

***Salammbô* in the Third Degree: From Novel to BD to Video Game**

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Gustave Flaubert began his novel *Salammbô* (1862) out of a desire to escape the present, which he had examined so closely in *Madame Bovary* (1857) – « j'éprouve le besoin de sortir du monde moderne, où ma plume s'est trop trempée » (III, 164). The leap is both geographic and temporal, with the novel taking ancient Carthage, rather than the author's contemporary France, as its setting. It recounts a love story against the background of the Mercenary Revolt (240-238 BC) following the First Punic War. Mâtho, the Libyan leader of mercenaries shortchanged by Carthage, dreams of Salammbô, daughter of the city's leader and priestess of its most important deity, even as he engages in a complex plot to unite various disgruntled armies and confront her father's forces. It is thus set on a grander, more epic scale than his previous novel, but Flaubert also leaves room for invention by taking on a lesser-known event and location, and eschewing Rome, Greece or Egypt.

Contemporary reviews were primarily negative, suggesting that the book was lifeless and boring, even unreadable, due to its accumulation of detail in the reconstruction of the ancient world (Pléiade 1226). Flaubert suggests that in writing it he merely employed the « procédés du roman moderne » (Pléiade 1219), elaborating fiction in the margins of reality, as in *Madame Bovary*. But his copious research, which the novel showcased with great precision, remained problematic to his readers. The combination of Flaubert's realist working method and his topic was deemed strange by literary critic Sainte-Beuve, while his use of historical information was regarded as unscientific by archeologist Guillaume Frœhner. On this account, *Salammbô* became the subject of a minor literary quarrel over the mix of science and literature, which contributed to its high volume of sales. The novel's exoticism made it very popular, and it also surprised its public through the vivid depictions of violence and scenes of sensuality it contained.

As Adrienne Tooke shows, Flaubert's detailed rendering of grandiose and grotesque Carthage can also be linked to his notion that the purpose writing was « faire voir ». The author also credited his travels to Africa and the Middle East with teaching him the proper approach to a subject, that of « être œil ». Because he conceived of his work in such visual terms, Flaubert opposed illustration, writing that « Jamais, moi vivant, on ne m'illustrera, parce que la plus belle description littéraire est dévorée par le plus piètre dessin. Du moment qu'un type est fixé par le crayon, il perd ce caractère de généralité,

cette concordance avec mille objets connus qui font dire au lecteur ‘J’ai vu cela’ ou ‘Cela doit être.’ » (IV, 221). To the author, then, illustration impoverished the text by fixing the form or meaning of what was portrayed, and by taking over the work of the reader’s imagination, which was open to a different range of associations.

This article considers two adaptations of Flaubert’s novel that rely nevertheless on illustration, Philippe Druillet’s bande dessinée *Salammbó* (1985) and Cryo interactive’s eponymous video game (2003), as its expansions into other media. It argues that in addition to the subject matter shared, each successive iteration relies on medium-specific elements from its predecessor (text from the novel, flowing illustrations from the BD), to which it assigns different functions in the new context. Druillet’s adaptation takes a visual approach to exposition, often relying on full-page illustrations or two-page spreads to draw the reader into a futuristic Carthage reimagined in hallucinogenic colors and intricate designs. His BD treats the excerpts from Flaubert it cites as images: displayed alone on a page, they are encased in ornate frames and lettered distinctively from captions or speech balloons. Like illustrations in a novel, the quotes from Flaubert are complementary to the visual storytelling.

Cryo’s take on Druillet’s *Salammbó* is focused on visual fidelity to the BD, which a brief reading of the developer’s most successful previous project indicates is a key element in their method of adaptation. The game’s use of panels, borders and page layout shows the similarities between *Salammbó* and other games that reference comic book elements, such as *XIII* and Atlus’ *Persona 5* (2016). A look at the extent to which they are integrated into game themes or fulfill functions specific to the medium will suggest that *Salammbó* achieves the greatest degree of intermediality. Through a discussion of the gameplay inherent to the genre into which the BD was adapted, I will conclude that the game recreates the experience of reading the album.

Salammbó as BD

Druillet began working on his adaptation of *Salammbó* in 1978, in the wake of his album *La Nuit* (1976), an apocalyptic narrative to which he refers as a requiem for his first wife. Despite the change in subject, Marie Barbier suggests a possible continuity between the two projects. Flaubert’s characters drowning under the weight of his verbal construction of Carthage can be perceived as the novel’s dystopian side, similarly to *La Nuit*’s last survivors disappearing in the ruins of their civilization. The project was initially suggested to Druillet by Philippe Koechlin, the editor of *Rock & Folk* magazine, which had published his previous album. Though he was not previously familiar with the novel, the artist recounts being immediately fascinated once he started reading it. He cites the novel’s ability to incite his visual imagination as the reason for his captivation and acknowledges that he undertook the project despite some trepidation at the idea of combining the BD medium with the work of a classic author (Barbier 17).

