

Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy* as “Historiographic Metafiction”

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Abstract—Seeking to free us from the clutches of our self-made rigid conventions, postmodernism criticizes the metanarratives of modern times, while metafiction seems a better spokesman of it. *New York Trilogy*, Paul Auster's debut composition and a meta-detective novel, has secured its fame in the postmodern fiction. It uses and abuses the conventions of detective novel, and lays bare the conventions of objective historiography. In doing this, Auster has given a self-reflective and equally historical dimension to his oeuvre through the technique of “historiographic metafiction”. Linda Hutcheon sees “historiographic metafiction” as a way to rewrite history in postmodern fiction. Postmodernism seeks to embrace a plurality of truths, and history is no longer monolithic and objective. Hutcheon contends that the postmodernist fiction is characterized by intense self-reflexivity and overtly parodic intertextuality. Utilizing historical accounts as intertextual effects, the writers of postmodernist fiction distrust in history. The present article will attempt to analyze *New York Trilogy* as a “historiographic metafiction”. Firstly, and insofar as it is within the scope of the article, it will attempt to offer a critical analysis of “postmodernism”, “metafiction”, and “metaphysical detective fiction”. Then, it will examine Auster's novel as a “historiographic metafiction” in the light of Hutcheon's theories.

Index Terms—historiographic metafiction, Paul Auster, *New York Trilogy*, detective fiction, Linda Hutcheon

I. INTRODUCTION

The term “postmodernist” is used to describe the philosophy, art, literature, music, architecture, etc. produced in the contemporary eras which often want to reject some criteria of these disciplines produced in a previous historical period. In the fourth edition of *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (1998), A. J. Cuddon attempts to explain the intermixture of modernism and postmodernism in the contemporary times:

To talk of post-modernism is to imply that modernism is over and done with. This is not so. There never is a neat demarcation line. Originally, avant-garde (q.v.) movements in literature and the arts in general were modernist; avant-garde influences continue. It might be said that there is a new avant-garde. Besides, post-modernism is still happening. When something else develops from it or instead of it, it will, perhaps, be easier to identify, describe, and classify (p. 690).

Among all schools of thought, postmodernism is perhaps the most reluctant to be defined, while it has always been a matter of controversy. And it seems that Cuddon finds no neat demarcation line between modernism and postmodernism. Literary scholars often consider James Joyce's novels as modernist while his fiction clearly shares some attributes of the postmodernist era as well. For example, at the beginning of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Stephen Daedalus, the protagonist, searches for the meaning of his life not only in the “Class of Elements, Clongowes Wood College, Sallins, County Kildare, Ireland,” but also in “Europe, The World, The Universe” (1996, p. 17). As Stephen searches to understand his connection to these and other facts of life such as the Irish church and nationalism, he attempts to solve his epistemological concern and realizes that in the realm of art he can pledge “himself to create the ‘uncreated conscience’ of his people” (Levin, 1960, p. 630). However, Joyce's novel can be regarded as postmodernist too, for it establishes what Jean-Francois Lyotard calls “incredulity toward metanarratives” (1984, p. 24). From Lyotard's eye, a “metanarrative” wants to present an absolute and monolithic account as to various historical events and experiences as well as the social and cultural phenomena which designate a tendency to the universal truth. Thus, he argues that the postmodern condition is characterized by a deeply felt skepticism towards authoritative metanarratives like nationalism and Christianity which try to suppress the other private and social voices. Joyce's protagonist, who is reluctant to pursue the monolithic voices of these power structures, seeks to abandon the application of their verdicts to his life and instead to lead his life on the basis of his own self-made theories and methodologies. This supports the assumption that Joyce's novel is postmodernist too, and perhaps that there is almost no clear line between modernism and postmodernism.

Also, Hutcheon defines postmodernism as basically double and paradoxical in nature, of which Auster's novel, with its capabilities of ‘intertextual parody’, is a better voice. She claims that

In the postmodern novel the conventions of both fiction and historiography are simultaneously used and abused, installed and subverted, asserted and denied. And the double (literary/historical) nature of this intertextual parody is one of the major means by which this paradoxical (and defining) nature of postmodernism is textually inscribed. Perhaps one of the reasons why there has been such heated debate on the definition of postmodernism recently is that the implication of the doubleness of this parodic process has not been fully examined (1989, p. 5).

