

## **The Shadow Worlds that Run Parallel to the Real World: Deleuzian Time-Images and Virtualities in Paul Auster's *Sunset Park***

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present paper studies Paul Auster's *Sunset Park* from the Deleuzian perspective. Gilles Deleuze in his books on cinema introduces his theory of metaphysics of imagination through which he analyses images of past as well as the crystal-images in the perceiver's [character's] memory. Accordingly, the paper looks for new ways to apply Deleuze's analysis of cinematic images on literature. Such analysis enables us to study the mentalities of Auster's characters' in terms of their relationship with their past memories, and their rejoining of the society after a self-inflicted exile. As such, Deleuze's treatment of the images of the past through the crystalline narrations and flashbacks will be used to analyse the past mindsets and memories of Auster's characters. The findings will ultimately show how these Deleuzian concepts can work as a new arena to critically evaluate literary works in terms of the role of images of the past and virtualities in creating evolving fictional storyworlds, using Paul Auster's *Sunset Park* as the tool for analysis.

*Keywords:* Paul Auster, Gilles Deleuze, sunset park, time-images, crystal-images, virtuality

### **INTRODUCTION**

Paul Auster's *Sunset Park* (2011) recounts the story of the alienated New Yorker

Miles Heller, his torn-apart family, and a bunch of unfortunate youngsters during the collapsing world of economic ruin and relentless, ever-expanding hardship of the late 2010s. Miles is "twenty-eight years old, and to the best of his knowledge he has no ambitions" (Auster, 2011, p. 4). He is also severely traumatised by an accident that had claimed his brother's life; therefore, his guilt-ridden memory hunts him by various

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levels of the images of the past. However, the main themes of death, abandonment, and time-images of the past are the ones that recur frequently in the novel. While each character is treated through a separate and sometimes overlapping story, the common thread among all their accounts is Miles Heller whose life has been affected socially, economically, and spiritually. Three years after Bobby's death, Miles, a 21-year old student back then, had abandoned college and a promised future to live in self-exile and away from his family and his nightmarish past. Now after seven years of living a life, and forced by events which have threatened his relationship with a Hispanic girl he is planning to marry, he finds no choice but to come back to New York and to join a band of squatters who have illegally occupied an abandoned wooden house in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Miles' subsequent reunion with his parents is mediated through his confidant friend, Bing Nathan, with whom and two other friends he shares the joy of living in a metropolitan Walden. On the other hand, while everybody's life has been disintegrated by the financial recession and the cultural gap between generations, one can find Renzo Michaelson, Miles' godfather, an exceptional character who can think beyond actualities and everyday problems. Renzo believes that his mind is occupied with virtual and potential ideas, even those "things that don't happen" (2011, p. 153). Renzo is a novelist, who mirrors Auster's longing for virtualities by brooding over impossible turns of the past events through what seems to resemble certain types of Deleuzian time-images.

Renzo's philosophical contemplations that encompass the issues of time and causality might be better analysed through Deleuze's notion of crystal-image. Having applied Deleuze's metaphysics of imagination on this occasion, along with diagnosing Miles' frequent flashbacks to his troubled memories and Bing's longing for the past with Deleuzian lens will be extrapolated in the forthcoming sections of this paper.

### THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

To understand Deleuze' transcendental-empiricism, or his middle stance between actual and virtual sides of philosophy, it would be beneficial to refer to the term *intermezzo*. David R. B. Kimbell in his *Italian Opera* (1991) suggests that "between 1700 and 1750 the *Intermezzo* was so popular" (Kimbell, 1991, p. 303) in the classic Italian opera; the term actually referred to an "interlude" (1991, p. 166) or a piece that used to be played between two musical acts. Deleuze and Guattari who are famous for their clever borrowings, have made use of this Italian term to facilitate their philosophy. "Intermezzo" or inter-being is all about reconciliation and "to get outside the dualisms" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005, p. 277). Therefore, one can say that Deleuze's paramount legacy stands between the above two opposing established schools of thought. Such is his reconciliation between the truth and the self, as the centers of traditional transcendentalism and empiricism respectively. *Intermezzo* is also the key to understand the incorporeal materialism through which Deleuze

