Milesi, Laurent. "Video-Gaming in(to) Literature: Virtual CorpoReality in Chloé Delaume's *Corpus Simsi*." *Intermedia Games—Games Inter Media: Video Games and Intermediality*. Ed. Michael Fuchs and Jeff Thoss. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. 153–166. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501330520.ch-007>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023, 04:29 UTC.

Copyright © Michael Fuchs, Jeff Thoss and Contributors 2019. Released under a CC BY-NC-ND licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>). You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

7

Video-Gaming in(to) Literature:

Virtual CorpoReality in Chloé Delaume's *Corpus Simsi*

Laurent Milesi

"My name is Chloé Delaume. I am a fictional character." Thus begins Chloé Delaume's *La règle du Je* (2010), a title which literally translates as *The Rule of the I* while punning on the French homonym for "game" (*jeu*).¹ This opening is the nth iteration of a formula first introduced in *La Vanité des Somnambules* (2003) and whose best-known variant opens Delaume's playful packaging of her body and self as a sim in *Corpus Simsi* (2003): "My name is still Chloé Delaume. I am interminably a fictional character."² In addition, this mantra evokes iconic lines and variations on the "I am my character" trope in literary history and popular culture, such as Gustave Flaubert's provocative assertion "*Madame Bovary, c'est moi*" and the more tongue-in-cheek "Groucho is not my real name. I'm just breaking it in for a friend" attributed to Julius Marx.³ Like these authorial *bon mots*, Delaume's self-identification in fiction raises the question of who Chloé Delaume, in fact, is. More to the point, echoing Groucho's implicit acknowledgement of the constructedness of "Groucho Marx," Delaume's declaration makes her artificiality explicit and therefore opens up the referentiality of the real to the metareferentiality of literary discourse.

Indeed, the name "Chloé Delaume" is closely associated with the literary practice of autofiction, whose diverse, sometimes mutually incompatible,

conceptions in French criticism she reviews in *La règle du Je*, a reflective “essay” on her attempt to square her own hybrid prose form and interrogation of aesthetic experience with this established, albeit definitionally divisive, genre.⁴ More specifically, Delaume is known for the idiosyncratic inflection which her fictional constructions have attempted to impart to this typically French literary problematic. Her trademark work on the interface between the virtual and the real draws on other media, such as games (including the popular detective parlor RPG *Cluedo* in *Certainement pas* (2004)⁵) and TV series. In the teenage-Goth-inspired fan fiction *La Nuit je suis Buffy Summers* (2007), dedicated to the eponymous heroine of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (The WB, 1997–2003), the reader “no longer plays at living out a fiction but an autofiction. He plays at being Chloé Delaume” (RJ 93). *La nuit* is a gamebook (*livre-jeu*), a form popularized in English by the CYOA (Choose Your Own Adventure) series. It is a second-person participatory (or “ergodic”) narrative whose unfolding depends on the interactive choices made by its reader-hero(ine), whose earlier avatars are Raymond Queneau’s reader-controlled scenario of *Un conte à votre façon* (1967) and, more famously, Julio Cortázar’s *Rayuela* (1963).⁶ In video game parlance, *La Nuit* could be seen as a compendium of alternative walkthroughs, a textual variant on the many possible scenarios in *The Stanley Parable* (Galactic Cafe, 2011), or a text adventure whose modern descendant is the browser-driven interactive game or IF (interactive fiction), its dice-throwing trickery being an equivalent of the card-playing mechanics of *Fallen London* (Failbetter, 2009) and other such games born of the StoryNexus creative tools.⁷ In a similar vein, *J’habite dans la télévision* (2006), which remixes several episodes of David Cronenberg’s *Videodrome* (1983), is a self-study of how the TV conditions modifications in body and thought: “To write oneself in(to) this real which fictionalizes us” (RJ 90).⁸

Like most of her autofictional experiments, the self-proclaimed essay *La règle du Je* proposes variations on the initial formula “My name is Chloé Delaume. I am a fictional character” (5), a formula that is first introduced in the opening chapter (titled “If you have missed the beginning”) and echoed in the fourth one (“If you have missed the sequel”): “My name is still Chloé Delaume. I am inexorably a fictional character. I think everyone got it” (21). Thus, the line between the expected critical (self-)reflection and the more creative writing is blurred, in keeping with the soon-to-come proclamation of a similarly porous synapse between life, the real, and fiction. Delaume’s autofiction is not the “autobiographical” restyling of a “real” self but, on the contrary, the willful repossession by a nominal avatar of “herself” instead of being passively “configured” by “real” others:

[T]he fiction always intermingles with life, . . . the real bends itself to the contours of my fable. The one I write each day, whose heroine I am. My old I (*Je*) saw itself scripted by others, a secondary character in a family romance and a passive walk-on part of collective fiction. Re-appropriating my flesh, my every move as well as my identity could only be achieved through literature.

