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Paul Auster and the American Romantics

William Marling

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"Je est un autre."—Arthur Rimbaud

Few contemporary writers have been so successful abroad and so suspect at home as American poet and novelist Paul Auster, author of some dozen books, including the critically-acclaimed *New York Trilogy* and a recent screenplay, *Smoke* (1995, dir. Wayne Wang). In Europe his novels crowd super-market checkout lines; in France, where he is beloved for his paradoxes and epistemological pixiness, a major conference has been held on his work.[1] But in the U.S., Auster's *trompe l'oeil* plots and imploding narrators have been viewed with more skepticism, as if his work simply capitalized on theories of intertextuality and "the death of the author."

Those are undeniable and important contexts for Auster's work, but his greater significance may be the way in which he invokes American Romantic writers in his own biographic circumstances to *reinstate* Auster the "author" in his own web of textuality. He illustrates what Bakhtin called the "chronotopic": an exchange between works and readers in a historically developing social world. Auster rereads the American Romantics and responds to them as his "inheritance."

1. *Intertextuality*. The allusions to and outright borrowing from the American Romantics in Auster's works are legion. Denis Mellier has surveyed Auster's use of Melville, especially "Bartleby, the Scrivener," and Bertrand Gervais the author's debts to Poe, especially the latter's "William Wilson."[2] Norma Rowen has traced the use of Daniel Quinn in Auster's *City of Glass* as a double for a putative author named William Wilson under Todorov's scheme of author/criminal and reader/detective.[3] Chris Tysh and Oscar de Los Santos have examined these references as "disaffiliation" and "inter-subjectivity" in Auster's work.[4] There are also characters named "Dimmesdale," "Wakefield," "Coverdale" and "Hollingsworth" in Auster's work. His reading of Nathaniel Hawthorne, my focus here, appears most prominently in *The Locked Room*, the third volume of Auster's "New York Trilogy." The narrator of the novel searches for a vanished writer named Fanshawe, the protagonist of Hawthorne's first novel.

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"simply red herrings," fish leading to other fish, never forming a school. Such a view safeguards Auster's status as the American darling of the French school of inter-textuality, with its predisposition to find Auster a novelist of paradox and aporia, concerned with the "invention of writing" and "the impossibility of signification." But it ignores the ways in which Auster's re-reading of the American Romantics forms a new text, one that Francoise Sammarcelli has observed to focus on "filiation and alterity." For her, these terms mean that "the loss of the biological father is made up for in the exhibition of the literary fathers."[5]

2. *Hawthorne.* Hawthorne's 1828 novel, while no lost masterpiece, is circumstantially interesting—and Auster appears to know the circumstances. Hawthorne paid a subvention of $100 to Marsh and Capen of Boston for the anonymous publication of 1,000 copies in October, 1828 (Miller 77). Twenty-four at the time, Hawthorne was experiencing a coming-of-age crisis: he had just restored the older spelling of his family name (from Hathorne to Hawthorne), apparently to re-establish his relation to the Hawthornes of the sixteenth century and to free himself from his own absent father, who died in 1808 (81, 84). The impact on Hawthorne of his father's absence and death overseas are well established, especially by Edwin Haviland Miller.

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Though *Fanshawe* received favorable reviews, Hawthorne attempted to sever his connection with, if not totally obliterate it. By 1832, according to Roy Harvey Pearce, Hawthorne issued a recall, asking his sister and friends to turn in or burn their copies (308–309). In 1851 when James T. Fields asked after the novel, Hawthorne "spoke of it with great disgust" (Martin 24). More significantly, throughout his courtship and marriage to his wife Sophie, Hawthorne never told her that he had written *Fanshawe*, and after his death, confronted with a copy, "she innocently denied his authorship," writes Martin (24). Hawthorne thus denied the "legitimacy" of his work in conjugal as well as literary contexts. Despite its inferior nature, is the novel so wretched as to warrant Hawthorne's disowning it? Pearce has speculated that it is "possible that he deliberately aimed his book at the reader whose tastes went so much against the grain of his own. Perhaps he had hoped to try himself in two roles—as the 'popular' writer in *Fanshawe* and the 'serious' writer in 'Seven Tales'" (308). Something about this experiment in authorial selves was associated in Hawthorne's mind with his father, his marriage and his legacy. Pearce continues,

