

Reading to you, or the aesthetics of marriage: dialogic intertextuality in the works of Siri Hustvedt and Paul Auster.

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Reading to you, or the aesthetics of marriage : dialogic intertextuality in the works of Siri Hustvedt and Paul Auster

Williamson, Alexander (2018) *Reading to you, or the aesthetics of marriage : dialogic intertextuality in the works of Siri Hustvedt and Paul Auster*. Doctoral thesis, Birkbeck, University of London.

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Abstract

Using a methodological framework which develops Vera John-Steiner's identification of a 'generative dialogue' between the works of Siri Hustvedt and Paul Auster, this research offers a new perspective on the bi-directional flow of influence and support between the two authors. Foregrounding the intertwining of Hustvedt and Auster's emotional relationship with the embodied selfhood of their characters, the first chapter traces the development of the authors' nascent identities through their non-fictional works, examining the genealogical, canonical and interpersonal foundation of formative selfhood. Chapter two examines the poststructuralist discourse in shaping Hustvedt and Auster's early fictional narratives, offering an alternative to the dominant postmodernist label, and attempting to situate the hybrid spatiality of Hustvedt and Auster's period. The third chapter considers Hustvedt and Auster's transfictional exchange of the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic characterisation and plot, an approach which seems to indicate Auster's assimilation of Hustvedt's shared affinity for Martin Buber's credo of mutuality. Continuing this discussion of self-other dialectics, the fourth chapter examines Hustvedt and Auster's visual representations encompass models of intersubjectivity informed by the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, highlighting how Hustvedt and Auster utilise ekphrastic techniques to foreground their shared creativity. Guided by Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra's alternative readings of Freudian trauma theory, the fifth chapter examines the empathic authenticity of Hustvedt and Auster's post-9/11 narratives. Assessing Hustvedt and Auster's dialogic formation in the late Twentieth and early Twenty-First Centuries, the conclusion identifies a powerful but often overlooked 'uninterrupted conversation' of their marriage, embodied in a generative dialogue and emotionally-freely unique to contemporary literature.

Item Type: Thesis (Doctoral)

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