The Racial Prejudice in City in Paul Auster’s Novels*

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In Auster’s novels, the racial prejudice occupies a vital part; the whites presently take a majority privileged position in the mainstream culture; both the blacks and Jews become the target of racial prejudice which is vividly embodied in City of Glass: The Graphic Novel, Ghosts, Man in the Dark, In the Country of Last Things.

Keywords: the racial prejudice, city, Paul Auster’s novels

Introduction

Ethnic and racial diversity has become one of the major characters in urban development. However, in the city crisis, compared to consumption, sex, and gambling, the racial prejudice has become more radical. In Auster’s novels, the whites presently occupy a majority privileged position in the mainstream culture; although there is a great difference between blacks and Jews, both the blacks and Jews become the target of racial prejudice.

Landscape of Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Ethnic and racial diversity has marked city history. It is impossible to separate the ideas, concepts, processes, and spatial manifestations of ethnicity and race from an understanding of the city.

From etymological perspective, the term “ethnicity” is stemmed from the ancient Greek ethnos, which means a “distinct people”. In this context, an ethnic group is consisted of individuals who believe themselves to be different from other culture groups. There is a religious aspect to ethnos, as it is originated from the Greek word ethnikos, which meant “heathen” or “pagan”, or those that were not Christian or Jewish. This idea of cultural difference emerged in Europe only in the 18th century as national states engaged in colonialism and imperialism over non-Europeans, which in turn generated the invention of a homogeneous national culture based on perceived racial superiority (Airriess, 2006, p. 4). The term ethnicity, or the condition of belonging to an ethnic group, in fact did not appear until the first third of the 20th century, and thus is a relatively new term associated with modernity. Although there is no all-agreed definition of the term ethnic, a working definition of ethnic group is a group of persons who perceive themselves as sharing a common ancestry and a set of shared characteristics such as language, religion, territory, and sometimes race. There is no single ethnic characteristic; however, that defines an ethnic group in that a characteristic important in defining one group may be less important or irrelevant for another group. Qualifying this simple definition includes observations that ethnic groups can be real or imagined, originate with reference to relationships to other groups, and that awareness of being a member of an ethnic group changes through time and space (Airriess, 2006, p. 7), because ethnicity or ethnic belonging is imagined, invented, or socially constructed by cultural markers.

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Ethnicity has sometimes been mixed or combined with the idea of race to create “ethno-racial” groups, particularly in plural or multi-ethnic countries such as the United States. While race may have bearing on ethnic identity, the distinction between the two concepts is that ethnicity is about group self-identification as “Us” while race is oriented to categorizing the “Other” and is almost always externally imposed (Airriess, 2006, p. 23). Race as a surrogate for ethnicity in the census, for example, is a “fictive” or fabricated cultural category and is not a naturally or biologically determined community (Airriess, 2006, p. 24). Indeed, it was common in this country until the early 20th century to refer to the Irish, southern Europeans, and Jews as separate races. But there are dubious connections between race and ethnicity in that some people sharing the same ethnicity possess different skin color and those of the same skin color are not considered co-ethnics.

Since World War II, and particularly beginning in the late 1960s, many of the industrialized countries of the world, and especially the English-speaking “settler countries” of the United States, Canada, and Australia, have become far more ethnically diverse in a new age of migration (Airriess, 2006, p. 1). This new age of migration possesses fundamentally different circumstances and dimensions; one of the characteristics of long-distance migration is the globalization of migration because immigrants originate from a more culturally diverse constellation of countries. Secondly, revolutions in communications and transportation have greatly transformed the propensity and ability of individuals and families to migrate from some countries to the desirable countries. The development in global communications has exposed potential migrants to images, whether real or not, of life and economic opportunities elsewhere. Long-distance air transport has also become less expensive and more frequent because of the deregulation of transport associated with globalization. The third characteristic of this new age of migration is the ability of immigrants to show identities that span the social, political, cultural, and economic worlds of both origin and destination countries. Because of the outcome of the civil rights culture of the 1960s, immigrants are arriving in a country that values the inherent differences in culture or multiculturalism, rather than subscribing to the linear and single-direction process of assimilation whereby newcomers must conform to the dominant and majority population culture. Fourthly, the new migration is characterized by immigrants arriving as families rather than individuals as well as the proportion of females in the immigrant streams being greater than males, which would expand the population in future. As America, the new circumstances and dimensions that characterize the new migration have led to Europe being replaced by Latin America and Asia as the primary source regions of immigrants.

