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THE TRAUMA OF IDENTITY AND MEMORY IN PAUL AUSTER'S MOON PALACE REFLECTION BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES

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Abstract

This Paper explores the theme of trauma in Paul Auster's novel Moon Palace and its profound impact on the characters' identities and memories. The author Auster's work is known for its complex narratives and exploration of existential themes, and Moon Palace is no exception. Through a close examination of the novel, this study uncovers how trauma disrupts the characters' sense of self and reshapes their understanding of the past. The story is told from Marco Stanley Fogg's point of view, a young man who undergoes a series of traumatic events that propel him into a journey of self-discovery and contemplation. Fogg's experiences serve as a catalyst for questioning the nature of identity and the reliability of memory. As the story progresses, Auster delves into the psychological ramification of trauma, illustrating how it fractures the characters' perception of reality. This Paper highlights the different forms of trauma depicted in the novel, including loss, abandonment, and betrayal. Each traumatic event challenges the characters' existing beliefs and forces them to confront the fragility of their identities. Memories, often intertwined with trauma, become distorted and unreliable, blurring the line between truth and fiction. The study examines how Auster employs various narrative techniques, such as non-linear storytelling and fragmented narratives, to mirror the fragmented psyches of the characters. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of Auster's work and the broader discourse on trauma, identity, and memory in literature.

Moon Palace is a novel by Paul Auster that tells the story of M S Fogg, a young man who embarks on a journey of self-discovery following a series of traumatic events. The narrative unfolds through Fogg's perspective as he navigates through a fragmented world, questioning his identity and the nature of reality. The novel begins with Fogg's isolated and precarious existence in New York City, where he experiences loss and abandonment. He finds solace in the company of an eccentric older

man named Zimmer, who becomes his mentor. However, Zimmer's sudden disappearance leaves Fogg adrift once again. As Fogg's journey continues, he encounters various characters and experiences that shape his understanding of himself and the world. He finds employment as a caregiver for an elderly man, gains access to a hidden treasure trove of books, and becomes involved in a love affair with a woman named Kitty Wu. Through these encounters, Fogg grapples with themes of fate,

chance, and the fragility of human connections. The novel also delves into the themes of memory and storytelling. Fogg's recollections of his past are often unreliable and distorted, blurring the boundaries between truth and fiction. Auster employs non-linear storytelling and fragmented narratives to mirror the fractured nature of Fogg's psyche and the crash of trauma on memory. Moon Palace explores the lasting effects of trauma on individual identity and the inter-generational spread of pain. Auster suggests that trauma not only shapes one's perception of the present but also reverberates across time, impacting future generations. In the end, Moon Palace presents a complex and introspective examination of identity, memory, and the human experience. It invites readers to contemplate the profound bang of traumatic dealings on one's sense of self and the quest for meaning in a world filled with uncertainty.

In Paul Auster's Moon Palace, the experiences of the protagonist, Marco Stanley Fogg, catalyze questioning of the nature of identity and the reliability of memory, leading to a transformative journey of self-discovery and contemplation. Fogg's journey begins with a series of traumatic events and personal upheavals, including loss, abandonment, and the sudden disappearance of his mentor. These experiences disrupt Fogg's sense of self and challenge the stability of his identity. He is therefore compelled to reexamine who he is and how he perceives himself relative to humankind. The novel delves into the fragility of identity, highlighting how external circumstances and unexpected events can shatter one's preconceived notions of who they are. Fogg's encounters with adversity and the subsequent questioning of his identity propel him on a quest for self-understanding and self-definition. Moreover, the reliability of memory becomes a central concern for Fogg. Traumatic events often intertwine with memories, blurring the boundaries between past and present, fact and fiction. Fogg's recollections become fragmented and distorted, leading him to question the accuracy and truthfulness of his memories. This questioning of memory further contributes to the exploration of identity and the subjective nature of personal narratives. Fogg's

journey of self-discovery and contemplation involves encounters with various characters and situations that offer him new perspectives and insights. Through these experiences, He gradually assembles the pieces of his uniqueness and gains a deeper understanding of himself. Fogg's experiences in Moon Palace prompt him to get on a transformative journey of self-discovery and contemplation. As he grapples with questions of identity and the reliability of memory, he undergoes profound introspection and seeks meaning and purpose in his life. Through his journey, readers are invited to ponder the nature of identity, the subjective nature of memory, and the existential quest for self-understanding.