unites the distinct and the indiscernible, the abstract and the concrete, as well as the actual and the virtual. Now, one can argue that the most interesting upshot of such worldview is evident through Deleuze's treatment of images, where he discovers both the actual and concrete images and the virtual ones in all the levels and classification of his metaphysics of imagination. Consequently, such an image that bears the dual characteristics of actual and virtual would be called time-image. As this paper endeavours to show this, various forms of such Deleuzian time-images could be found in *Sunset Park*. These instances are used to convey the dual nature of characters' longing for their unfulfilled past. This duality is the inherent nature of time-images because they represent Deleuze's transcendental-empiricism. As Trifonova (2004) notes, time-images mark "the end of representation" and "the annihilation of both subject and object" (2004, p. 135) to prove Deleuze's intermezzo between transcendentalism and empiricism. Therefore, we can argue that time-image and, in a general scale, Deleuze's metaphysics of imagination as a whole derive from his general transcendental-empiricism.

To expand and at the same time apply this general worldview, Deleuze draws on the role of cinematic images in shaping literary descriptions in the modern age. Cinema has invariably and permanently changed our view of life. Thus, on the basis of his project of altering philosophical concepts through studying new phenomena, Deleuze has done a detailed study of classic

and modern cinema, published as two influential books respectively: *Cinema I: Movement Image in 1986*, and *Cinema II: Time Image, in 1997*. The latter could be a valuable source for studying the imagery of the past and the portrayal of time through the chaos in which postmodern fiction is living. Nevertheless, as Auster seems to have made intricate use of modern cinematic imagery in his last novel *Sunset Park*, it appears beneficial to draw on some of Deleuze's main arguments regarding his metaphysics of imagination or simply put, his treatment of images.

Deleuze's transcendental-empirical worldview leads him to draw on the relation between the actual and the virtual in his treatment of images. For this purpose, as the present or actual descriptions along with descriptions about the past which add a virtual condition to the actualities of our concrete world, create a circuit between actual and virtual images. Such duality of actual and virtual descriptions is among Auster's narrative techniques in *Sunset Park*, insofar as the characters' minds become the subject of wrestling between various forces from their past or their present environment. This situation, according to Deleuze, rubs the stories off their "causality and linearity" and paves the way for them to "go beyond themselves in destiny" (Deleuze, 1997, p. 49). Interestingly, Auster's novel can be a good example for such Deleuzian "inexplicable secret" of destiny and the "fragmentation of all reality" (Deleuze, 1997, p. 49). Therefore for Deleuze, the most authentic source of virtuality resides

in pure recollections which are “summoned from the depth of memory” and “develop into recollection images” (1997, p. 54). Having surveyed these two forms of images which he tends to call “time-image” (1997, p. 68), we can see how Deleuzian theories when applied on *Sunset Park* can treat Miles’ never-ending nightmares of the accident that took his brother’s life. To this end, it is valuable to note that Deleuzian time-images share one main characteristic: in all of them the circuit or passage between the actuality and the virtuality forms a kind of flashback. In this sense, the actual and the virtual run after each other, and the present fades into the past with either a normal or a slow pace. However, the advance generation of time-images, emerging with the rise of modern times, is completely different, whereas the earlier forms “the broad circuit of recollection in dream” (Deleuze, 1997, p. 68) incorporated “flashbacks” and pure recollections as a whole, the new kind of time-image is born out of a “short circuit” between actualities and virtualities. This “very specific genre of description” is formulated in a way that “instead of being concerned with supposedly distinct object, constantly both absorbs and creates its own object” (1997, p. 68). This project is the “key or rather the heart of” Deleuze’s treatment of images in the modern era and is called “crystal-image” (1997, p. 69). It is worthwhile here to notice Deleuze’s own explanation:

We have seen how, on the broader trajectories, perception and recollection, the real and the

imaginary, the physical and the mental, or rather their images, continually followed each other, running behind each other and referring back to each other around a point of indiscernibility. But this point of indiscernibility is precisely constituted by the smallest circle, that is, the coalescence of the actual image and the virtual image, the image with two sides, actual and virtual at the same time ... when the actual optical image crystallizes with its *own* virtual image, on the small internal circuit. This is a crystal-image ... (1997, p. 69)

Therefore, in such “crystal-image or crystalline description” we witness that “each side is taking the other’s role in a relation which we must describe as reciprocal presupposition, or reversibility” (1997, p. 69). Such “mutual images” (1997, p. 69) remind us of both the incorporeal or the virtual and the actual or the material sides to a crystal-image. Hence, it can be argued that since the crystal-image is evolved between those planes of material and immaterial descriptions, the crystalline descriptions are among the narrative parts which one can transparently come across in a number of times in *Sunset Park*.

## DISCUSSION

### Time-Images and Virtualities in Paul Auster’s *Sunset Park*

When Auster’s *Sunset Park* opens, Miles is residing in South Florida, trashing out

foreclosed and deserted houses, and getting rid of the things left behind when the residents were evicted. Unlike his thuggish colleagues, who help themselves to anything of value, we find Miles Heller sentimentally photographing anything he finds in the abandoned houses. It seems that:

He has taken upon himself to document the last, lingering traces of those scattered lives in order to prove that the vanished families were once here and the ghosts of people he will never see and never know are still present in the discarded things strewn about their empty houses. (Auster, 2011, p. 3)

Miles' reference to the ghosts of people which are to be found in the abandoned things is somehow an evidence for his inclination toward virtual affinity. The furniture and the appliances he finds in the evacuated houses are not of material value to him, or at least their material appearance is not the center of his attention. Evidently he is able to think beyond the actuality of their existence, to think about incorporeal materialism. According to Lawley (2005), "the virtual is a present that cannot be captured by representation" (2005, p. 38). To think of the virtual is thus to think of the past. Miles truly recognises that his photo taking is a pure virtual gesture, "an empty pursuit, of no possible benefit to anyone", because no material convenience will come out of it. Yet he does not know why "things are calling out to him, speaking to him in the voices of the people who are no longer

there, asking him to be looked at one last time" (Auster, 2011, p. 5). Possibly he is searching for the images of the general past, a "whole temporal panorama, an unstable set of floating memories, images of a past *in general* which move past at dizzying speed, as if time were achieving a profound freedom" (Deleuze, 1997, p. 55). For Miles, such general presence of the past is felt due to the virtual ghosts of the absent family members to whom he will never find the chance to be introduced. Therefore, in Deleuzian terms, Miles's photography is about capturing the fragments of the liberated time, somehow bringing the past into the present. Yet the same effect of time facilitates the representation of social consequences of the economic recession. As the houses of the bankrupt families were evacuated by force, they didn't have sufficient time to pack and thus left in a hurry. At this point Auster's concern for the plight of the contemporary American society takes a larger-than-life turn, staging itself through virtualities. In this regard, Kukuljevic (2005) reads Deleuze's virtual as part of the real which "is not given in experience, but it is that by which experience is given" (2005, p. 145). Therefore, since the Deleuzian virtual is preceding the actual and experience, Auster refers to the magnitude of the modern predicaments with respect to their virtual status. He accordingly uses metaphors to convey this issue, as Miles concludes that not "the most circumspect removal can erase the stench of defeat" (Auster, 2011, p. 5). Miles is right to some extent. One might not be able to cure death,

abandonment, and such pure virtualities with actual means. This brings to mind Lyotard's concept of *différend*, the fact that sometimes justice cannot be done and discourse is unable to present any remedy or solution. The silence of discourse in its Lyotardian implications could be paralleled with Deleuze's profound liberation of time through the narration of the general past. When the past is gone too far, no present action can help rectify its consequences, or in other words, virtuality becomes so pure that "it does not have to be actualized" (Deleuze, 1997, p. 79). As such, nothing can simply fill the broad circuit or the gap between the actual and the virtual, between the general past and the present. What then remains would be a deep sense of nostalgia and despair. That is why Miles wants "his pictures - not things, but the pictures of things" (Auster, 2011, p. 6). Only pictures can capture a singular moment and tell Miles about the lost actualities, the defeated families, and their current miserable lives.

