Europeana Learning Scenario

Author.

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Summary

When we teach literature, we often face two issues.

- Interpretation: how do you know that the author wanted to mean this or that? A novel or a play or a film is to them no more than a good story.
- The link between reality and fiction. Most of the pupils think that they are radically different, even separate.

How can they be made to understand that a novel is also a dialogue between an author (who sometimes answers another author) and us? How to make them understand that fiction is a reflexion about reality, a way to represent it, to explain it, to understand it?

Then I am thinking about a persistent device in European literature, which always creates some confusion. It prevents the reader from feeling the comfort of simply being caught up by a story in the mind of the reader, which shows the paradoxical link between fiction and reality: **reflexivity or *mise en abyme* in French.** In fact, by proposing a fiction within the fiction (embedded story), the legibility of the narration is broken…

Table of summary	
Subject	*List all the subjects that this learning scenario is intended for. If this is an interdisciplinary lesson, list multiple subjects.* • Litterature/history of art • Reflexivity/mise en abyme (painting, film, drama) • Opening scene (exibition scene) • Baroque movement, paintings and litterature. • Preciousness
Topic	*Add here a topic that the learning scenario addresses. For example, if this scenario is intended for a History lesson, the topic could be the Napoleonic wars.* Literature lesson. Reflexivity/mise en abyme in an opening scene.
Age of students	Between 15 and 18
Preparation time	6 hours to adapt the lessons (instead of *Cyrano de Bergerac* of Edmond Rostand another novel or play)
Teaching time	9 or 10 hours. It is possible to adapt the course and not teach all its elements. The teacher may choose to do only those intended to explain the stakes of the mise en abyme, i.e. the first four lessons (painting's anlysis+ the opening of a film, *Dogville* + and a play, *Cold Blood*)
Online teaching material	*List here all the links of online tools, applications and support documents that you will use during the lesson, such as: Padlet, Kahoot, Historiana, etc.* • ***Teams*** *(Office 365)* • ***artplastoc.blogspot.com*** • ***YouTube****: opening scene of the drama performance in "**Cold Blood".*** • ***YouTube****: opening scene of **Cyrano de Bergerac** by Jean Paul Rappeneau.* • *Computer(s) to view film clips and do research on Europeana.*
Offline teaching material	*List here all the offline tools, such as: paper, glue, etc.* *Paper.*
Europeana resources used	*List here links ALL of the Europeana resources used for this learning scenario.* • Arnolfini; Velasquez; Caravaggio; Hotel de Bourgogne; Murillo; Poussin; De La Tour; Préciosité; Peinture baroque

Integration into the curriculum

Detail in a few sentences how the topic of the learning scenario will fit into your national curriculum.

The curriculum of the French-speaking section in the European Schools specifies that the literature course must address the relationship between literary texts and works of art. One approach could be to work on a **common process used by these different fields**: reflexivity/the mise en abyme.

Also, the study of this process invites students to reflect on the different forms of artistic creation and **how they reach their audience.** Highlighting the fictional side of the story is a way to establish a special relationship with the audience. The mise en abyme question will raise questions regarding the overall interpretation of the piece.

Aim of the lesson

Describe in 1-2 sentences what you would like to achieve with your students by the end of the lesson.

At the end of the lesson, I would like the students to be able to

1. Recognise and interpret reflexivity/ a mise en abyme.
2. Know how to define and identify the Baroque movement.
3. Explain why the Baroque movement favours the process of setting in mise en abyme.
4. Know how to define and recognise preciousness.
5. Know how to explain why the mise en abyme is still widely used by contemporary creators in the pictorial, cinematographic and dramatic fields.
6. Use this knowledge in an essay on the relationship between fiction and reality or the essential role of the viewer/reader in the creation of a work.

Trends

List the relevant trends that the lesson incorporates: http://www.allourideas.org/trendiez/results

1. **Sudents-centered pedagogy, inverted pedagogy: students master basic concepts of topic at home. Time spent in classroom is used to reflect, discuss, develop topic**. Students complete some questionnaires on Team at home.
2. **Collaborative Learning**, the pupils works together in groups. Synthesis on TEAMS are made in groups during the course.
3. **Assessment: the focus of assessments is shifting from "what you know" to "what you can do."** Once the definitions of concepts (reflexivity, baroque, preciousness) are studied, students should use these tools to propose personal analyses of paintings or film extracts. They are also able to build arguments by using them.
4. **Project-Based Learning: students get fact-based tasks, problems to solve and they work in groups. This kind of learning usually transcends traditional subject.** Cf. lesson 8 + essay.
5. **Cloud Based and open sources learning**: tools are on line (TEAMS), pupils can reach and modify it tin order to propose a synthesis.

21st century skills

Add here how the learning scenario corresponds to 21st century skills. To find out more: http://www.p21.org/our-work/p21-framework .

- **Critical thinking**: The twenty-first century will be the century of images. At a time when fakes news are invading social networks, it is more essential than ever that students know how to analyze the image and be wary of its apparent evidence. The studied procedure of the abyss is perfect to make it clear that an image is not as innocent and readable as it seems.
  Moreover, contemporary theatre is constantly returning to a very baroque vision of the world. The time for certainty is over, now we know that the reality of things can escape us, it is the "era of suspicion" that began in the 20th century described by the critic Nathalie Sarraute.
- **Involvement as a citizen.** But above all, a major change is taking place in the dramaturgy, reflexivity or the mise en abyme is still affirmed as a recurrent process in contemporary creations (cf. **Cold Blood** by Jaco Von Dormael but also **La Reprise** by Milo Rau etc). Why? Playwrights want a committed audience that is aware of the questions they are being asked. It seems to me that the citizen of tomorrow must learn from school that reading and writing are practices that must be taken away from their academic dimension and prepare them for active participation in the life of their society. **Cold blood** asks a philosophical question about the meaning of the life; Milo Rau with **La Reprise**, inspired by a real, banal and atrocious news item, goes back to the political origins of the tragedy by trying to involve the public in a reflection on the violence inherent in society. Awareness is essential for citizens to be able to fight against it as effectively as possible.
- **Medias and technology skills**: by using Europeana + TEAMS, pupils will develop ICT skills.

