

**Finishings off: Murder à la malet in Simsolo's Les Derniers  
mystères de Paris**

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### FINISHINGS OFF: MURDER À LA MALET IN SIMSOLO'S *LES DERNIERS MYSTÈRES DE PARIS*

AMY WIGELSWORTH

Il faut toujours terminer ce que l'on a commencé, même si c'est un autre qui s'en charge ! (Simsolo 2002, 11)

The hypertextual category of “continuation”, predicated as it is, according to Genette (1982), on the completion of an unfinished work, seems an especially apt one to form the basis of our discussion in this concluding chapter.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on a literary and a musical example of posthumous continuation, namely Baro's continuation of D'Urfé's *L'Astrée* and Süssmayr's continuation of Mozart's *Requiem* (1982, 223-27), Genette explains how important it is that a continuation conform to the design of the original author:

l'hypertexte doit rester constamment dans le prolongement de son hypotexte, qu'il doit seulement mener jusqu'à une conclusion prescrite ou congruente, en veillant à la continuité de certaines données comme la disposition des lieux, l'enchaînement chronologique, la cohérence des caractères, etc. Le continuateur travaille donc sous le contrôle constant d'une sorte de scripte intérieure, qui veille à l'unité de l'ensemble et à l'imperceptibilité des raccords. (Genette 1982, 224)

descent into banality. The obvious, and yet problematic, equilibrium to be struck, between conformity and closure on the one hand, and innovation and open-endedness on the other, takes on a new resonance in Noël Simsolo's *Les Derniers mystères de Paris* (2002). When an enigmatic serial killer commits murders in a series of Parisian *arrondissements*, bookseller Pierre de Gondol is enlisted to help solve the case and realises that the crimes are based on Léo Malet's *Les Nouveaux mystères de Paris*.<sup>2</sup> The criminal investigation is transformed into a literary research project, made all the more fascinating by the fact that Malet's series of novels was left unfinished. The assumption that Malet's *œuvre* can be subjected to a palimpsestuous completion by the serial killer is an intriguing one. The idea that crime, like popular fiction, follows a pre-existing formula and, as such, can be continued and completed by the criminal, and predicted by the bookseller-cum-detective, is offset by the degree to which crimes, and crime narratives, are characterized by disorder, surprise and a pervading sense of mystery, all of which come to dominate the diegesis as the murderer's design becomes more convoluted and the links to Malet more tenuous.

In attempting to determine the significance of this novel, I will begin by exploring the Romantic analogy between art and murder and demonstrate how the affinity between serial narratives and serial murders is a particularly compelling one. I will then explore the relationship of Simsolo's novel, to conformity and closure on the one hand, and to innovation and open-endedness on the other. Eco refers to this binary in terms of "the 'modern' dialectic between order<sup>3</sup> and innovation" (1990, 96). Finally, I will show how these two, apparently contradictory, impulses are reconciled in this novel which, I will argue, exemplifies Eco's radical, postmodern aesthetics of the serial.

### **On Murder, Considered as One of the Fine Arts**

In 1827, and in the context of a growing interest in aesthetic, as opposed to religious, command, approaches to crime, Thomas De Quincey

By positing an equivalence between the law-breaking criminal and the ground-breaking artist,<sup>4</sup> De Quincey crystallized the anxiety provoked by the Romantic emphasis on pioneering individuality and originality, and its concomitant rejection of classical models. The appeal of the analogy has endured, with serial murder seeming to lend itself particularly well to the comparison with art. Simpson writes of a near-obsessive linkage of serial murder to art” (2000, 22) and explains that the “contemporary narrative obsession with serial murder [...] substitutes repetition for creativity, pattern for design, and the spilled blood of corpses for paints” (2000, 18). The “modernist concept of ‘high art’” has co-opted De Quincey’s “murder as fine art” to create what Simpson terms a “metadiscursive culture”. The serial killer becomes an “artist manqué” (Simpson 2000, 23), who struggles to impose a “private and romantic vision” but, blighted by isolation and lack of appreciation, fails repeatedly in his endeavour.<sup>5</sup> In *Les Derniers mystères*, we learn of the testicular cancer, and consequent impotence, of killer Jean Dupont, as his background is uncovered, and of his reaction to a series of crimes committed by a fellow-sufferer. On his deathbed, Aumère confesses to having murdered three translators in the first, second and third *arrondissements*, a feat which Dupont resolves to better:

