

Fugue States: Modiano *Romancier*¹

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A narrator in the 1990s retraces the life and disappearance of Dora Bruder, age 15, after reading her parents' announcement in an old newspaper (*Paris soir*, Dec 31, 1942), revealing that she had run away from the convent school where she was in hiding. Moved by the detailed description of the missing girl, and further driven by his own multiple bereavements, he undertakes to document her escapade—her *fugue*—seeking to understand by bringing it into parallel with his own experience as a runaway and his father's clandestine existence during the Occupation. His itineraries around Paris retracing Dora's footsteps yield information about her parents' background, and he learns as well that the family was deported and died at Auschwitz.

The newspaper announcement exists. The young girl's name is real, although so richly overdetermined as to seem invented. Among its associations, the name brings to mind Rudy Modiano, the author's *adored* brother (*bruder* is "brother" in German), who died at the age of ten; it evokes Freud's Dora; and there are even connections to actress Françoise Dorleac, Catherine Deneuve's sister, who also died young and tragically. Nevertheless, a real Dora Bruder is listed in Serge Klarsfeld's *Mémorial des enfants juifs déportés de France*. Modiano published a tribute to Klarsfeld in *Libération*, in which he admits that reading, page after page, lists of names of deported children caused him to "have doubts about literature. Since memory is often the primary motor of literature, it seemed to me that the only book it was truly necessary to write was this memorial, as Serge Klarsfeld wrote it." His reading left him especially haunted by the many entries marked "unidentified child" ["Enfant sans identité,"] and so, taking Klarsfeld as an example, "I tried to find a

supplementary detail, an address, the slightest evidence about the life of one person or another. Some had left a trace.”² Eventually, with Klarsfeld’s help, Modiano was able to find photos of Dora and her parents, which he describes in detail in *Dora Bruder* (1997) and which appear in the book’s English translation.³

Attempts to recreate the life of a missing person are familiar to Modiano’s readers: Yvonne in *Villa triste* (1975), Ingrid in *Voyage de nocés* (1990), a father almost everywhere, a mother in *La Petite Bijou* (2001), a series of character sketches in the fifteen brief texts of *Livret de famille* (1977), to name just a few. This last volume spells out the typical procedure followed by the various narrators, who are all, more or less, stand-ins for Modiano himself: in search of a certain Harry Dressel, one seeker’s first step is to “gather material proof of Henry Dressel’s passage through life.” In the process of his investigation, he meets a dog lover and kennel owner who keeps an archive of photos and pedigrees, because “He was tormented by the thought of all those thousands and thousands of dogs who died in total anonymity and without having left the slightest trace.”⁴ The *modus operandi* resembles that of a detective, but the narrator of *Dora Bruder*, like the others, undertakes a quest that is both intellectual and affective, and through which he strives both to know and to mourn. Inevitably however, at some point documentation fails, the trail reaches a dead end, and then, as Harry Dressel’s narrator decides, “I had no proof, and my dossier was rather thin, but I planned to give free rein to my imagination. That would help me find the real Dressel.”⁵ Modiano follows a similar procedure in *Dora Bruder*, while imposing one additional overriding rule, as we shall see.

My reading of *Dora Bruder* begins in February 1831, the date of Victor Hugo’s first preface to *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Hugo’s point of departure, and the foundation upon which his novel is built, is a single word cut into the stone wall in an obscure corner of one of the cathedral’s towers. This graffito—the Greek word “ananké,” variously translated as *souffrance*, *tortures*, and *fatalité*—is described as the “stigmata of a crime or of distress branded on the forehead of the old church.” The hand that scratched the graffito is long dead and forgotten, and as if this evidence were not meager enough, the inscription itself has since disappeared as well; the stone has been rubbed smooth by time, leaving only a memory. “Thus aside from

the fragile memory that this book's author devotes to it, nothing remains today of the mysterious word engraved on the somber tower of Notre Dame. We know nothing about the unknown destiny it described with such melancholy."⁶ Like Klarsfeld's *Mémorial*, Hugo's novel serves as a tribute and monument to that anonymous suffering. Unlike Klarsfeld, however, and more like Harry Dressel's narrator, Hugo will use imaginative fiction to flesh out the desperate soul who left it there and tell his story: many pages later, we will peek through a door left ajar to watch Claude Frolo, in the throes of psychological and spiritual torment, scratching the mysterious word onto the stone.