> Might the introversion of Fanshawe explain why Hawthorne, even though he had at the very least allowed efforts to promote the novel, came so much to dislike it? It is possible that he wrote *Fanshawe* seriously and as well as he knew how to write at the time... But it is also possible that *Fanshawe*, then, may have been a deliberately calculated piece of hack-work:.... (308)

Hawthorne set *Fanshawe* at a New England school modelled on his own Bowdoin

of "dyspeptic consumption," which was then attributed to excessive st[illegible] Hawthorne also borrowed from the Salem library in 1828 a book citing the ca[illegible] John Galliston, who died in 1820, age 31, of "too great love of studying" (M[illegible] 80). It was by Chandler Robbins and titled *Remarks on the Disorders of Literary* [illegible] *or, An Inquiry into the Means of Preventing the Evils Usually Incident to Sedentary* [illegible] *Studious Habits* (cited by Miller 80).

A second setting from Hawthorne's youth figuring in the novel is Sale[illegible] Charter Street Burying Point, where he played as a child. Miller avers [illegible] Hawthorne would have known of the grave there of Nathaniel Mather, ano[illegible] scholar who died young and whose epitaph read "An Aged person/that had [illegible] but/Nineteen Winters/In the World"(81). His brother, Cotton Mather, belie[illegible] Nathaniel should become an example to young students and wrote a biogra[illegible] *Young Piety Exemplified* about the tragedy of the "humble self-loathing Young-M[illegible] (81).

3. *Fanshawe.* The president of Harvey College, Dr. Melmoth, and his wife Sa[illegible] take in Ellen Langton, the daughter of a merchant detained abroad. Ellen has [illegible] seen her father since she was small, making her a prototypical fatherless c[illegible] But Mr. Langton suddenly sends word of his imminent return. Melmoth's t[illegible] the narrative's task, becomes the preservation until his arrival of Ellen's in[illegible]cence, seemingly imperiled by suitors. This innocence, viewed intertextually, [illegible]seme for authorship.

Hawthorne's narrative focus oscillates between Fanshawe and Edward Walc[illegible] a tall, graceful *poet manque* and scholar "possessed of a face and form, suc[illegible] Nature bestows on none but her favorites" (346). His rival, the fatherless Fansha[illegible] has "a noble, high forehead; strong, bold features; but a blight . . . seemed to h[illegible] come over him ere his maturity" (346). Walcott and Fanshawe are recogniza[illegible] Romantic types, extrovert and introvert. Walcott likes to go riding or walk[illegible] with Ellen, the object of both men's attention. But Fanshawe has to be *ordered* [illegible] ride in pursuit of his health." Thus the three meet afield at a cottage. They f[illegible] two impoverished old women, one of whom is dying and turns out to be [illegible] villain's mother. This depressing scene causes Fanshawe to "call up in review [illegible] years, that, even at his early age, he had spent in solitary study—in conversat[illegible] with the dead—while he had scorned to mingle with the living world" (350). El[illegible] awakens in him a desire to live that conflicts with his "dream of undying fan[illegible] (350).

As Ellen and her two lovers stand by a pool one day, they spot a trout hidi[illegible] Walcott wants to catch it, Fanshawe does not. Along comes the mysterious Ang[illegible] (young Butler)—a man of bold, coarse features—who offers his rod to Ellen a[illegible] demands *sotto voce* a private interview. The scene, which Freudian analyses ha[illegible]seined thoroughly, is clearly Hawthorne's projection of his psycho-sexual confli[illegible] But is this Angler *only* a sexualized and threatening Father?

