IDENTITY IN THE POSTMODERN HYPERREAL WORLD: A STUDY OF PAUL AUSTER'S SELECT NOVELS

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

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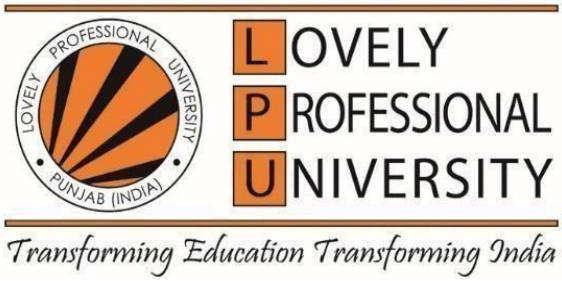

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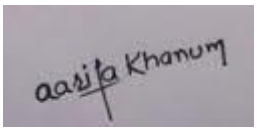
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the present work in the thesis entitled "Identity in the Postmodern Hyperreal World: A Study of Paul Auster's Select Novels" in fulfilment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr Muzaffar Ahmed Bhat, working as Associate Professor, in the Department English of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of other investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.



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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled "Identity in the Postmodern Hyperreal World: A Study of Paul Auster's Select Novels" submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the reward of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the English, is a research work carried out by Aarifa khanum, (Registration No.)11919218, is bonafide record of his/her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.

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ABSTRACT

The present study entitled "Identity in the Postmodern Hyperreal World: A Study of Paul Auster's Select Novels" is a qualitative research work through the lens of hyperreality. The study aims to analyse six novels of Paul Auster viz. *City of Glass* (1985), *Ghosts* (1986), and *The Locked Room* (1987), *The Book of Illusions* (2001), *The Music of Chance* (1991), and *Sunset Park* (2010). The seminal work of Jean Baudrillard who proposed theory of hyperreality in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1991) would become part of primary sources. The world of Auster showcases the Postmodern American society where consumerism has taken people's psyche. Verily in the postmodern culture, the representation has replaced the reality and is substituted by the meditated real called as hyperreal.

Paul Auster has been chosen for study since he is among the pioneers in depicting the postmodern American urban experience. The chosen narratives connect with the metropolis and are replete with images, impressions, and experiences of the city. These novels from the late twentieth century depict the variety, heterogeneity, and plurality of views as the protagonists navigate the complexity and sprawl of urban life while experiencing disorientation, turmoil, solitude, and fragmentation. Moreover, they depict the postmodern metropolis as a center of complexity, mystery, wonder, and multiple identities. New York becomes the quintessential setting for postmodern literature since its environment, cityscape, and topography conform to the postmodern urban matrix. The work of Jean Baudrillard offers a unique perspective on life in the city and proposes a vital concept: hyperreality. Hyperreality, in which we are overwhelmed with simulations and images, blurs the borders between reality and representation and relates to the notion of the postmodern city, in which notions of time and space have been irreparably transformed by the advent of new technology.

There are many dimensions to a postmodern metropolis, and some of the recurring themes include consumer culture, pluralism, alienation, multiple identities and illusions vs reality. The study's overarching goal is to uncover and clarify how the before mentioned thematic clusters manifest themselves in Auster's narratives. Thus, free play

of self is an important aspect in Paul Auster's fiction. While they do not gloss over the difficulties of forming such an identity, they do demonstrate how that persona emerges from plethora of influences and in dynamic interaction with them.

The thesis has been conceptualized and presented in six chapters. Introduction offers an overview of postmodern literature on fiction and identity, drawn from American literary history. Chapter One captioned "Simulation, Simulacra and Hyperreality: A Theoretical Framework" examines Auster's novels in the light of hyperreality theory of Jean Baudrillard. Chapter two presents the "Real/Reel Identities in the Auster's Select Novels." Chapter three studies the "Consumer Capitalism and Postmodernity in relation to Auster's novels." Chapter Four deals with the "Delegitimized features of Postmodern narratives" and looks at Auster's select novels. The conclusion will sum up the ideas analyzed and evaluated in the select works of the writer.

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Introduction

The qualitative study, entitled Identity in the Postmodern Hyperreal World: A Study of Paul Auster's Select Novels, employs Jean Baudrillard's (1994) theory of hyperreality in *Simulation and Simulacra* as a lens through which to examine the ways in which Paul Auster's fiction reflects contemporary American society's infatuation with hyperreality. Like Baudrillard calls it, "Hyperreality" is "dissolution of boundaries between what is real and what is imagined." The word "hyper" means "more real than real," therefore in this case "real is the result of the model." (1). According to Baudrillard, the overwhelming influence of technology on society has led to hyperreality, a phenomenon in which the mediated real, hyperreal, has supplanted the real, unmediated world (2-3). The prime focus of the study is to exhibit the dominance of simulacra in a postmodern society and how the characters are eternally entangled in the web of hyperreality, in a media saturated society. The study explores postmodern hyperreal world that gives rise to identity crisis and consumer society, in which whatever is part of the system is acknowledged as real and existing.

Paul Auster (1947) is one of the most leading postmodern American writers of the late 20th and early 21st century. His novels have received much approbation due to his varied and innovative narrative techniques as well as his habit of blending apparently distinct elements in the realm of literary form as well as elements of plot construction. The cohesive force that underlies all his major works is the protagonist's search for self in an absurd and chaotic world, something that is evidently visible in Auster's own life as well. He has published several memoirs which have also received favorable criticism and form an important part of his literary work. His fiction and autobiographical works thus form a connected chain which leads to a unified whole engulfing all of Auster's views on life, existence, and survival, and amidst this panorama of ideological idealization is revealed Auster's perspective on the journey that is as open-ended as it is vague and ambiguous. Indeed, much like many of the characters in his fiction, Auster's own life revolves around finding who he really is and where he stands in the universe. In fact, one can say that Auster's fiction is, in fact, the very medium through which he attempts to

delineate his own existence from the universe at large and thus categorize what is personal, and what is part of the other, which is the world at large. This search is reflected in his works, and even his non-fictional works acquire a certain level of autobiographical character. Through the medium of his writing, he has tried to investigate his state of being and his characters become extensions of his own consciousness.

Auster is one of the leading exponents of contemporary American literature who, in his fiction, best illuminates the emotional world of postmodern individuals and their inner journeys. Auster's work presents a myriad of themes like, chance and coincidence, problem of identity, mysterious disappearance, paternity, loneliness, and the quest of identity etc. His novels have received much appreciation due to his innovative narrative literary style. Auster's characters obsession with the quest for self-discovery and self-identity are considered as a salient feature of his works.

Being a key word in the topic of the thesis, it is imperative to draw the history of the concept of identity in the postmodern hyperreal world. In the hyperreal, the meaning of the word "identity," this means "individuality" (Webster 669), is lost. Since a replica of the universe is constructed according to people's choices, there can be no consensus on what is true or genuine since everyone's beliefs would be different. Everyone has their own unique perspective on this simulation, and hence on the world, and opts to join a simulation of their own design in order to craft the life and identity that they want. But the many simulations from which individuals choose are limited to those developed by the creators themselves.

Therefore, identity is wrapped in the sense of a simulacrum for the person who cannot deviate from the options predetermined for them by the producers. One's persona is transformed into a decorative accessory that may be added and removed at will. Consumption of cultural products is equated with identity formation in the postmodernist view As a result, as Hugh Mackay in Consumption and Everyday Life (1997) puts it in his own words "We become what we consume" (Mackay) is how Baudrillard puts it. But do all customers have the freedom to choose? The consumer is coerced into developing a sense of self within the parameters set by the producers. If a person has even a little amount of purchasing power, He/she will be able to pick and choose from the several

identities that are put out by the media's producers and marketers.If one does not have the ability to consume, however, he or she must assume the identity chosen by those who do, or else be cast out of society. Since certain identities are appropriated and others are still imposed, it is impossible to escape the hyperreal world in which we live.

As a result, the ever-changing nature of postmodern civilization makes it impossible to establish any universal truth. Given that the postmodern subject no longer believes it has any place or validity in such a cosmos, the loss of the masses and the real inevitably lead to the extinction of the postmodern person. For this reason, retaining one's unique identity in today's world is pointless and unattainable. With this result, the postmodern person no longer feels a sense of belonging to a group or even a sense of self. Therefore, postmodern social theorists have labelled the postmodern person with various diagnoses:

> Postmodernity has been described as 'schizophrenic' (Jameson 1991), 'multiphrenic' (Gergen 1992), 'telephrenic' (Gottschalk 2000), Depressive and nihilistic (Levin 1987), paranoid (Burgin 1990; Frank, 1992 Brennan 2004), and liable to induce in those who live in it 'low- level fear' (Massumi1993), or 'panic' (Kroker and Cook 1988). (Nicol 9)

Consequently, the postmodern man might be described as aimless, confusing, opaque, ambiguous, and fragmented, thus the postmodern subject, cut off from objective reality, creates its own. Maria Beville (2009) asserts that the post - modernist strategy to literary creation seeks to persuade the reader that truths, reality, and emotion are essentially totally subjective and individualized" (47-48). Because of this, in our period, reality is experienced and formed by the filters of the person in an eternally circular manner via copies of pictures.

As a direct result of this, individuals have lost their social relationships and the organizational principles that guided their society, which leads to the emergence of hyperreality. Consequently, inside the hyperreal world, individuals create the heightened reality of their own perspective, and this circumstance encourages more incredible simulation. As a result, there is no way out of this predicament and those still alive even

"be jealous of the deceased for having broken the simulation cycle and its avoidance of the real" (179).

Michael Greaney (2006) observes that today's society resembles Baudrillard's postmodern wasteland, where we live in a world where "what qualifies as real is never more than a simulacrum," "due to the prevalence of fakes, reproductions, and media illusions" (141). So, in this age of absolute disintegration, the postmodern person is always trying to find a place to call home. Consumption in the late capitalist period has become an essential part of social existence; being a "somebody" nowadays involves actively participating in the consumer economy. This is how people realize their value to the group. As conformity is the key to success in today's consumer society, it is essential that we all look, act, and think the same.

As a result, commodification serves as the foundation for the whole logic of the late- capitalist postmodern age. David Ashley (1994) asserts that Baudrillard takes a rather pessimistic attitude on the subject, writing that "people today do not reproduce themselves while counting pennies," and "We are propelled into the hyperreal world by the power of seduction, and we move about in it through consumerism." (60).

Therefore, in today's environment, everyone is compelled to consume and experience hyperreality. To this end, Dickens and Fontana argue that the relentless barrage of mass media in today's postmodern society has rendered terms like "class" and "the people" obsolete (9). As Baudrillard puts it, life today is more about "survival among the remnants than anything else" (Gane95). Because of the disintegration of the individual's sense of Community in the postmodern age it might be argued that Concerns planted by modernity persist; they have only been "privatized" (108).

The privatization of concerns, according to Bauman, reduces "class, national, and racial warfare" by bringing them to the level of the person. In addition, Bauman (2003) in Intimation of Postmodernity argues that, because of the privatization of anxieties, escape strategies have become individualized (108). The result is that the postmodern person devises their means of evading everything, including him self, time, place, and most importantly, reality. Since there is no longer a single, overarching reality that serves to

bind all individuals together, the postmodern person understands reality to be nothing more than a condition of consciousness. Because of this, it is no longer feasible for the modern person to fulfil their need to participate in social activities.

Therefore, according to Baudrillard, in the realm of the beyond, the subject cannot establish boundaries for their existence; thus, the replication of oneself or herself annihilates itself. Denzin (1986) writes in *Postmodern Social Theory* that the individual postmodern person is it is "just a pure screen, a switching point for all the channels of influence." (198)

Postmodernism also focuses on the subjectivity of individual experience and refutes all the systems of thoughts that grant objective truth. But unlike its predecessor, postmodernism calls into question the possibility of any universal truth. The loss of faith in the absolute systems of religion and science is reflected in the denial of grand narratives in postmodernism. It favors pluralism and draws upon different sources of knowledge instead of anyone. It emphasizes the inability to know objective truth if it exits.

Postmodernism is an extension of the features and beliefs of modernism, and it is hard to draw the exact line of difference between the two movements. Ihab Hassan (1987) in his book *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* maintains that postmodernism, like any other period, must be perceived both historically and theoretically. Fedrico de Onis used the phrase postmodernism in his writing in 1934, while it is unclear who first used the term.

According to Arnold Toynbee's in his book *A Study of History* (1939), postmodernism is the culmination of a "new historical cycle in Western culture" that began in 1870s. But later crttics like Irving Howe and Harry Levin, respectively, see it as a waning of the modernist movement. Postmodernism primarily concerned itself with architecture, but various philosophers and cultural theorists see its expression in various others forms, most notably, literature. Postmodernism, according to Fredric Jameson, is "the cultural logic of late capitalism." As a result, Postmodernism demonstrates that late-stage capitalism is a significant cultural phenomenon. Fredric Jameson, in his seminal

book *Postmodernism: or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), argued that global monopoly, governmental control of the media and its mass production, and the end of individual thought innovation are the hallmarks of contemporary capitalism

Jean-Francois Lyotard examines the role of the media under capitalist regimes in forming one's language of self in his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979). According to him, information is the "world's most significant commodity" (Sim 7), and as such, it should not be centralized. He advocates for the dismissal of "metanarratives" and "grand narratives," both of which appear to contain universality within them selves. Jean Baudrillard defines Postmodernism as an era of advertisement and media in which everything is a simulation of the actualworld.

The prefix post does not mean the emergence of a new epoch but a retort to modernism. The rumination on the alienation and absurdity of life is a common feature of both modernist and postmodernist thought. Still, whereas modernism attempts to provide a way out of it, Postmodernism celebrates the alienation and fragmentariness of life. As a phenomenon, the unity and coherence advocated by modernism are rejected in Postmodernism.

Therefore, Postmodernism as a manifestation in Art and Literature is difficult to be categorized within strict walls of ideological isolation. It is a convergence of diverse ideas from Dadaism and Surrealism to subjectivism. It contrasts modernism's coherence and rational spirit and the grounded approach of realism. Postmodern literature creates a world devoid of coherence in time and space. Postmodern writers consciously attempt to detach the reader from their sense of reality by using fantastical or bizarre elements in their works while simultaneously giving them authenticity by placing them in situations that do not make them appear out of place, thus giving them credibility and making them plausible. Midway through twentieth century, the dominance of the idea of a structured world propounded by Structuralism led to a reaction in the form of Poststructuralism. In denying the universalizing theory of Structuralism, Poststructuralism puts forward the precepts of Postmodernism. The interconnectedness of the language system gave way to open-ended systems popularized by deconstructive readings of Jacques Derrida.

Derrida's Deconstruction is one of the important landmarks in Poststructuralist ethos that strikes against the traditional view of a structured center. In the traditional view, the center acquired different terminology according to various philosophies; it could be ultimate truth, God, or man. Such concepts were supposed to grant stability to any specified system of thought. But these notions were challenged, and newly posed language problems came to the fore where systems of thought became decentred. The decenteredness of language is illustrated through the concept of God:

> When the word "God," which had previously served as the focal point of many discussions, was demoted from its position as a transcendental signified to that of a mere signifier, many minds were freed from the burden of having to make sense of it. This shifts God from an objective reality beyond words to a linguistic construct: a topic of discussion. And the belief systems that can only function if God is acknowledged as an actual being collapse when their central pillar is eroded. (Habib 656)

Thus, Derrida's is a reaction against the old metaphysics of a stable center. He insists on the instability of language and coins the term ―a difference which is a combination of two words ―difference and ―Deference. Difference marks the dissimilarity of a sign from the other one, and Deference is the postponement or delay of meaning. This means that ― "When we say that a sign is something that differs from other signs and cannot be represented exactly by the sign itself, we are referring to the sign's structure." (Pawar). Derrida remarks that words contain the traces of several other words, and hence, signification is never achieved; the signifiers do not point to any signified. The decentering results in free play and indeterminacy of meaning. The text becomes open-ended with multiple accesses where there is a lack of certainty and constancy. There is interplay of meaning which allows many signs swapping, and the text seems linked to many other texts.

Complimentary to Derrida's notion of difference, the idea of indeterminacy in the postmodern works is an important feature. For Ihab Hassan, it is a ― "complex referent" (7) that includes certain concepts like discontinuity, Deconstruction, ambiguity, pluralism, randomness, etc., which point toward the process of unmaking and has led to

the questioning of the relation between author-reader, reading-writing, etc. He links this indeterminacy with technological immanence, thus, coining the term ―indetermanence by combining indeterminacy and immanence. Postmodernism condemns the idea of any coherence or determinacy. Pawar argues that indeterminacy results from the fragmentation of society, family, and the world. As mentioned earlier, it is also the denial of any signification and seems to for sake everything.

In postmodern fiction, this indeterminacy can be manifested in the aspect of the theme, characters, language, and plot, as discussed by Li Ma in the article ― "Indeterminacy in Postmodern Fiction" explores that in terms of theme, postmodern fiction does not lend any single crux or gist due to the open-mindedness of the text. It is up to the reader to fetch any interpretation, thus, denying any coherence and certainty. The characters in postmodern works are unspecified and elusive. Sometimes they are presented as mere images and symbols without any names. The characters are so built that they seem ― "arbitrarily built by words; hence, they are there rather than in the world. In postmodern books, characters do not exist but instead appear as concepts, making them unknown to readers" (134). In the case of the plot, there is no logical continuation, and the sense of time and space is disordered. For language also, postmodern writers deny the possibility of any single meaning. In a sense, language does not lead to objective truth but only statements. Thus, indeterminacy emerges as an important postmodern attribute by permeating every aspect of the work.

The concept of self has also undergone a remarkable change since modernism. Where it enjoyed a fundamental position in modernism, in Postmodernism, it is understood as a fluctuating and fragmented one. Since signifiers no longer denote any specific reality, the self is regarded as another signifier not corresponding to reality. Fredric Jameson calls the postmodern self a person with schizophrenia who lacks any desire for coherence due to disconnected and isolated experiences. Lyotard's rejection of grand narratives conveys that the pivotal stance of self has been dislocated. For him, the postmodern self is ―a condition of knowledge, which does not refer ―an entity, a presence, or presences. Moreover, the idea of decentering has also led to the denial of

granting the central presence to self. Gubrium and Holstein (1994) discuss the postmodern view of the self:

> The idea of the self is largely replaced in postmodernism by what Derrida calls "the play of difference," in which objects are both enlivened and deadened ontologically by floating signifiers, eclipse substantiality. What is more, the self is polysemic, meaning that it is associated with and expressed via a wide variety of sign systems. (685)

Thus, Postmodernism does not accord any inherent meaning to self but a host of associations having no essence. It is regarded merely as an image whose description constantly swings among varied floating significations. Besides these hallmarks of Postmodernism, certain other features are worth discussing that are significant from a literary perspective. These are irony, playfulness, temporal disorder, ambiguity, Pastiche, metafiction, Intertextuality, historiographic metafiction, anarchy, chance, Deconstruction, indeterminacy, absence, participation, paranoia, fragmentation, etc.

Ihab Hassan says that postmodern literature is replete with absences and silences, which point to the relation of writer and reader. These silences project the work as a process that elicits an individual's response to fill the silences and gaps created by the writer, thereby granting permeability to the text, and removing the authorial control. In Postmodern literature, there is an obliteration of the boundaries between fact and fiction. It does not look for a way out of chaos but celebrates it. Literary texts may contain references to other literary works, termed Intertextuality. The text contains a web of relationships with other texts. There can be references to several other writers or texts which imply the deferring of the meaning. Intricately linked to this is Pastiche which is the mixing of different genres and styles. It can be a mixture of genres like crime fiction, detective fiction, science fiction, and fairy tales. The postmodern writer uses a variety of styles, a combination of multiple styles at once or a style completely unsuited to the content, to mimic or parody the literary form being used. There is also the involvement of multiple layers of authorial representation, essentially writing about writing, or Metafiction. It is intended to grasp the fabrication of fiction. These and various other

techniques enable the author to create a literary universe, essentially a timeless continuum of literary texts, and use this as a platform to develop their ideas.

Postmodernism places a significant emphasis on the concept of hyper reality. It addresses reality in a variety of contexts and facets. Most postmodern thinkers hold the belief that reality no longer exists. Sadly, we are not aware of this reality because we have been conditioned to assume that whatever information our senses convey to us must necessarily be accurate. The normal development of a person's personality is stunted therefore, and in its aftermath, artificial ambitions and an artificial world are established. Hyper reality is an important part of postmodern theory. It contradicts the primary goals and underlying assumptions of contemporary social, historical, political, and personal ideologies. However, postmodern thinkers use a number of novel concepts. The postmodern movement violently rejects established norms. As a result of the "bureaucratic, technical, and organizational imperatives of the capitalist economy and democratic governance," this phenomenon thrives (Best and Kellner, Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations 13). In addition, one of these was found in a postmodern work of fiction in which the action happens between two periods, the past and the future. Thus, they sought to study hyperreality by using the passages below:

> This historical novel can no longer set out to represent the historical past; it can only "represent" our ideas and stereotype about that past (which thereby at once becomes "pop history") we are condemned to seek History by way of our pop images and simulacra of that history. (Jameson 25)

They held that reality might be deceptive, and lags commonly held beliefs about the nature of reality. In contrast, the latter can be accurate in the case of recurring dream imagery. Avoiding rational thought is essential since hyperreality is best experienced rather than explained.

People in postmodern novels often focus on the complex technology they utilize. Still, they are unaware that their equipment is an illusion constructed to exert power over them. As Glen Ward (2003) sees it, reality manifests itself via representation, but the natural order of things has been inverted. In other words, reality expresses itself through

representation. They are unable to see the world as it is because of the advancement of technology, so they choose to dwell inside the illusions instead. They have a more pleasant place to go to escape the realities of their lives because of technology. The actual world is shown as a tainted place from Baudrillard's point of view. As a result, the artificial world, also known as the virtual world, produced by a computer or machine, seems more plausible. The stages in which individuals begin to disregard reality are the precursors to the actual loss of reality itself. As a result, technology is being used to imitate what it feels like to be in the actual world (75).

Baudrillard thinks that the development of technology has resulted in the emergence of the idea of hyperreality. According to Baudrillard, the concept of hyperreality refers to the process of creating an artificial representation of anything that may be mistaken for a genuine thing. Since it has muddied and blurred the barrier between reality and the reality that is a by-product of technology, there is no longer a connection that stretches between real and false (fake reality). According to Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1991), hyperreality emerges in generations that see everything as real without being aware of where reality comes from. He contends that hyperreality goes beyond communicating symbols depicting the authentic experience. He wants to create a sign that stands for something natural, even if it does not exist. The society we live in, he went on to say, has been supplanted by a world of replicas, where we desire nothing more than a simulation. In a technologically advanced society, everything is a simulation. This means that the original has been lost and that fakes have taken its place.

The study used the magazine as a benchmark. The first thing that we notice about a model in a magazine is that she is beautiful. Then, to improve our own looks, we set out to mimic hers. However, the model in the magazine does not resemble her appearance in the magazine in real life. This model has undergone makeovers and photo editing, among other treatments, to seem more desirable in the magazine. Professional photographers and makeup artists worked to create this stunning illusion. Therefore, many who see the model in publications want to adopt her look. When people try to mimic a successful design, they do so without realizing that the model they are emulating does not exist. It is

important to remember that the magazine model is entirely fictional. She is not normally this way. In this case, the truth may be determined just by a photograph of nothing. There is no basis for comparison between the picture and the actual world, thus it functions as a simulation that propels the viewer into a state of hyperreality. (Lechte 200)

Jean Baudrillard said, "Let us talk, therefore, of the universe from which human beings have gone" (Baudrillard, Why Has not Everything Already Disappeared 9), one of the most seminal sentences in the history of Western thought. Like many of his other contentious opinions before it, this assessment has prompted a broad variety of responses from many his critics. However, it may have deeper roots in the displacement of humans and their replacement by modern machines that see human beings as unnecessary. This subversion leads to individuals feeling alone and helps build a culture where people do not have many opportunities to interact with one other in meaningful ways. This means that "the actual world starts, ironically, to vanish at the same moment as it begins to exist" in a world where reality disregards the intersubjective ties between individuals. (11).

The concept of hyperreality developed by Baudrillard is where this term leads us. Several authors writing in the latter part of the twentieth century investigate this concept. Paul Auster is one of these writers; his works have a surreal quality that makes it seem like reality and simulations are indistinguishable at times. As a writer, Paul Auster combines elements of crime fiction and introspective works into a distinctive whole. Auster is credited with presenting his ideas in a unique and unprecedented manner while being at the same time logical and coherent. A close reading of his texts, however, brings new levels of interpretations to light.

Review of Literature

Various researchers and critics have projected their views regarding the aspects dealt with by Paul Auster vis-a-vis transcendentalism, psychoanalysis, the theme of complex identity, the role of chance and coincidence, memory, language, and storytelling. The quintessence of all the cited aspects brings us to ponder the hyperreal issues related to postmodern thought reflected through the novels of Paul Auster. Various

articles, essays, and critical books deal with these concepts, including the postmodern outlook of Auster's work, but very few articles have probed the Hyperreal aspect of his works.

There are some of the earlier researches that need to be understood to understand how they connect to the hyperreality idea. The novel *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner was the subject of an investigation into hyperreality and the simulation world. Dewi (2017) examines how the simulation world is portrayed in the book as well as how the simulation world influences individuals who are experiencing hyperreality for the purpose of this research. According to the findings of this research, the name Glade was identified as the simulation word in the book. Those who want to live there and undergo the necessary metamorphosis will have their memories restored to the "real" world. The term for these individuals is "Gladers." By recalling such times, they are taken back to their former life. There will be issues with their memory. Finally, the Gladers leave the virtual world behind and enter the realm of hyperreality. They would rather spend the rest of their life having pleasure in the simulation world than in the real world, which is so much worse.

Astutik (2018) showcases hyperreality in James Dashner's T*he Mortality Doctrine Series*, a cyberpunk book. In this research, she examines the novel's application of hyperreality, the relevance of rivalry in attaining the position of God, and the construction of hyperreality. As a result, hyperreality is shown via the actions of future Americans who spend all their free time immersed in a virtual reality world they have dubbed VirtNet. Because of technology, they experience an augmented reality. Then, the arrival of the climatic simulation of Earth, God, and Heaven in the popular VirtNet VR game Life Blood Deep.

Onal (2019) examines Paul Auster's *Moon Palace* and John Fowle's *The Magnus* for their use of hyperreality. The purpose of this research is to examine how hyperreality manifests itself in fictional works and how to avoid it. Consequently, the two works have many of the same postmodern traits. Hyperreality is shown in a variety of ways in these two works. Ultimately, the postmodern world is a simulation that anybody may enter. It

is up to each person to make their meaning and purpose out of it, but they can also get out when the circumstances allow.

Many scholars and critics have expressed their opinions on Paul Auster's work concerning transcendentalism, psychoanalysis, the subject of complicated identity, the role of chance and coincidence, memory, language, and narrative. The total of all of the features mentioned above leads us to consider the hyperreal identity concerns about postmodern philosophy as portrayed in Paul Auster's fiction.

Various articles, essays, and critical books deal with these concepts, including the postmodern outlook of Auster's work, but very few articles have probed the hyperreal aspect of his works. Robert Mc Crum, the first individual to publish Auster's work in Europe, said in an interview (1989) that an English author would be frightened or terrified by the metaphysical and existential terrain he explores. Nevertheless, he instantly addresses the major existential issues, including the essence of existence, happiness, and destiny. (qt. in O'Hagan)

Harold Bloom (2004) edited a book, *Paul Auster*, that contains various essays on Auster's works. These essays include reflections on the role of chance and coincidence, anti-detective fiction, solitude and confinement, urban space, the role of doubles, etc.

In an article titled "Paul Auster, or The Heir Intestinal," Pascal Bruckner discusses Auster's preoccupation with the self:

> This author is more concerned with others than anybody else I know. This is because he questions not one but two prevalent modern worldviews: that of the self-sufficient, independent individual who cares little about his or her history, and that of the traditionalist or minority who takes great pride in his or her heritage and cultural traditions. While acknowledging his ties to family, tradition, and culture, Auster sees that they are also deeply problematic. The self, like solitude and tradition, must be made and regenerated due to the lack of any a priori meaning in the contemporary world. (46)

Evija Trofimova (2014) in the book *Paul Auster's Writing Machine: A Thing to Write* With talks about Auster's image as a writer and his genius in storytelling. He says that Auster's fixation with writing corresponds to writing stories and is a means of writing the self. Trofimova discusses some postmodern affinities of Auster's works that show porous structure where — "each of his texts leaks out into his other texts, creating a cross-spillage that knows no generic boundaries" (11). But he also admits Auster's existential inclination:

> Auster's stories are variations on the same theme: human identity. The concepts of crisis, quest and urban space are all subservient to it. Such a suggestion adds some human pulse to Auster's work, which becomes audible to his readers who seek in it some resonance with their own existential struggles. That is why Auster's work keeps speaking to us, and we keep responding by reading it. Its appeal is deeply existential. (14)

Brenden Martin (2008), in his book *Paul Auster's Postmodernity*,offers a critical analysis of the postmodern elements present in the author's works. Martin defends Auster's decision to designate his work as postmodern by citing the opinions of several scholars who have written critically on the subject. However, he does not reject the existential worries that Auster has, and he acknowledges that Auster's existential philosophy...echoes the worldview that Jean-Paul Sartre developed. (72)

Aliki Varvogli (2001) evaluates some of Auster's novels in the book *The World that is the Book: Paul Auster's Fiction*. She investigates the ways in which loneliness, chance, and coincidence contribute to the people in his books becoming more self-aware. Even if most of his characters go on quests, it is possible that they will not even get close to uncovering the essential truth. She goes on to state that "the sense of indeterminacy, which is a manifestation of epistemological as well as ontological uncertainty, is underscored by the fact that the plot relies heavily on coincidence," which is an interesting take on the meaning of "indeterminacy." (126)

Fred Coppersmith (1998), in an article, ―Constructing the Self in Paul Auster's Leviathan says that:

> To make sense of what Auster calls (in another, later eponymous work) "the symphony of chance"—the extraordinary coincidences and apparently inexplicable details that a life is constructed upon—the protagonists in Paul Auster's novels re-create their own lives in the same way an author creates a tale.

Adriana Neagu's (2013) essay titled Between *Fabulation and Silence: In Search of the Paul Auster* explores the major concerns that are brought up by Auster, most notably in "City of Glass," as well as in all his other works. She believes that "in the introspective, meditative overtones, the Austerian text veers between existential receipt and a postmodern "classic," allegorizing the perpetually deferred signifier."

According to critic Richard Tetek (2008), Auster "innovatively addresses the contemporary challenges of our life". Central to Auster's work is the exploration of isolation, a theme frequently connected to the quest for self-discovery. (5)

Karl M. Duke (2011) Article titled *Narrative Disappearances: A Study of Disappearances across Paul Auster's Works*, with a Focus on Invisible delves into the theme of vanishing characters throughout Auster's novels. He claims:

> The act of disappearing in Auster's texts is more than simply vanishing, not being there, departing. This is a static event that cannot propel a story extremely far; instead, disappearance is closely linked to identity and especially the transformation of identities, changing them, recreating them. The reason for characters to disappear is often to start a new life by abruptly ending the former life they have led. Identities are therefore not solid entities, monoliths which unbendingly remain in their places; in fact, they are in constant turmoil which results in identities being part of a continuum, in a state of incessant alteration. (11)

Objectives of the Proposed work

The research aims the meeting the following objectives by critically analyzing the works of Paul Auster through the lens of hyper-reality; the major objectives of the studyto be conducted are:

1. To understand Baudrillard's concepts of simulation, simulacra, and hyperreal
2. To explore the real /reel identity in the select works
3. To describe consumer capitalism and postmodernity in Paul Auster's select novels
4. To evaluate the delegitimized features of the postmodern narrative in the select novels

Research Methodology

The next section deals with the research methodology. The current study falls in the category of qualitative research and descriptive research. To achieve the objectives of the research, of the selected texts content analysis would be the most appropriate methodology. The methods like textual analysis, examination, critical analysis, and elucidation of the primary and secondary sources have been used for the successful completion of the research work. The text under the study is based on French theorist Jean Baudrillard who is one of the revered figures off the present times. Baudrillard is of the view that world is overshadowed by simulated experiences and we tend to experience the prepared realities only. To capture the concerns of contemporary America vis-a-vis their social, familial, cultural, and economic condition, the prime motive is to analyze the theoretical framework of Jean Baudrillard and insights from postmodern thinkers like Fredric Jameson, and Giles Deleuze have been taken.

1. Explorative, interpretative, and comparative approach will be conducted to find out the effect of hyperreality on the characters on the society. It allows understanding of issues like identity, alienation, consumerism, capitalism, simulacra, and simulation etc. Explorative, comparative, and interpretative approach to finding out the transitional throughthe lens of hyperreality.

2. Interpretative approach to explore the effect of hyperreality caused by mass media, consumerism, and advertisement persuasion on the characters. This creates a sense of ambiguity among the characters as they feel torn between the real and the hyperreal leading to identity crisis, in decisiveness, confusion, distress etc.

3. Different novels from various genres of Paul Auster plot the divergent facets of hyperreality and in what ways it is affecting the society at different circumstances. An interpretative study will be conducted to analyse the inevitable presence of hyperreality in human life as portrayed in the selected works

Furthermore, the useful information has been collected from various data bases such as JSTOR, SJR, RESEARCH GATE, Shodhganga and various other e-sources. Besides this, the libraries of various national universities have been visited from time to time such as the University of Jammu, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University Katra, Central University of Jammu etc. The guidelines of the latest 8th edition of MLA style sheet have been strictly followed in formatting, citing, and referencing of the present thesis. Guidance from the worthy supervisor will be taken continuously.

Research Gap

From analysing the research review based on the works of Paul Auster, it became explicit that there are previous studies of P.G and Ph.D. thesis as well as research paper based on the narrative style, identity, Derridean study, settings, themes, and postmodern narrative techniques, etc in Paul Auster's works. Hyperreality is one of such themes that run explicitly in many of his novels but so far, no full length and comprehensive study is available in the research papers and critical books of the select novels explored from the lens of hyperreality. After reviewing the literature, a gap has been identified, and hence it is found that the application of Jean Baudrillard's theory is innovative and novel. This studywill fill this lacuna and gap.

The thesis has four chapters, followed by a conclusion and bibliography.

Introduction

The introductory part of the thesis will provide a complete insight into the tenets of Postmodernism and then analysis will move on Postmodern subject upon finishing disbelief in grand narrative and its implication on theory of hyperreality.

Chapter 1: Simulation, Simulacra and Hyperreality: A Theoretical Framework

The primary focus of this chapter is to showcase the dominance of simulacra in a postmodern society represented in the work of Paul Auster and how characters are eternally entangled in the web of simulations through the lens of Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality.

Chapter 2: Real/Reel Identities in the Select Novels of Paul Auster

The second chapter will deal with Paul Auster's novels to showcase how the consumerist, hyperreal society leads to the quest of identity in the different characters. Such as double or multiple identities of (Quinn) in the *city of glass,* escaping of real identity by (Nashe) in *The Music of chance* escape from all roots, borders, and identities by (Miles) in *Sunset Park* and mistaken identity of (Hector Mann) in *The Book of illusion* and formation of identity by (black, blue and white) in *Ghosts*. Then it will also investigate the ambiguous relation between the protagonist, author, and narrator of the book.

Chapter 3: Consumer Capitalism and Post-Modernity in the Select Novels of Paul Auster

This chapter will provide an insight into consumer capitalism which is the mainstay of postmodernism. An analysis of the consumerism and ways in which Paul Auster's novel demonstrates our fascination with the consumer society will be done. The selected novels will display how consumerism encourages us to believe that we can make ourselves appear valuable by surrounding ourselves with commodities. The characters let themselves get carried away in the buzz of mass media and mass consumption. Jean Baudrillard in his book, Simulacra and Simulation asserts that the contemporary society moves on the chains of production and consumption and everything in this society has an exchange value. In the society where there is no reality but only simulacra and where identities are created by images and codes.

Chapter 4: De Legitimization of Postmodern Narratives in the Select Novels of Paul Auster

This section primarily addresses the narrative strategies used by postmodern authors, who, having established the norms, proceed to utilize and abuse them in a parodic fashion. Including the works of postmodern theorists like Jean-Francois Lyotard, Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida, etc., this chapter will provide sufficient background on the postmodern tales thoroughly discussed elsewhere in the thesis.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In the last section, the study will summarize the concepts analyzed and assessed in the chosen works of the authors involved, drawing on the information gained about the existence and influence of the theory of hyperreality in Paul Auster's works. The goal of this section is for the researcher to elaborate on the findings of the study as determined by the content analysis approach utilized.

Chapter 1

Simulation, Simulacra and Hyperreality: A Theoretical Framework

On Hyperreality:

One's natural impulse, when confronted with a term that causes hesitation, is to take it to the nearest reference resource to get a fuller comprehension. The term "hyperreality" fits this description. A study of Hyperreality's language roots is necessary for a full comprehension of the concept, not only because of its many applications but also because of the wide variety of academic communities that use it. As a contraction of the phrase "hyperactive," the word "hyper" is often used to describe a condition of heightened activity and vigor. A kid's heightened activity level might be implied by a parent's statement such, "My child is incredibly hyper today "(Hyper, n.d., Merriam-Webster). To put it another way, "the object or quality is present above or beyond the regular degree..." is what "hyper" suggests when used as a prefix before a noun or pronoun. "Hyper" (n.d., Oxford English Dictionary). The addition of the prefix "hyper" to another word denotes that the idea being addressed exceeds the scope of the original word. In fact, both the Oxford English Dictionary and the Merriam-Webster Dictionary denote hyper as a prefix used with a variety of words (traditionally adjectives) in fields like medicine, science, or psychology. For instance, "Tarzan hyper-extended his arm muscles while swinging on a rope." In this case, Tarzan stretched his muscles beyond that of their normal movement. Or "Hyperspace, once thought of as only a dimensional reality of science fiction, can now be scientifically proven." Here, hyperspace is conceived of as beyond that of the three dimensions of the tangible, physical world (i.e., fourth, fifth, etc.). From a psychological point of view, hyper may also be used as a prefix to describe an individual's level of sensitivity to criticism of their emotional state.

However, the term "reality" has an unquestionably more important degree of a fancy denotative and suggestive arrangement of importance. As defined by the 2009 Oxford English Dictionary, reality is "the quality of being actual or having a genuine existence. "The reality is established in what is "of or characteristic with mounted, eternal, or unshakeable objects [...] not counterfeit, phony, or fancy," as defined by the

Merriam-Webster dictionary (2009). Consequently, the seat I sit in to compose this passage is viewed as accurate because it is clear (I will bit and sit in it). It features a target presence not connected to my reality (if I die, the chair is not affected in any manner) and did not seem attributable to me (with my birth, the chair did not suddenly appear); neither is it a dream.

By combining hyper with reality, Hyperreality can be considered as a feeling of authenticity in which what is genuine and what is fiction are fueled together so that there is no reasonable differentiation between where one starts and other ends far over that of contemporary mediated standards. Maybe that is likened to blending actual reality with computer-generated reality. In the development of hyper-reality in the consumer society, commercial assumes a significant job. Hyperreality is a collective consciousness and is infiltrated into everything about day-by-day life. In today's consumer culture hyperreality is largely constructed by the media, and advertisement plays a major part in this process. To comprehend this viewpoint, one should revisit Baudrillard's work. Baudrillard states in the *Consumer Society* (1998) "The advertising is first a statement for object and then is the consumed object itself" (25).

Advertising is a driving power that changes people group's demeanor to culture in the consumer society. Baudrillard says customary advertisements give individuals a feeling of the real world, but advertisements nowadays give hyper genuine sense dependent on the type of pictures; sadly, there is no straightforward, simple rationalization of Hyperreality at intervals in the corpus of Baudrillard's written work. There are contextual clues. The performance of hyper reality is found in understanding divisions of symbolic exchange. Baudrillard saw symbolic exchange because the starting point of this philosophical theory of denunciation, whereby power is changed through the development and movement of signs. For example, somebody who purchases goods employing a master card is symbolically transferring cash from one person to another.

Postmodernism is tough to outline; because of the process, it violates its most fundamental creed: that genre has no regard for any definite terms, limits, or truths. On the other hand, Denzin in his book *Postmodern social Theory* (1986) attempts to describe the genre by citing several different theorists and providing a summary of its most

notable traits. By asserting so, he defines the genre's most or nearly all commonly acknowledged characteristics:

> extreme conceptualization of language, phonetic way of thinking, and logic; study of logical information and authenticity; evaluation of the subject in friendly hypothesis; examination of ware; emphasis on the deficiency of the metanarratives; calamity; all of these things require a departure from grand frameworks; a fundamental examination of the mechanized, media-ruled global social framework; an approach to guessing that goes beyond the phenomenological, primary, post-underlying, and basic hypothesis plans; (194-95)

The term postmodernism was first used by John Watkins Chapman in the context of painting. Ihab Hassan in *The Postmodern Turn: essay in Postmodern Theory and culture* say that Postmodernist indulges in the play of pluralism and believes in breaking the rules. There is no lamentation of loss; rather, they celebrate fragmentation and bewilderment. In the 1920s, Postmodernism was used to describe new forms of music and art. But as a general theory, Postmodernism was first used by Arnold Toynbee in his book *A Study of History* in 1939. Postmodernism covers various disciplines, including sociology, theology, literature, architecture, etc. However, it is put forth that it first appeared in contrast to the modern architecture movement. Postmodernist defines the world as extraordinary, absurd, or horrific and rejects the traditional model of looking at the world as reality is inadequate. Many critics and theorists have identified distinct concepts—such as difference, repetition, trace, simulacrum, and Hyperreality—within the umbrella of postmodernism. When discussing Postmodernism, Lyotard is always brought up as an example. In the postmodern era, information is all that is considered "knowledge," as shown by the release of *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on knowing by Jean Francis Lyotard* in 1984. Before the Internet, people had to put in a lot of time and effort to learn something new; nowadays, we can learn something new by clicking our mouse. Instead of learning, we just find what we need when we need it. With a "incredulity towards metanarratives," Lyotard views Postmodernism as a criticism of Modernism via the provision of many, relative, and miniature narratives.

Postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism, by Fredrick Jameson (1991), is another influential discourse since it connects the word postmodernism to Late Capitalism and contends that post-modernity is characterized by "a mutation in constructed space itself" (38). Following in Jameson's footsteps, characterized postmodernism in terms of reconsidering modernism's pure rupture with history Linda Hutcheon in her book *A poetics of postmodernism: History, philosophy, fiction* (1988) says that postmodern writing, thus, relies not on anyone, overarching truth or meaning. Rather, it embraces a multiplicity of facts by emphasizing the reality that no one truth holds any more. It follows that the essential ideas of postmodernism, namely doubt, skepticism, and an acceptance of the fictionality of truth (48), are likewise central to the canon of postmodern literature. As a result, postmodernism, and the literature it spawned indicate a departure from absolute truth. Thus, interior reality supersedes the exterior. This phrase implies that truth is no longer a singular idea but rather a set of competing realities. Postmodernism and its literature recognize the relative nature of truth, but they also stressthat reality is produced artificially and may be attained in a number of ways, as Hutcheon puts it.

> Postmodernism questions centralized, totalized, hierarchized, closed systems: questions, but does not destroy. It acknowledges the human urge to make order, while pointing out that the orders we create are just that: human constructs, not natural or given entities. (41-42)

As the Hutcheon quotation above implies, postmodernism is both interested in finding real order and critical of attempts to achieve such order. For this reason, Patricia Waugh in *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984) calls postmodern literature "a quest for fictionality"(10), as it promotes a credulity in the fictive. The usage of metafiction in postmodern literature is an indication of this situation since it similarly blurs the boundaries between both fiction and nonfiction.

Another most influential who is constantly in debates on Postmodernism is Michael Foucault, in book *Discipline and Punish* (1977) states: Actually, power generates; it creates the world, the realms of things, and the rituals of truth (120). When it comes to the topic at hand, "reality" is the western humanities primary preoccupation.

People's perceptions of "reality" are especially important. It is the building blocks of awareness and understanding. It is the cornerstone of human interactions with nature, with other people, and with himself. That is where every theory starts off from. The issue of reality, which has developed into a metaphysical complex, has been perennially discussed and pondered by humans. After giving this much thought to the metaphysics and ethics of modern science and technology. The concept of "hyper- reality" was first used by Jean Baudrillard.

Certain theorists and critics are there who have identified Postmodernism with the final disappearance of reality. For instance, Jean Baudrillard appeared on the scene in the early 1980s. There were further debates in France in an academic circle on Postmodernism after the arrival of Baudrillard. The writings of Baudrillard have been instrumental in shaping the understanding of Postmodernism. French social scientist, logician, and social researcher Jean Baudrillard was born on July 27, 1929, to parents who worked for the government. He spent his formative years in the northern city of Reims. The most prominent intellectual of his day was undoubtedly Baudrillard. He supervised PhD students in humanism while teaching German in optional schools before completing his dissertation. In September 1966, he got an Associate's at Nanterre University of Paris and, in the long run, turned into an educator. His initial life was tremendously impacted by the autonomy and Algerian battles in the 1950s and 1960s. The Semiotic impact of Roland Barth has practiced incredible impact gracious his first book, *The System of the object* (1968). From its most punctual period until his demise on March 6, 2007, Baudrillard was educated at the European Graduate School. Baudrillard was extraordinarily affected by Marshall McLuhan's media theory. McLuhan brought up that the media is captivating just as narcotizing; its point is to do with the narcissist fascination of the portrayal. This rule was all around tended to by McLuhan in Understanding Media: The Extension of Man. Another impact incorporates Claude Levis Strauss, Marcel Mauss in the phonetic sociological interface and Durkheim Objectivity Georges Bataille, just as Jean-Paul Sartre, Fyodor Mikhaylovich Dostoyevsky, Friedrich Nietzsche, the Situationists, and Surrealism In 1968, understudy revolt at Nanterre college likewise roused him and he distributed various hypothetical articles on the scrutinize of technology. Another huge effect on Baudrillard's overall thought was

Marxism and the foundation impact of analysis and Sigmund Freud is additionally seen in his thought. Baudrillard is fundamentally acclaimed and broadly read as the prophet of Postmodernism. Even though he functioned as a social scientist, his prevalence and impact appreciated a wide interdisciplinary approach. He likewise became a rock star in mainstream media who motivated the formation of "The Matrix."

In the wake of Baudrillard's death in 2007, prominent publications such as The New York Times (Cohen) and The Guardian (Poole) published obituaries on par with those of Hollywood stars and world leaders. The Times deemed him a provocateur, while the Guardian deemed his death a hoax (in homage to his famously misunderstood declaration that The Gulf War did not take place). Although Baudrillard's increased visibility has made him wary of the appropriation of his ideas, this exposure may lend credence to his claims about the media spectacle.

