TOWARDS NEW COMPARISONS: GÉRARD BESSETTE’S *LE LIBRAIRE*
*AND ALBERT CAMUS’L’ÉTRANGER*, A TRANSTEXTUAL STUDY

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Résumé

Ce travail est une lecture transtextuelle du roman *Le libraire* de Gérard Bessette à travers l’étude de ses différentes relations textuelles, dont celles qui évoquent *L’étranger* de Camus. La relation entre ces deux romans reste ambiguë et a souvent été sujette à de fausses interprétations. Elle est également évoquée d’une façon excessive en comparaison à la relation que *Le libraire* entretient avec *La nausée* de J. P. Sartre et *Les demi-civilisés* de J. C. Harvey. La lecture transtextuelle du *Libraire* se présente comme une alternative aux comparaisons contemporaines--mais traditionnelles--de ce roman et de *L’étranger*.

Cette thèse analyse les romans en termes de relations textuelles plutôt que de les lire selon les procédés de la comparaison traditionnelle tels que l’influence ou l’originalité. En premier lieu, elle déniche, par une discussion comparative de la notion de l’influence littéraire et celle de l’intertextualité, l’approche théorique appropriée pour une lecture objective de la relation entre *Le libraire* et *L’étranger*. Deuxièmement, elle révise quelques comparaisons canadiennes des deux romans et distingue celles qui sont traditionnelles de celles qui tendent vers l’intertextualité. Finalement, ma tentative d’apporter des comparaisons nouvelles est conçue pour éviter l’ambiguïté des différentes interprétations du lien entre *Le libraire* et *L’étranger*. Ce lien sera évalué avec plus d’objectivité s’il est étudié en parallèle avec d’autres relations textuelles par lesquelles *Le libraire* évoque des romans tels que *La nausée* et *Les demi-civilisés*. L’application aux textes de la toponymie des relations intertextuelles/hyper-textuelles de Gérard Genette comme méthode d’analyse pratique basée sur les transformations textuelles démontre que les relations textuelles du *Libraire* sont multiples et ainsi démystifie la surestimation et toutes interprétations inadéquates de son lien avec *L’étranger*. 
Abstract

This work presents a transtextual reading of Gérard Bessette’s *Le libraire* through the examination of its different textual relationships, among them those to Albert Camus’s *L’étranger*. The relationship between *Le libraire* and *L’étranger* is still ambiguous and has often been subject to misreading. It has also been overstated in comparison to *Le Libraire*’s relatedness to Jean Paul Sartre’s *La nausée* and Jean Charles Harvey’s *Les demi-civilisés*. The transtextual reading of *Le Libraire* comes as an alternative to the contemporary--but traditional--comparisons of this novel to Camus’ *L’étranger*.

This thesis analyses the novels in terms of textual relationships rather than reading them in traditional comparative terms such as influence or originality. First, by discussing the discrepancy between influence and intertextuality, it foregrounds a theoretical approach allowing for an objective reading of *Le libraire*’s relatedness to *L’étranger*. In the second place, it reviews some Canadian comparisons of *Le libraire* and *L’étranger* and distinguishes between traditional approaches and those which tend to be intertextual. Finally, my attempt to bring forward new comparisons is designed to avoid the different misinterpretations of *Le libraire*’s relatedness to *L’étranger*. The relationship between these two novels is more objectively evaluated when studied in relation to *Le libraire*’s evocation of other novels such as *La nausée* and *Les demi-civilisés*. The use of Gérard Genette’s taxonomy of intertextual/hypertextual relationships as a method of practical analysis based on textual transformations demonstrates that *Le libraire*’s textual relationships are diverse and hence demystifies the overstatement and misreading of the novel’s relatedness to *L’étranger*. 
Composition du jury

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Introduction

Bessette’s novel *Le libraire* has been a successful novel in the market and on the literary scene. It has been well received within Canada and beyond the Canadian frontiers, especially in Eastern Europe. In 1961 "un ‘Grand jury des lettres’” retained *Le libraire* in the list of the ten best French Canadian novels to appear between 1945 and 1960 (Robidoux 139). Jozef Kwaterko notes that, in 1974, a Czechoslovakian translation of *Le libraire* was an unexpected success; eight thousand copies were sold in few weeks. The same attention was paid to the novel in Poland. In this respect, Kwaterko adds: “nous avons constaté, nous [the Polish readership] aussi, que Jodoin fonctionnait à merveille dans notre propre contexte historique et idéologique des années 1950” (141). Despite the specific Quebecois context of *Le libraire*, the eastern European readership have no difficulty in seeing in Jodoin’s story the censorship and the Stalinist hegemony that was present in these countries (Kwaterko 140).

Bessette was not comfortable with the success of his novel. He wished that attention be paid to his other works which for him had been neglected in comparison to *Le Libraire*: “Même moi, j’ai trop tendance à parler du Libraire. Pourtant, sa popularité m’agace. Il me semble que d’autres œuvres (Le cycle, La commensale, par exemple) mériteraient un meilleur sort. Hélas, le maudit Libraire prend toute la place” (Les dires 129). However, so far I am not quite sure about what made Bessette uncomfortable with *Le libraire*. Whether it is the wider attention this novel received in comparison to his other works or its very often underlined similarity to Camus’s *L’étranger* are not questions I venture to answer, even though they are tempting ones. These are issues concerning the author and our focus is the text. What I initially observe is that *Le libraire*
shows significant gestures specifically towards Camus’s *L’étranger* and also Sartre’s *La nausée*.

Bessette did not have any reticence to name the authors he admired (Sartre, Claude Simon, Dos Passos, Nelligan (*Mes romans* 72) or to indicate his favourite novel, *La route des Flandres* (*Les dires* 119) that served him, according to Gilles Marcotte (50), as a model for the composition of *L’incubation*. In my reading of Bessette and on Bessette, there is no mention of, or reference to, Bessette acknowledging a dept to Camus and his work. Bessette’s admiration for Sartre can justify, according to traditional standards of comparison, *Le Libraire*’s relationship to *La nausée*. But this is not the case for *Le libraire*’s relationship to *L’étranger* even though an ordinary reader can notice the kinship between the two novels, let alone literary critics, because of the various stylistic and thematic resemblances between the two novels.

The overstated relationship to Camus’s novel and the facility with which it is mentioned (Vanasse 512) might have, for some reason, irritated the author of *Le libraire*. But this does not justify Bessette’s silence on the relatedness of his novel to *L’étranger*. It is specifically this silence combined with the recurrent observation of *Le libraire*’s relatedness to *L’étranger* that creates a problematic issue around the relationship between the two novels. This problematic issue can perhaps be better understood through a hypertextual or intertextual study of *Le libraire*. Through a close reading of both *Le libraire* and *L’étranger*, I will study both the apparent textual relationships and the ones that can possibly develop between them through proactive reading. I will extend this study to other novels, namely *La nausée* and *Les demi-civilisés* in order to do, in a way, justice to Bessette’s novel.
If the critics’ stress is most often put on its relationship to *L’étranger*, there is here a partial rendering of *Le libraire*’s potential of intertextuality or hypertextuality. *Le libraire* refers in clear terms to Sartre’s *La nausée* but most often readers see only *L’étranger* in its textuality. Moreover, on the thematic level, *Le libraire* is immersed in the religious context of the Quebecois novel. It takes up the same theme, namely the clergy’s power over society, J. C. Harvey’s *Les demi-civilisés* had already treated polemically and profusely but in a different way about a quarter of a century before the appearance of *Le libraire*.

Because of its success in taking French Canadian Literature well beyond the Canadian readership, *Le libraire* does not deserve to be commented on with the lightness of argument and hasty conclusion of, for instance, André Vanasse. He seals the novel’s generic relationship to Camus’s *L’étranger* to a pastiche (512) that can be noticed right at the opening paragraphs of Bessette’s novel. This is what I consider as a denigration of *Le libraire*’s aesthetic and cultural value which may well reside in its openness to other literary artefacts and its rootedness in the specific Quebecois context.

I often read literary texts with a systematic care for the different textual signs that may remind me of other literary works. I consider that intertextual relationships come systematically to one’s mind in the course of reading literary texts. They are part of a reading experience and help situate a text in relation to a cosmos of previous readings and experiences. My first reading of Bessette’s novel *Le libraire* reminded me of Camus’s *L’étranger* to the extent of stimulating my curiosity to go back through Camus’ novel to make sure that the impression of the ‘already read’ I had while reading *Le libraire* was not due to an overflow of imagination. In fact, *Le libraire* did not remind me only of
*L'étranger*, but other novels such as *La nausée* and *Les demi-civilisés* also came to mind. The diary technique of Roquentin’s history writing in *La nausée* corresponds in many ways to Jodoin’s recording of his daily life in Saint-Joachin. Max Hubert’s voracious anger against the religious dominance and control over society and culture is also Jodoin’s concern but in a different manner.

My concern is to present a reading of *Le libraire* by reviewing a few critics who compared it to Camus’ *L’étranger* and to find out how they qualified the relationship between the texts. Second, I will attempt to present an objective description of the textual relationships existing between the two novels and analyse them. I will also point out the neglected or unnoticed relationships *Le libraire* establishes with Sartre’s *La nausée*, which I consider as being of equal importance to the widely evoked relationship to *L’étranger*. I will also situate Bessette’s novel within the historical development of the Quebecois novel: the relationship of Jodoin and Max Hubert of *Les demi-civilisés* is worth looking at in this light.

The study of these relationships is before all situated within the general view that writing is inevitably re-writing and that all texts are intertexts. While their practical analysis will be carried out with the use of the different transformation processes of Gérard Genette’s notion of hypertextuality developed in his *Palimpsestes*. The choice of this theoretical approach and Genette’s practical tools of analysis of textual relationships allow me to deal with and present these relationships in terms of transformations of one text by another and movement from one text to another. The author is less present and the text becomes not the property of the author but the product of its inherent dynamics to reach other texts and also be the property of the reader.
The work is divided into three parts and each part contains three sections. The first is an attempt to single out a reading approach through an evaluative comparison between influence and intertextuality. Since the relationship between *Le libraire* and *L'étranger* pertains to the field of comparison, it is then convenient to see which of the two notions describes it with more objectivity. The second is a review of a few Canadian comparative surveys of the two novels in question in an attempt to distinguish between the ones informed by the notion of influence and the ones that tend to be intertextual. The third part is a study of the different transtextual relationships within the overall paradigm of Gérard Genette’s notion of hypertextuality.

The objective of this work is to demonstrate that *Le libraire*’s textual relationships cannot be restricted just to *L'étranger* but also include other works such as *La nausée* and *Les demi-civilisés*, and hence the demystification of the relatedness of Bessette’s novel to Camus’s.
I. Intertextuality or Influence: le libraire, the problematic of influence

My objective in weighting between intertextuality and influence is to single out an intertextual reading perspective of Bessette’s novel *Le libraire* among a few possibilities of reading. I will attempt to delimit the ways this perspective can be carried out. The Barthesian intertextual concept of the “already read” and the “already written” is the immediate impression we can get in the process of reading Bessette’s novel, *Le libraire*. This observation and also other references to literary texts in *Le libraire* are certainly inviting and inciting aspects for an intertextual reading of this novel as well. On the other hand, the similarities between *Le libraire* and *L’étranger* are so striking that one may think about other literary approaches and concepts that can be applied to the reading of *Le libraire*.

One may quite likely think about integrating approaches like literary influence in the study of *Le libraire* precisely because of this inevitable Barthesian sense of the “already read” and the “already written” that keeps coming back through the reading of this novel, or simply because of the evident remark that Camus’s novel and Bessette’s might have come out of the same mould. A good number of Quebec literary critics are unanimous about this. Jacques Allard, Gilles Marcotte and André Brochu have singled out the proximity between these two novels. Allard has discussed at some length the existential parental relationship of Bessette’s protagonist, Jodoin (62). Gilles Marcotte has drawn parallels between Jodoin and Meursault underlining their commonalities and differences (Marcotte, 46-47). For his part, Andre Brochu evokes the formal and discursive evidence of the proximity between *Le libraire* and Camus’ *L’étranger*.
(Brochu, 100). But what I can notice in these critics’ formulations is that they have not gone far enough to explain why these two novels are so close to each other.

My idea, therefore, is that both Brochu and Marcotte insist on the close relationship between these two works and the reader’s systematic remark of the proximity between them, (of course I mean here a reader who has read both L’étranger and Le libraire) are enough to give rise to a serious problem. Whether this relationship is an intertextual phenomenon, a result of socio-historical circumstances, a chance encounter or an outcome of literary imitation or influence needs to be clarified. My attempt to deal with this problem is not meant to come up with a solution to this seemingly mysterious knot that links these two novels together. Rather, I will attempt to disqualify those reading perspectives such as influence or simple literary imitation and highlight the intertextual/hypertextual one. This is because a literary text is, above all, made of language and language by nature is constantly recycled and reworked. It is precisely the unstable nature of language that deprives any literary text of claiming ownership of its own textuality.

Relying on the theories of the Russian thinker Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva introduced in 1969 a theory that would account for an aspect of literary relationships that the notion of influence had for long misinterpreted. Her claim that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another,” (Desire in Language 66) deconstructs, once and for all, the text’s claim for originality and property over its language. It is in the light of this notion of intertextuality that the similarities between Le libraire and L’étranger can be described in terms other than those pertaining to power relationships.
1. Influence: theory and practice

The studies and discussions of *Le libraire* do not go beyond the observation that it is similar to *L'étranger* in many ways and at various levels. The Quebec critics I have cited above do no more than reiterate the proximity between *Le libraire* and *L'étranger*. Their elaboration of this consists in exposing briefly and discussing succinctly the 'how' of this proximity. They generally conclude their discussions by maintaining that despite this closeness, *Le libraire* remains a genuine Quebecois novel and its protagonist, Hervé Jodoin an autonomous character.

Let me take, for instance, the example of André Brochu who has clearly pointed out the similarity between *Le libraire* and *L'étranger*. He says: "et si l'on tient à situer Bessette dans un courant de littérature existentielle, il est facile d'établir un rapprochement entre *Le libraire* et *L'étranger*; dans les deux cas, même remise en question des valeurs -- sociales chez Bessette, métaphysiques chez Camus; même indifférence du personnage principale à ce qui l’entoure; et enfin, technique du récit presque identique: ce sont deux récits à la première personne, à peu près de même longueur, etc." (101). Brochu concludes his observation by defending *Le libraire* against imitation and underlining its authenticity as a Quebecois novel: "n’en concluons pas, cependant, que *Le libraire* soit une imitation de *L’étranger*. Le roman de Bessette est foncièrement québécois par la réalité qu’il décrit, les problèmes auxquels il s’attaque" (102).

To some extent, I agree with this view and I will argue on behalf of it later. But I consider it is important to investigate why these two novels are so close to each other, because it is precisely this inevitable facility to notice the striking proximity and to
establish parallels between these two novels that constitutes for me a problem which needs to be discussed and clarified. Anyone who reads these two novels will certainly end up questioning the “why” of this *rapprochement*. To say whether this *rapprochement* can be explained in terms of influence or imitation will certainly not lead to a fruitful and objective reading of Bessette’s novel because of what I call the inconveniences of influence. But I, all the same, consider it important to test influence as a possibility of reading *Le libraire*, because this will probably help demystify the mysterious knot that links these two novels together.

Critics of *Le Libraire* have scarcely attempted to explore the “why” of its proximity to Camus’ *L’étranger*. Of course so doing will perhaps lead systematically to the introduction of the notion of influence into the debate. This is perhaps why critics of *Le libraire* have avoided this question. Moreover, influence has become an outmoded field in literary studies. It has also been severely criticized by contemporary literary theorists and critics because it entails many inconveniences. It has been primarily dismissed as an author-centered method in literary discussions and its line of argument might quite likely result in vague and arbitrary conclusions about literary works. But if I venture to look at the “why” of the proximity of Bessette’s novel to Camus’ *L’étranger*, the answer will certainly be formulated either in terms of this obsolete notion of influence with its concomitant problems (ambiguities, value judgments, arbitrary conclusions), or in terms of the viable notion of intertextuality with perhaps its infinite and unbound textual relationships. The choice between these two answers rests upon the potential of each to let the text interact with other texts meaningfully without coming out with the conclusion that meaning is final and irrevocable. Kristeva’s sense of intertextuality as
being at least a double thinking will, in this case, be the appropriate one because it allows for the possibility to see Le libraire not as L'étranger but as Le Libraire and L'étranger, Le libriare and La nausée, Le libriare and Les demi-civilisés, and hence my concern to establish and study textual relationships rather than authorial hegemony or textual parentage as in the case of influence.

2. The inconveniences of influence

Influence, like intertextuality, is a heterogeneous literary term and there has never been a stable consensus over its definition. In this respect Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein affirm that “as terms of art, influence and intertextuality do not have the precision of ‘iconology’ or ‘iambic pentameter.’” According to them, “strictly speaking, influence should refer to relations built on dyads of transmission from one unit (author, work, tradition) to another. More broadly, however, influence studies often stray into portraits of intellectual background, context, and other partners of influence that we have just mentioned [namely, allusion and tradition]” (3). Susan Stanford Friedman for her part defines influence in her essay “Weavings: Intertextuality and the (Re) Birth of the Author”, as suggesting

a principle of causality in which one person (or thing) changes as a result of the action of an other, prior, more powerful force. It presumes a source, an origin, an agency that flows into and acts upon another. At work in the concept of influence is a hierarchical, subject-object binary in which one is the actor, while the author the acted upon. Agency belongs to the originator; passive reception and transformation to the other. The process of influence is invisible, evident only ‘in its effects.’ As a word, influence is implicated
in the rationalizing ideology of the conqueror, the colonizer, who envisions
his influence as a hegemonic penetration of the conquered, the colonized.

(152)

What is, however, noticeable in these two definitions of influence is that they both promote a unidirectional relationship between one text and another or between one entity and another. This is, indeed, one of the characteristics and one of the inconveniences of influence, because this unidirectional relationship implies a one way transfer or transmission of ideas and language usages from one entity to another. Influence in this sense is not in accord with the aspects of interactive communication and exchange that can develop between texts. It provides the methodological tools to say in what terms one text possesses the potential to create, proliferate and dominate and to say how another text is condemned to passively receive and imitate. Influence is, therefore, significant in terms of establishing power relationships in the production of meaning rather than textual relationships.

Michael Baxandall has severely criticized this unidirectional aspect of influence for the limitations it imposes on both the supposedly influential agent and the influenced subject. In this respect, he says: "'influence' is a curse of art criticism primarily because of its wrong-headed grammatical prejudice about who is the agent and who the patient ... if one says that X influenced Y it does seem that one is saying that X did something to Y rather than Y did something to X" (qtd. in Clayton and Rothstein 6). Baxandall’s idea is that influence is a way of thinking in terms of domination and power between one entity and another. Like Susan S. Friedman, Baxandall sees influence from a post-colonial point of view. For Baxandall, X’s unidirectional relationship to Y in terms power, domination
and silencing cannot hold if we want communication to take place between them. He then proposes a more viable method which consists of thinking about the potentialities of the patient by reversing “the active/passive” or the agent/patient relationship influence implies:

if we think of Y rather than X as the agent, the vocabulary is much richer and more attractively diversified: draw on, resort to, avail oneself of, appropriate from, have resource to, adapt, misunderstand, refer to, pick up, take on, engage with, react to, quote, differentiate oneself from, assimilate oneself to, assimilate, align oneself with, copy, address, paraphrase, absorb, make a variation on, revive, continue, remodel, ape, emulate, travesty, parody, extract from, distort, attend to, resist, simplify, reconstitute, elaborate on, develop, face up to, master, subvert, perpetuate, reduce, promote, respond to, transform, tackle .... – everyone will be able to think of others. Most of these relations just cannot be stated the other way round – in terms of X acting on Y rather than Y acting on X. (qtd. in Clayton and Rothstein 6-7)

Baxandall has, indeed ‘let the subaltern speak’. And the result is astonishing in terms of the multiplicity of the facets of communication emanating from the supposedly influenced, the recipient, or the subaltern. Baxandall concludes his criticism of the unidirectional aspect of influence by saying that “to think in terms of influence, blunts thought by impoverishing the means of differentiation” (qtd. in Clayton and Rothstein 7).

This leads me to the major inconvenience of influence in the sense that its claims are ambiguous and its arguments are unreliable.
Even if traces of influence seem to be evident in a literary work, it is still not logical to affirm for certain and confirm that it is the work X that has influenced the work Y or Y is an imitation of X. This is because there is no real evidence to make such a statement. To rely simply on the observation of the evident resemblances of a work to another is not enough to conclude that a work X is an influence on Y. It is not only a question of lack of evidence; it is logically inappropriate to come to such a conclusion because doing so means to announce the verdict of subjugation of the work Y by basing one’s judgments on an etERNALLY uncertain and unverifiable evidence. In this respect Claudio Guillén argues:

When someone said ‘Dickens influenced Kafka,’ we never knew for certain whether it was a matter of vague repercussions of a personal or biographical nature, perhaps profound, but with heaven knows what precise consequences; or whether it meant the confirmation of the presence of ‘Martin Chuzzlewit in Amerika’. The statement ‘Martin Chuzzlewit has had an effect on Amerika’ would not turn out to be very clear either, since we would not understand whether the form and incidents of Dickens’ novel were indeed recognizable in Kafka’s, or whether the statement referred to something that happened earlier, during the gestation of the work, or whether Dickens’ story had only transmitted a mental model of a picaresque novel. (244)

The only reliable terrain that remains for influence to draw its arguments from is the life of the author. This is again another inconvenience. Studies of influence tend to scrutinize the author’s life in search for those elements that unveil his/her link to another
author. This is perhaps what Clayton and Rothstein mean when they consider influence as an “author-centered” and “evaluative” concept (5). It is evaluative because to say that X has influenced Y is a way of explaining, evaluating and validating Y by the characteristics of X. And it is an author-centered notion because the only reliable evidence of the influence of a work X on Y is to be sought in the possibility that the author of Y may have recognized indebtedness to X or to the author of X. In this respect, the study of influence systematically shifts to the study of the author, find out which books he/she read, the education and training he/she received, the interviews he/she gave, the films he/she saw, the countries he/she visited, the publisher he/she was dealing with and so on. All these elements are what Claudio Guillén calls “the instruments of mediation and the intermediaries” (48) that comparatists have thoroughly examined for the sake of proving influence.