Yet Miles' sensitive attention to the past, in general, somehow originates from his deliberate deviation from a particular moment in time: his own past. He has decided to propose marriage to Pilar Sanchez; however, he has vowed to tell her "next to nothing about himself". This shows the depth of his alienation from his earlier life. "Least of all does he want her to know anything about his stepmother Willa Parks, who married his father 20 months after the divorce, and nothing, nothing, nothing about his dead stepbrother, Bobby" (Auster, 2011, p. 16). As Auster stresses the secrecy

of the events surrounding Bobby, the reader gets more curious to know about it. Bobby, Willa's only child from his previous marriage to late Karl Bergstrom, was his younger stepbrother. About 10 years ago, while Miles and Bobby were walking on the shoulder of a deserted road in the country, they started a regular dispute, the kind of shouting and slapping that adolescent boys are familiar with. Bobby was walking on the side of the road and when he said a bad thing to Miles, he pushed Bobby in anger, making him fall on the ground. The road was clear but suddenly before Bobby could get up, a truck came down the turn and ran him over. "Even now", Miles "can't be sure if he did it on purpose or not" (2001, p. 17). And the precise thing that has made him alienated from himself is that "he doesn't know if the push came before or after he heard the oncoming car, which is to say, he doesn't know if Bobby's death was an accident or if he was secretly trying to kill him" (2011, p. 17-18). Such are the complexities of Miles' past. The suspension of justice is apparent here too. And because the actual has been eliminated and Bobby is dead, all that remains is a strong sense of guilt, a pure virtual condition that is strong enough to push Miles out of the track of his life for years – in isolation, wandering like a Deleuzian nomad around the country, running away from his actual life because he does not "know if he heard the car coming toward them or not". For Miles "it seems certain that Bobby didn't hear the approaching car, or he wasn't concerned by it, ... But what about you?"

Miles asks himself. Did you know or didn't you know?" (Auster, 2011, p. 25). So Miles' virtual journey begins with this simple question. Therefore as Auster sketches out the structure of his storyworlds in his 2008 online audio interview, it seems that Miles' inability to answer the above decisive question makes him "hop off the tracks of reality" and start "living in a parallel world" (Miller & Auster, 2008). In other words, Miles' real journey has been to graduate from college and to possibly start work as a literary agent in his father's publication house, yet his alternative life has ended up in being a simple worker with no degree and no plans or ambitions. But since there is no remedy for the ambiguities of the past, what remain for him are painful flashbacks which he decides not to share with Pilar.

Now "it is 2008, the second Sunday in November" and Miles and Pilar are going to "grasp the Dickensian spirit", searching for "odd and amusing names" through "the baseball encyclopedia" (Auster, 2011, p. 31). Baseball has always had a special place in Auster's stories, and in *Sunset Park* the reader often comes across the real names of the stars of 1940s to 1960s who have been exemplary pitchers in the American Major League of Baseball. A few days later, Miles learns about the death of one of his childhood heroes: "On the eleventh, he reads in the paper that Herb Score has died" (2011, p. 32). We can argue that the metafictional technique of bringing real names into the fictional storyworld is a kind of adding an actual dimension to a virtual space which can have the effect

