Rewriting Wrongs

Rewriting Wrongs:
French Crime Fiction and the Palimpsest

Edited by

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**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

P<small>REFACE</small>

D<small>AVID</small> P<small>LATTEN</small>

Pierre Lemaître, winner of the 2013 Prix Goncourt for *Au revoir là-haut*, was previously well known as the author of *Alex*, a haunting noir thriller. In *Alex*, the eponymous protagonist, while incarcerated under some duress, makes her acquaintance with a troop of rats. This encounter is sustained over a considerable time, during which the behaviour of individual members of the troop is scrutinized as if by a zoologist. The rat is of course a totemic animal in some parts of the world but a figure of disease-bearing dread in the West. Intrepid British naturalist Sir David Attenborough shrinks at the sight of rats. He says his reaction is visceral but it is possible that his feelings are motivated culturally, conditioned by a series of negative literary representations: from the childhood warning stories of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* and *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers*, emerging into the adult world of Orwell, Camus and now Lemaître. Despite their apparent ubiquity most people will not have an unpleasant personal encounter with rats during their lifetimes, in which case our typical aversion must well from a spring of cultural memory that Freud, in his 1925 essay "A Note Upon the 'Mystic Writing-Pad'", conceived as a palimpsest.

Derived from the Ancient Greek *palimpsestos* meaning "scraped clean and used again", the term is a sensual one, evoking the material density of parchment or the chemical magic of invisible ink. It is synonymous with the excavation of the past through the carbon dating of early Islamic manuscripts, the conservation of the famous Archimedes Palimpsest, and more recently the discovery in 2000 of the Novgorod Codex, the only known hyper-palimpsest, in which the latest imaging techniques have revealed the imprints of multiple texts on the wooden back walls of three wax tablets. In modern times the palimpsest has been used frequently as a master metaphor for learning and scholarship, reinforcing the notion that knowledge is compacted, as if in archaeological strata, rather than available through simple linear narratives. It was also developed by Gérard Genette as a tool of literary theory, allowing readers to establish precise, textual filiations but also to appreciate how meanings circulate in a wider

literary universe, acquiring accretions and modifications. The magnificent culminating scene of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, where Blind Jorge entices William of Baskerville to remove his gloves and turn the poisoned pages of the lost second volume of Aristotle's *Poetics*, is a palimpsestuous melodrama, a fusion of the material and the abstract, shooting meanings in all directions, like the flames engulfing the library where this ultimate confrontation occurs.

However, in theoretical terms the palimpsest is not a site for competing intellectual ideas or metaphysical systems; instead it is a force against entropy, helping to make connections and facilitate dialogue. In this guise, using the figure of the palimpsest as a focus for critical discussion is particularly helpful to students of crime fiction. This is because the genre has spawned different styles of writing and different, apparently incompatible reading experiences. The sealed room mystery has little in common with the blood-spattered extravagance of the serial-killer narrative, though both are categorized as "crime fiction"; one important publisher of European crime fiction in translation steers clear of excessively violent stories, as a matter of editorial policy. Most crime narratives reward the immersive reader, for whom the characters in the story are people who might even exist, or have existed, yet the genre also welcomes the calculating reader-detective interested in signs and clues and in solving puzzles, rather than in motives and emotions. But perhaps this polarization of the readers of crime fiction into the affective and the cerebral is too neat and tidy. Surely, good crime can accommodate both.

Inevitably, this leads us into a familiar cul-de-sac, of discussions about literary taste and value, of what makes a good crime novel. And this is where palimpsestic thinking comes into its own, because the palimpsest helps us to understand how texts are produced and consumed at different times and at different places and therefore how literary value can never be absolute but is contingent on many factors and will fluctuate over time. As Genette shows in his analysis of Michel Tournier's rewritings of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, it can be used to illuminate the evolution of the literary canon, understood in its conventional sense. However, it can also be used to expose the steampunk tendencies of some fan fiction, or indeed the innumerable extensions of the "Sherlock Holmes" myth, some brilliant, some less so; Arthur Conan Doyle has appeared as a fictional character in at least twelve stories by eleven different writers. Moreover, the palimpsest can function as a platform, as it did one September day in 2012 at Durham University, upon which readers questing for the secret histories in the work of a writer like Didier Daeninckx, and others tracking ludic transpositions in postmodern "detective" fiction, two types of writing

which would normally be mutually exclusive, intersected and found common ground.

Many of the chapters in this volume originated as papers at this one-day conference, which was conducted much in the image of its overarching theme. It might be stretching the analogy too far, but in theories of the palimpsest it is possible to glimpse an ideal, something important about research in literature and the humanities. For it presupposes the existence of what Pierre Bayard has called "la bibliothèque collective", a coming-together of minds, here students and scholars of crime literature, to discover and share knowledge without prejudice and in an environment free of hierarchy. The outcome, the book in your hands, is a true reflection of this ideal.

