



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Memory and Tradition in L' Herbe des Nuis by Patrick Modiano: A Philosophical Criticism approach.

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Nov 1, 2024 Accepted: Dec 12, 2024	Sartre argues that a writer's Fictional Technique is tied to their metaphysical vision, which critics must discern to evaluate their work. Patrick Modiano's metaphysics aligns with atomic metaphysics or pluralistic positivism. Within this framework, character relationships are external, contrasting with spiritual realism's focus on internal relationships, where understanding one character reveals the essence of the whole. Modiano's unique writing style leads readers in multiple directions, creating a sense of distraction. Concepts emerge rapidly, often branching out before converging by the reading's conclusion. This reflects atomic theory's nature, where much accepted knowledge is, as Bertrand Russell states, beyond doubt, emphasizing a transient but interconnected exploration of ideas.
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INTRODUCTION

Philosophical criticism exists at the crossroads of literature and philosophy, employing a methodology similar to philosophical inquiry that merges both descriptive and normative aspects. This discipline includes a range of interconnected literary, philosophical, and scientific viewpoints and theories, prompting many scholars to view them as a unified whole. It is also linked to the activities of description, interpretation, and explanation.

Therefore, it is a misconception to equate the phenomenological method with the idea that descriptive approaches are the only valid means of inquiry, thereby disregarding other methods of uncovering truth or enhancing our understanding as insignificant. Such a viewpoint diverts us from an objective and open-minded approach, steering us towards a limiting experimental bias that can permanently obscure certain facets of reality from our awareness.

Moreover, while the objective phenomenological method requires interpreting the descriptions gathered, philosophy and criticism extend beyond mere description; they also entail interpreting reality and achieving a synthesis of doctrinal coherence. The interpretative method is crucial in our quest to understand—not just observe—the world and human truth, underscoring its undeniable importance.

Revisiting literary works through the lens of philosophy should not seek to uncover a singular hidden meaning that encapsulates their intellectual essence. Instead, the focus should be on elucidating their diverse structures, which allow for various interpretative approaches. Just as there is no such thing as purely literary or purely philosophical discourse, but rather a blend of discourses where linguistic interpretations intersect at multiple levels, it is equally challenging to definitively quantify the contributions of the poetic, the narrative, and the logical.

Consequently, it becomes evident that philosophical elements permeate literary texts at various depths, necessitating a careful analysis through description, explanation, and interpretation.

Philosophical criticism does not aim to separate the "intellectual element" from literary works by isolating philosophical concepts and issues from the narrative and stylistic aspects of the text. Instead, it recognizes that thought is an external component, existing incidentally rather than as a fundamental part of literature. Consequently, this extracted "intellectual content" cannot be considered authentic philosophy, as it fails to adhere to the standards of philosophical methodology.

Ultimately, does philosophical criticism involve analysing texts typically regarded as literary through the lens of a specific philosophical approach?

In a violently poetic text, Lawrence describes what produces poetry: people are constantly putting up an umbrella that shelters them and on the underside of which they draw a firmament and write their conventions and opinions. But poets, artists, make a slit in the umbrella, they tear open the firmament itself, to let in a bit of free and windy chaos and to frame in a sudden light a vision that appears through the rent—Wordsworth's spring or Cezanne's apple, the silhouettes of Macbeth or Ahab. Then come the crowd of imitators who repair the umbrella with something vaguely resembling the vision, and the crowd of commentators who patch over the rent with opinions: communication. Other artists are always needed to make other slits, to carry out necessary and perhaps ever-greater destructions, thereby restoring to their predecessors the incommunicable novelty that we could no longer see. This is to say that artists struggle less against chaos (that, in a certain manner, all their wishes summon forth) than against the "cliches" of opinion." ⁱ

The field of literature and criticism has seen numerous studies influenced by the methodologies of human sciences, including psychology and sociology. Among the most recent contributions are those derived from linguistic sciences, particularly the structuralist approach. However, the research argues that these methods alone are inadequate for fully understanding the subject, as they tend to focus on only one aspect and fail to yield the anticipated outcomes. This limitation arises because a literary text does not function as a self-contained system with fixed elements; instead, it represents a dynamic entity that thrives on its capacity for diverse meanings, interpretations, and implications. Literary texts are perpetually evolving and do not provide predetermined answers to pre-established questions.

Consequently, literary theories aim to elucidate these answers in a definitive manner. A literary text is characterized by its ability to support an infinite range of interpretations, each revealing a multitude of insights. If it is interpreted through a singular lens, it risks becoming a static artifact.

