

Enigmatic Identity and Alienated Self: Existential Analysis of Paul Auster's the Brooklyn Follies

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Abstract : Contemporary fiction is an intricate exercise where novelist acquires the role of a philosopher, a sociologist and a psychologist. The dilemma of fragmented self that a man experiences, is a crucial subject of contemporary fiction. Paul Auster's fiction is exemplary of the merger of Existentialism and Postmodernism, and while both of these movements insist on isolation of the self from all aspects of social affiliation, Auster's unique blend of these concepts presents man in a state which is not just alienated, but stranded in a desolate abyss, rendering even the release of death as questionable. The conundrums of the self is a compulsory consequence of the existentialist alienation that postmodern man is subjected to, and is further accentuated by the fact that existentialist freedom dictates that not only are one's actions not dictated by any form of external entity, but also the onus of one's destiny lies on an individual's own deeds. This paper will analyse Auster's The Brooklyn Follies from an Existentialist perspective, and will attempt to trace the alienation and identity conflicts of the Auster's characters along with some of the common Austerian themes. An emphasis will be laid on the characters' endeavour to reconstruct their lost self.

Keywords : alienation, existentialism, identity, postmodernism, self

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