Activities

Describe here in detail all the activities during the lesson and the time they require. Remember, that your learning scenario needs to use Europeana resources.

Name of activity	Procedure	Time
1- Paintings analysis to define and understand the mise en abyme	*The pupils will be asked to see on Europeana* **the Arnolfini portraiture** (Jan van Eyck) Then they will work on **the Menines** (Velasquez)**.** To conclude, **the triple self-portrait by Norman Rockwell**, 1960, which synthesises the whole reflexion about this tool. *We can ask the pupils to organize their own synthesis about reflexivity/mise en abyme.*	4hours. 2 at home, 2 at school
2- Film analysis: beginning of *Dogville. Lars von Trier.*	a) **Watch the beginning of Dogville.** • Why does the director choose this process to start his fiction? Answer the questionnaire. • What other genres have inspired Lars von Trier in his staging? Describe the film set. • How would you qualify this mixture of genres? b) **Watch Nicole Kidman's interview about her role in *Dogville* on the Europeana website.** Answer the questionnaire: • What striking element of the set is mentioned three times in the report? • Why do you think such a background was chosen? The students will identify the process of reflexivity and then be asked about the reasons for this choice made by the director. It will appear, among other things, that this opening scene has the effect of disconcerting the spectator, of disturbing him in his habits. To reflect on this subject, the professor could propose a presentation of Brecht's theory of the distancing process.	2hours 1 at home 1 at school
3- Test. Film analysis: beginning of Cold *blood* (Jaco von Dormael).	**The students follow the same model as in lesson 2, but are required to transfer their knowledge and skills to a new work, which the teacher is free to choose.** **a-Watch the trailer of Jaco von Dormael's "Cold Blood".** Answer the questionnaire online, on O365 TEAMS.	1 hour

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	• What are the first and last sentences in this work? • What interpretation would you propose? • What is this theatrical show compared to? • What is the theme of this show? • What characterizes the staging of the show? • Why is there a mise en abyme? What extra dimension does it bring?	
4- Write an essay.	In a press conference at the Cannes Film Festival in 2005. Lars Von triers explains his choice as follows: **"This system of white lines on a black floor allows the viewer to produce ideas and to participate in the creation of the film. The idea is also to represent reality in a humble way".** Do you think that the rule of the reader or the spectator is an essential part of the creation?	2 hours
5- Analyze the film adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Jean Paul Rappeneau.	Students will have previously read the drama and its film adaptation by Jean Paul Rappeneau. a- **How would you summarize the plot of this drama?** b- **The pupils will be asked to summarize all the effects of the abyss.** c- **Watch the beginning of the film.** • Answer the questionnaire on TEAMS • Where does the first scene take place? • What happens? • Why do you think someone can be heard coughing in the audience? • What is the second object of the show after Montfleury? • How do you interpret the wearing of the mask by the character in question? • What characterizes the game of the character on stage? • What is the third object of the show? • Do we see it right away? Comment. • What does Cyrano do at the end of the stage? How is this action a prolepse?	2hours
6- Paint analyses to define and understand the baroque movement	Edmond Rostand's play is set in the 17th century and is inspired by a very important literary movement of the time: the Baroque. The mise en abyme is a representative Baroque process. The objective of this lesson is to identify the **Baroque movement** in a work and analyse its meaning in order to better understand why the mise en abyme is a recurrent process in Baroque works.	4hours 2 at home 2 at school

	a- **On the Baroque movement**, choose on the website Europeana 3 paintings by **Caravaggio**: you will show how these paintings are representative of the baroque movement. **b-** Do the same for a **Murillo** painting**:** **c-** Then, still on the site Europeana, you answer the same question from 2 works of **Nicolas Poussin** and a work by **Georges de La Tour:** At the end, the pupils will be asked to organize a synthesis.	
7- Identify and define the preciousness movement.	Still in our work on the mise en abyme, we are now wondering about the choice of the piece embedded in Cyrano: *La Clorise* de Baro. This piece is a precious piece. Roxane, the precious name Madeline Robin has given herself, is a precious. The objective of this lesson is to define preciousness. They will be in groups to answer to the following questions: Why this choice of a playwright? What does it mean? What is the relationship between reality and preciousness? Is reality magnified or denied?	1 hour
8- Interpretation of a literary text, here the beginning of Cyrano: how the mise en abyme is a program to be decoded?	The purpose of this last session is to understand another function of the mise en abyme in an exhibition scene: it foreshadows the rest of the text; it is a program to be decoded. We will start from the definition of literary critic that Lucien Dällenbach: *"is put in abyss any enclave having a relationship similar to the work that contains it »*[1]. So, the pupils will be asked to work on the opening scene in order to speculate about the mains themes in the rest of the play.	2 hours in groups

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[1] *The specular narrative*, Seuil, Paris, 1977.

Assessment

Describe here the assessment method of the lesson, if any. For example, if you plan on assessing your students with a quiz, include here questions and answer options with color-coding the correct answers.

1-2 essay. (cf before)

2- Quizz

1-Define the process of the abyss. 1 point.

It is about inserting the same mirror work into a work, it is about embedding its reproduction in a work: a painting in a painting, a play in a play.

2 Give two examples of reflexivity/mise en abyme. 1 point.

Les Menines de Velasquez/Le portrait de Arnolfini/ Cold Blood/Cyrano etc.