Studying ethnicity and race in the city is critically important for the basic reason that periodic surveys inform us of ignorance relative to the rest of the world. Because of the growing diversity of immigrants in the city, it is incumbent upon the majority population to acquire a greater sensitivity and appreciation of these new comers. In disposing of the melting pot and assimilationist models that have guided the national perspective on ethnicity and race, we need to understand, embrace, and celebrate ethnic and cultural difference. Studying ethnicity and race in the city is highly rewarding for understanding the conflicts in the city. Most obvious is to help us specifically understand the spatial patterns of the complex coast-to-coast kaleidoscope of ethnicity and race. It has also assisted in the greater appreciation of ethnicity and race as communities produce a distinctive visual material culture to satisfy their particular needs, wants, and desires.

The Black and the White

The transatlantic slave trade, the largest forced spatial transfer of human beings in world history, was the western world’s first multinational enterprise and responsible for exporting almost 12 million Africans to the
so-called New World. The transatlantic slave trade started in 1444 with the shipment of 235 Africans from the Guinea Coast of Africa to Portugal, where they were sold as slaves. By 1750 there were at least 236,000 slaves in the English colonies of the Americas. The first significant spatial concentration of black slaves developed in the tobacco growing region of Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina. Since cotton production was also labor intensive, African slaves were imported to labor on cotton plantations. By 1790 there were 660,000 African slaves in the American South. The plantation system sustained slavery and created a permanent imprint on the cultural landscape of the South, where it became a powerful icon of the region that lasted into the 20th century (Airriess, 2006, p. 27).

Following Emancipation and for most of the 20th century, the geographical and social solution to the race problem in America was the doctrine of “separate but equal”, not black colonization or separate development. For instances, in the South, blacks drank water as long as it was at the “colored only” fountains, blacks and whites attended the same county fairs, but on separate days. Blacks saw the same doctor as whites but as long as they waited in the back room, blacks could ride the city bus as long as they sat in the back of the bus, but if the bus was crowded, they were expected, like good servants, to give up their seats to a waiting white person. On the other hand, if seats were available in the white section but not the “color” section, blacks were expected to stand in the aisle. “Separate but equal” stamped blacks with a badge of inferiority. Blacks could not escape the persistent stereotypes that reinforced them as biologically inferior to whites.

One of the most important chapter of black migration arose around the First World War—the Great Migration. Between 1916 and 1918 some half-million blacks migrated from the South to the North. Due to the volume of these migration streams, the proportion of the black population residing in the South decreased from 90 percent in 1890 to 50 percent in 2000. This substantial migration stream dramatically changed the ethnic face of northern cities. According to Christopher, the proportion of the black population residing in urban areas increased from 20 percent in 1890 to almost 50 percent in 1940. At the end of the 1920s seven cities had a black population of more than 100,000. The number of blacks residing in urban areas increased more than 800 percent between 1900 and 1970. And by 2000 almost 90 percent of the black population resided in urban areas compared to only 20 percent in 1890. Over one-half of the black population now resides inside the central cities of metropolitan regions.

Breaking away from past restriction of planter domination, urban blacks had more chances to participate and claim themselves culturally and socially. For Alain Locke, the city made a great difference because it forced the “Negro” from the simple life of the rural community to the complex life of the city (Airriess, 2006, p. 82). The urban “Negro” saw himself in wide and complex terms. The “New Negro” did not follow the last specification of passive behavior, but produced new social geographies by moving and crossing the hidebound boundary drawn by the race doctrine of “separate but equal”. During the 1920s, the black northern concentrated residential areas produced a vigorous culture symbolized by the “Harlem Renaissance”, which popularized the culture of southern blacks who migrated north. The political struggle after World War II led to a further re-evaluation of black identity in the United States. Malcolm X and the Martin Luther King Jr. launched civil rights movements which have played a great role in awakening of black history.

