

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. A DEFINITION OF POSTMODERNISM	2
III. THE POSTMODERN IDENTITY	4
IV. IDENTITY IN <u>CITY OF GLASS</u>	7
1. Who is Daniel Quinn	7
2. Introducing William Wilson	9
3. The Triad of Selves	11
4. Shadowing the Self	14
5. The End of the Self	17
V. CONCLUSION	19
VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY	20

I. INTRODUCTION

“I like your name enormously, Mr. Quinn”, Peter Stillman Sr., one of the characters in Paul Auster’s City of Glass says to the protagonist. “It flies off in so many little directions” (Auster 90). This is an allusion to the identity of Daniel Quinn, evoking thoughts about who this Mr. Quinn really is. In my paper, I will follow his winding path looking at Auster’s description of Quinn’s identity and trying to determine if the author has created a typically postmodern character. What is the core of Daniel Quinn? Does he represent the main characteristics of postmodern identity as described in theory?

A short definition of the term postmodernism as it is used in this paper will be followed by a closer look at identity in postmodern theory. The main part is an analysis of identity in City of Glass with a focus on Daniel Quinn, keeping in mind the definition of postmodern identity given earlier. A conclusion will sum up the points made in the course of the paper, adding some general observations.

II. A DEFINITION OF POSTMODERNISM

A discussion of postmodern identity requires a definition or identification of how the terms postmodern and postmodernism will be used in the context of this paper. This is of special importance since some

scholars even warn against any use of the term postmodernism because of its lack of clarity.

Postmodernism and the emergence of postmodern theory are relatively recent developments which appeared during the second half of the twentieth century. Many of its texts are extremely vague in their theoretical essence and often remain highly abstract. Representatives of postmodernism also have split into different groups which argue about the real character of their subject. Fortunately, since this paper is not dealing with postmodernism alone, it is not necessary to introduce the various definitions of those who can be described as the most salient representatives of postmodern theory. Nevertheless a basic knowledge about the main ideas of postmodernism should help to understand the discussion of postmodern identity in City of Glass.

Dominic Strinati in his Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture offers a reasonable solution to the dilemma of the fragmentation of postmodern theory. The paragraph on 'What is postmodernism' in the chapter 'Postmodernism and popular culture' summarizes some of the most important characteristics emerging throughout many of the texts about the phenomenon of postmodernism. I will therefore use the essence of Strinati's paragraph to provide what one could call a definition of postmodernism.

The first pattern Strinati identifies as one of the main characteristics of postmodern theory is that of a "breakdown of the distinction between culture and society" (Strinati 223). In the new social order described by postmodernism, popular culture and the mass media "govern and shape all other forms of social relationships" (Strinati 224). The way people perceive reality is dominated by signs and images. Mass media no longer reflects

society but “society has become subsumed within the mass media” (Strinati 224). In other words, the mirror becomes reality. Popular culture and its images also increasingly influence and promote consumption. This is linked to the growing importance of style and surface. The result is described as a deterioration of strong narratives, authenticity, intellectual depth and integrity (Strinati 225).

The second pattern is “the breakdown of the distinction between art and popular culture” (Strinati 225). One reason is seen in the vanishing of “agreed and inviolable criteria which can serve to differentiate art from popular culture” (Strinati 225), another in the disrespect of popular culture regarding the distinctiveness of art. Strinati mentions Andy Warhol’s famous print of Da Vinci’s ‘Mona Lisa’ as an example (Strinati 226).

“Confusions over time and space” is the third prominent pattern Strinati identifies in postmodern theory. It is argued that modern mass communications with their speed as well as the ease with which people move from one place to the other, make “time and space (...) less stable and comprehensible” (Strinati 227). Linear unities of time are disrupted and the reaction is a confusion which even extends its influence on how we organise our lives (Strinati 226).

The last of the four categories into which Strinati divides his summary of postmodern theory is “the decline of metanarratives” (Strinati 227). Here his two most important examples are religion and Marxism. One purpose of a metanarrative is supposed to be its usefulness as a guide for organising and interpreting life. The postmodernist claim of the decline of metanarratives could explain, for example, the declining significance of religion and its institutions. Also, the metanarratives’ claims

to absolute truth are rejected by the ‘reality’ of postmodern societies. This is why postmodernism has been so critical about the theory of Marxism (Strinati 227).