INTRODUCTION

ANGELA KIMYONGÜR
AND AMY WIGELSWORTH

In an authoritative recent study entitled *The Palimpsest*, Sarah Dillon explains the palaeographic origins of a phenomenon traced back to the Egyptian era of the third century BC, when manuscripts were commonly reused and their original text overwritten (2007, 13). Thomas De Quincey wrote that "[a] palimpsest […] is a membrane or roll cleansed of its manuscript by reiterated successions" (1998 [1845], 139), and was not alone in emphasizing the processes of erasure and destruction. Indeed, a recent Oxford English Dictionary definition evokes:

> a parchment or other writing-material written upon twice, the original writing having been erased or rubbed out to make place for the second manuscript in which a later writing is written over an effaced earlier writing.

What these definitions neglect to acknowledge, as Dillon points out, is the inherent ambiguity of the palimpsest. In her words, the procedure had a "paradoxically preservatory power" in that "although the first writing on the vellum *seemed* to have been eradicated after treatment, it was often imperfectly erased" (2007, 12). Dillon uses the example of the Archimedes Palimpsest to illustrate her point. The document, sold at auction for two million dollars in 1998, is a Greek liturgical book, thought to date from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. However, the remarkable value of the manuscript comes not from the surface document, but from the underlying text, paradoxically preserved for posterity: a uniquely important manuscript of Archimedes, with tremendous implications for the history of Greek mathematics and engineering (2007, 11–12).[1] The palimpsest, then, is defined by its tantalizingly incongruous marriage of the notions of destruction and suppression to those of preservation and creation. Superimposition, Dillon explains, is as much a "productive creativity" as an act of erasure (2007, 54), and the overwriting process can, in turn, engender a positive "reactivation" of the underlying layers of the

palimpsest (2007, 112). Given this intriguing ambiguity, there can be little wonder that the palimpsest has been a source of ongoing fascination in many areas of cultural studies, and has developed into a fruitful metaphorical conceit used to define any cultural artefact that has been reused but still bears traces of its earlier form.[2]

Via two perceptive case studies, Dillon goes on to explore the specific resonance of the palimpsest trope in the context of crime fiction. In the first of these, she considers "classical detective fiction" (2007, 63–68), analysing Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez" (1904) which, she observes, makes an explicit comparison between palimpsest reading and detective reading in the story's opening scene, where we see Holmes himself scrutinizing a palimpsest (2007, 64). Dillon explains that detective fiction contains two texts, as identified by Tzvetan Todorov in his "Typologie du roman policier" (1971 [1966]): the *fabula* (*fable*, or story), which criminal characters frequently attempt to erase or obscure, and the *sujet* (*subject*, or plot), or superimposed version of events. More recently, David Platten has evoked this arrangement in terms of a:

> dual narrative structure, in which the absent narrative of the crime gradually reappears in the pages relating the stages of the investigation, as if it had been written in invisible ink. (2011, 27)

Crucially, and perhaps inevitably, it is the story of the crime (we might also term this the subtext or urtext), rather than the story of the investigation or the superimposed version of events (the surface narrative) which is the focus of interest in the classical tradition:

> Like a palimpsest, the classical detective whodunit contains two texts: the story of the 'true' version of events which the perpetrator has erased, or attempted to erase; and the story of the ostensible version of events superimposed upon it […]. [T]he detective is involved in a process of palimpsest reading that resembles the practice of palimpsest editors in that its sole aim is the reconstruction of the underlying script - of value is that which is hidden or concealed, rather than that which is visible. […] Since the mid-nineteenth century, for palimpsest editors, to 'read' a palimpsest has meant to resurrect or uncover the underlying text; the overlying one is irrelevant. (Dillon 2007, 65)[3]

Classical detective fiction in fact exemplifies a distinction (that between *sujet* and *fabula*) common to all literary works, as Todorov himself acknowledges.[4] In much the same way, the preoccupations of "classical" and "modern" crime fictions must be seen to echo much more general perceptual shifts in interpretative criticism. In "Texte (théorie du)"

(1994 [1973b]) Roland Barthes explains how traditional interpretative criticism "cherche à démontrer que le texte possède un signifié global et secret". The text is treated "comme s'il était dépositaire d'une signification objective, et cette signification apparaît comme embaumée dans l'œuvre-produit" (1682). The structuralist view of the text as a layered palimpsest containing a hidden meaning, which the reader must retrieve and restore in order to interpret the text (Dillon 2007, 82–83) is clearly analogous to the obsession in classical detective fiction with the mysterious, underlying script. It follows that crime fiction has obvious metafictional implications, and these are a recurring theme throughout this volume.

