

The Quest Motif of Jewish Culture and Saul Bellow's Model of Novels

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Abstract—Set in the context of Jewish culture, the thesis explores the model of novels written by Saul Bellow. The author of the thesis holds that there is a quest model in Bellowian texts, either apparently or inwardly, which are related to Jewish culture. And the model is a kind of Jewish uniqueness: i.e. first, the agents to quest in the text are intellectuals; second, the quest is a spiritual one more or less; at last, it is uncertain and ironical.

Index Terms—quest motif, Saul Bellow, novel model, Jewish literature

I. INTRODUCTION

Some scholars of anthropologist classify heroic stories into two types: i.e. quest and initiation ones (Campbell, 2003, p.100). By the division, readers of Saul Bellow may easily find some kind of intertextual models through Bellow's works. For instance, from his early novel *Dangling Man* (1944), whose main character is Joseph, *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), the titular hero Augie March, *Seize the Day* (1956), Tommy Wilhelm as the central character, *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), Henderson the key character, till the middle representative one of *Herzog*, Moses Herzog the core character, and even his short story *Looking for Mr. Green* (1951), the readers are likely to find that all the novels are a kind of similar plot model, in which the main characters seem to be questing for something unknown to them. "But during their escapades they are all on the run, not from something but towards something, a goal somewhere which will give them what they lack--firm ground under their feet." (http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1976/bellow-lecture.html, 16/8/2014) From the Award presented to Saul Bellow, the author of the thesis holds that the protagonists are running for something. And so, he claims that the above-mentioned novels are quest types. But, regrettably, the Nobel Prize Committee for Literature declares merely that the heroes want to gain a small patch of "firm ground under their feet"; as to what is the firm ground, they have no further clear interpretation of it. So, the author of the thesis tries to explore the exact essential of their goals, which are uncertain, changing, on the move and difficult to define. Probably, the goals could be interpreted as money, love, rank or risk, and liberty, truth, self-identity, Heaven or a kind of spiritual homeland, or anything tangible and exact. In fact, the heroes are puzzled to look for the objects, and the writer, Saul Bellow himself feel "perplexed" to point out what they actually are. If the author of the thesis did so, he would commit either "intentional" or "emotional errors". To his delight, his purpose is not to find the goals which the heroes are seeking for, but to explain the plots of quest of the novels.

II. THE INTERPRETATIONS OF BELLOW'S TEXTS BASED UPON THE QUEST MODELS

Dangling Man, the first novel of quest narrative, telling us a story about Joseph, twenty-seven, from Chicago, is Bellow's first work which establishes his fame. Joseph, quitting his job in Travel Bureau, is waiting anxiously to be recruited. The story, in a form of journal, depicts Joseph's alienation during his time expecting to be enlisted. He feels to be separated and rejected by his families and communities because of his quarreling with his close friends, brothers, relatives and even his wife. We can see his idea in Joseph's words, 'I am enclosed in the small room, isolated, alienated, suspected, and I am not in a wide world but a closed hopeless prison. My vision is closed by the walls as well as my future. I have no future but the past, which rushes towards me with coldness and ignorance.' That is what Joseph's idea is at the time, which is a real description of his mind before his joining the army. After resigning his job, nothing else to do, Joseph has abundant time, which he intends to make use of; thus he might spend his days a little bit easily. And he picks up again his philosophy to study; unfortunately he doesn't know how to enjoy the free time. To him, the freedom is a burden on his shoulders, which is becoming heavier and heavier. In the end, he just stays in the room, reading newspaper or listening to the radio endlessly, watching maiden clear his house, staring at the cold outside of the window, and tries to think about the future and fate of human beings. Joseph always feels painful for what he sees in the world or what he is running for is never the present world he sees or expects; the readers may understand what Joseph is looking for is the essence hidden behind the phenomenon of the world. However, he is depressed and dejected about the world because what he sees is not what he wants indeed. Furthermore, he continuously re-examines himself over and again, and makes dialogues with his self-alternative ego to explore what is the world's essence. His reflective questions are like "For what is it?" "For what am I?" "Is this what I am for?" Joseph's questions are real dialogues with his soul and spirit to test and are to find the actual appeal from his heart, which is similar to Raskolnikov, a hero of *Crime and*