Modiano's novels echo Hugo's "nothing remains today" ["Il ne reste plus rien aujourd'hui"] again and again, as he too labors to stem the tide of disappearing traces. Hugo could have penned what Modiano writes about Dora: "It takes time for what has been erased to resurface" (*Dora* 9).⁷ Both have access to historical documents and supplement these with a Romantic and topographic (archaeological, architectural, cartographic) imagination. And each produces his eponymous book as a scriptural monument or *mémorial*, even a replacement: Hugo declares that his book will eventually be all that remains of the cathedral. The cover of the translated edition of *Dora Bruder* resembles a tombstone.

Unlike Hugo, however, and following Klarsfeld instead, Modiano imposes the additional rule of disciplining and channeling his impulse to fictionalize: he will not use invention to fill gaps in the historical record. To be sure, there is a place for imagination in *Dora Bruder*, but it is carefully circumscribed. Before undertaking this book, Modiano had already tried giving Dora's story fictive form in *Voyage de noces*, but there, he realizes he had merely "captured, unconsciously, a vague gleam of the truth" (*Dora* 44).⁸ The challenge he sets himself in *Dora Bruder* is more rigorous. The narrator's (and we can safely infer this is Modiano's own) meticulous research into documents relating to Dora and his tireless treks across Paris in her wake aim to assemble her *papiers d'identité* and restore her real *état civil*.⁹ He wants to breathe life into Dora's story without putting words in her mouth. And although his quest is motivated by multiple losses (the "enfants sans identité" of the Holocaust, but also others, including his dead brother and his always elusive, now

deceased father), and although like Freud's Dora, she is mute, he will not follow Freud's example and invent her motives or otherwise explain her. His need to know merges with his equally compelling desire to respect the reality of her life and death, forcing him to modify his conception of the novel genre and to forge for the novelist a new professional ethics—what in French is called a “déontologie”—that will bring his project into harmony with his subject. Otherwise, to speak in Dora's place might risk entering somehow into league with those who invented her in the first place (as a Jew), only to erase her.

What, then, is a novelist to do when confronted with a dead end, when he fails to find even the faintest trace, when there exists not even “a single clue, a single witness who might shed light on these four months of absence, [which remain] for us, a blank in her life” (*Dora* 73)?¹⁰ Modiano tells Klarsfeld that the Holocaust made him doubt the power of literature—made him ask whether there can be novels after Auschwitz, to paraphrase Theodor Adorno's famous question—but at the same time, he is by profession a novelist. Although it contains and depends on history, *Dora Bruder* is not a work of historiography. Even Klarsfeld calls the book a novel.¹¹ The question we might ask, then, is not so much whether or not *Dora Bruder* is a novel, but rather, how does Modiano mobilize his skills as a novelist in the service of the particular task he has set himself? What strategies might make it possible for him to call upon imagination while remaining faithful to historical truth?

Before outlining some of the narrative strategies that might accomplish this goal, it is important to understand what exactly is at stake. Dora's narrator is literally attempting to prove her existence—that is, to establish her legal *état civil*. Dora's father, probably in an attempt to protect her, avoided mentioning her when he went to the local police station in October of 1941, to register himself as a Jew, according to the laws of the Vichy government. Modiano succeeds in finding Dora's birth certificate, but he fails to find written records of her school attendance. He seeks these documents because without written traces, Dora quite literally remains an anonymous “enfant sans identité.”

