

The Relationship Between Saul Bellow's Creations and the Chicago School of Sociology

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Abstract: Saul Bellow was determined to be engaged in literary creation at the age of ten, but he majored in sociology and anthropology in university. When he was a postgraduate student, his mentor told him that he lacked suitability to be engaged in social science research, because his essays were easily turned into fictional works, and his intellect was suitable for some area full of creativity and imagination. Surely enough, he was the first novelist who won the Nobel Prize in Literature among Jewish American writers in 1976, hence he became worldly famous as his mentor expected. Researchers had paid much attention to his literary achievement, but few studies tried to contact his accomplishment with his sociological background. In this paper, I will analyze the influence of Social Science in Chicago on his literary creations and the tendency of sociology in his works, on the basis of his academic background of sociological studies.

Keywords: American literature; Saul Bellow; Chicago School; sociology

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1. The Origin and Main Ideas of Chicago School of Sociology

The University of Chicago was founded in 1890 by John Davison Rockefeller (1839–1937), the country's oil magnate at that time. The next year, William Rainey Harper (1856–1906), a professor of Greek and Hebrew at Yale University, was appointed as the first president. In 1892, Harper invited Albion Small (1854–1926) to University of Chicago so as to prepare the establishment and leadership of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology. Small wrote the first professional sociology textbook entitled *An Introduction of Sociology Research* (1894) together with Vincent, and founded the first academic journal of sociology in the world, *American Sociological Journal*, in 1915. Since then, more and more famous scholars came and joined the Department of

Anthropology and Sociology, the University of Chicago. From 1910 on, it became the main center of sociology teaching and research in the United States. *An Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, co-authored by Robert Park (1864–1944) and Ernest Burgess (1886–1966) in 1921 involved 14 academic subjects, including the study of human nature, human ecology, human socialization and group behavior, which basically established the development direction of American sociological research in the future. At that time, more than 40 relative courses were set up in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, the University of Chicago, which became the most outstanding sociology discipline in the contemporary American universities. On this basis, the famous Chicago School of Sociology came into being. The sociological research at the University of Chicago maintained its advantages for more than two decades, until a sociologist named Talcott Parsons (1902–1979), along with some others, launched the Academic Fronde in 1935. The leading position for the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, the University of Chicago, in American sociological field was overthrown. However, the Chicago School of Sociology did not withdraw from the historical stage. Instead, it managed to pass on from generation to generation. After the World War II, its second and third generations grew up.

By the time the University of Chicago was founded, Chicago had become one of the three largest cities in the United States. The joint efforts of Midwestern American immigrants and immigrants from the old European continent had made Chicago into a modern industrial city, a commercial center, and a thriving exchange all in one. However, many social issues emerged inevitably in the development of the city. From the perspective of pragmatic philosophy, these practical social problems became the focus of sociologists of the University of Chicago. The first generation of Chicago School of Sociology was mainly concerned with the study of urban society. The symbolic interaction theory of George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), a positivism philosopher, had a profound influence on the Chicago School of Sociology. Emphasizing on the symbolic nature of social life, Mead suggested that social significance should be regarded as the product of interaction between acting persons. Therefore, it was necessary to study society in its sustainable social development or social interactions, because people's ideology, individual behavior and the social activities people participated were all in the process, only the acting persons could constitute the social world. Thus, in the book entitled *The City: Proposals for the Study of the Urban Environment* (1925), Park argued that:

“A city, from the point of view of this paper, is not merely a collection of many individuals, nor a collection of social facilities such as streets, buildings, lights, trams, telephones, etc.; Nor is the city simply a collection of services and management department such as the people of courts, hospitals, schools, police and civil affairs. A city is the state of mind, the whole of customs and traditions, the whole of the unified thoughts and feelings which are contained in these customs and which flow with traditions.” “A city has become intimately connected with the vital activities of its inhabitants; it is a product of the nature, especially a product of human attributes.” (Robert Park, Ernest Burgess 1987: 1)

In terms of the research contents, the Chicago School of Sociology, from the perspective of social reality, focused on the relationship between immigrants and races, on those illegal gangs in the city of Chicago, on organized crimes, juvenile delinquency, occupational thefts, marriage, and family. In terms of research methods, the Chicago School of Sociology, in fact, was a kind of experience-based and action-based sociology,

which supposed to study the relationship between the acting persons and nature or the social reality in which they were living, to maintain the integrity of the social world in the study in order to optimize the research work, to concern the views of social acting persons, because they would always shape their social world by giving significance to the surrounding objects, persons and symbols in the sense of their social world.

