter sauf ce qui y tombe et dont la trace disparaît aussitôt, comme engloutie dans les eaux d'un fleuve" (*Travail* 283) ["Périphériques, expressways, boulevards, canals...so many tragedies and crimes, so many accidents and fatalities occur on busy thoroughfares. To the naked eye, things are constantly moving, never stopping; but anything [that falls] here disappears without a trace, as though sucked down by the waters of a river" (*Irène* 321)].

The danger and discomfort of characters' movement across and between spaces has much to do with the invisible made visible through surveillance and technology that compromises the safety of the individuals in the blending of public/private spheres. Private spaces are intruded upon by unseen eyes, watching and controlling information or rebroadcasting it into the public, "trapping" individuals and reducing space to virtual. In *Ne le dis à personne* and *Tunnel*, technology keeps the "bad guys" hidden from view, and everyone is potentially visible without consent through the use of video cameras, cellular phone tracking, internet hacking, and more. And tools like CCTV—ostensibly used to monitor space to either prevent crimes or identify criminals post-crime—can be misused and accessed for personal gain. In *Ne le dis à personne,* Margot's ghostly revival in email and surveillance footage links the loss of physical, bodily presence with the acquisition of a virtual presence through technology. Through the email messages (coming from an

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"anonymous" source), Alex is drawn into the virtual world in which his wife potentially still exists, contrary to all that he has believed to be true since her funeral. Having watched his wife's coffin enter the crematorium oven, the visibility of her body post-death is called into question by this virtual presence. As Alex reads the email message, an extreme close up of his eyes shows the glowing blue square of the computer screen reflected in each pupil, the invisible made visible to a grieving husband, hypnotizing him and pulling him closer to danger. As he later checks for an email from Margot, an exterior user connects to his computer; Alex's phone is tapped, his apartment is bugged, and later we see him watched and followed in-person by a male and a female when he leaves Charlotte's photography studio. After they track Alex's movements, the two culprits visit Charlotte after Alex leaves, and they murder her in order to extract information about whether Margot is truly alive. Every movement of Alex's life is under ubiquitous surveillance, whether state- or criminal sponsored.

Alex learns that Margot is indeed alive when her father confesses (with the police listening via wire). Margot, who worked for a local children's trust, confronted friend Philippe Neuville (the son of a corrupt aristocrat Gilbert Neuville, and the patron of Alex's family's stables) who had been molesting multiple young children working at the stables. When accused, Philippe (played by director Canet himself) turned violent, beating Margot viciously. In self-defense, Margot shot Philippe with an antique gun, and her father Jacques helped her cover up the crime and get rid of Philippe's body. Philippe's father, Girard Neuville, always suspected Margot's involvement in Philippe's murder, and hires men to kill her. But Margot's father, who had worked for the corrupt

Neuville when he was a police officer, managed to intervene during the attempted murder of Margot at the lake (after Alex had been knocked unconscious). Jacques hid Margot, killed the thugs, substituted the corpse of a prostitute in Margot's place, staged the crime scene to look like that of a serial killer, and identified the body as his daughter's once it had been discovered near the lake. Margot and Alex were each told that the other died in the attack, because Neuville Sr. needed to truly believe that Margot had truly been killed, or else he would have planned a new attack. Neuville had been watching Alex and Jacques since then, a surveillance team and an email hacker on his payroll, watching and waiting for contact between Margot and her family. By faking the death of Margot to Alex, and Alex to Margot, the couple lost nearly a decade together, which also interrupted their ability to have the children they were presumably planning (as indicated in the dinner scene at the very beginning of the film). While the couple is eventually reunited, they have lost a decade of their marriage, due to the permanent state of surveillance.

Although with largely different motivations, in *Tunnel,* the Truth Terrorist uses the internet to announce his presence, just as Margot does. The Truth Terrorist posts his "Five Truths" on his twisted website. He positions small cameras in the Channel tunnel, and broadcasts murders from hacked CCTV hotspots "for maximum visibility" of his crimes, which occur in public spaces. Regular citizens unaffiliated with the murder investigation are able to access the images and information that the Truth Terrorist releases through journalists and online, and the Truth Terrorist relies on public opinion in his divisive tactics in return, getting individuals to riot, or to vote via Twitter for which

among his child captives should die. The anonymity of the internet allows people to hide behind personas and avatars without fear of recourse, so individuals feel free to say horrible things about kidnapped children—and, well, everyone, from celebrities to neighbors—with impunity. Of course, this same anonymity can allow individuals to pretend to be someone they are not. Karl's son Adam follows online information about the case religiously, and tracks the Truth Terrorist's movements like a fanboy, sharing opinions, facts, and theories with a friend online via webchat, after "Becky," an ex-girlfriend who moved to South Africa, reaches out to him. Adam uses his daily webchats with Becky as an emotional outlet, since he feels disconnected from his absent father, he isn't very close to his step-mother, and there is more than a decade between him and his father's younger children. Adam tells Becky about his family life, his unofficial research on the Truth Terrorist case, and he shares information about his father's whereabouts and most recent findings. But it is later revealed that the Truth Terrorist is someone who knows Karl's family, and he is posing as Becky to glean information from Adam about Karl's progress in the case, and to create a connection with Adam that he can later exploit (which he does, and with fatal consequences for the "catfished"[11] teen).

