



The Postmodern Writing of the City in Patrick Modiano's Works*

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THE literary imagination is widely marked by the images of the space and the territorial metaphors, the echo of which has evolved a lot during centuries. The importance of the notion of space and its status in and in relation to literature have developed vastly in Western thought. Supposing that the Middle Ages considered space as an interval of time, since the Renaissance and until modern times, time has disappeared behind the power suggestive of space. From a mythical type to a modernized imaginary figure, space and its literary representations follow the transformations of the way of human life. Let us remember the distinction made by Mme de Stael between the literature of the North and the literature of the South, which not only affirms the close relationship between literature and space, but also emphasizes the cultural weight in the elaboration of axioms in question. This definition of the literature as a space generator on the one hand and the ideal mode of spatial representation on the other leaves the field free to criticize and describe the nodes woven between these two key notions. It is why that geocriticism is defined "as an axiology of space" (Grassin, 2000: X) and therefore proposes to study the space of literature as well as the literature of space.

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The complexity and diversity of the representation of space and its inclusion in the discourse find scope in the postmodern literature with the writing of the space to create its particular use. The writing of space is also invested in the matrix of the characteristics of this new contemporary writing to reflect its epistemological foundations. Patrick Modiano's works bear witness to this, as space penetrates the novelistic writing of this contemporary French writer who tries to draw from all the potential resources required to describe the world so far as that some critics consider him "a novelist in the Parisian space" (Meyer-Bolzinger, 2010, p 265).

Rue des Boutiques obscures, the sixth novel by Patrick Modiano, published in 1978, is the story of a quest for identity through the representation of cities, from Paris to Rome, from Megève to Bora Bora. The work has been awarded with the Goncourt prize. *Lost Quarter*, another novel of the French writer, published in 1984, relates the story of a best-selling author, who tries to elucidate some mysteries of his past in Paris, but the night city and its spells immediately seize him. We find that the image of the city represented in these two novels is combined with the status of the man today in the world; the postmodern man. In other words, we encounter a reformed, heterogeneous, discontinuous and plural image of the city. The question arises as how Modiano's topographical obsession is revealed in his writing and in what forms it appears. From these primordial questions emanates the following, inquiring the postmodern stakes that form the spatial imaginary of Modiano. How does the city as a recurring theme in the Modiano's work configures a strong articulation of the other motifs and how does the writing of space become the space of writing?

In an attempt to answer these questions, this article first proposes an overview of postmodern literature to see the basis of Modiano's treatment of space. We then try to get the postmodern approach of the city in Modiano's writing based on two works: *Rue des boutiques obscures* and *Quartier perdu*. In the end, this paper aims to study the writer's finality of the textualisation of space.

Keywords— City, Postmodern, Geocriticism, Patrick Modiano, *Quartier perdu*, *Rue des boutiques obscures*.