In addition to fiction, critics are in accord about a salient role of historiography in the formation of the postmodern. It seems that an embodiment of this role is the postmodern architecture. Hans Bretenz believes that the postmodern architecture "combines historicist awareness, a new representational impulse, and an ironic self-reflexivity" (2005, p. 66). For instance, the use of historical signifiers is abundant in it which can be taken as an intercession of the conscience of the past and present or the reformation of the historical consciousness in the modern. This is the model that Hutcheon has used in her theory of historiographic metafiction.

II. DISCUSSION

Postmodernism is amorphous in nature. Unlike modernism, which is characterized by epistemological quests and a series of post-war anxieties about the fate of man, the postmodernist discourse is typically often incoherent thematically as well as structurally. However, within its paradoxical environment we can detect the function of a number of discernable features. A feature of the postmodernist discourse is self-reflexivity. This trait is better illustrated perhaps in what W. H. Gass, an American experimental novelist, has originally called "metafiction". Metafiction is a literary subgenre which is self-reflective, self-criticizing, and inclined to address its readers that they are reading a work of art. In addition, Patricia Waugh defines it as a kind of inherent nature in all novels which "self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose question about the relationship between fiction and reality" (1984, p. 2).

A second feature of the postmodern discourse like history, literature, and fiction is the way of its projection. It is projected in such a way that it no longer has a discernible boundary, for it can extend its frontiers from one discipline to another one to involve itself with problems of the new discipline also. This mode of extended involvement produces an interdisciplinary environment where the established monolithic truth or reality is often violated, undermined. In such a realm of disciplinary intermixture, meta-discourse is a partial consequence of an increased social and cultural self-consciousness. However, within the contemporary cultural function of language, it also reflects a greater awareness, in the sense that it constructs and maintains our sense of everyday reality.

Gone are the days of objective reflection of the world in language, that is, of faithful representation of reality in it. Thus, still another feature of the postmodern discourse is the unique role of its language. Its language is an opaque and multi-dimensional phenomenon which perpetually hides itself from the reader, and by doing this, always comes to the fore itself as a new enigma which he has to solve. However, it is also an independent and self-contained system which generates its own meaning. On the other hand, the relation of language to the phenomenal world is highly complex and problematic while language regulates its relations with the world often conventionally. As Waugh notes, "Metafiction sets up an 'opposition, not to ostensibly 'objective' facts in the 'real' world, but to the language of the realistic novel which has sustained and endorsed such a view of reality" (1984, p. 11).

Consisting of *City of Glass* (1985), *Ghosts* (1986), and *Locked Room* (1986), *New York Trilogy* falls in the category of detective fiction, because reading it, one realizes that it uses and undermines the features of that genre. Under "detective fiction" there are a number of minor genres of which Auster's novel is an illustration. Merivale and Sweeney have sketched the characteristics of "metaphysical detective story". Their sketch include "the defeated sleuth, 'the world, city, or text as labyrinth', 'the purloined letter-embedded text, [and] mise en abyme', 'the ambiguity [...] or sheer meaninglessness of clues and evidence', 'the missing person [and] the double', and 'the absence [...] or self-defeating nature of any kind of closure to the investigation'" (1999, p. 8). In the representation of a labyrinthine postmodern New York in Auster's novel, the detectives are lost because at the end of each story they suddenly vanish and fail to know anything.

Historicism is among the integral issues of the postmodernist discourse. For example, the theorists of the postmodern architecture attempt to clarify how it is influenced by the modern architecture or the 17th-century baroque architecture. And Michel Foucault maintains that the postmodern art is a self-conscious art "within the archive," while the archive is "both historical and literary" (qtd. in Hutcheon, 1989, p. 4). Accordingly, in *New York Trilogy* Auster builds a world out of his imagination. "This 'world' has direct links to the world of empirical reality, but it is not itself that empirical reality" (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 4), the world in which the text situates itself is the world of intertextual discourses. This is the very nature of postmodernism which is characterized by self-reflexivity and parodic intertextuality. In order to distinguish "this paradoxical beast" from the traditional historical fiction, Hutcheon has coined the phrase "historiographic metafiction." According to her,

The term postmodernism, when used in fiction, should, by analogy, best be reserved to describe fiction that is at once metafictional and historical in its echoes of the texts and contexts of the past. In order to distinguish this paradoxical beast from traditional historical fiction, I would like to label it "historiographic metafiction." The category of novel I am thinking of includes *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Ragtime*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and *The Name of the Rose* (1989, p. 3).

