VANISHING BOOKS & LOST WRITERS:

QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP IN PAUL AUSTER'S NOVELS

AYLİN BİRSEN YILMAZ

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Aylin Birsen Yılmaz

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The thesis of Aylin Birsen Yılmaz

has been approved by:

Assist. Prof. Dr. Özlem Öğüt

(Thesis Advisor)

Prof. Dr. Cevza Sevgen

Assist. Prof. Dr. Didar Akar

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Thesis Abstract

Aylin Birsen Yılmaz, "Vanishing Books & Lost Writers: Question of Authorship in Paul Auster's Novels"

This thesis investigates the notion of authorship as represented in three of Paul Auster's late novels, namely *The Book of Illusions* (2002), *Oracle Night* (2003) and *Invisible* (2009). Focusing on the relationship between the fictional authors and their writing adventures in the novels, this study reads Paul Auster's novels as spheres where the notions of 'the writer and the text' vis-à-vis 'the author and the work' are juxtaposed. Moreover, analyzing the novels through the lens of Roland Barthes' arguments on authorship and textuality in "The Death of Author" and "From Work to Text", and also Michel Foucault's definition of "author-function" in "What is an Author?", this study mainly argues that Auster's novels- and the stories they nest- should be identified with the notion of 'text' and the people who write them should be defined as writers.

Auster's fictional authors are not dead only in the metaphorical sense Barthes proposes. They literally write at the moment of death and continue speaking from the land of the dead with the help of another writer who dedicates his life to rewriting the book left behind. Thus, the reader has two authors, the absentee and the surrogate ones whose collaborative efforts ensure rebirth for both the vanishing book and the dead author. Furthermore, the main character- or the surrogate author- who function also as the narrator in the novels also starts a new life for which the story acts as a passage. He can only start writing after he lets go of his previous mode of existence, only when he transcends his self and writes from the eyes of another self that is able to see the totality of time as past, present and future.

Paul Auster's novels are also parodies of American hard-boiled detective stories. His writer-protagonists are at the same time detectives and they are placed in the midst of mysteries which they fail to solve. Initially equating an author with a detective and later nullifying the function of the detective figure, Auster aims at two important points. First, he challenges the rules -or as Todorov put it "the typology"- of detective fiction. With this gesture, Auster denounces the notion of genre, which is a further proof of the novels' alignment with the idea of "the text" as opposed to "the work." Consequently, by shattering the role of the detective as the figure who has the capability to unravel the mysteries, Auster once more announces "the death of the author" who holds the key for opening up the ultimate meaning in the book.

Tez Özeti

Aylin Birsen Yılmaz, "Yok Olan Kitaplar & Kayıp Yazarlar: Paul Auster Romanlarındaki Yazar Sorunsalı"

Bu çalışma Paul Auster'ın üç romanında, *Yanılsamalar Kitabı* (2002), *Kehanet Gecesi* (2003) ve *Görünmeyen* (2009), anlatılan yazar sorununu incelemektedir. Romanların içerisindeki kurgusal yazarların eserleri ile ilişkisine ve yazma maceralarına odaklanan çalışma, romanları "yazar ve yapıt" kavramlarının "yazıcı ve metin" kavramlarıyla karşılaştırıldığı bir düzlem olarak okumaktadır. Romanları Roland Barthes'ın "Yazarın Ölümü" ve "Yapıttan Metine" adlı makalelerinde yazarlık ve metinsellik üzerine öne attığı fikirler ve Michel Foucault'nun "Yazar Nedir?" adlı makalesindeki "yazar işlevi" üzerinden inceleyen çalışma, Auster romanlarının - ve romanların içindeki hikayelerin- 'metin', bu hikayeleri yazanların da 'yazıcı' olarak tanımlanması gerektiğini savunmaktadır.

Auster'ın kurgusal yazarları Barthes'ın öne sürdüğü şekilde yalnızca metaforik olarak ölü değildir. Bu yazarlar ya ölüm anında yazarlar, ya da ömürlerini geriye bırakılan eserlerini düzeltmek ve yeniden yazmaya adayan ikinci bir yazar aracılığıyla ölüler diyarından konuşmaya devam ederler. Bu nedenle romanlarda iki yazar kimliği vardır; *absentee (*bulunmayan/gaip) yazar ve *surrogate (*vekil) yazar. Bu iki yazarın ortak çabası ve üstüste yazmaları ile sadece yok olan eser değil ölü yazar da yeniden hayata döner. Dahası romanların başkahramanı ve aynı zamanda anlatıcı olan surrogate yazar da eser sayesinde yeni bir hayata başlar. Bu yazarın yeni hayatında yazmaya başlaması ancak eski yaşamını terketmesi, kimliğini aşması ve kendini zamanı bütün olarak görebilen başka bir kimliğin gözlerinden yazması ile mümkün olacaktır.

Paul Auster'ın romanları aynı zamanda Amerikan sert polisiye hikayelerinin (*hard-boiled detective stories)* parodisi niteliğini taşır. Auster'ın kurgusal yazarları aynı zamanda hikayelerdeki dedektif karakteridir ve kendilerini çözmeyi beceremedikleri sırların ortasında bulurlar. Dedektif karakterini yazar karakteri ile özdeşleştirdikten sonra dedektifi etkisiz bir figur haline getiren Auster bununla iki şey gerçekleştirir. Birincisi dedektif hikayelerin katı kurallarını ve yapısını yada Todorov'un dediği gibi tipolojisini değiştirir. İşte bu hareketiyle, Auster tür kavramına karşı çıkar ve bu yolla romanlarını "yapıt" değil de "metin" kavramıyla yan yana koyar. Sonuç olarak Paul Auster hikayedeki sırları çözme becerisine sahip dedektif imgesini yıkarak, metnin anlamını açabilecek anahtarı elinde tutan yazarın öldüğünü bir kez daha ilan eder.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Paul Auster's fiction is marked by his preoccupation with the idea of death and rebirth through writing. Especially in his later novels his writer-protagonists who also function as the narrators, try to re-animate the forgotten memoirs, works or biography of another author character who is dead or believed to be so in the novel. While doing this, the identity of the writer-protagonist mingles with both the dead author and the story he sets out to write. After hearing the story from this writer, one is faced with the question: "Who is the 'real' author of the story?" Is it the dead author to whom the basic ideas, memories or initial sentences belong to? Is it the second writer, also the narrator who edits or rewrites the events from his own point of view? Or is it Paul Auster who creates a double meta-fictional frame in which he not only blurs the boundaries between the writer and the reader as represented by the characters in the novels, but also fictionalizes his own authorial self by invisibly entering into novels as indicated by recurrent autobiographical references that push the reader to identify the writer-narrator with Paul Auster?

This study endeavors to provide answers to these questions by demonstrating how Auster's novels modify the author image provided by Roland Barthes in "The Death of the Author" and by Michel Foucault in "What is an Author?" The metaphorical "death of the author" (Barthes 146) whereby the text loses its origin and the possibility of a single coherent meaning, along with the idea of "plurality of self" (Foucault 182) in these articles find their equivalent in the novels as *absentee* and *surrogate authors*, as I wish to refer them. None of these writers are the sole

creator of the texts they write within the novels since their ideas, selves and writings become unified within the story.

Auster's dead writers will be referred to as *absentee authors* because their absence does not necessarily mean their death. Although literally dead in the novels, they continue to be present in the novels as they write either at the moment of their death or they continue writing / speaking from the realm of death. Since their works are discovered post-humuosly the reader hears the voice of a dead man. In effect, the story enables rebirth for the dead author. However it is not merely him the story provides with a second life. In all three novels, the dead writer leaves the fate of his work into someone else's hands who then becomes the *surrogate* writer and completes the story. This second writer character also starts a new life to which the story acts as a passage. He can only start writing after he lets go of his previous mode of existence, only when he transcends his self and writes from the eyes of another self that is able to see the totality of time as past, present and future. This writing self is able to assess the past and read its implications on the present and future better than the surrogate writer who develops it. Therefore, he starts to live according to the commands of this writing self, or in other words, of writing itself.

These multiple writing selves get unified to (re)produce a common story whose origin is uncertain. This is a very central idea in all three novels which reminds us of Barthes' arguments in "From Work to Text" and in "The Death of the Author"

> […] to try to find the 'sources', the 'influences' of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas." (From Work to Text 160, emphasis in the original)

> Writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin […] Writing is that neutral, composite oblique space where our subject slips

> away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (The Death of the Author, 146).

To sum up, Auster pushes Barthes' arguments even further by not only blurring the identity of the author figure within his novels, but also by creating mazes where his writer-protagonists are intertwined with their works. I would argue that by creating this writing self that is indistinguishable from the text he is writing, Auster also invokes Michel Foucault's notion of the author. In his famous essay "What's an Author?" Foucault describes an author's proper name as a tool that enables classification of works written by different writers. Using the author's name, the readers are able to designate certain standards and characteristics for any written text. In this respect Foucault understands the author's name as part of a writing self which he calls "the author-function" (179). Foucault diverges from the classical notion of author because he defines the author as a social and historical product that exists only as function of the work. In other words, the author-function may be the source of a work's structure but by no means its meaning or interpretation. Thus, Foucault ends his essay with the question "What difference does it make who is speaking?" (187) Paul Auster's novels also invoke that same question in the stories they present. The 'author' of the stories within the novels is a voice which is an inseparable synthesis of the absentee and the surrogate authors.

Besides being a debate on authorship, the novels are also projects in which Auster parodies the typical patterns, characters, mysteries and solutions of the genre known as detective fiction. By parodying the highly structured nature of detective fiction and its premise that order is finally restored and there is a meaning to be found behind the apparent mystery, Auster shows the impossibility of providing a

single explanation that solves all the mysteries, and thereby imposing closure on the text. On the contrary, Auster's novels defy closure "on a signified" and they are marked by their "subversive force in respect of old classifications" such as the notion of genre, which aligns the novels with Barthes' term 'text' as opposed to 'work' (Barthes 157, 158). The most important differentiation that Barthes makes between the work and the text is that while the work is identified with singularity, the text is always marked with its plurality. While a single author, a unique meaning (a signified) and a certain structure is attributed to the work, the text "like language, [...] is structured but off-centred, without closure" (159). The plurality of the text is explained by Barthes in the following quote from "From Work to Text":

> The Text is plural. Which is not simply to say that it has several meanings, but that it accomplishes the very plural of meaning: an irreducible [...] plural. The Text is not a co-existence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination. The plural of the Text depends, that is, not on the ambiguity of its contents but on what might be called the stereographic plurality of its weave of signifiers (etymologically, the text is a tissue, a woven fabric). (159)

Here by emphasizing the etymology of the word "text" Barthes confirms that the text does not *have* different meanings but it is *weaved by* different meanings that does not yield to an interpretation; therefore to open up a text means to disperse or "disseminate" the very plural of its meaning.