Safety is compromised by the barrage of information disseminated by the internet, or by its use to track movements and information. There is an extreme vulnerability and power shift in the abstracted space created by technology. These anonymous spaces link back to Augé's space of the *non-lieu*, in which there is a sort of detachment between

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[11] "Catfishing" is the deceptive practice of misrepresenting or inventing one's identity online, generally for romantic purposes or financial gain. The term comes from a 2011 documentary called *Catfish* by Nev Schulman, who was duped into a romantic relationship with a young woman who turned out to be a married, 40-year old woman with an extensive invented backstory and family members who did not really exist.

distinct identity and existence, could easily be extended to include the internet, a virtual space existing—and linking—everywhere and nowhere. Our previously limited access to the world (and its access to us) grows larger, in what Augé calls an excess of space, characteristic of "supermodernity":

> De l'excès d'espace nous pourrions dire d'abord, là encore un peu paradoxalement, qu'il est corrélatif du rétrécissement de la planète: de cette mise à distance de nous-même à laquelle correspondent les performances des cosmonautes et la ronde des satellites. En un sens, nos premiers pas dans l'espace réduisent le nôtre à un point infime dont les photos prises par satellite nous donnent l'exacte mesure. Mais le monde, dans le même temps, s'ouvre à nous. Dans l'intimité de nos demeures, enfin, des images de toutes sortes, relayées par les satellites, captées par les antennes qui hérissent les toits du plus reculé de nos villages, peuvent nous donner une vision instantanée et parfois simultanée d'un événement en train de se produire à l'autre bout de la planète. Nous pressentons bien sûr les effets pervers ou les distorsions possibles d'une information dont les images sont ainsi sélectionnées: non seulement elles peuvent être, comme on dit, manipulées, mais l'image (qui n'est une parmi des milliers d'autres possibles) exerce une influence, possède une puissance qui excède de loin l'information objective dont elle est porteuse. (*Non-lieux* 44-45)

[We could start by saying - again somewhat paradoxically - that the excess of space is correlative with the shrinking of the planet: with the distancing from ourselves embodied in the feats of our astronauts and the endless circling of our satellites. In a sense, our first steps in outer space reduce our own space to an infinitesimal point, of which satellite photographs appropriately give us the exact measure. But at the same time the world is becoming open to us. We are in an era characterized by changes of scale - of course in the context of space exploration, but also on earth: rapid means of transport have brought any capital within a few hours' travel of any other. And in the privacy of our homes, finally, images of all sorts, relayed by satellites and caught by the aerials that bristle on the roofs of our remotest hamlets, can give us an instant, sometimes simultaneous vision of an event taking place on the other side of the planet. Of course we anticipate perverse effects, or possible distortions, from information whose images are selected in this way: not only can they be (as we say) manipulated, but the broadcast image (which is only one among countless possible others) exercises an influence, possesses a power far in excess of any objective information it carries. (*Non-places* 31-32)]

The borderless space of the "World Wide Web" is lawless and limitless, and even includes hidden sublayers to other worlds (like the secretive "dark web," the hidden web content which can only be accessed with special software, a knowledge of how "darknets" operate, and a tolerance of what might be conservatively called "legally questionable" content). As the internet and technological means of surveillance

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encompass more and more of the everyday, the possibilities are endless, as are the misuses. The internet blossoms out exponentially, unfurling tendrils into the past, present, and future, in untraceable directions and at breakneck speed (and yet folds in on itself to fit behind tiny screens in our homes and in our hands). And, as Augé remarks, that which is transmitted may be manipulated without losing its authority as it crosses those expanses of space, which is evident in the manipulation of digital images and information both in the creation of the narratives and within the works themselves.

Both in the narratives and in the contexts of their creation as international adaptations or co-productions, we see this concomitant change of scale outward and inward that Augé describes: vast geographical distances are gulfed by international media, and information is brought *to* a reader, viewer and/or characters, reducing spatial distance through accessibility. In *Ne le dis à personne,* the Yahoo! home screen background on Alex's computer touts headlines such as "La situation au Proche-Orient" ["The Situation in the Near East"], "Plusieurs manifestations à Paris" [Several Protest Marches in Paris"], and "Nouvelles arrestations à Toulouse" ["New Arrests in Toulouse"], in a list that links traumas and dramas from all over the world in one virtual place, the onslaught of information omnipresent and inescapable. *Tunnel's* Truth Terrorist posts his heinous crimes on a website, and a proxy server marks the true location and shows (falsely) that the site is hosted in Moldova, when in fact the site is actually hosted by a hacked server *inside* the police department in Kent (which is also their first clue that the Truth Terrorist was a former English cop). During the search for a potential suspect, Karl and Elise also stumble upon a top secret project called Operation

Peloton, a combined European task force conglomerate, who secretly deals in drug, human, and weapons trafficking. The group is responsible for arms sales to Libya, murders of drug gangs in Northern Marseille and Cyprus, and they funneled money to terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and Northern African extremist groups, linking far-flung corners of the Earth through destructive pursuits. The mysterious covert group also had "safe-houses" where they would torture or murder victims, and the sites all had code names pulled from various international sites spanning the globe, such as Studio 54, the Taj Mahal, Westminster Abbey, the Statue of Liberty, Stonehenge, Windsor Castle, Mount Rushmore, the Great Sphinx, the Great Wall of China, and the Colosseum of Rome. Similarly, *le Romancier* in *Travail soigné* links multiple cultures through the incorporation of the classic murder mysteries, with Lemaitre effectively planting national flags along the timeline of the genre to mark its high points along the evolution to his new hybrid form. The incorporation and indeed syncing of these widespread geographic locations within works that are themselves international, dilutes distance to conceptual, linking all of the world together as a unified space of "France" and "not France," merged in "captured" spaces.