RJ 6

The “I” who used to be called Natalie-Anne Abdallah until she was seven, when her Lebanese father’s name was “naturalized” to a more tamely French-sounding Dalain, experienced a traumatic event when, aged ten, her “father”—who was not even her “real,” biological father—murdered her mother in front of her before committing suicide. After a miserable early adult life, one day in 1999, she decided to do a Ctrl+Alt+Del and (re)invent herself, choosing as her new identity a cross between the given name of the heroine of Boris Vian’s *L’Écume des jours* (1947) and Antonin Artaud’s play *L’Arve et l’aume* (1947), itself a restyling of Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872).⁹ Instead of constructing an escapist fiction for her “real” self, she set about “suiciding her I,” “housing” in her body the avatar she was devising for herself as a future sim citizen: “[Chloé Delaume] has taken over [from Natalie Dalain] in the body, and she has then been writing herself ever since” (RJ 9; 7; 43).

Fictional or, in the words of fictionalized, real-life interlocutor Igor, “utopian” as this reinvention may sound, Delaume insists that she is building “a work of art without any distinction between life and paper” (RJ 61; 56). Not unlike fiction’s disturbing encroachment upon life’s scenarios in *Alan Wake* (Remedy, 2010), she is fleshing out her life from writing (RJ 7), rather than the traditional, other way round. Thus, in “S’écrire mode d’emploi,” a talk Delaume gave at a conference on autofiction in 2007 and whose wording contained much of the material of *La règle du Je*, she states:

My name is Chloé Delaume. I am a fictional character. I say so again and again and declare it everywhere. I write myself in books, in texts, in sound plays. I decided to become a fictional character when I realized I was one already. With this difference that I was not writing myself. Others were busy doing that for me.

“SMD” 1

Accordingly, “I” is not merely “another,” as in Rimbaud’s celebrated formula—reworked into “*jeu est un autre*” in *Corpus Simsi* (8)—but *becomes* another: “I suicided my I in order to get there. I became another”; “I must write myself

ceaselessly in order to make myself become [*advenir*]” (*RJ* 13, 80). Delaume’s ludic autofiction was therefore first a means of empowering the new identity to integrate her body. In 2012, the (by now former) “bio” on her website began “Chloé Delaume’s body was born on 10th March 1973 . . .” and centered on it (*ii*) as subject until “I” intervened and took over, proclaiming: “My name is Chloé Delaume, author, narrator, heroine. My body is thirty-eight years old and I have written twenty books.”

Mixing some of her textual compositions with different forms of performance, Delaume emphasizes that she performatively *inscribes* herself into life through transformation, the practice of autofiction allowing “an aesthetics of existence” (*RJ* 79; 56). To say is to do, as the Word is made Fleshless Body (*RJ* 69; 74). Indeed, her “je m’appelle Chloé Delaume” can also be interpreted as a performative call into being and existing: “I call myself today because I have imposed a second beginning,” soon after recalling her chosen double patrilineage and “I knocked myself up” (*RJ* 6; 79: “Autofiction contains performative genes”). Across the iterated formulas and the several life-books housing unsuccessful, hence ceaselessly renewed attempts to “suicide the I,” Chloé Delaume “has become a fictional character without a fixed abode” (*RJ* 88; 86), tensed between different messed-up saves of “herself” in a “virtuareal” space:

I make a pact with life, since I know only how to mess up my death. I have written myself in books, but very little in life for a year and a half, huddled up behind the computer . . . I no longer know how to write myself in the real at all, I no longer know how to write myself, just about to put up with myself. My texts prophesy the psychotic episode which is soon going to happen, I initiate myself in a syndrome of derealization.

RJ 88

The pact is what binds indissolubly life and writing: life-writing as a pact of survival in the real.¹⁰

In this fragile, ludo-performative interface, to play no longer means to pretend to be someone else, but rather to program (the life events of) another self into being through the interactive game rules of a conveniently homophonic “I-play” or *je(u)* (*RJ* 80), to “annihilate the borders” between fiction and life, art, and the real, in a kind of writing which re-transcribes as much as it inoculates (“SMD” 1). In this ludic (re)building of the self, the limitations of the real are overcome, while the daily dramas of soteriology are confronted in a relatively “protected environment”: “In the real I have few abilities, no sense of orientation. In the virtual I have ‘cheat codes’ but I mess up my saves with each disconnection” (*RJ* 82).

