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Abstract

Dora Bruder, unique to Patrick Modiano's literary repertoire, remains unclassifiable with respect to genre due to its constant oscillation between fiction, biography and autobiography. The publication of an English translation has further complicated the task of classification. While some scholars persist in their usage of the term 'autofiction' to describe this work, Modiano's reliance on visual elements such as photography and maps suggests that *Dora Bruder* would be more aptly classified as an instance of second-generation Holocaust ekphrasis. It is my contention that strict textual analyses that ignore *Dora Bruder*'s distinctive publication history fail to grasp not only the work's defining image–text dynamic, but also its continued existence as a work in progress. The current analysis therefore proposes a new reading of *Dora Bruder* in an attempt to reach beyond the Western conception of canonical literature and to better understand Modiano's *Dora Bruder* project.

Keywords

ekphrasis, Holocaust, Patrick Modiano, photography, postmemory, urban topography

While Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder* (1997) undeniably constitutes an example of second-generation Holocaust literature, it remains unclassifiable with respect to genre.¹ Even the casual observer would notice the absence of '*roman*' or of any other literary category generally inscribed on French title pages.² The publication of its English translation in 1999 by the University of California Press has rendered this task of classification even more complex. Why would the translated edition contain photographs and maps excluded from both the original 1997 Gallimard Blanche and the 1999 Gallimard Folio editions? Moreover, minimal analysis discloses that the 1999 French reprint represents a revision, not a re-edition, of the original text (Morris, 2006: 270). While some critics have noted the importance of the book's publication history, most have focused on a strict textual analysis, evading the question of publication and photographic reproduction altogether. The latter

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analyses ignore the intimate relationship between publication, revision and Modiano's motivations in writing *Dora Bruder*, a work considered unique to the author's repertoire. However, both types of analyses are inadequate, in that they fail to study image and text from a structural point of view. My argument is based on the supposition that an 'adequate' analysis would analogize the history of *Dora Bruder* and *Dora Bruder's* narrative construction. It is my contention that this text would be more accurately categorized as an instance of second-generation Holocaust ekphrasis: one which provides Modiano with the means to negotiate 'spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority' (Barthes, 1977: 44), to engage in a postmemorial narrative. And I intend to demonstrate that it was Modiano's initial inability to do so which subsequently led to *Dora Bruder's* specific publication history and constant oscillation between fiction, biography and autobiography.

Dora Bruder was originally published in 1997 in the Gallimard Blanche series before its 1999 reprinting in the Folio paperback edition.³ According to Alan Morris, a comparison of the two editions quickly uncovers alterations of varying importance, including the correction of spelling and punctuation errors, 'diegetic bolstering', the reassessment of ideologically charged terminology, and the addition of more precise documentation (Morris, 2006: 270–3). Although not all Modiano's amendments are noteworthy, many remain quite significant. Therefore, while I am grateful to Morris for indicating all changes that the author undertook between 1997 and 1999, his designation of what is significant and insignificant requires closer inquiry. For example, Morris considers 'Modiano's ostensible rectification of faulty transcriptions, false information and unnecessary vagueness' to be 'sub-editorial' (Morris, 2006: 270).⁴ However, since the book's fictional status is often challenged, the author's revision of proper names and toponymy merits attention. Indeed the following changes leave the reader unable to distinguish fact from fiction:⁵ the 'rue Liégeois' and 'avenue de Picpus' in the 1997 edition later become the 'avenue Liégeois' and the 'boulevard de Picpus' (Modiano, 1997: 22, 131; 1999: 20, 129). Similarly, the androgynous 'Claude Bloch' is replaced with the feminine 'Claudette Bloch' (Modiano, 1997: 118, 123; 1999: 116, 121), and 'Dr Andrée Abadi' undergoes a gender transformation, becoming 'Dr André Abadi' (Modiano, 1997: 128; 1999: 126; Morris, 2006: 270–1).⁶

Seemingly unimportant, these details are of the same calibre as those verified by Bertrand de Saint-Vincent, a literary critic whose findings Morris cites. After the publication of the Gallimard Blanche edition, Saint-Vincent published an article in *Figaro Magazine* entitled 'Patrick Modiano joue au détective' in which he contests a number of *Dora Bruder's* fallacious assertions including one quoted by Morris:

Modiano décrit son parcours jusqu'au bureau de l'état civil, qu'il situe au 5^e étage, escalier 5, porte 501 ... Le bureau 501 est celui des mariages; l'escalier 5 n'existe pas. Au palais de justice, Modiano a donc frappé à la porte du bureau 521 B. Pour y accéder, il a emprunté l'escalier S. (Saint-Vincent, 1997: 122)