of a Deleuzian time-image. However, the incident of Herbert Jude Score's (1933-2008) death recurs again through the story and Auster uses these occasions further to mix actualities and virtualities. A lengthy report of Herb's bad luck, the series of injuries and misfortunes which ultimately took this Cleveland Indians player's life, is among Auster's rare developments of the characters that are considered external to the main story line. Moreover, Score's account is noteworthy, since we will learn that he has been the subject of many childhood discussions between Miles and his father. One can thus treat him as a symbolic icon of their relationship. But now that Score is dead and Miles has not seen his father for the last seven years, for a second he is compelled to call him and "chat with him about Herbert Jude Score and the imponderables of fate, the strangeness of life, the what ifs and might-have-beens, all the things they used to talk about so long ago ..." (Auster, 2011, p. 34). Such a call never comes true and the son meets his father a few months later in Brooklyn. However, the significance of their regular discussions about fate, "might-have-beens", and "what ifs" will extend through the story. Obviously, all the possible impossibilities of fate are connected to the notion of time in one way or another, and since such possible turns of fate have never happened, they belong to those virtual conditions of the plane of reality which have never found appropriate differentiation to be actualised. Such are the virtualities Auster frequently refers to: the imponderables of fate. As Deleuze

favours the term “potentiality” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005, p.142) over possibility, we can add that virtualities are actually unthinkable because they have stayed as potentialities but have never found the chance to be materialised. But contingency does not always show its ugly face, and when Miles observes that Score’s story is making Pilar sad, he changes the subject to New York Giants’ Jack Wayne Lohke (1924-2009), nicknamed Lucky, whose frequent escapes from deadly accidents had made him famous. “Lucky, is the mythic embodiment of a theory of life that contends that not all luck is bad luck” (Auster, 2011, p. 35). Miles suggests and adds: “Think of the odds Pili. Death comes looking for him three times, and three times he manages to escape” (2011, p. 36). Thus, either good or bad, contingency is one of Auster’s regular themes based on which he often introduces his virtualised accounts of his characters. Later again, the fictionalisation of virtualities through recounting the actual stories of baseball players returns to spotlight when Miles is invited to the Sanchez’ for dinner. Having being introduced to one of Pilar’s relatives, Eddie Martinez, “in the aftermath of Herb Score’s recent death, they fall into a conversation about the tragic destinies of various pitchers from decades past” (2011, p. 41). Expanding their evaluation of the baseball players, they start talking about the sad story of the late California Angels’ relief pitcher Donnie Ray Moore (1954-1997). Miles “can still remember the stunned expression in his father’s eyes when he looked up from his newspaper at

breakfast twenty years ago and announced that Moore was dead” (Auster, 2011, p. 43). In the decisive match of October 12, 1986, while Angels were about to win over Boston Red Sox and enter the world series, “Moore delivered one of the most unfortunate pitches ever thrown in the annals of the sport” (2011, p. 44), and led to Angels’ defeat. Afterwards, humiliation and psychological pressure on Moore increased and made him retire early in 1989. A few months later he shot himself dead. Moore’s story is somehow significant insofar as Miles and Eddie would compare it with the life of Brooklyn Dodgers’ Ralph Branca (1926-2016) who had made a similar humiliating pitch but had never gone desperate. Instead, he had kept his spirit up. The comparison between a desperate baseball player and a cheered up one presents us with the fate of an introvert versus that of an extrovert. While Moore’s obsession with his defeat signals a transcendental gesture, Branca’s indifference toward his bad luck and the continuation of his social appearance can reveal his empirical worldview. Despite the mirror Moore’s desperation creates for Miles’ guilt-ridden mind, by juxtaposing these two accounts, Auster seems to tell us to what extent transcendental-empiricism can be a remedy for the predicaments encircling modern humankind. Again, here we can recall the virtual questions. What if Miles had not fled from home, and like Branca had tried to cope with the disaster? We are again subjected to the suspension of justice and a long silence in response. That is why Miles has been silent for the



last 10 years, and cannot even tell Pilar about his troubled past. Miles might not have attempted to commit suicide like his mirror character Moore, but still his self-exile is nothing less than self-destruction. Fortunately, Miles' story has not ended yet and as we move on, he is coming out of the shadows of virtualities. His decision to join the Sunset Park squatters and a later reunion with his parents can be regarded as his attempts toward the actualisation of his repressed capabilities.