According to Hussey (2003) Baudrillard's critiques ranged from political economics to semiotics, photography to architecture (Baudrillard was also a photographer), and love to death. However, several themes ran throughout his writings:

- The proliferation of a consumerist society
- The consumption of objects, the construction of social relations through mediated communications
- The impact of images and media on communication
- Historical perspective
- The perception of war through media

Because of his radical departure from conventional thought and interest in a broad range of topics, Baudrillard became a symbol and punchline for the French intellectual establishment (12 Great thinkers 30-35). A common theme throughout Baudrillard's work is his critique of the increasing influence of material things on human experience; as one reviewer put it, "the expanding power of the world of objects over the subject has been Baudrillard's preoccupation from the beginning" (Kellner 90)

Jean Baudrillard's post-Marxist phase is represented by two works: *The System of Objects* (1998) and *Consumer Society* (1970), both published in France. These works focus on the psychological pressures to buy in a modern capitalist system. The central thesis of the first book is that we do not use words to convey meaning; instead, we utilize consumer goods. Every overdetermined buy is like paying for a communal identity and a metaphysical order for the individual. The second poses a challenge to the person on such a level that the substance serves only to support the illusion of the productive system. Baudrillard characterized consumption in *The System of Objects* (1998) as follows:

> Consumption is not a material practice, nor is it a phenomenology of "affluence". It is not defined by the nourishment we take in, nor by the clothes we clothe ourselves with, nor by the car we use, nor by the oral and visual matter of the images and messages we receive. It is defined, rather, by the organization of all these things into a signifying fabric: consumption is the virtual totality of all objects and messages ready constituted as a more or less coherent discourse. If it has any meaning at all, consumption means an activity consisting of the systematic manipulation of signs (218).

In contemporary consumer society, the universality of consumption is the defining characteristic. Consumption is both a lifestyle and a method of human existence. Consumption and consumer culture are increasingly recognized as significant cultural trends. Economies flourish because of consumer spending in consumerist societies. The growth of the consumption sector has resulted in a large stockpile of expensive goods and an equally sizable clientele. Refraining from alcohol or other drugs is no longer seen as admirable. Consumption is a significant method for consumers to demonstrate their willingness, social standing, and identity. Not only are the consumed commodities symbolic, but so are the customers themselves.

Jean Baudrillard writes that postmodern civilization is in the midst of collapse in his book, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities* (1983). As he sees it, the old hierarchies have crumbled into ineffectual hordes of mushy, sensitive, arduous, and glaringly empty reality. The population has merged into a single layer that can no longer be separated.

They have been flooded with data, and it has caused them to lose track of their original goal. Analytics, public opinion polls, and marketing efforts have all been directed at them nonstop. They are unaffected by enlightened political representation. Ideas, faiths, and the hopes they inspire have all been sucked dry. Therefore, individuals have integrated both older and more modern sources of freeing authority. The "Law imposed on us is the Law of confusion of categories," according to Jean Baudrillard. The whole world is sexy. Every aspect of life may be seen as political. Aesthetics is paramount. In a single instant. For the sake of maximum generalization, each category is diluted until it is absorbed back into the pool of all other categories (25).

His best-selling work, *Americana* (1988), is a travelogue. Baudrillard considers the whole of the United States to be hyperreal. He claims that in this nation, computer simulations are given more weight than actual events. Explains how American society is a farce. For Baudrillard, the United States represents a cultural vacuum, a desert of the real. In which there was no longer any way to tell reality from fiction. Like scenes from a movie or soap opera are being used to depict real life. "Cosmetic surgery is the only way to get physical beauty, landscape surgery is the only way to achieve urban beauty, polling is the only way to achieve an opinion, and now genetic engineering is plastic surgery for the whole human species" (18).

Jean Baudrillard took on the role of detective in his book *The Perfect Crime* (1996), investigating the murder of reality and concluding that it can be solved. In the beginning of *The Perfect Crime's* preface, Baudrillard stated: "This book was written about a crime—murdering to reality. This book is to eliminate an illusion—a fundamental illusion of the world. Reality would not disappear in illusion, but illusion will disappear in all reality" (2). As stated by Baudrillard the visual has replaced reality. Symbol and reality begin to diverge. The simulation has supplanted reality and transformed into hyperreality. In this circumstance, the connection between individuals and reality is dubious. Due to the perfection of technology to such a degree, the original actual world is concealed. According to Baudrillard, technology, specifically digital technology, destroys reality. This ideal crime is carried out by the data realization and all

pure information events — in other words, by copying and reproducing reality in order to destroy the actual and further destabilize the world (20).

To describe this crime, Baudrillard established two fundamental concepts: simulation and simulacra. The purpose of simulacra is to replicate or simulate reality. According to Baudrillard, they are much more real than reality. Simulacra are the fundamental building blocks of hyperreality. It is the result of transforming an item into a symbol. If the reality of the past was natural, then the reality of the present is supernatural. Baudrillard established the idea of "simulacra" so as to comprehend stimulation. Simulacra imply non-real scenario. According to Baudrillard, so-called "simulacra" are not fake, but rather more real than the actual scene, as simulacra imitate reality and even fictitious facsimiles. Reality cannot be its own transcription. With the aid of contemporary digital technology, these replicas may be reproduced indefinitely. Due to the advancement of science and technology, the globe is flooded with manufactured goods. This is a technological universe filled with simulations and simulacra. Numerous simulations and simulacra obscure the "genuine reality." The most common simulacrum is the "virtual world" in electronic media such as television and the Internet. Modern digital technology growth enables the spread of information symbols. The number of symbols rises indefinitely. People are subject to the dominance of a vast array of symbols. Although individuals can rapidly and properly get information from a high number of symbols, they suffer from the visual effect of a huge number of unnecessary symbols. The electronic media is a symbolic game devoid of signifiers. Therefore, the new technology, particularly the growth of electronic media technology, allows individuals to live in isolation from the rest of the world. The actual world recedes and vanishes. The rise of the virtual world coincides with the decline of the actual world. This is, according to Baudrillard, a world with more information but less meanings. Information consumes its own data. It prevents communication and conceals society. Information erodes meaning and society as a condition of illegibility, like a mist (Baudrillard).

In his earlier writings, Baudrillard took a more conventional approach to studying modernity, consumer culture, and Marxism. He followed in the footsteps of other critical

theorists by investigating how the “new system of mass consumption bound up with the explosive proliferation of consumer goods and services” results in a “new technical order,” “new environment,” “new field of everyday life,” “new morality,” and “new form of hypercivilization”. (Best and Kellner 112-3). The postmodern capitalist economy has seen a meteoric rise in the commercialization and dissemination of trade values. Things, signals, and value exchanges are the masters over which people and society labor. Baudrillard, like other interpreters of modernity, considers the premodern. Gift giving and receiving were used to demonstrate the significance of religious or social obligations. Instead of separating people through the exchange of goods, these systems tended to strengthen their traditions. Capitalism has led to a shift in the role of exchange value in the trading of products. The dominating form is the market, the computation of trade values, and money. As a way of analyzing Production, political economics grows in influence and gradually takes over society. Baudrillard sees even Marxian political economics as part of the capitalist order’s rationalization and reproduction. The Marxist political economy argues that socialism and communism provide a more efficient and less exploitative system of Production and commerce than capitalism. Marxism does not argue against the common sense that Production is crucial to shaping society and fostering progress. Here, Baudrillard changes his strategy. A major value exists, as Baudrillard argues, in which goods are appreciated for the prestige and power signals they provide (114). According to Marx, use values are inalienable, and the existence of exchange value is contingent on the presence of use value. The problem with Baudrillard’s value system is that it is founded on exchange value and a “rationalized system of wants and objects that incorporate people into the capitalist social order” (114). Because of Baudrillard’s current life changes, his thinking has developed in a new way. His work is notable for its focus on language’s symbolic nature and the ambiguity of its symbols. It is impossible to overstate the revolutionary power of symbols; in the works he produced in the mid-1970s, he advocated for a return to symbolic commerce as a means of going beyond the requirements of production and the politics of commodity trade. This social movement provides an alternative to Marxist ideology that is more openly anti-capitalist.

Theory of Simulation, Simulacra, and Hyperreality

The terms “Simulacra” and “Simulation” are used to refer to three distinct types of simulacra, each of which is assigned a sizeable number: A painting of a famous person or location, for instance, is an example of a first-order picture since it was evident that the image is a synthetic representation of the actual thing that it depicts. This order is comparable to the pre modern era.

The Concept of second order is connected to the Industrial Revolution, which saw a blurring of the lines between representation and reality as a result of the profusion of copies manufactured in factories. Because of the item’s capacity to simulate reality, the original version is in danger of being replaced. Prints may be made of paintings.

Third order is applied to the postmodern period, characterized by the importance of the simulacrum over the original. As a result, the distinction between reality and illustration becomes more blurred. There is merely a representation of the real thing. The first picture has been placed in a passing repository, and as a result, the public has not had the opportunity to see it. Their only exposure to the artwork is through a print or digital copy of the original, which has been reproduced for them.

Three key themes in Baudrillard’s work are the relationship between truth and representation and consumer culture. Still, other themes dominated his works, including that Consumerism, social reality, and proliferating representation, which are the core concerns of Baudrillard’s fiction. “Jean Baudrillard’s works include For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign, 1972; The Mirror of Production, 1973; Symbolic Exchange and Death, 1973; Seduction, 1979; cool Memories, 1980; Simulations,1983; Fatal Strategies, 1983; America, 1986; The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena, 1990; The Illusion of the End, 1992.

Hyperreality & Simulations

Baudrillard claims that Marxist ideas are fundamental to the Enlightenment and Western civilization. Baudrillard’s analysis moved away from Marxist methodology in the late 1970s and 1980s as he developed the idea that symbols, signs, and simulations

had become pervasive. The boundaries between material and abstract things have blurred. Thus, according to Baudrillard, we have crossed over into a new epoch beyond the modern, which signifies a break with the past in the same way that the premodern and modern periods did. Industrialization's burdens on production, labor utilization, exploitation, and accumulation were the driving forces behind the development of the modern world's economic and social structures. "a new age of simulation" is a term used to define our current time, which is "characterized by the gradual replacement of production as the organizing principle of society by the organization of society according to simulation codes and models" (118). A new social order that models, codes organize, and signs emerge from signals taking on a life of their own. The study of signs, their kinds, meanings, and their connections is known as semiotics. Anything that conveys information is considered a sign, from language to traffic signs. Baudrillard contends that signals, simulations, and codes characterize the contemporary period. When it comes to identifying these signals and symbols with social reality, it is becoming more challenging.

Signs and simulations in the social sphere reflect the social reality. Baudrillard introduces several new terms and ideas in this work. When historical events or circumstances are simulated, digital or electronic visuals and indications take the place of the original physical ones. Typically, this is thought of as being a representation of the social world, complete with idealized or descriptive social structures, connections, and interactions. This has gone viral after being covered extensively on television. It is possible that the essence of the genuine is lost in the creation of a simulacrum. Baudrillard argues that in today's world, it is difficult to distinguish between authentic and counterfeit versions of popular culture. There are many simulations in our everyday life. It has therefore become hard to distinguish genuine from counterfeit items. When the proliferation of simulacra heralds the end of reality and truth and ushers in the period of hyper-reality, there is no longer any distinct reality in its totality, and here is where the postmodern human belongs, according to Jean Baudrillard.

As Baudrillard defines it, "hyperreality" is "the fuzziness of the boundary between the real and the unreal. More real than real, where real is generated as per the

model" (119). According to Baudrillard, the media distorts and filters what happens in the actual world, and the resulting "mediated real," or hyperreal, takes its place. The word "hyperreality" was popularized by prominent thinkers including Jean Baudrillard, Albert Bormann, Neil Postman, and Umberto Eco. Hyperreality is a phrase first used by Baudrillard in his book *Simulation and Simulacra*. His semiotic concept of hyper-reality was the creation of a real that did not exist before the models created it. To create this hyperreal, the author claims that technology and self-referential signals have gradually supplanted the natural world and all its referents. The realism of video games continues to improve, theme parks (an example of a simulacrum) like Las Vegas and Disneyworld continue to attract more visitors than their real-world counterparts, and national parks and reconstructions of natural landscapes allow for betterstudy of the natural world than ever before.

The word "hyperreal" was used by Baudrillard to describe the process through which an image, Simulation, and reality converge and become indistinguishable from one another. This is a stage in the process of social entropy that culminates in the disintegration of borders. This refers to the flow of information, as well as entertainment, commercialism, and political discourse.

Baudrillard says that technology and the media rule the whole postmodern world and create an immediate line of hyperreal, an attack on the reality that cannot be denied. He says that a postmodern person creates their "apparent reality" by using signs, images, and codes from the media and technology. Humans are naturally curious, and From the History Channel to the Arts and Entertainment Channel, modern media brings long-dead events back to life. For example, the shooting of President Abraham Lincoln can be seen from different angles. Since hyperreal images are created, they are superior to how authentic photos were intended to seem. Postmodern untruth, according to Baudrillard, is no longer synonymous with nonexistence since "it involves more reference, more truth, and more precision" (Baudrillard, Seduction29). That whatever is authentic is transmitted and therefore creates it. A hyperrealistic photo that shows the "grain of the face's skin" decreases the appeal of the eerie, he argues, since it "gives you more information" (29). Here, Baudrillard argues that sex is shown accurately on screen and that the colors used

in movies and television are more vibrant and realistic. This indicates that no more additions are possible since everything is already present. Consequently, there is no longer “something to trade” in the hyperreal world (29). Therefore, if contemporary individuals had to pick between the real and the hyperreal, they would choose the latter since it is uncontrollable.

As the media play an undeniable part in this frontal attack on meaning and reality, Baudrillard thus links the hyperreal to technology and the media. He claims that in today’s media- and technology-driven postmodern world, the concept of reality no longer exists. His thesis is that a postmodern person's "perceived reality" is the product of the signals, codes, and symbols offered by modern media and technology. It is worth noting that Berten(1997) adds, “Complex simulations that pass for reality but are really sign and media constructions are the norm in today’s environment.” (105-06). For instance, taking photographs of one’s food and then sharing them online has become a popular pastime for many people. The new standard of beauty is captured in Instagram images.

Postmodernity’s reality is reflected in these images, even if everyone knows they do not capture the true nature of the situation. Stars are often referred to by their stage names in everyday life. Innumerable examples show how pervasive total Simulation, and its over- proliferation are in postmodern society, such as the rise of cosmetic procedures for no medical reason, the breakdown of relationships because one partner failed to “like” a social media post, and the indifference to the suffering of others, such as hunger or famine, until they go viral on social media. These examples just scratch the surface of how the media may distort reality. Denzin (1986) argues that the media induced Hyperreality also invades the traditionally internal and private domestic area, thereby eliminating privacy. “The living room has become a theater where audiences may see the drama of world events” (197).

To illustrate, Baudrillard employs the example of a loud family from a reality television show. According to Baudrillard, the truth experienced by the Loud family is hyperreality, as the promised reality of the actual Loud family in the program never occurred. Therefore, the idea that “they behaved as if we didn’t exist” is “a ridiculous, contradictory expression that is neither true nor false: utopian.” (Baudrillard,

Simulacra28). Denzin emphasizes in this part that the media is the origin of the impression of reality and facts, giving them to the general people. According to Baudrillard, the mass media are anti-mediatory and intransitive because they fabricate non-communication. (Baudrillard, For a Critique169). Although believing to be an engaged participant in creating reality, the public is only exposed to truth and communication via media-induced spoon-feeding.

As a result, the media creates a global module that removes communication between the communicators. As a result, the postmodern person becomes a passive observer. Because of this, the postmodern human is so engulfed by technology and media that they become one with the images on the television screen. Without the media, it is difficult to get a true picture of the world. You "no longer watch TV, but instead TV watches you (live)" due to the elimination of "the difference between the passive and the active" (Baudrillard 29). The viewer plays no active role in the development of the individual's unique environment, like in Peter Weir's 1998 film The Truman Show. Unfortunately, viewers have become used to this premise and no longer notice it. Because they take part in the media's judgement of what is genuine, the Loud family is a microcosm of today's hyperreal society. Since we cannot read the signs, Baudrillard concludes that "Invasion, pressure, assault, and extortion from the media and models await us because we are all Louds." (Baudrillard, Simulacra 30). As Bauman (2003) puts it "society itself is now constituted through broadcasting," and "history is nothing but spectacle," (Bauman33). Given the constant production of Hyperreality, every assertion may be verified. For someone with a postmodern worldview, this is how they naturally think. Everything is constructed and seen via the lens of the observer. For Nicol (2009), Baudrillard is "not just lamenting the loss of something genuine and permanent (the real), but he also explores how Simulation effects our environment" (193).

Therefore, we rely on our senses, which may be deceiving, to make sense of the world around us. However, many facts are in disarray because there is nothing left to compare these hyperrealities against. According to Sartre (2007) revised definition of anarchy, "everything is born without reason, survives because it is fragile, and dies by chance" (133). Reality was created by duplicating the hyperreal (Bertens 146), and the

copying process has continued. Like today's film and MTV, Natoli believes that "when fiction overcomes the loss of this current claim to revealing the truth and expressing the reality," it will bring us closer to many other worlds and realities (266). As a result, several hyperrealities arise that are equally credible.

And to further complicate matters, Bauman in *Intimations of Postmodernity* (2003) says, "reality has eaten everything, and everything may claim reality with equal justice (or injustice, which amounts to the same thing)." (151). Reason and reality may be more malleable in our illogical era, as seen by the views of Natoli and Bauman. Though well-versed in the process of reality replication, postmodernists worry that "the real is created" since "the real looks less real" today (261). It seems that, paradoxically, the more people become aware of how reality is manufactured, the more of Baudrillard's simulacra arise. Natoli in an article "Meditating on a Postmodern Strategy of Reading" contends that this demonstrates how representations reveal reality's synthetic nature, and that the prospect of simulacra replacing reality is ultimately what haunts postmodern beings (261). Since Baudrillard popularized the concept of simulacra, "the floodgates that have left the real washed with false representations" (261) as he puts it. According to Denzin, the media undermine society by presenting facts as they really are:

> Achieving reality and relevance in the world of mass media is currently the only tool of power. It is being hammered into our heads from all angles that the issue exists, the economy is in shambles, and only strong political leadership can save us now. (196)

According to Denzin, the simulation age has turned reality itself into a kind of hyperreality. According to Behler (1990), "life beyond the beyond" has "begun to unveil its dark side" (29) because to the proliferation of "terrors that plague our culture of dread and our focus on the end" (Beville 49). As Baudrillard puts it, the postmodern person is "in the beyond, but without anything natural or genuine," and so he or she "pleasure and which one is reconstructing in sadness to strive to survive, endure, and bring back all prior civilizations that have been destroyed" (Gane 94). Therefore, people who try to fill the gap of the postmodern era feel a feeling of sadness. The demand for organic food and clothes, as well as the revival of the vinyl record in the music business, may all be the

consequence of a sense of nostalgia that stems from distancing oneself from the present. Consequently, people desire a taste of genuine pe. To show this, a fake village called Altnkoy was built in the middle of the Turkish city of Ankara. People come here to escape the real city outside of Altnkoy, which is why they are so desperate. So, the lack of reality leads to nostalgia for what has been lost or a desperate attempt to forget that reality has been gone for a long time through nostalgic events.

Baudrillard and Simulacra:

The word “simulacrum,” which may also be written as “simulacra,” was used by Baudrillard to refer to a duplicate of the original picture that has lost all its significance and relevance over time. He defines simulacra as copies that do not have an original or that have an original that has been lost. By Baudrillard’s definition, “the simulacrum is true,” as it “uses the term “simulacrum” to refer to anything that “hides the non-existence of the truth,” as opposed to “misleading pictures” or "hiding the truth behind a façade.” (Pawlett 196).

That is why a simulacrum has no basis, according to Baudrillard. It also does not hide any major facts. A simulacrum, on the other hand, hides the fact that grasping reality is an impossibility. And thus, “Having succeeded in killing off its referent, the simulacrum takes great pleasure in gloating over its corpse.” (Hutcheon 11).Simulacra are false representations of things that fool the eye into thinking they are the actual thing. Since photography is “open to imitation, to unlimited replication, “as Hutcheon puts it, it is the perfect example of Baudrillard’s concept of simulacra (Baudrillard 120). She contends that photography, with its “inherently contradictory medium,” is a more acceptable alternative to television as the paradigm of simulacra, even though many theorists favor television because of its close relationship to reality (121). Like carbon copies without the original image, simulacra relate solely to themselves and have no connection to the actual world.

Baudrillard represented three orders of simulacra; in his lecture delivered in Sydney in 1987, The Evil of Images, Baudrillard proclaims that apart from the fact that the U.S. lost the Vietnam War, it won in the hyperreal world through the films like

Apocalypse Now and Platoons. Baudrillard wrote an essay named Liberation in which he ascertained that the Gulf War would not take place and the aftermath of the war; he claimed that the war did not take place for the American audience as they were aware only due to the hyperreal image flashed on the television screen.

Baudrillard - The Three Orders of Simulacra:

Baudrillard presented three orders of Simulacra.

1. The primary order had to do with the premodern age, which is a reenacted duplicate of the original. For a model, A portrait of a renowned individual or spot.

2. The second order of simulacra compares to the modern upset that brought about large-scale manufacturing, thus delivering duplicates or simulacrums. The simulacrum took steps to supplant the genuine by emulating it too well. Such large-scale manufacturing is threatening to the point that it covers and mispresents a fundamental reality. We see objects that can be mistaken for firsts and eventually delivered negligible. For instance, portraits are printed and take steps to supplant originality.

3. The third order is related to the post-present-day age in which portrayal decides and drives the genuine. There is an absence of qualification between the portrayal and genuine. The public cannot separate between the genuine and the mimicked; the pictures that appear on the screen become the components of the genuine for the people. For models, unique portraits are left in exhibition halls, and individuals are experiencing their proliferation, now advanced or printed.

He additionally contends that our postmodernist culture is so overwhelmed by media. Where truth is razed, and everything is split, we tend to expertise simply organized real factors, altered wars recordings, advertisements, T.V. shows, and comparative alternative crap things that have obscured the qualification among the real world and double-dealing. A perfect illustration of this can be Facebook or alternative web-based media locales; through them, one might, build a profile of what I am, and one will cautiously tailor the net look of others.

He further argues that media so dominate our postmodern society. T.V., the internet, etc., where truth is destroyed, and everything is fragmented, we experience only prepared realities, edited wars videos, advertisements, T.V. shows, and similar other crap things that have blurred the distinction between reality and deception. A perfect example of this is Facebook or other social media sites; through them, one could easily create a profile of who I am, and one can carefully tailor the online appearance of others.

To better exemplify the process of simulacra. Baudrillard, in the opening chapter of the book *The precision of simulacra*, claims that:

> These days, we do not abstract in terms of a map, a mirror, a twin, or a concept. The concept of area, reference, or substance in simulation is now obsolete. It is the creation of a hyperreal, a real with no roots in fact, by the use of computer simulations. The land is now neither before nor after the map. Even so, the map begets the territory; more precisely, the precession of simulacra begets the territory. If you must revisit the myth now, think of the land where the pieces are slowly being scattered throughout the whole map. What remains in the deserts that are no longer part of the Empire but are now ours is the actual, not the map. The actual world's deserts if you will. (2)

At this point, would it be accurate to state that the map depicts something.

The theory of Baudrillard functions independently of Saussurean semiotics: when we conceive the ideas of the signifier, signified, and referent in a context that is not reality, all three of these categories become problematic, and referent vanishes. The sign, which consists of nothing more than the signifier (the word) and the signified (the notion), evolves into the hyperreal. The war (the referent, the thing that occurred) is no longer there, but the idea of war (the signifier) and the movie (the signifier) that extols its virtues are still there. Is there thus no point of reference. The referent is not lost; that much is clear. The point that Baudrillard is trying to make here is that the symbol supplants the referent according to the standards set by mass media and entertainment businesses. In his book *The Consumer Society* (1998) Baudrillard, delves deeper into his

relationship with the media, stating things like, “What mass communications provide is not reality but a dizzying whirlwind of reality”. (34)

Baudrillard and Simulation:

The word “simulation” conjures up images of a person trying to be someone they are not. The process of Simulation, contrary to popular opinion, does not include pretending; rather, it is used to create models of reality without reference to any actual world:

> A collapse of significance occurs when the emanating method of causality and the differential method of assurance, each with their own positive and negative charge, are consumed by the other post, causing a compression of one post over the other, a fabulous extending, and a breakdown of the two customary shafts into one another. Recreation starts at that point. (31)

Baudrillard sees Simulation as a sphere in which the difference between the two poles disappears, as the sentence indicates. Because of this, the difference copy and the material being copied are completely erased. As Bauman puts it in his critique of Baudrillard’s work the simulation “effaces the essential distinction between genuine and false, real and imagined.” (150-51). For this reason, it is clear that “to simulate” is more than just “pretending to be,” as it muddies the line between the two.

To dissimulate, in Baudrillard’s opinion, is to act as if one does not know how to take care of one’s belongings. By contrast, to simulate is to make believe that one has something that one does not. To paraphrase what he says, “one suggests presence and the other absence” (3). He argues that simulation threatens reality, butdissimulation does not. The boundary between reality and representation is black and white in dissimulation, but Baudrillard argues that in simulation, the “true” and “false,” the “real” and the “imaginary,” are in grave danger and it is no longer evident which is which (3). Baudrillard uses the idea that it is hard to tell whether a patient is faking their illness or not to demonstrate his point (3). The line between what is real and what is not dissolves, which must be emphasized once again. That is why, in Simulation, if you are good at playing the part of the mad, it is because you really are (4). Furthermore, Simulation is

superior because of the heightened realism it affords. Baudrillard argues that staged robberies would result in far more aggressive policing than actual robberies. In contrast to the genuine theft, which ignores just the Law and the system, the mock robbery attacks the whole concept of reality itself. As a result, virtual environments are far more dangerous than their real-world counterparts. (20)

Baudrillard's Disneyland: Reshaping Reality

The theme park Disneyland is an example of the third tier of Simulation in Baudrillard's book *Simulacra and Simulation*. Disneyland has its own world and does not thus speak for another meaning or reality since it is its reality. As a result, it serves as a model for what it means to be a duplicate without the original. According to Umberto Eco's argument, the phrase "completely real" comes to be synonymous with "completely fake" (7). As a result, this amalgamation is the fundamental component of today's hyperreal civilization:

> The rest of Los Angeles and the United States are hyperreal orders and orders of Simulation, but we are led to believe that Disneyland is real so that we would not question the veracity of the rest of the country. Reality may still be preserved by hiding the fact that it is not genuine, but this time it is not a matter of a distorted depiction of reality (ideology). (12-13)

The purpose of Disneyland's existence is to mask the truth that no other place in the United States of America, but Disneyland can be called "genuine." Although, like in Alice in Wonderland, nothing really exists, "everything seems real and so everything is real; at any rate, the fact that it appears real is real, and hence the factor is real" (16). As a result, in Eco's view, the United States of America is a fictional country with a fictional history, fictional culture, and fictional aspirations.

> Disneyland is more hyper-realistic than the wax museum, precisely because the latter always attempts to make us believe that what we see reproduces reality, while Disneyland makes it clear that imagination is fully replicated inside its magic enclosure. (43)

Eco says more about Disneyland by saying that it creates illusions and makes people want these illusions. For example, a real crocodile can be seen in a zoo, but "There is a message in Disneyland that advises us artificial environments better satisfy our fantasy needs." (44). In this way, Eco says that Disneyland shows that technology is better at showing reality than nature (44). So, because Disneyland is a total simulation at its best, it keeps people under its hyperreal spell from the time they walk into the parking lot until they leave through the exit:

> This one aspires to play the role of a kid so as to conceal the truth that actual childishness is everywhere, even among the adults who come here to play the child in order to cultivate illusions as to their own childishness, and so trick us into believing that adults exist exclusively in the real world. (Baudrillard 13)

Baudrillard argues that Disneyland is marketed to adults in order to trick them into "acting infantile" while they are there but that after they leave, they will go back to being productive members of society who can finally relax and enjoy life as grownups. To attract more mature guests to Disneyland, this practice is common. Therefore, Disneyland conceals the fact that childlike behavior is pervasive and that adults who seem to be behaving like children in the park really lead lives similar to those of children outside the park. One may thus argue that Disneyland is a tiny version of the real-world features of the imaginary United States. For this reason, guests of Disneyland may expect to experience a high degree of social isolation upon returning to "real" life. They are so thrilled about returning to Disneyland because it provides an escape from the harsh realities of life in the real world.

Baudrillard and Four Stages of Simulation/ Signs

Baudrillard has identified three orders of simulacra in his book *Simulation and Simulacra* (1994) and a specific period associated with each. The counterfeit model predominated during the "Classical" era, which spans from the Renaissance until the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. ii) During the Industrial Age, the paradigm that

predominates is Production. iii) The code-governed phase that we are now in is characterized by the preponderance of the simulation model (95).

Baudrillard defines postmodern society as a pure simulated society that denies the existence of reality. Baudrillard creates his postmodern metanarrative and gives phases and stages of the simulations and Hyperreality. Baudrillard is also against metanarratives. Thus, simulacrum replaces reality and then creates Hyperreality, which is divided into four steps:

> It is a mirror of fundamental reality.
>
> It hides and changes the nature of a basic fact.
>
> It conceals and denatures a fundamental reality; it conceals the lack of fundamental reality.
>
> It has no connection to any reality; it is its pure Simulation (11)

First stage: Mirror Image of Reality

Beginning with the Enlightenment and continuing through the birth of the Industrial Revolution, simulations have been around. As discussed by John Howard Northrop Fry, Freud, and Lacan, collective representations include the collective conscience and oppressive laws. This was a feature of a civilization where everyone worked together mechanically. These communities were entirely backwards. Baudrillard argues that the simulations accurately depicted a society's development of an initial portion or order. The gap between the actual world and the representation was seamless. These paintings are original, hand-painted works of art. All the fleshy folds were drawn out as if they were a picture of a man. Shakuntala was portrayed by the Indian Indo-Aryan poet and playwright Kalidas, who gave her an entirely female physical form. Dance of the Forest, written by Wole Soyinka, depicts the interpersonal drama of a South African tribe via photographs of trees and the people who live in them and through the words they use to describe those trees. Images like this seldom hide the truth. In the first round of simulations, pictures were not supposed to have any influence on how society operated. It was just a work of art, and aesthetics and enjoyment were its only purposes.

Second Stage: Reality In Disguise

The industrial civilization has now reached its mature state. It is distinguished by manufacturing on the scale that Fordism advocates for. According to Baudrillard, simulations recreate the same objects as before in their second phase of evolution. There is also a recreation of a refrigerator and a motor automobile. Reproduction at this stage consists of the repeated Occurrence of the same thing. In addition, there is no longer any need to engage in counterfeiting currently because goods are manufactured on such a large scale that there is no longer any concern about their uniqueness or origin. The simulations performed in this sequence misrepresent or distort reality. There is always an opportunity to play a corrupt game to the fundamental reality. It is a time referred to as late modernity.

Third Stage: Absence of Reality

Postmodernism develops as a cultural movement at this juncture. Codes, signals, and pictures flood the planet. The populous is professionally managed, and their simulations are proving to be too powerful. Present day authorized guidelines show that the line between Simulation and Reality has blurred. For instance, every character's function in the film or the promotion for the TV show is inherently flawed.

Given that the simulation society is structured by various convictions, ideas, and outlines, according to Baudrillard, it is impossible to differentiate a reality apart from simulations. In basic language, the truth is arranged according to codes. Several codes are shown by implication in political contexts, such as in the writing of legislation, the development, and enforcement of the Law, etc. Some are documented in concrete, intuitive-educational, industrial, and detention buildings. Others manifest more subtly, such as entertainment media, consumer merchandise, and engineering and planning conditions. Even more manifest themselves in consistent reviews and surveys that profile the population according to their employment patterns, income levels, sexual orientation, etc.

Fourth Stage: No Relation to Any Reality

In Baudrillard's view, Western civilizations (including the United States and Europe) have developed into a "fractural, viral, or malignant" state. As time goes on, the price keeps going up. DNA, AIDS, and even television visuals all follow this pattern. That all meaning, truth, history, society, politics, and sexuality are dead in today's postmodern civilization is his central thesis.

The elimination of distinctions between concepts is a defining feature of postmodern culture. This culture, according to Baudrillard, is "trans-political, transsexual, and trans-aesthetic in its qualities." To rephrase, everything is sexual, political, and artistic, which is to say that nothing is. The media's interpretation of these cultural elements further exacerbates the situation. Baudrillard presents the predicament of postmodern culture. The development of art results in the loss of many of its distinguishing characteristics, most notably its ability to challenge and stand in contrast to the world around it. As a result, there is such a thing as intertextuality in addition to transsexuality, which includes both eradicating sexual distinction and constitute our contemporary concept of sexuality. Surgical transsexuality is possible. However, semiosis is an increasingly popular and effective method for achieving transsexuality.

According to Baudrillard, our civilization is actively working to eradicate gender roles and distinctions wherever they may exist. This society has made it its mission to rid the world of negativity. In our society, day in and day out, television serials provide a picture of women that is devoid of many of the gender variations that exist in the areas of eating behaviors, clothing patterns, mannerisms, and ways of living. There is an overwhelming amount of optimism. According to Baudrillard, the absence of diversity in sexuality and lifestyle leaves us living in a world that resembles the smile that one may see on a dead body in a morgue.

The fourth order of Simulation is a concept that Baudrillard explores further in his writings. There is no connection to anything that is genuine. It is a complete and utter reenactment of itself. This is Hyperreality at its finest. All attempts are made to erase the discrepancies in this fourth order. You do not have to be a man or a woman to participate

in running, weight training, or aerobics. In the fourth order, personal experiences are made public through discussion programs with digital special effects, music, advertising campaigns and self-help books. These encourage us to discover ourselves, express ourselves, uncover our inner child, and find our true selves. Glen Ward (1997) has done an excellent job condensing the fourth order of Simulation. As Baudrillard argues, when the real ceases to be what it once was, yearning is its fullest expression possible. Simulation is what creates reality. So, once again, the reality is not given but rather generated, which implies that we cannot win.

Baudrillard's Concept of consumer society Marxism heavily influenced Baudrillard at the beginning of his academic career. In his latter piece of life, he could not resist contradicting him. Indeed, he has endeavored to obtain the zones which Marx had forgotten about. Marx, for example, developed his theory of production relations by constructing a framework. He addressed class conflict, dialectical materialism, and alienation. In his view, a person's social status had little bearing on his or her financial success. Baudrillard chose to investigate the concept of "use" for this probe. What sets Baudrillard apart is the way he uses the Marxian perspective of economic and material cycles to stress the social, emerging through simulations, TV, and other sources of media. For him, the link between money and culture is the bedrock of postmodernism. Baudrillard draws the conclusion that the postmodern simulation society has evolved into a Consumer society by analyzing it from two main vantage points. Postmodern culture is a consumer society based on a simulation that is confined by rules of code, symbol, and image. In a reproduction society, nothing resembles the real world, and consumption has no connection to reality, as Baudrillard admits. In a consumer culture, Simulation becomes a consumable good, according to the provided explanation. A simulation that can live forever is nothing more than an object of social need, and as such, it is subject to the Law of supply and demand, just like any other commodity. (Baudrillard 19)

Many twentieth-century social scientists have been influenced by Marx's study of industrialization and capitalism. It is no secret that Marx and his ideas have influenced a sizable number of post-postmodernists Baudrillard has taken Marx's ideas and incorporated them into his work. Guy Debord in his book *In the Society of Spectacle*

(1994), explores the rise of consumer fetishism through the lens of consumer culture. It is a social relationship between individuals that is mediated by pictures, where representation replaces reality, and everything is experienced via a representation that he sees as spectacle. As a result, Debord focuses on technological advancement and sees the development of spectacle as a deterioration of human existence. Because of the Debord school of thought, Jean Baudrillard argues in Simulation and simulacra that signs and symbols have replaced reality and codes and that Simulation has thus become the real thing in our world. A connection may be seen between Baudrillard's Concept of Simulation and Debord's exhibition concept because of the two thinkers' shared use of essential procedures. The two concepts of simulacra and spectacle aim to demonstrate how our image-heavy culture obscures the distinction between the real and the manufactured.

Additionally, two of them have a typical Marxist theoretical background. It does not matter how far from Marxism Baudrillard later became in his shift to focus on the use of resources and say that the use of resources eventually leads back to Production. According to Baudrillard, in a consumer culture, human relationships are replaced by relationships with goods, especially with items with symbolic value rather than utility or trade value. To use these items, one must be able to speak the language of the object. Concerning Baudrillardian and Debordiann's hypotheses, Steven Best (1991) claims that capitalism is a self-legitimating system where the object world presumes human well-being is defined by the (obvious) Consumption of things. (Best41-43)

This heavily influences Baudrillard's ideas on Consumerism and Simulation. It was via his discussions with Marx that Baudrillard came up with his theory of Simulation and consumerism. For Marx, modernity and free enterprise were both evils. A part of him believed in the eventual victory of the working class. Whatever the case, it never happened. Baudrillard believed that the West was not ready to dismantle the entrepreneur paradigm at the time. In such a situation, he concluded that Marx needed to be updated. Modern developments in data innovation and commercialization necessitated that Marx account for these changes. In his view, the contemporary era may be classified as super-, hyper-, late modern, or post-advancement. Marx's writing may need some work.

According to Baudrillard's theory of Consumption, market goods are nothing more than signals, and consumers purchase these signs rather than the goods themselves. You will find signage for anything from shirts to milk to the fridge to motorcycles and automobiles here. These items are for use in photographs. Hence, they were purchased specifically for that purpose. These images of products show the value of a certain brand or symbol. A certain brand represents them as having a high social position. In addition, the models through whom these indicators are sent have high fame. The film industry uses various people, including actors, public figures, and experts from various fields. These kinds of indications are of little real use. They are only a sign of respect in the industry. There is a considerable rise in Consumption because of this kind of advertising.

Consumption drives the creation of new products. Instead of emphasizing Production, Baudrillard emphasizes use, which is a departure from traditional Marxism. According to his argument, if Europe accepts America's style of usage as a dominating example, it will lead to a comprehensive association of Production. As a result, Baudrillard argues extensively that increased use will lead to improved creativity. According to Baudrillard, people are defined by what they eat, which is how they may be divided into distinct sorts of people. Most food we eat consists of signals rather than items. To demonstrate one's mastery over the symptoms, one eats. To become a product of desire, an item must be marked. What we eat and do not eat is controlled by the code. When it comes to Baudrillard, it is all about the efficient and ambiguous ownership of item indicators of Consumption. These product labels and the code they use are somewhat counterfeit. When we buy a BMW, we are not simply acquiring a vehicle; we are buying into the BMW experience. Because we live in a very mobile world, we cannot stand to buy a vehicle from a decade or more ago. Reality does not exist in a vehicle. Gliding signs and images reveal the reality.

There is a link between Consumption and Objects. Postmodernism says that the real world is coming to an end. Baudrillard was a poststructuralist at heart. Ferdinand de Saussure's instructor said that a word gets its meaning not from how it is used but from how it is used with other words. It means the word does not have anything to do with the real world. For example, "day" makes the word "night" more important. The basic rule of

etymology is that the words, not the things they describe, are what is important (genuine articles). When this happens, the meaning of a word does not depend on what it means to people. If everything else is the same, the importance of a word is based on how it fits in with other words. Ferdinand de Saussure's Structuralism influenced Baudrillard in language, which he used to take a historical look at language. He says there is a historical connection between a word and a thing. And language is the process of giving names to things. The words may or may not be real, but things are connected to words. The work of Saussure has two parts to each sign: a signifier and a signified. And language is a way of sending messages. In contrast to how he was raised, for Saussure, the most important link in the language is not between words and things. Instead, Saussure's idea of the sign points to how independent language is from reality. Saussure's theory of language says that the relationship between a sign and what it means is arbitrary (Saussure).

The present postmodern culture, according to Baudrillard, is a simulation society and a consumer society. Baudrillard is considered a skeptical visionary due to his skepticism about the postmodern entrepreneur culture. He is weakened by the setbacks of ongoing growth. He is conscious of simulation society's pains. He is anxious about the shortcomings of the actual world. Once enraged by the indications, he must be burned. This is cynical of Baudrillard. Postmodern civilization has deteriorated to such an extreme degree that there seems to be no prospect for rehabilitation. It seems that culture is irreparable. Indeed, Simulation and consumer culture provide significant challenges.

Fiction of Paul Auster and the Theory of Hyperreality

Paul Auster, the postmodern master of metafiction, incorporates Baudrillard's legacy of hyperreality without explicitly referencing it. Human experiences are shaped and guided by the hyperreal, as Alexander and Chatterjee (2014) explain in "Paul Auster's *Travels in the Scriptorium* as a Critique of the Hyperreal", how Human experiences are shaped and guided by the hyperreal, and this renders the search for meaning is futile (53). In *Timbuktu* (1999) Mr. Bones and Willy go to Timbuktu, a city where unstable illusions and simulations threaten their identity. Because the "distinction between the truth and the false, the real and the imagined" is threatened by the present hyperreal scenario of the conjectural postmodern world, a sense of meaninglessness

permeates both society and the individual. Postmodernism, as argued by Steven Best in his article "The Commodification of Reality and the Reality of Commodification," is characterized by an explosion of images and signals that blurs traditional categories such as illusion, reality, signifier, and signified. A semiotically self-referring hyperreality has replaced the social and actual world. (41-42) When a person's long-held beliefs about what is real and what is not are suddenly challenged bythe, what happens to them.

Paul Auster's protagonists are often preoccupied with the act of self discoveryand self-analysis, which is one of the novelist's most distinctive defining features. Individually, they are different because of the effects of anonymity and the constant upheaval of their surroundings. Some, like Nashe from *The Music of Chance* and Hector Mann from *The Book of Illusions,* are actively attempting to bury or suppress their actual identities, while others, like those still in the process of discovering who they are, are attempting to flee or hide from it (Marco Fogg in *Moon Palace*).

Identity appears to run through most of Paul Auster's work, in many forms: broken selves; divided personalities; numerous, confused, and mistaken identities; characters who are hiding, fleeing, merging, or otherwise obscured; and so on. His heroes often teeter on the edge of an cliff, struggling to maintain their own sense of self-identity. When they first begin their quest for who they are, they typically pare their lives down to the bare essentials because they are so overwhelmed by the uncertainty of their situation. In almost every one of his works, Paul Auster himself makes an appearance, blurring the lines between reality and fiction. Most of Auster's protagonists are American men who are professional or aspiring authors and who use writing as a means of establishing purpose in their life and discovering who theyare.

In addition, Auster also enjoys tinkering with language and names, two defining features of an individual's individuality. Allegory is often used in the naming of his heroes, which serves as a clue to their identities. Some instances include Herman Loesser being misread as Loser or Lesser in *The Book of Illusions,* Marco Fogg in *Moon Palace* perhaps being a metaphor for someone whose identity is obscured by dense fog, and Mr. Blank in Travels implying the guy who lost his memory. In order to fully understand the characters, it is important to take into account the ways in which their surroundings have

shaped their decisions and actions. The character of Auster's works often experience isolation, whether it internal (in their own heads, skulls) or external (as in Mr. Blank in+ Travels, Nashe in *The Music of chance*, in a vehicle or in an apartment (Blue in *Ghosts*). Withdrawing one's mind often coincides with a more literal withdrawal from society. The heroes, left to their own devices, question their existence and purpose. In a similar vein, Paul Auster locks him up in a New York City private room so that he may focus on himself and delvedeep into his ideas.

Among the many postmodern aspects of the Auster's novel, hyperreality is central. Every character in the novel foregrounds fiction and especially the protagonist Quinn himself. Quinn is apparently so tired of his own miserable life that he assumes other people's identities, and by taking on other people's realities Quinn can accept himself. That night, as he finally drifted off to sleep, Quinn attempted to picture what Work might have said to the stranger on the phone; this is typical of his habit of thinking about what other people would do or how other people feel (Auster, *City of Glass* 9). Similarly, Quinn accepts a position as a detective despite having no experience in the field: "Whatever he knew about these things, he had learnt through books, films, and newspapers." (7).

So, Quinn's method of thinking about detection is analogous to simulation: he develops visuals that tend to become his hyperreality, and then his own reality gets fuzzy (Barone 9). Quinn is confused about who he is and how he fits within the city:

> No matter how far he walked or how well he got to know New York's neighborhoods and streets, he still felt like he was in a maze at the end of the day. Not only did he feel lost in the city, but he felt lost within himself. When he stopped caring about where he was and just started walking, the world around him faded into insignificance. When he was walking well, he felt as if he was in the middle of nowhere. In the end, this was all he would ever wanted: to fit in absolutely nowhere. No place he had created for himself, and he knew he had no plans to leave. (3-4)

The mystery is changing too quickly for him to keep up with what is going on in the actual world. After publishing multiple collections of poetry, plays, and critical essays, Quinn has lost interest in writing (4). Consequently, Quinn assumes the persona of his alias, William Wilson. "Because he did not consider himself the creator of what he wrote," Quinn says of his decision to assume Wilson's identity, "he did not feel accountable for it and so was not forced to defend it in his heart" (4).

Through the course of the story, Quinn adopts several new personas. To add insult to injury, Quinn says, "he had, of course, long since ceased thinking of himself as genuine." If he was still alive at all, it was only via Max Work, his made-up alter ego (9). Despite all the various identities and names Quinn takes on and the various outcomes of the story, Quinn tries to stay sane to him self and not lose his grip over the situation and the fictional identities. He tries to explain the situation of his identity conflict within himself, and to sort out his identity:

> And then, most important of all: be mindful of who I am. So that I may recover my true identity. That is hardly a game, in my opinion. Contrarily, though, everything is ambiguous. For example: Can I ask who you are? Furthermore, why do you persist in lying if you believe you already know the truth? I can not think of anything to say. Simply put, pay attention to what I have to say. I go by the name of Paul Auster. This is not my actual name. (Auster 40)

Thus, Auster portrays the thought of a potentially endless postmodern questioning of identity. Auster plays with the layers of identity, and how a name is only loosely ascribed to an individual. A name is just arbitrary; it is a created surface of identity that is provided by somebody else. A name does not necessarily define a person as an individual.

To explain this further, Baudrillard's theory on the 'loss of the real' in his simulacrum/simulation theory can be useful. There is no corresponding reality beneath the surface of a provided name; there is no actual identity. And Auster the author cleverly plays with Quinn's identity to prove the point. Quinn assumes several identities just to

forget his own and, as a result he is not a reliable narrator. Quinn states early in the beginning of the novel: “remembered things, he knew, tended to subvert the thing remembered. Therefore, he could never be sure of any of it” (13). Because Quinn can never be sure of anything and tends to subvert the things he remembers, he can never interpret reality as a whole. When Quinn takes on all these identities, he forgets himself and that is what he wants. The forgetting about a unified individual self is part of the novel’s metafictional strategy to challenge the boundaries between fiction and reality – a real individual and a fictional character. Just as the reader of a novel forgets the real world and starts to get involved in the plot of the story and acts as if he or she is the detective. What Auster does here is foregrounding the metafictional characters and layers. Identities become subjects in the novel and whatever meaning they have is temporary, uncertain, and partly determined by the reader.

Quinn explores the concept of signs in Baudrillard’s simulacrum/simulation theory when Quinn meets Peter Stillman Jr. for the first time. Stillman Jr. explains the situation about his father and that he thinks that he is going to kill him. Quinn receives a photograph of Peter Stillman Sr., so he will be able to recognize him at New York’s Grand Central Station. In this part of the novel Quinn finds himself in a situation which is comparable to Baudrillard’s stage three sign; the photograph and what it means to the story can be seen as an illustration of the hyperreal and identity: “However, the image offered him no insights. It was only an image of a guy, nothing more. He gave it some more thought and came to the conclusion that it might have been anybody.” (31).