These two discrepancies are left unchanged in the Folio edition (Modiano, 1999: 18). Other erroneous details include the name of the architect of 39 boulevard Ornano indicated on a plaque as 'Pierrefeu' in the 1997 edition (Modiano, 1997: 14). Yet after visiting the address, Saint-Vincent comments that the architect's name is actually 'Richefeu' (Saint-Vincent, 1997: 122). Modiano does change the architect's name in the later

edition, thus confusing the reader familiar with both editions with his ostensibly arbitrary revisions (Modiano, 1999: 12).⁷

Before considering some of Modiano's more significant alterations, a remark must be made concerning the English translation. Published in 1999, it is difficult to believe that the translator was working with the 1999 Folio edition. Although it is possible that she was working in conjunction with Modiano while he was revising the 1997 edition, any collaboration between the author and Joanna Kilmartin has yet to be verified. It is therefore interesting to examine specific translations in light of the information provided above. Beginning with the toponymic changes signalled by Morris, the English translation appears inconsistently based on Modiano's corrections. Hence Kilmartin references the 1999 edition referring to the 'Avenue Liégeard' and later the 1997 edition with the 'Avenue de Picpus' (Kilmartin, 1999: 14, 108). In addition, the female Dr Andrée Abadi from the original *Dora Bruder* is translated as the male 'Dr André Abadi', recalling the revised edition (Kilmartin, 1999: 105). Claude Bloch's description nevertheless remains in complete accordance with the 1997 edition: 'Claude Bloch was thirty-two years old ... She was the *only* person on that transport to survive' (Kilmartin, 1999: 96, emphasis added). Morris observes that even though Bloch was 'la seule personne survivante du convoi' in 1997 (Modiano, 1997: 118), she became 'l'une des rares personnes survivantes du convoi' in 1999 (Modiano, 1999: 116; Morris, 2006: 271). Finally, Kilmartin's version mentions the 1997 architect 'Pierrefeu' instead of the 1999 architect 'Richefeu' (Kilmartin, 1999: 7).

One significant modification has a specific cultural connotation in French and passes inconspicuously in the English translation: the nuance between *juif* (Jewish or Jew) and *israélite* (Israelite).⁸ The latter, from the Hebrew *yisra'el*, indicates the descendants of Israel or Jacob and today retains its nineteenth-century anti-Semitic connotation when used to avoid *juif* ('Israélite'). From an etymological perspective, the term *juif*, derived from the Hebrew *y'hudi*, refers to the tribe of Judah, descendants of Abraham. In French, *Juif/juif* respectively designate ethnicity and religious belonging: the monotheistic Semites, faithful followers of Judaism, who once lived in Palestine ('Juif'). It should therefore not come as a surprise that Modiano eliminated certain terms deemed 'negatively subjective' from the 1997 edition (Morris, 2006: 271). Morris notes, for instance, the reassessment of 'le registre d'état civil de la communauté israélite de Vienne' (Modiano, 1997: 24; Morris, 2006: 271). This sentence is later converted into 'le registre d'état civil de Vienne' (Modiano, 1999: 22). Here the English roughly adheres to the first French edition with 'the Register Office of Vienna's Jewish community' (Kilmartin, 1999: 16). The nuances of *juif* and *israélite* are lost in translation. But if Modiano did not add the words highlighted in italics until *Dora Bruder*'s re-edition: 'Elle était entrée au Saint-Cœur-de-Marie en mai 1940, lorsqu'il n'y avait pas encore de persécutions *et que, pour elle, le mot "juif" ne devait pas signifier grand-chose*' (Modiano, 1999: 58, emphasis added), why do they appear in Kilmartin's translation: 'Then again, the classification "Jew" meant nothing to the fourteen-year-old Dora' (Kilmartin, 1999: 38)?

Quite arguably, these inconsistencies together with the printing of incorrect dates discredit the English translation.⁹ For example the University of California edition refers to April 1966 instead of April 1996 at the beginning of the twenty-fourth section (Kilmartin, 1999: 107; Modiano, 1997: 130; 1999: 128). However, the translated text does incorporate

three photographic images and two maps not reproduced in either of the Gallimard editions. Although Modiano's role in such editorial decisions is unclear, *Dora Bruder's* multiple editions still retain the work's original ekphrastic character. Since Modiano specifically refers in his French texts to the three photographs reproduced in the translated edition, as well as to seven additional images, one is led to believe that he had access to them during his investigation and the subsequent creative process, thus eliminating the hypothesis that *Dora Bruder* is an entirely fictional account; rather it appears to be a work of actual ekphrasis.¹⁰ The question then becomes: from whom did he acquire these images?