In a subsequent case study, Dillon considers "modern detective fiction" (2007, 76–82), this time analysing Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1984). Again, crime fiction can be seen to echo more general interpretative trends. The denouement of Eco's novel is especially significant in this respect:

> the final stage so crucial to detective palimpsest reading is frustrated: there is no revelation of an accurate correspondence between the detective's conclusions and the 'true' version of events as confirmed by their author. (Dillon 2007, 77)

The Name of the Rose thus challenges:

> the underlying assumption [of classical detective fiction] that reading can uncover the 'true' interpretation of a text, an interpretation that can then be verified by an author who retains complete control over the functioning of that text. (2007, 78)

Deduction gives way to abduction, and "detective palimpsesting" is superseded by "inventive palimpsesting", or a process of adding to the palimpsest, rather than paring it back.[5] As Dillon explains:

> ultimately, William's [William of Baskerville, the novel's detective] act of reading is a form of palimpsesting rather than palimpsest reading. He adds a further textual layer to the plot, rather than uncovering an underlying one. (2007, 79)

Eco's novel thus exemplifies his theory of the "openness" of narrative structure—"'open' works […] are characterized by the invitation to *make the work* together with the author" (Eco 1981, 63)[6]—which itself echoes the equivalence between reading and writing practices famously proposed by Barthes and his notion of the "writerly" text (1970),[7] by Iser's theory of

reader response (1978), and by the endeavours of Borges's Pierre Menard (1983).

Eco's novel serves as a diegetic echo of the poststructuralist paradigm,[8] according to which the text as palimpsest is "no longer regarded as a layered phenomenon in which the hidden text is of the only significance" (Dillon 2007, 82). Rather than dissecting the palimpsest to uncover and separate the hidden text, poststructuralists seek to acknowledge "the interrelatedness of the texts on the palimpsest's surface" (Dillon 2007, 83). Dillon's description of "a surface phenomenon in which two or more texts are inextricably tangled and intertwined" (2007, 83) is reminiscent of Barthes's description of the text as "un espace polysémique, où s'entrecroisent plusieurs sens possibles" (1994 [1973b], 1682).[9] We have clearly arrived at Barthes's understanding of the text as *tissu*:

> Dans l'écriture multiple, […] tout est à *démêler*, mais rien n'est à déchiffrer ; la structure peut être suivie, « filée » (comme on dit d'une maille de bas qui part) en toutes ses reprises et à tous ses étages, mais il n'y a pas de fond ; l'espace de l'écriture est à parcourir, il n'est pas à percer. (1994 [1968]: 147)

Barthes reiterates this new conception of the text in *Le Plaisir du texte*:

> *Texte* veut dire *Tissu* ; mais alors que jusqu'ici on a toujours pris ce tissu pour un produit, un voile tout fait, derrière lequel se tient, plus ou moins caché, le sens (la vérité), nous accentuons maintenant, dans le tissu, l'idée générative que le texte se fait, se travaille à travers un entrelacs perpétuel ; perdu dans ce tissu – cette texture – le sujet s'y défait, telle une araignée qui se dissoudrait elle-même dans les sécrétions constructives de sa toile. Si nous aimions les néologismes, nous pourrions définir la théorie du texte comme une *hyphologie* (*hyphos*, c'est le tissu et la toile d'araignée). (1973a, 85–86)[10]

Our new focus of interest is not the meaning supposedly hidden behind Barthes's "voile", but rather the veil itself, whose very texture, "dans l'entrelacs des codes, des formules, des signifiants" (1994 [1973b], 1684), is constitutive of meaning (Dillon 2007, 83). The origins of the metafictional propensity of crime fiction are, once again, laid bare: the challenges faced by the detective in relation to a given crime reproduce *en abyme* our evolving approaches to and assumptions about the text.

The conference which provided the inspiration for this volume, held at St. Chad's College at Durham University on 14 September 2012, with the support of the Society for French Studies, was conceived around the conviction that the palimpsest is a particularly fertile metaphor in the

context of French crime fiction, and sought to encourage debate on the nature, function and specificity of the palimpsest in this particular context. Of obvious note in terms of the specificity of the palimpsest to French literary and cultural studies is Gérard Genette's *Palimpsestes* (1982), which is perhaps the most well-known application of the palimpsest trope to the field of literary theory. Genette uses the notion of the palimpsest to reconsider intertextuality as defined by Kristeva and Barthes, and to explore *hypertextuality*, or any relation uniting a *hypertext* to an earlier *hypotext* via processes of *transformation* or *imitation*:

> Cette duplicité d'objet, dans l'ordre des relations textuelles, peut se figurer par la vieille image du *palimpseste*, où l'on voit, sur le même parchemin, un texte se superposer à un autre qu'il ne dissimule pas tout à fait, mais qu'il laisse voir par transparence. (1982, 556)

As Genette acknowledges, hypertextuality is, in fact, universal, and this means that the study of literary palimpsests is open to interpretative excess (analogous to the "inventive palimpsesting" observed at the diegetic level):

> […] toutes les œuvres sont hypertextuelles. Mais, comme les égaux d'Orwell, certaines le sont plus (ou plus manifestement, massivement et explicitement) que d'autres […]. Moins l'hypertextualité d'une œuvre est massive et déclarée, plus son analyse dépend d'un jugement constitutif, voire d'une décision interprétative du lecteur. (1982, 18)[11]

As Genette suggests, reading a text with its hypertextuality in mind makes objectivity difficult, and the less obvious the hypertextuality, the greater the scope for subjective interference. Interpretation thus ends up adding a new layer to the palimpsest, rather than satisfactorily disentangling the elements already present. As Dillon puts it:

> palimpsestuous[12] reading is […] an inventive process of creating relations where there may, or should, be none. As such, it always runs the risk of being false or fictitious. […] palimpsestuous reading is also a process of 'imping', of extending, lengthening, enlarging and adding to the palimpsest one is writing on. […] [I]n the process of reading the reader adds yet another text to the palimpsest's involuted surface […] (2007: 83)

Crime fiction provides a privileged vantage point from which to observe this type of reading. As Genette explains, a palimpsestuous reading is, inevitably, a rereading, with the text read initially "pour lui-même" and then a second time "dans sa relation à son hypotexte" (Genette

1982 : 555).[13] The incongruity of such an undertaking in the context of crime fiction—which, at least in its traditional, popular form, is usually discarded after a single reading—means that palimpsestuous readings of crime fiction are acutely self-conscious.

Suspicions about the particular aptness of the palimpsest metaphor in the context of French crime fiction were also confirmed by the plethora of varied and fascinating proposals received in response to the call for papers issued for the Durham event. The organization of the resulting volume echoes the structure of the conference that inspired it: chapters are arranged into three sections that identify three broad approaches to the use of the palimpsest in French crime writing, though there is inevitably, and often productively, overlap and interchange between the three parts.

Part I, "Rewriting the Past", groups together crime novels that either rewrite episodes from the past, or whose authors evoke past lives and past identities in their writing. Claire Gorrara's "Figuring Memory as Palimpsest: Rereading Cultural Memories of Jewish Persecution in French Crime Fiction about the Second World War" begins a discussion of crime fiction and its intersections with the Second World War with what has become an iconic example of the way in which the multiple narrative layers of the crime story are particularly well suited to the uncovering of forgotten historical moments. Didier Daeninckx's *Meurtres pour mémoire* concludes with a very tangible image of the palimpsest that echoes the ways in which two sets of intersecting memories of racialized violence during the Second World War and the Algerian War of Independence are brought to light in the course of the novel. Drawing on the work of Max Silverman (2013), Michael Rothberg (2009) and Sarah Dillon (2007), Gorrara's analysis focuses on three crime novels, from three different post-war decades, in order to explore the layering of memories of the persecution of France's Jewish community during the Second World War. Silverman's model of "palimpsestic memory" is adduced to demonstrate the complexities surrounding the ways in which this difficult period of recent history is remembered and articulated in crime narratives. Sophie Watt's chapter "'Un passé qui ne passe pas'…. Un mystère sans cesse redécouvert" also invokes Max Silverman's work on "palimpsestic memory" and that of Michael Rothberg on "multidirectional memory" in order to consider the ways in which racialized violence has been depicted in contemporary texts, short stories, novels and films, that share a palimpsestuous textual structure and that range across traumatic episodes from the First and Second World Wars as well as from France's colonial past. Watt explores the ways in which these different textual forms, when read together and across each other, illuminate the echoes between past