Literary historiography is an interfusion of history and fiction, in such a way that F. O. Matthiessen says they ‘enrich’ one another. He claims that in the “American Renaissance” of the 1980s and after, literary historiography has been more than a subgenre. To analyze the outcomes of the intermixture of these branches of knowledge, Matthiessen points to “the breaking down of arbitrary divisions between” (2004, p. 43) them which made it possible for the literary critic to benefit from history and for the historian to extend his consciousness to reach “general culture” through “politics”. However, it seems that historiographic metafiction, which is quintessentially a postmodern art form, is considerably different from the literary historiography of the 1980 and after, because the main reliance of the postmodern historiography is upon parody, textual play, and other language techniques which it uses for the purpose of historical reconceptualization. In the historiography which began in the 1980s, history was as a series of past realities which concretely existed not only out of imagination but out of language also. History and fiction were already there, and the historiographer would mix them to add to their capacities and produce a new genre. However, “historiographic metafiction” is a genre by which Hutcheon means “those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages (2004, p. 5). Here she is claiming that in historiographic metafiction, history is subjective and perspectival. In addition, it is a product of language, and is manufactured in the power-plant of our imagination.

This said, if we take language as a self-orienting and self-structuring phenomenon, the fiction-writer and historian write mainly to generate new ideas, new systems of thought. Looked from this perspective, history and fiction are the signs of only arbitrary connections with their referents, for they are ideological, opaque systems for whose characters and personages we can find almost no referents in the real life and history. To speak for Hutcheon again, the contradictoriness of historiographic metafiction makes it into a mode of writing which is simultaneously exhausting and formative, because as a form of metafiction, it searches “*within* conventions in order to subvert them” (2004, p. 5). On the one hand, it searches to annihilate the outmoded and trite discourses, while on the other hand, it grounds the formation of what Zavarzadeh has called new “frames of intelligibility in the postmodern fiction” (1985, p. 607). However, Zavarzadeh does not limit the productive power of metafiction to the literary narrative, but extends it to the other “modes of cultural (...) intelligibility” (1985, p. 611) also, by which he means both philosophical and scientific narratives. After briefly examining some traits of “historiographic metafiction,” we will attempt to analyze Auster’s *New York Trilogy* as a historiographic metafiction in the light of Hutcheon’s theories. Three salient features of a typical historiographic metafiction are intertextuality, parody, and paratextuality.

A. Intertextuality

Any text naturally implies that it stands in relation to any other text in the lack of which it can be registered neither in the consciousness nor in the realm of signification. Accordingly, it is understandable why Roland Barthes should maintain that “any text is an intertext” (Hawthorne, 1992, p. 127). Barthes’ “intertext” is a general and omnipresent text to which all texts are members and in the environment of which they are present. So, intertextuality is the meaning of texts as they are related to each other structurally and thematically. However, this general and omnipresent text is more than a simple coming together of a number of individual texts, because it affects how texts can and should be read. In the intertext, there are allusions which want the reader to participate in textual negotiations for better enlightenment, there are sounds which transfer him to the forgotten time periods for his remembrance and sympathies, there are devices which parody a previous system of signification for the replacement of new systems, etc. Therefore, intertextuality has it that a text should be read not as a divided block of writing but in the light of its relations to other texts. Barthes also claims that although in the heyday of New Criticism texts were regarded as “autonomous” artistic objects, but they were neither autonomous nor separated from other texts. The present readers find T. S. Eliot’s “Tradition and Individual Talent”, among other things, as the theory of a form of intertextuality, because his definition for “tradition” signifies the interconnection of literary texts in the whole history of their production. However, Hawthorn finds the theory of another form of intertextuality in the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin. Hawthorn mentions that “the DIALOGIC element in all UTTERANCES” (1992, p. 126) grounds a mode of intertextuality in the contemporary period, because dialogue excites a text to question about the existence, the function, and the meaning of any other text.