For Guillén, studies of influence are often composed of binary interrelations. Classically speaking, they may involve two national literatures, an author and a national literature, an author and a period of time, or two authors. “The two terms of [these] binary interrelation[s],” he states, “can be wide enough to take in constellations of writers, schools, movements [. . .]” He gives an exhaustive list of examples of binary interrelations, but let us be satisfied here only with a few like “the influence of Goethe in France” and “Kafka in our century”. He affirms that comparatists often “limit themselves to expanding one of the two terms of the equation [. . .]” Guillén carries on to elaborate on the aspect of transmission/reception of influence. He says that “occasionally a study begins with the transmitter: Montaigne and his influence in England (Charles Dédéyan).
Others begin with the receiver: Goethe and his assimilation of European literatures (Henri Peyre)” (47).

Here again the unidirectional transfer of data from one entity to another correlates with the transmission/reception aspect of influence. But the passage from one entity to another is, Guillén specifies, not a simple one. According to him, in influence studies based on a binary interrelation, it is particularly “rare or difficult to limit oneself to the examination of a text A and a text B. In dealing with literary history, one must investigate how it was possible for A to arrive at B, having to overcome so many obstacles and such large distances to do so” (48). Guillén explains that someone or something makes the passage from A to B possible. That is what he calls “tertium datur, a third party mediating a matter of concord rather than discord: the translator, the critic, the theatrical director, the magazine [. . .] the publishers and editors [. . .].” (48). The study of these mediating factors, for Guillén, had once been “a curious specialty within comparativism” (48). It represents what he terms “an auxiliary science” which consists in “the collecting of countless biographical, sociological, bibliographic, or anecdotal details” (48). This is, Guillén concludes, a boundless and futile task when he says:

[. . .] the terrain of influences [. . .] seemed no longer immense but boundless – as unlimited as our knowledge of the life of an author, including the most intimate details as well as the most external facts.

Goethe observed to Eckermann (December 16, 1828), “I owe much to the Greeks and the French; I am infinitely indebted to Shakespeare, Stern, and Goldsmith; but in saying this I do not show the sources of my culture – that would be an endless as well as an unnecessary task.” The limitless,
the boundless — *das Grenzenlose* — is the terrain of influences not only in the quantitative sense, but also because precisely there life merges with literature to an infinite extent in pursuit of the root of roots, the origin of origins, hoping at last to find the source of sources. (245)

Here Guillén makes a final note on influence studies. Influence, whatever its point of departure, its objective amounts to the same, find out the origin, the source, and the long search for the starting point that validates the presence of X in Y. A colossal work can be done to respond to a mere yes/no question: is X an influence on Y or not?

If the comparatist starts from the literary text, whatever the paths of his/her investigation are and no matter how lengthy his/her discussion, the ultimate conclusion is to answer the yes or no of influence. In this case, influence studies are very limited in their objective, but their terrain is boundless as Guillén observes. It is boundless because attention shifts systematically from the text to an unlimited cluster of elements extrinsic to the text, the life of the author in its different aspects, in search for the origin or influence. The other way round follows exactly the same path but in the opposite direction. If, for instance, we start from Y, an author’s acknowledgment of indebtedness to another author X, which is an aspect of Y’s life, we end up examining Y’s texts in search for the presence of X, the presence of influence. We are therefore trapped in a minute search for evidence (resemblances, parallels…) between Y’s and X’s works to validate an aspect of the author’s life (Y’s). And even if this evidence is found, it can never be held as ‘*la pièce à conviction*’ to charge Y’s texts with having been developed under the omnipresent and omnipotent shadow of X. Very often influence studies end up
investing an author with the power to shade authority upon a text not his/hers and
dispossess another author of his/her authorship.

3. The disapproval of influence in *Le libraire*

I stated at the beginning that precisely because of the inevitable observation of the similarity between *L'étranger* and *Le libraire*, we are tempted to deal with the 'why' of this similarity. In a comparative study of two literary works, it is no doubt difficult to tell why two works are similar. Notions like influence, imitation, parody, allusion, intertextuality are very often associated with comparative literary studies. However, the use of these notions will not lead me to the answer of the 'why' of the similarity between the two novels under study. Rather, they will be very useful to investigate and describe the relationships that can develop between them. The notion of influence can rely on all that is known as the context of these novels in order to tell something about the possible contacts that may have happened between *Le libraire* and *L'étranger*. It investigates all that is related to the lives of the authors to find out a reason for a literary phenomenon: the similarity between two literary works. And the reason is very often presented in terms of the circumstances that made the link between the two works possible.

To deal with the 'why' of the similarity between *Le libraire* and *L'étranger*, the introduction of the notion of influence may help to look at those mediating elements outside the texts in search for where the passage from *L'étranger* to *Le libraire* could have been possible. The focus on certain aspects pertaining to the life of the author is the tool influence provides in this task, and the attempt to read *Le libraire* from this perspective will shed light upon its different contexts rather than the text.
If critics, as I mentioned earlier, are unanimous in their observation about the proximity between Camus’ *L’étanger* and Bessette’s *Le libraire*, the author of *Le libraire* has not, to my knowledge, referred to any direct relationship of his novel to Camus’ *L’étanger*. In his book, *Mes romans et moi*, Bessette acknowledges his admiration for Sartre (72) who is a contemporary of Camus and whose relationship with him had been deeply affected after Camus’ publication of *L’homme révolté* in 1952. (Camus’ criticism of Stalinist totalitarian communism antagonized the French left wing thinkers who disseminated their existential ideas and pro-soviet propaganda in Sartre’s literary review *Temps modernes.*) Did Bessette come into contact with Camus via Sartre? This is an aspect of the author’s life, or what Guillon terms as “*un intermédiaire*” in his discussion on French comparativism, titled “The French Hour” (46-59). Is it worth studying here one detail of Bessette’s life, his admiration for Sartre, and the focus on Sartre as an *intermédiaire* to explain “the passage” from *L’étanger* to *Le libraire*. I will squarely say that this will be, to borrow Goethe’s words, “an endless and unnecessary task,” simply because no matter how deep and detailed the investigation, it will perhaps never provide complete and convincing evidence to claim that Sartre is the medium that made *Le libraire* possible, or the source from which *Le libraire* sprung.

Another existential writer with whose works Bessette is perhaps familiar is André Malraux. Bessette had written an essay in 1954 whose title is “L’unanimité chez Malraux.” André Malraux is the author of *La condition humaine*, which appeared in 1933. It is from the title of this novel that the existentialist writers derived the emblematic existentialist motto: “La condition humaine.” Is it possible to see in Bessette’s interest in Malreaux the starting point for the existential affiliation of his novel? This particular
moment in the author's literary activity may bring important elements in the existential 
background of his work, but this very particular detail opens a terrain of limitless 
possibilities. If I ask, for instance, "How did Bessette come to be interested in 
Malraux?" this will certainly take me back to the occasion, or the mediating factor, that 
united Bessette to Malraux. And again, once this mediating factor is identified, another 
one, more remote in the life of the author emerges. This is precisely the basic 
inconvenience of the search for the source of the passage from *L'étranger* to *Le libraire*. 
Not only is the terrain of this task without limits, the researcher may find himself before 
an operating table, dissecting the life of the author to the bone without being sure to get at 
the origin of this genetic disease, influence.

Studies of influence also rely on the author's pronouncements in search for his/her 
literary affiliations and preferred authors. Interviews the author accorded are scrutinized 
in the hope to find those magical revelations that may bring something new about his/her 
work. The most common statement about influence is the author's recognition of 
indebtedness. I have consulted a good number of interviews Bessette gave in search for 
any avowed relationship to Camus, and the result is negative. In these interviews, from 
the date of the appearance of *Le libraire* up to his recent death in February, 21st, 2005, the 
proximity of this novel to Camus' *L'étranger* had, so far, never been in the agenda of the 
interviewers' questions. My expectations, and also perhaps those of any reader of *Le 
libraire*, were that Bessette should have been asked about the link of his novel to Camus 
more frequently. But it had not been the case.

What, however, I have come across in my reading of the interviews Bessette gave 
is something perhaps more revealing than mere recognition of indebtedness. It is
something akin to what Harold Bloom terms "anxieties of indebtedness" (5) in his book *The Anxiety of Influence*. Here I reproduce a part of the 1973 interview conducted by Yvon Boucher and Carol Michaud for the literary review *Le Québec Littéraire*. What is at stake in this interview is influence. But neither the interviewers nor the interviewee dared to name it overtly and without some discomfort precisely because of the anxieties it entails, namely the questioning of the writer's authority on the part of the interviewers and the sense of loss of authorship on the part of the author:

Q.L. Un écrivain qui est aussi professeur d'université et critique ne doit-il pas faire le vide lorsqu'il se retrouve devant sa page blanche?

G.B. Il faut faire le vide, chasser de son conscient toutes les règles de la composition, de la critique littéraire. Quant à s'interroger sur la valeur de sa production quand on écrit . . .

Q.L. Mais "faire le vide" ne comporte-t-il pas le risque d'avoir de mauvaise surprise lorsqu'on relit ce que l'on a écrit?

G.B. Les influences sont assez évidentes pour certaines de mes œuvres, je pense, mais que peut-on y faire?

Q.L. A ce moment là on accepte le fait?

G.B. Je ne recommencerais pas une œuvre parce qu'elle ressemble à celle d'un autre écrivain [. . .]. On a mis ce qu'on avait de très intime que ce soit évident à la première ou à la n-ième lecture ça n'a pas d'importance.

(143)

Here the interviewers's questions revolve around the possibility or even the inevitability of influences during the process of creative writing. Their focus on the figure
of the author in the process of writing, the use of terms like “faire le vide”, “être fatal”,
“mauvaise surprise” when rereading one’s text and “accepte le fait” are, indeed,
symptomatic terms denoting allegations about influence and the authenticity of the
author. Again the figure of the author and its credibility are at the centre of the debate. Is
the author really the author of his/her own writing? Is he/she writing under the shadow of
someone else bigger, God-like, and omnipresent? The interviewers’ interest is to take a
dive into the intimate life of the author, not the author as a person but the author as a
creative writer.

Is the interviewers’ point that a novelist should write with a kind of tabula rasa as
a precondition for genuine creative writing, free from influences? Or is he/she
systematically writing with the ‘already written’, the ‘already read’, and the ‘already
known’ in mind and consequently his/her creative writing becomes inevitably influenced
or intertextual? From the sequence of the interviewers’ questions, it is noticeable that
they are addressing Bessette indirectly on the issues of influence and originality in his
work. Bessette is perhaps summoned to tell in what terms his creative writing is original
and in what terms it is influenced either by his own status as a literary critic and a
university professor or by other writings. Even though the interviewers’ questions are not
overtly about traces of influence in Bessette’s work, it is not, however, astonishing to
hear Bessette’s evocation of influence when he said: “les influences sont assez évidentes
pour certaines de mes œuvres, je pense, mais que peut-on y faire?” Here the
interviewers’ coercive questions have cornered Bessette in such a way as to make him
settle the point once and for all. They summon him perhaps to explain why Le libraire is
similar to novels such as L’étranger or La nausée. And it is certainly L’étranger that is at
stake here. But Bessette, relegated to a defensive position, had nothing more to do than reiterate and defend the integrity of the author as vigorously as possible. Bessette recognized that in some of his works influences (as perhaps a natural and inevitable intertextual phenomenon) were evident, but he conceded nothing in the integrity of his authorship over his work.

Harold Bloom, one of the latest beholders of the notion of influence reformulates this author-centered notion at the time when intertextuality has become, right after its introduction by Julia Kristeva in 1966, a very popular and voguish term in literary discussions. His concern in Anxiety of Influence is to come out with a theory of poetry based on the principle of influence. Bloom opens his book by saying that its concern is to offer “a theory of poetry by way of a description of poetic influence, or the story of intra-poetic relationships” and that “only strong poets, major figures” (5) deserve to be studied in terms of influence because they are engaged in a life and death conflict with their precursors.

The first disadvantage of Bloom’s notion of influence is that it is based on an ideology of exclusion since only major authors are taken into account. He is therefore coming up with nothing new, but simply matching the notion of influence with the arguments of the out-of-date liberal-humanist notion of the ‘Great Tradition’ with its partial and selective ideology of the major authors. This notion was introduced first by Mathiew Arnold by the end of the nineteenth century and developed later by his successor F. R. Leavis at the beginning of the twentieth century. This suggests that influence means power relationships with its correlative binary oppositions: dominant/subjugated, creative/repetitive, the survival of the stronger and the death of the
weak. It can also be compared to the oedipal conflict between father and son. To explain how his notion of influence functions, Bloom says: “weaker talents idealize; figures of capable imagination appropriate for themselves. But nothing is got for nothing, and self-appropriation involves the immense anxieties of indebtedness” (5).

If anxiety of influence is taken to mean the condition resulting from the confrontation of someone’s excessive self-confidence with someone else who is excessively and constantly powerful, we will, by analogy, understand that the anxiety of Bloom’s author-centered notion of influence is inherent in the author’s awareness of the omnipresent power of the precursor, the creator, the God-father, and the necessity for the author to assert his/her authorship. The author’s work is, for Bloom, an effort to develop Freudian mechanisms of defense against the precursor in order to attain the condition of survival or personal development. It can be either an oedipal gesture challenging the precursor to death for the re-appropriation of full fathership (authorship), or a “yielding up of more primordial for more refined modes of pleasure” to attain sublimation (8-9).

The issue of influence as it is evoked in the interview can be interpreted in two different ways. First, ‘influence’ can mean influence in the very sense of Friedman’s definition and Bloom’s notion of the major author’s struggle with their precursors. Second, it can mean a natural and inevitable manifestation of existing texts in every new text, or simply intertextuality.

I consider the aforementioned interviewers’s series of questions about the author and about the author in the process of writing as a sinuous way they have skillfully and politely taken to avoid a taboo question, that of influence with its possibilities to undermine the integrity of the supposedly ‘influenced’ author. Influence in this sense
leads us systematically to think of authors in terms of important and less important ones, major and minor, dominant and dominated or creators and imitators ones. The explanation for the interviewers' inability to address Bessette overtly on the issue of influence and their insisting that the author say something about the conscious or unconscious influences that may have marked his work are symptomatic of their having in mind perhaps Bloom's "anxieties of influence." The interviewers have, however, partly succeeded in coercing Bessette to speak about the resemblance of his work to another writer's work. "Je ne recommencerai pas une œuvre," Bessette said, "parce qu'elle ressemble à celle d'un autre écrivain." But Bessette said this perhaps defensively in order to re-locate his interviewers in their assigned places and remind them that, no matter what his work is taken to mean, the integrity of his authorship is unquestionable.

On the other hand, according to Blooms' arguments of the Freudian mechanisms of defence, Bessette's inability to name the writer to whose work any of his novels resemble, perhaps Camus (since critics unanimously evoke Camus as a precursor in their discussions of Le libraire) can be read as an oedipal killing of the father/Camus to appropriate fully the status of fathership/authorship over the mother/the existential novel. And Bessette's refusal to recognize indebtedness is, to apply Bloom's assertions, a way to reassert the status of a self-confident author and to refuse to caution the notion of influence when it is taken to mean domination. In this respect Bloom writes: "every major aesthetic consciousness seems peculiarly more gifted at denying obligation as the hungry generations go on treading one another down" (6).

Another alternative to interpreting the issue of influence in the interview is that Bessette's recognition of evident influences in some of his works can be seen as an
intertextual phenomenon. For Bessette, influences are inevitable and one cannot help being influenced. No matter how original a writer might be, he could never have full control over his creative writing. Creative writing, in this sense, can be seen as both a conscious and unconscious activity which plays itself in the spatial and temporal dimensions of culture. It inevitably enters into communication with other writings and cultural expressions. Creative writing is, therefore, systematically both intertextual in Kristeva’s sense that all texts are intertexts and the rewriting of previous texts in the sense of Edward Said’s view of a text as parallel script (*The World* 135).

With the pre-condition of “faire le vide” or without it, a writer eclipses in the writing process and the text emerges as an ‘already read’ and ‘already written’ text. This is what Bessette’s answer can be taken to mean when he said that influences were there “que peut-on y faire?” And Bessette carried on underlining the importance of reading (or the reader) in differentiating between influence and the autonomy of the author. He said: “on a mis ce qu’on avait de très intime que ce soit évident à la première ou à la n’ième lecture ça n’a pas d’importance.” For Bessette, active reading is important not because this leads to the recognition of the author in the text and to the disapproval of influence. Active reading can make a differentiation between influence as a denigration of the author and influence as an intertextual phenomenon.

I have attempted here to explain the phenomenon of resemblances between at least two literary works in terms of influence assuming that the point of departure, the origin of the one (*Le libraire*) must be the existence of the other preceding it, (Camus’ *L’étranger*). But ultimately, should I adopt such an approach, the whole of my analysis would prove to be an attempt to answer a mere yes/no question of influence. Did Camus
influence Bessette? Or, did Bessette recognize indebtedness to Camus? Who knows?

Even if both of these suppositions are true, there is still no tangible evidence of influence. To think of textual relationships in terms of influence undermines the possibilities of alternative meanings of texts. Influence instructs us that meaning is the origin, and that it is unique and final precisely because its point of interest is the origin, the beginning, the source where the text comes from. Its conclusions very often come as a door being closed on the signifying potentialities of the text. No doubt in terms of context, influence studies will bring forth perhaps considerable knowledge about the historical, cultural and social circumstances that helped the emergence of a specific typology of characters, styles and attitudes. But it ignores the texuality of the text at the expense of its extra-textual condition.

What is, therefore, the importance of attempting to demonstrate if *L'étranger* is an influence or not on *Le libraire*? Nothing important can emerge in this task except perhaps detailed sporadic moments in the life of the authors which will, so far, not answer the yes/no question of influence. Rather, it will inhibit *Le libraire*’s potential of communication with *L'étranger* and also with other texts. My conclusion is that influence has tried in vain to explain the unexplainable. Its basic characteristics all merge in such a way as to deal with a certain “God”. Its terrain, like that of God, unbound and without limits; its omnipresence manifests sporadically, like God, between the lines but its very nature is eternally unattainable, unexplainable and therefore unknowable. The convergence of its multiple pathways to the search for the uniqueness of the source, the origin, the beginning, the initiator and thus the creator is an inevitable search for God.
Both Kristeva’s and Barthes’s rejection of the concept of oneness, the God-author as the ultimate source and the generator of meaning, is one of the basic principles of intertextuality. They are developed as a reaction against the notion of influence. Kristeva’s introduction for the first time of the term “intertextuality” demonstrates this clearly. The novel for Kristeva is “heteroglossia,” a cross road of many languages. “Any text,” she writes, “is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read at least double” (Desire 66).

My preliminary assertion is that Le libraire is similar to L’étranger because the former appeared in 1960, about two decades after the appearance of the latter in 1942. According to the old standards of comparative literature such a claim is evident because the relationship between the former and the latter is that of causality. Since L’étranger precedes Le libraire in calendar time, we can therefore explain this similarity in terms of a unidirectional cause-effect relationship between these two novels. This logic leads me to the inevitable conclusion that Le libraire is similar to L’étranger and the other way round is not possible. Therefore L’étranger can be seen, in this case, as the origin and the generator of Le libraire. This perspective compels the reader or the researcher to study the relationship between these two novels in terms of influence, hegemony and power: to study how and why L’étranger is can be the cause of Le libraire. This is, however, not my perspective even though my approach is a comparative one. It is a comparative one in the sense of the new comparativism Claudio Guillén presents in his work The Challenge of Comparative Literature. It is based on the principle that a literary text, studied
comparatively, is more appropriately described and interpreted by relying on the notion of intertextuality than that of influence.

I have stated that Bessette recognized that influences might be evident in his works but rejected vigorously the slightest reproach on the integrity of his authorship over his works and on their authenticity. But it is an undeniable fact that the similarities between *Le libraire* and *L'étranger* are so clearly evident that it is difficult for me as a reader and a researcher to deny this reality. My preliminary assumption that literary imitation or influences have to be discarded from the reading of *Le libraire* is not made out of a desire to use the more voguish literary theories of intertextuality. It is perhaps easier to argue that *Le libraire* could be a casual imitation of *L'étranger* or this latter could have influenced it directly or indirectly through intermediaries such as Sartre. But this premise is a prejudicial one and does not encourage the prospective analysis necessary for the emergence of new meanings. For these reasons, I would rather use a new comparative approach informed by intertextuality as Claudio Guillén suggests and parallelism in the sense of Edward Said's view of writing as "parallel script" (*The World* 135), and made practically and analytically feasible by Genette Gerard's notion of transtextuality in his *Palimpsestes*.