Stretching to three volumes and representing seven years' work, *Salammô* was a great critical success, contributing to Druillet's being awarded three years later the prestigious Grand Prix de la ville d'Angoulême (1988). In interviews, he refers to this period as one spent steeped in Flaubert's world, but the BD represents a synthesis of two creative sources. Indeed, the artist casts his own recurring character Lone Sloane, an intergalactic traveler, as Flaubert's protagonist Mâtho. This substitution determines the genre of the BD as science fiction, and also influences its aesthetic. The four Lone Sloane albums preceding *Salammô* (1966-1978) were characterized by psychedelic colors, monstrous characters and environments, the use of geometric patterns in backgrounds, and irregular page layouts, with a predilection for splash pages and unconventional panel structures. The encounter of the two universes, Druillet's and Flaubert's, is also staged diegetically, with the recognizable Carthaginian plot being bookended by chapters in which Lone Sloane engages in his characteristic adventures. The character assumes his solitude by killing the crew on his ship so that he can pursue Salammô, whom he has seen in a vision, thereby becoming Mâtho. Once he is killed at the end of Flaubert's plot, Lone Sloane is reabsorbed back into his original world by his friend Yearl the neo-Martian, who also destroys the city, thus closing both narratives.

The relation of the two versions of *Salammô* and of the two media is further encapsulated in six distinctive pages featuring only text and facing illustrations to which they bear a close relationship. They offer insight both into Druillet's adaptation of Flaubert, and Cryo's adaptation of Druillet, to the extent that this layout is reused in the video game, which, as I argue, strives to reproduce the look of its specific BD source – one of whose markers are the six pages with decorated borders, to which the game assigns the role of transitions. A point of continuity between the game and the BD, these pages also reveal a great difference in the approaches to adaptation of the two.

Five of the six passages featured are drawn from Flaubert, like the majority of the BD text¹. However, they stand out in that they feature typographical indications that they are cited from Flaubert². Rather than creating tension, the use of ellipses in these passages suggests omission, which alludes to the existence of a source from which they are cited. They thus bear the markings of what Antoine Compagnon called « le travail de la citation »: Druillet's operations on the Flaubertian text. According to the critic, quotes in a text should be read as the interaction of « un énoncé répété et une énonciation répétante », which places them « dans cette ambivalence, la collusion, la confusion en elle de l'actif et du passif » (56). They are informed by their context, being commented on by the surrounding text, even as they serve to clarify it, aiding it in making its point more resoundingly.

These passages are decorated with accompanying illustrations. Depending on the pagination, they either face an illustrated page, or are followed by one that relates to the plot points mentioned in the citation (Fig. 1). The text may add some background information or allude to the relevance of the developments, but the emphasis is on

repetition, with text and image echoing each other. One could read a concern for fidelity in the act of citing from Flaubert as much as possible, and in matching text and illustration, but instead, these passages make it clear that Druillet is not concerned with the letter of text.

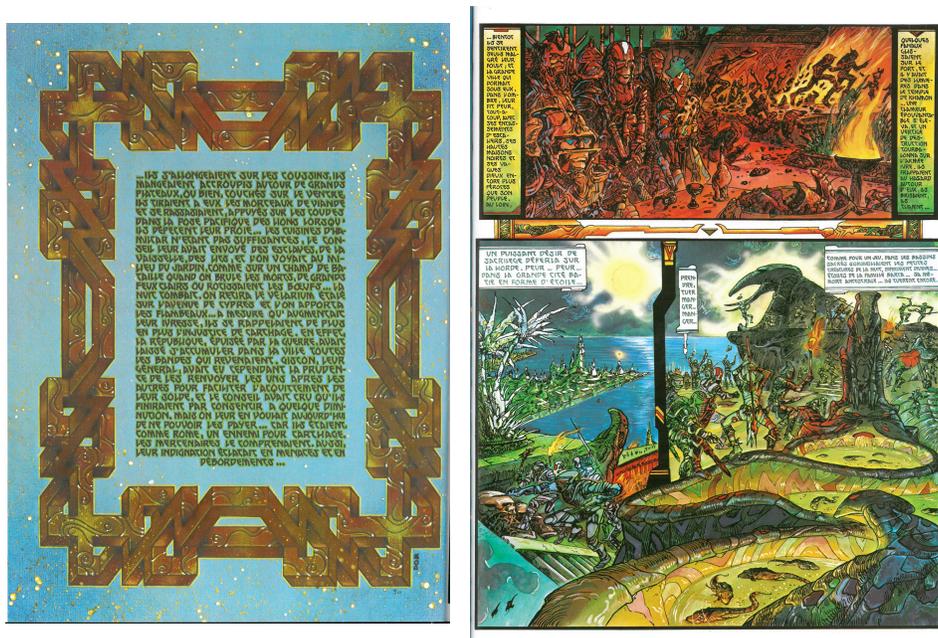


Fig. 1. One of the decorated Flaubertian passages and facing illustration (32-3, ©Glénat)

