



EXISTENTIAL ALIENATION AND THE IDENTITY CRISIS IN BHUTTO'S *THE RUNAWAYS*

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Abstract

This study analyze the theme of existential alienation and identity crisis in The Runaways (2019) by Fatima Bhutto in the light of the philosophical work of Jean-Paul Sartre, specifically Being and Nothingness (1943), and Existentialism Is a Humanism (1946). It argues that the protagonists of the text like Sunny, Monty and Layla embody Sartre's notion that "existence precedes essence" by their identities not being determined by cultural or social factors but being rather formed through contingent decisions within displacement and moral ambiguity. Their social marginalization, cultural estrangement and even psychological fragmentation indicates a profound ontological insecurity which is central to Sartre's existentialism. Moreover, the radicalization, emotional isolation and ideological seduction which the novel depicts, bring to life some major existential ideas like nothingness, bad faith, anguish, and the weight of freedom. All these factors underscore the conflict between self-creation and self-deception and finally, the instability of identity in a globalized modern world where there is spiritual dislocation.

Keywords: Existentialism, identity crisis, alienation, bad faith, nothingness, radicalization, freedom

Introduction

Identity crisis and existential alienation have become open occupational concerns of the modern literary discourse, particularly in the environment of globalized space, characterized by a lack of cultural unity, a trend of migration and an overall moral ambiguity. People are facing more and more instability in social, cultural and ideological constructs, which create deep interrogation in the sense of self-hood, meaning and responsibilities. The novel by Bhutto is a contemporary account of such existential issues in literature. The story is based on the parallel paths of three characters Sunny, Monty and Layla who are struggling with the issue of emotional loneliness, cultural alienation and identity crisis. The focus on the identity and belonging struggles of the protagonists helps the novel to bring out the ethical and psychological aspects of creating yourself and also explaining how people in the contemporary world cope with moral confusion, social forces and existential turmoil.

This study employs the existentialist postulates by Sartre to interpret alienation and identity crisis as portrayed in *The Runaways* (2019) projecting how actions, choice and immorality of the characters presented are the manifestations of the ongoing problem of authenticity in the complicated, disorienting new reality.

The modern literature offers a rich ground upon which the analysis of these existential issues can be done, especially in the stories that feature young characters who are forced to live within the disjointed social, cultural and ideological space. *The Runaways* (2019) by Bhutto prefigures the complex negotiations involved in the process of negotiating identity within uncertainty and moral ambiguity and how alienation can be both brought about by external conditions as well as internal processes of freedom and responsibility.



Background of the Study

Contemporary fiction is more than ever having to deal with the uncertainties of identity and the sense of existential alienation in a globalized and yet fragmented world, where conventional patterns of belonging have been greatly put into a state of dislocation. Current socio-political changes, cultural displacement and ideological challenges have increased the individual struggle to form a coherent sense of self in the circumstances of uncertainty and moral ambiguity. *The Runaways* (2019) expresses these tensions by depicting young characters that have to endure the experiences of marginalization, emotional isolation and the quest to find the meaning usually in the contexts of radicalization and ideological seduction. This is reflected in the existential philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, particularly, his assertion that “existence precedes essence” as he puts it in his works *Being and Nothingness* (1943) and *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (1946). In this view, identity is not a predetermined inheritance but a continuous self-formation through the choice, freedom and responsibility. The theme of psychological fragmentation and moral dilemma introduced in the novel is connected to the main concepts of Sartre, namely nothingness, bad faith and anguish, therefore, offering a valuable approach to understanding how modern subjectivity is formed and destabilized due to the conditions of uncertainty and existential insecurity.

Furthermore, the feeling of the meaninglessness and the irrational silence of the indifferent world can provoke an existential search of certainty. This Sartre’s contradiction is graphically portrayed in the text. The characters are deeply alienated by their families, their culture and themselves, their radicalization is not just a political or religious position, it is existential project, a bloody and radical attempt to create something of essence to stamp the horror of freedom on the solidity of a ready-made identity provided by a radical cause.

Literature Review

Existentialism is a philosophical paradigm that focuses on human existence and discusses the problems that people go through for their existence. It prefigures the experienced human being and assumes that subjectivity, freedom, choice, responsibility, alienation, suffering and absurdity of life are the central issues of the field. In opposition to classical philosophy which Plato describes that every person and every object has a fated essence or purpose existentialism challenge the idea of a fixed identity. The claims of Plato that there are predetermined traits that make one who they are were supported by the Christian theology which asserted that human beings are directed by a divine purpose. However, the experience of World Wars was cataclysmic and greatly disturbed these traditional beliefs and pushed philosophers to redefine the meaning of existence (Olson, 2012).