2. The Influence of Chicago School of Sociology on Saul Bellow's Works

Saul Bellow graduated, as an undergraduate, from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Northwestern University, in the summer of 1937, but his academic training truly began at the University of Chicago, where he had been deeply affected by the intense learning tradition and free academic atmosphere. The Chicago School of Sociology was still in its heydays when Saul Bellow was on campus, studying at the University of Chicago in 1933. Although the ideal of Saul Bellow was to find a significant life through the means of art, it was clear that his learning experience, especially his major, had made his later creations more or less influenced by the Chicago School of Sociology. This was represented firstly manifested in his critical attitude towards American society. The Chicago School of Sociology was mainly based on the attention of various social issues in American capitalist society, their critical observations and analyses of American society not only described some specific social phenomena, but also involved some of the basic values insisted on by American mainstream society, which were studied and analyzed from the perspective of culture, civilization and humanity. Saul Bellow once remarked: "If he were a novelist, his own books would be a commentary on his contemporaries, showing that he supports certain tendencies and opposes the others." (SongZhaolin 2002: 203) His meticulous description of the human ecology of American society was regarded as a fusion of the understanding to human and sophisticated analysis to contemporary culture, which was similar to comments made by the Chicago School of Sociology in different fields.

According to William Thomas (1863–1947), a sociologist, the initial motivation for people to engage in sociological research should not be to transform the existing society or to maintain the existing morality, but should be derived from sensitive curiosity and desire to understand the human behavior. Therefore, he put his emphasis on the personality things, when he was observing deep crisis of American society, especially on the tension and conflict between the efforts to seek rationalization and efficiency and the efforts to the pursuit of personal happiness, since the conflict of these two efforts was a paradox produced by the liberalism that American society always flaunted. Saul Bellow maintained his sensitive curiosity throughout his life. What was presented to the reader in his works were the lower Jewish civilian daily life, the destruction and struggle of intellectuals in modern society, the people's desire for wealth and fame in large cities, and all manners of criminal activities. Despite these social issues were partly due to social reasons, more were due to the characteristics of the individuals. For example, in *Seize the Day*, the hero William looked at the crowd and observed that every face was demonstrating a specific purpose or essence. His works also offered opinions on politics, economy, and social trends, in order to explore more from the deep causes of cultures. In modern American society where money had become the most important element, people's traditional ideas were already swept away, and moral sentiment and goodness were worthless at all in the face of the cruel reality. In one of Bellow's novels, *Herzog*, a middle-aged university professor at the age of 47 suddenly found that the reality of

his life was quite different from his good wishes: democratic politics was fraudulent false illusions with various problems in society. In his personal life, he was framed a madman and was forced to divorce because of the adultery of his wife with one of his friends. All these events made him look for less than his ideal belief and the spiritual pillar. As a result, he became psychologically unbalanced, and his mind was on the brink of collapse. In Herzog's opinion, his profound knowledge in history, which he thought pretty highly of himself, was utterly useless in real life. He was at a loss because he was ignorant of how to comprehend everything around him, how to arrange his life, no longer could he even explore the ultimate significance of life. As a modern American social elite, a senior intellectual, Herzog placed himself above the average person in society, but he was also impacted by the ideology from different backgrounds, and he expressed great boredom to the decadent of the middle class life, though he could not abandon all the components, which meant what this class possessed and insisted upon in terms of real life enjoyment and material wealth pursuit. He was anxious about it, trying to find a middle course that was easy to live in but free from the evils of the times. The description of Herzog's reflection on his inner struggle in the novel was actually a reflection on the paradoxical culture of modern American bourgeoisie.