The new comparative approach is not one that is made out of a reasoned choice. It is adopted as a supportive background to an attempt to resist the insisting and persisting premise of influence or literal imitation in *Le libraire*. The task of comparison associated with intertextuality is not an easy one. Charles Bernheimer warns the student in comparative literature that this branch of literary scholarship is "anxiogenic" because of its inability to delimit a methodological approach about what to compare to what and how
(1-2). On the other hand, Graham Allen, for his part, notes that intertextuality "is defined so variously that it is, currently, akin to such terms as 'the imagination', 'history', or 'Postmodernism'" (2). For these two reasons, I expect the new comparative approach to be an experimental one.

An approach made out of a combination of a comparison and intertextuality must be a risky one because of their being both, as terms, recalcitrant to fixation and definition. According to Said all writing is rewriting and the originality of any text lies not, as traditional comparativism sustains, in the singularity of a text, but in its constant attempt to stand in parallel to other text (The World 135).

Both modern theories of intertextuality, such as Barthes's and Kristeva's, and the different notions of new comparativism, such as Said's and Guillén's, speak with one voice about the text's intertextual nature. The emergence of intertextuality is seen by Claudio Guillén as une bouée de sauvetage for comparatists. "The concept of intertextuality developed some twenty-five years ago," he writes, "is especially useful for comparatists. We believe that here we have at last a way to dissipate the many ambiguities and errors such as those brought along in the wake of the notion of influence" (244).

The modern theories of the text stem from a completely new approach to language and meaning whose articulation is inevitably built upon the need to reverse the classical notion about the production of meaning and signification. Kristeva follows what Barthes has already formulated as the need for a serious revision of Saussure's classical notion of semiology as a general science of signs. In his famous work, Cours de linguistique general (1916), Saussure claims that linguistics is a branch within
semiology. In opposition to this, both Barthes and Kristeva claim that all signs (linguistic or non-linguistic) end up by taking their signification by means of language and within language only and; therefore, it is rather linguistics which should be the general science of all signs (*Le texte* 9-10).

On the one hand, Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality is very attractive because of its avant-gardist nature. On the other hand, it is too abstract and its application to the comparative study of texts would prove less practical. However, what I retain from Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality are those definitions which may describe certain aspects of textual relationships between the two novels under study. For instance, Kristeva’s definition of the novelistic utterance as the appropriate unit of intertextual analysis will help me select passages in both novels on the basis of this definition. She defines it (l’énoncé romanesque) as “un segment discursive par lequel s’expriment les différentes instances du discours (auteurs, ‘personnages’, etc.) il peut se présenter comme une suite de phrases, ou comme un paragraphe, et se caractérise par l’unicité du lieu de la parole [. . . ]. Vu comme texte le roman est une pratique sémiotique dans laquelle on pourrait lire, synthétisés, les tracés de plusieurs énoncés” (*Le texte* 13).

What also she defines as both the synchronic and diachronic function of the “novelistic utterance” will be useful. The synchronic function supposes that the novelistic utterance is related to other utterances within the linearity of the text in order to suggest a semantic structure for the text. The diachronic function supposes that the utterance is related to other utterances in other texts in such a way as to suggest a cultural identity to the text. Through this diachronic function of the novelistic utterance, Kristeva introduces
the notion of “ideologem” which gives cultural and socio-historical coordinates for the text (Le texte 13; Desire 36-7).

The diachronic function of the “novelistic utterance” will be useful to extend the similarities between the two texts beyond the boundaries of both. The integration of other texts, such as Sartre’s La nausée will be revealing since it allows me to figure out how the similarities are, before all, transtextual (affecting several texts) and not only bi-textual (specific to Le libraire and L’étranger). But since we are dealing mostly with the study of the relationships existing between two novels, Genette Gerard’s notion of hypertextuality must be more informing since it accounts for the different ways textual relationship can develop between just two texts, the hypertext and the text preceding it, the hypotext.

Genette considers this notion of hypertextuality as one type of a general notion of textual relationship, coined as transtextuality. He claims that any text attempts to transcend itself and reach another text, and that writing is always rewriting. For Genette textual transcendence, or transtextuality, means “‘tout ce qui le [the text] met en relation, manifest ou secrete, avec d’autres textes’” (7) This is what makes literature always at the second degree.

Transtextuality, as developed in his Palimpsestes, comes to replace what he developed in other works as paratextuality and architextuality. However, these two notions become two of the five identified types of transtextual relationships. Unlike Kristeva who poses intertextuality as the general theory of the text and as the key term used to describe textual relationships, Genette presents transtextuality as inclusive of all possible types of textual relationships. He considers intertextuality, as used by Kristeva, along with paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality and architextuality, as the five
types of transtextuality (7-12). And the type Genette develops in *Palimpsestes* is hypertextuality. He defines it as “toute relation unissant un texte B (que j’appellerai hypertexte) à un autre texte antérieur A (que j’appellerai, bien hyptexte) sur lequel il se greffe d’une manière qui n’est pas celle du commentaire” (11-12).

The hypertext establishes a link with the hypotext through a process of “transformation” which can either be direct or indirect. Genette uses the term “imitation” to refer to the indirect transformation. However, the use of this term has nothing to do with the imitation used, for instance, in other arts such as painting (Genette 348). Imitation in a hypertext is a complex process; it requires the establishment of a pre-existing generic model which serves as a framework of mediation between the hypertext and the hypotext (Genette 12).

Unlike Kristeva’s intertextuality which is more abstract and resonates in mathematical operations and formulas, Genette’s hypertextuality is practical and does not break radically with the classical literary denominations like parody, pastiche and travesty. Genette has in a way democratized the very notions used by traditional comparativism and has given them a modern meaning. They have become within his notion of hypertextuality the types that describe hypertextual relationship. To cover the description of the different hypertextual relationships, Genette adds new terms to the ones (parody, pastiche, and travesty) borrowed from traditional literary practice. “ Forgery” and “transposition” (36) are the terms Genette coins for the textual transformation and imitations that the classical terms can no longer account for.

We should not confuse the term imitation as it is used by traditional comparative approaches, in the sense of “bad imitation,” or plagiarism to denigrate one text for its
being textually related to another text. Genette uses this term in another context of textual relationships in order to refer to the transformative process that occurs between two texts. And he provides a variety of terms describing hypertextual relationships.

The common aspect between Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality and Genette’s hypertextuality is that any text is a living thing, able to make gestures and to refer to other texts by embodying them in different ways within its textuality. What is, however, specific to Genette’s hypertextuality is that this very aspect is limited to only two texts, the hypertext and its hypotext. The difference between Genette and Kristeva is that the former softens the abstractness of theory of the latter. Instead of signifying a radical departure from the classical notions of comparison, as Kristeva does, Genette modernizes them and provides additional practical tools to interpret the significance of the text in terms of its hypertextual relationships.

The similarities between Le libraire and L’étranger will be studied within Genette’s notion of hypertextuality because of the practicality of the notion and also its capacity to cover the various resemblances between the two texts. Our objective is to initiate a prospective inquiry for meaningful formulas that can emanate from them when they are studied as hypertextual relationships. This does not mean that other types of transtextual relationships will be discarded. Intertextuality as well as the three other types Genette proposes, namely paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality will be also useful to account for hypertextual relationships because all the types of transtextuality are interdependent (14).
I will succinctly define these types of transtextual relationships since they are going to be evoked at different occasion and stages in our analysis. But for a more detailed definition of each, I refer readers to Genette’s *Plimpsestes* (8-12).

Paratextuality refers to textual relationships suggested by the text’s use of a title or a subtitle to refer to another text allusively or directly. Genette uses Joyce’s title *Ulysses* as the best example of paratextuality as the title evokes Homer’s *Odyssey*.

Metatextuality is what may be termed in other words as literature on literature or about literature. It is the text’s comment on its own textuality or another text’s textuality. A metatexual text can also be termed as a self-reflexive, self-begetting or narcissistic text. Steven Kellman’s *The Self-Begetting Novel*, B. T. Fitch’s *The Narcissistic Text: A Reading of Camus’s Fiction* and Linda Hutcheon’s *Narcissistic Narratives: The Metafictional Paradox* are enlightening works in terms of metatextuality.

Architextuality has to do with the literary genres. It is what can be termed as the text’s generic identity. Is the text a novel, a play, a poem, a mixture of the three or of two out of the three? Is *Le libraire* a novel or a diary as the narrator maintains all through his narrative? Is Sartre’s *La nausée* a diary as its formal narrative structure and its introductory chapter suggest? More complex examples can be evoked as for instance Michael Ondaatje’s *Running in the Family* (1982) which can be considered as a miscellaneous work running across biography, photography, and history.

All the types of transtextuality are aspects of post-modern literature suggesting that writing can no longer be original. It constantly escapes identity. It is itself and something else. Therefore it is useless to contain a text in a specific meaning since its
textual identity is constantly out of reach. Textuality can then be seen as a handful of dry sand, the more pressing on the grasp of it the faster the grains slip out between fingers.

It is within this post-modern vision that the relationships between *Le libraire* and *L'étranger* are going to be examined. Even though my study is designed to be an attempt to reach meaningful relationships between the two texts, however, I proceed with the consciousness that beyond an objective descriptive account of these relationships, any attempt for meaning might contradict itself.

Before undertaking this study, it is convenient to go over what has been done in the Canadian comparative studies on the relationship between *L'étranger* and *Le libraire* in order to find out what to do and what not.
II. Canadian comparative criticism of Le libraire and L’étranger

I refer to three French-Canadian comparative surveys of Le libraire in order to figure out the salient points that are discussed and the conclusions that have been made on the relationship between Le libraire and L’étranger. The critics in question are Jacques Allard, André Brochu and Gilles Marcotte. I will also examine whether these critics tend to be traditional in their comparisons, i.e., comparing the two novels in terms of power relationships, or if they have in mind more recent notions pertaining to intertextual/hypertextual relationships.

My reference to only French-Canadian comparisons of Le libraire and L’étranger does in no way pretend the exclusion of English-Canadian comparisons. I should mention one of the most concise and pointed comparisons of the two novels by a lesser known critic in Canada. It is Leonard W. Sudgen’s “Gérard Bessette’s Le libraire As Seen Through its Resemblances to Camus’ L’étranger,” which appeared also in a less known and short lived literary review Le Chien d’or / The Golden Dog. As its title suggests, Sudgen goes straight to the intriguing and delicate issue that characterizes the relationship between Le libraire and L’étranger. Curiously enough, I have finally come across a critic who captured years ago the preoccupation I have had in mind ever since I read Le libraire. This preoccupation resides in the effect produced by both the clash and symbiosis between, on the one hand, the evident resemblances of Le libraire to L’étranger and, on the other hand, the persistent authenticity, completeness and autonomy Le libraire manifests in various ways. It is precisely this preoccupation that gives birth to the study I am undertaking presently.
1. English Canadian comparisons

In his article, Sudgen draws in broad lines the formal and thematic similarities between the two novels. He also sets forth a few salient features that associate Jodoin to and differentiate him from Meursault. Sudgen draws inspiration from what Glen Shortliffe, “friend and fellow professor of Bessette” (Sudgen 16) as well as translator of Le libraire and L’incubation, exposes in his essay “Evolution of a Novelist: Gérard Bessette” about the writer, his work and his world view. One important point that has been raised by Shortliffe and which Sudgen develops a little more is that French-Canadian critics see Le libraire just as a social satire and they fail to see what Shortliffe coins as “metaphysical” satire (Shortliffe 43-4).

Sudgen evokes one important philosophical issue in Le libraire which may subsume Glen’s “metaphysical” satire. But he explains it biographically in relation to Bessette’s own “spiritual evolution.” Sudgen writes: “beneath the sardonic reproach to which the satirist subjects religion and conventional mores, we should as well indicate an underlying critique of the human condition. The novel serves to illustrate one of the main facets of the author’s own spiritual evolution: the abandonment of traditional faith along with the Christian ethic and the development of a personal philosophy” (17).

Sudgen also evokes, in the last parallel he draws between Jodoin and the “camusian victim”(17) what I consider as Le libraire’s signs of promoting a pragmatic philosophy of life by diverting in many ways L’étranger from its object. (Genette’s notion of parody as a means to distort a text from its object and invest it with a new meaning and context (18-27) may be useful to demonstrate this claim). In this respect, Sudgen writes:
In conjunction with its more famous literary counterpart, we have seen how, in the latter phase of *Le libraire*, the author enlists the great themes of trial, judgement and condemnation. But, what is even more striking, this novel, in its most virulent significance, reveals a similar twist to the verdict. Hervé Jodoin indeed resembles the camusian victim who is shamefully to be punished in the name of decency. What is more, Bessette artfully places his personnage among those who refuse categorically to be part of this arrangement. His hero’s case appears to be all the more acute, since Quebec society is certainly described as suffering more intensely than others from the evils of the narrow and hypocritical structures of contemporary civilization. Nevertheless, in the end, through his detachment, his wit and guile, Hervé Jodoin abstains from being, as Camus himself has so well expressed it: “complice de ce monde qui juge et condamne en un moment avant d’aller diner au chandelles.” (18)

What Sudgen considers as “a similar twist to the verdict” is for me a hypertexual intervention on Camus’s text to distort it from its object, namely the criticism of the malfunctioning of colonial justice. Meursault’s refusal to be an accomplice of this official hypocritical structure, in the case of *L’étranger*, is, however not Jodoin’s. It is true that Bessette parodies the great themes of trial, judgement and condemnation. But in opposition to Sudgen, Jodoin does in no way adhere to Meursault’s refusal of complicity in the name of faithfulness to the self. Jodoin shows in many ways and in different situations in his narrative that “victory” is the ultimate issue that governs social conflicts and man is constrained by this ultimate urge to adopt a pragmatic attitude in life. No
matter what his instantaneous attitude to the world around him is, Jodoin’s ultimate purpose in life is to come out victorious, hence his pragmatism. And he shows this clearly at various stages and situations in his narrative (*Le libraire* 30, 46, 79) as for instance during the parish visit:


Jodoin’s “detachment, wit and guile,” however, stems from a pragmatic attitude that differentiates him from Meursault and teaches him how to keep feet on the ground, be realistic but not transcendentally romantic as Meursault. I will deal in the coming section (part II) with the different hypertextual relationships between *Le libraire* and *L’étranger* where Camus’s text is appropriated and reoriented towards this pragmatic profile of Jodoin.
2. English Canadian versus French Canadian reception of *Le libraire*

I should also mention that *Le libraire* was published in Paris because one Quebec editor in 1959 was reticent to publish the novel. Bessette affirmed that the editor in question, without naming him but the name was to be revealed later as Pierre Tisseyre (Robidoux 139; *Les dires* 117), did not say “no” but they should have to “wait” because the publication of the novel would for certain be “scandalous” (*Le libraire* 18; *Les dires* 117). The question to be raised here is whether Bessette did exhaust all recourses to Québécois publishers before going to René Julliard in Paris. Glen Shortliffe rectifies the running claim that *Le libraire* appeared in France because it “was rejected by all the important publishers in Quebec” (42). André Vanasse for his part, claims that “René Julliard ait accepté de publier *Le libraire* à Paris [car] la maison d’édition française espérait sans doute faire concurrence à *L’étranger* d’Albert Camus qui connaissait un succès foudroyant dans toute la francophonie” (512).

Indeed, *Le libraire* wages ruthless attacks on religion and village life in the 1940s Quebec. Glen Shortliffe notes that “heated discussions [...] arose about the truth or falsity of Bessette’s portrait of a small Quebec city” (42). It also aroused the discontent of several critics because of the sarcastic attacks on the Québécois society from abroad. Among these critics, Roger Duhamel, who witnessed that they felt “somewhat chagrined by the appearance, under the imprint of a French publisher, of a book which so obviously denigrated us in the eyes of the world beyond our frontiers” (qtd. in Shortliffe 42). Known for his *franc parlé*, Jacques Ferron notes that “Bessette aurait fait quelques prélèvements sur le rigorisme anglo-protestant pour nourrir son réquisitoire contre la société québécoise“ (qtd. in Vanasse, 513). Shortliffe, for his part, evokes the Biblical
proverb that one can never be a prophet in one’s own land (42) to refer to French-

Canadian reactions because of the discontent generated by the hysteric satirical portrait of

the prototype Quebecois village in *Le libraire*.

However, French-Canadian comparative discussions of *Le libraire* do not,

perhaps, succeed in containing this discontent in comparison to English-Canadian ones,

which do not perhaps experience Jodoin’s hysteric satire from the inside. Critics like

Shortliffe and Sutherland evoke Bessette with admiration and respect and do not hesitate

to underline the different merits of the writer and his work. Commenting on Bessette’s *La

Bagarre*, Sutherland does not neglect to qualify, for instance, Augustin Sillery (the

counterpart of Jules Lebeuf) as being “possibly the first complete and convincing portrait

of a homosexual in Canadian literature” (34). French-Canadian critics claim

anonymously the authenticity of *Le libraire* when they evoke its relationship to

*L’étranger*. They also underline its success and its influential position in Quebecois

literature. *Le Libraire*, Brochu notes, “est sans conteste une grande réussite littéraire”

(Brochu 102). Robidoux sees the novel as an epitome of the time of *la révolution

tranquille* and therefore it becomes “un classique incontesté” (139). Ben.-Z. Shek says

“quoi qu’il en soit, bien des critiques s’accordent à dire que *Le libraire* a fait date dans

l’histoire littéraire du Québec (120).

But, particularly, comparative surveys of *Le libraire* and *L’étranger*, like

Brochu’s and Marcotte’s, stray out of the context of comparison to involve issues that

add ambiguity to the relationships existing between the two novels. This ambiguity is

perhaps due to the fact that, like Ferron, they reproach Bessette for something they do not

have the possibility to express in a comparative study of texts which is supposed to be
objective. In one way or another, the accusation ends showing in terms that are not in accord with the ethics of comparison.

Jacques Allard is more pro-Bessettian and, like English-Canadian critics referred to above, he highlights Bessette's various achievements and draws attention to the intertextual potential of Bessette’s fiction. Therefore the distinction between English-Canadian and French-Canadian in the appreciation and reception of *Le Libraire* has nothing to do with the 'two solitudes'. Rather, they are evoked within the aim to make a difference between comparative discussions that involve power relationships and the ones that favour intertextual/hypertextual relationships.

3. French Canadian Comparisons: (J. Allard, A. Brochu, G. Marcotte)

Allard observes that “Jodoin est un proche parent de Meursault et de Roquentin qui séjournent eux aussi à Saint-Joachin, en y éprouvant les mots et les maux de l’existence” (62). Here he associates both Meursault and Roquentin to the setting of Jodoin’s story, Saint-Joachin. This implies that Allard points at the possibility that these two existentialist figures have been transposed, or transplanted in a new socio-cultural environment. This transplantation entails systematically a synthetic transformation of both figures into a single existential figure, Jodoin. This means that Jodoin is constructed out of a combination of specific features of each of the two existential figures.

In his study of Sartre’s *La nausée* as a self-begetting novel, Steven G. Kellman exposes the basic descriptive features of Roquentin. Kellman says:

Roquentin is a supremely solitary individual. [. . . ] he is a confirmed bachelor. He lives alone, and his contacts with others are reduced to a minimum – the necessities of renting a room, obtaining a
meal, and engaging in occasional passionless but cathartic sex with an
obliging Café proprietress [. . . ] Roquentin apparently has no family ties.
Aside from a casual reference to an aunt, he makes no mention of
forebears and certainly none of any offspring. Instead, he is merely
responsible for himself and is free to act as he pleases and go where he
chooses. (32-33)

Kellman’s description of Roquentin extraordinarily applies to Jodoin. This can throw
light on Bessette’s admiration for Sartre. And what is more important is that it perhaps
confirms the righteousness of Allard’s gathering of the three characters within the same
family. With the exception of his dead mother, Meursault has no family ties. Jodoin is
alone and without any family ties at all. All of them are generally regulated with the same
features, and the same daily course of life (life in the room, spending some time at Café
Malby/Chez Célèste/ Chez Trefflé/ work at the library or the office). All three are
presented as self-centered figures and are responsible for their own lives. They present
themselves as being deliberately solitary and they have nothing important to say except
expressing customary trivialities of daily life or something pertaining to their basic
necessities of daily life. For instance, consider Roquentin’s presentation of himself and
more specifically his unwillingness to speak:

Moi je vis seul, entièrement seul. Je ne parle à personne,
jamais; je ne reçois rien, je ne donne rien. L’Autodidacte ne
compte pas. Il y a bien Françoise, la patronne du Rendez-vous des
Cheminots. Mais est-ce que je lui parle? Quelquefois, après dîner,
quand elle me sert un bock [. . . ] nous faisons l’amour au pair [. . .}
Mais nous nous échangeons à peine quelques mots. A quoi bon?

Chacun pour soi; à ses yeux, d'ailleurs, je reste avant tout un client de son café. (Sartre 17)

The same predisposition not to talk is also Jodoin's: "sauf en cas de nécessité absolue, il ne m'est quasi jamais arrivé d'amorcer une conversation avec qui que ce soit depuis mon départ du collège Saint-Étienne. Ma propriétaire, Mme Bouthiller, fait toutefois exception. Il m'arrive de lui adresser la parole le premier. Pas souvent, mais ça arrive" (Le libraire 33).