The literary text should be understood as an open structure rather than a mere artistic form; it represents a complex network of cognitive frameworks that must be drawn out rather than presented outright. The text itself does not possess a fixed or definitive existence; instead, it comes to life through its interactions with other texts and is continuously redefined through various interpretations. Reading is a creative endeavour that sustains the text's vitality, leading to a multiplicity of meanings. This multiplicity challenges the notions of absolute objectivity and singular truth, offering valuable insights to philosophical doctrines that rigidly pursue certainty and final truths. Literature, with its diverse characters and perspectives, engages philosophy by

acknowledging its limitations, embracing the relativity of knowledge, and recognising the absence of absolute truths in favour of relative ones. While philosophy has traditionally relied on its established principles and language, literature provides fresh avenues for exploration, presenting new materials that encourage a broader perspective. This interaction revitalises intellectual practice, infusing it with creativity and a dynamic range of voices.

The interplay between philosophy and science is characterized by opposition, whereas the connection between philosophy and art is marked by harmony and resemblance. Science engages in creation and formulates equations that evolve into theories, striving to grasp the infinite. It seeks to limit memory to a certain extent, akin to achieving a state of blindness by halting its boundless progression. Science searches for references, constants, justifications, present emotions, and variables. It relies on geometric spatial coordinates, partial observers, and numerical data, aiming to establish possibilities and construct inferential systems or chains of reasoning, focusing on the conditions of existence while regarding nothingness as an opportunity and a void. In contrast, philosophy approaches existence as a realm of potentiality or the domain of possibilities.

Philosophy's aim is to capture the essence of infinite movement without interruption, engaging the emotions inherent in each piece, with the initial focus being the intricate weaving of a narrative. Conversely, philosophy shares a strong affinity with literary art, as it involves the formulation of concepts, while art is centred around the evocation of sensations, imagery, and emotions.

Art creates sensory experiences that are distinct from their original sources, models, subjects, and the artist themselves. It represents a composition that goes beyond mere technical or mechanical execution. The artist engages in drawing, sculpting, assembling, and writing, motivated by feelings and emotions rather than mere imitation. Art is not merely a reproduction; its aim is to evoke emotions from the cognitive experiences of the audience and their perceptual states. Its objective is to provoke a deep spectrum of feelings. The essence of the emotions encapsulated in any artwork serves as a testament, yet it does not depend on memory. In fact, as memory becomes more robust, creativity may wane. Art embodies a complex tapestry of feelings and emotions. The creative process in art is not about recollection but about crafting narratives rich in emotion. Both art and philosophy endeavour to comprehend the infinite through the finite, resembling a window that perpetually opens to the vastness beyond, symbolized by the colour blue. This is exemplified in the works of Salvador Dali and echoed in Cezanne's assertion that if art is grounded in feelings and emotions, then contemplation in art transforms us. In art, we do not merely inhabit the world; we merge with it, taking on various forms—be it an animal, a plant, or even a cell. We perceive through the perspective of a flower, allowing the artist to enter that vision and experience it. In this process of becoming and transformation, intersections, convergences, and blurred boundaries emerge, much like philosophical concepts. Art, akin to life and philosophy, functions as a language of emotions, expressed through words, colours, sounds, and materials. The importance of philosophical criticism in today's world is significantly linked to the investigation of existential themes, particularly through Heidegger's inquiries into identity and difference.

What the principle of identity, heard in its fundamental key, states is exactly what the whole of Western European thinking has in mind—and that is: the unity of identity forms a basic characteristic in the Being of beings. Everywhere, wherever and however we are related to beings of every kind, we find identity making its claim on us. If this claim were not made; beings could never appear in their Being. Accordingly, there would then also not be any science. For if science could not be sure in advance of the identity of its object in each case, it could not be what it is. By this assurance, research makes certain that its work is possible.ⁱⁱ

A fundamental notion that encapsulates these ideas is "intertextuality," which plays a vital role in contemporary literary analysis. This notion asserts that every text—broadly interpreted to

encompass various forms of cultural expression, akin to Foucault's concept of discourse—exists in a network of relationships with numerous other texts. Each text can be analysed down to its essential elements, which are derived from prior works. Consequently, every text serves as a reinterpretation of earlier texts, while simultaneously preserving its uniqueness. This mechanism of repetition does not merely replicate the original; instead, it engages with and transforms it, ultimately integrating the principle of difference within its framework.

