

## عقلٌ في حالة انهيار: مقارنة سريرية-أدبية للأعراض الهستيرية في رواية *Man Gone Down*

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### الملخص

تصور رواية *Man Gone Dow* لمايكل توماس حالة نفسية حية لشخصية رئيسية أمريكية من أصل أفريقي غير معروفة وهو يحاول كسب المال، والحفاظ على عائلته معاً، والحفاظ على كرامته خلال فترة أربعة أيام محفوفة بالمخاطر. تستخدم الرواية أسلوباً سردياً ينقل القلق والشعور المجزأ بالذات والرغبة الوجودية. كما أن له أعراض الهستيريا، مثل اضطراب الاكتئاب الشديد، واضطراب القلق العام، واضطراب ما بعد الصدمة الذي يأتي من الصدمة العنصرية وإهمال الطفولة. باستخدام معايير DSM-5، تبحث هذه الدراسة في التدهور العقلي والقوة للشخصية الرئيسية، مع التركيز على صراعه الداخلي، والتشوّهات المعرفية، وأساليب التكيف. يربط هذا البحث بين التحليل الأدبي والتقييم النفسي من خلال وضع رواية *Man Gone Down* في سياق صحي. إنه يوضح كيف تظهر العنصرية المؤسسية، وعدم الاستقرار الاقتصادي، والشعور المكسور بالذات كأعراض صحية في الأدب الأمريكي الأفريقي الحديث. تعمل الرواية بمثابة نقد للثقافة ودراسة حالة نفسية، مما يدل على الترابط بين العرق والصحة العقلية والهوية الأمريكية.

## A Mind in Collapse: A Clinical-Literary Approach to Hysterical Symptoms in *Man Gone Down*

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### Abstract

Michael Thomas's *Man Gone Down* paints a vivid psychological portrait of an unknown African American main character as he attempts to earn money, keep his family together, and maintain his dignity over a perilous four-day period. The novel employs a narrative style that conveys anxiety, a fragmented sense of self and existential dread. It also has symptoms of hysteria, such as major depressive disorder, generalised anxiety disorder, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder that come from racial trauma and childhood neglect. Using the DSM-5 criteria, this study looks at the main character's mental decline and strength, focusing on his inner struggle, cognitive distortions, and coping techniques. This research connects literary analysis with psychiatric assessment by putting *Man Gone Down* in a clinical context. It shows how institutional racism, economic instability, and a broken sense of self show up as clinical symptoms in modern African American literature. The novel serves as a critique of culture and a psychiatric case study, demonstrating the interconnectedness of race, mental health, and American identity.

**Keywords:** *Man Gone Down*, Hysteria, African Americans, DSM-5.

## Introduction

The emotional and psychological challenges faced by African American men in modern America are intricately linked to a multifaceted interplay of identity, race, class, and familial dynamics. He is often encumbered by the legacy of systematic racism, which permeates all facets of life—from restricted economic prospects to unconscious prejudices that undermine his value and humanity (Belgrave & Allison, 2018). This persistent pressure may result in sensations of invisibility, resentment, and internalized self-doubt as he traverses a culture that often characterizes him via stereotypes rather than his originality. Barrie et al. (2025) note that the quest for identity intensifies when society standards conflict with personal desires, resulting in emotional fragmentation. Class discrepancies intensify this conflict, as the quest for stability and achievement often encounters insurmountable structural obstacles. Families expect the African American male to be a robust provider and protector, navigating internal struggles and external persecution. The interplay between personal suffering and societal expectations engenders a significant psychological strain, making daily life a negotiation between survival and self-assertion.

While confronting issues of identity, race, class, and family, he must maneuver through a culture that both delineates and restricts him via past trauma and racial stereotypes. This tension engenders profound fragmentation and repression, as he is compelled to deny vulnerability and emotional distress to embody roles of strength, resilience, and responsibility (Taylor, Guy-Walls, Wilkerson, & Addae, 2019). When you are constantly negotiating between your self-worth and society's rejection, you may experience signs of hysteria, such as anxiety, detachment, emotional numbness, and unexpected outbursts. This is because your mind is full of repression and unresolved trauma. In this instance, hysteria aids in comprehending how individual suffering is influenced by racial experiences and how the psychological distress of African American men frequently serves as a silent protest against systemic erasure, unacknowledged pain, and the challenging demands of being both Black and human in a divided society.