An anecdote will illustrate the significance of this within the assumptions of French forensic law. A few years ago, my university charged me with establishing an off-campus study program in

Paris. In order to do this, I had to apply for the proposed program's legal status in relation to the Ministries of Education and Finance. The French lawyer with whom I was working to assemble the necessary documents asked me for copies of my own employment contract and my university's articles of incorporation. I laughed and explained that the only document I had was an annual letter of appointment, and that Dartmouth College was established by a Charter, drawn up in 1769 by the College's founders, including the legendary Eleazer Wheelock. The good Maître laughed in his turn, and pointed out that this only confirmed his understanding that the United States operated on an Anglo-Saxon system of common law, based on precedent, in which oral contracts are binding. By contrast, he went on to explain, French law—the Napoleonic Code—is *written* law. And then he summed up: "Si c'est pas écrit, ça n'existe pas." If it's not written, it doesn't exist.

Whether or not I have succeeded in conveying the legal intricacies of the situation, the implications of this distinction are immense. It suffices simply to reverse the proposition to show its relevance to Dora and Modiano: if it's written, it exists. The newspaper notice announcing that she had gone missing, hospital records, her father's army enlistment papers, even the numbers on her family's apartment building, and ultimately her name on the deportation list constitute written proof that she lived and died. Similarly, the fragments of letters assembled near the book's conclusion are the beginnings of analogous resurrections of other lost citizens. The narrator of *Dora Bruder* is attempting to write Dora into existence, along with these others; his book will serve as their identity papers.

The story our narrator is thus able to patch together is more than a biography of BRUDER, Dora (although that would have been achievement enough). He writes in order literally to save her life, that is, to rescue her from oblivion (from being an "enfant sans identité"), and not only in the existential sense but also as a legal member of the French (and the human) community. About another unidentified woman—the one who occupied the police van with the narrator's father, but who turned out not to be Dora Bruder—Modiano has this to say: "Were I not here to record it, there would be no trace of this unidentified girl's presence [. . .]" (*Dora* 53).¹²

Dora Bruder is, thus both a novel and a document with a specific

legal status. It is all the more crucial, then, to identify the narrative strategies that permit the writer to use the toolbox of the novelist while remaining faithful to Dora's historical reality.

Like several of the New Novelists (with whom most critics take pains to avoid comparing him), Modiano constructs his book around an absence or a void: Dora herself, and more specifically, her *fugue*. The stakes are high here, and as in many Nouveaux Romans, the narrative procedures tell a key part of the story that cannot be told thematically, in the process giving us a window into how novels work, how they interact with historical realities, what their powers are, and their limits.¹³ The example that comes most immediately to mind is Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Le Voyeur* (1955), where the author uses the figure of erasure (which he had already deployed in *Les Gommages* 1953) to convey through its absence the existence of a crime that leaves a hole at the center of the story. The missing crime erupts transformed in odd places and distorts the narration, creating undercurrents, double entendres, and lapses in coherence and intelligibility, so that it is only the text's mysterious structures and convoluted style that figure and thus betray its secret. Comparing the purely fictional *Le Voyeur* to *Dora Bruder* is problematic, however, because if readers were to focus on the productive power of the signifier and on the capacity of language to create meaning, as the New Novelists' experimental writing asks us to do, we would run the risk of erasing Dora herself by suggesting that she is no more than a language effect. While he prowls the streets of Paris in search of traces, the narrator of *Dora Bruder* walks this perilous line. This is why he takes such care not to invent. The double emphasis in his tale on the methods of his quest and the overdetermined nature of the evidence makes the book into a site of negotiation between language and reality and between analytical detection and the psychic work of mourning.

On several occasions, Modiano permits himself to take detours through other stories that might elucidate Dora's itinerary, fashioning a complex intra- and intertextual web that circles around the central lacuna. Reconstructing Dora's activities during the first of her two "*fugues*" leads to an abrupt but illuminating allusion to another "*traversée nocturne de Paris*," Jean Valjean's escape just ahead of Javert's police. Rereading Hugo's *Les Misérables* leads Dora's nar-