Actually, this paradox was not only reflected in any single work by Saul Bellow, but ran through his whole creative process. For instance, Augie March pursued a good life which he wanted to live through all his life; the rich man Henderson wanted to return to the primitive life in the plain nature to get rid of the troubles brought by monotonous material life; Benn Crader yearned for a kind of pure love without material benefits, and for a family sharing the happiness of all members; Charlie Citrine went further and further on the road of chasing fame and wealth. Although he tried very hard, the answer was clearly no. Now that they didn't succeed, could you call them losers? The answer was still no. Since the independence from the suzerain in 1776, Americans had an unshakable belief in their minds through the ages that only struggling could deserve a harvest, only unremitting efforts could bring about a better life. This required that the American people should not rely on the assistance of certain social classes or other people, but rely on their self-struggle and continuous innovation to realize their ideals, which had formed an important concept in American culture—American Dream. According to the study of Lang Mair, a historian and professor in the University of California, American Dream generally manifested itself in the following aspects: the United States offered everyone an opportunity to succeed; success depended on their own talents and efforts rather than a certain prominent family and fascinating background; equal rights for all; everyone was free in belief. But these aspects were full of historical variability, and they varied with time. In modern society, although the material wealth and spiritual freedom were still the basic contents of American Dream, the material aspects of American Dream were increasingly difficult to achieve due to the limitation of many objective factors, since material pursuits could get a definite guarantee, and for the most part, spiritual freedom was actually no less than a dream. Therefore, the society that was faced by modern Americans was far from the one dreamed of by its founders, though modern America was in a period of total chaos from private life to social behavior, or to public environment. Even so, the protagonists in Bellow's works still maintained their pursuits.

Through the analysis of Saul Bellow's works, we believe that the conclusion drawn by most people that Bellow's works are a revelation of the disillusionment of American Dream, which is not correct. In the end of *The Adventure of Augie March*, Augie March, who had been chasing his own ideals, said: "I may well be a flop

at this line of endeavor. Columbus too thought he was a flop, probably, when they sent him back in chains. Which didn't prove there no America." (Saul Bellow 1967: 557) In these words which represented what he had learned after all his hardships, we can recognize that although people surviving in modern American society had a lot of helpless grief and pathos with sorrow, Saul Bellow did not completely lose his confidence on American society, and the characters in his works also did not go to the end of their lives. Rather, on the way of life, they were still dreaming of something. American Dream was full of values and significance in this pursuit. If Saul Bellow's descriptions of the heroes' pursuit could be defined as the realization of American Dream in his works, which should be attributed to the insistence of social criticism of the Chicago School of Sociology, then, his sober understanding is attributed to the objective research and never the extreme position of the Chicago School of Sociology.

Many members of the Chicago School of Sociology were somewhat different from Thomas who focused on what is the problem of modern American social reality. Instead, they paid much more attention to what the society should be—the issue of social development direction. In their points of view, the actual effect of the academic research of sociology, should come out of the exploration about the knowledge that how a society developed, and should apply this knowledge to American society as a guide to its future social development. As a result, Chicago School of Sociology also regarded social psychology research as an important wing in their work. Correspondingly, in Saul Bellow's works, the introspection, recall, and stream of consciousness drove the development of the plot, and that these writing techniques accounted for a large proportion of the characters' thoughts on society and the real life.

Psychological realism novels mainly reflect the evolution of social spirit through the psychological description of their characters in the works. Saul Bellow's works are also known as psychological realism because of his detailed analyses of the characters' psychological states and conscious activities. Alan Bloom, also a professor at the University of Chicago, was a friend of Saul Bellow's, analyzed and criticized the high-level spiritual life in democratic America, in his book *The Closing of the American Mind*. In the foreword of this book, Saul Bellow wrote:

"The romantic poets and theorists in the 19th century, who were fond of teaching the people, made an utter mistake—poets and novelists were never human legislators and mentors. If the cause of artists must be interpreted as a purposeful one, then poets-artists should bring human beings a new vision, so that they can comprehend the world from different perspectives, and change their rigid experience mode, which can be regarded as an exalted ambition. The relentless spread of well-trained ignorance and the expansion of bad ideas have made the artist's career rather difficult. If we reveal the authentic colors of life, the fact is that we are living in an ideological world, and the operation of human thinking is really bad. Therefore, artists, whether they regard themselves as intellectuals or not, are inevitably involved in such an ideological struggle." (Alan Bloom 2007: 7)

Although he thought that divorcing from practice and action only depended on thinking and it was impossible to cure the suffering people, he still led people to think in his works. Notwithstanding the introspection, recall and stream of consciousness of these protagonists had big leaps, the thread of their thinking was still traceable.



His stream of consciousness was actually the thought stream, the flow of conscious thought, rather than the modern writer's unconscious clutters of stream of consciousness. The constantly flowing ideas of the characters in the works were to guide people to explore the problem as what American society should be. For example, Augie March's reflection on self-destiny, Mr. Sammler and Herzog's reflections on American social reality, Citrine's reflection on intellectuals, and Corde's reflection on American politics, etc.

Throughout the important works of the Chicago School of Sociology, we can make out that many of them focused on the problems of immigration and how they integrated in American society, wherever they immigrated from Europe: Polish farmers or Irish, German, Russian, and Italian immigrants, or southern blacks settled in the northern large cities and wanted to find jobs there—the real internal migration. After careful investigations, Park found that there was a process of disintegration and reorganization between the native communities and immigrants in the modern industrialized cities, which could be divided into four progressive stages: mutual hostility, conflict, gradual adaptation, and complete assimilation. Bellow's sociological educational background, his Jewish identity, and the reality of the large number of immigrants in Chicago also forced him to pay attention to the social life and development of those immigrants and represented them in his works. Saul Bellow was Jewish, but when he was a child his family lived in the Polish immigrant community of Chicago, so he was familiar with Polish immigration. At the beginning of *The Adventures of Augie March*, the protagonist was a curious child that was the reason why he felt very interesting to the decoration on Polish immigrant kitchen wall, their hanging objects on the door on Easter and Christmas. In *Humboldt's Gift*, Citrine provides the reader with a more mature and rational perspective: in Polish immigrant community, brick houses are painted bright at the street side, the lawn is elaborately fenced with iron pipes, the air smelled fragrance of home-brewed beer and pickled vegetables, in carnival activities of memorial day to the World War I, the Polish immigrants hand carrying Polish national union flags, marching with American songs, And yet they are very conservative, they prefer to maintain their own societies and tradition in the tide of immigrant assimilation. Compared to other peoples, Bellow concerned the Americanization of Jewish immigrants much more. Augie's brother Simon March, Citrine's brother Julius and some others were all seduced by the material life of the rich American society, with a strong desire to assimilate and classify, found their way in, eventually achieved success, but this success came at the cost of ignoring good and evil and eliminating sense of guilt. In his works, different from the former, there are some Jews are semi-assimilated, they struggled to wandering in the multiple values, on the one hand, they want to modernize and Americanize, on the other hand, they don't want to lose the traditional moral ideas which they stick in the heart, the paradox of this dilemma is authentic depiction of many Jews in the process of being assimilated into the United States, such as Augie March, he could neither beyond human nature, lived in a castle in the air, be otherworldly, nor lack of humanity, indulge himself freely in society, let his destruction down, but only keep the real human nature in order to obtain the balance between assimilation and persistence, thus form Bellow's "ideal structure". As for the internal immigrants from the rural south to the northern cities—black people, Bellow showed us the racial differences and barriers in American society in his works, such as slums, lack of trust, crime and so on. His descriptions are not as detailed as the data what sociologists knew, but they are more vivid and convincing.

As the focus of sociologists, city played an important role in the study of the Chicago School of Sociology, who considered city not only a unit in geography or in ecology, but also an economic unit, or the natural home

of civilized man. As urban life and culture, lively changeable, more hidden, more complex, was an organic ecological organization which had its own culture. Therefore, engaging in sociological research was necessary to have an in-depth understanding of modern urban life in the United States. In *The City*, Park and the other coauthors focused on human behavior in urban environments in the United States, and turned their attention to community organization, juvenile delinquency, neighborhood relations and the survival condition of migrant workers in those cities. Similar to the Chicago School of Sociology, one of Saul Bellow's two main objects of literary creation was American cities. The great significance of Chicago and New York to Bellow was that London to Dickens, Paris to Balzac, and Dublin to Joyce.