III. THE POSTMODERN IDENTITY

Living in a society like the one described by postmodern theory eventually has to bring about changes regarding the people living in it. What is the nature of these changes? According to postmodern theory, have they been affecting our identities? Looking for evidence for the emergence of postmodernism in contemporary societies, Strinati also deals with the question of changing identities. He observes “the erosion of collective and personal identities” (Strinati 238) and sums up the identity debate of postmodernism as follows:

The overall case that can be examined here does not claim that a simple process of decline has occurred but that a limited and dependable set of coherent identities have begun to fragment into a diverse and unstable series of competing identities. The erosion of once secure collective identities has led to the increasing fragmentation of personal identities. It is argued that we have witnessed the gradual disappearance of traditional and highly valued frames of reference in terms of which people could define themselves and their place in society, and so feel relatively secure in their personal and collective identities. (238)

Strinati concludes that the traditional frames of reference have not been substituted by new sources of identity. The typical features of postmodern theory like a growing consumerism or the increasing influence of mass media cannot provide new sources and therefore indirectly support the growing instability of identities (Strinati 239).

Since I do not want to base my discussion solely on Strinati's short statement about postmodern identities, I will now have a closer look at another text dealing with this subject. Douglas Kellner's essay about the character of identity seems to be an almost ideal text, since it examines the construction of identity in postmodern theory as well as its representation in today's culture, an approach similar to the one chosen by Strinati.

Postmodern theory describes identity as becoming more and more unstable and fragile. Some authors even criticize the term identity and call it a myth or illusion. They declare the end of the autonomous self which had been an achievement of modernity. Depth, substance and coherence as the characteristics of the ideal modern self have been replaced by incoherence and fragmentation (Kellner 217). Many postmodern theories regard popular culture as a field where the postmodern implosion of identity can be observed particularly well (Kellner 218).

In his own studies, Kellner observes a doublecoding of identity. 'Good guys' turn into 'bad guys' without any difficulty which signals the artificial and constructed character of identity. The doublecoding also shows that identity has turned into a game in which one can easily change roles, as mentioned above. The individual defines itself with the help of looks, images and consumption. According to Kellner, gambling can be regarded as the central motif of the construction of identity. The gambler is aware of the game he is playing and is constantly using or ridiculing social conventions. The fact that postmodern identity is often constructed against existing moral norms and values, gives it a threatening character (Kellner 234). Sports, the use of drugs, sex and social activities in general are employed to underline the otherness of the gambler. His identity is based on success in the form of respect shown by others (Kellner 229).

The subject is aware of its choices and the constructed character of its identity. This reflexivity helps to deal with the postmodern instability of identity and the growing conformity by giving the impression that one can easily change and adopt a different identity (Kellner 230). This illusion of being in control leaves no room for doubts about the choices being made. Kellner compares the changes of clothes, job or apartment to those of identity and thinks that they are equally frequent in today's society.

Douglas Kellner concludes that postmodern identity is highly fragmented, unstable and interchangeable (Kellner 234). The constant changes of identity that are taking place, demonstrate that the postmodern self seems to have accepted a pattern of multiple identities. Instead of creating confusion, this multiplicity adds to the game-character of postmodern self definition. Constructing identity has become a game in which everybody presents himself in a variety of roles, images and activities, accepting dramatic changes and transformations. These conclusions are similar to Strinati's summary of the character of postmodern identity. They agree on the instability and fragmentation of personal identities and also share the assumption that traditional sources for the construction of identity have lost their importance. Nevertheless, there is one fundamental difference. While Strinati thinks that an erosion of identity is taking place, Kellner observes a reconstruction and new definition of identity in today's society. He opposes the idea of a vanishing of identity and thinks that new forms of construction have replaced those prevailing during modernity.

IV. IDENTITY IN CITY OF GLASS

The focus of my discussion will be on the character of Daniel Quinn, the protagonist of Paul Auster's City of Glass. I will follow the description of his development throughout the whole story, trying to work out the relevant aspects for an analysis of his identity. The following questions will be at the center of the upcoming chapters. How does Auster describe Quinn's identity and its changes? Is Daniel Quinn a prototypical representative of postmodern identity as described above?

IV. 1. WHO IS DANIEL QUINN?

In order to understand the changes and developments Quinn will undergo, we need to look closely at how he is described by Auster at the beginning of City of Glass. A sound basis for a discussion of his character might bear some interesting points regarding the topic of this discussion. The opening sentence already hints at the motif of confusion about the self leading through the whole story:

It was a wrong number that started it, the telephone ringing three times in the dead of the night, and the voice on the other end asking for someone he was not.