Modernity and the destruction of the world wars only added to the hopelessness and disillusionment and cemented the philosophy of existentialism. Existentialism emerged as a reaction to modern life which tends to create a lack of meaning and cannot be emotional. They stress the fact that personal liberty is central in challenging such circumstances. As a result, existentialism is concerned with the way people are trying to create identity and ensure their position in the society in a bid to achieve autonomy and authenticity. In this regard, existentialism brings about the issue of the individual fighting to establish the self without being dictated by any social structure (Maryam & Fatima, 2020).

Kierkegaard also draws a distinction between objective and subjective truth and claims that truth is not solely universal or empirical but is highly embedded in the experience of an individual. The objective truth is abstract and impersonal and made by logic and science and the subjective truth is an individual one made by personal dedication and experience (Kierkegaard, 1980). Also, Kierkegaard correlates existential development with anxiety, irony and self-reflection. Anxiety according to him is a necessary element of human life since it



demonstrates the presence of freedom and self-realization. Instead of being negative as such anxiety makes individuals deal with their limitations and build real self-hood. Socratic irony is also an approach of defying social norms and speaking to oneself which Kierkegaard also uses as a means of moral and intellectual self-refinement (Weston, 2003).

Nietzsche's concept of *ubermensch* (overman) is the perfect man who breaks the normal morality in order to establish his or her own values and live a real life. He traces this change in three phases the camel, which is a symbol of obedience and endurance, the lion that is the symbol of rebellion and self-assertion and the child as the symbol of the ability to create something new and set new values. The model reflects the emphasis of existentialism on self-determination, authenticity and the ongoing becoming process (Pearson & Diethe, 2007).

Heidegger provided a philosophical method of perception of human existence which centered on ontology of being as opposed to traditional metaphysics. In his work *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1927), he discusses the concept of *angst*, being-towards-death and alienation explains how human awareness of death forces them to live intentionally and assume responsibility in creating their own lives. His position on alienation and bad faith is highly reminiscent of Jean-Paul Sartre and his focus on freedom and bad faith. Likewise, the critical philosophical reflection of the terminology Heidegger used and its meaning to existentialism is instrumental to investigate the issue of how man understands his existence as a temporal and finite being (Inwood, 1997).

Existentialism is a philosophical tradition that dwells on a formal study of human being existence and the circumstances that define it. The main preoccupation with the existentialist corpus and Jean-Paul Sartre specifically is the human person, his life, character, purpose and interpersonal relationships. According to Sartre freedom takes the main role in the existence of human beings and freedom has ontological meaning and not political and social connotations. In his work *Being and Nothingness* (1943) he asserts that "human beings are condemned to be free" which means that after people are hurled into existence, they are fully responsible of everything they take into being. Due to lack of intrinsic meaning direction or divine order in universe there are no predetermined forces of influence in human life. Man, therefore lives before and has to determine his essence later in action and choice. In this context freedom is not a right but an inevitable state of existence (Sartre, 1943).

Sartre explains his idea of freedom in his lecture *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (1946) where he claims that "existence precedes essence" arguing that human beings are subjects before they make their identity through an intentional act (Sartre, 1946). Sartre also argues that individual decisions can only be extended to the entire humanity hence universalizing the responsibility. This awareness creates existential anguish not because it is a sign of weakness but as a sign of moral responsibility since every single choice helps to create the set of common human values. He dismisses the argument that existentialism is the cause of moral anarchy by stressing that it is a moral obligation which is founded upon freedom. Alienation will arise when men or women repudiate freedom or when they evade their responsibility which Sartre refers to as bad faith (Sartre, 1946).

Sartre's existentialism has been used extensively as a critical method in literature studies to investigate the concepts of freedom, identity, alienation, responsibility and bad faith and in various literary backgrounds.

A study through the lens of Sartre represented by Sokel (1964) focuses on alienation, objectification and the appearance of the other. Sokel (1964) explored that Josef K. in *The Trial* (1925) is trapped in a bureaucratic system that does not make sense and is dehumanizing because it undermines the agency and identity of the character of the individual which resonates with what Sartre said about how the institutional forces can turn the self into an object. On the



same note, he explains the metamorphosis of the character in the text of *The Metamorphosis* (1915) is a radical form of Sartre's alienation where identity corroded under the watch and critique of other people. The author makes a conclusion that Kafka characters are the examples of existential isolation and loss of self under the pressure of overpowering external forms.