Bellow was familiar with the gray city of Chicago where he was brought up from an ignorant teenager to a young man. In *Looking for Mr. Green*, he described the run-down black neighborhood as follows:

“Rebuilt after the Great Fire, this part of the city was, not fifty years later, in ruins again, factories boarded up, buildings deserted or fallen, gaps of prairie between. But it wasn't desolation that this made you feel, but rather a faltering of organization that set free a huge energy, an escaped, unattached, unregulated power from the giant raw place.” (Saul Bellow 2002: 186)

To the vibrant New York, he could turn his attention to bustling citycentre such as Greenwich Village, Wall Street, and Broadway, could also found small scene in the street carnival: trolley, accordion and the violin, polished leather shoes, begging, while the dust is rotating flying like women on stilts. With regard to moral order problems that need to be solved urgently in metropolitan life, Chicago School focus on the inner conflict and stable indulgences of individual personality, the latter is also called philistinism of split personality. Indeed, the vast majority of people in modern society had developed this kind illness of philistinism of split personality, and everyone expressed the indignation to the endless stream of urban crime, once mentioned to fight against this kind of phenomena, but often back off, even coldness, as long as things have nothing to do with himself, might as well to let matter drift, even the police agency as the machinery of the state also find a pretext for not stopping urban crime. Young black pickpockets in New York not only brazen their attacks on buses, but also made physical threats and emotional insults against Mr. Sammler as a witness. The police who responded to the reports were vague, didn't accept reports with the reason that police force is not enough, this phenomenon is not unusual and other cases. Mr. Sammler was not depressed by his experience. He wondered what is wrong with society, why many young black people turn to crime, whether popular values are benefit for people's lives. The impact of major social events on the people is also highlighted in Saul Bellow's works, such as the impact of the economic crisis that swept across the United States at the end of the 1920s on teenagers, the feminization of poverty in women's lives, which are vividly presented to readers through the personal experience of Augie March and his mother.

The Chicago School of Sociology had conducted in-depth and detailed studies on the diversity of urban life and human nature. Park believed that people were carriers of double inheritance, both biological and spiritual ones which could be named social and cultural heritage. Therefore, human nature had the characteristics of contradiction and versatility. So, he pointed out:



“Cities magnify, flaunt, and reveal the various faces of personality. These are the things that make city life attractive, even fascinating. At the same time, because of this, the cities have become a place to discover the secrets of the human mind and to study humanity and society.” (Yu Changjiang 2006: 172)

Cities also played more than a background role in Saul Bellow’s works:

“A novelist is a historian with rich imagination, who can approach the truth of modern times more than social scientists. It’s as easy to describe public events as personal trivia—all it takes is more confidence and courage. Although I’ve merely been an amateur student of history and politics all my life, I began to understand that no one had ever imagined the decadent city in his works. All the ways are from the perspective of technology, economy and political bureaucrats. No one has considered the significance of these people’s lives.” (Michikokakutani 2007)

