

## ABSTRACT

### DEUIL D'UNE (IN)CONNUE

By Jennifer Ann Young

Contemporary French author Patrick Modiano's novels center almost entirely around memory and the traumatic events surrounding the Occupation. Modiano has spent most of his life dealing with the guilty remorse of having been born directly following the Occupation, while hundreds of thousands of others, including his estranged father, experienced it directly. Modiano's *Dora Bruder* focuses on the chance encounter with a stranger and the possibility of caring deeply for this person. The heroine, Dora Bruder, mesmerizes Modiano as he devotes six years of his life to finding out the fate of this young girl, who disappeared during the Occupation. Her fate becomes his mission. This thesis explores the possibilities of loving someone without ever having met him or her. It also further discovers the (im)possibility of mourning the loss of an unknown individual.

DEUIL D'UNE (IN)CONNUE

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Faculty of Miami University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of French

by

Jennifer Ann Young

Miami University

Oxford, Ohio

2008

Advisor \_\_\_\_\_  
James Creech

Reader \_\_\_\_\_  
Elisabeth Hodges

Reader \_\_\_\_\_  
Sven-Erik Rose

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Transformed Identities: La Place de l'Etoile and Dora Bruder.....	3
Lieux, Photos et Flâneur/Flâneuse.....	8
Le Vide.....	19
Ecriture: Mourning and Melancholia.....	23
Conclusion.....	32
Bibliography.....	33

## Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have been completed without the help of several individuals. The long, but rewarding road to its completion is due in part to your support, encouragement, and advice. I am forever indebted to your generosity. I would like to thank:

- my family, Jean, Bob and Jeff Young, and Taylor Cimala for providing me with love and support, and for pushing me to achieve a goal I had envisioned for years
- Jim Creech for your patience, honesty, expertise, and for initiating my interest in Patrick Modiano
- each French teacher I have had over the years. Without you, I would never have discovered my passion for the French language and culture and decided to share it with students for years to come: Madame Kane, Madame Stark-King, Madame Brisebois, Monsieur Koerner, Madame Lawrence, Jonathan Strauss, Jean-Paul Putz, Josette Barnett, Dominique Dimmer, Jesse Dickson, Claire Goldstein, Bruno Chaouat, Elisabeth Hodges, Michel Pactat, Patricia Reynaud, Sven-Erik Rose, and Paul Sandro
- my “French gradies” for your friendship, wisdom and continued support: Nicky Ptolemy Read, Jenny Wahl, Chris Palkovacs, Kathryn Siegel, Valerie Krock, and Erin Wheeler McKenzie
- Patrick Modiano for your passion, perseverance, and dedication to preserving the memory of your heroine: Dora Bruder.

## Introduction

### PARIS

On recherche une jeune fille, Dora Bruder, 15 ans, 1m55, visage ovale, yeux gris-marron, manteau sport gris, pull-over bordeaux, jupe et chapeau bleu marine, chasseuses sport marron. Adresser toutes indications à M. et Mme Bruder, 41 boulevard Ornano, Paris. (Modiano, 7)

In *Dora Bruder*, readers learn that Patrick Modiano found this passage from the *Paris-Soir* newspaper in 1988, 47 years after its publication. Written in December of 1941, Modiano immediately connects himself to the historical significance of this time period: the German occupation of Paris. How could a young Jewish girl, as he soon finds out upon research, disappear during a time of strict rules, regulations, and curfews? Captured by the words describing this young girl as well as by the image of what she represents, Modiano formulates questions concerning this unknown individual and imagines certain details of her life. This serves as the catalyst for his intricate search into the truth of Dora Bruder's destiny. She becomes the phantom of Modiano's dreams and aspirations. The more he understands his own family's history and plight, the more deeply and emotionally attached he becomes to Dora Bruder. It is through Dora Bruder that he is able to rediscover the dark memories of his troubled youth and his father's past. Modiano's internalization of Dora's past uncovers and redefines his family's identity, and in particular his own. The knowledge of Dora Bruder awakens Modiano's father's traumatic memories, which in turn became his own painful memories.

The first part of this thesis concentrates on transformed identities in two of Patrick Modiano's most acclaimed works: *Dora Bruder* and *La Place de l'Etoile*. In both of these texts, the leading figures, Patrick Modiano and Raphael Schlemilovitch, respectively, internally deal with self-identity crises, as well as the meaning of self, or "le moi" in Freudian terms. Modiano and Schlemilovitch constantly question who they are, as their identities change based on life experiences and encounters. My reading of *Dora Bruder* reveals the possibility of two individuals, strangers to one another, at two different points in history, connecting in such a way that it is plausible for Modiano, in this case, to care so deeply for Dora Bruder that he takes all measures to ensure that her

memory is kept alive. My emphasis then focuses on a Baudelairian reading of *Dora Bruder* in comparison to his poem “A Une Passante.” The two literary pieces define the role of a *flâneur/flâneuse* in a city full of memories, stories, and secrets. Perusing the streets while walking in the footsteps of another ultimately brings Modiano closer to Dora Bruder emotionally, mentally, spiritually and in time. Is it possible for Modiano and Baudelaire’s narrator to become attached to the seemingly unknown women, Dora and *la passante*? What is the effect a first glance can have on a person?

The second part of this paper expands on the themes of loss and emptiness. The bustling city of Paris becomes non-existent in Modiano’s eyes the more he learns of Dora Bruder’s existence and disappearance. The city acts as a character, once vibrant and boisterous, but now, desolate and isolated. The process of researching and writing becomes a narrative grave in which mourning empowers Modiano. What constitutes mourning? Is it possible to mourn the loss of someone we do not know? Can Modiano identify with a young girl who perished before he was born? Could Dora help Modiano in better understanding the complex and troubled relationship with his father? Is it possible to incorporate the trauma evident in Dora Bruder’s life into that of Modiano? Is Modiano’s trauma direct or inherited and from where? What phases of guilt or remorse did Modiano enter while delving into Dora Bruder’s life? Freud and Abraham and Torok write at length on the subject of mourning and melancholia and the phases that one traverses after a great loss. Did Modiano enter these same psychological stages during his research on Dora Bruder’s life? Furthermore, this thesis intends to show that *Dora Bruder* is a documented memorial or grave for not only the young heroine, but also for every single individual who perished during the war. The 145 pages stand for the thousands of memorials or funerals, which never officially occurred.

## **Transformed Identities: *La Place de l'Etoile* and *Dora Bruder***

Patrick Modiano was born in 1945, one year following the four-year German occupation of Paris. He believes he is a product of the Occupation and that he suffers from the shame of having been a survivor (Khalifa, 160). His guilt and remorse for being alive regularly make him question his “raison d’être.” The suffering he endures and the blame he places on himself are apparent in several of his novels. He is most famous for his debut novel *La Place de l'Etoile*, written in 1968, during a time in which the truths behind the Occupation and the Vichy government were being discovered. Readers and critics of Modiano immediately question the nature of the title of his masterpiece. It is without a doubt a play on words. When one thinks of *La Place de l'Etoile*, it is generally in reference to the Arc de Triomphe in Paris and the grands boulevards. L’Arc de Triomphe and these boulevards create an image of a star which is one of the most captivating and iconic symbols of the capital. The Star of David symbolizes the Jewish people and in this novel, *La Place de L'Etoile*, refers to the heart of French patriotism. Modiano uses the star as a representation of the “place des juifs.” Modiano’s triumphant novel uncovers the numerous identities of Raphael during this troubling moment in history. On the cover of the Gallimard edition, a glowing yellow Star of David is placed in the sky directly above the Arc de Triomphe. Perhaps the title is Modiano’s way of portraying the enormous impact of Jews in French culture, despite their minority standing.

Raphael Schlemilovitch deals with an identity crisis throughout the novel, similar to Modiano while researching and detailing *Dora Bruder*. The major problem in Schlemilovitch’s life is that he cannot choose an identity; whether he recognizes it or not, one does not know. As a minority in France he has pride in his Jewish identity, which is all the more evident in his treatment of the Dreyfus Affair. At one point, he proclaims that he will not serve in the army because Dreyfus was condemned. With fury he exclaims:

...je me refuse à servir comme soldat de seconde classe dans une armée qui, jusqu’ à ce jour, n’a pas voulu d’un maréchal Dreyfus. J’invite les jeunes juifs français à suivre mon exemple. (Modiano, 24)

Modiano's passion is the driving force in this exclamation of a pro-Dreyfusard campaign. The first person narrative creates a more plausible description as Modiano speaks on behalf of Schlemilovitch.

