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'UN HOMME MARCHE DANS LA VILLE': PARISIAN FLÂNERIE AND JEWISH COSMOPOLITANISM IN PATRICK MODIANO'S *DORA BRUDER*

In many ways, the narrator of Patrick Modiano's twentieth novel *Dora Bruder* (1997)—who ambiguously resembles its author—positions himself as the inheritor of a European literary tradition comprising both French and Jewish writers in particular.[1] Whether through intertextual allusions to Jean Genet's *Miracle de la rose* (1946) or Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862), or even to Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839), which achieved considerable renown in France through Charles Baudelaire's translation, the narrator conceives of his narrative as a descendant of these earlier works.[2] At one point he goes so far as to list the names and biographies of several writers who disappeared during the Occupation in 1945, the year he was born, thereby implying that he perceives himself to be their successor (*DB*, pp. 92–100).[3] The narrator figure of *Dora Bruder* does not quite equate the personal difficulties he recounts in *Dora Bruder* to these writers' traumatic experiences. Yet his account of a suspected illness, which appears during his presentation of these vanished writers, nonetheless suggests itself as a physical manifestation of the melancholy anxiety that infuses his investigations of twentieth-century Parisian history. This is a narrator who, as Judith Greenberg diagnoses, 'em-

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[1] All quotations from this novel are taken from the following edition: Patrick Modiano, *Dora Bruder* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997); page references will be cited hereafter in the main body of the text using the abbreviation *DB*. It should also be noted that *Dora Bruder* is generally understood to be one of Modiano's least novel-like works, so much so that, for example, Akane Kawakami has described it as a 'failed biography' (*Patrick Modiano* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2015), p. 126). Fuller discussion of whether *Dora Bruder* constitutes a work of autobiography, autofiction, or metafiction, while not uninteresting, would exceed the scope of the present article. Accordingly, for the purposes of what follows, not least given the apparent self-consciousness with which its prose is constructed, *Dora Bruder* will be referred to throughout as a novel.

[2] For further discussion of Baudelaire's translations of Poe, see Gary Wayne Harner, 'Edgar Allan Poe in France: Baudelaire's Labor of Love', in *Poe and his Times: The Artist and his Milieu*, ed. by Benjamin Franklin Fischer (Baltimore: Edgar Allan Poe Society, 1990), pp. 218–25 (p. 218).

[3] In common with works by W. G. Sebald (1944–2001), Modiano's narrators and protagonists tend to be born in the aftermath of the Second World War and in spite of this—or, perhaps better, because of this—find themselves compelled to investigate this period through which they did not live yet by which they are continually affected. In the French context, for example, Modiano is often—however simplistically—classed as a member of the post-war *mode rétro* movement of writers too young to have been involved in the war. See Alan Morris's chapter on Modiano in *Collaboration and Resistance Reviewed: Writers and the 'mode rétro' in Post-Gaullist France* (Oxford: Berg, 1992), pp. 144–78, cited in Kawakami, *Patrick Modiano*, p. 69. For further discussion of Modiano and the historical events treated in his works, see Ora Avni, *D'un passé à l'autre: aux portes de l'histoire avec Patrick Modiano* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997).

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bodies the condition of coming after the Holocaust'.[4] Susan Rubin Suleiman has noted Modiano's 'obsession with the period of the war' and the tendency of his protagonists to 'drift through an emotional landscape suffused with devastation and loss'.[5] The narrator suffers from a physical malaise that may be psychosomatic: upon visiting a doctor, he is informed that there is no shadow on his lung as he had expected (*DB*, p. 96). Nevertheless, this leads him to recall associatively a subsequent visit to another doctor, during which the narrator was shown a novel by Robert Desnos (1900–1945), one of the writers whose disappearance he earlier recounted, which coincidentally bears the same title as the first novel the narrator wrote. It is called *La Place de l'étoile*, just like Modiano's first published work of 1968. As the narrator somewhat self-consciously confesses, 'je lui avais volé, bien involontairement, son titre' (*DB*, p. 100). However contrived Modiano's construction of these apparent coincidences may seem, the narrator's unintentional theft of Desnos's title, if not the novel's contents, suggests that, though he may be confined to work within a particular framework of French and Jewish literary contexts, the constitutive elements of that framework may be reworked.

Another novel mentioned by the narrator during his reflections further hints at the constitutive tension between innovation and constraint in the narrative, as well as providing another way for the narrator to reimagine himself through the works of others. This novel is *Un homme marche dans la ville* (1945) by Jean Jausion (1917–1944), a writer whose Jewish fiancée was arrested during the Occupation to prevent their marriage from taking place (*DB*, pp. 118–120). The narrator of *Dora Bruder*, this article ventures to suggest, is the inheritor of this title: a man who walks in the city. Moreover, this epithet constitutes an apposite means of describing the particular aesthetic attitude that emerges in *Dora Bruder* through the conjunction of the Parisian flâneur and the cosmopolitan Jew in the person of the narrator himself.[6] From the historical perspective of the narrator, the novel is also positioned towards the perceived end of a French and European literary tradition as the twentieth century comes to a close. *Dora Bruder* thus constitutes an attempt by the narrator to accentuate the long-ignored significance of Jewishness within modern European literature at the close of the twentieth century.

[4] Judith Greenberg, 'Trauma and Transmission: Echoes of the Missing Past in *Dora Bruder*', in *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*, 31 (2007), 351–77 (p. 352).

[5] Susan Rubin Suleiman, '"Oneself as Another": Identification and Mourning in Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder*', *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*, 31 (2007), 325–50 (p. 342).

