

# The Paris of Modiano: layering, sedimentation and landslides

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## ABSTRACT

The literary work of Patrick Modiano appears to be inseparable from the city of Paris, and especially from the Paris of the German occupation: the writer, his readers, his critics, and even the Swedish Academy which awarded him the Nobel Prize in 2014, unanimously agree on this point. Space and time are intimately intertwined by Patrick Modiano, and his texts often connect Paris with the historical period of the Occupation, although the city is traversed and also described in a literal way on other occasions. The author's stylistic methods, consisting of interconnecting space and time and which blurs chronological boundaries create a nebulous, ambiguous, and indecisive image of the city, in which, as in *Dora Bruder*, several layers of time are superimposed.

**Keywords:** Patrick Modiano, Paris, memory, Occupation, Dora Bruder.

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## INTRODUCTION

On 9 October 2014, the French writer Patrick Modiano was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature “for the art of memory with which he has evoked the most ungraspable human destinies and uncovered the life-world of the occupation” (Nobel Prize, 2017).

Even before receiving that distinction, Modiano was already a well-known writer—both in terms of the distribution and sale of his work in France and abroad (his books had already been translated into 36 different languages) and from the point of view of its reception by literary critics and his peers—and he had

received many prizes.<sup>1</sup> However, the Nobel Prize clearly represents the definitive consecration of a writer's career (Ducas, 2013). When granting him the prize, the Swedish Academy emphasised the repetition of several themes in Modiano's literary texts, ones that had certainly already been identified much earlier by his readers and critics. Of note, among these areas, Paris was mentioned as a very specific category of its own. In fact, the 'facts' section dedicated to Modiano on the Nobel prize website states that the main themes that stand out in his work are "memory, oblivion, identity, and guilt. The city of Paris plays a central role in his writing [...] At times, Patrick Modiano's stories are based on his own experience or on interviews, newspaper articles, or his own notes" (Nobel Prize, 2017). Therefore, no matter how central Paris is in Modiano's work, it is not only a theme [for him] but rather, the city plays a pre-eminent role in his work because he considers it a participant in the creation.

Undoubtedly, there is a fairly wide consensus among specialists in Modiano's work, who consider that Paris cannot be reduced only to a minor or secondary decorative category in the writer's work.

[Modiano is synonymous with Paris. Think of the author's solemn declaration at the end of a preface presenting a personal selection of texts about the French capital: "*Nous voulions faire peau neuve alors que sur notre peau, justement, était inscrit ce tatouage indélébile: Paris. À toi. Pour toujours*" {We want to graft a new skin upon the old one, precisely, where

there was already an indelible tattoo: 'Paris. To you. Forever'} (Modiano, 1987). The enormous importance of this city in Patrick Modiano's work was soon recognised [...]. Virtually all his novels are set in Paris and, where some or all of the story is set elsewhere (*Villa Triste*, *Vestiaire de l'enfance* [Childhood closet], *Dimanches d'août* [August Sundays], *Du plus loin de l'oubli* (Out of the Dark), *Des inconnues* [The unknowns] and other texts), the author compares the places described with spaces in the French capital] (Zelinsky, 2012, p. 359).

On the other hand, in the brief and very general presentation dedicated to Modiano on the website of his publisher, Gallimard, the term most cited is 'Paris', where it appears twice within just few lines:

[Patrick Modiano, born in 1945, is one of the most talented writers of his generation. An explorer of the past, he revives the atmosphere and details of places and past times with extreme precision, such as Paris in the occupation in his first novel, *La Place de l'étoile*, published in 1968. In *Catherine Certitude*, he transports us into the world of a strange girl with a strange name, who grows up in the Parisian district of Gare du Nord in the 1960s] (Gallimard, 2014).