3- What are the effects of the abyss? Name at least three functions. 3 points.

- *Disorient the spectator*
- *Enter a distance from the object of the representation*
- *Question the real purpose of the representation*
- *Involve the spectator by taking him away from the comfort of the one who is waiting for a story to be told*
- *Create a critical distance*
- *Question the real by revealing the off-camera*

4. Define the Baroque movement. 1 point.

This 17th century movement contrasts with classicism. Unlike the classics, baroque people consider that the world is a fleeting, misleading reality whose meaning escapes us; cf. the titles of baroque works: Shakespeare's Midsummer's night dream, la vida es un sueno, Calderon, Corneille's Illusion comique. It reflects the uncertainties of the time: explorers are discovering new worlds that call into question religious certainties, geocentrism is a mistake, terrible wars of religion have broken Christian unity in Europe, Thus, the world seems unstable, changing. In the artistic fields, this translates into a taste for movement, instability, disorder, change, metamorphosis, ephemeral, imagination, dream, magic, illusion (trompe l'oeil scenery, mirrors, disguises), ornament, profusion, exaggeration, disproportion, virtuosity, improvisation, surprise, for what is bizarre, irregular, strange, what shocks. It is about touching the senses, the emotion, talking to the heart and not to reason.

5-How do you explain that the mise en abyme is a process often used by baroque artists?1 point.

The mise en abyme casts doubt on the real, on what is really seen and represented. It leads to a game of illusions that can make you dizzy. It creates uncertainty.

6-Do you think the process of putting it into abyss is outdated today? Justify your answer. 1 point.

On the contrary, contemporary creators like to stage the illusion they produce in order to invite the public to enter fully into a fiction that aims to question reality. Many playwrights, following Brecht, want to create what he calls distancing: theatre then becomes a political tool, a way to encourage healthy awareness and action.

7-Define the preciousness. 1 point.

The triumph of **preciousness** in the 17th century was a European phenomenon: in England, John Lily launched **euphuism**, in Italy, **Marinism** and, in Spain, **Gongorism.** But what distinguishes France from other European countries is that it has seen not only precious poetry flourish, but also a precious society that has developed in the context of salons. court life had become so crude under Henry IV that, by 1600, courtiers who were fond of politeness, courteous and refined conversations, used to gather in a few aristocratic hotels. Great ladies meet there with gentlemen and writers; they deal with literature, they write verses. Love is the main subject of the precious, a courteous and platonic love. Preciousness very quickly becomes ridiculous when the quest for greatness and the effort towards distinction drift towards assignment and excessive research.

8- In what way is preciousness a refusal of reality? 1 point.

Reality is considered vulgar, it is a question of conforming it to a moral ideal, of rejecting everything that may seem too trivial, the common language, the objects of everyday life. The language then serves to embellish the latter, Cyrano's heroine does not accept to be simply Madeleine Robin, she becomes Roxane, Christian's sincere love matters little to him if he cannot tell her in fine words. Reality is denied, disguised. In this novel, preciousness is a denial of reality. Roxane's preciousness is at the origin of the comedy that Cyrano will play by giving his words to the handsome Christian.

9. Choose a work (painting, film, novel, play etc.) with reflexivity and write an argument to explain how it is meaningful. 10 points.

***************************** AFTER IMPLEMENTATION *****************************

Student feedback

Add here the method with which your students will be able to give you feedback and discuss the lesson.

The teacher can create an online form to collect's student's feedback and ask them some ideas to improve it.

The teacher can also propose a class discussion to evaluate the contributions of the course and its shortcomings.

Finally, he can also suggest to students that they write an argument that will explain

- a- the advantages of this working method,
- b- then explain its limits before-
- c- proposing solutions to improve the course.

Last idea: suggest that students describe the course as a logbook, focusing on what interested them, bored, interviewed, etc.

Teacher's remarks

*Add here your comments and evaluation **AFTER** the implementation of this lesson. You can always use a rubric for self-assessment.*

This course allowed students to improve their general knowledge in a fun and active way. A course on Baroque out of context can be tedious, but when they understood that it was a vision of the world and that it was ultimately very modern, they were able to see and question the very modern nature of it: parallels were drawn with our time when all traditional frames of thought are being challenged.

When they first watched the beginning of *Dogville*, they were very confused and not very enthusiastic.... Same for *Cold Blood* but in the end, I learned that everyone had seen the entire Lars von Trier 's film. Many intended to go and see Jaco von Dormael's show, especially when they discovered that he was also the director of the film The *All New Testament* with Benoit Poolvorde...

They understood that the arts maintain a dialogue that knows no boundaries, whether temporal or geographical: the process of mise en abyme used in the 17th and 21st centuries proves it. **And above all, this subject is a perfect illustration of what unites us within European culture: the mise en abyme is not a French process but a European one (Calderon, Shakespeare, Poe, Calvino, Borges etc.).** In the same way, Baroque and preciousness were intellectual movements that developed throughout Europe. The reflection on love and its masks in *Cyrano* was of great interest to this teenage audience. Finally, the fact of varying the materials and actively involving them in research on Europeana or youtube and the joint writing of syntheses online (O365 TEAMS) contribute to making the course dynamic and lively. I hope I have succeeded in stimulating their intellectual curiosity!

About the Europeana DSI-4 project

Europeana is Europe's digital platform for cultural heritage, providing free online access to over 53 million digitised items drawn from Europe's museums, archives, libraries and galleries. The Europeana DSI-4 project continues the work of the previous three Europeana Digital Service Infrastructures (DSIs). It is the fourth iteration with a proven record of accomplishment in creating access, interoperability, visibility and use of European cultural heritage in the five target markets outlined: European Citizens, Education, Research, Creative Industries and Cultural Heritage Institutions.