[6] The notion of Jewish cosmopolitanism is one which has been employed many times historically as an anti-Semitic trope, such as in the case of the widely used pejorative Soviet euphemism of 'rootless cosmopolitanism' to denote Jewish intellectuals' lack of patriotic allegiance to the USSR. This article wholeheartedly distances itself from such views. For further discussion of this, see Michael L. Miller and Scott Ury, 'Cosmopolitanism: The End of Jewishness?', *European Review of History/Revue Européenne d'Histoire*, 17 (2010), 337–59, and *Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism and the Jews of East Central Europe*, ed. by Michael L. Miller and Scott Ury (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

Akane Kawakami has highlighted the significance of the figure of the flâneur for other works by Modiano, such as his novel *Fleurs de ruine* (1991) in particular, which she compares directly with Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857), in order to argue that Modiano's Paris constitutes a 'city of auras' in a Benjaminian sense, such that 'Modiano's goal is to sensitize his readers [. . .] to the tainted history of Paris'.[7] The present article builds on Kawakami's observations to suggest that, further to re-enacting the Parisian promenades of the cool and detached Baudelairean observer, the narrator of *Dora Bruder* stages in various ways a form of rapprochement between the figures of the Parisian flâneur and the cosmopolitan Jew, partially redirecting the gaze of the flâneur and inverting his perspective. Contrary to the traditional model of the flâneur as part of the crowd who can distance himself from it and observe dispassionately, narratorial flânerie in *Dora Bruder* concerns an outsider's perspective being brought into the crowd and emphasized earnestly for precisely those aspects which signify its outsider status. If, as Timothy Shortell and Evrick Brown note, 'part of the value of the flâneur is the foregrounding of the inherent meaningfulness of quotidian mobility', then the wandering narrator of *Dora Bruder* (who like Modiano identifies as Jewish)[8] attempts to restore the often ignored significance of Jewishness to twentieth-century literary works.[9]

Modiano is a prolific writer, who has written over thirty novels tackling themes of identity and loss. In 2014 he became the eleventh French writer to win the Nobel Prize in Literature for 'the art of memory with which he has evoked the most ungraspable human destinies and uncovered the life-world of the Occupation'.[10] Frequent authoritarian violence (such as that of the police during the Occupation of France by National Socialist forces in the Second World War), conflicts between parents and children, and meandering searches for a clearer sense of identity against all odds are common thematic features of Modiano's work. His narrators unearth names, dates, and other documentary evidence pertaining to vanished individuals and his plots frequently turn on events that occurred during the Occupation. Indeed, in the case of one of his most celebrated novels, *Rue des boutiques obscures* (1978), the detective narrator is an amnesiac whose final case becomes a search for his own memories

[7] Akane Kawakami, 'Flowers of Evil, Flowers of Ruin: Walking in Paris with Baudelaire and Modiano', in *Patrick Modiano*, ed. by John Flower (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 257–69 (p. 269).

[8] For further discussion of this see Ora Avni, 'Patrick Modiano: A French Jew?', *Yale French Studies*, 85 (1994), 227–47.

[9] See Timothy Shortell and Evrick Brown, 'Introduction: Walking in the European City', in *Walking in the European City: Quotidian Mobility and Urban Ethnography*, ed. by Timothy Shortell and Evrick Brown (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 1–18 (pp. 7–8). The author is indebted to Stephan Ehrig for this reference. See also Stephan Ehrig, 'Female City Walking, DEFA, and East Berlin's Post-War Urban Space: *heute abend und morgen früh* (1977), *Sabine Kleist, 7 Jahre* (1982), and *Die Beunruhigung* (1982)', *MLR*, 115 (2020), 380–402.

[10] See <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2014/summary/> [accessed 10 September 2020].

of his activities during the Second World War. *Dora Bruder* stands out from Modiano's body of work for its more ambiguous fictional status, not least because the text purports to be an autobiographical account of the author's research for another novel. Although the events of *Dora Bruder* are not narrated chronologically, but rather assembled piecemeal and intercut with other reflections, they centre around the narrator's recollections of his investigation into the history of the disappearance of a fifteen-year-old Jewish girl during the Occupation, and into the circumstances of his own life.

Having come across a notice in an edition of the newspaper *Paris Soir* from 31 December 1941 announcing Dora Bruder as a missing person, the narrator, who is familiar with the area where she went missing, begins searching across Paris for any trace of her in documentation from the time. He keeps an account of this: 'j'essaye d'imaginer le trajet qu'elle suivait' (*DB*, p. 45). Learning that one day Dora, for reasons the narrator is unable to uncover, did not return to her convent school before the evening curfew, the narrator is spurred to recall a time he also ran away from home in the winter of 1960. Later in life he goes on to write a novel based on these events entitled *Voyage de noces*, which appears in 1990 and is also the name of a novel written by Modiano himself in that year. Following that novel's publication the narrator continues to research Dora's life, unearthing files about her and her parents.[11] He is able to reconstruct the events of their lives until December 1941, when Dora disappeared. According to a police memo, she returned to her mother in April 1942, by which time her father had already been interned. Dora was then taken to the internment centre at Les Tourelles and later to Drancy transit camp in August 1942, where she was reunited with her father. They were both deported to Auschwitz, where, in February the following year, Dora's mother was also imprisoned. The novel ends with the narrator walking through the streets of Paris, occasionally feeling an echo of Dora Bruder's presence, traces of which he is still attempting to uncover. He admits to never knowing what she did in the weeks when she was missing, where and in whose company she was hiding. Through his acknowledgement that this is as far as he will allow his narrative to go, Dora is allowed a *fugue*, the freedom of her flight: 'j'ignorerai toujours à quoi elle passait ses journées', declares the narrator. 'C'est là son secret' (*DB*, pp. 144–45). The narrator considers this to be private knowledge that Dora may keep to herself, upon which neither he nor anyone else will intrude. While the narrator's searching—or at least his account of it—is over, there still exists a melancholy gulf between his present and Dora Bruder's past that remains ultimately unbridged.