Punishment created by Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-81), a great Russian novelist. Here, we can see the influence from Dostoyevsky. Though Joseph is exploring his spiritual call, he fails to find it. To some extent, he is aware that he should live for his inner heart. The burden and vainness from his living, the coldness and jealousy from the world, his skeptical quest from the inner heart, etc., everything unlucky led him to go to barrack. In the end of the story, he is delighted that he is no longer responsible for himself for he is going to be dominated by others in the military regimes. When we readers read here to stop to think a moment, an impetus to ask such a question, "Joseph had resigned his job for freedom at first; after he gained it, he was puzzled and perplexed to enjoy it; and he was obliged to dangle here and there to kill the noble freedom; finally, he is cheerful to be charged by somebody else, i.e. he is happy to lose his freedom. We could not resist asking: Does Joseph quest for freedom or just throw it away? Is he not paradoxical? What is his final goal to run for in the end?" To those questions, it seems unknown to the readers as well.

First, let us see the plot of *Augie March*, which has a clear quest line throughout the text. Augie March, the protagonist, is a Jewish guy born in Chicago. From 12 years on, everyone around him tries every conceivable means to dominate or influence him. The first one is a tenant Granny Lausch, who becomes the real king at last in his family. She constantly teaches him how to lie and to be a decent gentleman. "Coached by Grandma Lausch, I went to do the lying. Now I know it wasn't so necessary to lie, but then everyone thought so..." (Bellow, 2007, p.2) A second one, who tries to manage and govern Augie, is William Einhorn, No. 1 local broker of real-estate in the district. He often teaches Augie that all human beings are ranked and functioned differently, but he, with a special mission, is set in privileged group; Augie, belonged to an inferior one to him. And he would condescend himself to direct Augie to be the most outstanding guy in the privileged. Besides Einhorn, Mrs. Renling, the owner of a saddle shop, is willing to adopt Augie as well to arrange his life and future just because he is a sort of adopted boy, who could be treated and trained as her "perfect image". Actually, her would-be adoption is only to prove her construction of the world and her power. And even Simon, Augie's older brother, hopes Augie to follow Mrs. Renling. Simon told him that it is a fact that he should put selfishness and jealousy before anybody's death only if he could benefitted. He said,

"...you wise up to fact that first comes all the selfish and jealous stuff, that you don't care what happens to anybody else as long as you get yours, you start to think such things as how pleasant it would be if somebody close to you would die and leave you free. Then I thought it would be all the same to the somebodies if I die." (Bellow, 2007, p.213)

And the last one to guide Augie is his girlfriend Thea, who also wishes him to believe her power, and to live the life she yearns for. To all of the advisors and teachers, in Augie's words, they exhausted their tether to distinguish themselves from others, to enlist others to give performance, support their imagined world, and serve them.

However, Augie is never willing to be obedient to the leaders, who always want to control or alter his life. He is a natural rebel, and has a tendency to say "No" to the dominating forces around him. Once he found the danger to be dominated or assimilated, he would struggle to fight against them to defend his own idea. Thus, Augie is determined insistently to seek for his own independent fate so as to escape from others' restraint and control over his fate. Apparently, Augie's search for his fate has left his footprints over Europe and America, whose purpose is merely to live a life he desires, so he is an actual picaroon, whose search is different from Joseph's spiritual one. From Augie's quest, he is embodied a "meaningful, unique and noble" quality. After reading *Augie March*, we hold that the novel corresponds with the novel narrative of quest, because "a picaresque novel represents a traveling plot of on-the-road by adopting the style of adventures, or wanders" (Yang Jingjian, 2006, p.122).

