



# The Historical Detection of the Postmodern Man's War Obsessions in Auster's *Man in the Dark*

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## ABSTRACT

Literature has always been one of the sources of inspirations and recording of the events of each era. Postmodern fictional works have tried to deal with the manifestation of postmodern man and his postmodern obsessions. This paper, hinging upon the text and context analysis, has tried to show Paul Auster's tact in the revelation of postmodern man's war obsession in his work *Man in the Dark*. These have been presented via the lenses of postmodern narrative and plural histories as the prominent postmodern features. He has been able to make it clear that man in his body/soul, text/ context, and reality/fantasy is obsessed by war and postmodern world idiosyncratic obsessions the prominent of which is the threat of imminent war and is consequences and drawbacks on the mind, soul, context, reality, and fantasy of postmodern man at the mercy of diverse interpretations of texts and war events. These all may have been the imminent threats of international conflict or the like which has changed the war themes unstable, loose, and nebulous.

**Keywords:** Postmodern; Fiction; Obsession; Auster's *Man in the Dark*; Narration.

## 1. Introduction

In any era, the idea of human being existential obsessions has been the major concern of literary figures' artistic commitment on the line of their artistic role in society as the sign of literary endeavor and orientating its purpose on the illumination and illustration of human beings' obsessions. Twentieth century has witnessed great events and phenomena whose best reflections can be detected in different parts of the world and the minds and bodies of so many people and soldiers who have been the characters and creators of these tragic scenes and actions. This trend has penetrated into the twenty first century which has turned out to be much more bitter and hostile than the previous international hostility. The situation has got worse as human being is proceeding into the oncoming days and years of this century whose best crystallization can be seen in any country in any continent on the globe. In a mutating literary world in which classical and modern novels did not quench the thirst of eagerness in readers for new literary theories, the rise of postmodernism in the second half of twentieth century

did not operate less than an outburst to receive the attention of a noticeable number of readers. In the world of arts and literature, the requirement for new materials and theories is always a matter of concern. These have been captured technically in the introduced work of Auster. In the present study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Is Auster's *Man in the Dark* justifiable via the lenses of postmodern narrative and plural histories?
2. Is Auster's *Man in the Dark* indicator of postmodern war obsession?

In terms of research design, a qualitative and analytical approach was used in its procedure to answer the questions. To answer the above questions, first, Auster's biography is briefly introduced. Thereafter, the concepts including thematic presentation of his work, analytic postmodern narrative view, and plural histories in his work are analyzed and would be accompanied by some clues from the novel's main text to come up with the answer to the above questions.

## 2. The Work and Author

### 2.1. Paul Auster

One of the great intellectuals who has proved to be promising in the revelation of the existential obsessions of postmodern man has been Paul Auster. While talking about postmodernism, it is rarely possible not to think of Paul Auster as a thriving and prominent postmodernist author who has been the focus of attention for his brilliant writings especially in the recent years. What is noteworthy about Auster's writings is how he plays with the form and narration of the texts and makes use of complex characters in order to create a weird and intriguing story. Yet there are many marvelous ideas concealed in his stories which have the potential to be deciphered and scrutinized. In this paper, one of his novels, *Man in the Dark*, is analyzed to come up with a special theme developed in it.

### 2.2. Thematic Presentation of Summary of *Man in the Dark*

*Man in the Dark* (2008) has two main stories, one happening through the other. August Brill, the narrator, tells himself stories every night to pass her loneliness. He is 72, a retired professor of literature and a literary critic in New York, and lives with his daughter Miriam and granddaughter Katya. Sonia, his wife, dies several years ago because of cancer. Miriam, a teacher and writer, is 47 who was betrayed by her husband who left her for another woman five years ago. And Katya is 23 who lost her boyfriend Titus Small in the Iraq War last year.

August had a car crash last year, which made him to spend life on a wheelchair, and now he lives in his new house with his family. He tells himself stories each night to fall sleep or forget his problems. Such a nightmarish story telling can be detected in the life of so many postmodern men who have been afflicted by the postmodern era features. In reality, Paul constantly shifts between his night story and his own life story which adds to his idiosyncratic power and ability.