Ses crimes n’avaient rien du chef-d’œuvre et il me fallait établir un dispositif qui soit susceptible de faire œuvre d’art avec les suivants. Mais d’autres tueurs en série avaient déjà procédé de la sorte. Tableaux vivants en relation avec les sept péchés capitaux, les douze apôtres ou les 36 positions sexuelles. Je devais trouver mieux et m’inspirai alors de la série des Nouveaux Mystères de Paris, écrite par l’original Léo Malet. (Simsolo 2002, 227)

Playing on the traditional analogy between paternity and authorship, the sexual handicap of both Aumère and Dupont is an unmistakable echo of their artistic impotence.

The relationship of serial murder to serial narrative is a particularly interesting one. Simpson’s failed “artist”, tirelessly churning out imperfect

provides an apposite echo of diegetic content. Simpson finds the roots of this echo in folklore, explaining that:

folklore, essentially verbal in nature, considers repetition of key images and phrases a vital structural component to begin with, and so finds a metaphoric parallel to a series of murders. W.F.H. Nicolaisen professes that counting is equivalent to narrating in the European mind-set ([1989] 77-89): an applicable concept to explain the kinship between multicide and narrative. (Simpson 2000, 3)

Invoking Richard Dyer (1997), Simpson goes on to observe that “[t]he serial killer’s commodification possibilities are virtually limitless” and, as such, “the serial killer is a natural character type for a modern media based on the pleasure of seriality” (2000, 22). Borenstein notes the same felicitous coincidence of form and content, observing that:

[s]erial narrative provides a comfortable home for the serial killer. What could be more dismal and horrifying then [*sic*] the story of a bloody, violent murder? An endless story where each gruesome killing is followed by an even more appalling atrocity. (2007, 115)

Accustomed as we are to the insistent association of serial murder and art, our reading of Simsolo’s *Derniers mystères* is inevitably a cautious and self-conscious one. At times, the metadiegetic implications are subtle, as in the following example, in which *commissaire* Yèble (the official detective to Gondol’s amateur sleuth) notes an apparent change in the murders: “Avec elle, c’est une autre *série* qui commence. Nous ne savions alors pas si c’était *l’œuvre* du même type [...]” (Simsolo 2002, 41, my emphases). The association becomes more pronounced as the novel progresses. Gondol is initially unaware of the literary *source* of the murders, mistaking it for literary *potential*:

Les propos de Yèble me revenaient à l’esprit. Un tueur s’attaquait aux putes parisiennes. « L’étrangleur des filles du minitel rose. » Un titre idéal pour un polar bien sanglant. Déjà, onze victimes. Dans onze différents

of the murders provides a link to Malet's *Du Rébecca rue des Rosiers*, while a victim poisoned with bleach is a nod to *Les Eaux troubles de Javel*. After realising that the crimes are based on Malet's work, Gondol praises the murderer's mental aptitude, while bemoaning the fact that he has chosen to work with "still life" (French term is, fittingly, "nature morte"), rather than settling for crime fiction as the showcase for his clever intertextual referencing:

Je me mis à potasser *Les Nouveaux Mystères de Paris* et déduisis sans trop de peine que l'assassin de Marie Torma s'en était inspiré. Ce mec avait la fibre sacrément oulipopoupienne. Dommage pour la gent femelle qu'il soit du genre à s'adonner aux tableaux vivants avec nature morte plutôt qu'à se plaire à rédiger de simples romans policiers aux multiples références.  
(75-76)

This insistent and, increasingly, explicit linkage of serial murder to art (and to serial forms in particular) has important implications for our reading of the text. We find ourselves obliged to acknowledge that this is perhaps a novel less about serial murder per se and more about the questions raised by serial fiction itself. It is to these questions, and in particular to the dialectic between order and closure on the one hand, and disorder and open-endedness on the other, that I now turn.