One of Schlemilovitch's other identities, is ironically, that of a collaborator. During a portion of his life, he worked for the Gestapo where he formed relationships with men such as Maurice Sachs and Pierre Drieu la Rochelle. Schlemiovitch, here, appears as a weak person when he avoids certain problems and issues that could arise. Modiano uses "je" or "I" in order to make it more realistic or more alive. Modiano transforms Schlemiovitch into these several different identities as if it were a game. In his writing, he questions the authenticity of his identity. He recalls famous French writers and poets and comments on their beautiful prose and then asks himself how he can ever be compared to such masterminds, "...de quelle adolescence pouvais-je parler, moi, Raphaël Schlemilovitch, sinon de l'adolescence d'un misérable petit juif apatride? Je ne serai ni Gérard de Nerval, ni François Mauriac, ni même Marcel Proust" (Modiano, 55). By mentioning such authors, he idolizes their talent and value to French literature. After working as a collaborator and comparing himself to Proust, he tells himself that he is going to be the most influential Jewish French writer. He finds himself responsible for the future of Jewish writers. Modiano's own identity is represented here in his very first novel. He questions his own validity as he writes his first *oeuvre*. Alan Morris, in *Patrick Modiano in Beyond the Nouveau Roman: Essays on the Contemporary French Novel*, expresses a similar view:

As long as he (Raphael) plays the role of Franco-Jewish-author-in-search-of-an-identity, he is, of course, in exactly the same position as Modiano himself. This case being, it is no surprise that he can be found to share similar a background with the man who invented him. (Morris, 180-181)

Modiano's own experiences are transformed into the character he devised. His troubled youth and tumultuous relationship with his father force him to constantly question who he is and where he belongs. Both men, lost souls based on their past have the capabilities of being anyone, fitting in with anyone. Their chameleon-like characteristics enable them to adjust and change based on who or what they strive to be. His novel can be considered



in this case to be part autobiographical in so far as his own beliefs and misgivings are mirrored in Schlemilovitch.

At the end of the novel, Schlemilovitch has an encounter with Freud in which he appears in a dream-like fantasy. Schlemilovitch is not sure what is reality and what is fantasy. Freud tells Raphael to listen to the words of Jean-Paul Sartre, “LE JUIF N’EXISTE PAS...VOUS N’ETES PAS JUIF...vous avez simplement des délires hallucinatoires, des fantasmes, rien de plus...” (Modiano, 209). In *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Sartre explains that Jews do not have a historical past, unlike the French. This feeds into conflicting identities of being a Jew and being a Frenchman, both of which Raphael struggles with. According to Sartre, Judaism requires anti-Semitism to exist or as he writes, “If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him” (Sartre, 13). These claims enrage Raphael and he decides to disregard all that Freud says. Through engaging in this hallucinatory conversation, he understands how different France, being his homeland, differs from that of the typical Frenchman. Like other Jews, his relationship to Judaism is more ceremonial than religious. Although Sartre offends Raphael, he takes more pride than ever in his cultural religious identity.

At the end of the novel, Raphael’s identity crisis comes to an end. He is placed in prison and during a discussion with a police officer, he is informed that he is no longer permitted to read the works of Proust, Kafka, and Céline because of the positive Jewish influence relevant. Raphael has a revelation in which he decides that he is finished with constantly protecting himself and covering up his true identity. He is filled with memories of his experiences with anti-Semitism, and while he does not discuss these memories like Proust, he relives his Jewish identity. During his confrontation with Freud, Raphael responds to Freud’s analysis of his life by saying one of the most famous lines from the novel, “Je suis bien fatigué, bien fatigué” (Modiano, 211). He makes the concrete decision to stop memorializing his past but to look to the future. He is tired of this process and for the first time, he is going to look to what is ahead in an optimistic manner.

Keeping memory alive is a prevalent theme in several of Modiano’s novels. In *The Mirror of Memory: Patrick Modiano’s La Place de L’Etoile and Dora Bruder*, Samuel Khalifa writes:

As it appears in the novelist's concept of writing, the duty to remember seems, on the one hand, to be part of the quest of identity: the genocide becomes part of what it is to be Jewish; and, on the other, it is inscribed within the act of narration itself: the deconstruction of the narrative mirrors both the bewildering nature of what is evoked as well as the esthetics of a voice recovered (Khalifa, 160)

Modiano uses the characters in his novels as well as himself as symbols of memory. It becomes his obligation to capture the memories so that he may be able to find meaning in his own identity. Being Jewish in this sense involves dealing with the traumatic experiences and in doing so one slowly reaches an understanding of what qualifies identity. As a Jewish man, Modiano feels particularly drawn to the victims and it is through the research into Dora Bruder's life that he discovers the fate of other individuals in her situation, some of whom he believes were at the same place at the same time during her imprisonment. Dora becomes the principal character as a representative of an incomprehensible tragedy in Modiano's eyes. William VanderWolk, in *Whose Memory is This?: Patrick Modiano's Historical Method*, explains the role of Modiano as a narrator who is "unsure of [his] own identity because [he is] unsure of the past, becomes prisoner of memory" (VanderWolk, 55). He continues in saying that writing helps Modiano to alleviate his captivity by honoring his father and Dora's past in his thoughts (VanderWolk, 55). Due to Modiano's unstable relationship with his father, he is forced to understand the details of his father's experience during the Occupation by the few stories he did share. Based on the lack of any sort of relationship with his father, Modiano holds on to his father's stories, as they are one of the only things he has from him. The treasured memories serve as his father's legacy, or a family heirloom in a sense. The ambiguity of his father's history leads Modiano on a voyage to discover the past. His questions are not all answered, which he understands is inevitable. Modiano is thus, imprisoned in his father's, Dora's and every other victims' memory, of which only they know the complete truth. Khalifa expresses similar thoughts as VanderWolk: "If memory is to be kept alive, it must not be rigidified, but rather recognized as a space traversed by forgetting" (Khalifa, 160). By forgetting certain memories we are, in turn, remembering them and bringing them back to life. Memory is created in part by forgetting certain details; what remains during this process, constitutes lasting mental

souvenirs. Modiano's uncertainty about specific details forces him to dig deeper into thought and research, during which the lost memory begins to resurface.

Modiano's *Dora Bruder* and *La Place de L'Etoile* are a reflection of self. Modiano is able to find himself in both Dora Bruder and in the many identities of Raphael Schlemiovitch. He never attempts to state the facts of his Jewish identity because he is still in the process of understanding it. He sees his religious identity as a complex and confusing subject and through inventing characters and becoming attached to a young girl whom he never even met, he is better able to grasp the meaning. His close relationship to Dora Bruder and Raphael Schlemilovitch is best explained at the end of *Dora Bruder* when he realizes he has placed her in his thoughts above himself: "Je ne peux pas m'empêcher de penser à elle et de sentir un écho de sa présence dans certains quartiers" (Modiano, 144). The juxtaposition of Dora's life and Modiano's faltering identity become one. Her past becomes his present. As Modiano retraces Dora Bruder's steps, he enters Paris through her eyes. He subjects himself to the painful emotions she undoubtedly endured.

## Lieux, Photos, et Flâneur/Flâneuse

The idea of a *flâneur* as suggested by Patrick Modiano in his search for Dora Bruder is reminiscent of the same theme found in Baudelaire's poem "A Une Passante." The two texts are written during different time periods, "A Une Passante" in 1857 and *Dora Bruder* in 1997, and I do not intend to make light of the atrocities of the Holocaust by intertwining these two seemingly contrasting pieces of literature. Instead, it is imperative to look at the two women represented in "A Une Passante" and *Dora Bruder* as *flâneuses* of their time who attract the attention of the poet and Patrick Modiano, respectively. These men themselves represent *flâneurs* as well. Modiano and the narrator in Baudelaire's poem stroll the streets, captivated by the essence of these women.