III. Palimpsests at the Perimeters: Returning and Reclaiming

In each of the works, characters must return to the sites of trauma, to reconcile their losses in the space of their traumas. In *Ne le dis à personne,* after Alex learns Margot is alive, he goes back to the gate at Lac Charmaine, with the same aerial shot of his blue station wagon tracking his path across the country for the third time. As Alex enters the woods, a stag runs out into the clearing in front of him, visually echoing the

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image of a mounted stag's head that dominated the entryway of his father-in-law's home, the site Alex visited on the date of Margot's death for eight years. The stag's reanimation is a hopeful preview for Alex's desire to witness Margot's own "revival." Alex walks into the woods during sunset, and an orange-red glow illuminates the same flowering bushes from the first scenes of the film. He stops before the tree from the couples' youth, which is now carved with fresh hash marks on the trunk to include the eight missing years in the "M+A" heart design, filling in and effectively erasing the absent 8 year span with the completion of the visual/symbolic markings. Alex drops to his knees crying, and a rack focus pulls the background of the shot into view as Margot walks into the frame, envelops Alex in her arms. The two are reunited, holding each other as the camera pans up above the trees before panning back down onto the lake, where Margot and Alex now appear as children, holding hands on the dock. The country space is thus restored to its original "wholeness" and the couple's relationship is permitted to restart/start over with the visual return to the space of childhood innocence.

In the same vein as in *Ne le dis à personne*, in *La Princesse des glaces,* once the true cause of Alexandra's death is made public and the abuse victims are all identified, the story visually returns to a time in Alexandra's childhood, when the 12-year old, Jan, and Anders make a blood pact, saying "Désormais, nous sommes les trois mousquetaires, unis pour la vie" (124) ["From now on, we are the three musketeers, united for life"]. In the next frame, the children's determined faces greet Nils as he arrives on the frozen lake, where the three children push him into a large fishing hole in the ice and kick him under, final retribution for his months of abuse. The final frame is an insert of one of the sepia-

toned school photographs that shows in close-up that the three children are holding hands. This is prior to their murder of Nils, and, although two of the three are now dead, their secrets can no longer hurt them, allowing them a peace they could not attain in life.

Tunnel's Karl must return to the past, in order to work through the present. His son Adam is kidnapped by the Truth Terrorist, who has been posing as "Becky" online, and Karl and Elise realize that the murders are all a kind of elaborate smokescreen to personally hurt Karl and take away his family. They quickly pinpoint the Truth Terrorist culprit: Kieran Ashton, a former police officer whose wife had an affair with a then-single Karl a decade before. Ashton had also been fired by Karl's supervisors due to mental instability. Ashton blames Karl for his wife and son's deaths, since they were killed by a drunk driver, their car bursting into flames while crossing the bridge to England, presumably to leave Ashton for Karl, as the wife told a friend she intended to do. Ashton (who was involved with Operation Peloton) faked his death, and began to plan revenge on Karl. After kidnapping Karl's son, Ashton lures Karl back to the tunnel in order to goad him into shooting him on live CCTV footage that is being broadcast to the nation (in order to destroy Karl's life both personally and professionally, just as he blames him for his own situation). Elise manages to stop Karl from killing Ashton, but it is too late to save Adam, to whom Ashton gave a fatal overdose of morphine. Weeks later, a grieving Karl sits in his son's bedroom, reading Adam's favorite childhood book, *Tom's Midnight Garden*, and mourning his son's loss, but vowing to be a better parent and husband to his family.

Finally, in *Travail soigné*, the book necessarily returns to the beginning due to the structural loop that recreates its own passages (as Verhœven finds the manuscript). And the repetition is complicated further by a coda in which *le Romancier* writes a letter to Verhœven from prison, apologizing to Verhœven for indulging in "un portrait un peu...hagiographique" (407) ["a hagiographic depiction"] of the detective, saying that the two of them aren't really all that dissimilar (445). He also relays that his lawyers have secured publication of his novel, which, due to its novelty and horrific "ripped from the headlines" conceit, is "déjà promis à une gloire internationale" (*Travail* 406) ["destined to be an international best seller" (*Irène* 444)], and that "porté par le scandale, propulsé par l'horreur qu'exerce sur tout homme le fait divers tragique, mon livre se vendra par millions, il sera traduit, adapté, il figurera durablement dans les annales de la littérature" (*Travail* 407) ["borne along the wave of scandal and the horrified prurience that violent tragedy arouses, my book will sell millions, it will be translated, it will be adapted; in the annals of literature, it will endure" (*Irène* 445)]. The narrative levels within the book are again confused by this letter from *le Romancier* which mimics the trajectory of the Lemaitre novel itself; and, it should be noted, that in the English language edition of the novel, there is a post-script from the author Lemaitre (translated by Frank Wynne), who extolls his deep admiration for the authors from whom he borrows in his novel, aligning himself neatly with the fandom of the fictional *Romancier* serial killer, who dissects his own writing style. Lemaitre says, "Since I owe almost everything I am to literature, it felt natural to begin by writing a novel that was a homage to crime fiction" (*Irène* 447) and that he was "privileged to meet McIlvanney [author of *Laidlaw*] recently, and it brought tears to my eyes" (*Irène* 448). This final letter, coming just after the fictional letter by *le*

Romancier (which in part mirror each other), leaves the reader with the same kind of ontological uncertainty that Rossi discusses (84) in the zero text, with the creation of yet another crossover of the fiction/reality divide in Lemaitre's admiration of international works.