This narrator, positioning himself as an heir to both a French literary

[11] For further discussion of Modiano's lingering 'long-term obsession with the person of the historical Dora Bruder', see Kawakami, *Patrick Modiano*, pp. 123–33 and 138–44, esp. p. 132.

tradition and an overlooked legacy of Jewish modernist writing, investigates in *Dora Bruder* the lives and fates of a Jewish girl and her family by redeploying particular techniques ascribed to earlier Jewish modernist authors, as well as through intertextual references to prior works. In the process of amassing historical and biographical information throughout the text, even to the extent of including copious documentary evidence reproduced verbatim in the narrative (*DB*, pp. 101–27), the narrator reveals the Paris he wanders to be a palimpsest of different lives and histories.[12] He resolutely refuses, however, to invent or fictionalize Dora's life outside of what documentary evidence can relate. Dervila Cooke views this as a form of resistance, remarking that 'Modiano [is] concerned to create a sense of consciousness using his own in default of Dora's where necessary, in order to counter in some small way the dehumanisation of the Holocaust'.[13] She goes on to affirm that 'while it is impossible to access the reality of Dora's life or that of others, Modiano shows that a sincere attempt at representation is always better than silence'.[14] Throughout the text the narrator demonstrates an ethical awareness of the dangers of potentially appropriating the story of Dora and her family, or of inappropriately identifying with them, by insisting that there will always remain an essential element of their lives and histories that is unknown to him.

Although the narrator refers to that which will never be known about the Bruders as 'ce blanc, ce bloc d'inconnu et de silence' (*DB*, p. 28), he also describes, with reference to printmaking techniques, how certain locations retain a stamp or faint trace of previous inhabitants as a 'marque en creux ou en relief' (*DB*, p. 29). The technical term 'en relief' suggests sculpted material raised above its background plane, whereas 'en creux' refers to counter-relief, where a form appears hollowed out of a background, rather than seeming to emerge from it. In the case of the Bruders, the narrator specifies his preferred term: '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 en-

[12] For Max Silverman, intertwined memories of the Holocaust and of French colonialism in Algeria haunt the narrative of *Dora Bruder* in a process that he terms 'palimpsestic memory'. Silverman's understanding of the palimpsest is rooted in urban layering. This 'post-war presence of the concentrationary universe' emerges through an 'imbrication of colonial and Holocaust denial', which is subtly indicated by the fact that one of the narrator's points of access to a story about the Holocaust and the Occupation is a structure that the narrator recollects as being a barracks for colonial troops. For further discussion of this, see Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2013), pp. 111–13, esp. p. 113. Silverman's arguments echo the work of Andreas Huyssen, for whom such acts of physical rewriting constitute the urban palimpsest. Focusing on the issue of monumentalization in divergent artistic and media practices, he suggests that the transformation of spatial and temporal experience by memory politics is a major cultural effect of globalization. For further discussion of this, see Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

[13] Dervila Cooke, 'Hollow Imprints', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 3 (2004), 131–45 (p. 143).

[14] Ibid., p. 144.

droit où ils avaient vécu' (*DB*, p. 29). The term 'en creux' in particular, which is central to Cooke's reading, is suggestive, moreover, of a revealing *double-sens* in French since it is an almost perfect homonym for 'encre', meaning 'ink'. The hollowed-out imprint of the Bruders' absence therefore not only provides the narrator with space to fill, but might prompt implicitly the writing of a new account of their story. On the one hand, such a 'marque en creux' is indicative of the narrator's respectful approach to his historical sources. Yet, on the other hand, it is a means for him also to acknowledge his conscious invention and new writing in setting down the fictional narrative of *Dora Bruder*. This overwriting of the Bruder family's 'marque en creux' by the narrator's own ink is encapsulated by the figure of the man who walks in the city.

As he wanders through Paris, the city itself stimulates the narrator's thoughts about Dora and her family, while also indicating his own ignorance of their lives and the potential impossibility of knowing more. This is often integrated into extended descriptions of the routes taken on his Parisian perambulations:

> Vers 1968 je suivais souvent les boulevards jusque sous les arches du métro aérien. Je partais de la place Blanche. En décembre, les baraques foraines occupaient le terre-plein. Les lumières se décroissaient à mesure que l'on approchait le boulevard de la Chapelle. Je ne savais encore rien de Dora Bruder et de ses parents. Je me souviens que j'éprouvais une drôle de sensation en longeant le mur de l'hôpital Lariboisière, puis en passant au-dessus des voies ferrées, comme si j'avais pénétré dans la zone la plus obscure de Paris. Mais c'était simplement le contraste entre les lumières trop vives du boulevard de Clichy et le mur noir, interminable, la pénombre sous les arches du métro… (*DB*, p. 29, ellipsis original)

The narrator thus brings together the figures of the cosmopolitan Jewish outsider and the Parisian flâneur in his attempts to work through the historical events that are the subject of his research. This suggests that not only thematically, but also aesthetically, the narrator of *Dora Bruder* enacts an attempt at restitution—in the sense of offering some form of compensation for loss—for the victims of the Occupation, while still allowing Dora her *fugue*. While the conjunction of those two significant yet dissimilar cosmopolitan figures, the wandering Jew and the Parisian flâneur, reveals key constitutive tensions in the novel's aesthetics, their merging in Modiano's narrator also implies the possibility that these distinct figures may be reconciled. In the novel's opening pages, the narrator remarks that 'je me confondais avec ce crépuscule, ces rues' (*DB*, p. 8), suggesting that the more he wanders the twilit boulevards and arcades of the French capital, the more diffuse and unclear his sense of self becomes. Throughout his account of his investigations the temporal distance between his present and Dora Bruder's past is continually emphasized. Although he has often passed by the house at number 41 on the Boulevard Ornano, before he began his investigations he was unaware that it had once

been the home of the Bruder family. Now, however close he may physically be to where she may once have been, however much he may empathize with her plight, he struggles, with a certain melancholy, to perceive the city in which he moves as the same as the one through which she once ran:

> les lampadaires, les vitrines, les cafés s'allument, l'air du soir est vif, le contour des choses plus net, il y a des embouteillages aux carrefours, les gens se pressent dans les rues. 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 le Paris de ce temps-là et celui d'aujourd'hui. (*DB*, p. 50)

However, if 'the "melancholy" tone of Modiano's works is not (or not only) a sign of pathology but the result of artistic shaping', as Susan Rubin Suleiman observes, then such artistic shaping is the work of a narrator who is preoccupied not only with his post-war historical locatedness, but also with the various tensions of French, Jewish, and European literary heritage.[15]

The confluence of Jewishness and European modernist literature has received surprisingly little in the way of scholarly interest until recently. While, as Walter Cohen argues, 'the period between the turn of the century and the beginning of World War II witnesses a remarkable and rather sudden rise to literary prominence of things Jewish and especially of writers of Jewish descent', this is most evidently the case in prose fiction.[16] Framing his analysis within various contexts, including the Jewish heritage of persecution and vulnerability, the Jewish cultural ideal of learning and literacy, the perceived advantages of secularization for a frequently oppressed minority, and the earlier historical shift in European languages and literatures towards the vernacular, Cohen establishes the conditions of emergence of Jewish modernist literature in the early twentieth century, ultimately concluding that 'Jewishness proves the single most important demographic component of modernist fiction'.[17] Nevertheless, if the figure of the Jew was to a certain extent for many early twentieth-century Western societies the representative of modernity and, by extension, the modernist movement, then this fact paradoxically also goes some way to explaining the relative lack of attention paid to the significance of Jewishness to modernism. As a community of innovative, insecure, questioning exiles, Jewish immigrants in Europe, mistrustful of claims of superiority and authority, were much resented, in spite of the massive and consequential contribution they made to cultural and intellectual history.[18] To take just one example, shortly after the turn of the century, the American–

[15] See Suleiman, '"Oneself as Another"', p. 341.

[16] Walter Cohen, *A History of European Literature: The West and the World from Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 406.

[17] Ibid.

[18] For further discussion of this, see Chad Alan Goldberg, *Modernity and the Jews in Western*

British writer Henry James, upon returning to visit his native New York after a long absence as an immigrant in Europe, famously—and, it seems, unironically—wrote in his travel account *The American Scene* (1907) that the influence of immigrants of Jewish background and their Yiddish language on English was an 'impudence'. James assumes the inferiority of Jewish writers and intellectuals to be a given fact.[19] Adopting a different perspective, the British literary critic and travel writer Rebecca West would later observe in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941) further instances of resentment towards the Jewish people as a perceived embodiment of all things modern in the Balkans just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. 'Many primitive peoples', she noted, in reference to local nationalists, 'must receive their first intimation of the toxic quality of thought from Jews. They know only the fortifying idea of religion, and they see in the Jews the effects of the tormenting and disintegrating idea of scepticism.'[20] Frequently casting the Jewish people as disturbers of the status quo or harbingers of uncertainty and change, anti-Semitism in twentieth-century Western society thus constitutes a reaction against the embodiment of modernity by the Jewish people. Anti-Semitism is subsequently a deciding factor in the neglect of the key role of Jewishness in accounts of the development of modernism in European culture.

Midway through *Dora Bruder*, the narrator recalls how, as a younger man, he came across some anti-Semitic literature from the 1940s, which inadvertently inspired him to write his first novel. Looking back to the writing he subsequently produced, the narrator reflects on his ambitions:

> je voulais dans mon premier livre répondre à tous ces gens dont les insultes m'avaient blessé à cause de mon père. Et, sur le terrain de la prose française, leur river une fois pour toutes leur clou. Je sens bien aujourd'hui la naïveté enfantine de mon projet: la plupart de ces auteurs avaient disparu, fusillés, exilés, gâteux ou morts de vieillesse. Oui, malheuresement je venais trop tard. (*DB*, p. 71)

This might initially appear to be merely a regretful throwaway remark, as the narrator focuses on his intense desire to react against racist writers and considers himself to have been somewhat juvenile in his hopes of confronting these supporters of the National Socialist regime. However, on further reflection,

Social Thought (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), and Scott Spector, *Modernism without Jews? German-Jewish Subjects and Histories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017). For another perspective on the subsequent decline and turn towards conservatism after 1945 following the flourishing between the age of Enlightenment and the Second World War of the intellectual, literary, scientific, and artistic legacy of Jewish modernity, see Enzo Traverso, *The End of Jewish Modernity?*, trans. by David Fernbach (London: Pluto Press, 2016).

[19] Cited in Jonathan Morse, 'English Literature of the Twentieth Century', in *Antisemitism: A Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution*, I: *A–K*, ed. by Richard S. Levy (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), pp. 206–09 (p. 208).

[20] Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey through Yugoslavia* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006), p. 961.

this statement offers an intriguing point of departure for examining *Dora Bruder*, since it demonstrates a clear awareness on the part of the narrator of the late historical position from which he is writing, as well as of the literary traditions in which he sees himself. Looking back on historical events and figures, he is both determined by and distanced from the past that is the focus of his narrative. Moreover, it is on the field of French literature that his engagement with Jewish authors and literary works of the past will take place.

