(De)Formed Melancholic Depictions of Identity: Digitizing Aesthetics, Memory, and Culture

by

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Abstract

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This thesis takes up France Daigle's postmodernist *Pour sûr* (2011), a Governor General's Award-winning novel that depicts the day-to-day lives of a group of Acadians in Moncton, New Brunswick, over the course of 1728 fragments that belong to various aspects of Acadian culture, as a case study for a new methodology that aims to offer innovative means of studying minor literatures in Canada. First, it does so by distant reading the novel's quantifiable aesthetics—fragments, intertextuality, self-reflexivity—using digital tools, with data visualizations that show hidden patterns and clusters indicative of an unconscious cultural memory; second, it close reads these patterns and clusters alongside the author's melancholic, self-reflexive interjections as sites of conflict, sites that affectively construct her depiction of Acadian identity.

Chapter 1 introduces readers to the novel of study, the significance of cultural memory for a minor literature such as Acadie's, and to the project's objectives, while Chapter 2 conceptualizes the methodological framework of "sieve reading" that this thesis employs, and which combines distant and close reading. Next, Chapter 3 contextualizes Daigle and *Pour sûr* within the history of Acadian fiction and the tradition of literary postmodernism. In Chapter 4, I present data visualizations of the text that represent its fragmentation, self-reflection, and language before analyzing these findings alongside close readings of the novel in Chapter 5. Lastly, Chapter 6 discusses other possible applications for "sieve reading," namely with respect to other minor literatures.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my people *en Acadie*.

En principe, chaque fragment est censé faire référence assez clairement à d'autres fragments de séries distinctes, histoire de féconder l'aspect multidimensionnel de la structure. Donc, tous les fragments sont frappés et frappent à leur tour au moins deux fois (quatre contacts au total), ce qui crée un nombre incalculable (pour moi) de permutations. À partir de là, il devient virtuellement possible de lire ce livre dans tous les sens. Autrement dit, chacun peut le lire à sa façon. Mais ces excursions possibles à partir des fragments ne sont pas formellement identifiées ici. Il s'agit ni plus ni moins que d'une intention générale, qu'une version informatique de l'ouvrage rendrait possible.

- France Daigle, *Pour sûr*

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures and Illustrations

Chapter 1

Introduction: Memory and Identity; Aesthetics and the Minor

Pour sûr and Acadian Literature's Minor Status

France Daigle is one of Acadie's best known and most widely studied authors, having gained critical attention chiefly for her innovative formal experimentation, frequent use of irony, and self-reflexivity in her works. Her novel, *Pour sûr* (2011), unequaled in its importance to contemporary Acadian literature and chief object of study in this dissertation project, is a postmodern novel of epic proportions. Daigle has established herself at the forefront of postmodern writing in contemporary Acadie and, indeed, in the Francophone world, with well-known and much studied works such as *Pas pire* (1998), *Un fin passage* (2001), and *Petites difficultés d'existence* (2002). For the past few decades, a number of critics have recognized the major local, but also worldwide, cultural significance of Daigle's work. Andrea Cabajsky (2015) calls Daigle "a catalyst in the modernization of Acadian literature while becoming, in recent years, a formidable presence on the national and international literary stages" (n.p.); Benoit Doyon-Gosselin (2011) argues that her latest novel, *Pour sûr*, "en plus du reste de son œuvre, confirme que Daigle est une écrivaine contemporaine majeure" (n.p.); and Jeanette den Toonder (2009) asserts that Daigle "crée une géographie personnelle où non seulement la frontière entre le réel et le fictif devient floue, mais où encore un troisième discours, sous forme de métatexte réflexif, illustre le devenir de l'écrivaine" (92).

Certainly, *Pour sûr* is a monumental novel: at over 750 pages in length, Daigle's Governor General's Award-winner comprises 1728 fragments split into 144 different headings or

"categories," as this project (and most critics, including a leading Daigle critic, Doyon-Gosselin, does) will call them, that most often relate directly or indirectly to Acadian culture. This form represents a "cubed" novel, since twelve multiplied by twelve is 144—the number of "categories" within the novel—and 144 multiplied by twelve again—the number of fragments within each of these categories—totals 1728. The novel is a massive encyclopedic work akin to generational novels such as David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest* (1996) or even James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) that warrants its own first book-length study. Daigle's ability to dissect the Acadian, minor culture in this novel through self-reflexivity, intertextuality, and formal fragmentation is what sets her apart as an avant-garde Acadian writer. At first glance, *Pour sûr* seems to prioritize structural experimentation over questions of national identity that have permeated Acadian literature—and, perhaps even more so, its criticism—since the 1970s political renaissance in Acadie, and which critics have studied at length (Boudreau 1998; 2004; Lonergan 2013). In Daigle's case, the typical hierarchy of content over form in Acadie becomes inverted, insofar as questions of identity become a function of how the structure of the novel and the act of writing itself operate. Put otherwise—and not to say that content is completely superficial in *Pour sûr*—form, or completing a "perfect structure," takes precedence in Daigle's novel, while content takes on the secondary role of functioning to complete this idealized form.

Acadie, in a sense an imagined nation without any official recognition, is a borderless place, mainly encompassing parts of Canada's Maritime Provinces and, in particular, southeastern New Brunswick, where French colonists established several settlements at the outset of the seventeenth century, in 1604. In fact, the first piece of literature in Acadie appears

shortly thereafter when Marc Lescarbot produces *Le Théâtre de Neptune*, a play, in 1606.[1] After exchanging ownership with France on several occasions resulting from a number of wars, Great Britain claims Acadie permanently in 1713 and, from 1755 to 1763, ships off the Acadian people, primarily to the United States, in an event that would come to be known as the Deportation or *Grand Dérangement*. Some Acadians escaped and hid in the forest with help from the Indigenous population, others would return years later and reclaim their lands, but many perished during the tragedy while some chose to begin new lives where they were deported. The Deportation, a moment of cultural trauma, has since become a key chapter in Acadian history, culture, and, chiefly, literature.[2]

According to Jeffrey C. Alexander (2004), "[c]ultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (1). For Acadians, the Deportation of 1755, in which the British expulsed Acadians from their homes in vast numbers, has been that lasting, scarring event; it has marked their identity, culture, and art—predominantly literature—ever since. Hitherto, Acadie has figured as a disenfranchised minority among an invading majority. While the Deportation continues to be engaged through literary representation in Acadie in ways that will become apparent in this project, much criticism on Daigle and contemporary Acadian fiction

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[1] See Thierry's *Marc Lescarbot (vers 1570-1641). Un homme de plume au service de la Nouvelle-France* (2001).

[2] For a detailed account of Acadie's history and the Deportation, see Landry and Lang (2001), as well as Robert Viau (1997).

during her active period of writing over the past few decades has been undertaken through variations of—and expansions on—Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of a *littérature mineure*, which is defined by "the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation" (18). Deleuze and Guattari's work on *littératures mineures* has had a significant impact on Franco-Canadian criticism in general, and particularly on scholars such as François Paré, Raoul Boudreau, Lucie Hotte, and Andrea Cabajsky, among a number of others, who have written extensively on Daigle's oeuvre. Paré's foundational work, *Les littératures de l'exiguïté* (1992), inspires the rest of these critics in its celebration of the otherness, the anxiety, the powerlessness, and the heterogeneity of minor literatures opposite their majority counterparts. Still, apart from several book reviews (Doyon-Gosselin 2011; Parayre 2014; Tardif 2012), *Pour sûr* itself has received little literary criticism. Some important work, however, has come out on the novel as of this writing, including Lucie Hotte's "Au-delà de l'exiguïté : Les oeuvres de France Daigle, D'Andrée Christensen et de Simone Chaput" (2016) and Andrea Cabajsky's "Francophone Acadian Literature as an Ultraminor Literature: The Case of Novelist France Daigle" (2017). Each of the critics mentioned above has had a say on Daigle's place in Acadian literature and beyond, either directly or indirectly.

Raoul Boudreau's assessment of Acadian literature as caught in a "double-bind" between the Francophone majorities of Québec and France in (2006) remains one of the most influential commentaries on Acadian literature by one of its own scholars; however, his earlier observations regarding Acadian writers' relationship with their immediate, Francophone neighbour, Québec, in "L'actualité de la littérature acadienne" (1998), anticipates his later argument on the "double-bind" and formulates clearly a core issue:

> C'est encore, pour plusieurs, à l'aune de la réussite au Québec que se mesure l'importance de l'écrivain acadien et, devant l'envergure et les moyens de l'institution littéraire québécois, l'équivalent acadien ne fait pas le poids… Le Québec occupe donc par rapport l'écrivain acadien une position des plus ambiguë : il est d'un certain côté le terrain sur lequel il aspire se faire reconnaître et d'un autre côté la force dominatrice dans laquelle il doit aliéner une partie de lui-même pour accéder à cette reconnaissance. (8)

Boudreau's point certainly holds some truth: numerous Acadian writers of note have published in Québec over the years, including Antonine Maillet, Ronald Després, Jacques Savoie, Serge Patrice Thibodeau, Herménégilde Chiasson, and France Daigle, to name but several. The critic's "first bind" in particular—that Québec is where Acadian writers aspire to be recognized—makes complete sense, though it seems less so ground-breaking than simple common sense: obviously, any writer that wants to proliferate their work seeks out bigger markets, and especially in the present, global age. Boudreau's "second bind," however, seems to be somewhat generalized, if not already outdated. The claim that Acadian writers need to alienate themselves by omitting parts of their identity as Acadians in their works—in the form of themes and language—to gain recognition by this majority appears false, namely when considering some of Acadie's best-known writers. Novelists Antonine Maillet and Daigle, for instance, prove that alienating themselves is unnecessary to succeed at the national and international stages. Maillet's victory of the coveted Goncourt in France for *Pélagie-la-Charrette* (1979)—which tells of the Acadian return to their land after the Deportation—and Daigle's winning of the Governor General's Award in Canada for *Pour sûr* —which, among other accomplishments, showcases the Acadian dialect of Chiac in Moncton, New Brunswick—are testaments to the fact that these writers do not

need to alienate themselves to be validated by other Francophone majorities in the world, as this dissertation will consider further.

Other work has since built on Paré's essential text to expose its limits and attempt to remedy them, as well. Namely, *Au-delà de l'exiguïté : Échos et convergences dans les littératures minoritaires*, a collection of essays edited by Jimmy Thibeault, Daniel Long, Désiré Nyela, and Jean Wilson, makes significant strides in this endeavour. The most compelling piece in this collection with respect to this project is no doubt Lucie Hotte's "Au-delà de l'exiguïté : Les oeuvres de France Daigle, d'Andrée Christensen et de Simone Chaput," which argues that, while Deleuze and Guattari's work, as well as that of Paré, remain fundamental to understanding these minor literatures, the time has come to move beyond the minor literature paradigm. Even more to the point, she identifies and articulates quite clearly a recurring problem with the critical approaches that qualify these literatures as minor:

> Aucune des dénominations proposées n'est neutre, car elles mettent toutes en place une conception des "petites" littératures qui impose nécessairement un mode de lecture particulier. En ce sens, elles fondent également un horizon d'attente, selon la terminologie de Hans Robert Jauss. C'est donc dire qu'elles prescrivent un ou des modes de lecture particuliers auxquels la critique va souscrire. Ces conceptions proposent aussi, aux auteurs, des postures scripturaires qui seraient celles propres à l'écrivain en contexte minoritaire. (33)

The process, therefore, becomes cyclically pernicious: not only do these modes of reading predetermine critics' dispositions, but they also influence writers themselves as to what is expected from them in terms of literary production. These modes of reading are ever growing as well. As Hotte points out, Lise Gauvin's "littératures de l'intranquilité" and Michel Biron's

"littératures liminaires" are two examples of a growing corpus of jargon depicting these literatures as minor (33-4).[3] This dissertation project will thus heed Hotte's warning and distance itself from such confining denominations.

Lastly, and speaking of new terms emerging that pertain to "small literatures," Andrea Cabajsky's take on Acadian literature—namely the writing of France Daigle—as an "ultraminority" (2017), is the most recent and probably the most nuanced reading of Acadian literature in a current, (post-)minor context. For Cabajsky, the ultraminor is both "a writing strategy and a critical reading method" (159), and so she acknowledges the literature as well as its critics equally:

> As a writing strategy, the ultraminor represents literary attempts, such as those by Daigle, to transcend marginality while establishing new frames of reference defined on local terms. As a dialectical critical method, the ultraminor exposes the binaries that Daigle's novels seek to transcend—between center and periphery, majority and minority, cultural normativity and emergence—while remaining caught within the terms of the original double-bind. (159)

She does well to recall the work of theorists such as François Paré, as well as that of Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shi, among others, to warn readers of the numerous issues taken up with the "minority label" over recent years. In fact, Cabajsky appears to agree with Galin Tihanov's (2014) proposition that the dichotomy established between majority and minority is severely problematic (qtd. in Cabajsky 163). Yet, though her article is progressive in this sense, and while

[3] See Gauvin (2003) and Biron (2000) for more information on their individual treatments of "small literatures."

it moves beyond the historically preferred "minor" critique, Cabajsky still returns to an argument that promotes the same old binaries within the ultraminor, only with an added attempt at transcendence: "… the ultraminor exposes the extent to which Daigle's novels remain caught within the very oppositions they seek to transcend… center versus periphery and tradition versus modernity" (174).

Hotte (2016) makes the highly similar argument of Daigle's work—argument that she develops from an initial conceptualization as far back as 2002—except that she substitutes "ultraminor" for "individualism." For Hotte, Daigle and other writers in similar contexts "refusent d'adhérer à l'esthétique de l'exiguïté en écrivant des œuvres qui transcendent les frontières identitaires et les frontières spatiales de la communauté d'origine et surtout en pratiquant des formes littéraires qui s'écartent du réalisme propre à l'esthétique de l'exiguïté" (38). While this framework resembles Cabajsky's in some ways, it gives significantly more agency to the writers themselves: even in facing the challenges of being a minor writer, one does not need to write in accordance with a set of predetermined "minor aesthetics," but can instead transcend these critical confines to find new means of representing identity. Specifically in the case of Daigle, her writing of *Pour sûr* appears to be such a means of breaking critical confines of the minor, as she works through Acadie's cultural memory and employs self-reflexive postmodern aesthetics to represent identity. Certainly, while some have rightly pointed out that Acadian authors, such as Antonine Maillet with *Pélagie-la-Charrette* (1979), have employed postmodern aesthetics, none have pushed structural and self-reflexive boundaries with as much deliberation as Daigle in order to disrupt perceptions of the minor. This dissertation sets out to demonstrate Daigle's work using a two-pronged methodology that I will present in the next chapter. This methodology will examine the nature of *Pour sûr*'s fragments, the categorical

distribution in the text, Daigle's deployment of characters, and the presence and work of Chiac in the novel; the configuration of these quantifiable elements in the novel will show abstractions of Daigle's representation of Acadian cultural memory. In fact, and in some ways similar to Cabajsky's argument on the workings of the "ultraminor" in Daigle's text as caught between the "double-bind" of majorities France and Québec, my work will demonstrate that Acadie's double-bind comprises its own cultural memory as well as the influence of the Anglophone majority as driving, melancholic forces of conflict in *Pour sûr*.

Remembering Forward: Memory Constructing Identity

Literary scholars have ceaselessly and comprehensively pondered questions of identity, both in generic and thematic terms—how does one define identity and what are its components—as well as in its *methodological* implications: how is it constructed, represented, *written*? Within these sweeping, yet central questions, identity—as it has been studied generally—remains persistently fluid, with its significance shifting depending on the critical gaze imposed on it, whether cultural, national, or postcolonial, among others. Furthermore, even in the past century, scholars have seen the philosophical views on identity evolve from the modernist propensity to contemplate one's place in the universe to the postmodernist proclivity to look inward and self-reflect; the latter has remained central to identity until now, particularly when it is challenged by the public nature of the digital age, in which privacy—think of literal "identity theft"—has been consistently and greatly threatened. Questions of identity continue to be of great significance to literary critics and theorists, especially with respect to "minor" literatures as they study various means of validating the work done by authors from minor cultures. The literatures from minor cultures are particularly potent for scholarship on questions of identity because, precisely, they

are often enmeshed within cultural, national, and postcolonial stakes while also struggling to understand their respective identities as they are caught between the influence of the majorities surrounding them and their own perception of themselves. Due to its innate complexity, researchers increasingly inspect identity through the nuanced scope of memory studies to understand its myriad representations in minor literatures.

With respect to cultural narratives, memory does more work than history in that it accounts for subjective dispositions rather than mainstream understandings of non-existent objective truths, for, as Max Saunders (2008) points out, "memory…is necessarily a transformation of the remembered event or experience" (323).[4] The idea of a cultural memory is, therefore, more appealing than that of history for studies on identity because the former offers greater agency—or at least a central presence—to the culture in question. Various, but comparable definitions of cultural memory are prominent in current memory studies: Astrid Erll (2008), for instance, claims that cultural memory is the "interplay of the present and past in sociocultural contexts" (2), insofar as culture is a three-dimensional concept consisting of "social (people, social relations, institutions), material (artifacts and media), and mental aspects (cultural defined ways of thinking, mentalities)" (4). Likewise, Jan Assmann (2008) explains cultural memory as "a kind of institution. It is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that…are stable and situation-transcendent: They may be transferred from one situation to another and transmitted from one generation to another" (110-1). Some scholars, such as

[4] Memory studies and its credited founder, French theorist Maurice Halbwachs (1950), owes much of its understanding of history to *historiography*, the extensive tradition of studying the ways in which historians have understood or approached the notion of history.

Michael Rothberg (2009), posit memory—and by extension, cultural memory—more explicitly "as *multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative" (3). In any case, cultural memory is integral as the backdrop of identity since it pre-empts any conscious, self-reflexive constructions and representations of identity.

The idea of an Acadian cultural memory can be defined and differentiated from the notion of history and even culture by referring to examples. For instance, *history* tells of the first Acadian Premier of New Brunswick, Louis J. Robichaud, and of his implementation of the language rights act in 1969, making it the first and only officially bilingual province in Canada. Acadie's *cultural memory*, however, sees this past event from its own perspective: as an increase in freedoms, rights, and opportunities, while recognizing that Acadians are still the minority in New Brunswick; this tension, incidentally, drove the revolutionary Acadian poetry of the 1970s rising against Anglophone oppression in the province, namely in Moncton.[5] *Culture* itself—and, therefore, identity—is thus always evolving along with its memory: Acadian culture was much different before adding institutions to its cultural memory, then it changed again when French got its official status in New Brunswick during the 1970s, then again when Maillet folklorized Acadie's origins, and then again, I would argue, when Daigle's and other writers' urban representations became a part of its cultural memory—culture evolves as the memory of its people expands, and so do representations of identity. *Pour sûr* could be taken superficially as a snapshot of Acadian culture, of the present; however, Daigle's work also represents a longer

[5] See Lonergan (2013) for a full account of the history and factors that led to the 1970s revolution in Acadie.

lineage, taking into account the labour of memory: her attention in the novel to the evolution of Chiac, the importance of family and tradition in the text, as well as Daigle's many references to her other works all speak to her project of labouring through memory to represent an identity that is in flux, always changing.

Cultural memory, however, even with its pre-emptive nature, is not *strictly* an automated process of identity-construction; the construction of identity also requires personal agency. Linked to this idea of the personal, Erll (2008) asserts that "identities have to be constructed and reconstructed by acts of memory, by remembering who one was and by setting this past self in relation to the present self" because "ways of making sense of the past which are intentional and performed through narrative, go hand in hand with the construction of identities" (2). The mention of the "personal self" in this case and "narrative" as a method to work through memory and construct identity is highly significant for several reasons: first, because if identity is in constant flux between the personal and the cultural, like Assmann argues (2008: 109), with each depending upon the other, then tensions persist between personal and cultural memory, building upon each other to construct identity; second, if, as Andreas Huyssen (1986) suggests, "all memory, whether preserved in image, word, or sound is grounded in representation" (268), then readers can begin to understand fully how narrative representations of memory enact a personal construction of identity because, third, and like Saunders explains, "our memories are always already textualized. They are by definition 'after the event,' but also, as representations or mediations or narrativations of the event, they have always begun to turn the event into something else" (323). A prime form of textual, narrative representation of memory—and consequently identity—is thus literary fiction. In discussing fiction as an ideal textual, narrative representation of memory and its writing process as a personal means of working through

memory, the postmodernist movement immediately comes to mind. Postmodern fiction, due to its self-reflexive nature, does compelling work with respect to working through memory to construct a representation of identity; like memory, this postmodernist representation is often fragmented and intertextual in ways that are not always immediately evident, and tied intrinsically to language.

Currently, the mention of literary postmodernism in English Canada and Québec has come to often raise critical eyebrows. In the recently published book of essays edited by Robert Stacey, *Re: Reading the Postmodern: Canadian Literature and Criticism After Modernism* (2010), Christian Bök argues provocatively that postmodernism has yet to even begin in Canada. Per Bök, some critics refuse to acknowledge and study literature as avant-garde (99), while notable theorist Linda Hutcheon counters that postmodernism "isn't showing signs of going away any time soon" (50). For his part, Frank Davey makes the biting remark that "the epistemological uncertainties recognized by postmodernism made totalizations or homogenizations such as 'postmodernism' or 'Canadian postmodernism' impossible and created such genre ambiguities that 'text' could be the only literary signifier"; he still argues, however, that the notion "has not prevented critics… from giving volumes such titles as Postmodern Fiction in Canada" (37). Amidst these debates, which this dissertation will examine further, perhaps the most insightful comment in the book comes from Herb Wyile, who suggests that, "even if postmodernism as a state of cultural and intellectual ferment is over and we are now in the post-postmodern, or whatever, postmodernism is not *over and done with*" (196; his emphasis). Wyile's argument is significant because postmodernism in Canada and Québec has had lasting effects on its literatures, namely on those often qualified as *littératures mineures*, like Acadian literature, that tend to develop at a slower pace than other, major literatures. The

ongoing study of literary postmodernism in Canada, therefore, is not regressive; rather, it represents a means to understand better the current and future progression of literature that engages with identity because, precisely, some of the most important critical work on postmodernism in Canada and Québec comes from writers themselves: Robert Kroetsch, Margaret Atwood, George Bowering, Rudy Wiebe, Nicole Brossard, and Louise Dupré, among others, have all written critically as well as creatively on the topic of postmodernist aesthetics in one form or another, informing ways of reading and writing various subject positions. Thus, with minor literatures, postmodernism, or the understanding of a postmodernist methodology in reading minor literatures using postmodern aesthetics, is still highly significant today.

These matters of debate factor extensively in the conceptualization of this project, chiefly with the conscious shift from a general discussion on Canadian postmodernism to one on postmodernism in Canada. This adjustment speaks to Davey's concerns, among others, about the totalizing effect of a label such as "Canadian postmodernism" and argues that various forms of postmodernism exist within Canada; as this project will show, the definition of postmodernism indeed differs between even the most canonical literatures in Canada, English-Canadian and Québécois. This project thus seeks to move away from the study of postmodernism in relation to English-Canadian and Québécois literatures, to focus on how postmodernism operates in a Francophone "minor literature," specifically in working through the significant territory of memory and identity as exemplified by the work of Acadian author, France Daigle, and her novel, *Pour sûr*.

In establishing the nature of the novel's fragments, I will be able to get a sense of Daigle's involvement in a type of metanarrative that addresses readers directly, often interrupting the plot to interrogate it or offer supplementary information. Next, by mapping the distribution of

categories in *Pour sûr*, I can see what the text's preoccupations are at different points in the plot; I can also cross-reference these preoccupations with those fragments that are a part of Daigle's kind of self-reflexive metanarrative to offer even more significance to her representation of Acadie. Going further, I can also map out characters and in which spaces they appear over the course of the novel. As the title of the category "Avatars" and Daigle's metanarrative suggest, Daigle's characters seem to function as avatars of herself as an author, a function that serves to fulfill what den Toonder (2009) calls the process of "le devenir de l'écrivaine" (92). Not *that* unlike characters designed by players for video games at present, the novel's characters represent various figurative personifications or icons of Daigle, and so the ways and spaces in which she deploys them become highly significant, especially when examined alongside other information such as category distribution or the nature of fragments. Last will be the study of Daigle's use of Chiac in *Pour sûr* in conjunction with these other queries, which is rendered possible by using a text file that has been converted from a PDF version of the novel. Does she use it most often in metanarrative fragments? Which categories feature the most or the least Chiac? Which characters employ Chiac the most, and in which spaces? The answers to these questions will help build visual demonstrations of Daigle's representation of Acadian cultural memory and identity, what affects persist in her work, and the melancholia that seems to drive them.

The Project

The question of identity pervades *Pour sûr* and is effectively interrogated in new ways due to the novel's postmodern valorization of shattered structure, style, and subjectivity, which, in many ways, mimic the manner in which memory functions since memories—in their configuration of identities—are themselves fragmented, non-linear, and subjective mediations of experience.

Earlier in this section, I point out that questions of memory, as they build identity, are inherently tied to *methodology*, since the literary representation of identity enacts a method of working through memory with postmodernist aesthetics that allow for an escape from stereotypical understandings of the minor, as Hotte suggests (2016). Coming to the text with questions of cultural memory and identity, therefore, this dissertation sets out to study *Pour sûr* as a case study of the function of two methodologies that take into account the novel's structural conception: distant reading, using digital methods, and close reading of the digital findings through the scope of memory and affect studies, especially psychoanalysis; I call the combination of these methodologies "sieve reading," in which data is sifted through various critical "sieves" to then be analyzed closely with a particular approach. Sieve reading will break open Daigle's novel to understand the ways in which *Pour sûr* interrogates the subject of Acadian identity as well as Daigle's own engagement with Acadie's cultural memory through her use of postmodernist aesthetics such as fragmentation, intertextuality, and self-reflexivity. Specifically, sieve reading will treat *Pour sûr* as an example of a work that transcends the nationalist denomination of a *littérature mineure* and champions a set of postmodern aesthetics. With digital methods, namely those related to database construction and data visualizations that show categorical distribution, patterns, linguistic trends, this project will demonstrate the ways in which *Pour sûr* dissects and questions Acadian identity on an empirical level. My project will also show, however, by relying on memory studies and their contributions to understanding identity, that the traces of melancholia in the writing make this interrogation process a daunting task. The novel consistently challenges its own attempts to debate Acadian identity with aesthetical choices since its primary subjects in content—history, space, and language—unavoidably refer to a contested Acadian cultural memory.

Chapter 2

"Sieve Reading": A Two-Pronged Reading Method

Digitizing Daigle's Acadie: Using Digital Tools to Read *Pour sûr*

With respect to the first—if iterative, due to the questions with which I come to it—prong of sieve reading, distant reading with digital tools, I discussed the role of memory in constructing and representing identity in the previous chapter: memory and its latent attachments, through melancholia and affect, are difficult to pin down due to their abstract nature, but what if they could be concretized, made tangible to a certain degree? This undertaking is what I set out to accomplish here by using methods from the digital humanities to highlight the mnemonic residue in Daigle's aesthetics, and to show as well as analyze them explicitly in the form of data. Like the topic of postmodernism, that of the digital humanities remains contested at present, with arguments concerning definitions and methodologies coming from insiders and outsiders to the field, both friendly and hostile. Stephen Marche (2012), for instance, warns that "data is coming for your books" (n.p.) and that, in the wake of digitization, "literary people immediately set about doing what they do best: vapid, internecine squabbling" (n.p.); of course, he also contends that literature is the opposite of data (n.p.) and that algorithms are fascist (n.p.). Adversely, in his discussion of the digital humanities and literature, Matthew Kirschenbaum (2012) contradicts Marche's contention, claiming firstly that, "after numeric input, text has been by far the most tractable data type for computers to manipulate" (n.p.), and secondly that, "there is [a] long association between computers and composition, almost as long and just as rich in its lineage" (n.p.). These quotes mention several "buzz words"—data, algorithms, numeric input, computers, etc.— but how does one define the digital humanities? A vast amount of definitions exists; in

fact, Matthew Gold's *Debates in the Digital Humanities* (2012), a collection of essays from a number of digital humanists, lists well over twenty definitions. This project, however, chooses to adopt Kathleen Fitzpatrick's (2015) more inclusive definition of the field, given in an interview with Andrew Lopez and Fred Rowland:

> For me [digital humanities] has to do with the work that gets done at the crossroads of digital media and traditional humanistic study. And that happens in two different ways. On the one hand, it's bringing the tools and techniques of digital media to bear on traditional humanistic questions. But it's also bringing humanistic modes of inquiry to bear on digital media. (n.p.)

I agree with Fitzpatrick's point of view; the digital humanities are appealing in current scholarship because, precisely, of their interdisciplinarity and flexibility in terms of *methodological* approaches, not only in terms of objects of study.

Some well-known digital humanists, however, such as Johanna Drucker (2011), argue that digital scholars should solely undertake humanistic approaches to digital studies, rather than also apply digital tools to humanist scholarship. Drucker's reasoning is that humanists do not give enough consideration to questions of data or capta—information that is *given* as fact or information that is *taken* as fact—when using digital tools to demonstrate their humanist analyses. She argues for all data to be henceforth known as capta:

> Differences in the etymological roots of the terms data and capta make the distinction between constructivist and realist approaches clear. *Capta* is "taken" actively while *data* is assumed to be a "given" able to be recorded and observed. From this distinction, a world of differences arises. Humanistic inquiry

> acknowledges the situated, partial, and constitutive character of knowledge production, the recognition that knowledge is constructed, *taken*, not simply given as a natural representation of pre-existing fact. (n.p.)

At its core, however, Drucker's polemic assumes that humanists decontextualize their *capta* and in doing so present it as *data*. She thus makes an excellent point regarding the integrity of scholarship; yet, humanists do not work this way. In fact, humanists primarily concern themselves with ontological and epistemological questions. In its proper context, then, or at least in forthright conditions, I would argue that, by contrast to Drucker's argument, capta actually *becomes* data—this process is certainly true when considering language, as dictionaries evolve over time to propagate as data what was once considered capta. In terms of this project, understanding that capta can be contextualized as data, and not vice versa, allows for literature to be studied initially from a predetermined set of guidelines, if not from an objective perspective—much like a controlled experiment in a physics laboratory—before proceeding to a more traditionally humanistic interpretation, or close reading, with a critical twist that this text demands; in other words, the project close reads only the capta that has been contextualized as data in the text in terms of critical aesthetic conditions to reach conclusions that are inherently less biased than modes of hermeneutic reading that ignore this data.

In exploring Daigle's literary experiments with fragmentation and style, current digital methods provide an innovative means to analyzing the novel's structure in its entirety. Because of the sheer size of Daigle's novel and the complex patterns that the novel's fragments form, close reading methods alone are limited when considering scholarly points of entry. Rather, a novel of this scope is best entered with techniques derived from what Franco Moretti (2000) has called "distant reading" (57). Through these techniques and in an operative, metaphorical sense,

Pour sûr's fragments become synonymous with data from a database because, precisely, they are factual, textual information; the critic need not innovate some means of sorting the fragments as data because the author has already done so. By building a database from the fragments using software such as MySQL, one can manipulate their representations through various queries to study the novel from different angles—for instance, by examining the distribution of categories in the novel, cross-referencing which categories most often appear in the same chapters, establishing character interactions in relation to where they take place, analyzing these quantitative findings alongside what is happening in the story, etc. Stephen Ramsay (2011) defines this process as "[deforming]" the existing text into a number of data visualizations to study it from new perspectives and extract information from it (xi). He argues that deforming the text "[presents] a new text that imputes or denies authority to the original text itself, legitimizing or de-legitimizing its claims to truth value" (43), or, in other words, its formal integrity. Namely, the process is meant to show the latent or subconscious pervasiveness of Acadian cultural memory in the novel, even in those instances that memory is at odds with Daigle's explicit commentary on Acadian identity. In this enterprise of distortion, intent on refocussing the same text in a different way that is analogous to visually deciphering a Magic Eye picture,[5] representations of this database—data visualizations—will show how bits of information, in this case different elements of Acadian cultural identity, intersect at numerous, revealing clusters within the novel. For works of such epic proportions, Ed Folsom (2007) contends that "the only way to represent the universal [is] through the suggestion of database, a thousand bricks, all the

[5] Magic Eye pictures are "hidden" 3D images that demand a hyperopic (farsighted) focus to see, and often used as leisure exercises in places such as newspapers or the back of cereal boxes.

particulars with none left out" (1575). That statement, I suspect, will prove true of *Pour sûr*, a novel that comprises 1728 "bricks."

Chiefly, therefore, this project will make use of a number of digital tools as a methodology for distant reading. Distant reading, as Franco Moretti (2000) defines it, "*is a condition of knowledge*: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems" (57; his emphasis). Moretti's proposition of distant reading may seem abstract, but, as he counters in *Graphs Maps Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (2005), "abstraction is not an end in itself, but a way to widen the domain of the literary historian, and enrich its internal problematic" (2). A number of scholars have taken up Moretti and his methodology, including Matthew Jockers with his exemplary work, *Macroanalysis: Digital Methods & Literary History* (2013), which goes a step beyond simple "abstraction" by demonstrating the findings of distant reading through a vast array of data visualizations ranging from line graphs to histograms to word clouds. With respect to this project, however, one might substitute "literary historian" for "literary critic," and while Moretti mainly distant reads large quantities of texts, this project will employ distant reading as a methodology for investigating one text, Daigle's *Pour sûr*, with a large quantity of fragments. In other words, the exercise in question is a "scaled-down" distant reading—more concerned with literary aesthetics than with literary history. In a similar fashion to Jockers' work, this research will also demonstrate its findings stemming from a distant reading with the aid of data visualizations, doing so to interpret a new relationship between data and text.

Important to note is the fact that this work seeks not to diminish the importance of close reading, that long-standing tradition of the New Critics; as Marjorie Perloff (2003) points out rightly and concisely in a *digital* conversation with Charles Bernstein, close reading "needn't be

arid New Critical exercise at all, but just the habit of paying attention to the words and sentences on the page or on a CD-whatever" (n.p.). Perloff, however, is perhaps a bit hasty when she goes on to lament the current state of close reading, as she states: "I will sound like an Old Wolf in kvetch clothing when I say it's a practice that has been largely lost. So afraid are teachers and their students of actually looking at a text, so fearful that they will be endowing that text with 'autonomy,' that crucial things get missed" (n.p.). I would argue instead that close reading remains a fundamental reading practice in any English department, staunchly defended by the old guard and the new because it is, precisely, *fundamental* to most humanistic interventions; however, as most of today's proponents of close reading are likely to agree, to stop at a close reading and ignore contextual and factual patterns over and outside of larger bodies of work is ignorant and, frankly, irresponsible in today's highly public digital, political, and cultural climate. So, while this project still engages with and respects the critical value of close reading, it prefers to champion the combined efforts of *both* close and distant readings in literary studies as "sieve reading," and to reconcile notions of "data" and "text"; in fact, when the text is "captured," it becomes data. As Leighton Evans and Sian Rees (2012) argue, the "sceptic who states that data mining and pattern recognition in works of literature debase close reading ignores the prevalent mood of human action in a time of computational ubiquity" (37). On the contrary, scholars can make use of this "computational ubiquity" in literary studies, of various forms of distant reading, to inform their close readings, not to discard these altogether. Besides, just because digitization has made the use of certain forms of reading more accessible than others does not mean that these forms are new to literary studies or the humanities in general. In fact, as Federica Frabetti (2012) claims by building on the arguments of Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida, among others, technology is not only a tool, because "the human itself is always already

constituted in relation to its own technologies (be they a stone implement, language, writing, or the digital computer)" (162). In its undertaking of an innovative study of Daigle's *Pour sûr*, therefore, this research also attempts to bridge the ideological gap between close and distant readers, to consider data as reformulations of the text, and the text as data, as well as to combine the digital and the human—in other words, this work takes on the spirit of Donna Haraway's foundational "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" (1991), that of "potent fusions" (154), and applies it to the hybridization of these dichotomies in what I call sieve reading.

This fusionist reading aligns better with the study of a work such as *Pour sûr*—which takes up such a rich cultural memory as a backdrop—than close reading because it considers what Haraway (2016) has come to explore in terms of *sympoiesis*, or "making-with," which discusses artistic creation while accounting for "complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems" (58). Haraway's consideration of what is essentially *cultural memory* in her understanding that "[s]taying with the trouble, yearning toward resurgence, requires inheriting hard histories, for everybody, but not equally and not in the same ways" demands dynamic, hybridized reading practices, such as my proposed sieve reading. What does this hybridization, this "potent fusion" of distant and close readings into sieve reading, of data and text, mean for literary studies, and, in particular, this project? Mainly, it signifies a methodology, one that Stephen Ramsay defines best as "deforming" an existing text. Of course, this process is not meant to "bend the text to the critic's will," as often happens with mere close reading *or* distant reading; rather, as Ramsay argues, it simply "proposes that [scholars] channel the heightened objectivity made possible by the machine into the cultivation of those heightened subjectivities necessary for critical work" (x). Put otherwise: "deforming" the text—a form of distant reading,

as this project understands the term—acts as an initial "safeguard" against the critic's subjective tendencies in a close reading. This process is especially significant when considering Daigle's work (or most Acadian texts, for that matter), since most criticism on the subject has attended to the various manners in which Acadian identity emerges in her works, while paying less attention to her postmodern novels' attempts at interrogating the constituents of this identity. For example, some critics have studied the question of language in her works (Viau 2000; Boudreau 2004), some have payed attention to biographical elements in her novels (Boehringer 2003; Francis 2003; den Toonder 2009), while others have focussed on space as a signifier of Acadian identity in her texts (Leclerc 2006; Doyon-Gosselin 2011). These studies share the common trait of being, to some extent, close readings. This work, however, aims to investigate the novel via a close reading that is informed by a particular form of distant reading linked to database work.

While several methods for distant reading can successfully objectify a text—or "deform" it, as Ramsay calls the exercise—only one is ideal for the study of *Pour sûr*: the construction of a database. Since Daigle's novel comprises an indexed number of fragments (1728), it becomes, to a certain extent, quantifiable: in other words, the fragments become observable data. A database is a structured set of data, organized into tables made up of rows and columns, according to a particular purpose. In terms of Folsom's metaphor of a database as a structure of "bricks, *Pour sûr* works well with this concept: a novel comprised of 1728 bricks, that, when "deformed" with the aid of a database, will reveal a number of patterns and clusters of data—in this case, fragments. Of course, some humanists resist the idea of a database, and in particular Folsom's "utopian" views on *The Walt Whitman Archives.* Meredith L. McGill (2007), for example, claims that the comprehensiveness of the database "is a liability as well as a strength" (1594) because

the archive fails to "signal its own partiality, its noninclusion of the vast corpus of Whitman's prose" (1594), while Jonathan Freedman (2007) contends that

> To celebrate the branching, rooting, rhizomic, proliferating quality of database—to celebrate database as a kind of autonomous form, rooting and branching by a logic of its own—is (in this case, somewhat weirdly) to downplay the inclusions, exclusions, choices that have gone into the making of databases and hence to occlude the possibilities for questioning those choices. (1597)

These critiques certainly have merit; however, they seem to miss—either purposefully or not—the point of a database. A database does precisely what it is meant to do. A forthright database should denote its choices clearly, as the one used in this project will do (perhaps McGill should construct her own database to reflect her preferences?); yet, to address Freedman's concern, a database of *Pour sûr*'s fragments does not even need to consider these editorial choices. If one understands that a database is a structured set of data, and simply examines *Pour sûr*'s index of fragments, the novel is decidedly *already* a form of database, albeit a print one. Folsom's digital database is open-ended, leaving room for debate, but Daigle's novel is closed off, a "completed" object, in that no other material will add to it. In the digitization of such a database, therefore, if all fragments of the novel are included, "editorial choices" are a non-issue.