The Angler also turns out to be a fatherless child; filial anxieties dominate [illegible] Butler sub-plot. We learn that Ellen's father wronged young Butler, who plans [illegible] revenge in her abduction and rape. But he has only two days to consummate

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having Butler lose his horses and confine Ellen in a cave. Before he can ravish her, Fanshawe appears on the overhanging cliff, which Butler climbs and falls off, literally having "grasped at a twig, too slenderly rooted to sustain his weight" (451).

Butler's death in this sub-plot allows Hawthorne to favor Walcott in the denouement of the main plot. It is an Oedipal economy, killing off the worst in the feared father and inheriting his domestic realm. Walcott's worthiness is shown by his "feeling the superior, the irresistible strength of his rival's claim," that is, leaving the field to Fanshawe. But Fanshawe "discovered no intention to pursue his advantage," writes Hawthorne. "He seemed to have resumed all the habits of seclusion" (456). So completely does he withdraw that when Fanshawe dies the inscription on his gravestone, borrowed from Mather's, reads: "The ashes of a hard student and a good scholar" (460).

Hawthorne's reconciliation of Ellen to Edward, whom she marries four years later, seems a "conventional ending" if an artistic failure, but the figure it makes of "marriage" may be at the heart of Hawthorne's equivocation about authorship. Edward and Ellen are "uncommonly happy" as she draws him away from "pursuits that would have interfered with domestic felicity; and he never regretted the worldly distinction of which she thus deprived him. Theirs was a long life of calm and quiet bliss;—and what matters it," Hawthorne concludes, "that, except in these pages, they have left no name behind them?" (460). In this sense, marriage is opposed to authorship.

4. *The Romance of Failure*. Fanshawe and Walcott were Hawthorne's first versions of a dichotomy that Terrence Martin has called "the poet and the bookkeeper" (19). Martin terms these the artistic possibilities that Hawthorne saw before him, for in this and other early stories, the poet may succeed, but he is forced into opposition or mesalliance with society.[6] Inward, bookish, meeting with scorn and ignorance, the artist isolates himself from life, developing the same shallow sensibility of it that his art chastises. He longs secretly for a simple, well-adjusted life, writes Miller, "in a society where one is not driven by the imperatives, self-denials, and feeling of guilt which burden artists" (81). While the artist destroys himself, the bookkeeper prospers in prosaic fashion. Unimaginative, uxorious, conventional, he lives like Walcott in the outer world, which becomes an arena of public honor and recognition. Walcott wanted to become a poet, but "without much reluctance or regret surrenders the dream for the creativity of the husband-father in the contented anonymity of family life" (81).

Yet none of this addresses the over-determination that readers sense in Hawthorne's text in the separation of the author's "proper identity" from his narrative points-of-view. Here and in his other early work, as Jonathan Auerbach has shown, "this double burden of telling and acting entails an attractive but dangerous process of self revelation which threatens to collapse the distinction between creation and creator, between the action taking place within the fiction and the author's management of that action from without" (8). The American Romantics, as Auerbach points out, show us how "the scrupulous need to preserve form at all costs leads to rhetorical acts of self-betrayal" (8). Auerbach posits this need as fueling the Romantics' concern with forms and genres, as driving Poe, for example, to his "exact method of composition" (3). Formal concerns seem to offer

some prop against the collapse of the distinction between author and textuality; the "romance of failure," as Auerbach felicitously phrases it, means that especially in first-person narratives form never quite manages to exclude the personal, biographical or historical. Their attempts to delimit their textuality implicate these authors in history.

The "double burden" of narration stands out in *Fanshawe* because of Hawthorne's sub-plot involving Butler and Ellen Langton, the details projected from Hawthorne's life and psyche, according to biographers.[7] Ellen is effectively orphaned when her father goes overseas, and Ellen's feeling toward her father is "not . . . so strong, as that she would have felt for a parent who had watched over her from infancy" notes Miller (82). She thinks of him as "stately, cold, and stern," as Hawthorne no doubt thought of his own father. As Miller points out, Butler is expelled from his real home by his father, raised by the corrupt father Crombie, and adopted by Ellen's father, only to be rejected for a trivial offense. In rebellion against all of the cruel, absent fathers, Butler plots his revenge in the abduction and rape of Ellen, his "symbolic sister." "By this devious route Hawthorne introduces the subject of incest which is to haunt his writing to the final years," writes Miller (82).