However the similarity between these two passages can be extended to other areas. Jodoin's relationship with Mme Bouthiller, like Roquentin's with Francoise, is of sexual order. Both also use similar language processes to express the same thing: Jodoin's utterance: "il m'arrive de lui adresser la parole le premier. Pas souvent, mais ça arrive" is no more and no less than a paraphrase of Roquentin's "mais est-ce que je lui parle? Quelquefois, après dîner."

In more inclusive ways, Jodoin's actions, attitudes and discourse, besides being his own, are also twice doubled by the attitudes, actions and words of either Meursault or Roquentin, or both at the same time, depending on the circumstances of the diegesis. Jodoin's recurring "Peu importe" is also Meursault's voice. Allard's affirmation that "Meursault and Roquentin séjournent eux aussi à Saint-Joachin, en y éprouvant les mots et les maux de l'existence" can be understood as suggesting intertextual/hypertextual relationships between Le libraire, on the one hand, and both L'étranger and La nausée, on the other hand.
Like Allard, Brochu notes the existential affiliation of *Le libraire*. He specifically
draws Bessette’s novel closer to *L’étranger* and gives a general descriptive account of
how they are similar at the formal and thematic levels. In this respect he writes: “Et si
l’on tient à situer Bessette dans un courant de littérature existentielle, il est facile d’établir
un rapprochement entre *Le libraire* et *L’Étranger*; dans les deux cas, même remise en
question des valeurs - sociales chez Bessette, métaphysiques chez Camus; même
*indifférence* du personnage principale à ce qui l’entoure; et enfin, technique du récit
presque identique: ce sont deux récits à la première personne, à peu près de même
longueur, etc.” (101). For Brochu, the main issue in the novel is to present an existential
figure. He says: “Le véritable problème qu’il pose est celui [. . .] d’un individu
éminemment lucide, qui en est venu peu à peu à un état de résignation total au monde qui
l’entoure” (100).

Besides underlining the specificity of *Le libraire* as a novel deeply rooted in the
Québécois reality, Brochu notes that the novel’s literary merit is not so much the result of
its power of social contestation. It is the subtle portrayal of a personal tragedy (that of a
highly conscious individual reduced to a state of total resignation) which has succeeded
in giving full existence to the world of Saint-Joachin. In this respect he says: “La peinture
du milieu ne prend tout son relief que par le biais d’un drame personnel. C’est à travers le
narrateur que ce monde d’apparences qu’est Saint-Joachin acquiert une existence [. . .]
Et l’art de l’auteur se manifeste par en ceci, qu’il réussit à donner une existence non pas
aux personnages, puisqu’ils n’existent pas à vrai dire, mais précisément à leur *défaut
d’être*, à leur *manque-à-être*. L’auteur donne une consistance à ce manque en le plaçant
chez le narrateur lui-même” (100).
Brochu also explains Jodion’s resignation and his social contestation by measuring the distance between him and the author, Bessette. He claims that Jodoin comes closer to the author when there is social contestation, and the distance between them widens when Jodoin abandons this social role of contestation (100). To settle his final word on Jodoin, Brochu says: “Hervé Jodoin, somme toute, est un lâche; sympathique, soit, mais un lâche” (100). The reason for formulating such a statement on Jodoin is perhaps due to the fact that Jodoin betrays the social contestation Brochu expects of him. He always shows an attitude of indifference and resignation where he should, according to this expected social involvement, point out the absurd hypocrisies of the world around him. On the one hand he meticulously points out the absurdity of the Saint-Joachin world and condemns it; on the other hand, he does nothing to change this situation. He clearly signifies to the reader that it is not up to him to change things (it is not his business). Brochu supposes in regard to this attitude that Jodoin “se trouve, lui aussi, confronté à une éthique de l’engagement qu’il refuse. Je parle ici d’un engagement adulte, lucide, «déesespéré», qui ne se réclame d’aucune valeur pré-existante. Je parle de l’engagement sartrien dont Bessette, je crois, a compris les exigences mieux qu’aucun autre écrivain québécois, et auquel il oppose la mauvaise foi et la passivité”(101).

Brochu concludes his comparative survey of the two novels by discarding the possibility that Le libraire is an imitation of L’étranger:

N’en concluons pas, cependant, que Le libraire soit une imitation de L’Etranger. Le roman de Bessette est foncièrement québécois par la réalité qu’il décrit, les problèmes auxquels il s’attaque. D’ailleurs le problème du Québec, en un sens, est d’ordre « social » plutôt que « métaphysique ». Je
veux dire par là que nous n’en sommes pas encore arrivés à abstraire de notre expérience ce qu’elle comporte d’universel et que, forcément, notre réflexion sur nous-même recourt au langage du sociologue plutôt qu’a celui du métaphysicien. C’est une étape nécessaire. Avant de produire des philosophes, un people produit des poètes et des romanciers dont l’œuvre se présente comme une prise en charge immédiate du milieu. Cette prise en charge, Le libraire l’est. De là sa valeur et son importance. (102)

Unlike Allard, Brochu reads Le libraire comparatively in order to come out with the socio-biographic significance of the novel. The objective in drawing a parallel between Bessette’s novel and L’étranger is not to propose a reading based on textual (intertextual) relationships. And his evocation of L’étranger is not used in such a way as to explain how specific features function comparatively. For instance, he has not developed what he points out as Jodoin’s “drame personnel” in relation to Meursault as a tragic figure, despite his observation of this existential profile of personal tragedy that provides perhaps a universal aspect to the local color of Quebecois village life. Instead of discussing Jodoin’s resemblance to Meursault on the level of personal tragedy and how this tragedy is made public in both novels (Meursault presents himself as a romantic victim, Jodoin’s as a realistic and comic figure), he comes out with ambiguous comments on Jodoin. He does not indicate, for instance, in what terms Jodoin “est un lâche.” Is he “un lâche” in comparison to Meursault or any other existential figure? And I do not see the use of discussing Jodoin in relation to the author and then point out right after that Jodoin “est un lâche.”
Furthermore, Brochu points out that the similarities between the *Le libraire* and *L'étranger* do not mean that Bessette is imitating Camus. But he does not give any alternative relationship between these two novels to explain the similarities existing between them. With a kind of a protectionist attitude, he insists that *Le libraire* is deeply rooted in Quebecois literature, but he denies for this very literature the status of a mature ‘national’ literature emanating from a mature society in the same degree as other well-established literatures do. This is because he clearly declares that Quebecois society or culture is not yet ripe to give birth to philosophers. Statement such as “nous n’en sommes pas encore arrivés à abstraire de notre expérience ce qu’elle comporte d’universel” and “c’est une étape nécessaire. Avant de produire des philosophes, un peuple produit des poètes et des romanciers dont l’œuvre se présente comme une prise en charge immédiate du milieu. Cette prise en charge, *Le libraire* l’est. De là sa valeur et son importance,” are prejudicial ones. They can be taken to mean that Quebecois literature or culture has made significant progress but it is still fairly behind the advanced ones, may be the European cultures, which are more apt to produce philosophers. The point here is to point out the inappropriateness and paternalism of Brochu’s comment and his digression into issues that are not part of the domain of *Le libraire*’s relationship to *L’étranger*.

I do not understand why Brochu, in his discussion of *Le libraire*, comes up with a generalized sociological view about what a people is able to produce. Does he mean that *Le libraire* does not have the philosophical dimension that is very often attributed to *L’étranger*? Anyhow, Brochu discusses *Le libraire* in comparison to *L’étranger* and, in relation to this, he brings forth, perhaps consciously or unconsciously but indirectly, a value judgment about what/who is culturally advanced/superior and what/who is not.
This is what may be considered as a reproduction of a neo-colonial attitude that can perhaps be explained with more depth and detail by the ‘decolonizing the mind’ theories of anti-colonial thinkers such as Albert Mimi, Franz Fanon or Ngugui Wa Thiongo.

As a general conclusion, I can say that Brochu evokes the similarities between Bessette’s novel and *L’étranger* not because he wants to discuss textual relationships. Even though he sustains that these similarities are not of the order of imitation, he has not proposed any alternative way to deal with them. Rather, he comes out with sociological comments which undermine seriously his arguing on behalf of the authenticity of *Le libraire*. His comment which states clearly that before producing philosophers, a people/culture produces novelists and poets makes me doubtful about the motives of his evocation of the relationship between *Le libraire* and *L’étranger*. If he sustains that *Le libraire* is without contest deeply rooted in Quebecois literature, then why does he confine this very literature to its social relevance and underestimate its ability to translate philosophical issues and universal concerns. This is what allows me to conclude that Brochu evokes the similarities between *L’étranger* and *Le libraire* within the sphere of the traditional comparative approach that explains textual relationships in terms of power relationships.

In *Le roman à l’imparfait*, Giles Marcotte, like Brochu, observes the formal similarities between the two novels. He notes that among the references that are traceable in *Le libraire* (Sartre, Camus, Beckett, Kafka), the reference to *L’étranger* is the most important one. He writes: “La référence la plus fréquente, et sans doute la plus utile, est celle de *L’Etranger* de Camus, car elle se fonde sur le mode même du récit, les marques formelles du langage” (45).
Relying only on the opening two paragraphs of each novel, Marcotte describes succinctly the similarities between them as follows: “Première personne, passé composé; phrases brèves, sèches, écartant soigneusement toute marque d’émotion. Les deux textes s’écrivent sur le ton du constat, et le «Cela n’avait pas d’importance» de Bessette claque visiblement le «Cela ne veut rien dire» de Camus »” (46). Like Brochu, Marcotte discards the view of *Le libraire* as a simple and blind reproduction of *L’étranger*. “Le romancier du *Libraire*, de toute évidence, n’est pas victime d’une réminiscence fortuite; il *cite* Camus, comme il avait cité Balzac, Jules Romain et Gabriel Roy dans *La bagarre* et Claude Simon dans *L’Incubation*. Et il est normal, nécessaire même, que la citation soit le plus visible, là ou l’écriture se présente comme un langage vide, comme langage du vide”(46). In the same way as Brochu, Marcotte, at first sight, discards the victim status of the author of *Le libraire* by evoking multiple textual relationships. Marcotte singles out the recurrent reference to literary texts as an important aspect in Bessette’s fiction. For him, Bessette comes closer to Camus in the same way as he is close to a variety of other writers. He notes that the same process describing the relationship between Claude Simon’s novel *La route des Flandres* and Bessette’s *L’Incubation* also applies to the relationship between *Le libraire* and *L’étranger*. “Dans le cas de *La route des Flandres* comme dans celui de *L’étranger,*,” Marcotte observes, “Bessette imite littéralement; et c’est pour un écrivain, la seul bonne façon d’imiter, par les mots, les phrases, les formes. Son livre prolifique, dérive dans celui de Claude Simon, et celui de Claude Simon dans le sien” (50).

Unlike Brochu, Marcotte states clearly that the similarities between *Le libraire* and *L’étranger* pertain to the order of imitation. He also evokes *L’Incubation* and *La*
route des Flandres because the relationship between these two texts is quite similar to that between Le libraire and L'étranger; they derive from each other mutually.

If Marcotte considers Le libraire's recurring gesture towards Camus's novel as constituting a literal imitation of forms and language usages, this does not mean that he looks at textual relationships in terms of power and unidirectional relationships proper to influence. Marcotte thinks that the relationship between Bessette's novel and Camus's, like the relationship between Bessette's L'incubation and Claude Simon's La route des Flandres, is a bidirectional one. It is part of literary practice stemming from the broader view that texts are interrelated and interact with each other in many ways.

What is, however, noticeable in Marcotte's observation is that the relationship of derivation he establishes between each of the two pairs of novels (L'incubation/La route des Flandres and L'étranger/Le libraire) is much akin to what Genette defines as the transformation relationship between hypertext and hypotext. In this respect he says: “J'appelle donc hypertexte tout texte dérivé d'un texte antérieur par transformation simple (nous dirons désormais transformation tout court) ou par transformation indirecte: nous dirons imitation” (14). This kinship between this definition of hypertextuality and Marcotte's above mentioned observation allows me to assume that Marcotte tends to think in terms of textual relationships rather than power relationships in his comparative discussion of L'étranger and Le libraire.

Marcotte's conclusion is that Bessette imitates the formal devices of L'étranger and he specifies that the imitation of formal structures is the single best way for the writer to imitate. Here Marcotte's observation implies that there is good/successful imitation and bad/degrading (unsuccessful) imitation. My purpose is not to identify which of the
two characterizes the relationship between *L'étranger* and *Le libraire*. I want just to note that what Marcotte considers as “la seul bonne façon d’imiter” might be closer to one of Genette’s transformational processes characterizing hypertextuality. The imitation Marcotte is speaking about can perhaps be developed as hypertextuality since it corresponds to Genette’s notion of “imitation” which he defines as the complex and indirect transformation leading from hypotext to hypertext. Genette illustrates this notion by giving the example of the derivation relationship of the *Aeneid* from the *Odyssey* (6).

Besides observing in broader terms some aspects of the similarities between *Le libraire* and *L'étranger*, Marcotte also notes some differences between Jodoin and Meursault. Marcotte sustains that three major points differentiate Jodoin from Meursault. The first point is that Jodoin knows himself but this is not the case for Meursault: “mais on lit trois mots, dans le texte de Bessette, qui sont radicalement étrangers à celui de Camus : « je me connais ». Meursault ne se connaît pas, ne cherche pas à se connaître; il se pose comme étranger, radicalement, à toute tentative d’explication de lui-même, de ses actes, du monde” (46). To single out Jodoin’s specific difference from Meursault, Marcotte carries on to state that “Jodoin [...] se connaît, s’analyse, se défend, ne fût-ce que dans son for intérieur” (46).

The second one is that Jodoin, like Meursault, is an anti-hero but he has to control the manifestation of heroism in his own discourse by intervening with different metadiscursive devices, whereas Meursault has not to carry out such a task (46-47). And finally, Marcotte notes Jodoin’s profuse humour and the absence of this aspect in Meursault. He explains this difference by pointing out that Jodoin’s recourse to humour is, in a way, necessary in order to differentiate himself from Meursault. In this respect
Marcotte says: "un autre indice de la distance qui sépare Jodoïn de Meursault nous est donné par l’humour, que le premier pratique avec une sorte d’enthousiasme ricaneur, et dont le second est résolument privé, parce qu’il n’en a pas besoin" (47). The intriguing point in what Marcotte says here is this particular emphasis on Meursault’s needlessness of humour by using ‘italics’. Why does Marcotte single out this particular difference by putting it in italics? Does this connote that Jodoïn needs something additional in comparison to Meursault in order to appear different and thus avoid being a double copy of Meursault? Apart from such a supposition, Marcotte’s recourse to italics in order to stress one of the differences between Le libraire and L’étranger remains outstandingly ambiguous and unclear.

However, what I point out is that Marcotte disguises in ‘italics’ what he does not want to say clearly about the relationship between the two novels. He applies a kind of self-censorship perhaps in order not to touch at the sensitive issue pertaining to the integrity of the author of Le libraire. To put it in other terms, Marcotte says obliquely (in italics) what he avoids to say overtly, and this obliqueness needs to be revisited at least at the level of the reader whom the italics concern. This is because Meursault’s needlessness for humour (stressed in italics), implies that he is a complete and self-contained figure, of course in comparison to Jodoïn. Therefore, Marcotte implicitly suggests that the relationship between Jodoïn and Meursault cannot develop in terms other than a unidirectional exertion of power from the part of Meursault since the latter is in no need to come closer to other figures because the overall image Meursault incarnates is complete. Marcotte’s emphasis that Meursault does not need humour when he adds “parce qu’il n’en a pas besoin” can be interpreted as a closing door in front of Jodoïn’s
potential to redefine Meursault. This is what confines Jodoîn in the cliché of the double copy of Meursault.

Moreover, Marcotte’s claim that Jodoîn uses humour “avec une sorte d’enthousiasme ricaneur” means that such a humour is an exaggerated one and it oversteps the boundaries of social satire. In other words, this means that Jodoîn’s humour is unnatural and not so much oriented towards the society he derides. Rather, it is oriented quite beyond the Saint-Joachin social milieu in an attempt to reach an imposing figure whose constituent features are complete and cannot be transcended. Marcotte deals with Jodoîn’s hysteric humour as if not being a specific aspect of Jodoîn. It is an accessory Meursault is aware of but does not use precisely because of his completeness. In this way, Marcotte reduces Jodoîn’s humour to a simple ornamental gesture as if Jodoîn needs to mark his difference from Meursault by feigning excessive humour to show an additional value in order to validate himself.

As a final note, I can say that, specifically, Marcotte’s emphatic stress of a difference by using italics gives rise to serious doubts about the nature of his succinct comparison of Le libraire and L’étranger. At first sight Marcotte’s comparison tends to be hypertextual because he evokes the transformative process by the imitation of forms and language usages. But he does not go further to explain how Bessette’s imitation of forms functions between and across texts. Therefore, his use of italics instead of elaborating his point communicatively and discursively undermines the seemingly hypertextual premise with which he has started the comparative survey between the two novels.
The final analysis leads me to claim that both Brochu and Marcotte reproach Jodoin for what perhaps they cannot overtly reproach Bessette. I wonder why Brochu, makes a decisive value judgement when he says: “Hervé Jodoin, somme toute, est un lâche; sympathique, soit, mais un lâche,” (100) emphasizing on the word “lâche” by repeating it twice. Since Brochu is comparing two novels; therefore, he is supposed to remain within the parameters of comparison. Jodoin is “un lâche” in comparison to what or to who? Is he “un lâche” because he refuses the slightest commitment even to the very values he promotes, values, like freedom, faithfulness to oneself? Is he “un lâche” because, unlike Meursault, he has accepted to play the social game, by being an accomplice of his boss, Mr. Chicoine? Or, is he a base betrayer since he has accepted to carry out the plan to evacuate the prohibited books in return for money?

Camus explained in the American edition of L’étranger that Meursault was not a liar because he refused to play the social game. He said: “le héros du livre est condamné parce qu’il ne joue pas le jeu [and] il ne joue pas le jeu parce qu’il refuse de mentir” (qtd. in Achour 41). He refers perhaps to Meursault’s refusal to follow his lawyer’s advice not to tell the truth about his feelings at the death of his mother. Meursault’s refusal to hide his true feelings surrounding the death of his mother has been used by the prosecution as a proof that he is a potential criminal. It is in this sense that Meursault refuses to play the game. He stays faithful to himself at the cost of the death penalty. However, Meursault thinks that one should never give way to playfulness. After producing intra-intertextually the story of Le malentendu (Fitch, Narcissistic 89-90), Meursault arrives at the following conclusion: “J’ai dû lire cette histoire des milliers de fois. D’un coté, elle est
invraisemblable. D’un autre, elle était naturelle. De toute façon, je trouvais que le voyageur l’avait un peu mérité et qu’il ne faut jamais jouer” (124-125).

Unlike Meursault, Jodoin sees the whole of the social milieu and the cultural atmosphere of Saint-Joachin, in their different aspects, as being out of date. He thinks there is no meaningful reason that certain authors should be censured because their ideas are also out of date, as in the case of Voltaire. He is also convinced that it is not up to him to change things and hence his fully assumed distance from any social commitment. The fact that he takes part in the evacuation of the very books that are at the centre of the hidden hypocrisies he derides mercilessly can be considered as a betrayal of his self-commitment, namely not to commit himself to any cause. But this can be explained by Jodoin’s philosophy of pragmatism that has often been neglected when compared to Meursault.

I have already mentioned Brochu’s confinement of Quebecois literature to primordial social concerns. What is not, however, seen in Jodoin is his declared philosophy of pragmatism as going hand in hand with his stance of an existential figure he shares with Meursault. Jodoin has made it clear that besides his attitude of indifference to the world around him, he also appropriates this very world in terms of its usefulness and utility to his own advantage in order to come out of it a winner. This binary combination of both attitudes is present all through the novel. Life to Jodoin is meaningless so far as it does not bring something positive, useful and advantageous to his own life. He is ready to take advantage of anything provided he is going to win and be satisfied. This explains his role in the evacuation of the books in order to turn the whole situation to his own advantage, namely return back to Montreal, to borrow Joyce’s words
“with a little of the ready.” Life for Meursault is meaningless and his pleasure and satisfaction is to look at it as such.

It is, therefore, possible to suggest that both Marcotte and Brochu perhaps share Ferron’s view that Bessette criticizes Quebecois society by using foreign tools. But instead of expressing this clearly as Ferron does, it springs out in their comparative surveys of *Le libraire* as a slip of the tongue. This is the interpretation I can come out with from what is pointed out as ambiguous in both Marcotte’s and Brochu’s comparisons of *Le libraire* and *L’étranger.*

I have to add that Bessette settled for good in the neighbouring majority English-speaking province, Ontario, because of the teaching position he had at Queens University in Kingston. That he criticized a prototype of a Quebecois village society from the outside might be displeasing for Quebecois literary critics. It is possible that the profuse textual references *Le libraire* displays, among them the reference to *L’étranger,* suffer from such a discontent. This is where lies the risk that textual relationships might be interpreted with less objectivity and more digression into personal views.

Moreover, *Le libriare* irritated its own author. Bessette was certainly affected by the boomerang effect of the alchemy he created in *Le libraire.* He revealed, in an interview with Jean Fisette, his complex relationship with the novel: “j’avais peur de ne plus sortir du *Libraire*; qui m’agace. On me parle trop du *Libraire* à mon goût, et pas assez des autres romans” (Fisette 320; *Les dires* 129).