As points of direct intersection between Flaubert and Druillet, novel and BD, these passages attest to a contest of text and image. The condensation of the Flaubertian text and the visual disposition of the passages with decorative borders make them comparable to illustrations in a novel, with a reversal of the positions and of the roles of the two media. As Newell explains, illustrations are commonly thought to make difficult novels easier, and to provide a “gateway” for readers into the work. Believing that the collaboration between text and images can lead to the reader’s higher level of comprehension assumes that images are transparent and subordinate to the text, while text is open to a multitude of meanings. But as Fisher suggests, illustrations can “add metaphorical comment, extend the story, alert the reader to significant patterns, and supply visual types of the characters” (61). Newell further shows that the production of illustrations for novels is “always inflected by numerous intertexts, among them the artist’s other works, or [...] the meanings and significations a reproduced work has accumulated from previous contexts and reproductions” (79). Concluding on the

relationship of illustrations and the texts in which they appear, she writes that they fulfill the same need as adaptations on the part of the public, noting that “audiences consistently want more: more explanation [...] more clarification, more expansion, more story – they want more of the same but different, but not too different” (94).

In reversing the places of text and image, *Salammbó* casts the text as the gateway into the illustration, seemingly enacting Barthes’ schema, whereby “polysemous,” images evocative of “a ‘floating chain’ of signifieds,” are juxtaposed with a “linguistic message,” which helps the reader “to choose the correct level of perception,” and clarify the meaning of the image by letting them focus “[their] gaze but also [their] understanding” (39). But given the minimalist approach to citation in the BD, and the editing of the decorated passages, this text is reduced to the most practical of comments and the most limited extension to the story. It is, moreover, displaced from its network of allusions and intertexts and cannot supply the much-desired “more story.” Encased in its borders, the Flaubertian text merely signifies its provenance and medium, providing a skeleton upon which the illustration can grow.

The angular, repeated pattern of the borders casts the Flaubertian text as inert, stressing its difference from the visual narrative into which it is inserted. But the encasement of the text in these ornamental pages can also be seen as showcasing it. It appears a special find, rendering the passages akin to the results of a Flaubertian archeological dig³. Read at the time of its publication as an “archeological novel,” *Salammbó* is the fruit of five years of intensive research by its author into ancient Carthage. The visibility of this labor makes the novel akin to an encyclopedia of Antiquity (Neefs), condemned by prominent literary critic Sainte-Beuve as well as archeologist Guillaume Frœhner over its claim to scientific erudition and its ability to represent the past. To summarize such criticisms, the first commentator considered that *Salammbó* was not a realist novel because the archeological details were not used in a realist manner, in that they did not help to elucidate the psychology of the characters. The latter found it “unscientific” because Flaubert’s use of novelistic conventions impeded proper scientific communication. Explicating Frœhner’s critique from the epistemological point of view of archeology, Corinne Saminadayar-Perrin shows that Flaubert failed to achieve the standard goals of the discipline – he did not render the past intelligible, but merely described it through its artifacts. She further observes that *Salammbó*’s «dense matérialité des objets qui occupent le devant de la scène revêt une fonction essentiellement ornementale» (§ 24). Neefs relates this tendency to Flaubert’s project of reconstructing an inaccessible model: the accumulation of research evident in the text was needed to occlude the gap at its center (64).

These two notions, of the decorative artifact and the absent model, inverted, define Druillet’s adaptation and his operations on Flaubertian text. To Druillet and his readers, the model is all too present – as he notes, «Pendant sept ans, je travaille sur *Salammbó*. Non sans appréhension, car adapter Flaubert n’est pas chose aisée. C’est

un monument de la littérature et Flaubert lui-même avait souhaité bon courage à ceux qui voudraient l'illustrer » (197-8). The novel's decorative artifacts, details that the 19th century author had carefully researched in order to accurately represent Carthage, are visually substituted with elements of Druillet's own science fiction universe. For example, antagonist Hamilcar Barca's elephants, the various races in the mercenary army, and their weapons become futuristic alien creatures and technologies, which are nevertheless not addressed as such. Through their inversion of text and image, the pages with decorated borders present the Flaubertian model and denote its role in the new work: a seed enveloped by a much larger, differently shaped, colored and textured fruit. The narrative follows the aesthetic, with the opening pages of the BD, in which Druillet sets up the substitution of the protagonist (his Lone Sloane as Flaubert's Mathô) integrating Flaubert's *Salammbô* into a larger body of (illustrated) work as a further voyage of Lone Sloane, echoed in the closing pages by the hero's reabsorption into his own universe⁴.