### **The Sense of an Ending: conformity, closure and order**

Etymologically, notions of success and completion are closely linked. The Oxford English Dictionary tells us that the English "achieve", for example, has its roots in the Anglo-Norman *aschever* and the Anglo-Norman, Old and Middle French *achever*, *achiever* or *achiver*, meaning to complete or accomplish (a task, etc.). Frank Kermode explored the literary implications of the human fascination with completion in *The Sense of an Ending* (1967), arguing that, since we are born and die *in medias res*, we require "fictions" or "coherent patterns" to provide or imply endings.

The need for conclusion, even in the form of catastrophic apocalypse, is keenly felt throughout *Les Derniers mystères*. When Madame Quentin (whose murder Gondol will later discover when delivering an order to her home, drawing him further into the case), looks for a gift for her lover, her reaction to the news that Gondol doesn't have what she is looking for is somewhat exaggerated:

Son minois se chiffonnait. Des larmes perlaient de ses yeux. Sa main se posa sur son front pour ponctuer le terrible malheur qui l'envahissait.  
–Quelle catastrophe ! (26)

This prompts the wry narratorial observation that “Chacun voit l'apocalypse où il peut”. Later, as the novel gathers pace and Yèble and Gondol rush through torrential rain in an effort to stop Jean Dupont committing another murder, a gleeful tramp declares from his shelter: “Messieurs, c'est la fin du monde !” (175). References to apocalypse are also, almost certainly, an acknowledgement of the self-conscious palimpsesting at work in Simsolo's text. Dillon explains that both phenomena are characterized by a curious coexistence of destructive and creative impulses:

Palimpsesting and apocalypse are processes of partial destruction - the trace of the erased text remains in the palimpsest, certain of God's chosen people remain in the new age - that enable creation. (2007, 79)<sup>7</sup>

The emphasis on endings is just one way of demarcating, and thereby harnessing, time. Beginnings are almost as important, most notably in the form of regular customer Féodor Atkine's curious request to Gondol, repeated throughout the novel, that he scour the annals of literature in order to provide an answer to the question “Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?”, famously posed by fifteenth-century poet and criminal François Villon:

Le comédien m'avait demandé de lui retrouver les neiges d'antan si chères

sequences and specific periods of time within various novels, as Yèble's teasing of him attests:

Sur quoi tu enquêtes en ce moment ? La vie de Javert entre sa jeunesse au bain et sa seconde rencontre avec Jean Valjean ? La petite enfance de Dorian Gray ? L'identité réelle du professeur Faustroll ? Les derniers jours de Des Esseintes ? Le huitième péché capital ? (45)

The preoccupation with harnessing time is linked, as in Kermode, to a more general preoccupation with order and predictability. After an argument with his actress girlfriend, Iris, Gondol considers going back with champagne to apologize, and imagines the denouement his actions, coupled with her characteristic thespian posturing, would surely produce:

il y aurait la réconciliation sur le palier, avec des regards de tragédienne classique. Une ou deux citations piquées à Marivaux ou à Bernstein. Tout un cirque avant le baiser voluptueux et le radada sur la moquette. (Simsolo 2002, 75)

Atkine, we are told, is also an actor. Theatrical allusions sum up particularly well the balance between familiarity, or repetition,<sup>8</sup> and variation, which is at the heart of all hypertextual transformation. The relationship between a single dramatic text and the numerous possible interpretations of it is clearly analogous to the relationship between a hypotext and the hypertextual transformations it inspires.