Why *Le libraire* irritated its author is not a question I am attempted to answer. It might be true that a literary work becomes irritating to its own author precisely when it is very often seen, with a kind of “consolidated vision,” through the lenses of another
author. An ordinary reader of fiction can perhaps easily suggest a descriptive label to the relationship of *Le libraire* to *L'étranger*. André Vanasse underlines this facility when he says: "tout lecteur le moindrement averti ne peut s'empêcher de reconnaître, dès les premières pages, un pastiche de *L'étranger*" (512).

We have noticed that the similarities between the two novels are motivated by *Le libraire*’s ambition to express difference from *L'étranger*. On the ground of existential values (or lack of values) Jodoin and Meursault are twins. Concerning the world view Jodoin vehicles, *Le libraire* multiplies signs to express hypertextually its difference from *L'étranger*. For instance, Jodoin can be seen as a pragmatic North American figure in comparison to Meursault, and Jodoin multiplies signs to mark this difference. This, however, has not been noticed in the comparisons I have cited above, hence my attempt to explore this field where evident similarities subsume not radical differences but serious divergences. These divergences lay in measuring comparatively how Meursault and Jodoin translate their daily lives and narratives. This is what characterizes my attempt to engage in and suggest new comparisons.
III. Towards new comparisons: *Le libraire’s* transtextuality

A close reading of *Le libraire* reveals that the nature of its relationship to *L’Étranger* will not be figured out in such an easy and hasty way as Vanasse suggests. Above all, *Le libraire* establishes various kinds of textual relationships not only with *L’Étranger* but also with a variety other texts. Therefore, it is the study of these relationships that would perhaps determine whether *Le libraire* is similar to, influenced by, a parody or a pastiche of *L’Étranger*. I will, therefore, attempt to show how these (trans)textual relationships become possible and meaningful through different processes of transformation proposed by Genette Gérard in *Palimpsestes*. The focus is not only on *Le libraire* and *L’Étranger*. Other texts such as *La nausée, Les demi-civilisés, Le malentendu* and Kafka’s “Dans la colonie pénitentiaire” will be integrated with varying degrees in order to enhance our argument and demystify the confinement of *Le libraire’s* textual relationship just to *L’Étranger*.

I draw inspiration from Gérard Genette’s notion of hypertextuality and particularly from his revision of classical parody and his proposition of “la parodie sérieuse” (33) which is a genre of hypertextual relationships. He defines this modern version of parody as “le détournement de texte [par un processus] de transformation minimale” (33). Among the six different hypertextual practices Genette suggests (37), those which have “serious” function are certainly the appropriate ones to describe the relationship of *Le libraire* to its hypotext, *L’Étranger*. This is because the parodic reorientation of *L’Étranger* is non-satirical; the satire in *Le libraire* is social. It is directed towards the established hypocrisies in Saint-Joachin. *L’Étranger* undergoes textual transformations or imitations in a rather serious manner. As a preliminary observation,
the mechanisms of reorientation and distortion of the hypotext pertaining to "parodie sérieuse" and the serious function of this reorientation are the labels that are closer to the description of these textual transformations.

Since the functional relationship that ties Le libraire to its hypotext is not satirical, this allows wiping out "caricature" and "travesty" from the six categories of Genette's hypertextual practices (37). I also discard pastiche and parody "à caractère ludique" because of their uncommitted nature.

*Le libraire* does not imitate or transform *L'étranger* with a gesture of distraction, or within the proclaimed task to kill time for amusement. The transformation can mean a play with words. But the objective of this play functions also as a "détournement parodique" of a serious nature. Therefore, what I retain from parody is the seriousness of its transformative operation and not its playful side. And "pastiche" does not respond to the serious nature of hypertextual transformations because its uncommitted nature connotes what Marcotte indirectly suggests as the gratuitous side of imitation (50). Out of the six hypertextual practices (37) Genette suggests, the most appropriate ones to describe hypertextually the relationship between *Le libraire* and *L'étranger* are the transformation and imitation of a serious nature. They are the new forms involving a parodic "détournement" of the hypotext which Genette defines as forgery and transposition.

The text's display of textual signs to reach the hypotext might be less ostensible and thus its status of hypertextuality would not be overtly declared. For instance, to use Genette's examples, Marcel Proust's *Vergile travesti* declares overtly its hypertextuality and its function as a "travestissement burlesque" of its hypotext, Virgile's *Énéide*. 
Joyce’s *Ulysses* also declares paratextually and allusively its relationship to Homer’s *Odyssey* (Genette 15). This is not, however, the case for *Le libraire*. Of course hypertextuality in *Le libraire* is easily noticeable through the various textual and formal structures but it is not overtly declared paratextually and metatextually as the case of *Virgile travesti*. With the exception of a few textual indices which allusively suggest a relationship to *L’étranger*, there is no overt and direct paratextual sign declaring both to the reader and to the hypotext *Le libraire*’s hypertextual ambition. For this reason, the reader’s intervention is necessary to force the text to deliver its hypertextuality (Genette 16).

Genette has made it clear that “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” (16). It is in this sense that the reader’s intervention becomes useful because of the necessity to decide interpretively where the text’s hypertextuality is suggested with less evident textual indices. For instance, both the “Safe all” (6) and the “Kruschen” (37) salts, as evoked in *Le libraire* and *L’étranger* respectively, will be subject to an interpretive decision in order to sort out meaningful transtextual relationships.

To show the text in a wider context of textual relationships, other texts are going to be evoked. For this reason, I refer to Sartre’s *La nausée*, J. C. Harvey’s *Les demicivilisés* and Kafka’s “Dans la colonie pénitentiaire” in order to show that *Le libraire* is not restricting its textual relationships just to *L’étranger* and that *L’étranger* itself feeds its textuality by various relationship to other texts.
Hypertextuality and intertextuality are often declared in a text through textual signs that attract the attention of the reader. They are either novelistic utterances, as I mentioned earlier, corresponding to what Kristeva defines as the unit of semeanalytic and intertextual study of the novel (*Le texte* 13), or narrative situations and textual indices (words, names, scenes) suggesting possible parallels whose construction and completion becomes the reader’s task.

The narrative utterances become indices of intertextuality when they manifest in at least two texts. They function dialogically between and across texts in such a way as to suggest a multiplicity of meanings. The textual indices are of different kinds. They can be titles, subtitles, names of places or characters that evoke for the reader other texts.

Genette claims that “l’hypertextualité se déclare le plus souvent au moyen d’un indice paratextuel qui a valeur contractuelle” (15). To illustrate his idea, he gives the example of the paratextual function of the title of Joyce’s novel *Ulysses*. He says: “*Ulysses* est un contrat implicite et allusive qui doit au moins alerter le lecteur sur l’existence probable d’une relation entre ce roman et l’*Odyssée*” (15).

The indice Genette evokes here is akin to what Michael Riffaterre calls elsewhere “connectives.” In this respect Riffaterre writes:

> There are indices which direct readers towards the specific and relevant intertexts, and indeed compel them to look for these intertexts [. . . ]

These signposts are words and phrases indicating, on the one hand, a difficulty—an obscure or incomplete utterance in the text—-that only an intertext can remedy; and, on the other hand, pointing the way to where the solution must be sought. Such features, lexical or phrasal, are
distinguished from their context by their dual nature. They are both the problem, when seen from the text, and the solution to that problem when their other, intertextual side is revealed. They therefore belong equally in the text and the intertext, linking the two, and signalling in each the presence of their mutually complementary traits. Accordingly I shall call them connectives. (56)

The connectives become problematic because of their being situated in the intersection of at least two discourses. For Riffaterre, it is up to the reader to fill the gap created by the utterances that belong both to the text and the intertext (56). The search for the intertext is not enough to complete the gap created by the textual point where texts intersect. The text does not evoke the intertext solely for the sake of intertextuality or to display a cultural knowledge to compel the reader to be an active reader. It evokes the intertext because it is doing something to it or with it.

It is in this light that the reader's reception of the textual evidence of intertextuality or hypertextuality becomes a reaction or a response. My task therefore is to see how the indices of intertextuality and hypertextuality provided in Le libraire suggest significant parallels and different transtextual relationships primarily with L'étranger and in the second place with La nausée and Les demi-civilisés.
1. Paratextuality

According to Genette, paratextuality is the implied relationship that links, in an explicit or implicit contract, the text to its paratext. The paratext can be the text’s title, subtitle, forward, or any comment or illustration that is not part of the text. The paratext is the text’s forefront sign of its hypertextual ambition (Genette 9). The title becomes the paratextual means by which both reading and writing becomes re-reading and re-writing.

On the surface, the paratextual status of the title, “Le libraire,” does in no way manifest a hypertextual relationship to L’étranger. But the paratextual relationships of both titles to their respective texts can give birth to significant parallels between them and which may account for hypertextual relationships.

The first implied paratextual relationship Le libraire suggests can be observed in its orthography and morphology. Both words “étranger” and “libraire” have exactly the same number of letters and vowels. At the formal level of word building, a communication between both texts is launched right at the forefront paratextual sign of Bessette’s novel. By counting the letters of each word, we find out that Le libraire corresponds to, and communicates arithmetically with L’étranger. The minor and logical difference is that the letter “é” of the modifier “Le” is swallowed but replaced by an apostrophe. And L’étranger keeps its ten graphic symbols constituting its formal script. The direct mechanical transformation through substitution of letters (Genette 13-14) applies to the transformation process between the ten graphic symbols of L’étranger and the equivalent number of letters in Le libraire. From the observation of these correspondences between the two titles, we can point out that Le libraire announces paratextually, and perhaps unconsciously, its hypertextual relationship and parallelism to
L'étranger. The title, *Le libraire*, suggests, in concealed and less evident manner, its paratextual function as an indicator of the text’s hypertextual ambition.

Jodoin, the diary writer and the librarian, has perhaps measured the title of his narrative arithmetically in the same way as he measures allusively his room: “La chambre [ . . . ] a onze pieds sur huit et demi exactement. Je l’ai mesurée un soir que je n’avais rien à faire” (*Le libraire* 5). Marcotte observes that the dimension of Jodoin’s room connotes, at a larger scale, the dimension of a blank standard sheet of paper. He concludes that Jodoin, besides being the diary-writer, he is also an “arithmomane” (44). Like Marcotte, Françoise Iqbal has also noticed that Jodoin is a “fervent de l’arithmomanie” (344). The arithmetic correspondence between the titles *L’étranger* and *Le libraire* is, at the outset, arbitrary. But taking into account both Marcotte’s and Iqbal’s observation, Jodoin can be seen as an architect of his own text who measures paratextually the title of the text to announce its hypertextuality to *L’étranger*.

Ben.-Z. Shek’s observation pertaining to the morphology of the title “*Le libraire*” can also be set in a significant parallel to *L’étranger*. Shek sees the title of Bessette’s novel as a reflexive and a metaliterary one. He says : “On pourrait lire le titre, homonymiquement ainsi: *Le libre air*, ou, anaphoniquement, *La libre aire*, ou *La libre ère*, tous les trois, suite à «la victoire», pointant vers un avenir possible” (133). Marcotte states that Jodoin “est bien l’homme de la Révolution tranquille” (48). Robidoux considers *Le libraire* as an epitome of the era of liberty (139) that was going to sweep Quebec. It is in this sense that Shek’s splitting of the title suggests a wind of change that would liberate Quebec from the weight of the clerical power.
As long as *L'étranger* refers to Meursault and vice versa, the same splitting of the title “Le libraire” applies to the word “Meursault.” This allows for building up an indirect formal parallel between the two titles. “Meursault” can be split into “mert/soleil”, two terms which are very common in Camus’s writing. They also represent the two basic things in Meursault’s physical environment where his relationship to the world becomes meaningful. Meursault’s life becomes sublime when he is caressing bodily the sea, the sand and the sun. It is possible also to obtain “meurt/sot” in the sense that he dies an absurd death because he does not want to play the social game. And the combination of the two words resonates as “il meurt comme un sot.” The translation of this sentence word to word can be formulated as: “he dies like a coward.” This explains Meursault’s stubborn refusal to seize the opportunity of extenuating the circumstances of punishment when the judge offers him help provided he accepts Christian faith. Meursault’s refusal to follow the Judge’s perspective can be seen as a serious lack of wit and of pragmatism.

The third observation is that both titles function as a subject complement. They both define the state of an individual, “L’étranger” is Meursault and “Le libraire” is Jodoin. Both nouns are used to identify a person within a social structure. The noticeable difference is that *Le Libraire* refers to a state of a person in terms of its social activity; whereas, *L’étranger* refers to a state of a person in terms of its relation to a whole.

Right from the titles, I can notice the decidability and pragmatism of Jodoin, “le libraire,” and the cynicism of Meursault, “l’étranger.” Literally speaking “le libraire” is a person who fulfils the role of a librarian. The person is in the action; he/she is precisely what he/she is doing; working with and for books in a space reserved for books; shelving books, classifying them, selling them, and so on. In this case the title of the novel *Le*
*Libraire* embodies and anticipates the pragmatism of Jodoin through active and meaningful action.

Unlike "le libraire," "l'étranger" has an ambivalent order of reference. It may refer to the spiritual alienation of an individual who is not necessarily alienated socially. It may refer to a state of an individual who is not part of a geographical/geo-political entity. It may also refer to all these situations combined together. This ambivalence suggested by the title of Camus’s novel is perhaps symptomatic of Meursault’s experience of the paradoxical status of the place expressed in Camus’s *L’envers et l’endroit* translated as the *Right Place and the Wrong Place*.

If the different parallels developed between both titles allow me to see the title of Bessette’s novel as being imbedded with a concealed paratextual function pointing at *L’étranger*, it is not, however, evident to make this observation right at the first sight of the novel’s title. It only emerges when the reading of the novel is complete that we come back to the title to ponder upon it and inquire about how it manifests a hypertextual relationship to *L’étranger*.

It is perhaps easier to see the paratextual function of the title of Bessette’s novel in relation to Sartre’s *La nausée* since the library is at the centre of Roquentin’s life in Bouville in the same way as “La librairie Leon” (15) is at the centre of Jodoin’s life in Saint-Joachin. Another more evident paratextual sign in *Le libraire* is the date of the Jodoin’s penultimate diary entry. Unlike all its preceding entries which are dated without mentioning the day, the diary writer specifies the day for this entry as “*Mercredi, 8 mai*” (*Le libraire* 73). This systematically sends the reader to Roquentin’s penultimate diary entry which is titled “*Mercredi: Mon dernier jour à Bouville*” in which he relates his last
day at Bouville before traveling by train to Paris (*La nausée* 224). Jodoîn’s diary entry
dated “*Mercredi, 8 mai*” relates also part of the events of his last day in Saint-Joachin. By
displaying this correspondence with Roquentin’s last day in Bouville, *Le libraire* shows a
strong paratextual gesture of its hypertextual relationship to *La nausée*.

However, it is perhaps easy to notice that the text of *Le libraire* manifests in
different ways and at various occasions, mainly through different and less overt indices or
connectives, its relationship to *L’Étranger*, but there is no apparent and direct paratextual
sign alerting the reader about the hypotext *L’Étranger*, in the same degree as Jodoîn’s
diary entry on Wednesday alerts the reader about perhaps *Le libraire*’s deliberate
relationship to *La nausée*.

I, all the same, notice that the word “étranger” is evoked three times in *Le
libraire*. Right at the beginning Jodoîn is referred to as being “étranger” to the place,
Saint-Joachin (*Le libraire* 4). Second, Mlle Galarneau, Jodoîn’s colleague employee,
considers Jodoîn as “[un] étranger sans expérience” as he has accepted the job at
Leon’s book store (78). And finally Jodoîn reports that le père Manseau has remained
“impassible et étranger au débat” (69) after the selling of l’*Essai* has become a topic of
gossip at “*Chez Trefflé*.” Here paratextuality is used in an inverted way. Instead of the use
of titles or subtitles that direct reader’s right to *L’Étranger*, the narrator in *Le libraire*
integrates the title of Camus’ novel as word within the text in order to refer to the
different states of being “étranger.” The word “étranger” in *Le libraire* may then function
as Genette’s indice of hypertextuality or Riffaterre’s connective.

According to Genette’s definition of the paratext as being inherent in the text’s
“titre, some-titre, intertitres” and all the other secondary signs surrounding it, “préface,
postface...etc” (9), I notice that *Le libraire* displays no direct paratextual sign in the direction of *L'étranger*. Arithmetic, therefore, becomes the only efficient tool to count for hypertextual relationships where paratextual data are missing. Paratextuality is translated by the different parallels that can be established between the titles. However, hypertextuality in *Le libraire* is expressed in the different textual indices that are also traceable in *L'étranger* as well as other direct or implied indices which direct readers to other texts such as *La nausée* and *Les demi-civilisés*.

2. Hypertextuality

According to Genette, hypertextuality is the relationship of derivation of one text (hypertext) from another text (hypotext). *Le libraire* does not display its hypertextual ambition only to one hypotext but to a number of other texts depending on the context in which its textual relationships are discussed. When I consider its different indices of hypertextuality or connectives of intertextuality, the hypotexts that come to mind are, in the first place, *L'étranger*, and in the second place, *La nausée*. This classification may be arbitrary, since the analysis of certain aspects in *Le libraire* (the diary structure and the framing setting) might posit *La nausée* in the first position. On the other hand, within the context of the Quebecois novel, *Le libraire* can be seen hypertextually in relation to *Les demi-civilisés*. *Le libraire*'s hypertextuality can therefore be seen as multiple, and hence the demystification of the overstated and overestimated relationship to only one text, *L'étranger*. 
2.1 *Le libraire* and *L’étranger*

There are in *Le libraire* various kinds of indirect but evident references to *L’étranger*. Significant parallels can also be established between the two novels by relying on those textual elements in *Le libraire* which can be accorded the status of connectives or indices of hypertextuality.

Because of its phonetic resonance as Meursault, the word “Manseau” can be seen as a paratextual indice of hypertextuality or a connective suggesting the status of *L’étranger* as an intertext or a hypertext. The evocation of Fernandel in *Le libraire* also accomplishes the same function. The movie Meursault and Marie Cardona see at the cinema is a comedy of Fernandel. Jodoïn evokes Fernandel to satirize the plight of his boss, Mr. Chicoine: “je me dit qu’il ressemblait un peu à Fernandel” (*Le libraire* 47-8).

I also note the overwhelming number of expressions having the same meaning or meaninglessness in both novels: “cela ne veut rien dire,” “peu import,” “ça n’a pas d’importance” as well as less recurring ones such as “j’éprouvai la curieuse impression” (*Le libraire* 65) and “et j’ai eu l’impression bizarre” (*L’étranger* 132). “Chez Trefflé” can also be seen as suggesting hypertextuality between the two novels because of its parallelism with “Chez Célèste.” The same thing can be said about the “Safe All” salts which corresponds to the to the “Kruschen” salts. Both names are inserted within narrative utterances which manifest various levels of transtextual relationships.

“Chez Trefflé” is the name of the tavern where Jodoïn spends about seven hours a day (except on Sunday) drinking beer beside his table neighbour, the old man named “le père Manseau.” “Chez Trefflé” corresponds to “Chez Célèste,” the restaurant which is one of the signposts of Meursault’s life in Algiers besides the beach, the cinema, his
room and his office. Again direct transformation by substitution of letters shows clearly
the relationship of derivation of the first from the second name, since the word “Trefflé”
contains the same number of letters as “Célèste.” “Chez Célèste” undergoes both a direct
transformation at the level of orthography and a geometric translation (projection) to
another context and setting. Through these processes of transformation and translation,
“Chez Célèste” in Algiers takes its new script in oblique form and becomes “Chez
Trefflé” in Saint-Joachin.

The evocation of “Chez Trefflé” is the the diegetic point where texts intersect.
Besides Jodoin’s regular routine of beer drinking at “Chez Trefflé,” he also meets le père
Manseau, a name which can function in a mirroring effect as to reflect both Jodoin and
Meursault. Chez Trefflé becomes the diegetic situation where the action slows down and
Jodoin’s hypertexual interaction with Meursault takes place through the reflexive
function of le père Manseau. The evocation of “Chez Trefflé” systematically announces
the appearance of le père Manseau.

Le vieux Salamano in Meursault’s story can at the outset be set in parallel with le
père Manseau. But le père Manseau resonates phonetically as Meursault and shares
similar characteristics along with both Jodoin and Meursault. For these reasons, we can
suggest that le père Manseau functions reflexively in such a way as to read both Jodoin
and Meursault in the very image le père Manseau incarnates.

The people Jodoin knows are his Boss, Léon Chicoine, his other women
employees, Madame Buhler, the divorced woman from whom Jodoin rents a room and
Fred, the waiter at Chez Trefflé—his relationship to these people is basically of functional
and situational nature. Jodoin’s only relationship that has a humane character is that
developed (or which has not been developed enough) with le père Manseau at Chez Trefflé.

The relationship between Jodoin and le père Manseau can be set in parallel with the one between Meursault and Salamano. This is what suggests at the outsets that le père Manseau stands in parallel to "le vieux Salamano" in L'étranger. Salamano is presented as being tied up to his dog in a life-time relationship of dependence and reciprocal violence. Le père Manseau is also tied up to his beer at Chez Trefflé for a life time with awareness that for sixty-two years things have not changed in Saint-Jaoin (Le libraire 70).

Apart from the relationships made necessary by Jodoin's daily routine, work at the book store, drinking beer at Chez Trefflé, Jodoin is not interested at all in socializing or sympathizing with the people of Saint-Joachin. The socially furthest relationships he has been able to develop is that of neighbourhood, namely with le père Manseau at Chez Trefflé.