The central space that Paris occupies in Modiano's work<sup>2</sup> has been meticulously documented by literary critics, both in the general and literary press and in academic publications. Paris is usually considered a fully participatory recurring character in Modiano's texts,<sup>3</sup> although the Swedish Academy goes further and practically considers

1 The page dedicated to Modiano on the website of his publisher, Gallimard, lists the awards and distinctions he has collected since the beginning of his career: the Roger Nimier Prize, in 1968; the Felix-Fénéon Prize, in 1969; the Grand Prize of the French Academy, in 1972; the Booksellers' Prize, in 1976; the Goncourt Prize in 1978; the Grand Prize of the Prince Pierre Foundation of Monaco, in 1984; the Paul-Morand Literature Grand Prix of the French Academy, in 2000; and the Simone and Cino del Duca Foundation World Prize, in 2010. However, Gallimard's website does not mention these prizes: the Relay Prize, in 1990, for *Voyage de noces* (*Honeymoon*); the Jean-Monnet Prize for European Literature in the department of Charentes, in 2002, for *La petite bijou* (*Little Jewel*); the BnF-Prize Marguerite Duras Prize, in 2011, for his whole body of work; and the Austrian Prize for European Literature, in 2012, for his whole body of work (Gallimard, 2014).

2 In reality, this centrality only occurs in some of the writer's work, but the Modiano-Paris association has always been so dominant that it has been incorporated into the author's whole literary body.

3 "*Le Paris des années 40 ou des années 60 devient comme le deuxième personnage de ses textes, qu'il revisite en privilégiant les non-quartiers, ces zones parisiennes comme neutres, excentrées et perdues, où se cacheraient des personnages romanesques et dangereux, et autant de secrets qu'il lui faudra découvrir*" [The Paris of the 1940s or 1960s becomes like a second character in his texts, which the author revisits by privileging the 'non-neighbourhoods'; these are like neutral, peripheral, and lost Parisian places where fictional and dangerous characters would be hidden, as well as many secrets that will have to be discovered] (Kapiřílian, 10 September 2014).

Paris as co-creator in his work. Therefore, here we focus on the place that Paris occupies in Modiano's texts, insisting on the idea that, as is often the case for this writer, this city is treated in a literarily diffuse way, confused and uncertain, especially thanks to a process in which he interweaves space and time and blurs chronological boundaries. To show this, we will first analyse the nature of the unique link Modiano has forged between Paris and his books throughout his career. Then we will specifically look at the Paris of the occupation: here space and time are inseparable in Modiano's work, and Paris seems to be analogously united to the historical era of the Second World War, even though the author also traverses and describes the city, in literary terms, in other periods.

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### THE ANALOGOUS LINK BETWEEN PARIS AND MODIANO'S TEXTS

Right after the Nobel Prize was announced, an article about Modiano clearly highlighted how the presence of Paris predominates in his texts: "*Le destin de l'auteur français, qui vient de recevoir le prix Nobel de littérature, est lié à la capitale. Son histoire personnelle et celle de ses personnages dressent une cartographie de Paris*" [The fate of the French author, who has just received the Nobel Prize for literature, is linked to the capital. His personal history and that of his characters draw a map of Paris]<sup>4</sup> (Doiezie and Chissey, 10 October 2014). This concept of cartography or cadastre is repeated again and again in relation to Modiano's work, particularly in academic analyses devoted to him. "*En continuant notre lecture intertextuelle, on constate que les personnages des romans de Modiano parcourent très souvent la ville à pied. Ces sorties à pied offrent l'occasion à l'auteur, soit de décrire les quartiers parisiens, soit de projeter une image vivante et réaliste de la capitale avec «ses rues et ses places»*" [These walking tours provide an opportunity for the author, either to describe the Parisian districts, or to project a living and realistic image of the capital with "its streets and squares"] (Litsardaki, 2009). In fact, one can state that in Modiano's work "*todo es real y*

*patente y está medido. Modiano es un geómetra [...], frecuenta las avenidas más sombrías; es el escritor de París*" [everything is real, patent, and measured. Modiano is a surveyor who frequents the darkest of avenues; he is the writer of Paris] (Enzine, 1995, p. 20). In an interview printed in the 9 October 2014 edition of the newspaper *Libération*, Alice Kaplan, director of the French department of Yale university (where part of her teaching focuses on Modiano), explains that in this regard "*la précision des références parisiennes qui émaillent ses livres, tous ces noms de rues, ces adresses, qui captent si bien les ambiances de ces différents quartiers, qu'il faut sans doute avoir visité Paris au moins une fois pour tout saisir*" [with the precision of the Parisian references that adorn his books, all these street names, these addresses, which capture so well the ambiances of these different neighbourhoods, undoubtedly you would have to have visited Paris at least once to be able to grasp everything]<sup>5</sup> (Franck-Dumas, 9 October 2014), thus creating obstacles to the reception of his texts abroad, particularly in the United States.