rator to discover an astonishing lapsus: after the fugitive Valjean crosses the Seine at the Pont d'Austerlitz and heads in the direction of the real faubourg St. Antoine, "suddenly, you have a sensation of vertigo, as if Cosette and Jean Valjean, to escape Javert and his police, have taken a leap into space: thus far, they have been following real Paris streets, and now, abruptly, Victor Hugo thrusts them into the imaginary district of Paris that he calls the Petit Picpus." The uncanny part, what provokes in Modiano's narrator a "sensation d'étrangeté," is that when the fugitives finally reach safety by climbing over a wall, they find themselves in a convent garden that Hugo situates "exactement au 62, rue du Petit Picpus," and which is, according to our narrator, "the same address as that of the Saint-Cœur-de-Marie school where Dora was a boarder" (*Dora* 41–42).¹⁴ It was Dora who eventually ran away from the convent into the arms of the Gestapo, but it is Hugo who calls the sudden appearance of the convent an unexpected "enigma," a mysterious and uncanny locale ("étrange maison"), ambiguously "promising access to the radiant gates of heaven only to open the horrible doors of the tomb."¹⁵ A mysterious complicity arises between the two books, and Hugo, who believes in "le hasard, c'est-à-dire, la providence" ("chance, which is to say Providence") (Hugo, *Mis*. 1 501) converses directly with Modiano, who asserts that "Like many writers before me, I believe in coincidence and, sometimes, in the novelist's gift for clairvoyance." Then he corrects himself: no, it is not a gift, but "simply comes with the profession" (*Dora* 42).¹⁶

Modiano notices the way Hugo reaches beyond the real, and at the same time he alerts us to the presence of similar strategies in his own writing. Although it is difficult to say to what extent, if any, Modiano helped orchestrate this coincidence, many details align Valjean with Dora. It is almost as if Dora herself had taken refuge in Hugo's novel, or as if Hugo foresaw what would ultimately happen to her. Already once a *déporté* himself, Valjean is in flight, en *fugue*, with a little girl in his arms, and it takes only a small stretch of the imagination to catch sight of Jean fleeing across Paris with Dora. Or better yet, it would suffice to practice the technique employed by the young protagonist in Modiano's book for children, *Catherine Certitude*: Catherine removes her glasses in order to literally blur the boundaries between sensory perception and imagination.¹⁷ Wheth-

er or not the rue Picpus details in Dora's documents are exactly congruent with Hugo's description, this address brings her into a network of intertextuality that enriches her story and brings her to literary life. Dora's familiar haunts, like the objects that she might have seen, remain as silent witnesses to her passage. Or as Hugo explains, the rule of silence in the convent meant that "the capacity to speak was withdrawn from humans and given to inanimate objects."¹⁸

Modiano's narrator adopts this same Hugolian working hypothesis when he interrogates the objects Dora might have seen, the places she might have visited, and the people (including his own father) who might have crossed her path. He believes that "premises retain some stamp, however faint, of their previous inhabitants" (*Dora* 21).¹⁹ Similarly, he senses Dora's presence in a movie she might have seen—about "a young girl of her age who runs away" [*la fugue d'une fille de son âge*]"—in which the "the grain of the actual stock" seems veiled with a peculiar luminosity, making him realize with a start that "this film was impregnated with the gaze of moviegoers from the time of the Occupation" (*Dora* 65–66).²⁰ The narrator thus treats objects as memory sites capable of communicating about people long gone whose presence they have witnessed. And it is in these conversations among paving stones and street addresses, buildings and documents that imagination can legitimately take hold, and invention can implant itself without betraying the reality of the dead.

Still another intertextual figure appears between the lines, "en filigrane," as Modiano might say, to flesh out this portrait. François Truffaut's semi-autobiographical character Antoine Doinel of *Les 400 Coups* is close in age to Dora, and like Dora, he runs away from home and wanders the streets of Paris. Like Modiano's narrator, he is handed over to the police by his father and taken away in a police van or *panier à salade*. Doinel makes an appearance in another text in which Modiano, speaking as himself this time, traces another lost soul who died before he had a chance to know her: actress Françoise Dorléac. In *Elle s'appelait Françoise*, co-authored with Catherine Deneuve, he remembers having seen *Les 400 Coups* at its release in 1959 and muses about the film: "I was not aware that the scenes of the police van and [Doinel's] final escape [*fugue*]" were premonitory for me. At the beginning of the following year, I escaped from

the school where I had been imprisoned for four years. I felt that sensation particular to such escapes [*la fugue*]: the intoxication of breaking abruptly with everything—an intoxication with no future and that Truffaut leaves suspended in a freeze frame, the last image of his film, so as not to break the forward momentum.” He adds: “The police van, I encountered that later too, in circumstances similar to those in the film and that Truffaut himself also experienced.”²¹