In his analysis of the significance of Jewishness to European modernism, Cohen draws on what he describes as 'the myth of the Jew as artist, as aesthete, as a hypersensitive and anxious man', in order to argue for the centrality of Jewishness to European modernist literature, since 'in this mask [the Jew] has engaged the attention of the great novelists of our century'.[21] This description could be applied to the anxiously melancholy narrators of Modiano's novels, in particular the narrator of Dora Bruder, who, on the hunt in miserable weather for Dora's birthplace in the twelfth arrondissement, gloomily claims that 'je peux attendre des heures dans la pluie' (*DB*, p. 14). Evincing an awareness of his historical position not dissimilar to that of *Dora Bruder*'s narrator, Cohen is mindful of the potential pitfalls of adopting a long historical view, whereby 'the teleological distortion involved in looking back through the age of Auschwitz [. . .] makes it difficult not to read the culture of early twentieth-century Europe as a prelude to genocide'.[22] The year 1940, a conventional endpoint for 'high' modernism, takes on a grim and elegiac significance for Jewish modernist literature, as Cohen observes, given that the death camps placed the 'Jewish question' in a new and extreme light, while simultaneously drastically reducing the number of Jewish people in Europe. The narrator of *Dora Bruder* is also highly sensible of this, describing Dora's parents in particular as 'des personnes qui laissent peu de traces derrière elles. Presque des anonymes. Elles ne se détachent pas de certaines rues de Paris, de certains paysages de banlieue, où j'ai découvert, par hasard, qu'elles avaient habité' (*DB*, p. 28). Cohen nevertheless notes that Jewish modernist literature is not significant because of the Holocaust and its after-effects per se, but rather because, in the early twentieth century, literature was in point of fact one of the few remaining areas of European culture where Jewish contributions were relatively new.[23]

Although to a certain extent the narrator of Modiano's novel makes use

[21] Cohen, *A History of European Literature*, p. 408.

[22] Ibid., p. 407.

[23] As Cohen argues, 'it does not follow that the centrality of Jewishness to modernism occurs simply at the moment when Jews become central to European cultural, social, and political life more generally. [. . .] [T]he crucial point is not that Jews make more important contributions to many walks of life, especially in the early twentieth century, but that only in a few of those areas—notably the novel—is this the first moment when there are such contributions' (ibid., p. 412).

of exactly the teleological distortion that Cohen describes, in that his narrative is somewhat (over)determined by the events of the past (a characteristic which could, in a nutshell, encapsulate Modiano's œuvre in its entirety), the modernist contributions noted by Cohen constitute the literary heritage that lies concealed behind *Dora Bruder*'s palimpsestic narrative. Yet, if guilty of such teleological distortion, the narrator in fact employs it to other—more inclusive—ends, given that his narrative aims for the reinclusion of the significance of Jewishness in modern French and, by extension, European literature. For the narrator of *Dora Bruder*, the Holocaust is not a means to explain away the tragic absence of Jewishness from received understandings of modernist prose fiction. Rather, it constitutes a motivating factor in his attempt to reaffirm this key aspect of twentieth-century modernism in a European literary tradition. This, then, would suggest that any 'teleological distortion' of Jewishness's significance caused by the narrator's late historical perspective in *Dora Bruder* might constitute less an act of erasure or a failure to do justice to particularities in the service of a *longue durée* perspective, than an attempt at literary restitution.

One of the defining characteristics of Jewish modernist literature, for example in the works of Proust or Kafka, is a sense of identification between narrator and character that 'locate[s] the centre of the reader's interest not in the plot involving the nominal protagonist but in the reactions to it on the part of the narrator'.[24] This is key to *Dora Bruder*, understood here as an example of historically late modernist literature as opposed to a postmodern work.[25] The narrator's palimpsestic assemblage and mediation of his investigations into Dora's story via references to his own experiences encapsulate this Jewish modernist trait, which, as Cohen observes, 'convert[s] what might seem a solipsistic point of departure into a means of reconstructing the social

[24] Ibid., p. 415.

[25] Kawakami observes that Modiano 'situates himself squarely in the era that follows the Modernist period [. . .] [a]lthough his own works may not appear immediately and obviously to be postmodern' (*Patrick Modiano*, p. 4). Exhibiting a tendency to refract reality into playful language games, postmodern literature tends to question the possibility of fiction adequately representing it, while rejecting the modernist belief in certain universal truths in favour of a deconstructed distrust of the notion of truth itself. *Dora Bruder*, though written in the historical period of the postmodern, might be more clearly understood as an example of late modernist writing, not least because of its narrator, who embraces historicity, understanding himself as fundamentally historically implicated and positioned towards the ending of modernity. Rather than rejecting, after a postmodern fashion, any possibility of locating truth in his work, the narrator of *Dora Bruder* remains concerned with the search for moral truths, pushing the boundaries of fiction, not unlike 'high' modernists who understood themselves to be doing precisely this in the early twentieth century. That the narrator of *Dora Bruder* ambiguously resembles Modiano himself is likewise not a technique employed towards postmodernist ends, whereby the figure of the author is reduced to a linguistic sign within the text to encourage further ontological scepticism. On the contrary, the self-consciousness of the narrator of *Dora Bruder* highlights his narrative projects, his historical locatedness, and his perspective on the past.

world from the inside out'.[26] If modernism, as Fredric Jameson provocatively claims, rather than being defined by narrative subjectivity, in fact involves a flight from subjectivity, then this resonates all the more with the narrator's historically late reconstruction of the past in *Dora Bruder*.[27] At one point, the narrator recalls that when he was writing his earlier work, *Voyage de noces*, he visited places near to where Dora ran away. These streets are described in terms of the narrator's future discovery of the enigma of Dora: 'Ces petites rues sont voisines de la rue de Picpus et du pensionnat du Saint-Cœur-de-Marie, d'où Dora Bruder devait faire une fugue. [. . .] Voilà le seul moment du livre où, sans le savoir, je me suis rapproché d'elle, dans l'espace et le temps' (*DB*, p. 54). Dora's *fugue*, her flight from her would-be captors and the time that she spends evading both them and the narrator, mirrors a Jamesonian modernist flight from subjectivity, albeit one which is expressed in *Dora Bruder* through the narrator's reactions to it in the depths of winter:

> le seul point commun avec 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. (*DB*, p. 57)

As a result, the narrator's insistence on his centrality and his solitude in recounting what he knows of Dora's *fugue* and his ignorance of what occurred during it results in Jewishness being emphasized in the narrative, rather than ignored, not only through its thematic content but also through its echoes of distinctly Jewish modernist literary techniques.

