

Наукове видання

**Mainstream – Heterogeneity – Canon  
in Current American Literature**

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**Головна течія – гетерогенність – канон  
в сучасній американській літературі**

Матеріали III Міжнародної конференції  
з американської літератури  
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Читачеві пропонується двомовне (англійське + українське) видання матеріалів третьої міжнародної конференції "Головна течія – гетерогенність – канон у новітній літературі США", що відбулася у Києві й була присвячена проблемам фундаментальним, засадничим для літературної науки США сьогодення, що після кількох десятиліть осмислення певної дезінтеграції літератури, спровокованої добою постмодернізму й процесами мультикультуральними, стоїть перед необхідністю естетичного освоєння нової історико-суспільної ситуації у країні й світі, що крокує шляхом глобалізації з її викликами людству. Обговорювалися жанрові трансформації, персональні авторські набутки (проза і поезія) у контексті літературного процесу, його мультикультурна компонента під кутом зору гетерогенної природи літератури США, ознак, характеристик, необхідності й проблематичності як літературного канону, так й самого феномену мейнстриму на сучасному етапі. В ході конференції відбувся круглий стіл, присвячений творчості лауреата Нобелівської премії Сола Беллоу з нагоди сторіччя письменника.

В роботі конференції брали участь провідні вчені США, Росії, Польщі, Білорусі, українські науковці.

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Геккльберрі Фінна» М. Твена, але він сповнений колоритних характерів і сюжетних несподіванок. Американська традиція виявляє себе в усьому: лінія Джорджі викликає асоціації з фолкнерівським Бенджі, а потяг до влади й домінування, властивий Бабусі Люш або Мінтачану, — прикметний мотив прози чиказької школи.

Саме завдяки американській вертикалі контексту далеко не ідеальний Огі Марч постає як творець себе самого. Він вірить у те, що характер людини — це його доля, що життєва лінія кожного складеться за умови свідомого сприйняття людиною тих чинників, що нею керують. «Декому з нас знадобиться багато часу, аби зрозуміти, яка ціна нашого буття і що саме формує наше існування», — зауважує Огі. Він свідомий недоліків життя — людина водночас добра і зла, історія злочинна, ніхто не безгрішний, адже люди й речі громадаються навколо нас, убиваючи наше «я», — однак це перший герой Беллоу, якому судилося бути більшим, а не меншим за світ, що його оточує, і зображений він із надзвичайною комічною майстерністю.

Питання гетерогенності творчості автор піднімає не тільки в художній практиці, а й у теорії. В одному з есе збірки «Таємний скарб» (1960) він наводить таке розуміння природи роману: «Прийнято вважати, що лише суспільство не може створити для автора теми й характери, що гуманістичний зміст роману визначає він сам. Його сила, віртуозність, поетичність, його розуміння долі лежить в основі книг. <...> Напевне, ми стоїмо десь посередні між так званою величчю й позірною незначущістю. Але час уже припинити обманювати себе й визнати, що єдиний спосіб існування в цьому світі — залишатися людьми» [цит. за 10; 42].

У фіналі «Пригод Огі Марча» напруга дещо спадає, що знову викликає асоціації з американським каноном — адже так само змінювався характер конфлікту в останній частині «Геккльберрі Фінна». Наступним романам Беллоу була притаманна вже більша формальна єдність, але тим вони певною мірою завдячують ранньому періоду його творчості.

Serhiy Shcherbina  
(Poltava)

The Correlation of Picaresque  
and Parable in Saul Bellow's  
*Henderson, the Rain King*