A third one of Bellow's novels to employ the quest narrative is *Seize the Day*, which tells us a day about Tommy Wilhelm, the central character. During the single day, Saul Bellow weaves brilliantly many plots back and forth in the novel, including Tommy's reminisce, changing name, going to Hollywood to learn producing movies, resigning his jobs, asking for help from his father, Dr. Adler, divorcing against his wife, capital investment, etc.; in the end he joins a stranger's funeral parade, follows them into a synagogue, and begins to comprehend his life after listening to the music. And the story ends surprisingly. As far as all series of the plots are concerned, the author of the thesis holds the view that they are representations of the hero's struggle or quest for his life goal though failed. First, Tommy Wilhelm's changing name signifies to seek to gain his identity and recognition in the host society. He regards his old name Wilky as too Jewish flavor and has altered it into "Tommy", which sounds American. Nevertheless, he struggles to be an actual "Tommy" and never feels he is "Tommy" in the least indeed, because the "Wilky" is still dominating his whole soul and mind. He has to comfort himself and find excuse, i.e., perhaps the new name "Tommy" is not accepted just because he has not found the tangible success. In the meanwhile, the readers think Tommy is too childish, immature, and unrealistic for his changing name. Tommy should bear it in mind: it is impossible for somebody to gain foothold or recognition, or to achieve his success without hard work. Second, Wilhelm quits his schooling to learn to produce a movie in Hollywood, which shows he is ambitious and idealistic at his youth. As a college student, he is worthy of others' praise for his ambition or ideal. Unfortunately, What Wilhelm is doing is only to catch up with the Jones; he doesn't calm down to analyze the business, and design his future journey of life according to his own situation; he is too stupid to reject the sweet words of movie directors from Hollywood. As a result, Wilhelm is involved into a trap, for he seems to ride a blind horse as a blind. Third, as to the divorce, the author thinks that Wilhelm breaks the ethics of Jewish family to run for a fresh love. Also, some scholar of Saul Bellow studies claims that the plot has something to do with Bellow's divorce (Zhou Nanyi, 2003, p.130). That is why Bellow can give us a realistic description of it. Fourth, because of the cold hard surroundings and Wilhelm's fragility, we can say he is timid, irresolute and indecisive, which

leads him to his being fired of his job, which he is promised to be promoted. The embarrassment forced him to ask for help from his father, a millionaire. If we take a further analysis of the plot, we can see Wilhelm is very emotional for he still thinks of his father to rely upon at the critical time. And his intended dependence on his father is a clear signal to look for fatherly love. Unexpectedly, the father refuses to give him a single buck, which makes Wilhelm feel depressed and disappointed with his father. Dr. Adler cried, "Go away from me now. It's torture for me to look at you, you slob!" (Bellow, 2007, p.110) Even the father is barbarous. And so Wilhelm has no relatives to turn to for help; he is forced to ask Dr. Tamkin, a fake doctor and speculator, to put his final 700 bucks into a stock market, in which he wishes to earn a little more. Yet the final ray of hope is broke; Dr. Tamkin elopes away with the capital investment. At the moment, Wilhelm is in a dead dark lane. Lost and puzzled, standing in the street, he is carried away and involved into a funeral parade in the dusk in a cold afternoon. In a synagogue, he seems to seize the essence of his life. The novel is finished here, and we can see Wilhelm struggles to look for happiness, love and ideal, he fails again and again in this world; fortunately, he understands something in a church unconsciously. Does it indicate that Bellow points out the last redeemer of God for Wilhelm?