5. *Re-reading the Romance of Failure.* Auster's reading of the Romantics in *The Locked Room* begins with his title, a reference to Poe's "Murder in the Rue Morgue," the origin of the "locked room problem," but also to the many solitary rooms described in *The Invention of Solitude* (1982), where Auster made up, used and discarded selves in Paris, Provence and New York. In fact, scholars hardly ever discuss the novel without reference to the memoir. The ontology of the "locked room" may seem conventional, unless we re-imagine, with Poe's Dupin, the worldview of the "Ourang-Outang." Then other narratives become possible, some of horrific violence, as do violent (in)human alterities. Just as Poe's probes of alterity seem initially to be bounded by the impossibility of inhumanness, so Auster's plot seems at first conventionally bounded. The nameless first-person narrator is the "Walcott." He is a childhood friend who has lost touch with Fanshawe, an extraordinarily gifted but unpublished author. Fanshawe is presumed dead. He has left instructions with Sophie, his wife, that the "Walcott" shepherd his manuscripts into print. The narrator does so, even explicating them in articles—"I was the guardian of his work," he explains (17).

Auster re-reads Hawthorne's *Fanshawe* in many ways. He names Fanshawe's wife Sophie, the name of Hawthorne's wife; in *The Locked Room* she will serve the narrative function of Ellen Langton, personifying the "regenerative effects of love through the agency of woman" (Miller 83). In fact, when the narrator and Sophie have a child, it is named Ellen. This sort of name(for)saking, reminiscent of Hawthorne and Poe, invokes but hides essentially Romantic views of naming and authorship at the same time that it disperses authority by alluding to other texts. It reminds us of Hawthorne's "They have left no name behind them" (460). Still, it seems to take a father to name. Auster's Fanshawe, his narrator and Sophie are all essentially fatherless, like Hawthorne's characters. In particular Sophie's fatherlessness is like Ellen Langton's.[8] This lack of fathers, of which only the male point of view characters are acutely conscious, impels them to pursue what we

might call alterities: sub-plots that would instantiate them as "authors" in the women's lives. Hawthorne's Fanshawe wants to preserve Ellen Langton's innocence, and Auster's narrator takes unusual actions to keep his new wife Sophie "innocent" of her husband's existence. But the "double burden of telling and acting" is inherently unstable in form.

6. *Intertext.* Like Hawthorne's original, Auster's Fanshawe is a romantic, a poet, one who in Auster's parlance has gone into "the locked room" of his own "invention" to find out what is there. Auster's Fanshawe goes to an Eastern college, Harvard, and has a sister named Ellen, who gradually goes insane, partially from reading his poetry. "He was a separate being," his mother says, "a child without parents" whose salient characteristic was "a lack of affection" (Auster, *Room* 102).

Eventually the narrator moves in with Fanshawe's ex-wife and contracts to write Fanshawe's biography. He steps so completely into Fanshawe's life that his editor begins to suspect "Fanshawe" is a pseudonym. Then the narrator receives a message: Fanshawe is actually only hiding. He vows to kill himself in seven years, but meanwhile urges the narrator to marry his wife. "The child needs a father" he says, but "if you manage . . . to track me down, I will kill you" (66).

The narrator marries Sophie and to prepare himself for the biography, interviews Fanshawe's mother. A complex incest fantasy is revealed, for Fanshawe's mother says she desired the narrator when he was a boy. She saw him as her son's twin, while he was imagining her as a "late night fantasy" (106). "There was something natural about it," the narrator remarks, "Recently I've begun to wonder if she didn't somehow sense a hatred in me for Fanshawe that was just as strong as her own" (107). The negation in this attraction recalls Hawthorne's Butler-Ellen relationship; indeed before she seduces him, Mrs. Fanshawe remarks on the peculiarity of his being "married to my son's wife," a kind of doubling by which she takes incestuous revenge on her son (101). Auster writes, "Fucking me would be like fucking Fanshawe—like fucking her son—and in the darkness of this sin, she would have him again—but only in order to destroy him" (107).