By another strange coincidence of which Modiano is perhaps unaware, the working title of Truffaut’s film was “Les Fugues d’Antoine.” Truffaut, Antoine, Patrick, Dora. We can add to this list of *fugueurs* Modiano’s father, who frequently evaporated for long periods, and who was on one occasion, as described in *Dora Bruder*, arrested by the Gestapo for interrogation and taken away behind the caged windows of a police van or *panier à salade*. He and Dora might even have crossed paths that day. “Ils auraient pu se croiser,” we read repeatedly. (But no, it couldn’t have been the same young girl . . .). Weaving all these stories into Dora’s brings our narrator several degrees of separation closer to her reality, without having to invent her activities. In fact, what is missing from Antoine Doinel’s story is exactly what is present in Dora’s and vice versa: we see Antoine’s whereabouts during his *fugue*, but the historical context of the Occupation that Truffaut would have experienced at that age is missing from Doinel’s story; Dora’s story, on the other hand, is lacking almost everything *but* context. (The narrator is even reduced to consulting weather charts to imagine her experience.) Moreover, Doinel is approximately the same age that Truffaut would have been during the Occupation and the same age as Modiano when the author saw the film in 1959, that is, only a few years younger than Dora. Superimposing Dora’s story on Doinel’s and Truffaut’s own thus fills out the blanks in each.

In order to appreciate the textual maneuvers that allow Modiano’s characters to converse with Hugo’s and Truffaut’s and even for them to end up in the same places, it is helpful to examine more closely the idea of the *fugue*. The sense in which we have thus far encountered this key word in Modiano’s corpus as a whole is the second definition as found in the *Petit Robert* dictionary: “Act of running away momentarily from the place where one habitually lives.

See absence, escape.” The first meaning is equally (if less obviously)

relevant: "Musical composition written in counterpoint style and in which a theme and its successive variations form several parts that seem to run away and then chase each other."²² The two definitions work together to suggest the way in which Modiano's narrators follow *lignes de fuite* or vanishing points in pursuit of characters who have disappeared too soon. These narrators, born too late and forced to play the detective, always arrive after the object of their quest has slipped away. Modiano's narration encounters uncanny correspondences and highlights coincidences that interact fugally. The point is not that the experiences of Valjean, Antoine, Dora, Patrick, et al. are somehow commensurate or comparable. Rather, these correspondences create echoes, and they produce empathy. Unlike homophonic arrangements of melody and supporting chords, a key characteristic of fugal or polyphonic composition is that no single voice dominates or unifies the whole. There is no distinction between lead singer and backup. All voices are independent and equal in value. Although they never coincide, they converse. And in good hands (like Bach's), harmony can be made to emerge from the sequence of voices.²³ Through Modiano's fugal narrative composition, although the many stories (or songs) never coincide or occupy the same space at the same time, Dora's voice can be heard across the void.

This literary fugue construction thus permits the emergence of a dialogic form of subjectivity. Conversations that arise between the present and the past, between the narrator and the streets and buildings of today's Paris, between Modiano and his literary and cinematic predecessors make it possible for Modiano's novels to respond to history by enabling multiple positions of enunciation—historical, literary, filmic, imaginary—to "sing" in concert. Although she does not speak—and no one is allowed to speak *for* her—Dora can be understood as a historical person. Fictional structure creates solidarity across divides of real space, time, and generation. What is more, once spaces are opened for these voices, more of them emerge. Toward the end of the book, other individual historical victims make brief appearances, as the narrator gives us brief portraits of the dead through the inclusion of a series of "lettres perdues." By accepting delivery of these "dead" letters sent fifty years beforehand, he brings their voices into the fugue, making it possible for us to hear them.