The database for this project will be constructed fairly easily, since all of the data is readily available as an index to the novel. Each individual fragment will be tagged by its number (1-1728), its category (1-144), and the chapter to which it belongs (1-12) as they are specified by Daigle herself. Moreover, the database will contain each of the novel's characters and locations, thus allowing for a quantifiable analysis of who interacts in the novel, when they do so, and where they do so. Finally, since language is so important in Daigle's work with respect to

memory and identity, I also insert the text into the database—divided at the level of individual fragment for in-depth study—and juxtapose it with words from a standard French dictionary, allowing for empirical analysis of the author's use of dialect: where does it appear most often in the text? Who speaks it the most? In what contexts? These questions are foundational. Due to the accessibility of the data at hand, the average user could certainly construct a database for *Pour sûr* using a simpler program, such as Microsoft Excel; however, for a more sophisticated database, this project will use Oracle's MySQL software. MySQL is a relational database management system, in which "SQL" stands for Structured Query Language. As its name suggests, the system allows for queries between different structures—or tables—of organized data, hence its standing of "relational." In this case, for instance, a first table might comprise a fragment's number and the number of the category to which it belongs, a second table might consist of a category's number and its corresponding title, while a third table might list fragment numbers and the chapters to which they belong. MySQL then gives the means to querying the database that these tables make up, in any way the author of the database can conceive, in order to find patterns, clusters, and tendencies in the novel. An elementary example of this process (and simplified, in leaving coding out of it) would be to pose the following question: how many times does category 1, entitled "Chansons," appear in the first chapter? The software, relating the information from the constructed tables of data in the database, would then answer that ten fragments from the "Chansons" category appear in Chapter 1 of *Pour sûr*. Since each category comprises twelve fragments, readers can understand that having ten fragments from a single category in one chapter is a significant cluster, and this project will close read such findings.

A database, however, particularly with respect to this project, is only as helpful as the information it reveals. Fortunately for critics, with the aid of data visualizations, this information

need not be relayed only in numerical waves. Data visualizations—essentially visual demonstrations of clusters, patterns, tendencies, etc.—are at the heart of "deforming" a text. Quite literally, they allow readers to see the text in a different form. As Jerome McGann and Lisa Samuels (2001) argue:

> Deformative moves reinvestigate the terms in which critical commentary will be undertaken. Not the least significant consequence, as will be seen, is the dramatic exposure of subjectivity as a live and highly informative option of interpretive commentary, if not indeed one of its essential features… (116)

McGann and Samuels' commentary on subjectivity is especially compelling when considering *Pour sûr*: the novel, supposedly structured in a sort of cubic form, evokes a sense of stability, uniformity, and impartiality that projects objectivity. The patterns, clusters, and tendencies that the data visualizations derived from the novel's database queries, however, will show—as McGann and Samuels suggest—"a dramatic exposure of subjectivity" throughout the novel, whether this subjectivity is conscious or unconscious. I argue that this subjectivity is, in fact, a representation of Daigle working through memory to construct identity. These data visualizations may take on a number of forms, from simple histograms and treemaps to more complex, cross-referencing line graphs, but they will all demonstrate both Daigle's presence in the novel as well as "vulnerable sites" of critical inquiry that *Pour sûr*'s intricate form attempts to mask with its aesthetic play. These vulnerable sites—these patterns, clusters, tendencies, etc. that are remnants from either cultural or personal memory—will be the focus of this project's close reading.

Reading France Daigle's Affective Melancholia Through Memory

Renate Lachmann (2008) claims that "[l]iterature is culture's memory, not as a simple recording device but as a body of commemorative actions that include the knowledge stored by a culture, and virtually all texts a culture has produced and by which a culture is constituted" (301). In *Pour sûr*'s use of aesthetics, which distant reading will be able to demonstrate in new, compelling ways, instances of working through cultural memory to construct identity occur quite frequently to produce melancholic affects. Critics have addressed the structure of Daigle's works in the past, arguing that a certain two-dimensionality appears at numerous instances in her previous novels so that markers of cultural identity are laid out in a categorical horizontality, while her own, self-reflexive and subjective presence seeps vertically into these sequential fragments (Paré 2004). For example, *Pour sûr* features categories such as "Chiac," "Moncton," and "Religion," which identify clearly some constituents of Daigle's interpretation of a collective Acadian identity built from cultural memory; however, within fragments belonging to these categories, the narrator (which readers take to be Daigle herself) offers subjective, "vertical" comments as she works through this memory. This deliberate structure is significant to Daigle and readers because, as Birgit Neumann (2008) argues, cultural memories "involve intentional fashioning to a greater extent than do individual memories. Hence, literary fictions disseminate influential models of both individual and cultural memories as well as of the nature and functions of memory" (333). A significant example of this two-dimensionality belongs to the "Chiac" category, in which the narrator states: "parler le chiac appelle encore aujourd'hui un certain déshonneur" (25). This excerpt suggests that the narrator, or Daigle herself, has some melancholic reservations concerning the cultural past and present—or memory—of the Acadian dialect, as well as seemingly suffers from a personal dilemma regarding its use. In other words,

while she employs the Chiac dialect throughout the novel to construct and represent Acadian identity, she might disapprove of the dialect as a substandard linguistic practice, and this disapproval creates a paradoxical and melancholic tension in *Pour sûr.*

Pour sûr, however, is admittedly a cube-formed novel with three dimensions, as indicated by its fragment structure of 12^3. Doyon-Gosselin (qtd. in Cormier 2015: 95) posits irony to be the third dimension in Daigle's latest novel, and, indeed, a surplus of irony at various intersections of the two-dimensionality previously proposed by Paré might explain the forming of categorical clusters throughout *Pour sûr*. Doyon-Gosselin points out a specific example of this irony in the form of a fragment belonging to the category entitled "La vie des saints," in which an unknown speaker states "Saint-Simonaque !" in response to another's attempt at transcribing Chiac (218). As Doyon-Gosselin argues, this category is "horizontal," or categorical, in the sense that it suggests the discussion of saints, and, presumably, religion, which are important to traditional, Catholic Acadians; it is also "vertical," or subjective, because Daigle makes a self-reflexive comment on the difficulties of transcribing the Acadian dialect; finally, it is ironic—the novel's third dimension, according to Doyon-Gosselin—since the "saint" mentioned in the fragment is not an actual saint, as the category implies, but, rather, a form of blasphemous expletive. Due to Acadie's historical proximity to and peculiar relationship with the English-speaking community of New Brunswick, however, and its rising nationalism in the 1970s after New Brunswick becomes officially bilingual, irony might reveal an anxiety rooted in deeper memories regarding questions of identity than a distant reading of the novel suggests. In using distant reading as a point of entry into the novel, the goal of this dissertation is to find categorical clusters that inform an affective close reading, a reading that suggests that this third dimension is not a "superficial" irony, but, rather, as suggested, the result of a deeply-rooted melancholia.

Historically, from first-wave nationalist poets such as Napoléon Landry, to writers of fiction like Antonine Maillet and Claude Le Bouthillier, up to the second-wave nationalist poets, including Raymond Guy LeBlanc and Herménégilde Chiasson, Acadian literature has chiefly pertained to cultural identity by emphasizing the profound connection between the Acadian people, their land, and their language; however, considering that the colonial history of Acadie is fraught with tension between Francophones and Anglophones, due largely to Britain's Deportation of the Acadian people in 1755, Anglophone culture has had a significant influence on the formation of contemporary Acadian identity and writing due to its violent engraving in Acadian cultural memory. In providing a method of close reading, memory studies are effective in dealing with matters of identity-formation, particularly within the scope of psychoanalysis. Namely, Anne Anlin Cheng's (2001) work on adapting Freud's psychoanalytic theory of melancholia to include denial and exclusion (9) has shown a strong link between melancholia and conceptions of racial and cultural identities. Cheng posits melancholia "as a kind of consumption" (8) that also denies and excludes the "Other." She cites Freud, who explains that at some point the relationship between "ego" and a particular "object" is shattered, and that "[the] ego wishes to incorporate this object into itself, and the method by which it would do so… is by devouring it" (8). This process can be found especially in Daigle's experiments with the Acadian dialect, Chiac. Daigle employs this dialect abundantly in her fiction, as if her Acadian "ego" had swallowed the English language as object; yet, she also reiterates her criticism of this dialect in what scholars such as Doyon-Gosselin argue to be demonstrations of irony, which could point to another "swallowing": that of standard French. In Daigle's writing, and as this dissertation will show, the Acadian ego thus seems to deny and exclude what it has swallowed, a process which has important ramifications for its interrogation of Acadian identity, especially when considering

how Daigle is working through cultural memory to represent identity. In this case, Cheng's type of melancholia, this repulsion of the "Other" through a kind of self-deprecation, is a catalyst for the process of interrogation. In fact, melancholia—rather than irony— is quite possibly at the root of a cubical *Pour sûr*, as part of its third dimension.

Melancholia is certainly a storied term, from its Aristotelian link to the creative genius to its more recent association with affect studies and questions of identity. This project is thus tasked with arguing that a certain type of melancholia, out of a number of others, resonates with Daigle's writing. Sigmund Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), a century after its publication, remains arguably the most influential and debated piece of literature on melancholia. Freud's psychoanalytical reading of melancholia suggests that it occurs at the loss of an object that is, to a certain degree, "withdrawn from consciousness" (245), and that can incite a loss of self-regard. Contemporary scholars from a number of fields have appropriated, revised, and revisited Freud's theory for their own purposes over the years, proposing new, goal-oriented definitions of melancholia. These definitions come from different approaches: for instance, Judith Butler (2004), discussing vulnerability and grief, sees an ethics in melancholia and identifies it as "the repudiation of mourning" (29); Douglas Crimp (2002), approaching the term from the perspective of queer studies in relation to AIDS, writes that the conditions of Freud's theory "describe very perfectly the condition of gay men during the AIDS crisis, as regards both [their] rejection and self-doubt" (141); Paul Gilroy (2005), for his part, abandons Freud's approach in favour of that of Alexander and Magarete Mitscherlich, and relates melancholia to postcolonialism as it pertains to ideas such as multiculturalism and racism, explaining that Britain's refusal to mourn the loss of its Empire has contemporary effects on issues of immigration, among others; while, in Canada, Marlene Goldman has written extensively on the

aesthetics and politics of melancholia and on the manners in which they influence apocalyptic (2005) and "haunting" (2011) Canadian fiction.

In terms of an Acadian cultural memory, melancholia appears in large part due to the centuries of postcolonial trauma that the Acadian people experienced after the Deportation of 1755. This project will discuss trauma in more detail when close reading melancholia in Daigle's novel; however, trauma studies have been divided into various scholarly factions for some time, including what Ruth Leys (2000) has called mimetic (hypnosis, etc.) and anti-mimetic forms of trauma (305), the latter of which has been popular ever since Cathy Caruth's (1996) early work on the topic. Caruth sees trauma as event-based, in which the individual cannot fully know consciously the event at its moment of occurring, and so it is belatedly and repeatedly affective in its unknowability that "returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4); however, an understanding of traumatic *memory* centres on the negotiations of trauma that linger in the cultural imaginary long after the event, rather than on the event itself. In this sense, the presence of the Deportation persists in the works of Acadians that are centuries removed from the event itself as a negotiation of trauma and the affective scars that the event has left on their culture as a foundational tale. Perhaps, then, that Daigle's melancholia in *Pour sûr* is less tied to mourning the Deportation, but is rather a counter to the pressures within the Acadian cultural memory for writers to mourn their tragedies and negotiate this trauma; thus, melancholia almost acts as a mechanism of self-defence that resists the will of Acadian writing traditions.

This project finds Anne Anlin Cheng's work of adapting Freud's interpretation of mourning to discuss racial and cultural identity in the United States particularly compelling in its conception, as she claims that melancholia is "as a kind of consumption" that also denies and excludes the "Other"—in her case, African Americans. The close reading section of this study

will thus apply Cheng's definition of melancholia to Daigle's work—in particular relation to her use of aesthetics—in conveying the author's sense of Acadian identity, both cultural and personal. Aesthetics, as mentioned, are highly significant to Daigle's novel, and namely for the ways in which they tie in with memory and melancholia. As mentioned previously, melancholia has pervaded discussions on creative genius and aesthetics since the time of Aristotle's *Problems* (qtd. in Flatley 35). As Jonathan Flatley (2008) argues, "the aesthetic production of the melancholic may be an attempt precisely to combat depression, not, as one might assume, by way of an escape into aesthetic pleasures but precisely by directing her or his attention toward melancholy itself" (36). This process may well define Daigle's work, with her use of playful aesthetics representing perhaps not necessarily a bout with depression, but a means to work through her own feelings and memories towards an Acadian identity that is both cultural and personal. *Pour sûr*, this dissertation will argue, certainly shows signs of melancholia at work, but one that does not stem from depression; rather, as Julia Kristeva (1989) claims, "melancholia does assert itself in times of crisis" (8), and for Daigle, this crisis is of a *personal* struggle with a *cultural* Acadian identity. Put simply: as such a major literary figure in Acadie, Daigle must feel a certain pressure to champion its literature, yet simultaneously has a difficult time in situating herself with respect to her Acadian identity. As mentioned previously, as well, the melancholia in Daigle's work is thus a form of resistance. Daigle is in the position of abdicator, unable to fulfill her role as the ambassador of Acadian literature; therefore, she constantly demonstrates the tension imposed upon her as a principal Acadian author. As Kristeva goes on to clarify, "[the] artist consumed by melancholia is at the same time the most relentless in [her] struggle against the symbolic abdication that blankets [her]" (9). Daigle's relentless attempts at giving Chiac a standardized spelling, grammar, and syntax throughout *Pour sûr*, or of explaining the ways in

which the language currently functions, are the most evident examples of her struggle with her abdication as a major literary figure in Acadie. For instance, one fragment explains that, in Acadie, "l'usage du pronom y est encore fortement répandu. Son féminin, alle, vieille forme française du elle, en devant un mot débutant par une consonne" (13) to readers outside of Acadie. These explanations of Chiac permeate *Pour sûr*, and, in fact, the novel devotes entire categories of fragments to these clarifications, such as "Chiac" and "Chiac détails."

This example of explaining Chiac presents an intriguing issue at the core of *Pour sûr*, especially in relation to Cheng's idea of melancholia as a consumption of the object: it is directed towards an archaic, Francophone memory of Acadie. In a number of other examples from the "Chiac" and "Chiac détails" categories, Daigle discusses the English language present in Chiac:

> Un Français peut bien dire « parquigne », l'Acadien, lui, aura l'impression de faire du théâtre s'il doit en dire autant. Il prononcera donc tout naturellement « parking », comme il l'entend de la bouche des milliers d'anglophones qui l'entourent. (44)

This dual preoccupation would suggest that, especially with respect to Chiac, Daigle actually "consumes" two linguistic objects: the archaic—or traditional—Acadian French, and the ever-proximate English. So, while her struggle with Acadian identity is certainly compelling in considering the impact of the Anglophone majority on the Acadian people in Moncton, perhaps Daigle's melancholic "consumption" of traditional Acadie is more central to her bursts of irony throughout *Pour sûr*. Presumably, her abundant use and manipulation of Chiac in her work, coupled with comments such as "…parler le chiac appelle encore aujourd'hui un certain désohonneur" (25), evoke a sense of melancholic irony in readers. "Melancholic irony," here, refers to the fact that Daigle pays such importance to the dialect in its written construction, yet,

continually, as in this example, delegitimizes it, suggesting that this ironic portrayal stems from her personal melancholic attitude towards Chiac. As the writer herself has claimed when pressed on the matter (2015), “le chiac, ce n’est pas juste une langue, c’est une mentalité… j’espérais la [sa contradiction envers le chiac] résoudre pour moi-même, mais je ne l’ai pas résolue” (252).

Daigle, however, treats other “traditional” Acadian values with melancholic irony as well: traditionally, for instance, in Acadian culture and literature, the Catholic Church has played a significant role; this trend was often due to the fact that, even until the mid-twentieth century, the clergy wrote much of Acadian literature, as these people were the most educated in Acadie, thus becoming holders of Acadie’s cultural memory. In *Pour sûr*, Daigle also writes about the Church, yet chiefly does so ironically as a kind of criticism. To return to a prior example, she has a category of fragments titled “La vie des saints” in which saints are only devices to demonstrate humour or irony. Again, in one such fragment, the only mention of a saint is in the form of a cuss, “Saint-Simonaque!” (218), who, evidently, is not an actual saint. More to the point, she also has a category of fragments named “La religion,” which does the similar work of criticizing religion using irony. In Daigle’s perhaps most poignant commentary on the Church, however, she links its religious role to that of preserving Acadian memories of heritage and language:

> À un moment donné, en dépit de l’interdiction de mariage entre cousins jusqu’au septième degré, l’Église catholique se permit d’accorder des dispenses afin de protéger l’héritage. Protéger l’héritage, sauver l’héritage, préoccupation essentielle des Acadiens. Depuis toujours défendre son village, son bétail, ses terres, son église, et ultimement sa langue. Depuis toujours, et probablement pour toujours. (714)

Even with this profound commentary on core Acadian values, Daigle needs to preface such a statement with irony, in her humorous mention of the Church's rigidity when marrying cousins. This passage demonstrates the melancholic consumption at work in *Pour sûr*: she has "consumed" this memory of an Acadian identity of the past in this case, yet tries to exclude it, and the struggle between both impulses persists throughout *Pour sûr*. This struggle exemplifies the thesis of this dissertation: that *Pour sûr* attempts to interrogate and debate a cultural Acadian identity through these ironic ploys, yet ultimately has trouble doing so because of the melancholia underlying Daigle's paradoxical tendencies in the text. Michel Houellebecq (2005) calls these ironic ploys "l'ironie du double exact," referring to instances that ironically take up a statement of truth to make fun of them, creating a contradictory tension that, in the case of Daigle, exudes melancholia.

This thesis, however, would be incorrect to argue that Daigle is completely unaware of the struggle at the heart of *Pour sûr*. As a novel chiefly concerned with postmodern aesthetics, it is highly self-reflexive; even a cursory glance at the index reveals a number of self-reflexive categories that shed light on Daigle's own thoughts towards her work: "Erreurs," "Agacements," "Inquiétudes," "Réserves," and "Peurs" represent only a handful of many examples. Moreover, psychoanalytical concepts pervade *Pour sûr*, so Daigle needs to have learned of—or at least have had interest in—the field. For example, in the category of fragments entitled "L'Autre," she undertakes a Lacanian reading of the "Other." Readers may take this "Other" to represent the Anglophone majority in Acadie, and indeed Daigle seems to confirm this reading in the final fragment from the category, which depicts a conversation in English between an Acadian mother and an Anglophone cashier at a grocery store: the mother's child does not understand what is being said and so asks their mother, who lies to them about the topic of the conversation (487).

This project argues that this exchange represents a "consumption" of the "Other"—English—as object. Daigle, however, also discusses psychoanalysis in other instances, and namely in the category entitled "Freud par la bande," which talks about the life and works of Freud in an appreciative tone and vocabulary, and, fittingly, "Lacan," which she clearly admires for his attention to the link between language and the unconscious. And so, while readers cannot draw from *Pour sûr* an explicit mention of melancholia, Daigle undoubtedly has an interest in psychoanalysis as a field since it plays a significant role in her novel. In considering Freud's assessment that melancholia is "withdrawn from consciousness," however, the absence of its explicit mention in the novel is logical, and this absence gives space to the proposed work of this project. In short, Daigle's knowledge of psychoanalysis, without any specific mention of melancholia, is inviting to a reading of melancholia as an unconscious affective agent of memory in her work—one that she would consciously avoid given her penchant for postmodern aesthetics.

While the examples discussed in this chapter all represent fairly "isolated" incidents as a simple exercise in demonstrating what type of close reading the project undertakes with respect to melancholia, this dissertation project will also, with distant reading with the aid of digital methods, link these incidents to other, revealing patterns, clusters, and more meaningful interpretations in general. To summarize, then: the main objective of my dissertation project will be to show that Daigle's attempts at interrogating a cultural Acadian identity with the use of postmodern aesthetics and irony in *Pour sûr*, as well as her difficulty to do so, rest with underlying memories and melancholia in which she "consumes" two objects—Acadian past in terms of France's abandonment of it and the Anglophone other—while simultaneously denying and excluding them. To proceed with this argument, I situate *Pour sûr* in the next chapter as a

work of postmodern Acadian fiction within the larger historical context of Acadian fiction from the twentieth century onwards, as well as posit Daigle's unique position as a postmodernist within the broader scope of postmodern theory, and, more specifically, postmodern theory in Canada, to argue that her type of postmodernism is chiefly aesthetic. These preliminary tasks completed, the following work of this project comprises a database of *Pour sûr*'s fragments to be "distant read" using digital tools and visualizations—treemaps, line graphs, historiograms, etc.—to find patterns and clusters, and while the database is only available in digital form on the Canadian Writing and Research Collaborative's server, the visualizations and analysis of its data will make up this chapter. In its penultimate chapter, this project "close reads" these findings—as exemplified in this section—to analyze more thoroughly the melancholia at the heart of Daigle's novel. Finally, while the main objective of this dissertation pertains directly to Daigle's work and Acadian identity, the optimistic goal is that other critics adopt or adapt this methodology in approaching various other (categorically defined) minor literatures so that they, too, may contribute new scholarship regarding these cultures in meaningful ways that change the general understanding of them.

Chapter 3

"Sõ yoùsqu'y prend les lettres de Scrabble pour faire ses œuvres?": Contextualizing Daigle's Postmodernism and *Pour sûr* in Acadian Fiction

Acadian Fiction: A Brief History

Two major Acadian renaissances are generally credited with having influenced Acadian literature and culture, the first occurring around the mid-nineteenth century and the second situated shortly after the mid-twentieth century. Both waves of writers during these transitional periods share the desire to promote an Acadian nationalism, yet feed distinct values and ideals to their respective movements. The first wave of Acadian nationalism is born alongside the publication of American Henry Longfellow's influential and now-famous poem, "Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie" (1847). During the period spanning the first Acadian renaissance (c. 1864-1890) to the late 1950s, Acadie inaugurates and cultivates its various institutions, namely St. Joseph College (1864) and newspaper *Le Moniteur Acadien* (1867).[1] The development of these institutions gives rise to an Acadian, nationalist movement that culminates in the national Acadian conventions, at which Acadians decide upon cultural and political matters, such as their national holiday, 15 August (1881), and their national flag (1884).[2] This movement ensures a unified patriotism that dominates Acadian literature up until the late 1950s.

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[1] The duration of the first Acadian renaissance varies among critics, with some opting to lengthen the period to 1847, publication date of "Evangeline." See Belliveau (2014), n.p.

[2] See Bourque, et al (2013), for a detailed summary of the conventions.

The second Acadian renaissance is the result of several political movements converging into a militant, literary voice; or, as poet Raymond Guy LeBlanc calls it, a "cri de terre."[3] A significant aspect of the eventual Acadian neonationalist renaissance is the rise to power of Louis J. Robichaud as Premier of New Brunswick. Under Robichaud, New Brunswick becomes officially bilingual, a move which gives more power to the French-speaking Acadians, namely students at the Université de Moncton. In 1968, these students protest Anglophone authority in Moncton, demanding the respect of equal rights for Francophones. Joel Belliveau contextualizes the student protests in *Le "moment 68" et la réinvention de l'Acadie* (2014):

> La vague de manifestations est présentée comme le résultat d'un ras-le-bol chez la jeunesse acadienne des traditions de ses pères et, surtout, de ce qui est perçu comme leur soumission à la domination anglophone. Il s'agirait donc d'un choc entre les générations, mais d'un choc bien particulier, lié avant tout à la situation minoritaire des Acadiens et d'un désaccord sur le type de stratégie nationaliste à favoriser. (n.p.)

Several factors thus contribute to the student protests at the Université de Moncton and subsequent publications of militant literature: a general dissatisfaction with traditional expressions of Acadie, a rebellion against Anglophone cultural domination, and a disagreement with respect to the nationalistic strategy of Acadie. Most Acadian writers of the second wave, such as Raymond Guy LeBlanc, Guy Arsenault, and Herménégilde Chiasson, therefore, attempt to redefine Acadie in relation to its traditional depiction at this time, while simultaneously reclaiming it from Anglophone oppression. Alongside the political turmoil caused by the Quiet

[3] Raymond Guy LeBlanc publishes his militant collection of poetry, *Cri de terre*, in 1972.

Revolution in Québec and the student strikes at Université de Moncton, the poetics of these writers at the time are militant, breaking from tradition and ushering a modern style reflected in its linguistics and tone. Furthermore, these writers make space for the feminist Acadian poets of the 1980s—namely Hélène Harbec, Rose Després, and Dyane Léger—who, to a certain extent, herald the work of France Daigle in their radicalized style that focusses more on the personal act of writing itself than politics.

These movements mostly describe poetry, however, as fiction does not have such an important place in the history of Acadian literature until fairly recently. Pierre Gérin (2006) argues that the first Acadian novel is *Placide, l'homme mystérieux* (1904-06), published in two parts in *L'Impartial*, a small newspaper from Prince-Edward-Island, by father and son, Gilbert and François J. Buote. Still, fiction does not become popularized in Acadie until Antonine Maillet emerges onto the literary scene during the late 1950s. Over the next few decades, Maillet would gain local, national, and international renown, winning a Governor General's Award for *Don l'Orignal* in 1972 and France's prestigious Prix Goncourt for *Pélagie-la-Charrette* in 1979, becoming the first ever non-European to win the award. *Pélagie* is a revealing novel in terms of Maillet's tendency to romanticize and even mythologize Acadie: it tells the epic story of Pélagie and her ten-year journey to return her family and a host of others to Acadie after the Deportation, all recounted by a storyteller who is a descendent of one of her party members. Maillet still writes currently, with her latest novel, *L'albatros*, appearing in 2011; however, in the fifty years since the publication of her first novel—*Pointe-aux-Coques* (1958)—Acadian fiction has developed at a slower pace than in Québec, its closest majority Francophone counterpart, and, as Raoul Boudreau (2009) points out, few writers of fiction from the area have produced

significantly outside of Maillet and Daigle, with poetry remaining Acadie's preferred genre (29-30).

Nonetheless, Acadie has produced several important writers of fiction, even if these are perhaps not so well known in Québec or the Francophone world. Gérald Leblanc (1945-2005) is one such example. Even if known primarily as a poet, he publishes his novel, *Moncton Mantra*, in 1997, which became significant as a work of postmodernism in Acadie as well as an illustration of the influence of the American Beat movement on Acadian writers. In and around the same period, writer Jean Babineau produces three novels: *Bloupe* (1993), *Gîte* (1998), and *Vortex* (2003). Babineau's works represent a kind of postmodern, Acadian extension of the work done by the "High Modernists" of the early twentieth century, particularly with respect to James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which is referenced several times throughout the texts. Yet another fixture in Acadian fiction has been Jacques Savoie, who has produced close to a dozen novels to date both in Acadie and in Québec, with his latest novel, *Un Voyou exemplaire*, appearing in 2014. Savoie is mostly known for his breakout title, *Les Portes tournantes* (1984), which was later made into a film. One can even go back to 1962 and examine a contemporary of Maillet's early works in Ronald Després' *Le Scalpel ininterrompu. Journal du docteur Jan von Fries*, his first and only novel. Després called his novel, which caused controversy because of its dark themes and confusing imagery, a "sottie" at the time—a type of satirical farce on the state of humanity—and the novel fell into obscurity. Not to be forgotten either are the contributions to Acadian fiction by writers Claude Le Bouthillier, Louis Haché, and Hélène Harbec, among others. Perhaps no other writer of Acadian fiction, however, save Maillet, has gained as much local, national, and international critical attention than France Daigle, operating in poetry, drama, and, chiefly,

fiction, single-handedly introducing a new kind of postmodernism in Acadie and winning a myriad of literary awards along the way.

Daigle's *Pour sûr* represents an excellent case study of contemporary Acadian fiction because it implicates a number of defining factors both in and around writings in Acadie that can be traced back to its First Renaissance. First, the novel deals with questions of identity in an Acadie that seems to have moved past nationalistic preoccupations, instead reflecting—perhaps indirectly—on globalization in its depiction of Moncton as a "ville du monde." Second, *Pour sûr* is important to consider vis-à-vis Acadian literature's storied dependency to its critical reception: at the turn of the twentieth century, the clergy heavily censored Acadie's works (Richard 2017); later, Acadian fiction gained international renown when Antonine Maillet won the Goncourt in 1979 (Boudreau 2009); and relatively recently, writers like Daigle and Serge Patrice Thibodeau, in winning the Governor General's Award, raised new and pressing questions as to not only Acadian literature's place in the broader Francophone world, but also with respect to the relationship between minority and majority Francophone writings within Canada itself, inciting much work on the topic by critics such as Lucie Hotte, François Paré, François Ouellet, Catherine Leclerc, and Andrea Cabajsky. These critical approaches have regarded minority literature—and namely that of Acadie—as an aesthetically-based genre, as a *littérature de l'exiguïté*, and even as an "ultraminority." Acadian literature, however, due to its particular cultural history, linguistics, and, in the case of Daigle, unique postmodern style, has been difficult to pin down in any singular vein of minority literature. One objective of this project, therefore, is to study Daigle's work with the purpose of shedding light on Acadian literature's standing as a minority literature.

Situation of Postmodernism *en Acadie* and Daigle's Monctonian Quartet

With the emergence of writers like Daigle, Acadie was moving in full force towards what this project will consider as a postmodern literature. Due to Acadie's particular position as a French-speaking minority, literary trends tend to reach it later than in other French-speaking majorities, particularly Québec. As Raoul Boudreau explains in "L'actualité de la littérature acadienne" (1998), the Acadian writer holds a precarious position in relation to Québec: "[Le Québec] est d'un certain côté le terrain sur lequel [l'écrivain] aspire à se faire reconnaître et d'un autre côté la force dominatrice dans laquelle il doit aliéner une partie de lui-même pour accéder à cette reconnaissance" (8). Boudreau accurately points out that "la littérature acadienne a encore beaucoup de chemin à faire" (18) in terms of postmodernism, and particularly with respect to the fairly recent emergence of fiction, because Acadian literature needs to be legitimized by Québec as much as it does by Acadians. In fact, the special issue of the Québécois journal, *Tangence*, entitled "Le postmoderne acadien" (1998) and in which Boudreau's article appears, is the first substantial collection of criticism on Acadian postmodernism. Not surprisingly, because of Acadie's ambivalent position in relation to Québec, postmodernism did not reach Acadian fiction until recently—with the noticeable exception of France Daigle's work. Boudreau names only three Acadian novelists having produced works that could be considered postmodern in his view: Jean Babineau, Gérald Leblanc, and France Daigle. Of Daigle, who is more significant for the purposes of this project, Boudreau argues that

> Elle s'inscrit d'emblée dans la lignée des métafictions modernes où la littérature devient son propre sujet et où le jeu du texte n'exclut pas le matériau culturel acadien mais, selon l'opposition saussurienne bien connue entre langue et parole,

> le fait régresser de parole constituée à l'état de langue comme réservoir où l'on puisera les éléments qui entrent dans le jeu de la création. (15)

Apart from Daigle, however, these authors had only written one novel at the time of Boudreau's article: Jean Babineau's *Bloupe* was published in 1993, and Gérald Leblanc's *Moncton Mantra* had only been published one year prior in 1997. Furthermore, while Daigle continues to be preoccupied with play and language in *Pour sûr*, she also goes much further than in her prior works in terms of creating more complex matrices in the novel's overall structure.

To be frank, however, the significant work done in "Le postmoderne acadien" is preliminary and lacking in depth, not to mention now outdated. In fact, the roots of postmodernism in Acadian fiction can be traced back to its earlier and best-known publications. For example, Thomas Hodd (2015) suggested to me that

> … there is really nothing "traditional" about *Pélagie*. Even the oral story-telling is constantly rupturing, splitting between past and present… *Pélagie* also becomes self-referential in a post-modern way—we are constantly being reminded that someone is telling us a story that happened earlier, and that they are engaging in storytelling. And we are also reminded that it is a story that "needs to be told," "written down." (n.p.)

Pélagie is not the only example of postmodernist tendencies in early Acadian fiction, either. In Després' *Le Scalpel ininterrompu. Journal du docteur Jan von Fries*, which tells of a mad doctor intent on vivisecting the entire human race, a number of postmodern characteristics emerge. The novel is not only dystopic, but fragmented, self-reflexive, and parodic: important qualities of postmodernism, particularly for its early date of publication in the context of Acadian fiction.

Moreover, since the publication of "Le postmoderne acadien," Jean Babineau has written two more novels, *Gîte* and *Vortex*, while Daigle has produced three, not to mention that she has been publishing since the early 1980s.

As a writer, Daigle has proven to be versatile over the past several decades, producing poetry, drama, and screenplays in addition to writing journalistic articles. She is perhaps best known, however, for her avant-garde fiction and effort at transcribing the Acadian spoken dialect of Chiac. Her earlier works, such as *Variations en B et K* (1985) and *La vraie vie* (1993), do not feature Chiac, but stand as examples of her formal experimentation—for instance, Daigle constructs *La vraie vie* in one hundred fragments, anticipating her further use of fragmentation in *Pour sûr*. Beginning somewhat tentatively with *Pas pire* (1998), however, and progressing incrementally with *Un fin passage* (2001), *Petites difficultés d'existence* (2002), and *Pour sûr*, Daigle includes increasingly more written Chiac in her novels, with her latest work providing an abundance of self-reflexive passages that explain choices in its spelling and grammar. The development in formal experimentation and increase in the use of Chiac over the course of her latest four novels appears logical, since these works form a kind of quartet set in the same universe with a recurring cast of characters: in other words, as the content of the universe grows with each novel in relation to the development of its characters, narrative, and themes, so do Daigle's experiments with formal aesthetics and language.

Understanding the formal experimentation in the first three novels of Daigle's quartet is essential to grasping her conception of *Pour sûr* and the greater role of Chiac in the novel. In *Pas pire*, readers encounter several characters that appear in later novels, such as Terry, Carmen, Hans, and Élizabeth. Most of the novel revolves around a fictitious characterization of Daigle herself, the agoraphobic writer who has been invited to France to appear on a talk show, Bernard

Pivot's *Bouillon de culture*. The formal experimentation of the novel lies with its intertextual passages, particularly its vivid discussions concerning deltas, convents, and, most significantly, the twelve astrological houses. This novel is thus an early indication of Daigle's interest in the number twelve and, more importantly, of how she defines her own role as both creator and created. Jeanette den Toonder (2009), for instance, argues that

> la figure du créateur est une constante dans l'oeuvre daiglienne, flottant souvent au-dessus de ses personnages, et se moquant doucement d'eux. Ce créateur qui s'amuse de ses créatures joue un rôle fondamental dans les textes autofictionnels de cette auteure ; il jette également un regard critique sur le personnage de France Daigle, sur la je-narratrice et sur son projet d'écriture. (78-79)

From the first installment of her quartet, therefore, Daigle establishes herself as an influential agent both within and outside of the narrative.

The stylistic progression from *Pas pire* to *Pour sûr* shows the significant evolution of Daigle as a writer, with readers able to follow her development through the novels as she refines her craft. Even a simple observation, such as the difference between the opening and closing titles of the quartet, suggests a maturation: the phrase "pas pire" implies a kind of nonchalance and air of mediocrity, while the phrase "pour sûr" represents senses of both conviction and experience; moreover, both expressions are examples of French-Canadian colloquialism that demonstrate Daigle's fixation with irony and word-play. So how does this evolution translate to style and aesthetics? Beginning with *Pas pire*, readers can already discern the importance of form for Daigle. As mentioned previously, the number twelve as well as its fractions and multiplications feature prominently in the novel's structure, since it comprises four parts and twenty-four chapters, not to mention a paragraph on each of the twelve astrological houses. On

another note, the novel is also fragmented. The fragments do not belong in named categories like they do in *Pour sûr*, and so are not as explicitly self-reflexive, but, nevertheless, they demonstrate Daigle's inclination to splinter her novels as she moves from character to character and, more importantly, from narrative to candid intertext. More noticeable than the fragmented style of *Pas pire* is certainly its use of intertextuality, as the novel incorporates this element by culling from Greek mythology, Anne Frank's diary, and works on psychoanalysis, among a number of others. Particularly intriguing in this case is Daigle's attention to psychoanalysis, which also appears frequently in *Pour sûr*. Finally, Daigle's fictionalization of herself is important to note here since she pursues this strategy in her latest installation; however, the line between author and character is much clearer in *Pas pire* than it is in *Pour sûr*, in which Daigle often blurs this line during provocative moments of engagement with her own characters as well as readers.

Thus, *Pas pire* is a significant first step for Daigle in writing her quartet and developing her style; however, she continues to grow as a writer with her following novel, *Un fin passage*, as she proceeds to experiment with structure in different ways. Recurring characters continue their journeys and new characters emerge obscurely, as they are unnamed until later in the novel. Daigle also continues to find innovative means to insert self-reflexive instances in her texts, in this case through the voice of a mysterious, disembodied specter called a "suicide inexact." Moreover, she begins to incorporate more pronouncedly the notion of "chance" ("hasard") in *Un fin passage,* manipulating seemingly disparate characters from across the world—from San Francisco to France—into chance encounters that will shape their trajectories in future novels. François Paré (2004) makes the point that, in this novel and the next, *Petites difficultés d'existence*, "les personnages continueront… d'affronter le hasard de leur naissance singulière et

l'improbable enchâssement de leur marginalité fondamentale dans les interstices de la culture" (55). Paré is arguing that the concept of chance enables Daigle's characters to navigate their problematic relationships with Acadian culture, identity, and, increasingly, language, since chance explains the unique circumstances behind the birth—and survival—of Acadie. Certainly, these relationships are problematic because of Acadie's precarity and insecurities in the faces of both the Anglophone and Francophone majorities that surround it; however, the concept of chance, as an impartial force, seems to alleviate some of the accompanying pressures from these majorities, allowing a space for Acadians—at least in Daigle's universe—to have some agency in defining their own identities.

Un fin passage, as *Pas pire*, is written in fragments that this time are scattered throughout seven parts: each describing events on a day of the week. Intriguing is the fact that each section, or each day, has an accompanying subtitle that appears to foreshadow the theme of its section:

Jeudi	L'organisation
Mardi	L'attaque
Vendredi	L'amour
Lundi	Le rêve
Mercredi	Le négoce
Samedi	L'évaluation
Dimanche	Le repos

Table 1. Theme per Day in *Un fin passage*

The seven days of the week, each coupled with choice subtitles, seem to allude to the seven stages of grief, particularly when considering that a number of fragments in the novel come from the perspective of people that have committed suicide. These voices from beyond the grave contrast and accentuate the vitality of the characters in the novel, namely Terry and Carmen, who are travelling to France and are in the prime of their lives. Daigle, therefore, creates a compelling dependency between form and content in *Un fin passage*, and, perhaps more importantly, sets up a significant movement for her quartet as a whole, since the setting shifts from Moncton to the world before readers find that the world comes to Moncton in *Petites difficultés d'existence* and, later, *Pour sûr*. Terry and Carmen leave Moncton to explore the world and, through chance encounters with strangers (especially Étienne Zablonski), inadvertently initiate a series of events that shape the narratives of *Petites difficultés d'existence* and, later, *Pour sûr*.

Finally, in Daigle's penultimate novel, *Petites difficultés d'existence*, the nameless characters are revealed to be the Zablonski couple, Mr. Zablonski being a renowned painter. The couple packs up and moves to Moncton, the apparent nexus of the world in Daigle's universe and where new characters join the established cast and begin the task of fixing up an old building to create a cultural centre equipped with lofts. The events occur in juxtaposition with the characters' growing concerns with their language, place, and identity, as many of them undertake projects that are closely tied to these issues—not only Zed's lofts, but Terry's library and Carmen's bar. Furthermore, Daigle develops a method to combine chance and her intertextual moments in this novel by inserting fortunes of the Yi-King, an ancient, Eastern manual of divination, as chapter titles. Readers also learn that Terry reads these same fortunes throughout the narrative and in juxtaposition with said narrative, since they are the chapter titles and foreshadow the contents of these; however, at the end of the novel, readers learn that Terry was

misreading the manual, and so each fortune is incorrectly read. Thus, the novel reverts onto itself as it undoes its own work: all along, Terry had been making choices based on false fortunes, yet these false fortunes also serve as chapter titles and so as definite authorial choices. The concept of chance valorized throughout the novel, therefore, but Daigle still manages to make her playful presence known as author.