There are three basic parts to the discourse. The first part, the beginning of the quote, is devoted to Serenus' relation to wealth, possessions, his domestic and private life. The second part—which begins "I resolve to obey the commands of my teachers. . ."—this paragraph deals with Serenus' relation to public life and his political character. And the third part—which starts at "And in my literary studies..."—Serenus speaks of his literary activity, the type of language he prefers to employ, and so on. But he can also recognize here the relation between death and immortality, or the question of an enduring life in people's memories after death. So, the three themes treated in these paragraphs are (1) private or domestic life; (2) public life; and (3) immortality or afterlife.ⁱⁱⁱ

The relationship between literature and philosophy is rooted in a fundamental reality: philosophy constitutes a vital component of our cultural legacy, and its concepts frequently invite reinterpretation rather than mere acceptance. Knowledge and the experiences that inform it are viewed as disruptions within poetry and other forms of expression. Despite an in-depth exploration of literature's essence, writers often challenge the limits of critical thought, indicating that this interaction extends beyond the artistic domain.

In the modern age, where the domains of philosophy and literature converge, literary works frequently integrate philosophical concepts and address philosophical inquiries through a literary framework. This intersection has resulted in a blurring of the lines between various literary genres, as well as between prose and poetry. Such developments have prompted substantial shifts in the comprehension of literature within contemporary critical discussions, rendering its definition a subject of persistent contention among authors, philosophers, and critics, including notable figures such as Sartre, Maurice Blanchot, and Roland Barthes. To regard literature merely as a form of linguistic artistry is inadequate, as this viewpoint captures only a singular aspect of its essence. Likewise, understanding it as a fusion of expressive art and ideological dialogue represents merely another layer of its complexity. Ultimately, literature, despite its abstract characteristics, embodies ideas that are deeply rooted in human experiences and perspectives. It is intrinsically linked, whether overtly or subtly, to moral and human values, as well as societal issues, influencing and being influenced by them. This complex interaction further enriches the relationship between literature and philosophy.

The author recognizes the legitimacy of the aforementioned methods; nonetheless, he considers them insufficient. He contends that while these methods claim to produce definitive results, they ultimately fall short and expose their constraints when examined from a singular viewpoint. Furthermore, the author presents philosophical criticism as a viable alternative to the conventional practice of "reading literature." He does not reject other methodologies but posits that this approach reveals essential and profound elements of literary creation.

Sartre posits that the narrative methods employed by a writer are intrinsically connected to the storyteller's metaphysical perspective. He asserts that it is the responsibility of the critic to first discern this metaphysical vision of the writer prior to assessing the literary work.

A fictional technique always relates back to the novelist's metaphysics. The critic's task is to define the latter before evaluating the former. Now, it is immediately obvious that Faulkner's metaphysics is a metaphysics of time.^{iv}

Now it is clear that Patrick Modiano's metaphysics is atomic metaphysics or pluralistic positivism. Within the framework of this vision, the relationships between the characters are external relationships, unlike the vision of the metaphysics of spiritual realism, where the vision is the internal relationship, as each part (character) of the parts of the whole (a group, for example) will have a nature that reveals its relationships with every other part, and with the whole. Hence, if we know the nature of any individual in the group with complete knowledge, we know the nature of the whole, and the nature of every other individual with complete knowledge.

The writer has a distinctive style of writing. As soon as we start reading one of his works, we feel distracted and that the text does not advance in a specific direction, but rather takes us in all directions. Within the text, concepts are generated in a continuous and rapid rhythm. As soon as we feel that we have almost grasped the meaning of a specific concept, we find that it has itself branched out and branched out into various smaller concepts. However, these branching lines soon meet at the end of the reading.

Another characteristic of atomic theory or logical positivism is that a great deal of what we accept, as Bertrand Russell says, is without doubt As knowledge - based on the testimony of others, and the testimony of others in turn is based on our belief that there are minds other than our minds.

A very great deal of what we all unquestioningly accept as knowledge depends upon testimony, and testimony, in turn, depends upon the belief that there are other minds besides our own. To common sense, the existence of other minds does not appear open to doubt, and I do not myself see any reason to disagree with common sense on this point. But, undoubtedly, it is through experiences of my own that I am led to believe in the minds of others; and, undoubtedly, as a matter of pure logic, it would be possible for me to have these experiences even if other minds did not exist. Part of our reason for believing in other minds is derived from analogy, but part is derived from another source which has a wider application.^v

Practice

The narrative of *L'herbe des Nuits* evokes a thriller ambiance, yet it diverges from conventional genre expectations. The perspective is not that of the gangster or the law enforcement officer; rather, it centres on a peripheral character who embarks on an investigation that leans more towards the poetic than the procedural.

"On Sundays, particularly in the late afternoon, and especially when one is alone, a temporal opening occurs. It is merely a matter of slipping through." With his notebook in hand, the narrator endeavours to illuminate a past incident by attempting to traverse back in time. "All these memories resurface in a disordered manner, intermittently, and often the clarity is obscured. This stands in stark contrast to the organized notes within this notebook.