The difficulty for readers who are unfamiliar with Paris is further increased because of the very close entanglement between time and space in Modiano's texts. In fact, Modiano's Paris very frequently refers to the superimposition of different versions of itself, indisputably similar ones, although each is out of phase with the others, and not only chronologically—also in three different time periods: the Paris of the occupation, the Paris of the 1960s, and finally, contemporary Paris. In other words, the spatial coordinates of Modiano's Parisian territory only make sense when they intimately intersect

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4 It should be noted that the article is accompanied by an infographic, that is, an interactive map of Paris which marks certain places where, if the reader clicks on them, Modiano's work corresponding to the area appears.

5 In a clearly less favourable and rather more ironic—even cutting—register (for which he was later reproached), shortly before Modiano received the Nobel Prize, an article by Eric Chevillard, a literary critic at *Le Monde*, gave an account of Modiano's last book, *Pour que tu ne te perdes pas dans le quartier* (So You Don't Get Lost in the Neighborhood) thus: "*Elle se vérifie ici encore et le lecteur a parfois l'impression de suivre un itinéraire scrupuleusement détaillé plutôt que de lire un roman. A recommander aux touristes en visite dans la capitale. Sans compter qu'un livre dans le vent d'automne se replie beaucoup plus facilement qu'un plan*" [It is true here again and the reader sometimes has the impression of following a scrupulously detailed itinerary rather than reading a novel. I recommend it to tourists visiting the capital. Not to mention that a book folds much more easily in the autumn winds than a map does] (Chevillard, 2 October 2014).

with the temporal coordinates of these three periods. One of the peculiarities of Modiano's writing is that these periods are presented not only as successive, but also as being interrelated.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the Parisian space which is literarily reconstructed by Modiano contains strata that refer to specific historical periods, like sediments layered upon one another. However, they also sit like landslides which blur the contours of these different periods and so that they could even become confused with one other:

[On many occasions, authors seem to distribute Paris between two different times and several periods. In the case of Modiano, the collision between the Paris of today and the one of the occupation—which belongs to the past—is a recurrent phenomenon in his body of work] (Litsardaki, 2009).

In his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize for Literature given in Stockholm on 7 December 2014, Modiano himself addressed the centrality of Paris in his work. In particular, he placed it within the context of other literary work linked to specific cities. Thus, he cited several authors who are associated by collective memory and literary history with specific cities: Balzac and Paris, Dickens and London, Dostoevsky and St. Petersburg, Nagai Kafu and Tokyo, and Hjalmar Söderberg and Stockholm. Notwithstanding, Modiano has also established a very strong and practically analogous link, on the one hand between Paris and the period of the occupation,<sup>7</sup> and on the other, as he stated

in his speech, "*Je suis comme toutes celles et ceux nés en 1945, un enfant de la guerre, et plus précisément, puisque je suis né à Paris, un enfant qui a dû sa naissance au Paris de l'Occupation.*" [Like everyone else born in 1945, I was a child of the war and more precisely, because I was born in Paris, a child who owed his birth to the Paris of the occupation.]<sup>8</sup> Here, Modiano broadly develops the idea of the darkness of the Paris occupation, veiled, blurred and confused,<sup>9</sup> and yet absolutely inseparable both from his own existence (in the strict sense of the term: his birth) and from his literary creation. "*Voilà pourquoi le Paris de l'Occupation a toujours été pour moi comme une nuit originelle. Sans lui je ne serais jamais né. Ce Paris-là n'a cessé de me hanter et sa lumière voilée baigne parfois mes livres.*" [That is why for me, the Paris of the occupation was always a kind of primordial darkness. Without it I would never have been born. That Paris never stopped haunting me, and my books are sometimes bathed in its veiled light.] (Modiano, 2015). He emphasises the importance of Paris as literary material: "*La grande ville, en l'occurrence Paris, ma ville natale, est liée à mes premières impressions d'enfance et ces impressions étaient si fortes que, depuis, je n'ai jamais cessé d'explorer les «mystères de Paris»*" [The city – as it happens Paris, the city of my birth – is linked to my very first childhood impressions, and these impressions were so strong that I have been constantly exploring the 'mysteries of Paris' ever since] (Modiano, 2015). His speech perfectly corresponds to the literary resources Modiano uses: the superimposition of space (Paris), a historical period (the occupation), and personal time (childhood, and its accompanying socialisation which so marked him that he has incorporated it into a lot of his literary production).