The video game: Salammbô's production

Reviewing the catalogue of *Salammbô*'s publisher, the now-defunct Cryo Interactive, we note a thematic predilection for historically based games: *Versailles 1685* (1996), *Égypte 1157 av. J.C.* (1997), *Chine* (1998)) as well as a methodological preference for adaptations from other media⁵. Drawing on literary sources appears a creatively productive area for the company, as indicated by titles such as *Ubik* (1998), *The New Adventures of the Time Machine* (2000), *Dracula* (2001), *Jekyll & Hyde* (2002), and *The Mystery of the Nautilus* (2002). The games entertain diverse relationships with their sources, ranging from the simple appropriation of the novels' titles or characters into new narratives (*The Mystery of the Nautilus* keeps only Verne's submarine and its captain), to what can be termed "loose adaptations," in which the player reproduces key actions or scenarios from the literary texts in new locations, or for new purposes (*Ubik*, *Jeckyll & Hyde*). Games inspired by other media include *Aliens* (1995) and *Hellboy* (2000), which are based on comic books, and *Les Visiteurs* (1998) and *From Dusk till Dawn* (2001) based on films.

The diversity of these examples suggests that Cryo's interest in adaptation derives from the commercial appeal of an already-vetted story, which also stands to attract an already constituted public. Starting in the 1980s, video games have been perceived as a valuable tie-in market for films (Fassone 108), with blockbusters being at the forefront of franchises to adapt. Independent companies and European companies, however, found it more difficult to secure the rights for these films, with Ubisoft's acquisition of *King Kong* in 2005 representing the first French project of such magnitude (Blanchet 186). Even though Cryo's adaptations are not of the same scale, they do follow trends in film-to-game adaptation by promising a close relationship with their source, allowing users "yet another opportunity to buy into the film franchise" (Moore 186). The closeness of

the relationship between game and film is primarily signaled through visual means, but Cryo's biggest commercial success, *Dune* (1992), also adapts plot and character development through its gameplay. A look at how this is achieved will help us identify the key elements in the developer's method of adaptation, which will frame the discussion of *Salammbó*.

The two projects are very similar in terms of their sources, which are high-profile science fiction texts. Both are layered adaptations, with *Dune* based on David Lynch's film (1984) of Frank Herbert's novel (1965) by the same name⁶. The games thus take on a classic text, but as an adapted version into a new, more popular medium, with the latter installment being visually predominant. *Dune* used the likeness of the actors playing the main parts and used some film sequences. For *Salammbó*, this is manifest in the game's association with Druillet: the artist's involvement in development is featured in its advertising campaign, and on the front of the game box, while the back features his picture. His sigil is the first image presented to the user when launching the game, indicating that the artist was viewed as being of greater relevance to the game's intended audience than Flaubert, and he is also credited with graphic design and artistic direction.

While the David Lynch adaptation was found unsatisfactory by viewers and critics alike⁷, the game's positive user reception can be attributed to the close match between the film narrative and the genre into which it was adapted. The game offered more to its players than the typical film-to-game adaptation, which provided a pale imitation of its source through visual resemblance, unsupported by a strong narrative or gameplay (Fassone 111). Cryo's *Dune* took advantage of Lynch's paring down of the first novel of Frank Herbert's space opera to a handful of key characters, locations and conflicts centered on the exploitation of a valuable commodity (spice). It also followed its secondary focus on the messianic nature of the main character, Paul Atreides, and his mastery of psychic powers, which would assist him in triumphing over his rivals. Like the film, it excised the novel's philosophical meditations and political intrigue, reducing its worldbuilding to a few essential elements.

The close relationship between game and film was achieved through gameplay. *Dune*'s core element is real-time strategy gameplay in which the user, cast as Paul Atreides, gathers resources, both human (an army) and material (tools, weapons, spice) and manages them in a series of conflicts with various antagonists keen on attaining the same objectives. The adventure side of the game entails conversations with other characters that allow the player to obtain necessary information to advance the plot. This is conveyed to the user as the building of relationships with the inhabitants of the alien planet, and its effect is to open access to superior types of resources. The development of the main character's psychic powers, which happens as the plot advances, offers increased communication range, and access to better transportation, which render the resource management easier. A close fit between story and mechanics is thus evident. The practical effect of the game's adventure side is to make available different iterations of the strategy

gameplay, while, narratively, it integrates the game mechanisms into the specific parameters of the *Dune* diegesis.

Visually, the game recommends itself as an adaptation of its film source by styling the main characters on the actors playing them and by including footage from the film. Offered as an enhancement of the playing experience in the Sega Mega CD release of the game, this addition renders the encounter of the two adaptations very visible. The inclusion is meant to underline the continuity between Lynch's and Cryo's version of *Dune*, but the juxtaposition in fact reminds the user that the two are distinct. That one is "playing the film" is much more convincingly suggested by the gameplay, which reproduces the main character's story arc through its combination of strategy and adventure mechanisms. The apposition of the two media, while desired for commercial reasons, remains jarring by not being integrated into the conceit of the game, or being given a game-specific function.