European Schoolnet (EUN) is the network of 34 European Ministries of Education, based in Brussels. As a not-for-profit organisation, EUN aims to bring innovation in teaching and learning to its key stakeholders: Ministries of Education, schools, teachers, researchers, and industry partners. European Schoolnet's task in the Europeana DSI-4 project is to continue and expand the Europeana Education Community.

Annexe 1: extended presentation of the Learning Scenario

The effects of mise en abyme in an opening scene

Objectives of this lesson :

1- Giving sense to a literature exercise: interpretation.
2- Beginning a reflexion for an essay on the links between fiction and reality and on the essential part that a reader or a spectator play in the creative process.
   Does fiction reproduce reality? Does it offer it a loophole? Does fiction reveal reality? Is fiction created to transform reality better? Is fiction creating another reality?

When we teach literature, we often face two questions:

- The first is about interpretation: how do you know what the author meant? A novel or a play or a film can sometimes just be a good story to them.
- The other is about the link between reality and fiction. Most of the pupils think that they are radically different, even separated.

How can they be taught to understand that a novel is also a dialogue between an author who sometimes answers another author and sometimes discusses with us? How to make them understand that a fictional work is a reflexion about reality, a way to represent it, to explain it, or to understand it?

Also, teachers are often asked about reflexivity or *mise en abyme* in European literature, which usually generates a swirl of confusion. It can even prevent the reader from feeling the comfort of diving into a story, which shows the paradoxical link between fiction and reality**.**

In fact, by proposing a fiction within the fiction (an embedded story), the legibility of the narration is broken.

The simplest way to help the students is to confront them to paintings which uses this formal technique. This is why the pupils will be asked to analyse three paintings: ***Arnolfini portraiture*** by Jan Van Eyck, then ***the Menines*** by Velasquez and, as a conclusion, ***the triple portrait*** by Norman Rockwell, which synthesises the whole reflexion about the mise en abyme. Rockwell appears painting himself holding his palette, as many artists before him did, including Poussin in 1650, Manet in 1879, or Picasso in 1938. However, in this painting, N. Rockwell includes references to Johannes Grump, Durer, Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Picasso.

This formal technique (mise en abyme) allows raising the question of the **visibility of reality**. By representing himself in his creating act, it forces us to wonder about the creative process. It also **points at what we usually cannot see in reality, namely what is out of range - or out of frame.**

Then, students will work on two contemporary cinematographic pieces that also use reflexivity: *Dogville* by Lars von Trier and *Cold Blood* by Jaco von Dormael. What is interesting in these works is that the mise en abyme is used at the very beginning of the story, as if it was a proposal to the spectators, a kind of program. The disturbing originality of these opening scenes prevent the spectators from a comfortable passivity… This formal creative technique catches the attention.

In the same way, when an author chooses to use the reflexivity by inserting a fiction within the fiction (embedded story), the legibility of the narration is broken. Once the process of the mise en abyme and its stakes are understood, we will question its use in an opening scene. That the opening of a work begins in this way is always significant.

The teacher will analyse an opening chapter or a scene. This moment of narration has been part of the logic of *captatio benevolentiae* since Antiquity: it is made to awaken the interest of the reader or the viewer and to give them clues to understand the plot. The set in these openings is of particular interest, as it creates a specific and complicated relationship with fiction in many works. In fact, by using reflexivity or mise en abyme, it is not reduced to a simple background that would allow the audience to place the story in time and space but rather to highlight its artificial dimension. Why? What are the stakes of such a choice? How to interpret them?

Finally, a literary masterpiece will be analysed (*Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand). The students will have to use the newly-learned tools to examine the first act, which is a vertiginous multi-level *mise en abyme*. Why did Edmond Rostand choose to begin his play with another play acted in a yet mythical theatre? Why did he decide to set it in the XVIIth century, thereby making an apparent reference to the Baroque movement? More broadly, how does reality reflect its numerous facets, and what meanings should we give them?

Cyrano de Bergerac by **Edmond Rostand** is a particularly interesting choice because it opens on a theatrical scenery that induces a vertiginous reflexive dimension to mislead the spectator. This opening is confusing but may conclude an implicit pact between the playwright and the audience. Cyrano de Bergerac use the stage as a rehearsal area where an actor attempts to perform his role. Subsequently, a new dimension is created, as an actor performs in the stalls.

To understand this work better, the teacher will ask the students to analyse the opening scenes of two modern works:

1) Dogville **by Lars von Trier**. The opening scene deliberately rejects realism and offers a high-angle shot of a minimalist a theatre stage drawn in chalk. The distinction between cinema and drama therefore, somehow disappears. **Europeana** website: an interview with actress Nicole Kidman.

2) *Cold Blood* **by Jaco von Dormael**. The film opens on a drama piece that shows how all the special effects make the film possible. The final result is projected on the second level of the stage. The play is thus the making of a film set...

What do these exhibition scenes have in common? They are all surprising and original, but what does such a choice bring to the work? The fictional dimension of the work is highlighted, and the backgrounds turned inside out, as if to claim that it does not seek to mimic reality. But is it so?

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as it sometimes does, have triggered metareferential reflections). Yet, as a rule, mise en abyme merely 'mirrors' elements from a superior level on a subordinate one, but do not necessarily trigger an analysis of those.

Or

An essay: Do you consider that a work of art has the function of revealing reality?

Lesson 1: What is a mise-en-abyme? Examples and Objectives.

Objective: the goal of this module is to introduce you to various types of examples of reflexivity and allow you to understand his stakes.