His night story is about Owen Brick, a 30-year-old man, who wakes up in a hole in the ground in the middle of nowhere. He is wearing a corporal's uniform but he is sure that he has never been in the army. Although he thinks that he is dreaming, he is in a real situation. He finds in the wallet in his pocket some money and a driver's license named Owen Brick, born July 12, 1977, just like himself. He remembers his wife Flora and his job as a magician performing at children's birthday parties. He cannot escape the hole since it is too deep into the ground and thus cries for help. Nothing is heard but war sounds in the distance. He has to spend the night there and is awakened in the next morning by someone's call from the top of the hole: "Corporal Brick, it's time to get moving" (Auster 2008, p. 6). The man, named Tobak, is a sergeant who he helps Brick out. Tobak says that they are in America and there is civil war happening there. Brick has been called to stop the war by killing the person who is thinking about the war and thus makes it happen. Brick is given the man's address but he should go first to Lou Frisk in Wellington for more directions.

August stops Brick's story to reflect on his own life. He regrets that he cannot go upstairs to talk to Katya who is crying in bed. He has tried to calm her down after her boyfriend's death by asking

her to accompany him in watching and analyzing movies every day. He believes that "obsessive movie watching" can help her escape from her sorrows (Auster 2008, p. 15).

The way the author paves the way for the reflection of the intended theme in his mind is set through the creation of plural histories or reflection of some realities of events as well as the postmodern features manifested throughout the novel.

Back to Brick's story, he is now near Wellington and finds a restaurant to eat something. The waitress, Molly Wald, tells him that "we're in a war, and New York started it" when she recognizes that Brick is a New Yorker (Auster 2008, p. 28). Some states have declared independence from the country and only 16 states have remained unified. It is now 2007 and Brick asks about 9/11 and the Iraq War. Much to his surprise, Molly says that she does not know anything about them. Brick is in fact in a parallel world where 9/11 and the Iraq War have never happened. Instead, Americans are fighting Americans since Bush II could not win the 2000 election.

While staying in a hotel room, Virginia Blaine finds him. She was his beloved classmate when they were at high school. She explains everything and ensures him that he is going to return to his real life as soon as he kills that man who is thinking about war. The obsessions regarding war emerges here and the way it can be controlled is also revealed. Virginia's husband was killed when this war broke and she is a member of the party which wants that man dead. They meet Frisk for directions, although Brick cannot satisfy himself to kill someone he does not know.

Back to August, he says that Miriam is writing a biography of Rose Hawthorne, "a woman who lived two lives, the first one sad, tormented, failed, the second one remarkable" (Auster 2008, p. 44). Rose's life has actually inspired Miriam to tolerate her problems.

Back to Brick, he has an argument with Frisk about what a real world is. Frisk holds that "no single reality" exists (Auster 2008, p. 69), and that now they are in a parallel world created by the man who is thinking about that war. Frisk says that the name of that man is August Brill, an old man sitting in a wheelchair who has created Brick to kill him to end the war. Frisk then injects Brick, which makes Brick wake up in his real bedroom beside his wife. He thinks that he has been dreaming but Flora tells him that was missing for two days. Brick thus believes that he has been in another world which is parallel with his real world. He tells Flora the story. They should follow the orders, otherwise they will be killed. Flora wants him to forget all about it and thus they pass a month without any problem. However, after that period, Frisk and his companion show up at their door pointing their gun at Flora as she opens the door. Frisk warns Brick that he can only give him one more week to kill August, or else he and his wife will die. Brick asks Flora to go to Buenos Aires to her mother for her safety so that he can do something alone. Five more days pass until he finally decides to kill August. On the fifth day, Virginia suddenly appears to him when he is out of his house for a walk. She tells him that she is not actually working for Frisk, while she is going to accompany him on his mission. They leave to Vermont to meet August since she wants Brick to ask August to stop his thinking about war. Virginia is actually August's agent and talks to him by phone. At Virginia's house, at dawn, while Brick in on the parlor wondering what is going to happen, a helicopter bombards the house. Virginia is killed and Brick is shot to death by Federal troops when he is on the lawn after the fall of the house.

Back to August, he has deliberately wanted Brick's story to end because he wants to stop all thoughts of war. Katya has now come to his bed to have his grandfather's affection. He recalls a memory of his wife and recounts it for Katya. He talks about his personal life with Sonia and all the good and bad days they had together for the rest of the story. The whole story sequences happened in the course of the novel have some sort of similarity to that of what he is afflicted with in his own life but this time not in the battle field but in the depth of his mind, his loneliness, and his own house.

The characterization element of fiction is somehow controlled by the author. The narration is mainly done from the viewpoint of the characters whose speeches are somehow the manifestation of the reality of what they want to do as indirect reflection of history; their behavior is somehow the manifestation of the postmodern fiction, too.