(1)

It is no coincidence that the caller is asking for "someone he was not". Since Daniel Quinn's definition of himself is in question throughout the whole story, the first sentence already plays with this uncertainty about what is in store for the protagonist. Surprisingly, only a few sentences later Auster tries to downplay the role of the man he is about to introduce: "As for Quinn

there is little that need detain us. Who he was, where he came from, and what he did are of no great importance” (Auster 3). This is not to reduce the importance of the character but to stress that City of Glass, above all, is a story about storytelling. Auster simply refuses a detailed description of Quinn’s looks and characters. He mentions that Quinn is 35 years old, “had once been married, had once been a father, and that both his wife and son were now dead” (Auster 3). He is a writer of mystery novels and in his spare time reads many books, looks at paintings and goes to the movies. He is a fan of baseball and occasionally goes to the opera. His favorite pastime however is walking, “never really going anywhere, but simply going wherever his legs happened to take him” (Auster 4). This activity always leaves him feeling lost. The feeling extends to the perception of himself: “Lost not only in the city but within himself as well” (Auster 4). Furthermore, he expects a good walk to give him the feeling of being nowhere. This result is described as his ultimate goal: “And this, finally, was all he ever asked of things: to be nowhere” (Auster 4). Feeling lost within oneself added to the illusion of being nowhere does not leave much room for a clearly defined personality. After not even two pages, Auster has already given the character of Daniel Quinn more than a touch of weakness, instability, and emptiness.

IV. 2. INTRODUCING WILLIAM WILSON

The death of his son and wife have left a deep impression on Quinn’s life:

A part of him had died, he told his friends, and he did not want it coming back to haunt him. It was then that he had taken on the name of William Wilson. Quinn was no longer that part of him that could write

books and although in many ways Quinn continued to exist, he no longer existed for anyone but himself.

(4-5)

Obviously, William Wilson is more than the usual pseudonym. Quinn needs him to write his mystery novels and keep the awkward balance he has arranged for himself in order to continue with his life:

William Wilson, after all, was an invention and even though he had been born within Quinn himself, he now led an independent life. Quinn treated him with deference, at times even admiration, but he never went so far as to believe that he and William Wilson were the same man.

(5)

At this point of the story, the reader might still suspect that Auster has created some kind of split personality in order to illustrate the sometimes strange process of writing novels. Immersing in the world of fiction, some writers may feel like being someone else, like some other self taking over. At the heart of Quinn's feelings, however, seems to be something different. His attitude towards life has to alarm the reader: "He no longer wished to be dead. At the same time it cannot be said that he was glad to be alive. But at least he did not resent it" (Auster 6). This neutrality towards existence adds to the impression of emptiness and leaves much room for speculation about Quinn's 'real' identity.

With the deaths of his wife and son, Quinn's world has been completely decentered. To him, the universe no longer makes any sense and all the stability he once had has vanished. A look at Douglas Kellner's description of the construction of modern identities seems to explain Quinn's state. In Kellner's text, modern identity is characterized by interactive confirmation which means that identity depends on the

perception by others and one's own impression of the perception by the environment (Kellner 215). Being accepted by others in one's role as (in Quinn's case) father and husband is necessary to attain a stable and accepted identity. This means that the people who surround us play an extremely important role in the process of constructing and confirming one's identity (Kellner 215). Quinn therefore, at this point of the story, would be a typical representative of the modern character defined by the acceptance of his environment. After the family as the center of his world is gone, after his role as husband and father no longer exists, his identity also has ceased to exist. Modernity means the destruction of outdated ways of life, values and identities but also the creation of new forms (Kellner 216). Quinn has lost his old identity and still seems to be in search of a new one. At the same time he experiences the forces of his time which include a constant renewal and innovation. According to Kellner this could lead to a state of extreme alienation in which one no longer feels at home in the world (Kellner 216). Quinn's walks through the city symbolize these changes and their effect: "The world was outside of him, around him, before him, and the speed with which it kept changing made it impossible for him to dwell on one thing for very long" (Auster 4).