In the visual arts, the mise en abyme is based on the effects of inclusion, interlocking, self-quotation, self-representation, self-referentiation. Let's understand it with the following paintings:

a-The pupils will be asked to see on Europeana **the Arnolfini portraiture**. It is a double full-length portrait by the Flemish artist Jan Van Eyck (1390-1441) which is now in the National Gallery in London. The work, painted in oil on an oak wooden panel, dates from 1434 and has a size of 82 x 60 cm.

https://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/search?q=Van+Eyck&qf%5B%5D=Arnolfini

What is the function of the mirror in this painting?

The mirror is of great importance in this work. The mirror surrounded by ten small scenes of The Passion and the Resurrection (convex, like all 15th-century mirrors) allows the room to be shown from another point of view and accentuates the impression of space (**it blurs the limits**) by making the entire room visible in the reflection. **The mirror shows the viewer what he cannot see**, that is, **what is out of frame.** In this case, we can see two more people. One of these two people being Jan Van Eyck, himself. Thanks to the mirror, Van Eyck discreetly creates his self-portrait and asserts himself as an important artist of his time.

b-Then they will work on **the Menines**

https://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/collections/art?q=velasquez&qf%5B%5D=les+menines

What can we observe in this painting?

The mirror hanging on the back wall reflects the bust portraits of King Philip IV and Queen Mariana; is this the main subject of the painting under construction or the painting we are contemplating?

The king and queen are positioned in the off-screen of the painting, facing the mirror, in the place of the artist and in our place as spectator and it is their vision that we contemplate

Effect of interlocking, of embedding characteristic of reflexivity, we observe indeed the multiplication of similar images varying in colour or size: representation of paintings in a painting; the two large paintings on the back wall are copies of two works with mythological themes from Ovid's Metamorphoses, Apollo skinning Marsyas, by Jacob Jordaens, around 1625, and Pallas Athena striking Arachné, by Rubens, 1636-37.

We also notice an interlocking of spaces: reference to the off-field space (space of the artist, of the spectator), + the vision of a relative of Velázquez (Nieto Velázquez, employee of the king) in the frame (like a new painting) of the back door that opens onto another space of the palace.

This repetition of the image in the image allows a multiplication of points of view on the same element, the mirror opens onto a vision of the off-field creates an effect of depth and vertigo, gives a feeling of confusion to the spectator who necessarily wonders: is the huge back canvas, on a frame and on a stand that Velázquez is painting, the canvas we have before us, with the infanta Marguerite-Thérèse surrounded by her relatives as its main model? Here again, we see the painter in action with a self-portrait. Velasquez represents himself standing and in front. If the painter is inside the scene, who is he looking at, and who is he painting?

Lesson 2. To conclude, ***the triple self-portrait*** by Norman Rockwell, 1960, oil on canvas, Collection of the N.R. Collection Trust, which synthesises the whole reflexion about this tool. https://artplastoc.blogspot.com/2011/08/24-la-mise-en-abyme-en-peinture.html

N. Rockwell appears here painting himself as many artists before him did: Poussin in 1650, Manet in 1879, or Picasso in 1938 represented holding his palette. Besides, in this painting, N. Rockwell includes references to Johannes Grump, Durer, Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Picasso.

This triple self-portrait shows us the painter in the painting (seated, seen from behind) observing his face in a mirror on the left and painting himself on a canvas (large size, painting in the painting) placed on the right in an interior (on the floor and wall without decoration). The only look that appeals to the spectator is that of the great self-portrait of the canvas because the other self-portraits are from behind or with glasses masking the look. In addition to being larger in size, the self-portrait of the easel is unfinished, in black and white and, unlike the mirror, presents the rejuvenated artist, without glasses and with a different position from the pipe; these last details evoke more the small old and central self-portrait of the study sheet hanging on the left edge of the canvas, while on the right several reproductions of famous self-portraits (by Dürer, Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Picasso) place the artist in the tradition of European painting. The painter's signature appears on the painting in the painting at the bottom of the canvas being made.

Now we can ask the pupils to organize their own synthesis about reflexivity/mise en abyme

Synthesis about reflexivity. Reflexivity is a recurrent and ancient process that was finally theorized in 1893 by Gide in ***Les Faux monnayeurs***. It is based on a mirror game: "speculum" and "spectaculum" have the same origin. Since antiquity, the mirror and the spectacle are intimately linked, both in theatrical practice and in theoretical thought.

J. Rousset defines, in his book *La Littérature de l'âge baroque en France* in France, the process of theatre in the theatre as follows: "The theatre plays to be reflected in its own mirror by means of the inner room [...] The spectators of the room see on the stage a theatre and, in this second room, actors who are also spectators, who look at other actors.

In French, 'mise en abyme' (also known as 'mise-en-abîme') means 'placing into the abyss'. *Mise en abyme* is not restricted to one specific kind of literature or art. The recursive appearance of a novel within a novel, a play within a play, a picture within a picture, or a film within a film form

mises en abyme that can have numerous different effects on the perception and understanding of the literary text or work of art.This term can have various meanings:

1. The double-mirroring effect created by placing an image within an image and so on, repeating infinitely (infinite regression).

2. A reflexive strategy where the content of a medium is the medium itself – e.g. Shakespeare's Hamlet features a play within a play and Fellini's 8½ (1963) is a film within a film. This is also known as **reflexivity**.

3. A formal technique in Western art of placing a small copy of an image inside a larger one.

Reflexivity can have numerous different effects on the perception the literary text or work of art. The repetition can contribute to the understanding of a work or the concept of truth in general or to lay bare its artificiality or fictional aspect. If the artificiality of the mirroring device or related issues are foregrounded or discussed, mise en abyme can also be conducive to **metareference**.

Lesson 3: **Lars von Trier** *"Dogville"*

Objective: The goal of this module is to check if the students can now identify this process and analyse its stakes in an exhibition scene, here the beginning of *Dogville.*

a-watch the beginning of Dogville.

