



Asymmetric Information Games in *Portrait of a Man*, How Georges Perec Misleads his Reader and his Protagonist.

Clarisse Barbier

PhD candidate, University of Kansas, United States

Abstract

My paper will explore the question of misleading narrative in experimental and ludic author Georges Perec's very first novel *Portrait of a Man*. This novel offers a deep dive into the uninterrupted thought process of the protagonist, an art forger, as he tries to understand why he murdered a man. I will expose the different narrative strategies that are used by the author to playfully challenge the reader's navigation of the narrative, notably through the game-theory concept of asymmetric-information game (i.e. the information given by the author are incorrect or incomplete). I will also reveal how and why the protagonist unknowingly deceives himself in his perception of reality. Thanks to a close-reading approach and visualization tools, my research sheds new light onto this crucial novel in Perec's life work, as *Portrait of a Man* was published posthumously but paved the way to Perec's most famous and critically acclaimed works such as *Life, a User's Manual* or *W, the Memory of Childhood*. My paper, using notions of game-theory and cognitive narratology, brings new scholarship on a lesser known yet defining novel for Perec's career who eventually became a most influential author in the world of literature.

Keywords: narrative, Georges Perec, misleading, game theory