The narrator resolves to kill Fanshawe, who endangers his material success, as well as his psychic stability. If we are reading *The Locked Room* intertextually, Auster's re-reading of Hawthorne now becomes acute. To complete the Fanshawe biography, the narrator goes to Paris, passing the places and phases of Fanshawe's young life, his residence in Paris and Provence, which turn out to be the places and phases of Auster's life. This cathartic re-tracing of Fanshawe's footsteps, which was to allow Auster's narrator to return happily to his wife and their new child, fails. He and Sophie attempt to erase Fanshawe by throwing out his books and memorabilia. No luck—Fanshawe summons the narrator to Boston. Speaking through a door, Fanshawe reveals that he will commit suicide that day, that he repudiates his work and all that he was, particularly the illusions of immortality and fame through art. This reading of the romance of failure must be repudiated by the narrator, for it would erase his justification for being a narrator, and also efface his "author" partially. Before the narrator can realize this paradox, he finds himself holding a notebook.

This notebook, rich with Fanshawe's thought, represents the possibility of completely adopting his personality—that is, an about-face from repudiation to

radical alterity. Sensing himself confronted by a continuation of "Fanshawe," he refuses to open the notebook at first, but when he does, he finds the words strange, "each sentence erased the sentence before it, each paragraph made the next paragraph impossible" (178). As he recognizes, "the book had been written for me," yet by reading it, he effaces it (179). It goes forward, erasing futures, obliterating the past. Finally he throws it into a trash bin: "I felt there was something too willed, something too perfect, as though in the end the only thing he had really wanted was to fail—even to the point of failing himself" (179).

7. *Author/Narrator.* Like his Fanshawe, a younger Auster had a sister who "suffered through a series of debilitating mental breakdowns" (Auster, *Solitude* 25). As Auster's Fanshawe was a merchant seaman and caretaker of a farmhouse in Provence, so was Auster (Olendorf 13). Poe and Stevenson are Fanshawe's models (*Room* 30), just as they were once Auster's. As the young Auster, living in Paris, used to visit the composer he calls "S" on the Place Pinel (*Solitude* 89–94), so the young Fanshawe befriends "an old Russian composer by the name of Ivan Wyshnegradsky" on the rue Mademoiselle (*Room* 119). This adoption of a father by a son becomes a cautionary example, for neither artist ever finishes his work. Indeed the smallness of the rooms in which these two live seems to have dictated their imagination of impossibly large works, in one case requiring three full symphonies. The narrator has also been a census-taker (82–3) just as Auster once was (Olendorf 13) and one of the characters he invents for the census is named "Dimmsdale" (83). Like Auster, he has been "a telephone operator for the Paris bureau of the *New York Times*" (Olendorf 13; Auster, *Room* 121). He works "off and on for a movie producer—revising treatments, translating, preparing script synopses" in Paris, as Auster did (*Room* 121). Even the address of the final confrontation of this fragmented self in *The Locked Room*—9 Columbus Square, in Boston—is an actual address of a friend of Auster's, one whose acquaintance over 15 years comprehends the two phases of his life (McCaffery, *Contemporary Literature* 7). Auster's Fanshawe is also in an important sense the childhood friend whose electrocution by lightening he has described in interviews (8). And he is related to Fogg of *Moon Palace*, "a bookish young man, an intellectual" in his youth (*Moon Palace* 20), whom Auster has said is "looking back on the way he *used* to think, the way he *used* to interpret the world" (20). He is a variant of Quinn in *City of Glass*, of whom Auster said, "I tried to imagine what would have happened to me if I hadn't met [my wife], and what I came up with was Quinn" (McCaffery, *Contemporary* 16). As Auster scholars can attest, this is only a partial list. To contain himself, the narrator of *The Locked Room* tracks down the student Stillman (who appears in other novels, clearly a signifier for the young Auster/Fanshawe) in order to kill him as a substitute for Fanshawe. At the moment of crisis he finds himself unable to do so. He decides to return to Sophie, to become Walcott.