*The New York Trilogy*, a highly entertaining yet sophisticated work, of which *Ghosts* (1990b) is the second part, is coherently read and criticized as a representative of the American postmodern novel. Particularly, Auster’s employment and deconstruction of the traditional elements of the detective story, bringing about a
regressive linguistic investigation of the meaning, nature, and function of language, such as the indeterminacy of reference of text to meaning, of signifier to signified, makes this trilogy compliant to postmodern depiction of interpretation. The first installment of The New York Trilogy, City of Glass (1990a), later reprinted as City of Glass: The Graphic Novel, perhaps presents this point with the most force and clarity. As the title implies, at least two predicaments, one is “it evokes both transparency, the vision of a city or language completely present to itself, and fragility, the vulnerability and potential shattering of a world in which transparency would be replaced by shimmering shards of broken glass”, the other is it might thus suggest either a place where man may find his original, transparent language, or a place where man must learn to speak many different languages, where he can never be fully present to himself, where he is constantly being asked to translate, and translate himself into, the language of the other, where he would come to understand himself not purely and naturally but always through the reflection, refraction, and mediation of others. (Brault, 1997, p. 230)

Ghosts, the second novella of the Trilogy, carries forward the same subject and has often been treated only as a part of postmodern unit, and further succession of City of Glass. It has often been read as a mere forward step to explore postmodern themes initiated in the first, such as the shifting boundaries between author, character, and language; the inner life and self-estrangement, etc. The protagonists of Ghosts are deliberately cryptic; their “names” are merely color terms. Blue, a detective, deserts his fiancée and has been hired to watch a man, named Black whose only action appears to be writing in a notebook, and write a report; he takes a flat opposite Black’s and disguises himself in order to meet his subject as beggar, bar mate and salesman; he detects his report for White is in Black’ house and finally when he breaks into Black’s apartment he shoots him, where Blue has come to meet his employer, who turns out to be Black, and there is a third character, who tries to write everything down while employer and employee speak, based on the meta-narrative or postmodern dimension of the narrative; the narrator of Ghosts advises the reader that Black is not real but a transparently fictional construct. To explore Auster’s postmodern traits is not the purpose here, however. Rather, the relationship between the representative reading of the postmodern perspective and the racial conflicts and prejudice in the city mainly in Ghosts will be examined.

From a postmodern perspective, to understand “ethnic” or “race” would commonly be quick to dissolve not only the binary opposition of “white” and “black”, but also the ideological discourses that put up their construction. Ghosts makes this point more complex, while postmodernism in general, and Auster in particular, work diligently to deconstruct self/other binaries in a theoretical sense. To be honest, “the material actuality of American racial history and its psychological after-effects prove more intractable to theoretical re-vision than it might initially appear” (Berlatsky, 2008, p. 112). It is not an exaggeration to say that Ghosts is a novel dedicated primarily to the description of racial domination in the city. What is clear, however, is that Ghosts is not willing to see race or ethnic problem can be ignored in the city, whether it is in the past, the present, or the future. Indeed, any understanding of The New York Trilogy, especially, Ghosts with “White” and “Black” cannot ignore the infiltration of racial or ethnic problem in the city, even as such division is self-consciously deconstructed. Moreover, a close look at racial or ethnic problem may suggest ways of re-evaluating race or ethnic in postmodernism more generally.

In Ghosts, Blue, the detective, is metaphorically imprisoned in a small room to spy on another man, Black, and waiting and wishing for Black to do something. The narrator says the location is unimportant, “let’s say Brooklyn Heights, for the sake of argument. Some quiet, rarely traveled street not far from the bridge Orange
Street perhaps” (Auster, 1990b, p. 135). After a few days of routine surveillance, Blue start to go outside, and walk up and down the block, and move back and forth along Orange Street in the lovely spring weather, “At one end there is a view of the river, the harbor, the Manhattan skyline, the bridges” (Auster, 1990b, p. 155). It might be easy to pass over the following narration by Auster as a mere racially-tinged episode in *Ghosts* that is occupied by other themes:

In the other direction there is the church, and sometimes Blue goes to the small grassy yard to sit for a while, studying the bronze statue of Henry Ward Beecher. Two slaves are holding on to Beecher’s legs, as though begging him to help them, to make them free at last, and in the brick wall behind there is a porcelain relief of Abraham Lincoln. Blue cannot help but feel inspired by these images, and each time he comes to the churchyard his head fills with noble thoughts about the dignity of man. (Auster, 1990b, p. 156)