IV. The Genealogy of Genre and Cultural Inheritance

It is fitting that *le Romancier*'s letter uses the term "hagiography" for Verhœven, given its secondary meaning as a religious term, since the murderer chooses a particularly stomach-churning and biblical method of dispatching Verhœven's newborn baby, by crucifixion, based on the Chub story in which the character aptly named Christian is destroyed by the death of "son petit Jésus" (395) ["his own little Jesus" (435)]. Besides Lemaitre's use of infanticide, the predominance in all four of these stories of pedophilia and the death of sons allows for an aborted patrimony, a "sins of the father" punishment for secrets of the past, or revenge scenarios enacted in the present (of the four works in the chapter, two include the sexual abuse of multiple children,[12] two include neonaticide,[13] there are two instances of child/adolescent deaths,[14] and three instances of killed adult sons[15]). What was unseen in the past becomes a powerful force of evil in the present, with literally and figuratively molested or aborted primogeniture. Each of the works weave sexual abuse, kidnapping, and murder of children, all playing on a parent's and a society's worst fears, with predators hidden in plain sight: the star equestrian who volunteers at the summer camp (Philippe), or an upstanding pillar of the community

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[12] *Ne le dis à personne, La Princesse des glaces*
[13] *La Princesse des glaces, Travail Soigné*
[14] both in *Tunnel*
[15] *Ne le dis à personne, La Princesse des glaces*

(Gilbert); a former colleague who poses as a new friend in person or masquerades an old friend online (Kieran); a local journalist who requests an interview, or offers to help a pregnant woman to a car (*le Romancier*); a schoolteacher who dotes on his students (Nils), or a boyfriend's mother and family friend asking to stop by for dinner (Véra). These invisible predators serve to highlight the irony of the surveillance culture in which the characters live, which does not and cannot prevent these abuses.

What, ultimately, is one to make of the multitude of spatial and structural border crossings, enacted throughout adaptations that move the narrative across national lines, in narratives revealing moral/community transgressions that interrupt the chain of patrimony? These transnational works are highly reflexive ruminations on the genre framework itself, which, for *policier*, is a long standing and continued format that, unlike the many individuals dispatched within its narrative borders, is unlikely to die any time soon. Genre, then, becomes a means of cultural inheritance, as a stable cultural artefact. Thus, despite the fact that national boundaries are erased in the cross-national representations and hybrid cultural texts, those same borders reform like scar tissue with the traces of cultural exceptionalism *within* their adaptations, redefining cultural inheritance as a certain *francité* is inscribed on top of the original works.

In her seminal book *A Theory of Adaptation,* scholar Linda Hutcheon discusses the indigenization of adaptations, writing, "people pick and choose what they want to transplant to their own soil. Adapters of traveling stories exert power over what they adapt" (150). The hybridity in these particular adaptations is not unilateral, because of the implied agency of the adapting culture, France, and not the source cultures (themselves

already secondary sources within their genre, as I will lay out in this concluding section).

Tell No One, the original novel that inspired *Ne le dis à personne*, is reduced to pastiche

by reviews that compare Coben's work to iconic crime fiction authors who came before:

"Coben knows how to move pages, and he generates considerable suspense, but there's

little new here. The narrative style is cloned from James Patterson, alternating first-

person with third. The villains…are as old as mid–Elmore Leonard or even [Raymond]

Chandler" ("PW Fiction"). The concept of man-on-the-run, wrongly accused for the

murder of his wife is not a particularly new conceit either, and both the book and the film

draw frequent comparisons to 1963-67 television series "The Fugitive," and its 1993 film

remake of the same name (in fact, a promotional still and the poster graphic of *Ne le dis à*

personne actually show Clouzet striking the exact same running pose as the iconic 1993

poster/DVD cover of star Harrison Ford running in the famous chase sequence). While

the film version does stick relatively closely to the novel's plot, Canet changed the

ending of the film, adding in the motive of Philippe as a child molester (amping up the

stakes compared to "Brandon" in the book, who was a drug dealer), and he changes the

original self-defense killer, as well, since in Coben's plot, the husband character ("David"

in the novel/Alex) kills Philippe/Brandon, rather than the wife ("Elizabeth"/Margot). In

interviews, Canet is quoted as saying that Coben "loved [the new ending...], he said it

was better than the book" (Saner). In reviews, the film draws distinction in its rich visual

presentation, earning accolades from reviewers who called it "beautifully constructed and

thematically rich, and thus [the film] remains a pleasure even as the story becomes

increasingly implausible. It's adapted from a mystery by American novelist Harlan

Coben, but Guillaume Canet's film seems utterly French, as well as entirely

contemporary" (Jenkins). This elusive, yet oft-quoted quality of "Frenchness" is rarely

defined, but seems to be tied to both the rich visual interpretations and structural

ambition, despite a fairly formulaic plot.

Likewise, *Tunnel's* originality is in the cross-cultural conceit, but the original

series, *Bron/Broen* and its spinoff is in fact a fairly formulaic procedural: tortured cop is

haunted by mistakes of the past, while researching several murder investigations and

juggling the corresponding case files, crime scenes, questionings, and forensics. And

again, as with *Ne le dis à personne,* the conceit cannot wholly be called original either,

since the 2006 Canadian film *Bon cop/Bad cop* explores, albeit in the register of comedy,

the linguistic and cultural difference of French and English speaking detectives, when a

murder at the border forces a joint investigation. *Tunnel* also modernizes and adapts the

social problems of *Bron/Broen* to French and British socio-political realities, including

the true-to-life riots and increasing populations of the elderly, for instance. "We made it

particular to the French-British experience" says co-producer Jane Featherstone. "The

team took what was wonderful from [the original] and then forgot about it, in the nicest

possible way, and made their own show" (Plunkett). The series is so focused on capturing

the zeitgeist of modern political fears in Western Europe that their second season does

not even remotely resemble the plot of the second season of the original Swedish/Danish

show; instead, season two puts Elise and Karl back together for a terrorism investigation

that revolves around a plane crash in the Channel and religious/politically motivated

shootings and bombings (a topic so timely, in fact, that the show was held back from

airing for two weeks past its scheduled release, because episodes of religious-based

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terrorism were deemed too similar to the Brussels terrorist attacks of March 2016, and thus potentially traumatizing to viewers so soon after the events).