The same analogy can be used in comparing Auster's novels to detective stories. The traditional detective stories partake the notion of the work with respect to their loyalty to the rules of the genre in terms of the unfolding of the mystery by the detective and the 'proper' characterization. Conversely, Auster's novels should be aligned with the idea of the text since Auster writes "anti-detective fiction" (Russell,

97) in which he challenges such rules of the genre. The surrogate writer in Auster's novels is not only the narrator but also the detective figure. That is why, by problematizing the role of the detective as a solver of mysteries, Auster at the same time nullifies the role of the author as the one who holds the key to the meaning in a book.

The (meta-) fictional worlds the novels present are places where the reader confronts the repercussions of the theories on authorship in a brilliantly woven plotline. In *The Book of Illusions*, the earliest of the three novels to be analyzed in this study, the narrator is David Zimmer, a professor of English Literature, who lives in an emotionally catatonic stage after the sudden death of his family in a plane crash. Then one day David runs into a very short piece of silent comedy by Hector Mann, a very famous actor and director who disappeared without a trace in 1929 and is now believed to be dead. Focusing on Hector's anxious twitching of his black moustache (his most important body mark) while simultaneously trying to count money, protect his beloved white tropical suit and trying to make eye-contact with a pretty secretary across the room, the comedy evokes the only genuine moment of happiness in David's life for the first time in months. At that moment he understands that he "hadn't hit bottom yet, that there was still some piece of [him] that wanted to go on living" (8). He decides to go after that instinct to live, starts to watch all the films by Hector Mann and ends up writing a book called *The Silent Life of Hector Mann.* The publication of this book becomes a turning point for David. He receives a letter from a woman called Frieda Spelling who invites him to New Mexico to meet Hector Mann in person. Unable to believe that Hector is still alive, David refuses to go but one day a strange-looking woman, Alma Grund, comes to persuade him,

threatening to use force if necessary. Half of Alma's face has a red birthmark just like the one which stigmatizes another young woman in Nathanial Hawthorne's *The Birthmark.* Alma accepts the birthmark as part of who she is after reading that story and begins using it as a test of humanity in other people. Having lived with The Spellings her entire life, Alma is the one who knows the secrets about Hector's life and writes his "real" life-story. The reader learns from Alma that Hector left Hollywood because of his tragic relationship with two women: the journalist Brigid O' Fallon and the actress Dolores Saint John. In Alma's story which we hear through David, Dolores killed Brigid who was pregnant with Hector's child. The murderess and Hector buried the woman and ran away. After this incident Hector's conscience is constantly tortured and he seeks repentance by meeting his dead lover's family under the pseudo name Henry Loesser. Ironically enough, unaware of Hector's true identity, the family tries to find out what happened to Brigid with the help of a detective, and the father trusts the family fortune on Hector in exchange for marrying his other daughter Nora who unknowingly falls in love with the murderer of her lost sister. However, Hector runs away again by leaving a letter to Nora just like he did when he broke up with Brigid. He finds retribution when he is shot by robbers in a bank where he had met his current wife Frieda and assumed the name of Hector Spelling. He resumes filmmaking after the death of their son but the films he has made are never meant to be shown. The night when David Zimmer and Hector Mann meet, Hector passes away leaving the destiny of hundreds of films in his wife's hands. Without thinking twice Frieda burns all the films produced on the ranch for years and also destroys every copy of the book about Hector that Alma has dedicated

her life to write. The book ends with a huge mystery to be solved by the reader: "Whose story has s/he been reading all along?"

Oracle Night revolves basically around the life of Sidney Orr and the stories he writes. He is the writer protagonist and the first-person narrator of the novel. Moreover he is the narrator of the stories he writes that are narrated from the eyes of an omniscient third person. The novel offers a double level of fictionality to the reader. Accepting the fictional world Sidney Orr creates as 'fiction-fiction', the reader is inclined to believe in the world Sidney lives in as 'real-fiction'. In effect, the novel erases the boundaries between fiction and reality by making fiction-fictions come true in real-fiction and also by doubling the events and the characters in the novel with those in the story-within-story. At some point there is the account of a French writer who stops writing because of "the words he'd written about an imaginary drowning had caused a real drowning [of his daughter]" (188). This writer discovers that "words could kill…could alter reality" (188). Sidney Orr experiences something similar: he writes a story about his wife Grace and their close friend John Trause and the second he finishes the story he begins to see that those events were not merely products of his imagination, but real events that had been taking place in his life.

Like many others in Auster's novels Sidney is a writer who is struggling to "come back" to life after a long stay in hospital as a result of an accident. One day Sidney buys a blue notebook from a weird Chinese guy called Chang. Along with Sidney's friend John Trause who believes in Sidney's writing and constantly encourages him to write, that blue notebook is the reason why Sidney starts writing.

The notebook has strange powers on Orr that invite him into writing which he obeys, writing page after page without much effort.

The first story Sidney writes after the accident is a story based on the Flitcraft episode of the seventh chapter of *The Maltese Falcon* by Dashiel Hammett in which the protagonist Flitcraft is nearly killed by a beam that falls from a construction site. He realizes that "the world is governed by chance. Randomness stalks us every day of our lives, and those lives can be taken from us at any moment- for no reason at all" (12). He leaves his city and his family, and goes away to start a new life of submission to that destructive power. Based on this story, Sidney writes the story of Nick Bowen, a man happy in his marriage and a wealthy editor in a New York publishing house. The narrative opens with the manuscript of the novel *Oracle Night* by Sylvia Maxwell, a popular writer in the 20s and the 30s, which is sent to Nick by Maxwell's granddaughter Rosa Leightman. Nick Bowen falls in love with Rosa Leightman who is by and large a double of Sidney's charming wife Grace. A few days later after this meeting, one evening a gargoyle falls down from a construction site and nearly kills Nick Bowen just like in the Flitcraft episode. Nick takes this incident as a warning about the brevity and absurdity of life and wishes to seize every moment of it and leaves for Kansas City. After Nick leaves, his wife Eva thinks that he has left with Rosa and traces after Nick to bring him back. In Kansas City Nick works in an atomic bomb shelter owned by the taxi- driver Ed, who collects and classifies phone books all over the world in order to keep record of as many people in the world as he can. Nick gets stuck in the atomic bomb shelter which they use as "The Bureau of Historical Preservation" when Ed dies in an accident and the only key that can open the door is lost with him. Unable to save his

protagonist Nick from the little room buried in the underground, Sidney suffers from a writer's block.

The mixture of fiction and reality is nearly in every line of the narrative; however where it reaches the climax is the end when Sidney writes his second important piece. When Sidney Orr writes the part of his story "Oracle Night" where he puts Nick Bowen in an atomic bomb shelter and locks the door from the outside, everything in his own life begins to change. His financial situation gets worse and in order to make money he even accepts John Trause's offers to edit a story called "The Empire of Bones" written by Trause thirty years ago and publish it under his name. However, he loses the only copy that Trause trusts on his hands in a crowded metro.

At the end, Sidney's writer's block opens only when he decides to write about in the blue notebook what he feels to be the reality between his wife, John Trause and his addictive son Jacob. John was a very close friend of Grace's parents and was a like a second father to Grace. Nevertheless, when Grace grows up and John becomes a widow they fell for each other. Trause's son Jacob -a teenager back then- gets angry with this relationship and his rage does not abide even after Grace and Sidney get married. As he writes, Sidney begins to interpret every detail as to how he and Grace meet and get married through the lens of this old relationship between Grace and John. Furthermore, he becomes more and more assured that John was the person who actually talked Grace into marrying him in order not to leave her as a young widow when he is gone. But at the end of the story he says "I don't know if it's fact or fiction, but in the end I don't care. As long as Grace wants me, the past is of no importance" (187). After he writes these words he tears the blue notebook into pieces. Strangely, after Sidney writes the 'real' story between Grace and John and in

this way gives structure to many thoughts he was trying to ward off, John suffers from a heart attack and dies at the moment where the reader recalls his words "Thoughts are real…words are real. Everything human is real, and sometimes we know things before they happen, even if we aren't aware of it. We live in the present, but the future is inside us at every moment" (189).

Invisible (2009) is Auster's fifteenth novel which compromises many Austerian themes. The critic Jeff Turrentine defines it as "the four-way intersection of memory, language, fate and self-discovery" (1). But the novel is also about other questions Auster likes revisiting frequently: writing and authorship, the role of little contingent events on the course of lives and the slippery line between subjective and objective reality. The novel opens with the protagonist Adam Walker talking about the events that happened in Manhattan in 1967 where he met a visiting professor at Columbia University, Rudolf Born, and his girlfriend Margot. Adam is not a writer yet, but he dreams of becoming one; he writes poetry and also translates French poetry. To Adam's surprise Born comes up with a job offer for Adam. He asks Adam to edit a literary magazine that would be financed by Born. Young and inexperienced, Adam believes that Born is well-intentioned and accepts his offer.

Born is an enigmatic man: he is a professor of International Affairs but he also has political connections; he works for the intelligence. Although Born has a bad temper and acts contradictorily, Adam puts up with him in order not to miss the job opportunity he offers. But the events change color when Born stabs a black man to death on a street when the latter threatens them with a gun and tries to take Born's money. Born blackmails Adam with death if he speaks about the event and before Adam pulls himself together to take action against him, Born flees to Paris. This

event is to stay as a persistent wound in Adam's conscience and his search for justice shapes his whole life.

In the second part of the story the reader learns that the previous chapter was in fact a small part of a memoir written by Adam in the first person and he is now about to die from leukemia. In the second chapter the first person narrative shifts from the I of Adam to that of his classmate James Freeman - or Jim as he is often called in the novel- who is now a very famous writer. Adam asks for Jim's help to edit the memoir. Jim accepts and advises Adam to write about himself in the third person which would ease his burden and enable him to write in a more relaxed mode. Adam takes his advice and talks about his young brother Andy whom the family lost when he was seven, his sexual experiments with his sister Gwyn when they were children and the summer of love they spent just before Adam went to Paris in 1967, both to study literature and to face Born. Before the two friends can get together again, Adam dies leaving the fate of the project in his friend's hands. Adam's quest for justice concerning Born and his victim is followed by Jim's quest for truth, as he demands to know whether Adam's memories about Rudolf, Margot and his sister are dependable or not.

It is necessary to know these events and characters well in order to understand in what ways Paul Auster modifies the theories on authorship and parody the detective stories. Thus, the present introductory chapter has focused on the arguments of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault with respect to the concept of the author as portrayed in the three novels and also offered plotlines of the novels.

Chapter Two will elaborate on theories on authorship, in particular relation with the absentee and the surrogate authors and their unified writing selves; as well as concepts like death and rebirth in and through writing.

Chapter Three will discuss Paul Auster's specific use of the detective fiction genre for purposes of parody. Comparing the traditional rules and characters of the detective fiction genre with their subverted counterparts in Paul Auster's anti-detective fiction, the chapter posits that Auster makes use of the rigid rules of the genre to create a certain detective-author whose function is nullified at the end of each novel. As a result, the detective becomes another tool for Auster to declare the death of the author and the loss of the ultimate meaning in a literary text.