In this part, Blue does not give special attention to the bronze statue, more exactly, the race, or, “color”, despite his name, but Auster does. The statue builds Beecher1 as the white hero of the abolitionist movement. Beecher’s sculpture depicting him freeing the slaves reminds Blue of how imprisonment, domination, and even emancipation in this country, as later, Black tells Blue that before paying Walt Whitman a visit Thoreau went to hear Henry Ward Beecher’s sermon in Plymouth Church, a place which was also visited by Abraham Lincoln and Charles Dickens. As A. E. Winship comments “Mr. Beecher was the first man to become nationally great without bowing reverently to any traditions, the first successfully and publicly to eliminate all artificiality in thought and phrase”.2 Dr. Lyman Abbott states, on the one hand, “The true greatness of Beecher was therefore the greatness of a great personality; and his true work in the world, that of bringing to bear personal power for the moving of men toward righteousness and toward God”. On the other hand, “we were in danger of forgetting these, as some were so shocked by the unusual about Mr. Beecher…He auctioneered a slave off in his church to secure the funds for her purchase and liberation”, “Obedience to laws, even though they sin against me; disobedience to every law that commands me to sin, was his principle”.3 There is the drastic shift in Beecher’s image which he presents: a shift from an abolitionist to racist. Positively, the historical truth, however, is more contradictory; he was not only an abolitionist, but also as a racist whose objection to slavery was not supported by a belief “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that they are among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. As Lyman Abbott says, Beecher employed theatrical auctions of slaves into freedom, with light-skinned slaves nearly always chosen in order to gain the most sympathy from his white constituency; Beecher’s son described these slaves as “white and beautiful” suggesting that these two terms are inextricable (Berlatsky, 2008, p. 110). However, it is not astonishing for us, what Beecher focuses on is “white” slaves, he gives his own Social Darwinian view of racial problem,

1 Henry Ward Beecher, the famous, Brooklyn preacher, was born at Litchfield, Connecticut, in the year 1813, and he entered Amherst College at the age of 17, and graduated there in 1834. He found a position at the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, and was settled over that church in the latter part of the year 1847. He soon succeeded to secure one of the largest congregations of any preacher in the United States.
2 This quotation comes from Journal of Education, July 3, 1913, p. 12.
3 The American Journal of Theology, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Oct., 1904), p. 792. And here, law refers to the Fugitive Slave Law.
William G. McLouglin comments that Beecher places the burden of teaching the former slaves on the white community in speech, and elsewhere. He also suggests that it is the African’s tendency to lack the qualities listed, making him easier to enslave. While Beecher says, “the more he is like an animal, the easier it will be to hold him in thrall and harness” (Berlatsky, 2008, p. 110), he obviously held the notion that the African is closer to the animal than the European, and that the slaves must be trained to be more “human” in order to be completely worthy of liberty.

Racism Beecher held is hard for Blue as a point; however, few people can see the drastic shift the sculpture carries in its historical context. It is, after all, hardly a measure of “nobility” and “dignity” that African Americans, forced into a subjugated, inferior, and dependent position throughout American history, are placed in that same position in a statue that purportedly celebrates their freedom. For the reader, however, satire does not permeate the statue, even if one knows little about Beecher’s idea and history. Behind the brick wall, there is a porcelain relief of Abraham Lincoln, the white person, which sheds more light on Blue, a reflective of the “dignity of man”, as a source of noble thoughts about the dignity of man.

What’s more, the racial conflicts in the city are enhanced by the next episode. Little by little, Blue becomes more audacious in his strayings from Black. One bright Tuesday afternoon in May of 1947, Blue makes an excursion to Ebbets Field (Ebbets Field was a Major League Baseball stadium as the home of the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team of the National League from 1913 to 1957 in Brooklyn), and he leaves Black behind in his room on Orange Street. As he takes his seat at the ball park, he is struck by the sharp clarity of the colors around him: the green grass, the brown dirt, the white ball, the blue sky above. Each thing is distinct from every other thing, wholly separate and defined…Watching the game, he finds it difficult to take his eyes off Robinson, lured constantly by the blackness of the man’s face, and he thinks it must take courage to do what he is doing, to be alone like that in front of so many strangers, with half of them no doubt wishing him to be dead. As the game moves along, Blue finds himself cheering whatever Robinson does … and as Blue shuffles off with the rest of the crowd and makes his way home, it occurs to him that Black did not cross his mind even once. Jackie Robinson, the first African American to play in the major leagues, abandons the minor leagues and joined Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, who openly breaks the major league baseball color line. What Blue sees in the court is Robinson’s wonderful performance; however, Robinson’s promotion met a mixed reception among newspapers and white major league players. Although the policy of segregation has been abolished in the United States for a long time in 1947, racial conflict and prejudice still exists everywhere. In the Dodger clubhouse, some Dodger players insinuates they would sit out rather than play alongside Robinson, finally he was supported by the Dodgers manager, even not for the “human rights”, but for “I do not care if the guy is yellow or black, or if he has stripes like a fuckin’ zebra. I’m the manager of this team, and I say he plays. What’s more, I say he can make us all rich”. Robinson was also derided by opposing teams; he nonetheless becomes the target of rough physical play by opponents as well as the game fans insulted him, even KKK claimed that they would shoot him, and the police said he would be expelled when he first played. Blue cheers for him, “lured constantly by the blackness of the man’s face”, and his performance. Meanwhile, Blue contemplates the moods of the audience, “with half of them no doubt wishing him to be dead”. On the one hand, Blue makes a celebration for the abortion of slavery and racism resulted from the statues; on the other hand, what Blue senses is the overt reaction in the court against Robinson. In this light, Blue’s “inspiration”, “noble thoughts about the dignity of man” is terribly satirized. Auster implies the contradiction of racial problem, although the episodes are separated by “little by little”, as a narration, they occupy the same page separated by
not even one paragraph. Indeed, the consistent mention of Beecher, Lincoln, and Robinson, as well as Blue’s struggle against freedom, suggests the race or ethnic problem in the city in 1947, which is still haunted by the “ghosts” of the 1860s, slavery and its legacy of dependence and abuse, providing warnings for future.