Utilizing a stream-of-consciousness technique and emotionally intense observations, *Man Gone Down* presents a stark and personal portrayal of a man teetering on the edge—not only of financial ruin, but of psychological and existential turmoil. The novel examines the American Dream, exposing its illusory promises and the consequences for those who have been systematically marginalized and have not benefited from it. Michael Thomas's oeuvre is distinguished by its profound psychological insight, incisive social criticism, and lyrical language, rendering *Man Gone Down* a notable addition to current African American writing and a profound examination of identity, alienation, and resilience in the contemporary milieu. Thus, this study aims to analyze the protagonist's hysterical behavior through the DSM-5.

## 2.1 Literature Review

### 2.1.1 Considerations with regard to African Americans

African Americans, also referred to as Black Americans, historically have either whole or partial ancestry from various African racial groups. (Walton Jr. 2020). Beginning in the 16th century, African slave traffickers sold African craftsmen, farmers, and warriors to Euro-American slave traders. European slave traders then transported these individual Africans. ans. Jr. artisans in the Southern Hemisphere: Enslaved Africans, who are now known as African Americans, were transported from the Atlantic region to the Western Hemisphere. The migration marked the beginning of African-American history. European colonists sold slaves and put them to work on

plantations, primarily in the southern colonies. The agricultural sector employed them. During and before the American Revolution, a select few individuals were able to obtain independence via the means of manumission or flight, and they established autonomous settlements. Beginning with the establishment of the United States of America in 1783, the majority of African-Americans remained slaves, with the majority of them being concentrated in the American South. The Civil War in 1865 finally freed four million enslaved people (Harris, 2012).

Moreover, African American sociologists are beginning to raise concerns about the use of the term "African American—ack" as a sociological category that is viewed as homogenous. In addition, it emphasizes the significance of this particular aspect for the enhancement of social scientific research in general (R. Williams, 1995). There is a distinction between homogenization and stereotyping, and examples such as Frazier and Wilson's writings show a theoretical consequences that were not completely addressed (Okely, 2005). The authors argue that homogenized classes are flawed because they offer misleading representations. Henry's ideas complement the use of differential remedies. The concept that there is a homogenous Black population is no longer supported by factual evidence, as stated in Hare's comments, which expands the topic into the public realm (Henry, 2015). During the course of the conversation, Patterson (2008) sheds light on the role that African-descendant communities play in the academic world as well as the methodology that sociologists use to study African Americans. Additionally, Patterson takes a stand against the ideology of ethnic chauvinism and demonstrates how African American intellectuals have sometimes adopted a strategy that is anti-European toward racial segregation. Taken together, these debates have consequences for the way African American sociologists do research and for the way their peers see them and African Americans in general as study subjects. Nevertheless, this article used DSM-5 to illuminate the protagonist's hysteric behavior in Thomas's *Man Gone Down*.

### **The Correlation between the African American Experience and the American Dream 2.1.2**

African Americans have long been either ignored or neglected in the American Dream narrative, which has focused on economic opportunity, personal freedom, and the possibility of upward mobility (Armstrong characterizes, Carlos Chavez, Jones, Harris, & Harris, 2019). Despite the dream's universal promise of opportunity, African Americans have seen firsthand how national principles and systemic realities are inherently at odds with one another. African Americans have faced persistent barriers to achieving this goal due to systemic racism, segregation, discriminatory housing rules, educational inequality, and generational poverty (Banajii, Fiske, & Massey, 2021).