In Baudelaire's poem, the narrator sees a woman on the street and is captured by her presence. This stranger catches his eye and he becomes flooded with romantic thoughts of her. The first stanza sets the scene: a crowded street with loud commotion. It appears as if he is lost in the chaos of the crowd; noise and disorder circle around him. Life almost stops when he sees this woman. He chooses this one person, this one woman in the crowd of many. Why her? Similarly, why exactly does Modiano focus on this one *petite annonce* out of so many, in *Paris Soir*? The newspaper, which had dozens of *petites annonces* included one brief search announcement for a missing girl, Dora Bruder. Modiano does not mention any other *petite annonce* in *Dora Bruder*, but seems to instantly notice this one, and no others. In William Thompson's article "Order and Chaos in 'A une Passante'" he describes the significance of the boisterous city: "'A une Passante' is undeniably one of the great 'Tableaux parisiens,' an extraordinary poem of the city, a superb evocation of the anonymity of the modern urban setting and of the impossibility of pursuing a chance encounter or of halting the passage of time" (Thompson, 145). Is Thompson correct in this statement? The anonymity of the *passante*, in this instance, and Dora Bruder in Modiano's case is what instantly attracts the men. Who is she? Whom does she represent? It appears as if both the narrator and Modiano contradict Thompson's claim; both men aggressively seek out his *passante* in search of more information and clues. Baudelaire's narrator halts time, if only for the

moment where he gazes into her eyes. That look, that moment, that memory, is something that will stay with the narrator for eternity, perhaps. Gazing into her eyes, the narrator denies his own loneliness in hopes of receiving a loving gaze back in his direction. In his loneliest desperation, her *regard* brings him back to life and revitalizes his reason for living: “Fugitive beauté... Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître.” The empathetic glance they share heightens their level of intimacy, so much so that he considers the possibility of having loved her. There appears to be something devastatingly shattering in the *passante*, similar to but not exactly like the losses Modiano endured.

Modiano’s internalization of Dora stops time in order to relive the years of her existence. Contrary to Thompson, it is plausible to say that Modiano escapes his own life, his own reality, and the present date while entering those of Dora Bruder in 1941. In December of 1996, Modiano writes that fifty-five years have passed since Dora’s disappearance. He comments on the darkness of each passing day, the rain that seems to never end, and wonders if there is a difference from one day to the next, as each one seems exactly like the preceding. Modiano describes the link he senses between the bustling and chaotic city and Dora Bruder’s era:

Et au milieu de toutes ces lumières et de cette agitation, j’ai peine à croire que je suis dans la même ville que celle où se trouvaient Dora Bruder et ses parents, et aussi mon père quand il avait vingt ans de moins que moi. J’ai l’impression d’être tout seul à faire le lien entre Paris de ce temps-là et celui d’aujourd’hui, le seul à me souvenir de tous ces détails. Par moments, le lien s’amenuise et risque de se rompre, d’autres soirs la ville d’hier m’apparaît en reflets furtifs derrière celles d’aujourd’hui. (Modiano, 50-51)

The loneliness Modiano discusses as the only person who can create a link between his Paris and Dora’s Paris, illuminates his ability to keep her memory alive. The risk exists of Dora’s existence vanishing and never again being recovered, but Modiano, who admits this risk, will not allow it to occur. Dora’s existence becomes his mission, his passion, and his driving force to find truth over a ten-year period. Modiano disregards any possible thought of the “impossibility of pursuing” the unknown.

The act of writing allows the poet to keep the memory of the *passante* alive. In both “A une Passante” and *Dora Bruder*, the city takes on a definitive role of a place, *un lieu* as an association of memory. Marja Warehime draws upon the idea of a *flâneur* in her article “Paris and the Autobiography of a *flâneur*: Patrick Modiano and Annie Ernaux.” The centrality of this *lieu* to both Modiano and Ernaux’s writing and of course to Baudelaire’s poetry is highlighted in Warehime’s interpretation:

In one way or another all of these writers exemplify the difficulty of finding a literary form adequate to the experience of the *flâneur*’s sense of place, one that will translate the complex interrelationships between people and things, place and time. (Warehime, 99)

The combination of time and place in these works creates an intricate mélange and in turn, a complex storyline. *Dora Bruder*, Patrick Modiano, Baudelaire and his *passante* all become alive as “characters” by meandering throughout the city. Modiano is able to walk through the Paris of his day (in the present) and experience it through the eyes of Dora during the Occupation. Places alternate from present to past.

The poet notices minute details on the *passante*’s figure such as the way her skirt gently flows as she moves. She captures his attention in such a marvelous way described by Baudelaire: “Moi, je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant, Dans son oeil...” The narrator takes every essence of this woman and looks so deeply into her eyes that he essentially drinks from them. In an attempt to interiorize this woman or to “penetrate her exterior, we witness this lament. One might even suggest that, as the woman passes by him, the poet assumes the pain that he believes she feels” (Thompson, 149). If this woman is in fact in a state of mourning, as suggested by several critics, the poet assumes the melancholic role in her place or for her. This type of sympathy pain he shares for the *passante* mirror Modiano’s sympathetic and empathetic feelings toward *Dora Bruder*. The contagious state of mourning resonates with *Dora Bruder*’s unhappiness with the situation at hand that she risked her life by escaping to her unknown and possibly life-threatening future. Modiano equally shares her inner struggle and pain as he further delves into her life. As he walks around the Saint-Coeur-de-Marie boarding school where Dora resided during the Occupation leading up to her disappearance, he visualizes

her every move. He takes in the pain she must have felt after being separated from her parents and sent to a boarding school under false pretences – living as a hidden Jewish youth. Modiano describes the sympathy pain he feels for Dora as he wanders around the former school: “J’ai marché dans le quartier et au bout d’un moment j’ai senti peser la tristesse d’autres dimanches, quand il fallait rentrer au pensionnat...Mais la solitude de ces retours du dimanche soir” (Modiano, 129-130). Dora Bruder’s own *tristesse* and *solitude* enter Modiano’s psyche with each new part of the puzzle he pieces together to form her life. How do we discern this difference between sympathy and empathy? Sympathy occurs when an individual is affected by another’s pain, sorrow, and in particular, by a loss or death of a loved one. This individual does not necessarily feel the same pain as the one suffering from this loss, but he or she understands this agony and remains as a supporter, listener or confidant. Empathy, on the other hand is graver insofar as the individual – Modiano and Baudelaire’s narrator – enters and exists in the world of those who are bereaved.

Baudelaire’s precise observation of this *passante* is similar to that of Modiano’s study of Dora. During his lengthy research into Dora Bruder’s life he studies numerous artifacts including photos, which seem to be his most treasured possession of Dora. Modiano writes:

J’ai pu obtenir il y a quelques mois une photo de Dora Bruder, qui tranche sur celles que j’avais déjà rassemblées. Sans doute la dernière qui a été prise d’elle. Son visage et son allure n’ont plus rien de l’enfance qui se reflétait dans toutes les photos précédentes à travers le regard, la rondeur des joues, la robe blanche d’un jour de distribution des prix...Je ne sais pas à quelle date a été prise cette photo. (Modiano, 90)

He continues describing photos from his collection: “Elle tient la tête haute, ses yeux sont graves, mais il flotte sur ses lèvres l’amorce d’un sourire. Et cela donne à visage une expression de douceur triste et de défi” (Modiano, 91). His emphasis on “le regard” and “les yeux” suggests looking deep within her soul. Looking into her eyes and studying them is the best way he can understand her. The difference between Modiano and Baudelaire is that Modiano is unable to gaze into her eyes in person. Modiano’s first contact with Dora is in a newspaper article, a *petite annonce* for the missing girl. Only

later through his research is he able to see her, visualize her, and study a photo of her grave, sad eyes. Baudelaire's narrator, however, falls in love with the *passante* upon eye contact but remains in this state of "love" by speaking to her through the words in the poem.

Modiano represents Dora as a sort of ghost as he looks at her in several family photos he discovered during his research. He describes these photos with such precision and close attention to detail that one could easily imagine Dora and her family without having seen the photographs. In an explanation of two of these photos, Modiano uses the words "silhouette" and "ombre" in order to describe Dora:

Au fond, la silhouette d'un enfant, de dos, les jambes et les bras nus, en tricot noir ou en maillot de bain. Dora? Une autre photo plus ancienne de Dora seule, à neuf ou dix ans. On dirait qu'elle est sur un toit, juste dans un rayon de soleil, avec de l'ombre tout autour. (Modiano, 33)

The usage of the word "ombre" in reference to Dora implies loss and death. In this excerpt, Dora's silhouette glistens in the sun while the area surrounding her remains dark and desolate. It is as if in Modiano's interpretation of Dora's photos, she is either illuminated by light or represented as a dark, shadowy, ghost-like figure. Is it possible that Dora's absence in turn becomes her presence in Modiano's life? Had Modiano never found her *petite annonce* she would never have been an absence in his life. Can absence turn into presence? Modiano looks in on her life as a living, young woman but ultimately mourns her death due to the love and dedication he shares for her. In order to avoid any misinterpretations at this point, it is imperative to state that the love to which I refer, is not in the romantic sense, but rather in the fatherly, guardian manner.