Moreover, Auster dissolves the racial categories by playing with color and words in *Ghosts*. At the ballpark, he is struck by “the sharp clarity of the colors around him: the green grass, the brown dirt, the white ball, the blue sky above. Each thing is distinct from every other thing, wholly separate and defined”. After the second direct contact Blue disguises as a jovial blowhard by the name of Snow, a life insurance salesman from Kenosha, Wisconsin; Blue makes an effort to sleep; he thinks how strange it is that everything has its own color:

> Take blue for example, he says. There are bluebirds and blue jays and blue herons. There are cornflowers and periwinkles. There is noon over New York. There are blueberries, huckleberries, and the Pacific Ocean. There are blue devils and blue ribbons and bluebloods. (Auster, 1990, p. 179)

> There is a voice singing the blues. There is my father’s police uniform. There are blue laws and blue movies. There are my eyes and my name. He pauses, suddenly at a loss for more blue things, and then moves on to white. There are seagulls, he says, and terns and storks and cockatoos. There are the walls of this room and the sheets on my bed. There are lilies-of-the valley, carnations, and the petals of daisies. There is the flag of peace and Chinese death. There is mother’s milk and semen. There are my teeth. There are the whites of my eyes. There are white bass and white pines and white ants. There is the President’s house and white rot. There are white lies and white heat. Then, without hesitating, he moves on to black, beginning with black books, the black market, and the Black Hand. There is night over New York, he says. There are the Chicago Black Sox. There are blackberries and crows, blackouts and black marks, Black Tuesday and the Black Death. There is blackmail. There is my hair. There is the ink that comes out of a pen. There is the world a blind man sees. Then, finally growing tired of the game, he begins to drift, saying to himself that there is no end to it (Auster, 1990b, pp. 179-180).

> Obviously, Auster depicts three colors, same as the three protagonists’ names, blue, white and black. As Winthrop Jordan so effectively expounds in his book, *White Over Black*, colors, and white and black in particular, are associated with cultural connotation. “White and black connoted purity and filthiness, virginity and sin, virtue and baseness, beauty and ugliness, beneficence and evil, God and the devil” (Jordan, 1968, p.7). If blackness connotes bestiality, evil, punishment, weakness, and paganism in Western iconography, whiteness refers to humanity, goodness, reward, strength, and religion (Jordan, 1968, p. 56).

Oddly enough, Blue’s idea (everything in the world has its own color) and list of “colored things” is not too much consistent with the connotation which Jordan signifies; on the contrary, there are too much discontinuous from the connotation to deconstruct the binary opposition. Blue starts the “white” things with the birds “seagulls, and terns and storks and cockatoos”, and then flowers “lilies-of-the valley, carnations, and the petals of daisies”, and more neutral things, “walls of this room and the sheets on my bed”, what’s more important, the negative associations of “white”, such as “the flag of peace and Chinese death, white rot, white lies and white heat”. While Blue’s list of black things mainly comprises mainly negative associations, which has a long-term prejudice, “black books, the black market, the Black Hand, black marks, Black Tuesday, the Black Death and blackmail”, simultaneously, including ambiguous associations “my hair, the ink that comes out of a pen, the world a blind man sees”. Obviously, there are no positive references. The deep racial prejudice
is strengthened by Blue’s “there is no end to it”. As the title of *Ghosts*, “white” and “black” suggests transparency, the ideal logocentric relationship between signifier and signified, connotes a lack of substance.