Salamano is also Meursault's real neighbour. They both live in the same building and Meursault's flat is facing Salamano's. Considering the fact that le vieux Salamano and le père Manseau also lead solitary lives and are described physically as being old men, it is easy to establish a parallel between the two. But so doing might quite likely be a result of hasty comparisons between the two novels. Close examination of characterization in both novels leads me to suggest that le père Manseau is much like Meursault and Jodoin.
The conversation between Jodoin and le père Manseau seldom goes beyond an exchange of signs and the grumbling of a few words to greet each other. In one of his reports about le père Manseau Jodoin says:

Si bien que, en entrant Chez Trefflé ce soir-là […] j’inclinai la tête en direction de mon voisin qu’on appelle le père Manseau, un régulier comme moi que je voyais tous les jours depuis un mois sans jamais lui adresser la parole. Il me répondit par un grognement en tournant vers moi sa face tannée, taillée à coups de serpe. Puis, saisissant son buck de ses doigts noués par l’arthrite, il prononça d’une voix râpeuse:

-A votre santé, Monsieur Jodoin.

-Merci Monsieur Manseau. A la votre

Là s’est bornée notre conversation. Le père Manseau n’est pas loquace. Moi non plus. Nous avions simplement voulu établir des relations de bon voisinage. Ensuite nous n’avons rien à nous dire et nous n’avons rien dit. (30-31)

The same trait of personality can be traced in Meursault. What makes Meursault different from all the others, according to Célèste’s witnessing at the court is that Meursault “ne parla[t] pas pour ne rien dire” (93). Like Meursault, le père Manseau is not a talkative person. The first and last conversation he has had with Jodoin is to warn him about the risk he is running in opposing the religious authorities in Saint-Joachin. Le père Manseau signifies to Jodoin that he is not concerned with what goes on around him but he, all the same, points out to him that he is newly arrived in Saint-Joachin and advises him in an unselfish manner about the omnipresent power of the father priests in
Saint-Joachin: “Au fond, c’est pas ça [‘contrer les curés’] qui me dérange. Mais c’est pour vous dire, vous comprenez…” (70).

Jodoin’s reception of le père Manseau’s advice has taken a philosophic turn. Jodoin does not retain le père Manseau’s advice that it is not in Jodoin’s advantage to oppose the priests. Rather, he retains his feeling of solidarity and brotherhood manifested at this single occasion where le père Manseau has felt the need to speak:

Je m’apperçus que je serrais la main au père Manseau. Je ne sais s’il se rendit compte de mon émotion. Peu probable. Il n’en laissa, en tout cas rien voir. Sans doute, sa mise en garde ne m’apprenait-elle rien de nouveau. Je savais à quoi m’en tenir. Mais c’était l’intention qui me touchait, le sentiment de fraternité, de solidarité peut-être que le père Manseau avait voulu exprimer – la fraternité d’un simple voisin de table tenu à l’écart par ces concitoyens bien-pensants à cause de son alcoolisme…(70)

Camus’s view of social commitment and resistance is encompassed within this motto: “solitaire mais solidaire.” This view is well expressed in the story of La peste. Under the threat of the epidemic disease, all the characters have given up, each his specific solitariness, to fight all together against “la peste”. Jodoin understands le père Manseau’s warning in this Camusian sense of “solitaire mais solidaire.”

In passing, it is convenient to mention also the parallelism of opposition between Jodoin’s affiliation to le père Manseau and the priest’s evocation of “Le père Sagehomme” (Le libraire 25, 44-5) as reference for recommended reading. Le père Manseau stands in opposition to “Le père Sagehomme.” The religious connotation of the
word « père » is appropriated and deconstructed by associating it to the word “Manseau.” Jodoin shows simultaneously his existential profile by his affiliation to Meursault/Manseau and his anti-catholic attitude by the parallel of opposition between “Le père Sagehomme” and le père Manseau. Jodoin sees wisdom/sagesse in le père Manseau and not in “Le père Sagehomme.” We can suggest that Le libraire encompasses within this parallelism of opposition between the two names what L’êtreanger exposes profusely as Meursault’s atheism and anti-Catholicism.

All through the novel, there is a constant parallelism that is maintained between Jodoin and le père Manseau. They both perform the same gestures and adopt the same behaviour at Chez Trefflé and always meet each other at the same place. They each salute each other in a similar manner. They each sit alone and drink beer. All these elements of parallelism combined with the absence of conversation between Jodoin and le père Manseau gives me the impression that Jodoin is before a mirror contemplating his own image, exchanging few words with himself in the mirror but unable to start a whole conversation. As already mentioned, at the only occasion le père Manseau breaks silence and addresses Jodoin, this latter hears Camus’ words and not the literal speech of père Manseau. Precisely, this lack of speech combined with the reciprocal sharing of traits and gestures between Jodoin and his tavern neighbour is just an alternative way for Jodoin to project his own image or to express the sight of his own image in the portrait of le père Manseau which, in return, functions, through the different textual signs, as a portrait of Meursault, or as Meursault at “Chez Célèste” in Algiers being transplanted as le père Manseau at Chez Trefflé in Saint-Joachin.
All through the story, the mirroring effect at the encounter of Jodoin and le père Manseau is always there: same gestures, same simultaneous silence of the one and the other and exchange of greetings occur as in a mirroring effect. Here Jodoin describes his daily encounters of le père Manseau at *Chez Trefflé*: "chaque fois que je revois le père Manseau, c’est-à-dire tous les jours sauf le dimanche, j’incline la tête en sa direction. Il répond par un grognement et soulève son verre de quelques pouces. Au moment de partir, en se levant, il grogne de nouveau, et moi, je lui dis au revoir" (31).

As the gossip reaches the tavern after Jodoin’s selling of the *Essai*, Jodoin notes that le père Manseau has remained “impassible et étranger au débat” (69). He reports his daily observations of le père Manseau by using the very words that describe Meursault: “impassible,” “étranger,” “taciturn” in such a way as to enhance his own image as well as caricature Meursault in the portrait of le père Manseau.

Jodoin signifies metatextually but indirectly, through the different functions of the portrait and the name of le père Manseau that he does not duplicate Meursault; he parallels him and that is it. They meet each other, they spend the course of day at the same but transformed tavern close to each other, they have measured the distance between each other to good relationships of neighbourhood and parallelism and there Jodoin seals a hypertextual contract with Meursault. It is in this sense that the scene of Jodoin and Meursault can be reformulated to bring out their mirroring function.

Furthermore, since Jodoin designates his tavern neighbour as “le père,” would not it be possible to see in this the parental relationship between Jodoin and Meursault, namely that which has been already pointed out by Allard? Is it possible to see in the diegetic situation and reflexive function of le père Manseau, Jodoin’s affiliation to the
existential profile incarnated by Meursault? These are just rhetorical questions to point at how characterization in *Le libraire* may derive hypertextually from the figure of Meursault in *L’étranger*.

Other textual relationships are conveyed by those narrative utterances where more evident similarity between the two novels can be noticed. Both Marcotte and Vanasse refer to the following two passages (the opening paragraphs in both novels) to illustrate their observation of the evident relationship of *Le libraire* to *L’étranger*. The similarities are actually governed by a variety of textual transformation. The opening of *Le libraire* runs as follows:

Ma première démarche en arrivant à S-J, a été de me chercher une chambre. Il me restait qu’une cinquantaine de dollars et je ne voulais pas coucher à l’hôtel. Une fois installé là, je me connaissait, j’y serais resté indéfiniment.


So is the opening of *L’étranger*:

L’asile de vieillards est à Marengo, à quatre-vingts kilomètres d’Alger. Je prendrai l’autobus à deux heures et j’arriverai dans l’après-midi. Ainsi, je pourrai veiller et je rentrera demain soir. (9)

Besides Marcotte’s observation of the similarities at the formal level, I also note that the announcement of the death of the mother anticipates the eventual death of Meursault. In the same way the opening of the story with the arrival of Jodoin announces his return to Montreal at the end.

A similar observation can be made regarding the use of the same accessories for the setting, the departure of Meursault by bus and the arrival of Jodoin by the same means of transportation. Both passages have almost the same length and the number of paragraphs is the same. Also the number of sentences is almost the same.

The first paragraph in each passage contains basically three sentences. “Ça n’avait pas d’importance” is displaced to close the second paragraph. It can be inserted in the first paragraph without affecting the meaning whatsoever. “C’était peut-être hier” in the first paragraph in L’étranger can be removed because it is stated twice. With these minor changes we can obtain the same number of sentences in both paragraphs without affecting their meaning. These observations are just an attempt to push the parallels to their limit. Since just in the space of two paragraphs, an overwhelming number of parallels has been developed, the opening of Le libraire can, therefore, be seen an enunciation of the novel’s hypertextual relationship with L’étranger.

I have already discussed comparatively the titles of each novel in terms of the transparency of the one and the ambiguity of the other; the pragmatism of the one and the hesitancy of the other. Following this view about the titles, Le libraire displays a
structure of hypertexual gestures to the hypertext, *L’Étranger*, in an attempt to translate specifically the discrepancy between Jodoin’s pragmatism and Meursault’s idealism.

In the example that follows, *L’Étranger* is evoked by means of a paradigmatic replacement of the “Kruschen” salts with “Safe All” salts. Here Jodoin exposes the inconvenience of his beer intake and the way he resolves it:

> Le seul inconvénient sérieux, c’est que mon organisme supporte difficilement la bière. Je m’explique : ce n’est pas l’absorption qui me gêne, mais l’élimination. A partir du septième ou huitième bock, j’éprouve des brûlements dans la vessie. Pendant quelques jours, j’ai cru vraiment qu’il me faudrait renoncer à la bière.

> Mais, en parcourant le journal, j’ai découvert l’annonce d’un sel antiacide vraiment remarquable, le sel Safe-All. J’en ai acheté une bouteille. Une bonne dose entre le troisième et le cinquième verre, et mon malaise se limite à un échauffement fort bénin. *(Le libraire 6)*

Any reader of *Le libraire* will perhaps notice the similarity between this passage and the following one: “Un peu plus tard, pour faire quelque chose, j’ai pris un vieux journal et je l’ai lu. J’ai découppé une réclame des sels Kruschen et je l’ai collé dans un vieux cahier où je mets les choses qui m’amusent dans les journaux” *(L’Étranger 37)*.

Here Jodoin signifies clearly his pragmatism even though he espouses an existential profile similar to Meursault’s. He appropriates Meursault’s own actions and discourse and invests them with a different meaning. Looking carefully at what both Meursault and Jodoin make of the salt advertisement, a fundamental difference emerges between the two acts. Jodoin is curing his excess of beer absorption with ingurgitations of
the "Safe All" salt; whereas, Meursault amuses himself by cutting and filing the same salt with a different name in "le vieux cahier."

What is more important in the hypertextuality as it is evoked by the salt advertisement is the parodic deviation of the hypotext from its object (Genette 18). The solution Jodoin finds to his excessive absorption of beer is no more and no less than a parodic transformation and deviation of Meursault’s aimless and meaningless gestures.

Between these two passages, I notice one of the parodic transformations pertaining to hypertextual relationships between texts which Genette describes as "parodie minimale" (24). In this respect he explains that "la forme la plus rigoureuse de la parodie, ou parodie minimale, consiste donc à reprendre un texte connu pour lui donner une signification nouvelle, en jouant au besoin et si possible sur les mots" (24). He considers that this kind of parody as "la plus élégante, parce que la plus économique, [elle] n’est donc rien d’autre qu’une citation détournée de son sens, ou simplement de son contexte" (24).

The original passage in the hypotext, L’étranger, undergoes both direct and complex transformations characterizing hypertextual relationships (Genette 12-3). Direct transformation, according to Genette, consists in changing the formal constituents (letters, words) or structure of a sentence in order to obtain a new/different meaning (13-4). And complex transformation, which he calls also imitation, consists in producing a limitless number of mimetic performances which are informed by a generic model established by the hypotext (13).

Before proceeding with how the transformations operate, I have to note first that Meursault’s reading of the newspaper ends up with an action which is seemingly
meaningless: cutting of the Kruschen salt advertisement and filing it with the things that amuse him in the newspapers; whereas, Jodoin’s ends up with finding out a solution to his organic difficulty to evacuate the consumed beer. Jodoin puts it clearly that “une bonne dose [of the same matter Meursault cuts out from the newspaper but with a different name, Safe All salts] entre le troisième et le cinquième verre, et mon malaise se limite à un échauffement fort bénin.”

This compound sentence: “j’ai pris un vieux journal et je l’ai lu” undergoes both transformation and imitation and becomes “en parcourant le journal”. The imitative clause “en parcourant le journal” is no more and no less than one of a number of linguistic variations or performances of the same generic model, or semantic competence. For instance, other performances like «en feuilletant le journal» or «en jetant un œil sur le journal» mean the same thing but in different ways.

Direct transformation follows promptly this imitation. “J’ai découpé une réclame des sels Kruschen et je l’ai collé dans un vieux cahier où je mets les choses qui m’amusent dans les journaux” has completely been diverted from its object by substituting few words for others. “Découpé” is replaced paradigmatically by a verbal performance of the same category, “découvert”. And again imitation and transformation come back to substitute the word “réclame” with a synonymous word “annonce” and also another version of the same product “Safe-All” comes to replace “Kruschen”.

In a mimetic manner as well as through a process of transformation, Meursault’s reading of the newspaper and his cutting of the salt advertisement change into: “en parcourant le journal, j’ai découvert l’annonce d’un sel antiacide vraiment remarquable, le sel Safe-All.” But this transformation produces at the end a parodic twist which directs
me to a context and a meaning completely other than the surface meaning Meursault suggests, namely to do something meaningless just to kill time or to amuse himself. The parodic twist resides in Jodoin’s unsuspected seriousness when tells me that the salt resolves his health problem caused by his excessive intake of beer. In return, the suggested meaning of this twist resides in the pragmatic and practical function of the salt advertisement as a problem solving source when compared to its apparent grotesque meaningfulness in the way Meursault evokes it.

Moreover, the word “Safe All” is simultaneously a parody and a transformation through direct substitution of the word “Kruschen.” “Safe All” can be taken to mean literally a means of problem solving in all kinds of situations. It is Jodoin’s means to surmount his health problem. It can function allusively and metatextually as an antidote to what can be seen, by default of not considering writing as rewriting, as textual contamination.

Meursault files his Kruschen “réclame” in the old note book where he collects things that amuse him in newspapers. But he evokes this note book just at this occasion and he never refers to it in his narrative. This is what makes the reader believe at first sight that the whole scene of the “Kruschen” salts is evoked merely as a way of killing time among many ways. Meursault’s collecting an advertisement of a sterilizing matter (salts) without any projected practical purpose becomes an absurd and meaningless gesture because of its gratuitousness and the improbability to get pleasure out of it. What Meursault is doing with the advertisement may therefore be received, in the immediacy of the action, as a mockery in front of the reader’s face precisely because of the cynicism underlying its evocation.
The similarity between the two passages cited above is evident since Jodoin reproduces almost literally Meursault’s very words and actions. The appropriated text, both in its content and form, is reoriented not only to something meaningful but also to the revelation of one of the basic differences between Jodoin and Meursault. Unlike Meursault, Jodoin does not induce an absurd situation when he discovers the “Safe All” salts. Instead he appropriates this sterilizing matter in a pragmatic manner; the salt becomes meaningful because of its utility. The similarity of action and style turns out to a parodic twist when Jodoin redirects the parodied text to his own advantage: “j’en ai acheté une bouteille [of Safe All]. Une bonne dose entre le troisième et le cinquième verre, et mon malaise se limite à un échauffement fort bénin.”

Genette’s definition of minimal parody as a “citation détournée de son sens, ou simplement de son contexte”(24) applies here perfectly. Jodoin picks up the advertisement Meursault drops into a suspended and incomplete meaning, alters its trade mark and inserts it back to the functional and commercial roles we expect of it.

First the salt advertisement becomes practically useful since it dissolves Jodoin’s bladder pain. Second the advertisement is ontologically destined for sale and I do not understand what satisfaction Meursault pulls out of it other than signalling his cynical attitude towards life. Unlike him, Jodoin goes, in a pragmatic and realistic manner, straight to his business. He discovers the salt and buys it because of its utility. Jodoin is satisfied with the miraculous curing effect of the salt and he is no longer deceived to interrupt his daily routine: drinking beer at Chez Trefflé.

Jodoin parodies Meursault, as the advertisement scene suggests, stressing his pragmatism as being a fundamental aspect of his world view or philosophy of life. And
he is doing this by disorienting Meursault’s words and actions from their initial path. He integrates coherently and functionally in his narrative the very actions that Meursault isolates. The pasting of Kruschen advertisement in the old notebook stands alone, cut off from the events of the story, as a gratuitous and futile action. And it is precisely this gratuitousness of action that gives rise to a feeling that the whole scene is absurd. Jodoin has skilfully turned this absurd situation to his own advantage by making it useful and meaningful. It is in this sense that we consider Jodoin as a pragmatic figure in comparison to the mystic figure Meursault incarnates.

The apparent similarity between the two novels can be explained with a certain degree of objectivity in terms of the transformation processes of hypertextuality proposed by Genette. Quebec critics (Marcotte, Brochu and Vanasse) have done nothing more than announcing their observation of the similarity between *Le libraire* and *L’étranger* and stating passages in both texts in support of this without a deeper exploration of the different textual relationship *Le libraire* displays. *La nausée* and *Les demi-civilisés* are also outstanding hypotexts in *Le libraire*, but the focus of the above critics is only on le *Libraire*’s relationship to *L’étranger*. 
2. *Le libraire, La nausée* and *Les demi-civilisés*

*Le libraire* also entertains hypertextual relationships with other texts. *La nausée* and *Les demi-civilisés* can be discussed as hypotexts informing different thematic and formal structures displayed in *Le libraire*. *Le libraire*’s hypertextuality is, therefore, multiple and not directed towards *L’étranger* only.

Jean Charles Harvey’s *Les demi-civilisés* informs at various levels different issues raised in Bessette’s *Le libraire*. At the thematic level as well as the level of characterization and narration, there is a certain degree of complementarity between the two novels. The theme of censorship, for instance, culminates in *Le libraire* and this culmination becomes meaningful only when we look at Jodoin as an extension and refinement of Max Hubert.

André Belleau qualifies *Les demi-civilisés* as “le roman pilote [car] il annonce avec netteté certains des traits les plus constants d’un grands nombre de romans ultérieurs jusque dans les années soixante” (73). *Le libraire* displays textual relationships that situate it contextually in a continuum with Harvey’s *Les demi-civilisés*.

In his introduction to a 1966 edition of *Les demi-civilisés*, Harvey points out the clergy’s overall control of cultural production and of readership. He says:

> ce roman, paru en mars 1934, s’efforçait de peindre certain milieu petit-bourgeois de Québec et autres lieux. ... Vers la fin d’avril, Son Éminence le cardinal Villeneuve, archevêque, interdisait *Les demi-civilisés*. Son décret publié dans *La Semaine Religieuse*, défendait aux fidèles, sous peine de péché mortel, de lire ce livre, de le garder ou diffuser de quelque
façon. On imagine l’effet d’une condamnation si complète et fulminée de
si haut.” (7)

The clergy’s enterprise of censorship did not succeed to remove *Les demi-civilisés*
from the market but it cost its author the loss of his job as a *rédacteur en chef* of *Le
Soleil*. If Harvey’s novel had actually been one of the targets of the Clergy’s censorship,
Bessette’s novel *Le libraire* was, to borrow the famous post-colonial motto, “writing
back” to the religious ideology in Quebec that made use of censorship to assert its power
and control over society and culture.

The clergy and its politics of censorship is, from the thematic point of view, the
main *raison d’être* of Bessette’s protagonist, Hervé Jodoin, in *Le libraire*. From a post-
colonial point of view, it is possible to consider the clergy as a centre of hegemonic
power. Its politics of survival is foregrounded on the necessity to marginalize the merest
manifestation of liberal ideas that may threaten its established authority. Censorship is
therefore used as a means to push back to the margins of society and culture all the forces
of change and novelty. Control over books and mass media is the effective way to carry
out this task. The scandal caused by the circulation of Voltaire’s *Essai sur les moeurs* in a
school ruled by the good fathers of Saint-Joachin is immersed in this context.

From a literary point of view, *Le libraire* can be seen within both an existential
context as well as a specific Quebecois context. *Le libraire* translates both contexts in a
harmonious and non-contradictory way. Both Brochu and Marcotte classify *Le libraire*
in the category of the new novel in comparison to the traditional novel. According to
Brochu, the main character of the new novel is either a socially alienated individual or a
stranger from the inside (Brochu and Marcotte 15). For Gilles Marcotte the protagonists
in the new novel are “hippies” who look for individuality and not maturity as the
protagonists in the traditional novel do (Brochu and Marcotte 25).

*Les demi-civilisés* can be considered as a traditional novel in its different formal
aspects but the content of its narrative discourse is the very subject matter of the new
novel. In this light, *Le libraire* appropriates the content of Max Hubert’s narrative
discourse and translates it hypertextually into live action.