The adaptation of *Dune* thus indicates that, in analyzing *Salammbô*'s engagement with its BD source from the point of view of its production, the following elements are key: the game as the adaptation of an adaptation, the producers' desire to stress the intermedial nature of the adaptation, and the visual signaling of the correlation of the game and its source. *Salammbô*'s box appears to address the last point by informing that the game is developed « d'après le roman de Gustave Flaubert et la bande dessinée culte de Philippe Druillet ». This suggests a synthesis of Flaubert and Druillet, perhaps even an equality in prestige. In this regard, the game is promoting an institutional recognition of the BD, which first appeared in *Métal hurlant* (1980, no. 48-54), a French science fiction magazine with a profound influence on the genre⁸, to great critical reception. As the author remarks, « Pour la première fois, un auteur de bande dessinée illustre un classique de la littérature. Les deux mondes ne s'affrontent pas, ils se complètent. Avec *Salammbô*, j'ai fait entrer la bande dessinée dans les musées » (197-8). Because of this newly acquired symbolic capital, and in similar fashion to the case of *Dune*, Cryo's approach to the adaptation of an adaptation is more focused on the second layer than on the source material, making Druillet's BD the model to replicate in video game format.

But unlike Lynch's *Dune* as an adaptation of Herbert's novel, the BD does not distill, reduce, or tidy up the source narrative for easier consumption. Instead, it expands the diegesis through Druillet's own science fiction universe, and transitions to visual exposition. Druillet's world disperses through Flaubert's *Salammbô* when he casts his recurring hero, Lone Sloane, as the novel's protagonist Mathô⁹. The two characters may share this profession, but they have few other similarities, as Sloane is an interplanetary traveler, who engages in epic conflicts, being once used by the gods in their battle for supremacy (*Lone Sloane: Délirius 2*).

As Paula Rea Radisch has observed, Druillet "stretches and expands his frames" (104), one of his trademarks being the two-page spread which accommodates non-linear

reading patterns that emphasize energy and movement. The reader is drawn both to observe vignettes of action in freely defined sequence and to contemplate the whole. In contrast, pages that serve “only as visual display” also occur, as a paradoxical visual intrusion within a visual story (110). Writing about such panels, Karin Kukkonen notes that they have a tendency to embed the characters they represent in their surroundings (60). She observes a certain automation of their actions, and subordination to their environment even in illustrations in which their movement is emphasized (64). Integrating characters into elaborate borders that obscure backgrounds effaces to a certain extent their role as characters, turning them into decorative objects. Their new abstract existence splits them from their narrative function, impacting narrative flow. A similar disruption occurs due to the great variety of spans of diegetic time and space shown in Druillet’s large compositions. Thus, though Sonia Lagerwall has shown that despite necessary ellipses and synthesis, the “transmediation faithfully follows the story” (46), it is very differently articulated in the BD.

This is one of the elements of *Salammbô* that is adapted, rather than merely transferred, in Cryo’s game, which reuses Druillet’s characters and locations¹⁰. Though the game reduces the plot to a simpler quest and divides it into different episodes, the transitions are effectuated in panels that employ borders drawn from the BD and adopt the look of distinctive pages in the album. In the following section, I argue that in the case of Cryo’s *Salammbô*, the encounter of the two media is not discordant, as it was in *Dune*, with the function given to BD elements being particular to the video game. This integration renders the game an intermedial extension of *Salammbô*, conferring the “doubled pleasure of the palimpsest: more than one text is experienced – and knowingly so” (Hutcheon 116).

Reading Salammbô as a comic book and video game

Salammbô is a point and click adventure game in which the player is cast as Spendius, an escaped slave enlisted by the titular character to contact Mathô and eventually help the lovers meet. The choice of a secondary character as hero is explained by Luis Pimenta Gonçalves as ensuing from the developers’ desire to reduce the complexity of the plot¹¹, which in its modified form could not be assigned to Mathô in a faithful adaptation (§17). He goes on to note also that the player does not “become” the character – the point of view remains in the third person, as does the voice-over narration in referring to Spendius (§18). This distancing between player and game narrative maintains the separation of reader / novel or BD and constitutes one way that *Salammbô* indicates its nature as an adaptation.

Despite these changes in plot and character, what is much more closely adapted from the BD are the game visuals. The overall look of the game is darker, but the design of key locations (for example, the aqueduct and the temples of Tanith and Moloch) as well

as characters (Mathô, Spendius, Salammbô) bears a strong resemblance to their graphic novel versions. The complexity of structures has been maintained, and they continue to be inhabited by strange animals and alien races. The three-dimensional rendering of characters and their adaptation to the expectations of a game-playing public have made them more static in their appearance and more exaggerated in features, but they are easily recognizable to readers of Druillet's work.

The game also borrows distinctive layout elements of the BD, to which it attributes medium-specific functions. To transition between locations, the game adopts the arrangement specific to six pages in the BD that feature only text enclosed in an elaborate border, on a slightly patterned background, and face illustrations¹². The transition sequences treat the square gameplaying screen as a comic book page divided into a variable number of panels, with a larger column on the right used to display subtitles corresponding to the voiceover narration. It recounts the consequences of the player's actions, with two-dimensional images in Druillet's style enclosed in panels of irregular shapes. These renderings of game's three-dimensional elements are meant to more closely match the visuals in the BD, making the transitions one of the points in which the adaptation and its source can be seen simultaneously.



Fig. 2. Transition screen in *Salammbô*.