As well, speaking for Hutcheon, the writers of *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* remind us that the paradox of postmodernism lies in its “use and abuse of history” (2005, p. 208). They believe that intertextuality is more than reproducing “the past in the form of a shallow and comprised nostalgia” (2005, p. 208), for it is also, they say, a possibility for “revealing its past construction in discourse and ideology (2005, p. 208). So, as the ground of interconnection of all texts, intertextuality explores the relationship between one literary text and other texts. In a field of intertextuality, which is pluralistic, one frees himself from the grips of any certain and unilateral work to employ the capacities of a number of texts. In this way, it is the revitalization of a long file of texts which come to the fore one by one with an aftermath of critical innovations. This mode of critical innovation seems to be in concord with not only the needs of the postmodern consciousness but also the complexities of the postmodern interdisciplinary discourse. In this sense, intertextuality is the solution of the contemporary intellectual reader who reads voraciously to know everything and be everywhere. It is the endearment of democracy through a revitalization, generalization, of textual relations through interpretive reading as social interaction.

In *New York Trilogy*, the reader is referred to a number of literary texts including *Marco Polo’s Adventures*, *Don Quixote*, and *Walden*. In *City of Glass*, we see Quinn reading the first one while he is alone in his apartment and is

interrupted by an unexpected phone call (p. 3). Later in the story he visits Paul Auster the character who is in the middle of an imaginative reading of the text by Cervantes. In the second story it is the spirits of the American transcendentalists which are dominant.

F. O. Matthiessen has created his monumental *American Renaissance* (1941) mainly in the light of the works of a handful of literary giants: Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman. The works of these giants dominated the American literary landscape in the mid-19th century. Of these, Auster is funder of the work of transcendentalists. For example, in *New York Trilogy* we see Blue doing his tail job and realizing that Black is reading a copy of Thoreau's *Walden*. Later, when he meets Black in the disguise of Jimmy Rose, the latter tells him a story about Hawthorne who was "a good friend of Thoreau's, and probably the first real writer America ever had. After he graduated from college, he went back to his mother's house in Salem, shut himself up in his room, and didn't come out for twelve years" (2006, p. 172). When Black asks Jimmy what he did there, he says "He wrote stories" (2006, p. 172). The disguising name of Jimmy Rose is the eponym for the hero in a tale by Melville. In *Locked Room* (1986) which is the third story, Fanshaw is the title of Hawthorne's first novel. As inter-texts of history, these works provide a rich grounding for Auster's oeuvre, so that he can relate his story to other ones.

B. Parody

Describing a parody, M. H. Abrams says it

imitates the serious manner and characteristic features of a particular literary work, or the distinctive style of a particular author, or the typical stylistic and other features of a serious literary genre, and deflates the original by applying the imitation to a lowly or comically inappropriate subject (1999, p. 26).

It is said that the other literary genres (types) originate from parody. It imitates an original literary work of a previous time in a way that it preserves the form of the original work while its content it ridiculously belittles. The ridiculing approach of parody causes its content to be taken by the reader as far less valuable than that of the original work. Such a belittling way of analysis is also often for arousing the reader's sense of disliking toward (the subject matter of) the ridiculed work. To arouse his disliking, the parodist can use a handful of techniques including a file of dramatically sarcastic says, hyperbolic statements, or ugly gestures which the reader/onlooker cannot understand and which therefore show the hero or the subject matter of the original work worse than what they really are.

In this way, a parody works in an in-between situation, in a bipolar area on one end of which there is an original work of literature while on its other end there is a new work parodying the original one. This bipolarity is also the ground of a productive comparative study between the new and the original works to the blessing of which new literary experiences are generated. This bipolarity is significant from a further perspective also, for in a parody there is a surface level as well as an under-level. On the surface level, there may be the application of a series of downplaying techniques like joke, ridicule, lampoon, derision, even invective and sarcasm. On the other hand, in the under-level there is a conscious and goal-oriented literary criticism which is to help the reader to transcend his mentality and make himself accustomed to the new era, to the norms and standards of the new social strata. The formal similarity of the original and parodying works on the one hand, and the thematic difference of these works on the other makes the parody into a satirical imitation which guarantees the mental excitement of the reader. So, it is admitted that parody is an extended literary genre and a fertile field for productive literary negotiations. Meantime, a parody is naturally so subtle. In addition to its bipolarity just mentioned, its subtlety is rooted in the fact that the parodist should create a sense of equilibrium between similarity and difference, because the parody is, in form, similar to the original work, while in content it should be different from the original. This equilibrium renders parody faithful to its original work, while it projects the parody as a divided work also.