Here we find the hero of this novel, whose name is John, repeating what the philosophers of logical positivism say, that there must be more than one witness to ascertain the truth: and yet Non, je n'ai pas rêvé. La preuve, c'est qu'il me reste un carnet noir rempli de notes. Dans ce brouillard, j'ai besoin de mots précis et je consulte le dictionnaire. Note : Courte indication que l'on écrit pour se rappeler quelque chose. Sur les pages du carnet se succèdent des noms, des numéros de téléphone, des dates de rendez-vous, et aussi des textes courts qui ont peut-être quelque chose à voir avec la littérature. Mais dans quelle catégorie les classer? journal intime? fragments de mémoire? Et aussi des centaines de petites annonces recopiées et qui figuraient dans des journaux. Chiens perdus. Appartements meublés. Demandes et offres d'emploi. Voyantes.^{vi}

No, I didn't dream. The proof is that I still have a black notebook full of notes. In this fog, I need precise words, and I consult the dictionary. Note: Short indication that we write to remember something. On the pages of the notebook there are names, telephone numbers, appointment dates, and also short

texts which perhaps have something to do with literature. But in what category should we classify them? diary? fragments of memory? And also, hundreds of classified ads copied, and which appeared in newspapers. Lost dogs. Furnished apartments. Job requests and offers. Clairvoyants. [Translation]

The protagonist asserts, "No, what I experienced was not merely a dream." The evidence lies in the existence of a black notebook that I possess, its pages densely populated with notes. To clarify this uncertainty, I find it necessary to consult the dictionary for precise terminology. A note, in this context, refers to a brief written reminder. Within the notebook, one can find a series of names, telephone numbers, scheduled appointments, and various short texts that may pertain to literary themes. However, how should these be categorized? Are they personal memoirs or fragments of recollection? Additionally, there are numerous small advertisements that I have transcribed into the notebook, originally published in newspapers. These include listings for stray dogs, furnished apartments, job inquiries and offers, as well as advertisements for fortune-tellers.

The protagonist, while situated in the present, perceives his existence as an illusion rather than a tangible reality. In an effort to affirm his being, he seeks to revisit the past. Within the myriad of his contemplations, certain reflections resonate more profoundly than others, particularly in the absence of any disturbances to the prevailing silence. The phone has remained silent for an extended period, and there have been no visitors at the door.

Parmi ces quantités de notes, certaines ont une résonance plus forte que les autres. Surtout quand rien ne trouble le silence. Plus aucune sonnerie de téléphone depuis longtemps. Et personne ne frappera à la porte. Ils doivent croire que je suis mort. Vous êtes seul, attentif, comme si vous vouliez capter des signaux de morse que vous lance, de très loin, un correspondant inconnu. Bien sûr, de nombreux signaux sont brouillés, et vous avez beau tendre l'oreille ils se perdent pour toujours. Mais quelques noms se détachent avec netteté dans le silence et sur la page blanche...^{vii}

Among these quantities of notes, some have a stronger resonance than others. Especially when nothing disturbs the silence. No phone ringing for a long time. And no one will knock on the door. They must think I'm dead. You are alone, attentive, as if you were trying to pick up Morse code signals that an unknown correspondent is throwing at you from afar. Of course, many signals are jammed, and no matter how hard you listen, they are lost forever. But a few names stand out clearly in the silence and on the white page...[Translation]

In this analysis, the author, who is also a character within the narrative, encounters a marginalized minority. Patrick Modiano's decision to portray the protagonist as a novelist can be interpreted through the lens of the notion that a writer or artist must embody their subject in order to authentically convey it. Upon this embodiment, the subject becomes integrated into the artist's expressive framework, transforming into something distinct from its original form, thereby losing its inherent identity. This mirrors the experience of the artist, who undergoes a continuous duality with the world; the artist perceives the world not as a static entity but as a dynamic one, even when it appears stable.

The artist's purpose transcends merely articulating personal emotions or internal states; rather, they serve as a conduit for the voices of inanimate objects and other beings that lack the capacity for expression. As Paul Cezanne articulated, "The landscape thinks itself in me and I am its consciousness" The writer depicts the protagonist in a manner reminiscent of surrealism, representing a self that is fragmented and besieged, yearning for comprehension. This contrasts with earlier generations of writers who sought to unveil mysteries and transform the universe.

The hero mentions some names and some places: "Dannie, Paul Chastagnier, Aghamouri, Duwelz, Gérard Marciano, « Georges », l'Unic Hôtel, rue du Montparnasse..." if my memory does not fail me, I have always been cautious in this neighbourhood.