The title of Morris's article, "'Avec Klarsfeld, contre l'oubli": Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder*', directly references an article written by Modiano immediately after the publication of Serge Klarsfeld's monumental work, *Le Mémorial des enfants juifs déportés de France* (first published in 1994).¹¹ A collection of photographs of more than 3000 of the 11,000 children deported from France during the war, Klarsfeld's memorial rescues them from oblivion by restoring their faces and identities (Klarsfeld, 2001: 5). Published in *Libération* on 2 November 1994 and later reproduced in the 2001 edition of *Mémorial*, Modiano's article articulates the importance of Klarsfeld's research vis-à-vis writing and remembering the Holocaust: 'Et d'abord, j'ai douté de la littérature. Puisque le principal moteur de celle-ci est souvent la mémoire, il me semblait que le seul livre qu'il fallait écrire, c'était ce mémorial, comme Serge Klarsfeld l'avait fait' (quoted in Klarsfeld, 2001: 535). Before reading Klarsfeld's 1994 *Mémorial*, Modiano had failed to find traces of Dora through his own research, which began in December 1988 after reading her missing person's report published in the 31 December 1941 edition of *Paris Soir* (Modiano, 1997: 9; 1999: 7). It was in reality the Bruder's address, 41 boulevard Ornano, which initially attracted Modiano's attention: 'Ce quartier du boulevard Ornano, je le connais depuis longtemps' (Modiano, 1997: 9; 1999: 7). In the opening section of the text, the author recalls visiting this area of Paris when he would accompany his mother to the Saint-Ouen flea market. Yet because Modiano restricted his search during the late 1980s to spaces common to his and Dora's childhood, his investigation remained relatively futile.¹²

His lack of information finally culminated in the 1990 publication of *Voyage de noces*, a novel. Hoping that the creative process would eventually elucidate Dora Bruder's existence, he comes to the conclusion that fiction symbolizes all that is chimerical. Then a ray of hope: Klarsfeld's *Mémorial*. Modiano writes in *Libération*: 'Grâce à Serge Klarsfeld, je saurai peut-être quelque chose de Dora Bruder' (quoted in Klarsfeld, 2001: 535). Following the publication of Modiano's reaction to *Mémorial*, Klarsfeld sends him information about Dora's existence and deportation as well as photographs. Klarsfeld's letters, to which only Modiano's responses appear in *Mémorial*, unveil the provenance of the photographic images alluded to in both Gallimard editions and reproduced in the University of California Press edition.¹³ Incidentally, the translation's first image is the one that illustrates Dora's entry in *Mémorial*. This sharing of information and images reinvigorates Modiano's search for traces of the missing adolescent. In a letter addressed to Klarsfeld on 27 March 1995, the author reveals a future project, undoubtedly *Dora Bruder*: 'j'espère vous voir pour vous parler d'un projet que j'aimerais mener à bien, grâce aux renseignements que vous m'avez donnés et aux pistes que vous m'avez ouvertes' (quoted in Klarsfeld, 2001: 536). Despite the fact that Modiano's letter proves that *Dora Bruder*

is, to a certain degree, fictional – he never mentions Klarsfeld in his book – it does demonstrate the importance of family photography with regard to remembrance.

In *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*, Marianne Hirsch explores the generational relationship between photography, memory and history via what she terms ‘postmemory’. Based on first- and second-generation Holocaust survivors, she distinguishes postmemory ‘from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection’ (Hirsch, 1997: 22). She further associates memory with first-generation survivors and postmemory with subsequent generations (descendants of survivors) whose childhoods were shaped by first-generation narratives and their photographic images. Although image and text both constitute vehicles for transmitting memory, photographs are particularly significant in that they separate postmemory from memory and memory from forgetting (Hirsch, 1997: 22). Hirsch’s neologism buttresses the authenticating role of photography and the privileged relationship between the photograph and its referent. According to Roland Barthes, photographs provide evidence for the existence of something or someone no longer present. Photographs thus allow for ‘a new space–time category: spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, the photograph being an illogical conjunction between the *here-now* and the *there-then*’ (Barthes, 1977: 44). Family photographs confirm the relationship between self and the past.

Reading *Dora Bruder* as a postmemorial narrative is, however, problematical. First and foremost, Modiano does not describe his own family photographs and therefore cannot confirm his own relationship to the specificity of Dora’s past. The author describes ten photographs, nine of which are of the Bruder family: Cécile and Ernest on their wedding day, Cécile and Ernest with the then two-year-old Dora, a 12-year-old Dora after winning an award, Dora with her mother (with the same backdrop as the previous photograph), a shorter-haired 12-year-old Dora again with her mother, Dora at 13 or 14 with Cécile and Ernest, Cécile in front of a suburban house, a nine- or ten-year-old Dora on a rooftop, and finally Dora with her mother and grandmother in 1941 (Modiano, 1997: 32–3, 92–3; 1999: 31–3, 90–1). The tenth image is of two uniformed, middle-aged women; their badges indicate that they once worked for the Prefecture de Police (Modiano, 1997: 110; 1999: 108).¹⁴ If such photographs reinvigorated Modiano’s investigation, why were they not included? This fundamental question obviously presumes that it was the author’s intention to publish a text devoid of images. Modiano’s decision results in the reader’s own frustration as they must accept his unresolved narrative. This is not to say that his narrative would be resolved if the photos were included – only Dora herself could illuminate both reader and author. Instead, by selectively revealing information (e.g. providing descriptions of photographs rather than reproducing the actual images), Modiano once again fails, in Morris’s words, to ‘include all the relevant information [he] could’ (Morris, 2006: 283).¹⁵