The sense of order and predictability reflects the organization of the serial murders, modelled on “la grille Léo Malet” (Simsolo 2002, 83 and 125). The foregrounding of Malet's hypotext is underlined by the mischievous decision of Simsolo's publisher to wrap a misleading, bright red “bande publicitaire”, announcing “LÉO MALET”, around an unassuming grey and blue book cover, so that the real author's name fades into the background. Gondol realises that the names of the victims are linked to the number of the *arrondissement* in which they are murdered:

il a renommé la première lettre du nom ou du pseudonyme des victimes



The patterns are not merely precise, but self-consciously so, with the murderer deliberately leaving “une clef plus facile que les autres” in the fourth *arrondissement*: “[p]our qu’on puisse bien identifier son projet” (Simsolo 2002, 84). The killer’s sense of design persists, somewhat incongruously, into the final four *arrondissements*, for which Malet has set no precedent. Increasingly tenuous links, to the author’s lesser known works, point to the fragility of the design:

–Ce gus continue la série en s’appuyant toujours sur Malet. Il frappera dans les quatre derniers arrondissements.

–En improvisant, vu que tu m’as dit que les romans n’existaient pas.

–Ce n’est pas le genre à improviser. Bien trop maniaque pour ça. L’abandon de la pipe est une provocation autant qu’une signature et je suis certain que, pour ses prochaines exécutions, il va se baser sur des indices qui sont éparpillés un peu partout dans les autres bouquins de Léo Malet. [...] (108)

The apparent order becomes, in itself, a source of disquiet. Gondol points out that the regularity of the attacks should allow them to plan ahead and protect potential victims, but his lack of conviction is premonitory: “–S’il suit son rythme d’un meurtre chaque mois, tu as le temps d’organiser des planques et des protections, ajoutai-je sans trop y croire” (109).

### **An open book: innovation, open-endedness, disorder**

There is, needless to say, a school of thought diametrically opposed to that of Kermode and his fellow-advocates of closure and order. Genette explains that incompleteness is sometimes a defining feature of a text, giving the example of Marivaux’s *La Vie de Marianne*, in which “l’inachèvement [...] est [...] la vérité de l’œuvre” (1982, 239). He refers to “le respect, sinon le culte, voué à l’inachèvement” (1982, 235) and

There was [...] an unfinished design of Thurtell's for the murder of a man with a pair of dumb-bells, which I admired greatly; it was a mere outline, that he never completed; but to my mind it seemed every way superior to his chief work. I remember that there was great regret expressed by some amateurs that this sketch should have been left in an unfinished state: but there I cannot agree with them; for the fragments and first bold outlines of original artists have often a felicity about them which is apt to vanish in the management of the details. (De Quincey 2004 [1827])

Disorder, much like incompleteness, has its advocates. Kermode is particularly critical of Morse Peckham who, in *Man's Rage for Chaos* (1965), attempts to establish an identification of art with disorder. The dialectic is echoed in Simsolo's novel where, despite the ostensibly rigorous plan of the serial killer, chaos and contingency are ever-present. Note the coexistence of order and disorder in the following quotation, in which we see the full irony of the serial killer's meticulous adherence to Malet's "plan", which in fact saw him abandon his treatment of the *arrondissements* by numerical order:

–L'ordre dans lequel l'assassin choisit les arrondissements parisiens où il tue, c'est exactement celui de la parution des *Nouveaux Mystères de Paris* de Léo Malet, à partir du quatrième volume. [...] En 1954, il entreprend d'écrire des enquêtes de son détective de choc qui se déroulent chacune dans un arrondissement de Paris. La première est parue en décembre de cette année chez Robert Laffont : *Le Soleil naît derrière le Louvre*. Les deux mois suivants, il traite du deuxième et du troisième dans *Des kilomètres de linceuls* et puis *L'Ours et la Poupée*, un ouvrage réédité ensuite sous le titre de *Fièvre au Marais*. Deux mois passent avant que la série reprenne, mais Léo Malet abandonne alors l'ordre numérique et continue sa série dans le désordre. Les VI, XIV, X, VIII, XVI, XIII, XV, IX, XII, V, IV, XVII paraissent encore jusqu'en février 1959. Arrondissements où ton tueur a sévi dans ce même ordre. (78-79)