It is a photo of the real Stillman Sr., but it is an old photograph which had a link to a historical reality that is in the past and thus unobtainable. After the meeting Quinn starts to try to picture Stillman Sr. in his mind. He clears his desk and looks at the picture and writes down and mediates in his red notebook the attributes of the face:

> Stillman’s face. Or: Twenty-year-old Stillman's face. It is impossible to say whether today's features will be reflected in tomorrow's face. This, however, is not the visage of a crazed individual. Is this argument invalid, then? It looks harmless, if not pleasurable, to me. Some sensitivity in the mouth area, in fact. Watery, blue eyes are a near certainty. Hair was fine

> even back then, so it is possible that what is left is now completely gray or perhaps white. There is something oddly familiar about him; he seems like the contemplative sort who is probably really anxious and could stammer or struggle to control his rapid speech. In the case of Little Peter. Do I need to visualize it, or may I take it on faith? Lack of light. Putting myself in that setting is mind-boggling. (Auster 39)

After the meeting with Peter Stillman Jr. Quinn's analysis of the meeting and photograph can be seen as a stage four sign, because Quinn tries to access the reality behind the photograph. But the Stillman Sr. of the photo is not real, he no longer exists. By questioning the change in appearance of Stillman Sr., Quinn has problematized the process of identification. Quinn tries to add depth to the abstract image of Stillman Sr. by visiting the library to read the man's book. This state of hyperreality makes it impossible for Quinn to see Stillman Sr. since for Quinn there is no underlying identity to Stillman Sr.; everything he reads is produced and so he has no real access to Stillman Sr., who at this stage is just an old photograph. When Quinn finally starts to pursue the man, he believes is Stillman Sr., at the train station, he becomes unsure. Quinn studies the crowd of people again and sees another man looking exactly like Stillman Sr :

> His appearance was a carbon copy of Stillman's. For a split second, Quinn believed it to be an illusion, some kind of aura emitted by the electromagnetic currents in Stillman's body. This second Stillman, however, was plainly not connected to the first in any way, since he breathed, blinked his eyes, and moved about. (55)

All the signs of Stillman Sr. are now so abstract to Quinn that the aura of the man is, getting reinforced and Quinn does not know how to react to this. The two Stillman Sr's then part ways, one to the left and one to the right, and Quinn must make a choice of which one he should follow. He decides to follow the left one but is still uncertain about his choice: "A voice within him warned him that he would come to deeply regret his decision. Motivated by anger at the second Stillman for having confused him, he took drastic measures" (56).

Quinn is again uncertain of what is real and what is not, and he cannot decide his own reality, he is lost in different signs, he is a part of something he cannot comprehend. It seems that there are no fixed identities or meaning that Quinn can hold on to. Quinn tries to find the meaning of Peter Stillman Sr. s walks, but he is unsuccessful. Subsequently, when Quinn starts to pursue Peter Stillman Sr. everything seems like a big mystery. However, it can also be argued that Quinn is seeing a mindless wandering illusion of himself in Stillman Sr. It soon becomes clear to Quinn that the man has a routine during his walks, though a routine that appears to have no purpose: "Stillman invariably emerged about eight in the evening, dressed in his trademark long brown overcoat and toting a massive, vintage carpet bag." (58). Quinn is confused. Everything that occurs is plain as day to him, and he records it in his trusty red notebook, but he has no idea what it all means. (58). Quinn describes Stillman Sr.'s behavior during these walks:

> As he walked, Stillman did not look up. His eyes were permanently fixed on the pavement, as though he were searching for something. Indeed, every now and then he would stoop down, pick some object off the ground, and examine it closely, turning it over and over in his hand. It made Quinn think of an archeologist inspecting a shard at object in this way, Stillman would toss it back onto the sidewalk. But more often than not he would open his bag and lay the object gently inside it. Then, reaching into one of his coat pockets, he would remove a red notebook—similar to Quinn's but smaller—and write in it with great concentration for a minute or two. Having completed this operation, he would return the notebook to his pocket, pick up his bag, and continue on his way. (59)

Stillman Sr.'s behavior can be interpreted as a hyperreal mirroring of Quinn himself, as he wanders the city looking for clues, which are not really clues at all, but just signs of other signs. This creates hyperreal layers and an echo in the novel, because the novel creates signs of other signs which Quinn has a hard time to distinguish and make sense of. Quinn sees his own reflection in Stillman Sr. without even knowing it. In one sense he is doing exactly what Paul Auster the detective does. He is looking for answers and he

sees clues in everything. It is almost as if the entire story depends on his detective work and his red notebook. In City of Glass (1985), Quinn, a walker around the city, shows what it is like to be deceived by the appearance of the city's physical layout. From his perspective, he is "stuck in a hyperreality, a vertical labyrinth in which all reference points have been gone" (Eckhard 84).

Analysis of Auster's *The New York Trilogy* by Paul Jahshan in "Paul Auster's Specters" (2003) delves into the hyperrealistic context of the trilogy and comes to the conclusion that, Auster "attention on the dual notions of the mirror and the double and the ensuing spectral pictures as he navigates the new obstacles brought on by the advent of the virtual era" (389). That "the ultimate signified is continually postponed" (398) is only one of his claims that the fluidity of identities makes room for the hyperreal to emerge.

Blue, a private investigator, is recruited by White to keep an eye on Black in the sequel to the first trilogy, titled *Ghosts.* White rents an apartment for Blue in front of Black's apartment from where Blue would watch Black. Blue is supposed to write reports to White and in turn, collect his checks in a numbered mailbox. To Blue's utter distress, Black only reads and writes and goes for walk occasionally. Blue starts proposing certain stories to himself about the identity and relation of Black and White, but nothing comes out of it. During one of his walks, Black visits a bookstore and purchases a copy of Walden. Blue does the same to study Black's taste of reading but does not understand it. He follows his path, but no pattern emerges. Meanwhile his reports on Black do not fetch any answer from White except for the checks in the numbered box. On one occasion, to hear something from White, Blue secretly waits near the post box for White who happens to collect his report from there. He sees a masked man who collects report from the post box and appears like White. Blue chases him but White walks away hurriedly making his effort unsuccessful. Blue takes on the possibility of himself as a prey of White where Black's position is just of a bystander. To discover the mystery behind the case, blue disguises himself as Jimmy Rose, an old beggar and settles near Black's apartment. He converses with Black about some unrelated matters but suspects that Black is aware of his real identity. White sends him a letter questioning about his conversation with Black that confirms that Black and White are working together and are after Blue. He meets

Black in a restaurant who tells Blue that he is a detective who watches a man who does nothing but writes. After this meeting Blue comes to know that Black and White are one and the same person who has hired Blue to record his own activities. Blue goes to Black's apartment where Black is already waiting for him with a gun in his hand. He admits that he needed Blue to look at his own self. In desperation, blue beats him severely and leaves him unconscious or may be dead. He finds his own reports on Black's table, confirming that Black and White are not two different people. In the end, the third person narrator tells the reader that Blue leaves the apartment and goes somewhere and from that moment on, nobody knows anything about him.

Similar action is seen in Auster's *The Locked Room* (1986), which bears hints of Baudrillardian simulation. In this book, the character's lives are often intertwined with the mysterious disappearance of a certain person, whose absence is the thread that ties together each aspect of the story. When the reader discovers that Fanshawe has disappeared without a trail for them to follow in their hunt for him, they may sometimes begin to question whether this character exists. The fact that everything, including the future of all of the characters, is very dependent on Fanshawe's arrival, however, is what makes the story more interesting to read. However, as they continue their frantic hunt for Fanshawe, they ignorantly lead themselves down a path that leads nowhere and develops a sensation that they are living in a non-real world in which they cannot go on with their lives if Fanshawe is not in it. Because of this, it causes individuals to ignore the realities of their everyday lives and get absorbed in the process of creating a whole new world. To their surprise, it becomes clear quickly that Fanshawe's elaborate plan to have them fail has been in place the whole time. This discovery is made at the very conclusion of the narrative.

The preceding analysis, based on Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality, implies that Austers' protagonists lead a kind of existence that is attracted by a non-present unreachable like Fanshawe, whose absence leaves no evidence of his presence but merely a forgotten recollection that plagues their sense of reality. The characters in Auster's works are Fanshawe obsessives, says this analysis. In addition, one may argue that Auster offers a means of deconstructing the standard narratives by focusing his story on a

character who is not even in it. One may argue against this. Further, he subtly inserts a hyperreal essence into the novels structure, leading the reader to cynically continue with a story based on a figure who has gone entirely.

Fanshawe's character highlights simulacra's significance in contemporary people's lives. Auster's narrator spends his time searching Fanshawe's personal papers and artworks for hints as to where he could be living. While he considered himself an expert on Fanshawe, he noted that "there were no letters, no diaries, no glimpses into Fanshawe's private life" (Auster 161). He eventually concludes that there was nothing, as his search progresses to higher levels of detail. Although he had nothing more to offer, "Fanshawe had left me entirely on my own" (161).

Baudrillard's *The vanishing Point of Communication* (2009), in which he writes, "you never again murder someone by restriction and control," corroborates this idea (19). According to Auster's, "seven days were necessary to process and organize the material, to distinguish finished work from drafts, and to combine the pieces into some likeness to the order," thus it seems that this is the situation here (Auster, The Locked Room161). In his quest to learn more about himself, he has read "a hundred sonnets, threevolumes (...), and five one-act plays" (162). But they are just a bunch of fakes meant to make it seem like Fanshawe wrote them, and all that data that does not mean anything only makes him feel more and more lost in a hyperreal world.

The effects of the simulation's strength are felt not just by the narrator but also by Sophie. She has no breathing room for a free existence because of the overwhelming potentialities of Fanshawe's location. And now that Fanshawe is gone, she is feeling quite lost and frightened. She has been playing a game blindly without any idea of what she is doing, and as a result, her whole life has turned into an obsessive hunt for him. The narrator keeps quiet even after realizing that Fanshawe has abandoned her since "in my stronger moods, I argued to myself that keeping silent was the only way to protect her" (171). This claim demonstrates how immersed she is in a virtual scheme that has completely paralyzed her ability to experience her actual existence. What's fascinating is that the narrator sometimes reveals his belief that everyone involved is living a fantasy.

However, this fiction shields people from the unpleasant aspects of reality since “no one wants to be part of a fiction, and even less so if that fiction is real” (161).

The characters in *The Locked Room* are all going through an identity crisis in the present day. Auster creates a story in which the protagonists and antagonists alike are unable to tell reality from fiction or fantasy from reality. The stimulatory circumstances with which the contemporary person must deal are justified by the menacing presence of the hyperreal effects entrenched deeply throughout the narrative backdrop. It also sheds light on the terrible nature of our destinies when we choose to live in a world of simulations that provide us with no solid reality to cling to. That Auster’s creative writing has this quality is not a mere accident. Most of Auster’s writing has characters confined in some enclosed place so that the reader might contemplate the impact of confinement on the human mind.

Woods (2004) says that from a sociohistorical vantage point, Auster’s fiction demonstrates how “Any change in the methods by which a society generates its goods and services has an impact on the way in which people think about and use space.” (138). Since he has no clue where he is or what he is doing, Fanshawe takes his own life. Despite his modest involvement in the plot, he represents a kind of media that captures the attention of the viewing public. Because of his “denial of others,” which has “devastated one civilization after another in the postmodern period, “he fits the postmodern profile of a figure who erodes the border between reality and simulated copy” (Habibi 139). At one point, the narrator is so disturbed by his exposure to the illusions of our world of spectacle and simulation that he tears up the pages of his journal.

What Fanshawe gave him in hand. This is the thing that bothers him the most, maybe because he realizes that the “in today's postmodern world, the whole idea of asserting oneself has been relegated to the realm of fiction.” (Behrooz &Pirnajmuddin 195). Considering the circumstances, Fanshawe’s “cannot possible know what is true or not true” is an apt phrase. Who knows, maybe you will never grow up” (Auster 219).

In the same way, *Sunset Park* (2010) may be seen as an effective criticism of the postmodern situation that has blurred the line between reality and representation. This

article contends that Jean Baudrillard's concept on hyperreality is reflected in the game of signals that governs Mile's existence. It argues that this is proof that Auster's work is a criticism of the modern world, in which the hyperreal shapes and controls human experience and meaning seeking is fruitless.

In Paul Auster's *Sunset Park*, set in South Florida, the protagonist, Miles, scavenges abandoned houses and removes all of the contents before moving in. Whereas his thuggish coworkers plunder anything they want from abandoned homes, Miles Heller takes loving photos of everything he finds there. Indications point to:

> To establish that the lost families were once here and that the spirits of people he will never meet or know are still there in the abandoned belongings strewn around their vacant homes, he has taken it upon himself to chronicle the last, lingering remains of their dispersed lives. (3)

Mile's interest in virtual affinity is hinted at by his reference to the apparitions of long-dead people who may be unearthed in forgotten artifacts. The idea is reminiscent of Baudrillard's Simulacra and Simulations, in which he claims that "Photography... had a significant role in the secularization of history, in establishing it in its visible, 'objective' form" (Baudrillard 48).

That is why contemplating the simulated is like looking back in time. Miles understands his photography is just symbolic, "an empty endeavor, of no potential service to anybody," since nothing of practical use will come of it. Still, he cannot explain why "Items are trying to make contact with him, calling to him in the voices of those who have passed on and pleading for one more glimpse from him." (Auster 5). Maybe what he is looking for is a "sweeping view of the past, present, and future; an unsteady jumble of drifting recollections and glimpses of history in general that flash byat a dizzying rate, as if time itself were finally breaking free." (Deleuze55). Miles is haunted by the virtual ghosts of the ancestors he will never meet.

As Hutcheon (2003) puts it, "To this day, the only way to learn about the past is via the documents, testimonies, and other archival materials that have survived from that time." (58). In other words, according to Hutcheon, historical knowledge is built upon

representations of the past. Miles hopes that through photographing these moments of freedom, he might bring them back to life. Time's influence is also useful in depicting the societal impacts of the recession. They had little time to pack since they were compelled to leave their bankrupt family houses. In this context, the author's worries about the state of contemporary American society take on a more epic scale, taking the form of virtualities. Because of this, postmodernism "reveals adesire to view the current culture as the result of prior representations" (58). Distancing oneself from these images is a signifier of the postmodern person's degrading rupture with the past.

Miles is also deeply scarred by the accident that took the life of his brother, and the guilt-ridden memories of the past follow him about like a hound. Following his brother's passing, Miles loses his compass and starts to lose touch with himself and the world around him. Gauthier (2011) observes that some people see postmodernism as a Civilization where depth, coherence, meaning, originality, and authenticity have been emptied out or disintegrated into the random swirl of empty messages (30).

Postmodernism, as suggested by Gauthier, presents a world of complete anarchy and chaos. Miles leaves a note behind as he walks away from his house. After he finds a permanent home, he promises to let his loved ones know. Although, the book does indicate that "during the last seven years he has settled at any number of various addresses, yet he still has not been in contact" (Auster 30).

These words illustrate the deterritorialization and subsequent personality fracture experienced by Miles. Desire is a symptom of the subject's disintegration, which leads him to that point. The hyperreal, emblematic of the postmodern state, has total sway over Miles Heller. In the meanwhile, Miles finds out that Teresa's husband has been serving in Iraq for the last ten months and that everyone is sending their well wishes to him. As a result, Miles has been consumed by a parallel universe once again. Had Bush and Cheney been executed, maybe the Iraq War never would have happened. What he ends up with because of his inability to differentiate between real and imagined worlds are "sign-images," as Miles puts it.

> Casts another glance at the cloth on the table... He thinks of George W. Bush and Dick Cheney getting shot while standing against a wall, and then he prays that Teresa's husband may return safely to Pilar and the others. (Auster 46)

When Mile considers Teresa's spouse, his thoughts resemble those of a simulation: "he develops pictures which tend to become his hyper reality, and then his own reality gets hazy" (Barone 9). The space between the two is enormous. The written word, the tale, and the image are only a few of the numerous referential foundations that Auster meticulously destroys in Sunset Park. Therefore, he shows images by bridging the gap between the real and the digital. To do this, we employ descriptions of the present or actual events, as well as remarks about the past, to incorporate fictitious elements into our everyday lives. To show how the characters in Sunset Park are trying to make sense of their past and present experiences, Auster often shifts between depicting the characters' actual and imagined worlds. Auster's novels often include baseball, and in Sunset Park, the reader is treated to multiple allusions to real-life renowned American Major League pitchers from the 1940s through the 1960s.A few days later, Miles finds out that one of his idols from his youth has passed away: "on the eleventh, he sees in the newspaper that Herb Score has died" (Auster 32). Using real people's names in a tale is a metafictional technique that gives the fictitious world a more tangible feel. However, Auster uses the repeated references to Herbert Jude Score's (1933-2008) death to further blur the lines between the actual world and the online one.

Throughout the work, Miles recounts a discussion he had with his father on a bus from Florida to New York, during which his father recounted the story of his marriage and subsequent divorce from Miles's mother. The role of Cordelia played by Mary in Shakespeare's King Lear piqued Morri's curiosity. His father elaborated, saying, "He was dazzled by her skill." "Anyone who could play as well as he did in that tough, sensitive job must have had a deeper depth of heart and a broader variety of emotion" (Auster, Sunset Park58). After marrying Mary-digital Lee's double, Cordelia, Morris learns many months later that the real Mary-Lee has an entirely different personality quirk. It is for this reason that I like to imagine Morri's mental image of Cordelia as a crystal image, one

that has captured both Mary-physical Lee's image and Shakespeare's virtual image. Morris, captivated by the seeming contradiction between these two aspects of this similar picture, declares his intention to marry Mile's mother despite his inability to tell them apart.

According to Baudrillard, hyperreality is both a comprehensive concept and a postmodern phenomenon in which simulacra exclude representation and reality. Because of this, Baudrillard draws the conclusion that "what is lost is the original, which only a history itself nostalgic and retrospective can reproduce as 'authentic'" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 99). This is why, in Baudrillard's conception of the hyperreal, novelty and uniqueness are irrelevant. In its place, as the original fades away, new images are continually being formed, which has far-reaching consequences for social dynamics, worldview, language's value, and the ways in which we express ourselves to one another. Therefore, in the postmodern period, the only thing left is the hyperreal, with its manufactured reality.

Since we now live in a time of "forced extroversion of all interiorities" and "forced infusion of all exteriority" (Baudrillard 132) the hyperreal has even made its way into our most private spaces, our homes. Miles may use Sunset Park as his hyperreal realm. After making the move to *Sunset Park*, the tale focuses on Miles and his new friends and family rather than the larger plot. The head of the group, Bing Nathan, reflects on the value of history in light of the concept of the virtual:

> Today, however, the home itself is envisioned as a collector and a merchant, as a place for both gathering and tasks, as a control screen and terminal, which, in theory, could be endowed with telematic power or, at the very least, the ability to manage everything from a good distance, keeping in mind both domestic labor and, naturally, utilization, play, social relations, and recreation. It is now feasible to conduct home relaxation or getaway testing on a scale equal to that of pilot training simulators. We have strayed far beyond the lounge and into the realm of science fiction. (Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication* 128)

From what I have read of Baudrillard, it seems like the house has become a realistic simulation. With the addition of simulated shopping, chatting, and lounging, this virtual universe is starting to seem more and more like a make-believe realm. Although Miles's experience with the hyperreal unfolded before his exposure to television or other forms of mass media, his thesis hinged on their pervasiveness. Since he assumes there is no hope for the future, he believes that the here and now must be infused with memories from the past to be meaningful. Therefore, he avoids modern conveniences like mobile phones, laptops, and the internet: he does not want to keep up with the times. He spends his weekends with a six-piece jazz band, where he plays drums and percussion, even though jazz is on the decline and has a very tiny fan base. (Auster, SunsetPark 72) Like these pragmatic approaches—playing jazz, taking photos, and maintaining antique typewriters—self-nihilism Miles's permits a retreat from the real to his own hyperreal. The world he encounters afterwards is artificial, conflicted, and restraining.

The character Renzo Michaelson is another one whose instincts lead him to consider the virtual. To this day, his mother's tale inspires him as a writer. Renzo decides to compose an essay on their past together after remembering that she was engaged to a big Hollywood star but ultimately did not marry him. Because of this, he comes up with a fascinating idea that lines up with Auster's own premise about virtual reality, a world analogous to modern American life in which neither war nor capitalistic initiatives have any bearing. Auster wishes for a better world because he believes people are deserving of more than the virtual reality train wreck of a country they have inherited. To paraphrase Renzo, his idea is "about the unsaid and undone, the forgotten and never-remembered; about the lives not lived and the wars not fought; about the parallel worlds of the movies and the reality we think of as real." This virtual, with its dark and hopeless past, has no home but in the real. Putting oneself in what some could call "chancy area" might be dangerous. Yet, if it enables us to perceive the world for what it lacks and equips us with genuine means to make beneficial changes, rather than wishing for a flawless paradise, then it may be "worth exploring" (Auster 153). As Baudrillard suggests, getting your hands on the genuine deal has become impossible since the model has become the standard.

> In a modern society governed by the concept of simulation, reality has flipped roles and become the alibi of the model. And strangely, the real has become our genuine Paradise, although a utopia that is no longer practical and can only be imagined in the same way one could imagine a long-lost treasure. (Baudrillard 122-23)

We conclude that the people, actions, and events in Paul Auster's *Sunset Park* are typical of Baudrillardian philosophy. The concept of virtuality is spreading in Sunset Park thanks to the thoughts and deeds of many different individuals, and it has deep tiesto the community's view of time and love of the past. Mile's aversion to taking pictures of ruined equipment is only one example of the various ways in which the virtual manifests itself in real life. Miles is attempting to revive the shards of leisure time that he has lost with his photographs. Renzo Michaelson, a writer who only uses an ancient typewriter, is working on an essay regarding the existence of virtual worlds that are similar to but distinct from our own real and logical one. This identifies Renzo as a virtualist in the tale. The character's goal is to find a balance between the past and the present. As a result, individuals rely on representations of the past and Signs in order to enter the virtual world and, eventually, to be able to consider the Baudrillardian concept of virtual reality.

The Book of Illusions (2002) is a profound inquest of an individual's attempt of coming to terms with the intricacies of existence. It is a book that comprises of autobiographies and biographies, with Zimmer's story of life forming the overarching structure. It portrays problems, tensions, and the ludicrousness of contemporary American society. The story makes it quite evident that its protagonists are experiencing an identity crisis and that they are attempting to redefine who they are. Here is a complex tale of manifold layers of life of various individuals, the impending deaths and their troublesome restorations. Like Auster's other fictions, *The Book of Illusions* also highlights the puzzle of an amorphous identity of the characters which needs to be reframed despite the fact that the world they inhabit refuses to yield any meaningful outcome. They live in an illusionary world marred by recurrent tragedies, losses, and obscurities where, in a typical Austerian way, they always find a means to recuperate.

In his fiction, Paul Auster probes the paranoia that characterizes the postmodern individual's interaction with the world. Like Jean Baudrillard's theory on hyper simulations, the paranoid state affecting Zimmer's relationship with realities is referenced in *The Book of Illusions*. It is thus argued that *The Book of Illusions* investigates the predicament of contemporary societies in which pervasive simulations shape and regulate people's everyday interactions and the connection between perception and simulation has lost all credibility. This confusing mix of reality and simulation is a common theme in the works of Paul Auster. Several of his protagonists have trouble reconciling their private and public lives. Some critics achieve this by seeing his works through the perspective of the Baudrillardian concept of simulation. Analysis of Auster's works by Gloria Ma Oi-ming and Joane F. Gous (2011) employs Baudrillard's idea of the hyperreal. For their dissertation, they want to investigate the processes involved in growing and changing one's sense of self. While others like Petersen and Langbak (2010) try to figure out how the Austerian narrative worlds relate to a fake American society, we can only guess at the results. They use these standards to determine that *City of Glass* by Paul Auster shows Baudrillardian realms that "are marked by a breakdown of reality" (10). A similar inscription appears in *The Book of Illusions*. Baudrillard's idea of simulation is evoked by Zimmer's hyperreal experiences, which exploit and mislead him at the boundary between fiction and reality.

Just as in *The New York Trilogy*, where the protagonists enjoy the act of writing and exploring, so too do these forms of media play a crucial role in the protagonists' eventual resurgence. However, the book also makes use of the cinema as a new method of identity building. There are snippets of screenplays interwoven throughout the text, which both build and break down the author's fictitious universe, and so highlight the subject of the characters' narrative identities. Professor David Zimmer tells the tale of silent film comic Hector Mann, who vanished in the 1920s, in his book The Book of Illusions. After losing his family in an aircraft disaster, he puts his grief into writing about Hector Mann. The sad aircraft accident seems to be a reference to the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in the United States, which were written after those events occurred. His wife and children's tragic deaths drive him to an irretrievable depth of despair. Zimmer loses interest in life and isolates himself to suffer through the dull

days. Zimmer is flipping between channels one day when he stumbles onto a humorous sequence from Hector Mann's silent film, which causes him to burst out laughing. His lengthy period of emotional stoicism is shattered by the sound of his own unexpected laughing, and he remembers that he has a desire to live. Peacock, analyzing a similar situation in Paul Auster's *The Book of Illusions* (2002), concludes, "From this, we may deduce that Mann's films are at least as real (or simulated) versions of himself as his life is in actual life (in the Baudrillardian sense)" (Baudrillard 64).

In 1990, Paul Auster released his fourth novel, titled *The Music of Chance.* Although the story is straightforward, Auster brilliantly depicts the individual's never-ending battle with chance, chance occurrences, and accidents. In truth, Auster's *The Music of Chance* is his sermon about chance and its significance in the lives of individuals. Irvin (1994), "For Auster, "if my work is about anything, I suppose it is about the unexpected, the concept that anything may happen, "as he puts it in an interview. What is ahead of you is unknown (116). Nashe is synthetic tales dominate his conscious experience of the surroundings, much as the defining hallmark of the postmodern era, hyperreality. *The Music of Chance* primarily investigates "the boundaries that divide the random from the planned, the incidental from the well-crafted," which is a key moment in the story's gradual warping of his perception of reality (Varvogli 76). Because his own life is seen enmeshed with randomness and coincidences, Auster easily makes it to get straight to the readers mind through his characters.

Auster's characters find themselves in the clutches of these forces while living in the urbanism and uncertainty of postmodern American world. His characters may build castles in air or may aspire to bring heaven on earth, but all this dwindles very soon when they fall a victim of chance. The encounter with the supremacy of chance and coincidence brings the characters during hyperreal existence. Beneath the simple narrative structure of *The Music of Chance* which can be read as a mere road narrative, lies an intricate pondering on chance, coincidence, and many other issues. Divided into nine chapters, it presents the story of Jim Nashe, a Boston fireman and his encounters with random events. Nashe experiences the random play of chance when one day he

inherits a huge amount of insurance money after his father's death that he has not seen in the past thirty years.

Like elsewhere, Auster projects an absence of father or father-figure which can be traced in his own life also. This overpowering sense of the loss of father, in Auster's fiction, is usually accompanied by getting huge amount of money out of the blue. *The Music of Chance* is no exception. The money gives Nashe an illusion of freedom that permits him to lead a luxurious life – purchasing a new car, throwing lavish parties and, most of all, his indiscriminate driving spree to travel across America in his car. The power to purchase things, most of which he neither needs nor serve any useful purpose to him, makes him feel like he has control over both his actions and consequences. However, this reckless revel of senseless spending becomes just another instance of those self-destructive tendencies which characterize his defiance against his own helplessness and his inability to exert control over his own fate. Being deserted by his wife, he takes his two years old daughter to live with his sister. He finds the job of fireman monotonous and to grapple with the boredom, he quits it to enjoy the life of freedom and irresponsibility. Then he meets a gambler, Jack Pozzi on the road according to "coincidental meeting, the kind that appears seemingly out of nowhere..." (1).

Nashe advises that he risk what is left of his funds in a poker game against Flower and Stone, two "amateur billionaires." As a result of Pozzi's unanticipated loss, the duo is now $10,000 in the red. To pay back the debt, Nashe and Pozzi are hired to build a wall in the middle of a field using the stones from a destroyed castle. Calvin Murks, the attendant of a wealthy family, has them both locked up in the meadow. Pozzi attempts to flee this ridiculous assignment but is severely thrashed, and may perhaps be murdered, in the process. On the final day of his imprisonment, Nashe celebrates his freedom with Murks and his son-in-law. On their return from the inn, Nashe smashes his car with an oncoming vehicle which ends the novel.

Conclusion

This chapter explores the many facets of hyperreal identities in the works of Postmodern American writer Paul Auster. The protagonists are the central focus of the

thesis, as are their actions, thoughts, and reactions to their social and physical environments, as well as the process of identity development and the role the antagonist plays in this.

This research aims to connect Paul Auster, his work, and the concept of identityIn their search for who they are, the characters created by Auster withdraw inside themselves in order to put together the shards of the identity of the antagonist. They do not realize until much later that in doing so, they are really rebuilding who they are themselves. However, the hunt always results in change not just for thesearcher but also for the searched. It is contaminating, and as a result, the main characters are affected. The uncertain meaning of the search as well as the open- ended nature of the endeavor is both reflective of the elusive and changeable nature of identity. Whether in the urban setting, the context of the case they are working on, or inside their own minds, the protagonists experience feelings of confusion at various points during their travels and alone moments. Their identity is too dispersed and distant for them to unite and achieve their objective.

In Auster's novel we can easily identify the inability on the part of characters to identify with the simulated realities created by the postmodern world. This inability on their consciousness leads them to their mutated individual strikingly different from their old identities. The characters, unaware of their fabricated false realities consume their new identities as a way of survival in the postmodern world as if their new identities are real.

Chapter 2

Real/Reel identities in Select Novels of Paul Auster

This chapter examines the Real/Reel identities in Select Novels of Paul Auster. His works are exceptional, and his characters have distinct voices. Auster's literature, as well as those of other postmodern American authors, has long emphasized the dynamic of identities. However, unlike other American authors that discuss identity crises in racial, social, cultural, or aesthetic terms, Paul Auster employs the basic contradictory relationship between simulation and reality to depict a search for identity via the character's numerous identities. He actually leaves his real identity in the real world and takes on the identity of his characters and escapes into imaginary world where he can explore other people's identities. His work critically demonstrates the way simulation is permeating the American way of life; similarly, Hutcheon (1989) considers postmodern art as "contesting the simulacrization process of artwork" (223).

Paul Auster's works emphasize this journey and its phases, posing the subject of identity via the characters reactions to the stages. He explores the subject of identity via his character's journey phases, which include issues of identity, space, the role of chance/coincidence, solitude, and confrontations with alter ego/doubles. This ultimately results in a blend of real/reel identities that unites the writer/reader/character three together. What postmodern literature and my chapter is attempting to demonstrate is that there are no absolute facts or realities, but simply representations. There is no reality in postmodernist fiction, just constructed end of real/reel identities that unites the writer/reader/character three together ones. Before evaluating characters in Auster's works for their changing identities, it is vital to examine postmodern identity. The postmodern self is defined by a fragmented ego that has lost its core and is simply composed of pictures. According to Jameson (1984), whereas the simple and indivisible ego self-existed throughout the period of classical capitalism and the nuclear family, it ceased to exist in the postmodern era (24) Gergen (1991) asserts that postmodern society obliterates the concept of self. The self is obliterated when the individual is flooded with images from the media, which provides us with a plethora of nonsensical and

unconnected postmodern self-languages (6). Efrat Tseelon (1992) saysthat the pictures of the postmodern self are the postmodern self's reality (120).

Rossi (1983) observes that differences between the sociology of signs and the sociology of symbols show the cognitive area of experience. The postmodern analysis is concerned with aspects of signs. As it can be studied it is the third stage of the postmodern world where images are dominating the world and has turned out to be reality. To have a deeper understanding, the first stage is about the direct relationship between signs and corresponding reality. And in the third stage signs are the reality, and images are the things. The third stage took place due to advertising. As Baudrillard also believed the act of advertisement reduces the value to significant value. Advertisement is a key feature in transmitting the culture and self in a postmodern world. (Rossi n.p)

Man has been completely overtaken by technology, which has caused him to lose his uniqueness, which in turn causes him to lose his identity. Without getting too metaphysical, identity is the combination of a person's many traits, such as their place of birth, birthday, hair color, social standing, community involvement, etc.

The Postmodern conception of identity, among other things, was an attempt to depart from this fixed idea of internal consistency and sameness. Identity is seen as a tentative and illusory image constructed by the self and involved in a never-ending process of making and fabricating it because the factors which establish the stability have been obscured.

A postmodern identity is actually manipulated and controlled by the media that envelops and surrounds it. The deterioration brought on by the development of science and technology, particularly the television and computer, is reflected in man. The change from modernism to postmodernism has made identity more brittle.

In the postmodern era, identities become ever more fractured, destabilized, and fragmented as a result of social and cultural changes brought on by globalization, which result in identity crises. This implies that various identities are created over time and lack coherence and unity. In other words, postmodern people have fragmented identities that

are influenced by their consumption choices, race, gender, connection with a particular religion, and other factors.

In *City of Glass* (1985), protagonist Daniel Quinn is only half aware of the hyperreal world in which he exists: "he would infer that nothing was real but chance" (3) echoing the Baudrillardian ideas discussed before Auster describes the New York that Quinn inhabits as "hyperreal."

> No matter how far he traveled or how well he got to know New York's neighborhoods and streets, he still felt like he was trapped in a maze no matter how familiar he became with them. He was disoriented and disoriented, both physically and mentally in the city." (4)

New York is a fascinating cosmopolitan since it has long been considered a "Hyper civilization" (Baudrillard 259). Baudrillard asserts that "In today's society, everything is characterized by its simulacrum or the pictures and signs that have come to stand in for physical goods that have come to stand in for the Physical goods that make up the late-capitalist lifestyle." (Denzin 195).

Simulacra, as defined by Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulation,* is the occurrence of an original that is entirely replaced by a replica or a copy. He believes that as technology advances, a sense of self diminishes in the hyperreal world. The ability to recreate and rebuild one's identity causes the loss of one's true identity and prompts a quest for self.

In addition, Quinn used to spend his free time perusing books, going to movies, looking at the pictures—three cultural artifacts that may be thought of as miniature representations of a more extensive hyperreal reality. This has trapped Quinn totally in an imaginary world with no foundation. As Baudrillard puts it, "Due to the proliferation of mass media, the concept of "the mass" has emerged as an abstract concept that cannot be represented" (Baudrillard 22). However, the simulator's designers are not limited to Quinn's physical location. Yet, as the narrator explains, the creators of the simulation are not restricted to Quinn's physical location. Inwardly, the narrator maintains, Quinn is just as lost as everyone else. As a result, it is clear that the fictitious people, in addition to the

backdrop, are very realistic. There are three main phases in Quinn's maturation as a person. From Daniel Quinn through William Wilson to Max Work, via the hands of investigator Paul Auster:

> Prior to this, Quinn had been a more ambitious person... Something within of him had finally given up the ghost. Around this time, he started going by the name William Wilson. It was no longer Quinn who could create novels, and although Quinn did indeed continue to exist in many respects, he did so only for himself. (Auster 4)

It is obvious that by adopting the fictional name William Wilson, Quinn is attempting to construct a new, alternative identity for himself. "After all, William Wilson was a product of human ingenuity, and although having originated inside Quinn, he now lived apart from him." (5) Since Quinn's new Identity is completely developed and can exist on its own, he considers it as if it were a separate person from himself. As a result, Quinn's shifting identities may be seen as an effort to construct a Self via the demonization and invention of a false identity. If Quinn is adopting a new persona to cope with his social anxiety, his heightened problems would reflect the fantastical nature of the fictional world he inhabits. According to Bogard, in Baudrillard's *Challenge to Contemporary Sociology* (1990) "The third and final theory contends that the society has become a reflection of itself; that is, a pure "simulacrum"" (what Baudrillard calls the "hyperreality" of the social). The detective's hyperreality is the bubble he weaves around himself because he has concealed "Quinn," his Origin. However, Quinn does not cease inventing new identities at this point. He pushes and remakes new ones throughout the novel, until his last false identity as Paul Auster has such a devastating effect on his true self that it ultimately destroys him.

Since Quinn is not a single entity, he experiences life in a hyperreal universe. Instead, he has several personalities coexisting inside him, each with its own story to tell. This provides Quinn with an alias that is not his true self. In an odd game, Quinn portrays a brilliant investigator called Paul Auster. He does this either because he wants to have exciting new experiences or because he is unhappy with the job that William Wilson and Max have been doing : It may have been fun to go along with him a bit, he thought.

Maybe he would have learned something new about the situation and been able to assist in some manner. Since the caller was aiming for Paul Auster but got through to Quinn instead, he decides to help the confused caller out. So, Quinn creates a new identity and acts out as a fictional figure he knows nothing about. Again, as with himself, Quinn is making William Wilson a hyperreal person for the sake of others. These several personas are connected as follows:

> Quinn's trinity of identities included a ventriloquist in the form of Wilson. Quinn was the stand-in for the dummy, while Work provided the initiative with a lively, motivating voice. Even if Wilson was an illusion, he still made it worth saving the other two people's lives. Even though Wilson did not really exist, he served as a conduit for Quinn to make the transition from "me" to "Work." And Work had become Quinn's internal brother, his friend in solitary, as time went on. (6)

Another character Peter Stillman, whom Quinn is tasked with safeguarding, is a person with schizophrenia who has forgotten who he is. Peter's peculiar conduct and looks stun Quinn and the readers at their first encounter. Peter Stillman implies that a Skeptical reader should not put too much stock in his descriptions. Whether or not you believe him, Peter Stillman's appearance may be seen as a distortion of American conventional wisdom meant to emphasize the importance of the hyperreal world in which he finds himself:

> Everything about Peter Stillman was white. White shirt, open at the neck; white pants, white shoes, white socks. Against the pallor of his skin, the flaxen thinness of his hair, the effect was almost transparent, as though one could see throughto the blue veins behind the skin of his face. (15)

Peter stillman, in a lengthy discourse, informs Quinn that he does, in fact, inhabit a hollow of fictional constructed personas. In the meanwhile, my name is still Peter Stillman. To be clear, I do not go by that name in real life. Tomorrow, I do not know who I will be. Every morning is a fresh start, and with it, a new me (22). Thus, both the detective and the client are shown to be fictional creations of their own hyperreal

imaginations, and the narrative is shown to be based on a simulation rather than the real world.

Therefore, when Quinn and Peter meet, it is like two clouds of hyperreal Identities clashing and all that is left is a giant lump of "simulated" nothing. "As soon as their eyes connected, Quinn got the distinct impression that Stillman had vanished from his sight. He could make out his figure on the chair across from him, but it was almost as if he were not really there (15). As a result, Quinn is quick to see Peter's identity shift and identify Peter as his customer. Considering Quinn's expertise at adopting new personas, this is a bold assertion. When these two cutout characters finally cross paths, they discover that they have both been lying to them. Peter introduces himself to Quinn by stating, "I am Peter Stillman. I am saying this of my own will. Yes. Please do not call me that; it is not my true name. That, however, is something that cannot be changed. No. Regarding that. No, no. That is not the case anymore" (15).

Since Peter Stillman was his father's name, he decided to adopt it as his own. But when Peter responds, "Nothing can be done about it," the reader could infer that Peter's free will is not real, but rather a facade. The hyperreal world has grown so large that man has no option but to stoop before its virtual majesty, and neither Peter nor anyone else can change the fact that he was born with a name he does not wants. Peter Stillman knows quite well that he is in a simulation when he says, "My name is Peter Stillman. Possibly, but probably not, you are familiar with my name. Never mind. To be clear, I do not go by that name in real life. Identity is something I have forgotten. Pardon me. And it is not like that even matters. As in, anymore" (16).

Peter admitted that he has forgotten his birth name is symptomatic of a larger identity issue; he has lost track of who he is. Baudrillard also discusses this same point. According to him, the Collapse of the real" and the "lack of origin" are the postmodern man's best friends in the fourth phase of Simulacra, or "Hyperreality." Peter's confession that he has lost touch with his own self means that readers would see him in the same way they did Quinn: as a "faceless and invisible" person who needs to hide his true self from the world, as a person made up of pure hyperreal identities. As Peter proceeds, it is evident that a continual game of hyperreal is at play:

> Forgive me, Mr. Auster. I see that I am making you sad. No questions, please. My name is Peter Stillman. That is not my real name. My real name is Mr. Sad. What is your name, Mr. Auster? Perhaps you are the real Mr. Sad, and I am no one. (17)

Lavender and Auster (1993) say "Stillman (senior) keeps popping back again throughout the book, but each time he seems to be a completely different person who has forgotten everything that has happened to him" (220). This is the last time Quinn identifies himself as Peter Stillman.

> Peter Stillman is my name, Quinn said. Stillman said, "That is my name. "It is me, Peter Stillman. Like Peter Stillman, I am Quinn, he said. "Oh. My kid if you must know. You might say that, yes. You are a dead ringer for him, that is for sure. You and Peter are obviously different skin tones. Certainly not Henry Dark, although his hair is dark. However, do not humans develop and grow? Our identities shift from moment to moment. (Auster 82-83)

The fact that Stillman has not recognized Quinn in any of their subsequent three encounters suggests that the older man is correct in his assumption that Quinn is a fictional figure constantly in flux. In this case, Baudrillard's hyperreal combines with Quinn's many personas to simulate three different Quinn's for Peter Stillman, the father. Finally, Quinn's new identity, Peter Stillman, emerges and causes the older man to mistake it for his own, demonstrating Auster's skill in building a hyperreal world with several layers.

Similarly, Auster explores the conflict between outward appearances and the truth in *Ghosts*. Blue decides to become a detective so that he may watch Black constantly. Throughout his inquiry, he makes educated guesses about Black's identity but never reaches a definitive conclusion, forcing him to pursue the case again. His daily pattern of doing what White has instructed him to progressively develop an environment where he cannot critically evaluate the truth of the information he was given or the nature of the position he has been granted. He has suspicions and attempts to settle them by telling

himself innumerable stories about the truth of his circumstances. Still, he eventually drowns in the lack of a genuine, identifying tale, and his awareness weakens. The novel illustrates how postmodern man's inability to have meaningful conversations has led him to construct a Baudrillardian hyperreal world where isolated and disjointed people rely on artificial means of finding meaning and connecting that have little to do with the real world.

The novel *Ghosts* vividly depicts a hyperreal experience by portraying a universe created from a character's rapture for interpersonal interaction. When Blue cautiously follows Black's lead, Black finally feels confident in himself. To "show he is alive," he "needs Blue" (Auster 136).However, apart from Blue's own deluded thoughts, no actual investigative work is being done. Black, too, has come to understand the fictitious nature of their relationship and has come to terms with the hyperreal experience of always being seen.Because of this, Blue and Black's current predicament seems more real than the actual, and "that is how the real is erased" (Baudrillard 55). He keeps reporting the weekly reports to White, and his mind increasingly gets preoccupied with Black to the point that he has trouble focusing on the baseball game (because of the black Robinson) or relaxing in the theatre (because of the lack of light).

They seem to be more energetic and engaged in their made-up world, unconcerned with the outside world that may otherwise shatter their fantasy. Blue has his suspicions about the facts of the case, but he cannot seem to figure it out. The author attests that writing "takes over your life" (Auster 132) because of his experience as a report writer. A writer, in a way, does not have a life of his own. He is never truly present, even when he is. Nonetheless, they are both fixated on the possibility of finally meeting within the confines of the imagined instance. Interestingly, they "chat away like two old friends about this and that" (129), meaning that they do not want to part ways with each other after they have met. Blue, driven wild by his own curiosity, chooses to confront the source of his problems when he finally decides to go to Black's residence. To him, the mansion represents the hazy boundary between reality and the surreal. When he finally tracks down Black (or White), he hears the shocking statement, "You were the entire world to me, Blue..." You are the only constant in a world when everything else is

always flipping upside down (144). In a terrible turn of events, Blue admits that he has been living under the constant illusion of an examination case, or more accurately, that he has unwittingly participated in Dark's replicated cycle of flipping reality for a frenzied craving for contact and relevance, though in a hyperreal domain. As if that were not enough, Blue's recurrent guesses as to who Black is only served to further demonstrate his subconscious interest in the investigation. He looks for a loophole so that he may maintain his belief that there is a more reasonable explanation for the case's apparent narrative. But this just makes him more absorbed in the computer game. After going to considerable measures to remain undetected in order to identify Black, he is still skeptical that "the guy is not actually there, that even if he knows he is seeing him, it is more than probable that he is the only one who can" (126). Because the simulation of his present situation lacks any essential reality, it gives him the sensation that he is living in a dream, which is proof of the profound alienation he feels from his surroundings. He has focused every waking moment of the last year on this investigation. On the other hand, the narrator insists that "the more deeply enmeshed he becomes, the freer he is" (121).

They seem to be more energetic and engaged in their made-up world, unconcerned with the outside world that may otherwise shatter their fantasy. Black plans to hire Blue as a detective, but blue suspects this is all a deception so that Blue may learn more about Black's daily routine. He is preoccupied with following Black around and not thinking about how he got into this jam in the first place. That, as Baudrillard puts it in "The Vanishing Point of Communication" (2009) "You immobilize them more via knowledge overload than through information deprivation, so you can no longer "neutralize" them by suppression and control." (Eds. David B. Clarke et al 19) is a perceptive remark. Blue's situation is accurately characterized here; he may write and follow as much or as little as he wishes, but a hyperreal plot is at work. "He has learned a thousand things, but the only thing they have taught him is that he knows nothing, "he concludes as a consequence of his education, Spirits, he cannot discern the truth despite his best attempts. The author writes from experience when he says that drafting reports "takes over your life." A writer, in a way, does not have a life of his own. He is never truly present, even when he is (Auster 132). Nonetheless, they are both fixated on the possibility of finally meeting within the confines of the imagined instance.

Interestingly, they "chat away like two old friends about this and that" (129), meaning that they do not want to part ways with each other after they have met. Blue, driven wild by his own curiosity, chooses to confront the source of his problems when he finally decides to go to Black's residence. To him, the mansion represents the hazy boundary between reality and the surreal. When he finally tracks down Black (or White), he hears the shocking statement, "You were the entire world to me, Blue... You are the only constant in a world when everything else is always flipping upside down" (144). After the line suddenly cuts off, blue sounds sad as he admits that he has been living under the constant deception of an examination case, or more precisely, that he has accidentally participated in Black's mimicked round of flipping around reality for a frantic yearning for correspondence and importance, but in a hyperreal domain. As if that were not enough, Blue's recurrent guesses as to who Black is only served to further demonstrate his subconscious interest in the investigation. He tries to find a way to cling to another, more plausible explanation for the case's apparent progression.

Finally, Blue has postmodern identity crisis due to its hyperreal plot of deceit and pseudo communication and the existential, elusive color that results from it. As the case collapsed, so did his capacity for critical thinking and information processing, leaving him with little option but to become a storyteller. Black's motivation decreases regardless of whether he reads Thoreau's Walden. Reading it would lead to "change, and he would gradually obtain a complete grasp of his situation—that is to say, of Black, of White, of the case, of everything that concerns him," thus he is reluctant to do so (Auster, Ghosts124). But since his mind is stuck in a rut, he cannot relax by reading a book. He has become "so indolent as to reduce his existence to no life at all" due to his work as a correspondent for White (127). Feeling that he is "just half alive at best, experiencing the world only through words, existing only through the lives of others, "he does not feel like "anything at all" (127). It is only natural for someone to begin to mistrust the authenticity of everything when they are compelled to live a fake, mechanical existence for the benefit of another person's yearning for belonging and relevance. Perhaps it is not surprising that he makes his home in "no man's land, the position you arrive to at the end of the world" (115), or that it is there that he "discovers that words do not always act" (138). Auster's Ghosts echoes Baudrillard's concept of the hyperreal, which he says

results from “the continuation of the notion of alienation” (Smith 96). In today's cyber era, however, this alienation has reached a pinnacle, and the postmodern man no longer searches for reality or the long-lost twin. This is because even simulations may now pass for true reality. According to Baudrillard (1997), “the blue thoughts have been consumed by this strange new career, in which media is not a replica but rather a compelling illusion. It is a “image when there is nothing to see,” a “obsceneness of the real,” or a perfectly accurate depiction of reality that defines the hyperreal in artistic practice (Auster 31). Blue is probably a modern man who does not give much thought to his own identity since he lets the night, his mundane job of basic tracking and reporting, and his love of baseball consume him. Even a New Yorker in the twentieth century, whose environment renders him “dissociated and distracted,” would find themselves in this condition if they were honest with themselves (Martin151). It is Martin’s contention that “the hyperreal intimately corresponds to American culture” (151).