Through these and other devices, Modiano's text neither ap-

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propriates nor incorporates nor interprets Dora, but simply allows her to be glimpsed as a “fantôme,” as a “revenant,” as a presence “en filigrane” in a collage. Or better yet, Modiano’s fugal construction functions much in the way Sergei Eisenstein understood the functioning of montage. In Eisenstein’s “intellectual montage,” derived in part from principles of linguistics, meaning does not reside in individual images, but emerges dialectically from their juxtaposition. The result is what Eisenstein calls “visual counterpoint.”²⁴ Similarly, Dora does not reside in the individual voices of the fugue, but rather she emerges, like harmony, from their interplay.

As someone who remains a perpetual beginner at the piano, I can testify that the fugue is extraordinarily difficult to execute. Modiano’s literary fugue is deceptively unimposing, unflamboyant, and modest, but it may be the only way the minimal notes of Dora’s biography, the minimal traces of her presence can be authentically orchestrated. Admitting that he knows very little about her, he invites her to make a final *fugue* into his book, where her secrets will be safe. “I shall never know how she spent her days, where she hid, in whose company she passed the winter months of her first escape [*fugue*], or the few weeks of spring when she escaped for the second time.” By the book’s last sentence, he realizes that his ignorance has not turned out to be a failure, however, but on the contrary, the very principle of her survival beyond death. Like *Les 400 Coups*, *Dora Bruder* ends with a freeze frame: “That is her secret. A poor and precious secret that not even the executioners, the decrees, the occupying authorities, the Dépôt, the barracks, the camps, History, time—everything that defiles and destroys you—have been able to take away from her” (*Dora* 119).²⁵ It stands to reason that he, the narrator, finally realizes that he is pleased to have protected this precious secret, rather than stealing it from her. At the end, what he has succeeded in documenting instead is her absence, which he takes as proof of her existence. Even at rush hour, he is able to sense an emptiness that marks her passage.²⁶

Notes

1 The introductory material in this article reprises that of my essay on a related topic: see Lynn A. Higgins, “Lieux de mémoire et géographie imag-

inaire dans *Dora Bruder*,” in Bruno Blanckeman, Aline Mura-Brunel & Marc Dambre, eds., *Le Roman Français au tournant du XXI^e siècle* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2004), 397–405.

2 “dout[er] 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. [. . .] J’ai voulu suivre l’exemple que m’avait donné Serge Klarsfeld. [. . .] j’ai essayé de trouver un détail supplémentaire, une adresse, la moindre indication sur la vie de telle ou telle personne. Certaines avaient laissé une trace [. . .]” (*Libération*, November 2, 1994: 8; my translation).

3 *Dora Bruder* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997). Translated into English by Joanna Kilmartin. Further page references to the translation will appear in the text and to the original in the notes.

4 “[. . .] réunir les preuves matérielles du passage d’Harry Dressel sur la terre.” “Son tourment à lui, c’était de penser à tous ces milliers et ces milliers de chiens morts dans l’anonymat total et sans qu’ils eussent laissé la moindre trace” (*Livret* 185; my translation).

5 “Je n’en possédais pas la preuve et mon dossier était bien mince, mais je comptais laisser aller mon imagination. Elle m’aiderait à retrouver le vrai Dressel” (*Livret* 185; my translation). Elsewhere, he makes a similar associative leap: “Elle s’était fâchée avec l’un de ses metteurs en scène parce qu’elle l’avait vu tuer une mouche. Ils étaient ensemble à la terrasse d’un restaurant, sur les quais, et elle s’était enfuie en pleurant, après le meurtre de la mouche. Cet assassin avait trouvé étrange sa réaction. Mais il suffit simplement d’inverser les choses: c’est parce qu’on a considéré que la vie de millions de gens n’avait pas plus d’importance que celle des mouches, qu’on les a assassinés pendant la dernière guerre.” [“She had become angry with one of her directors when she saw him kill a fly. They were together on a restaurant terrace by the river, and she fled in tears. The assassin found her reaction strange. But you only have to reverse things: it’s because the lives of millions of people were considered no more important than the life of a fly that they were assassinated during the last war.”] (*Livret* 31; my translation).