Here we can make several observations. First, although Modiano's parents met during the occupation and therefore we can say that without the occupation this

6 This explains why the term *palimpsest* is mentioned so frequently when characterising Modiano's texts. This term was originally used to describe a parchment whose first written text is scratched out or cleaned off and is then reused to write a new text, with the original text remaining totally or partially visible under the new one.

7 "*Axée sur l'intériorité, la répétition et la nuance, son œuvre romanesque se rapproche d'une forme d'autofiction par sa quête de la jeunesse perdue. Elle se centre essentiellement sur le Paris de l'Occupation et s'attache à dépeindre la vie d'individus ordinaires confrontés au tragique de l'histoire et agissant de manière aléatoire ou opaque*" [Focused on interiority, repetition and nuance, his novels approach a form of autofiction in his quest for his lost youth. It primarily focuses on the Paris of the occupation and is dedicated to depicting the lives of ordinary people confronted with the tragedy of history and who behave in random or opaque ways] (Wikipedia, 2017). Therefore, note that the link between Modiano and Paris is systematically mentioned by the Swedish Academy, in press articles, in academic research, and by the writer himself.

8 The importance of the occupation in Modiano's work was also mentioned by the permanent secretary of the Swedish Academy, Peter Englund, when announcing the award of the Nobel to Modiano: "*pour son art de la mémoire avec lequel il a fait surgir les destins les plus insaisissables et découvrir le monde vécu sous l'Occupation*" [For the art of memory with which he has evoked the most ungraspable human destinies and uncovered the life-world of the occupation] (Englund, 2014).

9 Effectively, this is stated in his literary texts, as we will see later.

couple would never have got together, and their son would not have been born, it is not exactly true that Paris was Patrick Modiano's birthplace. In fact, he was born on 30 July 1945 in Boulogne-Billancourt. Of course, this deviation is as minor as it is understandable: Boulogne is a city on the outskirts of Paris and, evidently, the capital is much more prestigious and influential. However, this small alteration of reality further reinforces the link between Modiano's biographical trajectory and Paris; because this link is deliberately forced, it is key to understanding the omnipresence of this city in Modiano's literary texts. Second, Modiano intentionally links exclusively to the Paris of the period of the occupation, although, as we have already pointed out, both the Paris of the 1960s and the contemporary Paris of today are also very present in his work, albeit less frequently than the 1940s Paris. Thirdly, when Modiano presents Paris, he insists on its associated mystery by using expressions such as "*nuit originelle*" [primordial darkness] and "*lumière voilée*" [veiled light], as well as referencing the title of Eugène Sue's work, *Les Mystères de Paris* (*The Mysteries of Paris*),<sup>10</sup> which refers to a broader characteristic of Modiano's work, in which he almost always leaves an unresolved enigma.<sup>11</sup>

## THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS DURING THE OCCUPATION

This strong link between Paris, the occupation, and mystery is the essence of many of Modiano's texts. Thus, the period of the occupation becomes the historical

background for a lot of his novels.<sup>12</sup> Jesper Svenbro<sup>13</sup>, one of the 18 members of the Swedish Academy, who oversaw Patrick Modiano's award presentation in Stockholm in December 2014, began his speech with a paragraph taken from Modiano's novel *Livret de famille* [Family vignettes] (1977) which is very often quoted:

[I was only twenty, but my memory preceded my birth. I was sure, for example, of having lived in the Paris of the occupation, since I remembered certain characters of that time and minute and disturbing details of those not mentioned in the history books. Yet I tried to fight against the gravity that pulled me back and I dreamt of freeing myself from a poisoned memory] (Modiano, 1977).