A closer examination of Daigle's penultimate novel, *Petites difficultés d'existence*, hence reveals two major preoccupations for the author: the concept of chance—or even destiny—and the place of Chiac. First, the heightened role of Terry's readings of the divine Yi King (also known as *I Ching*) underlines several significant elements of the novel and its author. For instance, the fact that Daigle structures the entire novel around these readings indicates, at the very least, that she continues to garner interest in constructing her works within certain architectural frameworks. Perhaps more importantly, however, this particular framework—that of Terry's fortune-telling—allows Daigle to tease readers further than she did in *Un fin passage* when considering the concept of chance or destiny: she creates a paradoxical relationship between chance and order for the better part of two novels as her characters gravitate towards Moncton, before playfully "pulling the rug" from under her readers and revealing that Terry had been misreading his fortunes all along in *Petites difficultés d'existence*. This act further cements readers' uncertainty as to Daigle's role in her quartet: is she a character, like in *Pas pire*, some sort of omniscient figure, or a bit of both, as is the more accurate case in *Pour sûr*? Second, the issues revolving around Chiac are highly prominent in *Petites difficultés d'existence*, as the novel features more of the dialect than its two predecessors. Moreover, growing concerns emerge alongside its increased used, chiefly in relation to Carmen's worries about her children's linguistic upbringing. She encourages Terry to speak a more standardized French, since "[c]'est

pas beau un enfant qui parle chiac" (144). Over the course of this development, however, other characters demonstrate an unease with this movement towards a standardized French, while others, such as the unnamed man with whom Terry has a coffee, are tired of linguistic debate in Acadie: "Je suis assez tanné de c't'histoire-là d'Anglais-Français. C'est chavirant. Ça nous oblige tout le temps d'être d'un bord ou de l'autre" (50). Finally, a number of insecurities rise when the French Zablonski couple arrives in Moncton, creating a sort of dual opposition for Acadians, vis-à-vis both the anglophone and francophone communities. The novel thus sets up significant and complex relationships to be explored in *Pour sûr*.

These various types of formal experimentation, as well as the questions of identity tied closely to linguistic issues, set the stage for Daigle's creative techniques in *Pour sûr*, namely narrative fragmentation, self-reflexivity, and intertextuality in an attempt to deconstruct these questions: while Chiac is the product and combination of a proximity to English and remnants of archaic French, does it hold a grammar and is it a legitimate form of communication? Are Acadians, with respect to identity, defined only by this dialect, or are they more than that? How much agency do Acadians even have in making these choices? No novel explores these questions more so than *Pour sûr*, and while Daigle's previous works generate a significant amount of criticism (Boudreau 2004; Paré 2004; Leclerc 2006), *Pour sûr*, as a fairly recent publication, lacks scholarship. Only a couple of articles and several book reviews of the novel have appeared since its publication, the most relevant coming from renowned Acadian and Daigle scholar, Benoit Doyon-Gosselin (2011). The majority of insightful discussions on the novel, however, even if unreliable in some senses, come from Daigle herself. In an interview with Andrea Cabajsky (2015), for example, she claims to be influenced heavily by the OuLiPo group and, in particular, Georges Perec, who relies on creative constraints in his works (250). With respect to

Pour sûr, Daigle also claims Umberto Eco and Italo Calvino in her interview as major influences in her writing (249), and she also cites the Bible as an inspiration for the numerical index in her novel (250-251). These hints are all indispensable as this project moves to construct a postmodernism for Daigle and *Pour sûr*, since they allow for a more precise point of entry for an examination of the various aesthetic elements of her particular style of postmodernism.

"*Le chaudron a trouvé son couvert*": Literary Influences on Daigle's Writing

One of Daigle's key influences is the OuLiPo group, short for "Ouvroir de littérature potentielle." The OuLiPo group finds itself at the intersection of literature and mathematics, at which the foundational mode of production is through constraints. Some of its most famous members, including Raymond Queneau, Georges Perec, and Italo Calvino, all had a considerable impact on Daigle's style of writing. Queneau, for example, discussed in many instances the difference between pure chance and chance born from constraints—a tension with which Daigle enjoys teasing out in several of her novels, and especially in her "Monctonian Quartet."[4]

Georges Perec deserves a noteworthy mention here, as Daigle herself claims him to be such a fundamental influence in her construction of *Pour sûr*. Some argue that Daigle must have been chiefly interested in Perec's treatment of orality due to Daigle's own tremendous work with Chiac. The argument certainly has merit, yet might not apply in this particular context, and not only because Daigle herself explicitly claims that she was not trying to write down the oral

[4] For more of Queneau's works, see in particular *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* (1961) and *Le Voyage en Grèce* (1973).

(Cabajsky 2015, 251). First, Daigle herself claims in an interview with Andrea Cabajsky (2015) that Perec inspired her own work due to his use of formal constraints, namely with novels *La disparition* (1969), which does not once use the letter "e," and *La vie mode d'emploi* (1978), which, according to Daigle, is a sort of puzzle (250-251). Second, Chiac, as such a unique, circumstantial, and even phenomenological dialect, is and has been a point of interest for linguists and writers for a long time—with or without Perec, Daigle would most likely have been intrigued by Chiac. Third, and in support of the second point, Daigle herself has stated that her use of Chiac was undertaken to give a more authentic representation of the space. Of course, her play with language fits well with respect to a priority given to both literature itself and orality in her writing, and while her use of Chiac seems to be also about constructing and debating a sense of identity in *Pour sûr*—as made evident by the struggles of several characters in the novel when dealing with questions of language—Daigle does highly compelling work with the orality and formal elements of Chiac. In considering Perec's specific influence on Daigle, however, the more likely case is that she was influenced by his use of formal constraints and, more specifically and importantly, his use of fragmentation. Daigle was most probably interested in Perec's *Je me souviens* (1978), which contains 480 short fragments that recall his memories between the ages of 10 and 25. These memories are simple, quotidian details of Perec's life, and, though Daigle goes much further in *Pour sûr*—since her novel contains almost four times as many fragments that refer to numerous fictional characters, concepts, and historical figures, among other topics—many of her fragments reflect this style of writing; therefore, while readers should not ignore the essence of orality in Daigle's work, this project aligns itself first with Perec's attention to structure, given Daigle's tendency to do the same.

In support of this commentary, one can also cite Daigle's affection for Calvino's writing, namely for short stories such as "The Burning of the Abominable House" (published in Italian originally as "L'incendio della casa abominevole" in *Playboy Italia* in 1973) that apply constraints to a larger narrative structure, just like *Pour sûr*. Additionally, one might conjecture that her title of *Histoire de la maison qui brûle. Vaguement suivi d'un dernier regard sur la maison qui brûle* (1985) could be based on Calvino's story. Similarly, Daigle's investment in Umberto Eco plausibly lies with the author's innovative and expert use of intertextuality in his works, as Daigle employs these repeatedly in her novels. Lastly, and with respect to her mention of the Bible, the link is much clearer, as she simply based her numbered index of fragments on it. Each fragment is numbered in this specific order: number of the fragment in relation to the others within the entire novel (1-1728), number of the category to which the fragment belongs, which are indexed at the end of the novel (1-144), and number of the fragment within said category (1-12). For example, fragment 468.41.8 refers to fragment 468/1728 overall, category 41—which is "La vie des saints"—and is fragment 8/12 in this category.

Finally, while Daigle does not mention them specifically as direct influences on her work, readers should not neglect the work done by Québécois feminist writers of the 1970s as well as that of the 1980s feminist writers in Acadie when considering Daigle's conceptualization and development of her unique style of writing. Specifically, though Daigle might not have been affected stylistically by these works per se, they are important to consider because, as mentioned earlier with respect to the Acadian feminist writers of the 1980s, these women writers created a space for Daigle to polish her own individual set of aesthetics and employ them with Chiac. The first key figure to observe with this space in mind—and in accounting that its origin lies in 1970s Québec before emerging in 1980s Acadie—is feminist writer Nicole Brossard. Brossard (*Double*

impression 1984; *Le désert mauve* 1987) is a poet, novelist, and essayist best known for her feminist-themed and formally experimental writing, becoming a leading member of the emerging feminist movement in Québec during the 1970s. According to Karen Gould (1990), Brossard, along with contemporary writers Madeleine Gagnon (*Chant pour un Québec lointain* 1990), Louky Bersianik (*L'Euguélionne : roman tryptique* 1976), and France Théoret (*Bloody Mary* 2011 [1977-1992], "added considerable depth theoretically to the collective efforts of a growing number of Québec women writers for whom the political concerns of contemporary feminism, the experimental forms of literary modernity, and the question of the specificity or *difference* of women's writing appear to be inextricably bound" (xiv; author's emphasis). In relation to the works of these women, this project does not explicitly approach Daigle's text from a feminist perspective; however, *Pour sûr* challenges issues—even if different and recontextualized—similarly to how these feminist, Québécois writers did. Chiefly, Daigle uses experimental forms of literary *postmodernity* to explore the specificity or *difference* of *recent Acadian writing*, using the Chiac dialect to challenge the standardization of language itself, much like the feminist writers of Québec used language as a means of exposing "the traps and conventions of *phallocentric* discourse" (Gould xv; author's emphasis).

Furthermore, slightly before Gould, critic and creative writer Louise Dupré (1989) had also written on the impact of three of these writers (Théoret, Gagnon, and Brossard) on women's writing in Québec and Francophone Canada. In her discussion of Brossard's earlier works, especially, Dupré points out how the author as subjective "je," "se construit dans l'ambivalence entre la réalité vécue et l'utopie rêvée… [et] qui se voit schizé, dédoublé" (88). Significant is the fact that, like the manner in which Brossard and these writers inserted themselves directly into a particular discourse, Daigle often injects herself directly into her texts, speaking to both this

feminist style as well as her own postmodernist form and establishing a uniquely subjective position—one that often pits her subjective "je" as lived reality against her equally subjective, but imagined and utopic "je" to create conflict. As Daigle herself claims with this ambiguous "je" in play regarding the plot of *Pour sûr*: "Je ne considère pas avoir réussi à faire un roman avec une montée de tension dramatique, puis la résolution d'un dilemme" (Cabajsky 2015, 251). Perhaps, then, that the inherent tension in this novel is subjectively inward for Daigle, and so questions of identity and language are at its forefront. In any case, the highly significant Québécois feminist movement of the 1970s almost certainly, even if indirectly, made space for Daigle to become such a strong, female, queer writer, and might have even contributed to her creative methodology with respect to her experimental style and attention to language.

If the Québécois, feminist writers of the 1970s influenced Daigle in other ways, this influence was most likely funneled through the Acadian feminist poets of the 1980s, who would have been contemporaries of Daigle and even collaborated with her on projects. While, as Monika Boehringer (2014) claims, Acadie and its women writers are now situated in "postfeminism"—with younger Acadian women writers seeing feminism as "une affaire de leur mère, peut-être" (13)—Daigle is a different case because she grew as a writer during and since the peak of the feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s. As mentioned previously, three poets in addition to Daigle practiced defining feminist poetics in Acadie during the 1980s as "le noyau de cette génération" (Boehringer 2014, 29): Hélène Harbec, Rose Després, and Dyane Léger. Léger is the first of these poets to come along, winning the France-Acadie prize for *Graines de fées* (1980), the first collection of poetry published by a woman writer in Acadie as well as the inaugural publication of Acadie's new publisher, Perce-Neige (Lonergan 2010, 181). Also, a visual artist, Léger develops a poetics that meshes surrealism and humour, moving towards a

more prosaic style in later works such as *Le dragon de la dernière heure* (1999); this work, according to Lonergan, blurs the line between writer and character (182). Daigle thus parallels Léger in two important ways: in her use of humour—irony, especially—as well as in her tendency to obfuscate writer and character. The next of these three, key feminist poets to come onto Acadie's literary scene during the 1980s is Rose Després. Després is a multidisciplinary artist, being a comedian, musician, and interpreter as well as a creative writer. Differing from Léger and Daigle in that she uses darker tones and language in her poetry rather than humour, beginning with *Fièvre de nos mains* (1982), Després' writing nonetheless preoccupies itself with questions of identity and the relationship between the individual and the collective (Lonergan 191), and so is similar to Daigle's writing in this respect. Finally, the third poet to come along during this period is Hélène Harbec, whose first publication, interestingly enough, is written in collaboration with Daigle; in 1986, the two women published *L'Été avant la mort* with Éditions du remue-ménage, a feminist publisher. As Lonergan points out, Harbec's preferred themes in her works are childhood, death, and love (316); moreover, she often uses realist anecdotes and humour to effectively comment on life. Again, Daigle shares several similarities with this writer, since she also uses realist anecdotes—her fragments, for example, could be called anecdotes—and applies humour to them so that they impress certain comments on life upon the reader. Additionally, Daigle visits the themes of love and death repeatedly in her works, with childhood—her own, most likely—being at the forefront of *Pas pire*. So, while Daigle does not name these feminist writers—whether from Québec or Acadie—as direct influences on her work, her work *does* parallel theirs in various ways. In fact, one could argue that she adopted aesthetic values from these writers, honed them with her earlier works such as *Variations en B et K* and *La*

vraie vie, before applying them to broader issues of Acadian identity and language with her Monctonian Quartet.

An Aesthetic Approach: Constructing Daigle's Postmodernism

To discuss postmodernism and the manners in which the term applies to France Daigle's *Pour sûr* during the distant and close reading portions of this project, this section must first establish a working definition for the term, and, perhaps more importantly, justify this definition. Postmodernism has certainly had an unstable status throughout its history: is it a literary movement, a methodology, a set of aesthetics, or some combination of these categorical signifiers? In *Constructing Postmodernism* (1992), Brian McHale proposes "multiple, overlapping and intersecting inventories and multiple corpora; not *a* construction of postmodernism, but a plurality of constructions; constructions that, while not necessarily mutually contradictory, are not fully integrated, or perhaps not even integrable, either" (3; his emphasis). This project thus attempts to "construct" Daigle's unique postmodernism by arguing that she uses a set of postmodern aesthetics to build a particular methodology that, in turn, represents her own view of contemporary Acadie.

In constructing a postmodernism, however, one must first acknowledge the various contexts of a number of postmodernisms over the last half century. These contexts are not simply literary; rather, they also speak to historical, societal, and political concerns, among others. Jean-François Lyotard, for instance, argues in *La condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir* (1979) that since the Second World War, postmodernists have grown sceptical of the modernist master or metanarratives that attempt to embody the entire human experience with respect to art,

science, society, philosophy, and culture, while Fredric Jameson claims in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) that this same scepticism is a symptom of the late capitalist mode of production; moreover, Jameson discusses postmodernism in relation to the unfathomable depths of history, which will become significant in later discussions on cultural memory. Charles Newman also ties postmodernism to capitalism in *The Post-Modern Aura: The Act of Fiction in an Age of Inflation* (1985), citing inflation of the economy and a rise in yearly published works as the causes for the literary transition in question. Readers also associate the move to postmodernism with the shift of theorists such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes from structuralism to poststructuralism, and to deconstruction as well, due to the fragmented and rhizomatic tendencies associated with postmodernism and in part inherited from the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. Moreover, for the purposes of this project, critics of postmodern aesthetics, such as Ihab Hassan and John Barth, are particularly significant to recognize. In Hassan's *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (1982), for example, he differentiates modernism and postmodernism respectively using categorical dichotomies such as centring/dispersal, metaphysics/irony, and purpose/play, among a host of others. These dichotomies are not static, but they nonetheless represent a growing focus on writing and its process. For his part, Barth, while not completely dismissing this "definition by differences," opts instead in "The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodernist Fiction" (1980) for a more moderate explanation of postmodernism in relation to form, one in which, naturally, "artistic conventions are liable to be retired, subverted, transcended, transformed, or even deployed against themselves to generate new and lively work" (205). This sentiment, indeed, is

less polemical than others, and points to postmodernism simply as an innovative set of aesthetics meant to generate new and meaningful literature.[5]

While not expansively in-depth, this overview of several important postmodernist theorists and their interests leads to the more important work, with respect to this project, of Canadian and Québecois postmodernist theorists, including scholars such as Linda Hutcheon, Janet Paterson, Sylvia Söderlind, and Caroline Bayard, among a myriad of others; these theorists are all highly active at the height of discussions on literary postmodernism in Canada during the early 1990s. Hutcheon, working on postmodernism from the prospect of historiographic metafiction in English Canada, is arguably the most recognized theorist from this group, chiefly for her book, *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction* (1988).[6] In this watershed work, she explains that historiographic metafiction, as a fictional

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[5] These postmodernist theorists preoccupy themselves mostly with formal aesthetics, since these are at the core of this project; however, a much greater number of postmodernists could be referenced if the scope of this project was different (or broader). The exact breadth of literary postmodernist theory is difficult to specify, since the field grew alongside—and in some cases, diverged into—other prominent areas of study, including from feminist, queer, postcolonial, and cultural critical approaches. With the goal of containment, however, this project focusses on a postmodernism that prioritizes aesthetics.

[6] Hutcheon has also worked on a number of postmodernist theories and poetics outside of the Canadian context. See, for instance, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (1980), *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (1994), and *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (1985), among other works.

retelling of history, "often points to the fact by using the paratextual conventions of historiography to both inscribe and undermine the authority and objectivity of historical sources and explanations" (122-123). Leaning heavily on Lyotard's skepticism of master narratives, Hutcheon links historiographic metafiction to postmodernism at the outset of her text because "in the postmodern this self-consciousness of art as art is paradoxically made the means to a new engagement with the social and the historical world" (1), claiming additionally that postmodernism's "use of parody to echo past works signals its awareness that literature is made, first and foremost, out of other literatures" (1). Of course, Hutcheon has written extensively on postmodernism with other titles such as *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988) and *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989). Her tremendous work in the field has ensured that the genre of historiographic metafiction remains closely linked to postmodernist criticism and fiction.

Working in juxtaposition with Hutcheon at the University of Toronto, from the perspective of Québécois literature, is Janet Paterson, perhaps known best for her own book on postmodernist theory, *Moments postmodernes dans le roman québécois* (1990). Paterson's book echoes Hutcheon's works in a number of ways, chiefly with respect to its analysis of a set of postmodern aesthetics, including fragmentation, self-reflexivity, intertextuality, irony, and parody. She does, however, differ from Hutcheon on several aspects of postmodernism. For instance, Paterson takes parody a step further by asserting that postmodern writing in Québec is often "autoparodique car l'écriture postmoderne se moque souvent d'elle-même" (21). This claim seems logical, as self-parody could be defined as two aesthetic tenets of postmodernism, parody and self-reflexivity, coming together. Moreover, while Hutcheon applies Lyotard's concept of postmodern distrust of metanarratives to develop her own notion of historiographic

metafiction in English Canada, Paterson sides with Lyotard's other assessment of postmodernism as a genre based on what he calls "heterogeneous knowledge," a knowledge that he defines in *La condition postmoderne* as challenging "notions of unity, homogeneity, and harmony" (4): "j'utilise le concept de postmodernisme en m'inspirant surtout des propos de Lyotard parce que ceux-ci décrivent la façon la plus probante, à mon avis, le phénomène postmoderne tel qu'il se révèle dans le roman québécois" (16). Already, therefore, readers of postmodern theory in Canada can appreciate the fact that multiple kinds of postmodernism can exist at once, depending on the literature in question.

Sylvia Söderlind, for her part, is also a prominent figure in postmodern studies due to her work on marginality, *Margin/Alias: Language and Colonization in Canadian and Québécois Fiction* (1991). Among others, her text raises significant questions concerning the relationship between postmodernism and postcolonialism, namely in relation to the complex history of colonization in Canada and within the discourse of marginality. Söderlind argues that "at the extreme the margin becomes a figure for the centre, and the 'real' marginal becomes a margin/alias—a marginal in name only" (3). This process of naming and renaming "the marginal," of becoming an alias, leads her to question authorial "self-naming" (23) and examine "the writer's perception of his own role and position vis-à-vis his creation, hence of his understanding of his own agency" (23). To be sure, any act of naming, whether of the Self or Other, is to some degree political in nature, and Söderlind engages with this association throughout her book while using a number of Canadian and Québécois novels as objects of study. Ultimately, the postmodern author becomes a margin/alias in this perpetual inversion of the centre/marginal, so that while "the reader submits to the mastery of the author, the latter submits to the cruelty of the reader" (236). Invoking William Butler Yeats' "Among School

Children" (1928), this project poses the following question in a variety of iterations: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" (60). One can investigate this "dance" between author and reader possible in postmodernism writing because, as Söderlind argues, "postmodernism can be seen as a metaphorization of postcolonialism, or as a translation of the centre/margin dialectic from a political into an aesthetic register" (234). So, while critics may read politics in postmodern texts, aesthetics remain at the foundation of these texts and scholars would benefit from considering aesthetics as a primary point of entry into postmodern works.

Evidently, most critics in Canada have at least considered aesthetics in postmodern texts to a certain degree, whether inadvertently to push another agenda or as a key characteristic. Caroline Bayard is one of the latter scholars, most notably for her book published during the same period as the aforementioned authors, *The New Poetics in Canada and Québec: From Concretism to Post-Modernism* (1989). Although Bayard's chief object of study is poetry, her work lends itself well to works of fiction. Perhaps Bayard's most useful contribution, with respect to this project, is her careful differentiation between the concepts of avant-garde and postmodern. From the outset, she takes a preliminary position concerning both terms: for Bayard, the avant-garde represents "an aesthetic metaphor commonly used to identify writers and artists [that are] intent on establishing their own formal conventions in opposition to the dominant academic and popular taste" (3), while the postmodern

> transforms and perverts the function of the avant-garde, reroutes its directionalities away from the utopian myths of artistic progress, "tabula rasa," and artistic breakthrough… it is an attitude: the capacity to fuse and celebrate what had been previously separated; that is, the narrative from textual process,

> pleasure from scientifically established assertions, representations from non-representational elements.[7] (4)

These initial definitions established, Bayard proceeds to analyse English-Canadian and Québécois texts from the 1960s, 70s, and 80s through various scopes, including concretism, feminism, psychoanalysis, expressionism, and deconstructionism, among others. Her conclusion, particularly significant in terms of this project, is that, "[if] Canadians need a centre, the Québécois' reflexes and needs are the opposite" (196). Bayard posits Québec's tumultuous political climate as the reason behind its literature's refusal to adhere to a single, central authority, citing the historical context of "Duplessis' Grande Noirceur, of 'Refus Global'," of the subsequent rise in nationalism in the 1960s, and the rebelliousness it aroused amidst [François] Charon's contemporaries" (197). While possibly only coincidental, the tendency of the Francophone writers, in this case Québécois, to focus on decentring rather than the centre, might be telling of Daigle's own work in doing the same. Even with these fundamental differences between the two literary canons in Canada, Bayard argues that both sides share "what Robert Kroetsch once called 'the narratives of a discontent with a history that lied to us, violated us, erased us even'" (197). Perhaps for Daigle, too, the need to interrogate identity stems from a precarious relationship with history, or cultural memory.

These publications, however, are roughly from the beginning of the 1990s, the height of postmodernist theory in Canada, and while the field had dipped in interest by the turn of the millennium, it has recently regained critical attention in the form of *Re: Reading the Postmodern: Canadian Literature and Criticism after Modernism*, a collection of essays from

[7] Bayard bases her thoughts on those of Guy Scarpetta from his work, *L'Impureté* (1985).

various postmodern scholars, edited by Robert Stacey. Hutcheon and Söderlind feature in the book, as well as a number of newcomers to the field. As the introduction to this project points out, the field remains as debated as ever, from Christian Bök's argument that postmodernism has yet to even begin in Canada (99) to Stephen Cain's discussion of a second wave of postmodernism, a "pessimistic pomo," that would emerge after the publications of the 1990s critics (105). This postmodernism, "despite using many of the same textual techniques, resulted in texts whose primary ideological manifestation was nihilism" (105). Perhaps the key issue at the core of these debates is that many of the scholars in this book focus too much on discussing postmodernism as a period or literary movement in history instead of paying more attention to, precisely as Cain mentions, these "same textual techniques," or in other words, postmodern aesthetics. Whatever the goal of the writer may be, postmodernism is not necessarily a period, per se; rather, it represents a methodology for writing that consists of a recurring set of aesthetics, such as fragmentation, self-reflexivity, intertextuality, irony, parody, and decentralization. This turn toward approaching postmodernism chiefly from the angle of aesthetics applies to Daigle: she is not necessarily a first or second-wave postmodern writer in terms of a period, but rather a contemporary writer who employs postmodern textual techniques.

Clearly, in sorting through these numerable takes on postmodernism and considering Daigle's penchant for aesthetics, her readers might have trouble placing her in any categorical vein of postmodernism, hence the need to approach her work differently. While Daigle could certainly be argued to be an avant-garde writer, she is decidedly *more* than that: she is an avant-garde writer with an *attitude*, which, as Bayard argues, is grounds for postmodernism. Her position, therefore, places her first and foremost in the lineage of the OuLiPo members, for whom, just like Daigle, the constraint reigns. Although chance plays a significant role in her

works thematically, the author—and the constraints she has set and constructed for the work—determines the work and how it unfolds, both content and form-wise. In a way, the OuLiPo group champions the same credo as that of the nineteenth-century's aesthetic movement of "art for art's sake": an unadulterated enjoyment of literature devoid of socio-political commentary. Many of the fragments in *Pour sûr* arguably follow this axiom; however, Daigle's constant attention to Acadian identity and Chiac suggests that she has moved beyond her inspiration's straightforward doctrines, and, thus, into the realm of postmodernism.

As mentioned previously, Daigle has no real equal as a postmodern Acadian writer, even if others in Acadie have been known to produce works that could be considered postmodern. Raoul Boudreau (1998) argues that Daigle has gone further than anyone else in Acadian postmodern fiction, stating that with *Pas pire*, she has "atteint au sommet de son art" (17). Yet, since then, Daigle has continued to develop her postmodern prowess with the publication of novels *Un fin passage* in 2001 and *Petites difficultés d'existence* in 2002, culminating in the Governor General's Award-winning *Pour sûr* in 2011. As a result, and for all intended purposes, Daigle's fiction has become synonymous with Acadian postmodernism, having found success in the larger Québécois market (publishing at Éditions du Boréal) and in English translations of her work (Robert Majzels' translation of *Pas pire*, *Just Fine* (2000), winning the Governor General's Award in 2000, and his English translation of *Pour sûr*, *For Sure* (2012), was shortlisted for the same award in 2012).

For Daigle, postmodernism is an aesthetics for writing Acadie; however, due to the aesthetics that she employs, the Acadian identity—or at least Daigle's perception of it, as this project will discuss later on—is effectively interrogated in her novels, especially in *Pour sûr*, and never completely clarified. While *Pour sûr* contains several intertwined narratives, the influences

of OuLiPo group on Daigle ensure that these narratives remain subservient to formal aesthetics; therefore, fragmentation, self-reflexivity, intertextuality, and irony, among others, are at the foundation of her novel. Fragmentation, in particular, shatters the novel—and with it, Acadian identity—into 1728 fragments or "shards," shards that deconstruct language, culture, space, and history, to name a handful of them. Her use of self-reflexivity questions these various characteristics of Acadian identity, while the intertexts within the novel link them to an audience that is outside of Acadie, making Moncton—the novel's setting—a "ville du monde" (Doyon-Gosselin and Morency 2004). The irony in *Pour sûr*, however, is paradoxical: it at once keeps the tone light and playful, yet also speaks to an uneasiness with Acadian identity that is constantly linked to its instability throughout the novel. The paradoxical nature of this irony is representational of how the novel functions: while it attempts to destabilize Acadian identity with its postmodern aesthetics, identity is inherent to some extent in each fragment, making a complete subversion impossible. In line with Hutcheon's thoughts, *Pour sûr* is conscious of itself as art, and, relatedly and in the same vein as Paterson's argument, it is also at times self-parodic. In relation to Söderlind's views, Daigle certainly has an intriguing relationship with her creation and understands her own agency as author; moreover, similarly to the Québécois writers that Bayard discusses, she seems to focus on deconstructing, namely with respect to identity, yet, like the English-Canadian writers in Bayard's same study, she seems to be unable to escape the historical and linguistic constructs of this identity.

Finally, why exactly choose aesthetics as a point of entry into the study of *Pour sûr* when the novel, both explicitly and implicitly, offers so many options of approaches? Psychoanalysis, linguistics, numerology, cultural studies, historicism, feminism, or even postcolonialism: Daigle's epic easily invites readings through the lens' of each of these methods. The answer is

twofold and somewhat simple when considering the topical breadth of Daigle's novel, however, it is the most efficient way to handle the sheer amount of material that she lays out for critical analysis. First, just like Daigle gives her readers the illusion of chance, she provides critics with the illusion of choice, doing both through a singular, stylistic decision: in writing a novel that submits to formal constraints, she forces critics to prioritize these formal aesthetics in whatever study they choose to undertake. To do otherwise would surely result in an incomplete piece of criticism. Secondly, just because the aforementioned approaches should not be the point of entry into the study of *Pour sûr* does not mean they are forgotten; on the contrary, they become part of a much more in-depth study, and, as this project argues, relate in some way or another to questions of Acadian identity. With her postmodernist prioritization of form over content, therefore, Daigle departs from the popular concern for many Acadian writers with respect to identity—that of the *what*?—to the more intriguing and complex issue—that of the *how*?

Daigle the 'Pataphysicist: Imagining New Solutions to Old Problems

Conversely, an intriguing point of entry into Daigle's work—and especially with respect to this project—might be through "'pataphysics." French writer Alfred Jarry (1911) coins this term at the turn of the twentieth century, though he has difficulty defining it, preferring to define 'pataphysics by what some might call non-definitions, or by what it is not. One of Jarry's more compelling definitions, however, and the one to which most critics (Christian Bök 2001; Andrew Hugill 2012) have clung, is that 'pataphysics represents "the science of imaginary solutions" (21). To this chief principle, Hugill adds the following three: "'pataphysics is to metaphysics as metaphysics is to physics; 'pataphysics is the science of the particular and the laws governing exceptions; and 'pataphysics is a universe supplementary to this one" (4). In other words:

’pataphysics represents a refracted version of a known universe—a simulation, one could argue—in which one can troubleshoot imaginary solutions to any befitting problem. The concept of ‘pataphysics—namely its first defining principle—is apt since it could well be the epigraph to this very project (and perhaps most projects), particularly because of its methodology combining distant reading with the aid of digital tools followed by close reading through the lens of affect theory. Moreover, the OuLiPo group—by which Daigle was heavily influenced—held ’pataphysics in high regard as it spoke to their investment in “potential literature.” On another note, the topic remains influential in several fields related to this project: examples include Canadian avant-garde proponent Christian Bök’s *’Pataphysics: The Poetics of an Imaginary Science* (2001) and Stephen Ramsay’s *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism* (2011) on deforming texts using digital tools. In fact, one could argue that the manner in which Daigle treats identity and language formally in *Pour sûr* is ’pataphysical in the sense that it opens up potential—or imaginary solutions—to recurring issues in representations of contemporary Acadie. In any case, ’pataphysics as a concept will certainly appear in several forms throughout this project’s distant and close reading sections.

Bök’s text, in particular, is highly significant to this project because, not only does it offer an excellent analysis of ’pataphysics as a concept, but it also examines this concept’s influence on the OuLiPo group as well as on Canadian poetics. Andrew Hugill (2012) recognizes that “Bök leads a flourishing Canadian academic scene” (34) on ’pataphysics, which represents a daunting task because, as Hugill also asserts, Canadian ’pataphysics “divides into Anglophone and Francophone pataphysics, of which the latter differs again from French pataphysics” (xvi). While ’pataphysics is a scientific endeavour that Bök relates to poetics, its methodology bears several similarities to Daigle’s “insofar as such a science creates in advance the reality that it

explores" (51-52). Daigle, like the OuLiPo writers before her, uses formal constraints to create a "reality," a universe, even a language or set of aesthetics that she explores—with which she plays, in other words. Moreover, as Bök points out, "[r]ather than build operative devices for harnessing thought […], the 'pataphysician must instead build excessive devices for unleashing thought" (53). With *Pour sûr*, Daigle certainly builds such an excessive device, whether in relation to her 1728 interconnected fragments that unleash new ways of thinking about form and the novel, or with respect to her construction of a grammar, syntax, and spelling for Chiac, that unleashes innovative thoughts on, and understanding of, the inner mechanism of a defining characteristic of Acadian identity.

More specifically related to Daigle's production of literature itself, with her use of constraints to organize narrative, Bök looks closely at the influence of 'pataphysics on the OuLiPo group. Bök argues that "Oulipo resorts to 'pataphysics in order to suggest that even a machinic calculus has the potential to generate the novelty of anomaly. Just as science might propose rigorous systems for producing innovative knowledge, so also might poetry propose rigorous systems for producing innovative literature" (140-141). *Pour sûr* could certainly be defined as a "rigorous system": not only does it comprise 1728 fragments distributed evenly into 144 categories, but, as Daigle herself claims with regards to the novel's conception, she is attempting to consider the novel alongside the digital, in that each fragment could refer to two others (Cabajsky 2015, 251), creating an intricate matrix of references. Furthermore, and in relation to the OuLiPo's use of formal constraints and the potential of their combinations in literary texts, Bök makes the following lamentation:

> The fixed canon of literary research has often ignored the nomadic anomaly of such combinatorics on the assumption that to subscribe to constraint is to indulge

> in a frivolous aesthetic even though the formality of such constraint (as seen, for example, in the lipogram, the rhopalic, etc.) can afford the study of poetics with the rigor of a science. (151)

Precisely, in categorizing the 1728 fragments of her cubic novel in a particularly demanding constraint, Daigle enables criticism on her work to be undertaken with scientific rigor. For this reason, this project constructs a database of *Pour sûr*'s fragments, effectively quantifying the novel in order to analyze its aesthetics with as much rigor as possible.

Finally, how does Bök view 'pataphysics in the Canadian context? He does not engage with French Canada, preferring to discuss a handful of English Canadian poets instead; however, his observations of the manners in which 'pataphysics in Canada differs from its European counterpart include intriguing parallels to Daigle's work. Bök, for instance, claims that Canadian 'pataphysics is different from that of Europeans because it "[resorts] to European 'pataphysics in order to parody European 'pataphysics, granting Canada its own autonomy from the question of autonomy itself by portraying these paradoxical endeavours as an imagined solution to mnemonic problems" (183). While Daigle does not belong to Bök's target corpus, her novel, *Pour sûr*, nonetheless deals with similar paradoxical issues. Specifically, the novel creates an autonomous, imagined universe of Acadie that distances itself from the mythologized world conceptualized by writers like Antonine Maillet, yet that also allows her to "imagine solutions" to "mnemonic problems" of language and identity. The following chapters of this project will investigate precisely the manners in which Daigle constructs her fictional universe with her use of formal constraints and aesthetics, before moving on to discuss the "imagined solutions" that she offers readers.

Conclusion: Breaking the Mold with Aesthetics in *Pour sûr*

This project seeks to move away from the study of postmodernism in relation to the two major branches of Canadian literature, English-Canadian and Québécois literatures, to focus on how postmodernism operates in a Francophone minority literature, specifically Acadian fiction as exemplified by Daigle's work. In Deleuze and Guattari's (1975) terms, Acadian literature is a *littérature mineure*—consisting of "the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation" (18). Daigle, however, is somewhat of an anomaly in this regard—for instance, one could easily argue that her work is more concerned with the territorialization of language, and that the immediacy felt by certain individuals is not so much political as it is a tension between shame and pride for their language and identity. Perhaps a better way to classify *Pour sûr* is as what Homi K. Bhabha (1990) calls a "locality of culture," which, similarly to 'pataphysics, is defined by contrasts and what it is not:

> This locality is more *around* temporality than *about* historicity; a form of living that is more complex than "community"; more symbolic than "society"; more connotative than "country"; less patriotic than *patrie*, more rhetorical than the reason of state; more mythological than ideology; less homogenous than hegemony; less centred than the citizen; more collective than "the subject"; more psychic than civility, more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identifications. (292; his emphasis)[8]

[8] Bhabha's concept of "localities of culture" recalls Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities" from his much-studied work, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin*

With this model, distinctions between nation, region, and community all collapse into a single, transcendent space. In other words, Bhabha's understanding of a locality of cultures gives power to the locality in question, allowing it to break free from such defining power dynamics such as that between majority and minority. Thinking of Daigle's work in such a way is helpful because, while some may argue that her fictionalized space only represents a portion of—or community within—Acadie, the Acadie she creates in Moncton is meant to be a synecdoche for the "imagined nation." Daigle uses these types of synecdoche in other forms, especially characters, such as Terry and Carmen's travels to Europe as "Acadie exploring the world" and the Zablonskis moving to Moncton as "the world coming to Acadie." Thus, while Deleuze and Guattari's work on littératures mineures has had a significant impact on Franco-Canada in general, and particularly on scholars such as François Paré, who has written extensively on Franco-Canadian minorities as well as on Daigle's work, critics would do well to move away from their theory on minority literatures to tackle Daigle's unique style and preoccupations. François Paré has done well in this respect, as his *Les littératures de l'exiguité* (1992), for instance, celebrates the otherness, the anxiety, the powerlessness, and general heterogeneity of minority literatures rather than—even if influenced by their majority counterparts—simply playing on their status as a minority literature. Through this lens, which aligns itself nicely with Daigle's emphasis on aesthetics, readers may appreciate *Pour sûr* as the advent for a new kind of writing in Acadie.

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and Spread of Nationalism (1983); however, due to the fluid and precarious state of Acadie, Bhabha's nuanced and contemporized "locality of culture" seems better suited to define the universe of *Pour sûr*.

Raoul Boudreau (1998), among others, builds on Paré's work to claim that Acadian literature has a tendency (perhaps as most minority literatures do) to develop at a slower pace than its majority counterparts—in this case Québécois and French literatures—and that its relation to these literary majorities puts Acadian writers in a precarious position: "[Le Québec] est d'un certain côté le terrain sur lequel [l'écrivain] aspire à se faire reconnaître et d'un autre côté la force dominatrice dans laquelle il doit aliéner une partie de lui-même pour accéder à cette reconnaissance" (8). These writers indeed feel the pressure of desiring valorization from their majority counterparts; yet, they also occupy a challenging role within their own communities. As Lucie Hotte (2008) argues, "en tant que membres d'une communauté minoritaire, ils sont souvent contraints à s'engager activement dans leur milieu et à engager leur art [pour la] promotion, la valorisation et la défense du groupe" (319). In other words, Acadian writers become spokespersons for their cultural identity, a position that can be at once empowering, but also problematically ineluctable, since these writers have difficulties transcending the "cultural duties" assigned by their readership. This phenomenon has certainly occurred and continues to do so in the case of Daigle, and exponentially so because of her national and international success. A key means of overcoming this problem lies with a transition in critical focus, from that of a communal perception of identity to the individual values of the writer. Hotte (2008) points out that, more specifically, this transition moves towards—or perhaps back to, in considering the aesthetic movement of the nineteenth century—aesthetics: "Les artistes n'auront de cesse, à partir du début des années 1990, de demander une réception purement ou essentiellement 'artistique' de leurs œuvres" (331-2). With respect to this particular project, and if treated as their own object that precedes questions of identity, postmodernist aesthetics thus

become highly significant in examining *how* precisely they function to interrogate Acadian identity in France Daigle's *Pour sûr*.

The best way to enter this novel, from a scholarly perspective, remains through aesthetics. *Pour sûr* certainly does much work to explore the affects of Acadian identity and Chiac, but one must first understand how and why Daigle constructs her novel in this manner to provide accurate and educational critical analysis. For this reason, this project will attempt to quantify her aesthetics, to demonstrate them in revealing ways that inform the content of the novel in order to uncover and dissect the underlying distress beneath—or at—the surface of the text. Thus, before trying to gain insight into Daigle's Acadie by studying the affects produced by the narrative of *Pour sûr*, this study first examines, with the aid of various digital tools, what story her formal aesthetics tell.

