

The Journey of the Fragmented Self and the Representation of Identity in Paul Auster's *The Brooklyn Follies*

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Abstract

*Paul Auster's *The Brooklyn Follies* examines the profound exploration of fragmented identities as fluid, fractured and it reconstructed through narrative, memory, and interpersonal relationships. It also demonstrates personal identity with the themes of chance and storytelling focusing on human connection. Nathan's journey begins when he was diagnosed with cancer and lost his family support that leads to the fragmented self. He found out source to live his life by reconstructing his identity. The study argues that fragmentation focusing on Nathan Glass and other characters portrayed as not merely a condition of loss but a transformative process that enables renewal and self-reconstruction of the self.*

Keywords: Journey, Fragmented Selves, Identity, Selfhood.

In Postmodern literature, the question of identity plays an important role, where the notions of self are frequently destabilised by fragmentation, alienation, and uncertainty. Usually in Paul Auster's works the identity remains unstable and it consistently interrogates the identity as fragmented who struggles to define themselves in this unpredictable world. He explores the fractured nature of selfhood. This paper investigates the journey of the fragmented self and examines how the identities reconstructed through the continual process of achieving the transformation at the end. The psychological transformation of Nathan, the role of storytelling and the relationships restructured fragmentation and paved the way for the reconstruction of identity and meaning in this world.

Paul Auster was a distinguished American writer, novelist, poet, translator, and filmmaker. His works are widely associated with postmodernism. He was born in 1947 at Newark, New Jersey. He gained international acclaim with his notable work *The New York Trilogy*. He often blurs the lines between reality, fiction and metafiction examining the themes of identity, chance and existential uncertainty. He is well known for the terms associated with the terms of selfhood, chance, coincidence and narrative construction. His characters often navigate through the identity crises, emphasizes on absurdity, ambiguity and dislocation. He influenced by the

existentialism and philosophical concerns focusing on the idea of fragmentation and reinventing the self. Paul Auster's *The Brooklyn Follies* was published in the year 2005. This novel centres on a retired insurance salesman, Nathan Glass, who was diagnosed with lung cancer and experienced a failed marriage. He wishes to spend his last remaining days in a quiet place, waiting for his own death. He embarks on writing *The Book of Human Folly*, a book on human errors and absurdity. His life changed after reconnecting with his nephew Tom and Lucy. Nathan explores while travelling with Tom and Lucy, his own journey of recovering from the scars that left behind. He embraces a new hope by lending a hand and support around him in this fragmented world. This novel explores the themes of familial reconciliation, chance encounters and emotional healing.

Nathan Glass experienced the fragmented self as he was a divorcee, estranged from his daughter and a cancer patient. He perceives his life as a series of failures, recovering from cancer and other family problems. He decided to move to Brooklyn to die peacefully rather than an act of withdrawal. His identity is shattered by illness, loss, and disconnection as he faces the fractured shelves. His self-imposed exile reflects his existential dislocation. As he mentions, "My parents had moved out of the city when I was three, but I instinctively found myself returning to the neighborhood where we had lived, crawling home like some wounded dog to the place of my birth." (1)

The other characters in this novel also embody a fragmented identity. Tom struggles with disappointment and instability in his personal and professional life. Lucy, too, struggles with trauma and remains silent, which symbolises the fractured self. Their identity illustrates how their family, career, and social status are affected and tampered. Their fragmented self and existential dislocation become the starting point for transformation in reinventing their own self. Nathan narrates his experiences through storytelling, shares his perspectives and worldview and functions as a mechanism for reconstructing identity. He realizes the empathy between the relationships, thereby bridging the gap between the fragmented self and the reconstruction of the fragmented self. The identity formation and the search for meaning reframes one's experiences into a coherent meaning.

... now transformed into a confidant and counsellor, a lover of randy widows, and a knight-errant who rescued damsels in distress. (284)

Auster underscores as he reflects the character's fragmented self and fosters healing with the unexpected connections. Nathan discovers identity is relational through his relationships with Tom, Lucy and other characters, rejecting the solitary at the end. Auster emphasises that through interaction and care the identity can be reconstructed. Even in the face of uncertainty and adversity, the characters' connection affirms resilience and shared humanity. This novel concludes with the exploration of fragmented selves and the representation of identity through Nathan Glass's journey. The author too emphasized on transformation rather than fragmentation or disintegration. Here, the fragmented self regenerates the capability of renewal and reconstruction of meaning. Nathan reconnects with him and his surroundings, helping and supporting his close ones, unknitting their problems becomes a source for his survival, thereby reconstructing himself.

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