

ABSTRACT

IDENTITY WARS: POSTMODERN VERSUS MODERN IN PAUL AUSTER'S THE NEW YORK TRILOGY

Traditionally the study of identity has been the search for a discoverable, stable set of characteristics that fix one's sense of self within an unchanging meaning-matrix. Philosophical thought systems were dependent on the belief that the language used to describe and explain the world was a divine gift of God. As such, language had a fixed meaning grounded in the concept of the transcendent signified: God gave the word (language); the word was good (meaningful); therefore the word corresponded to the object (world). With the evolution of poststructural theory, language began to be seen not as the divine gift of God with a fixed meaning, but as a constructed tool of man whose meaning was constantly in flux. This study seeks to explain and delineate the differences between a modernist and postmodernist view of language using Paul Auster's The New York Trilogy as a catalyst for this comparison.

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