IV. 3. THE TRIAD OF SELVES

It is hard to describe the state Quinn is in at this stage of the story. Auster has created a character with a vacuum, an empty space which is neither waiting to be filled again, nor happy with its situation. Quinn has found a mode to deal with the loss of his family. It is not a new way of life but the acceptance of his situation with all its consequences. He seems to be

exploring himself, finding next to nothing: “He was alive and the stubbornness of this fact had little by little begun to fascinate him - as if he had managed to outlive himself, as if he were somehow living a posthumous life” (Auster 6). On the other hand, his posthumous life includes a new companion, William Wilson, who comes to live whenever Quinn is working on one of his novels. Wilson, however, is not the only company in Quinn’s life. Max Work, the hero of his detective stories, is another character filling some of the space within the frame of Quinn. He seems to be even closer to Quinn than Wilson, since Quinn actively shares his adventures. After he has finished a novel in which Max Work “had solved an elaborate series of crimes, (...) Quinn was feeling somewhat exhausted by his efforts” (Auster 6).

Now that the third and last part of Quinn’s identity has appeared on the scene, I will analyze the functions and relationships of these three pieces forming Quinn’s character. Auster himself offers a first short definition:

In the triad of selves that Quinn had become, Wilson served as a kind of ventriloquist, Quinn himself was the dummy, and Work was the animated voice that gave purpose to the enterprise.

(6)

It is interesting to note that in the “triad of selves” Quinn, the ‘original’ individual, has been reduced to the role of the “dummy”. A dummy is just a surface, an empty body without a brain, willpower, and the capacity to act on its own. Auster creates a human being without a core, controlled by forces inside and yet outside of him. Inside, because they are the result of his existence and a creation of Daniel Quinn, outside because they’ve developed a life of their own.

What is the role of Max Work, the private-eye narrator of Quinn's detective stories? At first sight, he seems to compensate Quinn's weakness, as is often the case with figures generated by our mind: "The detective is one who looks, who listens, who moves through this morass of objects and events in search of the thought, the idea that will pull all these things together and make sense of them" (Auster 9). Obviously, Quinn has lost control of his life and his self. He desperately needs someone or something that will put him back on track. Quinn has given his life in the hands of Max Work:

He (Quinn; Anm. d. Verf.) had, of course, long ago stopped thinking of himself as real. If he lived now in the world at all, it was only at one remove, through the imaginary person of Max Work. (...) If Quinn had allowed himself to vanish, to withdraw into the confines of a strange and hermetic life, Work continued to live in the world of others, and the more Quinn seemed to vanish, the more persistent Work's presence in that world became.

(10)

A detective is what Quinn wants to be, he wants to do all the things Work does. He admires his own creation and observes his actions with an amazing awe: "The very things that caused problems for Quinn, Work took for granted, and he walked through the mayhem of his adventures with an ease and indifference that never failed to impress his creator" (Auster 10). If Work is all Quinn wishes for, why has he created William Wilson, the "ventriloquist"? The reason is obvious. To be able to disappear completely, Quinn has cut all connections between his original self and the outer world. He wants to become invisible and Wilson serves as the new surface his environment can refer to. "If Wilson was an illusion, he nevertheless justified the lives of the other two. If Wilson did not exist, he nevertheless was the bridge that allowed Quinn to pass from himself into Work"

(Auster 6-7). Quinn himself cannot get to the core of the triad of selves and if there is a core at all, is a question that still needs to be answered in the course of this paper.

Auster describes Quinn as being aware of his situation but Quinn's strength and stability are clearly limited. His whole life has turned into one extremely complex construction, resulting in the loss of a clearly defined identity. Quinn proves creativity but not stability and always depends on his two companions, especially on Max Work: "(...) little by little, Work had become a presence in Quinn's life, his interior brother, his comrade in solitude" (Auster 7). We know that the use of multiple identities is a characteristic of postmodernity. Here is an obvious connection to the definition of postmodern identity given above. Quinn is aware of his active role in the construction of Wilson and Work and even makes active use of their presence. However, how he uses them does not correspond to the use of different identities as defined in postmodern theory. Quinn's withdrawal into the world of Max Work equals a mental exercise, while identity in postmodern theory defines itself through the recognition of the environment. At this stage of the novel, Quinn's desire to take on the role of Max Work is satisfied by thinking about a change:

It was not precisely that Quinn wanted to be Work, or even to be like him, but it reassured him to pretend to be Work as he was writing his books, to know that he had it in him to be Work if he ever chose to be, even if only in his mind.

(10)

Quinn's use of his pseudonym is a little closer to what is regarded as typical for the use of multiple identities. William Wilson represents Quinn, but the new name is only used as a shield to protect Quinn in his desire to be

left alone. One essential problem, however, remains. The use of a pseudonym is not the same as the use of another identity. Again, it is only a substitute. The central question stays the same: does the triad of selves have a core that can serve as a basis for an identity?