Speaking about the prose rich in philosophic content, it is impossible to ignore Saul Bellow's *Henderson, the Rain King* (1959). The book was created on the verge of «shy» и «rough» decades, however we will not find a picture of the American reality on pages of the book, relevant to the period separating an era of conformism and «cold war» from the years abundant in mass protest of any kind. «In the center of the novel there is a search, problems and conflicts of the philosophical, purely ideological nature, expressed in the hero's monologue, devoted to his semi-fantastical adventures in a conventional Africa, the place for the ideologies to collide» [10; 62]. The analysis of the basic conflict and ways it is being resolved as well as of the *Henderson...* ideological constructions gives the grounds to assume, that like *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), it is close to the picaresque. In our opinion, A. Muliarchik's point of view is erroneous: «The characteristic feature of Below's works from *Dangling Man*» up to *Herzog* inclusive was their belonging to critical realism, being imbued with art analysis, with the desire to seize and to render many composite features of the American reality» [11; 176]. *Henderson, the Rain King* obviously drops out of lines of novels, where heroes are «small people» of the modern society, victims of both social, and emotional — mental unsettled state» [11; 176]. It does not matter much that Eugene Henderson is a millionaire who had run to Africa from household and family disorders, being the character of a bit other nature than the characters of Bellow's early works referred to by the Russian researcher. In our opinion, the novel is close to modernist tradition. Unlike other novels published in the late 1940s-the early 1950s, *Henderson...* does not contain any feeling of empathy, any genuine suffering for destinies of a person in the hostile world. This feature is typical of Bellow's previous novels in which one can trace the influence of Russian writers — humanists — Dostoyevsky and

Chekhov. The objective appraisal of the novel was given by M.O. Mendelson «... the work on Henderson, the Rain King, makes impression of a cold book. The novel does not really excite» [10; 63]

When defining a genre of *Henderson, the Rain King* critics disagree. T. Tanner and I. Hassan regard this work as the one belonging to tradition of «romance» [9; 71], [5; 224]. R. Freeman finds the features of a picaresque in it and «the novel of education» [4; 66]. Apparently, it is fair enough to speak about S. Bellow's book as of a picaresque containing a parable-type level of generalization. As in a classical picaresque, the compositional structure of *Henderson...* is determined by the autobiographical form «...the cheat himself makes his autobiography after having gone through various everyday storms, he has been drifted to some quiet shelter» [12; 42]. At the same time, as M. Klein points out, *Henderson...* remains the book made of symbols, filled with meanings and abstractions and thereof having some lack of concreteness. Really, the book cannot be understood ...but symbolically» [6; 54].

Architectonics of the novel is deeply connected with the idea of a moral search undertaken by the protagonist: in fact Henderson's trip to remote Africa, to the «heart of darkness» is not but a metaphor of the self-knowledge process, to comprehend his own morals, mentality, world outlook. All subplots of the novel are in one way or another examined through the prism of moral concepts, and characters «of *Henderson...* act as the generalized types of human behaviour. The similar organization of the work testifies to both its belonging to the tradition of picaresque as it is in picaresque that «the writer is interested in characters predominantly as in human types, each of them being an embodiment of some vice» [13; 47], and its parable-type implications. As M. Bradbury points out. «In *Henderson...*, in particular, the task of modern fabulation has been realized where the imagined Africa has been made a playground for the anthropological geography in which he [Bellow] could play a story of psycho-mythical adventures» [3; 21].

The novel on Henderson can be divided into three parts that correspond conventionally to three stages of the main character's life. In the first part the events of pre-African past of the protagonists have been described, which assist the reader to make some ideas of the person who had abandoned the country, the house, his family, his beloved one to set for a risky pilgrimage in the unknown lands. It is the first-person narration, and at the beginning of the novel the principal char-

acter frankly informs of all his strong and weak points, and with a sufficient degree of self-criticism tells us about his parents, both wives, and a childhood.

However, soon the serious tone of the narration is replaced with the ironic and comical one, and together with the facts revealing the peculiarities of the protagonist's nature, the plentiful stream of information falls upon the reader, more often than not adding absolutely nothing to our knowledge of the character: there are funny episodes from the lives of minor characters, the description of Henderson's dress, his autos, his estate, etc. On the one hand, it is characteristic, rooted deeply in Guevara's and Quevedo's picaresque «... mosaicism of descriptions, when a panorama is split into hundreds of fine pieces — stories on various human destinies and types, the most curious characters of this theatre, whose charm lies in diversity» [12; 50]. On the other hand, the chaotic narration of the events, the chaotic alternation of time plans and spatial structures, obviously, according to the writer's plan are to render confusion of the character's feelings, all the confusion reigning in his conscience which can be defined as a border-line condition of Henderson's mentality on the eve of his travel to Africa. Forestalling the events, one can note, that some events related in the first part, are interpreted differently at various levels in the subsequent episodes, which adds multiple meanings to the narration. By the end of the expositional fragment Henderson's «confession» turns into expressly cut parody, which gives some grounds to reader's suspicion that the author is going to laugh at its audience, in particular at those who are dedicated to «deep reading». The fact that Bellow published the article named *Deep Readers of the World. Beware!* [1; 1] only in a week after having issued *Henderson...* testifies in favour of such a possibility.