Modiano questions himself by asking, "Dora?" It is evident that this is indeed the figure of Dora in these photos but the words that he uses represent her destiny: death. William VanderWolk defends this idea: "Such an album becomes a family monument, almost a grave of remembrances" (59). The photos in *Dora Bruder* act as a representation of death and mourning that surround Modiano's life. In the University of California Press edition of *Dora Bruder*, readers have the opportunity to view some of these photos. Modiano's bond to Dora transfers to his readers, as they too become



witnesses to her life. By printing the photographs Modiano unearthed, he eliminates all possibilities of her memory being forgotten. Like other victims, Dora has no grave or official burial ground. Instead, these photographs mark her existence, a representation of life, which in turn, mark the shadowy and hazy story of her death.

Marianne Hirsch discusses the idea of shadowy, ghost-like figures represented in photography. “Photographs, ghostly revenants, are very particular instruments of remembrance, since they are perched at the edge between memory and post-memory, and also, though differently, between memory and forgetting” (Hirsch, 22). This post-memory to which Hirsch refers, involves not just the memory of an acquaintance, but also the memory of their memory. Dora’s silhouette creates an illusion for Modiano; her figure links him to the past. Hirsch defines post-memory as:

...distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Post-memory is a powerful and very particular form of memory because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. This is not to say that memory itself is unmediated, but that it is more directly connected to the past. Post-memory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated. I have developed this notion in relation to children of Holocaust survivors, but I believe it may usefully describe other second-generation memories of cultural or collective traumatic events and experiences. (Hirsch, 22)

Modiano epitomizes post-memory for his “obsessive and relentless” devotion to Dora (Hirsch, 22). He invests his life in her past and the truth that defines her. Modiano, who was never able to have a personal connection to Dora when she was living, is unable to recall memories but he must create them through “investment” and dedication as explained by Hirsch. “Photographs in the enduring ‘umbilical’ connection to life are precisely the medium connecting first- and second-generation remembrance, memory and post-memory” (Hirsch, 23). Modiano takes on the role of the preceding generation, whose responsibility is to remember. This “umbilical connection” to which Hirsch refers, highlights his relationship to Dora: that not only of an observer or researcher, but more importantly, that of a familiar, bonded rapport.

Baudelaire's poem takes a striking turn of events with the exclamation, "Un éclair...puis la nuit!" This flash of lightening interrupts the romantic and gentle flow of the poem creating an abrupt disruption. The *éclair* acts as a photography flash, which is repeated throughout *Dora Bruder*. The lens of a camera is particularly interesting to Modiano because he does not know the identity of the photographer. He asks himself:

Qui a bien pu prendre cette photo? Ernest Bruder? Et s'il ne figure pas sur cette photo, cela veut-il dire qu'il a déjà été arrêté? En tout cas, il semble que les trois femmes aient revêtu des habits du dimanche, face à cet objectif anonyme.  
(Modiano, 91)

The anonymous photographer consumes Modiano's curiosity. Who was this "lucky" man to have been able to capture Dora's image? The possibility of the photographer being Dora's father comes to mind but Modiano then wonders if his absence means he had already been arrested. The possible absence of another person in Dora's life causes more speculation and inquisitiveness on Modiano's part. The flash of a light shines on Dora or in some cases creates a shadow to create the shape of her body. He wonders, "On se demande pourquoi la foudre les a frappés plutôt que d'autres" (Modiano, 92). "La foudre" represents this flash of a light capturing Dora's figure. Modiano questions the reason behind this flash of a light. Why does a photograph capture the white light, the brilliance and illumination of a person yet at other times catches the dark, shadowy silhouette?

Baudelaire's narrator refers to the *passante* as "fugitive beauté" or a "fleeting beauty." To where is she fleeing? Does he say this because he knows he will never see her again? Dora could be regarded as Modiano's "fugitive beauté" because Modiano can only see her in his research, photographs, or thoughts. His ambition is to find out to where Dora disappeared. Did she escape? Modiano's discovery of a *petite annonce* leads him on a several year voyage into her life. He dedicates these years to this "inconnue," who by the end becomes anything but "une inconnue" to Modiano. Baudelaire revisits the importance of a glance or "un regard," as suggested in the poem by the word "son oeil." The poet explains that her look or glance made him suddenly come back to life. Does this *passante* have the power to change the course of events,

thoughts, feelings, and emotions in his life? Walter Benjamin believes the poet's love for this woman is not at first sight but at last sight (Thompson, 134). How is it possible then to characterize his feelings for her upon first glance according to Benjamin's reading?

Baudelaire's narrator ends the final sentence of the third stanza with a brilliant question, "Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité?" This question poses several questions: Is he saying that he will only see her again in eternity, as in after death? Is he asking if he will ever see her again? Or is he asking if life, an eternal time including death and what follows, will allow them to ever see one another again? He attempts to answer his question in the final stanza, "jamais peut-être!" His frustration over her whereabouts interferes with his love and affection for her. This is one aspect not seen in Modiano's work. He never gives up on finding who Dora Bruder is or her fate. The narrator in "A Une Passante" has no idea to where this woman "escaped" after seeing her in the crowd and likewise, in speaking to her, tells her she has no idea where he is going either. Using the "tu" form, the narrator creates an even closer relationship with this *(in)connue*. Speaking to her using the familiar French pronoun, he enables himself to be on intimate terms with her. Is this a delusional longing for an unattainable love? The agitation on the poet's part derives from this inaccessible *rapport*. Thompson characterizes the *passante* in his essay: "She is both a cure for, and a cause of, the disorder in the poem and in the poet's mind" (Thompson, 153). Baudelaire ends by declaring his love for her and exclaiming that this *passante* knew his feelings: "Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais, Ô toi que j'eusse aimé, ô toi qui le savais!" During his frustration because he cannot reach her and because he feels he unsuccessfully shared his feelings with her, he mourns his past and future with her, something that they could have shared together in their imagined love life. Thompson affirms this idea: "She is no longer merely a 'passante,' that activity having long ceased in any case rather a (potentially) vindictive woman, conscious of her devastating impact on the poet" (Thompson, 158). The *passante* is transformed from *une inconnue* to *une connue*; someone who has the capability of so negatively affecting her "lover."

Throughout Modiano's research on Dora's life, he slowly begins to identify himself with her. He is particularly worried about her disappearance, partially because he once ran away too. Dora runs away from her boarding school for unknown reasons

according to the documents Modiano locates. He imagines several possibilities as to her whereabouts, how the weather influenced where she went, and how a young Jewish girl could survive in Paris, a city occupied by Nazis. Modiano compares escaping from his troubled life to what he knows about Dora:

Qu'est-ce qui nous décide à faire une fugue ? Je me souviens de la mienne le 18 janvier 1960 à une époque qui n'avait pas la noirceur de décembre 1941. Sur la route où je m'enfuyais, le long des hangars de l'aérodrome de Villacoublay, le seul point commun avec la fugue de Dora, c'était la saison : l'hiver. Hiver paisible, hiver de routine, sans commune mesure avec celui d'il y avait dix-huit ans. Mais il semble que ce qui vous pousse brusquement à la fugue, ce soit un jour de froid et de grisaille qui vous rend encore plus vive la solitude et vous fait sentir encore plus fort qu'un étau se resserre. (Modiano, 57)

The question he poses creates a distinct connection between Dora's disappearance and his own. Winter is the most obvious link he makes with her, but the physical act of running away reflects his own reasons to do so. The melancholy of a sober and cold day provides him with enough reason to run away, or to "escape" as he writes. He uses the word "solitude" to suggest complete emptiness and alienation from the outside world, as well as "noirceur" to reinforce the dark, shadowy atmosphere as discussed in the photographs of Dora. For Dora, this was her motive to escape. Unlike Baudelaire's narrator who does not know his *passante's* next move or where her life will lead her, Modiano knows to where Dora escaped, and her every step along the way. Dora, on the other hand, knows nothing of Modiano and never will. Baudelaire's narrator chooses to ignore where his *passante* fled but Modiano uses every resource possible in order to understand Dora.