It is clear that all the characters he mentioned live in a state of apprehension and fear, as he remembered that here Paul Chastagne always parked his car, while he stayed in a room on Rue Montparnasse, at the l'Unic Hôtel one evening, he had asked him why he did not leave this car in front of the hotel. His face lit up with a smile that betrayed embarrassment and he answered him while shaking his shoulders: "For the sake of caution...."

The observation can be made that nearly all characters lack identifiable occupations and do not possess personal aspirations; instead, they pursue objectives dictated by obscure institutions external to themselves. One might categorize them as embodying absurdity, as the notion of absurdity, in my perspective, is characterized by the lack of defined goals or clear endpoints. In essence, absurdity can be interpreted as the absence of purpose. Furthermore, the lack of employment signifies a disconnection from the universe, given that work serves as the fundamental link between humanity and the cosmos.

For the sake of caution, Paul Chastagnier said, I quickly realized that this man in his forties, with a dark complexion, who always wore grey suits and dark blue coats, was not doing any specific work.

The character of Danny serves as a central figure alongside the protagonist, with the narrative primarily focusing on the interactions between John and Danny. From an interpretive standpoint, she can be viewed as the objective representation of truth. Their initial encounter took place in the university district, a location frequently visited by John, the hero. Danny resided in a room within the United States wing, and her unexpected presence intrigued him, particularly because she was neither a student nor of American descent. Nevertheless, their acquaintance was brief, lasting only about ten days. During their first meeting, he hesitated to record her full surname as noted in his black notebook: Danny R., United States Pavilion, 15, Jordan Street, a name she may still carry today among the various identities she has adopted over time. It is noticeable that the background described by the writer/hero had uneasy connotations.

Nous nous sommes assis sur un banc à la hauteur de la rue qui longe le cimetière. Elle a fouillé dans ses deux sacs de voyage pour vérifier si elle n'avait pas oublié quelque chose. Puis nous avons continué notre chemin. Elle m'expliquait qu'Aghamouri avait une chambre dans cet hôtel parce que l'un des propriétaires était marocain. Mais alors pourquoi avait-il habité aussi la Cité universitaire ? Parce qu'il était étudiant. Il avait d'ailleurs un autre domicile à Paris. Et elle aussi était-elle étudiante ? Aghamouri l'aiderait à s'inscrire à la faculté de Censier. Elle n'avait pas l'air très convaincue et avait prononcé cette dernière phrase du bout des lèvres. Et pourtant, un soir, je m'en souviens, je l'ai accompagnée jusqu'à la faculté de Censier par le métro, une ligne directe de Duroc jusqu'à Monge. Il tombait une pluie fine, mais cela ne nous gênait pas. Aghamouri lui avait dit qu'il fallait suivre la rue Monge, et nous avons fini par atteindre notre but: une sorte d'esplanade, ou plutôt un terrain vague entouré de maisons basses à moitié détruites.^{viii}

We sat on a bench at the street which runs alongside the cemetery. She rummaged through her two travel bags to see if she had forgotten anything. Then we continued on our way. She explained to me that Aghamouri had a room in this hotel because one of the owners was Moroccan. But then why had he also lived in the University City? Because he was a student. He also had another home in Paris. And was she a student too? Aghamouri would help him register at the Censier faculty. She didn't look very convinced and had said this last sentence half-heartedly. And yet, one evening, I remember, I accompanied her to the Censier faculty by the metro, a direct line from Duroc to Monge. There was a light rain falling, but it didn't bother us. Aghamouri had told him that we had to follow rue Monge, and we ended up reaching our goal: a sort of esplanade, or rather a vacant lot surrounded by low, half-destroyed houses. [Translation]

The hero in his search for the truth, who represents the post-modern man. He researches characters from the past, and he himself identifies with some characters, such as the poet Tristan Corbière. The

past appeared to him like a film. Perhaps he considered the present moment in which he lives to be similar to the period in which he is researching:

Elles me sont utiles, ces notes, pour donner un peu de cohérence aux images qui tressautent au point que la pellicule du film risque de se casser. Curieusement, d'autres notes concernant des recherches que je faisais à la même époque au sujet d'événements que je n'avais pas vécus – ils remontent au XIXe et même au XVIIIe siècle – me paraissent plus limpides. Et les noms qui sont mêlés à ces événements lointains: la baronne Blanche, Tristan Corbière, Jeanne Duval, parmi d'autres, et aussi Marie-Anne Leroy, guillotinée le 26 juillet 1794 à l'âge de vingt et un ans, ont un son plus proche et plus familier à mes oreilles que les noms de mes contemporains.^{ix}