Next, Svenbro pointed out that "*Il n'était clairement pas facile, au milieu des années 1960, de faire accepter la réalité de l'Occupation. Mais Modiano, courageusement et de manière indépendante, a accepté ce défi dans ses trois premières nouvelles*" [It was clearly not easy, in the mid-1960s, to accept the reality of the occupation. But Modiano, bravely and independently, accepted this challenge in his first three novels.].<sup>14</sup> In fact,

12 The occupation also takes the central role of the film *Lacombe Lucien* (*Lacombe, Lucien*), whose screenplay was written by Modiano with Louis Malle and which was nominated for an Oscar for the best foreign film in 1974. This film was also cited in Jesper Svenbro's speech to the Swedish Academy about Modiano.

13 Svenbro is an expert in Greek mythology and antiquity who has worked in France for his entire professional career. Until recently he was the research director at the French National Centre for Scientific Research.

14 These novels by Modiano did not appear in the mid-1960s, but rather in 1968, 1969, and 1972. But one must recognise that, even then, the myth of a collectively-resistant France remained very strong. According to Lecarme, [the image of the France of 1940–1944 (an image confirmed or intensified in *La ronde de nuit* and *Les boulevards de ceinture*) was abhorrent to French readers in 1968. All of Modiano's characters—speculators, swindlers, failed actresses, journalists, or aspiring writers—are lost children that France strives to deliver to the German invaders. Modiano was the first, in Charles de Gaulle's France, to describe an antisemitic and xenophobic France that was supportive of Pétain and Maurras, and in which all the power was given to the *Police des Questions Juives* [the 'Police for Jewish issues', who investigated citizens' Jewish status]. Of course, some [people] were resistant, but these were double agents who rubbed shoulders with the strongest] (Lecarme, 2015, p. 49).

10 Initially published as a serialised saga between 1842 and 1843, this novel presents life in Paris, not from the point of view of high society, but from that of its people and, therefore, describes the misery that reigns in the city. It is far removed, both by its content and by its form, from the work Patrick Modiano.

11 Modiano's work very often ends without solving the opening mystery (and sometimes, on the contrary, expands it by adding secondary mysteries to it). Sometimes they are like detective novels, particularly those by Georges Simenon, because of their investigative dimension: the narrator is usually a sleuth who, while trying to solve an initial mystery, frequently adds a series of new mysteries—all related to the first—without ever solving the initial one.



in Modiano's case, one can refer to *The Occupation Trilogy* comprising *La Place de l'Étoile*, *La ronde de nuit* (*The night watch*), and *Les boulevards de ceinture* (*Ring roads*). The Paris of the occupation is again subsequently provides a partial context for *Dora Bruder*.<sup>15</sup> Even though these four Modiano texts are often compared to work by Marcel Proust or Georges Perec (despite their immeasurable stylistic differences<sup>16</sup>) they are less permeated with memory and the search for lost time than they are infused with forgetfulness or amnesia (related to the aforementioned subjects of dizziness, indecision, and instability). Together this renders a hollow identity and explains that impression of mystery, unease, or confusion that characterises Modiano's texts—although he would very soon stop basing the historical context of his work exclusively on the occupation. In fact, in spite of everything, it would continue to appear, as it always had, as an

[original matrix [...]. Not that it repeats itself identically or is like an encyclopaedia, but its qualities and attributes are constantly transferred, sometimes even grafted, onto the present. It is with {the occupation} alone that Modiano, a writer so reluctant to use excess metaphor, summons all these analogical imbalances: an arrest becomes a raid, small groups represent collaborators or resistance fighters, and following someone is to pursue them. A job interview may be reminiscent of an interrogation, filling out a form amounts to providing information as an informant, a trace left in the past can serve as condemnatory evidence in an indefinite Kafkaesque trial. Apartments are occupied as if by force, inhabited by characters in transit, ready to flee, leaving their belongings in suitcases] (Decout, 2015, p. 7).