### 3.The Analysis of the Work

#### 3.1.Analytic Postmodern Narrative View

The ways postmodern works are introduced have some sort of resemblance to the trends going on in the films and stories. By presenting a fragmented narrative with irrelevant parts, postmodernists aim to reject the unity and coherence which exists in modern narratives. Moreover, ambiguity, which is an inevitable component of postmodernist narratives, lays the ground for readers to have different understandings of the stories. One noteworthy point about postmodernism is that emphasizing the components and characteristics of postmodernism does not signify that it has come to the fore based on a definite formula and theory. On the contrary, postmodernism arose unconsciously from the texts under the new circumstances after World War II. According to Hutcheon, the essence of postmodernism is double, baffling, and mysterious. Furthermore, exploiting and affirming all the conventions of fiction and historiography, they are intentionally subverted in a postmodernist fiction. Hutcheon adds:

I would like to begin by arguing that, for me, postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges—be it in architecture, literature, painting, sculpture, film, video, dance, TV, music, philosophy, aesthetic theory, psychoanalysis, linguistics, or historiography. (1988, p. 9)

In opposition to modernism and its desire for discipline, “postmodernism is fundamentally contradictory” and undisciplined both in its theme and its structure (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 10). The already established criteria are all upside down in postmodern fiction to make them congruent with the characteristics of the time and the era. Among all of the literary schools, postmodernism is probably the most reluctant one to have a clear-cut definition despite all the recent endeavors to define and delineate it. Although many theorists believe that postmodernism is a vague and perplexing term, yet others believe that certain fictional features might turn a story into a postmodern one. Intertextuality, self-reflexivity, vicious circles, and plural histories are some of the postmodern elements which actively participate in the production of metafiction. Elaborating on each one of these elements, the current study attempts to provide a commendable account of “historiographic metafiction”. Arguably, taking advantage of these elements, metafiction writers question the relation between the subjective reality and the objective reality. Linda Hutcheon, the Canadian theoretician, has coined the term “historiographic metafiction” (1988) to refer to works which by focusing on history as their subject matter vacillate between reality and fiction. She defines “historiographic metafiction” as “those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages: *The French Lieutenant’s Woman, Midnight’s Children, Ragtime, Legs, G., Famous Last Words*” (1988, p. 5). Indeed, historiographic metafiction amalgamates two terms of ‘historiographic’ and ‘metafiction’. The first term points to works which deal with history and historical texts. And the second term is a phrase coined by William Gass (1960) to refer to stories wrapped inside stories. Indeed, metafiction concentrates on the writing process of the text. Rather than concealing the artificiality of their stories, metafiction writers wittingly refer to their works as self-made stories. Thus, they provide an opportunity for readers to know what they read is a story and not reality. Additionally, employing this technique and blurring the borders between fact and fiction, metafiction writers try to unveil the fact that history is also a story like other stories and one must not take it too serious. Undeniably, this technique of writing is one of the most significant ones within postmodernist fiction. Gass, trying to clarify metafiction and offering a better understanding of it, states:

There are metatheories in mathematics and logic, ethics has its linguistic over soul, everywhere lingos to converse about lingos are being contrived, and the case is no different in the novel. I don’t mean merely those drearily predictable pieces about writers who are writing about what they are writing, but those, like some of the work of Borges, Barth, and Flann O’Brien, for example, in which the forms of fiction serve as the material upon which further forms can be imposed. Indeed, many of the so-called antinovels are really metafiction. (1971, pp. 24-25)

In addition, in defining metafiction, Waugh asserts that “metafiction is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (1995, p. 2). Waugh also carries on her discussion by declaring that the writers of metafiction build an illusion to destroy it afterwards. Waugh believes that no reality exists in the outside world; reality takes shape in a fictional world which we may identify as true. The interesting point is that, by referring to the process of writing the text, the writer wittingly destroys that already made reality. Accordingly, Waugh says:

Metafictional novels tend to be constructed on the principle of a fundamental and sustained opposition: the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion. In other words, the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction. (1984, p. 6)

Therefore, by writing a story and elaborating on its process of writing, the writer discloses that it is a fictional illusion. Having this point in mind, we can generalize it to the historical narratives and claim that they are also fictional illusions. According to Hutcheon, when the term ‘postmodern’ is used for a literary work, it should be metafictional and historical and echo the context of the past. She also differentiates this way of writing from the historical way:

The term postmodernism, when used in fiction, should, by analogy, best be reserved to describe fiction that is at once metafictional and historical in its echoes of the texts and contexts of the past. In order to distinguish this paradoxical beast from traditional historical fiction, I would like to label it “historiographic metafiction”. (1989, p. 3)

Moreover, she refers to some widespread and familiar novels such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Ragtime*, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, and *The Name of the Rose* as instances of historiographic metafiction which she had in mind while theorizing this technique. Naming these literary works per se has some tinge of history narration. In fact, “historiographic metafiction” is a new form of historiography. Under the influence of postmodernism and its creativity in combining history and fiction, historical writings have developed to a new form and the traditional way of history writing is not valid any longer. The inherent formation and development of such a postmodern narrative genre, for sure, has been influenced by and has received support from many other intellectuals and literary works as some were introduced theoretically and operationally. On this line at postmodern narrative genre, a substantial discrepancy exists between the historical writings and “historiographic metafiction”. The discrepancy is that in the traditional way of historiography, individuals, events, objects, and anything related to them could be discussed and talked about provided that they had no incompatibility with real historical figures and their lives. Besides, they had to be employed in a plausible way. In other words, the reader was convinced that they had once occurred and their occurrence could be certified by the existing historical documents. This way of writing is in full contrast with postmodernist “historiographic metafiction” which not only refuses to comply with traditional rules, but also purposefully violates them. Picking real historical personages and events out and putting them in a constructed world of fiction are what the writer of “historiographic metafiction” does. These writers are not historians rather they are known as historiographers working in the field of fiction. Utilizing this technique, postmodernists try to draw the reader’s attention to this significant yet forgotten point that real historical events can never be retold in their pure form. Historical representations are neither pure nor innocent. What can be attained from the past are just the written records of it, which are not valid. As Hutcheon argues, “We cannot know the past except through its texts: its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are texts. Even the institutions of the past, its social structures and practices, could be seen, in one sense, as social texts” (1988, p. 16). Hence, according to what Hutcheon believes, a neutral and objective history never exists. Similarly, we can never achieve the pure form of the past events. “The past can never be attainable in a pure form as historical events; it can only be reached through chronicles and archival documents” (Kirca 2009, p. 7). Hutcheon also assumes that whatever the historians write about history and the past is accompanied by their own fictitious

legends. Therefore, the ultimate goal of postmodernists who focus on writing “historiographic metafiction” which means to subvert the prevailing perception of facts and fiction and to display the relation between them as a disputable matter. Prior to postmodernism, literary movements never questioned the relation between the story and the real world. Literature was the portrayal of the real world as it is. Emphasizing the fictitious nature of historical narratives, Hutcheon challenges the previous ideologies about history and literature. She additionally diverts the attention of the reader to the indecisive essence of historical narratives so as to accentuate the written nature of historical narratives. Indeed, she does not mean to deny the existence of history and historical events. Contrariwise, Hutcheon believes in history: “The past really did exist. The question is: *how* can we know that past today—and *what* can we know of it?” (1988, p. 92). At post modernism, the differentiation of reality and history as well as literature has become somehow nebulous. Truly, what she suspects is the certitude of historical narratives. She tries to show that we should not regard historical narratives as objective reality. “History can never be objective, according to White, since it has an ideological dimension and because it needs to be told and narrated, hence its narrative character” (Murray 2002, p. IV). Possibly, the reason is that what we know of the past has reached us by historians. “Historiography and fiction, as we saw earlier, *constitute* their objects of attention; in other words, they decide which events will become facts” (Hutcheon 1988, p. 122). Although all the past events have the potential to be truthfully recounted, only those chosen by the writer or the historiographer find an outlet to be narrated. In fact, the determinative factor for this selection is the person who writes them. Thus, no historical fact can exist without the help of historians. Therefore, as long as the existence of history and historical facts rests on historians, we can never manage to access objective and unbiased historical facts. Hence, historical facts come to existence as soon as they are written or narrated by historians. Hutcheon properly states:

In 1910 Carl Becker wrote that “the facts of history do not exist for any historian until he creates them”, that representations of the past are selected to signify whatever the historian intends. It is this very difference between events (which have no meaning in themselves) and facts (which are given meaning) that postmodernism obsessively foregrounds. (1988, p. 122)