Both Dora and Modiano search for liberty and freedom in an environment quickly closing in on them. Modiano's "trap" could suggest the city of Paris, which for him was like a prison. The two represent prisoners in their own city, captives of Paris and of those who prevent them from reaching freedom. Modiano's growing bond to Dora is due to their similar melancholic emotions. What is missing for the two is the chance to be free, to be a survivor. They have the aura of two prisoners, captives of the city. Modiano writes that the city of Paris "devenait une prison obscure" (Modiano, 56) and explains the difference between Dora's captivity in 1941 and his own in 1960:

Je pense à Dora Bruder. Je me dis que sa fugue n'était pas aussi simple que la mienne une vingtaine d'années plus tard, dans un monde redevenu inoffensif. Cette ville de décembre 1941 était hostile et voulait sa perte. A seize ans, elle avait le monde entier contre elle, sans qu'elle sache pourquoi. (Modiano, 78)

Modiano views this situation with realistic perception. He realizes that Dora believes running away is her only possible way to survive. While he can understand her choice, he mourns this decision as he considers it to be a form of suicide. Samuel Khalifa describes her decision: "Dora Bruder runs away from the austere atmosphere of a Catholic institution where she is a boarder. This first disappearance is the prelude to a definitive one: Auschwitz" (Khalifa, 162). Modiano cannot help but understand the implications of her decision because he went through the same agonizing process. By looking at Dora's circumstances, he is able to identify with her and find meaning in her actions:

La fugue - paraît-il – est un appel au secours et quelque fois une forme de suicide. Vous éprouvez quand même un bref sentiment d'éternité. Vous n'avez pas seulement tranché les liens avec le monde, mais aussi avec le temps. (Modiano, 78)

Even though time cannot be reversed, Modiano's emotions are full of fear for Dora's decision. He sees her actions, decisions, and reasons as a reflection of his own. His imagination wanders as he wonders to where Dora escaped during this period in which Modiano has no trace of her. The use of the word "éternité" is interesting, however, because Baudelaire uses it in a similar manner. In both instances, running away allows the possibility of finding eternity, or in Baudelaire's case, of seeing his *passante amoureuse*. In cutting off ties with the world, Modiano in the sense that Dora is his primary vision and obsession for several years and Baudelaire in that he sees only this woman before him, in the past, present and future, the men also cut off ties with time. Time ceases to exist for both. The women absorb all of their thoughts and actions so completely that time and life are eliminated before and after the discovery of Dora and *la passante*.

"Des photos comme il en existe dans toutes les familles. Le temps de la photo, ils étaient protégés quelques secondes et ces secondes sont devenues une éternité"

(Modiano, 92). Modiano discusses time as existing for only a brief moment but the one second it takes for a photograph to be taken, in turn, leaves behind an infinite number of memories. These eternal memories are a legacy for generations to come. The photographs Modiano possesses of Dora are now a testament to her existence. For Modiano, the moments captured of Dora, her family and her life become eternity. Memory can be forgotten, but the photographs he locates, are tangible proof of her existence. This empowers Modiano to never allow her memory to be erased.

Corey K. Creekmur takes a fascinating approach to discussing photographs in terms of mourning in “Lost Objects: Photography, Fiction, and Mourning.” Creekmur studies photographs and discusses the implications they have for the viewer, or the act of witnessing one moment of a person’s life photographed in the picture: “Photographs, as traces of the dead and so reminders of our loss, may then delay, sustain, and even encourage mourning when our psyche seems otherwise ready to ‘let go’ of the lost loved object (Creekmur, 74-75). Modiano’s collection of photographs of Dora and her family unites him more intimately to her than ever before. The *petite annonce* in the newspaper, conversations with people once associated with Dora, police reports, and the city of Paris all link Modiano to Dora’s life. But, it is the photographs, the tangible testimonials to her life and her existence, which allow him to mourn her loss on a different level, a more realistic, personal level. It is one thing to research Dora’s life and gather artifacts along the way, but it is on an entirely different level when he is able to see her, gaze into her eyes, and study her expressions. Through these photos, he becomes a witness to her life and her family, and all that existed before the Occupation. Dora Bruder, Patrick Modiano, *la passante* and Baudelaire’s narrator are all icons of the quintessential *flâneur*. What appears to be two opposing pieces of literature are intertwined through the idea of a *flâneur*. Marja Warehime best describes the parallels:

*Dora Bruder* evokes the Baudelairian and Surrealist *flâneur* because the narrative emphasizes the physical presence of the walker in the city, his solitude in the crowd and, in the case of the Baudelairian *flâneur* at least, the melancholy and nostalgia that sharpen his perceptions. (Warehime, 111)

## Le Vide

Throughout *Dora Bruder*, Modiano elucidates a certain sensation of emptiness, which increases as he learns more about Dora, her family, and their surroundings. If it were Modiano's mission to find out as many details as possible about her life and if he succeeds in doing so, why then would he feel emptiness around him? It is as if positives (finding out information and truths about Dora) and negatives (feelings of absence and desperation) combine, resulting in *le vide*. The roles of locations and places create a powerful and lasting impression of emptiness on Modiano:

On se dit qu'au moins les lieux gardent une légère empreinte des personnes qui les ont habitées: Empreinte: marque en creux ou en relief. Pour Ernest et Cécile Bruder, pour Dora, je dirai: en creux. J'ai ressenti une impression d'absence et de vide, chaque fois que je me suis trouvé dans un endroit où ils avaient vécu. (Modiano, 28-29)

From where does this emptiness derive? For Modiano, it must certainly exist as a result of becoming closer to Dora. The more he knows, the more connected he feels to her. As he enters Dora's former apartment, or as he walks around the grounds where her boarding school existed, his bond and alliance to Dora increase. He may never have known Dora in person, but he knows her in spirit and in memory. The locations he visits where she once lived, perused, studied, hid, or where she was imprisoned, permit him to feel her void, her absence, and her emptiness. The more knowledge he gains of Dora's existence, the emptier he feels. Only one who cares deeply for another individual can feel this.

Looking back on his childhood, Modiano recalls walking around the Clignancourt area and experiencing a certain sense of emptiness. Only as an adult, through the process of writing *Dora Bruder* and retracing her steps, does he reconnect with and understand his youthful sentiments:

Je me souviens que pour la première fois j'avais ressenti le vide que l'on éprouve devant ce qui a été détruit, rasé net. Je ne connaissais pas encore l'existence de Dora Bruder. Peut-être – mais j'en suis sûr – s'est-elle proménée là, dans cette zone qui m'évoque les rendez-vous d'amour secrets, les pauvres bonheurs perdus." (Modiano, 35)

As a fourteen year-old, he associates a location with a loss, an emptiness, and a prior existence. This aura is magnified years later as an adult upon understanding Dora and her past. It is not only the locations where Dora lived which were destroyed, but it was everything she embodied. The elimination of the tangible and the forgetting of the intangible would never have been remembered or honored again, if not for Modiano. The emptiness he felt as an adolescent foreshadows the mournful emptiness he exudes as an adult. Again, he raises the possibility of Dora having meandered through this same area of Cligancourt as he. His desire to be there with her deepens, as the sense of emptiness overwhelms him. Interestingly, this location also elicits secretive meeting places for lovers, which in turn, conjures up parallels between Modiano and Dora. He traces her every step, follows every clue in order to lead him to the path she ultimately took. His intricate search directs him toward “les pauvres bonheurs perdus” about which he writes. All that is lost, void, empty, and vanished encompasses the ever mournful and melancholic Modiano.

Upon reading Dora Bruder’s *petite annonce* in the newspaper, Modiano instantly obsesses over her fate. He describes his obsessive qualities as: “...le besoin de fixer son esprit sur des points de détail – et cela de manière obsessionnelle” (Modiano, 53). Obsessing to the extreme, Modiano fears he is losing all hope. Is it possible to lose hope when the only known facts are the brief descriptions from the newspaper? Preceding any sense of loss, is it likely one would ever gain hope from such a brief *petite annonce* dated 55 years prior? Modiano’s approach to dealing with Dora’s fate is Freudian at heart insofar as he does not understand yet what has been lost, or why he has a feeling of emptiness with each revelation into her life (Freud, 245). The uncertainty surrounding Modiano prompted him to write the novel *Voyage de nocces* in order to become closer to her:

Et la nuit, l’inconnu, l’oubli, le néant tout autour. Il me semblait que je ne parviendrais jamais à retrouver la moindre trace de Dora Bruder. Alors le manque que j’éprouvais m’a poussé à l’écriture d’un roman, *Voyage de nocces*, un moyen comme un autre pour continuer à concentrer mon attention sur Dora Bruder, et peut-être, me disais-je, pour élucider ou deviner quelque chose d’elle, un lieu, où elle était passée, un détail de sa vie.” (Modiano, 53)