Academic discourse often characterizes the African American quest for the American Dream as defined by tenacity, reinvention, and resistance. Scholars like W.E.B. Du Bois (1944) and Baldwin (1965) have examined how Black individuals must negotiate and redefine the ideal to include community survival, cultural pride, and social justice, rather than only economic achievement. Literature, particularly African American literature, often reveals the psychological and societal ramifications of pursuing a goal not conceived for Black people (Isaac, Merriweather, & Rogers, 2010).

Furthermore, the American Dream—typically considered the quest for achievement, liberty, and social advancement—has historically marginalized African Americans from its complete attainment. Additionally, James Baldwin astutely criticized that the ideal is founded on a "lie," reliant on the invisibility, work, and subjection of Black people to uphold a deceptive national

narrative of equality. Baldwin said that for African Americans, the ideal often transforms into a psychological encumbrance, necessitating integration and the renunciation of Black identity, while providing little monetary benefit (Baldwin, 1965).

Ultimately, the American Dream, as seen through the African American experience, transforms into a disputed domain rather than a definitive national promise—illuminating the nation's persistent challenges with inequality, identity, and historical accountability.

Therefore, *Man Gone Down* by Michael Thomas is a modern-day reflection and extension of Baldwin's criticism. As he fights for economic security and the continuation of his family, the anonymous Black narrator feels trapped by a fantasy he has internalized but is unable to realize. Racial trauma, structural injustice, and psychological fragmentation hinder his progress, despite his Ivy League degree and marital closeness to whiteness. His deteriorating mental condition, which manifests as episodes of anger, dissociation, and estrangement, is reminiscent of the hysterical symptoms described in the DSM-5. The case suggests that for disadvantaged persons, the pursuit of the American Dream might be a cause of psychological disintegration in and of itself.

### **An Exposition of the Novel in Brief 2.1.3**

Thomas's debut novel, *Man Gone Down*, received the 2009 International Dublin Literary Award on June 11, 2009. The award, the most lucrative literary accolade globally (excluding the Nobel Prize in Literature), is accessible to novels written in any language and amounts to €100,000 (£85,000, US\$140,000) (Rohter, 2009). However, the emotional and psychological challenges faced by an anonymous African American man as he grapples with identity, race, class, and family in modern-day America are explored in this powerful debut novel, released in 2007. The tale, which takes place over four stressful days, centers on the protagonist's frantic struggle to get enough money to be back together with his white wife and kids after being briefly separated from them. The story, which alternates between the past and present and is told in a lyrical, reflective voice, describes a childhood characterized by institutional racism, neglect, and the psychological effects of being Black in a mostly white culture (ibid).

### **Academic Publications on African and American Authors 2.1.4**

Shymchyshyn (2021) examines Michael Thomas's *Man Gone Down* via the prisms of postracial theory and post-identity hermeneutics. It also emphasizes how the novel exposes persistent racial, social, and ideological disparities by challenging the notion of a postracial America. To demonstrate how the protagonist fights against imposed social roles and pursues genuine self-expression in the face of institutional prejudice, Shymchyshyn employs close reading, hermeneutic, and cultural techniques. According to him, the novel's introspective monologue format challenges the discourse of racial development and reimagines Black identity outside of mainstream white expectations, exposing the ongoing emotional and psychological hardships of Black Americans. The piece also discusses how postracial theory and Thomas's work have received little academic attention in Ukrainian literary criticism.

In addition, Kernicky (2015) studied "The narrator in Michael Thomas's *Man Gone Down*." Kernicky asserts that the novel frequently objectifies the narrator as a Black man, presenting him as intimidating to men and sexually exotic to women. Moreover, the narrator's urban impoverished

Brooklyn origins and his wife's suburban New England childhood are the root causes of the class and cultural problems. Furthermore, Kernicky underscores the influence of the 1960s racial movements on the narrator's mother, who advises her son to guide his people. Despite her sincere intentions, her support has the same effect as his objectification: it creates unattainable standards. Kernicky claims that the hero is socialized to ignore the discrepancy between his ability and what he believes other people want from him. As a consequence, his body and actions are monitored by others to accomplish objectives that are seldom known or desired. Furthermore, he rarely considers the moral implications of meeting these obligations. This phenomenon is the main problem I bring up in this piece.