“Nothing could be more vivid, explosive, tumultuous, and active than the streets of New York,” Baudrillard says. “They are packed with people, bustle, and marketing, each by turn aggressive or casual”(Baudrillard 18). It is all set-in modern- day New York, where people routinely pretend to be someone else by changing their appearance or profession, where words have lost their meaning due to cultural degradation and the profusion of misleading information, and where “we do not know where we are... but in a false position” (Auster 127).

The narrative framework of Auster’s *Ghosts* deliberately blurs the boundaries between reality and simulation, allowing the hyperreal to masquerade as a plausible reality. Black’s postmodern isolation and need for connection drive him to build a reality he values, as shown in the novella. This supposedly results from a world devoid of social interactions due to the absence of people. Since Black’s identity has been destroyed, he may be able to put it back together with blue’s help, provided the simulation is running. Unfortunately, blue is the one who suffers as a consequence of this victimization, which plunges him into a surreal state in which he is always alone, overpowered, and confused about who he is. The tale comes to a tragic end, which is in line with what is hoped to be accomplished via hyperrealism, indicating that the simulation was effective.

A step farther is taken in *The Locked Room* in terms of replicating the effect of doubling and how the borders of reality and non-reality have become blurred. The doubling of Fanshawe and "I," as Bernstein (1999) claims in "The Question Is the Story Itself in Detecting Texts" "helps to motivate the story's plot and that plot, in turn, impinges on the doub1ing" (9). The novel begins with an explanation of the two personality's mutual dependence on one another:

> It seems to me now that Fanshawe was and ways there. He is the Place Where everything begins for nie, and without him I would hardly know who I am ... Whenever I think of my childhood now, I see Fanshawe. He was the one who was with me, the one who shared by thoughts the one I saw whenever I looked up from myself. (Auster 235)

They were almost identical twins who grew up together, shared everything, and became "blood-brothers." According to Fanshawe's mom:

> The similarities between you and him are striking. Like brothers, or maybe even twins, you two always did. When you were younger, I recall getting you two mixed up from afar. I had no idea which of you belonged to me. (261)

As Bernstein (1999) analyzes the initial word of the line, "seems," "posits the precarious character of many affirmations throughout the narrative; concurrently Fanshawe's ubiquitous link to awareness is preserved" (Bernstein, "The Question Is the Story Itself. in Detecting Texts" 50). The narrator and Fanshawe have been close friends in their youth, with their selves intertwining and overlapping, as signified by their act of mixing their blood through finger pricking at age seven. The disappearance of Fanshawe seems that his self is Separated from that of Fanshawe, yet the absence of Fanshawe is a residue that must be contained in the presence of the narrator's self: In a sense, Fanshawe was a specter I carried about with me. A mythical beast from long ago, something that no longer exists (Auster 236). Each of the two protagonists is trying to balance out the other. When the protagonist ostensibly assumes control of Fanshawe's life, the identity crisis reaches its climax. An encounter between the narrator and his suppressed other, like the

endings of the two preceding pieces, leaves the protagonist in a condition of ambiguity. The postmodern phenomena of fluid and merging identities is emphasized by the complete absorption of the multiple selves.

Quinn and Blue, who become aware of the degradation of their own selves while investigating other selves, the start of the quest after Fanshawe's disappearance gradually evolves into the fall of the "I", parallel to the effacing of Fanshawe, his double. Sophie is left in charge of deciding whether or not to publish Fanshawe's papers after the narrator leaves: Then I carefully made my way downstairs with the two luggage in tow. They weighed as much when combined as a man. (246). The immense weight of the suitcases lies in the fact Fanshawe is himself embodied in his own writings. The narrator's decision to carry the suitcases with him signifies his decision to release the Fanshawe inside him. This initiates the struggle of the two selves, real and illusion, within the same whole body.

In postmodernist literature, we get insight into the fractured essence of the self via the eyes of the characters' mirror images. Jean Baudrillard once said, "anything that redoubles, even ordinary, daily reality, falls in the same stroke under the sign of art, and becomes beautiful". This means that even the most banal action may be transformed into art in the postmodern society. In truth, representation is inevitable; there is no actual world, thus we have no way of knowing where the boundary between art and reality is. Every moment of our lives, we are both the framer and the framed. Readers of postmodern American literature will be aware with the Baudrillardian notion, stated in *Simulacra and Simulations* (1994) that the infinite production of pictures has led to an evacuation of the real (which is itself nothing but a consequence of textual representation).

The story's doubles are intriguing since their personalities might be so different. Since Flower and Stone are never mentioned again in the book *The Music of Chance*, it is reasonable to assume that they are a double act for Nashe and Pozzi. Even though Nashe and Pozzi do not physically exist, their doppelgängers do. "Flower was all agitation and lunging good will, yet there was something crude about him, Nashe sensed," (Auster70) referring to a "rough edge of concern" that gave the impression that Flower was at war

with himself. Nashe may be at conflict with that individual, but what he is really fighting is his hidden identity, his alter ego. Like Flower, Nashe would rather not worry about anything. At the book's climax, the narrator exclaims, "You are driving so quickly. In reaction, Nashe floored the gas and accelerated to eighty mph. He asked himself, "What did Murks know about driving" (216). Despite his best efforts, Flower does not appear to care much about this. Flower retorts, "Not exactly, but we nurture other things." The fertile ground of our thoughts is where our interests and emotions grow. I do not care how much money you have. If there is no passion in your life, it is not worth living (78). "Despite his denial that he was changing, Nashe is often heard saying things like," Nashe gives up all his responsibilities and starts driving without any concept of where he is headed."

In *The Book of Illusions* (2011), David Zimmer is practically a mirror image of Hector Mann and is forced to live out Mann's multiple personas. Both Hector and Zimmer are forced to reinvent themselves after experiencing tragedy. After suffering a loss of identity, individuals are forced to take stock of them, which ultimately aids in their reintegration into society. Although *The New York Trilogy* (1987) is the most known example of Auster's investigation into whether "illusions" conceal an underlying truth or only serve to obscure the lack of any reality, this inquiry is not exclusive to The Book of Illusions. But it accomplishes something none of his previous works have done before: it makes us wonder whether art is worth anything at all, whether it helps or hurts or even if it is the only life we have. The very designation, "name," proclaims itself to be an artistic creation. It is the only book of its sort that I am aware of that focuses only on one medium of representation and framing, and that medium is film. Moreover, I would argue that the novel orders an oddly harmonious connection between craftsmanship and death, and that Auster's particular brand of postmodernism is spooky by religious inquiries, similar to Baudrillard's, so God, whether he exists or not, is never far away managing life, craftsmanship, and passing. Paul Auster often features characters who have creative aspirations in his stories. Zimmer learns about Hector's upheavals in life through Alma's perspective. Like Zimmer, Hector's life spans several relocations during which he experiences intense isolation and ultimately loses touch with who he is. Hector's confused upbringing is best shown by the contradictory statements he made regarding his

birthplace in early interviews. The tragic event that follows his absence is the shooting death of Brigid O'Fallon, his lover, by Dolores Saint John, his would-be wife. His disappearance stands as a metaphor for the loss of his identity. He is inconsolable at having disposed of Brigid's corpse and covering up her death. This sets Hector out on his journey of self-examination and vindication. After abandoning his previous persona of Hector Mann, he adopts a new one as Herman Loesser. As Alma explains it:

> Hector's moustache was long gone by the time he arrived at Central Station on the morning of January 15th. He hid his identity by disguising himself by deleting the trait that made him most easily recognized. A cap was stuck in the bend of the curving pipe behind the toilet. Hector fished it out and saw that it was really a hard helmet for the workers.... That is when he saw the name "Herman Loesser" scrawled in pen along the inside leather band. He thought it was a fine name, maybe even a great one, and certainly no worse than any other.... Herman Loesser. People who read it could think it means "Loser," while those who say "Lesser" might be offended. No matter what it was, Hector thought he would finally discover the name that fit him. The next step is an addition, which follows the subtraction. Hector with no must ache and with a hat. When he walked out of the men's room that morning, he looked like anybody or nothing since the two procedures had nullified each other. (Auster143-44)

The way he picks up a new identity signifies arbitrariness of life. His disguise as other person not only saves him from getting recognized but also aids in looking at his own self from a distance. Because of his identity as Herman Loesser, he can lead a relatively inconspicuous existence, which allows him to avoid thinking about his troubled background. The fortuitous encounter Hector has with Frieda Spelling is a pivotal moment in the journey of self-discovery he is on. While he was at the bank, she walks in and immediately recognized him from his films. Even though she could not place the face immediately, she knew she would recognize the man within thirty seconds (193-94). But before she could say anything, a robber takes hold of her from behind and places a gun on

temple of her forehead. Hector plunges into a fight with the robbers and saves her life while himself getting injured. As Alma tells Zimmer:

> Hector did not consciously decide to get back up when he fell, but as soon as his knee hit the floor, he did. He was not trying to be brave, and he definitely was not trying to end up dead, but whatever else he was feeling at the time, fear was not one of them. He did not remember the pistol going off, the bullet ripping through his chest and knocking him to the ground, or Frieda escaping the man's grasp. (194-95)

Frieda is the one to take him to the hospital, and his time spent there recovering represents a rebirth. The couple's appreciation for one another is the glue that ultimately led to their marriage. Hector abandons the name Herman Loesser once again since it stands for everything negative in his life. Taking Frieda's surname, he is once again identified as Hector, albeit now as Hector Spelling rather than Hector Mann. After getting married and relocating to the ranch, Frieda insisted he return to filmmaking because she knew it was "the one thing in the world that made sense to him" (207). Like Zimmer, Hector finds meaning and solace in his professional expertise. He starts directing movies on the ranch with the help of Frieda and hired actors. These movies turn out to be more advanced and improved than his earlier ones but destined to be annihilated.

Sylvia Meers, a whore in Chicago, becomes another means of Hector's self-affliction. He becomes her partner in live sex performances for the rich. For a while, Hector dresses up and does live performances as a porn star alongside her as a means of humiliating himself to the point where he can accept death daily. "Squalor has its own benefits, Hector replied, going over her head," writes Auster. Who better to accompany a cold-blooded guy into his grave than a hot-blooded woman (Auster, The Book of Illusions 181). The mask that he uses gives him the illusion of anonymity so that he performs like a nobody and in doing so, saves himself from being Hector Mann. However, this errand is culminated with Sylvia recognizing his real identity. The fact that he constantly hides his face behind a mask throughout these sexual exploits emphasizes the total depersonalization that results. The performative body, however, is foreshadowed in Mr. Nobody, another of Hector's previously mentioned works. Hector's metamorphosis

into invisibility serves as a social and cultural conscience in this film on how easy it is for commercial culture to obliterate one's unique identity.

In Mr Nobody, Hector, normally invisible, rediscovers himself through the many guises he assumes to exact his vengeance. These deeds portend future occurrences in his life and pave the way for a succession of rebirths involving his multiple personas. In this made-up movie, the mirror scene plays a pivotal role. Hector will be able to see himself in the mirror after he returns home and the liqueur's effects wear off. He spends several long minutes staring at his reflection:

> The expression on his face remains the same, and as he peers into the eyes of the man staring back at him from the wall, it's as if he's looking at a stranger, encountering the face of a man he has never seen before. [...] He is no longer looking at the old Hector. He is someone else now, and however much he might resemble the person he used to be, he has been reinvented, turned inside out, and spat forth as a new man. (Auster 52)

Peacock claims that despite his renewed vitality, the "true" him is dissolving and the self is being torn apart as a result. Hector's life exemplifies how easy it is to become Mr. Anybody" (66).

In a similar vein, Pilar represents an alternate or mirrored self of Miles throughout *Sunset Park* (2010). In his mind, Miles has cast Pilar as a double of himself, shedding light on the struggle she faces between the promise of a bright future and the weight of the expectations others have placed on her. When Pilar and Miles first meet in a Florida park, they are both reading copies of *The Great Gatsby*, and Pilar quickly exposes that she is a mirror image of Miles (Auster 8). But beneath her sight Miles narcissistically thinks that 'he is the only person who exists for her on the face of the world.' Remember that encountering Pilar's eyes is a moment of non-seeing, a time of seeing himself (14). When it comes to her dedication to reading and learning, Pilar is not unlike young Miles. He, the young guy with no goals in life, the college dropout who rejected the perks of his former life of affluence, has decided to become ambitious on her behalf and see how far she will go. In return, Miles identifies with Pilar as a time before the traumatic death of

his stepbrother (11). For Miles, Pilar is a representation of his past self, and he hopes that she would someday "move on to medical school and become a doctor" instead of pursuing a career in nursing (12). Medical school, we later learn, was one of Miles's own squandered ambitions (67). Pilar's future, here, is not one she constructs but one that Miles has lost, his past aspirations deferred onto his young lover.

On her visit to New York, Miles again figures Pilar in terms that call to mind her hopeful future while limiting that future to the language of his own past. In one very long sentence, Miles swings from denying that he is 'telling her what to do' to ossifying her future in his imagination, fixing a picture of her adulthood in his mind: "For a split second, he saw Pilar as she would be in ten or twenty years, when she had fully blossomed into the woman she was destined to become. She would be confident and strong, but she would still carry the shadow of the thoughtful girl or young lady he was strolling with now." (206-7). Miles's presumed knowledge of Pilar's future strikingly occurs at a moment when she refuses to vocalize her own intentions, a moment when 'for once Pilar was silent, not willing to share her thoughts with him' (206). Here we find Pilar's future once again pulled away from her, posited according to the desires of her lover at a time when she does not speak, just as she is refused the ability to narrate within the tapestry of the novel.

Miles also figures Pilar as the double of Mary-Lee's current stage role, imagining that he will guide her into New York gradually, "letting her tell him when she was ready to go in up to her waist, up to her neck, and if and when she wanted to put her head under" (204-5). Miles's terminology invokes Mary-Lee's role in Samuel Beckett's Happy Days, in which she begins the play covered in sand to her waist and, in the second act, to her neck. Yet, even Miles recognizes that Pilar bucks this projection, more closely resembling the passionate real-life Mary-Lee than her onstage persona. Having researched the city in advance, 'Pilar ran into the lake with flapping arms [...] gliding along as smoothly as a practiced veteran' (Auster 205). Pilar's passionate reaction to city life, her commitment to experimentation, resonates with what Miles earlier termed 'her emotional excesses, her combustibility' (14). This attitude echoes Mary-Lee's own volatile and intense moods, Morris calling her 'the queen of excess, the Madonna of

naked feelings' (275). The affiliation lends Pilar the same flexible quality possessed by Mary-Lee, one reinforced by the young girl's status as an archive of those around her. Recall that Pilar abhors the idea of parenthood and its disruption of the future, a disinterest similarly expressed by adaptive artist-archivists Renzo and Mary- Lee. Pilar, then, stands as one of their kind, and her amorphous nature is at once acknowledged and foreclosed by Miles and Morris.

In Miles's and Morris's imaginations, Pilar stands prior to the future's determining moment, when the present fans out into several options, embodying the uncanny subject of Renzo's essay: 'the things that don't happen, the lives not lived' (153). It is for this reason that she is, in her various associations, transported back to the time before Miles runs away, before Willa first parts with Morris, and before Suki graduates from high school, moments when alternative futures are still possible. In recreating those around her, Pilar appears to be a figure of hope for the future, a chance to make new choices and arrive at a different future untainted by trauma. This future is in one sense, impotent, only a recapitulation of others' failures, of moments already lived. Yet, the very fact that she can accommodate this universe of comparisons, that she can become the archive of so many others, suggests that, like Renzo and Mary-Lee, Pilar is naturally equipped to cycle through roles as the future unleashes itself in unforeseen ways. Although the open future that Miles and Morris imagine for her is perpetually stained by other people's grievances, Pilar's own propensity to become an archive, to record fastidiously the information imparted to her, suggests a mercurial status, a way of resisting those projections and struggling against the traumatic temporality of the present moment.

Pilar's final status, however, remains somewhat unclear, evoking the tension between two melancholic orientations that the novel never fully resolves: the wounds that spring from destroyed companionship and the ones that tarnish a detached lifestyle. When Miles compromises their happy future together by attacking the police office, Pilar is presented with two options. Threatened with the loss of Miles, Pilar's easy relationship to the future might be traumatically spoiled as she mourns their failure to secure a desired future together. Yet, as an embodied archive, Pilar also seems endowed with the

subjective openness required to spiral towards a yet unlived and unarticulated future, by moving on from Miles and into a new persona.

The abundance of scholarly work on identity and the range of approaches to it demonstrates that it is an overly complex notion. Since identity is a lifetime process, it continues to assume new forms and trajectories through deterritorialization, or "lines of flight," to use Deleuze and Guattari's terms. Moreover, identification happens among a network of complex and frequent disconnections; hence, identity is not a fixed nor complete "assemblage" but rather a continuous, turbulent process of "becoming." Considering ongoing self-other logics and the "becoming" process in fictional narratives, it is necessary to reevaluate these fascinating notions of identity.

Stuart Hall (1987) believed that the postmodern subject does not have a stable, essentialist, or permanent identity because identity has become a "moving feast" that is continually modified in connection to how we are represented and treated by various cultural systems. Identity is interestingly tied to the intersection of belonging and self-awareness (598). Further Hall (2003) correctly notes that identity does not begin at a fixed place and continue in a straight line without interruption. These are insightful ideas, which need to be further interrogated in contemporary conversations about identity conceptualizations and acknowledges that the ideas raised here are temporary and subject to more connections that lead to deterritorialization. (240)

Miles Heller, the protagonist, has spent the last seven years running away from his history. According to the book *Sunset Park*, "during the last seven years he has moved down at any number of various addresses, but he still has not been in contact" (Auster, *Sunset park* 30). Due to some frustrating issues, Miles has temporarily returned to New York, leaving his young girlfriend behind in Florida. What happens to Miles in New York is essential to the novel's narrative. Miles spends his last days in New York with his dad, stepmom, and stepbrother. They were "part of a manufactured, fabricated, and fabricated family" (21). When Miles kills his stepbrother Bobby, it is the worst thing that could happen to an artificial family. The official cause of death is a car crash, but only Miles knows the real story. That they were "a patched-together organism, something not totally whole" was symbolized by "invisible fault lines, tiny cracks" in their family

(21). Because of the growing splits, the family only meets together for meals or family vacations. Consequently, they begin to retreat from one another and their inner worlds. Flight lines exist in Miles's persona because of the fault lines. In Miles personality and the process of deterritorialization, these lines expand within the subject and cause a split. Because of the breakdown in his psyche, the subject achieves a degree of desire. On this level, the person can express his wants successfully. Flight lines or deterritorialization are now the norms for his way of life.

Similarly, the main character and imagined character in *The Book of Illusion* prioritizes action, something which seems to endorse its constant use of mobility, flight, and exile, a continuous process of uprooting or "deterritorialization." All characters introduce us the psychosocial and psychological dislocation. They are victims of external factors as well as internal which are responsible for this kind of dislocation. Zimmer has lost his family and is left to mourn over his loss. This disrupts him badly. Hector is also facing psychosocial dislocation. His wife's mistake has compelled him to leave the world of glory and fame, hiding his identity. The novel provides more account of the unreliability of Zimmer, who has faced trauma due to his losses, as well as his mourning times in which he fell into the habit of heavy drinking and solitude. He seeks escape in the films of Hector Mann. He writes a book on Hector explaining Mann's existence characterized after moving away from the social sphere, by regular casting and wearing the masks of different identities in never-ending role play.

As protagonist David Zimmer travels extensively to view the twelve known films starring the fictional silent comedic actor Hector Mann, Zimmer's narrative reminds readers that Hector's films were somehow tied to—if not overshadowed by—Hector's disappearance and death. The very first sentences of the novel establish this link "Everyone thought he was dead". After publishing my book on his films in 1988, Hector Mann was silent for the next sixty years." (1). Of course, as the novel unfolds and readers discover that Hector was alive in 1988, the discovery (for both readers and David Zimmer) is much more dramatic under the premise that the man is dead and explaining Hector's disappearance is not even central for Zimmer's Book about Hector. Still, Hector's absence is prominent in The Book of Illusions.

Debra Shostak in her article "*In the Country of Missing Persons: Trauma in Paul Auster's Fiction*." examines the topic of loss and sorrow in Paul Auster's novels. She also interprets the protagonist's rhizomatic anguish as a desire for self-awareness. Shostak argues that Auster's focus on chance makes the necessity for control over the unpredictability of loss more important. Auster's writing displays a recurrent preoccupation with luck, in its many guises, whether it be a fortunate serendipity or random chance (68). So, Shostak analyzes how Auster's persona displays symptoms of rhizomatic pain and sadness by way of a confluence of events.

Jim Nashe of *The Music of Chance* (1991) gets the insurance money after his father's death which marks the beginning of his encounter with this "order of events" (Auster, 1). Like elsewhere, Auster projects an absence of a father or father figure, which can also be traced to his life. This overpowering sense of the loss of a father, in Auster's fiction, is usually accompanied by getting a considerable amount of money out of the blue. *The Music of Chance* is no exception. Nashe becomes profoundly affected by these events commencing from his father's death and then movingaway from his wife, sending his daughter to live with his insurance sister, and getting money. Contemplating these incidents, he cannot let go of their significance. He buys a red Saab, drives to Minnesota to meet his daughter, and finds her more comfortable with her cousin. He plans to go back to Massachusetts but by chance, he misses the way and enters the wrong road. Following the wrong track, he realizes the aimlessness of his trek and continues on that path. His journey extends for one whole year shrinking his money in the vagaries of life. Then a momentous meeting between Jack Pozzi and Nashe takes place through the agency of chance which takes both to the millionaire mansion to play poker. Pozzi seems to be a personification of events as his friends call him "Jackpot" due to his continuous winnings in poker.

Aliki Varvogli quotes one of Auster's remarks in her work, The World, that is the Book, "no life unfolds in a straight line. We are always prey to everyday uncertainties... And our lives are made up of random events" (Varvogli 127) which verifies the above-stated case. Nashe seems aware of the contingencies hovering over his life for some time. He decides to lend his ten thousand dollars to Pozzi to play the game. It is seen that the

two millionaires, Flower and Stone, acquire money by winning a lottery that again represents a chance event. Unpredictability again preoccupies Nashe, and both lose the game and become prisoners in the meadow of the millionaires. The punishment they must complete is the construction of a wall, "whose roots lay in the impenetrable concatenation of a succession of accidental occurrences" (Alford120).

Postmodern literature, according to Umberto Eco (1994), takes place in a rhizomatic environment where the characters' fictional realities are interconnected. According to him, all paths in this universe lead back to all other paths. One possible rephrasing of this is "no path out into complete meaning or absolute assurance." (90).This rhizomatic arrangement is seen in the *City of Glass*. Throughout the narrative, Quinn takes on several personas, from the writer Daniel Quinn to William Wilson to Max Work to Paul Auster to a nameless, faceless mythical character. Life's meaning may be found for many individuals only in the metropolis. As a result, there is no feeling of ultimate truth or value in fictional worlds, and widespread uncertainty and skepticism prevail.

City of Glass demonstrates how even a little disruption, such as an unanticipated phone call, may have a dramatic impact on a system. As a result of his interactions with new people and puzzles, Quinn's sense of self continues to fragment and take him in more improbable paths. Finally, he provides convincing evidence that the self is a "connective synthesis" (Deleuze and Guattari41), "part of an all- encompassing system of systems that interact with each other" (123). As an example, the plot of "*City of Glass*" begins when detective fiction author Daniel Quinn (real name: William Wilson) is mistaken for Paul Auster of the Austertive Agency. When Quinn takes on the investigation under the guise of Paul Auster, he discovers that the real Paul Auster in New York is a writer and not a private investigator. Because of this, there will be more fictitious profiles created. Together with Quinn and the narrative voice of The New York Trilogy, the deterritorialization of Auster's life in *City of Glass* effectively erases him from the canon. Quinn, after all, decides to impersonate Paul Auster when the strange telephone call reaches him for the second time:

> "Hello? "He repeated. As in, "How can I help you? At long end, the voice said, "yes. "It was the same strained, robotic voice. "Yes. We urgently

> need it. “Right away. “And may I inquire as to whose company you seek? “It is always the same guy. Auster. That guy who goes by the name “Auster. “Here, Quinn did not think twice. He had planned, and now the moment had come to put his plan into action. ‘Talking,’ he proclaimed. Hello, this is Auster. (125)

From this point on, Quinn will conduct his amateur sleuthing under the guise of Paul Auster. In a similar vein, White, “clearly not the guy he seems to be” (Auster 136), hires private investigator Blue to follow a man named Black, who turns outto be White in the end since “there never was such a man as White” (182). A mask, worn by a guy Blue assumes to be White but also by Black in the climactic moment, is the sole link between the two despite the strong suspicion that Black is indeed White. *Ghosts* is the novel in which the link between the real world and the fictional one is most overt and direct. As the case Blue works on throughout Ghosts takes shape, and he grasps its eternal nature, Blue is faced with the spirit of his subject and concludes that he is:

> being sustained only by verbal exchange only existing through vicariously experiencing the experiences of others. It may not be so horrible if the book were really intriguing. Basically, he may be sucked into the plot... But there is nothing in this book that might help him. This book consists of nothing more than a guy sitting in a room by himself and penning words. Blue concludes that this is it, and he wants no part of it. The question now is, “How can we escape? “As long as he is trapped within, he will have to keep writing the book on how to escape the chamber. (202)

Blue varies only slightly from Quinn. Since Blue is an actual detective, it is not unreasonable to think that Blue expects to solve “The case that seems simple enough”

(161) in rational, compelling, Max Work fashion. Like the *City of Glass, Ghosts* deconstructs the detective story to present a world where “nothing is real except chance” (Auster 3). Blue’s realization, however, that his existence is (and can only ever be) within words puts Blue in the same boat as Quinn, but at “a different stage of awareness of what [the words are] about” (Auster 346). Despite Blue’s ability to rule out an escape, his

determination to resolve the Black case the same way he resolved his past problems inhibits his ability to enjoy the intermezzo and "get caught up in the drama." Leaving "the room that is the book" and "boarding a train...and traveling out West to start a new life" or "even sailing to China," Ghost's last words depict blue embarking on a new adventure. Okay, then China it is (232). Both Blue's departure and Quinn's disappearance are framed by the first-person "I" introduced by the anonymous narrator. Blue is trapped in the chamber that is the New York City phone directory because his life is "all set out in black and white" (224). "The setting is New York, not China; the time is now; and neither one will ever change," is central to blue's thesis (161).

Although the first two parts of *The Locked Room* appear to end with very few questions answered and even fewer identities verified, the unnamed and, in a sense, anonymous narrator gives answers and consistency between the first two episodes in a sentence near the end:

> Without knowing how things turned out in the end, I would never have begun writing this novel. All three books—City of Glass, Ghosts, and this one—are equally excellent. By the end, I realized that all three accounts told the same tale, but that they only reflected various points in my own development of understanding. (Auster 294)

The central character in *The Locked Room* is Fanshawe, whom the narrator describes as "there for you, and yet at the same time [. . .] inaccessible" (210), leading us to speculate that Auster's work is about the enigma of one's own identity and the impossibility of fully understanding it. Multiple instances of impersonation and the use of the same names for (perhaps) distinct personalities lend credence to this theory. It is not quite clear who wrote what in *The New York Trilogy*, where Quinn poses as Auster, Black looks to play White, and the narrator of *The Locked Room* claims to be the author of *City of Glass* and *Ghosts.*

As argued by Deleuze (1996) in The logic of sense "There is no unitary self, but rather unidentified processes of "becoming" as the opposite of the fixed identity" (177). And thus, in Deleuze's view:

> the paradox of this pure becoming, with its capacity to elude the present, is the paradox of infinite identity (the infinite identity of both direction or senses at the same time – of future and past, of day before and day after, of more and less, of too much and not enough, of active and passive, of cause and effect. (2)

Paul Auster's book seerves as a metaphor for becoming, disconnection, and the disintegration of the "self" to explain how to articulate the ideas of transition, disconnection, and self-division. Auster's works contribute to postmodern cultural discussion because of their reflexivity, self-awareness, fragmentation and discontinuity, ambiguity, simultaneity, and emphasis on numerous subjects. A look at Auster's work reveals that all these components are connected to the theme of identity construction.

Auster's protagonists struggle with their identities throughout the books. This may be seen as an expression of their lack of self-awareness or direction in life before embarking on the adventures into the parallel world they have created for themselves. His characters are insatiable in their quest for self-awareness. As a result, they have a hard time defining themselves in a constantly shifting and chaotic world. Mr. Blank in Travels in the Scriptorium, Quinn in the *City of Glass*, the narrator of *The Locked Room*, Nashe in *The Music of Chance*, Hector Mann in *The Book of Illusions*, and others who offer fake identities are all striving to discover out who they really are. The three main characters, Black, Blue, and White, all spend miles in *Sunset Park* searching for themselves.

Fredric Jameson (1983) in his book *Postmodernism and Consumer Society*, understands the over-representation of pictures and media messages, and compares it to the psychosis of schizophrenia:

> Material signifiers in the schizophrenic's perception are fragmented and do not flow into one another, creating a sense of disorientation and disjointedness. Since our sense of identity is tied to the idea that "I" and "me" continue through time, a schizophrenic cannot understand the concept of personal identity in the way that we do. (119)

Postmodern schizophrenia, according to Fredric Jameson, is a terrifying collapse of the "self." Furthermore, Auster's books have a rupture between sensation and meaning, resulting in a confluence of what is actual and imagined. Auster's works might thus be understood as a symbolic universe full of similes inside the domain of schizophrenia. Because of the schizophrenic use of words, people, time, and place in Auster's books, walls are broken down into a permanent presence in each of his works.

It has been observed that fragmentation of "self" can be seen in postmodern schizophrenia, which has been defined as an explosion of fragmented mirrors that creates a reflective space for speculation about perception and time, as well as the representation of the "self" concerning these two concepts.

Stillman Senior, a character from Auster's first book, the *City of Glass* (1985), is a good illustration of this:

> It is Stillman's mug. Also: Stillman's from the 1990s. Not knowing whether this will be the face of tomorrow. This, however, is not the visage of a crazed individual. Is this not a valid argument, then? Seems harmless, even lovely, to my untrained eye. Even a touch of softness around the lips. Most likely they will have blue eyes that are prone to tears. Hair was fine even back then, so it is possible that what is left is now completely gray or perhaps white. He reminds me of someone I know, but in a strange way: he is the contemplative sort who is probably quite anxious and could stammer as he struggles to control the words that are bursting out of his lips. (39)

In this section, Quinn, the detective, describes Stillman from his point of view, and Quinn's personality is inferred from a picture he possesses of Stillman. When it comes to Stillman, Auster does not share his thoughts and emotions with the reader, even though the book relies on him as a character for most of its plot. As a result, the reader is left to deduce Stillman's personality traits based on cues provided in the text. Stillman is only one of many psychotic characters in Auster's work.

Hence, Peter Stillman Sr. is the suspect, father, and mad linguist who could pose a threat to Stillman Jr after having been locked away in an asylum for thirteen years. This mad linguist, Stillman Sr., has served a sentence for having conducted a cruel experiment on his son Stillman Jr., locking him up in a dark room for nine years from age two to eleven. The purpose of this singular experiment was to make his son forget his native English and instead start speaking Adam's lost tongue, the language of God. However, in the end, the only concrete result of this radical endeavor was quite evident his son, Stillman Jr., went mad.

This is readily demonstrated in Stillman Jr's lengthy and schizophrenic introduction of himself to Quinn: "I am Peter Stillman. Please do not call me that; it is not my true name. My actual identity is that of Peter Rabbit. I am Mr. White in the winter and Mr. Green in the summer. Do with this what you will. My words are entirely my own." (18). Even for a would-be detective like Quinn, it is easy to understand that Stillman Jr, now in his mid-twenties, has been through a trauma of gigantic proportions. As Baudrillard puts it:

> Reality no longer has the time to take on the appearance of reality. It no longer evens surpasses fiction: it captures every dream even before it takes on the appearance of a dream. Schizophrenic vertigo of these serial signs, for which no counterfeit, no sublimation is possible. (qtd. in C. Baker and al. 163)

Another character is Daniel Quinn, who is an author of detective novels and a widower. In Jameson's concept of schizophrenia, he would be in a perpetual present because language does not give him a sense of personal identity or coherent memories. Aside from that, he has "isolated, unconnected, discontinuous material signifiers that do not link together into a cohesive sequence." "He does not believe in himself anymore."(5). Finally, he assumes the persona of "Paul Auster," as if to swap off one mask for another. When it comes to Peter Stillman, the man Quinn was recruited to tail, his obsession grows. The idea that we may "become masters of words we utter, to make language meet our wants," as Quinn puts it, is central to Stillman's fantasies (98).

Quinn indeed suffers from schizophrenic vertigo when he grapples to understand and read his suspect. But if he ultimately fails, it is certainly not for lack of trying, since being a writer Quinn is equipped with both imagination and creativity. Hence, Quinn dutifully follows the meandering walks of the disheveled Stillman Sr in Morningside Heights and tries very hard to read his erratic behavior. These meandering walks could, of course, be seen as our detective entering the labyrinth. In that sense, we are not certain whether Professor Stillman is walking arbitrarily through the run-down streets of Morningside Heights or whether, as in labyrinths, there are underlying patterns to be detected. However, in post-modernity, there are no definitive answers, only more questions. Hence, once again, we are not certain whether Quinn's conclusions are accurate. Since there were two Stillman's at Grand Central Station, we are not even sure that this disheveled individual Quinn has identified the suspect he has been assigned to tail. This is also evident from Quinn's remarks of deep resignation when being confronted with two Stillman's: "There was no way to know: not this, not anything" (56).

Like the *City of Glass*, the novella *Ghosts* starts with a random event when White enters Blués empty office and he commissions him to follow a man named Black., Blue then passes through similar stages as Quinn, as he observes his suspect Black, while simultaneously his mental health deteriorates.

As Ilana Shiloh puts it "If Quinn started out as a fully rounded character aspiring to reach "salutary emptiness," Blue (the main protagonist of *Ghosts*) "undergoes an inverse process" (60). Therefore, Blue is a two-dimensional individual that develops a three-dimensional (and mad) personality via contemplation. To keep tabs on Black, White employs the services of private investigator Blue. Blue, who has moved into an alley house across from Black's flat, recounts his subject's daily routine: "Black writes, reads, shops in the area, and takes the odd walk" (Auster, *Ghosts*185). After years of observation and recording, Blue finally gains access to Black's apartment and reads the detailed reports he has written on Black. Black confesses that he hired Blue to observe his behavior "to remind himself of what he was supposed to be doing," and White confirms that they are the same person (230). In the face of Blue's relentless scrutiny, Black is brought back to reality:

> You were everywhere I looked, constantly within sight, following me about like a shadow, and staring into my very soul. Blue, you were my whole universe, and I made you the instrument of my own destruction. The one constant, the only thing that flips everything on its head, is you. (Auster 231)

There is an unidentified, first-person narrator in the novel *The Locked Room* who is obsessed with Fanshawe, the author's boyhood pal, and creative prodigy. While writing Fanshawe's biography, the narrator discovers an unexpected path to success and marital bliss—he marries his subject's wife, adopts his kid, and even sleeps with Fanshawe's mother. If he subsequently becomes willing to murder Fanshawe after the poison and the insanity have totally taken over his body and mind, it is because he wants to greedily take up as much of Fanshawe's past life as possible.

Just like Quinn and Blue, "the narrator is researching his friend's life in the hope of finding coherence and a source of motivation" (Double 164). The narrator´s detective quest into Fanshawe´s life becomes once again a labyrinth where he (the narrator) is desperately seeking patterns and 'hunts for clues' (282). Hence, just like Quinn and Blue, he stretches himself to the limit and beyond in "putting up a timeline of a man's life by researching his past and identifying significant events and people." (Auster 268). This quest also takes the narrator to Fanshawe´s mother to go through a vast number of letters from Fanshawe. If he (the narrator), in all his obsessiveness to find and confront Fanshawe, suffers from declining mental health, it is the events there in Fanshawe´s mother´s home that really push him straight into the abyss. The tipping point to madness is when the narrator and Mrs. Fanshawe end up drunkenly, violently, having sex, fully aware that she is fantasizing about "fucking her own son" (266) and the narrator about killing Fanshawe (Peacock 80). With this act, the narrator felt that "I had entered my own darkness" (266).

Thus, in having sex with Fanshawe's´ mother, the narrator, at some level, also has sex with his own mother. Moreover, if he now wants to kill Fanshawe, it is also in a remote sense his own father he wants to kill since he has always tried to measure up to him as a role model of what a man should be. If Fanshawe had been someone impossible

to measure up to, he now becomes the person the narrator without a name wants to eliminate in the 'Oedipal triangle in which Fanshawe is cast in the role of the father (Shiloh 93). However, as Ilana Shiloh points out, 'the realization of the Oedipal fantasy, even in partial terms (the possession of the mother), conduces to the disintegration of the ego... (and)... thus precipitates the dissolution of the narratoŕs self' (93-94). In addition, it also ruins the chances 'of redemption or of a second chance (which would) imply freedom from guilt, and the narrator finds himself enmeshed in a web of lies and deceit' (94). Subsequently, things completely unravel when the narrator's quest, now with the fully-fledged intention to kill Fanshawe, brings him to France, where he suffers a complete mental meltdown.

After losing his wife and two young children in an aircraft disaster, Zimmer, like the typical Auster protagonists, tries to start again by abandoning his "half-human" lifestyle and immersing himself in a state of numbness. In *The Book of Illusions,* Auster explores the issue of identity loss through the lens of the protagonist's quest for his or her own identity. A profound feeling of emptiness, despair, and the inability to find a reason to continue a life follow the loss in the narrative. The feeling of loss liberates him from his inflated self-esteem and aids him in creating his own identity. "Wondering around the world, looking at silent comedies," is how David escapes his problems (Auster 6). Also, publishing a book about Hector Mann would be an effort to transcend the emptiness of existence. To him, "books, language, and the written world would be a way of life" (7). Silent films provide a glimmer of optimism and a fresh lease of life to his depressing lifestyle:

> Gazed outside his bedroom window and examined his hands. Not that Frieda did not face challenges as well; it is only that he was considerably weaker and defenseless compared to her. She had the mental fortitude to understand that the boy's death was accidental, that he had perished because he was allergic to bees, but Hector saw it as a sign from above. (5)

After losing his children and her wife in a plane crash Zimmer isolate, disconnected him self from the society, gives up working and spends his days while watching television

and consuming alcohol. In the beginning of the novel, Auster describes his messy status of mind in the following way:

> The events of that summer are mostly a blur to me. Over the course of a few months, I drank myself into a stupor of depression and self-pity, seldom leaving the home and making little effort to care for myself beyond drinking and moping. Since most of my coworkers were away from early July until mid-August, I did not have to endure numerous visits or participate in the painful rituals of community grieving. I always welcomed my friends into my home, and I know they meant well, but their emotional hugs and lengthy, awkward silences never helped. I realized that being on my own, enduring the days in the gloom of my mind, was preferable. (Auster 8)

In *The Book of Illusions*, Hector Mann pays no heed to Brigid O'Fallon's love forhim. This leads into the latter's committing suicide. Following lines reflects the situation:

> Two days after he had walked out on her in October, she had slit her wrists in the bathtub. If not for the water that had dripped down into the apartment below, the landlady never would have unlocked the door, and Brigid would not have been found until it was too late. An ambulance took her to the hospital. She pulled through after a couple of days, but her mind had crumbled, she wrote, she was incoherent and weeping all the time, and the doctors decided to hold her for observation. That led to a two-month stay in the mental ward. She was prepared to spend the rest of her life there, but that was only because her one purpose in life now was to find a wayto kill herself, and it made no difference where she was. (6)

Not only Brigid but also her father is the symbols of human's mental weakness and depression. Hector describes the latter in the following words:

> The man lived in a domain of mute inwardness, of unending resistance against the world, and he seemed to float through his days with no other purpose than to use up the hours as painlessly as possible. He never lost

> his temper; he seldom cracked a smile. He was fair-minded and detached, absent even when present, and he showed no more compassion or sympathy for himself than he did for anyone else. (7)

The first few lines of *Sunset Park* (2010) provide an account of Miles Heller's workplace, which has had a profound effect on his way of thinking. Indeed, the novel presents Florida as a "nowhere country of damaged and deserted dwellings" (15), against which Miles must battle for existence, creating a postmodern sense of absence, instability, and insecurity. Everything around him reeks of defeat, but especially the abandoned houses where "not even the neatest, most careful eradication can eliminate the stink of defeat" (5). Because of his identity crisis brought on by his encounter with this foreign realm, he compares himself to "a black speck in a snow- covered earth" (68). In spite of his confinement and annoyance, he has "learned to manage his fury and float through the world with a calm, resolute detachment [in order to] gradually resuscitate himself in the face of [...] emotional excesses" (14). His proof of the scene of loss is documented and memorialized by the digital camera he carries with him when he photographs empty, forlorn homes. As he desperately tries to piece together disjointed pieces in the hopes of uncovering coherence, he thinks the camera could magically "save his life" (7). Outside of his digital camera, he has only his books to rely on for solace: "Mostly novels, although books in general and novels in particular are nota luxury but a need for him, and he has no desire to break his reading habit." (7). As a result, Miles uses photography and literature as a way to keep the door to introspection and freedom open.

The self is further problematized by Solitude's obsession with coined spaces. As Fredric Jameson (1991) argues, "Space is for us an existential and cultural dominant" (8). The existence of the Auster in Solitude is characterized by closed spaces both physically and mentally. Auster writes:

> For him, the world has reduced to the size of this room, and he will have to remain here if it takes for him to grasp the meaning of clue. Nothing else is definite, yet his being here is required for anything else to happen. It would be ridiculous for him to continue seeking if he did not discover this place for another. (Auster 9)

The confinement forms “a site of a second birth” for the self.” (10).The “invention” is thus a paradoxical process of self-regression to attain fulfillment and meanings in a state of “solitary” emptiness. Solitude is best described as a reconstruction of the self in the real world a world which is at the same time bleak, dispersed and lost. (11)

Exploring a character’s identity the influence of their surroundings on their actions should not be disregarded. Since social contact and human relationships play a significant role in shaping an individual’s identity. Characters in Auster’s works are regularly shut off from the outside world. Mental isolation is often accompanied by physical seclusion. In their isolation, the characters search for meaning and purpose in their lives. As an analogy, Paul Auster confines him to a tiny New York City room where he is free to explore his innermost ideas and feelings:

> In a universe where simulation is king, reality has become the justification for the model. And in a peculiar twist, the actual has become our true Paradise, although a paradise that is no longer workable and can only be dreamt of in the same manner that one dreams of a lost object. (Baudrillard 122-23)

According to Baudrillard’s theory, the real has been replaced by the model, making it impossible to achieve the real. Trying to piece together the puzzle of the antagonist’s identity, Auster’s characters withdraw into seclusion in search of their own identity, which they realize only afterward. However, the hunt always alters the seeker as much as they sought. It has a corrosive effect on the characters. As the meaning of the search is left open-ended, it reflects the ambiguous nature of identity and its inherent ephemerality and flux.

For instance, in “City of Glass, “Daniel Quinn is holed up in his apartment writing mystery books; in “Ghosts,” “Blue” is in his little studio, “The Locked Room” has Jim Nashe imprisoned inside the mansion’s walls, “The Book of illusions” has David Zimmer’s name inscribed within the room, and so on. The notebooks, mansion walls, studio apartment walls, and the lives of individuals serve as models for simulating various aspects of their existence. A lack of control over one’s own identity is a primary

reason for their downfall. “You cannot penetrate the other self if you do not know yourself first,” says Auster, and his heroes prove this point throughout his novels. Since “simulation is always effective, never real,” they erase his previous existence and become “even more real than the real.” (Baudrillard 56). Everything outside of the apartment complex becomes irrelevant and non-existent to them just because of that.

Also, the Trilogy’s emphasis on Solitude – experienced by Quinn, Blue, and the anonymous “I” (the latter two being protagonists of Ghosts and The Locked Room, respectively) -a central theme in the Trilogy may well recall the reader of Auster’s own solitary experience in Solitude:

> Quinn had always assumed he was the kind of guy who preferred his own company. Specifically, he has been looking for it for the previous five years. But now, as he continued to live in the alley, he was beginning to understand the actual essence of loneliness. There was no one else he could rely on except himself. The one thing he knew without a shadow of a doubt about his time there was that he was falling in love. (115)
>
> Blue has not had much time to relax and be idle before, so he is at a loss as to what to do with himself now. Nothing anchors him, nothing separates one instant from the next, and he is pushed back on himself for the first time in his life. (171)
>
> I turned edgy, remote, shut myself up in my little workroom, craved only Solitude.” (316)

When Quinn comes face to face with himself, he becomes divine because he realizes he is sinking, not rising. For Nashe in *The Music of Chance*, Pozzi’s departure left him feeling depleted and hopeless. Nashe and Quinn developed an internal “ideal” as a result of their sadness. “He found comfort in these dramatic displays of loss, in plunging to the bottom of a vivid, inexplicable melancholy; but, despite eventually regaining control of his emotions and learning to live with his isolation, he never got over Pozzi’s departure.” (Auster 179)

Nashe need Pozzi. He is incapable of controlling his loneliness. In alone, one develops an increasing indifference to his surroundings. Thus, seclusion impairs a person's curiosity in events occurring around him. Quinn in the *City of Glass* believes that when a person is alone, everything is possible. For instance, "Because it was irrelevant what happened, Quinn was unsurprised that the front door at 69th Street opened without a key" (Auster 124). However, isolation may also imply self-alienation. When Nashe was alone in the Wall's construction, it was as though the more isolated he grows, the more distant he becomes.

Solitude is the path to the completeness, and the Self is more significant than the ego. When we are alone, we may get insight into our true nature. The purpose of postmodern literature is not to get there. They are not final disclosures in Paul Auster's narrative framework. The gathering of Self and ego facilitates individuation process, also known as isolation. Morgan (1986) says "Its aim is to become a complete human being; the way it gets there is via the process of individuation; and the strategy it employs is the cultivation of a closer connection with both the ego and the Self. True seclusion is a good environment for making friends" (23). As the ego is connected to our conscious mind and the Self to our unconscious, solitude is the only way to achieve true wholeness. All Quinn does when he is alone himself is write. Therefore, if he lost the ability to write, it would shatter his sense of isolation. "For a while, he considered whether or not he had the mental strength to write without a pen, and whether or not he could instead educate himself to speak, his voice filling the empty space around him, and his ideas being projected into the emptiness and the bricks" (Auster 129). In solitude, the only activity that he is familiar with is his writing.

Each character has a notion or an item that relates to isolation in some way. In his head, he can discover serenity and tranquility. In The Music of Chance, Nashe discovers that driving provides him with a sense of freedom and a connection to his inner and outer personalities. "He yearned for a return to his own company, to the thrill of the midnight dash across the desert, to the rumble of the road on his flesh" (Auster7). In The Book of Illusions, David Zimmer seeks refuge in the movies, namely in the silent comedy of Hector Mann. After the catastrophe that befalls his family, Professor Zimmer becomes a

recluse and descends into serious alcoholism. Nothing seems to be able to lift him out of his gloom until one night when he happens to see a rerun of an old silent comedy starring Hector Mann on television. He laughs at the video, and the numbness leaves him.