In this immersive, hybrid perspective reminiscent of a gamer's involvement in a video game's ludic universe, there is no more secure boundary between playing (at writing) one's life and simulating it in a "virtuareality" convincing enough for the self to believe that it is the real, whether such a simulated reality is either a Baudrillardian hyperreality ("a real without origin or reality," "sheltered . . . from any distinction between the real and the imaginary") or a *Matrix*-like computer simulation.¹¹ In this respect, Delaume's enactment of virtual embodiment through *The Sims* in *Corpus Simsi* was a logical, if transitional step forward, marking the most accomplished form of such an overwriting of the self through the staged blurring of reality and simulation.

"Reloaded":¹² *corpus simsi*

Inspired by Will Wright's online RPG *The Sims*, EA's cult game franchise about the "simulation of life" (CS 26; "SMD" 10), Delaume's *Corpus Simsi: Incarnation virtuellement temporaire* is the main book output—with chapters numbered sequentially from v.1.0 to v.1.9 to simulate "builds"—of a "cross-platform" project started in June 2002 (CS 124–5), which, like a video game or computer software, spawned several "expansions" or "versions" over the next two years (from a beta to v.1.7, to non-sequential events like the *Matrix*'ed "*Corpus Simsi Reloaded*").¹³ Some three years after her decision to adopt a new name for a "Second Life," the *Corpus Simsi* project took Delaume's autofiction to a higher level of self-reformatting: a refusal to be incarnated merely in a book, ditching the housing body of the real in order to enter a virtual program and universe, in which her "I" could teleport across the bodies of its various users in the gameworld via her pixelated avatar—which was freely downloadable as part of a wholly customized "skin" (created by fashion designer Christian Lacroix) by other sim citizens to play (as) Chloé Delaume. Conceived as a multimedia performance, complete with digital music and playlets (*saynètes*) acted out live while gaming sequences of *The Sims* were projected onscreen, Delaume's major game-based endeavor to redraw the borderline between reality and simulation, actuality and virtuality, *corps* (bodies) and *corpus*, was terminated with the advent of a new Sims generation (*The Sims 2*) in September 2004.¹⁴

Within its 2D paper confines, *Corpus Simsi* flaunts itself as a visual, almost tactile artifact which replicates the gamer's access to the parent video game by first presenting the reader with the "configuration of the character" (v.1.0), the RPG's attribution of various qualities corresponding to the protagonist's initial characterization in more traditional fiction. While strictly speaking not affording the interactivity of a gamebook, Delaume's creation is yet a "gamesy"

recreation, complete with a part retranscription of its attendant blog during development, lavish screen grabs and countless avatar mock-ups of *The Sims*' universe which explore the parameters of virtual existence (investing space, time, needs, language, learning abilities, work, pets, death) and acts as a portal to the multimedia project framing *Corpus Simsi*. Often signaled by its self-consciously cutesy pink font, the augmented hyperreality of "Chloé Delaume" is matched by the work's intrinsic hypertextual dimension as the text unfolds from build (chapter) to build, in sync with the analysis of the sim citizen's growth and its universe's many specific facets.

A keen *Sims* gamer herself during the project's gestation, Delaume not only "classically" pens herself into an existing ludic environment but also merges with the game program, mutating into a sim citizen (*simstoyen*), the *ciel* [sky] conveniently becoming part of a *logiciel* or *didacticiel* ([educational] software) in French. The following montage, excerpted from its subsequent presentation in *La règle du Je*, will give an idea of this novel transformation:

Another median than the body, another media than the real . . . In the guise of an avatar, the "I" becomes a formatted videogame character, subjected to other rules than those of the physical world . . . To become a virtual avatar, to dissolve oneself pixel flesh in a videogame . . .

RJ 86

Staging [*Mise en scène*] of my pixelated double in diverse, concrete or symbolic situations. Projection of the virtual I, interaction with the real I. A *mise en abyme* made possible by technology. Implementation [*Mise en place*] of the Simsology rubric on my website, where it is possible to download my avatar. The Sims players can integrate me into their game session, play me, taking their turn at embodying me. More than two hundred people acquire my character, some send me screen grabs, as traces of my integration into their own fictions. Others than me write to me, a facet of my I wanders about in other computers than mine, living out adventures of which I have no idea. To enable the I to become a collective datum, a fictional prop where everyone can identify in their own way, was part of the process.