Chapter Four will present the final remarks and conclude the thesis.

CHAPTER 2

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WRITING AND DEATH: PAUL AUSTER'S *ABSENTEE* AND *SURROGATE* AUTHORS

Paul Auster's novels open with the presentation of a character trying to cope with a catastrophe in his/her life but is saved by the act of writing. The narrator in each novel is either in his death-bed but breaking his back to write the story he feels compelled to finish at all costs just like Adam Walker in *Invisible*, or emotionally ruined and about to commit suicide but his life is saved and his psychology cured by writing as in the case of David Zimmer in *The Book of Illusions*, or he "fails to die", contrary to predictions and writes in order to be rehabilitated like Sidney Orr in *Oracle Night.*

What these characters write and tell is generally about the life or the works of a dead author; or it is an autobiography written in the third person in the case of Adam Walker. Though so much related to death and loss, Auster's novels are by no means pessimistic. No book gets lost forever, and there is always hope for the writers to make amends with life. The text being written not only helps the surrogate writers to come back to life metaphorically, but it also revives the forgotten works and fading memories of the authors they write about. In other words the novels present triangular relationships in which a writer gives his/her life for the sake of his work which in turn re-animates another writer, and in some cases its creator as well.

The first example of these triangular relationships is the one between David Zimmer, Hector Mann and Zimmer's book called *The Silent World of Hector Mann*

in *The Book of Illusions*. The first thing the novel leads the reader to believe is that for the society and time Hector Mann lived in, he was a dead man. The novel opens with the sentence "everyone thought that he was dead" and as we learn from Zimmer "By 1932 or 1933, Hector belonged to an extinct universe, and if there were any traces of him left, it was only as a footnote in some obscure book that no one bothered to read anymore" (*The Book of Illusions* 2). The reader is convinced by detailed criticism about Hector's movies in Chapter 2 *The of Book of Illusions*[1] and later by Alma Grund's comments about it that *Silent World of Hector Mann* is "an extra-ordinary book…the definitive work" on Hector's movies (*The Book of Illusions* 90). By watching and studying each and every movie by Hector, Zimmer writes the most accomplished book about Hector's work no matter how much he neglects to pay attention to his sudden disappearance from the face of the earth without trace. Nevertheless, the book about Hector is a declaration of his talent, a reaffirmation of his presence in the realm of visual arts. Also, it is the initiator of Hector's contact with the world he had disappeared from years ago. As David Zimmer understands at the end of the novel, it was not Frieda but Hector who wanted to get in touch with Zimmer after reading *The Silent World of Hector Mann*. Thus, the mail Hector sends to David Zimmer functions as a confirmation of his biological existence, as well.

But it is not only Hector whom *The Silent World of Hector Mann* helps for reconciling with the world. The reader learns from David Zimmer that he is also like a dead man or a man on a fine line between life and death after the plane crash in which he loses his wife and two sons. David totally isolates himself from the outside

[1] Reading the detailed criticism on Hector's work in the second chapter of *The Book of Illusions*, I would argue that this part actually comes from David Zimmer's book *The Silent World of Hector Mann.* However, no such distinction is done by Paul Auster, not for any of the similar cases in all three novels. The voices and the writings of all the authors inseperably mingle with each other.

world; he even refrains from talking to himself by refusing to stay sober and to remember what has happened. David says:

> I stayed on in the house and continued to sink. By late September or early October, I was knocking off more than half a bottle of whiskey every night. It kept me from feeling too much, but at the same time it deprived me of any sense of the future, and when a man has nothing to look forward to, *he might as well be dead.* (*The Book of Illusions* 7-8, emphasis added)

These two cases clearly show that the book on Hector has a stronger place vis-à-vis both Hector and David and has drastic influence on their lives. David is nobody but a man who spends his entire year in a tiny room, furnished only by a table, a chair and a mattress to write the book. His existence relies on writing since, both metaphorically and literally, he comes back life after the book. He is literally brought back to life because after his family dies in the accident David suffers from such a deep pain that might eventually cause him to commit suicide. As a man without a sense of future, he tries at least to keep a part of their material existence through his body by performing the jobs that his sons and beloved wife used to do. He plays with his sons' toys, wears his wife's clothes, and uses her perfume to keep her fragrance in the air. Writing about Hector causes David to leave that house which was about to be the grave of David.

The theme of writing at the moment of death is not limited to *The Book of Illusions*. In *Oracle Night* Sidney Orr's physical and financial collapse after a car accident can be seen as a counterpart to Zimmer's emotional collapse after the plane crash. The opening of the novel echoes the death of the author-protagonist(s) of *The Book of Illusions*, especially in terms of the fallacy that "everyone thought that he was dead" (ibid.,1). The following quote clearly exemplifies this parallelism:

> I had been sick for a while. When the dead came for me to leave the hospital, I barely knew how to walk anymore, could barely remember who I was supposed to be…*They had given me up for dead*, and now that I had confounded their predictions and *failed to die*, what choice did I have but to live *as though* a future life were waiting for me? (*Oracle Night* 1, emphasis added)

Nick Bowen, the writer- protagonist of the story Sidney writes, also "fails to die" and in many respects Nick Bowen functions as the reincarnation of Sidney in the story within *Oracle Night*. As Sidney quotes from Dashiel Hammett- the writer of the original story upon which he bases his version- "He [here 'he' refers to Flitcraft, the protagonist of Hammett's story] felt like somebody had taken the lid off life and let him look at the works" (*Oracle Night* 11). Like Flitcraft, Nick also "realizes that the world isn't the sane and orderly place he thought it was" but "is governed by chance" and "he has no choice but to submit to this destructive power, to smash his life through some meaningless, wholly arbitrary act of *self-negation*" (*Oracle Night* 11-12, emphasis added). His escape from death is a matter of seconds and those seconds determine the rest of his life which he chooses to lead quite differently than before. Similarly after the falling gargoyle which stays a second short of smashing his brains off and sways his briefcase away Nick understands that "The stone meant to kill him. He left his apartment tonight for no reason than to run into that stone, and if he's managed to escape with his life, it can only mean that a new life has been given to him- that his old life is finished, that every moment of his past now belongs to someone else" (ibid., 22).

Until now, it has been demonstrated that in *The Book of Illusions* and *Oracle Night* a writer can start his life as a writer only if he gives up his previous mode of existence. Where does Invisible stand in this paradigm? In the case of Adam Walker death is an element of threat to the completion of his story. Unlike Sidney Orr or

Nick Bowen Adam is not given a second-chance in which he can keep on writing. In *Invisible* death is not something related to the past. Whereas David in *The Book of Illusions* and Sidney Orr in *Oracle Night* overcome death by writing and leave it in the past, with the growing influence on Adam's pen, death is inescapably present here and now in *Invisible*. The idea of writing's reviving power is common in all the novels; but still there is an important distinction between the earlier two novels and *Invisible*. Whereas writing about another writer- the absentee author- enables a metaphorical rebirth for David Zimmer and Sidney Orr, Adam Walker has to yield death, at least materially, while writing his autobiography. That is why, Adam Walker is the absentee author who leaves the destiny of his work into hands of his old friend Jim who consequently becomes the surrogate writer of the novel.

Adam leaves parts of his autobiographical book to his old friend Jim to edit and publish or just throw away on his call. Before Adam dies he wishes two things from his daughter. First he wants her to delete the file *1967* from his computer. This is the file which contains the rough drafts of his autobiography. Second, he asks her to give the envelope containing the hard copies of the chapters to Jim when he arrives for the dinner they arranged. With these two wishes he ensures that Jim is the only person to make a decision about the survival of Adam's autobiography.

Death's influence on Adam's efforts to complete the autobiography is of paramount importance. How much his illness affects Adam is apparent from the letter he leaves to Jim. The sentences reveal how he toiled to fight against death to take whatever he might hold back from the darkness of death before he will have to yield to that destructive power.

> […]As for the pages in this envelope, you will see that they are the outline for the third part. Written in great haste—telegraphic style— but

> working quickly helped bring back memories, a deluge of memories, and now that the outline is finished, I don't know if I have it in me to work it up into a proper piece of prose. I feel exhausted, frightened, perhaps a little deranged […]So weak, so little left, time running out. I will be robbed of my old age. Life is shit, I know, but the only thing I want is more life, more years on this godforsaken earth. As for the enclosed pages, do with them what you will. (*Invisible* 165)

When Jim reads those lines from Adam's letter, he has already gone- a scene reminiscent of David Zimmer's watching Hector's movies on the Blue Ranch and also his reading of Chateaubriand's *Memoirs of a Dead Man* in *The Book of Illusions*. Jim says:

> Just hours before, Rebecca had jolted me with the news that Walker was dead, and now he was talking to me again, a dead man talking to me, and I felt that as long as the words of that letter were still before my eyes, it would be as if he had been resurrected, as if he had been brought back to life in the words he had written to me. (*Invisible* 165)

Besides marking how Auster relates writing to life and death all these writer-characters and their relationships to each other, this quote also reveal the blurred lines between the fictional author's self and the selves of his characters within a radical concept of time. Adam Walker writes about himself based on his memories and turns into a fictional character that is immortal. Interestingly, what this fictional Adam does and says in the story changes the idea of the real Adam as his friends and family knew him. For example, Adam makes confessions about his incest relationship with his sister Gwyn and offers alternative explanations for the past in the autobiographical novel *1967.* At the same time the autobiography interferes with the future. Adam's sister Gwyn feels obliged to deny such a relationship but she still wants the book to be edited and published by Jim on the condition that all the real names are replaced with the pseudonyms. Thus, the moment Jim declares that all the names and places are replaced with the fictional ones, all the characters including

Adam, Gywn, Margot, and Jim seizes to exist anymore as the reader knows them. This example from *Invisible* reflects the idea that it is not the author that controls the direction of the book and its implications on reality and it can be associated with Barthes' notion of "the modern scriptor" in his "The Death of the Author" (148). Barthes holds that the modern scriptor relates to his writing in a different mode of "temporality" than "the Author" (ibid.). Barthes goes on to explain:

> The author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into *before* and *after*. The Author is thought to *nourish* the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same antecedence to his work as a father to his child. In complete contrast, the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*. (148, emphasis in the original)

Moving one step further from the modern scriptor who is born simultaneously with the text, Auster's writer protagonists have selves that not only shape the texts they write but also become unified with the characters they set out to create. In effect, the narrators of the novels appear as re-incarnation of the author characters, one of their many selves, one that is able to see the past and the future in the present of writing.