The fourth novel adopted the quest motif is *Henderson the Rain King*, another influential work appeared in 1959. The story depicts Henderson, a millionaire, set his foot over the world to look for his inner cry for he has the cry "I want" in heart. From American continent throughout African tribes---Arnewi and Wariri, there are full of his footprints to search for the cry. His quest is both sincere and funny, and the end is comic and annoying. Henderson thought he should have found the truth of life by reading the books of his father's heritage only to find countless notes and currency inserted in the books; he wants to live a life of peace; yet his wife---Lily is out of way and just goes to the contrary; he had intended to help out the tribes to get rid of the disaster of drought and frog, but to commit a horrible crime. Perhaps the most ridiculous thing he has undertaken turns him into the idol for the mass peoples in Wariri, i.e. the Rain King, who is admired by the tribe. He can hardly accept that the dignity and wisdom can be established and gained in a throng of lions so as to release from the spiritual shackles.

As to the quest undertaken by Henderson, the author thinks that it is really valuable in two dimensions. On one hand Henderson is seeking for something tangible and visible, i.e. a real object; on the other he is looking for a spiritual prop, a belief or something like that. There are some scholars who stick to all kinds of interpretations; they hold that what Henderson wants is love, forgiveness, or a peaceful life and the like, anything but to escape from alienation. Nevertheless, we are sure that why Henderson cried "I want!" in his chest for his empty life, lack of foothold in the world or for endless demands. As a matter of fact, we readers are not available to understand his idea. Yet recently, there is a comment, which says Henderson is undertaking a spiritual conversion and freed from modern scuffs. Of course, it is reasonable, but the opinion itself probably has a restriction upon other possible explanations to the quest. Hence, the author prefers that his quest is uncertain and changeable. Moreover, Henderson's comic behaviors, sublime or stupid, bring us to the image of Don Quixote, the "comic and mad" knight, who is devoted to carrying out justice and fighting against the evils. Henderson and Don Quixote have something in common. So we see the shadow and ghost of Don Quixote after over a thousand years. Don Quixote is here again but not in the Dark Ages---the Middle Ages. The story provides the readers with much to thought indeed. And we have to ask such a question: "Is the world out of order or are we human beings mad?" Probably both, if so, which is a hazard and emergent to resolve.

The final one which uses the quest motif is *Herzog* (1964), a representative work of Saul Bellow, "representing the middle class, especially the intelligentsia's perplexity and puzzlement in modern society, *Herzog* is a bridge of Bellow's works in his whole writing career." (Song Zhaolin, 2002, p.3) The story describes what happens to Moses Herzog, the core character, within only five days. Anxiously, Herzog seems to be on the constant move to look for something, but in the end taking paining-efforts for nothing. The plot is simple enough: After his divorce with the second wife Madeleine, Herzog always writes to relatives, friends, celebrities, the known or unknown, the dead or living, God and even himself without ending, yet he has never sent. In the meantime, he is reminding of his past, experience, families, parents, brothers and sisters, lovers and friends and the like. He is thirsty for true and perfect love. His first wife Daisy is very nice to him, who thinks she is too traditional; and he lost his head and is divorced with Daisy. The second wife Madeline, open and pretty, has adultery with his best friend Gersbach, which Herzog is forced to be estranged and divorced with Madeleine. He is strong, but has three women around as mistresses for quite a long time, and is not married one of them. His attitude or behavior to love is either playing a game or an endless quest for a perfect lover. From Herzog's letters and reminisce, we can witness clearly he is filled with chaos and perplexity, which is resulted not only from his broken marriages but also the messy reality, for which has led him to be lost. In the reality there are his friends' betrayal, relatives' estrangement, political plots, and etc., which are a series of performances. Thus, Herzog, a humanist and Romanticist, can't find his foothold to survive, and becomes a dangling man like Joseph of *Dangling Man*. By quoting Herzog's words, Saul Bellow interprets the chaos:

"And why? Because he let the entire world press upon him. For instance? Well, for instance, what it means to be a man. In a city. In a century. In transition. In a mass. Transformed by science. Under organized power. Subject to tremendous controls. In a condition caused by mechanization. After the late failure of radical hopes. In a society that was no community and devalued the person. Owing to the multiplied power of numbers which made the self negligible. Which spent military billions against foreign enemies but would not pay for order at home. Which permitted savagery and barbarism in its own great cities...." (Bellow, 2007, p.201)