Like Jodoin, Max Hubert is the first person narrator and protagonist of the story in
*Les demi-civilisés*. For instance, what Max says in the following passage informs, to
certain degree, the course of action of Jodoin’s story. Here is the passage:

[ . . . ] depuis que j’ai appris brutallement qu’il me serait impossible de
vivre en cette ville sans abdiquer le meilleur de moi-même, sans amoindrir
ce que j’aime le mieux en mon être, sans contrefaire moralement les
boiteux, les paralytiques, les goutteux et les culs-de-jatte, tous les infirmes
du crétinisme régnant, il me prend une envie folle de ne plus rien
demander à personne, afin que, livré à mes seules forces, je puisse démolir
ce que je voudrai, bâtir ce que je voudrai, adorer ce que je voudrai, bref,
enrichir ma personnalité et celle des autres. (*Les demi-civilisés* 136)

Max refers to an established socio-cultural order which inhibits the emergence of any
sense of individuality. He decries in a polemic manner the socio-cultural conflict which
creates the individual’s sense of a stranger from the inside. Max evokes the circumstances
which compel him to go through an experience of displacement and conscious alienation
in order to point out the hypocrisies of the world around him. The status of deliberate
alienation (or of a stranger from within) which is particularly translated by Max’s
decision to abstain from addressing the world that no longer understands him is, for Max, a way of re-appropriating the self.

Jodoin adapts into action what Max produces as a polemic discourse. In other words, Jodoin is doing what Max is thinking. We can read Jodoin’s story in the very flow of Max’s polemic ideas. Max derides the anonymous “ville” where he lives in the same way Jodoin mocks Saint-Joachin. Both Jodoin’s first departure from the “Collège Saint-Étienne” and second departure from Saint Joachin can be seen as a translation into action of Max’s feeling of alienation and revolt when he says: “[il m’est] impossible de vivre en cette ville sans abdiquer le meilleur de moi-même [. . .].”

I have seen that Jodoin’s story starts from the loss of his job at and his departure from the “Collège Saint-Étienne.” Jodoin explains in the entry of his diary dated “7 avril” that “sauf en cas de nécessité absolue, il ne m’est jamais arrivé d’amorcer une conversation avec qui que ce soit depuis mon départ du Collège Saint-Étienne” (33). Jodoin’s taciturn nature, (as well as perhaps le père Manseau’s, Meursault’s, and Roquentin’s) can be seen as Max’s consummation of his “envie folle de ne plus rien demander à personne.” This shared taciturn attitude is not pathological. It is perhaps existential; it is the outcome of Max’s consciousness of the impossible reconciliation with the world around him. We can say that Jodoin is also, to borrow Jacques Allard’s words, “[un] proche parent” of Max Hubert. Jodoin has achieved what Max desires to realize.

The intertextuality of *Les demi-civilisés* is not evident in *Le libraire* since there are no indices which directly or allusively refer the reader to Harvey’s novel. But Jodoin can be seen as evolving from a model of a Quebecois narrator protagonist born with Max Hubert. If Marcotte claims that the protagonist of the Quebecois new novel looks for
individuality and not maturity, this applies only partially to Jodoin. Jodoin attains individuality when seen within his existential profile. But he also attains maturity when he is considered in continuum with Max Hubert. The individuality of Jodoin can be translated as Max Hubert’s belated maturity.

*Le libraire* also refers to Sartre’s *La nausée* in significant ways. Jodoin tells me “il m’a fallu quatre dimanches d’ennui nauséeux” (35) before deciding to start his diary. Jodoin’s four nauseating Sundays can be seen as a connective of intertextuality or as an indice alerting the reader about *Le libraire*’s hypertextual relationship to *La nausée*. Ben-Z. Shek, sees this reference to *La nausée* as an instance of intertextuality designed to enhance “la diégèse et le discours” (124).

What is, however, noticeable is that Jodoin evokes *La nausée* in relationship to his diary writing enterprise. Jodoin’s decision to start a diary comes as the ultimate action which transforms his “dimanches nauséeux” into a narrative of his own life in Saint-Joachin. Roquentin’s enterprise of history writing in Bouville is displaced to Saint-Joachin. Allard suggests this view when he says, as already mentioned, that Roquentin “lui aussi séjourne à Saint-Joachin.” Jodoin’s nauseating Sundays in Saint-Joachin become doubly significant as a life experience undergoing a metamorphosis to become a re-writing experience. Jodoin’s diary writing can also be seen as another version of a narrative writing provided in Roquentin’s diary in *La nausée*.

Besides the evocation of the four nauseating Sundays, *Le libraire* entertains a close relationship with *La nausée* by displaying a number of other textual connectives or hypertextual indices. “Saint-Cécile,” the place where the evacuation of the prohibited books has been arranged (*Le libraire* 94) is the town which “L’Autodidacte” evokes as a
place where he discovers “le vrai mystère de la messe” (La nausée 163). Jodoïn’s “détournement” of the load of books from its original destination, “Saint-Cécile,” seals a hypertextual relationship with La nausée and enhances Jodoïn’s rejection of the religious fervor of the Catholic Church.

The local newspaper “Le courrier de Saint-Joachin” also corresponds to Le Journal de Bouville which Roquentin reads at times. Jodoïn’s fifth entry dated April can be set in parallel to the last entry of Roquentin diary dated as “Mercredi: Mon dernier Jour à Bouville” (La nausée 224). Both entries evoke the theme of censorship. Jodoïn transposes to “La librairie Leon” the same young school boys of “La bibliothèque de Bouville” and distinguishes among them the same serious reader, who is going to acquire L’Essai (Le libraire 42-3; La nausée 228-9). The triangular setting (room/café or tavern/book store) also structures the daily action in a similar way in both stories. The book repository is at the centre of both Jodoïn’s and Roquentin’s narratives. Jodoïn works at the book store of Saint-Joachin, while Roquentin is writing his history book about M de Rollebon at the library of Bouville.

In the following scenes, Jodoïn reproduces with slight variations what Roquentin observes as he goes in “la salle de lecture” of “la bibliothèque municipale.” Roquentin begins the entry of his diary dated “Samedi midi” as follows:

L’Autodidacte ne m’as pas vu entrer dans la salle de lecture. Il était assis tout au bout de la table du fond; il avait posé un livre devant lui, mais il ne le lisait pas. Il regardait en souriant son voisin de droite, un collégien crasseux qui vient souvent à la bibliothèque. L’autre s’est laissé
contempler un moment, puis lui a brusquement tiré la langue en faisant une horrible grimace” (*La nausée* 60).

Jodoin reproduces a similar scene but with an additional note of humour: “Parce sur mon tabouret, la visière rabaissee sur les yeux, accoudé au comptoir, un livre ouvert devant moi, je roupillais comme d'habitude lorsqu'un collégien au visage criblé d'acné, un béret sur la tête, est venu me demander *L'Essai sur les mœurs*” (35). Like L’Autodidacte, Jodoin is not reading even though a book is under his eyes: “Grâce à ma visière, on croit maintenant que je lis. Il n’y a que Mlle Placid qui ne soit pas dupe. Elle a remarqué que je ne tourne jamais les pages de mon bouquin. Ce qu’elle ignore, c’est que même éveillé, je ne les tourne pas davantage” (35). Jodoin always produces a humouristic note to downplay or outwit the world around him. His replies at various occasions (to Martin Nault, to his boss, to his employee colleagues, to the father priest) very often end up with a humouristic twist presenting Jodoin as the ultimate winner.

Both Jodoin and L’Autodidacte are facing the same scene and in a similar décor. They both face the same “collégien [ . . . ] qui vient souvent à la bibliothèque/la librairie” (*La nausée* 60; *Le libraire* 42) but who presents different physical appearances depending on the occasion. Jodoin’s “collégien” wears a face “criblé d’acné,” while L’Autodidacte’s is a “crasseux.” To L’Autodidacte’s look and smile, “le collégien” responds with a comic distortion of the face and a hippy-like attitude signifying perhaps a conflict of generations. Jodoin’s same look at the “collégien” produces immediately a reflected image of Jodoin’s identity: “J’ai donc regardé le collégien. Je le connais. Il vient souvent à la librairie. C’est l’un des moins bruyants. Il passe des heures à feuilleter des livres non coupés. J’étais comme ça, un dévoreur, à son âge” (*Le libraire* 42). Ben –Z Shek notices
the reflexivity of Jodoin in “le collégiens” and he even goes further to associate Bessette, the author, with the name of “le collégiens”: “Spéculair aussi est le rapport entre Jodoin et le collégiens boutonneux, Martin Guérard. (N’est-il pas permis de voir chez ce dernier le prénom du sujet de l’énonciation, Gérard Bessette?) [. . . ] le collégiens est lui aussi amoindri dans sa quête intellectuelle par les pères du Collège Saint Roch” (124-5).

Jodoin sees in “le collégiens” his own youth experiences. His decision to sell L’Essai to the young student can be seen as Jodoin’s business which he anticipatively evokes at his arrival to Saint-Joachin:

Quand le collégiens m’a demandé L’Essai, mon premier mouvement a été de refuser, de dire que nous ne l’avions pas. Car le lui vendre, c’est-ce-pas, ça pouvait causer des emmerdements [. . . ] Je fus quand même tenté de l’avertir que, en plus de couter cher, L’Essai sur les mœurs était un bouquin omnifère comme on en voit rarement. Mais à quoi bon? A cet âge-là, n’est-ce-pas, on est soupçonneux. Il se serait imaginé que je voulais simplement le détourner de «lectures dangereuses». Mieux valait qu’il se rendit compte par lui-même. J’ai donc été chercher le livre et je le lui ai donné. 42-3

I have stated that Jodoin’s coming to Saint-Joachin can be traced back to a conflict that opposes him to the authorities of “le Collège Saint-Étienne.” Through a silent complicity and self-reflexive identification with “le collégiens,” Martin Guérard, Jodoin revives and exacerbates this former conflict which is not exclusively his own experience but a shared experience of various characters whose inquiry for knowledge, freedom of thought and speech are controlled by the clerical authorities. Jodoin’s
experience as well as Max’s and “le collégien [‘s]” are one and the same. We can claim that Jodoin appropriates a collective experience and brings it to its limit. It is in this light that the selling of Voltaire’s *Essai* becomes significant in relation to the business Jodoin takes in hand. By selling of Voltaire’s *Essai*, Jodoin, the narrator, exhausts a theme which moves across Québécois texts of the pre-Revolution tranquille era.

Jodoin’s modest victory over the clerical authorities of Saint-Joachin and the hypocrite attitude of his boss, Mr. Chicoine, is also a victory over the beholders of a system which Max qualifies as “les boiteux, les paralytiques, les goutteux et les culs-de-jatte, tous les infirmes du crétinisme regnant.” Jodoin sees his victory dialogically when he says: “Je me sentis soulagé d’un grand poids. En fricotant ma petite transaction, j’observais ce d’une pièce deux coups: mystifié les bonzes de Saint-Joachin et roulé ce foireux de Chicoine. Sans compter que j’avais en poche mille deux cent dix dollars, une petite fortune qui me permettrait de vivre sans soucis peut-être une année complète” (*Le libraire* 96).

Jodoin’s victory is meaningful at different levels of reading. Bessette’s protagonist comes victorious out of a conflict which is not specifically initiated by the selling of the *Essai*. The conflict exists prior to Jodoin’s stay in Saint-Joachin, and it is perhaps the very conflict which is behind Jodoin’s loss of his job at “le Collège Saint-Étienne.” It may also be, by following this logic of retrospection, the conflict Max Hubert handed down to future generations. Jodoin’s selling of the *Essai* is no more and no less than the drop *qui fait déborder le vase*, and Jodoin, “le libraire,” is no less than the heir of a literary history who comes to terms with a thematic concern pertaining to a socio-cultural controversy that has affected the Quebecois novel for long. *Le libraire*
appropriates Max Hubert’s romantic and voracious cry against the religious order and translates it into pragmatic attitudes and actions seconded by an existential profile which is provided by Le libraire’s different transtextual relationships to L’étranger and La nausée.

It is in this sense that Jodoin’s commitment is meaningful. It is not a social commitment; it is cultural and textual. He has succeeded in bringing one of the main themes of Quebecois literature to its end through a blend of transtextual relationships. This is perhaps the reason Jodoin is seen as “l’homme de la Révolution tranquille” (Marcotte 48), and Le libraire as “[faisant] date dans l’histoire littéraire du Québec” (Shek 120). With Le libraire Quebecois literature turns a page in its history once and for all.

3. Archifextuality and metatextuality

“Appelons donc archifextualité la relation du texte à son architexte” says Genette in his Introduction à l’architexte (88). The text’s archifextuality becomes significant in the final and systematic attempt to go out of the text in order to reach the general principle, the model or the label that may provide a thematic or formal identity to the text. For instance Jodoin’s notion of “l’homme fini” is a general principle which also describes Meursault and Roquentin. This notion can figure as a paratextual declaration for the archifextuality of a story of an individual who has experienced a personal tragedy. The diary narrative as well as the model of a story as an ordinary life turning into an adventure or misadventure are at the outset the general structural paradigms which each text (Le libraire, La nausée and L’étranger) translates with different variations.
Architextuality also pertains to what we simply refer to as genre in literature. Genette considers architextuality as the most abstract and implicit type of transtextuality. He refers to it as “le statut générique du texte,” which the text itself is not supposed to know (11). For Genette a text can announce paratextually its architextuality by mentioning, in apposition to its title, its generic class (novel, poem, diary...). For instance Bessette’s book *Les dires d’Omer Marin: roman/journal* provides its literary identity, or genre, paratextually by specifying right in the title that the book is “a roman/journal.” This informs the reader that the book, thematically speaking, may be a mixture of fiction and biography. Of course, this should not be taken for granted because, for Genette, it is the reader’s task to determine whether a text is a novel, a poem, a diary, a comedy or a tragedy (11).

What is specific to *Le libraire* is that it expresses its architextuality metatextually in both direct and allusive ways. To decide whether Jodoin’s diary is a retrospective narrative, a novel, and within this category whether it is a tragic or a comic novel, depends on the different metatextual comments of the text on its own hypertextuality. As reminder, metatextuality is the text’s explanation on its own textuality.

The reason behind this belated discussion of metatextuality is that its manifestation in Jodoin’s text suggests a reading of itself and its different transtextual relationships. Here I will focus on how *Le libraire* reads its architextuality metatextually. I will deal first with the diary and its hypertextual derivation from a general model proposed in *La nausée*, and, in the second place, I will discuss the nature of *Le libraire’s* transformation of *L’étranger* in order to find out, out of the six hypertextual practices
Genette proposes (36-7), the identity of the hypertexual relationship that links them together.

Apart from the existential profile that unites Roquentin, Jodoïn and Meursault, the diary writing is also their common enterprise. They all are first-narrators of their own stories. Jodoïn and Roquentin are writing diary narratives, whereas Meursault is narrating his story as a diary without the formal aspects of a diary that both Jodoïn and Roquentin provide. Whether the three narrators are actually writing a diary or a novel is what is to be discussed as architextuality.

I have already seen that Jodoïn’s diary is hypertexually related to La nausée. Beside the diegetic transposition of Roquentin’s writing enterprise to Saint-Joachin, Roquentin’s diary may also serve as a model for Jodoïn’s. This is because La nausée is about the different implication of the diary as a general model of representation.

La nausée uses the diary narration not only as a framework for Roquentin’s narrative. The diary is also integrated metanarratively as the object of the very diary narration. The opening of La nausée is presented as a metacommentary on the diary writing. The novel opens as a non-dated entry of a diary about whether diary writing is appropriate to represent with verisimilitude the freshness of one’s perceptions and feelings. As its title, “FEUILLET SANS DATE,” identifies it, the first entry begins as follows: “Le mieux serait d’écrire les événements au jour le jour. Tenir un journal pour y voir clair. Ne pas laisser échapper les nuances, les petits faits, même s’ils n’ont l’air de rien, et surtout les classer. Il faut dire comment je vois cette table, la rue, les gens, mon paquet de tabac [. . . ]” (9). This definition of a diary describes perfectly the immediacy of narration in both Le libraire and L’étranger.
If an existentialist narrative recommends the use of the diary as a way of recording instantaneous impressions, meaningless or neutral daily gesture or events, Jodoin has accomplished this task without fault since he has marked his presence fully in his narrative. Like Roquentin in *La nausée*, Jodoin provides dates for his diary entries. But what is specific to Jodoin is that his diary is part of the story. Whereas, the diary in *La nausée* and also in *L’étranger* is just a structure.

Roquentin does in no way refer to the diary-writing as part of the action within the story. Rather, he refers to his enterprise of writing the biography of M. de Rollebon. Roquentin settles specifically in Bouville to use the different documents, “des lettres du marquis, un fragment de journal, des papiers de toute sorte,” available at “la bibliothèque municipale de Bouville” in order to reconstruct the life of “le marquis, M. de Rollebon” (*La nausée* 15-6, 198). Meursault’s pseudo diary of the first part is like Roquentin’s but without dates. The dates of the entries can only be induced by the reader on the basis of the time indications in the story. But the disjunction between the first part and the second part of the novel as well as the narrator’s unjustified vacuum between the killing of the Arab and the imprisonment of Meursault downplays the hypothesis of the diary structure in *L’étranger*. Because of this disjunction, Fitch has been at pains to decide “whether [Meursault’s story] is a diary or an inner monologue” (*The Narcissistic* 97).

*La nausée* which is announced as a diary does not develop fully as such but the diary is present in it only formally in terms of decorative dates. Roquentin is not quite sure about his biography or history writing enterprise; he refers to it as fiction when he says: “J’ai l’impression de faire un travail de pure imagination [et de recréer] des personage de roman” (*La nausée* 26). But at the end of *La nausée*, Roquentin unveils his
expectation that his achieved work might be received as a novel: “Je n’ose pas prendre de
decision. Si j’étais sûr d’avoir du talent…Mais jamais – jamais je n’ai rien écrit de ce
genre; des articles historiques, oui – et encore. Un livre. Un roman. Et il y aurait des gens
qui liraient ce roman et qui diraient : « c’est Antoine Roquentin qui l’a écrit [ . . . ] »” (La
nausée 249).

What Roquentin presents as a diary comes out at the end to be a novel. Jodoin
also comes out with a novel even though he still maintains up to the end of his story that
he is writing a diary: “En un sens, je regrette que ce journal soit terminé. Je pourrais
naturellement en commencer un autre” (Le libraire 97). But what is specific to Jodoin’s
diary in comparison to Meursault’s and Roquentin’s is that it is written in an exhaustive
manner, both as form and content, to the extent that Jodoin’s proclamation of it as such is
not to be questioned seriously by the reader.

The diary in Jodoin’s narrative is a sub-story which has a weekly frequency. The
writer of the diary in Le libraire applies perfectly to what La nausée recommends as the
different techniques of diary writing: “ne pas laisser échapper les nuances, les petits faits,
même s’ils n’ont l’air de rien, et surtout les classer” (La nausée 9). Jodoin’s
transformation of his nauseating Sundays into diary writing Sundays is implemented with
a method of classification and ordering of events as La nausée suggests. Jodoin refers to
his writing enterprise at specific moments in the narrative in order to announce the
different organizational prospects the diary requires as in: “mais procédons par ordre:
d’abord le cadre,” (Le libraire 13) “Mais procédons par ordre… Ce sera pour la semaine
prochaine,” (Le libraire 21) and “Mais ne mêlons pas les deux domines. Procédons par
ordre. D’abord l’amour (si l’on peut dire). Ensuite, le capharnaüm” (Le libraire 55).
Considering the different hypertextual gestures *Le libraire* performs in the
direction of *La nausée*, in Jodoin’s writing enterprise can be seen as another performance
of a diary model proposed in *La nausée*. The diary in *La nausée* is about Roquentin’s life
in Bouville until his eminent departure by train to Paris. Jodoin’s diary also relates the
same structure of the narrator-protagonist’s life story. The frequency of the diary in *La
nausée* is uneven, and only the first entry is dated fully, the dates of all the remaining
entries can be situated retrospectively to the date of the first entry. This is what enhances
the claim that *La nausée* is also, like *Le libraire* and *L’étranger*, a retrospective structured
in a diary form. Kellman perhaps suggests the same view when he notes that “*La nausée*
concludes with Roquentin’s decision to transform his life into a novel” (5). Kellman
considers *La nausée* as a self-begetting novel and its “project […] is to create a structure
within which its main character and his fiction come to life” (7).

This project is also *Le libraire’s*. What is, however, particular in *Le libraire* is that
Jodoin is not caught in Roquentin’s controversy at the end of *La nausée* about whether he
has written history or fiction, nor is he affected by the disjunction in the narrative
situation of Meursault. Jodoin undertakes his diary in a pragmatic, organized and
productive way. He ends up his narrative as a diary without any ambiguity, but the
project of this very diary is to come out with Jodoin’s own fictive story.

Kellman’s notion of the self-begetting novel can serve as a general descriptive
principle for *Le libraire’s* narrative structure and its content since Jodoin ends the
account of his life with a similar note as Roquentin does: “Mais il viendrait bien un
moment où le livre serait écrit, serait derrière moi […] Peut-être un jour, en pensant
précisément à cette heure-ci, le dos rond et qu’il soit temps de monter dans le train, peut-
être que je sentirais mon cœur battre plus vite et que je me dirais : «C’est ce jour là, à
cette heure là que tout a commencé.»” (La nausée 249). Jodoin also closes his diary with
Roquentin’s prospect (Le libraire 97). And the common prospect of both Roquentin and
Jodoin is to engage in writing retrospectively the content of the very diary we have just
finished reading. This corresponds to what Kellman reads in the closure of La nausée as
“an account, usually first-person, of the development of a character to the point at which
he is able to take his pen and compose the novel we have just finished reading” (3).