8. *Erasure.* Like Hawthorne, Auster suppressed some of his early work, notably the detective novel *Squeeze Play*. A few years later (1976–1977), Auster wrote a series of one-act plays. "One of them," he said, "to my everlasting regret, was even performed. There's no point talking about that now—except to say that

the memory of that performance still pains me" (12). The play appears to have been "Eclipse," produced in New York City by the Artists' Theatre, in March, 1977 (Olendorf 13).

Auster connects these suppressions with the period of his artistic coming-of-age and resolution of his feelings for his (dead) father. We also know that he felt driven to hack-work by economic frustration. As he recounts it:

> The year before my father died was a particularly bad period. I had a small child, a crumbling marriage, and a miniscule income that amounted to no more than a fraction of what we needed ... Half-crazed by the pressure of it all, I began devising various get-rich-quick schemes. I invented a game ... and spent close to six months trying to sell it. When that failed, I sat down and wrote a pseudonymous detective novel in record time, about three months. It was eventually published, but it only brought in about two thousand dollars, which was hardly the kind of money I had been hoping for. (McCaffery, *Contemporary* 10)

The name of this child is Sophie (McCaffery, *Contemporary* 14).

9. *Inheritance*. It would be easy to say that Auster made the obvious extension of Hawthorne's dichotomy: the later, mature self must somehow put to rest the earlier, romantic poet. "I sometimes imagined he *wanted* me to kill him," writes the narrator; "Fanshawe's power had to be broken, not submitted to" (113). But a closer look at the evidence and at Hawthorne's Fanshawe suggests a more complex use. In both cases the authors use the death of the father to probe filial "inheritance" and while both then explore alterities, Auster's problematization of the "author" leads to an inter-textual exhibition that begs to be contained. His "Fanshawe" turns out to be a mechanism by which that dissociation from the self, which he cites so approvingly in Rimbaud("Je est un autre"), produces Auster's own "realistic" self. This self is bounded by Auster's response to Hawthorne, which takes a new form of "inheritance." Not only is this a motif in *City of Glass*, *Moon Palace* and *The Music of Chance*, but Auster himself has commented on the importance of "receiv[ing] an inheritance after my father died eleven years ago" (McCaffery, *Contemporary Literature* 9). "It wasn't a tremendous amount of money ... but it made a huge difference; it was enough to change my life entirely" (9–10). Just before the inheritance was the period of his "half-crazed" desperation, in which he wrote the now repudiated pseudonymous detective novel. Such windfalls, Auster remarks, "create[s] a suspension of the daily routine" (9). "That money set my life on an entirely different course ... for the first time in my life I had the time to write ... It's impossible to sit down and write without thinking about it. It's a terrible equation, finally. To think that my father's death saved my life" (10–11).

Seen this way, Fanshawe and his manuscripts are the inheritance of *The Locked Room*'s narrator. The latter is not, as Stephen Schiff has stated, the "untarnished aspect of himself," nor does he "represent the author" equally with the narrator (15–16). He is recognized and re-read, "effaced" and "inherited." This seems, for Auster, to be a doubled process, for about the same time that he lost a father he became a father. As he has commented, "having children has a lot to do with [helping him mature as a writer and as an individual]. Becoming a parent connects you to a world beyond yourself, to the continuum of generations, to the

inevitability of your own death. You understand that you exist in time, and after that you can no longer look at yourself in the same way. It's impossible to take yourself as seriously as you once did" (McCaffery, *Contemporary* 13).