Paul Auster's Moon Palace, the narrative is overflowing with various traumatic events that significantly impact the characters and shape the story's development. These traumatic events disrupt the characters' lives, challenge their perceptions, and contribute to the exploration of identity and human experience. Some of the notable traumatic events in Moon Palace include:

Loss and Abandonment, Marco Stanley Fogg experiences multiple instances of loss and abandonment throughout the novel. His father's suicide when he was young leaves a profound emotional scar on him. He also experiences the loss of his mother, his childhood home, and his job, which contribute to his sense of instability and displacement. In Paul Auster's novel "Moon Palace," the protagonist, Marco Stanley Fogg, experiences profound loss and abandonment throughout the story which shapes his life and influences his journey of self-discovery. Here are some key moments of loss and abandonment that Marco encounters. At the commencement of the novel, Marco's mother dies when he is just eleven years old, leaving him orphaned. He is then deserted by his father, who disappears from his life without explanation. This loss and abandonment leave Marco feeling alone and disconnected from his family.

"As I grew older, she left me at home with babysitters more and more often, but I did not understand what these mysterious

departures of hers meant until much later, long after she was dead".(Auster1989, p. 4)

Marco falls in being in love with a woman named Kitty Wu, but their relationship eventually ends, leading to a significant loss for Marco. He is unable to cope with the breakup and spirals into a period of depression and self-destructive behavior. The loss of Kitty represents a significant emotional blow to Marco, further exacerbating his sense of abandonment and loneliness.

"As it turned out, it was on one of those afternoons in mid-October that I finally saw Kitty Wu again. I was battling my way through a sticky passage, and I did not notice her until she had already sat down on the bench beside me" (Auster1989, p. 92)

Throughout the novel, Marco experiences financial difficulties and loses his job, leading to a loss of material possessions. He becomes homeless and is required to live in Central Park, where he encounters other individuals who have experienced similar losses and abandonments. This loss of stability and material comfort adds to Marco's sense of despair and disconnection from society.

"I had no clear idea of what I was going to do. When I left my apartment on the first morning, I simply started walking, going wherever steps decided to take me. If I had all, it was to let chance determine what happened, to follow the path of impulse and arbitrary events" (Auster1989, p.50-51)

After his parents passed away, Marco moves in with his Uncle Victor, who becomes a father figure to him. However, when Marco is in his early twenties, Uncle Victor abruptly leaves him, abandoning him once again. This abandonment leaves Marco feeling betrayed and lost, with no stable support system.

In the latter part of the novel, Marco befriends Zimmer, a wealthy man who takes him in and offers him a job. However, when Marco accidentally causes Zimmer's house to catch fire, Zimmer abandons him, leaving him homeless once

again. This abandonment further emphasizes Marco's feelings of being discarded and unwanted.

"Zimmer was the one who took care of me during my convalescence" (Auster1989, p.72)

Throughout the novel, Marco Stanley Fogg's experiences of loss and abandonment serve as catalysts for his personal growth and self-reflection. They shape his understanding of himself and the world around him, forcing him to confront his vulnerabilities and search for meaning and purpose in the face of adversity.

I had not staged a series of mental breakdowns to establish a history of Psychological disturbance. (Auster1989, p.75)

Paul Auster is an acclaimed American author known for his explorations of existentialism, identity, and the complexities of human experience. While he is not the author of "Moon Palace," a novel by Auster himself, he is well-regarded for his ability to delve into the psychological state of trauma and its impact on characters' perception of reality. In "Moon Palace," published in 1989, The novel follows Marco as he traverses different stages of his life, encountering various people and experiences along the way. Trauma plays a significant role in "Moon Palace," as Marco faces the death of his father, the loss of his home, and other challenging circumstances. These experiences fracture Marco's perception of reality, leading him to question his own identity and purpose in life. Auster delves into the psychological effects of trauma by portraying Marco's struggles with grief, isolation, and a sense of displacement. Throughout the novel, Auster employs narrative techniques such as fragmented storytelling, multiple perspectives, and metafictional elements to mirror the fractured psyche of his characters. This fragmented narrative style reflects the disoriented state of mind caused by trauma and allows Auster to explore the subjective nature of reality.

Once I reached the end of the continent, I felt that some important questions would be resolved for me. I had no idea what that question was, but the answer had already

been formed in my steps, and I had only to keep walking to know that I had left myself behind, that I was no longer the person I had once been. (Auster1989, p.306)

Auster's exploration of trauma and its effects on perception is not limited to "Moon Palace." Many of his works, such as "The New York Trilogy" and "City of Glass," also delve into similar themes. This work delves into the broader implications of trauma and its capacity to transcend personal boundaries. Auster suggests that trauma can reverberate across generations, impacting not only the individuals directly involved but also their descendants. The study investigates the transfer of trauma through generations and its effects on the characters' attempts to forge meaningful connections and find solace in their shattered identities. In conclusion, this provides a preliminary exploration of the theme of trauma in Paul Auster's Moon Palace. By analyzing the novel's portrayal of identity and memory in the aftermath of traumatic events, this study illuminates the profound impact of trauma on the characters' lives. It highlights how Auster challenges conventional narrative structures to depict the complexities of trauma and its lasting effects on the human experience.

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