Saul Bellow also provided us with such a place to discover the secrets of the human mind and study humanity and society in his works. His descriptions of Chicago and New York showed us the “Tale of two Cities” in America. In Chicago, where he grew up, he gave us a colorful “Falstaff background” of America, a genre painting of American civilian life; In New York, the modern metropolis, he showed us the struggle of conscience and mental torment of the intellectual. When Chicago School of Sociology conducted sociological research, they used to think of social relationships as a form of dynamics, frequent use of the concept of “social forces”, but they thought that the social system, organization, etc. were not the basic elements of social forces. In order to research the social forces in-depth, it must be traced to every individual level, focus on the motivations, attitudes, desires and wishes that drove people to act, these four aspects needed to be investigated of content constitute the theory of “four kinds of desires” proposed by Thomas. Later, when Park and the others studied social forces, they were not obsessed with describing the effect of social forces on various social strata and class structure in American society, but also focused on the analysis of factors such as attitude. This was also accepted by Saul Bellow, whose protagonist’s desires and attitudes were determined by his life experience and trajectory. Augie March knew, at the very beginning, that man’s character was his destiny. In the face of the deep troubles of city life, he had a strong desire from his childhood: to grow into the kind of person he should be, to have a destiny worth pursuing. In the way of pursuit of his own fate, he was disturbed by many of the so-called life coaches—his tenant Lausch, paralyzed middle class boss Einhorn, superior Renling and his wife, headstrong Thea, Frankenstein Basteshaw, all these people wanted to let him live according to his defined direction. He understood, however, if according to the guidance of these so-called good people, he might be able to live well, but only as an experiment in their philosophy which limited his freedom, prevented him from realizing his “self essence.” Although there was one sinister crisis after another and deep traps in real life, but for him, the greatest danger was to fall into the trap of the self-righteous, lost his nature, gave up self-control of his destiny. Therefore, even in the face of great wealth and the great temptation of a comfortable life, he still left them firmly in search of “good enough fate.” Only in this way did Augie explore his outlook on life after going through hardships: “The axial lines of life, with respect to which you must be straight or else your existence is merely clownery, hiding tragedy.” (Saul Bellow 1967: 472) This axis was upholding truth, pursuing love

(broadly speaking), loving peace, being generous to others, being beneficial to society, and achieving world harmony. He believed that people who could get back on this axis.

“He will live with true joy. Even his pains will be joy if they are true, even his helplessness will not take away his power, even wandering will not take him away from himself, even the big social jokes and hoaxes need not make him ridiculous, even disappointment after disappointment need not take away his love. Death will not be terrible to him if life is not. The embrace of other true people will take away his dread of fast change and short life.” (Saul Bellow 1967: 472)

In *An Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, Park and Burgess had made an in-depth discussion on the concept of progress. The center of their discussion was the contradiction in human understanding of the basic problems of society development, or the basic paradox and sense of absurdity involved in human society. What they discussed was the most basic values of social development, they believed that when the progress would make the world a more comfortable, meanwhile, it would also make the world become more complicated, make the most basic living environment of people complicated, and make the survival of losers in social competition become more and more hard. With the basic bottom line of survival continued to improve, for the disadvantaged people, better and faster progress meant that disease, despair, and death. Therefore, progress could not be recognized in the general sense, because for the American society as a whole, retail progress could not guarantee wholesale progress simultaneously. Therefore, the Chicago School of Sociology had always held a pragmatic attitude towards the concept of progress. They believed that sociology should accept the values of the current society and do not object to this belief in practice, but to study the causes of social ills and try to find the means to cure the society. That's pretty much the opinion of Saul Bellow, who deeply steeped in sociological and anthropological thought. In his works, he had an objective description of the progress of American society, and also faced the dilemma brought by such progress. He observed that along with the progress and development of American modern society, the citizens had obtained freedom in general, no longer workday to day like cattle, every day they seemed to have a luxurious life to enjoy, but people found when their suspension in these new comfortable, they don't know why they should enjoy such a comfortable life. In modern society, people are often in a state of anxiety and helplessness, “Orpheus moved stones and trees. But a poet can't perform a hysterectomy or send a vehicle out of solar system. Miracle and power no longer belong to him.” (Saul Bellow 1976: 114)

Modern Americans, living in an increasingly prosperous world, but could not grasp themselves at all. Although “Bellow has never neglected the threatened status of value standards in the aggressive real world, which is exactly what he often describes, but he doesn't think that the rapid development of human behavior or science indicates a global catastrophe. In any case, he is an optimist and an opposition leader who believes in the goodness of human nature. Truth, of course, should be exposed, but truth is not always hostile. To face the truth is not necessarily to face death bravely.” As he believed, “There may be some truths in the universe, they are our friends after all.”