What downplays Jodoin’s diary is his knowledge that his writing enterprise in
Saint-Joachin is a comic adventure (Le libraire 70). Jodoin’s farewell to le père Manseau
is a moment of intense emotion for Jodoin. As le père Manseau takes leave of him after
advising him not oppose the priests of Saint-Joachin, Jodoin, overcome with emotion,
observes; “il [le père Manseau] s’éloigna, oscillant, écarquillé, de sa démarche raide de
pantin, sans presque plier les genoux […] Mon émotion tomba vite; heureusement, car
je n’aime pas être ému. D’ailleurs, ayant bu tout mon soûl, j’étais protégé des cinglures
du mondes extérieur. Je me laissais doucement flotter, considérant mon aventure comme
une comédie” (Le libraire 70).

Here Jodoin comments his own story. Precisely this specific narrative situation
where Jodoin has to depart from what I have argued before as his reflected image is
evoked within a metatextual context. I have already seen that the relationship between
Jodoin and le père Manseau translates metatextually the parallelism between Jodoin and
Meursault. Is it then possible to see in the separation of Jodoin and le père Manseau the
end of a long journey between the hypertext and the hypotext where the narrator
expresses metatextually the nascent architextuality of his text? Is Jodoin’s diary a comedy springing out of a transtextual transformation of Meursault’s tragedy in *L’étranger*?

The answer to this question depends on the discrepancy between the notion of “l’homme fini” which subsumes a personal tragedy and the story (of this very tragic figure) as a tragic or comic one. Both Meursault and Jodoin are tragic figures. Right at the beginning of both life stories, the dominant impression is that both protagonists enter into the scene as survivors of an individual tragedy whose symptoms are expressed by their attitude of indifference to the world. Jodoin explains this individual tragedy when he exposes his state of “l’homme fini” (*Le libraire* 86).

Both Meursault and Jodoin enter into the scene as “[des] homme[s] fini[s]” and with the consciousness that “to be or not to be” amounts to the same and “to do or not to do something” makes no difference. Both Jodoin and Meursault subscribe fully to the existential view that life is a vast and flat infinity in front of our eyes and it is useless to be involved actively within any project because there is no possible change in front of this flatness. This explains and justifies both protagonists’ life stories as nothing more than ordinary daily routines and their narratives as daily recording of events. Life for both protagonists becomes time which must be killed by doing something without any inherent purpose. But these daily life stories take different turns.

Meursault makes his tragedy public because he overtly, or out of a serious lack of wit, challenges the socio-political structure, the colonial (in)justice that is behind his very personal tragedy. He ends up with the expectation of his public execution. Jodoin’s inverts his personal tragedy into a comedy by inverting the consequences of his challenge to the religious order. Jodoin who enters into the story as a tragic figure ends up with a
modest victory: “Je me sentis soulagé d’un grand poids. En fricotant ma petite
transaction, j’avais fait d’une pièce deux coups: mystifié les bonzes de Saint-Joachin et
roulé ce foireux de Chicoine. Sans compter que j’avais en poche mille deux cent dix
dollars, une petite fortune qui me permettrait de vivre sans soucis peut-être une année
complète” (Le libraire 96). Mr. Chicoine, who is presented as a man of both economic
success and social rank, is cast in the expectation of his tragedy (his downfall) being
public.

Jodoin’s tragedy is, like Meursault’s, metaphysical and personal. He presents it as
a response and in comparison to M. Chicoin’s tragedy contained in the prospect of his
social and economic downfall (Le libraire 85-6) and also in kinship with Meursault’s
personal tragedy. Jodoin’s personal tragedy is a reinterpretation of his employer’s
eventual tragedy exposed in the notion of “l’homme fini.” Mr. Chioine is “un homme
fini” out of fear of economic bankruptcy and social downfall as a result of Jodoin’s
offence against the religious order by selling Voltaire’s Essai. Whereas Jodoin’s feeling
of “homme fini” is contained in the consciousness that life is not worth living which is
also Meursault’s. “L’homme fini,” for Jodoin pertains to “une certaine compréhension de
la vie, née d’expériences plutôt désagréables” (Le libraire 86) in a place marked by
controversial conditions which are “inadmissibles [and] révoltantes” (Le libraire 88). The
personal tragedy of both Meursault and Jodoin is metaphysical (philosophical) and it is
related to their respective experiences of a certain controversial status of the place.

When considered from their position of narrators of their own stories, Jodoin
develops his narrative in the opposite direction to that of Meursault. Meursault makes his
personal tragedy public (his story as a misadventure) in the sense that he addresses the
reader feelings in search for empathy by presenting himself as a romantic victim (Fitch, *L’Étranger* 152), of the colonial (in)justice which he criticizes with the enhancement of a hypertextual evocation of Kafka’s “La colonie pénitentiaire” (*L’Étranger* 170). Jodoin enters into the scene of Saint-Joachin as a tragic figure and goes out of it by the back door with the same personal tragic sense without any attempt to share it with the public. Instead, he leaves behind him a comedy whose appreciation depends on the position of the reader.

To decide whether Jodoin’s story is a tragic or comic one depends on various levels of reading; whereas, Meursault’s story is a tragic one. Mr. Chicoine reads a tragic-comic inversion of destinies. Jodoin reads a comedy where he has succeeded to shake the established order in Saint-Joachin: “j’avais fait d’une pière deux coups: mystifié les bonzes de Saint-Joachin et roulé ce foireux de Chicoine” (*Le libraire* 96) The French Canadian critics cited may see a social satire. And Glen Shortliffe suggests a not yet explored reading of *Le libraire* according to the taxonomic term of “metaphysical satire” to point out what the proponents of social satire fail to see. In this respect he writes:

The very heat of the battle waged over *Le libraire* served to concentrate critical attention upon “the sociological” aspects of the book. Looking back from this distance it now seems apparent that this critical tempest so obscured the vision of much of French Canada as to conceal from many the subtle expansion of a new and different kind of satire, a satire at once more broad and more deep [. . .] if a descriptive term must be found for this new brand of satire, perhaps the word “metaphysical” may serve as well as any. (43)
It is, however, challenging to see “metaphysical satire” in *Le libraire*. We have stated that *Le libraire*’s relationship to *L’étranger* is of a serious nature. But Shortliffe may be quite right when he suggests this term to open up a door for a different reading of *Le libraire*. It is perhaps only through the search for any philosophical criticism in *Le libraire* that we can perhaps surpass the univocal reading of it as social satire.

Jodoin’s farewell to le père Manseau is the point where divergence from Meursault’s story takes place. This very point may throw light on the nature of *Le libraire*’s relationship to *L’étranger*. This is because Jodoin’s metatextual comment on his own story as a comic adventure at the specific narrative situation where Jodoin takes leave of le père Manseau can be seen as an allusive and indirect declaration of *Le libraire*’s difference from the story in *L’étranger* as a tragic misadventure. The validity of this claim depends on the serious or satirical nature of the transformation process that establishes the passage from Meursault to Jodoin.

Instead of using Shortliffe’s term of “metaphysical satire” I would rather adopt Genette’s term “la parodie sérieuse” to account for “une forme d’hypertextualité d’une importance littéraire incommensurable à celle du pastiche ou de la parodie canonique” (Genette 35). And the hypertextual relationship that defines best the hypertextual passage from Jodoin to Meursault is what Genette coins as “transposition” or “forgerie” to account for the serious side of parody (36-7). These two hypertextual practices need to be narrowed respectively to “La transposition diégétique” which will account for transposition of Meursault’s diegesis in the new setting and “la continuation” (Genette 181-2) which will account for the rereading of Meursault in the skin of le père Manseau. Genette defines “la transposition diégétique” as:
Fictive ou historique, l’action d’un récit ou d’une pièce «se passe»
[. . . ] dans un cadre spatio-temporel [ou bien] historico-géographique que
j’appelle la diégèse [. . . ] une action peut être transposée d’une diégèse
dans une autre, par exemple d’une époque à une autre, ou d’un lieu à un
autre, ou les deux à la fois. Une telle transposition diégétique, ou [. . . ]
transdiégésation, ne peut évidemment aller sans, pour le moins, quelques
modifications de l’action elle-même [. . . ] La transposition diégétique
entraîne donc quelques transpositions pragmatiques. (343)

“La continuation” complements the transposition of Meursault in the new setting in such
a way as to see in le père Manseau a prospective adjustment of the relationship between
Meursault and Jodoin.

Particularly the absence of communication and the consolidated relationship of
neighborhood between Jodoin and le père Manseau consolidate the view that le père
Manseau is more a (trans)textual character than a fictive one. “Le père Manseau,” Jodoin
says, “est le seul Joachinois pour lequel j’éprouvais de la sympathie. Calme, stoïque,
taciturne, il me paraissait autrement sage que les gens qui s’agitten. Je regrettais alors de
n’avoir pas lié plus intimement connaissance avec lui, mon voisin de table près de trois
mois” (Le libraire 92).

According to Genette’s “transdiégésation,” le père Manseau at Chez Trefflé in
Saint-Joachin can be read as a transplantation of Meursault at Chez Célèste in Algiers.
The phonetic resonance of Manseau as Meursault and the adding of the word “père,” in
consort with the transplantation of the whole decor and action allow me to see in le père
Manseau, Meursault transplanted and revisited. This supposes that Meursault delivers
himself to the reader in such a way as to survive to his execution. In this light, Fitch considers that Meursault manipulates his narrative in order to create the effect of a “romantic victim” (L’étranger 152) and find refuge in the empathy of the reader. Le père Manseau becomes significant in a reading experience which extends Meursault to a certain hypothetical and compromising final meaning. Is it possible to see, in this case, in le père Manseau a Meursault resurrected from his victim status and to survive to old age and become mature and wise enough to the extent of deconstructing his youthful idealism?

Le père Manseau’s advice to Jodoin not to challenge power is significant in this sense: “Eh-bien c’est pas bon pour la santé icitte de contrer les curés. Les ficelles, c’est eux autres qui les ont, vous comprenez...” (Le libraire 70). However, this can be read as Meursault’s belated maturity that challenging the power in the name of ideals may lead to a tragic end.

Jodoin receives this advice both ironically and seriously. The irony is that, Meursault’s belated maturity is, for Jodoin, out of date. This is because Jodoin has his own ways for challenging power. Wit, tact, simulation and dissimulation (see Jodoin’s entertainment with the priest of Saint-Joachin, (Le libraire 46), the entertainments with his boss, (Le libraire 29-30 and 79-89)) are, for Jodoin, less heroic (Le libraire 79) but appropriate and pragmatic means to get at least a small bite of the flesh of the clerical power and the established socio-economic order in Saint-Joachin.

It is in this irony that we can read perhaps an instance of philosophical criticism which may allow for the possibility of considering Le libraire in terms of a “metaphysical satire.” This kind of criticism can perhaps take effect in Le libraire’s translation of the
same existentialist issues provided in *L’étranger* but within a set of pragmatic attitudes and transformations in order to enhance the idea that what matters in life is victory and satisfaction and not tragedy and loss.

On the other hand, Jodoin takes le père Manseau’s advice seriously since he sees in it a gesture of solidarity which is in accord with the Camusian world view expressed in “solidaire mais solitaire.” Jodoin’s ironical neglect of le père Manseau’s advice resonates more as a serious manner to display a difference within canonicity since this neglect is balanced by a solidarity which plays itself in the silent communication between the hypertext and the hypotext.

If *Le libraire*’s formal architextuality is presented with more evident hypertextual signs as a variation of a diary model forged by *La nausée*, its functional architextuality depends perhaps on various kinds of readings. From the social point of view, *Le libraire* is a comic novel. From a hypertextual view, it tends to be a “parodie sérieuse” of a personal tragedy that can be traced with varying degrees in Meursault as well as in Roquentin and Max Hubert.
Conclusion

Through the study of Le libraire’s different transtextual relationships, I have demonstrated that L’étranger is not, and cannot be, the only hypotext from which Le libraire derivates. La nausée also unquestionably figures as a hypotext in the textual agenda of Le libraire. Paratextually speaking, I have shown that Le libraire displays more evident signs towards La nausée than towards L’étranger. The date of the diary entry, “Mercredi, 8 mai,” in Le libraire is a strong paratextual sign which clearly points at La nausée. Le libraire’s paratextual signs to L’étranger, in their totality, are not overtly displayed and have not the strength, clarity and precision of Jodoin’s diary entry title: “Mercredi, 8 mai” (73). Through this title, Jodoin, the diary writer, seals a strong hypertextual relationship with Roquentin since his last diary day in Saint-Joachin corresponds to Roquentin’s last day in Bouville (La nausée 224). On the basis of the clarity of this paratextual sign, Le libraire’s hypotex is, in the first place, Sartre’s novel and not Camus’s.

Le libraire’s paratextual relationship to La nausée allows me to draw at least three observations. The first one is that the overstated relationship of Le libraire to L’étranger is just a discussion of an aspect of Le libraire’s overall system of textual relationships. Therefore, it should not stand for a complete reading of Le libraire’s hypertextuality.

Second, the conclusion Vanasse comes out with just on the basis of a mere observation of the opening paragraphs of both Le libraire and L’étranger is a faulty one, simply because Le libraire is not a pastiche of L’étranger since it does not downgrade L’étranger’s thematic or stylistic concerns through mockery or satire. Likewise, Brochu’s and Marcotte’s comparisons of the two novels, besides their ambiguity, as I have argued,
do not cover the totality of *Le libraire*'s textual relationships. Both critics's conclusions on Jodoin are inadequate. How can we measure the distance between a local reception of Jodoin as “un lâche” and an eastern European one as “Jodoin fonctionait à merveille dans notre propre contexte historique et idéologique des années 1950” (Kwaterko 141)? Maybe only the Biblical proverb that one can never be a prophet in one’s own land (Shortliffe 42) can measure such a distance. These three critics (Vanasse, Brochu and Marcotte) have dealt with *Le libraire* in its existential context, but have developed only its relationship to *L'étranger*. Jacques Allard is, therefore, the critic who indicates *Le libriare*’s hypotexts with more precision when he observes that Meursault and Roquentin “eux aussi séjournent à Saint-Joachin.” But I have also noticed that Jodoin’s existentialism can also be seen in relationship to Max Hubert’s moral alienation and revolt. Therefore, Jodoin’s existential profile can also be studied in relation to *Les demi-civilisés*.

Last but not least, since the third observation is more a problematic issue that my analysis has avoided than a result of it. To find out whether Bessette had ever referred to Camus is an investigation in itself. This partly explains the first part where I have evoked the notion of influence with all its inconveniences and its incompatibility with an objective reading of *Le libraire*’s textual relationships. I have also discarded this notion for what my research perhaps fears to confront. This eluded issue can be formulated in a simple question: did Camus influence Bessette? The intertextual or hypertextual study of *Le libraire* rejects completely this question because of the theoretical claim that the author is dead and the text becomes systematically textuality (language), constantly reworked, recycled and re-created, i.e., writing is rewriting. On the other hand, it is also
difficult to avoid this question precisely because of the resistance of Le libraire’s author to the merest attempt that draws him or his novel closer to Camus.

I have observed in the interview with Boucher the different implications of the coercive questions about writing and influences. Bessette recognized the evident influences in his work and rejected any third party authorial interposition between his authorship and his work. He also recognized the resemblances of his work to another author’s work without giving any name: “Je ne recommencerais pas une oeuvre parce qu’elle ressemble à celle d’un autre écrivain.”

What is really intriguing in Bessette is that he spoke openheartedly about authors he admired (Sartre, Claude Simon...) (Mes romans 72) and inspiring works and fictive figures, such as La route des Flandres for the composition of his novel L’incubation (Les dires 119) and Dos Passos’s fictive figure, Joe Williams (Mes roman 69), but he never referred to Camus in any instance. It is true that Le libraire’s resemblance to L’étranger is easily noticeable. I do not, however, understand why Bessette did not refer to Camus in the same way as he referred without any hesitance to other authors since Le libraire is unquestionably related to Camus’s L’étranger. And any attempt to explain Bessette’s attitude will remain hypothetical.

The oversimplification and overstated relationship of Le libraire to L’étranger, which is actually a partial reading of Le libraire’s textuality, may have affected Bessette’s authority over his work and hence the author’s reaction by resisting any attempt to explain what has been already over-explained and yet not adequately explained. But still, this is not reason enough to interpret Bessette’s intriguing avoidance to state Camus’s name or his work. Is Le libraire’s hypertextuality to L’étranger less
direct but more intensely present to the point of considering *Le Libraire*’s relationship to *L’étranger* in terms of an anxious struggle between the precursor and the recalcitrant disciple, between the powerful father and the ambitious son? Did the French publisher deceive Bessette to draw his manuscript closer to the successful novel of the Nobel Prize winner in 1957, a practice which had become an ephemeral tradition in France by that time? A number of questions can be asked about Bessette’s unjustified and intriguing silence over the relationship of his work to Camus’s.

In his explanatory notes, Bessette added more complexity to the intrigue when he confirmed that the manuscript of *Le libraire* was lost and that he altered a good number of dialogues into reported speech: “le brouillon (égaré) du *Libraire* contenait de nombreux dialogues. Je les ai éliminés parce qu’ils me semblaient manquer de naturel et du piquant. On a bien raison d’affirmer que le style est souvent plus important que le «fond»” (*Les dires* 128). In his book *La Création de Gérard Bessette*, Robidoux confirms, in a note, that “Les fonds Bessette de la Bibliothèque nationale du Québec” has only a copy of the typed final text of *Le libraire* and no manuscript (141). Where did then the manuscript of *Le libraire* disappear, how and why?

To push the intrigue further, consider how Bessette read his own text. Our study suggests that le père Manseau can function at various levels of transtextuality as to mediate the parallel between Jodoin and Meursault. Bessette commented on his own texts and posited le père Manseau in the same family as his other father characters, such as Bouboule in *La bagarre* and Norbert Allaire-Ducul in “Romance,” who, all, are parodies of Bessette’s image of his own father (*Mes romans* 70). “Ces trois vieillards, plus au moins marginaux et révoltés” Bessette specified, “sont les antithèses – donc les imitation
à rebours – du caractère et du comportement de papa, qui fut un homme timide, soumis et plein de respect humain.” Bessette drew also a parallel between the physical appearances of both his father and le père Manseau and also other parallels (Mes Romans 70-71), but he did not provide any justification of the choice of the name “Manseau” in which we see a phonetic resonance of the word “Meursault.” The problematic issue that arises here is that I absolutely trust my sensory reception and still hear this resonance against the author’s explanatory details about the origin of his fictive character, and I do not reject, all the same, this explanation. But I have to point out that, by commenting on his own text, Bessette loses the status of the author and becomes a reader in the same position as any other reader. The question to be asked then is whether Bessette’s reading of his own text is designed to discard the reader from consolidating the overstated relationship of his novel to L’étranger.

Le libraire’s relationship to L’étranger is surrounded by intriguing issues. Maybe critics and readers notice only the relationship of Le libraire to L’étranger simply because of the fact that L’étranger has a larger readership and is more famous than, for instance, La nausée and Les demi-civilisés. The Quebec critics’s “consolidated vision” of Le libraire’s relationship to just Camus’s novel may have irritated its author and provoked diverse reactions on his part. His silence about any relationship to Camus and his reading of le père Manseau may be seen as reactions pertaining to authorship reassertion or to tactful manipulation of readers’ attention. Any attempt to answer these intriguing issues surrounding Bessette’s relationship to Camus will result in speculative argument.
Le libraire appeared at a time (1960) when the notion of intertextuality had not yet appeared. Literary theory was not ripe enough at that time to do justice to writing which has always been rewriting. On the absence of a theory of the text, rewriting was evaluated with notions pertaining to the originality of a genius and powerful author and hence the systematic hegemony of the figure of the powerful author as the father of any rewriting. This may explain Bessette's avoidance of Camus which may be seen as pertaining to the author's refusal to caution a reading perspective that undermines his own (re)writing, since recognition of Le libraire's relationship to L'étranger would perhaps serve as la pièce à conviction for the reader who might see in Le libraire only one inspiring source, namely L'étranger. Then the textual relationship of Le libraire would be subject to inappropriate readings. For some reason, the Quebec critics (Vanasse, Marcotte and Brochu) have not been able to provide a convincing comparative reading of Le libraire in relation to L'étranger. They (Marcotte, Brochu) either have digressed into issues which are not relevant to the field of objective comparison, or come out with hasty conclusions (Vanasse), even though contemporary comparative theory, as proposed by E. Said, Claudio Guillén and Barthes, see originality in the text's potential to show its rewriting quality. According to this view of literature, Le libraire's authenticity is precisely its clever and balanced architecture emanating from the text's potential to simultaneously keep a constant parallel with renowned works such as La nausée and L'étranger and enhance its Québécois specificity.

My work has been an attempt to provide an intertextual/hypertextual reading of Bessette novel and thus stress Le libraire's authenticity in its transtextuality. I have demonstrated that Le libraire's textual relationships are multiple and not univocally
oriented to L’étranger. However, both my review of Québécois criticism of Le libraire and the secondary sources on Bessette and his work are limited. Considerable work remains to do on Le libraire and also Bessette’s other works. All hope of clarifying Bessette’s silence on the relationship of his novel to Camus may have gone with his death. And Québécois critics, by misreading Le libraire’s relationship to L’étranger had perhaps not been able to pay tribute to the author of one of the most successful novels in Quebec literary history during his lifetime and hence missed the chance to make Bessette speak. It is not astonishing therefore to hear a voice breaking silence in these terms: “Libre opinion: Le génie de Gérard Bessette” to remind the reader of Bessette’s great talent and the neglect that affected the author and his work in Quebec (Gagnon). Now, the only way to rehabilitate the author and his work is to study his other works which, according to him, deserved as much attention as Le libraire (Les dires 129).
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