They are useful to me, these notes, to give a little coherence to the images which jerk to the point that the film runs the risk of breaking. Curiously, other notes concerning research that I was doing at the same time about events that I had not experienced – they date back to the 19th and even the 18th century – seem clearer to me. And the names which are involved in these distant events: Baroness Blanche, Tristan Corbière, Jeanne Duval, among others, and also Marie-Anne Leroy, guillotined on July 26, 1794 at the age of twenty-one, have a its closer and more familiar to my ears than the names of my contemporaries. [Translation]

Another individual he encountered was Agamori, who had a connection to the character Dani. He reflects on Agamori, stating: "His name was Agamori, and something about him intrigued me. Was he genuinely a student? When I inquired about his age, he replied: Thirty. Afterward, he appeared to regret disclosing that information. Is it possible to be a student at the age of thirty? I hesitated to pose the question, concerned it might offend him. And what of Dani? What motivated her desire to be a student as well? Was it truly as simple as they implied, to gain admission overnight to this institution known as Sounsier? Observing them together at the Hotel Unik, they did not seem to embody the typical image of students.

On a particular day, he found himself alone with Dani on the lower end of Odessa Alley. As rain began to fall, they sought shelter in the courtyard of the Montparnasse Cinema. They settled in the centre of the hall, during an intermission, unaware of the film's title. The expansive yet rundown cinema evoked in me a sense of unease reminiscent of my experiences in the neighbourhood's alleys. A distinct odour lingered in the air. I inquired whether Dani planned to remain in the neighbourhood. Her response was negative; she did not intend to stay for long. She expressed a preference for residing in a spacious room in the 16th arrondissement, where tranquillity prevailed, and one could exist without drawing attention. Elle aurait préféré habiter une grande chambre dans le seizième arrondissement. Là-bas, c'était calme et anonyme. Et personne ne pouvait plus vous retrouver. « Pourquoi? Tu dois te cacher? – Non. Pas du tout. Et toi, tu aimes ce quartier?»^x

The hero was trying to understand the kind of relationship that bound the members of this small group. Chastainy's character represents the lifestyle of this group.

About him the author says: "I think he spent some years in prison, like De Feltz and Marciano. He was the oldest and must have died since then. He used to wake up late in the day and make his appointments in distant places, towards the south, in those isolated places in the country around the old train station for commercial goods. These places were familiar to me too. It is surprising that Dany often met John only in streets with buildings with double exits.

The author depicts Paris as a realm inhabited by nomads, characterized by individuals devoid of roots. This notion is perhaps encapsulated in the title of the novel, *Herb des Nuits*, which implies that the roots of the grass are merely superficial. The characters reside in transient accommodations, such as bed and breakfast establishments, frequently shifting from one hotel to another. They lack permanent addresses or stable homes, relying on the post office for their correspondence. Their

interactions with one another are shallow, and their daily experiences are strikingly uniform. Despite their presence in bustling environments, they remain disengaged from their surroundings. The protagonist, John, exemplifies this detachment, as he reflects on his own behaviour: he often finds himself in comparable situations, evading acquaintances due to an unexpected aversion to social interaction. He typically crosses to the opposite side of the street when they approach or seeks refuge in building entrances until they pass. On one occasion, he even escaped through a window on a lower floor to avoid an unannounced visitor. He is well-acquainted with buildings that have dual exits, maintaining a list in his black notebook. Recently, he traced the route from Paris to Voyages on a map with his finger, symbolically retracing the passage of time. In this context, the present loses significance, overshadowed by monotonous days illuminated by a dismal light, reminiscent of the twilight of life, where existence feels like a mere succession of days.

On a different evening, while navigating the streets of Paris, I found myself captivated by the interplay of lights and shadows, as well as the various styles of lampposts and spotlights that adorned the thoroughfares and alleyways. It felt as though these illuminations were conveying messages to me. This sensation resembled the experience of gazing at a lit window for an extended period: a complex blend of presence and absence. Although the room behind the glass seemed vacant, the light remained on, suggesting the presence of someone. In that moment, the concepts of present and past dissolved; everything became interwoven, akin to that empty room where the light persists night after night. I frequently envision discovering a draft that holds his memories, a connection to life that allows him to drift into the past. However, it transcends mere recollection; it embodies epochs within a life shaped by dreams, or rather, a life devoid of time, which he endeavoured to extract, page by page, from a sombre existence, infusing it with both shadow and illumination. In that moment of disappearance, we existed in the present, with rain cascading down, enveloping people and objects in a shroud of darkness. I awaited the arrival of night, anticipating the distinct separation of elements, made possible by the contrasts of light and shadow. The characters, including the protagonist, had grown accustomed to existing without any semblance of legitimacy.