and present oppression and, in so doing, produce a critique of modern society. In "Arsène Lupin: Rewriting History" Emma Bielecki approaches Maurice Leblanc's Arsène Lupin books as novels whose intertextual practices in the early part of the twentieth century have a clear ideological dimension. Leblanc's appropriation of Conan Doyle's character Sherlock Holmes, eventually renamed Herlock Sholmès for legal reasons, is increasingly bound up with questions of French national identity; if Sholmès becomes a somewhat ridiculous figure in comparison with the quick-witted Lupin and if Paris is glamorized in comparison with a dreary London, Leblanc's intention is to bolster French national identity in the wake of historical crises such as the Franco-Prussian war, the Panama scandal and *Boulangisme*. The Lupin stories, Bielecki argues, possess a doubly palimpsestuous quality in that they purport to reveal truths hidden by layers of falsity whilst actually layering a fictional version of events over the historical record. Christine Calvet's "*Du récit à l'envers au récit de l'envers*: the Imprint of the Palimpsest in Simenon" takes as its focus another emblematic figure of francophone crime writing, Georges Simenon. Starting with the premise that Simenon's novels do not conform to classic generic expectations in that the resolution of the investigation is not their central element, Calvet examines three Simenon novels: *Les Demoiselles de Concarneau*, *Les Fiançailles de M. Hire* and *En Cas de malheur* to demonstrate how the investigatory narrative is overlaid by the re-emergence of past, hidden events that are not merely necessary to the framework of the detective story but are, above all, a means to understanding the characters' inner lives. The palimpsest is thus seen as a central building block of Simenon's wider literary project to write "le roman de l'homme".

Part II, "Textual Rewriting", shifts from authors and texts that use a palimpsestuous framework in order to investigate both public and private pasts to those for whom the palimpsest offers the potential for a fruitful reworking of an existing text, overlaying it with a new text through which the informed reader can spot traces of the original. Alistair Rolls's "Paris as Rewrite: Getting Away with it in Léo Malet's *XVe arrondissement*" is articulated around the argument that Malet's novel *Les Eaux troubles de Javel*, part of his series *Les Nouveaux mystères de Paris*, in which each novel is set in a different Parisian *arrondissement*, is a rewriting of his earlier work *Nestor Burma contre C.Q.F.D* which, like *Les Eaux troubles de Javel*, is set in the fifteenth *arrondissement*. Paris, or more precisely its fifteenth *arrondissement*, is posited as the palimpsest upon which the original crime was written and is now effaced by a new resolution of that crime, the space within which the original wrong is subject to a rewriting.

Andrew Watts turns to a different form of rewriting in his chapter on televisual adaptations of Balzac's *Une ténébreuse affaire*, specifically Alain Boudet's 1975 adaptation. Balzac's 1841 novel is particularly well suited to this volume's theme in that it has been described as the first French detective novel. While Watts agrees that it is not, technically speaking, a *roman policier*, it is nonetheless a work of detection, but also a palimpsest in that Balzac superimposes his own narrative over earlier texts, notably Walter Scott's *Rob Roy*, while Boudet's televisual adaptation of the novel evokes, not least through its casting, the traces of earlier television programmes that the viewer is encouraged to detect. Thus, the chapter analyses the relationship between the theme of detection and the inherently palimpsestic nature of adaptation, whereby the adapter grafts new meanings onto earlier texts. The final contribution to Part II is Adrienne Angelo's "Enigmas, Erasures and *Enquêtes*: Camille Laurens and the Palimpsest" in which the interrelationship between detective fiction and the palimpsest is seen to take a more ludic and self-conscious turn. The chapter explores Laurens's earliest writings, *Index*, *Romance*, *Les Travaux d'Hercule* and *L'Avenir*, as works that are both centred around crime, particularly crimes of passion, and marked by a porosity that enables the reappearance of characters, the multiple restaging of certain episodes, and intertextual citations. As in other texts discussed in this volume, our generic expectations of crime writing are frustrated, in this case through the subordination of the investigatory framework to a literary emphasis on the role of writing and rewriting.

The type of self-conscious and self-reflexive writing which can be seen in Laurens's work remain very much to the fore in the chapters that form Part III, "Imitation, Parody, Metafiction". The four chapters in this section explore the creative impetus behind works that deliberately set out to imitate others in order to create something new. Ellen Carter's "Taking Background Research Too Far? Caryl Férey's Cross-Cultural Borrowings" examines the cultural borrowings made by Férey, a metropolitan French writer, in order to add to the authenticity and credibility of crime works purporting to offer representations of Maori and New Zealand society from the perspective of the insider. Discussion focuses on a detailed analysis of two novels and their sources, elements of which surface in the novels as unacknowledged borrowings that Férey subsequently imported into his own work. *Utu* contains rewritten elements from Keri Hulme's *the bone people* (1985), while *Haka* borrows from the early pages of Victor Segalen's *Les Immémoriaux* (1907). Carter undertakes a detailed linguistic analysis of these borrowings and considers potential explanations for their use, as well as some of the cultural confusions resulting from Férey's