RJ 87

This complex ludo-existential process also involved the creation of an online blog, partly merged as v.1.8 in *Corpus Simsi* (CS 100–3), where the avatar would recount its everyday life and consign its thoughts about its status as a video game character (RJ 87)—an interesting feature if one recalls that Delaume tried to demarcate her autofictional practice from the "cyber ego" in

new digital forms of fictionalized autobiography such as blogging (*RJ* 62). What follows is a representative, dramatized sample which shows how the *Je* speaks as a *Sims* heroine of a game program. It is taken from the final entry, left undated but clearly composed after the original *Sims* character had been superseded by the new *Sims 2* prototype:

I won't speak to you any longer. I have nothing left to say to you, I don't have to give evidence any longer. Since *The Sims* 2 I've been very afraid of dying. Since *The Sims 2* I've become more fluid, my nose is in 3D, I've become red-haired and my irises are green . . . I don't have the same life any longer and I'm afraid it might stop. I'm no longer infinite, I'm just a Phoenix.¹⁵

According to Joyce Goggin, *Corpus Simsi* privileges the virtual body over the corporeal.¹⁶ The last-but-one quotation, as well as the repeated claims to have exited a constrictive physical frame, would at first seem to substantiate her claim.¹⁷ So would perhaps Delaume's own summary toward the beginning of *Corpus Simsi* (4–5), where she explains what led her autofiction experiments to be rerouted to a mere search for a fleshless "housing space" (*CS* 5; reprised 124): it was the character's dogged refusal to be reincarnated on paper and its desire to pirate "her own" deserted body, a body from which this character was then evicted through the housing body's implosion at the end of the previous novel, *La vanité des Somnambules* (*CS* 14; see also *RJ* 85–6). This emphasis on virtualization also accounts for observations like: "The game that my former body preferred was called *The Sims*" (*CS* 7; also 60: "ex-body"), "The quartering of the self into a heap of files provokes no suffering whatsoever . . . Only the hard disk knows about an integrity problem" (*CS* 11). It also accounts, more generally, for the numerous processes of recoding and reformatting the self and body, broken down into computerized parts or game components (e.g., *CS* 12, 15, 20).

While this approach, comfortably backed up by bio-literary *factum* and *fatum*, would find some confirmation in the generally prevailing view that, to quote Martti Lahti, "[games] crystallize a new and complex relationship between corporeal experience (the body) and our subjectivity," it flattens the evolutive trajectory which I have just reconstructed and sidesteps two crucial aspects of Delaume's undertaking (registered in the binary subtitle: virtual incarnation):¹⁸ First, there is the author's remediation of herself and her body, already conceived as median and medium (see the above extract about the avatar), via a ludic recreation spanning several "versions" and aesthetic media through which Delaume stages the (re)incarnation of her virtual new self as distributed into enacting gamers.¹⁹ I am emphasizing this aspect since Goggin rightly identifies Delaume's ergodic reclamation of some of the game

experience on which it is based, yet seemingly links this remediation to virtualization only, without the extension into other corporealities.²⁰ Second, there is the more radical, political view of individual life as always already a fiction scripted by others in family and society in quasi-Baudrillardian fashion, which writing needs to re-incarnate otherwise. The following entry on Delaume's former Sims blog merged in v.1.8, dated "27 simsial 03, 15h41" as if it were in a revolutionary calendar, is representative of this ludo-existential takeover by a new order, straddling the border between *Corpus Simsi* and the "real" out there, for whom playing and being are interchangeable: "we suspect that Simsians . . . have organized themselves like us. We are the Sims, we play the Sims" (CS 103).²¹

"This is my virtualeal body" could therefore be the motto of *Corpus Simsi*, whose protagonist infiltrates the bodies and lives of gamers and physically implants herself in the video game book's virtual world. At stake here is not merely the usual "willing suspension of disbelief" inevitably presupposed by the imaginary or imagined scenarios of something called "fiction"—in whatever aesthetic medium—but also the necessity to understand how the liberating potential of the virtual over the real (as well as a critique of power in the latter) can extend, reshape and redefine corporeality itself. A sense of this is given in the final blog entry about the difference between unamenable fictional characters and humans: "we are in potentiality [*dans la puissance*] and you in power [*dans le pouvoir*]." Or, as "S'écrire mode d'emploi" puts it: demarcating itself from the fashionable "neo-realist" novel, autofiction intervenes in the "field of possibles" ("SMD" 2). This emphasis on possibilization also helps account for the token reversibility of *Corpus Simsi* executed by the back cover, as if to mime a gamer's decision to start all over again (or, as it were, to turn over a new leaf),²² and the following statement (the first part an unattributed quotation from Guy Debord) in the book's "flip side": "In the world that is really upside down, the true is a moment of the false. You had been forewarned but you never listen."²³