In order to promote the social normal and wholesale progress, the Chicago School of Sociology proposed the theory of “social control” which studied how the society could spontaneously form a self-control mechanism,



therefore, they required sociologists to take upon themselves both tasks: they were not only ordinary social members but also more bystanders at the same time. When they and other ordinary people faced a homogeneous social phenomenon, they must get rid of the average man unconscious intuitive impression to the society, study and explore it in a way that made it easier to establish clear logical relationships. The protagonists in Saul Bellow's works were also both social practitioners and observers. As social practitioners, their joys and sorrows kept pace with social development, but as observers, they watched the society, city, and country in which they lived with calm eyes. Joseph's resignation from his job, which made him wait to be drafted into the army, allowed him to observe society at a distance, to explore the significance of existence, the nature of man and the value of life. Therefore, Augie March established himself as a social observer from the very beginning, because he realized that "all the influences were lined up waiting for me. I was born, and there they were to form me." (Saul Bellow 1967: 46) So he kept reminding himself:

"Look out! Oh, you chump and weak fool, you are one of a humanity that can't benumbered, and not more than the dust of metals scattered in a magnetic field and clinging to the lines of force, determined by laws, eating, sleeping, embodied, conveyed, obedient, and subject. So why hunt for still more ways to lose liberty? Why go toward, and not instead run down, the huge drag that threatens to wear out your ribs, rub away your face, splinter your teeth? No, stay away! Be the wiser person who crawls, rides, runs, walks to solitary effort, who procures for himself and heeds the fear that are the kings of this world. Ah, they don't give you much of a break, these kings! Many a dead or dying face lies or drifts under them." (Saul Bellow 1967: 330-331)

Therefore, he wasn't influenced by the thoughts of these people, and he got rid of them to find his "better destiny". Mr. Sammler and dean Corde were also in such a situation, but also on the sidelines, who had lived in the society from the start but had not integrated with it. Herzog and Citrine were the spectators who had followed the events, the observers who had kept a certain distance from society. As Nadine Gordimer (1923-2014) once said,

"Superior powers of observation means abnormally staying out of the way: or rather, the dual process of paying too much attention and approval to other people's lives, while remaining incredibly detached...The tension between inaction and total commitment: that's what makes a writer a writer." (Margaret Atwood 2007: 22)

The same could be said of Saul Bellow and his literary protagonists.

3. The Influence of Chicago School of Sociology on Saul Bellow's Creative Techniques

In order to maintain the effectiveness and objectivity of its academic research, Chicago School of Sociology advocated a series of qualitative research paths, such as history of daily lives, autobiographies, case studies,

personal diaries, correspondences, non-standard interviews, and intervention observations. In order to show the objectivity and directness of life, Saul Bellow used the method of social investigation of Chicago School for reference. In his works, which looked like the autobiographies of the protagonists, the first person was often employed while the author kept silent without a single word. Therefore, the fictional literary figures seemed active in arranging their own destinies or narrating their own stories. Bellow's works depicted a series of vivid characters by demonstrating case studies of American social life. Through the synthesis of these case studies, he completed the overall study of American society.

In the early phase of his literary creation, Saul Bellow analyzed the inner world of the characters in the form of Joseph's diary, by employing the strategy of "inward turning" in his novel *Dangling Man*. After the United States participated World War II, Joseph, a Canadian youth who was brought up in the United States, enrolled to join the American army so as to fight at the front line. Having resigned from his job, he stayed at home waiting for the notice of enlistment from the authorities. Yet, as he was a foreigner, he had to go through some investigative screenings before joining the army, which would last several months before their completion, since the relevant government departments had issued some certain regulations for married men. Therefore, he still had to wait. In his seven months of waiting at an idle transition state, he began to deliberate life and being, hoping to find out the significance of existence, human attributes, and values of human life. He could not comprehend the reason why the world we seek is not whatsoever the world we see, the world we bargain is not whatsoever the world we get. In that way, he was more and more confused about whom he was, and his own position in American society, so he became gradually a helpless idle man who was "dangling in the air". After the creation of a unique Bellow style in *The Adventures of Augie March*, he carried out a new stylistic experiment in 1964, which was represented through the whole book of *Herzog*, with 56 unsent letters. Herzog, a university professor, suddenly found that he seemed to be a failure in both social and personal affairs. He was in agony at the betrayal of his wife and friends. In order to find out what was wrong with the world and himself, he began to write letters to the dead and the living and the unknown. Of course, those letters were not intended to be sent. Some of them were impossible to be sent even if they were really intended to be sent (the addressees had already passed away). In the letters, Herzog pretended to argue with these addressees, and he put forward opinions and suggestions on the society, so as to free himself from the confusion of life and the collapse of spirit.