choice to inform *Haka* (set in New Zealand) with borrowings from a source text set in Tahiti. Férey's choices are considered in relation to theories of Julia Kristeva, Gérard Genette, Marie Darrieussecq, Roger Little and Pierre Bayard, and Carter concludes that judgement of Férey's rewriting is made problematic because of the porosity of the borderlines between intertextuality, parody, pastiche and plagiarism, all of which have obvious connections with the palimpsest. In "*Filatures de soi*: Detectives, Disappearances and Deceit in the Crime Autofictions of Calle, Laurens and Nothomb", Elise Hugueny-Léger deploys case studies of a series of autofictional texts by Sophie Calle, Camille Laurens and Amélie Nothomb in order to explore the parallels between crime writing and autofiction. Autofiction has obvious affinities with crime writing as a genre frequently built upon a quest for identity effected through a search for clues and traces of the past. While acknowledging that the two genres are quite distinct in terms of intention, narrative devices and the use of plot or character, Hugueny-Léger examines the ways in which Calle, Laurens and Nothomb deploy, or indeed parody, traditional features of crime fiction in autofictional texts characterized by a ludic approach to the search for identity. In his study, "The Many-Layered Palimpsest: Metafiction, Genre Fiction and Georges Perec's *'53 jours'*", Simon Kemp continues the focus on the ways in which writers of self-conscious fiction, for whom the processes of writing and story construction often form the subject of their fiction, take inspiration from the structures of the detective story, particularly in its classic embodiment from which many crime writers have now departed. Kemp is at pains to emphasize the difference of Perec's *"53 jours"* from other detective metafictions that insist on distancing themselves from the genre, frequently using parody to do so. He contends instead that Perec's posthumously published novel is a "paragon of crime metafiction" in that it embraces the notion of crime fiction as a game played with the reader, celebrates it and encourages us to read it as such. Posthumous reworkings provide the critical focus of the final chapter in Amy Wigelsworth's aptly titled "Finishings Off: Murder à la Malet in Simsolo's *Les Derniers mystères de Paris*". Rather than a simple homage to Léo Malet's *Les Nouveaux mystères de Paris*, Simsolo's novel offers a continuation of Malet's unfinished series by having a serial killer provide, through the murders he commits in a number of different Parisian *arrondissements*, a palimpsestuous completion of Malet's original project. Detailed textual analysis of the novel's criminal investigation foregrounds the ways in which Simsolo resolves the tensions, implicit in Genette's definition of hypertextual continuation, between conformity to the original

author's designs and the search for resolution on the one hand, and the value of innovation and open-endedness on the other.

The palimpsest provides a delightfully problematic *grille de lecture* for our engagement with French crime fiction, poised *à mi-chemin* between its structuralist and poststructuralist avatars: the structuralist incarnation of the palimpsest—which, as we have seen, has notable affinities with the classical detective fiction model—often facilitates our understanding of a given crime narrative, by encouraging us to unearth an underlying text; but the poststructuralist manifestation of the palimpsest—that of a polyphonic, surface phenomenon, to which we, as readers, are invited to add our own, new layer—just as frequently problematizes our encounter with the text. Therein, we might argue, lies the ultimate appeal of the palimpsest: rather than resolving and removing the mysteries at the heart of crime fiction, and thus invalidating the genre, fictional "detective reading" and scholarly "palimpsest reading"—of which the present volume is itself an example— go beyond the confines of the structuralist project, proceeding to add new layers of complexity to both the narratives in question and the scholarly discussions they inspire, and thereby perpetuating, much to the delight of amateurs and scholars alike, this compelling and vibrant genre.

Notes

[1] See http://www.archimedespalimpsest.org/

[2] Fittingly, as Dillon points out, this new, figurative concept is itself the result of a palimpsestic process: "the concept of the palimpsest – which is at play in literary, critical and theoretical discourse subsequent to De Quincey – is a philosophical concept that has emerged from an erasure of its 'literal' or 'proper' meaning" (2007, 54).

[3] See also Russell (1867, 110–11).

[4] "[C]es définitions […] sont […] deux aspects de toute œuvre littéraire que les Formalistes russes avaient décelés, il y a quarante ans. […] : la fable, c'est ce qui s'est passé dans la vie, le sujet, la manière dont l'auteur nous le présente" (Todorov 1971 [1966], 58).

[5] Dillon observes the beginning of this shift (from deduction to abduction) in classical detective fiction—"Neither detective nor palimpsest reading […] are methods of deduction. Rather, both are practices of 'invention' – a word which means both 'to come upon', 'discover', 'find out' and 'to devise', 'contrive', 'feign' or 'make-up'" (2007, 67–68)—but notes that the element of invention involved in William's reading practice is much more explicit (77).

[6] Quoted by Dillon 2007, 79–80.

[7] '[L]e texte scriptible, c'est *nous en train d'écrire*' (Barthes 1970, 10).