The concept of Sartre's existentialism is employed to examine the invisibility of the state of the narrator. In his study, Gibson (1988) presents invisibility as an existential metaphor that is congruent with the idea of the other presented by Sartre where identity is distorted through radicalized perception. Gibson shows that the identity crisis of the protagonist is based on a constant definition by the external gazes as opposed to self-authorship. The concept of Sartre's alienation and freedom is used in justification of the struggle that the narrator is going through trying to establish a sense of self in a society that is not willing to embrace his humanity. Another study used Sartre's existentialism to examine main character's identity crisis in the post-9/11 environment in the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Morey, 2011). It is a foregrounding of the Sartre's concept of the look of the other and how western suspicion and stereotyping is being applied to reform the self-perception of the protagonist. He describes that the metamorphosis of character is an existential reaction to alienation in which identity is reequipped in the pressure of external criticism and political hate.

Recent research focuses on aligning Sartre's existential concerns to evaluate alienation, meaninglessness and bad faith in the context of narrating terrorism. Chambers (2018) states that the concept of radicalization is presented as an existential reaction to the emptiness and the absence of meaning. The concepts provided by Sartre can help to explain the way in which characters are trying to find a meaning by making devastating decisions in which true sense of self does not appear to be achievable.

The works of Bhutto have received a lot of academic attention due to a sensitive coverage of the issues of insurgency, state violence and the daily life of the people in the tribal areas of Pakistan. The research on the novels is mostly focused on the issues of repression of the state, marginalization and alienation (Farhan, et. al, 2023). They claim that alienation operates both at social and psychological levels at the same time also describing both mechanisms through which dominance is imposed externally and assimilated internally by people. In another study by Asl and Asyiqin (2013), the typology of violence is foregrounded and it reveals the combination of direct aggression, cultural norms and structural injustices to inflict existential and material pain. The *Memoir* is analyzed by Khan et al. (2021) stating that the memoir is more than a personal account of events and builds a politicized narrative based on the Bhutto's legacy. Their analysis previews Bhutto as placing her own personal trauma in the context of the larger socio-political history of Pakistan using narrative stages and language decisions to make the ideological meaning. The authors believe that the memoir can be viewed as a deliberate act of intervention into political discourse with emphasis on the importance of memory and narrative composition to uphold political identity instead of narrating the tragedy of the family. However, this sociopolitical approach does not respond to existential questions about freedom, choice and self-definition and also leaves ontological aspects of alienation unaddressed.

The Runaways (2019) has also been examined through mixed range of critical approaches such as the postcolonial theory, psychoanalysis, feminist approach and the study of the radicalization processes and the media theory. A notable study explores postmodern-deconstruction in *The Runaways* (Kharal, et al. 2022). The authors use the concept of displacement to discuss how the characters transform social and psychological frustrations into the ideological commitment. They finally arrive at the conclusion that the novel shows the process of radicalization as a result of existential, social and cultural alienation as opposed to exhausted theological belief



which fits in some aspects in existentialist issues. Yet, they are so much focused on postmodern deconstruction that they do not focus on self-constituting freedom and moral responsibility of the characters that is the main concern of Sartre's existentialism. Another study examines that the two male protagonists suffer from neurotic core issues such as low self-esteem, an unstable sense of self and fear of abandonment (Sarwar, et al., 2023). The authors explain that it is unconscious conflicts and the experiences at an early age which lead to radicalization and not social and ideological considerations. Another research by Rauf, et al., (2025) discusses the marginalization of female characters that how the female characters in the novel like they are marginalized through patriarchal structures, colonial legacy and religious identity. They discuss the implicit and explicit types of oppression and resistance and prove the gender aspects of radicalization subjectivity. Although the psychoanalytic prism throws light on the psychological causes of extremism and oppression, it represents the characters more as responsive beings and not agents capable of dramatic projection and ontological self-determination which overlooks existential issues of freedom, responsibility and nothingness. It is in the light of this concern, that the present study situates the characters of *The Runaways* in Sartre's existential prism to analyse the issue of identity and alienation.