Why does the director choose this process to start his fiction?

Answer the questionnaire.

What other genres have inspired Lars von Trier in his staging?

Describe the film set.

How would you qualify this mixture of genres?

b-Watch Nicole Kidman's interview about her role in Dogville on the Europeana website via this link.

Answer the questionnaire:

What striking element of the set is mentioned three times in the report?

Why do you think such a background was chosen?

The students will identify the process of reflexivity and then be asked about the reasons for this choice made by the director. It will appear, among other things, that this opening scene has the

effect of disconcerting the spectator, of disturbing him in his habits. To reflect on this subject, the professor could propose a presentation of Brecht's theory of distancing.

Bertolt Brecht used the German term *Verfremdungseffekt* (the dissociating effect) to force the viewer not to identify with the characters, reduces passive entertainment and tends to stimulate the audience to keep an awakened and critical attitude from their distant position towards the events.

The first step is to create an estrangement effect: "Under the familiar, discover the unusual," says Brecht; to prevent the spectator from sticking to reproductions or even worse, to immerse himself into fiction; to keep awake the **conscience** of each partner. The piece is a show rather than an illusion of reality: the audience is aware that they are spoken to.

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956): Which codes of representation to use if the drama does not invite to flee social reality (fiction) nor to reflect it (imitation) but to the distancer to transform it? 1935

In his *New Technique of Dramatic Art*, Brecht penned masterful synthesis of only a few pages in which the concepts and themes that make him one of the greatest reformers of the scene of the 20th century. Brecht is engaged in a communist social revolution; thus, his goal is not to produce drama to entertain, but rather to address the spectator with engage choices. Drama is, therefore, without excluding the pleasure of the viewer, a tool for social analysis. To analyse, one must observe the object from a distance, which can be achieved with actors who disrupts the viewer's process of identification of the to his character, for instance, by addressing them. The performer shows his character rather than personifying it, delivering his text "in quotation". The scenography will not hesitate to put on stage what was hidden, sources of lights etc. Theatricality is claimed, it is not about illusion. If the drama is the action on stage, the lyric the expression of the feelings, and the epic the fact of reporting facts, then we understand that Brecht has taken again by giving it a new meaning this word to name this new form of representation and writing of "epic theatre"]

Lesson 4. **Test.**

Objective: **The students follow the same model as in lesson 3 but are required to transfer their knowledge and skills to a new work, which the teacher is free to choose.**

Here the beginning of *Cold Blood*. Jaco von Dormael.

a-Watch the trailer of Jaco von Dormael's "Cold Blood".

Answer the questionnaire:

What are the first and last sentences in this work?

What interpretation would you propose?

What is this theatrical show compared to?

What is the theme of this show?

What characterizes the staging of the show?

Why is there a mise en abyme? What extra dimension does it bring?

b- Write an essay in a press conference at the Cannes Film Festival in 2005.

Lars Von triers explain his choice as follows: **"**This system of white lines on a black floor allows the viewer to produce ideas and to participate in the creation of the film. The idea is also to represent reality humbly"**.** Do you think that the rule of the reader or the spectator is an essential part of the creation?

Lesson 5: *Cyrano de Bergerac*

Now that the concept of mise en abyme and its stakes are understood, we can begin the study of a drama based on the multiple effects of meaning of this process: ***Cyrano de Bergerac***. Edmond Rostand. Colleagues can choose a novel from their country using this process.

==Objective==: beginning a reflexion for an essay about the links between fiction and reality

Students will have previously read the drama and its film adaptation by Jean Paul Rappeneau.

a-How would you summarize the plot of this drama?

b-The pupils will be asked to summarize all the effects of the abyss.

The first act is performed in a theatre.

All the characters play a role: Cyrano plays the one of the friends while he loves Roxane, Roxane plays the comedy at De Guiche to protect Christian, Christian plays the words dictated by the director Cyrano.

It's all a game of illusions. However, Rostand chose to locate his piece during the characteristic 17th century, during which the Baroque movement was very successful. The latter carries a particular representation of reality...

Moreover, the heroine, Roxane, is representative of another important movement of this century: preciousness. Here again, the reality is questioned....

c-Watch the beginning of the film.

Answer the questionnaire.

Where does the first scene take place?

What happens?

Why do you think someone can be heard coughing in the audience?

What is the second object of the show after Montfleury?

How do you interpret the wearing of the mask by the character in question?

What characterizes the game of the character on stage?

What is the third object of the show?

Do we see it right away? Comment.

What does Cyrano do at the end of the stage? How is this action a prolapse?

Context

A special setting: a theatre stage in the theatre: the Hôtel de Bourgogne.

Edmond Rostand locates the first act of Cyrano de Bergerac in "the hall of the Hôtel de Bourgogne". By choosing this setting throughout Act 1, the theme of theatre in theatre is the most explicit, the most obvious ...

Why this choice of an abyss for an exhibition scene? Admittedly, situating the action in this theatre makes it possible to define a precise spatiotemporal framework. This decor contributes to the historical colour by locating the action over time. Thus, during the XVIIth century the Hotel de Bourgogne was the meeting place for a very diverse public with different social backgrounds; We can verify it from the beginning with the entry on the scene of the various protagonists who mix great lords, musketeers, page, popular public.

On the other hand, to play this process of theatre in the theatre immediately inscribes action in a process that was dear to the **Baroque period** and that liked to highlight the deceptive dimension of what surrounds us.

As for the play that Rostand chose to enshrine in Cyrano de Bergerac, La Clorise de Baro (1590-1650), it bears witness to the same concern for historical accuracy: it is almost contemporaneous with the action of Cyrano, since it was created in 1631, and precisely at the Hôtel de Bourgogne

You can consult on the site Europeana a document on the hotel of Bourgogne.