The same night, Miles hears that sergeant Lopez, Teresa's husband (Teresa is Pilar's older sister) has been in service in Iraq for the last 10 months and everybody is praying for his safety before meal. Hearing this, Miles suddenly gets immersed into virtualities again. What if Bush and Cheney would have been executed and no war could ever happen in Iraq? Lost between actualities and virtualities he is creating for himself as time-images, Miles

Looks down at the table cloth again ... He imagines George Bush and Dick Cheney being lined up against a wall and shot, and then for Pilar's sake, for the sake of everyone there, he hopes that Teresa's husband will be lucky enough to make it back in one piece. (Auster, 2011, p. 46)

This again reminds us of Auster's famous audio interview with Faber's George Miller in November, 2008, in which Auster argued that Bush's era created a parallel world for the Americans and that their actual world should have been one without any wars

and economic depression. Similarly, the virtual call for Bush and Cheney's execution also resonates with Owen Brick's story in Auster's *Man in the Dark* (2008), in which two different Americas lived parallel to each other, one in peace, and the other in conflict with the world and burnt inside with a huge civil war. Therefore, while Auster's time-image has regularly covered particular cases, this time it enters the realm of crystallisation of time through a universal reciprocal presupposition by referring to Iraq war. It is not just the personal images of the past which have differentiated *Sunset Park* from other contemporary novels, but the diversity of such images has made it an exemplary case for studying Deleuze's metaphysics of imagination. Moreover, while the first observation is that Moore's story of guilt and suicide mirrors Miles' own retreat from the past, it seems arguable that they form the image of an interwoven mirror. This type of narration thus falls within the category of "work within work" (Deleuze, 1997, p. 77), which has a striking significance in Deleuze's treatment of time-images. For Deleuze, when two crystalline descriptions are mirroring each other and especially when one contains the other, they have to be treated as a special "mode of the crystal-image". Such interwoven narration of crystalline descriptions "has often been linked to the consideration of a surveillance, an investigation, a revenge, a conspiracy, or a plot" (1997, p. 77). And in the case of Miles and Moore, we can argue that their crystalline narration falls within the category of frame stories, helping the

main crystal-image to link itself more efficiently to the main plot of the story. In simpler words, Moore's account empowers the portrayal of the desperate situation of Miles' story and helps the reader to see another dimension of alienation from the self, a fact bringing Miles seven years of retreat and making Moore commit suicide.

But crystal images can sometimes be deceptive too. In the other parts of the novel, as Miles is sitting on a bus, travelling from Florida to New York, he recalls the memory of a conversation with his father, in which he explained to him the account of his marriage to his mother and their subsequent divorce. It all started when Morris saw one of Mary-Lee's performances as Cordelia in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. "He was blinded by her talent, his father continued. Anyone who could perform as she had in that demanding, delicate role must have had a greater depth of heart and a wider range of feeling" (Auster, 2011, p. 58). But what Morris had actually seen was just an intricate image within another image; in fact, a crystal situation had deceived him which was followed by a wrong marriage. "But pretending to be a person and actually being a person were two different things" (2011, p. 58). Therefore, Morris obviously marries Cordelia, who is a virtual condition of Mary-Lee, but a few months later he realises that the actual woman is someone with a different personality. Thus, Cordelia's image in Morris' memory can be interpreted as a crystal image which has entrapped both the actual image of Mary-Lee and the virtual image of Shakespeare's dramatic

persona. Therefore, Morris, infatuated with the real distinction between both sides of this mutual image and confused with their indiscernibility, finally vows to marry Miles' mother. But the image becomes clear after a few months, and when the crystal shatters from inside, they discover their deep differences and eventually divorce when Miles is only six months old. Then Willa comes into the picture and although she proves a caring stepmother for Miles, the absence of his real mother marks its excruciating effects on his soul.