This policy of difference and/in sameness in parody is a genuine translation why the postmodern historiographic metafiction should be so interested in it. Metafiction is the program of a time situation when a literary genre or a system of codes should be neutralized, decoded, for the emergence of a new system, because the previous system is no longer functional, because, it means, it has gotten stale and therefore the new generation does not appreciate it. In the history of European culture, there are times when a previous ideology was neutralized to give way to a new one. For example, in "Preface to Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems" (1802) William Wordsworth says "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (598). For Wordsworth and other Romantic poets imagination was a "celestial power" that would make them related to eternity. Thus, they would search for the source of poetry mainly in human psychology which showed itself in the dynamic imagination of an exceptionally great poet as a "maker". Also they would consider a poem something like a wild stream, which intuitively projected itself to the poet while he had no control over it. Whatever the criteria of Romantic poetry was, it was evident that it could not take great social responsibilities, because the necessity of deep poetical considerations often caused the poet to go into absence from the practical social scenes to reside in his ivory tower of personal life and poetical meditation. However, men like Alfred Tennyson and Mathew Arnold in the Victorian Age composed a kind of poetry and/or literary criticism which was increasingly concerned with the problems of their own time and society. The radical reaction of these men against the personal seclusion of the Romantic poet would excite them to give their readers a sense of the past also. In such times of literary and cultural transition, parody is instrumental in the hand of the fiction-writer, because through a ridiculous imitation of an original work or the standards of a past literary period, it paves the way for the emergence of a new work or the formation of new tastes and values.

As a means of the postmodern fiction, parody is both for projection and cancellation, because as it wants to repeal a previous intelligibility, it also wants to propose a new mode of thought to make for the disintegration of the previous one. And a writer of historiographic metafiction uses parody to guarantee that the canonical works can and should be critically revised, re-evaluated, through a mechanism that puts a previous work, author, or ideology under consideration for the inauguration of new readings of history, for the proposition of new modes of cultural criticism. In the hands of the parodist, such works are imitated not only in their intentions but in their intertextuality also. In this regard, Linda Hutcheon notes that “parody is not to destroy the past; in fact, to parody is both to enshrine the past and to question it” (1989, p. 6).

In *City of Glass*, where Quinn investigates the facts about the Miltonic dissertation of Peter Stillman, Auster parodies the work of Milton. When he comes across an ancient account of Tower of Babel, he creates a historical figure named “Henry Dark” whom Stillman declares “the private secretary of John Milton—from 1669 until the poet’s death five years later” (2006, p. 45). But when Quinn meets Stillman and introduces himself as Henry Dark, Stillman laughs and tells him that there is no Henry Dark:

“Hmmm. Yes, I see your point. It is true that two people sometimes have the same name. It’s quite possible that your name is Henry Dark. But you’re not *the* Henry Dark.”

“Is he a friend of yours?”

Stillman laughed, as if at a good joke. “Not exactly,” he said. “You see, there never was any such person as Henry Dark. I made him up. He’s an invention” (2006, p. 78).

This is the moment when historiographic metafiction is used for parody. Auster challenges the traditional assumption of history as truthful, fabricates a historical figure, and in so doing crosses the lines of reality and fiction. In historiographic metafiction history loses “its privileged status as the purveyor of truth” (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 10).

Auster’s fabrication of Henry Dark indicates that history is naturally not given but is constructional, perspectival, and uncertain. So it seems that by such fabrications he wants to undermine the simple notion of history as objective. If a monolithic view of history claims to embody the objective veracity of the past, this is incredulity toward history as monolithic. Hutcheon asserts that historiographic metafiction “offers a sense of the presence of the past, but this is a past that can only be known from its texts, its traces - be they literary or historical” (1989, p. 4). She argues that fiction and historiography are both prone to simultaneous use and abuse, assertion and denial. Accordingly, in Auster’s book the detective conventions and traditional historical accounts are both drawn upon and undermined. Utilizing the detective traits, he constantly undermines the traditional assumption that we have in mind of the detective stories. In each story the result of detective efforts is but its own fragmented detection. As Lyotard believes, the nature of knowledge in postmodernism has changed. So, the detectives in Auster’s world are doomed to discover only their problem of self-knowing. In other words, the pragmatic of detection in Auster’s novel clearly is not similar to that of Sherlock Holmes-like stories in which the detectives decipher the mysterious murder cases after a long meticulous search. Instead, in metaphysical detective genre, any chase is eventually resulted in detective’s own fragmented self-knowing.