La Princesse des glaces is, comparatively, the most liberal adaptation of its source material, with writer Bocquet saying openly in interviews that he retained *no* original dialogue as Läckberg wrote it for the book (Burssens)—which makes their use of *tutoiement* discussed previously all the more unusual. Bocquet says that the graphic novel adaptation highlights what he and Bischoff personally liked best about the novel: "Les thèmes qu'on a mis en avant sont ceux qui nous plaisent, qui nous touchent… notre album [n'est] pas seulement le roman illustré" ["The themes that we highlighted were those that pleased us, that touched us…our comic book [is not] just an illustrated version of the book"] (Smars). The duo certainly places more emphasis on a creative visual interpretation than a faithful recreation of Läckberg's novel, which may, in fact, make it more inventive and inspired than the original work. In his book on Scandinavian crime fiction, Barry Forshaw says, "Many authors are content to relate their narratives in carefully organized, linear fashion without attempting to test the elasticity of the medium. The result [is] work which is weighted with precisely those elements required to produce a Pavlovian response in the reader…" (3). While Forshaw proposes that Scandinavian writers are generally more daring in attempts to destabilize the crime genre, *Isprinsessan* original author Camilla Läckberg, often referred to as the "Agatha Christie of Sweden," trades in familiar crime procedural tropes that are wholly formulaic. On Läckberg's official website,[16] the author offers a "crime school" for her readers, specifically to teach

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[16] http://www.camillalackberg.com

fans how to write their own murder mysteries. Her official formula outlines five key

principles of crime writing:

> 1. All clues discovered by the detective must be made available to the
> reader;
>
> 2. The killer must be introduced early on in the story;
>
> 3. The crime must be serious;
>
> 4. The solution must be actively deduced;
>
> 5. There must be a known number of suspects; the murderer must be one
> of them.

Läckberg proposes that writers need only exchange "Murderer, Motive, and Means" in a

reductive plug and play format, the Ikea of crime writing: simple and efficient, red

herrings not included. Her nine-novel series follows this formula rather exactly, and, as

the most profitable author in Swedish history, she has cleverly hinged an empire on three

interchangeable narrative elements. Yet this formula itself is a conglomeration of

Western crime tropes, arguably inspired by generations of Anglophone and Francophone

crime writers, and with little innovation from the author herself (recalling even the crime

fiction list of S.S. Van Dine, see: Appendix A). Thus, Läckberg's formulaic plot is itself

already a kind of adaptation, with Bocquet and Bischoff's work reinterpreting an already-

translated text, infusing novelty via their deviation from the formulaic work, their stylistic

choices unique to the graphic novel form, and taking part in a kind of *cadavre exquis*

chain of interpretation.

In all four works, *Ne le dis à personne, Tunnel, Travail soigné* and *La Princesse des glaces,* the emphasis on the creativity in interpretations of the source material is critical because the originals have a kind of comparable seriality in the repeated characteristics in the crime genre. The works that initially capitalized on a regional trend, such as American pulp fiction, the British procedural, and the *Nordic Noir*, result in a breach of clear international context, of sometimes dizzying complexity (case in point: *La Princesse des glaces,* which is exported globally as a French graphic novel, is based on a Swedish book, adapted by a Franco-Swiss duo, published by Belgian company Casterman, which was previously acquired by Italian conglomerate RCS MediaGroup and then re-sold to Editions Gallimard publishers in France in 2012). With such complicated pedigrees, these adaptations are "un-translations" of sorts, effectively linking both the original nation and France to an established canon of Western crime literature; in so doing, France's imaginative interpretations and willingness to work across the borders of the "hexagon," allows the country to stake a claim as inheritors of the European crime fiction mantle (or, at the very least, for top of the sales charts). In these hybrid cultural objects, geo-political, linguistic, narrative, and genre boundaries are drawn, moved, negotiated, and erased, in a genre with characteristics that have not changed much since Poe's *Murders in the Rue Morgue;* in the stable framework of *policier,* the mutable spatial and stylistic details are subjected to that indefinable French flair, a Gallic *je ne sais quoi,* that propels the locked-room mystery out across unlocked borders.

Conclusion

In 175 years, Poe's "locked room" of the enclosed apartment on *Rue Morgue* has given way to unbound rural space, and the detective is transported from the urban labyrinth to great expanses of countryside in France and out across French borders. In twelve contemporary examples of the *policier* genre, I have mapped the shift from urban to rural spaces, and interrogated the fluidity of borders and boundaries in the diegesis and the narrative form, as physical space is transformed into aesthetic space of the narrative form itself. The limitations of the conventions of the *policier* genre make room for tropes from the *fantastique,* the *conte de fée*, and influences from international crime fictions, as the detective figure moves away from classic *policier*'s urban zone and into a rural/border space that allows for the possible, the potential, and the problematic to unfold. In those spaces, isolated rural communities are revealed, where marginalized viewpoints and minority voices translate socio-political anxieties of modern day France.

In Chapter 1, works *Écoute le temps*, *Les Revenants*, *L'Armée furieuse*, and *Bouche d'ombre* employ blended timelines and the narrative framework of the *fantastique* genre, to map and transmit community violence and injustice. Chapter 2 works *L'Inconnu du lac, Les Témoins*, *Les Premiers*, and *Alex* demonstrate geometrically

structured spatial configurations in the countryside that symbolically reduce the community to the individual as a critique of institutional control and patriarchal power. And in the works of Chapter 3, *Ne le dis à personne, Tunnel*, *Travail soigné* and *La Princesse des glaces,* external spaces are absorbed into France in an effort to tap into the heritage of the genre, while the detectives' personal traumas are confronted in abstracted spaces of web-surveillance and constant observation. Through various states of decline of community in the works (laid bare by the deconstruction of the structure of the *policier* genre itself), we can track the current and sometimes disparate states of French national identity, as well as internal and international borders in flux.