Lesson 6.

Objective: to identify the Baroque movement in a work and analyse its meaning to understand better why the mise en abyme is a recurrent process in Baroque works.

d- **On the Baroque movement**, choose on the website Europeana 3 paintings by Caravaggio: you will show how these paintings are representative of the baroque movement.
e- **Do the same for a Murillo painting:**
f- **c-Then, still on the site Europeana, you answer the same question from 2 works of Nicolas Poussin and a work by Georges de La Tour:**

Synthesis: Baroque art is characterized by plays of light, chiaroscuro effects that play on contrast effects and create deceptive illusions. "Trompe l'oeil" is a common procedure also in architecture. Baroque painters prefer the most spectacular point of view: the moment when the action takes place. The spectacular staging's, their painting are like theatrical staging. It is a question of arousing emotion, of making people feel a kind of vertigo, an impression of confusion. Often, the settings are so full that the viewer's eye gets lost... Emotion rather than reason, favoured by the antagonistic movement, classicism.

In fact, if the classical is convinced that it dominates the world it orders according to clear concepts, the baroque man, very modern in fact, feels that the latter escapes us, that reality is elsewhere. The titles of great Baroque works are very revealing in this respect: Shakespeare's *dream of a summer night*, *Life is a dream* of Calderon or Corneille comic *illusion* are all works that question the readability and reality and the reality of what we think we are living....

Lesson 7: *Cyrano de Bergerac*

Objective: What is preciousness? What is the link with reflexivity and baroque?

Still, in our work on the mise en abyme, we are now wondering about the choice of the piece embedded in Cyrano: *La Clorise* de Baro. This piece is a precious piece. Roxane, the precious name Madeline Robin has given herself, is a precious.

Reflection proposed to the students on the following point: why this choice of playwright? What does it mean? What is the relationship between reality and preciousness? Is reality magnified or denied?

The Clorise is a clear reference to preciousness. In Rostand's play, it must be closely related to all that concerns this literary movement: the character of Roxane, the affected language of the Marquis (I, 2, v. 123 to 126) or their swoon in the name of the precious ones (I, 2, v. 56-59), the fear of the duenna to miss the discourse on the Tender (III, 1, v. 1182-1187; III, 3, v. 1296-1298; III, 5, v. 1326-1328), and especially the opposition of Cyrano to "those monkeys" that are for him the precious (III, 3, v. 1298), his animosity against Montfleury (I, 2 to 4, and III, 1, v 1206-1207, III, 6, v. 1354-1355), his contempt for Baro's play ("The verses of old Baro worth less than zero, / I interrupt without remorse!", I, 4, v. 251-252) and his hatred of the precious language (III, 7, v. 1412-1439). The interruption of La Clorise's performance foreshadows Cyrano's refusal of Preciousness.

On the preciousness, you can consult on Europeana : *Preciousness: from the splendour of the salons to the precious ridiculous* by Antón Martínez, Azucena.

Preciousness: A Rejection of Reality?

- Preciousness: Beautiful discourses
- Roxanne loves preciousness. She loves words and discourses ("I love you" is not enough)
- Christian loves Roxanne.
- Cyrano loves Roxanne.
- Roxanne loves Christian's appearance but is not satisfied by his rhetoric.
- She is in love with words (because she's a precious)
- Cyrano thinks he is not handsome enough (big nose) but is great at rhetoric.
- Christian and Cyrano are unable to face reality.
- What does this rejection of reality provoke?
- The character uses another character as an actor.
- It's a fake love relationship.
- Tragedy: lies prevent true love.
- Self-love vs real love
- Cyrano hates precious people because they are not true to themselves.

The triumph of preciousness in the 17th century was a European phenomenon: in England, John Lily launched euphuism, in Italy, Marinism and, in Spain, Gongorism. But what distinguishes France from other European countries is that it has seen not only precious poetry flourish, but also a precious society that has developed in the context of salonsPreciousness is an art of living and an aesthetic that flourished between 1650 and 1660 in the Parisian aristocracy. Preciousness is characterized above all by an extreme refinement of behaviour, ideas and language. Precious women love the games of the mind and put the subtlety of thought at the service of a discourse on love. The feeling of love is indeed at the centre of conversations and is the subject of poems and novels that the precious ones comment on in their living rooms. Love for the precious is a love that is purified, codified, idealized, rid of the rudeness of carnal desire. Precious people have an idealized vision of love and Roxane illustrates this perfectly. More than Christian's kisses, she wants a beautiful speech. This particular relationship to reality is the reason for the comedy that will be performed throughout the play.

NB. **The Clorise is a pastoral novel whose plot is borrowed from an episode of L'Astrée that people at the time read with passion: it consists of five volumes, with multiple secondary intrigues. The fifth volume was completed by the secretary of Honoré d'Urfe. This romance novel with multiple romantic twists recounts the love between the shepherd Celadon and the shepherdess Astrée in a bucolic scenery. The novel is distinguished by a dizzying game; it alternates warrior adventures, heroic acts, disguises, wonderful episode, analysis of the complexity of the feeling in love. Courtiers are passionate about these subtle scenes of love, and often contradictory manifestations. We can consider this text as an analytical novel that focuses on the manifestations of love, the birth of passion, jealousy, strategies of seduction, revenge, etc. Love according to D'Urfe foreshadows the Cornelian conception of sentiment: the reason is imposed on passion: one cannot love someone without merit, without a sense of honour: "It is impossible to love what we do not appreciate. The success of L'Astrée, for example, did not really end until 1761, when Rousseau replaced Honoré d'Urfé with** *La Nouvelle Héloïse.*

Lesson 8. The purpose of this last session is to understand another function of the mise en abyme in an opening scene: it recesses the rest of the text; it is a program to be decoded. We will start from the definition of literary critic that Lucien Dällenbach: "is put in abyss any enclave having a relationship similar to the work that contains it »The specular narrative, Seuil, Paris, 1977.