Repeatedly, the words “manque,” and “vide” appear in his writing. At first glance into Dora’s life, an overwhelming feeling of emptiness envelops Modiano. His urge to fill this void prompts him to write another novel. Writing serves a different purpose for each author, but for Modiano, it fills gaps of the unknown, and occupies his mind as it wanders in and out of a melancholic state. Appropriately, Modiano’s *Voyage de nocces* concentrates on a middle-aged Parisian man who one day is overcome by the meaningless life he has been leading. He deserts his wife and all things familiar in search of a woman he met some 20 years prior. A chance encounter, similar to that with Dora Bruder, sent him on a search for her truth. Why did she, Ingrid, commit suicide? What was her secret she seemed to hide from her husband? The narrator, Jean, met this woman in the midst of World War II and Modiano successfully intertwines the past and present. The *mélange* of the historical and current perspectives creates a fantasy-like atmosphere. Modiano’s heroines, Dora Bruder and Ingrid, play strikingly similar roles. Why Ingrid? Why Dora? Similarly, why *la passante*? Why do these male *voyeurs*, in the obsessive, un-sexual meaning of the word, choose these women in such a seemingly arbitrary fashion? In fictionalizing Ingrid, he allowed himself to imagine possibilities concerning Dora’s life. It is impossible to ignore the parallels between Ingrid and Dora. He conjures up Ingrid, a modern character similar to Dora. Ingrid provides him with the possibility to delve deeper into Dora’s truth. *Voyage de nocces* serves as a sort of detective novel for his own personal pursuit. *Dora Bruder* and *Voyage de nocces* serve as a psychological obituary for the two women who so touched the hearts and souls of their men.

In the final pages of *Dora Bruder*, he revisits *le vide* as a final cry out to Dora. Referring back to the day when Dora and her father were sent to Drancy, Modiano compares it to today and the austere emptiness that has forever entered his life. As he writes:

Depuis, le Paris où j’ai tenté de retrouver sa trace est demeuré aussi désert et silencieux que ce jour-là. Je marche à travers les rues vides. Pour moi elles le restent, même le soir, à l’heure des embouteillages, quand les gens se pressent vers les bouches de métro. Je ne peux pas m’empêcher de penser à elle et de sentir un écho de sa présence dans certains quartiers. (Modiano, 144)

As a result of his relationship with Dora, he no longer sees the Paris of then or the Paris of now in the same manner. The city as a character has drastically changed due to his encounter with Dora. The emptiness of Modiano's Paris is a direct result of the tragedy of one victim: Dora, who represents the thousands of French Jews who lost their lives. It must be remembered here that *Dora Bruder* is not a novel, but a biography/auto-biography. With his utmost sincerity, love, respect and devotion to a girl, who was once just a name on a piece of paper, Modiano now has a personal relationship with Dora Bruder. Most fascinating is how Modiano places her above himself, as a father does a child. Dora will forever live in his mind, and most importantly in his memory. Modiano's fear and true belief is that no one holds on to memories. He writes, "Je me suis dit que plus personne ne se souvenait de rien" (Modiano, 131). He now has the power to bring back her memory, and that of the other thousands who perished. Her "écho" will forever last throughout Paris, leaving it not completely empty for Modiano.

### ***Ecriture: Mourning and Melancholia***

As previously mentioned, Modiano's writing helps him to better understand Dora Bruder's life and the reality of his own past. Khalifa writes:

Writing thus becomes a way of exorcizing the author's pre-history. It becomes a sense of deliverance from his sense of guilt about the past.... [W]riting becomes a means of compensating for emptiness and, in doing so, of creating an identity. (Khalifa, 165)

This "pre-history" discussed by Khalifa, refers to Modiano's relationship with his father. His shame concerning his past is due in part to his father's refusal to discuss the events surrounding his experience during the Occupation. His father's shame at having been a survivor and his refusal to acknowledge this time in his life easily transfers to Modiano. The negation of the exchange of words, of conversation, or simply of the painful memories from one generation to the next, creates tension, anguish, and remorse during Modiano's youth and adulthood. Modiano craves truth, not just about Dora's life, but initially and continually about his family's past. The ambiguity surrounding his father's life eats away at him. As organized, meticulous, methodical, and inquisitive as Modiano is in terms of Dora's life, one must suppose he is equally if not in more dire need of answers about his own family's history.

Many survivors of tragic events like the Occupation and Holocaust do not believe they deserve to have lived. Modiano's father must certainly have questioned why he is still alive, why he didn't perish with the other victims. As a result, his guilt and shame defines his relationship with his son. The relationship between father and son is full of hostility, yet it is through Dora that Modiano is able to better understand and discern the meaning. He remembers the story his father once told him of his experience in a police wagon in which he saw a young girl whom he assumed to be around eighteen years old. His father escaped from the police wagon but the image of this girl haunts Modiano, as he wonders if Dora Bruder was him:

Je l'avais presque oubliée, jusqu'au jour où j'ai appris l'existence de Dora Bruder. Alors, la présence de cette jeune fille dans le panier à salade avec mon père et

d'autres inconnus...m'est remontée à la mémoire et bientôt je me suis demandé si elle n'était pas Dora Bruder...Peut-être ai-je voulu qu'ils se croisent, mon père et elle...Il se peut que cette inconnue ait échappé, comme mon père, au sort commun qui leur était réservé. (Modiano, 62-64)

Modiano tries to place Dora in the same situation and context as his father. He sees this as a possibility but above all, he wants to think that this young girl, to whom over the course of years of research, he has attached himself, could have known his father; she could have been in the same exact police wagon, at the same exact time, going to the same exact destination.

Modiano wants to feel close to Dora in space and time. He also strives to bring to light not only her life, but also the truths of every other individual who suffered unfathomable losses. Denise Cima, in *Etude Sur Modiano: Dora Bruder*, explains this possibility:

*Dora Bruder* s'apparente d'abord à un 'tombeau,' composition en 'honneur de son père et en l'honneur de Dora...Le livre devient alors un lieu de mémoire, un mémorial dans lequel ne sont oubliés ni les bourreaux ni surtout les victimes. (Cima, 27)

By honoring this young, deceased girl whom he never knew, Dora becomes the phantom of Modiano's father, of Modiano's shame, of his past and of all of the victims of the Occupation. Modiano dedicates *Dora Bruder* to the memory of the thousands of victims who never received a proper burial or memorial, and to those who were never respectfully honored. As he walks along the Seine, past the former Prefecture of Police during the Occupation, Modiano cannot help but think of all of the lies that were hidden here within these very walls. With disbelief and a hint of denial, he writes, "Nous nous persuadons que ce ne sont pas les mêmes pierres, les mêmes couloirs" (Modiano, 83). The building exudes the inspectors' names, scents, and lies, according to him (Modiano, 84). Despite the fact that the thousands of transcripts detailing every roundup and arrest from this time were destroyed, he points out that the letters once addressed to the police, respectfully asking for information regarding interned loved ones, still exist. Here, on the next several pages of *Dora Bruder*, Modiano shares with the world the pleas and cries from loved ones searching for news. These forgotten and ignored letters bear witness to

the erased memories of those who perished. As a guardian not only of Dora Bruder, Modiano devotes himself to all those she represents:

Elles [the letters] ont été là pendant plus d'un demi-siècle, comme des sacs de courrier oubliés au fond du hangar d'une lointaine étape de l'Aéropostale. Aujourd'hui nous pouvons les lire. Ceux à qui elles étaient adressées n'ont pas voulu en tenir compte et maintenant, c'est nous, qui n'étions pas encore nés à cette époque, qui en sommes les destinataires et les gardiens. (Modiano, 84)

Similar to the family cycle, Modiano takes on the responsibility of preserving the memory, cherishing the legacy and caring for the generations directly preceding him. The love and respect coming from a chance encounter with Dora Bruder resulted in this literary memorial. Despite the attempts by the Vichy Government to hide incriminating evidence, Modiano's *Dora Bruder* is a documented legacy of truth. He also sets examples for us, the readers, of the power we possess. He shows us that not only are we in control of our destiny, but we can also alter the past for the better. Reading and responding to these long-lost letters gives Modiano and his readers hope and reminds us to never forget the atrocities of the past. By documenting just a small portion of the letters he discovered, he calls on his readers to be proactive, to talk, to share, to converse, and to remember. He views these letters as calls from the past, which can be answered. Modiano lays to rest the thousands of individuals who never received a proper burial, memorializing their lives, their loved ones and their truths.