It is notable that in the entire corpus of works discussed in this dissertation, the detective figures largely fail in their attempts to capture the killers, or cannot save their own loved ones from peril; gone are the infallible detectives Dupin, Lupin, Holmes, Poirot, and Maigret of the past, replaced instead by a much less victorious group, in the throes of far murkier personal crises. In *Les Revenants,* the police can neither explain the reappearance of their dead family members, nor prevent their expulsion from the community; police chief Thomas cannot find the serial killer, or prevent the destruction of the town by the less benevolent sect of *revenants*; his colleague, Laure, is unable to help Julie and Victor to escape the town, and doesn't stop Victor's "reclaiming" by the unhappy *revenants*. *Écoute le temps'* Lieutenant Brenot is helpless and hopeless when Charlotte asks about the investigation into her mother's death, and the police play no role whatsoever in solving the case. *Inconnu du lac*'s Inspector Damrodeur is killed by Pierre on his second visit to investigate the murder at the lake, and makes it no further than the

parking lot. *Les Premiers'* Ben is transformed into a murderous creature himself before he can solve the murders of local townspeople. In *Témoins,* cops Sandra and Paul don't quite get all of the pieces of the puzzle put together in time to catch the murderer-for-hire, and are unable to save Paul's friend's daughter, who dies in Sandra's arms. And Commandant Verhœven arrives too late to save Alex from suicide in *Alex*, only able to reconstruct the case after he finds her body and journals. Similarly, Verhœven can only complete the investigation in *Travail soigné* when he is given the manuscript by the Novelist, which is a blueprint of his plans (and the Commandant is several minutes late to prevent the murders of his wife Irène and newborn son). Like Verhœven, Karl in *Tunnel* can only solve the case after the Truth Terrorist reveals himself, infiltrates Karl's home, kidnaps his wife, and kills his son.

Those who *do* succeed at catching murderers are generally non-professional investigators who suffer a great personal loss along the way, and who are compelled to enact justice, revenge, or take up the slack from ineffectual police, such as Charlotte in *Écoute le temps* who loses her mother; Lou in *Bouche d'ombre,* who loses friend Marie and investigates the cause of her suicide; the fugitive doctor Alex in *Ne le dis à personne,* who does recover Charlotte and solves the mystery of her disappearance, but only eight years later, and the police hinder, rather than help his search (and he loses his father-in-law to suicide in the process); and for *Princesse des glaces'* Ericka, solving childhood friend Alexandra's murderer does not take away the sting of losing her best friend (and her trip to Fjällbacka was actually compelled by the tragic sudden death of both of her parents prior to the beginning of the story). In fact, in each of these works, only Vargas'

Commisaire Adamsberg in *Armée Furieuse* escapes this trend unscathed. Vargas' regular translator Siân Reynolds compares Adamsberg to more of a "medieval knight on a quest"[1] than a modern detective, so perhaps the adventures of Adamsberg as a knight-errant are exempt from the patterns of the modern detective due to the temporal leap that inscribes him in yet another different literary tradition.

In the article "Entertainment and Utopia," Richard Dyer links the social implications of genre films (namely musical comedies) to a desire of escapist entertainment, with its "image of 'something better' to escape into" (468). He outlines five sensibilities inherent in mainstream entertainment that suggest the feelings of a utopia: abundance, energy, intensity, transparency and community, which compensate for the "tensions and inadequacies" in society. By contrast, Zoe Bolton reinterprets Dyer's original sensibilities to show that film noir (and I would expand Bolton's definition to include the larger *policier* genre) provides an escape through the "dystopian sensibilities" that match Dyer's list of social inadequacies: scarcity, exhaustion, dreariness, manipulation, and fragmentation. In stark opposition to the upbeat, optimistic musicals that Dyer evaluates, in *policier*, unpleasant feelings "are not simplified but become complex and elaborate" (Bolton). In a 2009 interview with National Public Radio, crime author P.D. James affirms that

> the mystery flourishes best in times of acute anxiety and depression, and
> we're in a very depressed state at the moment...[a mystery is] solved not
> by good luck or divine intervention, it's solved by a human being. By

[1] Quoted from Siân Reynolds, personal communication, 10 July 2015, "Protect and Serve: Crime Fiction and Community International Conference," Edinburgh, Scotland.

> human courage and human intelligence and human perseverance. In a
>
> sense, the detective story is a small celebration of reason and order in our
>
> very disorderly world. (James and Wertheimer)

The detectives' failures noted in the works studied here, then, highlight the human

vulnerability of this crime ecosystem, particularly, when, as illustrated in many of the

works and demonstrated in many real-life communities in France, there is a growing

distrust of organized law enforcement. The failure of the detective, emphasis on personal

tragedy, and vigilantism-like justice-seeking of individuals in the narratives is a

barometer of cultural panic in the modern age.