Finally, when Blue comes to Black’s apartment to see him, Black awaits him, masked and armed with a revolver; Blue disarms Black and attacks him, rendering him unconscious, possibly dead.

He removes the mask from Black’s face and puts his ear against his mouth, listening for the sound of Black’s breath. There seems to be something, but he can’t tell if it’s coming from Black or himself. If he’s alive now, Blue thinks, it won’t be for long. And if he’s dead, then so be it. (Auster, 1990b, p. 191)

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon argues “violence will be claimed and taken over by the native at the moment when, deciding to embody history in his own person, he surges into the forbidden quarters” (Fanon, 1963, p. 40) and “At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect” (Fanon, 1963, p. 94). That is, blacks should take violence to gain their freedom, and “self-respect”, rather than expect to be freed by the whites; freedom is a result of black’s struggle rather than a gift by whites. This point is ironically expressed in *Ghosts*’ statue of Beecher and relief of Lincoln who is portrayed as “giving” the slaves their freedom. Blue’s final violence too might be seen as a struggle for his freedom against his master (White). Not only does Blue kill his “master”, White, but he also simultaneously kills the images of both “White” and “Black” and still the binary opposition of the master/slave dichotomy.

Blue has to understand that White and Black are the same person. His secretive, elusive employer White does not exist after all; he is quite literally absent, because he is the absence of color: He is Black. Blue’s identity begins to decay, together with Black’s, White’s and Blue’s, three subjectivities collapses. Just as the dissolution between Black and White as characters (and as races), the blurring of color connotation is deconstructed, and the direct reference Blue initially attributes to words, colors, and races is subverted. If, according to postmodern/poststructuralist logic, the divisions between black and white are unsound, then the basis for oppression and prejudice based on such divisions must also be untenable.

At the end of *Ghosts*, Blue stands up from his chair, puts on his hat, and walks through the door; Blue seems to obtain freedom by violence from the imprisonment watching over Black. However, the narrator of the story adds the last section of the fiction,

> Where he goes after that is not important...Anything is possible, therefore. I myself prefer to think that he went far away, boarding a train that morning and going out West to start a new life. It is even possible that America was not the end of it. In my secret dreams, I like to think of Blue booking passage on some ship and sailing to China. Let it be China, then, and we’ll leave it at that. For now is the moment that Blue stands up from his chair, puts on his hat, and walks through the door. And from this moment on, we know nothing. (Auster, 1990b, p. 192)

This ending implies a haunting of “ghost” of race. “Going out West to start a new life” is a traditional theme in American literature. To go out to west, to some extent, initially equals to “conquer” and settle the Indian lands for the “freedoms” of the white settlers. Likewise, “sailing to China” gives at least a dim hint of the deaths of millions of Chinese, like American Indians.

**From Prejudice to Persecution: Anti-Semitism in City**

A much similar parallel to the racial prejudice of the black may be found in maltreatment, even persecution, of Jews in the city. Like that of the blacks, Jews suffering experience extended for many centuries
over many countries. However, there is a great difference of hostility between the two races. Although, there have been outbreaks of racial violence in the city, in history, Jews in the city were isolated into certain small quarters, usually named as “ghetto”. On the other hand, for black haters, their hatred may be cruel and passionate; the hatred for the Jew haters, their purpose is to eliminate the object in camps as in Hitler’s war.

Although America is claimed to be a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural country, Christianity dominates, the tradition of Christianity culture is the mainstream. In Paul Auster’s novels, the author explores the racial violence against Jews. Interestingly, in all Auster’s novel, he only presents the reader with the story of racial violence against Jews in cities in history and in future.