Of the thousands traumatically affected, Modiano links the two closest to him; his father and Dora Bruder. He creates a parallel between his father, Dora and himself. The emotions and feelings that follow reflect the melancholy and the mourning that one experiences after the loss of someone. In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud states that melancholy is situated between love and hate, and this struggle poses the question: should one keep investing the love object despite disappointments, ill treatments, and ultimately, despite the loss of the love object? (Freud, 245). Modiano describes a scene illustrating this idea in which he and his father are on their way to the police station to resolve a dispute between his parents. His father is in a fit of rage as Modiano thinks, "Il était là, assis devant moi, impassible, l'air vaguement dégoûté, il m'ignorait comme si j'étais un pestiféré" (Modiano, 70). After this incident, Modiano only sees his father one other

time; the silence between the two men fervently foreshadows their separation. The melancholic ambience of this scene and the melancholy in Modiano's emotions is found in the unconditional love as well as the intense hatred for his father. Marja Warehime, in "Returning to the Scene of the Crime: *Quartier Perdu*, *Dimanches d'août*, and *Fleurs de ruine*," discusses Modiano critic Michèle Breut's focus on similar themes in all of his works. Breut and other Modiano critics point out "the melancholy charm of the ambience and the décor irresistible..." (Warehime, 37).

Modiano tries to love his father and to establish a connection between the two of them, but his father does not want to have anything to do with him. Modiano struggles with love and hatred, but he arrives, ultimately at a stage of melancholy. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, in *Deuil et Mélancolie*, explain the Freudian conception concerning melancholy. They write that they are captured by what Freud describes as "...l'image qui revient d'une plaie ourverte...C'est cette plaie que le mélancolique cherche à dissimuler, à entourer d'un mur, à encrypter..." (Abraham and Torok, 272). This wound consists in the loss of Modiano's father, not exactly his death, but the loss of a father figure. Modiano recounts a story in which he went to a hospital to visit his father whom he hadn't seen since adolescence. He searches without ever finding him: "Je finissais par douter de l'existence de mon père en passant et repassant devant cette église majestueuse...Impossible de trouver mon père" (Modiano, 17-18). His father represents an enormous wound and his interest in Dora reopens it. Modiano, as the melancholic soul, hides this wound from the outside world, revealing it in his writing.

During Modiano's research and writing process, the city of Paris played an enormous role, like a character. This character changes considerably between the years of Dora's existence and those of the present. Throughout *Dora Bruder*, Modiano traces each location that Dora visited. The symbolism of these locations highlights the importance of the theme of death, evident throughout Modiano's masterpiece: the hotel where Dora's parents hid, the Catholic institution where Dora studies in hiding, the Drancy internment camp from where Dora is deported, etc. (Khalifa, 168-169). Modiano remembers a "sensation de vide" when he returns to Tourelles, the camp from where

Dora was transported en route to Auschwitz, but “sans savoir quelle en était la vraie raison” (Modiano, 132). Tourelles acquired more importance because Modiano knew someone who had been interned there: Dora Bruder. His sensation of emptiness symbolizes melancholy according to Freud:

...one feels justified in maintaining the belief that a loss of this kind has occurred, but one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost, and it is all the more reasonable to suppose that the patient cannot consciously perceive what he has lost either.” (Freud, 245)

The fact that Modiano does not know why he has these empty emotions makes him melancholic. The juxtaposition of his process of writing and the Freudian process of melancholia is the driving force for his search for the truth. Before Dora Bruder, Modiano was unaware of any loss. As he continues researching, he uncovers a deep bond with Dora Bruder. His every thought turns to her and he becomes oblivious to the outside world, unless it pertains or has connection to Dora.

It is not entirely true to say that Modiano was unaware of experiencing any loss before his encounter with Dora Bruder. To clarify, before Modiano found the *petite annonce* detailing Dora’s disappearance, he was unaware that he would ever feel deeply affected by the loss of a stranger. It was not until he read the *petite annonce* for the first time that he felt a surge of pain and grief. However, in 1957, at the age of 10, Modiano’s younger brother, Rudy, passed away. His death was a shock and took a large toll on Modiano. In his 2005 novel *Un Pedigree*, he mournfully discusses his brother’s loss as a reflection of his writing:

En février 1957, j’ai perdu mon frère... A part mon frère Rudy, sa mort, je crois que rien de tout ce que je rapporterai ici ne me concerne en profondeur. (Modiano, 44)

The loss of his brother, his only sibling, forever altered his world and his outlook on life. His inability to rely on his parents for support or to deal with the mourning process together, as a cohesive family, forced him to reflect and grieve independently. With respect to this loss, it is entirely impossible not to acknowledge the significance of Dora’s

last name: Bruder, meaning “brother” in German. When Modiano originally saw the *petite annonce* in *Paris Soir*, did the last name catch his eye? Throughout the years of research dedicated to Dora’s life, he begins to see her, not just as the topic of an investigation, but also as a real-life heroine. Modiano, who was rarely given any support, attention, or emotional stability by his family, and who lost the closest person to him, eventually finds someone, Dora, who allows him to feel connected and to have a reason to live. Unlike his father, on all accounts, Dora also provided Modiano answers to his questions, to his perpetual inquisitiveness. Richard J. Golsan, author of *History and Counterhistory in Postwar France* highlights this phenomenon:

The name ‘Dora’ is anagrammatically ‘adore,’ while ‘Bruder’ is German for ‘brother.’ Together, these two words cannot help but evoke the ‘adored (and deceased brother)’ and in so doing, blur the boundary between historical fact and fiction that is so typical of Modiano’s writing. (Golsan, 45)

Coincidental? Assuredly. However, coincidences cannot be ignored and this one in particular, symbolizes Modiano’s relationship to and with Dora. Modiano does not just love Dora as a parental, guardian figure, but also fraternally, as one would care for a sibling. The young Dora embodies similar characteristics as his cherished brother. Modiano’s thirst to help, to care, to protect, and to seek truth, is quenched in his devoted relationships with Dora and Rudy.

As a young writer, (his first published novel was written at the age of 21), Modiano dedicated his first eight *romans* to Rudy Modiano. Daniel B. Perramond, author of *Livret de famille (1977) de Patrick Modiano: grandeur et misère de la mémoire*, defines his *sensation de vide*:

La mémoire s’avère non seulement peu digne de confiance parfois, mais elle est aussi, en particulier pour le narrateur, une malédiction qui l’empêche de vivre heureux dans le présent et qui le hante au point de souhaiter l’oubli total. (Perramond, 71)

The curse, or *malédiction*, rests heavily on Modiano’s shoulders. His grieving and mourning process lasts decades and infiltrates into each of his novels. He is a part of every one of his novels’ characters. He molds himself into each person, blending in and



out of the present day and the past. His guilt for having been born after the Occupation, as previously mentioned, is suggested in the majority of his characters. By creating characters that either lived during or survived the Occupation, he is in a way, able to live vicariously through them and feel that he too experienced this tragedy. By internalizing his characters, it is possible for Modiano to feel their pain, grief and melancholia.

As we have seen before, Modiano finds a present-day connection to Dora Bruder by the topography of Paris. The city's streets and buildings are a living testament to Dora's existence and disappearance. Once filled by her movement, her words, her steps, her scent, her essence, the city transforms itself into an archeological residue of her being. Tourelles and the Parisian sites mentioned in *Dora Bruder* represent the ghosts of the victims before and after the Occupation. Abraham and Torok explain this phenomenon as it pertains to one of their patients:

...c'est pourquoi il en a soigneusement mis en conserve le souvenir comme son bien le plus précieux et cela au prix de lui bâtir une crypte avec les pierres de la haine et de l'agression. (Abraham and Torok, 273)

The hatred and aggression, as described by Abraham and Torok draws upon the anti-love Modiano received from his father. The lack of affection, attention, love, respect, and especially truth, suffocates Modiano, as he fervently tries to escape and find not only answers, but also reciprocal respect and relationships. The mourning that embodies Modiano during his research on Dora is extraordinary. Freud explains mourning as a loss of interest in the world. The world becomes sad and empty like that of the Paris in which Modiano lives. Contrary to melancholia, during mourning, the mourner knows for whom he or she is mourning, and as for Modiano, this is Dora. The figure of Dora becomes more important than himself. The melancholia that overwhelms Modiano in strolling the streets of Paris is evident as he mourns Dora:

Depuis, le Paris où j'ai tenté de retrouver sa trace est demeuré aussi désert et silencieux que ce jour-là. Je marche à travers les rues vides. Pour moi elles le

restent...Je ne peux pas m'empêcher de penser à elle et de sentir un écho de sa présence dans certains quartiers. (Modiano, 144)

The love and loss that Modiano has for Dora is evident here, at the end of the book. Paris exists in all of the memories of the Occupation, the victims, the tragedy as a whole, and it is Dora who is the main representative throughout the city. His investment in her recapitulates all of his former and current feelings for his family. It is Dora, who is the vehicle and symbol for all other losses in Modiano's life, in particular his brother's.