Moreover, if Hirsch’s postmemory theory partially explains Modiano’s motivations for writing *Dora Bruder*, it completely ignores all that makes this text unique. Starting from the premise that *Dora Bruder* is indeed a postmemorial narrative, the narrator’s quest for Dora becomes a metaphor for his desire to find traces of his father. This unconscious redirection of emotions toward a new person – Dora – can be explained by Freud’s notion of psychological transference. If *Dora Bruder* represents an instance of transference, then it is meant to resolve conflicts between Modiano and his father, a Jew who,

unlike Dora, escaped deportation for reasons unknown. From this perspective, *Dora Bruder* should be read as an autobiography in disguise, a pseudo-biography. Such a reading lends credence to Akane Kawakami's description of Modiano's narrators who are 'indispensable to the narrative as the sole means of its articulation ... the narrative's existence is only justified as the search for – or the creation of – the narrator's identity' (Kawakami, 2000: 10–1). Kawakami's hypothesis is further supported by Barthes's *Camera Lucida* whose second half, according to Liz Wells, is concerned with photography's 'psychological and autobiographical implications' (Wells, 2003: 15). This is particularly true regarding a photograph's *punctum* which 'rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces [the viewer]' (Barthes, 2003: 25). Modiano's deep personal connection with Dora's photographs thereby aids him in his search for or creation of a narrative identity.

Dora Bruder undeniably has a strong autobiographical component. The narrator's father is first evoked as the narrator navigates the Palais de Justice in search of Dora's birth certificate. The labyrinthine building reminds Modiano of the Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital in which he was unable to find his father (Modiano, 1997: 19–20; 1999: 17–18) – incidentally this episode represents the only allusion Modiano has ever made to his father's death in his writing. Other autobiographical elements related to his father include the imagined encounter between his father and Dora Bruder in 1942 (1997: 64–6; 1999: 62–4), his father's escape upon arrest (1997: 64–5; 1999: 62–3), his involvement in the black market during the Occupation (1997: 66, 119; 1999: 64, 117), his transformation from victim to persecutor in the Black Maria after having his son arrested (1997: 70–4; 1999: 68–72), and his failed attempt to send his son to the Reuilly army barracks (1997: 74; 1999: 72). Yet, interestingly, the father–son conflict portrayed in *Dora Bruder* does not demand immediate resolution. At first, the narrator feels offended by his father's behaviour. Modiano mentions that he wrote *La Place de l'étoile* (1968) in order to arrive at a greater understanding of his father's anguish during the Occupation (1997: 72; 1999: 70). This first novel was intended as a response to the anti-Semitic authors whose books he had discovered in his father's library. It was only after its publication that Modiano realized that his book had come too late: 'la plupart de ces auteurs avaient disparu, fusillés, exilés, gâteux ou morts de vieillesse. Oui, malheureusement, je venais trop tard' (1997: 73; 1999: 71). Modiano consequently finds himself incapable of hating his father, an innocent victim of anti-Semitism, for having ordered his arrest (1997: 73; 1999: 71).

Hence while Modiano's father plays an important role in *Dora Bruder*, defining this text as a psychological transference is simply inaccurate. As *Dora Bruder* is the only Modiano text whose title refers to its main 'character', Dora's presence – or rather her absence – necessitates further analysis. Unable to reconstitute what happened to Dora between December 1941 and her internment in Tourelles several months later, Modiano uses the void that his investigation creates to guide the reader through the lacuna of collective memory. Out of the abyss and Dora Bruder's ubiquitous sense of absence, come other fragmented existences: Syma Berger, Fredel Traister, Ruth Kronenberg, Zébu Desnos, Claude(ette) Bloch, Josette Delimal, Tamara Isserlis, Ida Levine, Annette Zelman, Hena, Raca Israelowicz and Claudine Winerbett. The list goes on. Modiano's admission that these identities, much like his own, are constructed upon emptiness

parallels Giorgio Agamben's conception of testimony: 'Testimony is thus always an act of an "author": it always implies an essential duality in which an insufficiency or incapacity is completed or made valid' (Agamben, 2002: 150). The silence surrounding Dora's final months in Paris is therefore not negatively perceived at the end of Modiano's narration. Instead its validation functions to protect her identity from the amnesia of time. How else could one interpret the text's final passage:

J'ignoreraï toujours à quoi elle passait ses journées, où elle se cachait, en compagnie de qui elle se trouvait pendant les mois d'hiver de sa première fugue et au cours des quelques semaines de printemps où elle s'est échappée à nouveau. C'est là son secret. Un pauvre et précieux secret que les bourreaux, les ordonnances, les autorités dites d'occupation, le Dépôt, les casernes, les camps, l'Histoire, le temps – tout ce qui vous souille et vous détruit – n'auront pas pu lui voler. (Modiano, 1997: 147; 1999: 144–5)

In addition, while Hirsch's definition of postmemory primarily deals with photography, the absence of reproduced images in both Gallimard editions serves to validate Modiano's testimony, as described by Agamben. If it is true that Klarsfeld's photographs catalyse the creation of Modiano's 'adapted' postmemorial narrative, what sustains it? Recalling Barthes's notion that photographs provide for the simultaneity of spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, Modiano favours a different 'visual' medium that functions in much the same way: the city. Given that geography fuels the author's initial inquiry, *Dora Bruder*'s evolution through postmemorial cartography is logical. Indeed Modiano complements his archival research with details of the surrounding urban landscape.¹⁶ Specific addresses and institution names intersperse most sections of the text beginning with the Bruders' address cited in *Paris Soir*. As a result, the reader learns much about Parisian geography spanning several decades, notably 1926 until 1996: the Rothschild Hospital where Dora was born in 1926, the north-eastern suburb of Sevran, the Clignancourt police station, Saint-Cœur-de-Marie, the Saint-Germain police station, the internment camps of Tourelles and Drancy, etc. Yet despite the focus on topographical precision, Modiano's investigation is never closed. Instead, it progresses from exactitude (41 boulevard Ornano, December 1941) to uncertainty once the author realizes the impossibility of unearthing Dora's secrets: '*Dora Bruder* [will] forever open out into alternative stories, and thereby ultimately foreground the possible rather than the known' (Morris, 2006: 277); hence *Dora Bruder*'s open ending.

The fact that Modiano provides descriptions of places over time again recalls Barthes and Hirsch. By favouring topography over photography, Modiano proves that the former is as capable as the latter of creating Barthes's new space–time category. Visits to particular sites often conjure up the author's own personal memories; for instance, a brief description of Ernest's childhood in Vienna at the turn of the century shifts to that of a 20-year-old Modiano in Vienna in 1965, which in turn becomes that of 1919 Vienna when Ernest himself turned 20 (Modiano, 1997: 23–4; 1999: 21–2). By extension and in relation to Hirsch, Modiano uses topography in place of family photographs to confirm the relationship between self and the past. Therefore it seems appropriate to designate *Dora Bruder* as an adapted postmemorial narrative, one whose nucleus is geographic rather than photographic. This important modification of Hirsch's definition of

postmemory justifies the reproduction of maps of both the twelfth and eighteenth *arrondissements* of Paris at the beginning of the English translation.¹⁷ They appear before the text's *incipit* and are preceded only by the *Mémorial* photograph of Dora and her parents. Once again it remains unclear whether or not Modiano participated in designing the translation's layout. I am inclined to believe that the author is himself responsible for the absence of maps in the Gallimard editions – perhaps due to their *punctum* vis-à-vis the author. If one accepts the hypothesis that the exclusion of photographs reinforces the idea of an unresolved investigation as explained above, then the exclusion of maps reflects the dynamism of Paris's landscape.

After contemplating the photograph picturing Dora, Cécile and Dora's grandmother, Modiano writes, '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' (1997: 94; 1999: 92). The same is certainly true for maps, an assertion that Modiano's consultation of the old map illustrates. Despite the absence of Saint-Cœur-de-Marie in Paris in 1996, the map confirms this institution's authenticity and immortalizes its 1940s' existence. The dynamism of the urban landscape is therefore one of change and effacement rather than productive expansion. The normally bustling cityscape appears desolate and empty. Though the text abounds in examples of the emptiness encountered during the narrator's numerous walks around the capital, one in particular is worth mentioning. Upon returning to the area where the second-hand goods store once stood the narrator explains a key policy of French post-war urban planning:

Le dépôt et son rideau de fer rouillé n'existent plus et les immeubles voisins ont été restaurés. De nouveau je ressentais un vide. Et je comprenais pourquoi. La plupart des immeubles du quartier avaient été détruits après la guerre, d'une manière méthodique, selon une décision administrative. Et l'on avait même donné un nom et un chiffre à cette zone qu'il fallait raser: l'îlot 16. (1997: 137–8; 1999: 135–6)

The amnesiac fog veiling the city tries to efface any remaining traces of Dora and other deportees. Today the street names and addresses once associated with names (e.g. Bruder) no longer correspond to anything (1997: 139; 1999: 137). Similarly, Modiano often mentions the destruction of archives: 'Quelques années après la guerre, d'autres archives des commissariats ont été détruites, comme les registres spéciaux ouverts en juin 1942' (1997: 78; 1999: 76). The author's topographical research therefore belongs under the same rubric as his biographical research: historiography.