Many Paul Auster's protagonists commit themselves to solitude as a means of evading disintegration, but this is not an escape from society; rather, it is an escape from disintegration. Even while we see that alone makes most of Auster's characters unhappy, in the end, solitude is what teaches them how to face their inner lives and their histories. Auster introduces Miles Heller, the main character of *Sunset park.* One of the first things the author talks about him is that he is a photographer. Miles needs to take pictures to lessen his feeling of solipsism. He feels compelled to narrate the lives of anonymous people who have been evicted. Miles is a young man with no goals who stopped going to college and lives in the present. If he has done anything in the seven and a half years since he went out on his own, it is that he has learned to live in the present, to focus on the here and now. (6). "The inward trip into memory that Auster must take in order to face his confusion and misery is presented as a possible site of redemption, one in which he might strive toward relief from his suffering and the restoration of his sense of self." (Lewis 13)

Steven Alford in an article "Spaced-out: Signification and Space in Paul Auster's; The New York Trilogy" says "After momentarily seeing himself in a solitary, Blue understands that seclusion is unattainable and that his relationship with Black is unbreakable. (620). Despite what we would think, it seems as though Blue is looking over Black. He cannot be alone since he needs to keep an eye on Black and has a personal connection to him. He sacrifices himself for the sake of being alone, yet he cannot be alone since the only way he can express himself is by watching Black. This is a paradox. In Auster's characters, the theme of isolation is prominent. The search for one's true Self might be symbolized by a period of solitude. Taking a break from the outside world and returning to one's own inner world is also a kind of isolation. A standard definition of solitude does not apply in postmodernist literature like Auster's. Solitude in postmodern literature is not a condition of resurrection but rather a state of uncertainty.

Solitude is a form of revolt against existence, an attempt to discover one's own unique self-representation via the pursuit of inner contentment.

In the same way as Solitude does, Auster's writing explores the experience of disorientation and isolation in the face of physical Space. The traditional role of space has shifted from idea receiver to idea generator (The Spatial Turn 1). Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, David Harvey, Edward Soja, and Gilles Deleuze are just a few of the prominent thinkers that have explored this area. Paul Auster is one of the most well-known authors who has dabbled with the idea of utilizing space as a dynamic, ever-evolving factor that shapes characters' identities. Space's emptiness is used as a metaphor in Auster's novels to show how the individual might be reduced to nothing. In essence, New York City serves as the setting for the Trilogy. For Baudrillard, the United States is "an empty place," erased by "the gloriously affectless succession of signs, pictures, faces, and ritual actions on the road," and what he sees in the country's geology is "the aesthetics of disappearance." (Baudrillard 54)

Most of Auster's characters live in New York City or another postmodernist city in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In Trilogy, New York serves as a metaphorical theater for this emptiness, showcasing the dissolution of the individual in the struggle between reality and fiction. When Quinn walked throughout New York in *City of Glass*, he was completely disoriented. Stillman's words establish New York as a metaphor for disruption and turmoil in the *City of Glass*, and his description of the city as a labyrinth or maze alludes to the hopelessness of its citizens.

> I am in New York because it is the most desolate, depressing city in the world. Everything seems to be in shambles and confusion. [...] The brokenness of everything: the people, the objects, the minds. The whole metropolis is a dumping ground. (Auster 78)

Through the protagonist's journey to "become nothing," the book emphasizes the city's role as a catalyst. The city is a powerful force in the lives of its residents, and it represents the void in which the protagonist of *The Music of Chance*, Jim Nashe, is trapped since he has no means to escape. Jim Nashe went through periods of doubt and

helplessness after a series of devastating losses (his wife left him, and he had to leave their child in the care of his sister). Before his life became a soap opera, before the ground opened and gobbled him up, quitting the department seemed unthinkable. [...] (Auster 8). While working on the wall with Jack Pozzi, Jim Nashe "acted as though he meant to torture himself into exceeding new boundaries of endurance" (19). Article by Ilana Shiloh entitled "A Place both Imaginary and Realistic: Paul Auster's *The Music of Chance*" analyzes Paul Auster's "Laurel and Hardy" play. Come to Heaven and see how Auster manipulates space over and again:

> When I think of the wall, it is as if I were going beyond what I can think. It's big, so much bigger than anything else. (Pause). And yet, in itself... in itself... it's just a wall. A wall can be many things, can't it? It can keep in or keep out. It can protect or destroy. It can help things... or make them worse. It can be part of something greater... Or only what it is. Do you see what I mean? It all depends on how you look" (Shiloh 149).

Here, Shiloh examines the wall's role as more than just a static structure; it is also a dynamic environment rife with contrasting interpretations.

Daniel Quinn, the protagonist of *City of Glass*, is in a similar circumstance as Nashe after he loses his wife and children in a tragedy. To find Peter Stillman, an escaped convict, Quinn assumes the persona of a detective called Auster and dresses the part. Peter Stillman, the patriarch's son, mistakes Quinn's occupation for a prank and employs him. Stillman was Quinn's topic for weeks, but then he vanished without a trace. Then, to keep an eye out for Stillman Sr. and shield Peter Stillman Jr., he decides to set up housekeeping in an alley behind the building where Virginia and Peter Stillman Jr. To "maintain maximum attentiveness," Quinn sets up a routine in which he constantly looks for food, eats as little as possible, and sleeps for no more than three hours each day. (Auster 15) The fact that Quinn managed to avoid public attention despite his fame by sticking to such a strict regimen is quite remarkable. His presence was no longer noticeable, as if he had "vanished into the city's walls" (116). When Quinn walked inside Stillman's empty apartment, this became noticeably clear. With the intention of keeping a detailed record, first of the case and then of his life, he decides to keep writing in his red

notebook. When just a handful of pages are left in his crimson notepad, he knows he is almost finished writing:

> Even if the light never returned, he contemplated if he had it in him to learn to speak instead of writing, to fill the night with his voice and speak the words into the air, into the walls, and into the city. (Auster 131)

At some point, he just stops showing up. Like Peter Stillman Jr., who his father locked up some years earlier while the elder Stillman conducted his experiment to uncover Adam's original language before the "Fall of Man," Quinn had let himself free by entering that chamber and remaining there. Only problem was, Quinn was making a beeline for oblivion.

In both Manhattan (*City of Glass*) and Brooklyn (*Sunset Park*), Auster's concern in the discourses of identity creation becomes apparent. Each character's quest for self-discovery is intrinsically related to the neighborhood's ongoing struggle to reclaim its former glory. Moving into the Sunset Park house, Miles, Bing, Ellen, and Alice form a new entity in which they are able to momentarily achieve their goals. However, depending on the specifics of each character's situation, may represent a wide variety of different kinds of settings. The characters' fight to preserve their financial situation and their determination to keep from losing themselves in their hyperreal struggle led them to the Brooklyn house. Occupying this space becomes a vehicle via which people fight for autonomy from their current jobs and housing arrangements.

> This past summer, when [Bing's] friend Ellen Brice informed him about an abandoned home in Sunset Park, [Bing] viewed it as a chance to put his theories to the test, to go beyond his unseen, solo assaults against the system, and take part in a collective action. This is the most daring thing he is ever done, and he has no problem justifying their actions despite their illegality. In these hard times, a vacant, dilapidated wooden home is nothing more than a target for vandals and arsonists, a nuisance that begs to be trashed and robbed, and a threat to the safety of the surrounding area.

> Since he and his pals now inhabit that home, the neighborhood is safer, and the locals have a better time of it. (Auster 77)

This bleak depiction of contemporary New York City and its "brokenness" in every aspect reflects the characters emotional bankruptcy in the city. As we travel from the *City of Glass* to *Sunset Park*, from Manhattan to Brooklyn, the landscape has become more and more dreary, more and more alienating, more and more devoid of meaning and meaningful purpose, or as Bing puts it, "a trash civilization generated by the selfishness of profit-driven enterprises" (72). Cultural activities such as art, education, communication, and community building have been supplanted by "all things digital," much to the disadvantage of our urban culture (72). The city has always been a place of and for innovation, but the advent of these new technologies has only served to increase the complexity of the human experience inside it. As these three elements develop in the real and fictitious worlds, we will continue to observe, admire, and criticize the interplay among them.

Space has always figured largely in the fiction of Paul Auster. *The New York Trilogy*, the work that has launched his literary career, exploits the urban landscape of New York, turning its topography into a blank page on which the movements of one of the characters trace a verbal message. *The Book of Illusions* (2002), his fictional universe has widened to incorporate the Southwest. As with its predecessor, *City of Glass*, *The Book of Illusions* encourages the reader to take a bird's eye perspective of its many locations. The camera then pulls back even farther, until the whole nation is in view. The narrator describes the landscape Zimmer and Alma pass through on route from Boston to Albuquerque, and at times the distance is so enormous that all definite recognition is lost. This extreme bird's-eye vision is broken up by zoom-ins on locations and cities that seem to have been chosen at random from among Auster's literary influences. Zimmer writes from his Brooklyn residence. While the hector's twelve-monthly minutes of Silent films are treasured in archives throughout the United States and Europe. Other than those in London and Paris, the surviving reels of hector's films may be found in New York City, Rochester, Washington, and Berkeley.

The “two-dimensional” cinematic environment is an illusion designed to draw in the viewer and immerse them in a fantastical realm. Film, according to Dragon (“A lehetetlen valósága” 1), is appealing to audiences because it gives them the feeling of being a part of real life. David Zimmer, in the novel’s universe, has the opposite preoccupation, being preoccupied with the spatiality of movies while ruminating on the difficult link between fantasy and reality.

> [...] The more movies tried to mimic reality, the less accurately they were able to portray the world, which exists inside us as much as it does outside. That is why I have always had a soft spot in my heart for silent films and black-and-white cinema. The moving picture was a visual language, a method of storytelling that used visuals projected onto a flat screen. The visuals seemed three-dimensional because of the use of music and color, but thus at the expense of their original, unadulterated form. It was a two-dimensional universe, and it all took place on a flat screen. We created our own mental third dimension. (Auster 15)

Hector Flight’s location and characters are reminiscent of early 20th-century American fiction, as if Auster were experimenting with a new aesthetic for his work at the turn of the millennium.

Paul Auster’s novels always begin with a seemingly unrelated event that changes the protagonist’s life forever. This sets in motion a chain of unpredictable occurrences that leads to the protagonist’s disillusionment with his or her own identity. To surrender to what Dragana Nickolic (2001) calls “the lightness of being the other, of being on the surface with no interior thoughts while the load of one’s own awareness is forgotten.” (Nickolic) .Certain conclusions about [the actions of Auster’s characters cannot be drawn they have no center nor stable identity. The only consolation left for Auster’s subject is to reinvent himself: Uncle Victor says in Moon Palace that every person is the author of his own life. (Auster 30)

Fragmentary writing is a hallmark of Auster’s work. “With no before or after”, (17) He discusses the disconnection of a fractured world in his writing.

> He messes up the story's natural flow and makes the protagonist and antagonist's next moves based on random events. In this way, complexity challenges the traditional, linear understanding of causation. In 'poor' fiction, chance is sometimes abused as a method since it enables the author to explore any number of plot avenues and character motivations. Chance, however, has a way of destroying the strength of logic and reason in Auster's narrative. (18)

That "the unexpected happens with almost numbing regularity in our lives," as Auster puts it, is a statement that might be taken as gospel. Given that the impossible does in fact exist, it is the job of the realist writer to include it into his story. (270). Using chance as a mirror, Auster's prior experiences are reflected the goal of narrative realism is to make characters and events seem as real as possible. For Auster, it is a way to reflect on his own prior experiences:

> The author regularly uses personal anecdotes. Truthfulness and believability are required. When he writes about them, he does it with such passion that his prose blurs the boundary between fiction and truth. He appears especially committed to bringing life to this sector. (Paul Auster: Cruel Universe)

To cite few examples, The opening event in *City of Glass* sets forth the whole story, one random event leading to several other chance incidents. When Quinn pretends to be Auster on the phone, the caller on the other end says, "A false number had sparked the incident, with the phone calling three times in the middle of the night and a person on the other end asking for someone he was not." This is the beginning of Quinn's Journey of dissolving Identity. Later, when Quinn had time to reflect on his experiences, he concluded that "nothing was genuine but chance," as the narrator puts it. (7) Quinn takes note of Peter Stillman's case – a case of a child who has suffered due to his father's strange philosophy. Coincidently, Peter is also the name of Quinn's dead son, and he cannot help seeing an image of his dead son in mentally disturbed Peter. Becoming involved in the case, he tracks the course of Stillman's walk and discovers the hieroglyphics embedded in his path. Coincidently, it turns out to be the TOWER OF

BABEL – Stillman's topic of research. He observes that Henry Dark predicted the year 1960 to be the year of emergence of new Babel and coincidently Stillman locks up his son in 1960. Quinn gets trapped in the complexity of case losing his sense of identit y. Quinn traces Paul Auster, the supposed detective to get his help in the case but the Auster whom he finds is a writer. He meets Auster's little son, Daniel, which is Quinn's first name. Day by day Quinn falls in an abyss of hopelessness and learns from Auster about Stillman's suicide. After losing everything, he regrets the futility of his decision to act as the detective Paul Auster over the phone. In the end, the narrator unaware about the whereabouts of Quinn, gets his red notebook and considers various contingencies regarding his present location.

Similar to Quinn, another private detective in *Ghosts*, "goes to his office every day and sits at his desk, waiting for something to happen, "We find that this is what happens to him in the opening line of the book. Nothing happens for quite some time, and suddenly a guy called White enters, and everything changes. (8). Blue ponders on various contingencies about the reason behind White's hiring him to watch Black. Feeling the hopelessness of the case, Blue remembers an old case he dealt with, that was "full of strange twists and coincidences" (138). He restored the missing Gray to his wife when one day he had met Gray in a bar coincidently. Another coincidence happens when Blue follows Black walking across the Brooklyn Bridge. It is the same bridge where he used to come with his father during his boyhood. This interest in coincidences continues when Blue memorizes a story of a boy who discovers his dead father frozen in ice while skiing after twenty-five years. Blue also discovers that the name of publisher of the copy of Walden which Black reads is Walter J. Black and feels surprised by this coincidence. To unravel the mystery about the mysteries of Black, Blue disguises himself as a beggar and indulges him into a conversation. Blue's look like Walt Whitman in his disguise is purely coincidental with his presence in the same street where Whitman used to work and published his first book. The unpredictable continues and finally when Blue invades Black's apartment, he gets stunned to find his own weekly reports on Black's table. A series of such unpredictable events enables him to discern the meaninglessness of his existence helping him to put an end to his misery

Chance events do play an important role in many of Auster's works. In *The Locked Room,* a freelance writer reflects on his lifelong friendship with Fanshawe, a strong man from his childhood whom he "had let go of" (9). A letter from Fanshawe's wife, whom he has not spoken to in years, causes the narrator to feel "a sequence of tiny shocks," as if "too many forces were pressing [him] in many directions" or tearing him, and his identity, apart. A phone ringing, a man entering an office, and a letter arriving are all examples of patterns that may be chaotic but are not necessarily such, depending on their initial conditions. In life, "things happen to us in ways we can not anticipate" (10). A true trilogy narrator thinks things through. Since "the indifferent character of contingencies shapes our awareness," Auster is interested in the many responses people have to these impacts. The protagonist of the narrative, unlike the impersonal elements of chance, should see the accident to save his or her soul (Martin 66).

Statements like "Something occurs, and from the minute it starts to happen, nothing can ever be the same again" (Auster, *Sunset Park*23) may be found throughout all of Auster's works. Bobby's death in *Sunset Park* is entirely brought on by an accident caused by Miles. Miles also happens to eaves drop his parents over his impotency by chance and then leaves the house for good. He meets Pilar in a park reading The Great Gatsby just like himself. Ellen finds the Sunset Park house just through a good luck to save herself and some others from homelessness. The Sunset Park house itself is the only house left without surveillance by the government in that region. Mile's call to his father's office just arrives after Morris has left for London to meet his wife. Mile's call to his mother's house is always left unanswered since she is not home. Ellen runs into his ex-boyfriend just by chance and starts all over with him again. And Miles and Ellen are lucky to be able to escape the house on the police's arrival, while Alice is injured in the quarrel and Bing is arrested. All these events, just as in a real life, are plausible in the life of characters like Miles and change the course of the novel for him, while any one of these episodes in itself is nothing but a grain of dust in the cosmos – although Miles's luck is mostly miserable than good.

Auster presents two real cases of bad luck and good luck, revealed through Miles and Morris's discussion over the issue: the cases of real baseball players Herbert Jude

Score (1933) and Jack Wayn Lohrke (1924). Score experienced a life full of bad luck through severe diseases and injuries – thus Auster's narrator reflects that "It doesn't seem possible for a man to have encountered so much bad luck in the course of a single lifetime" (34). However, "Lohrke, a.k.a. Lucky" was "the mythic embodiment of a theory of life that contends that not all luck is bad luck" (35).

He survived the D-day invasion and the Battle of the Bulge, a bomb explosion, a plane crash due to being bumped from the flight, and a bus crash (35-36). One can still argue whether what happens to Miles at the end of the novel – having decided to hand himself to the police because of broking a policeman's jaw – would be for or against him. Due to the open-endedness of the novel, anything can happen.

There is a soundtrack to chance in *The Music of Chance*. The protagonist, like many others, has his or her life shaped largely by chance. It is clear that the concept of chance plays a significant role in Nashe is future thanks to the prominence of words like "random" and "Jackpot" (the second character Nashe meets by chance and with whom he "jumps").

Nashe begins the narrative with a recollection of all the random occurrences that have occurred in his life to this point. He highlights the fact that all of these circumstances arise as a result of a series of accidental occurrences that ultimately form his destiny. After receiving an inheritance, he experiences the departure of his wife and the subsequent encounter with Pozzi, which sets in motion his absorption in the unexpected. From that point on, he is completely dependent on the forces of chance:

> He spent the whole year doing nothing but driving across the United States, going from one end to the other while he waited for his funds to deplete. Nashe had not planned on it taking so long, but one thing led to another, and by the time he realized what was happening to him, he no longer cared whether it ended. On day three of the thirteenth month, he met a boy who introduced himself as jackpot. It was one of those chance meetings that appears out of nowhere. (1)

That his wife left him, or his kid was left with his sister while he was unable to support himself and his family because of financial difficulties are all examples of how his life has spiraled into this predicament. If he had gotten the fortune before to this occurrence, things may have been quite different. In all these scenarios, the character is subjected to the whims of chance in an explicit manner. He runs into Pozzi while driving aimlessly along the road:

> If this had happened at another time, Nashe probably would not have said anything. Nonetheless, as he had previously given up and believed he had nothing left to lose, he saw the stranger as a salvation, a final opportunity to do something positive for himself before it was too late. And without further ado, he executed the plan. Nashe closed his eyes and leaped without showing any sign of fear. (Auster 1)

Nashe puts himself in jeopardy by taking Pozzi's counsel on the poker game after they meet. Unfortunately, he does not think about how his acts may turn out in the future. In the film's conclusion, Pozzi, Laurel, and Hardy are all playing poker when Stone (Pozzi) enters the fray. As the novella comes to a close, we learn that Pozzi's failure has led to an attack and perhaps murder, and that Nashe is night spent in the car on the way home from the bar has led him to an unknowable but certainly detrimental fate. If Pozzi had prevailed, he and Nashe would have walked away from the Flower and Stone estate flush with cash. Instead, they had to toil away at the estate for months, risking injury or perhaps death. (25)

Similarly, chance plays a key role in *The Book of Illusions*, propelling David's story along and connecting the novel's many plots' threads. The first several chapters of *The Books of Illusions* detail and analyze several random occurrences. As an introduction, Zimmer's whole family has lately died away, beginning with his father-in-law who "...had recently been operated on for a tumor in his leg and the family consensus was that she (Zimmer's wife) and the boys should go as quickly as possible" (6). Thinking back on what happened next, Zimmer says:

> I cannot seem to get sick of taking the same aimless strolls. Everything from the cancer in my father-in-leg laws to the temperature in the Midwest that week to the phone number of the travel agent who booked the plane tickets was a part of it, every link in the chain of cause and effect a vital component of the nightmare. Even worse was that I insisted on taking them to Boston so they could catch a direct flight. I had hoped they would not have to leave Burlington. To go to Milwaukee from New York, I would have had to take an eighteen-seat prop plane, and I had already warned Helen that I did not enjoy flying in such a tiny aircraft. I told her that she and the boys should not go on one without me because they were too risky. My concerns were so allayed by their decision to not follow through. They went on a more extensive one, and I messed it horribly by having to hustle to get them there. (6-7)

Action begins with an aircraft catastrophe and ends with Alma and David traveling to New England and New Mexico, respectively, after Alma discovers a monograph written by David. That he has the time to complete his work must be due to Alma's seemingly capricious death. Chance in *The Book of Illusions* serves both as a reminder of the random nature of existence and as a technique of enhancing the novel's coherence. An aircraft catastrophe decimates David Zimmer's family and his life, but a fortuitous meeting with Hector Mann's films saves him from committing suicide in The *Book of Illusions*. Sandusky, Ohio, is a location Hector claimed to have resided in several of his Hollywood-inspired hagiographies but never really visited. He has arrived, and he decides to take part in the bank heist that has just occurred. Despite his heroics, the holdup is thwarted. A lady who is a fan of one of his now-classic films tends to him in thehope that she may nurse him back to health. David complains early in *The Book of Illusions* that "We all want to believe in impossible things … to persuade ourselves that miracles can happen" (5). Once upon a time, it was possible for a fictional story to develop by a chain of miracles, but modern religious ideas do not allow for such a structure. An element that symbolizes instability and uncertainty is used by Auster in his text, a random occurrence, to strengthen the coherence of his work. The Book of Illusions

uses chance meetings as structural elements to move the plot along, incidents that may either shatter or develop the lives of the protagonists.

People in the postmodern era believed that there is no such thing as absolute truth or reality, and as a result, they rebelled against organizations that held themselves up as possessing such a claim. There are no "authorities" in postmodern thought; instead, the individual is the source of their own authority. Only subjective realities may be considered true in any given scenario. There are no absolutes. As it relates to the actual world, words are formed and invented by everyone. It is evident in Auster's works that contemporary concerns, such as authoritative figures and the dichotomy between reality and fiction, are blurred and no one can tell which is real and which is fiction. There is a problem of literary illusion, and postmodernism does not tell us what the difference is. Instead, it makes our minds even more confused.

Conclusion

The chapter describes how the topic of identity pervades Auster's writing and his protagonists never cease to search for a missing coherence within themselves and to raise questions like: Who am I? Where am I? How do I fit into this world? Is there someone above who controls my life? Therefore, can be defined as confused, non directional, obscure and ambiguous. As a consequence, the Auster's Character being detached from reality, constitutes its own reality. All discussed aspects lead to the same conclusion - identity is fragmented, impenetrable, and elusive. They ultimately fail in their ongoing search for who they are. Since everyone's worldview is unique and everything is based on their personal preferences, there is no such thing as truth or reality. Identity has transformed into an interchangeable fashion accessory. The characters of Paul Auster ultimately fail in their quest for identity. The numerous fears of the postmodern hyperreal world prevent the characters to come to terms with life. It is further supported by fictional doublings, mirror images, problem of solitude, role of chance and coincidence, and openendedness. The aspects of identity are coupled with the aspects of language and text that are presented as impossible to bring to a satisfying end: the protagonists fail in their search for identity, the language fails to communicate the presence, and the text fails to bring to a solution. The search for identity is portrayed as open, ongoing and unfinished.

Chapter 3

Consumer Capitalism and Postmodernity in Select Novels of Paul Auster

The present chapter discusses consumer capitalism and post-modernity in the select novels of Paul Auster. An important thread in Auster's works is the exploration of post-modernity in postmodern American societies. A post-war industrial society is thus formed, with its mass-produced ideology and mechanized ideals. As a result, peoples are no longer recognized as individuals with unique personalities and histories, but as demographically significant statistics based on factors such as ethnicity, gender, and, most significantly, disposable income. The degree to which one conforms to social norms defines one's social position, and this conformance is the linchpin of one's identity. As a result, the books of Auster are set in a time of mass consumption. Those things that have commercial potential are given the highest priority. Globalization, corporate branding, and increasingly intrusive types of advertising have moved our attention to a lifestyle that has been manufactured artificially. Auster's protagonists cannot find their place in this commercial and materialistic American environment. Like racism, consumerism is seen as a major problem in American thought and literature even though its global material effects are often minimized. As stated by Zygmunt Bauman (1998) Consumerism is the cultural emphasis on consuming as opposed to creation (24).

Many contemporary works written in the America deals with the issue of consumer culture. All studies of contemporary American literature, write Andrew Dix (2011), and Brian Jarvis (2012), "ought to grapple with consumerism." One may argue that consumer culture is essential to understanding contemporary literature and art (32). All these works show how widespread and compelling advertising and "the visual culture of consumer society" (134) can be in shaping people's opinions and behaviors towards consumer goods and services. Author Jame Annesley (1998) coined the term "blank fiction" to describe a movement in American literature during the 1980s and 1990s that was predominately based in New York, and which examined "disaffection, decadence, and violence" in contemporary American society and was "obsessed with the connection

between the individual and consumer culture" (2). Most American literature, however, follows Humphry's social analysis in its portrayal of commercialization, showing it as an inevitable power that impacts people negatively, elevating shallowness and flippancy under the misrepresentation of advancing opportunity of decision, while simultaneously weakening our genuine organization, sabotaging local area, and compromising our vote-based system. Like words in a language, symbols in today's consumer culture represent social standing and reputation. Products in today's consumer culture are often utilized briefly before being discarded. What sets excess apart from scarcity is its relation to material riches. As a result, the damage that results from consuming is its meaning. Consumption, in Baudrillard's view, is only a bridge between the two extremes of creation and destruction (77-78).

Jean Baudrillard, Jean Lyotard, Michel Foucault and Fredric Jameson are only few of the postmodern social and consumerist thinkers who have shaped the movement. Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulations* (1984) is a seminal work in defining postmodernism with regards to late capitalism. Consumerism, or late capitalism, is seen by Jean Baudrillard as a natural progression of his concept of the hyper real. He sees the whole universe as a simulation, from the way it works to the way we experience it. The simulation ends after enough commodities have been produced and consumed. Simon Malpas elaborates:

> The language, the code, by which the whole of society interacts and converses today is the circulation, purchase, sale, and appropriation of products and signs/objects with distinct meanings. By contrast, one's own wants and pleasures are only the after-effects of one's own words since consuming is structured and framed in such a way. (122)

Baudrillard included semiotics into his explanation of consumption by way of the sign/signifier method. What we accumulate is more than just material; it is also a building block of a linguistic system that determines who we become. Consumption, as Baudrillard sees it, is intrinsically linked to the formation of the individual's identity since it reflects the person's innermost desires. Consumers in the postmodern era will

never be content since the things they buy are “sham products, or unique indications of pleasure,” (122) but do not really make the buyer happy.

The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism and *Postmodern Narrative Theory* by authors like David Harvey, Fredric Jameson, and Mark Currie draw parallels between capitalism and postmodernism. In the age of global capitalism, connections have been made between cultural and creative practices and monetary concerns. The loss of money’s symbolic value is a major issue in the works of Paul Auster. Fredric Jameson, following Ernest Mandel, argues that postmodernism is our society’s dominating cultural force and that, like capitalism, it seeks to dominate every aspect of the creative process. In Jameson’s view, he believes that the past had been reduced to two-dimensional pictures that have become commercially valuable. There is no reality to which these signs and simulacra, or what he refers to as “pastiche,” correspond. Signals circulate and interact with one another so that self-referent signs render meaning irrelevant. As argued by Mark Currie (2010) “represent a world where simulations are becoming inseparable from the objects they replicate, and where this state is intrinsic to the commodification process.” (4).

Paul Auster uses the concept of money as a prism through which to examine the contemporary world and explore the subject of whether truth and fiction are interchangeable. False money resembles fictional worlds to bolster its seeming legitimacy in the real world. The value of written money without a physical equivalent looks questionable from this vantage point, and so does the connection between language and meaning. Production of the book as a business that supports the author’s family becomes a metaphor for script money, or words written on paper that guarantee payment. The protagonist in Paul Auster's *City of Glass*, for example, is a failed poet named Daniel Quinn who, after receiving a mystery phone call, decides to pose as a detective named Paul Auster. The stillman give him a $500 check, but it is in someone else’s name, so he cannot cash it. Paul Auster agrees to pay the check for another Paul Auster he meets in the story, but the check bounces and he never gets paid. While doing the check, several questions are prompted all at once. First and foremost, it is a broken commitment to pay. Another way in which the borders between fiction and reality are blurred is by the fact

that the cheque is made out to a character named Paul Auster, who does not exist, but whose wife and children do. Paul Auster and the real-life author are equidistant, but the illusion of truth implants the concept of their equivalence into fiction. Third, the check fits the idea of language that has no meaning by declaring that it is an order to pay but does not.

Another character Sr. Stillman, throughout Peter Stillman Sr.'s life and work, is concerned with language. For nine years, he kept his son in a dark chamber with no windows to see if language was a gift from God or learned. After traversing the streets of New York, he follows an itinerary that spells "The Tower of Babel" in the shape of a circle. Walking the streets of New York, he collects "objects of interest" and renames the ones he thinks are worthy of further study. If an umbrella has been broken and can no longer fulfill its job, he says, it should not be named by the same name. The Garden and the Tower: Early Visions of the New World, Stillman's work on the extinction of language and human civilization, serves as a point of reference for his strategy. He maintains that an object and its name were interchangeable in Adam's prelapsarian language, but the fall damaged the language. Language had become a collection of artificial signals, disconnected from God; names had become disconnected from things. "There are many ways to look at the fall from grace of humanity in the Garden of Eden, including the loss of language." (52)

Stillman's idea of the death of language is reminiscent of the "fall of money," which is represented by an uncashed check. Like the use of fiat money, which has no real worth, severing the link between language and the object it signifies increases the self-referentiality of fiction. According to Alison Shonkwiler (2007) "In This System, Language Has Removed From The Process Of Production Through Which It Once Linked To Anything outside of Itself" (150). A claim made by Daniel Quinn: "My name is Paul Auster. For this reason, the statement "That is not my true name" (Auster 49) is essential because it questions our preconceptions about the significance of a person's name to their identity.

Also, *The Music of Chance* is the first of Auster's books to focus on money. Auster examines the many methods in which a person might get money and the

ramifications each has for the individual by using the narrative of a man who desires independence but ends up in bondage. Unexpected sources of wealth include a legacy, a lottery win, a winning hand in a poker game, and money gained through hard work. There are various instances when Auster uses unearned money as a metaphor for destiny, chance, or free choice. On the other hand, this novel has a far more direct relationship with money, making it a narrative of labor, gain, and loss under capitalism.

Starting with an undeserved windfall, money viewed as unearned is spent with the recklessness that affects the person's stability. Nashe is compelled to leave up parenting responsibilities and his relationship with Fiona because of a desire to spend his money in both the physical and metaphorical sense. In the wake of the endowment, Nashe investigates the boundaries of selfhood: just how much can he shed while still being true to himself. In the assumption that permanent work, relationships, and financial belongings hinder personal freedom, they are thrown away with little thought or feeling. When it comes to Jim Nashe in *The Music of Chance*, money both buys and hinders his growth:

> The money had bought him independence, but with each expenditure he was depriving himself of an equal amount of independence. He could not have continued going if it had not been for the money, but that same money was also an engine of loss, propelling him back to square one. (17)

Work and physical labor are used to analyze the link between earned and unearned money, and sections about wealth development emphasize this relationship even more. Having won their first fortune in a lottery, Flower and Stone are the eccentric and dangerous billionaires to whom Nashe loses. These traders have taken their profits and re- invested them in the commodities market. It did not take long for us to start becoming extremely affluent, as Flower puts it. And once we became affluent, we got rich. (75). Eyal Dotan in an article "The Game of Late Capitalism: Gambling and Ideology in" The *Music of Chance*" (2004) claims that the speculation that generates riches for the Flower and Stone includes "a certain metamorphosis of money, leading it to lose its daily qualities. Bets and bettors turn currency into a nebulous concept." (164). since there is no effort or production, Auster highlights this lack of work by introducing the idea of money

producing more money. One signifier might act as a reference for another. Therefore, he uses his fortune to bring even greater success to the place from where he first got his money. For this reason, money may be thought of as self-generating and self-referential. According to Tim Wood (1995), "a criticism of the ideology of American capitalism" and the "extent to which money governs and coerces" are two of the novel's most insidious concerns. (145-150). It is possible that the book's explicit treatment of financial matters was what first picked Wood's interest in hisrole as a critic. Warren Oberman (2004) continued the debate by stating that he hoped to demonstrate how Auster's existential concerns and a "postmodern criticism of late- capitalism" (191-206) might be combined in a book.

The ideas and architecture of *Sunset Park* are far more obviously influenced by late capitalism than those of *The Music of Chance*. In contrast to the immateriality of the financial markets portrayed in *The Music of Chance*, the emphasis of *Sunset Park* is on how post-capitalism has also commercialized non-physical means of communication like imagination, language, and creativity. The novel *Sunset Park* reveals Auster's newfound interest in contemporary politics and the materiality of our society.

The contradictions of money were brought into closer perspective by the subprime mortgage crisis. Financial speculation and emotive terms like "futures trading" were used to highlight the immateriality of money in striking contrast to the tangible reality of abandoned houses or the widely circulated photographs of laid-off employees. Most individuals could not comprehend the magnitude of the gains and losses in financial markets, while operations like quantitative easing confounded the subject of how money is generated. The paradoxes of meaning that Auster has been addressing in so much of his writing have fascinating connections with the significant disparity at the core of our relationship with money.

Aesthetically, *Sunset Park* examines the economic crisis and the destiny of the American economy, both directly and indirectly. This book addresses money as both a tangible object and an abstract concept tied to Auster's earlier work. In addition to exploring new avenues for creative expression and novelistic practice, the book aims to describe, narrate, and explain what occurred when individuals began losing their houses.

Language and objects, truth and fiction, subjectivity and narrative point of view have always interested Auster. In this case, he used the current economic slowdown to examine those concerns from a fresh angle. Sunset Park is preoccupied with the metaphorical and symbolic significance of money. Meanwhile, issues about the value and monetization of cultural creation are pushed to the forefront.

Contradiction is personified in the form of money. It is tangible in the shape of bills and coins, but it is also intangible since it only serves as a symbol of value, not as a thing in and of itself. It is a promise to pay the holder of the note or coin a specified amount rather than the actual value. In a broader sense, the economy is seen and conceptualized as something that is both instantly tangible and bewildering. A screen's algorithm and items like futures and derivatives on the other end are a part of this spectrum. Due to the financial crisis, those who have lost their jobs and homes find themselves on the other end of the scale. The physical and intangible nature of money and the economy, the daily necessity, and the unfathomable scale of the system that creates and supports it are all paradoxes that Auster exploits to resurrect some of his previous worries. According to Richard T. Gray, one of the most fruitful metaphorical fields in Western civilization is the one that defines comparisons between language and money. Many concepts "derived from the field of finance, such as the ideas of circulation, exchange, credit, banking, counterfeiting, investment, etc., are regularly utilized as metaphorical vehicles for the illumination of language activities," (95) he writes. Using money as a metaphor, Auster can delve further into his long-standing interest in the linguistic structure of language. Even while money is more important than any other worth, he still evaluates how intellectual or creative activity fits into this environment.

Parallels may be seen between David Zimmer of The Book of Illusions and Nashe of The Music of Chance. Like Nashe in The Music of Chance, Zimmer is able to watch all of Hector's films archived in different institutions throughout the world because of distribution from insurance money he receives after the loss of his wife. Like in The Music of Chance, he can give his whole attention to the work at hand because of the backing he is given monetarily. In the 1920s, while his career was at its height, Hector

Mann mysteriously disappeared from the film business, and later authored a book about his career titled The Silent World of Hector Mann.

According to Fredric Jameson (1984), postmodernism is characterized by a parallel between the media and the market:

> This process solidifies the comparison between the media and the market; it is not that the media is like a market, but that the 'market' is just as different from its 'concept' (or Platonic conception) as the media is from its concept. The media presents free programming over which the consumer has little control, but which is then rebranded as "free will" since it is selected by the individual. (275)

The *The Book of Illusions* opens with the idea that the entertainment industry (movies, TV, and advertising) has a direct link between producing money and the fictional and digital worlds they create. Professor and writer David Zimmer's wife and two young sons died in a plane crash. At his lowest moment, David is suicidal and drunk, yet he finds relief from his despair while watching a silent film on television. After that, he becomes fixated with the silent cinema star from the 1920s who vanished without a trace in 1929, the character of Hector Mann. His numbness disappears as soon as he turns on the TV and watches one of Hector's old movies; he starts laughing.

> When I felt that unexpected spasm rises through my chest and begin to rattle around in my lungs, I understood that I had not hit the bottom yet, that there was still some piece of me that wanted to go on living. [...] While Hector Mann was on screen, I forgot about my misery for a while and realized I must have more gone on inside of me than simply pure death. I was not ashamed of this discovery; rather, it confirmed my worst suspicions. (9)

Throughout the narrative, money-making is linked to fiction and the virtual world via film, television, and advertising. A film by Hector's initial description symbolically thematizes the joining of diverse media forms and the methods in which the narrative is sutured the intermedial gaps. Mann performs a part in a video clip, and Zimmer

seamlessly transitions from narrating the clip to describing it, which adds another symbol, that of the hole. Hector's performance as a diligent bank assistant clerk in The Teller's Tale is highlighted for Zimmer in a two-minute clip that leaves the director suitably pleased. Floorboards in the upper-level office of the bank manager are now being replaced. Hector is exerting a lot of effort to keep on working (counting money) as if he were not interrupted, to shield his white suit from the dust that is falling, and to make eye contact with a stunning secretarial girl. Hector would have to start again every time he lost count, but that just spurred him to work twice as quickly. He would look up at the ceiling a split second after the workmen had re-planked the area to check where the dust was coming from, and each time they would have already patched the hole. (11)

McLuhan's concepts of "hot" and "cold" media best reflect the viewer's relationship with the medium of representation, as evidenced by Zimmer's concerns about the nature of cinema. A hot press (such as a movie) provides fewer opportunities for audience participation. Hence it is less probable that the audience can fill in all the holes. Involvement in hot media is minimal, but participation in excellent press is high, he says (25). If you ask me, the cool version does not always have what the hot form lacks. Many artworks include an intermedial interplay that contains both hot and cold features. The points of contact or bridges affect the level of audience immersion:

> Before the body, there is the face, and before the face there is the thin black line between Hector's nose and upper lip. A twitching filament of anxieties, a metaphysical jump rope, a dancing thread of discombobulation, the moustache is a seismograph of Hector's inner states, and not only does it make you laugh, it tells you what Hector is thinking, actually allows you into the machinery of his thoughts. While the eyes, lips, and well-timed lurches and stumbles all play a part, it is the moustache that serves as the instrument of communication, and while it may speak a language without words, its twitches and flutters are as plain and understandable as a message hammered out in Morse code. (29)

Auster's protagonist personifies what Jameson calls "capitalism in the postmodern era's culture of simulacrum" (Jameson18). Jameson argues that use value is forgotten, and a

culture of simulacra emerges when monetarytransactions become the dominant economic mechanism. The image, as Guy Debord put it, “has become the definitive form of commodity reification in today’s society.” (18)

In *Ghosts*, Auster uses a number of tactics to promote capitalism as an ideology. The first few paragraphs introduce the reader to Blue and his way of life. Blue, in Auster’s words, “goes to his workplace every day and waits at his desk for anything to happen” (161). The link between a man and his job is a compelling illustration of how capitalism works from the very beginning of this chapter. “Blue is in need of the labor, so he listens and does not ask many questions,” (161) Auster says. It is from this point on that the author gradually reveals the decline of capitalist society to the reader.

Textually, the compensation Blue receives is a critical component of the story. Blue has to live paycheck to paycheck to promote capitalism and its supposed usefulness in today’s world. On the other hand, Blue complains in his writing about being underpaid for his work. In his mail, Blue finds a check for the Black report he produced. Despite this, Blue’s meticulous and time-consuming observational abilities are not mentioned. The fact that money was given implies that White was satisfied, says Auster. No matter what it suggests, silence is not an appropriate response disappointed with Whatley’s lack of response to the economic and social structure working against Blue. The only thing Blue receives from his boss is a paycheck, and he does not get anything else. These differences are because White and Blue are from different socioeconomic backgrounds. After all, White is in charge, and Blue is the employee. The post office scene in which Blue waits for White, or whoever is working for White, is another Marxist feature. On Halloween night, at twelve o’clock, a youngster is spotted walking to the post office wearing “a latex Halloween mask depicting a terrible creature with a gash in its forehead, gushing eyeballs, and fangs for teeth, worn by youngsters.” (198). Blue thinks he sees the man, but it seems more like he is imagining the whole thing based on how Auster recounts the mask and his encounter (198). Historically, the bourgeoisie in capitalist societies has been known to ignore the struggle of the working class. The cover may serve as a visual depiction of the regime’s secretive nature. Bourgeoisie, like White, oversee the proletariat, which is shown by the color blue. Marx argues that capitalist

civilizations are abysmal due to concepts like “big brother” and the Upper-class keeping tabs on the lower class’s movements and choices.

As a socio-psychological phenomenon, Jean Baudrillard describes the change from a production-based economy to a consumption-based one. He argues that the profusion of pictures in the media produces fictitious demands, which fuels rising consumerism. There has been a transition from making products to producing signals, according to Baudrillard (Selected Writings 46). Thus, the socially built sign values connected to items we acquire to differentiate ourselves following the demands of fashion are what customers buy when capitalism generates needs by channeling desire toward specific signals. Lots of research on consumer culture draws inspiration from Baudrillard but leaves out his critical perspective. The idea that consumption “subsumes all sources of motivation to those directly relevant to self-identity” has led to the notion that it is a kind of liberatory self-expression and self-fashioning (24-26).

Due to its materialism, superficial obsession with externals and predisposition toward hedonism, consumer culture is seen as a danger by many. The basis of the argument is that our riches, which is represented as if it were equally distributed across the whole American population, has made us unhappy. No inference should be drawn from this. Anti-consumerism campaigners used the term “affluenza” to describe the unhappiness of the wealthy.

According to Kim Humphrey (2010) “Consumerism is motivated by the conditioned need to keep up with the Joneses and finally culminates not in fulfillment but in discontent” (21). It “fragments communities and social relationships,” “contributes to cultural homogenization,” and “undermines our sense of well-being and enjoyment,” according to his analysis of the effects of excessive consumerism (5). Social critique often takes an anti-consumerist stance on a variety of issues, from characterizing economic processes as pathological to discussing the ways in which first-world consumption has contributed to global poverty (7). The influence that globalization has on the physical environment has been a hotly contested topic of discussion amongst first-world citizens. Distances between places have shrunk, and the physical organization of places has changed, thanks to both technology and the presence of other cultures, such as

clothing, food, and garments as commodities in the first world (especially in urban planning and architecture). Theories on how globalization affects the physical environment rely mainly on the observations of people living in the first world. There are problems with these kinds of experiences because, as Fredric Jameson says, they are intertwined with and help to hiding the mechanisms of global capital, which leaves individuals who live in the transformed locations feeling bewildered.

As a maze, the city of New York is portrayed in Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy* (1987), the most studied book on the postmodern city. These three works suggest a connection between neoliberalism and postmodern approaches to space and how they are perceived. The protagonist's first-world advantages complicate his or her experience of homelessness, but none of the stories examines the broader connection between homelessness and privilege. In Paul Auster's The New York Trilogy, we have *City of Glass, Ghosts,* and *The Locked Room*. Since all three novels feature private investigators (either pros or amateurs) working to solve murders in a postmodern city, they may be read together as a single work. An unmistakable illustration of the way in which urban fiction presents the postmodern spatial paradigm as a problem, and, by extension, a symbol of the way in which contemporary American writing makes use of motifs of postmodern space in urban contexts, as suggested by the critical focus on this example. Like those by Petra Eckhard (2014) "The trilogy is a metaphor for the city's temporal and spatial dynamics in postmodern New York novels many people believe that New York is "the architectural translation of the domestic shattered" and "a non-place where the concept of home, together with all its implications of security, family, and identity, are made meaningless" (105). Kim Koonyong (2010) argues that the trilogy depicts the more comprehensive "spatial system of globalization" (Koonyong) while Betty Nigianni (2003) sees it as showing the more crucial relationship between body and urban space in contemporary American literature (323).

Both the novel's prologue and its criticism highlight the significance of considering how space relates to postmodernism in contemporary American literature and literary studies. The novellas employ a geographical metaphor to portray a general scenario of postmodern life that is intrinsically difficult to navigate, yet critics feel the

trio symbolizes the postmodern urban environment. Consequences of globalization are mythologized as universal and natural because this spatial metaphor ignores differences in experiences across global or even national socioeconomic strata and contradicts how the character's experiences are an extension of their financial status. In the novel City of Glass (1985), the protagonist, mystery writer Daniel Quinn, hires a private investigator to keep tabs on Peter Stillman, Sr. the reason for this is because Peter Stillman Jr. and his speech therapist confuse Quinn with the famous investigator Paul Auster. Since they asked him to, he complies. As soon as Peter's father gets liberated from the facility where he was imprisoned, Peter believes that his father would attempt to injure him when he meets him again. It turned out that Peter's dad had hidden him away for nine years, protecting him from the outside world and the use of language. Stillman's moves across the city grow preoccupied with Quinn. His pursuit of Stillman ultimately fails, and he loses track of him. To keep an eye on Peter and Virginia, he then spends weeks squatting in an alley behind their building. The city and the tale are left without a trace when Peter and Virginia vanish without a trace, Stillman commits himself by leaping over the Brooklyn Bridge (145), and Quinn is unable to return to his life. In the second short story, titled "Ghosts," (1986) we meet Blue, a private investigator who has been engaged by a man named White to keep tabs on and report on the activities of a character dubbed "Black". Blue has a hard time dealing with the monotony, isolation, and interminability of his profession. When he and blue finish working together on a piece of literature, White plots to kill them both. Finally, Blue manages to murder Black and go away.

In the end, another amateur detective is looking for his childhood friend Fanshawe in *The Locked Room* (1986) When Fanshawe vanished, his wife Sophie approached the narrator for help carrying out Fanshawe's request that his friend read his manuscript, evaluate its merits, and pursue publication if it was worthy. After successfully publishing one of Fanshawe's books, the narrator goes on to marry the woman he believes to be his friend's widow. After receiving Fanshawe's letter of thanks, he becomes obsessed with tracking him down and ending the commotion he has been causing. He plans to track him down under the guise of researching Fanshawe for a biography he has being asked to write. Fanshawe finally comes clean and says he is hiding out in Boston and has no intention of going back to New York. Labyrinths are a

common motif in modern American literature, and Stefan L. Brandt (2009) in "The city as liminal space: Urban visuality and aesthetic experience in postmodern US literature and cinema." explains that in The New York Trilogy, the labyrinth is "a symbol of the protagonist's experience of bewilderment and uncertainty" (558-59). About the story's development, Sante says the city is "a labyrinth of chance" and that the investigator "finds that his goal has brought him through the labyrinth on a course that represents an irregular circle" (Sante 1). Brandt (2009) sums up the novel's description of New York City by quoting a paragraph from the beginning:

> It did not matter how far he went or how well he got to know the city's districts and streets; New York was an infinite place, a maze of unending steps, and he was always left with a sense of being lost in it. (4)

For Jameson (199) the labyrinth is the defining experience of inhabiting postmodern space, and this section shows it as a character's subjective reality, which Jameson also relates figuratively to the maze: "Postmodern theory has the wit to hold to its Ariadne's thread on its way through what may not turn out to be a labyrinth at all, but a gulag or perhaps a shopping mall" (11). Disorientation in postmodern space is exacerbated by the difficulty of finding exits and entrances, the reflective exterior surface that "achieves a peculiar and placeless dissociation of the building from the city" (42), and the sheer size and "busyness" of the interior spaces, which Jameson uses as an example from LA's Bonaventure Hotel (40). Most of all, he is concerned with the incapacity to locate oneself in postmodern space, which reflects a broader failure to find oneself in global capitalism (51-54). When dealing with postmodern space, this book follows in the footsteps of Jameson by focusing mainly on the protagonist's attempt to traverse it. Many difficulties people have while navigating a city may be traced back to the city's layout or specific structures.

