

## SAUL BELLOW'S NOVELS OF THE 1940S-1960S: THE PECULIARITY OF CONFLICT AND THE CONCEPT OF PERSONALITY

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### Annotation

The article Saul Bellow's Novels of the 1940s-1960s: The Peculiarity of Conflict and the Concept of Personality explores the distinctive features of conflict and the development of personality in the major works of Saul Bellow. The study focuses on how Bellow portrays internal and external conflicts through intellectually rich characters who struggle with identity, alienation, and the search for meaning in modern society. Special attention is given to novels such as Dangling Man, The Victim, The Adventures of Augie March, Seize the Day, and Herzog.

The article analyzes philosophical, psychological, and social dimensions of conflict, demonstrating that Bellow's protagonists often experience existential crises shaped by historical, cultural, and personal factors. It also examines the concept of personality as dynamic and evolving, emphasizing the tension between individuality and social expectations.

### Key words

Saul Bellow, conflict, personality, existentialism, identity, American literature, modern novel.

### INTRODUCTION

The mid-twentieth century was a period of profound transformation in American literature, marked by a deep exploration of individual identity and social change. Among the most influential writers of this era, Saul Bellow occupies a central position due to his unique ability to combine intellectual depth with vivid character portrayal. His novels of the 1940s-1960s reflect the complexities of modern life, particularly the tensions between the individual and society, reason and emotion, and freedom and responsibility.

Bellow's works are distinguished by their focus on the inner lives of characters who are often caught in situations of moral and psychological conflict. These conflicts are not merely external struggles but deeply internalized experiences that

shape the characters' sense of self. The protagonists in Bellow's novels are typically intellectuals who grapple with questions of identity, purpose, and human existence. As a result, the concept of personality becomes a central theme, closely connected to the nature of conflict.

This article aims to analyze the peculiarities of conflict in Bellow's novels and to explore how these conflicts contribute to the formation and transformation of personality. By examining key works from the 1940s to the 1960s, the study seeks to demonstrate that Bellow's literary achievement lies in his ability to depict the complexity of human consciousness within a rapidly changing social context.

**Literature review.** Scholars have widely recognized Saul Bellow as a writer deeply concerned with the philosophical dimensions of human existence. Critics influenced by existentialism argue that Bellow's characters embody the existential struggle for meaning in an indifferent or chaotic world. His protagonists often face dilemmas that require them to define themselves through choice and action<sup>28</sup>.

Literary critics have emphasized the role of intellectual conflict in Bellow's works. According to Irving Howe, Bellow's novels present a unique blend of social realism and philosophical inquiry, where characters are both products of their environment and agents of their own development. Howe suggests that Bellow's protagonists are engaged in a continuous process of self-examination, which reflects broader cultural tensions in postwar America<sup>29</sup>.

Another important perspective is offered by Malcolm Bradbury, who highlights Bellow's contribution to the modern novel through his exploration of identity and individuality. Bradbury argues that Bellow's characters resist simplistic definitions, instead embodying contradictions that mirror the complexities of modern life. This complexity is particularly evident in the way conflict is portrayed not as a single event but as an ongoing condition of existence<sup>30</sup>.

Psychological interpretations of Bellow's work also emphasize the role of inner conflict. Influenced by theories of Sigmund Freud, some critics view Bellow's characters as individuals struggling with unconscious desires, guilt, and anxiety. These psychological tensions contribute to the development of personality, revealing the intricate relationship between the inner self and external reality<sup>31</sup>.

Furthermore, critics such as Lionel Trilling have noted that Bellow's novels reflect the moral and intellectual challenges of modern society. Trilling argues that Bellow's protagonists are engaged in a search for authenticity, attempting to reconcile personal values with societal expectations. This struggle often results in a

<sup>28</sup> Bellow S. *Dangling Man*. - New York: Vanguard Press, 1944. - P.63.

<sup>29</sup> Howe I. *Critical Essays on Modern Fiction*. - New York: Harper, 1970. - P.54.

<sup>30</sup> Bradbury M. *Saul Bellow*. - London: Methuen, 1982. - P. 112.