This theme can also be analyzed through the lens of Foucault's argument about the plurality of self in "discourses" which he puts forward in "What is an Author?" He argues that the author's self is not a unique 'I'; on the contrary, it is disseminated into many selves throughout the text. "[Author-function] does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects- positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals" (Foucault 182). Foucault asserts that the author's proper name and the meaning

associated with it is a part of "author-construction" and convinces his reader that it does not in fact make any difference who actually speaks us through a book (Foucault 180). Paul Auster's novels reflect this argument by offering different names that are possible authors of the same book but it is not clear either which part or which sentences belong to which particular author. At the end of all three novels the question "Which one from these different names does refer to the real author?" is answered by another question: "What difference does it make who is speaking?"(Foucault 187)

The unified writer selves of the stories are created thanks to two important tools. Firstly, the writer-protagonists create their stories in similar places which have connotations to death and infinity or they write almost in the same rooms that only serve to the act of writing. Secondly, there are double characters in the novels which eradicates the differences between the "real-fiction" (the world of the novel), the "fiction-fiction" (The world of the stories within the novels).

By presenting characters that write from similar places Paul Auster blurs the selves of his writer-protagonists in the stories written within the novels. In other words, Auster uses the space of writing as a tool for accentuating the unification of his writer protagonists with the characters they create or write about. In *The Book of Illusions* Chateaubriand, Hector Mann and Alma Grund represent the idea of writing beyond grave. David Zimmer "spends every waking moment with" Chateaubriand and Hector whom he announces to be equally dead. "No one's been with Hector Mann since 1929. He's dead. As dead as Chateaubriand" (55). Moreover, the title of the book David Zimmer is asked to translate is *Memoires d'outre-tombe* which he translates as *Memoirs of a Dead Man.* Zimmer claims that "The important thing is

that it makes sense. It took Chateaubriand thirty-five years to write the book, and he didn't want it to be published until fifty years after his death. It's literally written in the voice of a dead man"(53). Chateaubriand himself testifies to Zimmer's argument of the dead voice in the introductory lines of his memoirs by asserting that the voice in which the book was written cannot be limited to a single period of his life. Conversely, it is a language that has a holistic view of his life from his babyhood to his maturity and old age.

> The changing forms of my life are thus intermingled with one another [...] My cradle recalls something of my tomb, my tomb something of my cradle, my sufferings become pleasures, my pleasures sufferings; and, now that I have completed the perusal of these Memoirs, I am no longer certain if they are the product of a youthful mind or a head gray with age." (*The Book of Illusions* 57)

So, he seems to recognize different selves within himself and his understanding of the space and temporality shifts. Time becomes a straight line on which the writer self can move back and forth and experience the past and the future as well as the present.

In a similar vein, the movies Hector Mann produces on The Blue Ranch can be taken as art coming from the land of death. The color blue is a significant element of Auster's novels that symbolizes infinity and prolific artistic creation. Just like the blue notebook that encourages and enables Sidney Orr in *Oracle Night* to write incessantly, in *The Book of Illusions* The Blue Ranch function as the place where Hector can make films without any restrictions on his art. Besides the color blue, the name of the region, Tierra del Sueño, is worthy of consideration here. Sueño in Spanish means "sleep", thus the phrase can be translated as "land of sleep or land of slumber" (http://www.spanishdict.com). In effect, the place can be read as a sort of

grave and the second life Hector leads under the pseudonym Henry Spelling as after-life dedicated to artistic creation only for its own sake. To conclude, *The Memoirs* and the movies are products of a state of being who paradoxically has to resign from his work in order to exist. It is only possible for Hector and Chateaubriand to 'live' when they transcend their self and write themselves from the eyes of another self that is able to see the totality of time as past, present and future.

Lastly, both of them exemplify the Austerian writer which never claims full authorship to his/her work. Refusing to be the owner and the origin of their work, Hector and Chateaubriand leave the destiny of their works into someone else's hands. Just like they do not try to be the ultimate source to which their work refers, they also refuse to control the direction towards which their works are headed. Both Hector and Chateaubriand leave the decision to destroy or publish a huge body of work to their wives. Frieda Spelling is no less indispensible than Hector himself for the movies. Towards the end of the book the reader learns from Alma that "they [Hector and Frieda] made a pact in 1939 to produce films that would never be shown to the public, and they had both embraced the idea that the work they did together should ultimately be destroyed" (240). Auster places Frieda even above Hector by juxtaposing their motives in making the films. For Hector they were "a form of penance, an acknowledgment that his role in the accidental murder of Brigid O' Fallon was a sin that could never be pardoned…, and in the tangled, self torturing logic of his decision, Hector had continued to pay off his debts to a God he refused to believe in" (241). However, the calamities Hector goes through (the bullet that tore his chest or his son Teddy's death) cannot ease his conscience. The ultimate form of self-punishment is the incessant act of film-making that goes to ashes at the end.

“Make films, yes. Pour every ounce of your talents and energies into making them. Make them as if your life depended on it, and then, once your life is over, see to it that they are destroyed. You are forbidden to leave any traces behind you” (241). But Hector was not alone in that. Actually it was Frieda who enabled the production of films. “Frieda was his accomplice, his staunchest defender…Not only did she talk Hector into making films again (threatening to leave him if he didn’t), but it was her money that financed the operation. She sewed costumes, drew storyboards, cut films, designed sets” (ibid.) If it was guiltiness that pushed Hector to destroy the films, how can Frieda’s passion to create and then, with even greater enthusiasm, to burn those films be explained? Zimmer realizes that “Frieda was innocent, and yet she accepted Hector’s terms, *putting aside her own ambitions to devote herself to the creation of work whose central aim was nothingness”* (ibid. emphasis added).”

One may assert that beyond helping Hector and thereby sharing his authorship over the movies, Frieda moves even further in her artistic endeavors by developing her own “aesthetic principle” which requires “a unified process of creation and destruction”(242). David’s gaze was overwhelming for Frieda because he was a threat against her diligent work. David’ presence “tainted the purity of the moment. The films were supposed to die a virgin death, unseen by anyone from the outside world” (ibid.) Frieda’s aim in making the films or what she call the artistic work is not making the films, the work “was to make something in order to destroy it” (ibid.) It is impossible to refute that Hector and Frieda are co-creators regardless of the fact that Hector is the prominent figure. Thus, it can be concluded that by accentuating the difference in their motives Auster reverses the authorial hierarchy between Hector and Frieda.

Oracle Night also offers similar paradigms between the three different author figures. The protagonist Sidney Orr's writing trials and his relation to Nick Bowen, the writer-character he creates in his story, reflect the idea of leaving the destiny of a work in the hands of a surrogate author figure and the plurality of the authorial self. In the novel the protagonist Sidney Orr writes in order to come back to the "swing of things" after a fatal accident. However, from the first pages onwards Sidney is presented more as an 'authorling' than an author and his capability as a writer is constantly belittled by various ways. Orr's writing goes no further than a delicate shadow that is developed by the enigmatic powers of the blue notebook, or his friend John Trause. The reason why it is a shadow is that Orr never writes an original story; on the contrary whatever he writes in the blue notebook is either built upon stories that are written before or they are subjective accounts of what has happened in 'real' life. Sidney's writing also reflects Barthes definition of the text as a "multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash…a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture ("The Death of the Author" 149). To speak in Barthes' terms, texts do not have authors as works do; that's why Sidney Orr cannot be claimed to be the author of any piece he sets out to write.

There are three pieces that are written by Sidney Orr and all three exemplify ideas Auster plays with regarding the question of authorship. Is originality an indispensible attribute for someone to be defined as an author? If a text is rewritten by another writer which writer should be called as the real author? The first story Orr writes is about Nick Bowen and it is like a palimpsest that retells the story of Flitcraft in Dashiel Hammett's *Maltese Falcon*. John Trause, the renowned author who also

happens to be a family friend, finds its premise "terrific" and suggests Sidney Orr to "turn it into something good" (10). Sidney agrees to "take up the challenge of fleshing out the story" (12) because he also finds the premise good on the grounds that "we have all imagined letting go of our lives…at one moment or another we have all wanted to be someone else" (ibid.). Fascinated with the idea of rebirth this premise suggests, Sidney finds his new life by the help of the character he creates. When Sidney opens his blue notebook to write in something interesting happens: once the main argument is there the rest of the story runs almost spontaneously. "The words came quickly, smoothly, without seeming to demand much effort. I found that surprising, but as long as I kept my hand moving from left to right, the next word always seemed to be there, waiting to come out of the pen" (ibid.).

Thanks to Sidney's willing pen Flitcraft, a minor figure in Hammett's ouvre, reincarnates into Nick Bowen. Thus the reader finds the echo of the paradigm in *The Book of Illusions* in which a vanishing work is revived by another writer. But *Oracle Night* does something different which reflects Auster's efforts to erase the boundaries between the author and text, too. Although the other two novels there are also meta-fictional, in *Oracle Night* he adds yet another level, a second-degree meta-fiction, by writing about an author-protagonist who in his turn also creates another author-protagonist in the story within the story. Therefore in this novel we find even more doubles that reflect the unification of writing selves.

Oracle Night has a further importance because it provides various examples of Auster's second tool for unifying different writing selves, namely the use of doubles. The story Sidney makes Nick Bowen create shows numerous parallelisms between the writer and the characters he writes about. While reading the novel, the reader is

often perplexed by complexity of the story which is a mosaic of different motives from the lives of both the person who writes and the people who are written about. That being the case, it becomes even more challenging to draw a line between the writer and the text. Actually, in *Oracle Night* one can never be sure about who the real author is and whose story is being told because of that mixture.

Firstly, Sidney is a middle-aged editor; a man deeply in love with his wife. Also he is a man of books and has close friendship with a renowned author, John Trause, whom he admires deeply. His ideal looking life is reshaped by an accident and very first thing he does in this real life is to write a story based on a minor figure in Dashiel Hammett's detective stories. Nick Bowen is a simultaneously developed character as soon as he starts writing; but once the similarities between Sidney's and Bowen's are discovered it is not difficult to realize that Bowen is a substitute for Sidney Orr. Nick Bowen helps Sidney Orr to discover things that are hidden in his sub-conscious mind. Even Sidney's surname Orr -a pun on the connector word "or"- suggests that Nick and Sidney are interchangeable.

Sidney describes Nick Bowen as a man "in his mid-thirties, [who] works as an editor at a large New York publishing house, and is married to a woman named Eva. Following the example of Hammett's prototype, he is necessarily good at his job, admired by his colleagues, financially secure, happy in his marriage, and so on" (13). Like Sidney the course of his life changes for good as a result of an accident. Again similar to Sidney who receives the idea of his novel from a mediator, John Trause, at the beginning of the story within story within story, Nick Bowen also receives a book and takes it on to bring it back to light from shadows.

