

PECULIARITIES OF CONFLICT AND PERSONALITY IN SAUL BELLOW'S NOVELS

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Abstract: *This thesis examines the peculiarities of conflict and the concept of personality in the novels of Saul Bellow, focusing on the interplay between psychological, philosophical and social dimensions of human experience. The study explores how Bellow constructs complex protagonists whose identities are shaped through internal and external conflicts. Drawing upon existentialist philosophy, psychoanalytic theory, and modernist narrative techniques, the research analyzes key works such as *Dangling Man*, *The Victim*, *The Adventures of Augie March*, *Seize the Day*, and *Herzog*. The findings suggest that conflict in Bellow's fiction functions not merely as a narrative device but as a fundamental mechanism of personality formation. His protagonists embody intellectual tension, moral ambiguity, and existential anxiety, reflecting broader cultural transformations in mid-twentieth-century American society. The thesis concludes that Bellow's literary contribution lies in his ability to synthesize philosophical inquiry with psychological realism, thereby redefining the modern novel.*

In the landscape of twentieth-century American literature, Saul Bellow occupies a distinctive position as a writer deeply concerned with the philosophical and psychological dimensions of human existence. His novels reflect the intellectual climate of postwar America, a period characterized by rapid social change, cultural dislocation, and a growing sense of existential uncertainty. Within this context, Bellow develops a literary framework in which conflict becomes central to the exploration of personality[8.73].

The relevance of this study lies in its focus on the dynamic relationship between conflict and identity formation. In Bellow's fiction, characters are not static entities; rather, they are continuously evolving subjects shaped by internal contradictions and external pressures. The analysis of such processes contributes to a deeper understanding of modern literary representations of the self.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the peculiarities of conflict in Bellow's novels and to analyze how these conflicts influence the development of personality.

The objectives include identifying types of conflict, examining narrative techniques, and interpreting the philosophical implications of character development.

Critical discourse surrounding Bellow's work has consistently emphasized its philosophical depth and psychological complexity. Scholars influenced by existentialist thought, particularly the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, argue that Bellow's protagonists exemplify the struggle for meaning in an absurd and fragmented world. These characters confront the burden of freedom and responsibility, often experiencing existential anxiety as a result.

From a socio-literary perspective, critics such as Irving Howe highlight the interaction between individual consciousness and social structures. According to Howe, Bellow's characters are both shaped by and resistant to the socio-cultural environment, which generates a persistent state of tension.

The psychological dimension of Bellow's fiction has been explored through the lens of Sigmund Freud, whose theories of the unconscious provide a framework for understanding the internal conflicts of Bellow's protagonists. Feelings of guilt, repression, and anxiety play a crucial role in shaping their identities.

Furthermore, Malcolm Bradbury underscores Bellow's contribution to the modern novel, noting his ability to integrate intellectual discourse with narrative form. Bradbury emphasizes that Bellow's characters resist simplistic categorization, reflecting the complexity of modern identity.

This research adopts a qualitative analytical approach grounded in literary criticism. The methodology includes:

- 1) Close textual analysis of selected novels
- 2) Thematic interpretation of conflict and personality
- 3) Comparative analysis across different works
- 4) Application of existentialist and psychoanalytic frameworks

Primary texts analyzed include *Dangling Man* (1944), *The Victim* (1947), *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), *Seize the Day* (1956), and *Herzog* (1964). These works represent different stages in Bellow's artistic development and provide a comprehensive basis for examining recurring thematic patterns.

The analysis reveals that conflict in Bellow's novels operates on multiple levels: psychological, social, and philosophical. These dimensions are interconnected and collectively contribute to the formation of personality.

In *Dangling Man*, the protagonist Joseph experiences profound psychological tension while awaiting military service. His condition of "suspension" symbolizes a deeper existential crisis, where the individual is caught between autonomy and obligation. This internal conflict leads to introspection, self-doubt, and a fragmented sense of identity[1.56].

Similarly, in *Herzog*, the protagonist's habit of writing unsent letters reflects an attempt to reconcile conflicting thoughts and emotions. His intellectual overactivity

becomes both a coping mechanism and a source of instability, illustrating the paradox of consciousness[2.43].

In *The Victim*, social interaction becomes a site of conflict, particularly through the relationship between Asa Leventhal and Kirby Allbee. The tension between perceived guilt and actual innocence demonstrates how identity is shaped through external judgment. Social conflict here exposes the vulnerability of the individual within a moral framework.

Seize the Day presents a protagonist overwhelmed by failure and disillusionment. Tommy Wilhelm's struggle is not only economic or emotional but fundamentally existential. His inability to assert control over his life reflects a broader condition of modern alienation[5.62].

In contrast, *The Adventures of Augie March* offers a more dynamic perspective. Augie embraces uncertainty and views conflict as a catalyst for growth. His personality is fluid, adaptive, and open to experience, suggesting an alternative model of identity formation.[4.186]

The findings indicate that conflict in Bellow's novels is not resolved in a traditional narrative sense. Instead, it functions as a continuous process that shapes and reshapes personality. This aligns with modernist conceptions of identity as unstable and evolving.

Bellow's protagonists are characterized by intellectual awareness and moral sensitivity. They engage in constant self-examination, which intensifies their internal conflicts but also deepens their understanding of existence. This duality reflects the tension between knowledge and action, a recurring theme in modern literature[6.26].

Moreover, Bellow's narrative techniques such as interior monologue, philosophical reflection, and fragmented structure enhance the representation of conflict. These techniques allow readers to access the inner world of characters, making the experience of conflict more immediate and authentic.

In conclusion, the novels of Saul Bellow present a sophisticated exploration of conflict and personality within the framework of modern literature. Conflict is depicted as a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses psychological, social, and existential elements. Through this complexity, Bellow constructs characters whose identities are shaped by continuous struggle and self-reflection.[4.5].

The study demonstrates that Bellow's literary significance lies in his ability to merge philosophical inquiry with narrative art. His portrayal of personality as dynamic and evolving challenges traditional notions of character and contributes to the development of the modern novel.

Ultimately, Bellow's works remain relevant because they address universal questions about identity, meaning, and the human condition. His characters' struggles resonate with contemporary readers, affirming the enduring value of his literary

legacy.[7.90].

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