Do these essential elements make *Dora Bruder* a biography? Not entirely. In spite of the inclusion of specific dates, police reports and letters meant to assure the reader of the text's historical accuracy, Saint-Vincent's own research in 1997 proves the contrary.¹⁸ Furthermore, Dora's life eludes her biographer who is unable to draw any significant conclusions. Qualifying this text as an autobiography or autofiction is not entirely appropriate either. As Kawakami remarks, the reader's perception of a biographer's reliability is contingent on a specific hierarchy; the biographer must never appear more important than their subject (Kawakami, 2000: 124). Modiano's initial search for information about Dora's *fugue* nevertheless results in the endless alternation between biography and autobiography. The cause: Modiano's use of the first person. Here such a narration allows for

the insertion of verifiable facts about the author as narrator into his own failed biography on Dora. And although the narrator relegates himself to the periphery, his presence indicates a desire to work through a displaced trauma (the Holocaust and perhaps his father's death¹⁹) as well as to discover his own place in France's Jewish history. Because biography and autobiography cannot coexist simultaneously, the notion that *Dora Bruder* represents an adapted postmemory still dominates our discussion of genre.

Yet due to the strong correlation between postmemory and first-generation Holocaust narratives, even an adapted postmemory, one that is spatially defined, does not account for *Dora Bruder*'s fictional nature. Because Modiano's research essentially uncovers a historical abyss, he exploits his authorial clairvoyance in order to fill this void:

Comme beaucoup d'autres devant moi, je crois aux coïncidences et quelquefois à un don de voyance chez les romanciers ... cette gymnastique cérébrale peut sans doute provoquer à la longue de brèves intuitions 'concernant des événements passés ou futurs'. (Modiano, 1997: 54; 1999: 52–3)

And Modiano's endeavour to straddle both the historical and the fictional has constantly evolved throughout *Dora Bruder*'s publication history. In the original French edition and the English translation, the narrator presents some information as fact. For example, when describing Suzanne Albert's experience at Saint-Cœur-de-Marie, he states: 'Elle se souvient que tout était noir dans ce pensionnat ... Cela ressemblait plutôt à un orphelinat' (Modiano, 1997: 45). Morris observes that this section is altered in the 1999 edition so as to demonstrate that the narrator actually *infers* this information from the description provided by Albert: '*Sans doute* à cause de l'hiver et du black-out de ce temps-là elle se souvient que tout était noir dans ce pensionnat ... *Selon elle*, cela ressemblait plutôt à un orphelinat' (Modiano, 1999: 44; Morris, 2006: 272, emphasis added). Another example demonstrates the hybrid nature of the English translation. In 1997, Modiano writes the following sentence about Ernest: 'Je suis même certain qu'il n'a pas touché de pension d'invalidité' (Modiano, 1997: 27). Although the sentence is later abandoned, the English translation retains an altered version which hesitates between Modiano's certainty in 1997 and his uncertainty in 1999: 'I'm *almost* sure he didn't receive a disability pension' (Kilmartin, 1999: 19, emphasis added). One could argue that Kilmartin poorly translated the word '*même*'. However, in light of the translation's other inconsistencies this assertion is purely conjectural.

Morris finds Modiano's 'diegetic bolstering' more interesting than the emendations cited above (Morris, 2006: 272). Diegetic bolstering refers to the substitution of earlier expressions revealing unexplainable gaps in the author's research (e.g. *j'ignore*). Examples include the addition of a transcription of the Bruder's marriage licence as well as other information pertaining to their relationship before Dora's birth (Modiano, 1997: 28; 1999: 26–7; Morris, 2006: 272), detailed descriptions of Saint-Cœur-de-Marie's curriculum (Modiano, 1997: 39; 1999: 38–9; Morris, 2006: 273), and architecture (Modiano, 1997: 42; 1999: 41–2; Morris, 2006: 273), and finally the addition of precise names and addresses of certain administrative services (Modiano, 1997: 111, 117; 1999: 109, 115; Morris, 2006: 273). In this regard Kilmartin's translation corresponds to the 1997 edition (Kilmartin, 1999: 20, 32, 34, 91, 96). Morris concludes that these additions represent an

'attempt to bring Dora further out of oblivion through the revelation of new information ... which [has] come to light since the text was first published' (Morris, 2006: 273). This in no way stipulates that Modiano exploits new findings in order to create a more factual text – Morris indeed concludes that '*Dora Bruder* is not as objective and unfictional a work as it has often been taken to be' (Morris, 2006: 276). The frequency of rhetorical questions and expressions of authorial doubt indicate that the 1999 edition of *Dora Bruder* is still speculative.