Research Objectives

- i. To explore how the novel portrays the struggles of characters related to alienation and identity crisis
- ii. To examine how Sartre's existentialism explains the identity crisis in the novel
- iii. To analyze how personal and social exclusion is intertwined with the characters' identity crisis and alienation

Research Questions

- i. How does the novel portray the struggle of characters amid alienation and identity crisis?
- ii. How does Sartre's theory of existentialism explain the identity crisis in the novel?
- iii. How far is the personal and social exclusion intertwined with the characters' identity crisis and alienation?

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study employs Sartre's existentialist philosophy which provides a conceptual tool of questioning identity, alienation and freedom in the work of Bhutto *The Runaways* (2019). Sartre's existentialism observes the notion that existence precedes essence so, individuals are not determined to be things but they make themselves by volitional choices or acts. As a result, individuals have the ontological freedom that is consequently accompanied by responsibility and existential weight as every individual has to make his/her way in the world which has no inherent meaning and every decision is a statement of self-constitution. One concept of the Sartre's existential philosophy that is alienation which is define as the sense of estrangement created by addressing the lack of inherent sense in the world. The characters in *The Runaways* (2019) are going through similar conflicts because the social norms, cultural alienation and relationship forces are encroaching on their ability to create authentic identities.

Through Sartre's existentialism this study underlines the relevance of conscious self-construction under the limitation of the societal and cultural contexts also creating a clear framework of how to interpret identity and alienation in the novel.

In order to explore existential alienation and identity crisis in *The Runaways* (2019) the qualitative research design is chosen using the tradition of philosophical literary criticism. The main approach is a systematic utilization of Jean-Paul Sartre existential ideas with special reference to his works *Being and Nothingness* (1943) and *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946). It involves a close textual analysis where the events of the narrative, character development



and symbolic structures are analyzed to reveal traces of major Sartre's concepts like (alienation, bad faith, the absurd, and the identity crisis of self-deception).

Analysis and Discussion

This section critically looks at how the characters in the text face alienation and identity crisis using the existentialist theoretical frame work. It explores how identity crisis, alienation and emotional loneliness interferes with self-conception and sense of belonging among the characters.

Struggles of the Characters amid Alienation and Identity Crisis

She wasn't supposed to be inside; she knew that Madam had very strict rules about what sort of people were allowed in the elegant Clifton house. Anita Rose moved slowly towards the furniture, reaching her hand out to touch it. Before she could, her mother saw her. Anita dropped her eyes at once, already aware of her place. (p. 4).

Sartre's concept of "Alienation and the look of the other and Bad Faith" are exploring in these lines in the most appropriate way. The fact that Anita realizes that she is not supposed to be in the house instantly puts her in an alienated state as the environment of the Clifton house is already designated as a social taboo to her. The strict rules of Madam are working as an invisible yet strong other, influencing the view that Anita has of herself even prior to her being confronted directly. The way she is crawling towards the furniture is indicative of her shyness before this perceived gaze as she feels like an outsider and not a free subject. The look determines her identity externally according to Sartre's terminology giving her a profound sense of alienation where she looks like a person who does not belong. Meanwhile, the reaction of Anita demonstrates „bad faith“ because she blindly takes the social role she is supposed to undertake. Anita deprives herself of an existential freedom by hiding her eyes and retreating without a struggle and acting as though she is already defined. Her behavior is an example of how bad faith works in the undertones not in open self-deception but in silent submission to the meanings imposed and as such is complicit in the rejection of her agency.

He hadn't burned his American passport. Monty wished he had been brave enough to burn that too. The passport felt like proof that he belonged nowhere fully, neither to America nor to the place he was trying so hard to claim. (p.123).

This textual evidence depicts Sartre's notion of "Alienation and the Look of the Other" the principle that existence precedes essence. The character of Monty is struggle with alienation and identity crisis. The American passport is used as a material signifier that Monty is a fractured belonging, that he has constant reminder that he is classified under his external labels and not a self-chosen identity. In a Sartre's context the passport is a production in which the social world views and categorizes him by sealing his identity in terms that alienate him to both America and the place he is so desperately attempting to possess which is Mosul. This creates a feeling of alienation in its purest form because Monty is suspended between identities that neither group gaze recognizes nor accepts. Meanwhile, the fact that Monty's desire that he was even bold enough to burn that also shows the tension created by the principle of Existence Precedes Essence. Burning the passport symbolizes a radical statement of freedom a direct denial of the fact that the idea of nationality and documenting them should define who one really is. His identity crisis are compounded by the fact that the existence that was forced upon him before and against his preferred existence is represented by the presence of the passport. The existential weight of living in between imposed designation and self-definition which Monty experiences as the passport proves that he belongs nowhere completely also indicates that his alienation is the result of the unresolved tension between the self which he is forced to become and the self which he is trying to become.