After the completion of writing *Herzog*, Saul Bellow terminated his stylistic experiment, since he was already capable of writing further skillfully with the Bellow style established in the creation of *The Adventures of Augie March*, but, anyway, his stylistic reference to the Chicago School of Sociology was undeniable.

For his final work *Ravelstein*, Bellow paid equal attention to technique. "His Midwestern narrator is Zeke, the elder Zeke, an unassuming writer with Bellow's own familiar, confused, trusting, highly deceptive voice, half talking to us, half talking to himself." (Penelope Fitzgerald 2000: 43) The academic circles believe that it has multiple themes, which mainly focus on Bellow's transformation of Jewishness, narrative techniques, the existential crisis of intellectuals in the post-modern society and Jewish identity, but by the time it was published, researchers identified his hero as Bellow's good friend Alan Bloom, the novel is regarded as a biography of Bloom, intended to depict their friendship. Although Bellow once said that the novel was a higher form of autobiography, he never explicitly told people that he was writing Bloom. Although *Ravelstein* is largely considered nonfiction in America—a memoir about Bloom. It is, as Cynthia Ozick points out:

“When it becomes a novel, the author’s life becomes the business of the unknown. A novel, even if it is autobiographical, is not an autobiography. If the writer himself says that such and such characters are in fact such and such people in real life, the reader still has the obligation — the ‘charming obligation’ of fiction — to cover his ears and turn a deaf ear..... Fiction exists underground, not above the ground. Or, as the Taoists say: Tao can be talk, it isn’t the ordinary Tao..... The thing is gone, but the phantom, the powerful and fantastic being, remains.” (Norman Manea 2015: 3)

Adam Phillips declared, “Ravelstein seems to be more a novel about biography than a biography.” (Adam Phillips 2000: 1) As readers, we must not indulge in the gossip that circulates among the masses or in the simplistic preferences promoted by the major literary press. The reason why Bellow said that the novel is a higher form of autobiography is that to emphasize its social effectiveness and objectivity, in order to give full play to the intervention of literature.

American postmodern period arose approximately in the 80s of the 20th century, reached its prosperous stage in the 90s, on the premise of mature electronic information technology, marked by the high commercialization of social life, in the case of increasing public leisure, the society as a whole is running in order to satisfy the mass consumption desire. However, due to the rampant popularity of deconstructive philosophy, it has a profound impact on the post-modern society in America. People deconstruct everything, including people themselves, thus resulting in the continuous wandering of individual life and forming multi-faceted individuals. The life of Professor Ravelstein, the protagonist of *Ravelstein*, is in a constant wandering. Correspondingly, in modern American society, where the prevailing reaction is against reason itself, in the void of thought, Saul Bellow’s work uses introspection, recollection and stream of consciousness to drive the story forward, he wants to arouse people’s attention by analyzing the life of Ravelstein, makes people think about how to better grasp their own problems in the post-modern.

Conclusion

Despite his efforts made on the college campus for several years, Saul Bellow was not turned into a sociologist. It was his belief in becoming a writer that took effect:

“I don’t think I’m a very sophisticated man. Chicago is not a city for people with complex ideas. But in Chicago, as I was a child of Jewish immigrants, I had a belief in becoming an American writer.” (Michikokakutani 2007)

Nevertheless, his sociological learning experience did have an undoubted impact on his later works, which was reflected in both the ideological contents and stylistic applications in his works. A conclusion can be drawn that Saul Bellow is destined to become a great litterateur because of his learning experience in sociology and anthropology.

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