No wonder that historians can permute and alter the historical events and, consequently, the entire history. Definitely, they are not absolutely loyal to history. They try to interpret the history through fiction and their anguishes. While recording or narrating the historical events, some parts may be more emphasized whereas some other parts are ignored. So the process of recording history is inevitably acquainted with omission and revision. This can happen either as a failure in recording or as a result of following some ideological purposes. Kirca suitably points to this notion in his thesis:

Historical events can only be reached through documents and other texts and historiography turns historical events into historical “facts”. Such an argument stresses the role of the historian as a determining factor in giving significance to certain historical events and inserting only these events into historical accounts while ignoring others, sometimes for ideological reasons. (2009, p. 7)

So it bares the point that perusing diverse ideologies and purposes, historical facts can be presented in a number of disparate ways which at the same time signify dissimilar interpretations. Since no one can return to the past and personally feel and experience the past events, the only way for her/him to know the past is through reading the recordings of other people who have once been experiencing those events. Auster has tried to link the voyage between the past and the present in his work. The disadvantage of such accessibility to the past is that recordings can never be trusted which has proved to be the Achilles hill of postmodern literary endeavor. Maybe the reason is that they have been transmitted to us in textual forms, and texts are not trustworthy. “And in arguing that *history* does not exist except as text, it does not stupidly and “gleefully” deny that the *past* existed, but only that its accessibility to us now is entirely conditioned by textually” (Hutcheon 1988, p. 16). One outstanding point to remember is that what is available from the past is the revised version of it. Therefore, while speaking about history, it does not mean that all past events and happenings are expressed in a pure way and are eventually labeled as history. What

is meant is that, like literature, history is also the product of language. Thus, the historians' claim to represent an external reality which is objective is a wrong and faithless claim. So the past is what has been shaped in our mind based on the already written texts which are the products of historians:

Dominick La Capra has argued that all documents or artifacts used by historians are not neutral evidence for reconstructing phenomena which are assumed to have some independent existence outside them. All documents process information and the very way in which they do so is itself a historical fact that limits the documentary conception of historical knowledge. This is the kind of insight that has led to a semiotics of history, for documents become signs of events which the historian transmutes into facts. (Hutcheon 1988, p. 122)

Therefore, the reason that a plethora of narratives exist for a certain event of the past can be justified through the point that historians have different concerns and interests and thus belittle, exaggerate, or totally change that event as it accords with their aims. It would be difficult then to distinguish and discrete what has really happened and what the ingenuity of the narrator has produced. It is one of the most pivotal matters one deals with in historiography. While talking about ideological reasons behind historical revisions, it should not be forgotten that these ideological motives can comprise a vast area of political, social, gender, feministic issues, among others. Hutcheon refers to the ideological reasons behind history writing:

Thanks to the pioneering work of Marxists, feminists, gays, black and ethnic theorists, there is a new awareness in these fields that history cannot be written without ideological and institutional analysis, including analysis of the act of writing itself. It is no longer enough to be suspicious or playful as a writer about art or literature (or history, though there it never really was); the theorist and the critic are inevitably implicated in both ideologies and institutions. (1988, p. 91)

Anyway what matters in "historiographic metafiction" is that it decenters the centers and pays more attention to the marginalized in history. Certainly, this fact reminds us the Bakhtinian notions of "carnavalesque" and "polyphony" which turn every center upside down and provide an opportunity for everyone to play a role. As a matter of fact, postmodernist novels resist the deficiencies of logo centrism and oppose them. "Much of the debate over the definition of the term "postmodernism" has revolved around what some see as a loss of faith in this centralizing and totalizing impulse of humanist thought" (Hutcheon 1988, p. 58). Being inspired by the aforementioned Bakhtinian notions, as Hutcheon acknowledges herself; she lays the ground for "historiographic metafiction" to deal with people and events that were always marginalized. In this way, postmodern narrative genre achieves the ability to gain the ability of capturing the past and the present and pave the way for the postmodern man to find a sort of condolence for his existential obsessions.