Added to that, the invention of Henry Dark is a technique for re-writing history. As an example, using the historical events of “Tower of Babel,” the author violates the traditionally supposed veracity of history by fictionalizing a real man of past eras like Milton as the material of his story. To speak for Laura Barrett, in this interfusion of history and fiction “reality, truth, and finally history are determined by perspective” (2000, p. 802). Elsewhere in the same study Barrett argues that the invention of narrative identities from history is a possibility of fitting them with the necessities of time and place as a style in which “history repeats itself in an endless cycle of destruction” (2000, p. 804).

It is also a possibility for narrative conventions to be simultaneously used and undermined. Each protagonist of the stories – Quinn, Blue, and the unnamed guy of *Locked Room*, who is seemingly a private eye-seeking after truth, finally realizes the truth about himself. In *City of Glass* we see Quinn writing a detective story which engages him in a game that leads to his own detection. Similarly, Blue in *Ghost* is hired to do a tailing job on Black, but in the end he understands that White and Black are in fact the same person who has been watching him all the time. Blue comprehends that this man has made him a subject rather than being an observer. In *Locked Room*, the unnamed character is hired by Sophie, Fanshaw’s wife, to take care of the business of his disappeared husband and investigate the truth about him. But interestingly his pursuit leads him to knowledge about himself, and the unnamed character confesses the interconnectedness of the three stories. He declares that

The end, however, is clear to me. I have not forgotten it, and I feel lucky to have kept that much. The entire story comes down to what happened at the end, and without that end inside me now, I could not have started this book. The same holds for the two books that come before it, *City of Glass* and *Ghosts*. These three stories are finally the same story, but each one represents a different stage in my awareness of what it is about” (Auster, 2006, pp. 287-88).

Here the author turns the storytelling convention on its own head, and in so doing, undermines the framework of detective genre as well as his own authenticity. Although Auster’s historiography shares the similar attributes of historiographic metafiction, his version of history, as Varvogli maintains, differs from those of “other American authors who may be more easily identified as exponents of this tendency” (2001, p. 118). In *The World that Is the Book: Paul Auster’s Fiction* (2001), Varvogli argues that Coover’s and Doctorow’s historiographical styles have little in common with that of Auster. From his outlook, the writers of *The Public Burning* and *Ragtime* take use of fun and “political

history” to produce a genre of historiography in which the real and the unreal are integrally intersected, but the absence of “parodic intensions” in Auster’s fiction leaves us in a reading space where the main concern is whether we are able to realize “the ultimate objects of history.”

C. Paratextuality

A further device that historiographic metafiction uses is a self-conscious paratextuality, which is the use of external documents in fiction. Hutcheon affirms that in the postmodern novel paratextuality is characterized by the use of “footnotes, epigraphs, prefaces, and epilogues; sometimes they are parachuted directly into the fictive discourse” (2003, p. 92). These elements are not part of a main narrative, but they give a certain orientation to the reader’s mind, which in turn grounds a certain mode of reading or a certain interpretive conduct. David Herman (2009) affirms that “paratextual materials afford resources for interpretation, allowing readers to channel and delimit their inferential activities by situating texts within generic (or TEXT-TYPE) categories, historical epochs, authors’ oeuvres, sociopolitical controversies, and so on” (p. 190). Thus, it seems that the paratext is often for the creation of something like a protocol of reading which determines how the text should be read and appreciated. Such a protocol places the paratext in an intermediary position between the reader and the text and makes it possible for them to compromise. The paratext directs reading, grounds interpretation, expands the frontiers of the text, and provides ways of inferencing.