As Gondol explains why he thinks that Dupont's final killing will be different to the others ("La touche finale ne peut être une victime comme les autres" (Simsolo 2002: 219)). Yèble forces him to admit the random

–Si je te comprends bien, j’ai beaucoup plus besoin de chance que de ton art à dénicher les énigmes dans les textes littéraires ?  
 –J’en ai bien peur. (Simsolo 2002, 219)

The pervading sense of disorder has a significant effect on temporality. In line with Gondol’s fears, Dupont soon abandons his monthly schedule and the murders become more frequent. As the case takes on a new urgency, Gondol’s sleep patterns are disrupted. He works through the night, fearful that the killer could strike again at any time (Simsolo 2002, 141), then later falls asleep surrounded by his work: “Le sommeil m’avait saisi en plein travail et je m’étais endormi sur les romans de Léo Malet” (157).

A series of odd meteorological phenomena reinforces the impression of warped temporality. First, a “canicule hivernale” (158) descends on the capital:

Un magnifique soleil contredisait toujours la logique des saisons. Quelques femmes portaient des robes d’été avec décolletés révélateurs et jambes plutôt découvertes. Pas si désagréable en la matière, le dérèglement météorologique. Sauf pour un père Noël qui transpirait sous sa barbe de coton. (77-78)

News kiosks report the absence of snow in mountain resorts, reminding Gondol of his quest on behalf of Atkine, for the evanescent “neiges d’antan” (Simsolo 2002, 78), and the heat continues into the new year: “Les fêtes de fin d’année se déroulèrent sous un chaud soleil tropical” (Simsolo 2002, 101).

The unseasonal heatwave is followed by a period of exceptionally heavy rainfall, which gives rise to an abundance of aquatic images. Gérard Louvert, a cinema enthusiast who helps Gondol with his investigations, wearing “un grand ciré de pêcheur breton et des bottes en caoutchouc” is likened to “un marin égaré” (159). Serge, one of Gondol’s regular clients, enters the bookshop “laissant des mares ruisselantes sur le sol et s’ébrouant comme un phoque en pestant comme un fou,” declaring, “–

Those working on the serial killer case are dismissive of pronouncements of a watery apocalypse:

À quelques mètres de la librairie, un clochard réfugié sous un porche nous interpella.

—Messieurs, c'est la fin du monde !

Yèble lui jeta une poignée de pièces de monnaie et accéléra le pas. (175)

Yèble's reaction to the tramp's warning is significant in that the threat of impending conclusion is dismissed via an offer of money, in much the same way that a successful serial can be prolonged at the behest of an editor, working on behalf of a reading public, willing to pay an author or continuator.<sup>9</sup>

The water imagery would also appear to be a self-conscious nod to the intertextuality at work in Simsolo's novel. As Still and Worton explain, with reference to Quintilian's metaphor of liquefaction, liquid imagery is a particularly apt way of evoking the conflation of reading and writing activities and the transformation of the read into the written (1990, 7 and 32) which characterize intertextuality. What we write is "a pulped version of what we have read", and reading is "a performative act of criticism and interpretation" (1990, 7),<sup>10</sup> rather than an independent and passive act. Gondol struggles to protect his stock of books from the rain ("La pluie s'engouffra et je me hâtai de refermer l'huis afin que les bouquins restent intacts" (176)), but the intertextual "pulping" implied by the image is as inexorable as the rain is unrelenting. These images are all the more significant in light of the fact that Malet's *Nouveaux Mystères* is not the only series at stake in Simsolo's novel. *Les Derniers mystères* is itself part of Baleine's "Le Poulpe" series, a collective literary project inaugurated in the 1990s and an early manifestation of "fan fiction",<sup>11</sup> and specifically of a sub-group of titles within the list which have Pierre de Gondol as their central character. Just as Dupont seeks, via his crimes, to prolong the series initiated by Malet, so Simsolo contributes to the ongoing, collaborative depiction of the bookseller-detective, thus reinforcing De Quincey's analogy once again.<sup>12</sup>

un froid glacial me réveilla avant l'aube. Le gel s'était formé sur les vitres. J'allumai le chauffage et repris la lecture de l'intégrale de Malet en songeant aux messages envoyés par le tueur. (191)