In 1950s~60s of the last centuries, American society is what Herzog sees; there are more details to describe the situation, i.e., individualism is destroyed, humanism is degenerated. Faced the worsening situation, Herzog can hardly accept it, for he is an intellectual harboring a noble ideal. Therefore, certainly he feels a stranger and hurt. To our console, Herzog never abandons his ideal to look for and reflect upon himself frequently. He struggles to find a solution to the ailing society. Herzog's quest, according to Liu Hongyi, a scholar of Jewish literature, calls it a spiritual exile (Liu Hongyi, 1995, 187). And so, the author regards it as a spiritual exploration. Though Herzog put himself into thinking and reflecting, and nothing visible is come up for our reference. Consequently, Herzog is only a thinker, not a practical doer; *Herzog* is a narration of Herzog's spiritual quest for foothold, though his quest is not systematic and available to find a final answer.

Besides the long stories, Bellow's short ones also follow the quest motif to organize the narration. The most typical one is *Looking for Mr.Green* (1951), an earliest short story. First we can judge the story is the kind of quest from the title. Then, we are convinced to see the plots. During the Depression (1929-1933), the hero, Grebe, is offered a junior post after his utmost efforts. On his first day to work, he is sent to dispatch relief fund to a black community. Mr. Green is one of the fund takers. Despite of the extremely bad weather, Grebe goes to deliver the aid to him. The obstacle to find Mr. Green is he seems to be invisible, because his neighbors are reluctant to talk about or to contact with him; they all tell Grebe, "They don't know him" or "They have never seen him." In the end Grebe finds Mr. Green's house, and is sure of his staying at home; nobody answers his knocks when Grebe knocks at the gate; so Grebe has to hand the relief check to a drunken naked black woman. The quest plot is simple indeed. Some scholar holds that the quest is both spiritual and physical (Bach, 1999, p.73~74).Physically, Grebe's quest is to find Mr. Green, an average human being; spiritually, it symbolizes universal love and care.

After all, if we take the above-mentioned texts into account together, we can see there are some connections among the stories. In the first, they have similar plots, either spiritual or practical quest; in the second, the main characters share some things in common, they have similar character, i.e. Joseph, Grebe and Herzog, they are a kind of somber, Henderson and Augie, open and optimistic. The author of the thesis holds that *Dangling Man* lays the foundation for Bellow's whole writing, a parent's text, which foreshadows Bellow's tone, style and genre.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BELLOW'S QUEST

Bellow's narrative type of quest, from the author's viewpoints, is associated with Jewish tradition and culture first; second, they are the products of the modern and post-modern times; the last and the most important factor to create the novels comes from the appeal of "the conscience of society" arising from an intellectual, of course, i.e. Bellow's observation and reflection. It is known to us that Bellow's families are Jewry for generations, whose grandparents were nobles in Russian Tsar's reign. And the family started to descend till Alexander II was assassinated in the end of 19th century, which resulted in persecuting and driving out Jews as scapegoats. For the worsening situation in Russia, Bellow's parents moved their families to Canada in 1913. According to Bellow's memories, he began to study Judaist texts as Orthodox adults in Old Times. He is immersed into learning *Old Testaments*, from then on, so he is quite familiar with *Genesis* and even takes it for granted. He is too absorbed into the stories to tell them from the world (Kramer, 2007, p.10). All the facts prove that Bellow is in command of the Jewish culture and tradition. We know that human beings have set foot on the quest for a way home since our ancestors Adam and Eve privately ate the forbidden fruits and were driven away from the Garden of Eden by God. Arnold Toynbee(1898-1975), an English historian, remarked, once Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden, they have been longed for the Garden, which is a symbol of paradise; they begin the journey to look for the way home. In *Genesis* there are recordings of Jewish forefather, Moses leads their Jewish tribes to return to homeland—Canna, a Promising Land by God after 40-year-exile in Sinai Desert. In fact, if we take a historic look at the Jewry's development, the Jewry is doomed to look for its homeland in the birth of Jewry. As the loyal followers of Jehovah, the Jewry is led by Abraham to leave for Canna to fulfill God's Promise. But, they are driven away by aliens and become wanders over the ends of the Earth, which is called Diaspora; they are marginalized and murdered by other ethnics; they are regarded as strangers. During World War II, they are at the edge of racial extinction because of the Final Solution. The Jewry as a nation has not gained its foothold until the establishment of Israel in 1948. Historically, to find a foothold is an ethical mission for the Jewry; the Diaspora of nearly 2,000 years had demonstrated that. Therefore, the quest motif is one of the most primary literary ones throughout the Jewish culture, which is adopted by Jewish writers. Saul Bellow, as a banner-bearer of Jewish literature, influenced by the Jewish culture, it is no wonder to find the quest motif in his creative products.