Now that Miles has moved to Sunset Park, other characters' stories become the locus of the novel as well. Bing Nathan is the leader of the group and his contemplation about the value of the past is related to the notion of the virtual:

He takes it for granted that the future is a lost cause, and the present is all that matters now, then it must be a present imbued with the spirit of the past. That is why he shuns cell phones, computers, and all things digital – because he refuses to participate in new technologies. That is why he spends his weekends playing drums and percussion in a six-man jazz group – because jazz is dead and only the happy few are interested in it anymore. (Auster, 2011, p. 72)

Bing's idea about the future comes from the recent economic depression and the deflating financial statistics of the U.S. market which have significantly decreased

people's hope for a brighter tomorrow. Bing's argument about the past, however, is somehow pointed to transcendental empiricism. Blending the present with the shadow of the past, like Miles' taking photos from the discarded things, can be interpreted according to Deleuze's constructivism. Analyzing Bing's ideas about the past in line with our Deleuzian project of metaphysics of imagination, however, exhibits a subtler longing at work. As Konik's (2015) study about Deleuze's metaphysics of imagination shows, in time-images "the virtual past always coexists with the actual present" (2015, p. 108). Accordingly, Bing's theory of generating an assemblage between the past and the present is somehow creating a mutual image, a crystalline time-image which refers to the adding of the virtual condition from the past to the present and actual phenomena. Therefore, it would neither be the past nor the present, but an intermezzo between the virtual and the actual planes.

Another character whose intuition pushes him toward thinking about the virtual is Renzo Michaelson. As a novelist, he is influenced by his mother's life story. When he recalls that she was engaged to a would-be famous Hollywood actor whom she never married, Renzo decides to write an essay about such history, to realise what could have come from such marriage. This makes him develop an interesting theory which coincides with Auster's own assumption about virtual reality, a reality in parallel with the American life today in which wars or capitalistic ventures have no

place. Since it seems for Auster that people deserve more than the wreck of the country they have actually inherited, in terms of virtual reality, he wishes a better world. Renzo's idea is similarly "about the things that don't happen, the lives not lived, the wars not fought, the shadow worlds that run parallel to the world we take to be the real world, the not-said and the not-done, the not-remembered". This kind of virtual which belongs to the impossible and bleak past is limited to potentialities on the plane of the real. However, such "chancy territory" might be "worth exploring" (Auster, 2011, p. 153), because it brings to light the inadequacies of the actual world, and instead of wishing a mere utopia, it may enable us with practical solutions toward change and differences. Renzo's contemplation thus moves in the line of the Deleuzian notion of the virtual and tends to criticise the defects of society and to search possible resolutions.

## CONCLUSION

To put the findings of this research into a nutshell, we witness in *Sunset Park*, the idea of virtuality is emerging through different characters' thoughts and actions, and is deeply linked to their image of time and fondness of the past. Accordingly, a crystalline description can well inform us of Miles's parents' meeting and their troubled marriage. Furthermore, Bing is inclined toward old commodities, and Miles' aversion to take the picture of discarded appliances shows his sensitivity to the manifestations of the virtual in life. Whether through their contemplations about adding a

flavour of the past to their present situation, or through practical methods like playing jazz, taking photographs or taking care of old typewriters, Miles and Bing share the same concern. They want the virtual and the actual, the material and the immaterial to be brought together. Ultimately, they want something in between the past and the present at the same time, a crystal image per se. Furthermore, Renzo Michaelson is a writer who only uses an old typewriter for creating his texts, and his upcoming essay is going to be about the virtual worlds that run parallel to our actual and sensible one. Renzo is thus among the virtualists of the story too. Therefore, as we delve deeper into the storyworld, the analysis of the characters in *Sunset Park* enables us to demonstrate that they practise reconciliation between the transcendental and the empirical as a method of living. They are apt to bring meaning into their worldviews by adding a shadow of the virtual condition to the all-actual doctrine of capitalism. Thus, they rather use time-images to reach that virtual realm, and ultimately, to be eligible to think about incorporeal materialism.

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