Sabry (2022) examined how Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) depicted femininity as a subaltern position using postcolonial literary critique. His analysis of the novel focuses on its reflection of postcolonial themes, specifically double colonization and double oppression, where Black women face both patriarchal and racial dominance. By examining the interplay of colonial and gender-based power systems, the research exposes the double marginalization of Black women in the novel. Additionally, Sabry notes that the novel explores racial hierarchies and their effects on identity, particularly the artificial contrast between Blackness and Whiteness. In her writing, Sabre makes the case that slavery functions as a covert force that shapes family patterns and warps Black women's perceptions of themselves. It also emphasizes the novel's use of language as a means of forming identity and worldview. In the conclusion, the essay argues that *The Color Purple* criticizes mainstream feminism for ignoring Black women's particular challenges in the battle against oppression.

Another study by H. Williams (2018) studies how Toni Morrison uses the language of disability in the preface to *The Bluest Eye*. According to William, the novel describes the social and psychological repercussions of racism, especially internalized racism. William also notes how Morrison depicts Pecola Breedlove's decline into mental illness as both a metaphor for and a real representation of the trauma young Black girls endure in a racist culture by using words like "crippled," "freak," and "disabling consequences." William says this framework emphasizes how Pecola's collapse, which turns into the main tragedy of the novel, is influenced by family dysfunction and social rejection. Furthermore, her mental breakdown criticizes a society that does not defend its most vulnerable members in addition to highlighting the terrible effects of internalized racial inferiority. In the end, Morrison's story forces readers to consider the continuous marginalization that comes with the intersecting identities of race, gender, class, and mental health.

However, this study differentiates itself from past studies by providing a targeted analysis of the protagonist's hysterical symptoms using the diagnostic framework of the DSM-5, notwithstanding earlier examinations of many thematic and psychological elements of *Man Gone Down*. This research seeks to elucidate the psychological intricacies of the protagonist while emphasizing the seriousness and possible ramifications of unaddressed or misidentified symptoms. This clinical-literary method elucidates how profound psychological suffering may exacerbate the character's personal and existential crises, so providing a critical viewpoint on the convergence of racism, trauma, and mental health in modern American literature.

### 3.1 Theoretical Framework



DSM-5 (APA, 2013), which examined hysterical symptoms throughout time, serves as the basis for the present investigation. Using empirical research, the DSM is a systematic attempt to categorize the symptoms and other phenomenological psychopathology in the American diagnostic system for psychological diseases. The DSM-5 included two primary branches of hysteria: somatoform, or "somatoform dissociation," and psychological, or "psychological dissociation." Nonetheless, the researcher used DSM 5 to draw attention to the hero's hysterical symptoms, which keep him trapped in the psychological disorder.

### 3.2 Psychological Disintegration and Social Oppression in *Man Gone Down* Through the Lens of DSM-5

Michael Thomas's *Man Gone Down* (2007) is a poignant account of a Black man's struggle with the psychological distress stemming from institutional racism, economic instability, and family discord. Although much critical focus has been directed toward the social aspects of the novel, a developing area of multidisciplinary research aims to investigate its psychological nuances using clinical diagnostic frameworks, especially those specified in the DSM-5. This method clarifies the protagonist's personal conflicts and contextualizes them within wider discussions like racism, trauma, and mental health that induced his hysteria.

Several studies, including those by Drabinski (2019) and Hooks (2000), as well as Fanon (1952), have highlighted the psychosocial effects of racial exclusion, arguing that institutional racism can lead to ongoing psychological suffering. Losing self-identity and emotional collapse can be looked at through the lens of disorders such as Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), and Adjustment Disorder as stated in DSM-5. Typical symptoms of depression manifest within the narrator: hopelessness, insomnia, anger, and self-loathing; and yet, these manifestations are tightly tied to racial exclusion and social oppression, thus confounding any purely clinical interpretation.