The arctic temperatures are also significant in drawing Gondol's attention, along with that of the reader, to the police officer assigned to follow him, whose efforts at discretion are continually thwarted by the extreme weather. His incognito is betrayed and ridiculed as he is beset by uncontrollable shivering (191) and a conspicuous blue face (192), succumbs to a debilitating cold, and takes a spectacular fall on the ice, landing against the bookshop window:

Un terrible bruit nous fit tourner la tête vers la vitrine du magasin. C'était le flic chargé de ma surveillance qui en était la cause. Le pauvre type avait glissé sur le verglas et s'était cogné contre la devanture de la librairie. (203)

These slapstick moments in fact serve quite a serious purpose. With the reader, along with Gondol, repeatedly reminded that the bookseller is not only trailing Dupont, but is also being followed himself, he is invited to acknowledge the ironic similarities between the two characters. Here, it would seem that we are not dealing with "disorder" as such, but rather with a new and unsettling brand of order.<sup>13</sup> Troubling patterns, affinities and connections are made between supposedly antithetical categories. As Simpson puts it, "[t]he serial killer as metaphor collapses boundaries between good and evil, Left and Right, male and female, high art and kitsch" (2000, 19-20). Thus Gondol, despite his insistence that "Je ne suis pas flic, moi. J'enquête dans les bouquins. Jamais de réel" (46), is forced to acknowledge the *rapprochement* of literature and reality as his literary delving draws him deeper into the murder investigation and vice versa.

Similarly, an affinity between Yèble and the reader is suggested via the numerous descriptions of the *commissaire*'s increasingly voracious appetite (and, to some extent, that of Gondol and Iris as well). Gondol and

“consumer” of popular fictions. The following example is a particularly striking one. As Yèble and Gondol wait for the galerie Oudin to open, in order to question the man from whom Dupont bought a photograph left on the body of one of his victims, Yèble devours numerous items of food and drink:

Il attrapa le gros paquet de biscuits que j’avais entamé en l’attendant et en engloutit tout le contenu.

–On va y aller ensemble, décréta-t-il après avoir vidé ma bouteille de jus d’orange sanguine.

[...]

Rue Quincampoix, la galerie n’était pas encore ouverte et Yèble décida de prendre patience dans un troquet où il dégusta une assiette de charcuterie arrosée d’un muscadet des plus corrects. (205)

As Gondol and Yèble arrive at Dupont’s apartment, we see the *commissaire*, much like the serial reader, torn between immediate consumption and the postponement of satisfaction. He orders a sandwich to appease his appetite, and yet is happy to wait for reinforcements before entering Dupont’s den, thus delaying the imminent discoveries: “–Attendons les renforts, décida Yèble en commandant un sandwich” (221).

As Simpson explains, drawing on Bakhtin’s discussions of orality in carnivalesque folk culture (2000, 5 and 15), biting and eating are also activities frequently associated with the serial killer. Simile is used to suggest the monstrous nature of Yèble’s appetite and thus posit a similarity between him and his criminal nemesis: “Il mangea comme un ogre en se léchant les babines et vida deux bouteilles de bourgogne” (111).

A scene towards the end of the novel in which Gondol is struck by the uncanny similarities between the serial killer’s endeavours and his own points to the specific function of these surprising confluences of roles:

J’arrêtai ma lecture, gêné de comprendre que le monstre enquêtait comme moi dans une œuvre littéraire, mais s’en inspirait ensuite pour créer une réalité macabre. (228)

distance when reading it. The deliberate blurring of ostensibly clear-cut polar opposites obliges us to pause, just like Gondol, and step back from the novel, so as to fully appreciate its meta-diegetic implications.