The author of *New York Trilogy* frequently uses paratextual devices like illustration and historical movie to self-consciously transform historical documents into a fictive framework. The example in *City of Glass* is perhaps more telling. When Quinn realizes that Stillman has been spelling a weird shape with his course of walking through the city, he immediately draws some typographical views of Stillman’s maze-like steps. Here the writer self-consciously uses external proofs to make his reader aware that he is reading a novel. At the same time, he undermines the conventional tradition of fiction writing. Finally, Quinn deciphers that labyrinthine paths are to be represented in the cryptic spelling of the phrase “TOWER OF BABEL”

Quinn then copied out the letters in order: OWEROFBAB. After fiddling with them for a quarter of an hour, switching them around, pulling them apart, rearranging the sequence, he returned to the original order and wrote them out in the following manner: OWER OF BAB. The solution seemed so grotesque that his nerve almost failed him. Making all due allowances for the fact that he had missed the first four days and that Stillman had not yet finished, the answer seemed inescapable: THE TOWER OF BABEL (Auster, 1990, p. 70).

Among other things, these alphabetical arrangements remind the reader that language is mainly a formal structure in the inside of which there is no ultimate meaning, but the elements of which can yet transfer meaning only when they stand in logical connection with each other. As John Scaggs argues, the importance of the phrase “The Tower of Babel” can be analyzed in two ways:

First, in its reference to ‘the Biblical narrative of the fall into linguistic multiplicity’ (Marcus, 2003, p. 260), it emphasizes not only the impossibility of a universal language, but more specifically, the impossibility of natural, unproblematic, and unmediated communication and interpretation. Secondly, Quinn’s extraction of the letters OWEROBAB from Stillman’s negotiation of the labyrinth of the city, and his interpretative leap to the phrase THE TOWER OF BABEL, reinforce at a metafictional level the limits that the fall of the biblical tower signifies in relation to the reader’s engagement with Auster’s novel itself, and with crime fiction in general (2005, p. 142).

The writer of historiographic metafiction can use the techniques of other media structures like the movie also. Another example is in *Ghosts*, when Auster sends Blue to watch the movie “Out of the Past.” The movie is fabricated on the story of an ex-private eye who tries to build a new life for himself in a small town. A film noir in category, the movie is characterized by a dark and convoluted storyline and a dark cinematography. Through the use of paratextual effects of a noir film, here again the maker transfers the reader to “where another’s consciousness can be represented” (Fludernik, 2007, p. 265). Fludernik argues that a major use of narrative is the fertilization of the reader’s consciousness by making it possible for him to close his eyes on the familiar world and reside imaginatively in a wonderland little or nothing of which is already familiar to him. This world of “alterity” can primarily be dangerous or frightening to the reader. However, his residence there and his confrontation with its up-to-now unknown places and personages is a meaning of the extension of his consciousness, and the supposition that he will ultimately come to terms with the conditions of this new life. Now it suffices to note that the paratextual elements, to speak for Fludernik again, “ease the reader into or out of the text” (2007, p. 266), because they remind him of the storyline and help him differentiate between the world of the imaginary and his own world of reality.

However, paratextuality itself is a facade or possibility of metafiction. So, the remaining part of the present article will attempt to analyze the nature and function of metafiction in the postmodern literature and discuss some metafictional manifestations in Auster’s novel. In *The Art of Fiction* (1992), David Lodge claims that “the grand[d]addy of all metafictional novels was *Tristram Shandy*” (1992, p. 206). To justify his claim, Lodge argues that realism was inclined to overlook the gap between life and art. For this purpose, it often pretended that literature was life, was faithful to life. Then he theorizes that, on the contrary to realism, *Tristram Shandy* highlighted the life-art gap in order for the reader to comprehend that story is not life but is a handful of language structures which only convey a sense of life to the reader. Lodge maintains that the pre-modern literature concealed this gap often through critiquing itself using “aside” and other techniques like structural analysis, character description, and thematic interpretation. Therefore, insofar the pre-modern fiction used such techniques for self-evaluation, it also stood in the position of metafiction.

But in the postmodern era metafiction is no longer a means for backgrounding the problems of realism. It is a mainstream of fiction on which great writers like Nabokov, Fowles, and Barth have worked as a major part of their literary concerns. And the purpose of the postmodernist metafiction writer is the creation of new experiences and the transcendence of literary and artistic discourses.