The design inherited from Druillet is associated with a break in gameplay. It is a visual element that the user does not control, but which summarizes the episode's events and their significance or consequences. In so doing, it fulfills a further game-specific function, that of bridging the gap between the greater narrative developed by the game and the user's actions. In a point and click adventure game, the user advances by solving puzzles, the answers to which depend on conversations or the location and correct arrangement of different objects. Progress occurs in small steps, and not in real time, so these transitions help the user master the magnitude of the character's achievements and their chronology. Through these screens, gameplay appears logically organized, independently of player of trial and error.

The Flaubert and Druillet narratives of *Salammbô*, and their respective media, are entwined along the nodes provided by the decorated passages. The novel's distinctive features, and those of its writing, are encapsulated in these pages, becoming embedded in the BD version. In the game, the layout of these pages is used in a function specific to the genre, that of conveying the impact of the player's actions and projecting the action into new locations or launching new episodes. In these instances, the player is reminded that the game is an adaptation, and that a change in medium has occurred, but much more seamlessly than in *Dune*. Motivated by the logic of visual adaptation, the integration of the two media in *Salammbô* is very close.

The game draws on the visual characteristics of its source and integrates the distinctive elements of its medium into gameplay. In a point and click adventure game, the player progresses in a linear story by solving various puzzles, including conversations in which a series of correct replies must be given, different objects gathered, organized or transferred to other characters. In *Salammbô*, visual cues dominate, with the character's main activity being the careful observation of spaces with complex architecture and décor. Plot points are broken down into smaller steps, which reduce the action to the puzzle mechanisms. For example, the initial task of giving Salammbô's statue to Mathô entails six further actions – a conversation with him (1), in which Spendius is instructed where to go to remove his chains (2); a game played with the character that owns blacksmithing tools (3); a conversation with the artisan to obtain glue (4); putting the statue back together (5); and another conversation with Mathô (6). Though the tasks are relatively clearly identified from the start, the locations to visit in accomplishing them are not immediately obvious to the player, so exploration and back-tracking are frequently necessary.

Travel between locations is not ludified, with space scrolling in preset directions and increments displaying the same images on each pass. Coupled with the game's camera being fixed and giving a wide-angle view of the setting, the main playing experience is that of wandering through richly decorated locations. Though the same impression can be had while playing other point and click adventure games, because

Salammbó maintains the specific look of its source, the roaming inherent to this type of gameplay becomes an approximation of reading the BD's sweeping illustrations.

Fassone argues that in adapting film, games engage in the "discretisation and abstraction of the narrative of the original" (113), and in *Salammbó* the same logic is evident in the treatment of the images. The BD's complex pages are broken down into individual vignettes, linked to create the diegetic geography. Given the main character's frequent isolation in the environment and the lack of time pressure exerted either narratively or through timed puzzles, the player is relatively free to explore it at leisure. The new spatial arrangement does not approximate the "Z" reading pattern of comics, but it was not necessarily the most useful cognitive path in Druillet, whose complex page compositions frequently deconstruct the standard grid format. While the geography prevents users from determining their own reading pattern, the navigation of sites on an average playthrough offers both variety and harmony of design, inviting contemplation. The act is not merely aesthetic, since, like in the BD, puzzles that draw the user deeper into the graphics allow the plot to be derived from the interpretation of images.

Playing *Salammbó* thus depends on the users successfully employing interpretative codes derived from their experience with games and BD in sequence. In this regard, the game follows trends that are evident in French digital comics of the 1990s, as analyzed by Julien Beaudry. As he shows, comics of that period began to be adapted into point and click adventure games, and most frequently the BD provided content for games, while form was generally sacrificed. In some cases, games based on comics were, however, designed so that they could « conserver un mode de narration visuelle proche de la bande dessinée. Ils intègrent des citations directes des albums et utilisent des codes graphiques propres à ce média (cases, bulles, récitatifs...) » (78). Situated between these models, Édouard Lussan's *Opération Teddy Bear* (1996), functioned by « alterner des moments ludiques et des moments narratifs », yielding « un nouvel objet culturel, à mi-chemin entre la bande dessinée et le jeu vidéo » (54). While *Salammbó*, too, occupies this space, the use it makes of its BD source, as a game, can also be read through a comparison with similar products that are much more closely aligned in their development and marketing with the video game side, such as Ubisoft's *XIII*, a French-produced title released the same year as *Salammbó* and based on the eponymous Belgian comic by Jean Van Hamme and William Vance, and a more recent Japanese title, Atlus' *Persona 5* (2016).