Stefan never treated Sunny like a spokesman for Islam or Muslims. He just spoke to Sunny as Sunny. That was rare, and Sunny felt how deeply he had been reduced to labels before this moment. (p.204).

Definitely the most valuable perspectives of this passage is the Sartre's concept of "Alienation and the Look of the Other". This passage explicitly concerns the experience of Sunny who is objectified by identities forced upon him. The fact that Stefan never saw Sunny as a spokesperson of Islam or Muslims is the point that serves to emphasize the reduction of Sunny to a category (as an individual subject) to religious and cultural categories. This is an illustration of the repressive role of the look in Sartre's terms where other people determine Sunny and his identity by a general stereotype. This kind of tagging causes him to lose his subjectivity and he has to face himself as an object as dictated by others' expectations but not as a self-sufficient, defining, person.

This alienating gaze is briefly stopped when Stefan addresses Sunny with the word Sunny which enables Sunny to feel that he is treated as a unique consciousness and not as a symbol. The infrequency of such an occasion makes clear how repeatedly Sunny has been deprived of this type of existential recognition. He realizes how badly he had been labeling him before this instance shows the extent to which he has been in an identity crisis because his sense of self has been torn apart and tied in by externally imposed definitions. In this dialogue the non-labeling phenomenon becomes critical and the experience of being highly alienated is revealed through the manner in which Sunny has been subjected to objectifying social gazes on a regular basis and how his identity struggle is manifested through these regular encounters with social gazes of objectification.

After discussing the issues of identity crisis and existential alienation, the discussion now shifts to how Sartre's existentialism explains the identity crisis in the novel.

Sartre's Existentialism and Identity Crisis in the Text

Anita listened, rapt. That was who she wanted to be: the kind of girl who could forget someone in a week. Who didn't need anyone, who wasn't afraid. Someone brave and free, a lioness who was not and would never be, a man's woman. (p.101).

These lines analyze in the context of the Sartre's ideas of Existence Precedes Essence and Human Beings Are Condemned to Be Free because it demonstrates how Anita attempts to establish her identity without depending on societal and relationship-related pressures. The fact that Anita adores the girl who was able to forget someone within a week and did not need anyone who was afraid underlines the need by the girl to establish her freedom to create her own image instead of being attached or dependent. This according to Sartre's existentialism is what happens to self-creation whereby essence is brought out through conscious decisions and actions that are reflective of personal preferences, wants and goals.

The existential weight of freedom is highlighted by the vision of not being a lioness and will not be the woman of a man as Anita understands that such an identity is created at the cost of abandoning the expected and strictly enforced roles and expectations of women in society. The implicit acknowledgment of the fact that freedom comes with responsibility to be a brave, independent and self-determined person. Sartre is correct in his statement that people are condemned to be free as freedom is the inherent consequence of this statement. The fact that the process of internalization of freedom and self-definition highlights the problems of identity formation in the context of alienation shows how Anita reconciles the demands placed on her and the identity she wants to realize.

He laughed bitterly, but he knew it was true: he had no guts. Layla had known it too. Monty realized that this weakness had placed him outside her respect and outside the man he wanted to be. (p.124).



These lines examining by using Sartre's notions Existence Precedes Essence and Bad Faith because it is a preview of the self-definition problem and internalized limitations facing Monty. His scowling laughter along with the knowledge that he lacked guts is an indication of a highly developed sense of self-awareness to the fact that there is a distance between what he is and what he wants to be. In Sartre's terms, Monty is faced the reality of his not being predetermined but he has given fear and lack of action the chance to establish his being which makes him alienated to the self he desires to be. His acknowledgement that it was also known to Layla points out the power of the Other, whose perception only makes him feel inadequate his alienation of himself more pronounced.

Bad Faith is demonstrated by the recognition that this weakness had put him out of her respect since Monty is aware of the fact that he has denied his freedom in the past by letting other forms of judgment and his own fears to rule his actions. Living a life of self-deception by not acting in an authentic and responsible manner he limited himself to being a reflection of inferiority instead of making use of his ability to define himself. This scene sums up the conflict between the need to be recognized and respected on one side and the need to be genuine to his existence and form himself by making his own free decisions.