IV. 4. SHADOWING THE SELF

After having introduced or rather after having offered this sketch of the protagonist, Auster sends Quinn on a long and painful quest for who and what he really is. Quinn's first step is to assume the role of someone he does not know, a detective by the name of Paul Auster. For my discussion it is not only the name of the unknown detective which makes this an interesting development, but also the fact that Quinn now will be a detective. He can fully assume the identity and lead the life of Max Work, the admired hero of his mystery novels. Of course, "it was a wrong number that started it", but Quinn demonstrates a certain amount of initiative in pursuing the case. Nevertheless, his overall situation has not improved. When he meets the people who hired him, Virginia and Peter Stillman Jr., Peter greets him with the following words: "Yes. No. Thank you. (...) I am Peter Stillman. I say this of my own free will. That is not my real name. No." (Auster 18). Norma Rowen sees a connection between Stillman's words and Quinn's situation. Stillman Jr.'s "reliance on cliché" and his "contrived and mechanical delivery express in extreme form Quinn's sense (...) that the language he is using is not his own" (Rowen 228). The strange Stillman Jr. also resembles a puppet, reminding the reader of Auster's description of Quinn as a 'dummy'.

Before he makes him meet the object of his tail job, the author seems to prepare his protagonist for what is coming up in the course of his investigation. Standing naked in his apartment, Quinn picks up a pen and writes his initials in a red notebook he has just bought. To him, “it somehow seemed appropriate to be naked at this moment” (Auster 46). Although he seems to feel the importance of what is happening, he denies himself a closer look at his situation: “It was the first time in more than five years that he had put his own name in one of his notebooks. He stopped to consider this fact for a moment but then dismissed it as irrelevant” (Auster 47). Of course, what he has just done is extremely relevant but the foolish Quinn does not give it another thought (Barone 16). Instead, with the first entries in his red notebook, he contemplates on assuming another identity:

To remember what it feels like to wear other people’s clothes (...) And the strange sense I would have of climbing into his skin. That is probably a start.

And then, most important of all: to remember who I am. To remember who I am supposed to be. I do not think this is a game. on the other hand, nothing is clear. For example: who are you? And if you think you know, why do you keep lying about it? I have no answer. All I can say is this: listen to me. My name is Paul Auster. That is not my real name.

(48-49)

Here Auster, the author, reflects on the effects of the construction of postmodern identities and also formulates what is needed to stand the difficulties waiting for people living in a postmodern environment. “To remember who I am”. Quinn denies that everything is a game and at the same time imitates the speech of Peter Stillman Jr.. Trying to be the postmodern gambler he finds himself in the most difficult situation of his life, having lost himself.

Norma Rowen in her article compares Daniel Quinn to Don Quixote in his desire to “inhabit and make real one of his own fictions” (Rowen 226). Quinn does so by assuming the identity offered to him by the Stillmans. Since it is also the identity of Paul Auster, the author, Norma Rowen concludes that this is a comment on postmodern identity in general:

The fact that by an amusing trick, this identity is apparently that of Paul Auster himself, the writer of the novel, illustrates the extent to which elements of instability and of self-reflexive fictionalizing have invaded all ideas of self and its manifestations in the postmodern world.
(227)

Quinn enjoys his new identity and continues to believe that his actions are the result of his own will: “The effect of being Paul Auster, he had begun to learn, was not altogether unpleasant” (Auster 61) He is satisfied with what he is doing and enjoys the freedom of not knowing about himself as he feigns to be a detective called Auster, “he felt as though he had somehow been taken out of himself, as if he no longer had to walk around without burden of his own consciousness” (Auster 61) He feels lighter and freer, already enjoying a feeling related to nothingness. Still he clings to being Quinn. He can push away thoughts about his former life with his wife and his son with the help of his new identity which allows him to avoid pain and doubts about his life: “To be Auster meant being a man with no interior, a man with no thoughts. (...) He consequently had to remain solely on his own surface, looking outward for sustenance” (Auster 75).