This reversibility of verisimilitude and simulation (since we are/play the Sims) uncovers a deeper sense of the virtual as the manifold of possibilities of (and often sacrificed by) the real rather than the former being conventionally reduced to a modern technological extension of the latter. It is not only to be located in the reversibility of art and life ("To make a work of art of one's life, and one's life out of a work of art" ("SMD" 3)) or of being an actor versus a spectator in the world ("the subject does not only observe what s/he lives out, the subject lives out what s/he observes" ("SMD" 3), paralleling quantum physics, where the fact of observing changes the state of what is being observed). It also cuts through to the core of Delaume's indirect "translation" of that key dimension of any gamer's experience: immersion, or what Delaume called on her website "the fictionalization of possibilities . . . of being immersed in the power of web-fiction."²⁴

In this respect, performance and performativity play a crucial role. By involving and ceaselessly reconfiguring the relation between *corps* and *corpus*, the supporting stagings of herself over and over again, or the remediating experiments, lend a degree of corporealization and affect to what could otherwise remain mere textual effect and make-believe. But in this immersive merger with the game program (see *RJ* 46), and bearing in mind the emancipatory potential of autofiction, who thinks and programs whom in the folds between the ludic-literary and the real? And in the book *Corpus Simsi*—which it should be emphasized again is not strictly speaking a gamebook—what place and role is ascribed to the reader-gamer in the *je/u* of a new interactive fictional contract? What happens when one virtualizes oneself in(to) an autofictional series whose often-iterated claims to be a fictional character are played out against live virtualizations of the gaming self, once the “real” self has become the withered avatar of the *je* that has been reinvented/reconstructed through the autofiction of a “second life”? Through its programming of the reader-gamer’s interactive role, *Corpus Simsi* invites us both to read the video game and “play at literature” in a double (narrative and corporeal) projection, an ergodic participation that commits the reader-gamer to a more intense mental and physical manipulation within the book-as-portal or in the interface between the *Sims*’ gameworld and our own “real” world complete with imaginary expansions.

S’écrire: politics of the virtuelleal

Even though, as Delaume’s “*Corpus Simsi* project” section on her website used to state, in the *Sims*’ parallel game universe “the greatest freedom of action cohabits with the strictest codification,” not unlike in Oulipian creation, the constraints paradoxically allow inventiveness and creativity to be maximized and make self-*projection* possible. The very dialectic of freedom and constraint begs the question of the ultimate motivation of such a “project” for those “unamenable characters” to whom “Delaume” belongs. The exchange with Igor in *La règle du Je* provides an answer. “Moi” argues that the fictionalization of the self at work in autofiction is an act of resistance against collective fictions (*RJ* 58; cf. “SMD” 8), a politics of resistance in order to *save* the individual in an increasingly dehumanizing, capital-driven society (“SMD” 2). The recurrent metaphors of housing, building (as well as “builds”), construction, etc. even suggest a new deal or “eco-nomics” (from *oikos* and *nomos*: the law of the house), poignantly relevant in these days of protracted credit crisis, in which the autofictionalized individual hopes to “repossess” their divested, alienated self and subjective capital.²⁵

Thus, *s'écrire* in autofiction is to empower oneself through fluid virtual reincarnations; it is not reducible to "consigning one's life" ("SMD" 3), but rather it is always "writing oneself in the living" (*RJ* 60), such that autofiction can even promnesically prophesy the real to come (see *RJ* 85–6, which discusses the psychotic episode predicted by the previous novel), unlike the retrospective anamnesis of autobiography. To write oneself autofictionally is "to construct another memory for [one]self" ("SMD" 7), which goes beyond the psychoanalytic goal summed up by Freud in the famous *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*: Where Id was, there Ego shall be.²⁶

More (ludic) formatting than (literary) form, more configuration than figure, "Chloé Delaume" of *Corpus Simsi*, the simulation that is the gamer's incarnated virtuality, encodes a new form of ludo-textual embodiment to be taken at physical face value: "virtual corporeality": "My name will always be Chloé Delaume. Here much more than elsewhere, doubtless. I've found forever an ample mediator capable of housing me. Of housing me without clashes, without screechings, without pain" (*CS* 114).

