



Paul Auster's "The New York Trilogy" as Postmodern Detective Fiction

Matthias Kugler

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Magisterarbeit, die am 07.01.1999 erfolgreich an einer Universität in Deutschland im Fachbereich Philosophische Fakultät eingereicht wurde. Abstract: Paul Auster's New York Trilogy, published in one volume for the first time in England in 1988 and in the U.S. in 1990 has been widely categorised as detective fiction among literary scholars and critics. There is, however, a striking diversity and lack of consensus regarding the classification of the trilogy within the existing genre forms of the detective novel. Among others, Auster's stories are described as: "metaanti-detective-fiction;" "mysteries about mysteries;" a "strangely humorous working of the detective novel;" "very soft-boiled;" a "metamystery;" "glassy little jigsaws;" a "mixture between the detective story and the nouveau roman;" a "metaphysical detective story;" a "deconstruction of the detective novel;" "antidetective-fiction;" "a late example of the anti-detective genre;" and being related to 'hard-boiled' novels by authors like Hammett and Chandler." Such a striking lack of agreement within the secondary literature has inspired me to write this paper. It does not, however, elaborate further on this diversity of viewpoints although they all seem to have a certain validity and underline the richness and diversity of Auster's detective trilogy; neither do I intend to coin a new term for Auster's detective fiction. I would rather place The New York Trilogy within a more general and open literary form, namely postmodern detective fiction. This classifies Paul Auster as an American writer who is part of the generation that immediately followed the 'classical literary movement' of American postmodernism' of the 60s and 70s. His writing demonstrates that he has been influenced by the revolutionary and innovative postmodern concepts, characterised by the notion of 'anything goes on a planet of multiplicity' as well as by French poststructuralism. He may, however, be distinguished from a 'traditio...

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