

SAUL BELLOW AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF AMERICAN REALISM

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ABSTRACT The article reveals the most prominent creations by Soul Bellow, one of the greatest representatives of American realism. The article investigates the notion of realism in American literature, discusses the development of realistic trend in US literature and highlights the peculiar realistic features of Soul Bellow's creations.

Keywords: realism, narration, subjectivity, colouring, self-realization, caricature, grotesque.

Saul Bellow (short for Solomon Belous, 1915–2005), according to critic Walter Allen, is "one of the most generous talents of modern literature." He came from a family of Jewish immigrants who moved from St. Petersburg first to Canada and then to the United States. The writer, a future Nobel laureate, spent his childhood in Chicago. Bellow was brought up in a favorable intellectual atmosphere; four languages were spoken in the family: English, French, Yiddish, and Hebrew. The cult of books and music reigned. Bellow greedily accumulated knowledge. From his youth, he absorbed diverse artistic influences, especially significant for him were Russian classics: Tolstoy's realism, Dostoevsky's psychological discoveries, the poetry of Chekhov's prose. He also knew Russian philosophy of the turn of the 19th–20th centuries well: Solovyov, Rozanov, Berdyaev. Bellow graduated from two universities, worked as an editor and writer, and taught.

Life experience allowed him to later recreate in his novels the environment of university professors, reflective intellectuals-humanists, people accustomed to reasoning, thinking, writing, rather than actually acting. Bellow debuted with the novel "The Restless Man" (1944), presenting in it an almost Kafkaesque situation

with light irony and humor. The main character is a 27-year-old Chicago native Joseph, a university graduate, an intellectual. The hero is waiting for a call-up to the army, and he feels alienated from society, being in a "suspended" state. The hero's poems are his self-reflection. In persistent reflections, moods in the spirit of existentialism are sometimes felt. Already in his first romance, Bellow demonstrates the mastery of psychological characterization, revealing the contradictions of the hero's inner life. Not wanting to spend any more time in the grueling wait for a draft notice, the hero volunteers to join the army. Bellow's artistic focus is the internal drama of heroes, usually reflective intellectuals, who are in conflict with a dehumanized environment. His deep themes are freedom as "the link between the makings of a person and his self-realization; love as a means of ensuring the influence of the individual on his environment." (Gillenson,2014)

The early works of S. Bellow are distinguished by a subjective manner of narration. These are works of gloomy metaphysical coloring, where the heroes are completely immersed in the inner world. The writer himself said that his first works were written in the traditions of realistic literature, which presents man as a victim. The early novels depict a subjectively colored world, full of powerlessness and guilt. The works of the early period of Bellow's creativity are distinguished by extreme philosophical saturation, represent a continuous debate about the problems of human existence. The central character, deprived of moral, ethical, religious values, is "torn" between idealism and nihilism, between love and contempt for his own kind. It is not without reason that the author chose the epistolary genre to reveal the subtle nuances of human experiences caused by interaction with the social environment, which helps us understand the essence of the socio-historical ties of the twentieth century.(Morozova,2000)

The novels of the fifties differ greatly in style, form and tone, although in ideological terms these works continue and develop the themes of the writer's previous novels. The main task for the novelist is the desire to find the true meaning