Delaume's engagement with alterity, intermediality and "serious play" did not stop when her autofictional cycle came to a close, with the "transitional" novel *Une femme avec personne dedans* (2012).²⁷ Instead, it took a new direction with *Alienare* (2015), a transmedia survival sci-fi, *Kholat*-style, co-produced with Franck Dion as an iOS app.²⁸ Set in a post-apocalyptic universe and made up of a series of independent classified files (*journaux internes*) from four of the seven characters over the forty-eight hours of their mission (codename: *Alienare*) into the heart of an uncharted "white zone," Delaume's interactive fiction mixes codes from sound drama, animation cinema and video games with levels, integrated audio-visual cutscenes or "transmissions," an optimized superhero and a final boss, as well as allusions to the Lovecraftian RPG horror game series *Call of Cthulhu* (including the famous sentence "Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn" from H.P. Lovecraft's original short story "The Call of Cthulhu" (1928)). Freed from the two-dimensional constraints of the paper format, the interactive fiction is ported to a haptic screen which operates as the reader-gamer's control center and access point. This is Delaume's most borderline experiment since the "augmented literature" of *Corpus Simsi*, adding to multimedia fiction an increased level of immersivity which edges literature ever more closely to the digital realm of videogaming.²⁹

Notes

- 1 Chloé Delaume, *La règle du Je: Autofiction, un essai* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010), 5. All subsequent references to *La règle du*

Je will be indicated parenthetically in the main text. I will use the abbreviation “*RJ*” in cases in which the text I refer to might not be entirely clear. All translations from Delaume’s texts are mine.

- 2 Chloé Delaume, *Corpus Simsi: Incarnation virtuellement temporaire* (Paris: Léo Scheer, 2003), 4. All subsequent references to *Corpus Simsi* will be indicated parenthetically in the main text, using the abbreviation “*CS*” in cases in which the text I refer to might not be entirely clear.
- 3 Ironically, this most celebrated quotation is apocryphal as it cannot be found in any of Flaubert’s writings. A variant of Groucho’s line appears in *A Night in Casablanca* (1946).
- 4 See also Shirley Jordan, “*État présent: Autofiction in the Feminine*,” *French Studies* 67, no. 1 (2013).
- 5 The title of *Certainement pas* (*Certainly Not*) echoes Lacan’s notorious quip when answering a telephone call to his name (see http://www.chloedelaume.net/?page_id=291, accessed March 17, 2017). The story takes place in a psychiatric hospital which mirrors Delaume’s own internment the year before, and each of its characters embodies a “real” person, including the author. One of the characters in the French version of *Cluedo*, Mademoiselle Rose (Miss Scarlett), is mentioned in *CS* (7).
- 6 “Ergodic” as defined by Espen J. Aarseth in *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).
- 7 See examples of their various gameworlds at <http://www.storynexus.com/sd>, accessed March 17, 2017.
- 8 In an interview for the e-magazine *L’Internaute*, Delaume recalls that autofiction has often been compared with reality TV; see <http://www.linternaute.com/livre/magazine/chloe-delaume-chloe-delaume-l-interview/l-autofiction-c-est.shtml>, accessed March 17, 2017.
- 9 Various recalled, for instance in *RJ* (5–6) and in Chloé Delaume, “*S’écrire mode d’emploi*,” *publie.net*, 2008, <http://classes.bnf.fr/ecritelaville/ressources/delaume.pdf>, 1. All subsequent references to “*S’écrire mode d’emploi*” will be indicated parenthetically in the main text, using the abbreviation “*SMD*” in cases in which the text I refer to might not be entirely clear. The title alludes to Georges Perec’s famous novel *La vie, mode d’emploi* (1978) about the meticulously interwoven lives of the inhabitants of the building at 11 rue Simon-Crubellier.
- 10 See “*SMD*,” 7; quoting from Chloé Delaume, *Dans ma maison sous terre* (Paris: Seuil, 2009), 3.
- 11 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 1–3; Nick Bostrom, “Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?” *Philosophical Quarterly* 53, no. 211 (2003).
- 12 Chloé Delaume, “My Beautiful Reloaded” [*sic*], [chloedelaume.net](http://www.chloedelaume.net), July 2015 (originally published in *Spray*, 2009), <http://www.chloedelaume.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Nouvelle-Chloé-Delaume-Spray-2.2.rtf>. Delaume’s short story recounts the day in the simulating life of a wife, living at 4 impasse Will Wright, until a “holographic program” activating her double detonates her brains and makes her unload her revolver on the indifferent husband that was seated on her chair where her body was lying, and the third person (“she”) in the narrative “reloads” as into a first person (“I”).