As for Dany, who represents the elusive truth, we do not know where she came from or where she is going, and John always saw her contradicting herself, she was sad that she no longer lived in this neighbourhood.

Je lui ai demandé si Aghamouri savait qu'elle avait habité dans l'appartement de l'avenue Félix-Faure. Mais non, il l'ignorait. Elle ne l'avait connu qu'après, à la Cité universitaire. Et il ignorait aussi l'existence de cette maison de campagne qu'elle venait d'évoquer devant moi. Une maison de campagne à une centaine de kilomètres de Paris, m'avait-elle dit. Non, Aghamouri ni personne d'autre ne l'avait jamais accompagnée poste restante pour qu'elle prenne son courrier. « Alors, je suis le seul à connaître tes secrets? »^{xi}

Agamori told me that you needed false papers because you were involved in a dirty story...She looked at me and then raised her eyebrows. She didn't seem to realize anything. She tried to tell him about her life. She was simply born in Paris during the war, two years before I was born. She was born to an unknown father and Andre Lydia Roget at 7, alley Narcisse Diaz, 7th arrondissement. Mirabeau Sanatorium.

Sometime after the conclusion of the war, it was revealed that your mother, Andrée Lydia Rogé, resides at 16, alley Vitrov, in the twentieth arrondissement. However, the reasons behind this scrutiny and the abrupt relocation from the sixteenth arrondissement to the Charonne district remain unclear. Perhaps you are the only one who can elucidate this matter. The investigation reports make no mention of your brother Pierre, whom you frequently discussed with me. The detectives are aware that you lived in alley Blanche under the alias of Mireille Sampieri, yet they have not disclosed the rationale behind your use of this name. There is no reference to your

accommodation in the university district, nor to the United States wing, or Victor Hugo Street. Nevertheless, I accompanied you there and waited for you behind the building with the dual exits. You consistently returned with a bundle of banknotes, leaving me to ponder their origin, although they remained oblivious to this detail. There is also no information regarding the modest apartment on rue Felix-Fours, La Barbourie, or the country house in Fouise. They were aware that you had rented a room at the Hotel Uniq, based on a tip from "Daffin," yet they did not seem eager to interrogate you; otherwise, they would have had to wait for you in the lobby or received a simple phone call from "Daffin" to inform them of your presence. The investigation was abandoned rather swiftly, and in any case, by the time I was summoned by the detective's son, I had already vanished. "That was noted in the file. She disappeared, much like Madame Dorme, of whom no trace was found in Switzerland, assuming that a genuine search had been conducted there.

It is worth noting that she had told him when she first met him (Jean) that she was of Moroccan origin:

Ça paraît un peu bizarre, mais c'est tout à fait naturel... Michèle m'a prêté sa carte d'étudiante... J'ai perdu tous mes papiers et il faut que je fasse des tas de démarches compliquées pour obtenir un acte de naissance... Je suis née à Casablanca... » Était-ce une coïncidence ? Elle aussi avait un rapport avec le Maroc^{xii}

It seems a little strange, but it's completely natural... Michèle lent me her student card... I lost all my papers, and I have to go through a lot of complicated procedures to obtain a birth certificate ...I was born in Casablanca..." Was it a coincidence? She also had a connection with Morocco. [Translation]

He also told me that someone had gotten you fake documents. I said "someone" because I didn't really know the family name of the man with the thin face whom others called "George" and whether it was his first name, a pseudonym, or even a family name.

It is previously mentioned Paul Chastagne; however, the individual posing the greatest threat remains "George." He is responsible for providing Danny with counterfeit documents. George enjoys considerable backing in Morocco and maintains connections with an associate at the embassy. This network seeks to enlist his assistance for their purposes. Specifically, this endeavour involved an attempt to entice a political adversary to Paris with the intention of eliminating him. Notably, several individuals associated with that group, who frequented the Hotel Unik, had significant links to Morocco. They were engaged in a scheme to ensnare a Moroccan political opponent who frequently visited Paris and had not fully aligned with their views, yet he found himself entangled with them and felt unable to refuse their demands. Danny was not the only one caught in this predicament; John also found himself in a difficult situation, as he expressed. In general, if you will, my (John's) situation was somewhat critical... I was stuck between the two... I was visiting people from both sides at the same time... You could say that I was doing double work... But it was more complicated than that... Basically, we never do double work..." "j'entendais la voix lointaine d'Aghamouri me dire: « Au fond, on ne joue jamais double jeu. (p. 36) One of the group members had said to him: "You're lucky... you're not forced to put your hand in the tar like us... you still keep your hands clean..." "Vous avez de la chance... Vous n'êtes pas obligé comme nous de mettre la main dans le cambouis... Vous gardez les mains propres..." (p. 36)

However, he had been summoned by the police to investigate him regarding his relationship with that group. After a period of time, about twenty years, he met the lieutenant who was in charge of the case. He admired John's character and followed what he wrote John, and gave him the case file he was handling, and he had met with him and asked him about the woman called "Dani".