In *Man in the Dark* (2008), the protagonist tells two true stories within story of racial violence against Jews in cities in the past. One story concerns about the human evil and the other is about the human goodness. The first is told by Jean-Luc, a second cousin of the narrator, August Brill’s wife, who grows up in Belgium (and later moved to France), where the story happens. Jean-Luc tells his teacher’s story. In 1940, when the Germans occupied Belgium, Jean-Luc was just 15, but he joined an underground resistance cell as a courier, and his teacher also joined the resistance, but one morning in 1942, the Germans marched into the school and arrested her and she was put into camp. After many years, he heard her heroic story by chance in a restaurant. In camp, she defied an order from one of the camp guards. The commandant decided to execute her in public, with the entire population of the camp on hand to witness the killing, Jean-Luc tells the narrator, in a quiet voice suddenly filled with emotion, he said: “She was drawn and quartered”.

With long chains attached to both her wrists and both her ankles, she was led into the yard, made to stand at attention as the chains were attached to four jeeps pointing in four different directions, and then the commandant gave the order for the drivers to start their engines. According to the man at the next table, the woman didn’t cry out, didn’t make a sound as one limb after another was pulled off her body. Is such a thing possible? (Auster, 2008, p. 259)

The execution scene, obviously, brings us to Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* in which Foucault depicts in detail the dismemberment of Damiens on March 2, 1757. After almost two hundred years, in 1940s, Nazi repeated brutal act. In the years 1939 to 1945, about five to six million Jews, including one million of them children, sent into camps, and put to death, simply because they were Jews.

Another is a story within a story as well. A woman who covered the arts for the *Independent* or *The Guardian* tells his grandma’s story. When the Nazis entered into power in 1933, her grandmother was 17 or 18; her Jewish family reacted as many others did: “they believed that Hitler was nothing more than a passing upstart and made no effort to leave Germany”. One day, her family received a letter signed by someone claiming to be a captain in the SS. He had been aware of their family; he could be court-martialed for writing the letter to warn them that they are in great danger, as Jews, they would all be arrested and sent to a camp. He was willing to furnish them with exit visas that would allow them to escape to another country on the condition that their daughter would go to the park, sit down on her favorite bench, and stay there for two hours. The reason for this request is that he had fallen in love with their daughter. He needs to see his darling girl one last time before he lost her forever. Her grandma had to do it, even though the family feared it was a hoax. “The next day, the exit visas were slipped under the door as promised, and the family left for England” (Auster, 2008, p. 262). In the context of anti-Semitism, Auster explores the power of love which not only saves the whole family, but saves the hope for human kind. Anti-Semitism is racist discrimination against Jews for the simple reason that they are Jews, “Anti-Semitism is then where it is thought that the Jews are inferior in a permanent
and ineradicable way, and where this is used to dominate, exclude, or (legitimate people to) eliminate Jews because they are Jews” (Fredrickson, 2002, p. 170).

For thousands of years, Jewish people had remained the objects of severe scorn in western world. In Auster’s *In the Country of Last Things*, Auster imagines the anti-Semitism in the city in future. The narrator is trapped in a country of last things; one day, she run into the National Library when she is chased by the police; only that moment did she know that a few of the Jews escaped into the library, when she whispered, “I thought all the Jews were dead”; someone answered, “there are a few of us left”, “it’s not so easy to get rid of us”. In the novel, the Jews cannot avoid the destiny of destroy in the future; the special hatred of the Jews obtains its peculiar power from the historical relationship between Judaism and Christianity. The sentence Auster writes reflects the real feeling of Jews; when Anna meets rabbi for the last time, rabbi’s words impress us most which we find it so startling at the time that we have continue to think about it ever since,

> Every Jew, he said, believes that he belongs to the last generation of Jews. We are always at the end, always standing on the brink of the last moment, and why should we expect things to be any different now? (Auster, 2005, p. 130)

In the future, in cities, the racist thoughts still exist and also there is a political situation which Jews can be served as the scapegoat. From this aspect, the anti-Semitism has been embedded in western culture over many centuries; if human beings do not make a reflection, it will erupt at some moments, for instance, hard economic crisis, etc.

Rather than reducing as time passed, anti-Semitism increased during the end of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. In cities, particularly, the level of anti-Semitism has become epidemic trend. The description about Jews and anti-Semitism in the city can be found throughout Auster’s writings, from early autobiography until the very end of his novels.

**Conclusion**

In Auster’s novels, especially in *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel, Ghosts, Man in the Dark, In the Country of Last thing*, the racial prejudice occupies a vital part; both the blacks and Jews become the target of racial prejudice. As a writer, Auster has been concerning the reflection of the black history and the possibility in the future. As an American Jew and a writers of humanism and appalled by what had happened, Paul Auster examines the history of anti-Semitism, and explores the possibilities in the future in his novels.

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