- 13 During the project (2002–04), Delaume’s website featured a separate rubric (“simsologie”) listing additional “expansions” such as “*Corpus Simsi* 1.5: Idéalisisation des icônes en cours,” audio performances, and a *SimsBlog*, http://www.chloedelaume.net/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=4, retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20040217143537/http://www.chloedelaume.net/r15>, accessed March 17, 2017. A former version of Delaume’s website treated her life not unlike a game or TV series, dividing it into “seasons” and “episodes.”
- 14 See the 2003 “actOral” event at the Festival international des arts & des écritures contemporaines called “*Corpus Simsi* 1.6,” at <http://www.actoral.org/archives-actoral/actoral-2-23/chloe-delaume-1495>, accessed March 31, 2017, and the “*Corpus Simsi*” section at http://www.chloedelaume.net/?page_id=294, retrieved from http://web.archive.org/web/20151112020955/http://www.chloedelaume.net/?page_id=294, accessed March 17, 2017.
- 15 From Chloé Delaume’s former *Sims* blog “Il n’y a que des après et pas qu’à saint germain” (whose title was meant to echo Boris Vian’s fake guidebook *Le Manuel de Saint-Germain-des-Prés* (1951)), at <http://www.chloedelaume.net/sims/blog/>, retrieved from http://web.archive.org/web/20100301000000*/http://www.chloedelaume.net/sims/blog (last saved on 13 April 2010), accessed March 17, 2017. The narration of this apocalyptic supersession of the first-generation *Sims*—their incompatibility with the new model leading “Chloé Delaume” to destroy her own vital files, her avatar’s miraculous resurrection and “somatic” reformatting, and eventually her “own” demise—is humorously dramatized in “*Corpus Simsi Reloaded*.” Note in particular page 5: “My name is Chloé Delaume. I am a fictional character and I am the one who decides the end of the story” (retrieved from http://web.archive.org/web/20081113211932/http://www.chloedelaume.net/ressources/divers/standalone_id2/corpus-simsi-reloaded.pdf, accessed 17 March 2017).
- 16 Joyce Goggin, “*Corpus Simsi* Or, Can a Body Tell a Story?” *Public* 34 (2006). See also her extended, later essay “A Body Hermeneutic? *Corpus Simsi* or Reading like a Sim,” in *The Hand of the Interpreter: Essays on Meaning after Theory*, ed. G.F. Mitrano and Eric Jarosinski (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009).
- 17 See, for instance, “*Corpus Simsi Reloaded*”: “I once was the tenant of far too narrow a human body” (2).
- 18 Martti Lahti, “As We Become Machines: Corporealized Pleasures in Video Games,” in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. Mark J.P. Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York: Routledge, 2003), 158.
- 19 For a definition of “remediation,” see Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999). As a fictional-cum-virtual experiment, *Corpus Simsi* goes beyond remediation and offers a unique hybridization between literature and videogame. See Anaïs Guilet, “Lire le jeu vidéo, jouer à la littérature: *Corpus Simsi* de Chloé Delaume,” in *Les Jeux vidéo au croisement du social, de l’art et de la culture*, eds. Sylvie Craipeau, Sébastien Genvo, and Brigitte Simonnot (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy/Éditions Universitaires de Lorraine, 2010);

Marika Piva, "Formes kaléidoscopiques: l'hybridité chez Chloé Delaume," *Babel: Littératures plurielles* 33 (2016).