In *XIII*, the BD look is primarily achieved through the process of cel-shading characters and environments, in which three-dimensional models are rendered as though they were two-dimensional, and more particularly, using the conventions of comic book shading. Bold outlines around characters and sharp perspective on objects and architecture echo the impression of two-dimensional approximation of volumes. Onomatopoeia are also used, with diegetic noises such as gunshots and exclamations suggesting injuries displayed on screen in distinctive lettering during gameplay. But

Despite *XIII*'s commitment to the comic book aesthetic, it demonstrates an unease with the fixity of the print medium. The opening sequence already announces the game's desire to replace it through other media. An open book with a traditional layout of panels is initially displayed to the player, but it is not meant to be read since it is not visible long enough, nor are there evident captions or speech bubbles to assist comprehension. The camera then sinks into it and goes on to jump between panels on the first and subsequent pages, playing brief animations. These sequences show what ensues from the illustrations, either filling in the gaps between displayed panels or going far beyond what was portrayed on the overview of the book. The camera movement thus appears to simulate reading the comic and to illustrate how meaning is made from separate images, but it also speeds up the process and settles it into the content of the animations.

It is also important to note that several of the sequences bridging panels allude to other visual media, such as film or video. Artifacts such as film grain or the framing outline and recording indicator from a camera display are superimposed onto the animation, though onomatopoeia are also used to punctuate the main events. In combining these elements, the sequence foreshadows the change in medium and announces the game's aesthetic. At the same time, a concern with expediently "covering" the narrative territory occupied by the comic book is evident. It is evoked in game's opening only so it can be replaced through other, more motile media. This creates the impression that intermediality is rejected even as it is illustrated – the comic book medium is reduced to an aesthetic divorced both from its own and game mechanics.

A different approach to replicating the comic-book look in a video game is offered by *Persona 5*, which valorizes secondary aesthetic characteristics of comic books, and also assigns them a game-specific function. A Japanese game, it highlights the traits of manga as a printed, paper medium in punctuating important transitions in gameplay. Graphic elements such as greyscale and halftone shading are deconstructed and decoupled from their original purpose – the game is in color, and shading is achieved differently by its programming – and related to a gameplaying feature specific to *Persona 5*'s genre, the Japanese role-playing game (JRPG).

The game narrative has the characters navigate between two distinct environments: a realistic setting (modern-day Tokyo), in which they are high school students, and a supernatural realm (the Metaverse), in which they possess superpowers and confront a wide variety of enemies, collectively identified as Shadows. Confronting the Shadows allows the characters to progress both geographically within dungeons, the structures to be traversed in order to reach the main villain of a given stage, and in terms of their resources and abilities.

The comic book elements are most evident in the Metaverse, during the characters' battles with the Shadows. There, the status bar displayed recalls manga through its representation of the player's party in high contrast greyscale cartoon

miniatures in a fixed overlay. The medium’s visual vocabulary is evident also in the way the impact of the attacks is conveyed through distinctive, fixed lettering and onomatopoeia. Rare dialogues juxtapose a two-dimensional rendering of the characters with the three-dimensional battle scene. Thick, irregular lines are used to separate the two, creating panel borders and defining speech bubbles. A further allusion to the look of manga is made through the use of visible, decorative halftone patterns (such as stars) in greyscale. These are noticeable, for example, following a successful “all-out attack,” when characters are shown celebrating victory in a two-dimensional static image. Various versions of this shading method appear also in menus (Fig. 4), and on the screen separating the characters’ celebration of the conclusion of a battle and the series of slides informing the player what resources were acquired.

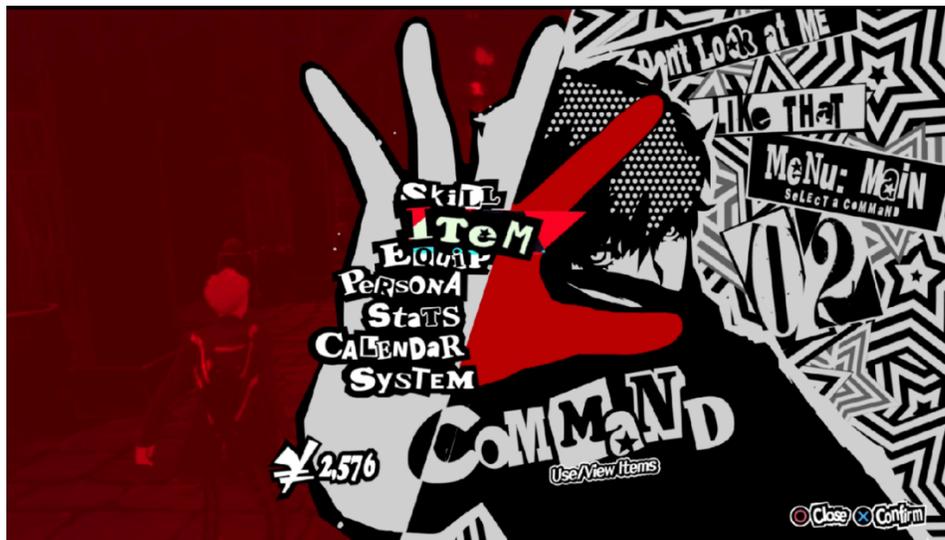


Fig. 4. Menu in *Persona 5* featuring decorative halftone patterns

The function ascribed to the particularities of manga as a print medium evoked in marking the end of a battle is that of realizing a transition between two main types of gameplay activity: the traversal of the dungeon and the confrontation with enemies. In the first setting, the player is relatively free in his or her movements, while during battles the playable characters and the Shadows alternate attacks in a scripted fashion. The turn-based gameplay is structured so that the player does not control the characters’ movement but selects attacks which are carried out on screen through preset animations. A staple of the JRPG, this transition was jarring in games such as those of the *Final Fantasy* series, where enemies would not be indicated on the map, and consequently the user would engage in random battles as he navigated the space. *Persona 5*’s framing of the dungeon-battle-dungeon transition through manga softens the transition. The variety of gameplay

activity is conveyed as the turning of pages, encouraging the user to see the two types of actions in which he engages as continuous.