## Conclusion

In *Les Derniers mystères de Paris*, the serial killer narrative is used to explore the complexities inherent to serial form. The novel illustrates Eco's point that "seriality" and "repetition" do not preclude "innovation". On the contrary, we are dealing with an "inseparable scheme-variation knot, where the variation is no longer more appreciable than the scheme" (Eco 1990, 97-98). The reader is invited to adopt a critical stance in relation to the novel, and to recognise that what Eco terms "variation" (I have also used the terms "innovation" and "disorder") are, in fact, integral to "repetition" (or "order"), rather than their polar opposite. In this way, the reader is able to fully appreciate the incongruity of the task the serial killer has set himself. Given that the variations on the Malet theme are potentially infinite, providing a satisfactory conclusion to his work is an impossibility. The message is nowhere better summed up than in the novel's deliciously ambiguous title: these are, of course, not the *last* mysteries of Paris, but merely the *latest* in an ever-expanding series.

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<sup>1</sup> Note the distinction Genette makes between the continuation and the sequel: "Lorsqu'une œuvre est laissée inachevée du fait de la mort de son auteur, ou de toute autre cause d'abandon définitif, la continuation consiste à l'achever à sa place, et ne peut être que le fait d'un autre. La suite remplit une tout autre fonction, qui est en général d'exploiter le succès d'une œuvre, souvent considérée en son temps comme achevée, en la faisant rebondir sur de nouvelles péripéties" (Genette 1982, 223). Genette goes on to argue that the continuation could be better described as an "allographic completion" and the sequel an "autographic

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<sup>5</sup> Note the same comparison in the BBC's recent crime drama series "The Fall", in which DS Stella Gibson (Gillian Anderson) mocks the artistic pretensions of elusive serial killer Paul Spector (Jamie Dornan), only for him to voice his mistrust of art and the artificial character of the order it creates:

GIBSON            How are you free? You're a slave to your desires. You have no control at all. You're weak. Impotent. You think you're some kind of artist, but you're not.

SPECTOR          Art is a lie. Art gives the chaos of the world an order that doesn't exist.

(episode 5/5, broadcast 9.00pm, 10 June 2013)

<sup>6</sup> For two important and insightful reviews of Kermode's seminal study, see Bersani 1967 and Webster 1974.

<sup>7</sup> Dillon explores the fascinating notion of "apocalyptic palimpsesting" with reference to Derrida (1984), who "argues that the possibility of literature is founded on precisely that which both the palimpsest and apocalypse represent - the non-possibility of remainderless destruction" (2007, 80), and Zamora (1988): "As Lois Parkinson Zamora notes, although in contemporary discourse apocalypse has come to be equated with the end of the world, in the biblical tradition apocalyptic narratives predict both the end of the world *and* the coming of a new age" (2007, 79).

<sup>8</sup> Iris and Gondol's self-conscious playacting reminds us Genette's aforementioned "scripte intérieure" (1982, 224). See also Genette's discussion of Virgil's *Aeneid* as "un simple scénario que le travestisseur aurait pour tâche de développer" (1982, 81).

<sup>9</sup> Ponson du Terrail's *Rocambole* series provides what is perhaps the best known example of such a manoeuvre. Ponson du Terrail's revival of his swash-buckling hero after a three-year hiatus in *La Résurrection de Rocambole* (1865-6) came in direct response to overwhelming public demand.

<sup>10</sup> We are reminded, once again, of the particular aptness of the theatrical analogy for evoking the tension between repetition (adherence to a script) and variation (interpretation of that script) characteristic of hypertextual transformation.

<sup>11</sup> The project is discussed in some detail by Platten 2011, 203-11.

<sup>12</sup> The Baleine website (<http://www.editionsbaleine.fr/9-Pierre-de-Gondol>) lists nine other titles featuring the bookseller-detective: Jean-Bernard Pouy's *1280 âmes* (2000), Rémi Schultz's *Sous les pans du bizarre* (2000), Philippe Kerbellec's *La montre du mède* (2001), Roland Brasseur's *Le cinquante-quatrième jour* (2001),



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<sup>13</sup> As Eco explains, “variability” is linked to “repetition” as much as it is to “innovation” (1990, 96).

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