- 20 Goggin, "Corpus Simsi," 107; "A Body Hermeneutic", 217–8.
- 21 Simulating generic "sim seasons" (rather than individualized months) of the third year of the new millennium, Delaume's "revolutionary" blog improvises on the French Republican calendar (which likewise began in the fall), with names ending in -ère (instead of -aire), -lien (equivalent to -ôse) and -al, corresponding to fall, winter, and spring months, respectively.
- 22 In a CNN interview, Will Wright declared that while "games are not the right medium to tell stories," they are about "story possibilities" (qtd. in Mukherjee 2). Surprisingly enough, *Corpus Simsi*—and, more generally, Delaume's work on the interface between literature and game as well as related media—is absent from Mukherjee's study, which revisits the polarization between ludologists and narratologists, even though it quotes Janet Murray's early statement (from *Hamlet on the Holodeck*) about urging this new "compositional tool" (the video game) to be placed "as firmly as possible in the hands of the storytellers" (4).
- 23 Recalled in *RJ* (86). See Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Ken Knabb (London: Rebel Press, 1983), 9. See also "Corpus Simsi Reloaded": "In the world that is really upside down, the real is pixels by default" (1).
- 24 Qtd. in Goggin, "Corpus Simsi," 106, 108; see also Goggin, "A Body Hermeneutic," 215, 218.
- 25 See "SMD": "life marks the body and the body transmits back. It is the job of language to perform the work of *conversion*" (3; italics mine).
- 26 See Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XXII (1932–36): New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), 80. In the light of her own recall of autofiction's quasi-psychoanalytic restitution of the real through writing (see <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xx9xad>, accessed April 5, 2017), one might want to question Delaume's glib downsizing of psychoanalysis in *Corpus Simsi* on account of the Sims' main attractive features: their lack of unconscious or imaginary (61), their lack of existential depth (35), and their inability to suffer or somatize: "the Sims are unfit for literature because they don't know suffering" (50). See also "SMD" (3) about autofiction always going farther than psychoanalysis.
- 27 "Serious play" echoes the name of the publishing house in Nantes, Joca Seria, where Delaume has been in charge of the "Extraction" collection since 2010. On her trajectory as a writer, see Delaume at http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xx9xd0_chloe-delaume-une-femme-la-fin-d-un-cycle-de-l-autofiction_news, accessed April 5, 2017.
- 28 Chloé Delaume and Franck Dion, *Alienare* (Paris: Seuil, 2015). See also <http://www.alienare.fr/>, accessed April 6, 2017.
- 29 See the authors' interview at <http://www.actusf.com/spip/Interview-2015-Chloe-Delaume-et.html>, accessed April 7, 2017.

References

- Aarseth, Espen J. *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.
- Bolter, Jay David, and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999.
- Bostrom, Nick. "Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?" *Philosophical Quarterly* 53, no. 211 (2003): 243–55.
- Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Translated by Ken Knabb. London: Rebel, 1983.
- Delaume, Chloé. *Corpus Simsi: Incarnation virtuellement temporaire*. Paris: Léo Scheer, 2003.
- Delaume, Chloé. *Certainement pas*. Paris: Éditions Verticales, 2004.
- Delaume, Chloé. *J'habite dans la télévision*. Paris: Verticales, 2006.
- Delaume, Chloé. *La Nuit je suis Buffy Summers*. Montreuil-sur-Mer: è@e, 2007.
- Delaume, Chloé. "S'écrire mode d'emploi." *Publie.net*, 2008. Accessed March 17, 2017. <http://classes.bnf.fr/ecrire/la/ville/ressources/delaume.pdf>.
- Delaume, Chloé. *Dans ma maison sous terre*. Paris: Seuil, 2009.
- Delaume, Chloé. *La règle du Je: Autofiction, un essai*. Paris: PUF, 2010.
- Delaume, Chloé, and Franck Dion. *Alienare*. Paris: Seuil, 2015.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XXII (1932–36): New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*. Translated and edited by James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press, 1964.
- Goggin, Joyce. "A Body Hermeneutic? *Corpus Simsi* or Reading like a Sim." In *The Hand of the Interpreter: Essays on Meaning after Theory*, edited by G.F. Mitrano and Eric Jarosinski, 205–21. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009.
- Goggin, Joyce. "Corpus Simsi Or, Can a Body Tell a Story?" *Public* 34 (2006): 100–12.
- Guilet, Anaïs. "Lire le jeu vidéo, jouer à la littérature: *Corpus Simsi* de Chloé Delaume." In *Les Jeux vidéo au croisement du social, de l'art et de la culture*, edited by Sylvie Craipeau, Sébastien Genvo, and Brigitte Simonnot, 223–36. Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy/Éditions Universitaires de Lorraine, 2010.
- Jordan, Shirley. "État présent: Autofiction in the Feminine." *French Studies* 67, no. 1 (2013): 76–84.
- Lahti, Martti. "As We Become Machines: Corporealized Pleasures in Video Games." In *The Video Game Theory Reader*, edited by Mark J.P. Wolf and Bernard Perron, 157–70. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Mukherjee, Souvik. *Video Games and Storytelling: Reading Games and Playing Books*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015.
- Piva, Marika. "Formes kaléidoscopiques: L'Hybridité chez Chloé Delaume." *Babel: Littératures plurielles* 33 (2016): 139–59.
- The Sims*. Developed by Maxis. Electronic Arts, 2000. Windows.
- The Sims 2*. Developed by Maxis. Electronic Arts, 2004. Windows.