The representation of *La Clorise* thus has enough in common with the play *Cyrano de Bergerac* that we can talk about his mise en abyme in a sense. Indeed, it respects both the criterion of inclusion and that of the reflection of fiction. It sets out themes, situations and operating laws of the piece that encompasses.

So, to demonstrate it to the pupils, they will be asked to reflect on the themes announced in the opening scene

What is going on in this scene? Let's recap:

a-Montfleury saying his text says Baro's words

b-Montfleury can't say his text

c-He cannot because he is prevented from doing so by an unwelcome person who does not respect him: Cyrano

a-As we have seen, the choice of a baroque and precious piece inserted is significant because it already sets up the problem of a special relationship to reality. The Baroque questions it by pointing out its illusory dimension, the preciousness illustrates its desire to flee it, to build another more beautiful and less vulgar one. However, the price to pay is high, **real feelings never can be expressed.** we can see in Montfleury reciting verses of Baro an abyss of Christian reciting the words of Cyrano and Cyrano, when he reads them to Roxane pretend that they are those of Christian....,

b-The stuttering with which Montfleury is constrained, this impossibility of saying, prefigures the theme of the **impossible confession** which runs through Rostand's play. Christian does not dare to confess his love to Roxane because he knows he lacks wit (II, 10, v. 1111-1129); Cyrano, who is often disposed to declare his passion to Roxane, will never be able to do so: because he is ugly (I, 5, v. 513-517); because Roxane tells her that she loves another (II, 6); because Christian dies, preventing the confession (IV, 10); even on the verge of death, Cyrano can express himself only by the paradoxical formula: "No, no, my dear love, I did not love you! (V, 5, v. 2467).

c-On the other hand, by disrupting the performance of Baro's play, Cyrano prepares all the scenes in which a character in the position of comedian comes up against spectators without respect.

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The reading of Ragueneau's poem is intended for listeners who are more anxious to stuff themselves with cakes than to listen attentively (II, 4). The story of the fight at Nesle's door is thwarted by Christian's impertinent play of words (II, 9). In this last example, the situation of the prevented theatre interferes with romantic relationships and, indeed, the troublemaker is often a rival of the "comedian". If Cyrano has forbidden Montfleury to play, it is above all because he has dared to bring his eyes to Roxane (I, 5, v. 482-491).

Finally, can we not read the premature interruption of the representation of *La Clorise* by Cyrano as an image of loves too soon interrupted by a rival? Scarcely has Christian gone to pick the kiss of Roxane whom he is called by his two rivals: Cyrano and the Count de Guiche in the person of his messenger, the Capuchin (III, 10); he has just married Roxane that he must go to war (and his fooled rival, Guiche, does not fail to sneer: "The wedding night is still far away!", III, 14, v. 1697 Even the loves of Ragueneau and Lise are short because of a musketeer (III, 1, v. 1174-1181).

So, we can see it, the insertion of the beginning of *La Clorise* has the same programmatic value as some openings of operas, it already announces the future story and its outcome

Conclusion. Why did we study reflexivity in a opening scene?

In order to understand the process and its implications, we worked on several mise en abyme in different fields, painting, cinema, theatre.

It seemed to us that the process of putting it into reflexivity was all the more interesting when it appeared as soon as it appeared in an opening scene in a film or a play. This is why, before starting the study of the chosen work, *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand, we chose to work on two beginning scenes: *Dogville* by Lars von Trier and Jaco von Dormael's Nano dance show, *Cold Blood.*

The mise en abyme always establishes a distance between what is seen and the spectator. From the outset, he is confronted with a question about the purpose of the representation. In fact, the mise en abyme prevents an obvious, innocent reading of what is before our eyes and this is undoubtedly its main interest. By the discomfort it causes, it involves the spectator in the creative act.

The mise en abyme raises several questions that will allow the teacher to propose a reflection to the students on the links between fiction and reality, on the problems posed by the interpretation of a work, on the links between the creator and his audience.

What is the purpose of the representation?

How does the mirror effect make it possible to question reality by exposing the off-camera, which is not visible?

How does the mirror effect make it possible to consider several levels of reality or even another reality?

How does it allow the creator to question himself and us about his creative practice?

In what way is it an invitation to the reader to participate in this creative act?

In what way is it an invitation to decipher what surrounds it?

How is it disturbing to a spectator?

The interesting thing about the work studied, Cyrano de Bergerac, is that it concentrates in itself most of the virtues of the mise en abyme. From the exhibition scene, the mise en abyme makes it possible to lay the main milestones of the discourse on reality that the playwright proposes to his reader. The work, whether cinematographic or literary, cannot be reduced to a story told: it is a dialogue, an interpretation of the world around us that we choose to share or not...

Lesson 10: Test

The students follow the same model as in lesson 5 but are required to transfer their knowledge and skills to a new work, which the teacher is free to choose.

Suggestions:

Analysis on **Short Story: *The Fall of the House of Usher* by Edgar A. Poe**

Or

Analysis of an episode of ***The Simpsons.*** It frequently happens in The Simpsons that the characters watch TV: characters of a TV series are thus watching TV themselves. This act is a mise en abyme, as we see a film within a film. However, if they were to start discussing what they are watching it would moreover be a case of metareference (or rather the mise en abyme would, as it sometimes does, have triggered metareferential reflections). Yet, as a rule, mise en abyme merely 'mirrors' elements from a superior level on a subordinate one, but do not necessarily trigger an analysis of those.

Or

An essay: Do you consider that a work of art has the function of revealing reality?