When Quinn loses sight of Stillman, he goes for a walk around the city and *City of Glass* meticulously details every route he takes, every corner he makes, and every place he stops (127-28). This labyrinth makes getting from A to B difficult because of all the many paths you may take. There were "no streets here, no city blocks to show the stages of his approach," and he suddenly felt as if he had been on the move for hours.

Then, “it seemed as if he had been wandering for hours,” (143) the author writes. As an added bonus, he discovers the same types of architectural features that Jameson finds puzzling in Grand Central Station: a person who was determined to disappear “could do it without much trouble,” according to Quinn, who “went through the numbered gates seeking for secret stairs, unmarked entrances, and dark alcoves” (61).

Blue, who makes an appearance in *Ghosts*, feels perplexed by elements of the setting. Like the surface of the Bonaventure, the author thinks that Manhattan’s “buildings are so lofty in the early light that they appear to be figments” (177). Like Jameson’s assessment of Bonaventure’s internal rooms, he says that Times Square is full of “bright lights and commotion, masses of people rushing this way and that” (212). Even if there are room descriptions, what really matters is how the protagonist feels about being lost in the unfamiliar environment. As part of his study, Quinn “ransacks the chaos of Stillman’s motions for any gleam of cogency,” plotting his daily travels onto a map of the city and becomes obsessed with the idea that the pattern of each stroll may represent a letter in a phrase that Stillman has written (75). His inability to create a unified map has angered him much. Blue does nothing except wander about town while Black leads the way, taking in “strange bits of landscape, random data clusters. “Nonetheless, he never interacts with any of it or the other people that live there (like Blue)” (202). He has the same tendency to drift off, albeit not when with Black. He “continues to meander about in his circle, halting now and then in some random area, and then moving on “when he first emerges” (197).

Through the narrator’s memories of “blundering foolishly from home to house” during his tenure as a census taker, *The Locked Room* paints a bleak picture of the city and its inhabitants (292-93). Further, he experiences disturbing outside-of-New-York situations that discredit the link between aimlessness and the city. If we take his search for Fanshawe as an example, he experiences this disorientation in Paris: “From one instant to the next, I felt to be in a new place, to have forgotten where I was” (341). By elevating the feeling of disorientation above the spatial (and economic) practices to which Jameson’s theory relates it, this statement challenges an underlying distinction between New York and “old world” Paris (338).

The questions the character asks are futile efforts to construct a spatial map of the subject's movements from the minute details of those motions alone. Quinn attempts to understand Stillman's goals by drawing meticulous maps. Blue "keeps waiting for some pattern to form, for some indication to drop in his way that would guide him to Black's secret" (174) by keeping track of Black's whereabouts (181).

The narrator of *The Locked Room* tries to find Fanshawe by deciphering his letters to his sister Ellen. They are all lacking in some way. In *The Locked Room*, the narrator eventually receives a letter from Fanshawe that reveals his whereabouts after he has given up attempting to locate him on his own (356). When Black reveals his plans to Blue, only then does 'Blue learn of them (216). If knowing Stillman was the aim, then "Quinn has failed," and "he might wander through the streets every day for the rest of his life, but still, he would not locate him." (109). The last words of the great Auster: "I could not be sure of any of it" (35), and "uncertainty would torment him to the last" (68). The importance of space travel and navigation is further emphasized by the works' frequent use of these themes as metaphors for the journey of life. The preceding discussion demonstrates that spatial metaphors are often used to portray the protagonist's inquiries. According to Blue, this investigation is "going nowhere", so he starts from the beginning and solves the case piece by piece. (175). His information suggests that White is eager to "hide [his] tracks" (185). He "walks back and forth" to consider his options (216).

The narrator of *The Locked Room* relates a similar experience, saying that he was "taken down a million roads of false inquiry" before "finding the one one that would take [him] where [he] needed to go." (332). According to Stillman and his investigation of man's natural language, we can never find our way until and until "we can function within a terrain small enough to make all findings conclusive" (93). Even though the story centers on the investigators, their personal experiences are portrayed as representative of modern life in general. Two of the characters in *The Locked Room* are unwilling amateur detectives who are lured into investigations by the narrator, who is pursuing a mystery that has nothing to do with the novel's narrative. The use of spatial metaphors aids in the elucidation of the narrator's Spatial metaphors are often used when

describing humans. Both Blue and Fanshawe have a “secret core in him that cannot be reached,” which is described as a “mysterious center of hiddenness” (248). Their conversation had “a mode of speaking that repeatedly went around the item that was being spoken,” as the narrator of *The Locked Room* and Sophie Fanshawe put it (267). It is important to remember to take life one step at a time (162). The narrator ofThe Locked Room observes that “in general, lives appear to swerve suddenly from one thing to the next... A person proceeds in one way, turns sharply mid-course, stops, drifts, and starts up again.” “No matter how hard we strive, the place we finally arrive at is never the one we had in mind” (297). Consequently, life is “a chronicle of accidental junctions, of flukes, of random occurrences that disclose nothing except their absence of meaning,” and so cannot be mapped (256).

Fredrick Jameson (1991) in *Cultural logic of Consumer Capitalism*, argues that “spatial shift” (154) in postmodern consciousness an aesthetic and fundamental preoccupation with space that persists even as physical places recede out of limelight, is reflected in scholars frequent metaphorical use of room and route in representing the contemporary metropolis. The importance of space and spatial comparisons grows throughout the book, as though this preoccupation with space is intrinsic to or the product of postmodern thought. Furthermore, the story structure of Auster’s books is twisted, with omitted subtleties, recursions, and emphases throughout the three novellas that break up the limits between stories in an agitating manner, and metafictional components pointing out the fictionality of basically the first two stories. Joseph Francese (1997) a prominent Postmodern critic, argues that “the reference’ of standard works by ludic meta fictionists retains the past into the present, “and that the “breakdown of time” in metafiction “consolates and adjusts the peruser to the present and adds to the decay of the reader’s will and capacity to grill the world and self” (157-58).

Likewise with globalization, the book’s portrayals of postmodern space infer that it is both “the status quo” and an issue; by stretching out this experience of room to the peruser, the methods of postmodern fiction request an affirmation and compassion for the muddling and uncannily confusing experience of consuming such spaces. Some have argued that the characters’ difficulties stem not from the chaos itself but from their efforts

to impose order on it, an argument that has been backed up by scholars like Brandt and Eckhard (2009, 2011). Simply put, the critics argue that the book does not do enough to tackle the issue of the inaccessibility of postmodern space. Simply stated, Quinn is trying to fulfill the assigned duty of investigator and "wants there to be a logic to them, no matter how opaque" he believes they are, thus he has a hard time accepting the "arbitrariness" of Stillman's patterns (Auster 83). If order did not need to bekept, Quinn would not have to labor as hard. Eckhard (2011) argues that Quinn's path represents an acceptance of postmodernism's newfound chaos as well as a rejection of this responsibility. For the characters, letting go of the concept of "logical knowledge" facilitates their healing from their individual traumas (184). Brandt (2009) argues that the fact that Quinn finds happiness in the midst of what the book calls "a measure of serenity" and "a salutary emptiness inside" on his trek through the labyrinth is not a negative development. He never expected anything different from his request for "nowhere" (4).

As these analyses see it, the novel's depiction of urban space is closer to Edward J. Soja's thesis. The disintegration of urban space brought on by globalization is "very diverting and incredibly delightful," in Soja's words. Not having a clear mental map is something Quinn finds exciting. "Giving oneself over to the flow of the streets, "he finds that by strolling aimlessly, all locations became equal, and it no longer mattered where he was" (4). He has a secret desire to "disappear" entirely, and he finds solace in the "quiet" of the library. In the library, he hopes to find "a place where one may truly escape "inside" the circle of music's repetitions" (130). When this goal is reached, it suggests that postmodern incoherence may be conquered rather than endured, first by "melting into the walls of the city," and then by vanishing out of Stillman's apartment. The impact of the case on him, he says, "He had been one thing, and now he was another." Nothing changed for the better or worse. The only difference was that" it was different," the speaker said (143). Stillman sees utopia as "nowhere," indicating that it is not a location to which we can one day return but rather something "immanent inside man himself," despite his emphasis on the necessity for radical rethinking via "the attempt to reproduce language that was uttered inEden" (56).

Stillman makes the link between “nowhere” and “utopia” to illustrate Quinn’s peace with his homelessness. However, Stillman draws the parallel, despite his assertion that Quinn’s depiction of nowhere is fictitious. If I were to be honest, I would not put my confidence in Stillman. His madness stems from his need to find meaning in chaos, which is shown to be fruitless throughout the trilogy. However, Quinn’s version of nowhere seems to be more trouble than it is worth. If Quinn could be anywhere, it would be there. To be with Auster’s family, “spouting rubbish about ancient novels, surrounded by yoyos and ham omelets and fountain pens,” is his ideal scenario. (136-37) Quinn is wasting away due to lack of food and sleep and the hazards of street life (121). A prime example is when Blue “realizes he would much rather be with his lover than spend the rest of his life in this small room for God knows how long” (Auster, *Ghosts*165). Neither during nor after the inquiry is he permitted to do so by the city. The more Quinn digs into the case and tries to make sense of the inexplicable, the less he enjoys his time in the city. The narrative implies that his loss of his kid rendered whatever pleasure he had to be fake or fleeting, and that genuine contentment requires both a connection to and the capacity to give meaning to space, both of which are implausible.

In the *City of Glass*, where he lives, Quinn is able to sustain himself as a mystery writer by working just “five or six months” every year. The rest of the time he spends reading books, looking at art, and watching movies. He watches baseball on TV all summer long and goes to the opera in the winter (3). He leads a comfortable and carefree lifestyle, but his freedom to pursue his passions leads him to get involved in the case, where he is degraded and then mysteriously disappears. The ability to renounce paid work in favor of more personally rewarding or enjoyable pursuits is a luxury that comes with economic independence. Quinn’s wealth and privileged way of life are out of the ordinary for Americans, although her life is not highlighted as particularly extraordinary in the narrative.

Black, pretending to be White because he is affluent and has nothing better to do, pays for Blue to conduct his fruitless research into Ghosts. Without Black’s money, there would be no story to tell. Blue’s access to tools like binoculars, as well as the more subtle trappings of American city life, such as his ability to send checks through the post office

while remaining anonymous, his ability to secure housing for himself and Blue in plain sight of one another (Blue discovers the place "fully equipped with brand new furniture, kitchen utensils, and even new clothes" (163)). Blue has a secure, well-paying career, plenty of free time for hobbies like reading, writing, shopping, and eating, and is never in danger until he and Black are forced to face each other. That sense of safety that comes with their position is what drives them crazy.

Finally, both Fanshawe and the narrator of *The Locked Room* are middle-class white guys who grew up in the suburbs and have the financial freedom to choose between working and not working. Since the narrator "knew what it was like to struggle each month to pay the rent" and since the apartment Fanshawe lived with Sophie "suggested that Fanshawe had not spent his time earning money," it is safe to assume that they are not as well off as Stillman or even Quinn (237). Meanwhile, "there was always food on the table and none of them moaned "because of Sophie's pay at Fanshawe (241). He makes writing a part of his daily routine but chooses not to publish, opting instead for the anonymity that comes with not having to worry about the monetary pressures of fame (242). After moving in with Sophie and making a living off publishing Fanshawe's works, the narrator dismisses Fanshawe's literary career despite its success and reputation. The narrator places more value on the job Fanshawe "can't accomplish than on the work he actually does" (245). Being able to make ends meet without working frees them up to focus on other concerns. Affluence breeds wanting and wanting leads to disappointment. The real problem with living in a city is not the difficulties it creates or the questions it fails to answer, but rather the fact that it provides a way of life so novel and yet so deceptively straightforward that its residents have to invent desires they cannot satisfy.

As for the second feature of postmodern space, the collapse of private and public borders. Blue disguises himself as a salesperson and visits Black, all the while looking forward to the moment when "the door will open, and then Black will be inside him forever" (Auster 218). Due to the absence of limits, Black attempts to commit murder instead of suicide, but blue kills him and then vanishes into the future. "His travels across the city had given him an appreciation for the inner and outer connectedness," Quinn

adds. On his finest days, he could seize the sovereignty of inwardness by bringing the outside in via mindless movements (Auster, City of Glass 74).To attain the oblivion, he seeks via postmodern spatial logic, he must sacrifice community.

Apart from the imprisonment of the Blue in his chamber and Quinn's aimless roaming around the streets, Auster's textual universe has a third major sort of intoxicating spatiotemporal experience. What I refer to as the vehicle chronotype is most visibly manifested in Jim Nashe's transcontinental trips within The Music of Chance. Nashe's mentality is exemplified by the following:

> The thrill of sitting in the motor and hurling oneself forward through space demanded rapidity. That elevated to the status of an absolute need, a hunger that must be satisfied at any cost. It seemed as if he was the only thing that persisted since nothing else around him lasted more than a second. He stood motionless while the world around him whirled past him and vanished, a steady anchor in a sea of flux. His automobile became a fortress of protection from the world outside, a place where he felt safe from harm. If he was behind the wheel, he was free from all of his problems and nothing from his past could bother him. (11–12)

As Baudrillard put it, "driving is an extraordinary form of amnesia." "Discover and eradicate everything that is before us" (9). Car experiences of the protagonist include two journeys that alternate between roads and homes, culminating at the billionaire's mansion. Primeau (1996) in an article Literature of American Highway comments to begin with, a standard formulaic structure for the genre dictates the repeating locations and their interrelationship because of the interaction between these various spatiality's represented by rigorously defined places and undefined space. For a time, the voyage becomes all for the road explorers who stick to the prescribed route and then return home (143). So, the road serves as a tool for investigating the contrast between the known and the unknown, between vast space and the confines of a particular region, or between civilization and nature. On the other hand, Questers tend to return to their homes after their journeys, where they may reflect on their experiences and connect with their loved ones. Concerning the man's sphere of influence, Primeau describes how his house and

the road serve as his typical chronotypes. But in *The Music of Chance*, both chronotopes are significantly reformed. Physical construction is the fundamental distinction. Even though the road and residences seem to have an ideal balance in the novel's beginning, Nashe's automobile adventure ends with his stay at the billionaire's mansion. The axiological position of the road and the home space is also a notable divergence in traditional road tales since the essential purpose and values associated with the latter have been dramatically changed. Since the main protagonist's trip begins and ends there, the home's value cannot be overstated, according to Primeau. However, even if the protagonist's daily routine is disrupted for a short period, their house is still the center of their universe and remains so even when they return home. Madanipour (2003) says "because it is both a shelter for the individual and a location for a social unit, which for a long time has been the family, it is traditionally seen as the ideological and domestic center of one's semiotic space" (62). Bachelard (1994) says "It is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word,". The road explorer may return there to share their experiences or to relive them. "It is our corner of the world" (4).

Despite this, Nashe's family house in Boston, where he starts on both excursions, seems to be a problematic construct because, while it serves as the beginning of his road trips and provides a starting point, it lacks some of the essential characteristics of homeliness. This corresponds to Bachelard's notion of the house as one's center of the world and, simultaneously, diverges from Madanipour's implications of closeness and solid stability that are the primary components of domestic space. Consequently, Nashe's home loses its usefulness as a reference point over time, causing him to lose his sense of self. This private, protected area is still referred to as "the intimate private space that is separated, and protects its members, from the impersonal public outside," but it does not serve as a home in the classic sense. After that, Nashe's wife, left him and his profession as a fireman "kept him out of the house at all hours of the day and night," the man had no option but to ask his sister to take care of his daughter, which led to the degeneration of his family life (Auster, *The Music of Chance*2). In other words, "the bottom half of a dismal two-family house in Somerville" (2) no longer serves as the nucleus of the social unit represented by the family and so loses its position as a "place of living for a handful of people in a close, intimate relationship" (62).

Madanipour (2003) comments that in the beginning, Nashe's home serves as "a point of reference through which the individual discovers their place in the world, despite the absence of close connections" (65). Private home space is what Bachelard refers to as the "center of the universe" for a man, yet it serves to define his professional domain. Nöth (2015) says many any sites in Boston are "the result of metaphorical projections of cultural values onto geographical space," such as his home and the fire station (22). Nashe's "micro-universe" consists of these places, and they have a unique value to him. It is still the only thing "that had ever meant anything to him" when it comes to the man's micro-universe and, at the same time, to his home since there is no longer a distinction between private and public life (Auster 8). As a result, Nashe's semiosphere is entirely defined by his profession and drives him to return home after his first trip to Minnesota, which was first seen as a vacation. Nashe's initial excursion is congruent with Primeau's notion of traveling in road fiction, in which a typical road explorer performs a circular movement first out from and then back to their home base. Since the home serves as Nashe's center of gravity and reference point for placing oneself in the world, and the road serves as the peripheral region of importance, his initial journey keeps the conventional circular form. Nashe's return from vacation shows that a man's habitation is not axiologically stable since it no longer defines him as a social person whose sense of existence is seen via his work sphere. "It was not that he wanted to quit his job, but with no more time coming to him, what else was he supposed to do? […] He still had over sixty thousand dollars in the bank, and maybe he should use it to get out while he still could" (Auster, *The Music of Chance* 8).

Far-reaching changes that have recently occurred in man's life triggered a chain reaction that could not be stopped. The man's internal struggles intensify all the experiences linked with the road, motion, or speed. When Nashe's emotional attachment to his abode weakens, seeing no possibility of continuing the life that he used to have, the protagonist abandons it altogether for the unexpected opportunities the road offers. Each step increases the distance between the man and his past, leading to his temporary lack of any spatial point of reference in his world. Discarding all his material belongings before commencing the second journey signifies Nashe's final separation from his old life:

> He spent several hours gathering up Thérèse's belongings and loading them into trash bags, finally getting rid of her in a systematic purge […] and when he began to consider his own possessions the following afternoon, Nashe acted with the same brutal thoroughness (Auster 9-10).

Brigham (2015) argues "The act of hitting the road is symbolic of breaking free of any ties to one's social environment, one's history, one's family, and any other ties that may have held one back" (6). Thus, exceptional circumstances on the road enabled Nashe to liberate themself from all that had been left behind and what functioned as the determinants of his position in society. Usually, the journey signifies an attempt to be free from restrictions or a desperate craving for a change. In that, *The Music of Chance* does not diverge from road fiction tradition since the pursuit of liberation is primarily motivated by Nashe's crisis that cannot be eased. Nashe is brief happiness at inheriting the money is quickly replaced by grief when he meets Juliette in Minnesota and finds that here is where the sky began to fall in [...] After some time, Nashe realizes that things cannot be fixed. Too much time had passed since he had saw Juliette; now that he would come back for her, it was as if she had forgotten who he was (4).

The solitude, freedom to go anywhere he desires, and the overall appeal of the path are so overwhelming for Jim that driving very quickly becomes an intoxicating obsession. As it turns out later, one that cannot be willingly stopped. At one point, after many hours spent in the car, a disoriented man notices the tremendous influence that the road exerts on him. Nashe recognized he was no longer in charge of his own life, that he had fallen under the influence of some mysterious and overwhelming force [...]; despite his best intentions, he could not bring himself to stop (6-7). Although the characters journey together lasts only a few days, certain features of the relationship can be enumerated that dominate the plot of road novels. The characters are of the same sex, male, and relatively young, consistent with the portrayal of the great majority of road explorers in the genre. Both Nashe and Pozzi set out on the road to seek a new sense in their lives – whereas, for Jim, the path represents an escape from the past and the quest for something not specified up to the moment of the meeting; for Jack, it signifies opportunities, especially the ones linked with money. These two men meet at critical

moments in their lives. As Nashe's fortune has been shrinking, the protagonist finds himself in a worsening financial situation since he has neither discovered a new sense in his life nor taken any steps to settle down. Therefore, the man realized that "if something did not happen soon, he was going to keep on driving until the money ran out" (19). Pozzi's critical situation, similarly to Jim's, also results from the lack of money. As he confesses to the protagonist, "I was supposed to be in one of the biggest games of my life, and now it's not going to happen" (29). Hence, Nashe becomes his companion's savior since he proposes to lend him some cash for the big poker game. In turn, Pozzi seems to be for him an unexpected stroke of luck – if the young gambler wins, the protagonist will get half of the money as retribution for a significant risk he takes. Therefore, the primary bond created between the men is financial. Yet, whereas in a great majority of road narratives, the bonding between characters is maintained as long as they are traveling, in *The Music of Chance*, the relationship is preserved even after the men lose the game and have to work off their debt at the billionaires' mansion.

In *The Music of Chance*, Paul Auster engages in a literary dialogue with the tenets of American road fiction, giving it a postmodern character, especially regarding spatiality's statuses. Brendan (1996) says that the novel also foregrounds "the significance of random contigent happenings" (27), which is regarded as one of the tenets of literary postmodernism. The author redefines some of the fundamental components imposed by the formula, which results in a greater emphasis on the power of contingency, identity, disorientation and confusion, and manipulations within the spatial dimension of the novel, which are widely recognized concerns addressed in postmodern novels. The invariants of the generic convention and its principal formulaic pattern are realized in the narrative since Nashe commences journeys due to not being complacent about his current situation. The adventures enable him to discover the lure of the road: "escape, and the offer to break the routine" (Primeau 15). The sensations experienced are so profound that they result in the man's destabilization of identity. Moreover, the axiological status and the previously stable border between the center of his home and peripheries represented by the road are reformulated.

Unlike the protagonist of *Sunset Park*, Miles Heller, who and his three pals take safety in a home in Brooklyn, *City of Glass's* Daniel Quinn travels from the domestic environment to the public streets of Manhattan. Paul Auster's novel *Sunset Park* is set in the Sunset Park neighborhood of Brooklyn during the Great Depression and follows a gang of squatters who have taken over a home in the neighborhood. The book is not about the city's poor fighting to find shelter, but rather a group of young white academics and artists who squat as a kind of personal redemption and financial thrift. The idea's creator, Bing Nathan, is joined by artist Ellen Brice, her friend, doctorate student Alice Bergstrom, and protagonist Miles Heller, who is on the run from potential statutory rape accusations and is seeking for a place to stay until his love Pilar becomes eighteen. All of them abandon or forgo conventional housing options in favor of living as if they were really homeless. The book describes a scene of poverty tourism, in which relatively rich people participate in the activities of the lower class because they believe it to be more interesting than those available in the established economy. Sunset Park, as described by Andrew Lawson, (2013) in "Foreclosure Stories: Neoliberal Suffering in the Great Recession." "Foreclosure Stories: Neoliberal Suffering in the Great Recession." "Tracks a freshly unveiled landscape of class," in which members of the middle class are becoming aware of their own economic fragility and structural connection with the working class. Still, the impoverished are rarely seen in their proper perspective or given the attention they need" (62). While this is not the problem at hand, nor is the lack of poverty in the neo colonized globe, it does raise questions about what it means when people from the first world's middle class play the role of the impoverished in a story. McMichael (2000) defines informalization as "the casualization of labor via corporate restructuring and the development of new forms of individual and collective livelihood strategies" (213), but in the novel, it is portrayed as a solution to middle-class problems of alienation rather than a manifestation of the injustice perpetuated by global capitalism. At the same time, it portrays domesticity and stability as a cause of distress.

The informal dwelling that Bing and the other protagonists adopt allows them to rebel against the "shabby," "alienating," and "empty" consumerist lifestyle of mainstream America. To authors from the developed world, the informal economy's inventiveness and community-building have always come across as admirable forms of defiance. This

view of informalization as a collection of resourceful practices that provide agency to their users is bolstered by Sunset Park's focus on the ways in which the characters' choice to squat solves their difficulties and, on the planning, and techniques required to make it work. Furthermore, by using anti-consumerist philosophy as a driving force behind his decision to squat, Bing presents his action as a kind of defiance against late capitalism rather than a plain celebration of one of its results.

The city, or more specifically, New York, is a majestic object in many of Paul Auster's writings, and this is especially true in his short stories. As Brendan Martin (2007) cites Jean Baudrillard to establish the hyperreal as an integral part of the metropolis, it symbolizes "the epitome of the postmodern city":

> Nothing beats the intensity, electricity, turmoil, and vitality of New York City streets... Millions of people are out and about in the city, aimlessly meandering and acting recklessly and violently as if they had nothing better to do (which, of course, is the case). (155)

Auster's novels place a high value on urban crisis literature, which includes spiritual and ethical dilemmas and racism. As a result of the city's milder spiritual and moral challenges, racial hatred becomes more intense and even violent. While Auster's understanding of the urban predicament is exceptional, it has remained a central motif and jumping-off point for his ideas throughout his career. Throughout his career, Auster has written on various problems that represent his critical view of the city's history, present, and future.

Despite his glowing praise of the city and exaltation of the city's affluence, Edward Glaser purposefully ignores the difficulties and problems the city is facing. A "soft Pandora's box" has opened in the metropolis, containing never-before-seen devastation. Catastrophes have even threatened human life itself in several cases. In his works, Auster examines the city's many problems. To raise awareness of urban concerns is one thing, but for Auster, the ultimate aim is for us to regard them highly.

To begin, this section talks about the city's spiritual and ethical problem, which is exacerbated by technology and media, the deconstruction of conventional ethics, and the

enjoyment of gambling. Racism in the city will next be examined, with a focus on prejudice towards blacks and Jews. The ethnic and racial makeup of cities is growing more varied. Even if racial hate has been more intense in the present crisis than in the past, blacks and Jews become targets of racial hatred in Auster's writings, even though whites today hold the favored position in popular culture. Individuals of mixed race consequently, characters in Ghosts have just color descriptors for "names" We will look at the relationship between the city's racial tensions and prejudice in general and the representative reading of the postmodern viewpoint. Postmodern efforts to understand "ethnicity" or "race" often seek to dismantle the binary opposition between white and black and the ideological discourses that underpin them. In addition, postmodernism, and Auster has a significant theoretical emphasis on dismantling the self/another dichotomy. *Ghosts* is not at all a novel about the prevalence of racism in the city. For its part, *Ghosts* is adamant in its refusal to believe that race and culture in the city can be ignored in the present or the future.

In *Ghosts,* the investigator is imprisoned in a tiny room to watch on Black while waiting and hoping for something to happen. Even though he is given it the moniker "Blue," Auster is the one who first recognizes the bronze statue. It presents Beecher as the white hero of the abolitionist cause. Because of Beecher's freedom, Blue is reminded of the history of slavery in the United States, which is ironic. Black reveals to Blue that before visiting Walt Whitman, Thoreau heard Henry Ward Beecher preach at Plymouth Church, the same place where Abraham Lincoln and Charles Dickens worshipped. The following episode only worsens the city's racism. With each passing day, blue's deviations from Black get more audacious. He notices how vividly everything around him is colored: green grass, brown dirt, a white ball, and a blue sky above. Everything has its own distinct identity. Therefore, it is difficult to mix them together. By his best attempts, he cannot take his eyes off Robinson throughout the game, lured in by the dark features of the guy. He is impressed by the man's courage in the face of so many strangers, half of whom don't want to see him die, to achieve what he's doing. While Black is unconscious, blue snatches his weapon and attacks him in his apartment. To gain their freedom and self-respect, "rather than depending on whites to liberate them, blacks should resort to violence. Giving is shown in Ghosts' sculpture of Beecher and Lincoln's

relief. It is possible to consider Blue's ultimate act of hostility as a struggle for personal freedom from his tyrannical master. As with the "master/slave dichotomy," all concepts of "White" and "Black" and their binary opposition are demolished by Blue. There is only one Blue, and he must come to understand that White and Black are the same things. White, his enigmatic and mysterious superior, does not exist since he is the colorless void that is the absence of color. As Blue's sense of self starts to weaken, the subjectivities of Black, White, and Blue begin to disintegrate. The blurring of color connotation undermines dissociation between Black and White as characters and the direct link Blue initially gives to words, colors, and races (and as races). Is it possible that the foundation for racial oppression and discrimination is defective if postmodern/poststructuralist logic is correct.

Auster's novels and short stories have long dealt with the widening gap between the sexes. The characters in books like *The Book of Illusions, Sunset park,* and *The Locked Room* may be interpreted as urban decay and insatiability metaphors. Postmodern metropolises have more open sex relationships, with more flexibility and unpredictability. Auster's sex writing depicts the crises of dissolving traditional ethics rather than providing the perfect marital pattern. The Roaring Twenties are the period in which *The Book of Illusions* is set. Auster employs a prostitute called Sylvia Meers as a metaphor for the generation's wild and crazy sexual emancipation. For six months, they appeared forty-seven times together.

Every one of these groups enjoys the act of having sex, from professional athletes to elected officials to bankers and stockbrokers, to the "Bankers and lawyers, businessmen and politicians, athletes and stockbrokers, as well as representatives of the idle rich" Whatever the size of the city, their shows are always sold out. Minneapolis, Detroit, and Cleveland all had a role in the project's development in addition to Chicago. "Nightclubs, hotel rooms, brothels, warehouses, commercial spaces, and private residences were some of the venues. More than a hundred people to "one (repeated ten times for the same individual)" were some of the crowd sizes observed. The performers might accommodate both large and small crowds. Customers might request short plays based on Hector and Sylvia's own erotic daydreams, which they would perform for them.

To this day, incest is still widely seen as a grave offense against human nature and God's laws of morality. As a former college roommate of Jim's, Walker narrates the story of their incestuous relationship via the second-person narration in the book Invisible. An observer in New York at the time of Walker's experimentation described it as a "dark and depraved thing according to both man and God's laws," by his sister's words. Neither in the countryside nor in the city does incest play a significant role anymore in Invisible. A central subject in Auster's new book is the importance of memory and trauma in society. They are still mourning the loss of their sibling, Walker. It is via Auster that the protagonist's traumatic experience and literary legacy come to light. As an academic study of incest, Invisible helps us better understand the trauma of incest as a personal and societal experience. *Oracle Night* is held in Brooklyn, New York City. In an interview, Auster confesses that "Oracle Night is also a dark book," When Orr was in the hospital, he wrote about the incestuous relationship between Trause and Grace. When Orrlearned that his wife was pregnant, she reacted weirdly, and the New York City family values were placed in peril by his relationship with a prostitute and his wife's odd behavior when she learned of her pregnancy. For example, in Oracle Night's marital difficulties, *The Locked Room* volume in *The New York Trilogy* deals with people's moral quandaries. However, the narrator claims that Fanshawe has now acknowledged his long- buried emotions for her. Establishing a direct link between alcohol abuse and its consequences is impossible. A mother-son relationship will never be harmonious, and there is also the issue of purpose. As long as the narrator and Fanshawe had sex, Fanshawe would once again belong to hers. In addition, the narrator's mental state deteriorates rapidly. The narrator and mother Fanshawe discuss the city's separation from human nature, which Fanshawe's mother had to deal with growing up in New York. At this stage, it is impossible to identify which side lay the trap, and which one was caught. Both may be stuck, but it is not likely. The narrator achieves what her son had been unable to: a tight family bond via sexual engagement. Fanshawe's mother's infidelity fulfills the narrator's predetermined target of attack: Fanshawe. To begin with, there is no indication that the narrator's identity would ever be revealed.

This is the first novel in which the narrator's experience is extended to symbolize Auster's idea of the universality of ethical issues in city life. Regarding relaying their

personal experiences, people in the city have extraordinary obstacles because of their isolation. Racism is more intense and violent than consumption in many of the city's crises, and the problem itself reaches a peak in terrorism when consumption acts as a self-outlet. From his continuous quest for novelistic invention to his finding a new direction for urban writing in the postmodern social and cultural context, Auster's genius comes. Concern about the city's present and future significantly impact today's academic sectors.

The city is a location where the weight of the many is most apparent. As with the crystal picture, it signifies an amalgamation of several realities, which are always intertwined and evolving. As with a piece of art, there are many ways to observe the city and various mental pictures. Quinn's home city is New York, a city of glass. In New York City, it is crucial to remember that it's the site where a wide range of realities collides. New York is no longer just a city in the United States; it is a global metropolis whose primary descriptor is "diversity". Since its inception, it has stood as a symbol of the place where people from many backgrounds come together in search of a better life. In addition to being a sign of diversity, New York City is also a symbol of modern progress and economic growth, portraying the capitalistic system in all its glory. The work in question captures the diversity and complexity of New York City's social and economic landscape:

> There were men, women, kids, grandmas, grandpas, teenagers, infants, millionaires, millionaires' kids, millionaires' babies, rich people, poor people, black people, white people, Orientals, Arabs, men in brown, gray, blue, green, women in red, white, yellow, pink, kids in sneakers, kids in shoes, kids in cowboy boots, fat kids, thin kids, tall kids, short kids, all sizes, all shapes, all colors, all sizes, all colors. (Auster, City of Glass 66)

Quinn's home city has a tremendous deal of diversity, which results in a wide range of possible realities. Each of these realities is influenced by the subjectivities' previous experiences and influences. When the story indicates that: an example of how perceptions differ may be observed in the narrative: "If the trees that Quinn saw outside were the same ones that Peter Stillman saw, she wondered aloud (...). Is the universe the same for Peter, or does it appear to be such for him as well" (43). Even while Quinn and Stillman

Junior may be looking at the same thing, their perspectives on it will differ depending on various factors, such as their cultural background, personal experiences with the object, or their intended outcome. Since of this, Quinn discovers that he can't observe what Peter Stillman does because the reasons and rationales that drove each were different when he followed the elder Stillman.

Quinn's meeting with Paul Auster in the *City of Glass* is the only time in the novel that can be considered a brotherly encounter. "Quinn was relieved to hear these remarks as if the load had finally been shared. He had the need to embrace Auster and make the declaration that they were buddies for life" (113). Reassurance is provided by the food they share during this one-of-a-kind moment of communion. The idea of dining with a companion is foreign to Quinn, who had long since forgotten what it was like (116). As previously said, a city's subjectivities are as many as the people who live there, and New York is the most exemplary illustration of this. As New York continues to evolve, the urban subject is impacted by those changes. Because of his uniqueness, he alters people's perceptions of the location. According to Quinn's modern image of the city, Whitman profoundly impacted the notion of New York as a place of closeness and brotherhood that allowed the subject to identify his own identity as part of a larger totality. Despite these divergent viewpoints, Whitman's influence may be found in the City of Glass. Mongin (2006) Overlaid on such ideas are those of "narrative issue" continually being weaved and unwound by the city's people. Even if it has a unique name that identifies and distinguishes it, the city is at the same time plural, and different rhythms approach it at the same time (64).

For capitalists, progress and success are best measured by visible outcomes. Brooklyn Bridge, Wall Street, Empire State Building, and World Trade Center are just a handful of the city's contemporary landmarks. New York City is the undisputed global capital of the modern capitalist quest. It is possible to draw the conclusion that urbanites create social bonds for largely practical reasons. Specifically, as Gardiner (2000) explains, a utilitarian society is "overshadowed by the logic of the commodity-form and an attitude of productivism" (15). The universalizing power of money helps normalize the valuation of human labor as a mere exchangeable good.

However, the pursuit of individual happiness in a utilitarian society inevitably leads to more and more isolation and apathy. Virginia Stillman, Peter's young wife, attracted Quinn to encourage him to work on their case, but she swiftly took on her boss's negative outlook. This is a metaphor for what happened in the *City of Glass* before. After Virginia has just had a passionate kiss with Quinn, she explains: "The point of this was to establish Peter was lying. Having faith in me is crucial" (37). If this encounter had any effect on Quinn's employer, it was likely little, since he soon retreated behind his professional mask, and no one had addressed his emotional state at the time (77). This is shown by Quinn going to Paul Auster for help with the Stillman case. "To prove he was not a self-absorbed ingrate, he started questioning Auster about his work," the author writes (116). When it comes to finding a solution to his difficulties, Quinn is just as self-centered as the rest of the city. Because he makes friends based on his own interests, the urbanite has a hard time connecting with people and maintaining connections over the long haul. The subject develops several identities, some of which may lack intensity, in contrast to a pre-modern society in which a cohesive group of persons with integrated labor regarded the individual as a unified essence.

Paul Auster uses *The Music of Chance* as his playground to cryptically convey the dilemma produced by capitalist ideology's discipline in a postmodern metropolis in his book *The Music of Chance*. Gambling has been a part of human culture for a long time. On the other hand, gambling only became a business with the rise of capitalism. For centuries, gambling was illegal in many capitalist nations until the 1960s, when a process of legalizing it began, and then it became an industry. Because of their belief that "labor came to be deemed in itself the purpose of life, ordained by God," Protestant ethics has had a considerable effect on American gambling bans. The saying attributed to St. Paul, "He who refuses to labor should not eat," is universally applicable. One's lack of grace is shown by his or her inability or reluctance to work. In reference to the well-off, "even if they do not need to work to support their own requirements, he should work." (7). In the midst of the free market economy of the 1960s and 1970s, a new industry arose: gambling. Too far, forty of the fifty states in the US have legitimized the gaming industry. Lotteries have exploded in popularity among the city's lower-income people because of the widespread belief that winning may instantly and dramatically enhance

one's standard of living. Nashe and Pozzi lose everything in the poker game, so the billionaires have them build a 10,000-stone wall to settle their debt. The two billionaires threaten to call the police, but they have little choice but to cooperate since Nashe is aware that the authorities are more likely to help powerful people. Although the repressive state apparatus is said to work "by violence" by Althusser, the ideological state apparatus operates "by ideology." But both governmental institutions cooperate to further the interests of the capitalist class. To rephrase, the few gamblers and their investors benefit from legalized gambling as an ideological state machinery to dominate society. But although most individuals (including Nashe and Pozzi's parents, who acquire billionaires via speculation) lose everything, the two affluent protagonists themselves end up losing everything (even their freedom). People in postmodern or late capitalism civilizations are pushed to place the responsibility for their plight squarely on themselves rather than the system in which they find themselves. Everyone wins or loses money as a result of the story's events. The Ideological State Apparatus is the primary discipline used to preserve social order by the ruling class, the capitalists. Money is never earned in the fictional world. It is always won, whether by chance, trickery, or deception. Flower and Stone, the novel's two eccentric and merciless billionaires, play poker just for fun, while Nashe and Pozzi play for their freedom. Their actions are inconsistent with the protestant ethic, which is whythey have been excommunicated.

As for the "spontaneous enjoyment of things," the protestant ethic is a formidable weapon in the fight against "restricted consumption, especially of luxuries". When Nashe lost all of his money in a poker game, he was transformed into a docile prisoner of the ruling capitalist class in Foucault's panopticon. He never questioned his living conditions before or after the game. Flower and Stone are keeping an eye on him, and he is urging Pozzi to complete the contract by building a wall to pay off the debts. Although Murks, the character of a servant, seems to oversee Nashe and Pozzi on the surface, it is really two millionaires who act as the natural watchdogs. Initially, Pozzi resorts to violence to convey his unhappiness with Nashe's "rhythm". However, he later becomes superstitious, claiming that Nashe upset the universe's equilibrium by altering "the city of the World" and removing a figurine from it. Pozzi blames his plight on bad luck, and his escape is capped off with a sssshhhh. The Music of Chance is a study of how ideology serves as

the primary means of discipline. According to Tim Woods, disciplinary practices were used during the wall's installation, such as deadlines, continual imposition and restriction of activities, surveillance systems to check performance, and guards. The title "The Music of Chance" implies contrasts between music and chance, which suggests an ambiguous condition of things. As a metaphor for the current problem in the city and the novel's abrupt finish, "ordered dis orderedness" is used. Because of capitalism's role as a vast casino, everyone in it is a potential "Knight" in the game of chance.

Conclusion

Consumerism is more than just an economic system; it is how our society operates. Products are symbolic and convey far more than we may realize. While it is simple to conclude that product consumption helps us establish a sense of who we are as individuals, it actually accomplishes much more. Consumerism helps us figure out where we fit in society and gives us the ability to change our social surroundings. Consumerism is often dismissed as shallow and meaningless. Baudrillard's thoughts on consumerism create a sense of loss because there is no meaningful identity and no way to achieve fulfillment. Nevertheless, if you decide to be a consumer and recognize that identity and social condition are constructed, you will feel liberated. Consumerism provides us with the tools we need to become anyone we want and allows us to control how the world perceives us. Paul Auster, though his novels, underscores the role of an artist and his or her work in the society. He points out that America has transformed into a society of spectacle where only signs rule with no meaning behind them. The relations between people have been replaced by commodities and images and the notion of death and meaning of true life absolutely altered by the influence of rampant commodification. The writer analyses contemporary American society as one which is structured on the constructed culture of repression. Capitalism and consumerism have snatched the power of how to see and think from the people and changed their status from humans to consumers, driven more by the instilled desires than by their instincts. Time, as a relative concept, runs too fast for them to understand the meaning of true life and hence, people fail to delve into their consciousness. It is the increasing speed of life that has clouded the contemporary human's capacity to see beyond the realm of spectacle.

Chapter 4

Delegitimized Features of Postmodern Narrative in Select Novels of Paul Auster

During the course of the last century, there have been an incredible number of shifts, advances, and new ways of doing things in every sphere of life. The current age is seen as a time that is a disaster on several fronts, including the social, political, economic, and moral fronts. The legacy of the Enlightenment as well as the foundations of western thinking and philosophy are being called into question as a direct consequence of these shifts, which have given rise to a great number of disputes among the world's most influential philosophers and theoretical thinkers. Accordingly, there is a great deal of confusion in contemporary theoretical and philosophical ideologies, which did not exist in the past. Furthermore, every theorist bases his theoretical views and perspectives on his own distinct foundations, rather than the traditional master narratives, which were the common universal foundation of all thoughts, theories, and philosophical perspectives. It is an endeavor to break down the old conventions and norms in an effort to take into account the whole state of the present age as a whole. The rejection of authority and centers, whether they be metaphysical or political, is at the foundation of the majority of postmodernism characteristics. Therefore, the postmodern world rejects the idea of hierarchy and adheres to more conventional standards of aesthetic worth.

Postmodernism is often considered to have emerged from the sense of disillusionment with the events of the Second World War, particularly those of the holocaust and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As we shall see, these occurrences are also the beginning of the end of great narratives or meta narratives, as described by Jean Francois Lyotard (1924) in his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Jean-François Lyotard writes, "Simplifying to the extreme, Lyotard characterizes postmodern as skepticism toward metanarratives" (Jameson 24). For Lyotard, skepticism of metanarratives is driven primarily by technological development, particularly in the context of gadgets that will develop into personal computers and convert information into a commodity. Lyotard (1924) writes "The nation-

states will one day struggle for control over information, just as they fought in the past for control over territory, and subsequently for control of access to, and exploitation of, raw commodities and cheap labor," (5) Bennett and Royle(2009) in an article "An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory" observes that the conclusion of Lyotard was surprisingly visionary in the late seventies, many decades ahead of the coining of the phrase 'fake news'. The narratives that Lyotard referred to when speaking of the end of grand narratives or metanarratives were above all fruits of modernity, a modernity that more specifically nurtured the narrative of the era of enlightenment as an age of reason. However, they also, of course, include other metanarratives such as Christianity and Marxism. Together these metanarratives have provided a wide array of objective and universal explanations of the functioning of the world. Hence, the end of these metanarratives also signifies the end of believing in an unstoppable progress through reason, but also by means of using science or technology. That injustice, unreason, and evil will be put to rest after the last judgement, the revolution, or the scientific conquering of nature is a central promise of many such tales, according to Lyotard's postmodern situation (282). Even more so, Lyotard argues that we should be cautious of these collapsing models of explanations for our world and existence, and instead refer to micronarratives, which are local and regional and cannot be applied uniformly to everyone as the metanarratives. It follows that the 'legitimizing' force behind these metanarratives or grand narratives has dissipated. A plural, regional, or even ephemeral legitimation is currently in effect. The likes of Marx, Hegel, and God are not qualified to sit in judgment (282). Hence, for postmodernists just like for modernists, the concept of truth is subjective and individual rather than objective and universal, which, we will see, is also an important conclusion for all three detectives in the Trilogy. Time and time again, they struggle with the fact that the old methods of reason and analysis, which were invaluable tools for solving crime in the world of enlightenment, are no longer applicable in the postmodern world. If we go back to Lyotard's claim that the postmodern era is marked by 'incredulity toward metanarratives,' which means that metanarratives are no longer useful tools to explain the world we live in, we now come to a second theoretical concept. This concept becomes crucial to analyze Paul Auster's novel What is referred to here is the postmodern questioning of authority and established truths.

Thus, the incredulity leads to challenging and questioning of established truths or models of explanations, which have been central to our western European world and culture. If postmodernists challenge and question the existing metanarratives of Marxism, the enlightenment or Christianity, the three detectives in the Trilogy all question for different reasons the very fundamentals of their existence and identities in their confusing and fragmented postmodern world.

A much of what we consider postmodernism today can be traced back to the work of French philosopher John Francois Lyotard. This essay would not exist without his input; he sees postmodernism primarily through the lens of the crisis in metaphysical philosophy and hence considers himself a philosopher. His primary concerns are the modern world and the age of reason, and philosophical grand narratives. Lyotard, like Habermas, is said to see the postmodern era as a "crisis of legitimation" in the introduction written by Fredric Jameson for "*Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. "This is because, according to Jameson, legitimation and its crucial position were lost in the modern age. M.A.R. Habib (2008) in his book A *History of Literary Criticism and Theory*, defines postmodernism as the "absence of totalizing frameworks of explanation" and the "dissolution of human subjectivity" (566).

New types of scientific legitimation are emerging as traditional forms of legitimation, which Lyotard calls master-narratives, collapse. Two classical age master-narratives that he considers are "the freedom of mankind" and "the theoretical unity of all knowledge." According to him, the purpose of science is not to build a model of the universe but to produce novel phenomena and claims.

Lyotard's focus is on the nature of knowledge in a historically unprecedented break with the norms of established cultures. The widespread use of computers during this era has turned the world into a smaller community, giving rise to the term "global village." He thinks it is crucial that our fractured, skeptical, and unsure society is going through a legitimation crisis right now. Wittgenstein's concept of language games provides the foundation for his worldview, which may be seen as referring to a wide range of forms of expression. Since language games are not defined and legitimized in terms of any external absolute reality, but rather on the basis of their own internal rules,

they provide a formidable obstacle. This is a really serious problem. Similarly, postmodern knowledge is justified via micronarratives rather than macro narratives from the past. He contends that it is irrational to rely on totalizing conceptions for authority in the modern world. Master tales from the past cannot justify the new realities of the postmodern present. Nihilism and delegitimization characterize today's global community. After the collapse of conventional thinking and the demise of the credibility of the quest for a transcendental authority, postmodern science and knowledge are not meant to arrive at a consensus but rather to uncover instabilities. He argues that every kind of interaction can be reduced to a game with its own set of rules and strategies. As he puts it, the rules of these linguistic games are set by the participants themselves. All games have their own unique set of regulations; thus you can't bring the guidelines from one game into another. Then he goes on to knowledge, defining both narrative and scientific understanding as built out of necessary legitimization steps. By being told and used in everyday life, information typical of pre-modern civilizations gains legitimacy. However, scientific understanding has to be justified by appealing to overarching, authoritative narratives or universal truths. Overarching ideologies or systems of thinking that include all of human knowledge and scientific understanding are what we mean when we talk about these great narratives.