Chapter 4

The Novel as Database: Visualizing the Many Forms of *Pour sûr*

The Structure of *Pour sûr* at a Glance

This chapter offers visual demonstrations of *Pour sûr* as a database with the aid of digital tools, demonstrations that allow for "deformations" of the text itself to shed light on Daigle's innovative use of postmodern aesthetics in her representation of contemporary Acadie. The findings from this chapter will show mnemonic traces, patterns, clusters, and distribution as well as sites of conflict in which Daigle works through cultural memory to construct and represent Acadian identity; moreover, it will allow for interpretation through the lens of affect studies—namely affective melancholia—in the following chapter. As this project is of a progressive nature, in the sense that this distant reading must come before the close reading of its findings, this chapter is essential to plotting Daigle's monumental novel in its empirical data, with the final goal being to analyze this data through the scope of affect and to comment on her interrogation of Acadian identity. Due to the rigorous structure of *Pour sûr*, with its fragments and categories, the novel is relatively easy to quantify and "deform" in ways that offer insight into Daigle's process of constructing it; therefore, the most practical study with which to begin in this chapter is of the quantitative distribution of fragments, categories, and self-reflexivity in the novel.

To properly understand the power of deforming *Pour sûr*, one must first grasp the impression of stability and perfection that the novel gives at surface level: it contains 1728 fragments, which is 12^3, and these fragments are divided into 144 categories, which is 12^2, meaning that each category has twelve fragments. Moreover, the novel has twelve chapters, with

each chapter comprising 144 fragments. At first glance, therefore, the novel appears to be completely balanced; visually, one would think of *Pour sûr*'s construction as such:

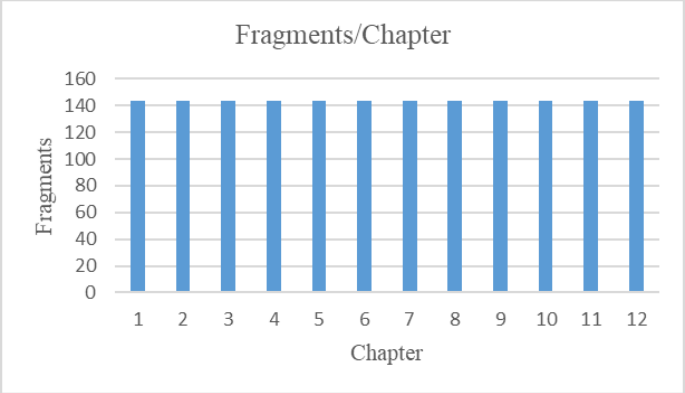

Figure 1. Graph of Fragments per Chapter

Even formally and superficially, then, as figure 1 shows, the novel puts forth a sense of perfection and evenness, with each bar in the graph being faultlessly aligned. This structure can initially affect readers, numbing them to the novel's inner imbalances and conflicts; however, to digitally deform the novel in a series of visualizations communicates a story of melancholia, of Acadian identity as a psychological battleground of self-reflexive work through cultural memory that leaves affective scars. Examples of these scars include, perhaps most obviously, the inscription of Chiac, but also passages in which Daigle offers self-reflexive comments on elements of Acadian identity such as history, language, and religion that are *outside* of the plot, as well as instances in which she participates *inside* of the plot in the form of character "avatars," as she calls them. As mentioned, this digital study will begin with a quantitative analysis of fragment nature—whether they are a part of the plot or self-reflexive comments outside of it—and distribution in the novel to reveal empirical patterns and clusters before undertaking a study of character interactions at important locations in the narrative and, finally, a linguistic study of the presence and uses of Chiac in *Pour sûr*.

What's in a Fragment? Metanarrative and Narrative Composition of *Pour sûr*

Since this project argues, for one, that the novel is a construction of identity based on the self-reflexive act of working through cultural memory, the foundational point of entry into a quantitative deformation of *Pour sûr* should be at the very nature of the fragments themselves, which are always one of two possibilities that seem to align themselves with differing ideations: either they belong *inside* of the plot of the novel, or else they are considerations *outside* of the novel's plot. While a fragment inside the plot features conventional narration and dialogue, a fragment outside the plot is usually a comment by Daigle's avatar: for instance, in the "Notes" category, one fragment reads "Le mot *tu* sous-entend *tu vois*" (29; Daigle's emphasis), in which Daigle, *outside* of the plot, offers a linguistic explanation to her readers for an expression found inside of the plot. Daigle scholar Benoit Doyon-Gosselin (2017), however, has argued that the novel's fragments instead fall under three classifications that represent the cube's three-dimensionality: the characters' stories, Acadie's collective history, and Daigle's self-reflections (91). The argument is certainly convincing; yet, in this project's goal of considering Acadian culture in terms of memory rather than history, it unravels because cultural memory plays a significant part in *each* of these classifications, and so to try and separate them undoes the power of cultural memory in constructions and representations of identity. Cultural memory, rather than Doyon-Gosselin's proposal of a collective history, accounts for the complex network of Daigle's own subjectivities or dispositions in the novel; in other words, the "objective truth" implied by collective history is somewhat misleading. In simply classifying fragments into "narrative"—found inside of the plot—and "metanarrative"—fragments outside of the plot—readers adopt two signifiers that are less deterministic from a critical perspective; this work seeks to understand the potency of cultural memory rather than tame and reduce it, which could potentially occur

with overdetermination as to the nature of the fragments. Thus, while the link between the nature of these fragments and memory is not always straightforward, I tend to associate the metanarrative fragments with Daigle's direct interjections in working through the cultural memory represented in the narrative fragments. I argue that these metanarrative moments attempt to nuance the number of identified and unidentified, varied and broad views by the characters in the author's literary universe.

In the case of the entire novel, the number of fragments belonging to each classification is split almost equally, with the narrative fragments (in orange) totalling 50.2% of fragments and the metanarrative fragments (in blue) totalling 49.8% of fragments:

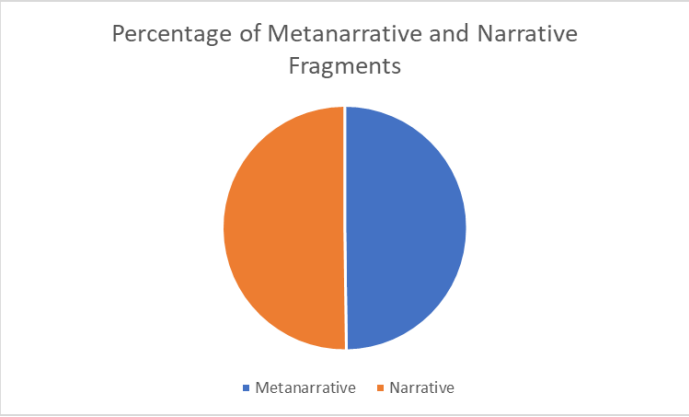

Figure 2. Percentage of Metanarrative and Narrative Fragments

From this simple figure, one can see that neither the narrative nor the metanarrative holds any significant dominance over the other—they are both locked in area distribution, yet some chapters favour one over the other. In fact, the two chapters at the *literal* core of the novel, 6 and 7, are the only ones that split narrative and metanarrative fragments at *exactly* 50% each, while the others fluctuate slightly. This next figure demonstrates the percentage of fragment

distribution per chapter, with Chapters 3 and 12 offering the most divergent percentages on either the narrative or metanarrative sides:

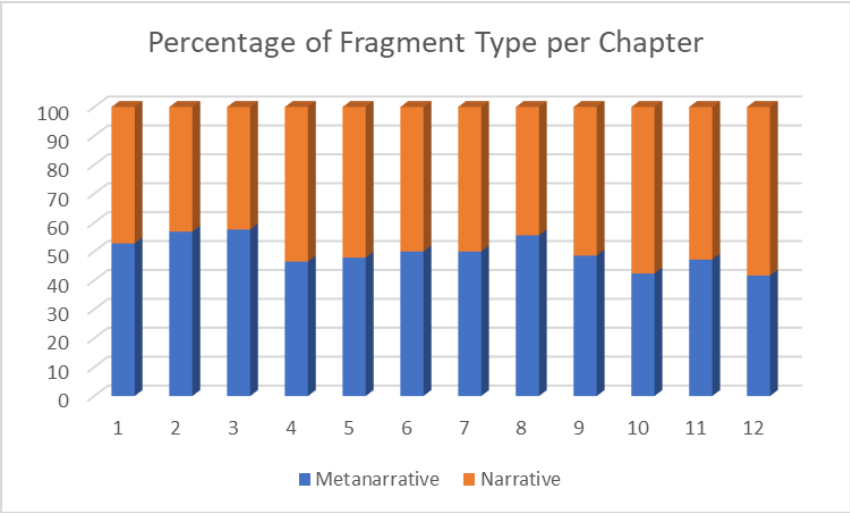

Figure 3. Percentage of Fragment Type per Chapter

Although the margins are not astronomically high in any instance, Chapter 3 shows the most significant advantage for metanarrative fragments at 57.6% (narrative fragments at 42.4%), while Chapter 12 contains the most narrative fragments at 58.3% (metanarrative fragments at 41.7%). On their own, without a close reading of the highlighted chapters, these statistics do not offer much insight; however, alongside other data, such as the distribution of categories in the chapters, their prevalent character interactions, and their linguistic composition, the percentage of narrative and metanarrative fragments will become informative to the study of Acadian identity and memory in the novel.

Categorical Distribution and Breaking *Pour sûr*'s Illusion of Perfection

Daigle considers 12 to be the number of "perfection"; therefore, the entire structure of *Pour sûr* depends on this number: its 144 categories—12^2—each contains 12 fragments, and these

categories are spread among 12 chapters, with each of *those* consisting of 144 fragments. As a result of this structure, Daigle creates an illusion of perfection that could potentially hide latent patterns and clusters in the novel; however, the uneven distribution of categories is a significant indicator of underlying concerns or preoccupations in the text. This distribution can help to answer several questions, both cosmetic and comprehensive: which categories are distributed most evenly throughout the text? Which categories appear most often in each chapter? What can be learned from cross-referencing this data with that of the nature of the fragments in each chapter, percentage-wise, mentioned earlier? How do these patterns work with the content of these chapters? Establishing the ways in which Daigle lays out her literary bricks in *Pour sûr* is necessary to understand her interactions with the Acadian cultural memory that serve to construct and represent Acadian identity.

The question of a category's consistency is meaningful because it shows preoccupations that sustain themselves throughout the novel. Visualizing this query shows a category's consistency by counting the number of chapters in which it appears—the more chapter appearances there are, the more the category is consistent:

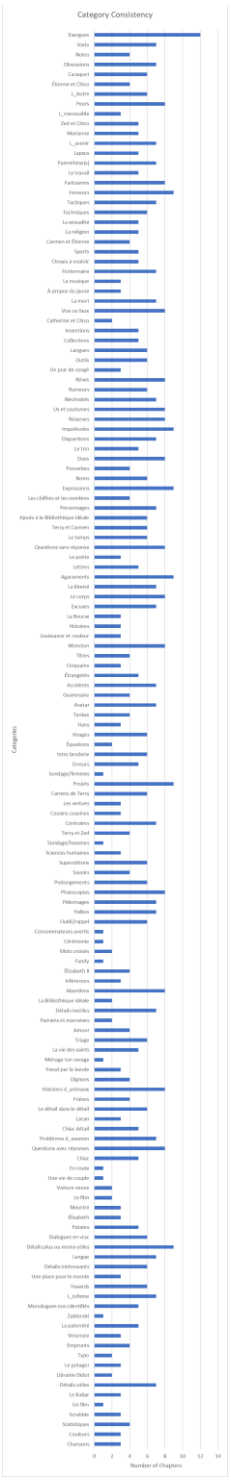

Figure 4. Category Consistency

While the category titles are difficult to discern here, the important element to notice in this visualization is the extreme spikes represented by the consistency of certain categories: some are

distributed over a significant number of chapters, while others are highly concentrated, featuring in only one or two chapters.[1] These spikes signify precisely the type of revealing information that

[1] The category titles are numbered as follows: 1. Chansons 2. Couleurs 3. Statistiques 4. Scrabble 5. Un film 6. Le Babar 7. Détails utiles 8. Librairie Didot 9. Le potager 10. Typo 11. Emprunts 12. Structure 13. La paternité 14. Zablonski 15. Monologues non identifiés 16. L'Infirme 17. Hasards 18. Une place pour le monde 19. Détails intéressants 20. Langue 21. Détails plus ou moins utiles 22. Dialogues en vrac 23. Patates 24. Élizabeth 25. Meurtre 26. Le film 27. Voiture neuve 28. Une vie de couple 29. En route 30. Chiac 31. Questions avec réponse 32. Problèmes d'examen 33. Chiac détail 34. Lacan 35. Le détail dans le détail 36. Fraises 37. Histoires d'animaux 38. Oignons 39. Freud par la bande 40. Ménage ton ravage 41. La vie des saints 42. Triage 43. Amour 44. Parrains et marraines 45. Détails inutiles 46. *La Bibliothèque idéale* 47. Abandons 48. Inférences 49. Élizabeth II 50. Fundy 51. Mots croisés 52. Cérémonie 53. Consommateurs avertis 54. Oubli/rappel 55. Haïkus 56. Pèlerinages 57. Photocopies 58. Prolongements 59. Savoirs 60. Superstitions 61. Sciences humaines 62. Sondage/hommes 63. Terry et Zed 64. Contraires 65. Cousins cousines 66. Les vertus 67. Carnets de Terry 68. Projets 69. Sondage/femmes 70. Erreurs 71. Intro broderie 72. Équations 73. Virages 74. Hans 75. Tankas 76. Avatars 77. Grammaire 78. Accidents 79. Étrangetés 80. Cinquains 81. Titres 82. Moncton 83. Jouissance et couleur 84. Histoire 85. La Bourse 86. Excuses 87. Le corps 88. La liberté 89. Agacements 90. Lettres 91. Le poète 92. Questions sans réponse 93. Le temps 94. Terry et Carmen 95. Ajouts à *La Bibliothèque idéale* 96. Personnages 97. Les chiffres et les nombres 98. Expressions 99. Noms 100. Proverbes 101. Duos 102. Le trio 103. Disparitions 104. Inquiétudes 105. Réserves 106. Us et coutumes 107. Nécessités 108. Rumeurs 109. Rêves 110. Un jour de congé 111. Outils 112. Langues 113. Collections 114. Inventions 115. Catherine et

the imposing and seemingly "perfect" structure of *Pour sûr* might hide. A closer look at this visualization points out the most consistent categories in the novel, those that appear in at least nine chapters:

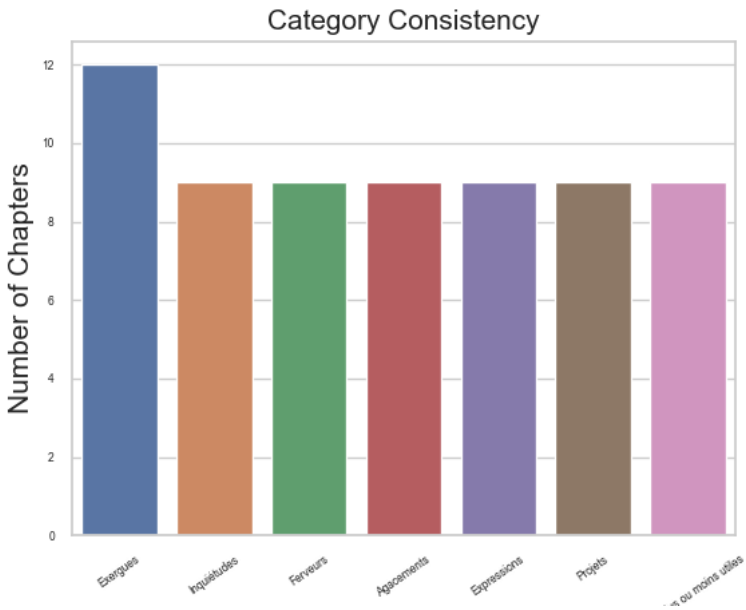

Figure 5. Category Consistency (Appearing in Nine Chapters or More)

As this specified visualization shows, other than the "Exergues" category—which comprises epigraph fragments that appear once at the beginning of each chapter—the most consistent categories in the novel appear in nine chapters each, or 75% of the novel. These categories are

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Chico 116. Vrai ou faux 117. La mort 118. À propos du jaune 119. La musique 120. Fictionnaire 121. Choses à vouloir 122. Sports 123. Carmen et Étienne 124. La religion 125. La sexualité 126. Techniques 127. Tactiques 128. Ferveurs 129. Fantasmes 130. Le travail 131. Parenthèse(s) 132. Lapsus 133. L'avenir 134. Marianne 135. Zed et Chico 136. L'inavouable 137. Peurs 138. L'Autre 139. Étienne et Chico 140. Caraquet 141. Obsessions 142. Notes 143. Varia 144. Exergues.

"Agacements," "Détails plus ou moins utiles," "Expressions," "Ferveurs," "Inquiétudes," and "Projets." Interestingly enough, these categories appear to be chiefly self-reflexive in nature, as they refer to the author's irritations, fervors, worries, projects, as well as provide somewhat useful details to the reader; therefore, the most consistent presence in *Pour sûr* seems to be a fictionalized Daigle, as she steadily interrupts the plot to offer insights or commentary.

In inversing the query, asking instead for the categories that appear in only three chapters or fewer, 25% and under, the following visualization reveals the least consistent categories in *Pour sûr* and, consequently, areas of concentration:

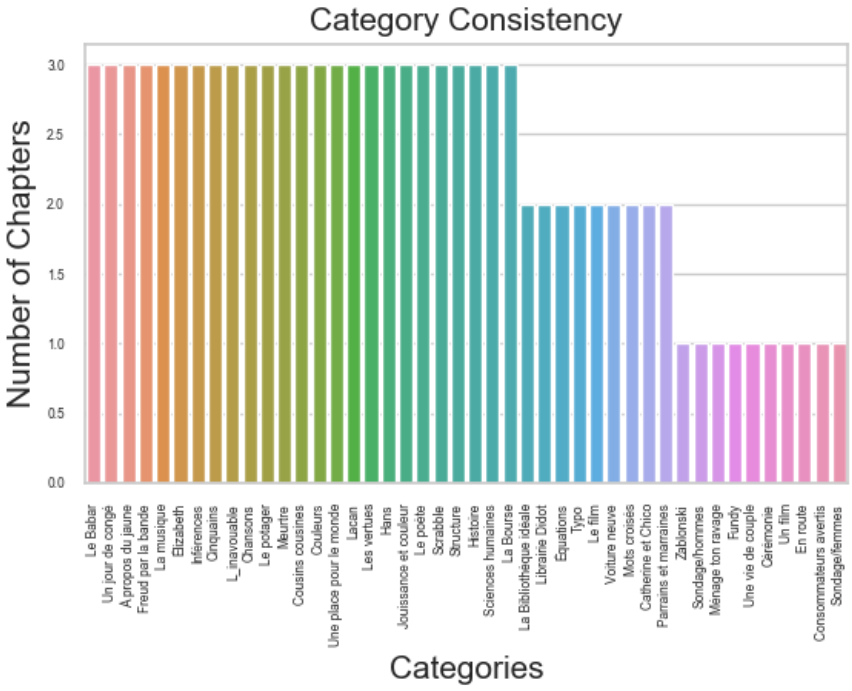

Figure 6. Category Consistency (Appearing in Three Chapters or Fewer)

As made evident by this graph, more categories fall under this query than the previous one, making finding clusters somewhat more difficult; however, in specifying the query further, some intriguing information comes to light regarding category concentration. First, both categories that

discuss psychoanalysis explicitly, “Freud par la bande” and “Lacan,” are fairly focalized, with each appearing in only three distinct chapters. Second, categories featuring in only two chapters include some pertaining to relationships, such as “Catherine et Chico” and “Parrains et marraines,” as well as a particular focus on books with categories like “*La Bibliothèque idéale*” and “Librairie Didot.” Third, and perhaps most compellingly, might be the categories that are united in a single chapter: “Zablonski,” “Sondage/hommes,” “Ménage ton ravage,” “Fundy,” “Une vie de couple,” “Cérémonie,” “Un film,” “En route,” “Consommateurs avertis,” and “Sondage/femmes.” A close reading of these categories in particular will reveal whether they are perhaps less significant in the novel because of their lack of consistency or more important because they needed to be grouped closely for Daigle to communicate ideas with readers.

This quantitative data speaks to categorical distribution throughout the entire novel, but what about the categorical distribution for each chapter? While each chapter appears “stable” with 144 fragments, it is not so stable when considering to which categories its fragments belong. One particular form of data visualization—a treemap—demonstrates this instability quite clearly by showing how much space each category occupies in a particular chapter in relation to others. The figures that follow are categorical treemaps for each chapter, with the additional information of the total number of categories that the chapter contains; as the novel progresses, the concentration of categories diminishes:

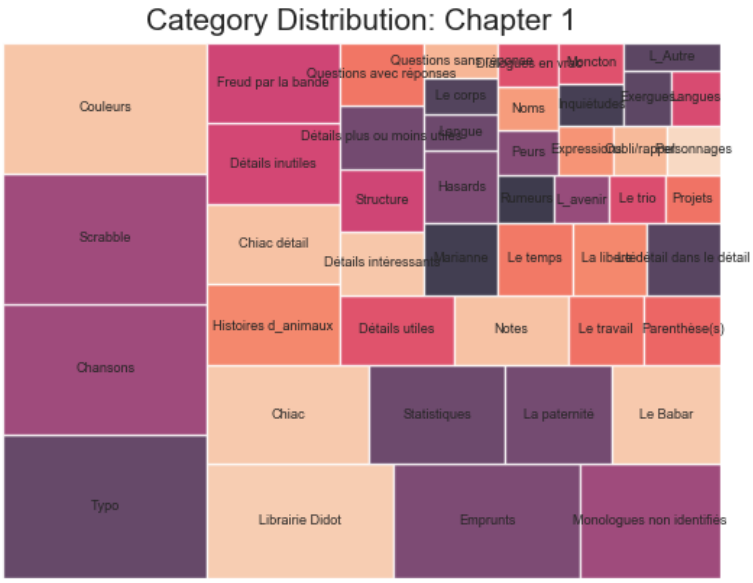

Figure 7. Category Distribution: Chapter 1 (46 Total Categories)

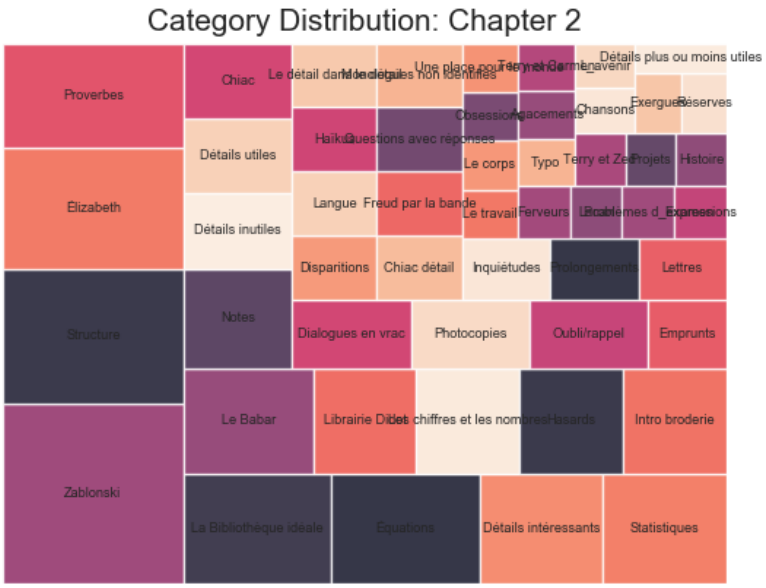

Figure 8. Category Distribution: Chapter 2 (51 Total Categories)

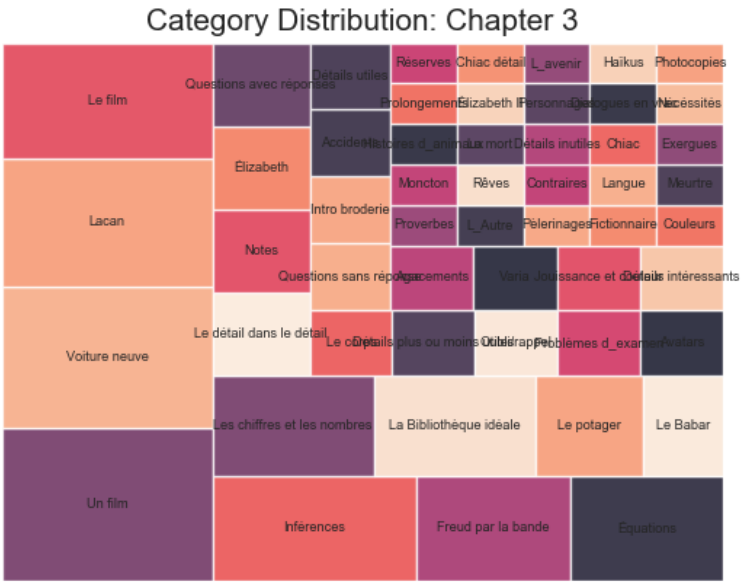

Figure 9. Category Distribution: Chapter 3 (53 Total Categories)

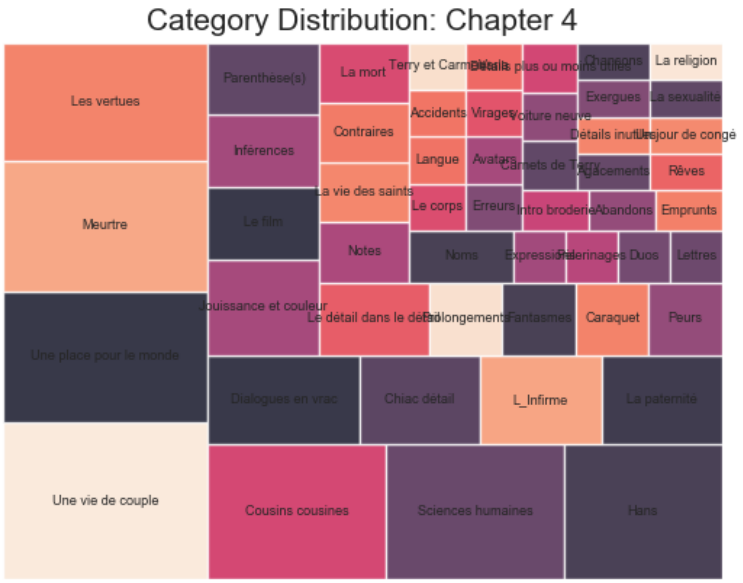

Figure 10. Category Distribution: Chapter 4 (51 Total Categories)

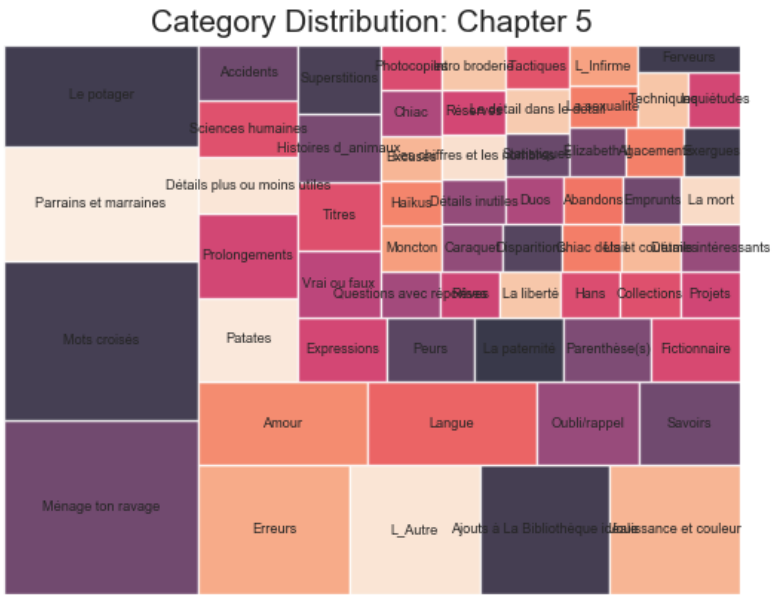

Figure 11. Category Distribution: Chapter 5 (61 Total Categories)

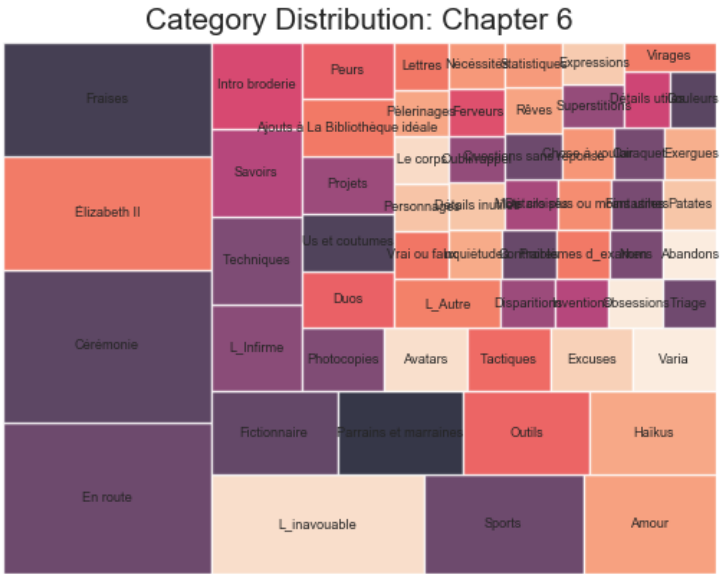

Figure 12. Category Distribution: Chapter 6 (59 Total Categories)

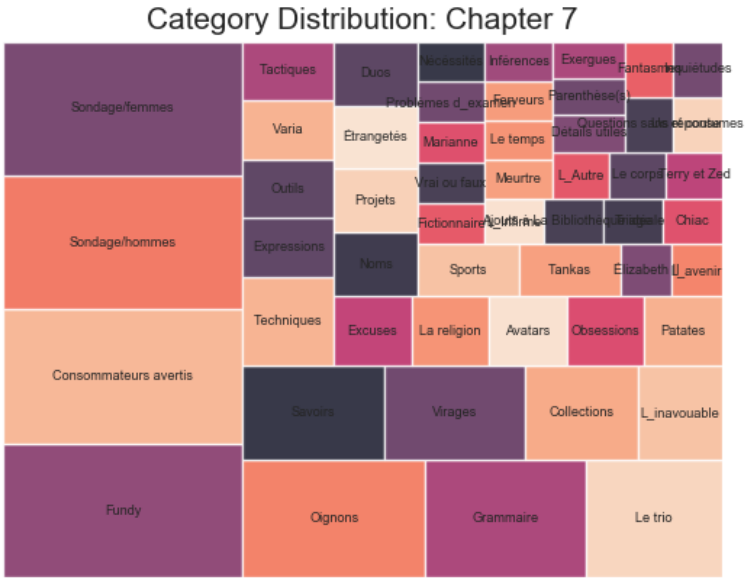

Figure 13. Category Distribution: Chapter 7 (52 Total Categories)

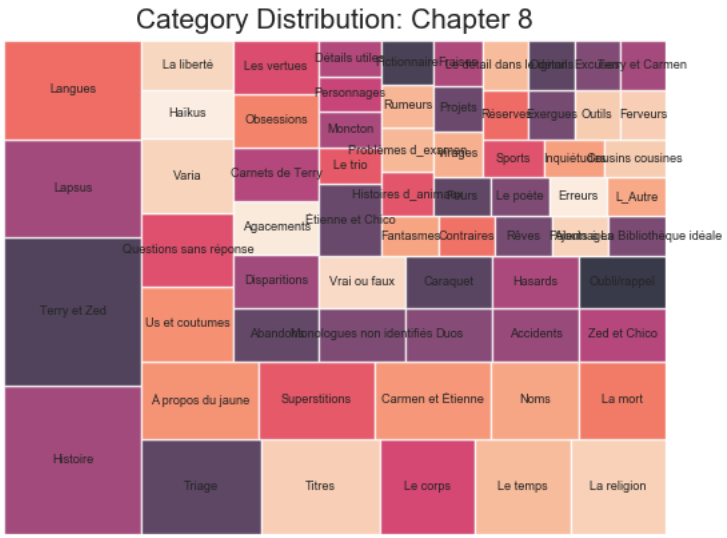

Figure 14. Category Distribution: Chapter 8 (65 Total Categories)

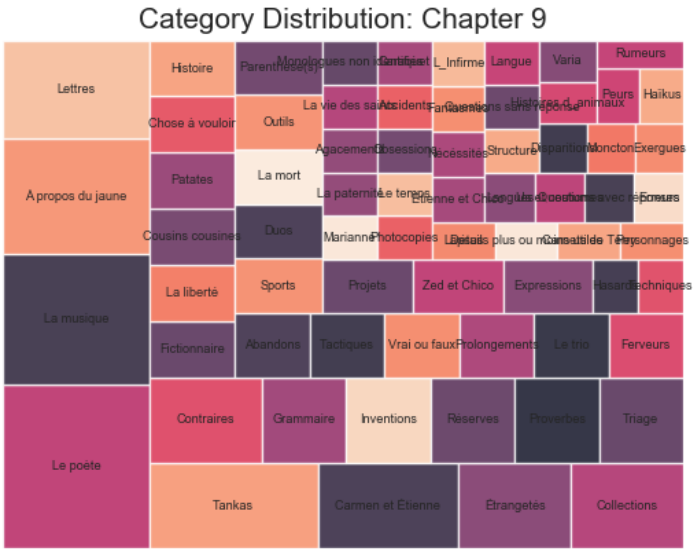

Figure 15. Category Distribution: Chapter 9 (69 Total Categories)

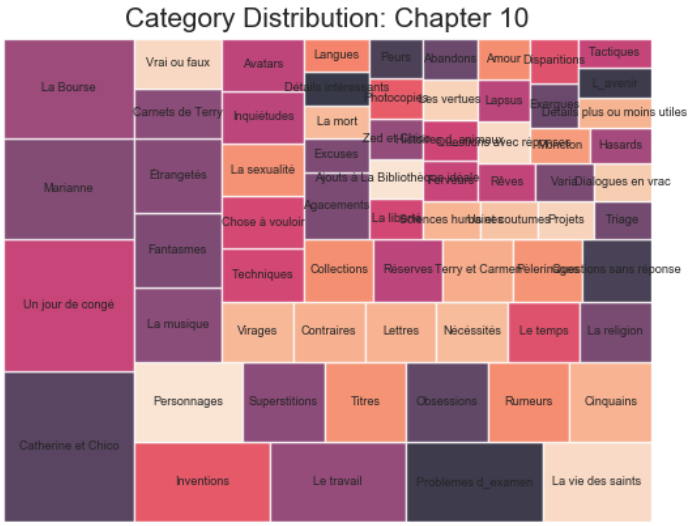

Figure 16. Category Distribution: Chapter 10 (66 Total Categories)

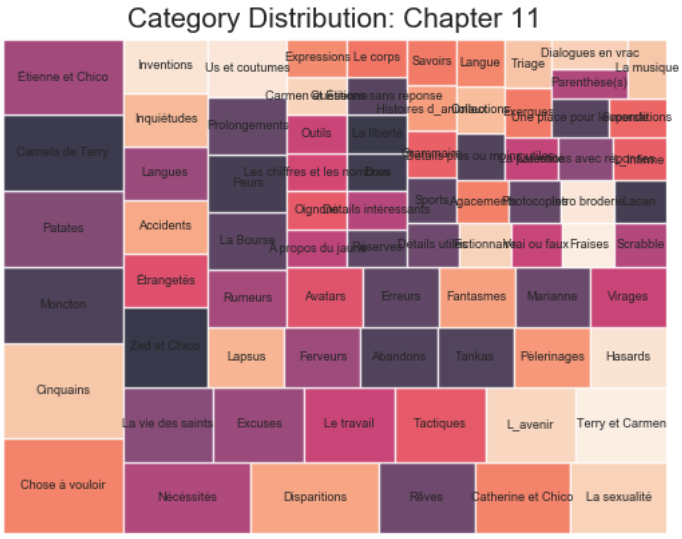

Figure 17. Categorical Distribution: Chapter 11 (77 Total Categories)

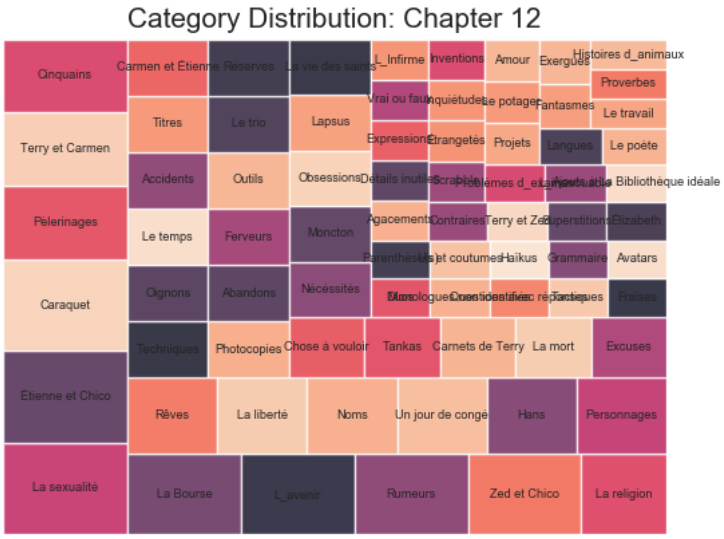

Figure 18. Categorical Distribution: Chapter 12 (75 Total Categories)

So, while the pattern for most of the novel appears to be that four categories major in each chapter, a trending rise in the total number of represented categories per chapter also exists:

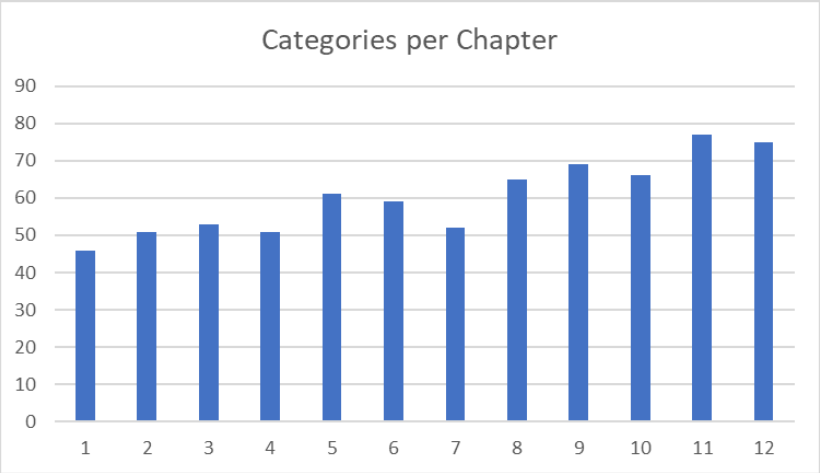

Figure 19. Categories per Chapter

Chapter 1 thus represents the lowest number of feature categories at 46, while Chapter 11 represents the highest number at 77, with Chapter 12 following closely behind at 75. This jump represents an increase of over 60% in categories per chapter from *Pour sûr*'s beginning to end. Regarding *Pour sûr* in its entirety, this table shows the categories that appear the most in each chapter, and how often they appear:

Chapter	**Category (Number of Appearances)**
1	Typo (11), Chansons (10), Scrabble (10), Couleurs (10).
2	Zablonski (12), Structure (9), Élizabeth (8) Proverbes (7).
3	Un film (12), Voiture neuve (11), Lacan (10), Le film (9).
4	Une vie de couple (12), Une place pour le monde (10), Meurtre (10), Les vertus;

	Cousins cousines; Sciences humaines (9).
5	Ménage ton ravage (12), Mots croisés (11), Parrains et marraines (8), Le potager; Erreurs (7).
6	En route (12), Cérémonie (12), Élizabeth II (9), Fraises (9).
7	Fundy (12), Consommateurs avertis (12), Sondage/hommes (12), Sondage/femmes (12).
8	Histoire (9), Terry et Zed (9), Lapsus (6), Langues (6).
9	Le poète (10), La musique (8), À propos du jaune (7), Lettres; Tankas (5).
10	Catherine et Chico (9), Un jour de congé (8), Marianne (6), La bourse (6).
11	Choses à vouloir (5), Cinquains (5), Moncton; Patates; Carnets de Terry; Étienne et Chico; Nécessités; Disparitions (4).
12	La sexualité (5), Étienne et Chico (5), Caraquet (5).