### 3.2. Plural Histories

Historiography is a prevalent term in postmodernist literature. Actually, postmodernism is always dealing with history in one way or another. Hutcheon states that "one of the few common denominators among the detractors of postmodernism is the surprising, but general, agreement that the postmodern is ahistorical" (1988, p. 87). However, by utilizing the term "historiographic" for defining postmodernist literature, Hutcheon makes an endeavor to reject the claim that postmodern literature is ahistorical. "Despite its detractors, the postmodern is not ahistorical or dehistoricized, though it does question our (perhaps unacknowledged) assumptions about what constitutes historical knowledge" (p. xii). The significant point which one should keep in mind about history is that each historical record is about something which occurred once, and what historians do is to determine which part of that record is real. In this way they make their works different from fictional ones. White states:

Every history is a history of some entity which existed for a reasonable period of time that the historian wishes to state what is literally true of it in a sense which distinguishes the historian from a teller of fictitious or mendacious stories. (1963, p. 4)

Thus, it is not a surprise to say that every period has its own truths and history. Interestingly, these truths are not fixed and they vary from one period of time to another. This explicitly signifies that we should never expect to face a single account of a historical event. Hutcheon alleges that, in the recent decades, truth have been converted to a relative concept. Aiming to elaborate on such a concept, she offers the history of India and Pakistan as presented in Rushdie's *Shame* (1983) as a sample:

In *Shame* we learn that when Pakistan was formed, the *Indian* history had to be written out of the Pakistani past. But who did this work? History was rewritten by immigrants, in Urdu and English, the imported tongues. As the narrator puts it, he is forced—by history—to write in English “and so forever alter what is written”. (1988, p. 108)

This indicates how the histories of these two countries have changed for good. Even though they are recorded as reality, they are actually lies or blurred reality and subsequently not praiseworthy. What Hutcheon emphasizes is that these various lies are manifested as multiplicity of truths or “plural histories”. As a consequence, what we encounter is an altered history which can be presented in multiple ways:

Past events can be altered. History gets rewritten. Well, we've just found that this applies to the real world too....Maybe the real history of the world is changing constantly? And why? Because history is a fiction. It's a dream in the mind of humanity, forever striving...towards what? Towards perfection. (Hutcheon 1988, p. 111)

It is thus implied that history is considered as fiction. The interesting point we should bear in mind is that as long as history is written, there would be plural forms of it. Therefore, changing the past events leads to an overall change in the whole history of a certain era. Nowadays the borders of literature and history have been altered due to the prevalence of violence and war on the globe.

As postmodernists believe, history does not end; history has no teleological status in the postmodernist worldview. Rather, history is cyclical. As Hutcheon argues, “Postmodern fiction suggests that to re-write or to re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological” (1988, p. 110). The noticeable point is that in the course of rewriting history, history acquires its own meaning. Hutcheon claims that “Postmodernism returns to confront the problematic nature of the past as an object of knowledge for us in the present” (p. 92). Technically, since it is through language that the act of writing takes place, meaning also takes shape through writing. Accordingly, Waugh states:

The simple notion that language passively reflects a coherent, meaningful and ‘objective’ world is no longer tenable. Language is an independent, self-contained system which generates its own ‘meanings’. Its relationship to the phenomenal world is highly complex, problematic and regulated by convention. ‘Meta’ terms, therefore, are required in order to explore the relationship between this arbitrary linguistic system and the world to which it apparently refers. In fiction they are required in order to explore the relationship between the world of the fiction and the world *outside* the fiction. (1984, p. 3)

Regarding this aspect of the work, Waugh nicely stresses the meaning-making nature of language and its literary devices in the production of stories. Therefore, it can be said that by applying different literary devices in producing a literary work, writers can create their own version of truth. The version of narration of war and its side effects has become so loose and overlapping that it becomes so hard to come up with a single true version of reality and nature of war. The imminent threat of international conflicts or phenomena of these types have given rise to the creation of works of art which have tried to manifest such blurred themes and obsessions on the line of either their personal taste or artistic intellectuality.

#### 4. Conclusion

Paul Auster, the great novelist, has tried to reflect through the lenses of plural histories reflected

in the characterization as well as postmodern narrative viewpoints regarding the theme of concern and worries has tried to give rise to the manifestation and revelation of postmodern man's existential obsessions the prominent of which has been the threat of international conflicts and the like going on across the globe in his work *Man in the Dark*. On the line of his theme development, he has been able to delineate via the framework of history and the fiction narrative genre the postmodern man existential obsessions and the psychological obstacles accompanying them. To him, the boundary between the reality and the fantasy, the text and the context, the history and the literature, the modern and postmodern, and the conscious and subconscious has become so bibulous whose illustration would cease the sufferings and the anguishes of the readers as they have tried to console with the characters via the elements of postmodern narrative fiction in his introduced novel. The introduction of an ominous international conflict giving rise to the emergence of another war and its accompanying impacts done through projection procedure has been one of the great tact's he has deployed in his novel on the line of his theme projection and development.

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