Through the intersection of these late modern Jewish elements with a further configuration of the 'man who walks in the city'—the flâneur—*Dora Bruder* may be read as a novel that brings together the elite and the ostracized in modern European literary culture. If, as Keith Tester affirms, '*flânerie* can be understood as the activity of the sovereign spectator going about in the city in order to find the things which will occupy his gaze and complete his otherwise incomplete identity, satisfy his otherwise unsatisfied existence and replace a sense of bereavement with a sense of life',[28] then there is a tragic irony in the case of the narrator of *Dora Bruder*, whose gaze is occupied not with pleasant distractions, but with Dora's absence and—more broadly speaking—the occultation of Jewishness's significance in Western society and culture. A central constitutive tension thus emerges in the novel, which modifies the compromised position of cosmopolitan privilege traditionally

[26] Cohen, *A History of European Literature*, p. 416.

[27] See Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essays on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002), pp. 85–86 and 131–36; cited in Cohen, *A History of European Literature*, p. 416.

[28] Keith Tester, *The Flâneur* (Hove: Psychology Press, 1994), p. 7. Thanks are due once again to Stephan Ehrig for this reference.

associated with the flâneur.[29] This sense of duality and tension is at the heart of *Dora Bruder*'s aesthetics and of its narrator's wanderings. However, it must be noted that a form of flânerie embodying various tensions between national, ethnic, and cultural identities is not unique to the narrator of *Dora Bruder*. While, as Walter Benjamin notes in *Das Passagen-Werk* (1927–40), his unfinished *magnum opus*, 'Paris created the type of the flâneur', this literary figure was distinctly European, as well as particularly French, and its Parisian particularities soon became more cosmopolitan.[30] For a long time, as Mary Gluck rightly observes, 'the popular flâneur had still taken it as axiomatic that Paris, or at any rate Europe, was the centre of modernity and that he could not exist anywhere else in the world'.[31] Following Benjamin's analysis of Baudelaire's earlier elaborations in his essay 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne' (1863), however, the flâneur then moved beyond the confines of Western Europe, becoming 'a man of the world and [. . .] a great traveller who felt at home in all parts of the globe'.[32] Nevertheless, as Jacob Edmond argues, the flâneur was far from the creation of an isolated European modernity: 'while acutely self-conscious of his place at what he perceived to be the centre of modernity, his sense of European particularity was nevertheless born out of his relation to non-Europe'.[33] Such self-conscious positioning of the flâneur is intensified and nuanced by the narrator of *Dora Bruder* and is also revealed to stand in intriguing tension with the cosmopolitan Jewish perspective, whose particularity is likewise determined by the relationship of the European to the non-European.

If, as Pieter Vermeulen has argued, 'the flâneur anticipates a literary cosmopolitan ethos that thrives on intellectual curiosity and the virtues of the aesthetic', then this figure is also unavoidably imbricated with canonical Western privilege.[34] Famously denigrated by Benjamin as a 'spy for the capitalists', the

[29] For further discussion of the figure of the Jew as both embodiment and limit case of conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism, see Cathy S. Gelbin and Sander L. Gilman, *Cosmopolitanisms and the Jews* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2017), which highlights the absence of Jewish people from the cosmopolitan philosophies of thinkers such as Kant and Herder. If their conceptions of 'world citizenship' profit from the security of the nation and the freedom to explore beyond its borders, then Jewish people without a nation implicitly constitute a threat towards this vision. This highlights, according to Gelbin and Gilman, a need for a recalibration and renegotiation of the nuances of the notion of cosmopolitanism, focusing on its ambivalences.

[30] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 417.

[31] Mary Gluck, 'The Flâneur and the Aesthetic: Appropriation of Urban Culture in Mid-19th-Century Paris', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 20.5 (2003), 53–80 (p. 78).

[32] Ibid. See also Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. II, ed. by Yves-Gérard le Dantec and Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 714.

[33] Jacob Edmond, *A Common Strangeness: Contemporary Poetry, Cross-Cultural Encounter, Comparative Literature* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), p. 16.

[34] See Pieter Vermeulen, *Contemporary Literature and the End of the Novel: Creature, Affect, Form* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 84.

flâneur, while purporting to be an impartial observer, plays the roles of both aesthete and profiteer: 'as a flâneur', Benjamin argues, 'the literary man ventures into the marketplace to sell himself'.[35] Traditionally, then, the flâneur's choice not to participate in the life of the city and engage with the people in the crowd might even imply a form of surveillance, of cultural policing, that rejects the multifarious nature of the metropolis in favour of a normative conception of how the city ought to be. In *Dora Bruder*, however, the narrator makes no claims to such questionable impartiality: he positions himself 'dans le flot des passants' (*DB*, p.8), overcoming the potentially compromised position of the flâneur by virtue of his identification with Jewishness. Recalling the figure of the wandering cosmopolitan Jew, albeit one confined to Paris, he thus embodies both the privileged and the outcast figures of European modernism. In that sense, to follow Edmond's phrasing, in *Dora Bruder* a new sense of European particularity—of European Jewish cosmopolitanism with a distinctly French element—is born out of this relation to what has long been perceived as the non-European. It has often been said that 'le flâneur peut naître partout; il ne sait vivre qu'à Paris';[36] in *Dora Bruder*, the narrator's flâneurial wanderings are animated by the tension between the two.