Table 2. Most Featured Categories per Chapter in *Pour sûr*

These clusters of categories per chapter, along with the other information offered by the database queries and their visualizations, will prove to be highly insightful into Daigle's process of

working through cultural memory as they are closely read in the following chapter of this dissertation.

Character Interactions in a "Ville du monde"

In such an immense novel, another helpful tool of the database becomes the mapping of characters. By registering characters and places in *Pour sûr*, one can determine which characters appear most often in the novel, with whom they interact the most, and where they do so. This information is telling of certain patterns and clusters on its own; however, when tied to other facts that have been gathered, such as the nature and distribution of the fragments and categories, as well as the linguistic properties of the text, it reveals significant latent work in *Pour sûr* as a labour of cultural memory. Considering that the fictionalized Daigle claims in the novel that she views her characters as avatars for herself, their interactions in the novel are essential to layering her own labour of cultural memory as she works through it to construct, deconstruct, question, and sustain an Acadian identity: "Il ne serait pas inexact de dire que les personnages d'une fiction littéraire sont les avatars de son auteur, c'est-à-dire à la fois sa représentation, sa métamorphose et son malheur" (173). In this sense, readers can understand characters in the novel as iterations of Daigle the author, almost as an extension or an alternate version of her, just as is the case with her first-person, fictionalized self: "le personnage *je* du roman *Pour sûr* de France Daigle est un avatar de l'auteure, c'est-à-dire une figuration de France Daigle" (571).

As with the categorical analysis in the prior section, the database can offer readers as a point of departure some initial facts and figures concerning the novel's characters that are quantitative but revealing nonetheless. First, a quick query shows that characters appear in 652 of

Pour sûr's 1728 fragments, thus representing just under 38% of the novel. Within these 652 fragments, the following figure shows the number of fragments in which each character appears:

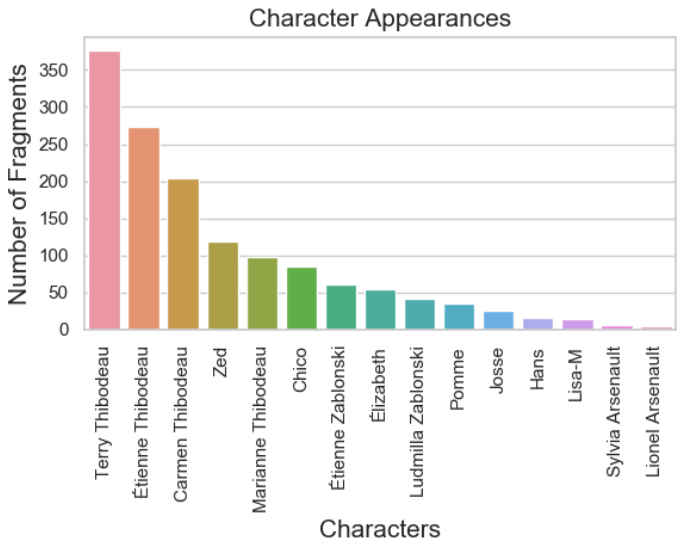

Figure 20. Character Appearances (Number of Fragments)

Evidently, Terry is the most often used avatar by Daigle: he appears in 376 fragments, which represents only just over 20% of the entire novel, but a whopping 58% of fragments in which any character appears. In rank of appearances, he is followed by his son, Étienne, who appears in 273 fragments, accounting for roughly 16% of the novel and 42% of fragments in which any character appears; then, his partner, Carmen, ranks third, appearing in 204 fragments, which represents almost 12% of the novel and 32% of fragments in which a character appears. The first non-member of *Pour sûr*'s Thibodeau family is Zed, ranking fourth overall at 119 fragments, which constitutes just under 7% of the novel and 18% of fragments in which a character appears. The Arsenault couple, Sylvia and Lionel, barely appear in *Pour sûr*, though they were major characters in previous novels of Daigle's Monctonian Quartet. The following figure shows

character appearances in relation to others, accounting only for fragments in which characters appear:

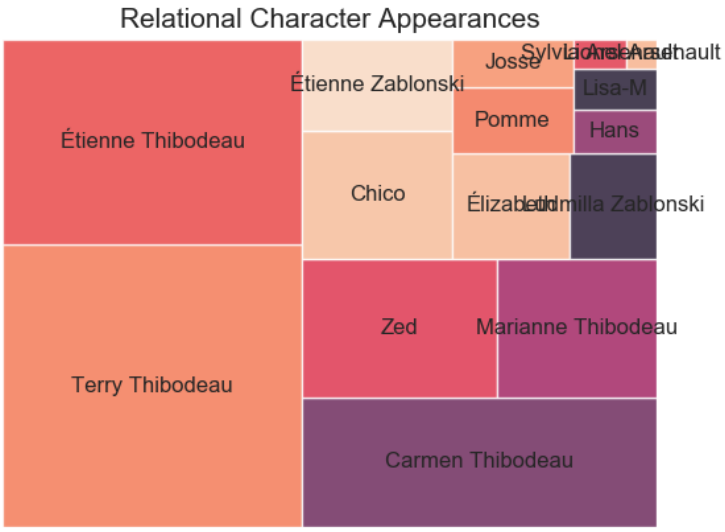

Figure 21. Relational Character Appearances

As this treemap shows clearly, certain characters—in particular, the Thibodeau family and Zed—dominate *Pour sûr*'s narrative as avatars for Daigle. More interesting to observe, however, is where, when, and how these avatars interact with each other, namely those characters that appear most frequently.

According to the data, the Thibodeau family is central to *Pour sûr*,; they include father Terry, mother Carmen, son Étienne, and daughter Marianne. The following, comprehensive visualization demonstrates each character of the family in order of appearances, as well as the places within the narrative in which they most often interact, scaled for relation; they are also adjusted for visibility:

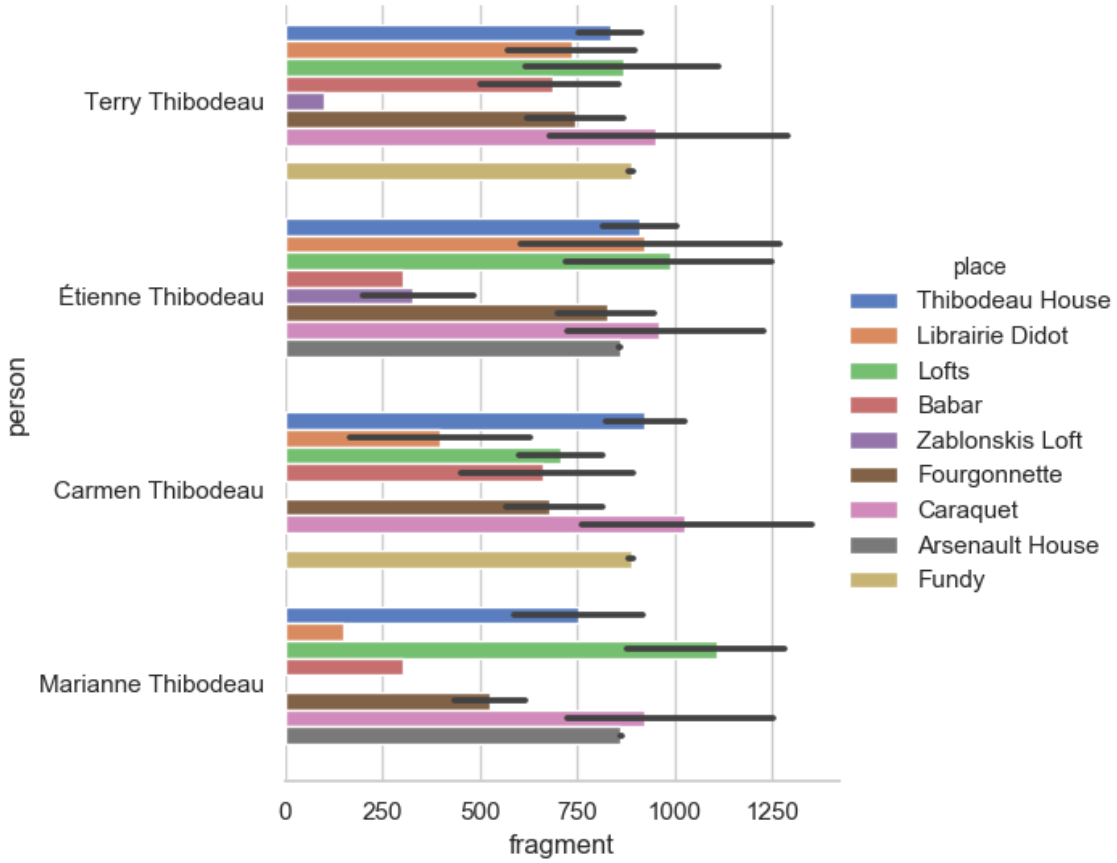

Figure 22. Person per Place and Fragment (Thibodeau Family Adjusted)

The data points to several commonalities and differences between the characters. Noticeably, each character scores highly in time spent at home in the "Thibodeau House," as well as on their trips to "Caraquet" and "Fundy," though young Marianne does not appear at all during the latter mentioned trip. The fact that much of the time spent together for the Thibodeau family is in their vehicle, "Fourgonnette," is also intriguing. Some other pertinent data is that Terry and Étienne both spend a significant amount of time at the "Librairie Didot," with the latter spending a number of appearances at the Zablonski loft without other members of his family; moreover, Terry spends almost as much time as Carmen in the "Babar," even though she is the bar's owner; both Étienne and Marianne's appearances in fragments at the "Arsenault House" are contrasted

by a lack of presence from their parents—both are in attendance, of course, as these fragments represent the children's ceremony in adopting godparents, yet the lack of any mention of Terry or Carmen is still worth noting; lastly and related to absences, both female characters, Carmen and Marianne, do not appear at the Zablonskis' home, implying that it is a space for the men.

The Thibodeau family and its dynamics allow Daigle to explore numerous themes and questions related to Acadian identity; however, Terry remains her avatar of choice by a significant margin. In focusing on his appearances only throughout *Pour sûr*, the following graph plots his presence per chapter and represents the breadth of his influence as a central character:

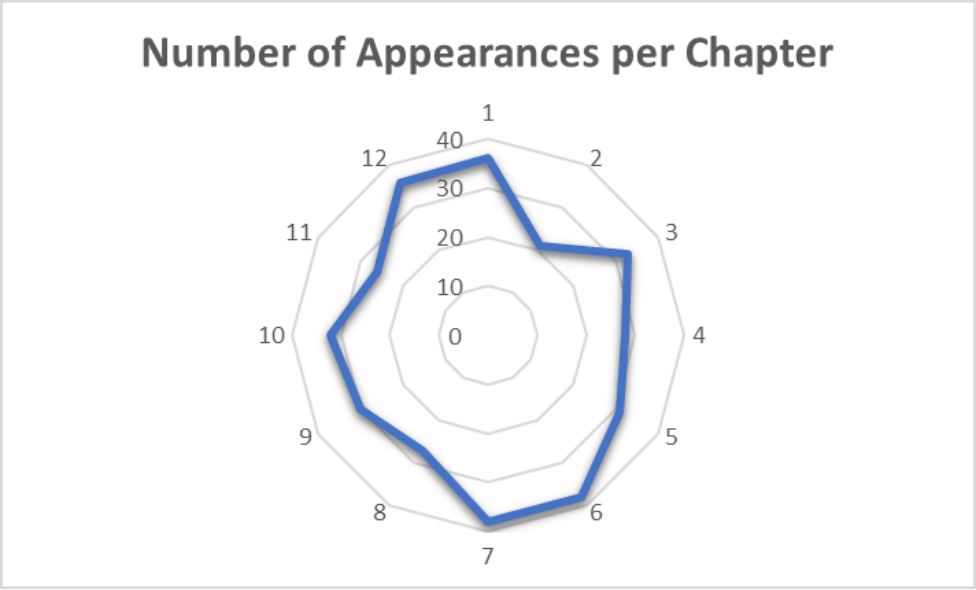

Figure 23. Number of Appearances per Chapter (Terry)

As the graph demonstrates, Terry's presence throughout the novel is highly consistent, with his fewest appearances being 21 in Chapter 2, and his most appearances being 38 in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7—the core of the novel—with a strong presence in Chapter 1 and Chapter 12 as well with 36 appearances in each to open and close *Pour sûr*. Terry, as a character and avatar of

Daigle's, thus seems to be a constant in the novel, his presence felt heavily not only in clusters at key points in the novel, but also consistently in its conception.

Outside of the Thibodeau family, Zed is the character with the most appearances in *Pour sûr* at 119, which represents only roughly one third of Terry's presence. In a graph similar to the one representative of Terry in Figure 23, however, Zed accounts for a much different level of consistency:

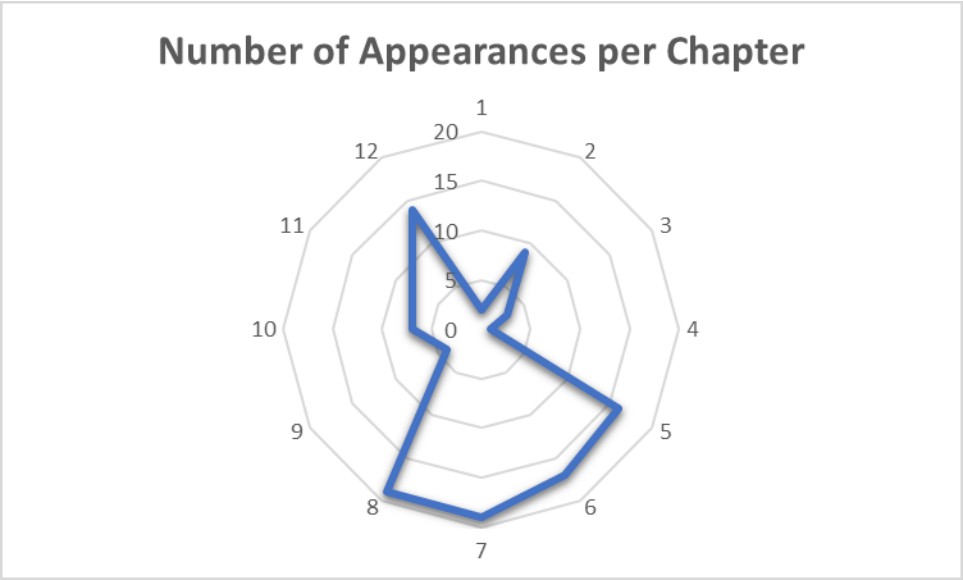

Figure 24. Number of Appearances per Chapter (Zed)

The data shows that, at the core of the novel, specifically through Chapters 5 to 8, Zed has an immense spike in appearances compared to the rest of the text. These clusters should thus translate to meaningful analysis, particularly when compared to what is happening in the narrative: why does Daigle make such use of the Zed avatar in these chapters? What themes or ideas is she working through, and why is Zed the character with which she engages to do so?

Of course, interactions are just as significant, if not more, than single character analyses. In considering the spikes in Zed's presence, who appears alongside of him in these instances?

Terry is Zed's closest friend, and so investigating their appearances together might shed light on Zed's prominent incursion as an avatar in Chapters 5 through 8. As this figure highlights, Terry appears in the majority of fragments in which Zed also appears in Chapters 7 and 8:

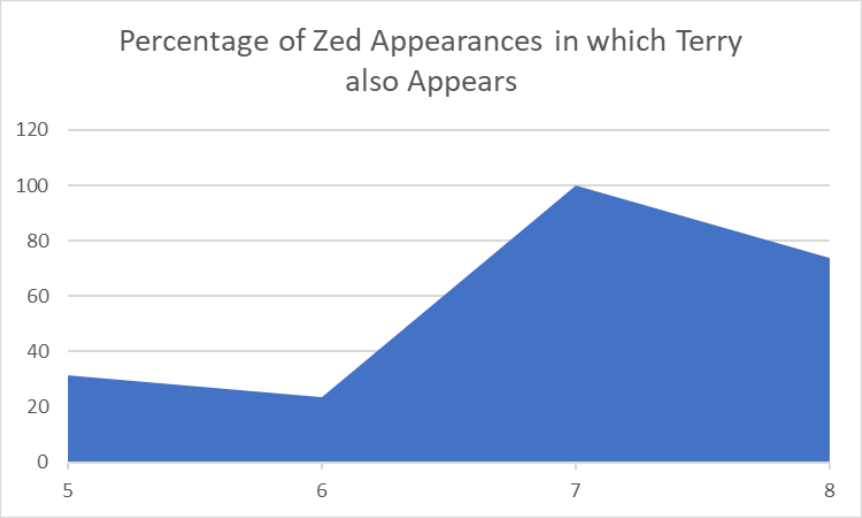

Figure 25. Percentage of Zed Appearances

in which Terry also Appears (Chapters 5 to 8)

While Terry's presence alongside Zed is relatively low in Chapters 5 and 6, it spikes in Chapters 7 and 8, in which he appears in 100% and 73% of the fragments in which Zed appears, respectively. The data also shows that they appear together in Chapter 7 at both the Babar and in Fundy, while they appear together mostly in undisclosed spaces or the Lofts in Chapter 8. This information allows for potential analyses of Zed's character with and without his closest friend, as well as what he does in various spaces by himself or with Terry; for instance, Zed spends most of his time at the Lofts, his place of living but also work, in Chapter 5 when he is without Terry.

If characters in *Pour sûr* are avatars for Daigle herself, then what about her women characters? Carmen is the most evident character with which to begin an analysis since she features in the third-most fragments throughout the novel. A similar visualization to that of Terry

and Zed's appearance distribution shows that, while Carmen's number of appearances in Chapters 1 and 2 are lower in relation to the rest, she later becomes a stable presence in the narrative:

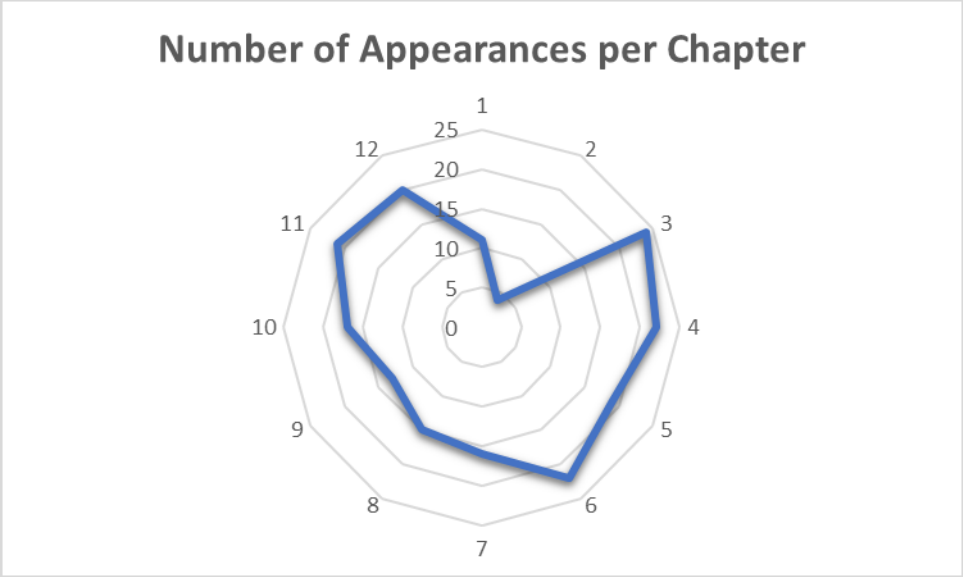

Figure 26. Number Appearances per Chapter (Carmen)

Of note here, according to the data, is that Carmen appears to be used as an avatar by Daigle more strategically than Terry in some cases: case in point, while Carmen appears the fewest number of times in Chapter 2 at four appearances, she makes her most appearances in the very next chapter with twenty-four. As the following figure shows, she goes from being a character barely present and static in the domestic space in Chapter 2 to a mobile character in Chapter 3, moving from the domestic space—which remains a sort of anchor for her—to various areas of the city in the family vehicle and the Babar, her place of work:

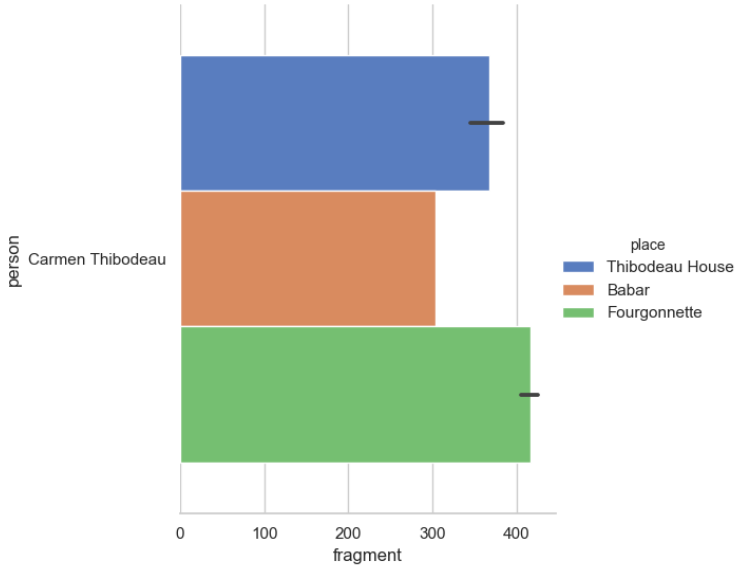

Figure 27. Carmen's Spaces in Chapter 3

The figure shows a higher concentration of spaces for Carmen than other key characters, such as Terry, for example. This concentration implies that, while Terry seems to be Daigle's avatar of choice for varied inquiries within *Pour sûr*, Carmen as an avatar is much more strategically deployed and in particular spaces.

The spaces that Carmen occupies are intriguing because, unlike Terry, who occupies many spaces, she only occupies certain spaces and in fewer instances; moreover, with whom does she share these spaces outside of the Thibodeau family? Does she share them with other women? As this figure shows, Carmen does indeed have close ties to other women in the novel:

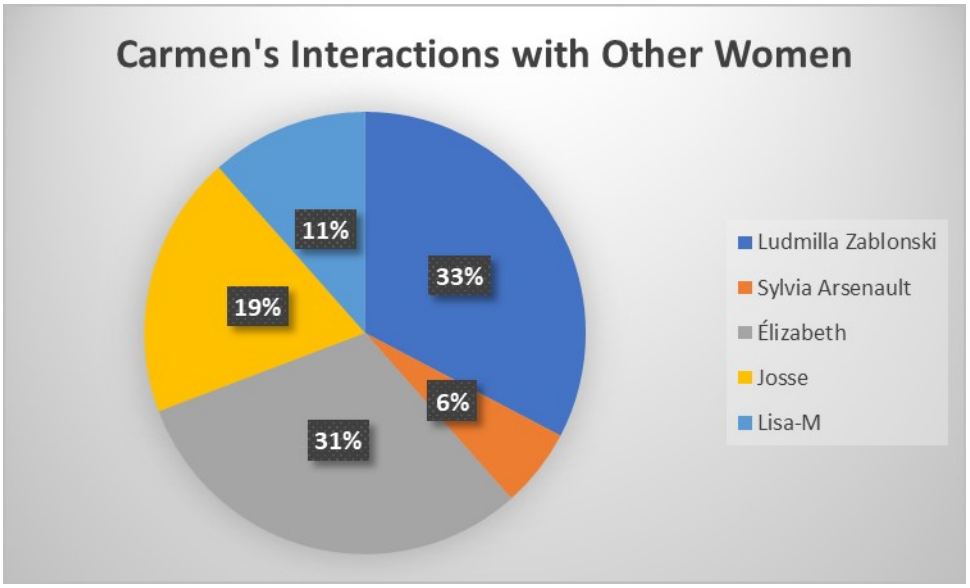

Figure 28. Carmen's Interactions with Other Women

These figures show that Carmen's most consistent interactions with other women are with Ludmilla Zablonski, Terry's partner at the Librairie Diderot, Élizabeth, her daughter's godmother, and Josse, one of her employees at the Babar; moreover, this next visualization represents the spaces that these women occupy:

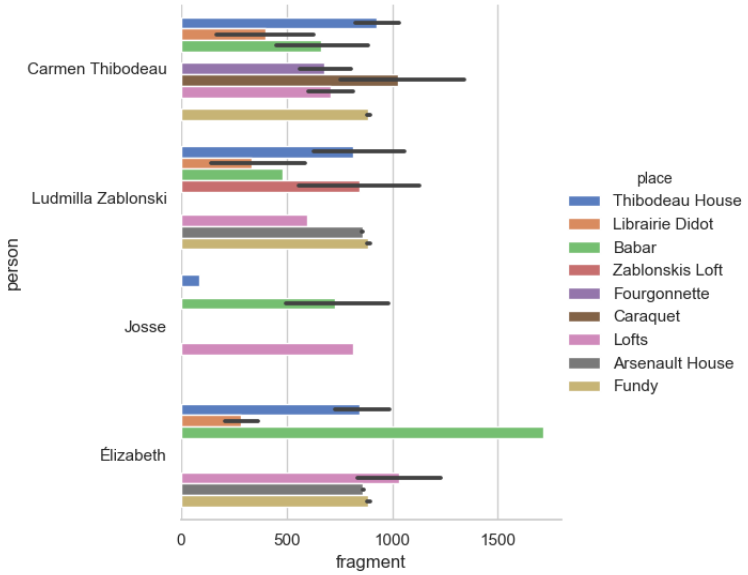

Figure 29. Women Character Interactions

Thus, the number of spaces occupied by each woman seems to correlate directly with the number of interactions each has with Carmen: Ludmilla appears in seven spaces, Élizabeth in six spaces, and Josse in three spaces, with the common denominators for all three women being the Babar and the Lofts.

Lastly, while studying the major characters and their interactions is highly compelling for several reasons, this study can only be enriched by a comparison to an account of the other, less significant characters and their roles as avatars in *Pour sûr*. The database allows queries based on virtually any constraint; however, since the Thibodeau family's centrality to this novel is supported by the number of appearances of each of its members, I define less significant characters as simply those outside of the family. Figure 24 already demonstrates Zed's presence throughout the novel, and so the following figures show how other characters outside of the core Thibodeau family are used as avatars in *Pour sûr*:

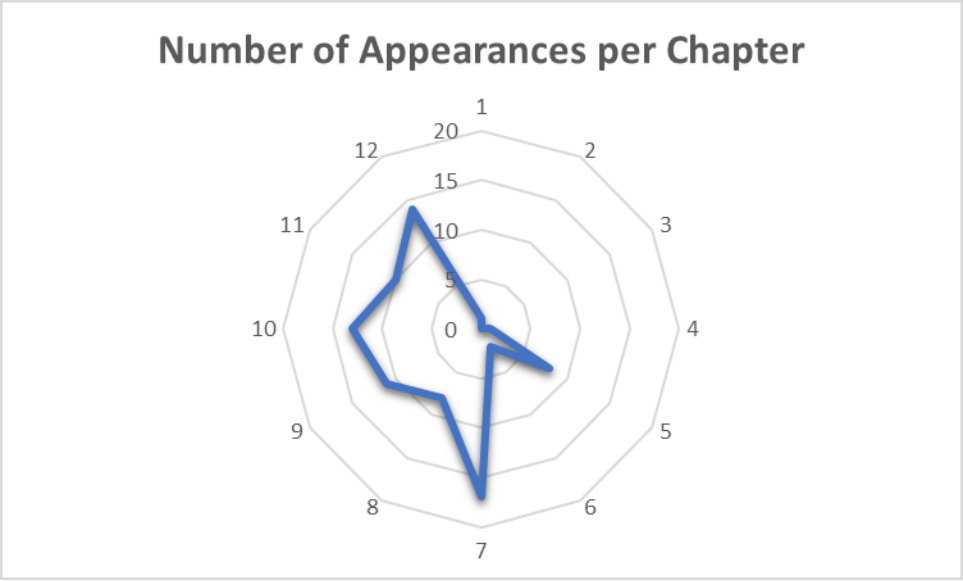

Figure 30. Number of Appearances per Chapter (Chico)

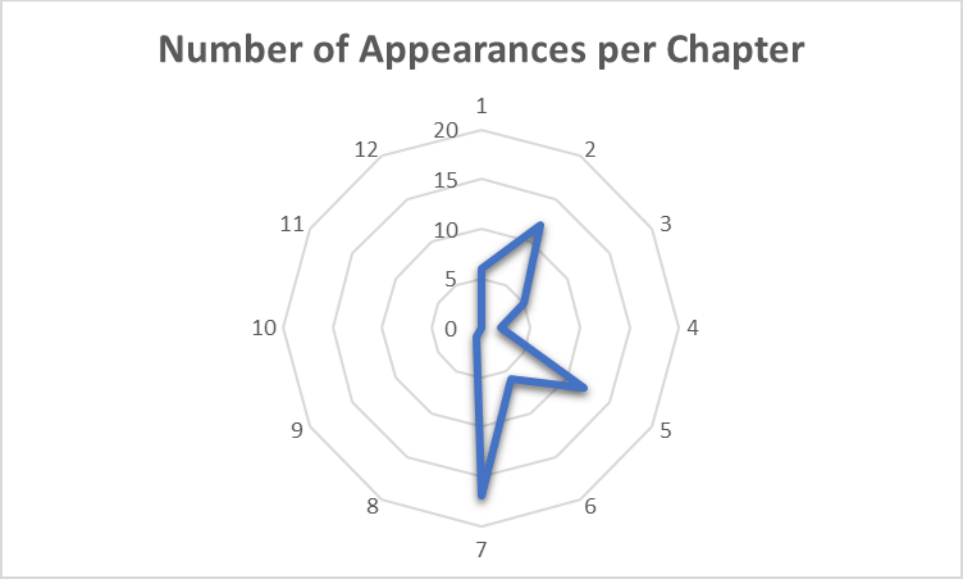

Figure 31. Number of Appearances per Chapter (Étienne Zablonski)

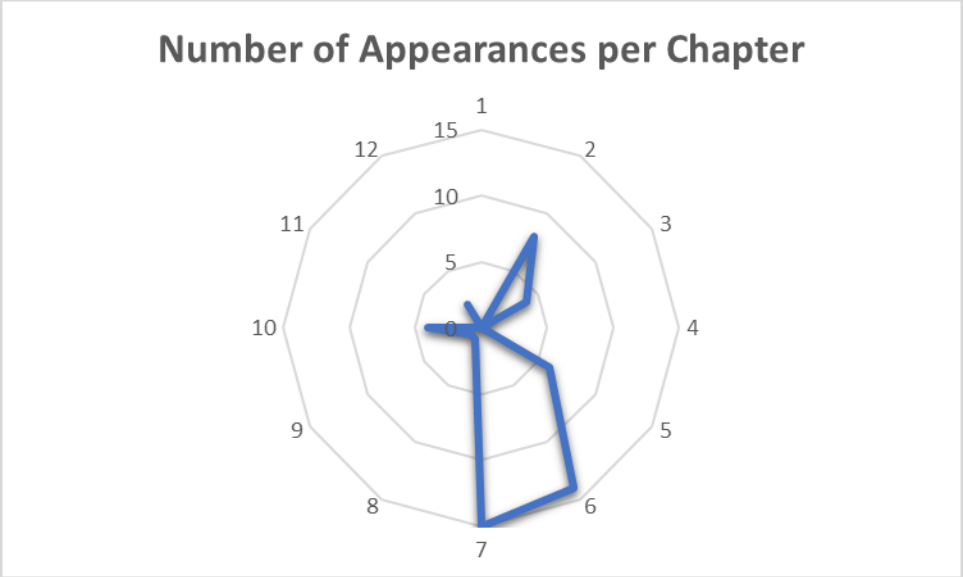

Figure 32. Number of Appearances per Chapter (Élizabeth)

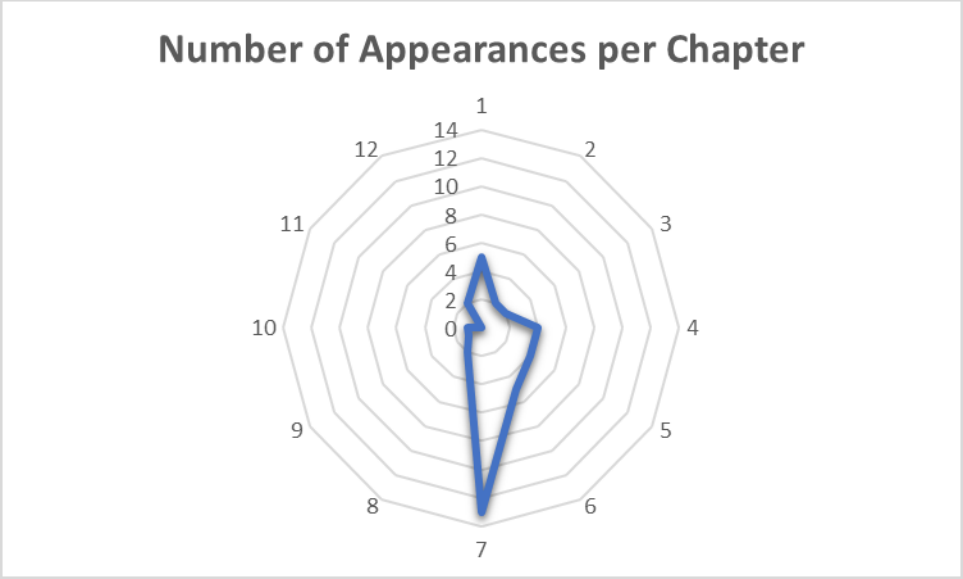

Figure 33. Number of Appearances per Chapter (Ludmilla Zablonski)

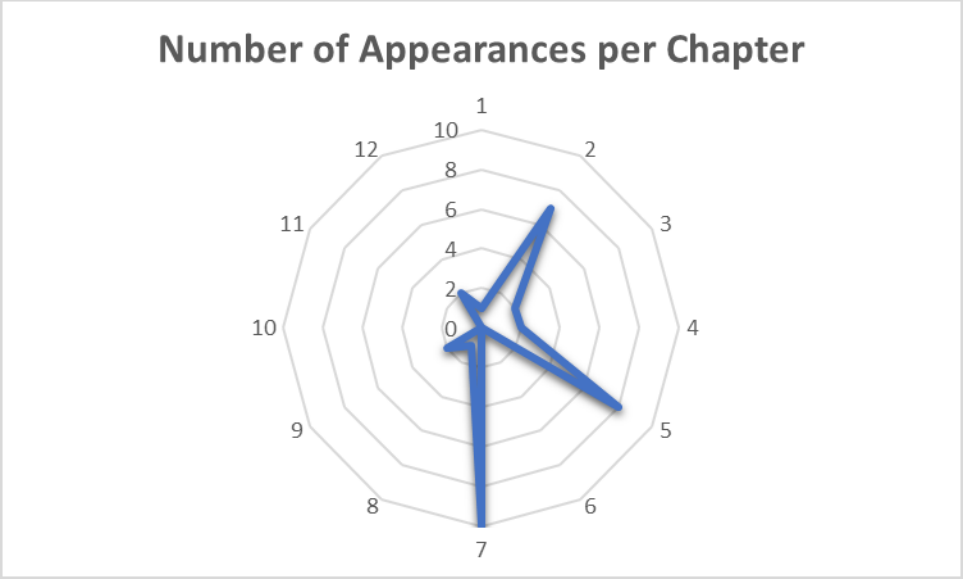

Figure 34. Number of Appearances per Chapter (Pomme)

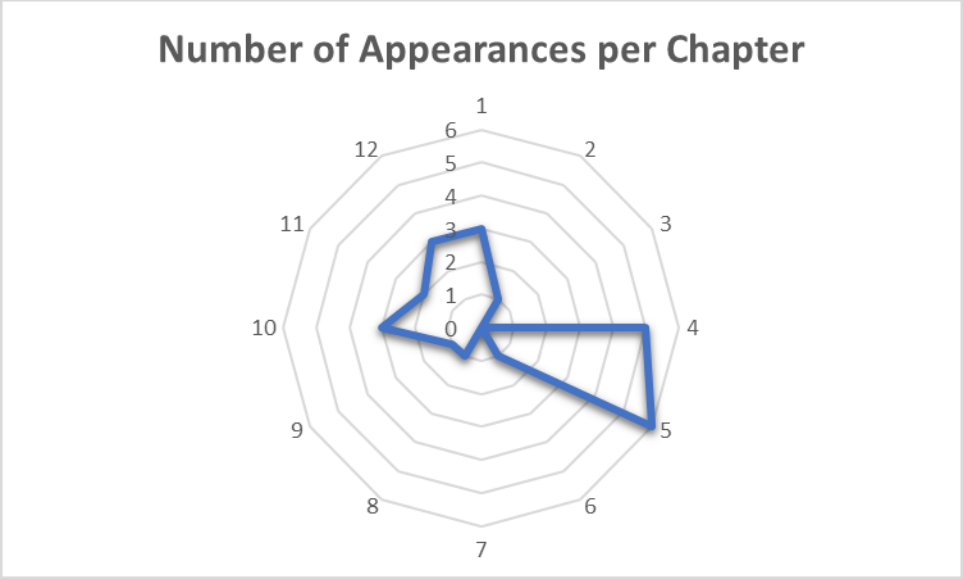

Figure 35. Number of Appearances per Chapter (Josse)

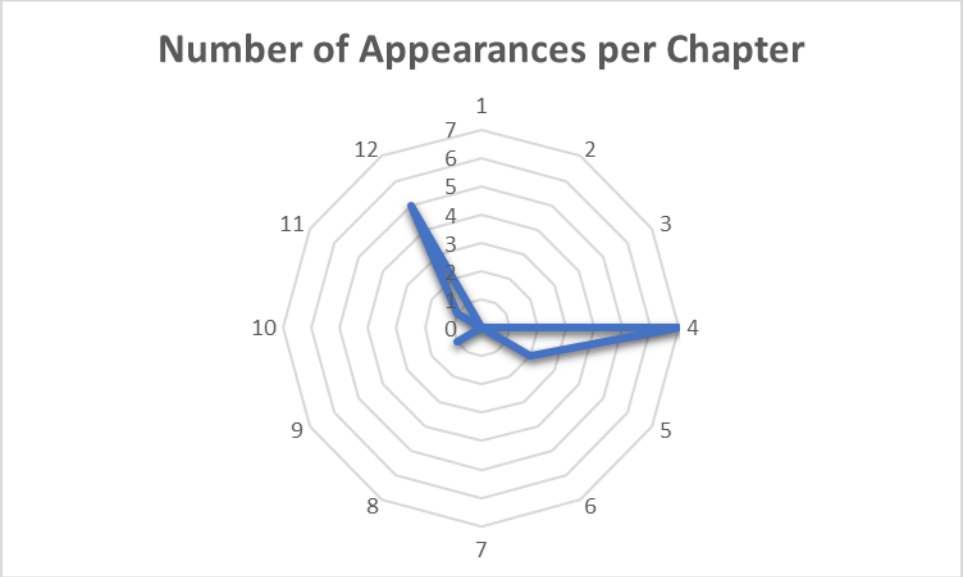

Figure 36. Number of Appearances per Chapter (Hans)