It looks that the purpose of Henderson's trip to Africa was the spiritual regeneration of the character, the thorough revision of the foundations of his moral and world outlook. However, the objective symbolical content of pre-African episodes of the main hero's life give enough reasons to doubt whether it is possible to change something in the attitudes of the person who aggressively reacts to any attempt to influence his behaviour. From the position of belligerent egocentrism Eugene challenges public opinion, tyrannizes his relatives, trying to assert himself in the world which, from his point of view, is controlled, by «swinish» instincts. He is invulnerable to anything, at least he makes impression of an armour-clad person (here Bellow plays

with one of the postulates of psychologist Wilhelm Reich's theory) [8; 212–223]. Besides, the main character embodies writer's understanding of existential approach to life, i.e. we deal with the character, whose eccentric tricks are in a way the expression of his existential «ego». However, on the level of the plot Henderson's misbehaviour can be explained in a fairly simple way: he is a millionaire, and a crazy millionaire is one of the human types common for modern literature. And if Eugene transforms his estate into «pig paradise», builds pigsties on a lawn in front of the house and instead of usual flower bed, and statues from Florence and Salzburg are overturned by animals in his ancient park — he has all «natural» rights to do it, because «the Hendersons have owned property here for more than two hundred years» [2; 23] — he informs some doctor Bullock from public health service.

The symbolical meaning of this to greater extent confirms character's spiritual insolvency, as his barbarous attitude to works of art, especially when being drunk he had desecrated ancient French cathedrals, showed his negligence to cultural heritage of the past. Thus the conceptual aspect is reduced to oppositions between the European culture represented by the world of fine arts, the domain of spirit and American «material» culture, embodied in cars, planes, weapons. Manipulating with these symbols, Bellow brings a reader to the idea of classical culture's decline, «twilight of civilization». The heritage of the past is not capable to raise the feeling of the beautiful in a contemporary soul — in such a way one of the themes of Bellow's novel can be treated.

Some researchers, in particular Judy Newman, considers Henderson as a character, aspiring to cross out the past, prevailing over him as social and cultural heritage in order to realize «American Adam's» predestination, that of the New World Messiah [7; 73]. This problem, in my opinion, is formulated a little bit inexact being, however, one of the questions raised by S. Bellow in the novel. First, the character is far from denying the past in full, he is proud of his parents, their social status, their fortune. And he treats his more remote ancestors with respect. We can see it from his unwillingness to place the portrait of his wife in family portrait gallery because, in his opinion, Lily is not worthy to be immortalized alongside with such people as Eugene's great-grandfather, the Secretary of State or his relatives who had served as ambassadors in England and France. Second, Messianism presupposes protection of certain values, in this case the

values the contemporary American reality, but Eugene Henderson, as it was shown above, is alienated from reality. Moreover, escapism is his principal position. Messianic ambitions of the character objectively lead him to Nietzsche's idea of superman. At the same time in many respects the parable layer of the narration is based on Nietzsche's oppositions (well known opposition of culture and nature can serve as an example), and even on certain ethical and philosophical ideas of German philosopher. M. Klein has convincingly proved, that Henderson's African adventures are molded under the structure of Zarathustra's first parable [6; 66–67]. Nietzsche's parable narrates about spirit's metamorphoses and the latter is to pass three stages on its way to the supreme knowledge, which are symbolically designated by three creatures: a camel, a lion and a child.