of life. He paints a broad social panorama and a critically understood picture of society. The novels of the 1950s become an expression of the new American worldview, saturated with a cheerful, life-affirming intonation. The heroes' actions are directed mainly to the outside world, the hero himself is shown through his actions. If the peculiar protest of the early heroes of Bellow's works is absorbed into a passive attitude towards society, then in subsequent novels he opposes himself to society and the social in himself. The fact is that at that time in the United States, under the influence of the Cold War policy, spiritual stagnation characterized all spheres of life in the country. It was in the fifties that the term "massified" society arose, implying the dominance of private interests. In *The Adventures of Augie March*, Bellow uses the form of the picaresque novel, with the help of which he explores both the social and moral quests of the hero. The fate of the novel's protagonist unfolds against a broad historical background and is linked to the fates of many people. The reader sees different generations of Americans. Bellow consistently takes the hero through all circles of social life: he is a student, a petty thief, a millionaire's secretary, and a trade unionist. Striving for a better life, Augie experiences deception, theft, pain, betrayal, and wealth. The search for his "I" becomes the driving force of the hero's adventures. Augie March persistently strives for absolute freedom from people and their opinions. The desire to preserve the volatility and diversity of his life is what determines the hero for twenty years. Augie's overflowing cheerfulness explains the confidence and serenity with which he perceives the accepted and unaccepted phenomena of life. In this novel, Bellow reliably showed the world of the rich, in which indifference and acquisition were natural. Thus, Augie was rejected by his wealthy relatives precisely because of his openness, simplicity and independence. Such opposition to the world of moral degradation touches upon one of the most important conflicts of American society.

The publication of "Herzog" novel in 1964 became a literary event. It struck by the novelty of its form, style, and the originality of its hero. At the center of the

novel is Professor Moses Herzog, a teacher of history and literature, who appears on the pages of the novel at the moment of a spiritual crisis. Family troubles and acute disappointment in almost everything paralyze his creative energy; the book he planned to write based on his dissertation has stalled. His behavior itself is not entirely adequate and causes those around him to have serious doubts about his mental health. He writes letters to people, both familiar and unfamiliar, and even long dead: to himself and God, to the philosophers Spinoza, Nietzsche, Heidegger and President Eisenhower. The extraordinary hero appears in different guises - professional, family, intimate. From the Duke's reflections, often confused, fragmentary, violating the chronological sequence, the main stages of his life story are highlighted. Moses Duke's father, a merchant, wanted his four children to "get ahead in life." One of them, Moses, showed himself to be a capable young scientist, his dissertation "Romanticism and Christianity" was translated into several languages. Moses married Daisy, with whom he has a son, Marco. The hero is not deprived of female attention. One of his lovers, Madeline Pontritter, who claims to be an intellectual, seeks a divorce from Daisy. But he soon begins to reap the sad results of the new marriage, convinced of Madeline's difficult character. Having bought a house at her insistence, he spent all his savings on this purchase. Then he experiences an unexpected blow: Madeline announces to Duke that she no longer loves him, and therefore demands that he break up with her. The woman is cold and cynical, together with the lawyer who betrayed Moses and became her lover, she manages to formalize all property matters with maximum benefit for herself. With a broken heart, Duke leaves Chicago and goes to New York, where he finds a new passion - 40-year-old Ramona, his former student, an art specialist and co-owner of a flower shop. Her care and tenderness restore Duke's peace of mind, and most importantly - the ability to work creatively. But the hero's misadventures do not end. He almost ends up in prison on charges of criminal intent, and Madeline is among those who are ready to "drown" him. Moses is saved from trouble by his brother.

The novel ends on a relatively bright note: Duke is going to visit Ramon. He is preparing for her arrival and intends to put an end to the pernicious habit of incessantly writing meaningless letters... The Duke is in many ways an unusual figure in American literature. He is a multifaceted, ambiguous personality, gentle, intelligent, conscientious, somewhat comical and at the same time full of inner dignity. A man of thought, easily hurt, he often gives in when faced with rudeness and impudent practicality.

The image is to a certain extent autobiographical. The novel is an example of lyrical prose. Artistic attention is focused not so much on the events and actions of the hero - there are not so many of them - as on the thoughts of the Duke, his inner state, his reflection and frank self-analysis. Such self-disclosure of the intellectual hero, who is inclined to connect personal problems with the "eternal" questions of life, is achieved by introducing into the narrative such elements as excerpts from his letters, internal monologues that develop into a stream of consciousness, into the form of indirect speech, when the Duke looks at himself "from the outside": "Resuming his digging into himself, he admitted that he was a bad husband. With friends - an individualist. In love - lazy. In joy - boring. Yielding to others. Evasive with his own soul."