This tension, however, also ensures that the flâneur's sense of confinement within a Parisian milieu becomes transmuted for the narrator of *Dora Bruder* into a sense of carceral menace. Whereas Benjamin notes that 'the street becomes a dwelling for the flâneur',[37] the narrator of *Dora Bruder* is less content to peruse the people perambulating through the city's shopping arcades than he is to seek out forgotten spaces and their long-dead inhabitants, ultimately likening the city of Paris to 'une prison obscure' (*DB*, p. 56). This configuration of the flâneur casts an oblique gaze on the Parisian cityscape in *Dora Bruder*, evoking a further Benjaminian allegory of history as a 'petrified, primordial landscape'.[38] Yet the typical charms of the flâneur's everyday observations are absent in Modiano's novel, since, as Max Silverman observes, if *Dora Bruder* treads the path of flânerie, then it 'reveals not the re-enchanted world of everyday life but the horrors of wasted lives'.[39] This revelation finds its clearest expression in the sense of emptiness evoked as the narrator wanders the boulevards and banlieues of the French capital. Indeed,

[35] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 446.

[36] This quotation is taken from the anonymously authored *Paris, ou le livre des cent-et-un* (Stuttgart: Bureau des Nouveautés de la Littérature Française, 1832), p. 5, and is cited in various works of scholarship on flânerie, e.g. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 82, and Kawakami, 'Flowers of Evil, Flowers of Ruin', p. 257.

[37] Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays of Charles Baudelaire*, trans. by Howard Eiland and others (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 68.

[38] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998), p. 166.

[39] Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory*, p. 113.

in the novel's final pages, the empty city of Paris stands as a metaphor for Dora: 'la ville était déserte, comme pour marquer l'absence de Dora' (*DB*, p. 114). The immovable and unchangeable past is once more irrecoverably temporally distant from him, and the streets he wanders are more often than not entirely void of life. He experiences at various intervals 'cette même sensation de vide' (*DB*, p. 132) and 'l'impression de vide' (*DB*, p. 133), remarking also that 'il ne restait plus qu'un terrain vague' (*DB*, pp. 133). The streets' emptiness—clearly, for the narrator, a resonant metaphoric reminder of the Jewish absence in post-war European society—continues across the narrative: '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 du métro. Je ne peux pas m'empêcher de penser à elle et de sentir un écho de sa présence' (*DB*, p. 144). Even when occasionally surrounded by people, the narrator senses the emptiness of the city; he is both within the crowd of passers-by and isolated from them. As Benjamin notes, the allegorical gaze of the flâneur feeds on the melancholy that stems from being both within the crowd and an observer who is set apart from it.[40] Simultaneously detached from and connected to the masses in the arcades, the flâneur embodies the prevailing melancholy of modernity, much as the narrator of *Dora Bruder* embodies a sense of melancholy confinement in Paris.

While it is by no means a kind of master category that explains modernism in its entirety, Jewishness's intersection with and influence on the modern—and modernist literature in particular—are highly significant due to their location both within and outside of national contexts. In considering the long underdiscussed centrality of Jewishness to modernism, it is imperative to note the sense of duality embodied by this Jewishness within national contexts. Lyndsey Stonebridge describes this as the 'wry detachment' of the Jewish European cosmopolitan.[41] The narrator's self-positioning in *Dora Bruder* as a late modernist writer encapsulates this, not least because the tension between the outsider status afforded to the Jewish perspective and the cosmopolitan experience of encountering strangers provided the conditions of emergence for Jewish modernist literature. As Cohen notes, 'the collapse of shared values and consequent project of reconstructing solidarity on the basis of the everyday—including the lives of those who are different from you—fit with the experiences of culturally assimilated but often still socially marginal Jewish writers'.[42] The comparative advantage of this position takes an ambivalent and apparently contradictory form, since, as Jonathan Morse observes, 'at the beginning of the twentieth century, [. . .] the Jew was simultaneously

[40] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 21.

[41] Lyndsey Stonebridge, 'Refugee Style: Hannah Arendt and the Perplexities of Rights', *Textual Practice*, 25 (2011), 71–85 (p. 83).

[42] Cohen, *A History of European Literature*, p. 421.

rich and poor, a jewelled exotic and a denizen of Western civilization's underworlds'.[43] The position of being to a certain extent separated from the norms of a national culture, while still remaining committed to that culture, enables a broader form of identification than that achievable by writers located within one national tradition. As Cohen notes, 'the Jewish legacy entails a less exclusive attachment to the nation in an era when national rivalries produce catastrophic results. This is the famed Jewish cosmopolitanism, to be celebrated or reviled depending on one's outlook. Jewishness offers a position in which you at once do and do not belong.'[44] The novel's narrator embodies two distinct, resonant figures—the cosmopolitan Jew and the Parisian flâneur—who, in different ways, are both within and without a nation.