Baptise Roux, in *Figures de L'Occupation dans l'oeuvre de Patrick Modiano*, writes:

...la symbiose qui s'opère entre ces représentations d'un monde révolu et la sensibilité de Modiano facilitent le contact ou la sympathie entre le passé insaisissable et un présent silencieux. (Roux, 115)

Modiano's writing combines stories of real people and historical events. One could say that these people, like Dora Bruder, are "ghost-like, passive figures carried along by the tide of events as victims of circumstance and/or oppression" (Mitchell and Côté, 165). It is Modiano, the perpetual gravedigger of prose, who unearths these victims and brings their tragic stories to life. In doing so, he consciously mourns the victims who have preceded him, and the world for having failed him. Freud states, "In mourning, it is the world which has become poor and empty, in melancholia it is the ego itself" (Freud, 246).

Melancholia and mourning are not the only Freudian psychological ideas detectable in *Dora Bruder*. Modiano's imagination wanders throughout the writing of *Dora Bruder* and it is possible to see the Freudian dreams and unconsciousness appear. The different lives of Modiano, his father and Dora represent the different worlds of an adult and a child (VanderWolk, 64). William VanderWolk writes:

...Freud is implicated as the arbiter of the unconscious and dreams, two key elements in any Modiano work. In Modiano's works the world of dreams serves as a link between the different worlds of the child and the adult. Freud's association of dreams, childhood and the unconscious memory works for Modiano on the temporal as well as spatial levels. Time lived, time remembered and the time of dreams all make up the temporal web of Modiano's work. (VanderWolk, 64)

According to the situations with his father and Dora and without knowing it, Modiano invents or imagines the possibilities of their identity in Freudian terms. Modiano brings his father and Dora into consciousness. *Incorporation* according to Abraham and Torok consists of a *fantasme*, and in Modiano's case, it is slightly narcissistic in that he wants to keep some of what Dora Bruder represents to himself. *Incorporation* is described as:

Introduire dans le corps, y détenir ou en expulser un objet – tout ou partie – une chose, acquérir, garder, perdre, autant de variants fantasmatiques...la marque d'une situation intrapsychique fondamentale. (Abraham and Torok, 261)

The *fantasme* present during *incorporation* exists when Modiano imagines several possibilities for his father and Dora. His dreams become the unknown past due to his father's silence about the truth (VanderWolk, 64). Modiano enters stages of mourning after experiencing *incorporation* and after accepting their destiny. The negation of absence exists in *introjection* according to Abraham and Torok. In *Dora Bruder*, *introjection* is seen in Modiano's desire to express in writing the emptiness in his own life and in the lives of Dora, his father and the victims, as well as to put into words his identification with a young girl whom he never knew and who was murdered, and the ghosts of Dora and of Paris. Abraham and Torok also allow us to clearly relate Freud's position on melancholia to Modiano. In *Deuil et Mélancolie*, Abraham and Torok write:

Le mélancolique semble faire souffrir sa propre chair en la prêtant à son fantôme; on a voulu reconnaître là une agressivité retournant sur soi. On ne sait s'il aime vraiment son fantôme mais il est sûr que celui-ci est 'fou' de lui; pour lui, il serait prêt à tout. Ce fantôme éperdu, le mélancolique l'incarne dans tout ce qu'il endure 'pour lui.' (Abraham and Torok, page 271)

The same question is raised here as many Modiano critics have posed: Does Modiano love Dora Bruder? Is this type of love possible? By all means, the melancholic, in this case Modiano, embodies all that Dora represents. His pain is a reflection of Dora's troubled life. Modiano's text, historical reference, biography, autobiography, but above all his *chef d'oeuvre* "incarnate" as Abraham and Torok describe, Dora's short life into his own; into his being; into his "flesh."

## Conclusion

What does this text represent? What is the role of the readers and those in the future? *Dora Bruder* is undoubtedly an example of intergenerational transference. Modiano, born after the Occupation, a member of the generation responsible for keeping memory alive and never allowing future generations to forget, is, himself, deeply scarred by his father's experiences and those of every other victim. *Dora Bruder* is a literary archive, complete with testimonials, photographs, letters, and voices of the past. Modiano provides his readers with a choice: be proactive or passive. The victims' cries still exist and readers become witnesses to the catastrophic events of previous generations. We, as readers, are compelled to answer these cries. How can we answer these pleas? The truth needs to be told and we have the power to tell it. It seems impossible not to be moved by the human despair he brings to light. He asks us to end the continuous, perpetual cycle of forgetting. Healthy healing is possible, even decades after the tragic events surrounding the Occupation. He has given the world a taste of the sorrow, despair, mourning, grief, and even love, which define him and the millions of people directly affected.

Patrick Modiano shows his altruistic, empathetic, paternal, brotherly, devoted, and compassionate characteristics in his *roman* dedicated to Dora Bruder. She represents who he is and defines his identity. Dora answers Modiano's questions about the past and in particular all of his unanswered questions surrounding his father. She provides him with much-needed closure after decades of uncertainty and guilt. This thesis has demonstrated the possibility of not only loving an unknown individual, but also mourning the loss of this person. The stages of mourning and melancholia Modiano experienced in terms of Dora, his father, his brother and every victim who never received the proper respect in which Modiano so fervently believed are clearly evident by looking carefully at the theories proposed by Freud, Abraham and Torok.

## Bibliography

- Abraham, Nicolas, and Maria Torok. "Deuil ou Mélancolie: Introjecter – incorporer." *L'Ecorce et le Noyau*. Paris: Flammarion, 1987.
- Baudelaire, Charles. "A une Passante." *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Paris: Gallimard Bibliothèque de la Pleiade, 1973.
- Cima, Denise. *Etude sur Patrick Modiano, Dora Bruder: Jeux de Miroirs Biographiques*. Paris: Ellipses, 2003. 23-24.
- Creekmur, Corey K. "Photography, Fiction, and Mourning." *Photo-Textualities: Reading Photographs and Literature*. Ed. Marsha Bryant. University of Delaware Press, 1996.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. 1947, Vol. 14, 237-258.
- Golsan, Richard J. *Vichy's Afterlife: History and Counter-History in Postwar France*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2000. 45-50.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Khalifa, Samuel. "The Mirror of Memory Patrick Modiano's *La Place de l'Etoile* and *Dora Bruder*." *The Holocaust and the Text: Speaking the Unspeakable*. Eds. Andrew Leak and George Paizis. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- Mitchell, Constantina Thalia and Paul Raymond Côté. "Surveying the Literary Terrain." *Shaping the Novel: Textual Interplay in the Fiction of Malraux, Hébert, and Modiano*. Rhode Island: Berghahn Books, 1996.

Modiano, Patrick. *Dora Bruder*. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Dora Bruder*. Trans. Joanna Kilmartin. California: University of California Press, 1997.

\_\_\_\_\_. *La Place de l'Etoile*. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1968.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Un Pedigree*. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2005.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Voyages de Noces*. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1992.

Morris, Alan. "Patrick Modiano." *Beyond the Nouveau Roman: Essays on the Contemporary French Novel*. Ed. Michael Tilby. New York, Oxford, and Munich: Berg, 1990.

Perramond, Daniel B. "Livret de famille (1997) de Patrick Modiano: grandeur et misère de la mémoire." *The French Review*. October 1992: Vol. 66, No. 1, 69-76.

Roux, Baptiste. *Figures de l'Occupation dans l'Oeuvre de Patrick Modiano*. Paris: l'Harmattan, 1999.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Anti-Semite and Jew*. New York: Schocken, 1948.

Thompson, William. "Order and Chaos in 'A une Passante.'" *Understanding 'Les Fleurs du Mal' Critical Readings*. Vanderbilt University Press, 1997.

VanderWolk, William. "Whose Memory is This?: Patrick Modiano's Historical Method." *Paradigms of Memory: The Occupation and other Hi/stories in the Novels of Patrick Modiano*. New York, Washington D.C./Baltimore, and Boston: Peter Lang, 1998.

Warehime, Marja. "Returning to the Scene of the Crime: *Rue des boutiques obscures*, *Quartier perdu*, *Dimanches d'août*, and *Fleurs de ruine*." *Paradigms of Memory: The Occupation and other Hi/stories in the Novels of Patrick Modiano*. Eds. Martine Guyot-Bender and William VanderWolk. New York, Washington D.C./Baltimore, and Boston: Peter Lang, 1998.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Paris and the Autobiography of a *flâneur*: Patrick Modiano and Annie Ernaux." *French Forum*. January 2000: 25:1, 97-113.