In the second part of the novel Bellow, interpreting this parable, shows how the character bearing a burden (like a camel) «a burden of a white man», arrives to the tribe of Arnewy. The settlement of the tribe is located far from big cities, far from the madding crowd. The sight of the desert, the landscape bring an idea of the «prehistoric» antiquity of the area «which must be older than the city of Ur» [2; 47]. The chronotopes of this part of the novel narrating about the misadventures of the traveling American, have a key value for understanding of symbolics of this stage of the character's spiritual evolution; the closed microcosm as a model of The Universe is a typical parabolic chronotope. By making a reader know that Henderson found himself in the prehistoric time, the author creates allegedly artificial environment where only laws of the nature reign. Hence, Eugene receives an opportunity to dump the cargo of «civilized» experience, to show his true «ego.» The Biblical allusion used by the author at the beginning of the fragment also contributes to such comprehension of the events. Henderson compares himself to Christ in a desert, being tempted by a devil. Proceeding from system of the novel's conventions, in many respects appealing to the symbolic structure of thinking which is specific for the USA, it is possible to conclude: the character has to pass a test in his search of true knowledge.

In order to thank the people who had received him warmly, Eugene decided to destroy the frogs which have lodged in the water tank and were frightening the tribe's cows. To that end he, following in Hunk Morgan's footsteps, made a bomb, furnished it with a fuse and dropped it into the tank. The consequences of the explosion were catastrophic — the reservoir was destroyed, the tribe and its cattle

were doomed to death. In the context of the novel, this episode is heavily loaded from the symbolic point of view. Henderson wasted the opportunity to reject his former ideas on reality and to try to accumulate centuries-old wisdom of life «in natural conditions». On the contrary, «the burden of a white man» defines all his logic in this event. «Who is to be preserved — oneself, cows, or tradition? I would say — oneself. Life, — I said, — is to establish new traditions» [2; 60].

Biblical motives were also intervened into the semantic context of the episode.

In fact in opinion of prince Itilo, the frogs is a mark of damnation, granted to his tribe for its sins. The protagonist connects the damnation to one of seven Egyptian punishments. But as it is known, the people of Egypt suffered for no reason just as the Arnewy were suffering. Hence, by generalizing the events on the parable level, in this case — Biblical parable, Bellow once again fixes reader's attention on senselessness of human destiny in the world where the innocent are punished, and evil-doers are saved. The same sense bears T.S.Eliot's poem which was retold by Henderson, the poem about a nightingale, singing that «mankind cannot bear too much reality. But, — the hero asks himself, — how much unreality it can bear?» [2; 99-100].

In the context of the character's spiritual evolution the experience gained by him during his stay with Arnewy, cannot be called positive. The objective meaning of the second part of *Henderson...*, in my opinion, is reduced to the following: destruction, violence are the most natural manifestations of human nature, whereas good intentions of a person are alien, unreal, so to say «hell-born». Therefore any display of humanity, any wish to introduce kindness into human relationships contradicts to human nature. By comprehending its essence, a person does not ascend to spirit's summit, but descends to the «heart of darkness», as if making circles round the depths of a hell, i.e. it degrades. In such a way Saul Bellow builds his book giving another meaning to the conceptual and spatial structures developed by Dante and Konrad.

Meanwhile Romilayu, Henderson's guide, was accompanying Eugene farther on deeply into Africa, to Wariri tribe. The third part of the novel describes his stay with king Dafu who headed a tribe whose totem animal was a lion. The name of the tribe «Wariri», causing with the English-speaking reader association with the word «war» — «war» and the way Romilayu described them «the children of darkness» [2; 108], assumes its essential difference from the

Arnewy. In fact, the first steps of travelers on the Wariri grounds are accompanied by a number of incidents testifying to the hostile natives' attitude to strangers. First Henderson and his guide were trapped, then they were put into prison where, they found themselves in a company with a deadman. The American is struck, but not so much with the lack of hospitality of Dafu subjects, but with his comprehension that he had been fought against with his own weapon. Violence, unscrupulousness, blackmail — it appeared that Wariri were professing the code of «commandos», too. Eugene, who got used to take into consideration force only, for the first time from the beginning of his African voyage feels fear. During his stay with Dafu the character had to go through various degrees of fear — from fear for his life up to an animal horror of a lioness tamed by the Wariri leader. «Education» of the character turns into his education with fear, and in this thesis it is difficult to differentiate between Nietzsche constructions and existential motives. Besides the symbolics of the last part of the book becomes much more complicated, and it reveals itself at all levels of the novel.