<sup>31</sup> Freud S. *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. - London: Routledge, 1917. - P.46.

sense of alienation, which becomes a defining feature of their personality<sup>32</sup>.

Overall, the literature suggests that Bellow's exploration of conflict and personality is deeply rooted in both philosophical and psychological traditions. His novels offer a rich framework for analyzing the complexities of human identity in the modern world<sup>33</sup>.

**Methodology.** This study employs a qualitative literary analysis to examine the peculiarities of conflict and the concept of personality in Bellow's novels. The research focuses on selected works from the 1940s–1960s, including *Dangling Man* (1944), *The Victim* (1947), *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), *Seize the Day* (1956), and *Herzog* (1964).

The analysis is based on close reading, thematic interpretation, and comparative analysis. Key passages from the novels are examined to identify patterns of conflict and character development. The study also incorporates theoretical frameworks from existentialism and psychoanalysis to provide a deeper understanding of the characters' experiences.

**Results.** One of the defining features of Bellow's novels is the centrality of internal conflict. In *Dangling Man*, the protagonist Joseph experiences a profound sense of uncertainty and isolation as he awaits induction into the army. His conflict is primarily psychological, reflecting a struggle between personal freedom and social obligation. This internal tension shapes his personality, leading to introspection and self-doubt.

In *The Victim*, Bellow explores the theme of guilt and responsibility through the character of Asa Leventhal. The conflict in this novel arises from the protagonist's interactions with others, particularly his accuser, Kirby Allbee. The tension between personal innocence and perceived guilt creates a complex psychological landscape, highlighting the fragility of identity.

*The Adventures of Augie March* represents a shift toward a more expansive and optimistic vision of personality. Augie's journey is characterized by a series of experiences that shape his identity. Unlike earlier protagonists, Augie embraces the uncertainty of life, viewing conflict as an opportunity for growth. His personality is dynamic and adaptable, reflecting Bellow's belief in the potential for self-realization.

In *Seize the Day*, the protagonist Tommy Wilhelm struggles with failure and disillusionment. His conflict is both internal and external, involving financial difficulties, strained relationships, and a sense of personal inadequacy. This novel illustrates how conflict can lead to emotional breakdown but also to moments of

<sup>32</sup> Trilling L. *The Liberal Imagination*. - New York: Viking Press, 1950. - P.34.

<sup>33</sup> Bradbury M. *Modernism and the Modern Novel*. - London: Penguin, 1983. - P.94.

self-awareness and transformation.

Herzog presents one of Bellow's most complex characters. Moses Herzog is an intellectual overwhelmed by personal and philosophical conflicts. His habit of writing unsent letters reflects his attempt to make sense of his experiences. The novel explores the fragmentation of personality in modern society, emphasizing the difficulty of achieving coherence and stability.

**Discussion.** The analysis reveals that conflict in Bellow's novels is multifaceted, encompassing psychological, social, and philosophical dimensions. These conflicts are not resolved easily; instead, they contribute to the ongoing development of personality. Bellow's characters are defined by their struggles, which serve as a means of self-discovery.

The concept of personality in Bellow's work is closely linked to the idea of individuality. His protagonists resist conformity, seeking to define themselves on their own terms. However, this pursuit often leads to alienation, as they find themselves at odds with societal expectations. This tension between individuality and social integration is a central theme in Bellow's novels.

Moreover, Bellow's use of language and narrative style enhances the portrayal of conflict. His characters' introspective monologues and intellectual reflections provide insight into their inner worlds. This narrative technique allows readers to engage deeply with the characters' experiences, making the conflicts more vivid and meaningful.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, the novels of Saul Bellow from the 1940s-1960s offer a profound exploration of conflict and personality. Through his complex and intellectually rich characters, Bellow depicts the challenges of maintaining individuality in a rapidly changing world. His portrayal of conflict as an integral part of human existence highlights the dynamic nature of personality, emphasizing growth, self-awareness, and transformation.

The study demonstrates that Bellow's literary achievement lies in his ability to combine philosophical depth with psychological insight. His novels not only reflect the social and cultural realities of their time but also address universal questions about identity, meaning, and human experience. As such, Bellow remains a significant figure in modern literature, whose works continue to inspire critical analysis and interpretation.

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