In his eponymous work about *Dora Bruder*, a young Jewish woman who disappeared in 1941, the usual space–time borders become, once again, diffuse and blurred (Modiano, 1997). The text is devoted entirely to trying to reconstruct that young woman's trajectory, to try to understand why she fled twice during the occupation before being stopped by the French police and, later, deported.

[From 1988, fascinated by the case of Dora Bruder, a teenage girl deported in 1942 from France to Auschwitz, {Modiano} conducted an investigation that would produce a generic hybrid, *Dora Bruder*. This biographical sketch, based on archives and testimonies, as well as research (Modiano 'worked' with Serge Klarsfeld), is also a partial autobiography and a romanticised drift. If the communication of this evidence, without commenting {on it}, leaves the reader emotionally charged, it is nonetheless a melancholic gesture, largely because it is doomed to remain incomplete. The investigation is hampered by the disappearances which the text continually refers to: the oblivion, destruction, or inaccessibility of the archives, the demolition of buildings, and the death of

15 [Contrary to the accepted idea, Modiano departed very quickly (in the space of three books) from the 'dark years', although the book that generated the most consensus and admiration was *Dora Bruder*, in 1997. {On the other hand} he removed the whole of *The Occupation Trilogy* from his collection {published by} Quarto] (Lecarme, 2015, p. 50 and p. 56).

16 In reality, what brings him closer to these two writers is both the theme of disappearance, so dear to Georges Perec, and that of memory. During his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Modiano emphasised the following: "*Vous avez eu l'indulgence de faire allusion concernant mes livres à « l'art de la mémoire avec lequel sont évoquées les destinées humaines les plus insaisissables. » Mais ce compliment dépasse ma personne. Cette mémoire particulière qui tente de recueillir quelques bribes du passé et le peu de traces qu'ont laissé sur terre des anonymes et des inconnus est elle aussi liée à ma date de naissance : 1945. D'être né en 1945, après que des villes furent détruites et que des populations entières eurent disparu, m'a sans doute, comme ceux de mon âge, rendu plus sensible aux thèmes de la mémoire et de l'oubli.*" [you were kind enough to allude to "the art of memory with which he has evoked the most ungraspable human destinies". But this compliment is about more than just me. It is about a peculiar kind of memory, which attempts to collect bits and pieces from the past and the few traces left on earth of the anonymous and the unknown. And this, too, is bound up with my year of birth: 1945. Being born in 1945, after the cities had been destroyed and entire populations had disappeared, must have made me, like others of my age, more sensitive to the themes of memory and oblivion]. This comment also, especially, applies to Perec although he was born a decade before Modiano, in 1936.

witnesses and contemporaries. Still, other traces remain in the palimpsest of history to signify the permanence of its violence. An old map of Paris marks a cemetery which was opposite the boarding school in which Dora had hidden: Modiano reminds us that a thousand victims guillotined in the Reign of Terror are buried there in a mass grave] (Dambre, 2010, p. 99–100).

We can use *Dora Bruder* to update the precise way in which the different periods are entangled and fused in the Paris that Modiano recreates literarily. In fact, an overlapping impression of a Paris from different periods emerges from several passages, especially from the book's last page:

[Afterwards, the Paris in which I tried to find [Dora's] trace remained as deserted and as silent as that day [the day after Dora and her father were sent to Auschwitz, when there was a curfew in retaliation for an attack]. I walk through the empty streets. For me they stay that way, even in the evening when there are traffic jams and people rush into the subways. I cannot help but think of her and feel an echo of her presence in some neighbourhoods. The other night, [this happened] near the North Station] (Modiano, 1997, p. 144).