IV. 5. THE END OF THE SELF

Quinn's lack of inner stability soon leads to further complications. Following Stillman Sr., he begins to imitate the old man's odd behavior in order to fill the void inside himself that continues to exist even as he tries to be Auster, the detective. But there is no insight, neither into Stillman Sr., nor into himself: "He had lived Stillman's life, walked at his pace, seen what he had seen, and the only thing he felt now was the man's impenetrability" (Auster 80). For Norma Rowen, Stillman Sr. is only one piece in the puzzle leading Quinn "not outward to to the world around him but inward to his own self" (Rowen 227). Stillman Sr. in my opinion is especially important insofar as he is the one the whole investigation focuses on. He is Quinn's last hope and when he disappears, Quinn is left with nothing but himself. He has lost Stillman Sr. and instead of being "inside his skin" (Auster 108) he is finally forced to look at who he is. Rowen sums up Quinn's adventures as follows:

All the figures and situations in the case turn out inexorably to be in various ways his own reflections, and his wide divagations through the labyrinth of New York only bring him back to the inner world that he has been so assiduously avoiding.
(227)

However, he stays involved and in all his despair contacts the 'real' Paul Auster. As he tells him his story, he admits what he has been trying to hide from himself for five years: "I hardly know myself" (Auster 111). As he wanders the streets the next day, he contemplates on the homeless people he sees. Quinn already sees what he has become. An invisible madman, unable to come to terms with himself.

Constantly watching the Stillmans' apartment, he turns into one of the bums he has thought about some days ago. "Remarkable as it seems, no

one ever noticed Quinn” as he is living in a garbage bin, with only very little food and even less sleep. In his solitude, he has nothing “to fall back on anymore but himself”, he notices that he is falling and the trouble is that he does not know how “to catch himself as well” (Auster 139). When a lack of money forces him to leave his seclusion, he is confronted with his own image in a mirror and “he did not recognize the person he saw there as himself” (Auster 143) Auster’s protagonist now is very close to discover the truth about himself. When he calls Auster, the character, to ask him about a check he was supposed to cash in for him, Quinn learns about the death of Stillman Sr.. Robbed of the character which kept the case and his role as a detective alive, he heads towards his apartment. Surprisingly, it is inhabited by a woman he does not know and all of his personal belongings are gone. He realizes that his struggle is over: “Quinn let out a deep sigh. He had come to the end of himself. He could feel it now, as though a great truth had finally dawned in him. There was nothing left” (Auster 149). When he returns to the Stillmans’ apartment and finds it empty, he retreats to a room at the back of the apartment, takes off his clothes, and falls asleep. Writing in his red notebook and living off the food that miraculously is served to him, Quinn spends his last days in complete solitude. As he has filled all of the pages in his notebook, nothing is left of Quinn and he eventually disappears.

Reproducing the conditions of Peter Stillman Jr.’s childhood, Quinn tried to become what Stillman was, an innocent child (Rowen 231). Being naked and without any contact to the outer world, Quinn wishes to be born again, to start anew:

He remembered the moment of his birth, and how he had been pulled gently from his mother’s womb. He remembered the infinite

kindness of the world and all the people he had ever loved. Nothing mattered but the beauty of all this.

(156)

V. CONCLUSION

Losing himself, in the end allows Daniel Quinn to be reborn. Only by becoming nothing, he can start all over and live another life. Before the death of his wife and son, the family had given him a purpose and had reassured him that he was alive. Having lost his connectedness, he turns inward and discovers a void, an empty room within himself. The loneliness created by the loss of his family turns into desperation as Quinn is waiting in vain for an appropriate substitute. This seems to be the source of his desire to assume different identities which becomes obvious when we look at the “triad of selves” (Sorapure 77). His situation supports Strinati’s argument that traditional frames of reference like the family have been substituted by new sources of identity.

After the family is gone, Quinn turns into a detective but as Dennis Barone notes “one cannot borrow purpose and meaning as one would a hat” (Barone 16). Speaking of hats, Quinn does not even borrow one to turn into a ‘real’ detective. He is neither much of a consumer, defining himself through extravagant clothes or a specific style, nor is he being absorbed by mass media. Quinn cannot be described as a typical representative of the postmodern generation as described in theory. His world is not dominated by signs and images, he does not construct his identity against moral norms and values. His problem is far more serious. He does not know who he is. As the fragments of his identity vanish, Quinn is at the end of himself and not a

postmodern gambler exploring the wide range of possibilities. Auster's protagonist has nowhere to start from and his involuntary search for himself is bound to be futile. If we want to know Quinn's real identity, all we have to do is remind ourselves of Auster's words: "In the triad of selves (...) Quinn himself was the dummy" (Auster 6).

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