As I leafed through the file, I found in the civil status files, reports, and interrogation transcripts. Some names caught my eye: Agamouri, El Ghali, Wing of Morocco, University Quarter, born June 6, 1938, in Fez. Claimed to be a "student," member of the Moroccan security services. Moroccan embassy...

George B. The named Rochard, medium length chestnut hair, straight nose, large scars. Please inform the administration, Turbogut 92000 if additional information is available... The named here De Feltz, first name: Pierre, appeared before us. The report was reviewed by the accused, read and signed... Chastagne, Paul, Emmanuel, height 1.80 meters. Has a Lancia number 1934 JD 75... Marciano Gérard For reference, there is a scar length of

Two centimetres on the left eyebrow ... I was turning the pages very quickly, avoiding stopping at one of them, and I was afraid every time to discover a new detail or a file concerning Dany Dominique Rouget, called "Dany". Under the name of Mireille Sampieri (23) Blanche Street, nicknamed Michele Agamori, nicknamed Chenin de Chio ... According to Davant's inquiries, she was living at the Hotel once under the name of Chenin de Chio, born in Casablanca. She communicated by mail, as the letters at the post office testify. In the file of the person called Langley, there was a page of dirty white paper that looked like a civil status file. That evening, I leafed through it again, hoping that the bad photograph on the left would finally reveal its secret, and I recognized Dany by her hair, which seemed shorter. But the file bore the name of a woman called Mireille Sampieri, who lived in Paris in the 9th arrondissement, number 23, alley Blanche. The date was the year before our meeting, and it bore the following note: "Certificate of authorization to receive correspondence and faxes tax-free." However, the post office was not linked to the one in the alley of the Convention where I had accompanied her so many times, but to "84, number 31, alley Ballou, 9th arrondissement." I wonder how many posts she had drawn her mail from. How had this file fallen into the hands of this person called Langley or his service? And this name, Mirai Sampieri, didn't Langley say it in his office at the Geisler Security Department when he interrogated me? It's really strange how some details of your life don't seem immediately clear to you, but then twenty years later they come to light, like when you look at an old, familiar photograph through a magnifying glass and a face or something you hadn't noticed before jumps out.

Now, into existence. What happened to them I think that those whom Dani called the scoundrels of the Hotel Unik are dead at least (George)", called Rochard, and Paul Chastanet. I am not so sure about De Feltz and Gerard Marciano. I also do not know anything about Agamori. As for Dani, she has disappeared completely. However, I had written down on the last page of the black notebook a list of some details that were supposed to help me trace her. I had added other details that I did not know and which I learned later while looking through the Langley file. However, my research remained in vain and I ended up giving it up at some point. I no longer have many illusions. All this will find its way to oblivion, one day or another. The novel ends with his description of Dani / the truth: "Our presence would have made no difference in her life.

ⁱ Deleuze, Gilles, & Guattari, Felix (1991). *What is Philosophy?* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, Columbia University Press New York 203-4

ⁱⁱ Heidegger, Martin. (1969), *Identity and Difference*, Translated and with an Introduction by Joan Stambaugh Harper & Row, Publishers New York, Evanston, and London P. 26

ⁱⁱⁱ Foucault, Michel. (1983). *Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia*. Publisher: Berkeley P. 61.

^{iv} Sartre, Jean - Paul (1968) *Literary and Philosophical Essays*. Trans. Annette Michelson, London, Hutchinson. Pp.84-5.

^v Russell, Bertrand. (1959). *My Philosophical Development*. Published By Simon and Schuster, Inc. P. 195.

^{vi} Modiano, Patrick. (2012). *L'herbe Des Nuits*. Gallimard. P.3.

^{vii} Modiano, Patrick. (2012). *L'herbe Des Nuits*. Pp. 3-4

^{viii} Modiano, Patrick. (2012). *L'herbe Des Nuits*. P. 6.

^{ix} Modiano, Patrick. (2012). *L'herbe Des Nuits*. P. 7.

^x Modiano, Patrick. (2012). *L'herbe Des Nuits*. P. 8.

^{xi} Modiano, Patrick. (2012). *L'herbe Des Nuits*. P. 27.

^{xii} Modiano, Patrick. (2012). *L'herbe Des Nuits*. P. 43.

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