> As the story opens, the manuscript of a novel has arrived on Bowen's desk. A short work bearing the suggestive title of *Oracle Night*, it was

> supposedly written by Sylvia Maxwell, a popular novelist [one of Nick's favorites] from the twenties and thirties who died nearly two decades ago. According to the agent who sent it in, this lost book was composed in 1927, the year Maxwell ran off to France with an Englishman named Jeremy Scott." (13)

The novel passes from Sylvia Maxwell to Jeremy Scott and eventually to Sylvia's granddaughter Rosa Leightman. "It was through her that the book was given to the agent—with explicit instructions that it be sent to Nick Bowen first, before anyone else had a chance to read it" (ibid.)

Rosa Leightman is another proof that Sidney creates his writing character Nick's life upon his own. In the footnote to the part where Rosa and Nick meet for the first time Sidney informs the reader that he is taking his wife as a model on which he creates Rosa. Being an editor, Sidney meets his wife Grace in a publishing house, falls in love at first sight. So, he makes Nick Bowen an editor just like himself and writes an exactly similar setting for Nick and Rosa Leightman to meet. However, it is not simply this mechanic aspect that makes the similarity between Rosa and Grace a mirror for the resemblance between Nick and Sidney. The way Nick feels about Rosa when he first sees her is described with almost the same words that Sidney uses to tell how he felt when he saw Grace. Reading two accounts successively leaves such a similar impression that they become identical and the people who utter them, namely Sidney Orr and Nick Bowen, become almost interchangeable- a fact also spoken out by Sidney when he describes the first moment Nick sees Rosa Leightman.

> She is dressed in simplest clothes, has almost no makeup on, wears her hair in a short unfashionable cut, and yet her face is so lovely, Nick finds, so achingly young and unguarded, so much […] an emblem of hope and uncoiled human energy, that he momentarily stops breathing. That is precisely what happened to me the first time I saw Grace- the blow to the brain that left me paralyzed, unable to draw my next breath—so it wasn't difficult for me to transpose those feelings onto Nick Bowen […] To make matters even simpler, I decided to give Grace's body to Rosa

> Leightman—even down to her smallest, most idiosyncratic features…(14)

When the events and the character in both writers' lives are taken into consideration, it becomes even more obvious that Nick Bowen is a prerequisite for Sidney to start writing. More than just a persona in a story, Bowen is Sidney's writing self, a tool he uses not only to unleash his abilities as a writer but also to project his unconscious feelings about his wife Grace and his friend John Trause and his wishes on explaining the mystery surrounding his marriage. In this respect, Nick Bowen and Sidney Orr's marriage and betrayal stories give food for thought. Nick Bowen is married to a woman called Eva for five years and as Sidney informs "after five years of relative stability and contentment with Eva, his marriage has come to a standstill (13). Eventually Bowen falls in love with Rosa Leightman and betrays to his wife Eva. The same scheme is found in Sidney's escapade with a prostitute called African princess. No matter how hard Sidney tries to ignore the truth, he unconsciously starts taking revenge on his wife by both his affair in Chang's place with the Princess and also by creating Bowen who, unlike Sidney, succeeds in leaving the routines of the life he was obliged to repeat day and night.

Although Sidney sets out to write Nick as an unoriginal character created on a model and the story as a palimpsest over *Maltese Falcon*, Nick and his story prove to have apocalyptic powers revealing Sidney's inner world. Nick is locked in a bomb shelter and is left to his slow destruction. Surprisingly, as long as Nick is stuck in that little room Sidney cannot write a word; in other words, he goes through a writer's block. The only way out of the dead-end is to confess what is already there, to unleash the unconscious. Considering all parallelism between Nick and Sidney, one could argue that Sidney indeed opens up his unconscious by writing the piece

that contains the story of his life including all the explanations to the questions that preoccupy him. Only after destroying the material existence of the story by tearing off the enigmatic blue notebook, he reconciles with his wife, with the fact that she betrayed him and can start living his life as truly real as it might be.

Auster's fictional authors are by no means the origin of their books; they are not keys for opening up the ultimate meaning in their stories. By presenting novels that are made out of interwoven stories by different writers Auster's work reflects Barthes argument that "the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas" ("From Work to Text" 160). In his novels Auster propagates his belief in the necessity that an author has to resign from the book he writes in order to born as a writer. However, at this point a contradiction arises because while Auster repeatedly plays with the idea of authorial effacement in the stories that he makes his fictional authors tell, he prefers basing his novels on the events, memories and people from his own life. What might be Auster's intention? Does he efface the fictional authors in order to accentuate that he is the 'real' author of the whole novel with all the minor stories it nests? Such a strategy would cause a huge discrepancy between what he asserts in all his novels and what he actually does by using recurrent autobiographical references. But is it really so? Providing an alternative explanation for the presence of the author's real identity in his novels, it can be proved that Paul Auster disavows his authorial self by presenting himself as a fictional being within the story.

Especially after the publication of such novels as *Invention of Solitude*-which is a half fictional half real account of Auster's relationship with his father, and *The New*

York Trilogy which contains a large deal of references to Auster's life not to mention the character named Paul Auster, literary studies about Auster mainly focused on the relationship between the author's life and his work. The overt parallelism between the events and people in Auster's life and his work make it not surprising that there is a substantial amount of articles and theses that try to develop different arguments about the relationship between the two. One of these critics, Dennis Barone, tells in his article "Paul Auster and the Postmodern American Novel" that

> Auster's fiction often draws on autobiographical material, but […] it does so in a very complex way. One reads Auster's fiction and the general outline of his life becomes clear. Born in 1947 in Newark, New Jersey, he attended Columbia University in New York, traveled and lived in France, and married writer Lydia Davis, whom he later divorced. He received an inheritance after the death of his father and married writer Siri Hustvedt, events that he credits with having rescued him […] These facts of Auster's life are but autobiographical bones; the author in some sense remains an enigmatic leviathan for the reader. (1-2)

The author himself is aware the allusions in the novels to his life. In an interview with Larry McCaffery and Sinda Gregory, Auster explains this relationship in this way:

> PA: Essentially, I'm a very intuitive writer, which makes it difficult for me to talk about my work in any coherent way. There's no question that my books are full of references to my own life, but more often than not, I don't become aware of these references until after the fact. *Moon Palace* is a good case in point. It sounds more like an autobiography than any of my other novels, but the truth is that it's probably the least autobiographical novel I've ever written. Still, there are a number of private allusions buried in the story, but it was only after the book was finished that I began to see them. (72, 73)

It would of course be an oversimplification to read the novels from a limited perspective of author's life story. Although the novels revolve around similar themes such as chance, solitude, identity, war and disappearance, they are too multi-faceted

to reduce into one story based on the life of its creator. Auster himself defies the idea that all his novels are actually one and the same in the interview with McCaffery and Gregory:

> PA: I don't mean to imply that my books are nothing but an outpouring of my unconscious. There's art involved as well, and effort, and a very precise sense of the kinds of feelings I am trying to convey. To say that "all my books are the same book" is probably too simple. What I mean is that all my books are connected by their common source, by the preoccupations they share. But each book belongs to its central character: Quinn, Blue, the narrator of *The Locked Room,* Anna Blume, Fogg, Nashe. Each one of these people thinks differently, speaks differently, writes differently from all the others. But each one is also a part of myself-which probably goes without saying. If all these books were put together in one volume, they would form the book of my life so far, a multi faceted picture of who I am. (53-54)

In *Post Modernist Fiction* Brian Mc Hale approaches this theme of the author's presence in the story he writes from a thought-provoking perspective. Mc Hale analyzes the ways writers disturb the fictional reality by their intrusion into the fictional world. He focuses on *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles to describe the phenomenon which he calls "frame-breaking" (197). In the novel narrator declares "This story I am telling is all imagination. These characters I create never existed outside of my own mind" (cited in McHale 197). McHale notices that

> […] with this gesture, the illusory reality of the fictional world is destroyed, and in its place we are offered, if not *the* real world, at least *a* real world […] The author occupies an ontological level superior to his world; by breaking the frame around his world, the author foregrounds his own superior reality. (197)

However "frame-breaking" yields much unexpected consequences. Let alone destroying the fictional reality, it enhances that world by being a part of it.

> Intended to establish an absolute level of reality, it paradoxically *relativizes* reality; intended to provide an ontologically stable foothold, it

> only destabilizes ontology further. For the metafictional gesture of sacrificing an illusory reality to a higher, "realer" reality, that of the author, sets a precedent. Why should this gesture not be *repeatable*? What prevents the author's reality to be shattered? Nothing whatsoever, and so the absolute reality of the author becomes just another level of fiction, and so the *real* world retreats to a further remove. Or to put it differently, to reveal the author's position within the ontological structure is only to introduce the author *into the fiction;* far from abolishing the frame , this gesture merely *widens* it to include the author as a fictional character. (197, emphasis in the original)

If the author's voice enters the text as an ontological challenge that may cut both ways, why does not his picturing himself as a man locking himself in a room, sitting at a desk and holding a pen to write a story function the same way?

> Does not the mere introduction of the scene of writing into a text involve a degree, perhaps a very large degree, of fictionalization? [...] 'Someone sitting there writing the page' is always […] only a fictional reconstruction after all. And this reconstruction of the act of writing depends upon what has been written-on the text that we read. In this sense, the writing itself is 'more real' than the act of writing… (McHale, 198)

Depending on Auster's *New York Trilogy* and the novels discussed in this study one can claim that Auster uses both ways of "frame -breaking "quite boldly. In his first novel The *City of Glass* Auster ostensibly breaks the frame by the image of a writer Paul Auster who is mistaken for a detective. Having read this novel in comparison with the novelist's later fiction one is confirmed that Auster uses the technique of frame-breaking as a supportive tool for reflecting his fascination with stories-within-stories and complicates author-reader-narrator-text relationships.

In *The New York Trilogy* Auster uses "frame-breaking" in the most apparent ways. But he by no means gives up entering into his novels as a masked character. Despite the absence of a character named Paul Auster, the supposed detective who turns out to be a writer in *City of Glass*, the image of writing as McHale also argues,

becomes propaganda of his presence. Auster enters his novels just like himself, with the same image of writing at his desk. In all three novels he chooses writer character(s) to represent him under different names: in *The Book of Illusions* David Zimmer is the most striking figure as an author who lives within the borders of his study. Actually the word *zimmer* in German means "room" and I would argue that his name also suggests David Zimmer's strong tie with the place he writes to the point of obsession and his absolute dedication to his work. This argument can be verified with the fact that in every instance Zimmer writes he is in *the locked room* furnished only by a desk, chair and bed and he is completely isolated from the rest of world. He never goes out; he studies with a tremendous speed with little sleep and rest as if ultimate reason for his presence on earth is to finish the piece he is writing. Similarly, in *Oracle Night* all the fictional writers has a little room and a desk for writing, a place called "a sacred sanctuary" by Sidney Orr.