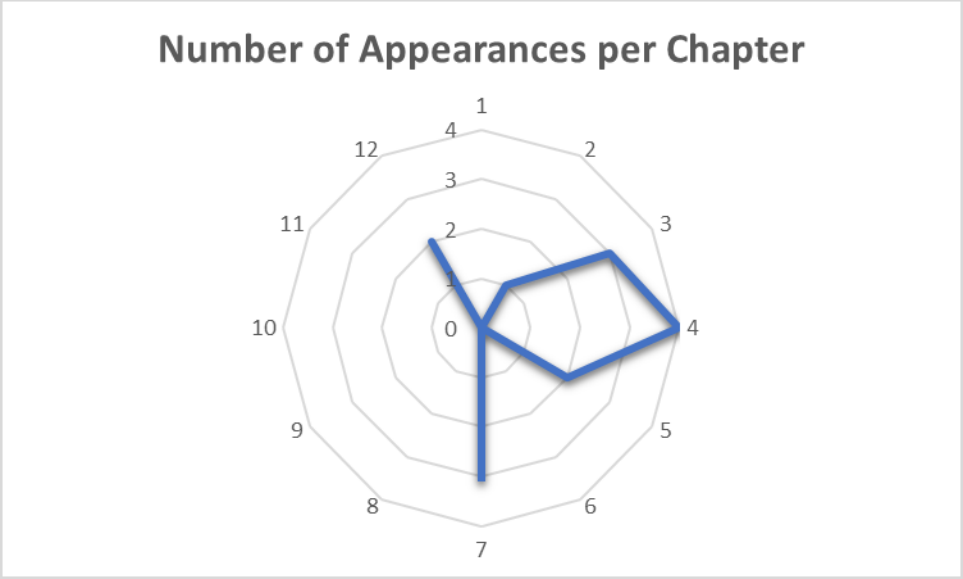

Figure 37. Number of Appearances per Chapter (Lisa-M)

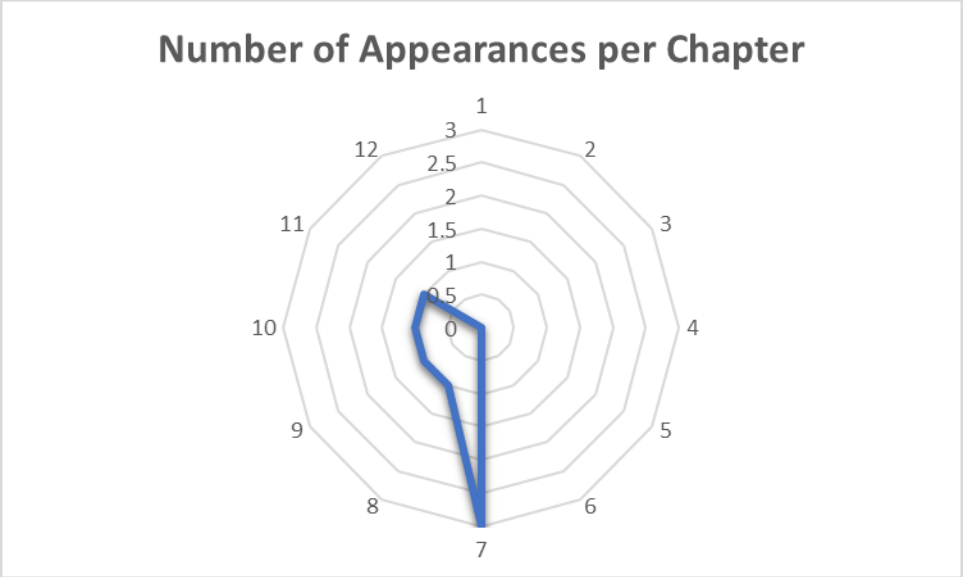

Figure 38. Number of Appearances per Chapter (Sylvia Arsenault)

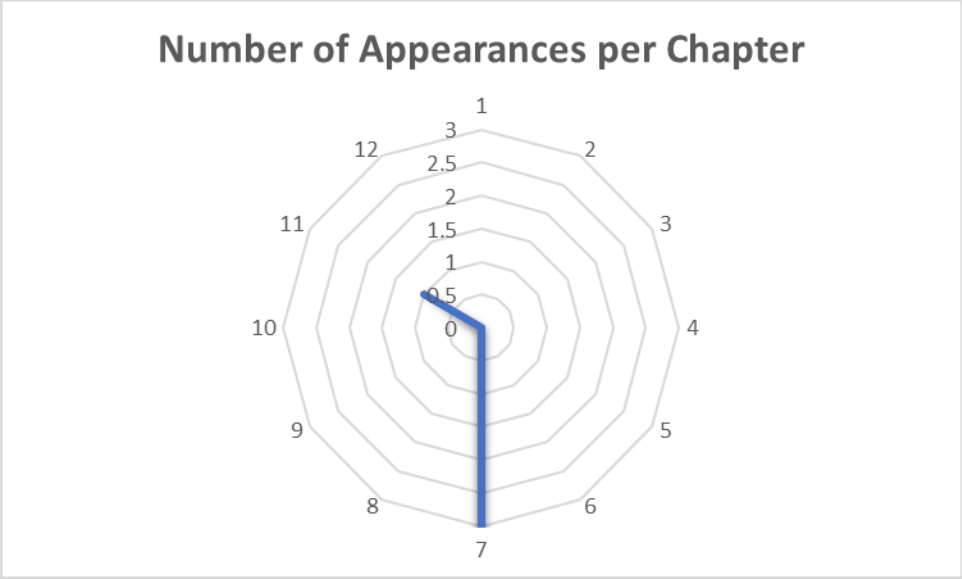

Figure 39. Number of Appearances per Chapter (Lionel Arsenault)

As made evident by these visualizations, none of these characters' presence convey close to the same level of consistency as Terry, or even to other members of the Thibodeau family. Daigle instead appears to use these characters as avatars strategically in particular chapters depending on the point in narrative. Relatedly, a query of the characters' occupied spaces produces the following figure, showing again a kind of strategy in linking some characters to certain spaces:

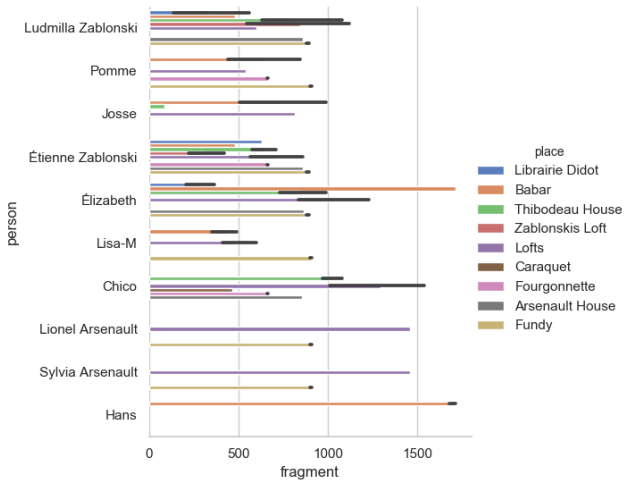

Figure 40. Person per Fragment per Place (Minor Characters)

Other than Chico, the Zablonskis, and Élizabeth, who move about with more agency through various spaces, the other characters are relegated to few spaces: Hans, for instance, is almost never identified in any significant space other than in his appearance at the Babar towards the end of the novel. Daigle thus strategically deploys these characters as avatars not only in terms of frequency of appearance, but spatially as well. These visualizations show important character patterns that, again, matched with the other data gathered here, will prove useful in the practice of close reading that will unfold during the following chapter.

Daigle's Acadian Linguistics: The Presence of Chiac in *Pour sûr*

As mentioned previously, Chiac is an integral part of Daigle's representation of Acadian identity. The dialect as a marker of identity remains contentious among Acadians at present: should it be considered with pride as a collective signifier, dismissed because it indicates a lack of mastery of standardized French, and how do speakers account for numerous variations in the dialect across Acadie? Daigle, as made evident by the proliferation of Chiac in *Pour sûr*, is also trying to make sense of the dialect's foundational place in Acadie's collective memory; however, Daigle's metanarrative interventions in the novel often point to a disapproval of the dialect. While the Acadian author is conflicted, data analysis of her novel offers some ideas as to how she works with and through Chiac: by comparing *Pour sûr* to a large French lexicon that contains approximately 135000 standard French words, a data analysis reveals—with some degree of error accounting for French and English words that are the same, certain proper names, and simple omissions in the lexicon—how many of the novel's words are *not* standard French, thus flagging Chiac or at least a variance in dialect. Coupling this type of linguistic study with other

findings from this chapter produces insight into Daigle's labour of working through cultural memory to represent an Acadian identity in *Pour sûr*.

As with the fragment, category, and character analyses, the simplest and most effective site of examination with which to begin is that of quantitative distribution. Reading *Pour sûr* with a code that "cleans up" the novel in terms of removing digits and separating words such as contractions with apostrophes—for instance, "c'est" is two words—indicates how many words and how many *distinct* words that the text comprises. While the novel is certainly monumental in total size, the following figure shows that the number of distinct words in *Pour sûr* is somewhat more manageable with respect to a linguistic study:

Figure 41. Words in *Pour sûr*

At just under 20000 distinct words in a total number of 185000 words, readers will get a better sense of scale when considering the quantitative presence of Chiac in the novel. Furthermore, the same reading can be done for each chapter to check for consistency. A modified search for each chapter calculates its total number of words and distinct words and, additionally, a simple

mathematical equation underlines the relational difference between the two sets of data for each chapter by determining the percentage of total words that are distinct:

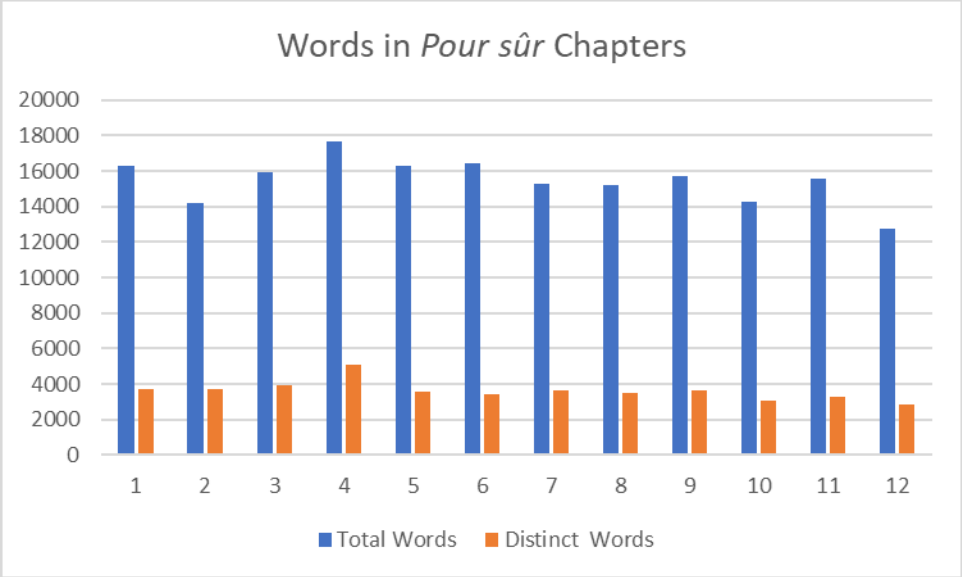

Figure 42. Words in *Pour sûr* Chapters

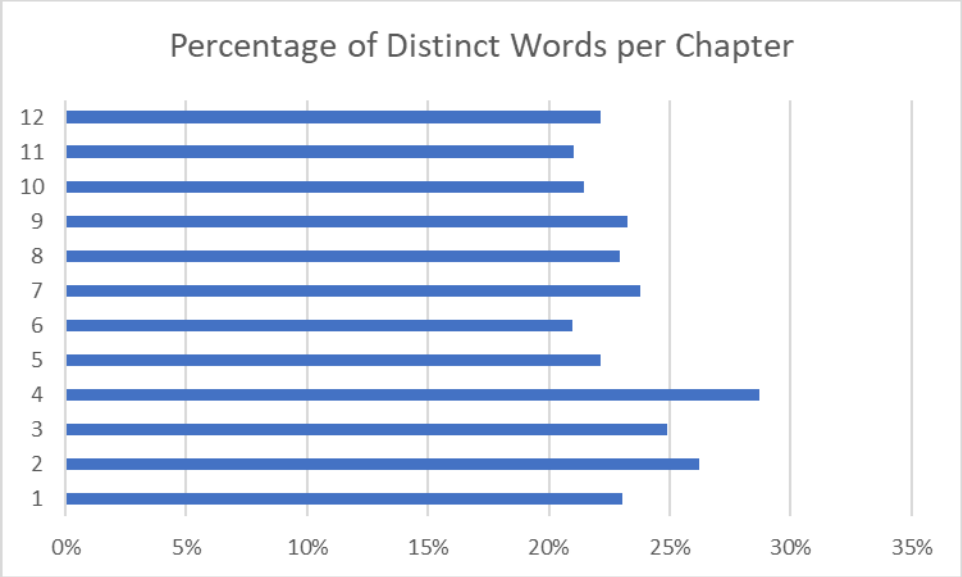

Figure 43. Percentage of Distinct Words per Chapter

As the data shows, the percentage of distinct words per chapter is fairly consistent, with a spike at Chapter 4 before tapering off in the later chapters. When considered alongside the entire novel, this fact makes sense, as the more words are accumulated in the text, the less probable that these words are distinct.

With this quantitative data as a baseline, the amount and affective work of Chiac in the novel becomes contextualized and measurable. Using a code similar to the prior one, one can read the following quantitative data for Chiac in *Pour sûr* and compare it with the overall linguistic data:

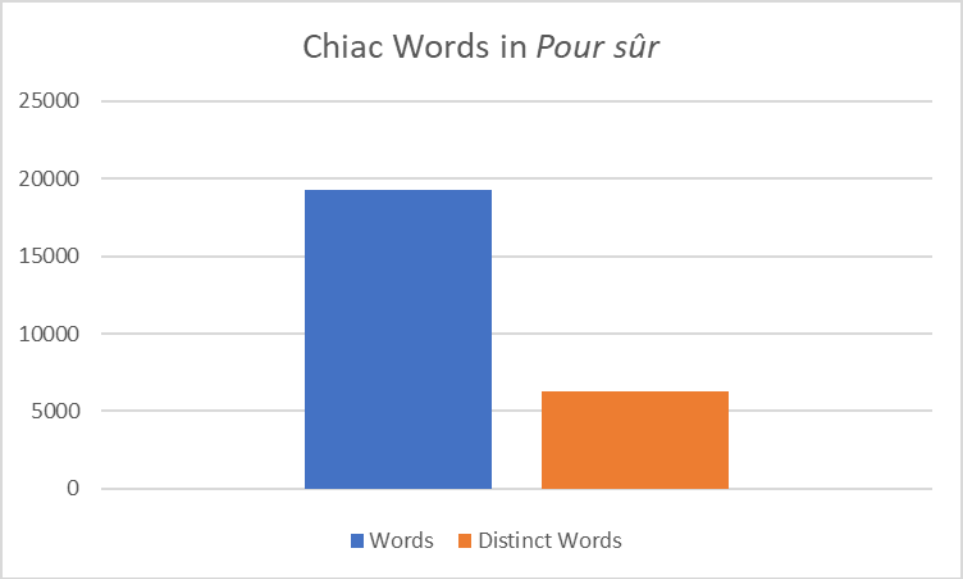

Figure 44. Chiac Words in *Pour sûr*

Figure 44 reveals that, at just under 20000 words, Chiac words—that do not fall under the purview of standard French—represent roughly 10% of the entire novel; moreover, a much higher discrepancy exists when accounting for distinct words. While the percentage of distinct words in the novel sits at just over 10% as well, the percentage of Chiac words that are distinct is a significant 33%, a number that could have several indications.

Furthermore, just as with the novel's total word and distinct word counts per chapter, a similar reading can be done with Chiac's quantities, revealing certain patterns particularly when examining the percentage of distinct Chiac words per chapter:

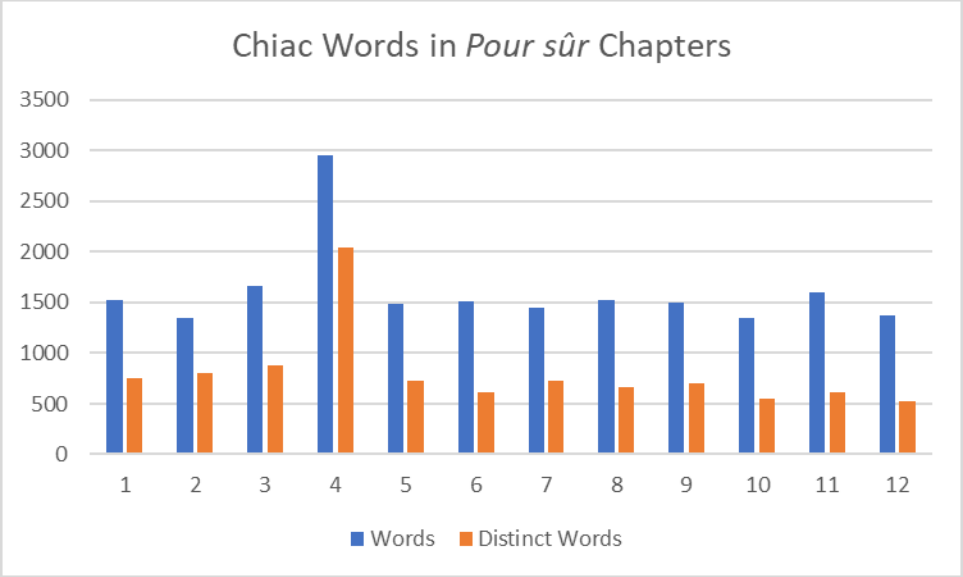

Figure 45. Chiac Words in *Pour sûr* Chapters

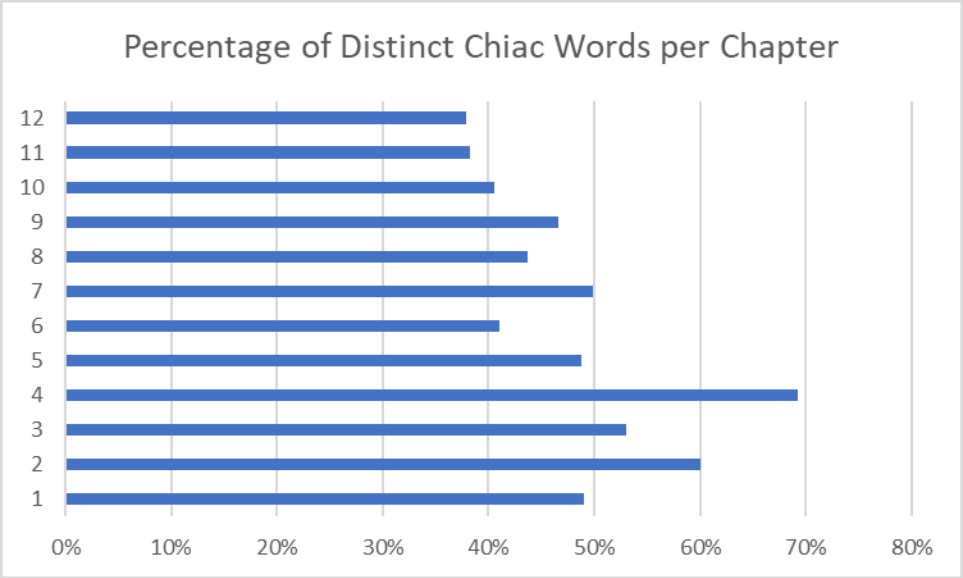

Figure 46. Percentage of Distinct Chiac Words per Chapter

As these figures show, the number of Chiac words seems to correlate, speaking generally, with the total number of words in terms of relationality; however, after the spike of almost 70% for distinct Chiac words in Chapter 4, its percentage drops off notably over the course of the remainder of the novel, by over 30% in fact. This information is intriguing because of other data collected through this analysis: for instance, a previous query reveals that Terry is Daigle's preferred avatar by a considerable margin; therefore, combining that fact with the evident decrease in the use of distinct Chiac words throughout the novel, as well as with the knowledge that Terry is actively trying to better his French in *Pour sûr*, the argument could be made based on such a reading that *Terry improves his French significantly over the course of the novel*. This type of argument that couples data analysis with close reading is just one example of the many compelling uses of this reading method, which will be explored further in the chapter to follow.

On that note, and instead of cross-referencing the Chiac data with a mere avatar for Daigle, one could also read the language of choice for the author's own interventions at the intertextual or self-reflexive level. By this proposition, I mean reading the distribution of Chiac in fragments from *Pour sûr* that occur outside of the plot, culled as metanarrative, which I had signalled earlier in this chapter and that account for over 50% of the text in terms of number of fragments. These fragments hold a slim minority in terms of numbers, but they are the minority by a wide margin when studying their word count in relation to the fragments that occur within the plot:

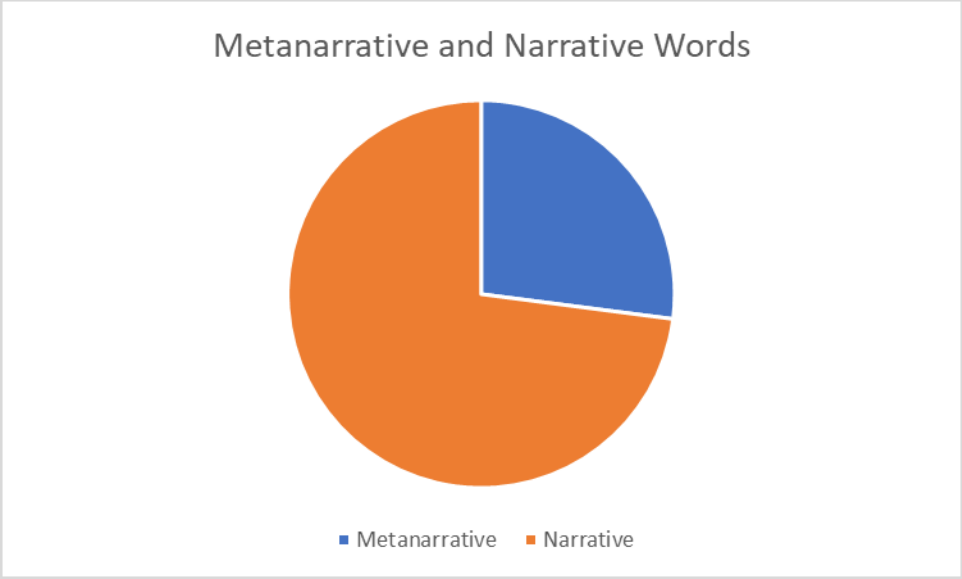

Figure 47. Metanarrative and Narrative Words

In comparing Figure 47 to Figure 2, therefore, one can conclude that the metanarrative fragments are much shorter than the narrative ones, featuring chiefly snippets or interjections.; however, as the following figure shows, the vocabulary is richer in these metanarrative fragments:

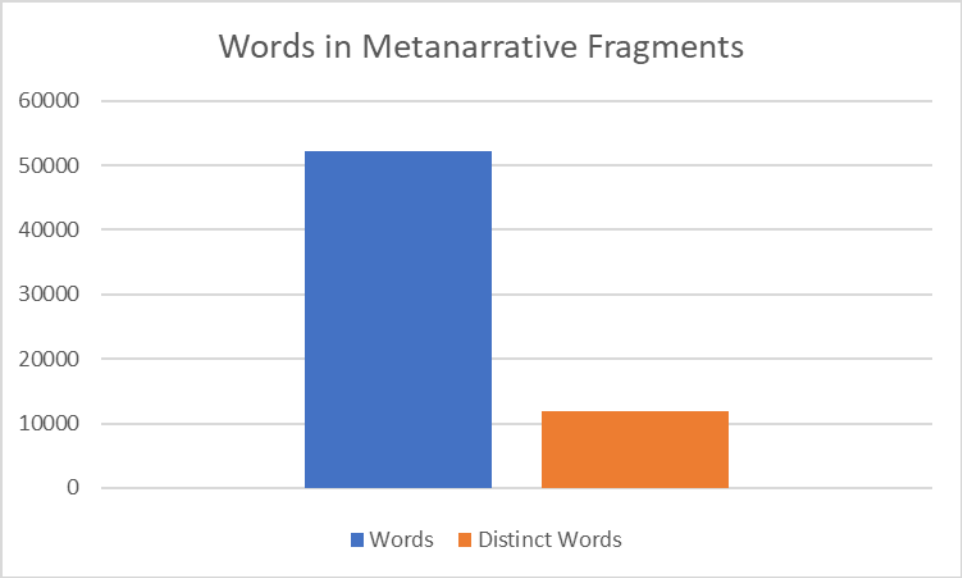

Figure 48. Words in Metanarrative Fragments

As Figure 48 shows, roughly 22% of the words in the metanarrative fragments are unique, over double the percentage that represents the entire novel when considering distinct words. One can easily argue, therefore, that Daigle's vocabulary during her contributions outside of the plot is more diverse than within it by a significant margin, even in short samples, as these fragments feature significantly fewer words.

Of these words in the metanarrative fragments, how many are Chiac or at least outside of the lexicon of standard French? Somewhat surprisingly in light of the higher quality of vocabulary, these fragments feature over 5000 Chiac words, almost 4000 of which are unique:

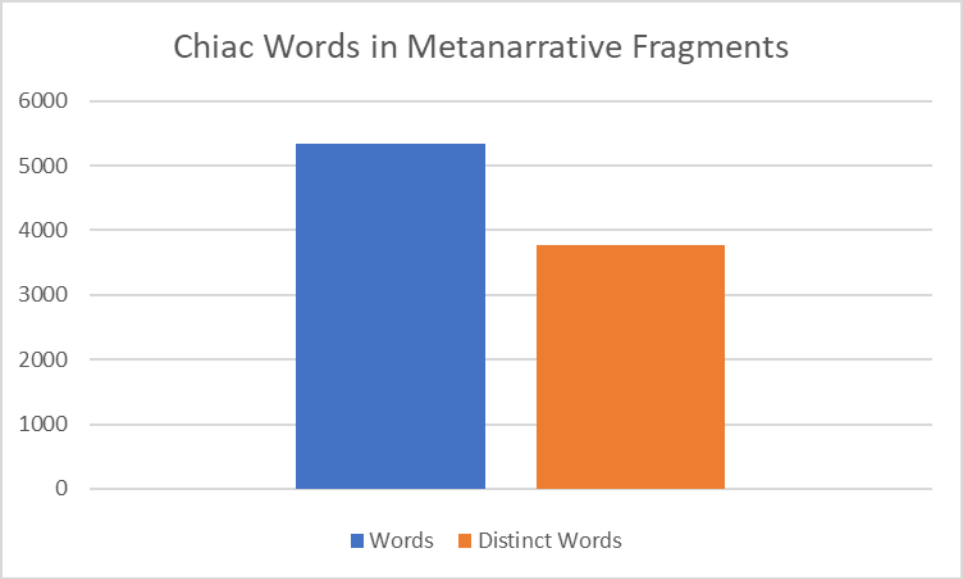

Figure 49. Chiac Words in Metanarrative Fragments

While Daigle's vocabulary can perhaps be considered more diverse in these metanarrative fragments than in the narrative fragments, she remains consistent in her use of Chiac, as the dialect represents roughly 10% of the total words used in both types of fragments. One can assume, therefore, that Daigle engages with Chiac in *Pour sûr* at both the level of practical use in the plot as well as at the level of self-reflection and philosophical musing, implying that Chiac

possesses an intellectual property that needs to be understood beyond its label of a simple, unsophisticated dialect employed orally by Acadians.

Conclusion: A Blueprint of Daigle's Acadian Cultural Memory

This chapter demonstrates *Pour sûr*'s trends, patterns, and statistics at the intersection of structure, character interactions, and language. Data analysis reveals, over the course of the novel, the distribution of its fragments and their categories, the characters that Daigle uses most often as avatars and in which situations, as well as the role of Chiac. These queries and the information that they offer are generalist, as to build a better sense of the many forms of *Pour sûr*; however, the database allows for more specific queries within these broader findings at points of interest, points that will be close read in the following chapter to understand and articulate Daigle's labour of memory, as she seemingly works through the Acadian cultural memory to offer a particular representation of Acadian identity.

Even from these general queries, however, some intriguing facts come to bear on the reader: *Pour sûr* features almost the same number of metanarrative and narrative fragments; each chapter in the novel is widely unbalanced when considering category representation, as each chapter centres three to five categories, and some chapters highly or even exclusively focalize single categories; Terry is by far Daigle's avatar of choice, followed by his son, Étienne; Chiac is consistent throughout the novel when juxtaposed with total word count, and it is employed in all situations. I discussed in the previous chapter how Daigle, the 'pataphysicist, creates an Acadian universe to "imagine solutions" to her questions of identity, but the present chapter visualizes this universe, its blueprint signalled by her use of postmodernist formal aesthetics that imagine a

space in which Daigle may work through cultural memory in a representation of her understanding of Acadian identity.

The following chapter will close read the findings from this chapter to lay out Daigle's labour of memory in clearer ways alongside the affects that her aesthetic choices produce. I argue that Daigle's attempts to work through Acadian cultural memory to represent an Acadian identity are melancholic due to her own conflicted emotions regarding Acadie—its values, traditions, and language—and thus she inadvertently conveys melancholic affects in numerous and significant instances that pervade *Pour sûr*. Through this difficult work, however, Daigle also highlights the strengths of Acadian fiction as well as its important contributions to critical and theoretical understandings of living and producing in and out of the "minor."

Chapter 5

A Close Reading of Affective Melancholia in *Pour sûr*

Reading the Blueprint: Memory and Melancholia

Daigle plays several roles with respect to her fiction: avatar, archivist, mathematician, and, perhaps most significantly, 'pataphysicist. As the "science of imaginary solutions" (21) that Jarry (1911)—a French writer who is also named in Daigle's novel—defines, "'pataphysics is a universe supplementary to this one" (4), and Daigle is the creator of such a universe in *Pour sûr*—master of her very own literary playground. Yet, while the notion of "play" is certainly prominent in her novel, she takes the role of 'pataphysicist seriously as well, using her imagined universe to work through elements that constitute an Acadian cultural memory to represent Acadian identity. As previously discussed, while a culture can be said to define a people at present, and history can recall events, cultural memory accounts for the interpretation of history by a culture over time. Categories such as "Chiac," "Moncton," and "La religion" thus construct the tapestry of this Acadian cultural memory—Daigle's literary universe as simulation—while others like "Excuses," "Inquiétudes," and "Peurs" allow Daigle's fictional, first-person avatar to engage with this cultural memory and to interrogate its values, traditions, and language in self-reflexive fragments concerning Acadian identity.

Regardless of biographical assumptions, Daigle's conception and use of an avatar for herself in *Pour sûr* creates a significant and consistent tension: readers constantly confront a certain conflict between the Acadian cultural memory that the author imagines and the self-reflexive, metacomments on the Acadian identity constructed in the novel. Benoit Doyon-

Gosselin (2015; 2017), for one, has repeatedly argued that this tension is a kind of device through which Daigle can employ her signature irony, and that this irony is a cornerstone of the novel. This reading, however, while true, assumes that irony is the foundation of her work, but it is an aesthetic symptom, I argue, of a deeper condition—melancholia. The presence and work of melancholia in *Pour sûr* might be contested; however, the affects that the novel's fragments, categories, characters, and language speak to a perpetual, melancholic uneasiness, a state of discomfort with identity within a particular cultural context. This melancholic disposition is partly based on the sociocultural and political dynamic between Francophones and Anglophones in Acadie, certainly, yet it also lies with what Julia Kristeva (1989) has called the position of "abdicator," of Daigle unsure of her position as spokesperson or memory keeper of Acadian identity.

In *Black Sun*, Kristeva explains a complex process of melancholia as it links closely to that of depression:

> Melancholy cannibalism, which was emphasized by Freud and Abraham and appears in many dreams and fantasies of depressed persons… accounts for this passion for holding within the mouth… the intolerable other that I crave to destroy so as to better possess it alive… It manifests the anguish of losing the other through the survival of self, surely a deserted self but not separated from what still and ever nourishes it and becomes transformed into the self—which also resuscitates—through such a devouring. (12)

Kristeva is worth quoting at length here because, precisely, this process appears to manifest itself in *Pour sûr* in certain instances when Daigle's avatars clash with pillars of Acadian cultural memory, almost as if they have devoured them. Such targeted pillars include the Deportation,

Chiac, and Catholicism; each of these foundational elements of the Acadian cultural memory is attacked directly or indirectly in the novel by either Daigle's fictional avatar or other characters. The novel is a "self" that survives by nourishing itself on this cultural memory, which it appears to resent. The tension between Daigle's fictional avatar and Acadie's cultural memory in *Pour sûr* thus speaks to Kristeva claims that "[t]he artist consumed by melancholia is at the same time the most relentless in [their] struggle against the symbolic abdication that blankets [them]" (9). Daigle's "relentless struggle" in the novel seems to be the labour of devouring Acadian cultural memory to reformulate her particular vision of Acadian identity.

The other, perhaps more evident melancholic tension in the novel stems from the influence of the Anglophone majority on the Acadian people, particularly in terms of Acadie's minor status and its dialect of Chiac—in other words, what is *excluded* in terms of a standard French. Anne Anlin Cheng (2001) has expounded on Freud's work on melancholia to contextualize it within critical race studies in the United States, and her work lends itself well to scholarship on other minor cultures: as Cheng claims, "[a]t the heart of loss there is now an active exclusion and denial of the object. In a sense, exclusion, rather than loss, is the real state of melancholic retention" (9). In Acadie and seemingly in Daigle's work, then, Acadians have "swallowed"—in the form of the English language majority of the region—an object that they simultaneously exclude and deny, and the result is the Chiac dialect. The fact that this melancholic object is linguistic both simplifies and complicates matters: on the one hand, language is clearly a key, if at times debated, identifier of Acadian identity; on the other hand, measuring the affects of such a melancholia can be difficult because, as Ruth Leys (2011) argues, "affect cannot be fully realized in language" (442). Fortunately, the data visualizations in the previous chapter speak to form on a more comprehensive level than merely that of

linguistics, and, as this chapter will argue and demonstrate, affect is conveyed chiefly through formal and linguistic aesthetics; these aesthetics in *Pour sûr* inform Daigle's work with Acadian cultural memory to build her particular vision of Acadian identity in her 'pataphysical, literary universe.

Yet, since Freud, discussing melancholia without acknowledging mourning as another possible grieving process is difficult, and remains especially so in cultural and literary studies such as this one. Cheng makes quick work of mourning in her own scholarship on race before moving on to melancholia: mourning is a grieving process for an externalized, "lost object," is finite in character, and in this process a proper substitution can be made at its completion (7-8). In terms of this project, the "self-confliction" of melancholia, in which the excluded object that is being grieved over is consumed and turned inward, appears to be more in line with the self-reflexive nature of *Pour sûr*. For her part, Judith Butler (2004) sheds light on Freud's later thought that melancholic consumption of the object might in reality be part of mourning as well (20-1). Butler appears to distance herself from Freud's understanding of the differences between mourning and melancholia to instead focus on mourning as a grieving process that reclaims power in an open, vulnerable acceptance of grief in response to violence against socially marginalized groups, particularly in the post-9/11 context of her work in *Precarious Life* (30). These conversations perhaps occur more so alongside rather than amongst each other, however, since Butler is speaking of a political project of mourning while Daigle is producing a cultural exercise in melancholia that is in fact not "agreeing to undergo a transformation," as Butler puts it (21). Nonetheless, Butler's earlier work, *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), theorizes melancholia extensively—like Freud eventually would—as difficult to separate from mourning: in reading Freud, Butler determines that

> melancholia, defined as the ambivalent reaction to loss, may be coextensive with loss, so that mourning is subsumed in melancholia. Freud's statement that melancholia arises from "an object-loss withdrawn from consciousness" is thus specified in relation to ambivalence: "everything to do with these struggles due to ambivalence remains withdrawn from consciousness, until the outcome characteristic of melancholia has set in." (174)

As my analysis will argue, mourning in *Pour sûr* would certainly appear to have been subsumed in melancholia and withdrawn from consciousness, with the novel's aesthetics revealing it as what Butler would call "characteristics." Moreover, and as affect theorists in the branch of psychoanalysis such as Leys (2007) have argued, mourning and melancholia are similar to an extent because melancholia, in a sense, is also a failed completion of mourning, one that is a self-inflicted ambivalence: "[t]he ambivalence, or more precisely, the repressed aggression toward the lost object prevents the completion of the work of mourning" (Krystal and Niederland qtd. in Leys 44). This ambivalence—or feeling of "impossibility," as I call it—persists in Daigle's *Pour sûr* as a source of the melancholia within the text, particularly in terms of the harmony between plot and self-reflexive passages, which themselves relate to conflicted Acadian cultural signifiers, and having to use a dialect to represent Acadians while disapproving of it, among other paradoxical tensions, including the numerous and varied interactions between Daigle's avatars.

MetaDaigle? Framing Affective Aesthetics

The confrontation between Daigle's literary avatar and the Acadian cultural memory that serves as a working backdrop to *Pour sûr* is perhaps the fundamental source of melancholia in the

novel, hence why the previous chapter establishes the quantity and distribution of narrative and metanarrative fragments. In fact, this confrontation is the source of most of the acclaimed irony in the text and frames the rest of the affective aesthetics in the novel. As the data indicates, at least, these two types of fragments take up almost the equal amount of space in the text, with the narrative fragments, at 50.2%, holding a sliver of an edge over the metanarrative fragments, which occupy 49.8% of the novel. These numbers suggest that, over the course of *Pour sûr*, Daigle's self-reflective instances maintain a balanced dialogue with the plot of the novel. As the data visualization in the previous chapter highlights, however, several anomalies crop up at various points in the novel: first, that Chapter 3 (major categories: "Un film," "Voiture neuve," "Lacan," and "Le film") features the most metanarrative fragments at 57.6%; second, that Chapter 12 (major categories: "La sexualité," "Étienne et Chico," and "Caraquet") contains the most narrative fragments at 58.3%; and third, that Chapters 6 (major categories: "En route," Cérémonie," "Élizabeth II," and "Fraises ") and 7 (major categories: "Fundy," "Consommateurs avertis," "Sondage/hommes," and "Sondage/femmes") each offer a perfect split between the two types of chapters at 50% each, the only chapters to do so.

The quantity of metanarrative fragments in Chapter 3 affects the reader in multiple ways: in having such a large percentage of self-reflexivity this early on in the novel, Daigle establishes her literary omnipresence in the reader's imaginary; moreover, these fragments institute an early attention to the novel's formal aesthetics and the significance that Daigle attaches to structure in *Pour sûr*. The very first fragment of this chapter, an intertext from Italo Calvino in the "Exergues" category, confirms this significance:

> *La littérature ne peut vivre que si on lui assigne des objectifs démesurés, voire impossibles à atteindre. Il faut que les poètes et les écrivains se lancent dans des*

> *entreprises que nul autre ne saurait imaginer, si l'on veut que la littérature continue de remplir une fonction.* (125)

Daigle certainly launches herself into such an enterprise with *Pour sûr*, which is such a conceptually intricate novel in its structure, and the intertextual inclusion of Calvino's thought seems to be a self-reflexive nod to this endeavour.