If most genres fail to accurately describe *Dora Bruder*, how should one define this 'threshold' work?²⁰ Hirsch's use of postmemory or postmemorial narrative requires that the author be a second-generation Holocaust survivor as is Modiano. The idea that *Dora Bruder* is an example of second-generation Holocaust literature is nonetheless incorrect. As 'literature' is derived from the Latin word for writing, *litteratura*, it places emphasis on the written word. However, the current analysis has determined that photographs of the Bruder family catalysed the second phase of Modiano's investigation. It has also determined that the urban landscape sustained the author's writing; hence the need to find a more appropriate term. Usually defined as the verbal representation of visual representation, 'ekphrasis' underscores something 'literature' cannot: the suturing of image and text. This definition suggests that ekphrasis negotiates the amalgamation of different media. Theoreticians who have written on ekphrasis often reduce the visual to space and the verbal to time. This theoretical simplification, or perhaps complication, of ekphrasis as a rhetorical activity originates from the physical presence of artwork and the linearity of writing. Furthermore, ekphrasis depends on the hypothesis that text and image do not differ semantically. Because language is not medium-specific, the combination of image and text reaches beyond the Western conception of canonical literature. Due to its conflation of time and space and its defiance of the limitations of normalized genres, Modiano's text elicits more profound analyses which look past its instances of biography and autobiography and, more importantly, reject the generic label of 'autofiction'. Reading *Dora Bruder* as an instance of second-generation Holocaust ekphrasis would enable the critic to generate more adequate analyses than those published thus far.

One final question should be addressed: of the three editions of *Dora Bruder* studied here, which one should the reader choose? Decidedly all editions and translations of *Dora Bruder* play an important role in transforming the piece into a work of mourning, *Trauerarbeit*: Freud's 'process of elaborating and integrating the reality of loss or traumatic shock by remembering and repeating it in symbolically and dialogically mediated doses' (Santner, 1992: 144). All editions contribute to the work's vacillating focus on language, verbal and visual, and silence. If certain details about Dora's life will forever escape the author, the text's successive editions provide the reader with glimpses of the investigation's numerous phases, starting with the 1990 publication of *Voyage de nocés*. Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder* as a work in progress is then a beacon of hope calling out to those whose testimonies may reveal Dora's secrets:²¹ 'Unlike any conventional commemoration, this is not heroic, monumental, present or possessed of a coherent narrative; rather it is a testament to absence, being small, fragmented, humble and requiring a prolonged process of reading and reconstituting' (Rogoff, 1995: 121).²²

Notes

- 1 Scholars often use the neologism ‘autofiction’ to describe Modiano’s works. See, for example, Laurent (1997) or Cooke (2005).
- 2 Alan Morris (2006: 276) argues that ‘As the book itself intimates – there is no generic indication at all on its title page – attempting to classify it is probably the wrong approach’.
- 3 French publishing houses generally do not publish literary works in hardcover editions. Therefore ‘paperback’ is a misnomer and is used here to distinguish between the more expensive, larger-format Gallimard Blanche edition and the cheaper, smaller (*édition de poche*) Folio edition.
- 4 Morris specifies that such alterations include ‘corrections of “typos,” inconsistencies, lax uses of language, and the like’ (Morris, 2006: 270). Yet in the following paragraph he states: ‘Under this heading, quite clearly, comes Modiano’s ostensible rectification of faulty transcriptions, false information and unnecessary vagueness’ (2006: 270). Although Morris elucidates the importance of changes cited in the present article (e.g. names of thoroughfares and proper names) – in fact he notes that these particular revisions are ‘more meaningful’ (2006: 270) – his definition of what exactly constitutes a ‘sub-editorial’ alteration is somewhat misleading.
- 5 It should be duly noted that most readers would not be aware of changes from edition to edition. However, it is my contention that no reading of *Dora Bruder* should be restricted to the newest edition, as each one constitutes one phase of Modiano’s project. According to Morris,

[Modiano] could decide that there is no need for a further revision of his work since ... some omissions and inaccuracies are apparently integral to its conception. Alternatively, he could carry on taking his cue from Klarsfeld and amend his text at every feasible opportunity, as much of the evidence currently available suggests. Only the print runs to come, however, will confirm this for sure. (Morris, 2006: 285)