    The growing importance of the European Union in national politics, concerns

over France's high unemployment rates, income inequality, perceived socio-political

turmoil, and persistent immigration debates converge at the same time that momentous

anniversaries of major European wars were commemorated (including the 100-year

anniversary of the start of World War I in 2014,[2] the 70th anniversary of D-Day in 2014,[3]

and in 2012, the 50th anniversary of the Evian accords that marked the Franco-

AlgerianWar cease-fire[4]), poking at old wounds and reviving tensions between internal or

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[2] See: "Les Serbes boycottent les cérémonies officielles du centenaire de la Grande Guerre." *Libération*. 28 June 2014. http://www.liberation.fr/planete/2014/06/28/les-serbes-boycottent-les-ceremonies-officielles-du-centenaire-de-la-grande-guerre_1052894

[3] See: Lichfield, John, and Kim Sengupta. "D-Day 70th Anniversary Commemorations: The World Remembers; But What, if Anything, Have We Learnt?" *The Independent*. 6 June 2014. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/d-day-70th-anniversary-the-world-remembers-but-what-if-anything-have-we-learnt-9504158.html

[4] See: Hadden, Gerry, and Marco Werman. "50 Years After the Algerian War, *Harkis* Still Wait for French Apology." *Public Radio International*. 19 July 2012. http://www.pri.org/stories/2012-07-19/50-years-after-algerian-war-harkis-still-wait-french-apology

international communities. Large-scale and mass-casualty terror attacks led by Islamic State militant groups swept through Paris in November 2015, Belgium in March 2016, and at Bastille Day Celebrations in Nice in July 2016; President François Hollande's 2016 polling numbers give him the dubious honor of the "least popular president in French history,"[5] and fear and paranoia over new and rapidly evolving technologies and state-sponsored data collection fuel op-ed pieces on both sides of the Atlantic, with provocative titles such as "Europe is spying on you."[6] At the time of this writing, students and union members have taken to the streets over sweeping labor reforms in months of protests,[7] and rioters recently burned a police car in the streets of Paris as an ironic coda to a law enforcement-sponsored rally *against* hatred of the police.[8] The Seine overflows its banks with equal vigor, as *la crue centenalle de la Seine* threatens precious works of arts at riverfront museums like the Louvre and the Musée d'Orsay.[9] Everything, it seems, is going to hell.

Or is it? In his *France, fin de siècle*, Eugen Weber traces the incongruous "discrepancy between material progress and spiritual dejection" (2) that characterized

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[5] Hollande scored an incredible 74% *défavorable* [unfavorable] rating in Feb 2016; see: "Étude YouGov France." http://bit.ly/1sxqsUq

[6] See: Muiznieks, Nils. "Europe Is Spying on You." *The New York Times,* 28 Oct. 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/28/opinion/europe-is-spying-on-you-mass-surveillance.html

[7] See: Walt, Vivienne. "France Could Be Immobilized by Massive Protests Over Labor Law Reforms." *Time,* 25 May 2016. http://time.com/4348204/france-labor-law-reform-strikes

[8] Sicard, Cyrielle. "Une Voiture de police incendiée en pleine manifestation de policiers contre la 'haine Anti-flics'." *Le Parisien*, 18 Mar. 2016. http://www.leparisien.fr/informations/loi-travail-manifestation-inedite-de-policiers-contre-la-haine-anti-flics-18-05-2016-5805855.php

[9] See: "Crue à Paris: Branle-bas de combat dans les grands musées des bords de Seine." *Le Point*. 02 June 2016. http://www.lepoint.fr/culture/crue-a-paris-branle-bas-de-combat-dans-les-grands-musees-des-bords-de-seine-02-06-2016-2044005_3.php

both the dawn of twentieth-century France and our twenty-first century woes. The same scandals and crises that brought about our modern apprehensions also "caused tremors one hundred years ago: pollution, crowding, noise, nerves, and drugs; threats to environment, to peace, to security, to sanity private and public; the noxious effects of press, publicity, and advertising; the decline of public and private standards; the rising tide of transgressions imperiling law and order" (5-6). Perhaps we are reliving the cycle of social discontent that marks the growing pains of modernity. This cycle also signals one reason for the enduring—and growing—popularity of the crime genre. The appeal of neat classification, order, reason, and logic are a balm on the soul of social discontent. In modern works, the detective's failure and the rise of the layperson's abilities to assume responsibility for the investigation, highlight the contemporary shift toward modern individualism, self-centered values, and a media and technologically enhanced super-civilian.[10] This technological focus is also what I envision to be an organic expansion of this project, as transmedia storytelling is becoming a more commonplace format of genre fiction.

In a transmedia storytelling format, narratives reach beyond their own diegetic borders to invade real life with an immersive participatory component. This often takes the form of web content, such as Canal+ sponsored "media experiences" to accompany major shows such as *Engrenages* and *Les Revenants,* where an interactive companion web series and online video game allows users to interact with characters from the show.

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[10] There are many instances in which social media was used as a tool for true-life crime solving, with users providing preliminary research for police; there are also investigations in which law enforcement used social media as a research and tracking tool. See: "Social Media Use in Law Enforcement," *Lexis Nexus,* Nov. 2014. https://www.lexisnexis.com/risk/downloads/whitepaper/2014-social-media-use-in-law-enforcement.pdf

For *Engrenages*, the user acts as a fictional journalist who follows Capitaine Laure

Berthaud's team on an investigation. Users unlock companion videos, photos, and

documents online, and engage with the diegesis on their own terms. Similarly, *Les

Revenants* series' companion site has users walk through and explore the town from the

show, and characters interact to reveal snippets of their backstory not always made

apparent in the series' regular episodes. The internet becomes a platform from which the

narrative is manipulated by a user in real-time.[11]

The same is true of video gaming in France, which, as the second largest producer

of video games, has a healthy revenue stream of 3 billion euros annually (compared to an

average 1.3 billion euros earned by French cinema).[12] "ARG," or Alternate Reality

Games, are a popular format that blends live action and traditional video gaming with

real-time interconnectedness of multiple media forms. One such example is game

developer *Lexis Numérique*'s series of crime investigation games, *In memoriam* (2003),

In memoriam: La Treizième victime (2004), and *In memoriam: Le Dernier rituel* (2006).