Silverman argues that in *Dora Bruder* 'the particular and the universal are held in an ambivalent state'. But for Silverman this is not simply repetition of the same but rather a 'return, both same and different, familiar and yet new'.[45] In a similar vein, the tensions between the Parisian flâneur and the wandering Jew are reconciled by their being encapsulated in one person: the narrator of *Dora Bruder*. While, as Marja Warehime argues, the narrator of *Dora Bruder* draws on the marginality of the figure of the Parisian flâneur, reconfiguring this literary type to contribute towards the creation of a 'sense of place' in the novel, the notion of marginality also recalls the sense of the cosmopolitan Jew who is both inside and outside of Europe, and *a fortiori* of European literary culture.[46] The difference between the two figures, however, is one of perceived cultural prestige. Although flânerie in *Dora Bruder* is, on the one hand, indicative of the novel's French literary roots, it is also, on the other hand, a literary device that has enduring resonance within a broader Western European tradition. Viewing the narrator as a Parisian flâneur in *Dora Bruder* endows him with a certain European cultural prestige and literary aestheticism, which nevertheless remains haunted by the legacy and influence of Jewish modernist literature. Since the narrative of *Dora Bruder* is largely confined to one city, the narrator's flânerie within this Parisian context demonstrates the specifically French cast of the novel's aesthetics. Though Paris is not the only significant European cultural capital to be referenced in *Dora Bruder*, it is undoubtedly the city to which the narrator is continually drawn back and which frames his narrative. Moreover, it is in fact through references to another European capital of modernist culture, namely Vienna, that the strength of the pull of the French capital for the narrator is revealed. Following his elaboration of the discovery of the military record of Ernest

[43] Morse, 'English Literature of the Twentieth Century', p. 207.

[44] Cohen, *A History of European Literature*, p. 421.

[45] Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory*, p. 123.

[46] Marja Warehime, 'Paris and the Autobiography of a Flâneur: Patrick Modiano and Annie Ernaux', *French Forum*, 25 (2000), 97–113 (p. 111).

Bruder, Dora's father, for example, the narrator speculates about the life the Bruders had when they first arrived in Paris from Vienna, a city that the narrator has also visited (*DB*, p. 21). In his recollections of Vienna, the city appears deserted, just like his constructions of Paris. In his account of his time in Austria, the narrator also imbues the text with a sense of emptiness and loneliness. There is a particular wistfulness in his declaration that 'un jour, je retournerai à Vienne que je n'ai pas revue depuis plus de trente ans' (*DB*, p. 22). Although he has not physically been present in this city for a long time, he returns in his descriptions of it to those deserted streets to brood over the lives of Dora's parents. If he were to return there in reality, as he acknowledges, he would probably be able to discover concrete information about their lives there and their extended family. Instead, the narrator prefers to insist on returning only in the text he writes, constructing a melancholy cityscape that facilitates his engagement with the past. As the narrator goes on to present Ernest's military record from his time in the Foreign Legion during the French Algerian War, there is an instance of potential expansion for the narrative beyond its Western confines in the European capitals of Paris and Vienna. The narrator lists the many battles and skirmishes in which Ernest Bruder took part, along with corresponding dates and information about each event.

Ultimately, however, this account reveals itself to be in fact merely a gesture towards a context beyond Western Europe, since the narrator returns to wondering whether 'la nuit, dans ce paysage de sable et de caillasses, rêvait-il à Vienne, sa ville natale?' (*DB*, p. 25). In speculating as to whether Ernest dreamt of Vienna, the narrator returns the focus of his narrative to the Austrian capital, without ever travelling there himself in the course of the novel, before tightening his focus further on the French context once more in his later assertion that, at the age of twenty-five, Ernest 's'est retrouvé sur le pavé de Paris' (*DB*, p. 25). Not only has Ernest returned to the streets of Paris, but so has the narrator. He comes back again to the places he wanders in the narrative of *Dora Bruder*. In further confirmation of this, he proceeds to explain Ernest's lack of a pension from the Foreign Legion and his lack of French citizenship, which—perhaps insensitively—he sees as somehow parallel to his own self-imposed confinement in Paris during his investigation. He firmly locates his narrative and his historical investigations in the Parisian literary stomping ground of the flâneur, which is refracted through the narrator's insistence on his own perception—'La seule fois où j'ai vu' (*DB*, p. 25)—which, in typical Modiano fashion, is often simultaneously destabilized through the uncertain phrasing of 'je suppose' (*DB*, p. 25). Although the sustained engagement with flânerie in *Dora Bruder* is indicative of a certain literary prestige, which colours the text's aesthetic attitude with a sense of European cultural

privilege, a new composite figure emerges in the narrative through the reconfigurations of the Parisian flâneur and the cosmopolitan Jew. Confined within these literary contexts and the tensions that emerge between them, the narrator comes as close as he can to creating something new. His European and French particularities are thus imbricated with a relation to Jewishness. This fundamentally complicates and determines the aesthetic attitude of *Dora Bruder*.

The narrative of *Dora Bruder* shows, from a historically late position, the aesthetic techniques that emerge from the Jewish perspective of being simultaneously both inside and outside—in the centre and on the margins—of a national literature. This affords an outlook that is privileged, given its perspective from multiple vantage points, yet also precarious, given the marginalized and victimized status of the Jewish people in Europe historically. Twentieth-century Jewish writers are thus 'more internal and more external than any writers on the geographical fringes'.[47] Having initially tested the limits of the cultural capaciousness of Europe in the early twentieth century, the inclusion of Jewishness in European culture was then subjected to near eradication and subsequent ostracization. From the historical position of the narrator of *Dora Bruder*, looking back at the events of the twentieth century, Jewishness has failed to be recognized for its intellectual prestige in European culture. However, by folding together the ostracized cosmopolitan figure of the Jew and the elite figure of the Parisian flâneur, the narrator of *Dora Bruder* not only refashions the privileged apparatus of French and European cultural traditions that have long eschewed acknowledging Jewishness as a constitutive aspect, but also moves towards implying the possibility of a reconciliation between the privileged insider and the ostracized cosmopolitan. Stalking the melancholy streets of Paris, the narrator embodies both of these figures, such that he is moving simultaneously both inside and outside of the European literary tradition of the twentieth century, a dynamic and fluid, as opposed to aloof and static, observer. Accordingly, if the Bruders' 'marque en creux' is filled by the narrator over the course of this novel, then the marks he leaves are the inky footprints of 'un homme [qui] marche dans la ville'.

Marbach am Neckar Ian Ellison

[47] Cohen, *A History of European Literature*, p. 441.