Gilman (2014) and Brossard and Chandler (2022) recognize the argument for psychiatric diagnosis as inadequate to address cultural and social pressures—at least in the context of the oppressed. This becomes crucial to the interpretation of *Man Gone Down* where the protagonist's mental breakdown arises not from just one form of personal psychopathology but from racial capitalism, inadequate forms of masculinity, and the demands of assimilation coming in the way.

In particular, the protagonist's "mental collapse is as much a product of internalized racism and class pressure as it is of any personal failing," as pointed out by commentators such as McNamara (2019) and Freeman (2007). Nevertheless, when we look at mental health issues through the DSM-5 prism, we can pinpoint identity disorders, persistent depression, and trauma-related symptoms with more precision. Clinical patterns of attachment disorder and adjustment disorder are mirrored in the protagonist's excessive rumination, self-isolation, and difficulty in sustaining solid relationships.

Moreover, the novel's confessional and autobiographical tones are consistent with the concept of "writing trauma" as defined by scholars such as LaCapra (2014). The narrator's fragmented recollections and preoccupation with memory can be analyzed using Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) criteria, although the trauma they experienced was not a singular event but rather a protracted exposure to systemic violence. Once again, the problems he has with his relationships, how he sees himself, and managing his emotions, which are similar to the traits of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), make it hard to separate mental health issues from the suffering caused by society.

In summary, the profound psychological impact of racial and economic disenfranchisement as portrayed in *Man Gone Down* is underscored by the use of the DSM-5 as an interpretive tool. From the critical viewpoint of literature, one must be warned against the separation of the symptom into its sociohistorical origin. Hence, a literary-clinical reading needs to take into account that a mental illness is not purely a private problem but rather a manifestation of collective trauma and social fissure.

## 4.1 Results

### 4.1.1 Introduction

While *Man Gone Down* does not explicitly discuss hysteria, it proffers an insightful examination of emotional and psychological tribulations consistent with themes traditionally associated with the disorder. The novel offers nuanced views into his psychological conflict and identity. Intergenerational trauma from his childhood reveals abuse and neglect, showing how historical trauma perpetuates cycles of psychological suffering.

Together, these factors paint a picture of a man uneasy with the complexities of identity, societal expectations, and personal vicissitudes. Historically, his emotional and psychological turmoil have fallen parallel to hysteria, affording a contemporary view of the expression of the condition. In *Michael Thomas's Man Gone Down*, the novel profoundly explores themes of societal marginalization and psychological distress, even though it doesn't explicitly use the term "hysteria," which resonates with historical conceptions of the condition. The unnamed African-American narrator grapples with the pressures of racial identity, economic instability, and personal trauma, leading to emotional turmoil that can be analyzed through the lens of hysteria.

### Critical Evaluation of the Quotes 4.1.2

In the following statement, he proclaims himself "the tyrant lizard king"—a manifestation of delusional or dissociative identity, suggesting another personality or mythological role. Furthermore, his bodily behaviors—"widened nostrils," "sniffed," "smiled, revealing his teeth"—exhibit an animalistic, dramatic quality and are detached from typical social contact, corresponding with conversion-like motor symptoms and expressive disinhibition often seen in hysteria. "I'm brown!" he growled... 'I'm the tyrant lizard king!' ... X widened his nostrils and sniffed at them... He opened his eyes wide, nearly forming circles, and smiled coolly while ensuring that his teeth were visible. (p. 9).

In the above statement, X's change into a "tyrant lizard king" shows a dramatic reaction that connects to Freudian ideas and DSM-5 concepts, mixing trauma, dissociation, creating a symbolic identity, and physical symptoms. His conduct exhibits a desperate, unconscious defensive mechanism—a response to racial erasure, emotional disintegration, and societal disempowerment.

The traumas of alienation and racial identity significantly influence the narrator's experiences. Highlight the societal marginalization that a Black male experiences in predominantly white environments. Internal conflicts and feelings of invisibility exacerbate his psychological fragmentation. An inferiority complex plagues the narrator, stemming from his experiences as a Black man in America.