This comparison suggests that *Salammbó* strives for an integration of the two media in the player experience: it draws on the visual characteristics of its source, like *XIII*, and assimilates the distinctive elements of its medium into gameplay, like *Persona 5*. As adaptation projects, both *Salammbó* and *XIII* engage with the question of both recalling their comic book source and functioning as a game, but take divergent routes. While *XIII* prefers the gaming side and reduces its reuse of the comic book elements to utilitarian functions (menus and some transitions), *Salammbó*'s game mechanics can in fact be seen to emulate the experience of reading the BD.

Conclusion

Salammbó stands out from games such as *XIII* and *Persona 5* through its integration of the two media on which it relies because it reproduces key aspects of the BD experience both through gameplay and graphically. The most visible allusions to the game's source, Druillet's book, appear in the transition screens, which borrow the layout of six distinctive spreads. In these screens, the flattening of the images into two dimensions recalls the BD illustrations more closely than the game's three-dimensional models. References to the BD thus mark important points in the game, in which progress is marked and game activities in which the user has engaged are related to story.

Even as they stress the game's nature as an adaptation, the transition screens also attest to the differences between Cryo's approach to its source and Druillet's. In the album, this layout is reserved for longer Flaubertian citations that bear the marks of Druillet's editing and are juxtaposed with his complex illustrations. An encapsulation of his method of adapting Flaubert, the pages show that in the BD the source text is contained and restrained. It powers the album but it develops in different, unexpected directions, with expansion and flow being the key characteristics of its visual narrative. While Cryo, with the artist's collaboration, privileges graphics, as the reading of *Salammbó* predecessor *Dune* indicates, its emphasis is on fidelity to its source.

The game genre into which *Salammbó* was adapted entails visual puzzles and the navigation of space in a particular, pre-scripted manner. This type of movement imparted to the BD is more in keeping with the reading of a large-format album than with the three-dimensional movement required by *XIII*. There, though the look of a comic book in motion is achieved, the emphasis is on the motion. Transitions featuring comic book elements fulfill much of the same function as in *Salammbó*, but they also recall the particularities of its source, which are erased in *XIII*. If *Persona 5* assigns a game-specific function to the traits of manga as a printed, paper medium it reuses, it also decouples these from their original function. The decorative use of these elements is woven into the game's themes, further characterizing the unexpected heroic nature of the protagonists.

While the manga elements look distinctive in the game, their mix in *Salammbó* creates less of a sense of an encounter between media. Gameplay and graphics allow the two to flow through each other, yielding a continuity of experience between game and BD.

Notes

¹ In an interview, Druillet approximated that 70% of the text in the BD is Flaubert's (Barbier 20).

² In Druillet's *Nosferatu* (1989), citations from Baudelaire used in speech bubbles are acknowledged in the illustrations as such.

³ In a similar vein, Barbier refers to the Flaubertian citations as jewels (9).

⁴ The 2018 Titan Comics English-language translation of the collected *Salammbó* bears the title *Lone Sloane Salammbó*, in keeping with *Lone Sloane: Delirius* and *Lone Sloane: Gail*.⁵ For further details on Cryo's historical games see *Video Games Around the World*.

⁶ Cryo returned to the same subject matter in 2001, following the Sci-Fi channel's adaptation of the novel, with *Frank Herbert's Dune*, which was far less successful.

⁷ Representative reviews include those of Richard Corliss, writing for *Time*, who considered the film "inward and remote," Pauline Kael in *The New Yorker*, who found that it was "heavy on exposition," and presented in "scenes that are like illustrations" and Rita Kempley in *The Washington Post*, who observed that the adaptation "turns epic to myopic."

⁸ Thierry Groensteen observed that popular science fiction works such *Star Wars*, *Blade Runner*, and *Alien* would have been impossible without the magazine (86).

⁹ The character appears for the first time in 1966, in *Lone Sloane: Le Mystère des abîmes*, and in a total of 14 albums to date.

¹⁰ The representation of characters in the game is more stylized by Druillet, and they are costumed in more overtly science fiction outfits, though the architecture remains similar to that in the BD.

¹¹ Gonçalves' article also goes into greater detail of which episodes from the BD are kept in the game.

¹² Unlike the illustrations, the decorated passages are signed by the BD letterer, Dominique Amat.

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