Just like the space of writing, the equipment of writing is also very important for both Paul Auster and his writing protagonists. The adventure of writing starts for Sidney Orr when he finds the blue notebook made in Portugal which almost enchants Orr into writing in it. Then we learn that John Trause, the older writer in the novel, also writes in a blue notebook made in Portugal. "Auster, too, writes in such a spiral bound notebook" notices Dennis Barone and asks "So what do these colors, these notebooks, these intertextual relationships mean?" Leaving this question open, Barone just says that "trying to pinpoint the red notebook down is even more difficult than claiming once and for all that Hawthorne's scarlet letter "A" is this or that" (2).

One last example of many other autobiographical elements that are recurrent in *The Book of Illusions* and *Oracle Night* can also be cited as follows. David Zimmer can dedicate himself to writing after he receives a large deal of money from the insurance after he is bereft of his family in the plane crash. Similarly, Sidney Orr is saved from his financial problems and has an opportunity to follow his artistic endeavors when John Trause leaves all his inheritance to Sidney before he dies.

Turning our attention to *Invisible*, the novel is widely believed to include numerous autobiographical accounts of Auster's youth. In fact, it would not be too much to claim that the protagonist Adam Walker is created in the image of Paul Auster. Like Auster he is an ambitious student at Columbia University, has strong interest in Provençal and French poetry which he also likes to translate amateurishly. At one point in his youth he goes to Paris with a belief that he can educate himself better in Europe. These are the points that directly testify Adam Walker as young and confused Auster at the start of his literary career. However, more than these factual parallelisms one should focus on the narrative structure in which we see the identification of old Adam Walker with Paul Auster which makes the whole novel a memoir of both authors within and outside of the story. Therefore Paul Auster lives in the novel as the writer Adam Walker -who is vividly described in his obsessive writing image, as well.

How can one position this self-referential narration in the context of author's death? Mc Hale compares modernist and post-modernist novels and unmasks the "invisible and unobtrusive" author trend in modernist novels.

> The modernists sought to remove the traces of their presence from the surface of their writing, and to this end exploited or developed various forms of ostensibly 'narratorless' texts…Paradoxically, the more they sought to efface themselves, the more they made their presence

> conspicuous. Strategies of self-effacement, while ostensibly obliterating surface traces of the author, in fact call attention to the author as *strategist*…Self-effacement, it turns out, is a form of self-advertisement…then by the logic of paradox, self advertisement is conversely a form of self-effacement. Thus, the modernist slogan, successor to modernism's "Exit Author," is "The Death of the Author." (199)

By reducing his position to a fictitious being as a character within the novel who inevitably yields to the demands of the story just like the other characters, Auster announces his death as the author, the creator and the origin of the story. To conclude, Paul Auster pours snapshots from his own life into his novels such as the room, the desk and the notebook he uses while he is writing these novels. By using these autobiographical references and modeling his writer protagonists on his image as a writer Auster does not try to highlight himself as the author of the novels. To the contrary, whether he enters in novels with his real name (as he does with the pseudo-detective Paul Auster in *City of Glass*), or as one of his writing selves or images (as in the case of David Zimmer, Sidney Orr or Adam Walker), he fictionalizes his authorial self, just like he does with the selves of his author-protagonists.

CHAPTER 3

AUTHOR AS PARODIC DETECTIVE

> The detective is one who looks, who listens, who moves through this morass of objects and events in search of the thought, the idea that will pull all these things together and make sense of them. In effect, the writer and the detective are interchangeable. *(City of Glass* 15).

The New York Trilogy has often been thought to be Auster's masterpiece because of the unique nature of the novel that provides ground for the discussion of various critical approaches yet resists closure by any one of them. Never again did Auster combine parody and detective fiction more explicitly but detective fiction has remained as one of the most fundamental features of Auster's novels up to the present. Therefore, any reading that overlooks the elements of detective fiction in Auster's novels would be missing a vital part of them. A closer look at any novel by Auster shows that the basic patterns of the formula he employs for *The New York Trilogy* stays persistent throughout his entire career as a novelist.

Detective fiction continues to be an indispensible tool for Auster as it provides a structure that serves well Auster's purposes of parody. By twisting the structure of the detective stories, Auster challenges the notion of the genre. The detective figure is always a writer in Auster's novels, which makes the parody a double-edged one that aims both at the notion of the detective and that of the author. The inability of Auster's detectives to provide perfect explanations for the mysteries undermines the rules of the genre. Since Paul Auster's fictional authors are impotent detectives, their

position as an author who has the ultimate meaning in a book is denounced simultaneously. Therefore, the scheme of parody announces the novels as 'multi-authored' or 'author-less' texts and the fall of the detective is accompanied by the fall of the author in the stories within the novels.

Paul Auster parodies certain rules and characters of the detective stories. In *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*, John G. Cawelti describes those rules and characters. He elaborately discusses the emergence and development of the detective stories and informs that "The classical or ratiocinative detective story was first clearly articulated by Edgar Allen Poe in the 1840s, but it did not become a widely popular genre until the end of the nineteenth century" (80). In the chapter" The Formula of the Classical Detective Story" Cawelti goes on to explain the formula of the classical detective stories by referring to two stories "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Purloined Letter" by Edgar Allen Poe. He lays down four main components of the formula for the classical detective story. In a classical detective story 1) the description of a particular situation is presented, 2) the situation evolves by a pattern of action, 3) the characters are introduced to the reader and to each other and their relations are developed, 4) a proper setting according to events is created. According to Cawelti "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Purloined Letter" are very important as they precisely exemplify these four characteristics and Poe had become the reference point for detective fiction until the emergence of the hard-boiled story with its different patterns" (Cawelti 80).

The first part of the formula covers the time before detective comes to the scene. At this stage whether the murderer, the thief, etc. and his motives are known

or not, the dramatic irony stays intact. In other words, mystery surrounding the identity and the means of the criminal may be presented to the reader as in "The Purloined Letter" and "The Murders in the Rue" but still the detective is supposed to verify the fact with conclusive evidence; hence the action is focused on the efforts to unmask the criminal.

In this part Cawelti adds another important point which is important for the parodical use of the genre. The classical detective story is marked with the "detachment" of the detective's personal from the case he is working on" (Cawelti 81). The following quote from William Aydelotte explains the world as perceived by the characters of detective fiction:

> In place of the complex issues of modern existence, people in a detective story have very simple problems. Life goes along well except for the single point that some crime, usually, in modern societies, a murder, has been committed…From this act follow most of the troubles. Troubles are objectively caused by an external circumstance, the murder, which can and will be resolved, whereupon the troubles will disappear…The mess, confusion, and frustration of life have been reduced to a simple issue between good and evil. (qtd. in Cawelti 81)

Moving on to the *pattern of action* which encompasses the period in which the detective investigates and solves the case, Cawelti offers yet another set of events consisting of six parts which characterize the classical detective story: "(a) introduction of the detective; (b) crime and clues; (c) investigation; (d) announcement of the solution; (e) explanation of the solution; (f) denouement" (82). Although sometimes these distinct parts may be merged with each other, according to Cawelti they are indispensible for classical detective story.

The following part of Cawelti's analysis is *Characters and relationships*. In a classical detective story characters can be grouped into four parts: "(a) the victim, (b) the criminal; (c) the detective; and (d) those threatened by the crime but incapable of

solving it. Cawelti remarks that later writers have elaborated on these roles and in some cases have mixed them up, but on the whole it seems safe to say that without the relations implicit in these roles it is not possible to create a detective story (91). In a classical detective story the victim and the criminal have to stay minor characters whose motives or personalities remain hidden from the reader. Since "the goal of the detective story is a clear and certain establishment of guilt for a specific crime" the writer has to make sure that the victim is "right" and innocent whereas the criminal is "bad" and guilty (ibid., 91-92). Thus the victim and the criminal can be considered as types rather than characters. On the other hand, the primary focus in a classical detective story is essentially on the detective and those who investigate the crime. Poe's Dupin for example is the main character of the stories and Dupin has prevailed as an influential detective figure.

> Of all Poe's contributions to the formula of the classical detective story, his invention of Dupin— with his *aristocratic detachment*, his brilliance and eccentricity, his synthesis of the poet's intuitive insight with *the scientist's power of inductive reasoning*, and his capacity for psychological analysis-was certainly the most crucial" (ibid., 93, emphasis added).

Although the motives of the detective are to be changed by the hard-boiled detective story, most of the features of the classical detective has proven to be quite persistent in the literature which descended from it.

One such descendant, which Auster constantly revisits for purposes of parody, is the American hard-boiled detective stories. In *Post Modern Literature* Ian Gregson contends that "The postmodern preoccupation with language and textuality has led to an insistently parodic culture…Paul Auster's detectives are like post-modern *flaneurs*: nihilistic observers of New York, detached wanderers and gazers at a city whose meaning baffles them" (62). In fact, the city, more specifically New York is

truly a major back-drop for Paul Auster's detective stories which, along with certain elements of the classical detective story, also parody "the hard-boiled detective story" (Cawelti 139). Differing from the classical detective story most importantly in its vision of the modern and urban setting, American hard-boiled story draws a rather morbid picture of the city:

> When we step from the world of the classical detective formula into the milieu of the American hard-boiled story, the vision of the city is almost reversed. Instead of the new Arabian nights [a promised land of "exotic and romantic adventure"], we find empty modernity, corruption and death. A gleaming and deceptive façade hides a world of exploitation and criminality…(Cawelti 141)

The Book of Illusions should be cited as the most notable example of Auster's parodies in which he uses the city after the example of the hard-boiled formula. Following the formula he envisions the city as the center of dark relationships and wanton habits. Especially in the parts before Hector Mann commits his tragic mistake he is placed in the gleaming world of city night life which is described as a shallow world obsessed with appearances.

> From the day he signed with Kaleidoscope to the day he disappeared, Hector's run lasted only seventeen months. Short as that time might have been, he achieved a certain measure of recognition for himself…Hector was not someone who tended to sit around at home after dark. He was seen in restaurants and nightclubs, and parties and movie premieres, and nearly every time his name appeared in print, it was accompanied by a descriptive phrase that referred to his *smoldering magnetism,* his *irresistible eyes,* or his *heart-stoppingly handsome face. (The Book of Illusions* 74, emphasis in the original)

The city also functions in the novel as a place that fosters crime but at the same pushes the criminal to escape. However, upon leaving the city the criminal assumes a different identity for purposes of hiding but this new self entraps the criminal forever. In two scenes, one in the movie *Mr. Nobody,* later in Hector's 'real' escape such entrapment is evident and these two scenes actually talk to each other. The

following excerpt from David Zimmer's analysis of *Mr. Nobody* is a foreshadowing for the story of Hector Mann's life. Hunt, the malevolent character in Hector Mann's films, makes Hector drink a potion which casts him invisible:

> Hector doesn't vanish in *Mr. Nobody*, but once he drinks the drink, no one can see him anymore. He is still there before our eyes, but the other characters in the film are blind to his presence. He jumps up and down, he flaps his arms, he takes off his clothes on a crowded street corner, but no one notices. When he shouts in people's faces, his voice goes unheard. He is a specter made of flesh and blood, a man who is no longer a man. He still lives in the world, and yet the world has no room for him anymore. He has been murdered, but no one has had the courtesy or the thoughtfulness to kill him. He has simply been erased. (*The Book of Illusions* 34)

When Hector actually leaves the city, he becomes an "invisible" man like the character he plays in *Mr. Nobody*. The first thing he does in order to let go of his identity is to shave his mustache, the most important body mark of his identity as a silent comedian. "He disguised himself by removing his most identifiable feature, transforming his face into another face through a simple act of subtraction (124)." Hector also changes his name upon finding a worker's cap which bears the name of his owner at the back: Herman Loesser. Hector assumes this name as an apt one for "changing his identity without altogether renouncing who he was […] Herman Loesser. Some would pronounce it *Lesser*, and others would read it as *Loser*. Either way, Hector figured that he had found the name he deserved (124, emphasis in the original)." The erasure of Hector's self and his transformation into an invisible man are further accentuated in the following lines: "The cap fit remarkably well…After the subtraction, then, an addition. Hector minus the moustache, and then Hector plus the cap. The two operations canceled him out, and he left the men's room that morning looking like anyone, like the spitting image of Mr. Nobody himself (125)."