Second, the Bellowian texts are affected by the times, i.e., the 1940s, 50s and 60s, which leave the prints in the writings. During the mid-1940s, World War II is just over; the whole world is still hidden beneath heaps of the ruins. Faced the world, the majority of the mass people are lost to what to do. And in the United States, a kind of despair is prevailing. Calvino, an Italian novelist, describes the times:

When we have found the imperial power, which was used to be taken as a complex of miracles, and now, a wasteland of chaos, filled with corrupted maggots here and there, even the Holly Stick of human beings is powerless to cope with, the victory achieved by fights against enemies has turned the human into the offspring of destruction, it is a moment of despair indeed (Calvino, 1998,p.221).

The quotation is an illustration of Americans' despair about the country and the world as well an indication of the

outlook to the world spread in American literary stage. Up to 1950s, American government advocates suppressing policy against the East, i.e., the Communist countries; from President Truman, McCarthy till Eisenhower, they are pioneers to anti-communism, who have waged a Cold War between the West and the East for over half a century; in 1960s, there are Civil Right movements full play, including anti-Vietnam War, Feminism and counter-culture, and so on, which bring up riots and threats to civil safety and security, people feel uncertain and begin to lose beliefs. At the time Saul Bellow is not satisfied with the situation, so he struggles to find the foothold for human beings in the crippled society, which is a historic act and duty for a Jewish intellectual. And Bellow doesn't believe the phenomenon; he says that the kingdom of value and fact will never be separated (http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1976/bellow-lecture.html, 8/16/2014). It tells us that he is convinced that the value kingdom exists in the world. Consequently, his protagonists are trying to find a small patch of firm foothold, i.e. the value kingdom or spiritual prop. That is why we agree that his works are echoes to the times and the answer to the call of his conscience.

Bellow's Jewish background helps him create the quest models with Jewish flavor. First, the protagonists to carry out the quest are intellectuals with Jewish origin, some of whom have even attended higher education; Augie, with the least schooling, had been to night class of a college in Chicago for two years. The adoration for wisdom and knowledge is rooted in the Jewish culture. From the story of *Old Testament*, we know there are two trees in the Garden of Eden, one is the tree of life, and the other is the tree of knowledge and wisdom. The Garden is the dwelling place for God, so everything in the Garden is holy. Hence, it is evident that the wisdom and knowledge are part and parcel of the Deity. And if we read Jewish classical texts, there are too many scripts in Judaist texts, for instance, the most popular one, "The fear of God is the beginning to have knowledge." (Proverbs, 2004, p.1029) Anybody can find such praise of the wisdom and knowledge in *Proverbs*, which is a book, and composed of the praise and respect for wisdom and knowledge. A third way to prove the adoration is that Jewish parents always teach their children to learn *Holy Bible*, *Talmud*, *Torah* and the typical texts of Judaism, which benefits the children to inherit the Jewish culture and tradition as well to learn knowledge. Furthermore, even the Jewry is in the course of the Diaspora, being slaughtered by aliens, they also set up various schooling institutions so that the poor are available to attend school with little or no payment.