The everyday thinking of modern man, always oriented toward traditional norms, is currently increasingly gravitating toward breaking standards. The author's technique is also determined by the original writer's intention - "to give a grain of common sense, clarity, truth, for which people are hungry." It is this original writer's attitude that makes the novel unusually relevant, even almost half a century after its appearance. The term "nihilism" has firmly entered European culture. This new situation was grasped primarily by writers. The understanding of nihilism as a cultural and philosophical phenomenon is currently continuing in modern foreign literature. S. Bellow described and gave impetus to the development of the so-called "American nihilism" and presented a special type of nihilistic hero-skeptic in

American literature. Initially, in its explicit form, nihilism was formed within the framework of the philosophical tradition, since the radicalism of thought in Western European culture always exceeds the radicalism of practice. Intellectual nihilism is a specific phenomenon of Western consciousness. Thinkers who denied the possibility of constructing a completely rational picture of the world and came to the metaphysics of will as a component of European nihilism were A. Schopenhauer, F. Nietzsche and M. Heidegger. Heidegger considered nihilism a universal human state of "liberation from all previous values", to which the devaluation of everything impersonal and, thus, not possessing ontological status leads. Heidegger also attempted to classify the forms of nihilism: 1) passive nihilism - the idea that there is no value or meaning in the world, and will is understood in its psychological sense; 2) active nihilism - a reassessment of the highest values existing in the world, and the subject sets himself the goal of actively destroying old values. In his letters to the most unexpected addressees, Herzog, who is struggling with loneliness and looking for like-minded people, sending a message to the president, in particular, writes: "Tax legislation will turn the entire nation into accountants. The life of each person becomes a business. In my opinion, this is perhaps the worst interpretation of the meaning of life in history. Human life is not a business." Herzog's scientific and civic temperament makes him respond to a variety of reasons - publications in newspapers, research he read, his own generalizations, the twists and turns of the dramatic fate of his friends and contemporaries. At the same time, those who are alive and well now stand in the same row with the deceased, but resurrected thanks to the hero's insatiable thirst to ask questions and patiently wait for answers: "Dear Doctor-Professor Heidegger, I would like to know, what meaning do you attach to the words "Thrown into the everyday"? When did this happen? Where were we when this happened? How to live in a world of high ideas and concepts that only slightly correspond to current, everyday American conditions" The philosophical maxim of the great existentialist is revealed to Herzog when he himself finds himself similarly

"thrown into the everyday" and does not know how to get out of it. As a result of his spiritual pilgrimage, Bellow's hero comes to renounce the rationalistic construction of life. The Duke is resurrected and begins to enjoy life: to feel the warmth of the sun, to distinguish colors, to love. The rejection of false claims, the absence of arrogant claims to everyday life - this is the finale to which the Duke comes.

Bellow strives to show not only who a person is, but also to guess who he could become. To capture his aspirations, his need for self-realization, for fulfilling his life purpose. Bellow's novels are artistic commentaries on his philosophical principles. His characters are living personalities, although they carry a certain "predeterminedness". Bellow's heroes ask themselves these questions, and the author himself does too. And the deep motivation of his heroes is not success in the usual sense, not the acquisition of knowledge, but the thirst for a worthy existence. And this is reflected in his assimilation of the experience of Russian classics, whose heroes - including Tolstoy and Dostoevsky - are characterized not so much by aspiration for material success as by the intensity of spiritual quests. Bellow's style is ironic, in it both caricature and grotesque retouching are noticeable. Subtle humor is its most important stylistic dominant. Bellow enriched the genre of the philosophical-psychological novel in the USA, which was previously considered, primarily, the property of German (Thomas Mann, Musil, Hesse) and French (Sartre, Camus, Vercors, Merle) literature.

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