In *Oracle Night* and *Invisible* as well we have uses of the city as a part of mystery scheme. In *Oracle Night* "the detective" Sidney Orr uncovers the mystery about Grace and John Trause only after he incarnates into Nick Bowen, the protagonist of the story he writes and at the same time his writing self, who leaves Brooklyn and starts living in a bomb shelter in Kansas.[2] The city as *Oracle Night* presents it is a place where a baby can be given birth upon the toilet of a rusty bar in Bronx, marriages are threatened by betrayal and intriguing relations. Sidney reads an article about a drug-addicted prostitute who gives birth on a toilet, throws the baby away in a towel and returns to his customer whom she stabs after an argument about the payment. He is assured that they are not sporadic events; on the contrary, they tell something about the whole society:

> When I finished reading the article for the first time, I said to myself: This is the worst story I have ever read. It was hard enough to absorb the information about the baby, but when I came to the stabbing incident in the fourth paragraph, I understood that I was reading a story about the end of mankind, that that room in the Bronx was the precise spot on earth where human life had lost its meaning. (99)

The corruption of the city is important for the detective story because the more people let go of their humanity and turn the world they live into a chaotic place, the more a detective as a savior is needed to restore the order. Even though Paul Auster uses this argument almost without a change, he in fact parodies it by his incapable detectives who get lost in the chaos rather than solve it.

In a classical detective story the characters are more like types than characters. Neither the motives of the criminal nor a multi-faceted portrait of the victim are provided to the reader in order not to curb the effects of the dénouement at the end of

[2] What is extremely important about *Oracle Night* is the fact that Auster combines the detective with the victim of the mystery. Obviously this is a highly parodic version of the formula of detective stories, a point that will be discussed later on.

the story after the presentation of the ultimate solution of the case by the super intelligent classical detective who always keeps his critical distance to the case and the people included. However this formula is radically changed by the hard-boiled detective story. Claiming that Auster follows the hard-boiled formula as the Ur-text for his parodies, I will move on to prove this argument by demonstrating each point Cawelti offers in the following quote by examples from the novels.

> The hard-boiled detective sets-out to investigate a crime but invariably finds that he must go beyond the solution to some kind of *personal choice or action*. While the classical writer typically treats the actual apprehension of the criminal as a less significant matter than the explanation of the crime, the hard-boiled story usually ends with *a confrontation between the detective and criminal*…this difference in endings results from a greater personal involvement on the part of the hard-boiled detective. Since he becomes emotionally and morally committed to some of the persons involved, or because the crime poses some basic crisis in his image of himself, the hard-boiled detective remains unfulfilled until he has taken *a personal moral stance toward the criminal* (143, emphasis added).

Setting out to draw a parallelism between the detectives Cawelti has defined and the ones Auster offers, one should primarily investigate the question "Which character(s) is the detective, and which one(s) is the criminal(s) of each novel? It is a tricky question since there may be more than one detective figure whose motives sometimes overlap. However, rather than the characters who sometimes act like or are officially detectives, this study will focus on the detective figures who best exemplify the features of parody. According to this criteria, in *The Book of Illusions* the main detective figure to be analyzed here is David Zimmer, who tries to rebuild the lost image of Hector Mann as a silent comedian by following bits and pieces of his work just like the classical and hard-boiled detectives that follow the clues in order to solve a mystery in earlier detective stories. In *Oracle Night* it is Sidney Orr who tries to figure out the secrets of his own life by connecting some fragments

related to his wife and her old friend. In *Invisible* the detective is the renowned author Jim whose efforts to shed light upon his dead friend Adam Walker's life form the basic mystery scheme of the novel. On the other hand, Hector Mann & Dolores, John Trause (may be also his son) & Grace Orr, and Adam & Gywn Walker are the criminal couples of the stories. Although the females are indispensible parts of the crimes or mysteries in the novels, it is the male party that the novels are primarily concerned with.

It has been quoted from Cawelti that the detective is not a detached analyzer of the mystery but he goes through "a personal choice or action", has to take "a moral stance toward the criminal" and has to confront the criminal personally at the end of the story. Firstly writing about Hector Mann, and later trying to save his films become the central aim of Zimmer's life rather than comprising a part of it. David Zimmer becomes involved in Hector's life through his relation to Alma. He meets Hector in his last hours and witnesses the destruction of hundreds of his films.

In a similar vein, the criminals in *Oracle Night* are Sidney Orr's beloved wife and his closest friend. Also, in *Invisible* Adam Walker and his sister Gywn are Jim's friends from the college. All detectives in the novels unravel the mystery at the end of the novel; the novels make it sure the criminal's motives, feelings and thoughts are understood and credited to some degree if not justified totally.

Last but not the least about the hard-boiled formula, the name of the one important American hard-boiled detective story writer should be discussed particularly. Dashiell Hammett and especially his novel *Maltese Falcon* is a recurrent name in Auster. The writer is declared to be one of the first and best users of the hard-boiled formula. There are references to him in *The Book of Illusions* as a

novelist of "uncommon intelligence who had stopped" writing (12). In *Oracle Night* the reference to Hammett is even much bolder. The original story Sidney Orr writes is built upon the seventh chapter of *Maltese Falcon* in which Hammett's detective Sam Spade tells the story of Flitcraft "the man who walks away from his life and disappears" (11). Auster inverts the story according to his own purposes, but still the basic patterns Hammett uses are still there.

> …while the classical detective's investigation typically passes over a variety of possible suspects until it lights at least on the least-likely person, his hard-boiled counterpart becomes emotionally involved in a complex process of changing implications. Everything changes its meaning: the initial mission turns out to be a smoke screen for another, more devious plot; the supposed victim turns out to be a villain; the lover ends up as the murderess and the faithful friend as a rotten betrayer;…and all the seemingly respectable and successful people turn out to be members of the gang. In many ways this rhythm is the antithesis of the classical story where the detective always shows that the corruption is isolated and specific rather than general and endemic to the social world of the story. (Cawelti 146 - 147)

Although Sidney's primary purpose of writing is to get back to life after the accident, his journey ends up with the discovery that all the 'trustworthy' people turn out to be parts of a love scheme that offends him. What I would suggest is that this process should be read as a counterpart for Hammett's move from the "smoke scene" to the end where "everything changes its meaning." Grace is not a murderess; nevertheless, she is the parodic criminal whom the detective is strongly in love with and John Trause is "the trusted friend" who turns out to be a "traitor" in the story Sidney Orr writes to illuminate the secrets in his life. Auster even provides a gang as a hard-boiled story would do. In the novel Grace and her friends from college set out to form a secret organization which they called "The Blue Team." An applicant for the group needed a number of characteristics:

> Blue Team members didn't conform to a single type, and each one was a distinct and independent person. But no one was allowed in who didn't have a good sense of humor…then, a taste for the ironies of life, and an appreciation of the absurd. But also a certain modesty and discretion, kindness towards others, a generous heart. No blowhards or arrogant fools, no liars or thieves…An astute observer, someone capable of making fine moral distinctions, a lover of justice… (*Oracle Night* 45)

Now it is obvious that although there is the gang part of a hard-boiled story, the gang Auster offers is a team of goodness and honesty. However, the fact that the charter members of the gang turn out to be the criminals of the story Sidney has written is worthy of consideration here. By reversing the scheme presented above Sidney emphasizes the idea "*Good people do bad things*" (Oracle Night 47, emphasis in the original). And this becomes yet another parallelism between the hard boiled story and Auster's novels because in both party "the corruption [is] general and endemic to the social world of the story" (Cawelti 147).

The parody of the detective fiction is a vital theme in Paul Auster's fiction because it reflects his understanding of the genre, the author and the meaning in literary texts; in short, it is a part of his aesthetic theory. Although Paul Auster is not a detective-story writer *per se*, not in the sense that Edgar Allen Poe, Agatha Christie or Dashiel Hammett used to be, he uses the elements of the genre quite often. In an interview, Joseph Mallia asks Paul Auster: "Did you feel that you were writing a mystery novel?" Auster's answer to the question gives the reader an insight as to why he uses the genre. Auster responds:

> P.A: Not at all. Of course I used certain elements of detective fiction. Quinn, afterall, writes detective novels and takes on the identity of someone he thinks is a detective. But I felt I was using those elements for such different ends, for things that had so little to do with detective stories, and I was somewhat disappointed by the emphasis that was put on them. That's not to say that I have anything against the genre...I tired to use certain genre conventions to get to another place, another place altogether...The question of who is who and whether or not we are who

> we think we are...[The detective] is the seeker of truth, the problem-solver, the one who tries to figure things out. But what if, in the course of trying to figure it out, you just unveil more mysteries? I suppose maybe that's what happens in the books" (Mallia par. 11).

As Auster clearly tells he uses the genre "for different ends", to go to "another place altogether." This different place I would claim is the postmodern understanding of the notion of reality where the reason is no longer capable of unraveling mysteries; where absolute design and order is replaced by chance and contingency. As such the writer-protagonists of Auster who also function as the detective figure of the novels reflect this failure of reason and design. In the novels the inadequacy of the detective to provide answers goes hand in hand with the impossibility of the author to be the key for the story he writes. Thus, the aim Auster's aim in using the detective genre should be analyzed from these two angles.