In these games, users track a serial killer and receive real-life emails from in-game

characters, use text messaging to receive codes and clues, and search for information

hidden on real life websites to piece together their own investigation file. These

innovatively interactive games transgress the boundaries of the narrative space and bridge

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[11] Another, more rudimentary example of this type of interaction online is an animated image creator sponsored by French television channel *Arte*, which told users to "Construisez le polar de vos rêves (ou pires cauchemars) en Gif!" ["Build the whodunit of your dreams (or worst nightmare) in Gif!"], as part of the week-long *Le Printemps du Polar* celebration. http://cinema.arte.tv/fr/article/composez-le-polar-parfait.

[12] See: Jury, Caroline. "Video games industry: France ranks second in terms of production." *Consulate General of France*. 27 Feb. 2013. http://www.consulfrance-vancouver.org/Video-games-industry-France-ranks; see also: "*SNJV* Annual Survey of the French Video Game Industry, 2015." *Syndicat National du Jeu Vidéo*. http://www.snjv.org/category/publications/barometre_annuel/

reality and fiction through the virtual space of the search, which is itself a hybrid space, since the fictional clues are to be found on actual websites and in locations not always affiliated with the game. Other ARGs involve participants working together via the internet, and still others include a geographical component wherein users complete a scavenger hunt in a real-life location. The displacement of the user in real, geographic space as a manipulation of narrative space is a phenomenon that bears further study. Here again, the ability of a reader/watcher/player to track the puzzle is at the forefront, with physical action, logic, and special equipment used to compose, deconstruct, and reconstruct the narrative form (appropriating or sharing the same functions that the detective once commanded). And yet, the narrative still remains within a framework, just as the *policier* genre remains stable. There are still guided patterns in the logic of an ARG, and a destination to be reached; Todorov's timeline still exists, with the crime and the investigation still culminating at the solution of the crime.

As the *policier* genre continues to flourish and media forms innovate and change the scope of the narratives, could the spatial turn in modern *policier* signal the death of the French *detective*? One cannot forget that even Arthur Conan Doyle flung Sherlock Holmes off of the cliff face of the Reichenbach Falls. But he also revived him, back by popular demand for another cycle to recommence, and for the genre to live on.

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Appendix A: Excerpts, S.S. Van Dine's "Twenty rules for writing detective stories"

Abridged list of rules originally published in *The American Magazine* (1928-Sep):

"1. The reader must have equal opportunity with the detective for solving the mystery. All clues must be plainly stated and described.

2. No willful tricks or deceptions may be played on the reader other than those played legitimately by the criminal on the detective himself.

3. There must be no love interest in the story [...]

4. The detective himself, or one of the official investigators, should never turn out to be the culprit [...]

5. The culprit must be determined by logical deductions—not by accident or coincidence or unmotivated confession [...]

6. The detective novel must have a detective in it; and a detective is not a detective unless he detects [...]

7. There must be a corpse in a detective novel, and the deader the corpse the better [...]

8. The problem of the crime must be solved by strictly naturalistic means. Such methods for learning the truth as slate-writing, ouijaboards, mind-reading, spiritualistic séances, crystal-gazing, and the like, are taboo [...]

9. There must be but one detective—that is, but one protagonist of deduction [...]

10. The culprit must turn out to be a person who has played a more or less prominent part in the story [...]

11. Servants—such as butlers, footmen, valets, game-keepers, cooks, and the like—must not be chosen by the author as the culprit [...]

12. There must be but one culprit, no matter how many murders are committed. The culprit may, of course, have a minor helper or co-plotter [...]

13. Secret societies, camorras, mafias, et al., have no place in a detective story [...]

14. The method of murder, and the means of detecting it, must be rational and scientific. That is to say, pseudo-science and purely imaginative and speculative devices are not to be tolerated [...]

15. The truth of the problem must at all times be apparent—provided the reader is shrewd enough to see it. By this I mean that if the reader, after learning the explanation for the crime, should reread the book, he would see that the solution had, in a sense, been staring him in the face—that all the clues really pointed to the culprit—and that, if he had been as clever as the detective, he could have solved the mystery himself [...]

16. A detective novel should contain no long descriptive passages, no literary dallying with side-issues, no subtly worked-out character analyses, no "atmospheric" preoccupations [...]

17. A professional criminal must never be shouldered with the guilt of a crime [...]

18. A crime in a detective story must never turn out to be an accident or a suicide. To end an odyssey of sleuthing with such an anti-climax is to play an unpardonable trick on the reader. If a book-buyer should demand his two dollars back on the ground that the crime was a fake, any court with a sense of justice would decide in his favor and add a stinging reprimand to the author who thus hoodwinked a trusting and kindhearted reader.

19. The motives for all crimes in detective stories should be personal [...]

20. [...] I herewith list a few of the devices which no self-respecting detective-story writer will now avail himself of. They have been employed too often, and are familiar to all true lovers of literary crime. To use them is a confession of the author's ineptitude and lack of originality.

> (a) Determining the identity of the culprit by comparing the butt of a cigarette left at the scene of the crime with the brand smoked by a suspect.
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> (b) The bogus spiritualistic séance to frighten the culprit into giving himself away.
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> (c) Forged finger-prints.
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> (d) The dummy-figure alibi.
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> (e) The dog that does not bark and thereby reveals the fact that the intruder is familiar.
>
> (f) The final pinning of the crime on a twin, or a relative who looks exactly like the suspected, but innocent, person.
>
> (g) The hypodermic syringe and the knockout drops.
>
> (h) The commission of the murder in a locked room after the police have actually broken in.
>
> (i) The word-association test for guilt.
>
> (j) The cipher, or code letter, which is eventually unraveled by the sleuth."