The following passage illustrates the protagonist's contemplation of his own mental state:



"I wonder if I'm too damaged. At some point, Baldwin wrote about a person who had 'a wound that he would never recover from,' but I can't recall the specific source. Baldwin also described the loss of a member who was still in pain. Maybe something inside of me was no longer intact. Perhaps something had been cut off or broken down—collateral damage of the diaspora."

(Thomas, 2007, p. 13)

The aforementioned introspective moment reveals the protagonist's profound feelings of desolation, a consequence of personal adversities and systemic oppression. This moment is indicative of the internal turmoil that is associated with hysteria. The narrator's introspection is reminiscent of the themes that James Baldwin has examined, emphasizing the enduring and pervasive nature of trauma that is entrenched in historical and societal contexts. The preceding quotation emphasizes the significance of recognizing and resolving the psychological consequences of systemic oppression and cultural dislocation. The DSM-5 classifies anxiety as a histrionic symptom, and this approach guides it.

This continual othering exacerbates his sense of being "too damaged," a motif that recurs throughout the novel. On page 14, he records self-descriptors such as "Black, Broke, and Stupid" and "Drunk, Black, and Stupid," which underscore his internalization of societal prejudices. Historically, "hysteria" has been associated with themes such as emotional distress, mental health, and societal pressures. The protagonist's internal conflicts and experiences are indicative of this.

Furthermore, the protagonist's interactions with his children demonstrate a conflict between his internal turmoil and his external appearances. For example, his son X demonstrates behavior that, while imaginative, suggests a disconnection from reality: "X, who from the age of two has believed he is a carnivorous dinosaur, who leaps, claws, and bites, who speaks to no one outside his immediate family, who regards interlopers with a cool, reptilian smirk, is charming (p.16).

As it is mentioned earlier, *Man Gone Down* does not explicitly mention "hysteria," but it encompasses the essence of the term by examining the impact of societal expectations on individual mental health, identity crises, and psychological distress, as illustrated in the following quotation. "X looks exactly like me. He resembles not my three-year-old self, but my mature self. He has a man's body and a man's head, square-jawed, no fat or softness... X looks exactly like me except he's white (p.16).

The narrator contemplates the unwarranted privileges that societal perceptions of race bestow upon his children, resulting in divergent life experiences that are exclusively determined by their skin color. This observation emphasizes the narrator's multifaceted emotions regarding identity and affiliation, as he struggles to understand the repercussions of his son's appearance in a racially cognizant society. The DSM-5 defines excessive thoughts, feelings, or behaviors linked to somatic symptoms, leading to significant distress or impairment. In this context, the narrator's intense fixation on ethnic identity highlights the perceived consequences of depersonalization, which is one of the symptoms associated with histrionic personality disorder.

This depiction serves as a metaphor for the emotional complexities that are either witnessed or inherited within the family, further illustrating the concept of psychological tension. Additionally, it shows how a youngster engages in intense and long-lasting creative play, which includes traits like selective communication, social retreat, and an enduring association with a dinosaur identity. Thomas referred to the child's dinosaur character in *Man Gone Down* as a way for him or her to

deal with family problems or environmental stresses. A child's desire to hide behind a made-up persona may represent an attempt to gain power or stability in an otherwise chaotic environment. Therefore, DSM-5 criteria include limited, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or occupations, as well as persistent deficiencies in social communication and engagement across many situations.

Intergenerational trauma and emotional turmoil dominated the narrator's psychological distress, further exacerbated by familial abandonment and abuse. He describes his father's gradual disappearance: My father ran out on us when he was the age I am now, but he didn't have the heart to just go. First he went to the couch, then to the Ramada, and only after a decade of coming in and out of my life did he finally allow himself to completely disappear (p. 56). Long after the pain of abandonment has healed, he begins to doubt his stability, loveworthiness, and capacity to achieve success. According to the DSM-5, the father may be exhibiting symptoms of hysteria as his estrangement grows over time. As a result of stress or trauma, these diseases may cause disturbances in perception, memory, identity, or consciousness. As a coping method for dealing with internal conflict or psychological suffering, the father's behavior—retreating from the home environment and finally disappearing—could be considered an anxiety symptom.

