



Missing Person (Verba Mundi) (Verba Mundi Book)

By Patrick Modiano, Daniel Weissbort (translator)

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Missing Person (Verba Mundi) (Verba Mundi Book) By Patrick Modiano, Daniel Weissbort (translator)

Winner of the Prix Goncourt

In this strange, elegant novel, winner of France's premier literary prize, Patrick Modiano portrays a man in pursuit of the identity he lost in the murky days of the Paris Occupation, the black hole of French memory.

For ten years Guy Roland has lived without a past. His current life and name were given to him by his recently retired boss, Hutte, who welcomed him, a onetime client, into his detective agency. Guy makes full use of Hutte's files - directories, yearbooks, and papers of all kinds going back half a century - but his leads are few. Could he really be the person in that photograph, a young man remembered by some as a South American attaché? Or was he someone else, perhaps the disappeared scion of a prominent local family? He interviews strangers and is tantalized by half-clues until, at last, he grasps a thread that leads him through the maze of his own repressed experience.

On one level Missing Person is a detective thriller, a 1950s film noir mix of smoky cafés, illegal passports, and insubstantial figures crossing bridges in the fog. On another level, it is also a haunting meditation on the nature of the self. Modiano's spare, hypnotic prose, superbly translated by Daniel Weissbort, draws his readers into the intoxication of a rare literary experience. (Verba Mundi)

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Editorial Review

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Twenty-seven years after its original French publication won the Prix Goncourt, this elliptical, engrossing rumination on the essence of identity and the search for self finally enjoys its first U.S. edition (which uses Weissbort's smooth 1980 English translation). Set in postwar Paris, it follows an amnesiac now known as Guy Roland, employed for the past decade by a kindly private investigator. When the PI retires, Roland sets out to lift the veil on his past. As he ably conducts this most personal of investigations, Roland begins to suspect that he may have employed multiple identities, leading a mysteriously compartmentalized existence. He may even have been fleeing the German occupation when his memory was wiped away. Roland's explorations bring home his mentor's observation that we all live in a world where "the sand keeps the traces of our footsteps only a few moments." Even as it opens the door to new mysteries, the enigmatic ending underscores the human drive to preserve those footsteps for as long as we draw breath. *Frank Sennett*
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Review

Delicate and cunning . . . Modiano's method is to sidle up to subjects of mystery and horror, indicating them without broaching them, as if gingerly fingering the outside of a poison bottle. . . He opens dark doors into the past out of a sunlit present. --John Sturrock, Times Literary Supplement

'The best place to fling oneself into Mr. Modiano's oeuvre.' --New York Times

About the Author

Patrick Modiano is a bestselling novelist and the winner of some of the most prestigious literary awards in France, including the Prix Goncourt and the Prix Mondial Cino Del Duca for lifetime achievement. In 2014 he was awarded 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."

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Patrick Bergeron:

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