It is recorded in historic documents that the Jewry has almost eradicated the illiterate; which demonstrates the Jewry has paid much attention to education. That is why they are called the nation of A Book. Second, essentially, the quest is spiritual. Whoever, like Joseph, Wilhelm, Herzog, Augie or Henderson, they are spiritual picaroons for their heart has no place to hold, or they have no sense of belonging to something, which leads them to spiritual crisis. Joseph's dialogues with alternative ego and Herzog's letters are expeditions in kingdom of thought, which are comparable with the psychological descriptions written by Dostoyevsky. In fact, the mentality in Bellow's works is connected with Judaist ethics and morals. To interpret it, we have to trace back to the birth of Judaism. In its baby stage, the followers of Judaism are poor, which is called the religion for the poor. So Judaism strongly sticks to the justice, takes sympathy to the fragile and exploited; the Ten Commandments are also basic principles to for an average person; *Deuteronomy* is a book talking about the importance of law and moral as well. So actually, they are spiritual beacons for people. In the old times of Israel, many famous prophets, a special group of intellectuals, stand out to criticize the errors or immoral behaviors of the times, and they are called the conscience of society. Saul Bellow, as an intellectual who has inherited the Jewish tradition, creates a series of heroes to find the spiritual ground for modernists to express his ideas because he thinks the modern times must get something wrong, Bellow's writing is reasonable. Third, the quests in Bellow's novels are endless and have no definite end, which result in a kind of irony. For instance, Joseph's final cry, "Long live the regimes!" is just an ironic escape from the alienation; he is cheerful to lose his liberty; and Augie's questing footmarks are left over Europe and America, whose purpose is to live an independent life without others' control or restraint, which sounds to be a daydream; Herzog, a higher intellectual, returns his old dilapidated house in the countryside, for he is contend with no message with others, which is hard to understand; etc., all the final acts after quests are open to imagine, they have no certain definite answers. All the protagonists are unfortunate in their life; each one performs a kind of individual tragedy, which foreshadows the collective tragedy of Jewish race. As to the irony, it is a natural product when the Lord Almighty chooses the Hebrews and promises them a piece of land flowing with milk and honey; the chosen people have not enjoyed any bliss and bless given by God but endless disasters; the land is not the so-called but filled with wars, troubles and bullies, the gap between God's promise and the reality is too wide to bridge, which forms an irony of fate to the Jewry. In a word, the irony is indispensable in Jewish literature.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Though the quests are infinite and uncertain, it doesn't mean they signify nothing meaningful. On the contrary, it opens a new phase in American literature. On one hand, Bellow has changed the style of tough guys written by Earnest Hemingway (1899-1961); traditionally, the tough guys are calm, brave and resolute, who are accepted as heroes. Yet, Bellow's characters are hen-picked, cuckolded, divorced, and family-broken and marginalized, they are small statures or a sort of clowns, though they are intellectuals; in Hebrew language they are called the figure of nebbish and schlemiel (Wade, 1999, p.4), which is universal in modern literature, especially in Jewish literature. They are not heroes but anti-heroes. On the other hand, the caricature of the intellectuals, laughed and shown off, as the writing subject, Saul Bellow tries to arouse people's care, concern and attention to them; and we can see his sympathy and irony to the little

wretched man under his writings. Bellow makes good use of the quest motif in Jewish culture, tradition and history, with his focus on the little man; his writings have provided us with colorful insights into the times, who has become an organ to the intelligentsia in contemporary America. Universally speaking, the quest motif belongs to not only the Jewish ethnics but also every nation over the Earth, from the perspective we say Bellow is global, because everyone is on his move to quest for whatever he wishes.

NOTES

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