Furthermore, the protagonist's internal struggle may be heightened by his perceptions of himself and his feelings of social isolation and inadequacy: "We were never awful. (p. 77). This claim reveals an intense need to justify oneself and fight against internalized guilt, resonating with historical accounts of hysteria as a reaction to repressive social standards. The protagonist believes in his virtue, even when others judge him. According to the quotation, he is still struggling emotionally and wants to find a way to balance his self-image with how society sees him. Anxieties, intrusive thoughts, and unfavorable changes in mood and cognition after experiencing trauma are all symptoms of hysteria, according to DSM-5. Therefore, the protagonist's statement may be considered an indication of heavy mental burden, maybe similar to symptoms seen in certain anxiety disorders and mood disorders connected to traumatic experiences. The novel thoroughly examines the complex relationship between one's own identities, how others see them, and one's mental health.

In addition, the following remark traces the novel's themes of institutional racism and emotional turmoil: "Most people don't understand, or have never experienced rage. It isn't singular, random, or episodic. It's cumulative, with a narrative thrust like a black-iron locomotive (p. 207). A condition of emotional instability similar to historical accounts of hysteria, this metaphor depicts the accumulation of rage stemming from pervasive racism and marginalization, which in turn evokes sentiments of harm and hopelessness. On the other hand, the paragraph describes an enduring and pervasive fury that is similar to symptoms of several depersonalization illnesses included in the DSM-5. It reflects the complexity of anger and emotional regulation-related mental health disorders and highlights the psychological consequences of long-term emotional discomfort.

Taken as a whole, these aspects depict a person struggling with his identity, social norms, and inner demons. Historians have historically interpreted hysteria, and the emotional and psychological struggles he experiences offer a contemporary perspective on the disorder's symptoms.

## 5.1 Conclusion

Michael Thomas's *Man Gone Down* is a powerful psychological depiction of a Black man with the interlocking challenges of race, masculinity, economic instability, and familial obligations in modern America. The main character's unpredictable behavior, moments of disconnect from reality, and deep emotional pain align with the symptoms of hysteria as described in the DSM-5, such as conversion disorder, traits of dissociative identity, and emotional issues caused by trauma. His moments of acting out in anger, losing a sense of self, and experiencing physical pain without a clear cause serve as both storytelling tools and symbols of deep-seated trauma and ongoing social injustice.

Through the application of DSM-5 diagnostic criteria to the novel, this research highlights the ways that literature may shed light on the psychological repercussions of racialized experiences, which are often overlooked. This interdisciplinary method is significant because it is able to bridge the gap between clinical and literary study. It demonstrates how mental health discourse may help us gain a deeper understanding of racial identity, resistance, and the lived realities of marginalization. This approach is one of the ways in which *Man Gone Down* encourages readers to see hysteria not just as a clinical disease but also as a culturally and politically charged manifestation of surviving under duress.

Finally, this paper has focused on different themes and psychological components of *Man Gone Down*; nevertheless, this study stands out by applying the DSM-5 to the protagonist's hysterical symptoms. Hence, this paper seeks to achieve two things: show how complicated the main character's mind is and how serious and even disastrous symptoms may be when they go untreated or misunderstood. The character's emotional and existential crises may be better understood via this clinical-literary method, which provides a critical viewpoint on how racism, trauma, and mental health connect in modern American literature.

Finally, this paper has focused on different themes and psychological components of *Man Gone Down*; nevertheless, this study stands out by applying the DSM-5 to the protagonist's hysterical symptoms. Hence, this paper aims to achieve two objectives: to show the complexity of the main character's mind and the severity and even disastrous consequences that can result from untreated or misunderstood symptoms. The character's emotional and existential crises may be better understood via this clinical-literary method, which provides a critical viewpoint on how racism, trauma, and mental health connect in modern American literature.

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