Inheritance is a locating and constitutive function of the author for Auster. "My true place in the world, it turned out, was somewhere beyond myself, and if that place was inside me, it was also unlocatable," writes Auster's narrator (*Room* 58–9). Auster re-reads or "inherits" Hawthorne, and in the process of doing so he is at least temporarily constituted as an "author," but as his progeny (literary or human) come into the world, the "double burden of telling and acting" begins to impinge. Inheritor of Fanshawe but sonless, this narrator seeks the filial thread, which in *The Locked Room* his adoption of Sam (the son of Sophie and Fanshawe) or selection of Stillman, the student Auster from other novels, can provide only positionally. Most striking is that this particular moment over-writes what we have described earlier, in Hawthorne and the first half of *The Locked Room*, as resolution by incest—a halt in the narrator's production of new selves after his penetrations of Fanshawe's mother and Sophie. He is stabilized in answer to Fanshawe's assertion to the narrator that "The child needs a father and you're the only one I can count on" (66). "Instead of an investigator, I was now an inventor" (82). Filiations now seem to appear spontaneously. We discover that the narrator has parents (87), and that Fanshawe ran away from his wife because he was about to become a father (171), a test the narrator has at least passed.

10. *Re-reading Inheritance.* Auster himself discusses intertextuality in terms of the Lacanian "mirror-stage." "Self-consciousness in adulthood is merely an extension of those early experiences," he has said, in which "the infant feeding at the mother's breast looks up into the mother's eyes and sees her looking at him, and from that experience of being seen, the baby begins to learn that he is separate from his mother, that he is a person in his own right. We literally acquire a self in this process." In adulthood, "it is no longer the mother who is looking at us . . . we're looking at ourselves" (McCaffery, *Mississippi* 58). Thus in his contemplation of his father's life in *The Invention of Solitude*, we find Auster first in his Fanshawe mask, writing of a father who is like Walcott, the bookkeeper, "a man who finds life tolerable only by staying on the surface of himself . . . satisfied with offering no more than this surface to others;" and later, in his Walcott mask, averring that "Marriage, on the other hand, closes the door. Your existence is confined to a narrow space in which you are constantly forced to reveal yourself—and therefore, constantly obliged to look into yourself, to examine your own depths" (15). It is in this sense that Rimbaud's "Je est un autre" is so useful to Auster the "realist." There are not only many self-images in Auster's mirror when he, as an adult, regards himself, but a compulsion to erase those he already knows. To see is to see anew. "What do you see?" he writes, "And if you see, how do you put it in words?" (*Moon Palace* 122).

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NOTES

1. Colloque Paul Auster, June 10–12, 1994, Institut de Recherche du Monde Anglophone, Universite de Provence, Aix-Marseille.
2. Denis Mellier, "Metafiction et signification dans *City of Glass* or l'illusion d'une transparence," and Bertrand Gervais, "Au Pays des tout derniers mots. Perte du language chez Paul Auster," Colloque Paul Auster, Universite de Provence, Aix-Marseille, 10–12 June, 1994. My special thanks to Chris Metress, whom I met there, for reading and commenting on this essay.
3. Norma Rowen, "The Detective in Search of the Lost Tongue of Adam: Paul Auster's *City of Glass*," *Critique*, 1991, 32.4: 224–33.
4. Chris Tysh's "From One Mirror to Another: The Rhetoric of Disaffiliation in *City of Glass*" appears in the special Auster issue of *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 1994, Spring, 14.1, 46–52. This issue, the first of its kind, contains a number of important articles on Auster. Oscar De Los Santos' dissertation is "The Concealed Dialectic: Existentialism and (Inter) Subjectivity in the Postmodern Novel," Ohio State U., 1993.
5. Francoise Sammarcelli, "The Invention of Writing: Filiation and Otherness in *The Invention of Solitude*," Colloque Paul Auster, Universite de Provence, Aix-Marseille, 10 June 1994.
6. For example, "The Artist of the Beautiful," "Peter Goldthwaite's Treasure," and *Septimus Felton*.
7. See Miller, *Salem*, 25–28, 32–36; Mellow, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 13–16.
8. Sophie, in Auster's novel, does have parents, but they are only mentioned once and never appear. They play no role in her life.

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