Delegitimization is a feature of the twentieth century since the big narratives that previously legitimized it have been abandoned. Since there is no longer any agreement, we now have to tolerate a wide variety of linguistic tricks. As a result, the contemporary period has largely abandoned the metaphysical idea of absolute reality in favor of a perspective of relative truth. Thus, the postmodern era may be seen as a fusion of competing ideologies, each of which is valid in its own right. Art, however, was seen as a depiction of the modern world's chaotic and fractured reality after the postmodern age arrived. To free man from the confines of conventional art, creativity and fragmentation have supplanted all previous approaches and techniques. Images of doubt, deconstruction, dehumanization, and fragmentation permeate current postmodern art in all its forms, from painting and sculpture to dance, music, poetry, and prose. With Lyotard's legitimation theory in mind, we may say that despite postmodern art's

independence from great narratives and the absence of any sense of universal truth, it is nonetheless subject to the authority of little stories.

Unlike the traditional writers of yore, who do not reveal their nuances of story-telling, the postmodern writers profess that they do not have anything to hide from the Other, here, the reader. He does not bother to give his reader the finished book but rather seeks his company while he is still composing his story in his notebook. The notebook then performs a dual function. It is both a tangible, physical entity- the readable words of the writer's story and an intangible, abstract domain- the unreadable maze of the writer's mind. In order to enter this locked room of the notebook, the notebook itself becomes the key. Hence, the written word also acquires multiple identities as it splits its personality. The journey of narration begins from the Self. Considering the Self as the present, the progress of the Self towards the other indicates its journey into the future. This is made possible only through words. Soon, the notebook of the writer becomes the book in the hand of the reader. The identity of the Self is the ultimate quest of the postmodern writer. Postmodern world is a labyrinth of endless circles as mentioned earlier. Its literature is also a quagmire that seems to be leading its readers to a bottomless pit that keeps winding downward into an endless abyss.

This is best explained in Paul Auster fiction with the help of fictional works and books that are part of the reality of the book that the reader reads. That is, Auster not only writes his books, but also creates books for his writer-characters. The postmodern writer has a variety of techniques to choose from and a whole range of subjects to write upon.

By creating a potpourri of narrative styles and techniques, using fragmentation, pastiche, irony; without resting on any one particular convention of literature, the postmodern writer actually rejects the so-called 'grand narratives' as emphasized by Lyotard and thereby reject any idea of a unified whole. The infuriation of the artist gradually evolves into impishness and his anxiety turns into accomplishment. He explains things which need no explanation and draws a curtain over things that need deliberations. He blames everything upon the inadequacy and ambiguity of language, openly recognizing the limitations of his words. Ambiguity/Undecidability signifies being unable to decide between two different competing interpretations or options. The postmodern

world lacks absolute values for central concepts such as God, Truth, Reason, or the Law. These tenets are in the aftermath of the end of the metanarratives no longer possible to clearly define and therefore become possible to question or challenge. What was considered ambiguous in the middle of the twentieth century is now seen in terms of undecidability. Undecidability undercuts the concept of unity. The postmodernist critics welcome the opposite of unity, which are multiplicity, heterogeneity and difference, which renders any final meaning of a literary text impossible.

As a counterpoint to the concept of art as a master tale, postmodern literature often makes use of pastiche and intertextuality. According to Jameson (1991), pastiche is a hallmark of contemporary writing because it serves as a vehicle for recognizing and appreciating diversity. The literary work "intertextuality" is used to characterize the extent to which Auster's writings draw from and are influenced by other texts, both by him and by other writers, both contemporary and classic. These techniques, which are often used in Auster's work, show how postmodernists do not believe in master narratives.

The way Paul Auster's works are put together shows that he believes this. *City of Glass* has a very broken structure. The story does not progress in a straight line; instead, it seems to move in a circle that will never end. In his or her quest for truth and purpose, the protagonist crosses several thresholds between the real and the fantastic. He keeps changing his tale, his character, and his identity until he has nothing left to hide. Therefore, Quinn's search for meaning in this postmodern world is fruitless. Therefore, there is nothing in modern art, such as values or great narratives, that may aid in the process of self-discovery. The use of metafiction is a hallmark of postmodern fiction and, more specifically, Paul Auster's writing. Lyotard's concept of postmodern philosophy and ideology is exemplified in the metaphysical detective genre, which makes extensive use of this strategy. To bring attention to one's own creative act while creating fiction; that is the technical definition of metafiction. It is made noticeably clear to the reader that what he is reading is fiction and not the truth. This method stems from the modern skepticism over the veracity of established facts. The term "metafiction" is defined by Patricia Waugh in her book *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious*

Fiction (1984) as "metafiction is "fictional work that self-consciously and methodically calls attention to its position as an artifact in order to address concerns about the connection between fiction and reality" (2).

When reading a piece of metafiction, the reader is left in a state of confusion as reality itself blurs into the story. Sometimes the narrator may interrupt the story to inform the reader that they are in a work of fiction by speaking to them directly or alluding to them. The reader is responsible for understanding the text rather than the author in these works. After all the norms and standards have been shattered, reality has become an ill-defined mystery.For example, in Auster's novels, much of the action is focused on the art of writing itself. Characters‟ preoccupation with writing brings into consideration the blurred boundary between reality and fiction. The device of self-reflexivity is employed by Auster very adroitly by making authorial interventions and authorial presence in the novellas in one way or the other. In this context, Zohreh Ramin in "The Process of De-centering; Paul Auster's New York Trilogy." says:

> Here, the detective's hunt for the truth is transformed into a quest for meaning in the world and in the language used to describe it. Since both the actual and the fantastical realms are equally possible, there is no obvious delineation between them. As a result, it is no longer plausible to argue that facts in the actual world are in opposition to fiction in the fantastical one. For this reason, Auster depicts the intersection of these two universes as a cross rather than two parallel lines that never meet. Thus, the meeting point arises because reality and fiction are inextricably intertwined, and any effort to draw a clear line between them is doomed to fail. (3-4)

City of Glass opens with a statement that marks the onset of a mystery - a wrong number asking for a detective, Paul Auster. As it turns out later in the novel, Paul Auster is a writer and not a detective. This presents a befitting example of metafiction as Paul Auster is working on a treatise about Cervantes‟ *Don Quixote* and brings to the fore the idea about the ambiguous nature of authorship of the work. *Don Quixote* is originally written in Arabic by Cid Hamete Benengeli and later translated by Cerventes. Cid Hamete seems

to Paul Auster an amalgamation of four characters Sancho Panza, the barber, the priest and Samson Carrasco. For Auster, Quixote makes his friends to record his adventures to see "how accurately his chronicler will record his adventure" (Auster, *City of Glass*98).

In this context, Steven E. Alford states that just as Cerventes created the character of Don Quixote, Paul Auster, the writer of *City of Glass,* created Paul Auster, the character. And the character Auster shares many details of Auster's (author of the novel) life (20). Thus metafiction, in this case, is not only a literary device but becomes a source of letting the author explore his own consciousness by projecting his thoughts on paper. During his search of Stillman Sr., Quinn comes across latter's thesis about the fall of man causing fall of language. To explain the role of language in a postmodern world, Auster places this story within his fictional cosmos. Stillman writes in his work that how every word is designated a second meaning after the fall, the first being before the fall. Then, Stillman delves into the description of myth attached to the Tower of Babel and Henry Dark's interpretation of it. Dark postulates that by recreating the before-fall language, the lost innocence can be regained. This account ends with author's comments which, at once marks its status as an artefact: "Quinn let out a little sigh and closed the book" (Auster 49).

Similarly, in *Ghosts,* for example, Blue has been given the task of reporting back his findings periodically, to his client in writing. These reports not only serve as an instrument by which he can express his thoughts more clearly, but also a means to evaluate the role of the very words he uses. Blue's assessment about Black by projecting the latter's image as perceived by him onto the piece of paper is, in fact, Paul Auster's journey of self-discovery. Both Auster and Blue discover truths about themselves through this process of self-revelation. Auster takes this to a new extreme when in The Locked Room he makes a writer the protagonist in absentia. While presenting the story of Fanshawe, Auster cuts off the fictional world with certain comments of narrator, e.g., "and as I write this now" (Auster 199). When the Trilogy's narrator reveals, "The whole tale boils down to what occurred at the conclusion, and without that end within me today, I could not have begun this book," the reader is no longer under the impression that they are reading a work of fiction. The same goes for City of Glass and Ghosts, the two works

that came before it (287-88). Auster often shows the reader the reality of his fictional world. “Everyone understands that tales are fictitious,” the narrator continues. Despite their persuasive power, we are aware that these stories are fiction, even when they provide information more valuable than what we can learn anywhere else (245). Thus, the process of writing, which is central to Paul Auster’s literary method, plays a multifarious role in the Trilogy, giving the metafictional narratives multiple dimensions of interpretation.

For Auster, the decline of language in the postmodern era is a central theme in his writings. According to Auster, the disintegration and isolation of modern life may be traced, in part, to the breakdown of communication. The characters’ failure to make sense of New York City and the practical world suggests that modern man has become alienated due to language’s incapacity to bear the weight of meaning. As a result, relying on words to make sense of what happened is insufficient. Mark Brown (2007) defines aphasia as “a disjunction in the mind of sufferer between their experience of the world and their capacity to utilize words to explain it, “which is exactly what the characters have (8).Since language acts as a bridge between an individual’s consciousness and social groups, its elimination compartmentalizes human existence. Words no longer convey the same meaning as they used to do earlier. In a sense, signifiers do not correspond to the same signified. What the detectives are searching for, in Trilogy, can also be linked with understanding the vagueness of language in postmodern world where words no more commensurate with the completely altered ethos of society and the self. All the characters encounter estrangement from language, e.g., the fragmented utterances of Peter Stillman reflect the same estrangement from language as it is with Quinn. Before the death of his wife and child, Quinn used to write poems, plays and essays but now he feels alienated and the only thing that interests him is mystery novels which he writes under the pseudonym of William Wilson. He develops an inclination towards mystery novels because “in a good mystery there is nothing wasted, no sentence, no word that is not significant” (Auster 8). He finds a more centered world in these novels something which his life lacks. Moreover, in his investigation of the case, he confronts Stillman Sr.’s obsession of inventing a new language, something that confirms his doubt regarding the corruption of language. Stillman opines that the language has lost its communication

ability because of the fall of the man: Adam's only responsibility in the Garden of Eden was to establish a naming system for all the living things and inanimate objects there. Without thinking, his words had pierced the fabric of the universe. His descriptions of what he saw did more than just describe them; they disclosed the items essential natures and brought them to life The object itself was irrelevant, as was its name. Since the downfall, this was no longer valid. Things lost their names; words lost their meaning; and language lost its connection to God. This means that the narrative of Garden chronicles not only the fall of man, but also the demise of language. (43) The fall of man corresponds with the advent of knowledge which has reached its extreme proliferation in the contemporary world. Auster, in the extract quoted above, clearly reflects the Derridean implosion of meaning post World War II. The whole edifice of western logocentrism crumbles under the lens of Derrida's theoretical pronouncements and the perpetual deferment of the meaning ensues.

In this context, Dimovitz (2006) says, "The violent repercussions of elder Stillman's ambition to rediscover the prelapsarian language by isolating his son from any external "contact is acted out in the book," clearly resembling the Derridean argument against a search for presence. (617). To obtain the "language of God", Stillman Sr. conducts an experiment on his own son by locking him up in a room for nine years, isolated from all the worldly influences so that he can speak the language of innocence. His experiment proves to be an utter failure resulting in Stillman Jr.'s fragmented self as well as language. Also, as a part of his experiment, Stillman Sr. is trying to invent a new language by wandering in the city, collecting the broken things and assigning them names. By following Stillman, Quinn draws the patterns of his walk in his notebook and thus, in a way, participating in his quest. Subsequent to Stillman's disappearance, Quinn stations himself in a garbage bin near the flat of his clients with whom he losses the contact. According to Norma Rowen (1991) this dissent in garbage bin symbolizes his hope to be recycled, to be reborn, and to get the language of innocence. (230)

The urbanization of the nineteenth century is a significant theme in analyst literature. It was the destruction of the singular's followers in the massive city swarm, as noted by Walter Benjamin: "the distinctive essence of the analyst tale" (qtd. in Bernstein

138). It has been pointed out by Stephen Bernstein that Paul Auster's postmodern New York, especially in *City of Glass*, resembles what Fredric Jameson refers to as "postmodern hyperspace," a site that illustrates "the inadequacy of our brains, as of now, to plan the extraordinary worldwide global and decentred communicational organization in which we regard ourselves as gotten as individual subjects "(qtd in Bernstein 138). Thus, according to Bernstein (2011), it becomes impossible to get a grip on a meaningful totality of urban or global contexts (138). The title of the first novella *City of Glass* in the Trilogy also leads us to the American word for mirror, namely looking glass with references to endless reflections, which brings us to another postmodernist technique used in the Trilogy, namely intertextuality. Intertextuality, as defined by Odaciolu et al. (2017) "An Analysis of *City of Glass* by Paul Auster from a Postmodernist Perspective." is the phenomenon in which one text makes reference to another and gains meaning through knowledge of the surrounding discursive context in which the earlier texts were created. (Odaciolu et al 482). This is the conclusion reached by Linda Hutcheon in A Poetics of Postmodernism, in which Hutcheon takes the argument to its logical extreme and wonders whether any literature in the postmodern world can be deemed to be really unique for this reason (126). As we will see later in this essay the Trilogy constitutes a significant labyrinth of intertextuality with a large number of references to Henry David Thoreau's *Walden: Or, Life in the Woods* (1854), Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Fanshawe: A Tale* (1828) and many other works.

The postmodern elements in Auster's Trilogy extend beyond mere projection of the author into its textual space. Auster weaves his narrative with a texture that is rich in textual references from both contemporary and classic literature. Using intertextual traces compels the reader to see not just the inevitability of textuality in our knowledge of the past, but also the usefulness and restriction of the inevitability of knowledge's inescapably discursive shape (Hutcheon 127).

In an intertextual reference of Cervante's Don Quixote in Trilogy, Paul Auster, a character in *City of Glass* tells Quinn that he is working on the book, Don Quixote. He is involved in the ambiguity of the authorship as well as the multiple narrative perspectives. Like Alonso Quixana, the protagonist of Don Quixote who is obsessed with reading

chivalry books, Quinn is also fond of mystery novels and to set his fondness in action, he assumes the identity of Paul Auster just like Alonso takes the identity of Don Quixote.

Another reference to this work is made in *The Locked Room*. The narrator in trying to be like Fanshawe, accompanies him in his every mad pursuit. He sees himself as Fanshawe's devoted companion, "an adolescent Sancho astride [his] donkey" (211). Other intertextual links employed in Trilogy are *Marco Polo's Travels*, Milton's *Aeropagitica, Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained*, Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym, The Pit and the Pendulum*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Thoreau's *Walden* and so on. Auster also finds a suitable treatment of Biblical story of "The Tower of Babel" and "Myth of Paradise" in *City of Glass*. He has projected the theme of loss of language with allusion to these stories. God, to put a control on the irrepressible power of man, produces variation in human language thereby, causing destruction of the tower. And with the fall of man comes the fall of language. In the novella, Stillman Sr. confines his son in a room for nine years to get back the prelapsarian language, as for him, it will bring back the lost innocence. Blue, in *Ghosts,* follows the meaningless routine of observing Black who does nothing but write. Initially, Blue considers it an ordinary tail job, but soon his assumption proves wrong, and the case turns out to be a metaphysical one. Observing Black from his window helps him to see his self-more vividly. He feels alienated and every minute detail of his life, which he notices during his investigation, renders him removed from the world.

"In *Ghosts*, colors stand for names with no precise symbolic connotations to signify plurality of meaning and refusal of being limited to specific meaning" (Ramin 4). Blue has always found it simple to write reports, even in circumstances when he had to deal with a language barrier. Now, however, he finds that words themselves may be deceptive, as he learns for the first time in his history of report-writing that "words do not necessarily function, that it is possible for them to conceal the things they are attempting to communicate" (45). Words no longer signify the same things and, hence, clues do not confer any authentic sense. Consequently, Blue understands the futility of case and realizes that it is he who is being watched. He observes Black through his words and hence, his life becomes chaotic and deceptive like his words. Like Quinn's, the narrator's

world in *The Locked Room* is a decentred one. Fanshawe, from the start, is aware of the fragmentariness of language and his unwillingness to get his work published implies his inefficiency to form a connection with the words. He leaves his work to the discretion of the narrator for whom "words died the moment [he] lifted [his] pen" (240). In his pursuit to know about mysterious Fanshawe, the narrator realizes that it is he who is being pursued by Fanshawe all along. In the concluding chapter of the novella, Fanshawe gives a red notebook to the narrator and as he reads it, he comes across the issue of the inability of words to convey meaning: All the phrases were ones I was already acquainted with, but their arrangement made it appear as though their ultimate goal was to nullify each other. There is just no other way for me to say it. Each new phrase nullified the previous one, and each new paragraph rendered the previous one impossible. After reading the first word, my bearings were immediately gone, and I was left to fumble blindly through the rest of the book, unable to see a thing (307). Hence, the narrator finds himself enmeshed in the mire of words, letters and the red notebook. When Auster questions the very nature of language and the role that it plays in the relation of man to himself and to the universe, he raises his novel to a plane which lies at the intersection of art and philosophy, the postmodern and the existential.

Another aspect of the Auster's fiction is the fact that Auster infuses in his protagonists the feeling of loss and despair which they attempt to alleviate by losing themselves in the urban jungle, New York, in this case, be it Quinn or Blue, they all seem to get some relief by escaping from their situations as they immerse themselves in the greater unknown which for them becomes the city itself. Quinn, for example, takes to the city when he gets weary from trying to solve the puzzle that he has been given. Traversing through the city, he loses track of himself and is set adrift amidst the throngs of people that inhabit the postmodern wasteland that is Auster's New York. Quinn walks as if he desires to lose the ability to think and feel, and thus movement gets transformed from an active exercise into automation, devoid of any purpose whatsoever. Walking becomes a mechanical activity, wherein Quinn, simultaneously, wanders aimlessly and consciously calculating his steps. This contradiction in terms is primarily a result of design, or the lack of it, that Auster, as an author, follows in creating his worlds. He first gives his characters the awareness that the world that they find themselves in is slowly

drifting away from them and with this revelation he sets them afloat a gradual descent into nothingness. This awareness is paradoxical, as Auster's characters are themselves dynamic entities, and while they are still searching for their own identities, they move a step further towards comprehending their own relation to the world at large. Thus, Auster perfectly blends the hyperreality with the postmodern when he places his protagonists at the helm of two different dimensions of existence merging into each other, and yet retaining their individual features. One is the state of being-itself, one that presumes and presupposes that all meaning, and all rationality lies inside the individual, and thus has no connection and no relation to anything outside of it. All responsibility of defining the order and purpose of their being lies upon the individuals themselves.

The second is concerned with how that state of being interacts with its external reality and the nature of that reality as perceived by it. The characters have no stability, therefore, the only way they can endure the burden is to abandon the obligation to put together the elements of their situation aiming at coherence. Quinn wanders aimlessly across New York since he does not care where he is going; it does not matter where he is. Quinn thus stands on a bridge between two banks that run parallel to each other, one symbolising the search for meaning within, and the other for the relative consequences of that interpretation. The two banks can never meet, but both of them are equally important if the individual is to stay afloat. Auster's perspective on the hyperreal condition of the protagonist which he sets within a postmodern outlook is much the same. Quinn, on the other hand, realized that the inner and exterior worlds were interconnected thanks to his travels across the city. On his better days, he would use aimless mobility as a reversal method to bring the outside in and therefore seize the sovereignty of inwardness. He had learned to regulate his episodes of depression to a certain extent by immersing himself in externals. Therefore, aimless wandering represented a kind of me'ntal laziness. (61) When chasing Stillman fails to yield any meaning and comfort, he prefers to abandon this search for stability and logic altogether and instead of trying to pull together strings of distant coherence, he prefers to become a part of that chaos himself. Quinn's descent into madness is thus not a tragic event but merely a logical outcome of an otherwise illogical existence. However, on closer analysis it becomes evident that Auster's answer to this dilemma is not as simple as it might appear to be in the first instant.

In *Ghosts* for instance, Blue only descends to insanity, if at all, only for a short period of time. He finally escapes from his situation but in an entirely different manner than Quinn. Blue not only manages to escape madness, but also does so on a positive note, with the hope that he would be able to make a new beginning. Auster does not let go of the uncertainty that runs through his works, and indeed the only thing that appears to be certain in the Trilogy is uncertainty itself. As a consequence of this, Blue embraces the chaos that had once plagued him. Being a novel written on the lines of detective fiction, *City of Glass* is also intertextually indebted to E.A. Poe. The foremost reference is to the story named *William Wilson* by Poe. By choosing William Wilson as Quinn's pseudonym in his works, Auster tries to correlate the two characters. He has invented a private eye in his novels named Max Work. The theme of duality which Poe has explored in this story is exploited by Auster in a different way, as Scott Dimovitz (2006) argues, "Rather than spreading the idea of subjectivity, the proliferation of doubles serves to highlight the idea that various characters represent distinct ontological aspects of the self" (625).

Unlike Poe's *William Wilson* who kills his rivalrous double, Auster's Wilson serves as a bridge between Quinn and Max Work. Poe's Wilson sees his double as his competitor, but Quinn's imaginary persona of Max Work gives him assurance that he has it in him to be Max Work whenever the situation arises. Quinn projects Work with all the aggression and enthusiasm which he himself lacks. Thus, he has become "a triad of selves" in the words of Auster, "Wilson was the ventriloquist, Quinn was the dummy, and Work was the animating voice that provided direction to the business in the "triad of selves that Quinn has become" (Auster 6). Also, in acquiring the identity of Auster, the detective, Quinn embodies another self-inside him: the self of a detective whom he does not know. In Ghosts, Blue does the meaningless job of shadowing Black. He watches his activities continuously from his window. In that period of solitude, Blue becomes conscious of unexplored facets of his mind. While looking from his window to Black's apartment and feeling the pangs of existential ennui, blue thinks of him as his double, "Because when Blue watches Black across the street, it is like he is staring at himself in a mirror; he is not only seeing Black, but also himself." (Auster, *Ghosts*142). He opines that "every man has his double somewhere" (169) and in saying so Blue confirms

identifying his self through Black. During their conversation, Black introduces himself as a detective doing the same sort of work as Blue does. Thus, theme of duality finds a place here when Black confesses to have made Blue a deliberate prey. Both Blue and Black use each other as a prop to gauze existential credibility. Black says, "You were everywhere I looked, constantly within sight, following me about like a shadow, and staring into my very soul. To me, you were the whole universe; unfortunately, I sacrificed yourself for me, Blue. You are the one constant, the only thing that can flip any situation on its head." (190).

Like Poe's Wilson, the narrator in *The Locked Room* (1986) possesses mixed feelings for Fanshawe. In his childhood, narrator used to imitate Fanshawe's extraordinariness and at the same time acknowledges his jealousy for him. Narrator's becoming a part of Fanshawe's family places him at par with him. Even the name Fanshawe bears a direct link with the novel of the same name by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Like Hawthorne, Auster's Fanshawe is disconnected from the world and like him, Auster's Fanshawe considers himself unfit for his Ellen (Sophie). Various critics consider the lonely Fanshawe as one of the aspects of Hawthorne himself. Likewise, Auster's Fanshawe shares many features of Auster's early life. Not only Fanshawe, but a direct reference to Hawthorne's story "Wakefield" has also been made. Like Wakefield, Fanshawe leaves his wife and hides himself away from his family. „Wakefield" is viewed from the perspective of an unnamed narrator like that of *The Locked Room*. *City of Glass* starts off as an ordinary detective tale with some minor exceptions and events unfold therein seem at first to be plausible and even probable. It seems like a tale that probes the dark corners of the human mind, a tale that talks about Peter Stillman's insane notions, his attempts to torture his son for the sake of correcting and proving his theories, and Quinn's task to prevent any further hurt by Stillman to his son. Analytical reading reveals that a sense of chaotic absurdity takes over the so far linear narrative. The first thing that takes the narrative away from the real to the absurd is the way in which Stillman's wife arranges for payment and Quinn's reports to be sent through anonymous letters. The personality of Stillman himself and his conversations with the protagonist further tilt the narrative towards the chaotic. By the time he loses track of Stillman, Quinn is on the verge of collapsing. He goes and meets a character Paul Auster, who is a writer. This is

the turning point in the book where the author abandons all sense of reality. On one hand, Quinn has lost track of Peter Stillman, and on the other hand, he is unable to contact Virginia Stillman, his client who had hired him in the first place. It is at this point that Quinn finds himself in a predicament from where there is no escape and no restitution. He finds himself in what is an absurd situation from the start, and the more he tries to make it comprehensible, the more incomprehensible it becomes. Finally, he plants himself in front of the building where he supposes that Virginia Stillman is staying, and thus finally descends into complete chaos. He loses all sense of reality and abandons his search for Stillman Sr. By the time Stillman dies, Quinn's existence is blurred beyond recognition. He has lost all traces of civilized human behavior, his apartment has been taken away from him, and his life is reduced to animalistic survival without the faintest trace of any human concern. Quinn's story ends with the end in the pages in the red notebook, and the underlying absurdity is revealed when the story ends just as abruptly as it began.

Auster traces much the same pattern in the second book of the Trilogy, i.e., *Ghosts*. From completely impersonal names that Auster gives to the characters of this novella, to the plot that he weaves, he travels down the similar road that leads to nowhere. In this novella, the characters have cryptic names that seem, on a superficial level, to be connected to each other, and appear to impart some sort of coherence to the narrative but are, in fact, completely random, and have been placed on a focal only for the sake of creating this illusion. Blue is set to work on a case that requires twenty-four-hour surveillance on an equally mysterious Black. The most significant thing about Black is that there is nothing significant about him, nothing remarkable that sets him out from the rest, and this puzzles Blue more than anything else, because he cannot figure out the reason why anybody would want to put a tail on such an ordinary man as Black. He is so common and ordinary in his everyday routine that Blue has nothing to report back when he writes his reports to the people who hired him. The destination is just as absurd as the journey that led Blue there. Tired of waiting for something to happen, Blue confronts and supposedly kills Black who was already intent on committing suicide, and the last we see of him is that he leaves all his past behind him and embarks on a new life that is uncertain and, therefore, unknown to the reader.

Similarly, in *The Locked Room* the protagonist is a writer who takes on the role of a detective to find a missing person, a theme dealt with by Auster in the other novellas of the Trilogy as well. This idea of a character existing as an individual first and then cast into a mould that would determine his role in the story is something like the notion of Hyperreality as expounded in Baudrillardian thought. Auster's characters do not follow a predetermined path, rather, it is their individuality that determines what path they will choose that will lead them further to self-discovery. In *The Locked Room*, for instance, it is the protagonist's own disposition that leads him into detective work. Despite living a successful life, he desires and discovers hidden motivations inside him to risk his life in the process of searching for what he has taken upon himself to find. Thus, the focus is on what the individual is, and what he will become if he is left to follow his own disposition freely, rather than what popular stereotype expects him to become. This feature of Auster's fiction is clearly hyperreal in its connotation.

Commensurate with the hyperreal pursuits in literature, Auster demonstrates in his fiction the random play of chance and coincidence that permeates the lives of his characters. There is a continuous onslaught of unpredictable that alters their course of action. Such random events are accompanied by chaos, contradiction, and complexity in life.

The New York Trilogy presents Auster's focus on the role that these events play in the contemporary world through his characters who find themselves unable to fight against these forces, and thus encounter uncertainty. His practice of using chance and coincidence in his works corresponds to his own encounter with such events. He comments in an interview: As a novelist, I have a responsibility to reflect reality in my work, to show the world as it is and not as others would have me portray it. The unknown is always enveloping us. My role, as I see it, is to maintain an attitude of openness for such encounters and vigilance toward the inexplicable happenings across the planet (Collected Prose 541).

One of the most vivid intertextual links in the novel can be seen in Beckett's second published novel in English, Watt written during World War II. The play traces the journey of the protagonist, Watt to the house of Mr. Knott where he is put into

confinement. Watt faces a deep anxiety and tries to make a sense of his life while living in that house. In the end, his language goes beyond recognition, and he is seen at a railway station setting out for a journey. The image of confinement of the character is at the heart of *The Music of Chance*. Instead of one, here two characters are imprisoned in a meadow where they get acquainted with internal conflicts. Their incarceration provides them a medium to discern the absurdity of their task. Similar to Watt who, in an attempt to understand everything loses his self, Nashe feels a fleck of happiness on reaching the meadow and only afterwards realises the futility of his endeavours.

Another association with Beckett's works that can be seen in *The Music of Chance* is Waiting for Godot. Nashe and Pozzi represent the two tramps, Estragon and Vladimir, of Waiting for Godot. The two tramps are seen waiting on a road for some unknown force that will relieve them of their relentless sufferings. During their wait, both of them bear boredom and hyperreal angst which impels them to commit suicide. In the same manner, the two tramps in *The Music of Chance* wait impatiently for their work to finish to get back their freedom. Their frustration grows to such an extent that they attempt to escape. Pozzi gets fatally beaten in his attempt which propels Nashe to consider his own death in the similar manner. He also tries an unsuccessful get away from the meadow and is condemned to live there. Another link to the Waiting for Godot is that the name Pozzi is reminiscent of Pozzo of Waiting for Godot. Pozzi, like Pozzo in the second part of the play, is submissive and compliant who submits to Nashe's resolve to pay their debt. Not only this, he also agrees to escape from the meadow on Nashe's insistence. The world, depicted in Auster's and Beckett's work, is without rationality and hope where the characters feel a sense of self-estrangement and isolation. Besides the characters, the setting of the meadow in this novel is also somewhat Beckettian. The roadless path from the millionaires' mansion to the meadow is symbolic of a connectionless and destroyed environment. The demolished heaps of stones represent the fragmentariness of individuals' self. The meadow looks like "an immense territory of short, stubbled grass, as flat and silent as the bottom of the lake" (Auster105) surrounded by woods. Being distanced from the house and any human interference, it embodies loneliness and despondency. Blanketed by the woods on all the four sides, the meadow foretells the resultant confinement of Nashe and Pozzi. The settings also signify their lost

homeland and hopeless desire of acquiring the same. It is a Godless society governed by a totalitarianism regime represented by Flower and Stone where their "domestic routines became dry and meaningless" (163). The making of wall in the meadow resonates the overtones of Franz Kafka's The Great Wall of China. Moreover, Auster's tilt towards Kafka's work can also not be ruled out. It is a story of a nation's project of making a wall for keeping off the invaders. The wall is built in fragments and is never completed. The labours and mason have never seen the enemies infiltrating but, even then, they work continuously in order to feel secure.

Similarly, in *The Music of Chance*, Nashe and Pozzi become millionaires labourers to build the wall. While their stay in the meadow, they never see their masters. The only source of connection between the masters and laborer's is Calvin Murks. Their masters are kept vague and fluid during the wall making just like the enemies in The Great Wall of China. According to Varvogli, a concealed link is established between the image of wall making and its connection with authority or a chance event that is a common feature of Kafka and Auster, respectively. Where Kafka holds the presence of heavenly law, Auster confers the presence of chance and coincidence that drives the life. Kafka's characters live in accordance with the divine principles but Auster's characters confront the incomprehensible chance encounter. Varvogli quotes Paul Bray as having said:

> Not in the surface sense of strange bureaucratic tangles, but in the Kierkegaardian sense of divine order that eludes human explanation, The Music of Chance is Kafkaesque. Auster, in contrast to Kafka and Kierkegaard, postulates some kind of cosmic stream as the source of reality, rather than a god who is fundamentally apart from humanity. This cosmic current is chance – or fate – and far from being separate from humankind, it is built into everyday life. (110)

What becomes another instance of intertextual reference, is when Nashe reads a passage from Rousseau's *Confessions* where he is confessing his "naked self-deception" (Auster 49) regarding his imminent welfare. Rousseau tries to hit atree with a stone from some distance believing that if it hits the target, his wellbeing will be accorded. After missing

the target in many attempts, he, finally, comes closer to the tree assuming that all the earlier efforts will not be counted and makes a last blow. Being happy with his success, he considers that his life will now become better. Nashe gets awe-struck to recognize Rousseau's candid confession of deceiving himself. Like Kafka's labourers in Great Wall who carry on their wall making process just to feel secure, Nashe also works relentlessly on the wall just to know "how long he could live in a state of uncertainty" (49) considering the wall as a redeemer. He is trapped in an everlasting deception that forces him to assume the wall as a source of his redemption.

The Music of Chance presents the thematic implications that chance and random incidence is the hidden force governing human life. All the major characters acquire money by chance. In fact, the game of poker is viewed as a game of chance. Nashe and Pozzi are also the victims of chance. The music like harmony of the alliance between Nashe and Pozzi is formed on the foundation of randomness of a chance game. In trying to understand such complicacies of world, Nashe comes across its absurdity. Auster's characters seem to be trapped in the randomness of the world. The unpredictability of these events puts them in the orbit of existential wanderings as a result of which they strive to remake their self and make sense of their existence. In fact, the characters feel moments of salvation in encountering the unexpected. Despite the assault of chance, they have to take responsibility of their action. After Pozzi's death, Nashe realises his enforced isolation and restriction. He comes to know about the ambiguity of his notion of freedom. If the last incident of the head-on collision is deliberate, it shows Nashe's inability to carry the burden of his existence. And, if it is by chance, it clears Auster's stance of viewing life as a summation of countless events of chance and coincidence, creating a cacophony which he calls music of chance.

Along with other significant Austerian literary experiments, *The Book of Illusions* (2011) portrays an explicit reference to cinema. The intermixing of genres is one of the strategies of postmodern writers. In this light, Suzen Kayhan (2014) in "Fragments of Identity in Postmodern Film" argues that the hallmarks of certain genres remain discernible in postmodernist writing despite its fuzziness, heterogeneity, and chaos. After establishing that postmodern literature is not a genre-free zone, we may examine the

ways in which genres are merged or transformed. Genres that are blurred or mixed represent an innovative approach. Postmodern works often straddle many genres, which challenges the way the audience automatically classifies works of art. (42) In addition to the postmodern feature, the intermedial association of literature and cinema in this novel can be seen rooted in Auster's own faculty of filmmaking and scriptwriting. His movies like *Smoke* (1995), *Lulu on the Bridge* (1998), *Blue in the Face* (1996) etc. have already attested his said status. His artistic talent finds rejuvenation in this appealing intermedial combination through which he presents his acumen of storytelling. In this context.

Intermedial thematizations and imitations in Paul Auster's *The Book of Illusions*, by Borbala Bokos, may be summarized as follows: "...in the book descriptions analogous to scripts operate as regions of medial interactions and overlappings, linking the cinematic and the literary media" (2). He then implies that the media they consume and the stories they tell themselves have an effect on the book's protagonists. The novel's cinematic nature stems from the author's use of many filmic techniques, including cuts and camera angles, zoom views, voice-overs, editing, etc. In *The Book of Illusions*, Auster's fictitious character Hector Mann pays tribute to the silent film comedians of the 1920s (a time period he really admires). Based on Auster's definition, silent film is "a visual language" and "a technique of transferring tales by projecting pictures onto a two-dimensional screen" (14). By having Zimmer, Hector's narrator, explain the films, Auster embraces the silent cinema, in which only the pictures and gestures are required to express the notions of the mind. They lack sound and color, making them more impressive than the talkies. So instead of using words to describe places, people use their bodies instead. In several of the moments Auster describes, Hector's body and moustache are essential in portraying his feelings. Even before his body, you will notice the thin black line that runs from Hector's nose to his upper lip. Hector's moustache is like a seismograph of his emotional state; it not only makes you chuckle, but also provides insight into his inner thoughts and the workings of his brain. Although it uses no words, the moustache is twitches and flutters are as clear and decipherable as a message pounded out in Morse code. Other components (eyes, lips, carefully calibrated lurches and stumbles) are involved. (29) As Zimmer begins to familiarize himself with Hector's films, he realizes that the signature moustache and white suit have come to characterize

Hector in the minds of audiences everywhere (30). Unlike other comedians who generate laughter of the audience through their comic appearance, Hector looks sophisticated and handsome and the way he manages the trouble through his peculiar style is the source of amusement. As the case of Austerian characters who always struggle to find a way to fill the lacunae of their fractured subjectivity, the characters in *The Book of Illusions* follow the same path. Both Zimmer and Hector seek the salvation of the self in their creative faculties. For Hector, it is making films that make any sense for him and for Zimmer, it turns out to be investigating and writing. Zimmer's quest becomes more pronounced in the novel because apart from writing his autobiography, he is fulfilling the role of a pursuer who is investigating the mystery of a missing artist. Even for Alma, writing becomes the source of her salvation. In most of Auster's fiction, the motif of searching the missing person happens to be the cause of the narrator's redemption.

Urbina, Eduardo (2006) observes that on the narrative level, the metafictional status of the novel, having a mise-enabyme structure, gives an illusion of more than one narrator. But as it happens, the narrator of all the stories is Zimmer. It is through his focalization that the reader spots Hectors story which he gets to know from Alma, who in turn, gets it from Hector. So, Auster creates illusion through ―a world of by employing character-writers who ―depend on the creation of such stories as lived illusions for their existence and self-knowledge (59). At one point in the novel Zimmer admits that ― "the world was an illusion that had to be reinvented everyday" (Auster 57) and this reinvention is possible through the agency of words. It is only through the words that the characters world of illusions can be deciphered. While analyzing the movies of Hector Mann, it becomes clear that they symbolise his real life. There is not much of a distinction between his fictional and actual life, both of which mislead the reader. What Zimmer says of Hector's movie persona, "He has all the yearning ambitiousness of a diligent immigrant, a guy focused on conquering the difficulties and establishing a place for himself in the American jungle" (35), is also true of Hector in real life. It is possible that the reader will not catch on to the idea that truth is shifting into fiction and fiction into actuality. The characters in the novel are in a continuous process of reframing their lost identities through the lives of other people involved. The truth which they want to explorealso becomes deceptive. They live in an illusion of escaping from their life of loss

and despair. Zimmer tries to relocate his self through the investigation of Hector's life. While living on excessive drinking, Hector's clipping becomes the ground of his escaping into the illusory life. His fascination for Hector's movies impels him to decode the mystery of his life. In his quest, he not only unravels the new illusory world of Hector Mann but also his own new existence. Hector gropes for self-affirmation in the deceptive world of movies. Towards the end of his meaningless wandering, with Frieda and her money in hislife, he gets a chance to immerse in his movies again. Both of them live and work on the blue stone Ranch in Tierra del Sueno. The ranch also refers to the world of illusions, not only because of its purpose but for its name as well. Zimmer discovers the mystery of the name of the ranch during his stay there when he comes across an anecdote written in Hector's journal. It was during a walk with Frieda's dog on a foggy evening that Hector mistakes human spit for a shinning piece of jewel or a stone having a bluish hue. As he tried to touch it, it broke apart. Hector removed his hand in disgust after realizing the deception. As "Hector had already seen the stone, and he understood that it did not exist, that the life they were intending to make for themselves was founded on an illusion," Hector and Frieda eventually named the property they purchased in Tierra del Sueno Blue Stone Ranch (287). Hector invites Zimmer to the ranch so that he could become the witness to his doomed art and life. Urbina (2006) comments although Alma is involved in the project of writing Hector's biography, Zimmer's presence on the ranch would validate his existence. Through Zimmer, Hector tries to project the riddle of his illusionary existence before the world. With Hector's death, Frieda hurriedly burns all the movies and even Hector's biography. It corresponds to the ―destruction of the grandest illusion...to preserve his mystery and secret (64). Years after Hector's and Alma's death, Zimmer maintains his world of illusions. He writes ―The Book of Illusions and thus, brings to the fore the story of Hector Mann's illusionary world. Towards the end of the novel, Zimmer projects another illusion. He feels that Hector's movies are not destroyed; they might have been copied and kept somewhere by Alma. Zimmer wants to live with the illusion of discovering those hidden movies of Hector Mann and for him ―the story will start all over again (321). Besides Chateaubriand, Auster has alluded to Hawthorne's short-story, ―*The Birthmark* in the novel. Alma was born with a birthmark described as "a purple stain roughly the size of a man's fist, big enough and wide enough to resemble

the map of some imagined nation" on the left sideof her face (100). She had read Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" repeatedly, Alma tells Zimmer. She finds a similarity with the heroine of the story, Georgiana who had a similar mark on her face. Until her marriage with the scientist, Aylmer, Georgiana thought of the birthmark as a part of her face. But her husband saw it as a symbol of some sin and corruption and wanted to remove it. He prepared some potion in his laboratory to remove her birthmark. To get his husband's love, she agreed to take the potion. She drank the poison and slept. But when she rose, the birthmark started disappearing and when it disappeared completely, Georgiana died because ―the birthmark is who she is. Make it vanish, and she vanishes along with it (121). For Alma, her birthmark is the sign of humanity and her uniqueness.

Like Georgiana in Hawthorne's ―*The Birthmark*, she cannot dispose it off without destroying herself. But unlike Georgiana, Alma takes her birthmark for testing the humanity of others also, to get to know what they think of her. Another interpretation that can be made is associating birthmark with her manuscript. She becomes the source of validating Hector's disordered existence by writing his biography. After the death of Alma's parents, who were artists working in Hector's films, Hector offers her to write his biography, narrating the story of his life. She visits many places to collect the evidence, meets people, watches his movies and forces him to invite Zimmer to the ranch to become the ―witness of the witness‖ (280). But after Hector's death, Frieda burns Alma's manuscript to wipe out Hector's remnants. Alma cannot withstand separation from her symbolic birthmark and eventually, she commits suicide. According to Jim Peacock, Alma's birthmark is so integral to her identity that she is essentially transformed into a work of art that testifies to the irrefutability of representation. (58). The purpose of birthmark/manuscript to represent Hector's life becomes inextricable to her existence; she carries the onus of representing Hector's existence.

In *The Book of Illusions,* Auster also talks about certain epistemological doubts. The questions about truth, values and beliefs are brought into consideration. The characters are seen investigating the aspects of reality. The conventional assumptions about identity, truth and existence are challenged that results in skepticism about a particular belief. An attempt to solve the mysteries of disappearances and losses unlocks

a panorama of epistemological paradoxes. In Auster's work, "the endeavor to locate the truth and the solution of the mystery" becomes, in Daniela Rogobete's (2013) says "a fundamental epistemological investigation of the techniques we use to grasp the world around us, to map the spaces that define us, and to know ourselves" (43). The epistemological doubts and their upshots are important concerns of postmodernism. Auster rejects the notion of preconceived modernist ideas that direct the human existence. For him, to exist is to give a certain value to it. Because existence precedes essence, it is upon the individual to construct essence. At one point in the novel, Auster raises a philosophical question: ―If a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it fall, does it make a sound or not (Auster207). The question finds its answer in Hector's resolve of making movies in the ranch and destroying them after his death. At the outset, the sheer nihilistic project of making movies for destruction seems inexplicable and absurd to Zimmer but Alma comes to his rescue regarding his doubts and uncertainties. Hector abandons his film career to punish himself for his involvement in Brigid's murder. He forsakes society and exiles himself inflicting every torture on himself. The death of Frieda and Hector's son on the ranch pushes Hector towards mental breakdown. It is during this time that Frieda restores him to a negotiable peace by beginning to make movies with premeditated intention of destroying them. He justifies breaking his resolve of renouncing movies thus, ―If someone makes a movie and no onesees it, does the movie exist or not (207).

Hector's justification of making movies can be associated with Nietzsche's view that truth is decoded through interpretation, and one has to understand the world through one's own standpoint. Hector intends to leave no trace of his movies made in the ranch because he thinks that if the world remains unaware of his movies, his penance will be completed. A contradiction that surges up in the novel is the writing of Hector's biography through Alma in spite of his resolve of burning movies and becoming anonymous. Zimmer has no explanation of Hector's allowing Alma to unveil his existence to the world because that would snap the self-inflicted punishment. But, like Chateaubriand, Hector also anticipates revealing the story of his life after his death. He promises the truth to Alma, and she makes the bargain of publishing Hector's biography after his death. All along the errand of making movies and writing biography, Frieda holds a different stance. She has been a partner in Hector's every preposterous task and

his staunchest defender, and she was up to her elbows in it from the start. She not only coaxed Hector back into filmmaking by threatening to leave him if he did not, but she also provided the necessary funding. She was responsible for the construction of costumes and sets as well as the creation of storyboards, film editing, and set design. You do not put in so much effort unless you like what you are doing and believe it is worthwhile, but how could she have had pleasure in devoting her life to something that ultimately yielded no results. When Hector felt hopeless and stuck in his psycho-religious struggle between desire and self-abnegation, he reminded himself that he was fighting for a greater good. He made movies not to destroy them, but in spite of that. Therefore, she has been against Zimmer's visit to the ranch. It takes much time for Alma to persuade Hector and Frieda to invite Zimmer and once he sets foot on the ranch, Frieda starts abhorring his visit. Later, after Hector's death, Frieda not only burns his movies but also his every belonging, removing his every trace – Hector's journal, his notebooks, negatives and prints of the movies, costumes, sets and production apparatuses and even Alma's biography of Hector. Zimmer construes that for Frieda, the destruction of movies along with other things is far more profound than Hector, that Hector would not survive to see the devastation, but she must fulfil the annihilation and swallow its brunt. She has directed her whole life towards that goal and that has become the only purpose of her life: To Frieda, though, it seems clear that the two events were inseparable, complementary phases of the same process of making and breaking. Over

> the years, she must have let the idea that she was destined to be the one who finally set off the fuse and ended their labors take precedence. Eventually, it had developed into a distinct kind of beauty... The objective was to create a weapon with which to attack it. Until all traces of the work were eradicated, it remained just that. Only at the moment of its destruction would it exist; after the smoke had cleared into the New Mexico sky, it would no longer exist. (Auster 279- 80)

After Hector's death, Zimmer leaves the ranch because of Frieda's reluctance for him to be there. After eleven years when Zimmer thinks about the events of that day in retrospect, he is almost convinced that it was Frieda who killed Hector. Because it was

determined that Hector's movies had to be a private affair, she wanted to throw Zimmer out so that their concealed sanctuary might not get thwarted. Hector's death left no reason for Zimmer to be on the ranch.

The novel employs a distinct narrative technique having only one narrator but encompassing varied narrative levels. These layers confer upon the novel, the status of metafictional narrative. Kovacevic (2013) maintains that the novel shows — narrative depth is achieved by the presence of several books inside the novel, with the work's significance resting on the intertextual relationships between its various narrative strands (544). The primary narrative vein is Zimmer's own life story. Being written from first person perspective, it becomes Zimmer's autobiography pushing the writer Auster to the boundary, hence, making the fiction self-referential. It also bears testimonial to the postmodern tenet of blurring the fine line between fiction and fact. Zimmer's analysis of Hector Mann's movies and the cumbersome work of translating Chateaubriand's Memories and consequential musings form the secondary narrative layer. Zimmer's autobiography encompasses Hector's biography which is a retelling of Alma's account by him. His analysis of Hector's life and further investigation to track thelost actor forms the third layer, becoming a story within a story. Such type of narrative structures implies the constant suspension of the meaning that avoids simple elucidation. In fact, the end of the novel does not close the story but opens various possibilities for the unresolved quests. Being a postmodern writer, Auster experiments with the narrative structure of the novel. To grasp the story, one must repetitively delve deep in the novel.