Other heavily present metanarrative fragments in the chapter include some from "*La Bibliothèque idéale*," which construct a fictionalized version of the ideal library, as well as "Équations," which feature often nonsensical mathematical equations that all refer to the novel's fixation on the number twelve. While metanarrative categories are meaningful because of their intertextual references as well as their recurring fascination with mathematical structure, the most informative metanarrative fragments in Chapter 3 might be those belonging to the "Lacan" and "Freud par la bande" categories, since they demonstrate an early preoccupation with psychoanalysis and language. In one such instance of the latter category, the metanarrative self-reflection ponders: "L'humain n'est pas fait pour être heureux? Voici comment Freud décrit la vie en fonction du moi, du ça et du surmoi: un cavalier (le moi) conduit un cheval rétif (le ça) tout en ayant à se défendre contre un essaim d'abeilles (le surmoi)" (129). Already, this metanarrative voice is concerned with the capacity for happiness, and she ties this concern to Lacan's understanding of language and what has become known as the unconscious in psychoanalytical and, later, affect studies: "De nombreuses trouvailles de Lacan tirent leur origine des miroitements du langage, du langage comme révélateur" (127). These meditations on happiness and expressions in language that negotiate the line between the unconscious and conscious speak to the important work of Chiac in the novel, which this chapter will later discuss.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Chapter 12 contains the most narrative fragments in *Pour sûr*. Compellingly enough, similar to the analysis of Chapter 3, the opening epigraph, a quotation from J.M. Coetzee, is also telling of the chapter's tendency in terms of narrative fragments: "*Nous écrivons parce que nous ne savons pas ce que nous voulons dire. Écrire nous le révèle*" (679). This idea of the act of writing revealing what writers are trying to say reflects a simplified version of the thesis of this project, that Daigle's novel is the culmination of her work on Acadian culture to speak about identity. As the final chapter, then, that comprises a majority of narrative fragments, Chapter 12 both implies that Daigle has finished her work in terms of literary progression for the novel's characters—her fictional avatars, several of which have been involved throughout her Monctonian Quartet—and provides hopeful glimpses into their futures. For instance, Young Étienne and Chico, the new generation of Acadians, appear together often in this chapter, setting the tone for upcoming understandings of Acadian identity; readers learn of a forthcoming family trip for the Thibodeau family, and of a new home bought for them with Terry's investment success; decades into the future, Zed and Terry are still best friends, even with Terry paralyzed and mute. While the earlier chapters of the novel seem to promote the prevalence of formal aesthetics in the novel through its metanarrative fragments, the novel ends with a kind of heartfelt farewell to these characters, these avatars, in narrative fragments that expose them through dialogue and interactions in their most genuine representations.

The core of *Pour sûr*, Chapters 6 and 7, in which narrative and metanarrative fragments are split *exactly* evenly, is intriguing to consider in terms of the weighted importance of each type of fragment. The epigraphs for Chapters 3 and 12 proved insightful, and so readings of these two chapters might begin the same way. The epigraph for Chapter 6 is from Nicolas Bouvier and reads: "[…] *un méandre de plus est ce qu'une rivière peut faire de mieux; c'est d'ailleurs ce*

qu'on en attend" (315); for its part, the epigraph for Chapter 7 is a statement by Elizabeth Smart: "*J'y parviendrai, grâce à la méticulosité de la folie*" (377). In reading these two passages side by side, one can easily read a kind of symmetry at work that reflects the perfect division of narrative and metanarrative fragments in both chapters: one is written in the third person, while the other is written in the first person; one evokes a lax pace ("méandre") and the other elicits a frenzied pace ("folie"); one seems to value a kind of thoughtlessness ("un méandre de plus") even though the other appears to value attention to detail ("méticulosité"). One could easily argue, as well, that the epigraph to Chapter 6 best describes Daigle's approach to laying out plot and characters, while the epigraph to Chapter 7 speaks to her tireless work in completing the cubed structure of *Pour sûr*.

As for the plot in both chapters, it also offers intriguing reflections of the nature of the fragments and their perfect division. In Chapter 6, for instance, the avatar representing Daigle's fictionalized self meets with several characters including Étienne Zablonski, another artistic avatar of Daigle's. The connection to aesthetics that these two avatars share results in a compelling confrontation between the narrative and the metanarrative, when Daigle's avatar questions Zablonski:

> —Vous pensez que tout ce qui vous arrive m'arrive aussi?
>
> Il haussa de nouveau les épaules.
>
> —Je ne pense pas souvent à cela, vous savez. (320)

This exchange between the metanarrative and narrative artists reveals a kind of complicity, yet also Zablonski's ambivalence in shrugging off Daigle's apparent worries with respect to how these avatars feel—as he states, he does not think much of her at all. The passage constitutes a

sophisticated level of self-reflection as well as demonstrates Daigle's preoccupations with aesthetics and the notion of representation in the novel.

Chapters 6 and 7 also show its characters in transition, in movement both literally and figuratively—taking "detours," as the epigraph to Chapter 6 hints towards. The Thibodeau family vacations in Caraquet, while Zed shows Élizabeth around Moncton in a kind of tour of his childhood. Later, they all take a trip to Fundy, joined by the Zablonskis and others. Meanwhile, Étienne and Marianne gain godparents in these family friends, and Zed adopts Chico as his son. The novel's core is thus a significant, pivotal point for most of its characters. In Chapter 7, however, Daigle also honours the structural work of the novel: in one story that recurs throughout the chapter, Terry, Étienne, and Chico set out to count the exact number of squares that their toilet paper contains. This exercise evidently points back to the chapter's epigraph regarding meticulousness, but it also references Daigle's resolution and attention to detail in completing *Pour sûr*'s structure, doing so humorously by the juvenile and trivial act of counting toilet paper squares. The two core chapters in the novel, therefore, are split evenly between both narrative and metanarrative fragments, and their plot points and avatar interactions seem to validate the importance of a sense of balance and ongoing relationship between them.

The natures of the fragments in *Pour sûr*, in terms of what I call narrative and metanarrative, are highly important with respect to the affects that they convey. They add a complex depth to the novel in that they compel readers to fundamentally understand each fragment at two levels: first, at the level of the fragment's status as either narrative or metanarrative; second, and consequently, at the level of how this status complements or interrogates the other. In so doing, Daigle creates a self-reflexive mechanism within the novel, in which its formal aesthetics are just as significant—and perhaps even more so—than its plot. Put

in other words, the author shows a preoccupation with *how* she represents content just as much as with *what* this content actually is, and, as the interaction between Zablonski and Daigle's fictional avatar in Chapter 6 implies, some doubt and tension often mediate both form and content. This doubt or tension may very well point towards the concept of melancholia that this project develops: as Jonathan Flatley (2008) argues, "the aesthetic production of the melancholic may be an attempt precisely to combat depression, not, as one might assume, by way of an escape into aesthetic pleasures but precisely by directing her or his attention toward melancholy itself" (36). This process may well define the work of Daigle's avatar in the text, with her use of aesthetics representing perhaps not necessarily a bout with depression, but a structured means to work through her own, often divided feelings towards constituents of Acadian cultural memory and identity: insecurities in the face of artistic, cultural creations, the necessity to pass through the "Other" to see the "Self," as well as her conflicted use of Chiac.

Decoding *Pour sûr*'s Categorical (In)consistencies

The narrative or metanarrative nature of Daigle's fragments might be the inherent affective agent in *Pour sûr*, yet the distribution of the novel's 144 categories also affects the reader in key ways. Their distribution speaks to clusters in certain chapters as well as to which categories are divided most evenly over the course of the novel, indicating a sense of consistency. Moreover, and most significantly, the distribution of these categories reveals which themes, in terms of both Acadian cultural memory and aesthetics, Daigle focusses on at various points in the novel. These points intersect with the plot to potentially disclose the core areas that she addresses—and how she addresses them—to represent Acadian identity. In this respect, the data visualizations from the prior chapter are helpful, as they literally illustrate maps of where categories are employed

throughout *Pour sûr*. In close reading these categorical consistencies or inconsistencies, readers will begin to gain a more accurate understanding of Daigle's work and the melancholia that bolsters it. As the visualizations report, Chapter 1 of *Pour sûr* features the lowest number of represented categories at 46, and this number rises throughout the novel: this rise makes sense, considering that Daigle's "perfect" structure must have grown more and more difficult to accomplish as she wrote, assuming that she did so—or at least assembled the novel—in chronological order. Regardless, the effects of this distribution, which becomes progressively less concentrated, cannot be ignored: the highly present categories in the earlier parts of the novel affect readings of the novel as a whole, and so Daigle's structural choices matter and have certain dispositions.

Chapter 1 of *Pour sûr* features four majority categories: "Typo" (11/12 fragments), "Chansons" (10/12 fragments), "Scrabble" (10/12 fragments), and "Couleurs" (10/12 fragments). Each of these categories dedicates over 80% of their allotted fragments to this chapter—a greatly significant statistic. By definition, each of these category titles refers to aesthetics, setting a tone for the remainder of the novel. Chapter 2 builds on the trend set in the prior chapter with respect to aesthetics and—while also comprising four majority categories—also adds a certain nuance to their place in the text. First, the "Zablonski" category, which chiefly features conversations between Étienne Zablonski, the artist, and Étienne Thibodeau, in which Zablonski asks the boy to assign a colour to various words in a highly aesthetic and also linguistic exercise, has all of its fragments appear in Chapter 2; therefore, Daigle begins early on in the novel to incorporate the theme of aesthetics in the interactions between her characters. Alongside Zablonski and Étienne's discussions in Chapter 2 also appear nine fragments of the "Structure" category. These

fragments are metanarrative, in which Daigle's fictionalized avatar deliberates on the project that is *Pour sûr*, offering readers insights into the conception of the novel:

> Si difficulté il y a, elle se situe peut-être dans une absence de repères, obligeant chaque lecteur à éprouver la méthode pour accéder à la création, prouvant par le fait même qu'il s'agit bien d'une création et non d'une méthode éprouvée. Se fait-elle comprendre? (78)

Even this early in the novel, then, Daigle points to the importance of methodology with respect to the act of creation; creation is not simply the result of a spark of inspiration, but rather the product of a contextualized labour. I argue that Daigle's created universe, her tapestry of Acadian life, is precisely this context in which she can labour to represent identity through her use of aesthetics.

In considering this link between categories about aesthetics and metanarrative fragments, Chapter 3 is compelling because, as mentioned previously, it holds the most metanarrative fragments in *Pour sûr*. Somewhat surprisingly, the key categories of the chapter are not so recognizably aesthetic in theme: "Un film," "Voiture neuve," "Lacan," and "Le film" all appear over nine times in the chapter. Film is certainly an aesthetic creation, but the fragments are mostly narrative in nature and describe Étienne and Marianne's progress as they take part in a locally shot production. The "Voiture neuve" category, for its part, chiefly tells exactly the story of its namesake, as Terry purchases a new vehicle for the family. Dispersed among these more or less trivial plot lines, however, upon a closer look, are a number of categories whose metanarrative fragments mostly deal with aesthetic choices, such as "Inférences," "Les chiffres et les nombres," "Notes," and "Freud par la bande," which tie in significantly with the other major category in this chapter, "Lacan," which appears ten times. Daigle's understanding of

Lacan as a psychoanalyst fascinated with language—and the unconscious meaning behind it—is particularly intriguing with respect to this project, in surmising that "*Lacan trouvait dans la parole de ses analysants la nature réelle du mécanisme qui leur nuisait*" (127; my emphasis). While potentially referring to her various avatars as well, she seems to echo exactly what is at work in *Pour sûr*, with respect to language in terms of Chiac as well as with form in general, considering the structural network of the novel. In fact, in a "Notes" fragment in Chapter 3, Daigle highlights this kind of work between form and content by referencing André Gide: "Gide considérait les mémoires comme étant seulement à moitié sincères, ambigus, hésitant entre le fond et la forme" (172). This claim refers to the life writing genre, yet the comment on memory and the place of form and content within its conception is essential to understanding *Pour sûr* itself.

Since the concentration of categories in each chapter dips significantly as the novel progresses, then, the categories that are most *consistent*—meaning that they are distributed most evenly among the chapters—become meaningful as well. Other than the obvious "Exergues" category, which appears once at the beginning of each chapter, six categories feature in nine chapters, representing the most consistent ones in the novel: "Agacements," "Détails plus ou moins utiles," "Expressions," "Ferveurs," "Inquiétudes," and "Projets." The data shows that, combined, 80% of these fragments are metanarrative, and so, the voice that recurs the most regularly in *Pour sûr* is that of Daigle's fictional avatar, who continually leaves self-reflexive confessions as to the struggles at the heart of the novel. The consistency of these fragments is actually what conveys—in a kind of subliminal hum due to their sparsity—hints of the melancholia in Daigle's text. These instances, in their serious tone as well as their metanarrative nature, instantly clash with the plot, which has barely any dramatic tension; they affect the reader

by pulling them into Daigle's experiment, her insistent attempt to get to the bottom of *something* that she is still constructing, or at least her place within this something.

The scattered, yet consistent fragments from select categories demonstrate the difficulties with the novel's conception: in "Agacements," for instance, Daigle's fictional avatar reflects upon its numerical structure: "[p]remier agacement: un roman avec beaucoup (trop) de chiffres" (82); she also thinks that, "[e]n fin de compte, il m'aura été impossible d'échapper à une certaine entropie du texte, c'est-à-dire à une condensation de sens, un ordonnancement du récit qu'il m'est donné de ressentir comme un agacement" (709). These annoyances seem somewhat superficial, if quite genuine, yet gain strength with a passage such as the following that speaks to more than simply the novel's structure:

> Un vice caché dans un roman publié est particulièrement difficile à rattraper. C'est tout à fait le genre d'ambiguïté auquel un auteur ou une auteure n'aspire pas. Car la découverte d'une erreur dans un livre en fragilise la lecture. L'erreur indispose le lecteur ou la lectrice; il ou elle éprouvera une sorte de gêne d'avoir à conclure un ouvrage moins que parfait. (227)

This hidden, unidentifiable vice is haunting in this case: it speaks of a certain shame with respect to readers' responses and appears to be a moment of authenticity, or at least of vulnerability in its seemingly honest admission. Burying this type of statement within the formidable structure that is *Pour sûr* seems to show a definite form of melancholia, one in which the avatar as subject has "swallowed" what it tries desperately to exclude—an Acadian cultural memory which it finds problematic, yet tries to represent regardless.

The consistent "Ferveurs" category also puts forth some quality thoughts in terms of melancholia and its associated, impossible desire: it speaks to a desire a desire that transcends any kind of planned literary approach:

> D'un battement d'ailes la ferveur survole les techniques et les tactiques pour atteindre le cœur des choses. La ferveur croit que le cœur des choses lui revient de droit. Elle voit les techniques et les tactiques comme des processus inférieurs visant à ralentir son ardeur. (347)

This desire, because it transcends aesthetic techniques and tactics, is impossible to escape, and this impossibility defines much of the melancholia of the novel. The fascinating element of *Pour sûr*, however, is that Daigle is aware of this tension, and goes so far as to try to determine its origin with her readings of psychoanalysis:

> L'élaboration d'une juste définition du désir permet de constater à quel point des gens comme Freud et Lacan furent touchés d'une forme de génie. Car il n'y a pas de définition triviale du désir. De la même manière, l'art et la science de la psychanalyse reposent entièrement sur des conceptions denses toutes de circonvolutions faites, qui se prêtent difficilement à la vulgarisation. Pour le moment, tenons-nous-en au fait que le désir est à la psychanalyse ce que la fraise est à la tarte aux fraises. (71)

By reading this rich, and albeit humorous passage, one can make several key observations: first, Daigle seems quite impressed with the ways in which Freud and Lacan approach understandings of desire, a difficult notion to grasp; second, that the practice of psychoanalysis, according to Daigle, lies entirely with the conception of dense and convoluted projects that are difficult to

convey in lay terms; third and last, that desire is the basis for psychoanalysis. This entire passage thus seems to both discuss psychoanalysis as an exercise as well as to reflect on *Pour sûr* itself as a psychoanalytic project.

Close reading of the intersections of these two types of data—the nature of the fragments in the novel and the categories to which they belong—reveal some compelling information regarding the novel. Chiefly, the self-reflection within the text concerning the novel itself as a type of psychoanalytical project, both in high concentrations in Chapter 3 as well as consistently over the course of the novel, implies a certain sense of authorial control. This sense is that Daigle's avatar in *Pour sûr* and Daigle the author are the same character, and that this omnipotent character is well-aware of and in conscious command of her novel as a psychoanalytical exercise. This sensation is powerful because, in fact, it distracts from what is *outside* of consciousness in *Pour sûr*; specifically, it deflects—though unintentionally—from the influence of cultural memory in the novel, and how this cultural memory meets with Daigle's understanding of psychoanalysis and desire to construct a particular Acadian identity. This meeting creates a kind of melancholia that underlies the novel, one that effectively distinguishes between Daigle's avatar and Daigle the author, the conscious and the unconscious. Close reading her use of character avatars as well as how she engages with Chiac in the novel will shed more light on this peculiar undercurrent to support this argument.

"Sa représentation, sa métamorphose et son malheur": Daigle's Avatars

Daigle's characters—her avatars—are highly significant in *Pour sûr* and with respect to the other findings discussed relating to the nature of fragments as well as categorical distribution in the

novel. Not only do they offer various points of view through which to consider Acadian cultural memory, but they are also integral to representing a cohesive Acadian identity in Daigle's imagined universe; as the titular quotation implies in relation to the avatars, the question of representation is complex, constantly changing, and quite difficult to attend. The fact that only 38% of fragments in the novel feature characters, again, on the surface, contributes to the idea of Daigle the author as this omnipresent figure that occupies most of *Pour sûr*; therefore, close reading the data on her avatars in relation to other data is necessary to better understand the tensions at work between cultural memory, self-reflection on Acadian identity, and the process of creation. In particular, it might reveal telling information on the novel's underlying melancholic tension with respect to unfulfillable desire.

A direct query showed in the prior chapter that Terry is Daigle's preferred avatar, appearing in almost 60% of fragments that feature any characters whatsoever; moreover, his highest number of appearances is 38 in both Chapters 6 and 7, the core of the novel. These chapters, as mentioned previously, are split equally between metanarrative and narrative fragments, and thus the idea of balance permeates them while notions of movement, transition, and growth accompany Terry's heavy presence in these chapters: categories "En route" and "Cérémonie" dominate Chapter 6, each with their 12 appearances featuring in the chapter, while categories "Fundy" and "Consommateurs avertis" lead Chapter 7, also each appearing in 12 fragments. Perhaps most interestingly, however, is the category that comes up when considering Chapters 6 and 7 together rather than separately: "L'inavouable," which appears in a telling 11 fragments in both chapters combined. Studying Terry's presence in these chapters alongside passages from "L'inavouable" is highly compelling: Terry is central to the novel in that he brings other characters together, from advancing Zed and Élizabeth's romantic relationship by

contributing to making them Marianne's Godparents to welcoming the worldly Zablonskis, who become cultural fixtures in the city, to Moncton. He also epitomizes a central conflict in the novel, one with Chiac, as he attempts to improve his standard French through his reading and interactions with his family and other characters at his Librairie Didot. Due to his significance, reading his heavy presence in Chapters 6 and 7 alongside the "L'inavouable" category—whose fragments appear intermittently between those that describe the Thibodeau family's vacation and those that show Zed and Élizabeth's blossoming relationship—is compelling. In the final fragment of this category in Chapter 7, Daigle chooses to summarize all other fragments in a lengthy, but worthwhile passage:

> Récapitulation. Tout compte fait, l'inavouable, c'est le réel. L'inavouable tue. D'où l'importance relative de l'aveu. Avouer à quelqu'un ou s'avouer à soi-même, la difficulté est la même. Le paradoxe étant que, même pour s'avouer quelque chose à soi-même, il faut passer par l'Autre. Parce que le réel, c'est l'Autre. Est-ce dire que le moi ne fait pas partie du réel? Réponse simplifiée: le moi est au réel ce que le vêtement est au corps, parure, surface. Le moi recouvre, protège, dissimule, et le langage du moi en fait tout autant. Le langage cache plus qu'il ne dévoile. C'est ce qui rend l'aveu difficile et l'objectivité impossible. En d'autres mots, je cache donc je suis. Il n'y a pas de voie directe. (430)

This self-reflexive passage reveals Daigle's understanding of the complex concepts that she develops over the course of the novel: the "real," confession, the self, the Other, and language. It speaks to a meandering, yet meticulous means of expression, just like the epigraphs to both chapters. How does Terry function in this imagined universe, in these chapters in particular, alongside these reflections? In other words, if Daigle's self-reflexive avatar claims that "she

hides, therefore she is," consciously or not, what does Terry reveal as her "other" avatar of choice, and especially with respect to an underlying melancholia linked to a kind of impossible desire to resolve her feelings towards Acadie's cultural memory?

Other data on Terry's appearances in *Pour sûr* are helpful in answering these questions. For instance, while the central categories to Chapter 1 are self-reflexive and focus on aesthetics and play, he features a significant 36 times. Most of the time, in his appearances, he enacts the kind of veiled forms of expression, of creation, that Daigle discusses in "L'inavouable": he sings for his family and tells stories of animals for his children, teaching them certain morals and values while doing so. For instance, he sings Aragon for Étienne and Marianne while in the kitchen:

> Devant Étienne et Marianne, l'effet avait été total. Les deux bambins avaient été hypnotisés de voir leur papa, qui, de chantonner en préparant le repas, se mit tout à coup à harmoniser une voix qu'ils ne lui connaissaient pas à des paroles mystérieuses qu'ils comprenaient un peu tout de même, surtout lorsque Terry faisait exprès, par ses gestes et expressions, d'en soutenir le sens. Les deux enfants eurent l'impression de voir beaucoup de nouvelles choses se créer là, devant eux. (19)

Like in the case of his storytelling, Terry's singing fascinates and entertains his children, whom he affects in a purely positive manner with his antics. Terry's attempts at expression, whether in music, storytelling, or even simple communication, thus seem to affect positively those around him, rather than remain stuck in a self-reflexive cycle, like those of Daigle's fictional avatar. This fundamental difference between the two avatars and their ability to express themselves strengthen the melancholic disposition in the novel that resides with Daigle's impossible desire

to communicate her representation of a "real" without passing through the Other, even when that Other is another avatar in the novel. Put otherwise, *Pour sûr* constitutes the fractured nature of Acadian identity—within the Acadian people as well as outside of it in terms of its history, language, and culture—in literary form; it attempts to consolidate a fragmented Acadian identity, yet this work appears impossible to accomplish fully in the text, contributing to its underlying melancholia.

Terry also features 36 times in the final chapter of *Pour sûr*, a chapter that sees the distribution of more categories alongside a majority of narrative fragments. After the opening epigraph, Chapter 12 opens with the much-anticipated exchange between the novel's two key avatars: Terry and Daigle's fictional character. In this passage, the melancholia at the heart of the novel, at least with respect to the use of avatars, becomes quite apparent and affective, evoking a sense of sympathy for Daigle's avatar:

> — J'ai déjà entendu ça, des écrivains dire que c'est les personnages qui finissont par prendre õver l'histoire, but c'est dur à crouère. Je veux dire, l'histoire tombe pas du ciel, faut que quelqu'un y pense. Parce que veut, veut pas, faut still qu'y aïye une mind en errière de ça. Non? (679)

Terry's curiosity certainly comes through in the question that he poses Daigle, in this case, but so does his inherent generosity as an avatar: even while expressing his doubts, he acknowledges the author's kindness and labour in creating him and the universe in which he evolves. In Daigle's final thought on the meeting, however, readers can sense her melancholia, the reasoning behind her construction of this fictional universe and its characters: "Il eut sincèrement l'air de regretter mon départ. Cela me brisa un peu le cœur. En m'en allant, je me demandai s'il était normal de préférer des personnages aux vraies personnes" (680). Since this final chapter features more

narrative fragments and fewer concentrations of categories, one could argue that, indeed, Daigle has undergone a process of mourning rather than one of melancholia; however, statements like the ending to this passage instead point to an ongoing, melancholic lack of resolution: the characters may be content with their representations—their identity—in Daigle's universe, but Daigle's self-reflexive avatar cannot be at peace, and this envy adds to the tensions in the novel.

The female avatar with the most appearances in the novel, perhaps predictably, is Terry's partner, Carmen. As the data from the prior chapter demonstrates, Daigle deploys her more strategically than Terry: she chiefly appears in the Thibodeau household, the Babar, where she works, and the family van, and particularly in Chapter 3, in which she features most often. This chapter has already discussed the importance of *Pour sûr*'s Chapter 3 because of the fact that most of its fragments are metanarrative in nature, while its majority categories are chiefly narrative in essence. Unlike Terry, who is more of a nomadic character that often doubts himself, Carmen personifies strength and conviction in the few spaces that she regularly occupies. For instance, she plays both the role of mother and boss at the Babar; Terry tells her that he is cooking supper for the kids, but she has work to do:

> — Mmmm, ça, c'est bon. Maman montera un petit peu tantôt.
>
> — Pour lire une histoire?
>
> — Si tu veux.
>
> Puis Carmen se rendit derrière le bar, attrapa par la queue quatre marasques confites, en tendit deux chacun aux enfants.
>
> — Quesse qu'on dit? (133)

As this passage demonstrates, Carmen takes her work duties seriously, yet is also a strong parental figure. She even instills the value of hard work to her children, namely when Étienne

has reservations about featuring in a local film in exchange for payment, as a conversation with Terry reveals:

> — Asteure je comprends. Ça doit être pour ça qu'y m'a demandé si j'aimais travailler.
>
> — Quesse t'as répondu?
>
> — Que des fois c'était fatigant, ben que j'aimais faire ça pour notre famille. (156)

Carmen is thus a strong character who highly values family and work ethic, and she attempts to teach her children lessons on these matters at every opportunity. While Terry allows Daigle to question culture and identity unabashedly in the form of an avatar, Carmen seems to be reserved for the fortification of certain values that Daigle appears to condone.

Carmen is also a pillar of conviction with respect to speaking standard French: she is responsible for pushing Terry to speak a more sophisticated French rather than Chiac, and encourages her children to do the same, as English bothers her. After a conversation with the film's director, for example, "Carmen ne comprit pas pourquoi — essaya de ne pas se laisser agacer par le fait que — la réalisatrice s'était adressée à eux en anglais pour finir" (160). English is a constant threat for her, and as she explains to Terry with regard to their children's participation in the film:

> — Je suis pas sûre que c'était une bonne idée d'envoyer les enfants faire ce film-là. T'aurais dû entendre Étienne après le souper. C'était des cãndés par-icitte, des puddles d'eau par-là, qu'y avont mis du cement dedans, qu'était ãwesome, pis là y a annoncé qui voulait une skãteboard pour sa fête. (166)

Carmen's recounting of events, and in a number of instances, Terry's responses, are humorous; yet, this humour, much like the use of irony in the text, is an effective device that deflects or covers the melancholic tension underlying Carmen's concern. So, while *Pour sûr* necessarily employs a wealth of Chiac in order to represent how the linguistic aspect of identity has evolved through the Acadian cultural memory in the region—with Terry personifying the persistent issues with respect to the dialect—Carmen's avatar appears to be a means for Daigle to express the melancholia underlying this aesthetic choice, coupled with others such as humour and irony, in the text. Even surrounded by and speaking Chiac, Carmen remains unequivocally against its use, and fights an uphill battle throughout the novel to eradicate its use in her family.

When studied alongside the nature of fragments in the novel and the distribution of their categories, Daigle's use of avatars also produces melancholic affects; even by examining only these two—albeit crucial—characters, the melancholic undertones of the novel begin to take shape, and especially because these characters speak. The means of expression of these characters, these avatars, is particularly significant when considering Daigle's fascination with language and psychoanalysis as well as the all-important stakes of Chiac in the text as well as with respect to Acadian cultural memory and identity. More than any other aesthetic that comprises *Pour sûr*, language and the namely Chiac is perhaps the most telling of the melancholia at work in the novel.

***Chiac Mémoire*: Melancholic Linguistics**

As the prior chapter demonstrates, Chiac is a constant in *Pour sûr*: comprising roughly 10% of the text, it occupies all types of fragments, categories, and is spoken by all avatars throughout the novel. Chiac is the most recognizable, yet contested Acadian signifier of Daigle's imagined

universe, particularly because of her attention to detail with respect to the spelling of words in the form of accents and italicization. The stakes of the dialect in the novel as a cultural identifier, as well as the clear difference of opinion from certain characters on its place in Acadie, speak to a deeply-rooted melancholia in Acadie's cultural memory both in relation to the Anglophone majority in the region as well as between Acadians themselves.

Just as with the other types of data close read in this chapter, the usage of Chiac in *Pour sûr* is best tackled in conjunction with supplementary information regarding fragment nature, category distribution, and avatar deployment. For instance, the fact that Chiac, consistent with the remainder of the novel, comprises 10% of the metanarrative fragments in the novel—which are mostly composed of Daigle's avatar's self-reflections—is compelling considering her apparent dislike for the dialect *within* some of these self-reflections: as she opines, "parler le chiac appelle encore aujourd'hui un *certain déshonneur*" (25; my emphasis). Her disdain for the Anglophone influence on Chiac is also clear when she argues that "c'est sans doute la forte et souvent *insidieuse présence* de l'anglais qui donne au chiac son caractère propre, et la prononciation tout à fait anglaise de ces mots pèse lourdement dans la balance" (44; my emphasis). While this thought shows a melancholia in relation to the anglophone majority, it also demonstrates the presence of a melancholia toward Acadians themselves, presumably because of how Chiac makes them appear to other Francophones who speak a more standard French. Daigle makes this sentiment clear, for example, in the following self-reflection:

> L'on raille les Acadiens — les Acadiens eux-mêmes le font entre eux — de prononcer nombre de mots comportant un *è* comme s'il s'agissait d'un *é*. *Père* et *mère*, par exemple, se diront *pére* et *méré*. Il s'agit bien sûr d'une ancienne prononciation française. *Mais cette prononciation et plusieurs autres ont vraiment*

> *l'air de produire un effet ringard aux yeux de l'Autre, comme si cette inadaptation au français moderne était la preuve d'un défaut d'adaptation à la vie moderne tout court*. (48; final sentence my emphasis)

Daigle's melancholia, and thus melancholic use of Chiac when she must represent Acadian identity over the course of the novel, is evident in such self-reflexive passages that occur in *Pour sûr*'s first chapter. The impossibility of the desire to discuss Chiac as problematic without employing Chiac itself is, therefore, a strong melancholic force in the novel.

Consequently, a number of the issues concerning Chiac must be worked through using avatars. While most characters in the text do not overly ponder the question of language, it is a living phenomenon in the Thibodeau family, and in particular between Terry and Carmen as they try to raise their family. Terry, as discussed, faces challenges in substituting his Chiac for a more standard French. He especially does not want to disappoint Carmen in raising their children to speak French. In a conversation with Étienne, for example, Terry contemplates Carmen's opposition to Chiac:

> — Hõw cõme que c'est pas l'histoire du lapin Pascal, denne?
>
> L'anglais fit tiquer Terry. Carmen avait tendance à le blâmer pour le chiac des enfants. (61)

Terry is right to keep Carmen's apprehension of the Acadian dialect in mind; unlike him, who is often ambivalent toward Chiac and even appreciates its innovation at times, Carmen is strongly opposed to it and does not want Étienne and Marianne to grow up speaking it. She believes that Chiac is simply born from laziness or from a lack of curiosity, pride, or logic:

> La position de Carmen au sujet de la langue n'a rien de reposant, et ce, pour elle-même en premier lieu. Elle a beau vouloir que les enfants apprennent un français correct, elle ne peut s'empêcher de sourire parfois devant certaines tournures chiac. Mais ce n'est pas toujours le cas, hélas. Elle a souvent l'impression que le chiac résulte d'une certaine paresse, ou d'un manque de curiosité, de fierté, de logique, d'autant plus quand le mot français est connu de tous et facile à intégrer au parler courant. (76)

In a number of ways, Carmen's position on Chiac, as it is explained in this passage, is highly telling of the melancholia tied to the dialect in *Pour sûr*, and especially as it complements Daigle's metanarrative reflections. Curiously, Chiac is defined as *lazy* here rather than *efficient*—an intriguingly negative disposition considering Chiac's propensity for linguistic conservation—and *illogical* instead of *rational*—also compellingly cynical given the rigorous grammar to which Chiac adheres and that Daigle discusses throughout the novel. Moreover, while Carmen, as an avatar of Daigle, sees Chiac as a point of *lack* of pride, it is often a *source* of pride for many Acadians. This melancholia almost works to undo the significant place of Chiac in the Acadian cultural memory and, therefore, representations of Acadian identity. It tries to trivialize the pivotal place of the dialect in Acadie; however, the data tells another story, one that sees Chiac play just as important a role in quotidian dialect in her Acadie as it does in the self-reflections of Daigle's fictionalized avatar.

In terms of chapter breakdown, Chapter 4 of *Pour sûr*, which tells of a party at the Babar, an ongoing game of Scrabble, as well as the murder, contains by far the most Chiac words of the novel—even more significantly, however, it has the highest percentage of Chiac words by a wide margin at almost 70%, roughly 10% more than the next closest chapter, Chapter 2. Three

categories feature the most prominently in Chapter 4: “Une vie de couple” appears twelve times, while “Une place pour le monde” and “Meurtre” each feature ten times. “Une vie de couple” is all about l’Infirme and Antoinette’s game of Scrabble. While the fragments themselves do not feature much Chiac, the game of Scrabble is in itself metaphorical of the Acadian dialect: it is inventive, highly dependent on morphology, and can be played using multiple languages, with some words helping to construct new ones. For its part, the fragments from “Une place pour le monde” represent the opposite, dealing instead with the literal and pragmatic elements of Chiac: they depict a party at the Babar, where the use of Chiac is abundant and, even more significantly, it is completely contextualized in a situation where many Acadians gather to celebrate the hundredth op-ed of one Hektor Haché-Haché. “Meurtre,” though, is an interesting category in Chapter 4: sure, it tells of a murder that eventually leads to Zed adopting Chico later in *Pour sûr*; however, it also makes some pointed comments about Chiac in odd places. For instance, when Terry is explaining the judicial process to Carmen, she corrects his French:

> — En tout cas, un hearing, c’est un procès, pis une jãil, c’est une prison, by the wãy.
>
> Terry ne le prit pas mal:
>
> — Je sais. Ça montre juste comment fort que c’est quante le chiac de Dieppe coule dans tes veines. (238)

Terry’s conversation with Carmen, and his recognition of her paying such attention to language in time of crisis, spills over later on in the chapter as well when he is attempting to reason how such a tragedy happens:

> — C’est pour le petit que ça me bodre le plusse… Peux-tu ouère? T’as six ans, ta mére s’a mõre õr less sauvée, a fucké õff avec un autre homme, dans l’Ouest õf

> ãll plãces — je veux dire, c'est pas comme si qu'a plãnnait de te ouère tous les week-ends… —, pis ton pére est à la jãil parce qu'y a tué son õwn pére, ton grand-pére by the wãy, que tu vis avec depuis aussi longtemps que tu te rappelles, pas yinque mort, murduré! C'est pas yinque une attaque de cœur, ça! Pis par son õwn garçon encore de plusse, qui est ton pére itou! Pis t'as pas de fãvorite oncle ou tante pour toutte smõothér ça õver, let ãlone t'adopter. Ãnyway, either wãy t'es stoque, parce que c'est les deux hommes que tu relatais plusse à, õbviously. Sõ y te reste yinque ta grand-mére, which que son homme vient de mourir — murduré par son õwn garçon à yelle itou, remember? — but y est rendu à la jãil asteure, qu'est pas à côté de chez vous non plus, must I ãdd, sõ a fiïle pas trop ben ãbout toute l'affaire, pis alle a un petit gars de six ans sus les bras, qu'alle aime but y avont comme soixante-dix ans de diffarence, pis a wõrry qu'y finira peut-être par être comme son pére à lui, whõ knõws? Ein? Peux-tu ouère?
>
> Carmen en resta abasourdie.
>
> — Sõrry, but faullait que ça sorte exactly dans ctes mots-là. (239-40)

In a time of urgency, therefore, Terry reverts to Chiac to explain the situation as clearly and emotively as possible, and, although he feels the need to apologize to Carmen for his linguistic choice, he does much work to legitimize the place of Chiac in this passage. So, while the beginning of the novel sets up a melancholia surrounding the use of Chiac, the major categories in Chapter 4—which features the highest percentage of Chiac in the novel—validate the dialect in significant ways, namely with their work of contextualizing and even humourizing it.

The problem with this exercise in validation, however, is that it is undercut immediately, re-establishing the linguistic tension that drives *Pour sûr*. The fragment that directly follows the

previously mentioned monologue by Terry is a metanarrative fragment by Daigle's avatar, who states:

> Aussi grammaticalement logique qu'il puisse être, le chiac est la plupart du temps dénoncé comme modèle suprême de médiocrité, une déviation magistrale par rapport au français normatif, une forme langagière (lapsus: uniforme bandagière) supposée supérieure. Prendre/perdre son mal en patience. (240)

Interestingly enough, Daigle's avatar completely contradicts Carmen's earlier assessment of Chiac as illogical, and instead just claims that it is most often denounced as a mediocre deviation from standard French, though she never—nor does she at any other point in the novel—says by whom. While this example uses superlative descriptors to exaggerate its content, these types of opinions that shed a negative light on Chiac remain scattered throughout the text and set up a lingering anti-Chiac sentiment that clashes with the abundance of Chiac in the novel. This constant conflict creates a melancholic affect with respect to language that circulates in the novel as an undercurrent that also influences readings of every other aspect of Acadie's cultural memory, whether the Deportation, Catholicism, family legacies, or even cuisine; therefore, while the Acadian identity that Daigle represents in *Pour sûr* owes a debt to these elements of Acadie's cultural memory, the melancholic affect running through it seems to push a certain desire for Acadians to let go of them, a desire that appears impossible to fulfill: a paradoxical meeting of two situations.

Of course, Chiac—*language*—is the foundational component of Acadian cultural memory from which Daigle draws to represent Acadian identity, and thus it is a crucial melancholic and affective force in the novel. The melancholia is the chief source of tension in *Pour sûr*, and, as I have discussed in this section, various character avatars as well as Daigle's

avatar all broach Chiac differently: Carmen is mostly against Chiac, though she seems to tolerate its use in certain circumstances; Terry is nuanced when considering the affective and cultural value of Chiac, yet tries to better his standard French—and *succeeds*—over the course of the story; Daigle's avatar cannot help but speak negatively of Chiac, even if she is forced to converse in the dialect throughout the novel. In her meeting with French artist Étienne Zablonski, Daigle's avatar tells him that "[c]'est un peu étrange de [le] voir en chair et en os après tout ce temps" (320) after which she describes a curious understanding between the two avatars: "Cela le fit rire. Il savait que je le trouvais beau. Puis il y eut un silence" (320). While readers may think that Daigle's avatar is claiming here that she finds Zablonski physically attractive, the evidence gathered and discussed in this chapter points to a different form of admiration: she finds appealing in Zablonski his confidence, his sophistication, and the fact that his modes of expression—both in terms of his use of standard French and his aesthetic creations—are refined, and she thinks highly of these traits. Yet, her avatar also feels that she cannot attain this idealized status—especially based on her negative perception of Acadie's cultural memory and language, in particular—and this realization is another source of melancholia for her that leaks into the novel as an affective force; it is in numerous ways responsible for her melancholic relationship with Chiac and, thus, with Acadie.

From Acadian Cultural Memory to Identity: Daigle's Literary Legacy

If cultural memory, as Astrid Erll (2008) claims, comprises the social, the material, and the mental (4), then France Daigle's *Pour sûr* exists as a representative snapshot of Acadian cultural memory—a portrait of Acadian identity in a specific time and place. The novel is a material artifact holding culturally defined mentalities that circulate in social circles and institutions;

however, the novel is also an important Acadian cultural capsule for much more than critics have given it credit. The issue is perhaps that, as Daigle might have intended, readers—even perceptive scholars—have been duped by her self-reflexive authority, in that they focus so attentively on the question of whether the Daigle in the text is in reality the same as Daigle the author—admittedly a difficult predicament from which to escape—that they ignore or miss the melancholic affects of the Acadian cultural memory in the novel, or the *unconscious agents* in *Pour sûr*. This crucial disposition is certainly at the heart of Benoit Doyon-Gosselin's "De la maison à la métalepse daiglienne" (2017), which is a fine literary analysis of the novel, except that it perhaps gives Daigle too much credit in her meta and self-reflexivity, and thus does a disservice to the significant work that *Pour sûr* does in terms of Acadian cultural memory and how it shapes identity. Andrea Cabajsky's "Francophone Acadian Literature as an Ultraminor Literature: The Case of Novelist France Daigle" (2017) is another well-argued scholarly work on Daigle's *Pour sûr*—this time in the context of World Literature—that perhaps makes the opposite choice to Doyon-Gosselin's argument in that it pays too much attention to Acadie's historical status as a doubly dominated literature and not enough notice to the novel's self-reflexivity: the ways in which Daigle reflects on her *own* culture is just as telling as the ways in which the majority Other(s) influence the use of Chiac in the text.