[8] Genette uses the term *structuralisme ouvert*: "Car il y a, dans ce domaine, deux structuralismes, l'un de la clôture du texte et du déchiffrement des structures

internes […]. L'autre structuralisme, c'est […] celui […] où l'on voit comment un texte […] peut – si l'on veut bien l'y aider – « en lire un autre »" (1982, 557).

[9] See also Derrida's "Survivre" (2003).

[10] See also 1994 [1973b], 1683.

[11] See also Dillon 2007, 90.

[12] The adjective ("palimpsestuous") was coined by Philippe Lejeune in his Barthesian pastiche entitled "Le Roland Barthes sans peine" (1984). See Dillon 2007, 4 and Genette 1982, 557. Note the distinction made by Dillon between "palimpsestic", which "refers to the process of layering that produces a palimpsest", and "palimpsestuous", which "describes the structure that one is presented with as a result of that process" (2007: 4).

[13] Discussing Tournier's *Vendredi ou la vie sauvage*, Genette refers to a "lecteur imprévu et sans doute importun [qui] vient alors se superposer au destinataire recherché, et cette double « réception », par elle-même, dessine ce qu'on pourrait décrire comme un palimpseste de lecture" (1982, 523).

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PART I:

REWRITING THE PAST

CHAPTER ONE

FIGURING MEMORY AS PALIMPSEST: REREADING CULTURAL MEMORIES OF JEWISH PERSECUTION IN FRENCH CRIME FICTION ABOUT THE SECOND WORLD WAR

CLAIRE GORRARA

The figure of the palimpsest and memories of the Second World War have particular traction in the case of French crime fiction. The unsettling sense that widely circulating stories of wartime bravery and sacrifice cover over more troubling stories of guilt, shame and loss is common currency in French crime fiction about the Second World War.[1] Indeed, the palimpsest as a metaphor for intersecting war memories is given concrete form in Didier Daeninckx's critically acclaimed novel *Meurtres pour mémoire* (1984). As the novel draws to its end, Inspector Cadin and historian Claudine Chenet enter Bonne Nouvelle metro station whilst it is undergoing renovation. As they watch, an Algerian worker scrapes away at decades of posters on advertising hoardings:

> Claudine s'arrêta devant un coin de mur. Elle me montra un carré de céramique à demi recouvert de lambeaux de papier jauni qui résistaient aux efforts d'un travailleur algérien. On ne distingua qu'une partie du texte mais le sens ne s'en trouvait pas affecté: « … est interdite en France… coupable à être condamn… cour martia ... lemande … personne qui porte … sortissants jui … peine allant jusqu'à la mo… éléments irrespon … à soutenir les ennemis de l'Allemagne…..met en garde …. coupables eux-mêmes et la population des territoires occupés. (Daeninckx 1984, 215–16)

Peeling away the successive layers of advertisements reveals the German occupier's edict announcing the penalties should French men and women be discovered to have harboured Jews evading capture.[2] It is this "hidden" text of the persecution of the Jewish population in occupied

France that the novel intermeshes with stories of racialized violence perpetrated against demonstrators on 17 October 1961 in Paris at the height of the Algerian War. In the novel, these two histories are brought into contact via the character of the perpetrator André Veillut, a scarcely veiled reference to the real-life figure of Maurice Papon, wartime civil servant and Paris police prefect during the Algerian War. As this final scene of a palimpsestic layering of texts and histories in the novel makes explicit, Daeninckx is invoking a model of memory predicated on transversal connections—both transnational (France and Algeria) and transhistorical (Second World War and the Algerian War). The fragmented and elliptical form of the military notice in the metro station suggests that the story of the wartime persecution of the Jewish population is one that is difficult to decipher after so many years but can—and should—be read in relation to other instances of State-sanctioned violence. The project of the novel is to resurrect these histories, to make the "lost" voices of the past speak, and to do so via a textual layering that sets memories of the wartime past in relation to other apparently distinct events in twentieth-century French history.

In this chapter, the modelling of memory as palimpsest will be explored in three French crime novels that represent the apparent loss and recuperation of Jewish memories of the Second World War: Léo Malet's *Du rébecca rue des Rosiers* (1958), Jean Mazarin's *Collabo-Song* (1981) and Murielle Szac's *Un lourd silence* (1999). In each of these three novels, spanning a fifty-year period, the focus of inquiry will be upon the transversal connections that bring into contact different group memories of the Second World War at a given historical juncture. Such "knotted histories" (Rothberg 2011) of memory traces and intersections allow for a layering of French war memories that brings to light often startling and unexpected reconfigurations of the past. To this end, this chapter will itself be a layered and composite investigation, as it will read these three crime narratives across and through post-war French memory debates, as well as through the work of literary and cultural critics, Sarah Dillon and Max Silverman. Their work provides a departure point for reflecting on notions of memory as palimpsest and for demonstrating how such a concept can be mobilized to better understand cultural remappings of French war memories over the post-war period.

