

Abstracts

“Oneself as Another”: Identification and Mourning in Patrick Modiano’s *Dora Bruder*

Susan Rubin Suleiman

Taking off from Paul Ricoeur’s book *Soi-même comme un autre* (*Oneself as Another*), this essay discusses two kinds of identification in Modiano’s relation to Dora: identification as appropriation, where the writer “assimilates” Dora’s story in order to explore his own relation to his parents, especially his father; and identification as empathy, where the writer underlines the differences between his and Dora’s stories and also seeks to come to a historical understanding of what happened to her. In that process, he also evokes the fate of other Jews who, like Dora and her family, were deported from France. I conclude that this kind of empathetic identification leads to mourning, which is the realization that the death of a person has left (as Jacques Lacan puts it) a “hole in the real.”

Trauma and Transmission: Echoes of the Missing Past in *Dora Bruder*

Judith Greenberg

This essay begins with the ethical imperative that *Dora Bruder* puts forward: to pay attention to the stories of the pain of others that had been ignored during the Holocaust. But *Dora Bruder* is also full of “missing pieces”—missing details in Dora’s life story, missing elements in the narrator’s relationship with his father, and the missing understanding that necessarily occurs in relation to “knowing” trauma

and particularly, the Holocaust. The essay looks at those “missing pieces” both through insights in trauma theory and through the lens of 9/11, which introduced a new sense of the “missing” to this writer. It proposes that the narrator’s condition or quest as haunted by the missing can be understood as an aspect of “postmemory,” a term introduced by Marianne Hirsch to describe the transmission of traumatic memories across generations. The essay explores how the narrator can represent the “next generation” that inherits the trauma of its parents as a kind of “postmemory.” In this sense, *Dora Bruder* captures our own predicament of being possessed by the responsibility to remember the pain of others and yet unable to adequately know that past.

Modiano and Sebald: Walking in Another’s Footsteps Steven Ungar

This article studies Patrick Modiano’s *Dora Bruder* (1997) and W.G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz* (2000) in conjunction with a contemporary literature of diaspora grounded in the extended aftermath of World War II. Both texts straddle fiction and testimonial accounts such as memoirs, letters, and video/audio recordings. In addition, both raise questions with which traditional historians seldom contend, even when they group these questions under the category of memory. What understanding of the recent past might these two narratives promote? What do they imply—individually or as a set—concerning the nature and function of the historical subjectivity that literature can convey? Each in its own way, *Dora Bruder* and *Austerlitz* override conventions of literary genre by mixing elements of novel, autobiography, and essay. Accordingly, language becomes a prime point of inquiry in conjunction with the double question most likely to be raised in terms of the historical record: who is writing and to what end

or purpose? These questions, in turn, direct inquiry to enunciation and point of view as components of historical subjectivity associated with the literature of a post-World War II diaspora.

Dora Bruder and the *Longue Durée*

Susan Weiner

Modiano's methods in *Dora Bruder* recall the *Annales* historiographer's rejection of the history of events in favor of the "long duration," but with human history as its object. Modiano's long duration draws out repetitions and variations between his own life and Dora's as he reconstructs and imagines it, between Dora and fictional characters, between Dora's story and the lives of Holocaust victims and survivors known and unknown. Moreover, the author encourages the reader to take part in the uncanny connections the novel makes, through movements of the imagination not unlike Modiano's own. In so doing, we approach Dora and those who shared her fate through their lives rather than their death, restoring to them the everyday freedom of their thoughts and actions alongside our own.

Modiano *Historien*

Richard J. Golsan

Beginning with the "Trilogy" (*La place de l'étoile*, *Ronde de nuit*, and *Les boulevards de ceinture*) of his first three novels published in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the work of Patrick Modiano has been indissociably linked with the history and memory of the Occupation. *Dora Bruder* is of course no exception along these lines. What makes Modiano's Occupation novels distinctive is their combination of the "historian's" knowledge of the historical realities of the period and the novelist's or "poet's" talent for powerfully evoking the feel and ambiance of "les années noires." While Modiano's practice as novelist has been widely discussed, his practice and especially

his vision as “historian” deserves greater attention. This essay seeks to assess the novelist’s historical vision through a reading of *Dora Bruder*, including the “Trilogy” and the more recent *Un pedigree*.

People Who Leave No Trace: Dora Bruder and the French Immigrant Community

Mary Jean Green

Although the neighborhoods where Dora Bruder once lived are now crowded with more recent immigrants, Modiano seems to have erased the contemporary French immigrant community from his narration. Yet immigrants and their children, like Modiano’s own father, are very much at the center of this text. In fact, the story of the bureaucratic subjugation of the Bruder family suggests parallels with issues affecting immigration in the book’s narrative present in 1996 and 1997, especially the deportation proceedings instituted against immigrant children who, like Dora Bruder, were born in France. Despite their remarkable absence from the streets of Modiano’s Paris, French immigrants of the narrative present become in his text visible through the traces of their absence, their history of colonial and post-colonial oppression offering ghostly echoes of long-repressed histories of war and Occupation.

Fugue States: Modiano *Romancier*

Lynn A. Higgins

The essay shows how in *Dora Bruder*, Modiano is able to call upon imagination and mobilize the novelist’s craft while remaining faithful to historical truth.