In "The Literature of Exhaustion" (1967), which was, in the time of its publication, an avant-gardist research, John Barth argues that in the first half of the 20th century the writers realized that literature was falling into a kind of pitfall, because whatever they might have written about had already been discussed by writers before them. Under the influence of this problem, Barth (and others) thought that literature had to start radically anew. For this purpose, he found himself concerned with the composition of a new kind of fiction which was no longer extrospective but was introspective, which was no longer externally directed but was internally directed. He thought that for the emergence of this kind of fiction the modernist literature had to make a turn inside, come circle, and then start zooming on its own finalities, problems, as its main themes and subjects. This vision, Barth materialized in the shape of a mobius strip which he introduced in "Frame Tale" as the first title in "Lost in the Funhouse."

Auster's rejection of detective genre is reinforced by exploiting the signifiers of a film noir. "Ghosts" and "Out of the Past" share a similar structure and plot. *Ghosts* is the account of Blue, an ex-private eye, who seeks a new detective game of hide and seek. But the result is disappointment and chagrin, and later at the end of the story he is turned to a puppet of Black who hires him and constantly spies on him. In a similar way, the film noir is the narrative of an ex-private eye who tries to start a new life but instead engages in some unexpected events which, in the end, lead to failure and dissatisfaction.

III. CONCLUSION

History and literature have always been intertwined, and both are inherent in the discourses of postmodernism. In the postmodern architecture this claim can be easily proved. It is also in line with Michel Foucault's assertion that postmodernism is self-consciously art within the archive. Historiographic metafiction is a quintessentially postmodern art form which affluently uses (literary) techniques like parody, paratextuality, and historical re-conceptualization.

In *New York Trilogy*, Paul Auster takes use of the advantages of historiographic metafiction like interdiscursivity and paratextuality to distort our traditional perception of detective fiction, violate the relationship between the real and the imaginary, and add to the advantages of the postmodernist fiction. His interest in the discursiveness of the past places him within the context of historiographic metafiction. However, this does not mean that his version of history is similar to that of other postmodern writers like Robert Coover and E. L. Doctorow. Regarding the postmodernist view of history, there are similarities between Auster on the one hand and Coover and Doctorow on the other. However, whereas the two latter exploit parody for political ends, the former develops a stylized version of history which is subordinated to the aesthetic concerns of the text.

In his novel, Auster employs a number of narrative styles including intertextuality, parody, and paratextuality. Intertextuality is the embodiment of the institution of literature. It is the great text, the "intertext", to which all texts are members and in which they are all present. Also, it is the space where all texts are related to each other. In the postmodern era intertextuality seems to be a useful space for critical reading, because as the reader often wants to read voraciously to know everything, intertextuality can lead him from one text to another ad infinitum. However, it seems that "intertextuality" is too limited to explain the true nature of historiographic metafiction. Thus, it is not for nothing that Hutcheon proposes "interdiscursivity" as a more appropriate technique for the purpose, because it allows the postmodern novelist parodically to draw not only from literature and history, but from the movie, painting, and many other disciplines also. Parody is the imitation of an original literary work of a previous time in a way that the imitation preserves the form of the original work while the value of its meaning it minimizes. It is a style of metafictional writing where literature is engaged with itself. This is because through a ridicule of a previous work of grand literature, it creates a situation for critical evaluation by questioning the basic tenets of literary production. Paratext is the materials which make no part of a main text however come along it. In a literary text, it includes elements like the title, the preface, the epigram, and the afterword. These are other than a main narrative, but they play a role in the reader's appreciation of the narrative. Therefore, standing in a middle way between the text and the reader, they provide a certain mode of reading by orienting the reader's consciousness.

As a historiographic metafictionist, Auster experiments with history also. He uses history as a space of discursiveness, and in order to challenge the authenticity of objective facts and violate the boundary lines of fiction and reality. This he does mainly for achieving his philosophical ends among which are self-knowing and the problems of identity. The postmodern knowledge constantly changes. So, from Auster's perspective the rupture in detective genre indicates an impossibility to gain ultimate knowledge. His character Henry Dark testifies to the fabrication of historiographic metafiction in his work which both uses and repeals the veracity of history. It indicates that history is no longer the embodiment of truth about the past, but is constructional, subjective, and perspectival.

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