Hundreds of different names of Parisian places (streets, squares, gardens, stations, etc.) appear in Patrick Modiano's search for a trace of this tragically disappeared young woman, scattered, almost imperceptible and impalpable—and yet always evident in some spaces in Paris. It is precisely this aspect that explains why, in 1999 when Joanna Kilmartin translated *Dora Bruder* for publication in the United States, it became enriched with a paratext destined to turn it into a work that is more accessible to foreign readers, which modified

[its status as a book, turning it into a biography, documentary evidence. Other elements of paratext which also contribute, in this edition, are the city plans for the 12th and 18th arrondissements, the former is decoratively reproduced on the front

and back cover: this book is not only about a person who really existed, but this life is also linked to a very specific urban space. By subtle narrative work, this sketch suggests the close interweaving of Dora and her Parisian 'habitat'] (Schulte, 2012, p. 527).

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## CONCLUSION

Paradoxically, although not all of Modiano's work is explicitly situated in Paris or the occupation, it inhabits and is inhabited by that period and by that space.

[Thus, in thirty novels and stories, from *La Place de l'Étoile* (1968) to his very last, *Pour que tu ne te perdes pas dans le quartier* (published on 2 October [2014]), this writer has not stopped surveying a real or vanished Paris, devastated by men and time and haunted by the ghosts of memory, dragging us into its most neutral, grey, and peripheral areas—as a kind of mental geography, a metaphor of the obscure regions of the unconscious where all that is repressed would hide] (Kapriélian, 26 October 2014).

In an extremely original way for a literary work, Modiano's art has helped to shape, in part, Parisian urban space: not only the Paris he constructs in his texts, but also, the texts themselves—especially *Dora Bruder*—also contribute to producing Parisian space. The interweaving of different periods and real or prosaic geographical realities culminated on 9 January 2015—not in literature, but rather, in the real [French] capital of today. In a public tribute to Patrick Modiano given at the Théâtre de la Ville, the mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, announced that a promenade in Paris would soon be named in honour of Dora Bruder. Indeed, on 1 June [2015] and in Patrick Modiano's presence, the Paris City Hall inaugurated this promenade where the Bruder family had lived many decades before, between Rue Leibniz and Rue Belliard. It was described thus:

[Six months after his expressive acceptance of the Nobel Prize in Stockholm, the writer was once again moved on Monday 1 June, at the

inauguration of the Dora Bruder promenade, in the 18th arrondissement of Paris. Before a small group of privileged Parisians, members of Dora Bruder's family, schoolchildren, and Jewish representatives from over the world, Modiano found simple and fair words to revive the space of the moment this Jewish girl was deported to Auschwitz in September 1942. That 16-year-old fugitive, who he snatched from oblivion and anonymity in his most poignant book, soberly titled *Dora Bruder* (Gallimard, 1997), was a girl from the neighbourhood, recalled Modiano: {Her parents were married at the town hall of the 18th arrondissement, she went to the school whose façade we can still see, she attended another school a little further up the hill, she lived with her parents in Rue Lamarck, off of Boulevard Ornano}, the novelist emphasised. {Her grandparents lived "a few meters from us"}. [...] Today, {Dora Bruder becomes a symbol}, declared Modiano. {She now represents the memory of the city where thousands of children and adolescents left France to be killed in Auschwitz, those whose

faces we can still see because Serge Klarsfeld tirelessly collected their photographs in his book, *Mémorial* [*Le mémorial des enfants juifs déportés de France*, FFDJF, 1994, {Memorial of Jewish children deported from France}]] (Cosnard, 1 June 2015).

It is rare enough that a street, avenue, square, or walkway is named after a writer, but this is unheard of for one of their characters, even if it is someone who was real. Patrick Modiano's work had already removed Dora Bruder from the anonymity and oblivion Nazi abuses had plunged her into. With the naming of this promenade after her, she had gone a stage further. In the same way, as the Nobel Academy put it, Paris almost participates in the creation of Modiano's work; [Dora Bruder] now almost participates in the creation of Parisian space, because this promenade now bears her name in explicit reference to Modiano's text. The Parisian space is etched into Modiano's work and, from now on, one of his pieces of work is stamped onto the Parisian space. In this case there is also a landslide between the literary and urban terrains, which feed into each other until they completely overlap.

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