Personal and Social Exclusion and Its Impact on Characters

This section critically examines how personal and social exclusion contribute to the characters' experience of alienation and identity crisis within the text. It dwells on how loss of social groups and poor interpersonal relationships influence their perceptions of themselves and their status in society. The discussion also examines how exclusion compound internal conflict such that characters begin to question, destabilize and wrestle with their own identity as compared to other people and to their surroundings.

Monty stayed close to Sunny, careful not to draw attention to himself. He moved like a shadow at the edge of the group, aware that even here he did not quite belong.
(p.132).

The text is revealing the concept of "Alienation and the Look of the Other" as Monty in his effort to go unnoticed makes a conscious effort to avoid being noticed, when he says he is a shadow at the periphery of the group this shows a convergence between the sense of social and personal exclusion. The group socially is a community where he feels he has been alienated Monty internalizes this alienation so he feels that he did not fit in. The combination of these exclusion types only worsens his estrangement not only the opinion or lack of concern of other people alienates him but also his own opinion and fear of inability to fit in. This is a double exclusion that informs his behavior and leads to the invisibility as a survival measure.

The text has also an essence of Human Beings Are Condemned to Be Free because Monty freely chooses the way to live in his marginal status in life. Sartre contends that man can never avoid freedom even when it is social exclusion Monty as the user of such freedom, manages it by opting to stay at the margins and this way handles the risk and even social attitudes. The lack of control gives him room to exercise his freedom and this portrays the functioning of the personal agency in the presence of overlapping marginalization.

Sunny kept to himself, hardly mixing with any of the other recruits. He did not seek friendship or recognition. Isolation had become a habit, a way to avoid the pain of rejection. (p.137).

The extract depiction the idea of "Alienation and the Look of the Other" where Sunny chooses to isolate himself and does not want to interrelate with the other recruits. He is socially rejected and excluded and develops the feeling of being an outcast among the group. On his part he internalizes this rejection and permits the originator experiences of neglect and judgment to



structure his behavior and self-perception. The combination of external exclusion and internalization alienation proves the enhancing of estrangement causing a circle of isolation. Existence Precedes Essence is also depicted through these lines because Sunny is shaping his own identity using his actions intentionally. Isolation is a habitual position that he applies to create a form of self-reliant, suspicious and detached self-caused by the experiences of exclusion. His being is not preconditioned it is constantly created in accordance with his decisions in reaction to exclusion and rejection.

Anita watched the cars slow down as they crossed into Clifton, the buildings taller, the walls cleaner, the people different. She knew she did not belong here, not really. Her feet felt heavier on these roads, as though the city itself was pushing her back. (p.83).

The text refers to the concept of “Alienation and the Look of the Other” because the experience of crossing to Clifton indicates social and personal exclusion of Anita. The city is a space of exclusion socially the cleaner buildings, the varying persons and orderly environment signify her as an outsider. Anita in her turn internalizes this nonetheless as she feels her feet growing heavier and this depicts how the external environments promote internalized alienation. Social environment and her internal sense are united in such a way that estrangement and disconnection are formed reflecting the dualism of exclusion.

A sign of Human Beings Are Condemned to Be Free can be observed in the passage as well because Anita has to find her way into this new world and determine how to live in it. Even in those areas that demand exclusion Sartre insists that it is upon the people to determine their reactions and actions. The fact that Anita is conscious of her otherness means that she has to bargain the identity of herself which is to show the effect of freedom on exclusion in the determination of behavior and self-view.

Conclusion

This study has shown that *The Runaways (2019)* shows the articulation of existential alienation as a marginal state, but rather as the organizing reality of the lives of its characters. Through the lens of Sartre, the paths of Sunny, Monty and Anita affirm that identity is not inherited or fixed rather, it is contingent production of choice that is created under circumstance of displacement, ideological coercion and moral ambiguity. Their turn to radicalization and self-delusion demonstrate Sartre’s idea bad faith and expresses an avoidance of the suffering that is the lot of radical freedom.

The text reveals the uncertainty of these evasions, the more the characters strive to mend their identities with the help of outer ideologies, the more they are fragmented. This stresses the main existential paradox of self-creation imperative and the temptation to reject it that lingers. The text, in consequence, indicates the crisis of subjectivity in a globalized world as well as anticipates the ethical load of choice in the absence of transcendental guarantees. What is unleashed, then is a criticism of modern identity as a precarious one per se, as something that is made up by freedom but is subject to constant danger by the urge to get out of it. Future studies may expand the idea to include comparative analyses of the texts produced in the East and the West to study whether existential concerns are region specific or they have been created under the influence of global events of war, displacement and cultural imperialism.

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