Figuring the Palimpsest

The work of Sarah Dillon on the palimpsest in literature, criticism and theory provides rich material for reflecting upon how the palimpsest as literary trope might intersect with the genre of crime fiction and with memory transmission (Dillon 2007). Firstly, Dillon highlights the metaphorical potential of the palimpsest as a means of approaching the multiple inscriptions of the past in textual practice. In her observations on the palimpsestic recovery of "lost texts",[3] she contends that the figure of the palimpsest connotes both literary erasure, an original text erased by an overlaid inscription, but also, paradoxically, preservation, as fragments of the original inscription are resurrected by the work of new reading practices. Secondly, Dillon makes a compelling argument for the connections between what she terms "palimpsest reading" and "detective reading". For Dillon, as with the structure of a palimpsest, the narrative economy of the classical detective story is predicated upon the recovery of a hidden text (the "true" story of the crime) which seeps through and eventually supersedes the surface text (the story of the investigation).

This modelling of detective fiction via the trope of textual layering is a productive methodology for rereading French wartime memories, above all those associated with the Jewish community. Such stories are often figured as rescued from beneath (or read through) the accretion of other wartime inscriptions. These other memories, be they those of resistance or collaboration, do not compete with Jewish memories but rather intersect and cross-fertilize with them. Indeed, the transversal reading practice generated by the French crime novels in this chapter is commensurate with Dillon's coupling of postmodern detective fiction—in this case Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*—and a "palimpsestuous reading". This Dillon defines as "a process of reading that attempts to negotiate and do justice to the interrelatedness of the texts on the palimpsest's surface" (2007, 83). Such a reading practice is one that is attentive to the entanglement of textual layers (and memories), not their separation and arbitrary disassociation, promising connections that configure the text (and the past) in new ways.

Dillon's dual imagining of the palimpsest as a figure of simultaneous loss and recovery and her focus on the interrelatedness of palimpsestuous layers is a model of literary-critical practice that bears comparison with the work of scholars of French cultural history. In *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (2013), Max Silverman invokes the figure of the palimpsest in order to capture the multiple connections across time and space of different histories

of violence within a francophone context.[4] Firstly, Silverman mobilizes
the figure of the palimpsest to demonstrate how, in the work of cultural
memory, the present is shadowed or haunted by the past. In Silverman's
formulation, this is a past which is not immediately visible but one which
comes progressively into view, setting up a relationship between past and
present:

> [in] the form of a superimposition and interaction of different temporal
> traces to constitute a sort of composite structure, like a palimpsest, so that
> one layer of traces can be seen through, and is transformed by, another.
> (Silverman 2013, 3)

As with Dillon's literary-critical model, Silverman's conception of
French cultural memory constructs the palimpsest as a privileged figure of
interconnectedness or entanglement, richly evident in literary and filmic
narratives. Secondly, Silverman contends that such a "palimpsestic
memory" is not simply a combination of two distinct moments in time but
the result of a cluster of apparently disparate spaces and times which,
combined, "create a different spatio-temporal configuration" (Silverman
2013, 3). This gives rise to textual inscriptions of memory that refuse a
linear history of past events in favour of a patterning of past and present
alive to the interplay of similarity and difference. For Silverman, as for
other cultural critics of "multidirectional memory" (Rothberg 2009), this
palimpsestic memory brings into view hybrid and overlapping histories. In
the cases of colonialism and the Holocaust, such a reconfiguration of
memory opens up a critical space for imagining what Silverman terms a
"cosmopolitical memory" (2013, 179), a form of cultural memory
sensitive to new solidarities that challenge conventional boundaries and
histories of nation and race.

Silverman's model of palimpsestic memory is an exciting one when
applied to post-war cultural production and the Second World War in
France. Firstly, it captures a sense of the superimpositions and productive
interactions of different inscriptions of the past over time. Cultural memories
of war are constructed as fluid, contingent and open to future transformations
that are powerfully engaged in creative acts of remembrance. Secondly, it
refutes a progressive teleological model of the evolution of war memories
that we might associate with now canonical studies of French war
memories, such as Henry Rousso's *Le Syndrome de Vichy* (1987). In
Rousso's psycho-social model of memory, dominant post-war memories
of national resistance in the 1950s and 1960s give way to darker memories
of collaboration in the early 1970s. These are superseded by resurgent
memories of Jewish persecution in the 1980s, heralding an era of