6 “Stigmate de crime ou de malheur au front de la vieille église.” “Ainsi, hormis le fragile souvenir que lui consacre ici l’auteur de ce livre, il ne reste plus rien aujourd’hui du mot mystérieux gravé dans la sombre tour de Notre-Dame, rien de la destinée inconnue qu’il résumait si mélancoliquement.” (Hugo, *Notre-Dame* xxxvii-xxxviii; my translation).

7 “Il faut longtemps pour que resurgisse à la lumière ce qui a été effacé” (*Dora* 13).

8 “capter, inconsciemment, un vague reflet de la réalité” (*Dora* 54).

9 Here again, Modiano follows Klarsfeld, whose lists include “nom, prénom, date et lieu de naissance, adresse où l’enfant a été arrêté.” Klarsfeld continues to seek photographs.

10 “la moindre trace,” when there is “aucun indice, aucun témoin qui aurait pu m’éclairer sur ses quatre mois d’absence qui restent pour nous un blanc dans sa vie” (*Dora* 89).

11 Klarsfeld 534.

12 “Si je n’étais pas là pour l’écrire, il n’y aurait plus aucune trace de la présence de cette inconnue [...]” (*Dora* 65).

13 Lynn A. Higgins. *New Novel, New Wave, New Politics: Fiction and the Representation of History in Post-War France* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1996).

14 “soudain, on éprouve une sensation de vertige, comme si Cosette et Jean Valjean, pour échapper à Javert et à ses policiers, basculaient dans le vide: jusque-là, ils traversaient les vraies rues du Paris réel, et brusquement ils sont projetés dans le quartier d’un Paris imaginaire que Victor Hugo nomme le Petit Picpus. [...] la même adresse que le pensionnat du Saint Cœur-de-Marie où était Dora Bruder” (*Dora* 51–52).

15 “promettant d’ouvrir la porte radieuse du ciel et ouvrant la porte horrible du tombeau!” (Hugo, 1967 vol. 1, p. 497; my translation).

16 “Comme beaucoup d’autres avant moi, je crois aux coïncidences et quelquefois à un don de voyance chez les romanciers—le mot ‘don’ n’étant pas le terme exact [. . .]. Non, cela fait simplement partie du métier” (*Dora* 52–53).

17 Modiano, *Catherine Certitude*, illustrated by Sempé.

18 “la parole était retirée aux créatures humaines et donnée aux objets inanimés” (Hugo, 1967, Vol. 2, p. 30; my translation).

19 “les lieux gardent une légère empreinte des personnes qui les ont habitées” (*Dora* 28).

20 “[. . .] je ressentais un malaise. Il venait de la luminosité particulière du film, du grain même de la pellicule. [. . .] J’ai compris brusquement que ce film était imprégné par les regards des spectateurs du temps de l’Occupation” (*Dora* 80).

21 “Je ne savais pas que les scènes du panier à salade et de la fugue finale étaient pour moi prémonitoires. Au début de l’année suivante, je me suis échappé d’un collège-caserne de Seine-et-Oise où j’étais enfermé depuis quatre ans. J’ai éprouvé cette sensation particulière à la fugue: l’ivresse de rompre brusquement avec tout—l’ivresse sans avenir et que Truffaut a laissée en suspens par un plan fixe, la dernière image de son film—avant qu’elle ne soit brisée dans son élan. Le panier à salade, je l’ai connu quelques temps plus tard dans des circonstances à peu près semblables à celles du film et que Truffaut a vécues, lui aussi” (Modiano and Deneuve 17; my translation).

22 “Action de s’enfuir momentanément du lieu où l’on vit habituellement. V: absence, fuite.” And: “Composition musicale écrite dans le style du contrepoint et dans laquelle un thème et ses imitations successives forment plusieurs parties qui semblent se fuir et se poursuivre l’un l’autre” (My translation).

23 See Bettmann.

24 Sergei Eisenstein, "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form," in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*. Trans. Jay Leyda. San Diego: Harcourt, 1949. 45–71.

25 "J'ignorerai 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" (*Dora* 145).

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