What is extremely important in the formulaic and structuralist nature of detective story is that it has a premise that pure reason has the power to understand and explain the world. By following a certain path of reasoning the detective with all his superior "intuitive insight" and "power of inductive reasoning" makes all things crystal clear at the end of the story. So, detective fiction has a highly "end-dominated" structure (Russell 99). But this very formulaic structure is what makes detective fiction such an apt genre for ironic representation or parody. Allison Russell pinpoints this in "Paul Auster's Anti-Detective Fiction" as follows:

> The detective story is closely affiliated with the Romance (despite its 'gritty' realism) through its solitary quest and in its emphasis on 'reintegrating the existing order.' The detective in conventional fiction discovers 'the truth,' but in the deconstructive anti-detective novel, 'the inanity of the discovery is brought to its climax in the nonsolution, which unmasks a tendency toward disorder and irrationality that has always been implicit within detective fiction.' (110)

The inability of Auster's detective-author to explain the events that take place in the world undermines the capability of reason to explain the world as well as the position of the detective as somebody armed with power to do so. Although possible solutions and explanations are offered to the mysteries throughout the novels, none of Auster's novels closes with a speech by the detective figure, which reveals the absolute truth and restores order. As Auster presents a detectives who are at the same time the authors in the story, by nullifying the detective he automatically eradicates the author. Rather than making the implied author an all-knowing figure to which all signifiers refer, Auster "continually disseminates the meaning" (Russell 99).

Tzvetan Todorov in "The Typology of Detective Fiction" discusses the detective fiction from similar perspectives. After stating the reactions against the notion of genre in literary studies, he goes on to discuss the particular relationship between the detective fiction genre and literature that has derived from it. Todorov goes on to argue "Detective fiction has its norms; to 'develop' them is also to disappoint them: *to 'improve upon' detective fiction is to write 'literature', not detective fiction* (138, emphasis added).

Todorov also mentions the twenty rules of the detective fiction which was laid down by S. S. Van Dine in 1928. He summarizes them in eight items one of which is closely linked with the discussion of author-detectives in this study. The rule orders that "With regard to information about the story, the following homology must be observed: 'author: reader = criminal: detective'" (142). The rule identifies the criminal with the author and the detective with the reader; which means the criminal sets up a mystery scheme that would be read, understood and explained by the detective.

Madeleine Sorapure's article "The Detective and the Author: City of Glass" is also preoccupied with the comparison of the author with the criminal and the reader with the detective. She starts her argument by referring to the tendency of critics to understand the detective as "the figure for the reader within the text, the one character whose activities most closely parallel the reader's own" (Most qtd. in Sorapure 71). Sorapure further posits that

> Readers of detective fiction typically admire the interpretive skill of the detective, who, in the midst of mysterious, misleading, and disparate clues, is able to discern logical and necessary connections leading invariably to the solution of the mystery […] readers can identify with the detective and achieve interpretive victory alongside him, or closely on his heels. (ibid.)

However, both Todorov and Sorapure remain doubtful about the validity of this configuration. Todorov notes that the rule "has lost its pertinence with the disappearance of the double story" (143). In a similar vein, describing *City of Glass* as a "meta-anti-detective story" Sorapure denies reading the detective as the reader. Instead, focusing on the endings of the detective stories where the detective provides an explanation of the crime, she notices that

> […] the detective recaps the entire proceedings, charting the true significance of the clues and characters he has encountered. Establishing causality and eliminating ambiguity, the detective presents his own 'authorial' ability to unite disparate elements into a formal coherence. (71-72)

Sorapure notices the debate on authorship in *City of Glass* in particular relation to Foucault's "author-function". She sees in the novel that "authors find themselves playing detective and detectives find themselves 'playing author' by writing about their adventures" (73). By focusing on the relationship between "authorship and detection" she concludes that

> All the author-characters in the novel- Quinn, Stillman, 'Auster', and the narrator— try to apply the logic of the traditional detective story to their experiences as detectives, and instead realize, in varying degrees, the inadequacy and inaccuracy of the genre's presuppositions. Thus, rather than depicting detectives who invariably attain authorial omniscience, the novel presents author-characters whose experiences return them to the detective's ground-level, fragmented, and imperfect understanding. (73)

It should be noted that what Paul Auster does in *City of Glass* to identify an author-character with a mock-detective is not radically different from what he does in his later novels. In the novels although there are the necessary components, characters and mystery of a detective story, they don't evolve into a story either like the classical or the hard-boiled detective stories. He parodies the detective stories in order to come up with an understanding of reality that is totally different from that of the classical detective stories.

Linda Hutcheon's arguments on post-modernism and parody shed light upon the nature of that reality. Hutcheon starts her extensive argument on post-modernism in her *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, by declaring that "postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges" (3). Setting out to define postmodernism with specific emphasis on the novel but also with reference to other art forms such as architecture, film, TV, music and painting, Hutcheon confirms that "postmodernism is fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political. Its contradictions may well be those of late capitalist society, but whatever the cause, these contradictions are certainly manifest in the important postmodern concept of 'the presence of the past'" (*Poetics* 4).

Although Hutcheon touches upon parody in relation to postmodernism in the book, the place where she extensively discusses parody is her *A Theory of Parody:*

The Teachings of Twentieth Century Art Forms. In her argument parody is a "double-coded", "pragmatic" but not "parasitic" art form which is characterized by "ironic trans-contextualization." Hutcheon holds that:

> Like irony, parody is a form of indirect as well as double-voiced discourse, but it is not parasitic in any way. In transmuting or remodeling previous texts, it points to the differential but mutual dependence of parody and parodied texts. Its two voices neither merge nor cancel each other out; they work together, while remaining distinct in their defining difference....satirists continue to use the pointed and effective doubling of parody's voices as a vehicle to unmask the duplicities of modern society. (*A Theory* xiv)

In its modern usage parody serves for a wide range of purposes "from the ironic and playful to the scornful and ridiculing." (*A Theory* 6) Thus Hutcheon refers to parody as "a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion,... [It] is in another formulation repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (6). Hutcheon's insistent emphasis on irony is the most important aspect of her analysis. The parody Hutcheon is primarily concerned with is "an integrated structural modeling process of revising, replaying, inverting, and 'trans-contextualizing' previous works of art….Ironic "trans-contextualization" is what distinguishes parody from pastiche or imitation (11-12)." The quote suggests the fact that parody includes a reworking of a previous text aligns it automatically with discussions of pastiche.

As the writer of anti-detective novels that parody the detective fiction, Paul Auster's fiction is everything but "parasitic". Auster "inverts" the characters and rules of the detective stories; therefore we find the elements of the detective fiction in their transformed versions, which makes the novels align with Hutcheon's notion of "bitextual synthesis."

Hutcheon confirms that "Parody is a bitextual synthesis, unlike more monotextual forms like pastiche that stresses similarity rather than difference" (33). So, what is peculiar about parody is not repetition but "repetition with difference" (32). Hutcheon holds that

> When we speak of parody, we do not just mean two texts that interrelate in a certain way. We also imply an intention to parody another work (or set of conventions) and both a recognition of that intent and an ability to find and interpret the backgrounded text in relation to the parody. (22)

Looking at the reflections of the parodical usage of the detective fiction in the novels, it is clear that the detective figures of the novels- David Zimmer, Sidney Orr, Adam Walker and James Freeman- are all trying to find out the secrets in a dead-man's life and tell it in the stories they are writing. Therefore, the stories they write function as the solution part of the classical detective stories. However, as these stories are far from figuring out the mystery and thereby restoring order, they turn out to be one of the major elements of parody. Having set out to 'detect' the reality, the detectives just open up new sets of mysteries which they fail to comprehend.

While *The Silent World of Hector Mann* tries to illuminate the forgotten career of Hector Mann, while writing it David Zimmer learns about the murder of Brigid O' Fallon and Hector's enigmatic disappearance after this murder. Similarly, the story Sidney writes in the blue notebook functions as the explanation of the surprisingly smooth events that led to his marriage to Grace. However reasonable the story sounds, it is essentially an incomplete account of a vital crisis John and Grace lived through as understood and told by Sid. In parallel, Adam Walker's quest for justice and his incestuous love for his sister Gwen is rewritten by James Freeman. It is impossible for the reader to tell where Adam's memory is modified with his imagination in the narrative. Thus the 'truth' is never absolute, never unquestionably

certain. As the people about whom the stories are written are already dead, the questions the story asks can never reach their addressee, which constitutes one of the most important elements that these three novels have in common.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

This study explores the notion of authorship as represented by the relationship between the writer-protagonists and their stories in three novels by Paul Auster, namely *The Book of Illusions* (2002), *Oracle Night* (2003) and *Invisible* (2009). Reading Paul Auster and his fictional authors primarily in relation to Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" and "From Work to Text", Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?" it is maintained that not only the stories within the novels but also the novels themselves are mosaic texts, units of quotations that come not from a single author but from multiple writing selves.

The introductory chapter presents the general narrative framework and short summaries of the novels to demonstrate the fact that Paul Auster uses a unique scheme in the stories in which the protagonist - who is at the same time the narrator - is a writer who is working on a story that was written by a dead or lost author. More often than not, the story itself talks about another writer; which creates a 'double-fictional writer' within the fiction. As such, there are multiple author figures in the novels, including Paul Auster himself. The writings and the ideas of the first writer whom I call the absentee author merges and becomes one with the sentences of the second one, the surrogate author.

Chapter Two deals with the idea of death and re-birth in the novels, and discusses the metaphorical and literal death of author-characters as a modification of the metaphorical death of the author in Barthes. What the chapter mainly posits is

that in the meta-fictional novels of Paul Auster there are several writer-protagonists and the stories written within the novels are the outcome of the unification of their writings. Furthermore, the chapter maintains that the literal death of the absentee authors is paralleled to the metaphorical death of the surrogate authors and both parties are granted re-birth through the act of writing. The unification of the multiple writing selves and the literal as well as the metaphorical death of the author protagonists in the novels are analyzed from the perspective of Roland Barthes' declaration of the author's death and Foucault's argument on the plurality of the writing selves. These arguments are related to the stories within the novels and are also important for the novels themselves. As a matter of fact, the stories within the novels are merged with Paul Auster's writing and the lives of the characters are like spontaneous snapshots from the author's actual life. For this reason, the chapter postulates that not only the stories within the novels but also the novels themselves are 'author-less texts' rather than being the works of a unique author.

Chapter Three explores a different perspective on the authorship debate in the novels. Tracing the elements of detective fiction in the novels, the chapter primarily shows that Paul Auster has been using the detective fiction genre for purposes of parody since his early novels. In order to point out which aspects of the detective fiction is parodied in the novels studied here, the chapter refers to the formula of the classical and American hard-boiled detective stories in John G. Cawelti's *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*. The chapter questions why parody of detective fiction remains so important for Paul Auster. By referring to Linda Hutcheon's theories about the function of parody and Todorov's "Typology of Detective Fiction" the chapter reads the debate on authorship in the

novels in relation to notion of genre. Consequently, the chapter argues that Paul Auster's employment of parodical devices on the formula of the detective stories aims to undermine the notion of the genre as well as the role of the detective-authors in the novels. Paul Auster's detective-authors are impotent observers of the mysteries surrounding the world of the novel. Thus, the most important outcome of the denouncement of the role of the detective as the solver of mysteries is that it leads simultaneously to the vanishing of the author who is the source and the ultimate meaning in a book.

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