Earlier reviews of the novel also offer similarly incomplete readings of *Pour sûr*: Catherine Parayre (2014), for instance, rightly points out that the novel's plot does not offer any suspense before arguing somewhat flatly that the suspense instead comes from narrative interruptions by way of "lists" in the novel—what I would call the least interesting of metanarrative fragments. For her part, Dominic Tardif (2012) makes a choice similar to Doyon-Gosselin's, taking Daigle's word at face value: she quotes Daigle's statement as fact, for

example, when the author claims that "j'ai seulement voulu *montrer* le chiac, plaide-t-elle, en insistant sur le verbe montrer. Je me demandais comment les gens allaient réagir en voyant les mots" (n.p.); evidently, as this chapter has discussed, Daigle's self-reflexive disposition at numerous times in *Pour sûr* does much more than simply *show* Chiac—it repeatedly points out a conflicted relationship with Chiac. Chiac, in how it functions in the novel, is thus a manifestation of Daigle's resentfully swallowed object. In this respect, this project has done more than *shown* the aesthetics at work in Daigle's novel through distant reading with digital tools; it has also argued with the help of close reading that melancholic affects drive the novel, rising from Daigle's understanding of Acadian cultural memory that serves as the foundation for her imagined universe to inform her representation of identity that occupies it.

In *Pour sûr*, and with particular respect to the work of Freud and Lacan, Daigle provides readers with important lessons in psychoanalysis that complement her own novel in some ways. The melancholia that drives the affects in the text linked to cultural memory, however, lies *outside* of her consciousness, and as Lacan (1962-63) also argues in his seminar on anxiety:

> … [affect] has a close structural relationship with what is, even traditionally, a subject;… [affect] is not repressed… It is unmoored, it goes with the drift. One finds it displaced, mad, inverted, metabolised, but it is not repressed. What is repressed are the signifiers which moor it." (11)

Of course, I have argued in this text that melancholia is the core, repressed signifier in Daigle's novel—the affects that are moored to it circulate in the novel, highlighted more clearly with the help of digital tools and visualizations. This psychoanalytical approach to affect studies continues currently (Gregg and Seigworth 7): theorists such as Ruth Leys (2007), Brian Massumi (2002), and a host of others continue to debate whether and how affect is either conscious or

unconscious, intentionalist or non-intentionalist. While Massumi's angle chiefly characterizes affect as bodily, as well as indeterminate and prelinguistic, I tend to side with Leys' more nuanced understanding of affect as operating cognitively as well—in Lacan's terms, then, affect might be unmoored, but also play the role of signifier at times. Melancholia, I believe in this case, is most often outside of the text's "consciousness" in a repressed state, which is why so many contradictions persist in *Pour sûr* with respect to cultural and linguistic values and permeate the novel with a feeling of impasse. While the influence of Anglophones on Acadian culture and language might appear to be a preoccupation in the novel at first glance, the true object of melancholia for Daigle is the Acadian cultural memory itself—this object, as Cheng (2001) reasons, is the cause for this affective impasse:

> The melancholic's relationship to the object is now no longer just love or nostalgia but also profound resentment. The melancholic is not melancholic because he or she has lost something but because he or she has introjected that which he or she now reviles. Thus the melancholic is stuck in more ways than just temporally; he or she is stuck—almost choking on—the hateful and loved thing he or she just devoured. (9)

In *Pour sûr*, this "being stuck" comes out in numerous deadlocks between avatars, narrative and metanarrative fragments, categories, the use of Chiac and what is being said about Chiac, etc. This "being stuck," this melancholia, and the affects that is creates represent a fascinating case of a minority author working through their cultural memory and displaying this labour in literature—not only in terms of the novel's content, but also with respect to such an innovative formal structure.

And so, with her Monctonian Quartet and, in particular, the monumental *Pour sûr*, what is Daigle's literary legacy *en Acadie* and beyond? Certainly, she has gone further than any other Acadian writer—regardless of genre—in dissecting the constitution of Acadie's cultural memory, breaking it apart into manageable bricks with which she was able to build a fictional, literary universe in which she could reconstruct representations of Acadian identity. Her genius in terms of style and postmodernist aesthetics that stem from her self-reflexive work on Acadian culture, and her colourful cast of characters, even if lacking in terms of dramatic tension, remain memorable for their charming quirks. Perhaps, however, that her most significant accomplishment is demanding a new understanding of the function of the novel in the Deleuzian (2000) sense, namely for minor literatures: rather than asking "what does it mean?" Deleuze suggests that readers ask, "how does it work?" (36). Instead of seeking validation from the majority, Daigle forces Acadian readers to reflect and re-evaluate their own thoughts and feelings with respect to their cultural memory and representation, while simultaneously providing non-Acadian readers with an entertaining and well-crafted text. Her versatility and ingenuity have done much for aesthetics, producing works rich with potential for scholars of both Acadian and minor cultures and literatures.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Through the Sieve and Beyond

Digitizing Acadian Memory, Culture, and Aesthetics

In numerous ways, Daigle's *Pour sûr* is an ideal novel with which to develop digital reading practices. While most close reading methods rely on critics' abilities to propose innovative *qualitative* analyses, digital reading techniques chiefly depend on the *quantitative* nature of distant reading. The qualitative essence of close reading implies that scholars approach texts with certain dispositions, whether formalist, historicist, or psychoanalytic, to name but a few, whereas distant reading grants a certain level of autonomy to the text, one that can lead to close readings—critical perspectives—based on a foundation of data. In this respect, *Pour sûr*'s postmodernist aesthetics, namely its fragmentation and index system, invite computable study; they are already laid out in a particular order that requires no prior critical involvement, only pre-analytical visualization. Moreover, the cubed configuration of these fragments is evenly arranged across twelve chapters and distributed into assigned categories; therefore, like the fragments themselves, their categories may be plotted digitally before any close critical intervention. The index of these fragments and categories also simplifies the mapping of characters and places in the novel, and so *Pour sûr*, through its structure, provides an ample pool of data as a point of entry for various studies.

Yet, some difficult choices must still be made once this pool has been gathered, especially when the object of study is identity—comprising a number of cultural elements—and the text in question represents changes to it over time as an accumulation of cultural and personal

memory. In the case of Acadie and its portrayal in *Pour sûr*, for instance, language is integral, particularly with respect to Chiac. The dialect has developed over centuries in Acadie, and deciphering how much Chiac is in the novel was challenging. Ultimately, I decided to compare the words in *Pour sûr* with those in a standard French lexicon to calculate the percentage of Chiac in the novel; however, I could have—and some linguists might argue that I *should* have—chosen otherwise. For instance, if a sentence contains a single Chiac word, would that in turn make the *entire* sentence Chiac as a pragmatic, linguistic unit? Similar logic applies to my choices regarding the nature of the fragments in the novel: wanting to account for the self-reflection in the text, I classified each fragment as either narrative—part of the plot—or metanarrative—offering self-reflexive commentary. Unlike the distributions of the fragments and their categories, which are already established by the author, the differences in the nature of the fragments are the result of my own critical disposition. Nonetheless, since these distinctions might yield compelling results due to the object of the study, I stand by my decision; as long as I have been fair in contextualizing the findings of this work, I believe that they remain a highly valuable scholarly contribution on *Pour sûr* and Acadian cultural identity.

To be sure, this work has been greatly concerned with methodology, sieve reading, but it has also sought to build on—even having begun its conceptualization before—the most recent contributions to scholarship (Cormier 2015; Cabajsky 2017; Doyon-Gosselin 2017) on France Daigle's body of work, the novel *Pour sûr*, as well as the broader contexts of Acadian literature and cultural identity. Daigle's writing in the minor, her work towards developing literary representations of Chiac, her use of innovative formal aesthetics, and the meaning of these elements of her work for her imagining of Acadie have all been topics of discussion for these critics. Literature has always been highly influential in Acadie, with the major movements in its

history having repeatedly added to Acadian cultural memory and thus consistently affected new iterations of identity: the devoutly Catholic and nationalist poets of the early twentieth century; the political and linguistic revolution of the 1970s; Antonine Maillet's mythologizing of Acadie's past from the 1950s onward; the feminist poetics of the 1980s; the urbanization of Acadie in the 1990s by the likes of Jean Babineau, Gérald Leblanc, and, of course, France Daigle, who now reflects on and represents Acadie in the age of globalization in her works. In terms of size and depth, *Pour sûr*, in particular, is unlike any other literary work produced in and about Acadie, and it holds the memory of its people's history in a thorough snapshot of their cultural identity at present.

Pour sûr is also compelling considering the ways in which Acadian writers are often chosen as spokespeople for their culture, whether formally or not, and so the novel's self-reflexive moments on "the self" and "the Other" show potential instances in which Daigle's avatar encounters the Acadian cultural memory. When considering identity, Michael Rothberg (2009) points out that "[o]ur relationship to the past does partially determine who we are in the present, but never straightforwardly and directly, and never without unexpected or even unwanted consequences that bind us to those whom we consider [O]ther" (5). To a certain extent, any individual that is perceived to be outside of the self—the personal—is "Other," and so the mantle of spokesperson for one's culture might be difficult for some writers to take up: for instance, regarding Chiac, a major component of Acadie, Daigle has claimed that "le chiac, ce n'est pas juste une langue, c'est une mentalité… j'espérais…résoudre [ma contradiction envers le chiac] pour moi-même, mais je ne l'ai pas résolue" (Cabajsky 2015: 252). A personal response to a cultural demand is thus often fraught with tension, especially when the subject is reluctant to accept such a burden. This project has discussed literary influences on Daigle's writing, but other

constituents of her past might also intersect with the broader Acadian cultural memory. One particularly pertinent example of this intersection is the fact that Daigle's father, Euclide Daigle, was the editor of the Acadian newspaper, *L'Évangéline*, and was a fierce proponent of standardized French; France Daigle would go on to work as a journalist at the newspaper during the 1970s while completing her Bachelor of Arts.[1] This aspect of Daigle's formative years suggests a possible influence on her literary works and their inherent linguistic tensions with respect to Chiac. So, while this project has attempted not to stray from the data pulled from the text itself, scholars could very well use a similar methodology and incorporate biographical criticism to study the literary meeting of personal and cultural memory.

To conclude on the note of methodology, this dissertation has been about developing digital practices in the context of sieve reading that are both generous and fair to the object of study in question—by making arguments based on the text's data, its patterns and clusters—as well as highlight the complexities of writing in the minor; in this specific case, Acadie. The first step of sieve reading, distant reading, visualizes the empirical, formal structure of the text; the second step, close reading, attempts to correlate various sets of data alongside the content of the text to either substantiate initial hypotheses or discredit them: in this sense, sieve reading—no matter the concluding findings—is *always* generative in its scholarly output. Moreover, sieve reading is methodologically innovative in two key ways: first, it applies distant reading strategies—usually reserved for a large amount of texts over a significant span of time—to a singular text; second, it employs close reading *of* the distant reading findings, a practice

[1] See Lonergan (2010) and Raymond (2003) for a detailed account of Euclide Daigle's tenure at *L'Évangéline*.

customarily unemployed precisely because of the large amount of texts normally involved in distant reading. The close reading component of this method is of particular importance because distant reading, on its own, has traditionally been dominated by white, masculinist and heteronormative discourses in theory, practice, and, as a result, in its findings. The addition of close reading to distant reading practices seeks to acknowledge these problematic traditions and offer solutions to them.

Acknowledging the Dangers of Distant Reading

The digital humanities—both within and outside its sphere of practitioners—have been debated as to the purpose and value of such a field. In particular, the methodology of distant reading has been highly criticized from its outset, at first because critics who champion close reading felt threatened by its technical novelty, and more recently because scholars have found it to often be sexist and racist. This latter problem has been propelled into the spotlight with new vigor as of late—with good reason—due in part to distant reading's originator, Franco Moretti, being named in response to the #MeToo movement on the grounds of sexual assault. Lauren Klein (2018), for instance, delivered an excellent talk on these issues at the 2018 MLA Annual Convention titled "Distant Reading After Moretti." Drawing on Sara Ahmed's (2016) work on sexual harassment as the result of structural problems such as inequity, exclusivity, white supremacy, and heteronormativity, in which the structure itself allows the problems to remain invisible, Klein points out these same issues in distant reading methods (n.p.): the power imbalances within this method, both in terms of the practitioners themselves and what they study, are analogous to Ahmed's discussion of sexual harassment because they too enforce the problematic structure in

the discipline that makes marginalized groups invisible. Klein goes on to explain the negative effects of this structural failure:

> This flaw leads to workplace environments that are unwelcoming (if not outright hostile) to women and other minoritized groups. But it's those very same people who would otherwise be best positioned to identify and challenge the instances of sexism, or racism, or other forms of oppression that they see—not only in their institutional environments, but also in their scholarly work. Without those voices, conceptual structures, as well as institutional ones, remain securely in place, unchallenged and unchanged. (n.p.)

Klein offers several potential solutions, all of which seem like they would benefit distant reading in terms of inclusivity and scope: the assembly of new and diverse corpora as well as the rethinking of questions posed and models used to seek their answers, for example (n.p.). Distant reading itself has perhaps been inherently problematic in some ways, to be sure, yet what Klein seems to be criticizing here more than the methodology are its practitioners—the choices that critics make to ensure that the system remains unchanged, and thus sexist and racist.

As Klein points out, she is only the latest critic to address such structural and, consequently, methodological issues in distant reading; others have been doing so for at least a decade. Moya Z. Bailey (2011) has discussed identity and positionality in the digital humanities, and how the discipline in particular is a space in which white men dominate discourses while women and people of colour are especially marginalized, whereas Miriam Posner (2012) has criticized the sexist stereotype that "women cannot code," which extends to structural issues related to accessibility, but also to cultural issues that propagate the idea that women are not

interested in coding. Feminist scholar Lisa Marie Rhody (2016) poses a broader, methodological dilemma in distant reading that

> … compels [her] to consider what literary studies can bring to bear on the text mining of big data, a practice similarly steeped in the masculinized rhetoric of scale and ambition. Does the rhetoric of text analysis or its assumed empiricism dissuade feminist scholars from using it to pose questions about difference, erasure, and absence? How might the feminist literary critic approach text analysis without succumbing to the positivistic claims of objectivity that such methods so often encourage? (n.p.)

Similarly, Tanya E. Clement (2016) also criticizes the supposed objectivity of distant reading methods, its "binary logic," and calls for a study that accounts for the ambiguity of words and their meaning:

> When engaged in this kind of text mining, we are reinscribing the simplest meaning of The Word… Likewise, even when we are humanists and feminists and should know better, we think we understand the machine's results when they are words or when they cluster books according to an author of an "always already" gender. We see a pattern we think we can interpret, because we think we know what The Word means, and gender, which we have worked so hard to complicate, is suddenly reduced to "female author" or "male author." The Word has been proved to serve as ground truth. The Word is apodictic. (n.p.)

Here, Clement's opinion that "we should know better" rings particularly true, and speaks to the issues of white and male privilege in the discipline that can lead to a sense of comfort, a feeling

that “we have done enough”; however, this type of engagement with the text is simply not good enough, as it actually *betrays* the objectivity that distant reading professes—the work should not stop there. In fact, one of the main reasons for which this project will host its database on the Canadian Writing Research Collaborative (CWRC) is the organization’s long-standing commitment to feminist practices, to which its precursor, the Orlando Project, a world-leading project on feminist literary history, attests.

With respect to distant reading and its use of quantitative methods, Ted Underwood (2018) argues that “it’s time to be honest about the preparation needed for cultural analytics” (n.p.). By preparation, Underwood is referring to scholars’ duty to understand and convey the cultural context of the statistics with which they are engaging: in other words, to move from capta—information that is taken—to data—information that can be given as fact within its context. Moreover, he is speaking to the obligation of seeking out the proper tools necessary to analyze this data, as well as to the commitment required to learn how to use them. In this regard and as mentioned previously, this project has attempted to be “honest” in two key areas: first, by contextualizing fully its methodology, or from where the numbers that it analyzes came; second, by moving beyond mere distant reading, substantiating its quantitative findings by engaging with the text at the level of close reading its data. The preparation needed to undertake this project was massive, from learning Structured Query Language in order to build a database of *Pour sûr* that would represent it as honestly as possible so that its analysis was as ethical as it was significant, to learning the Python coding language that would enable a thorough study of Chiac in the text. These areas represent ethical positions at which to start, I believe; however, practically employing quantitative methods can certainly be difficult to *learn* as well as to *teach*. On this difficulty, Andrew Goldstone (2019) offers three “prescriptive lessons”— which are

applicable in this case even if Goldstone's focus is curriculum—when considering quantitative analysis. Goldstone's first lesson is that "[c]ultivating technical facility with computer tools—including programming languages—should receive less attention than methodologies for analyzing quantitative or aggregative evidence" (n.p.). Before even thinking of computer tools, research questions must be posed and methods established to attempt to answer them; the methodology does not only inform the choice of which digital tools to use, but can also identify issues or gaps in the quantitative findings that they offer. Goldstone's second lesson pertains to the data itself: "Studying method requires pedagogically suitable material, but good teaching datasets do not exist. It will require communal effort to create them on the basis of existing research" (n.p.). Goldman makes a good point and, fortunately, for the methodology that I have developed, Daigle's *Pour sûr* is an intuitive source from which to create relational datasets: it contains a set number of fragments, 1728, established by the author that are divided equally in terms of categories and chapters, making them ideal for a quantitative study Third and last, Goldstone argues that, "[f]ollowing the 'theory' model, digital humanities has typically been inserted into curricula as a single-semester course. Yet as a training in method, the analysis of aggregate data will undoubtedly require more time and a different rationale…" (n.p.). Again, Goldstone is speaking specifically to curriculum in this case; however, the lesson holds true in the sense that quantitative methodology should not be cultivated on its own, but rather in relation to the questions at hand, whether literary, historical, or cultural. In the instance of this project—its cultural context, its linguistic concerns, its handling of memory—the substantiation of quantitative analysis with close reading was necessary.

The argument for combined distant and close reading has also been recently made by others such as Michael Gavin, Collin Jennings, Lauren Kersey, and Brad Pasanek in their book

chapter, “Spaces of Meaning: Conceptual History, Vector Semantics, and Close Reading” (2019). In particular, they suggest “a method of computationally assisted close reading that draws from two distinct intellectual traditions: *conceptual history* and *vector semantics*” (n.p.; authors’ emphasis); put otherwise, these scholars study the development of sociopolitical concepts by examining quantities of related words and meanings in specific texts, and they consider the concept of “wit” in John Dryden’s satirical *MacFlecknoe*, written in 1678, to demonstrate their method. As Gavin et. al. claim:

> *Wit* is widely regarded as a concept central to English culture of the later seventeenth century… John Dryden’s *MacFlecknoe* sits at the center of this transformation, exemplifying how neoclassical poetry stages mutually informing contradictions between *wit*’s psychological and political connotations… Therefore, it offers a perfect case study in tracing the conceptual fields that structure a text. We conclude by showing how Dryden draws on *wit*’s conceptual association with *sophistry* and *fancy* to produce a new ligature between poetry and kingship. (n.p.; authors’ emphasis)

This work thus reads *MacFlecknoe* as an emblematic text at the core of a significant literary moment in English seventeenth century. Instead of employing distant reading to look superficially at all texts in this period, therefore, this methodology uses quantitative methods combined with the close reading of a single, important text to provide scholarship on one of the most influential concept’s of its time in wit.

After an initial distancing from close reading, the digital humanities seem to be acknowledging its value and reintroducing it as a supplement to its quantitative methods that tries to redress some of distant reading’s inherent biases. In a similar fashion to the methodology

developed by Gavin et. al., which employs computational linguistics to discuss conceptual history, my sieve reading relies chiefly on a relational database to take up cultural memory and identity. Each project also necessarily finds its binding link in the combination of these reading practices: for Gavin et al., it was wit; for this project, it is melancholia. This binding link—what seems to drive the literature and culture in respective contexts—seems of particular importance when considering minor literatures. The combination of distant, computational reading and close, qualitative evaluations of its data allows for the significant work of identifying the driving—perhaps even survivalist—force behind the production of literature in minority cultures from Canada and abroad.

Sieve Reading: Reading Other Literatures

As mentioned, the goal of this project—while immediately concerned with representations of Acadian culture and identity—has always been to extend beyond its object of study to lend its methodology to scholarship on other literatures. Sieve reading represents a compelling means of reading the minor for a number of reasons. Its distant reading component allows for a quantifiable contextualization and visualization of a minority's cultural memory: the story of its social, material, and mental dimensions told in patterns, clusters, maps, and linguistics, among other tangible measurements. As a result, critics do not have to rely primarily on comparisons between the minor text and historical accounts; rather, a minority's background, its cultural memory, may be found in its own telling of events, peoples, places, languages, values, and traditions. This initial quantitative method of reading informs the close reading to follow: what types of questions should the reading pose of the text based on the distant reading's findings? Which critical approach is best served to provide answers to these questions? This project chose

to read *Pour sûr*'s data through the lens of affective melancholia due to Acadie's complicatedly conflicting colonial and postcolonial past as well as the tensions that appear to persist in its culture; however, a number of other approaches have the potential of substantiating quantitative findings in texts from other cultures and writers that, while perhaps not minor, could be considered to write literature of the marginalized, and especially in those postmodernist works with measurable aesthetics.

Take, as an example, Thomas King's recent Governor General Award-winning *The Back of the Turtle* (2014): the novel, through compelling storytelling, illustrates the cultural memory of marginalized Indigenous peoples in Canada and, in a broader sense, North America in general. King's novel tells the story of scientist Gabriel Quinn, who leaves his job with the Domidion corporation and heads to Smoke River Reserve, where his work resulted in an environmental disaster that polluted the river and left the area in ruins. Shifting from capitalist to environmentalist perspectives in a fragmented narrative, *The Back of the Turtle* demonstrates the destructive powers that continue to assault the land, its resources, and its people. Quantitative methods could be used in several ways as points of entry into the novel: like in the case of *Pour sûr*, a database of fragments and from whose perspective they are told, for instance, would make for intriguing data. Since the text emphasizes the importance of places, however, another potential practice of distant reading could be the mapping out of the places in the narrative; moreover, it also features intertextuality in the form of Gabriel's research on the history of "man-made" disastrous events that have taken place all over the world. Places struck by these disasters, like the nuclear explosion in Chernobyl, are mentioned alongside Pine Ridge, South Dakota, for instance, which was used as a bombing range during World War II (23). Mapping the disasters mentioned in King's text, dating them, and categorizing them by type, for instance, could

provide an intriguing backdrop against which to close read the narrative, revealing a broader comment on the environmental impacts of capitalistic, energy-driven endeavours, as well as their catastrophic effects on the Indigenous peoples that live and depend on these lands while preserving them.

On the topic of mapping, one could also entertain the idea of using a variation of sieve reading to study what critics have called "migrant" or "immigrant" literatures in Canada's multicultural archive. One such postmodernist novel is Kim Thúy's *Ru* (2009), also a winner of the Governor General's Award, which comprises a series of fragments bridging protagonist Nguyễn An Tịen's youth in Vietnam, her immigration to Quebec, and subsequent adulthood and motherhood. The novel's fragmentation is a representation of the various components of Tịen's identity, yet the stories that she recounts speak to the importance of *memory*—which is quite different than history to her—in keeping this identity whole: as she explains with respect to telling these stories to her son, "[j]e raconte ces anecdotes à Pascal pour garder en mémoire un pan d'histoire qui ne trouvera jamais sa place sur les bancs d'école" (46). The fragmented nature of *Ru* and the novel's preoccupation with memory also invite quantitative analysis that relies on the construction of a specified relational database, much like *Pour sûr;* however, since Thúy's protagonist travels overseas as a refugee, with readers following her progression in her new life and in different roles, from child to mother, the close reading possibilities differ greatly from those in Daigle's novel. Similar to the case of King, then, mapping would be an intriguing option as a form of distant reading; yet the trauma of the refugee experience begs other compelling questions as well. What social, material, and mental aspects of her culture was she able to take with her to Canada, which ones did she find there, and how did they come together as she worked to overcome her trauma? Investigating these questions alongside a categorized database

as well as digital maps with a timeline could potentially offer insights into the difficulties of salvaging cultural memories during migrant/immigrant experiences and over generations.

None of these individual writers are "minor" in themselves in the sense that their works have been met with major critical success; due to this acclaim, however, they *do* speak for their respective marginalized cultures in a number of ways, whether deliberately or not. Daigle, King, and Thúy are examples of writers that draw from postmodernist aesthetics to both call attention to and add to their cultural memories through their fictional works. While the method is iterative, in the sense that one must come to the text with certain questions or ideas, sieve reading relies on distant reading to reveal the underlying threads in these works and uses close reading approaches to glean understandings of how minor or marginalized cultures see and represent themselves in literature both in relation to their own cultural memory as well as through the eyes of the majority or central. Moreover, in making the data from the distant reading stage of sieve reading available to the greater public through initiatives such as CWRC, as this project does, the potential for conversations across scholarly disciplines and cultures in Canada and abroad will increase exponentially. Numerous close reading approaches can thus be undertaken from a single set of data, and sets of data themselves can even be altered depending on scholars' reasoning and contextualization; furthermore, with each dataset made public, new comparative dialogues may begin between them. As technology progresses, literatures have new means of participating in broader cultural and critical discourses, as well as the benefit of being read according to their own internal frame and structure: with productive methodologies and widespread access, the possibilities for research are limited only by imagination and the openness to making use of available tools and texts.

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Appendix A

Pour sûr Database Structure

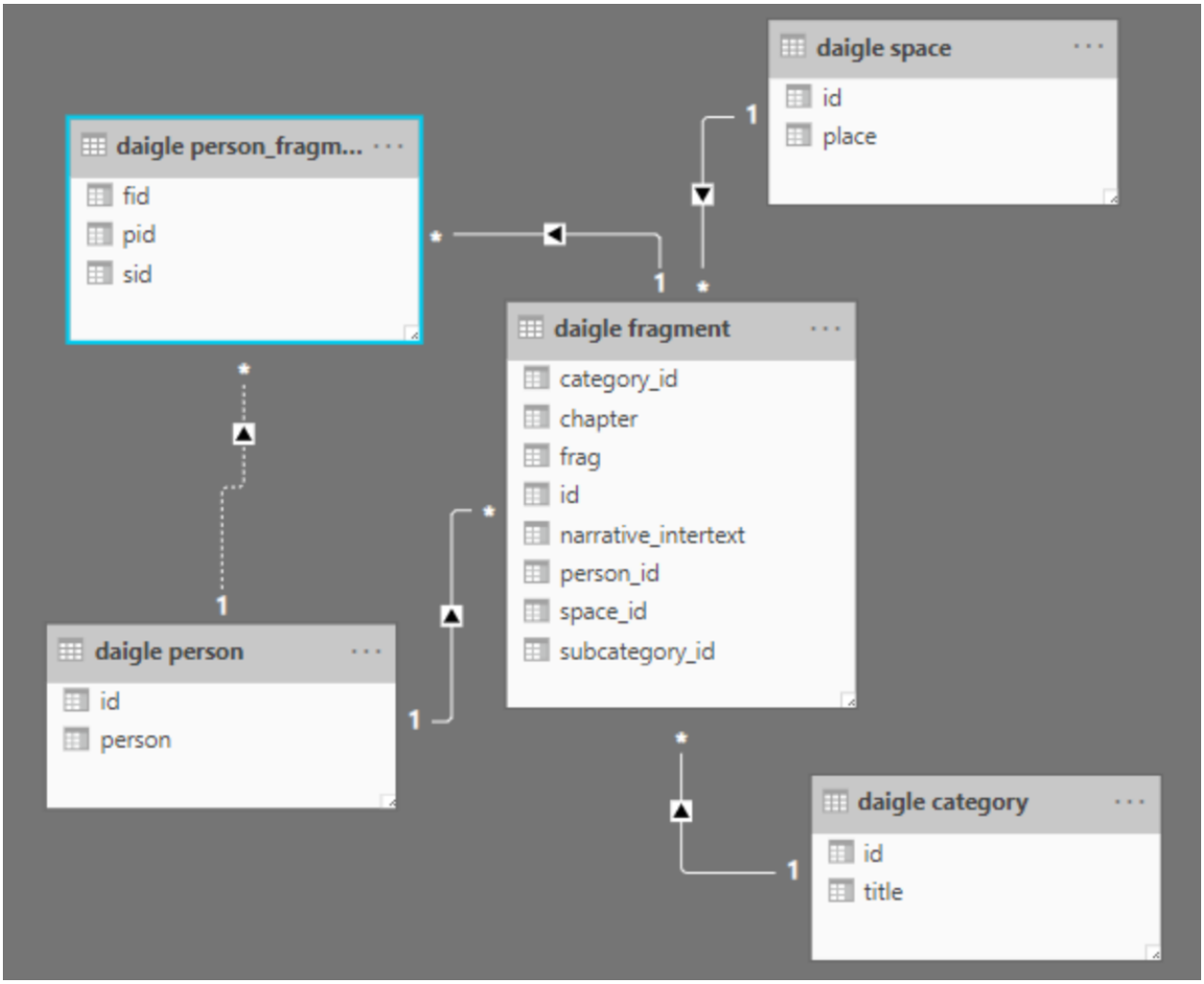

Figure 50. *Pour sûr* Database Structure

daigle fragment

This table, which categorizes each individual fragment in *Pour sûr*, is at the core of the project's relational database. Each fragment is classified by an identification number that matches its order

of appearance (“id”), the category number to which it belongs (“category_id”), the order of the fragment within its category (“subcategory_id”), the chapter in which it appears (“chapter”), if it features any characters (“person_id”) or places (“space_id”), whether it is narrative or metanarrative in nature (“narrative_intertext”),[1] and its text (“frag”).

id	chapter	frag	category_id	space_id	person_id	narrative_intertext	subcategory_id
1	1	Ce qu'il tenait pour sa position était, en réalité, adaptation à tout c	144			intertext	1
2	1	'- Papa, chante ça que tu vas faire après. ', '- Aprèèès... ', 'Terry ava	1	1	1	narrative	12
3	1	'Le beaufort survient au Scrabble lorsque les deux lettres les plus c	4			intertext	11
4	1	'- Souricette avait décidé qu'a voulait être une souris de laboratoir	37	1	1	narrative	7
5	1	'Avalées. Bloqua. Kamut. Sauna. Won. Routière. Avec. Image. Poire	4			intertext	1
6	1	'- Quelle couleur qu'alle était Souris 7? ', 'Terry répondit sur un ton	2	1	1	narrative	2

Figure 51. *daigle fragment*

daigle category

Tied to the *daigle fragment* table and integral to this project on Acadian culture, *daigle category* serves to assign the names of the categories to the appropriate identification numbers.

id	title
1	Chansons
2	Couleurs
3	Statistiques
4	Scrabble
5	Un film
6	Le Babar

Figure 52. *daigle category*

[1] At an earlier stage of this project, while constructing the database, metanarrative fragments were to be called intertexts, hence the discrepancy in the titles.

daigle person

Related to the *daigle fragment* table, *daigle person* links the names of characters to the proper identification numbers.

id	person
1	Terry Thibodeau
2	Carmen Thibodeau
3	Zed
4	Pomme
5	Étienne Thibodeau
6	Marianne Thibodeau

Figure 53. *daigle person*

daigle space

Likewise, the daigle space table ties the identification numbers of places in the novel to their names.

id	place
1	Thibodeau House
2	Librairie Didot
3	Babar
4	Lofts
5	Fundy
6	Caraquet

Figure 54. *daigle space*

daigle person_fragment

Lastly, this table joins searches for characters and places to allow for the mapping out of Daigle's avatars throughout the novel.

fid	pid	sid
4	1	
6	1	
8	1	
14	1	
18	1	

Figure 55. *daigle person_fragment*

Appendix B

Sample of SQL and Python Construction and Queries

Constructing the Database in SQL

```
1. CREATE DATABASE daigle DEFAULT CHARSET UTF8;
2. USE daigle;
3. CREATE TABLE categories (
   id tinyint unsigned NOT NULL auto_increment PRIMARY KEY,
   title varchar(50)
   );
4. CREATE TABLE fragments (
   id smallint unsigned NOT NULL auto_increment PRIMARY KEY,
   chapter tinyint unsigned,
   frag TEXT,
   category_id tinyint unsigned,
   narrative_intertext text,
   FOREIGN KEY (category_id)
         REFERENCES categories(id)
         ON UPDATE CASCADE
```

```
        ON DELETE RESTRICT
);
```

5.
```
CREATE TABLE fragments (
id smallint unsigned NOT NULL auto_increment PRIMARY KEY,
chapter tinyint unsigned,
frag TEXT,
category_id tinyint unsigned,
spaces_id tinyint unsigned,
persons_id tinyint unsigned,
narrative_intertext text,
FOREIGN KEY (category_id)
        REFERENCES categories(id)
        ON UPDATE CASCADE
        ON DELETE RESTRICT
FOREIGN KEY (spaces_id)
        REFERENCES spaces(id)
        ON UPDATE CASCADE
        ON DELETE RESTRICT
```

```
    FOREIGN KEY (persons_id)
        REFERENCES persons(id)
        ON UPDATE CASCADE
        ON DELETE RESTRICT
    );
```

6.
```
    CREATE TABLE spaces (
    id tinyint unsigned NOT NULL auto_increment PRIMARY KEY,
    place varchar(50)
    );
```

7.
```
    CREATE TABLE person_fragment (
    fid smallint unsigned,
    pid tinyint unsigned;
    FOREIGN KEY (fid)
        REFERENCES fragment(id)
        ON UPDATE CASCADE
        ON DELETE RESTRICT
    FOREIGN KEY (pid)
        REFERENCES person(id)
```

ON UPDATE CASCADE

ON DELETE RESTRICT

);

8. CREATE TABLE persons (

id tinyint unsigned NOT NULL auto_increment PRIMARY KEY,

person varchar(25)

);

Sample of SQL Queries

Query for Narrative and Metanarrative Distribution:

- SELECT (COUNT(narrative_intertext)/144*100) FROM fragment WHERE narrative_intertext = "intertext" AND chapter = 1;
- SELECT (COUNT(narrative_intertext)/1728*100) FROM fragment WHERE narrative_intertext = "intertext";

Query for Categorical Distribution:

- SELECT category.title, COUNT(*) FROM fragment, category WHERE fragment.category_id = category.id AND chapter = 1 GROUP BY category_id ORDER BY COUNT(*) DESC;

Query for Characters' Fragment or Chapter Appearances:

- SELECT COUNT(person_fragment.fid), person.person FROM person_fragment, person WHERE person.id = person_fragment.pid AND pid IS NOT NULL GROUP BY pid ORDER BY COUNT(person_fragment.fid) DESC;###number of appearances in order###
- SELECT (COUNT(person_fragment.fid)/1728*100), person.person FROM person_fragment, person WHERE person.id = person_fragment.pid AND pid IS NOT NULL GROUP BY pid ORDER BY COUNT(person_fragment.fid) DESC;###*percentage of fragments appeared in whole novel*###
- SELECT (COUNT(person_fragment.fid)/652*100), person.person FROM person_fragment, person WHERE person.id = person_fragment.pid AND pid IS NOT NULL GROUP BY pid ORDER BY COUNT(person_fragment.fid) DESC;###percentage of fragments possible###
- SELECT person_fragment.fid, person.person FROM person_fragment, person WHERE person.id = person_fragment.pid AND fid BETWEEN 1 AND 144 AND pid IS NOT NULL;###appearances in chapter###

Python Code: Inserting Fragment Text Into Database

Preliminary Establishment of Files to Read and Write as well as Regular Expressions

- import re
- filename = 'poursur.txt'
- out_file = open('poursursource.txt', 'w', encoding="utf-8")

- BLANK_LINE = re.compile(r‘^\s*$’)
- COMMENT_REGEX = re.compile(r‘^#’)
- DIGITS = re.compile(r‘(\d+\.\d+\.\d+)’)

To Write to Database

- def dump_to_database():

    if len(text) == 0:

        return

    out_file.write(‘%s | %s | %s | %s’ % (fragment, category, subcategory, text))

    db_text = ‘ ’.join(text).strip()

    out_file.write(‘\n\n’)

Defining What to Write to Database

- with open(filename, ‘r’, encoding=“utf-8”) as novel:
- lines = novel.readlines()
- text = []
- incomplete_name = False
- for line in lines:

    if BLANK_LINE.match(line):

        continue

    if COMMENT_REGEX.match(line):

        continue

```
        if DIGITS.match(line):
            fragment, category, subcategory = DIGITS.match(line).group(1).split('.')
            try:
                _, end = line.strip().split(' ')
                category_name = end.strip()
                dump_to_database()
                text = []
            except:
                incomplete_name = True
            continue
        if incomplete_name:
            category_name = line.strip()
            incomplete_name = False
            dump_to_database()
            text = []
            continue
        text.append(line)
- out_file.close()
```

Python Query for Chiac Words

Preliminary Establishment of Files to Read and Write as well as Regular Expressions

- import re
- f = open(‘intertext.txt’, ‘r’, encoding=“utf-8”)
- text = f.read().lower()
- f.close()
- words = re.split(r‘\W+’, text)
- NUMBERS = re.compile(r'\d+')

Cleaning up the Text

- clean_words = [word for word in words if \

  not NUMBERS.search(word) and \

  len(word) > 0 and \

  ‘_’ not in word]

- words = clean_words

Create a Lexicon of Chiac Words

- with open(‘DICTIONARY.txt’, ‘r’, encoding=“utf-8”) as file:

  word_dict = {line.strip(): None for line in file}

- chiac_text = []

```
- for word in words:
        if word not in word_dict:
            chiac_text.append(word)
- chiac_words = list(set(chiac_text))
- chiac_words.sort()
- with open('chiac.txt', 'w', encoding="utf-8") as output:
        for word in chiac_words:
            output.write(word + '\n')
```

Appendix C

Sample Lexicon of Chiac Words Found in *Pour sûr*[1]

Àmoitié

Âgeuse

Ã

Ãbout

Ãctually

Ãdd

Ãfter

Ãgain

Ãgree

Ãgressive

Ãgreér

Ãlienation

Ãll

Ãllowér

[1] Sample taken from some of the most productive letters in alphabetical order.

Ãlone

Ãlright

Ãlthough

Ãn

Ãnd

Ãntiques

Ãny

Ãnytime

Ãnyway

Ãnyways

Ãrm

Ãrtist

Ãs

Ãsk

Ãt

Ãttacks

Ãutopsy

Ãvatars

Ãwesome

Brãin

Brãinwashée

Brãkes

Brãnd

Bâtissiont

Bãbartender

Bãby

Bãck

Bãd

Bãg

Bãkér

Bãllfield

Bãloney

Bãng

Bãnk

Bãnkrupt

Bãnkér

Bãr

Bãrbecue

Bãseball

Bãsic

Bãthing

Béarn

Bébelles

Bébittes

Bédéesque

Bêguer

Bôler

Bõmb

Bõnus

Bõok

Bõoth

Bõrderline

Bõre

Bõring

Bõss

Bõttom

Bõunce

Bõund

Bõyfriend

Cõat

Cõde

Cõdes

Cõleslaw

Cõllection

Cõme

Cõmmon

Cõmputers

Cõnsumer

Cõntrarians

Cõntrol

Cõps

Cõpyright

Cõrporate

Cõurse

Dăd

Dăndruffs

Dărait

Dăre

Dărk

Dăta

Drăin

Drõp

Drouette

Écoutiont

Écrivont

Épare

Épârer

Équeutait

Éspaire

Éspairiont

Õatmeal

Õbsess

Õbsession

Õbvious

Õbviously

Õf

Õff

Õkay

Õkey

Õn

Õperatais

Õr

Õrganic

Õther

Õtherwise

Õut

Õver

Õveralls

Õverpayér

Õverseas

Õverweight

Õwn