The story in *The Book of Illusions* is not simple but taxing and arduous. Auster has chronologically displaced the story and has employed the technique of analepsis and prolepsis, i.e., use of flashback and flash forward respectively. By exploiting anachronism in the novel, Auster indicates the disharmony and disintegration of life in the postmodern world. Since the novel is presented as a fictional autobiography, all the events are described through analeptic form: Zimmer's narration of the death of his family, writing the book about Hector's movies, relationship with Alma, his visit to Blue Stone Ranch, Hector's death, burning of his movies, Alma's and Frieda's death and his return to Vermont. To assert that Zimmer anticipates publishing his autobiography after

his death, Auster uses prolepsis. The novel is chronologically disoriented as the entire novel is set in late eighties which enclose Zimmer's investigation of Hector's life which, in turn, is positioned in late twenties and early thirties. The narrative shifts from thirties to eighties, swinging from Hector's life to Zimmer's account of it. As Darko Kovacevic says, — "The novel's storyline is intricate and multi-tiered, with two major plot arcs separated by time that converge at the conclusion and several subplots that fit well into both arcs." (537).

The anachronism persists till the very conclusion of the book. When Zimmer reveals that his memoirs would be a posthumous speech, the jumbled chronology makes sense. Paul Auster's *The Book of Illusions* is a collection of contemplations on a wide range of themes, such as self-awareness, emptiness, agency, mortality, anxiety, and more. The heroes in this narrative are fighting a never-ending war for personal fulfillment. Harold Bloom (2004) says in Paul Auster, "It is an unending journey, without promised outcomes, which can never find a closure" (48). Zimmer's book on Hector Mann serves as a rebirth for both, and his writing of it becomes an act of self-making for him. Both Hector and Zimmer's careers will be revitalized because to this book. With the help of fixing Hector, he hopes to feel better about himself. Auster depicts the world of illusionary existence via which the novel's protagonists attempt to escape their troubled lives while examining the novel's cinematic linkages. Cinema is shown as a means of self-representation, through which one may come to grips with the external world via the medium of illusion. Each step of their travels leads to a new realization about themselves. The character's quest for self-discovery is presented as endless. Austerean protagonists make the quest for self-affirmation a fundamental theme of their journey.

Using *The Great Gatsby* (1925) as an in-text allusion in his most recent work, *Sunset Park* (2010), Paul Auster explores the alienation from one's roots that was so typical of the Lost Generation. Miles Heller, a protagonist who lives in Florida and cleans out foreclosed buildings, and Pilar Sanchez, a barely seventeen-year-old protagonist, are fans of *The Great Gatsby*. Heller falls in love with Sanchez, and the two shares a passion for the novel. He is compelled to flee to face his demons when Pilar's elder sister uses extortion to get him to ignore her demands that he keep away from her. Pilar cannot get

over his stepbrother's death. After pushing him into the road a decade earlier, the latter was struck and murdered by a car (another link to *The Great Gatsby*, as Myrtle's inadvertent death involves the hero's fall). This tragedy occurred when Pilar shoved his stepbrother into the road. He travels to Sunset Park, Brooklyn, to see his buddy Bing, who has established illegitimate residence in a home with two other women who share the space.

The Great Gatsby's pessimistic picture of the American Dream in a posttraumatic world attempting to resuscitate a broken pursuit of pleasure is set against the historical and social context provided by the mimetic references throughout the novel (post-World War 1 vs post-September 11 and the subprime crisis). Miles Heller is a lot like Nick Carraway if you are looking for a nostalgic perspective. On the other hand, Miles is not the novel's narrator but rather one of the novel's focalizers. This makes for a fascinating contrast, as it becomes clear early on that Miles is a composite character, sharing certain parts of Gatsby's fate and being as unreliable as Nick is. Indeed, the peripeteia after Miles' disgrace may be compared to Wilson's diegetic-level retribution scheme and Gatsby's illusionary effort to escape his past. One of the most obvious ways in which *The Great Gatsby* and *The Catcher in the Rye* are related intertextually is in the way that both authors, in response to the human strife and antinomies exemplified by the epigraph to Gatsby's book, investigate the poetics of the Green Light as the driving force and creative conclusion of their respective works: "We beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." (184) By flipping the fictional set, slicing the text, dispersing the narrative voice, and toying with the role of the narrator and the figure of the reader, Paul Auster reappropriates the idea of intertextuality in a post- modern hyperconscious fashion (to use William Marx's phrase). The author dives into metafiction by considering many perspectives on the Real's disintegration:

> Insofar as the phantasm is never more than the screen that hides something very fundamental, something determining in the function of repetition [...], the real occupies a space spanning from pain to fantasy. The accident, the noise, the little bit of reality that proves we are not dreaming, may re-present the actual. On the other hand, Freud argues that this reality is not

> as limited as it seems, since what awakens us is the other reality concealed behind the absence of that which stands in for representation. (Lacan 60)

In his novel *Sunset Park*, author Paul Auster explores the political and economic collapse of the United States, with the first chapter focusing on the aftermath of the subprime crisis: "Each home is a narrative of failure - of bankruptcy and default, of debt and foreclosure" (3). Towards the end of *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald alludes to Gatsby's abandoned house, writing, "I walked over and stared at that vast incoherent failure of a house once again" (183). Fitzgerald opens with a scene in which Miles enters a foreclosed home. The narrator emphasizes the desolation of the American landscape by constantly using the polyptoton "home," "homeless," and "homelessness."

Located about in the middle of the distance between West Egg and New York, "the valley of ashes," as Fitzgerald calls it, is a perfect example of how the landscape is intrinsically tied to the chasm that can never be closed. Like something out of a dark fantasy film, this area is completely devoid of human interaction. In the first chapter of *Sunset Park*, we meet the spirits of the valley of ashes. In both stories, the difficulties are more emotional than material.

Snapshots of reality and their ambivalent treatment in the novel highlight the meaninglessness of objective reality and the fleeting, fleeting, ephemeral quality of life, and as the novel progresses, the author moves away from the dialectics of plenty and affluence and toward a negative version of wealth. Miles Heller has taken a seat on the sidelines to record this fall. He paints a picture of the hollowness and emptiness that plague a society that desperately seeks to mask its vulnerabilities behind excessive prosperity and false promises. However, in *Sunset Park*, realism is only an appearance, since the real, as the rebirth of the repressed, is the genre that reigns supreme. Using the reader's need for realism and a wealth of information and references, the author creates the impression of a documentary style. Trash removal is a booming industry in a world where the economy is in shambles and suffering is spreading at an alarming rate (Auster, *Sunset Park* 4).

In addition, the international front, represented by the war in Iraq, is subtly alluded to, lending credibility to the depiction of a troubled nation. And what can Teresa do with her husband stationed in Iraq relates a challenging macrocosm from the standpoint of world geopolitics to a chaotic microcosm on the home front, as indicated linguistically on the page by the conjunction and (10). The author may portray a different, more intimate narrative by alluding to a war, thus it is no surprise that historical and political contexts are evident in the text. How one individual copes with their history is at the heart of this narrative. This background may be seen as a pitiful fallacy, which would lead to a chaotic and fractured atmosphere.

As a consequence, both Fitzgerald's and Auster's works are set against a backdrop of social disparities and contradictions, reflecting their authors' perspectives of the opulent American society and the impoverished people who continue to be excluded from its riches and dazzling carelessness. Miles's buddy Bing Nathan runs a company in Park Slope called The Hospital for Broken Things, where they restore forgotten relics. Given that the Vietnam War started over twenty years before his birth: He thinks the idea of America has run its course and the country is no longer viable, but he admits that there is still one thing that binds the dispersed citizens of this crumbling state. […]. (72)

In particular, the asyndeton's converging effect highlights Paul Auster's troubling depiction of the isolating qualities of New York City and, more specifically, western Brooklyn, which at the same time serves as a mark of juncture for all of the areas: More than a hundred thousand people, primarily Mexicans, live in the sprawling, multiethnic area extending from Upper New York Cove to 10th Road (80). The protagonist of *Oracle Night* (2004) reflects He "felt like a man who had lost his way in a foreign city" (2). The isolation, however, is only temporary. The narrator develops a renewed curiosity for Brooklyn's sights as he or she becomes reacquainted with the city's streets. This is a major theme in his book, *The Brooklyn Follies* (2005), in which the protagonist decides that returning home to Brooklyn is the perfect way to pass away. The book portrays the residents of Brooklyn, from the middle class to the homeless, the creative class to the corporate elite, as a cohesive group capable of working together for the greater good. It does this by describing the streets in great detail and showing how busy they are Paul

Auster talks about Brooklyn a lot, both literally and figuratively. He says that it is a place of tolerance and coexistence where everyone is welcome and a place of enigmatic fascination where a lonely person might find comfort.

It is a mirror image of the fall from grace that Jay Gatsby experienced, while Miles' cool detachment calls to mind Nick Carraway's detached perspective: "I was inside and outside, both captivated and disgusted by the limitless diversity of existence. "This is where Fitzgerald's" comes in. Nick's story has all the complexities of the objective observer, as he suddenly shifts from the role of silent witness to that of puppet-master controlling dieges is and representation. Whether via Nick's tales or Miles' photographs, it may be seen as an attempt to reclaim the void: "By now, his photos number in the thousands." Put another way (Auster 5). Miles, who once mixed with the affluent, has chosen to shun society. His migration to the south and his strained relationship with his father symbolize his social and geographical decline. But Pilar's presence in his life helps him to feel less responsible for his brother's death.

Miles changes roles from onlooker to primary player. His ardent pursuit of Pilar's admission to an Ivy League institution contrast with his own lack of academic success. Like the sculptor in Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* he undergoes a metamorphosis and becomes a Pygmalion figure. Despite the age difference, Miles is sexually attracted to her as he marvels at her knowledge and tries to educate her, which recalls Humbert Humbert's efforts to educate Lolita in Vladimir Nabokov's book. Like the Bildungsroman, the quest narratives in *Sunset Park* serve as coming-of-age stories. The books have a bleak resolution, often including a cycle back to nothing. Miles fails to grow from his mistakes, and his narrative is shattered. The last section is a depressing reminder of Miles's impending return to homelessness as he returns to Manhattan to face his impending jail sentence for assaulting a police officer.: "they are all homeless now […]" (307).

Similarly, to *The Great Gatsby,* the debate of *Sunset Park* depicts the impossibility of evading one's innate human defect. Despite this, the inevitable decline into nothingness praises fiction as the sole means of re-enchantment:

> My whole adulthood has been spent writing stories, putting imaginary people into unexpected and often unlikely situations… but the real is always ahead of what we can imagine. No matter how wild we think our inventions might be, they can never match the unpredictability of what the real world continually spews forth. (180)

Paul Auster's books are characterized by and indicative of the mise en abyme of the creative process that runs through them. The symbolic is undoubtedly at the forefront, with language and literature reflecting on itself self-reflectively.

As François Gavillon (2000) elucidates, several characters are authors who document, translate, publish, and archive. Even when it goes beyond fiction, Auster's work is inherently inward-focused (183). Multiple characters in *Sunset Park* have connections to literature. Miles's father, Morris Heller, is a publisher, and two of his close friends are well-known authors. They draw attention to the author's instance and ultimate motivation while penning anything. The issue of the influence of a witness on a language that cannot establish meaning is therefore brought into sharp focus.

Sunset Park's structure exemplifies how masks are amassed, destiny is redirected, and voices are multiplied and distributed, providing a metatextual depth that arises from the question of representation's plausibility and the art of citation intertextual allusions. The book does have a clear structure with four distinct sections. Miles Heller, Bing Nathan and Company, Morris Heller, and All are recognized first, second, third, and fourth, respectively. The tale is experienced in a severely fragmented manner due to the internal focalization of all the characters, with a sense of both discontinuity and continuity due to echoes and similarities with each vision. The novel's dialogic structure, in which several characters' points of view are conveyed, is highlighted by this format. It creates a sense of emotional distance that may help resolve the pain of experiencing a total loss. This potentially unifying and empowering game is a terrific release (Picard 210).

It raises the issue of authority, and more particularly, the author's complicated and diverse identity and linguistic skills to address the basic things beyond words but

continues to torment Miles, Morris, Ellen, and others. Metalinguistic elements in the book include the unfortunate events in their life that set off a chain reaction and force them to act. They provide, in Derrida's terms, a pattern of difference and recurrence. When the worship of identity and the supremacy of Self over Other are challenged, it is by the difference that we know as difference. Not only does differ (to vary) mean being dissimilar, but it also serves to delay (to defer).

Given that there is no structuring, original, transcendental signified, this battle is against fixed meanings and the marginalization of illustrating signifiers. The writing of difference makes internal references because it rejected the traditional ideas of signifier and referenced. As an antidote to idealism, metaphysics, and ontology, the focus on the topic of writing is particularly effective. Derrida argued that difference is a tactic, a game, and a movement (Derrida 47-52).

Difference is therefore not limited to language strategies of accumulation and amplification in *Sunset Park*; it also includes structural strategies such as narrative ruptures and the deliberate delaying of the story's reveal via a plethora of embedded analepses. It might also be in the tangled sentences that provide a look into the heroes' and villains twisted thoughts. On page 178, for example, Morris Heller relays his observation of his kid in a lengthy, meandering phrase that attempts to imitate the stream of consciousness by merging several factual aspects of Miles' reality with literary components and references to Sherlock Holmes and Walt Whitman. Morris Heller is a wanted man who has to keep an eye on his child, so he goes on the run and assumes a variety of identities until finally settling on the stage name "the Can Man" (179). The structure reminds me of how Jay Gatsby developed the persona of Gatsby in the novel.

The return of Mile's mother Mary-Lee is a prime example of this phenomenon. Since she was reared in New York, playing Winnie in Beckett's Happy Days must seem like going full circle for the acclaimed actress. Thinking about Beckett's language and re-creating the playwright's tricks and complexity brings the play's emptiness and absurdity into sharper focus: "the formidable challenge will be to hold forth, within these constricted emplacements for an hour and a half, delivering what amounts to a sixty-page monologue [...]." (Auster187). When Winnie dies and is buried onstage, it symbolizes the

end of the play and the decline of the theater as a whole. William Marx(2005) argues that the last act of the suicidal will to destruction in contemporary writing is accomplished by the adoption of a specular or mirror-like position (171). He labels this emerging literary trend, “the literature of farewell,” for its rejection of religious dogma. Many of us feel a pang of nostalgia and yearn for the past after finishinga book.

Pilar Sanchez and Miles Heller want to make their audience suspend disbelief in their stories by presenting characters and plot points that defy logic. The appearance of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s Biographia literaria in 1817 helped to establish the term’s prominence. Naturally, this italicized metafictional allusion highlights the metaleptic process by presenting visually another mode of communication between the story’s internal and exterior aspects or the plot and the literary technique. “Deliberate transgression of the threshold of embedding, “as defined by Genette, leads to incursions that undermine the distinction between layers and are hence called “metalepses” (Genette 88). According to Genette, metalepsis includes the beholder in an ontological transgression of worlds since it crosses the boundary between syntactically stated levels and functions as a deviant referential activity. The reader’s willingness to suspend disbelief is broken by the italicized list. It contrasts sharply with the scattered facts that, taken together, provide a picture of life in Sunset Park.

Paul Auster often employs frame shifting in his work, which implies that fiction may reflect the chasms between the Real and the Unreal, despite the fuzziness of the boundary between the two. Paul Auster’s book Sunset Park is a grim portrait of a post-trauma America, the pieces of which may be pieced back together only via the act of writing. When compared to The Great Gatsby, current literature is far more accessible to individual interpretation, and this is emphasized via the employment of postmodern literary methods such as wide distribution, fading of the characters, and deconstruction. To emphasize the subject’s disconnection from reality, language, and meaning, he employs literary tactics such as delay and repetition.

Mark Brown, writing in 2007, argued that 9/11 had not had a major effect on Auster’s universe. His walk-through New York City’s streets would leave him feeling empty, but he noted that novelist Paul Auster had spoken out strongly in defense of his

hometown and its residents in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, and that Auster had come a long way from his initial belief that words could do little to honor the victims. [...] he considers the missing structures, the collapsed and burning structures that no longer exist, the missing structures and the missing hands, and he wonders if it is worth hoping for a future when there is no future, and from now on, he tells himself, he will now be here and then not here, the now is gone forever. (192)

The novel was published nine years after 9/11, although it makes many references to that day, either explicitly or via the effects of that day's events on the ongoing worldwide conflict and the economic hardships that followed. The display, however, clarifies the reference, and the structural repetition of the nominalized "missing" underlines loss eternally, absence as a pervasive linguistic presence and perpetual occurrence. Fitzgerald says of the trees that were cut down to make space for Gatsby's house, "they had once pandered in whispers to the last and grandest of all human illusions. "This statement makes me think of Nick Carraway's remark in which he laments the loss of the new world's trees after visiting Gatsby's abandoned estate and finds that "the trees of the new world have been hacked down." (Fitzgerald184). Auster depicts a dreary crepuscular world in which individuals find unity and closure inside the confines of their Sunset Park home, only to be uprooted once again as they witness "the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us" (184).

Chance/ Randomness is a concept that is among other concepts introduced by Derrida in his essay 'My Chances, Mes Chances'. The fact that he uses the French word for chance interchangeably with the English word chance in the title of this essay is an important fact to take note of. The French word chance means luck but could also refer to opportunity or possibility. Hence, Derrida is introducing in his essay an ambiguous concept and often refers to the opposite of chance in his writings, which would be 'pas the chance'. This concept 'pas the chance.' would roughly mean missed occasion or opportunity. Hence, the duality of the word 'chance' is critical. "the assumption that everything that occurs is incidental and the conviction that no coincidence is gratuitous," Derrida writes, "are two opposite interpretations of chance" (cited in Postmodernism's Second Quest). This fits with Auster's treatment of chance in his fiction. Brendan Martin

says that Auster uses "the chance element "to imply" the potential of unanticipated and random happenings which may happen at any moment, independent of individual circumstances or location and any subsequent scenario that may arise because of the initial action" (qtd. in Odaciolu et al. 482). Thus, in Auster´s postmodern world concepts such as coincidence, randomness and the unexpected are strangely wedded with the concepts of destiny or fate to shape his character's identities.

The first novel of Trilogy begins with a random incident when Quinn receives a phone call asking for some detective, Paul Auster. Auster has used this incident from his own experience when one day he receives a phone call asking for some Pinkerton Agency. Next day, he again receives the same call but hangs up. He feels intrigued to answer the call in affirmative the next time it rings but the call never turns up. This opening event in *City of Glass* sets forth the whole story, one random event leading to several other chance incidents. Quinn answers the phone call pretending to be Auster and that is how Quinn's existential journey starts. Quinn takes note of Peter Stillman's case – a case of a child who has suffered due to his father's strange philosophy. Coincidently, Peter is also the name of Quinn's dead son, and he cannot help seeing an image of his dead son in mentally disturbed Peter. Becoming involved in the case, he tracks the course of Stillman's walk and discovers the hieroglyphics embedded in his path. Coincidently, it turns out to be the TOWER OF BABEL – Stillman's topic of research. He observes that Henry Dark predicted the year 1960 to be the year of emergence of new Babel and coincidently Stillman locks up his son in 1960. Quinn gets trapped in the complexity of case losing his sense of identity. Quinn traces Paul Auster, the supposed detective to get his help in the case but the Auster whom he finds is a writer. He meets Auster's little son, Daniel, which is Quinn's first name. Day by day Quinn falls in an abyss of hopelessness and learns from Auster about Stillman's suicide. After losing everything, he regrets the futility of his decision to act as the detective Paul Auster over the phone. In the end, the narrator unaware about the whereabouts of Quinn, gets his red notebook and considers various contingencies regarding his present location.

Likewise blue, in *Ghosts* (1986) ponders on various contingencies about the reason behind White's hiring him to watch Black. Feeling the hopelessness of the case,

Blue remembers an old case he dealt with, that was "full of strange twists and coincidences" (138). He restored the missing Gray to his wife when one day he had met Gray in a bar coincidently. Another coincidence happens when Blue follows Black walking across the Brooklyn Bridge. It is the same bridge where he used to come with his father during his boyhood. This interest in coincidences continues when Blue memorizes a story of a boy who discovers his dead father frozen in ice while skiing after twenty-five years. Blue also discovers that the name of publisher of the copy of Walden which Black reads is Walter J. Black and feels surprised by this coincidence. To unravel the mystery about the mysteries of Black, Blue disguises himself as a beggar and indulges him into a conversation. Blue's look like Walt Whitman in his disguise is purely coincidental with his presence in the same street where Whitman used to work and published his first book. The unpredictable continues and finally when Blue invades Black's apartment, he gets stunned to find his own weekly reports on Black's table. A series of such unpredictable events enables him to discern the meaninglessness of his existence helping him to put an end to his misery.

The narrator in *The Locked Room* also confronts such random events which altered the course of his life. He gets a chance to reframe his identity after receiving a letter from Sophie, Fanshawe's wife. The long-vanished figure of Fanshawe in narrator's life reappears after that letter which revives his interest in studying his own self and he realizes that "Each person's existence is nothing but a collection of accidents, a record of fleeting encounters and unplanned occurrences that reveal nothing more than their inherent meaninglessness" (Auster213). An instance of coincidence appears when Fanshawe and narrator during their childhood visit a cemetery. Fanshawe, out of curiosity, enters a freshly dug grave for a long time to know how it feels to be there. After this adventure they reach home in the evening to know that Fanshawe's father has expired during the afternoon – the same time when his son was entering the grave. The narrator's critiques of Fanshawe's unpublished works receive great acclamation and he receives that unpredictable letter which changes the course of his life.These events turn a writer into a detective to search his missing friend and impel him to embark on a journey of self-exploration. As the effects of "Since random chance is what ultimately shapes each person's state of mind, Auster is interested in how people from all walks of life

respond to it. Despite the indifference of fate, the novel's protagonist should see a fortuitous event as a path to redemption." (Martin 66). A cursory look at Paul Auster's Trilogy is sufficient to warrant the claim that it is not, in fact, in the tradition of conventional detective fiction. Although many critics have opined otherwise and have justified their arguments by attributing the difference in Auster's use of the form from the genre itself on the ground that novelty itself cannot determine adherence or deviation from the norm. They maintain that this alone does not incriminate him as not being a detective novelist. Indeed, *City of Glass*, *Ghosts* and *The Locked Room* contains many elements of conventional detective fiction and certainly some of these elements are centralto what is commonly known as a detective novel.

For instance, the protagonist in *Ghosts* is a private detective, in *The Locked Room* a writer turned detective to search his missing friend and in *City of Glass* the protagonist is a detective novelist who undertakes the task of a private eye to protect a client when he is thrown in the midst of a case. But, in agreement with many other critics, who justly point out, that these arguments alone are not sufficient to place Trilogy among novels and Auster among novelists who belong to the tradition that began with Poe and his Dupin. In comparison with Poe and later novelists who followed his example with a plethora of plots which centered on eccentric detectives tracing the course of the occurrence of a crime and the journey of the detective on his way to solving it and finding the culprit, Auster has taken on a new approach. It can be seen as a postmodern pastiche of traditional detective novel. All of these followed some general guidelines which, with some distinction in details, can be traced back to a common locus as having the same genealogy.

The protagonists in the *City of Glass*, *Ghosts*, and *The Locked Room*, unlike Poe's Dupin and Chandler's Philip Marlow, are makeshift detectives. Daniel Quinn, in the *City of Glass,* is a detective fiction writer who is thrown into a mystery after he receives a phone call meant for some detective, Paul Auster. Like a true detective, Quinn follows every detail of Stillman case and even adapts himself to new habits which the situation demands. Blue, in *Ghosts*, similarly sinks into a case the client of which seems suspicious

to him from the very beginning. He observes each and every detail of Black and like Quinn follows him everywhere.

The narrator in *The Locked Room* is a writer who, to get rid of haunting figure of Fanshawe, becomes a detective. He becomes obsessed with searching him and puts together the fragmented information to solve the mystery of his disappearance. An interesting feature of Trilogy is that contrary to traditional novels written in this genre, no crime actually occurs here. While this is not an entirely new phenomenon and even one of the pioneers of modern detective fiction writers, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, employed this technique in many of his works, Auster's approach is completely different. The purpose is not to introduce novelty or freshness into the genre itself, but rather something that is entirely antithetical to the above. It is not a coincidence that what Quinn is looking for in *City of Glass* turns out to be nothing at all, and it is this nothingness which gets transferred from the case to Quinn's own life. Although there is a hint of a crime, rather a premonition that Peter Stillman is out to harm his son, and though it is Quinn's task to prevent such a thing from happening, thereby giving him a sense of purpose and a direction in which to concentrate his efforts, this task is not the equivalent of a mystery in the traditional sense. For one, the details of the task itself are vague and the guidelines are so blurred that even Quinn himself does not understand the intricacies of the job at hand. Secondly, the way the job comes to Quinn is also of much significance, since it reflects the absurdity that is manifest in the nature of the task to be performed and the chaos to which it leads later. Even the manner of execution of the job, is exemplary of Auster's unconventional approach.

In *Ghosts,* Blue does his job of watching Black without knowing the reasons from White. Blue follows Black without any hint of crime and the case becomes so obvious to him that he doesn't bother to observe Black relentlessly and often decides to go for long walks. He gets his check in a numbered box without any address on it. Blue encounters the futility while performing his allotted task, and finally in his rebellion, he confronts Black and almost kills him.

The unnamed narrator in *The Locked Room* traces the clues of the disappearance of Fanshawe. The omnipresent figure of Fanshawe stimulates the narrator to solve the

mystery of his disappearance. The narrator assumes the role of a detective and when, finally, he reaches Fanshawe, he appears in the form of a mere voice from behind the locked door. Consequently, Auster challenges the norms of the detective genre by asking why the characters are continually following the incorrect leads and missing the real perpetrator. Each story begins with the detective looking for an externally imposed case, shifts into a search for self-discovery when the roles of investigator and suspect are reversed, and ends with the detective realizing the futility of trying to explain and rationalize a practically multiple, and adaptable world. (Ramin, "The Process of De-centering; Paul Auster's New York Trilogy" 6) Characters in Trilogy represent distinct sides of Auster's personality because of the author's usage of autobiographical details. This reflects the blurring of distinctions between reality and fantasy. In times of doubt, Brenden Martin (2000) says he can assess his own character by looking at how he handles them in his fiction. Postmodern autobiographies are what Auster essentially makes (9). Auster uses his characters to explore the possibility of a self that is difficult to pin down. Auster's own understanding of the self is mirrored in The Locked Room's narrator's epiphany: "My genuine position in the universe, it turned out, was someplace outside myself, and if that place was within me, it was also unlocatable." For the first time in my life, I realized that this void in the heart of the universe represented the space between my sense of self and anything that was not my sense of self (228). Auster was born and raised in New York, the city at the center of the Trilogy. In all his books, this metropolis serves as a setting. First, using the pen name William Wilson, Quinn published a collection of poems and translations; then, under his own name, he wrote the mystery thriller *Suicide Squeeze*. Auster, writing as Paul Benjamin, also published a book of poetry and a play named Squeeze Play to start the New Year. Like Auster, Quinn also uses typewriter for drafting his works. His characters shares Auster's fascination for baseball. Quinn's wife and son died leaving him alone in a small apartment. Auster also loses his first wife and son through divorce pushing him into solitude in his little room. The Red Notebook used by Quinn, Stillman and Fanshawe is the name of a collected prose works by Auster. The Auster-character in *City of Glass* appears to be the reflection of Auster-writer. Like Auster-writer, he has a wife named Siri and a son, Daniel. Blue's reminiscence of a visit to Brooklyn Bridge with his father evokes the image of absence of

a father figure in Auster's life. Like Auster, Fanshawe had an unstable sister, Ellen. The presentation of a lonely protagonist in the beginning of the novels represents Auster's own solitary experiences – loss of father, a divorce, inhabiting a small room and so on. Just like Auster himself, Quinn, Blue, the unnamed narrator and Fanshawe find a solace from their weary existence in their writings- a way to construct their identity.

It would be useful to explore a couple of other postmodern concepts, which play a central role in the Auster's novels i.e., simulation, identity, and decentring. In western philosophy the dichotomy between the original and the real has been central going all the way back to Plato and his powerful allegory of the cave, where a group of chained individuals are watching shadows projected on to the wall of a cave by puppeteers. Thus, they falsely believe that they are interacting with the real world fully. They live in this illusion while in reality they are only able to catch pale reflections of the outside world and its events on the wall of the cave fueled by the fire behind them. Thus, these are merely reflections of the real life which is going on outside their limited existence in the cave. This belief gave rise to a hierarchy between the real and the copy. In Plato´s interpretation we could only perceive a vague and pale copy with our senses of something real, which occurred elsewhere beyond our reach. As we already know, the postmodernists challenged and questioned hierarchies, authorities, and established truths. The postmodern Philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1927) often referred in this context to the many signs, symbols and images communicated to us in the omnipresent advertising, which surrounds us everywhere in our postmodern world. Moreover, this advertising is often misleading and can make us believe that a particular brand of car or hamburger has an inherent value that far exceeds the 'sad and surprisingly expensive artifact that you have just bought' (Bennett and Royle, 283). Hence, the difference between the real and something (for instance a sign) that replaces the real with its representation, thus, 'a copy without origin' or what Baudrillard referred to as "Simulacrum" (Baudrillard 327). Furthermore, Baudrillard introduced yet another way of thinking about these concepts. Baudrillard distinguishes between what Ferdinand de Saussure (1857) calls the signifier and the signified, hence, between the word (on the page or any other material thing that signifies) and the idea or concept that the word represents.

The notion of distinction between an idea of an object, the signified and the actual object, the signifier, as we will see, becomes crucial to the detective in *City of Glass* in his quest for the lost tongue of Adam. An identity is largely determined by factors such as gender, class, race and sexual orientation. To stay inside the boundaries ofthe norm for your group is often encouraged or rewarded. A male heterosexual subject would therefore, for instance, undoubtedly often fuss about not wearing garments that would make him look' too gay'. However, the postmodern notion of identity has gradually become less rigid. According to the postmodern thinker Judith Butler (qtd in Barry2017) says "identity can become a site of contest and revision", She also takes this argument one step further and claims that all identities are "a kind of imitation for which there is no original". Hence, in the postmodern world we are constantly changing between different roles and positions, picking and choosing from an endless number of options of whom to become" (147). Thus, the postmodern identity is fluid with a potential to constantly reshaping and recreating oneself. In *City of Glass*, we will see how the main protagonist, Quinn, pushes this to extreme and how he gradually loses himself in the process. As stated, earlier Postmodernists challenge that there should be one truthor one interpretation of reality that should be seen as superior and consequently reign supremely. Thus, the Postmodernists challenge the notion of final meanings, the ethnocentric (if 'the West' is challenged after the atrocities of World War II, it has not really been replaced by another category such as for instance 'Islam' or 'the East' in our increasingly polarized world) and the phallocentric (privileges, significance, and power of the phallus and therefore masculinity). Hence, the postmodern world is multipolar without one definitive center (Bennett and Royle 287). In this chapter, art is considered to be an important overarching story. Since postmodern literature is marked by pastiche, Metafiction, and intertextuality, it cannot be seen as a legitimate artistic discipline. While the goal of modern architecture was to create a unified and meaningful space, instead, we have towering towers with individual cells for each postmodern subject and confusing mazes of streets that the modern subject cannot even begin to navigate. Therefore, disagreement and fragmentation may be described as the total state.

Conclusion

The Chapter discusses the narrative techniques employed by Auster. Narrative is a crucial tool that is used to construct meaning. Paul Auster in his novels opposes traditional narratives and their encompassing, rigid meaning system in favour of an open, postmodern narrative. The abundance of Postmodern elements, such as meaningless signs, in coherent narrative technique, lose plot, simulations and information technologiesthat have replaced a new center in modern life, predominate in Auster's work.Auster's characters are constantly confronted by the onslaught of information and imposing advancements that have outplace man's capacity for reason and imagination.The Self is always understood in relation to the other in all the works of Paul Auster. This theory is well-established by the proficient use of metafiction and intertextuality as literary devices. The awareness of the ephemeral present in relation to the ended past which is ever-present constantly head toward making and breaking one's identity. But this is further complicated by the interpolation of godlike chance. Thus, the Self loses its sense of the real. It starts doubting the presence of reality in anything that seems real and revels in the real experience of the world of imagination.Hence, in a hyper real situation, one cannot hold on to his identity or individuality. What one manages to create is just a simulacrum- a mere pretence or a vague representation of the world by means of his subjective inclinations. It is obvious that one's beliefs and ideologies will never be the same as of another. As a result, nothing can be considered asactual or real. Each person regards this simulacrum, for that reason, the entire world, in a different way and prefers to pass in a simulation (representation or imitation of one process or system through the use of another) of their own personal invention to construct their own identity. Nonetheless, these various simulations found across the journey of the Self are produced in Auster's fiction with the help of certain recurring motifs, images and symbols. These reappearing elements are the fundamentals of his original myth. Therefore, the following chapter throws light on the various recurring features in the select novels of Paul Auster.

Conclusion

The final word cannot be said in any research project, and there is always scope for further enquiries and new discoveries. There can be, however, a definitive consensus which can be arrived at by critical analyses. Paul Auster's work presents a unique problem in this respect, as it encompasses a duality in terms of thematic ambiguity as well as complications of formal construction. The very foundation of Paul Auster'sliterary canon revolves around the focus of hyperreal meanderings of the self, located in the fragmented postmodern world.The thesis deals with major issues raised by hyperreal situation underwent by Auster's characters, within the postmodern setting in which he has cast them. In his major novels, Auster creates his own universe, and in this universe each character finds him self on a quest, both to discover himself, as well as to unravel the mysteries behind the purpose of his existence. Both are part of the same ensemble, and to explicate one is to illuminate the other. Amidst the task which they have been burdened with, the characters experience the entropy infused within the framework of Auster's universe. They witness some events which change their lives irreversibly, as well as others which are merely a brief diversion in the vast repertory of random events which make up their lives. These events, as well the actions which they trigger, along with the consequences of these actions, have all beenanalysed in detail in the current study.One of the central concerns addressed in Auster's novels is that of a search for sense of the self. Rather, Auster follows in the tradition of earlier writers, and adds his own opinion to the discourse. He belongs to that group of writers who emphasizes the human cost of progress, as well the human consequences of the action of civilization as a whole. His characters face an immeasurably daunting task which takes them a long time to complete after facing many obstacles, or they may fail utterly, followed bydespondency or death. At the heart of this blueprint lies the quest for personal identity and some direction and purpose in their life. Auster's characters unrelentingly question themselves and their subjective realities for establishing a platform on which to build their own senseof the self. The people in these groups are striving to achieve a condition of mental self- reliance and self-sufficiency by breaking free from the social and material

servitude from which they have been prevented from achieving true freedom of spirit. Instead of tryingto figure out the story's twists and turns, the hero in an Austerian work looks within for answers. In Auster's vision of America, the individual is no longer a cog in the wheel of society; instead, he or she must muddle through the morass of existence on his or her own. (Auster)

Even the most fundamental social organizations, which have been a part of human lifesince the dawn of modern civilization, have degenerated to the point that they no longer give the support, care, love, affirmation, and foundations for personal growth and development. In this desolation and despair, Auster's characters find themselves fending for their existence all alone, without a soul to lend a hand in their time of need. They are thrown amidst a struggle for their very existence and have no one to turn to for consolation. This melancholy looms large over his plots and remains largely unrelieved at the end of his plots, which, like fractured tales of other postmodernists, end as abruptly as they had begun. For the characters, as well as the reader, the agitation stirred by Auster's words remains sustained.

Auster's hyperreal crisis is set in a postmodern New York, a city which irrefutably forms the backbone of all of his works and ties his ideas together in a harmonious whole. It becomes evident, however, on detailed study that Auster's perception of this majestic city – the center of the world – is vastly different from how it is typically portrayed. The busiest city in the world, full of chaos, loud noises, and endless entropy, becomes a place of meditation on the more important questions in life. The city itself becomes a literary device, and the characters move, grow and develop themselves about it just as it were a dynamic, organic entity. It is against this backdrop that Auster develops his ideas about existence and the meaning of life, and it is a very unique approach, indeed, to solve thequestion of identity.

In this city Auster paints characters which are closely drawn from his own experiences, and who are often afflicted with the same dilemmas that plague their creator. Thus, when Auster's characters seek to discover themselves amidst the chaos of the city they live in, it is Auster himself who is searching for some purpose to his life, and for some order and meaning in an otherwise dreary and meaningless existence. Thus, while

on one hand, some characters bear direct references to their creator, such as being a professional writer or indulging in the same pastimes which the author is fond of, to even having the same name as Auster himself, others are associated with the author in more subtle and deeper ways.

In his works like *The New York Trilogy*, where his depictions are more fragmented sketches rather than traditional characters, the shades of the author's personality are visible only beneath the external metaphorical layer of narration. In any case, on critical analysis of Auster's method of character development, it becomesevident that it is, indeed, Auster who attempts to understand himself and the world around him through his characters. The hyperreal mode of investigation, as well as the postmodern fragmentariness, comes as much as of their own accord into the picture, as much as they were put there by the author himself. Thus, the New York City which Auster paints, or the characters which roam up and down the streets of this magnificently desolate city, is both perpetrator and victim of the desolation, which it has brought down upon itself. The question of meaning of existence, which Auster asks perpetually throughout his novels, is deposed primarily through the motif of the city. However, the reality of the problems which are dealt within his works remain universal, as his characters stand for every man, and the issues faced by them are indeed those which havebeen faced by men since the dawn of time.

The city becomes everything, and encompasses everything, in Auster's works. It serves as motif, literary device, metaphor, and provides a foundation for the writer to develop his characters and leave them free to wander in the lonesome world he has created for them. As the study has shown, there are many reasons – all of them significant in their own right – as to why Auster has chosen this city as a setting for his works.

Even the novels which are not explicitly set in New York bear some connection to it. In the works where the location is not explicitly stated, the background bears startling resemblances to his version of New York. Perhaps the most important reason why New York is so central to Auster's conception of a forlorn state is because of the quintessential nature of its postmodernism. Indeed, there are few places in the world which are more thevictims of the commercialization of human civilization than poor old New York City.

As his characters walk throughout the length and breadth of the city, they find skyscrapers as high as the sky itself - magnificent, tall buildings, marvels of modern architecture. And yet, they are neither pleasing aesthetically nor provide any kind of soothing ease to the senses. Instead, they become just another infusion in the alienating nature of modern human societal frameworks. They become representative of the commercialization of every aspect of human existence – from the artificial nature of the buildings themselves, to the distinct, individualism of the people that live and work inside them. New York is a city which is overwhelmed by billboards and commercials pasted across every nook and corner of the cityscape. What is missing is the human element – the people that work in and walk in and out of big stores every minute of every day. The city, therefore, becomes the perfect postmodern setting – alienated, isolated, without relief or reverence, and finally, without any meaning at all.

The first chapter of the thesis is "Simulation, Simulacra and Hyperreality: A Theoretical framework" and its manifestation in Paul Auster's works. This chapter's goal was to show that Baudrillard calls for the end of simulations. The purpose of this chapter was to show how Baudrillard's theory mourns the demise of the real while proposing a new sort of reality he calls hyperreality. A model that generates yet another model might be said to be a definition of hyperreality. As a result, it has a self-generating function that pushes postmodernists away from realism and representation. That is why a postmodern person cannot trust their senses since everything might be real or imagined. That people give more credence to fictional TV characters than they do to the actors and actresses who represent them is connected to this concept. When we stop accepting hyperreality as fact, we no longer need to distinguish between what is real and what is not real. Therefore, "reality is constructed by simulation" (Nicol 7). And postmodernists exhibits a world which is artificially constructed.

As a criticism of a hyperreal society, this study sets out to undo the work of author Paul Auster by unraveling the threads that hold together his fictitious tale world. By zeroing in on Auster's book, which takes place in a global reproduction, the individual can connect Quinn's microcosm of hyperrealistic people with Baudrillard's fourth demand of Simulacra. To demonstrate how Auster's "order models" of Simulacra

function as a postmodern worldview, the characters were able to look at other characters, such as Peter Stillman's father and son, and provide more plausible written evidence. Daniel Quinn's, David Zimmer's, and Peter Stillman's character nebulousness is optionally clarified by the Baudrillardian concept of hyperreality, defined as "the fabrication by models of a true without beginning or reality" (Baudrillard 1). For Baudrillard, "in the moment, the truth is itself hyper-sensible; at the moment, the entire common political, social, authentic, and monetary truth is absorbed into the simulative element of hyperrealism" (143). Paul Auster's works are analyzed as postmodern fiction that stresses the weight of hyperreal lifestyles as the inevitable result of the present's mirrored reality.

The second chapter of thesis analyses "Real /Reel Identities in Paul Auster's Novels". Identity is a prominent theme in Paul Auster's works. Auster does his best to confound the reader by switching around the characters names. Paul Auster's characters travel the path to identification via the prism of several personas, and the processes necessary to get there are outlined in my chapter. Because people's identities are fluid, I cover both the fundamental and unreal aspects of identity in depth in my chapter. Almost all of Auster's characters lack a central point of reference; they are, in other words, divided. The real identity of the characters is supposed to reside in the unconscious, which is why the surfaces are examined to see whether they are aware or unconscious. We are left wondering whether the identities are genuine or just an illusion. Most of the characters have no sense of order, just chaos.

In my chapter, the individuals encounter their alter egos, the hidden aspects of their personalities; in reality, society produces distinct selves for them to be like other people. When the pseudonymous realm enters, the double and the genuine intertwine. To understand how the Auster books show the self as a pure simulacrum without any reference points, we need to look at doubles like Quinn and Auster, Blue and Black, Fanshawe and "I." Auster's heroes embody this quandary, always balancing the line between the real and the reel. Auster's journey for self-discovery continues in solitude. The characters have an awakening in seclusion when they become more conscious of the

world around them. Trilogy self-representation is tested by its authenticity in a pseudonymous environment and is intertwined with geographical issues after the solitary.

Once they reach that point, they notice the incidents of coincidence, which is when they realize they are conscious beings. Because they understand their significance as "individuals" in society, they take responsibility for their actions. Thus, each of these occurrences in the characters' life serves as a turning point that triggers a series of events which shift the path of their future. This is when their destiny is handed over to the whims of fate. Because of this, the characters are forced to delve deeper into their lives and learn how to deal with these strange situations. Because of the uncertainty in the world, it becomes a quest for one's identity. Finally, the character's search for identification ends up with either a true or a fictitious identity. To a certain extent, each of these characters reaches a point of incompleteness. The steps they take to discover their identities do not complete them; instead, the procedure for taking such steps is what enlightens and produces both personas.

My thesis's third chapter analyzes the "Consumer capitalism and Postmodernity in the works of Paul Auster". Consumerism is not only a method of doing business; it is fundamental to the very fabric of modern life. Symbolically, products convey more meaning than we may be aware of at first glance. It is tempting to believe that shopping for one helps shape one's identity, yet this is just part of the story. Consumption culture teaches us about our social roles and how to effect positive change. It is easy to write off commercial culture as meaningless and rapid. Because there is no meaningful identity or path to satisfaction, Baudrillard's thoughts on consumerism inevitably lead to afeeling of loss. But if you choose to be a consumer and recognize that your identity and your social context are both constructed, you will find new found freedom. With the resources made available by consumerism, we can mold our identities to be anything we want them to be. Being able to approach consumerism square in the face and declare, "this is who I am because I choose it," is only possible after we realize that our identity is not derived from the things we acquire.

Delegitimized features of the Postmodern narrative is discussed at length in thethesis's fourth chapter. One of the most influential modern philosophers, Lyotard,

characterizes postmodernism as lacking faith in overarching stories. In doing so, heaccounts for the state of knowledge in today's industrialized nations. According to him, a master narrative is a totalizing framework that categorizes and provides meaning for all human knowledge and experience. He claims that historically, these frameworks were authoritative and that everything was sanctioned and legitimized according to these principles. Postmodernism, he says, renders these ideas and frameworks irrelevant since no one school of thought is more valid than any other.

In his view, continuous change and increased progress are hallmarks of the postmodern age thanks to the expansion of scientific and technological knowledge, particularly in the realm of computers. The world's laws have so evolved. Where tiny stories, or micro-narratives, take the place of grand ones, the norms of legitimacy undergo a radical shift. Individuals today have conflicting wants, perspectives, and modes of thought referred to as "little narratives." Consequently, putting stock in minor stories leads to a society where people are always at odds with one another. All facets of postmodern existence, particularly in advanced civilizations like the America that serves as the backdrop of Auster's books, have been profoundly impacted by this theoretical and metaphysical situation. Postmodernism is often seen as an era of social and cultural variety and plurality due to the decline of authority and legitimation as essential concepts. Numerous labels, such as the "age of consumerism," "late capitalism," and the "virtual and digital age," have been used during this period to characterize the profound changes that have occurred in society. In the 1980s, the globe turned into a pluralistic and fragmented place due to the changes and advancements that began in the second part of the twentieth century.Because of this, barriers between high and low culture, high and low social strata, and other inequalities in many spheres of life were dismantled. The emergence of the internet and the global village concept facilitated the dissolution of geographical barriers. This led to a gradual but steady increase in the degree to which social, political, historical, cultural, and moral circumstances were unstable and diffuse. The literary world, particularly the arts, was not immune to these shifts.

The postmodern literary movement has significantly impacted the work of Paul Auster. His novels are postmodern since it is a part of the metaphysical detective fiction

subgenre. True to Lyotard's postmodern state description, this genre exemplifies it. It was made for the skepticism of the modern day. The classical detective lived in an era of reason, meaning, and closure; the postmodern detective lives in a world defined as a labyrinth filled with a sense of loss, a lack of meaning, and a need for disclosure. Quinn conducts extensive research about the lost tongue of Adam or the language of God, Blue holds out in his stakeout as 'an Indian among us' for more than a year and communicates with his suspect through various disguises and the nameless narrator seems to contact every person, who has ever been in touch with his missing person and friend, Fanshawe. The nameless narrator even travels to France to track down and interrogate the people, who were part of Fanshawe's life during his lengthy stay there. Hence, the three detectives push themselves forward relentlessly in their various quests despite little or no encouragement from their employers, who in fact all seem essentially indifferent to their findings. Meanwhile, however, as a direct result of their 'cases,' the detectives become downright overwhelmed by their 'suspects' or missing persons. Moreover, they all suffer humiliation and become stripped bare of their personal and professional identities to the point where they question themselves, lose their sanity and become unable to distinguish their realities from their postmodern paranoia and obsessions. Thus, the gradual mental decline of all three detectives is intricately linked to the postmodern condition and more specifically to central notions of postmodernity such as chance, identity, and isolation.

All of Auster's works, taken together, accurately depict the postmodern world in all its diversity and disjunctiveness. The characters and settings of Auster's books are accurate examples of postmodern society, culture, and philosophy. In the postmodern metropolis, people are more likely to sense fear, doubt, and apprehension because of the complexities they face there. Therefore, given that the issue of the postmodern man is built into the very foundation of postmodernism itself, it would seem that there is no way to rectify this situation. The identity crisis and the problem of objective truth are central to postmodern thought. As a result, we need to deconstruct postmodernism and goback to traditional master narratives if we want to save the postmodern man. To extract meaning from his existence and get a handle on the components that make up who he is as a person, the postmodern man must turn to some form of center or point of reference. Even though this answer is completely implausible, it seems that there is no other choice.

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