- 6 The 1997 ‘Dr Andrée Abadi’ was most probably a typing error. Modiano refers to him in the next sentence as ‘André’ (Modiano, 1997: 128).
- 7 Again Morris’s analysis provides some interesting insights into this matter. According to him, Modiano only selectively corrects errors signalled by Saint-Vincent: ‘A few of the contested sections have duly been revised in the later rewrite, but others remain untouched, including the reporting of a central investigative visit’ (Morris, 2006: 274).
- 8 When asked to define *juif* and *israélite*, scholars often quote the historian Ricardo Calimani: ‘Hébreu, israélite, juif. Trois visages, trois nuances linguistiques et trois étymologies cachées. Hébreu, l’errant; Israélite, l’indompté; juif, le fidèle’ (quoted in Bordes-Benayoun, 2005: 11).
- 9 Although some critics might argue that inconsistencies in Kilmartin’s translation with respect to both French editions do not *discredit* her work (the argument being that inconsistencies already exist in the 1997 edition and thus the English translation is actually an intermediate version between it and the 1999 French edition), the fact that only one English translation exists is highly problematic. If *Dora Bruder* is to be considered a work in progress, even after the publication of its 1999 Gallimard Folio edition, should not the English translation follow suit? Kilmartin’s version therefore cannot effectively translate the work’s significance and purpose if it is presented as definitive.

- 10 Hollander (1995) distinguishes between two types of ekphrasis: actual and notional. A piece of written work can only be defined as actual ekphrasis when it refers to an identifiable work of art; examples include Emma Lazarus's 'The New Colossus' inspired by the Statue of Liberty and Herman Melville's 'The Téméraire' based on Turner's 'The Fighting Téméraire'. If the work of art is imaginary, then the ekphrasis is considered to be notional (e.g. John Keats's 'Ode to a Grecian Urn', Homer's description of Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*).
- 11 I am highly indebted to Morris for his research on the correspondence between Modiano and Klarsfeld – one that Modiano himself fails to acknowledge in his own work (Morris, 2006: 283).
- 12 Although it could be argued that this 'spatial commonality' represents just one aspect of the narrator's investigation, I contend that it, in fact, constitutes its very foundation. As will be discussed later, Modiano's motivation for investigating Dora's life and disappearance is personal. I would argue that if Dora's neighbourhood had not evoked childhood memories, Modiano would not have continued his inquiry.
- 13 Morris also suggests the origin of these photographs (Morris, 2006: 281–2).
- 14 The text also references an unspecified number of photographs showing areas of Paris frequented by both Modiano and Dora. I am not including them here as they do not portray individuals. They nevertheless remain an integral part of Modiano's inquiry.
- 15 Barthes's exclusion of his mother's picture from *Camera Lucida* provides an interesting parallel to Modiano's own exclusion of photographs from *Dora Bruder*. Due to the affective impact of the picture of his mother, Barthes refuses to reproduce it as it would not have the same impact on the reader. Barthes defines a photograph's affective impact as its *punctum*: 'A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)' (Barthes, 2003: 25). Since Modiano has a vested interest in his investigation of Dora's disappearance, one could conclude that his exclusion of images is indeed related to their *punctum*.
- 15 Erin McGlothlin (2006: 137) writes 'Modiano's literary atlas includes a number of narrative strategies, chief of which are the two reproduced maps of the twelfth and eighteenth arrondissements in Paris that he inserts at the beginning of the narrative'. As the maps were not reproduced in either of the Gallimard editions, it should be noted that McGlothlin supports her hypothesis with a rather presumptuous assertion.
- 17 These two maps are presumably details of a larger map of Paris whose date is unspecified. Unable to obtain a photograph of the now extinct Saint-Cœur-de-Marie, Modiano refers to 'un vieux plan de Paris' in order to determine the layout of the school's grounds (Modiano, 1997: 41; 1999: 40). Cartography succeeds in usurping photography's power of authentication.
- 18 Morris observes that despite Saint-Vincent's contestations, 'the Folio text has not been *totally* purged of incorrect or misleading information ... In [some] passages, Modiano has seemingly been aware of problems, and chosen not to act' (Morris, 2006: 274).
- 19 Because both of Modiano's parents survived the Holocaust, to what extent is the author's trauma linked to the Holocaust or even to Vichy? As previously noted, Modiano's father benefited financially from the Occupation (e.g. the black market) after having narrowly escaped deportation. It therefore seems possible that the question of 'why Dora and not his father' fostered Modiano's trauma, or perhaps even guilt.
- 20 Marja Warehime uses the term 'threshold' to define literary works which could be described as both documentary and autobiographical in nature (e.g. *Dora Bruder*). Although her specific usage of the term only applies to a limited number of texts, namely those by Annie

Ernaux and Patrick Modiano (Warehime, 2000: 99), I suggest broadening the term's application to any work whose genre is unclear.

- 21 Modiano writes: 'En écrivant ce livre, je lance des appels, comme des signaux de phare dont je doute malheureusement qu'ils puissent éclairer la nuit. Mais j'espère toujours' (Modiano, 1997: 43; 1999: 42).
- 22 Although this quotation has been taken out of context (Rogoff originally wrote it to describe Joseph Beuys' early work on Auschwitz), it pinpoints the very essence of Modiano's Dora Bruder project.

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