Analyzing the character of king Dafu, the western researchers of *Henderson...* «find connotation of madness in his name [7; 69] (daffy — «madman»), and, obviously, there is a grain of truth in it. Dafu's madness like Ahab's madness, can be considered on several levels. First, on a plot level Wariri king tries to study habits of lions by becoming similar to a tame lioness that is unreasonable from point of view of Bownam, the tribe's sorcerer and the supporters of the latter. Second, Dafu aspires to comprehend human nature basically from book knowledge and ignoring people who made his environment — the inadequacy of such behaviour is clear even to Henderson. And at last, the philosophical views of the ruler, representing eclectic mixture of various philosophical ideas of the West with the African ideas of the nature of things, are far from being consistent, and, as it is shown in the novel, they conflict with Dafu's action themselves.

However, in the character of the African king Henderson finds the features which he was lacking himself. The king of the tribe trusts in a final victory of virtue inherent in a person, in spite of the fact that for such a victory one has to pay an enormous price. «The man of courage will try to put an end to the evil» [2; 201]. But for the sake of a true morals triumph, as Dafu believes, a person has to pass the long way of sufferings and so the principle «a man wants to live» is only the beginning, and it is not solely sufficient» [2, 204]. The king

himself is ready to suffer in the name of the future, however the pathos of thank-offering is intentionally reduced in the novel. On the one hand, the king's actions are strongly limited by the ritualized customs perceived by him as some unchangeable rules, manifestations of fate. So, on his way to establishment of the full authority over the tribe he repeatedly had to face the dangers of death, and such a life within the hair breadth of death has forced the king to reconcile with the inevitability of death. Therefore death, suffering, violence, fear, from his point of view are usual conditions of human existence and one can and should struggle with them, but it is impossible to defeat them completely. On the other hand, the role of thank-offering, a scapegoat is prepared to Henderson from tacit agreement of the king though the protagonist knew nothing about it to the very death of Dafu. The character having relied himself to the royal patron, suddenly found himself in the center of interparty struggle. Using irony and a farce elements, Bellow represents Henderson's misadventures, who thoughtlessly wished to take part in the «prayer of a rain» ritual. The scene of the ritual is the climax of the novel, it has an important value for understanding of the whole parable level and it is saturated with symbolics very densely.

Sitting in a royal box of the stadium, Henderson was observing a mystery with interest. Basing his knowledge on popular scientific literature, Eugene tried to assure Dafu of the impossibility to cause a rain by means of magic. Further on the king stepped on the arena where together with a young African girl he participated in a sort of art gymnastics competition, and the skulls of the deceased kings were used as subjects. It was a death dance both literally and figuratively because in case of dropping a skull the guilty deserved a death penalty. The duet passed the test with honour. Then there came a turn of weight lifters who transferred rather heavy figures of gods from place to place. «Struggle against god» turned out to be struggle against weight, spirit — flesh controversy was solved by the writer in favour of flesh once again. Henderson was fond of a show, he was an expert in weight lifting. When only one figure of the most influential and, hence, the heaviest deity was left in the center of the arena and the recognized athlete of the tribe failed when attempting to lift an idol, the American concluded that his hour of triumph has come. To the delight of all people gathered for the ceremony, he lifted the statue of Mumma and was awarded with title of Shango, the Rain King. The protagonist was unaware of the fact that his participation in the

religious rite as Shango, was a part of the plot planned by priests against a royal party. Eugene had to pass all stages of initiation into a position of the Rain King: he had been forced to mock at gods, he had been dragged in dirt and dressed in motley. At the end of the ritual which was interrupted by an African downpour, dirty, morally and physically exhausted, nude Eugene Henderson appealed like Ahab to heavens.

Actually, regeneration of Shango-Henderson, his returning to a bosom of a society and reconciliation with it also begins with this moment. Mock-heroic initiation has taken place, the process of the character formation was almost completed. The Wariri have taught Eugene a severe lesson. The hero wanted to become the Messiah he was made the Messiah after having been smeared with a dirt. Here Bellow, undoubtedly, played with a literal translation of a word «Messiah», designating «smeared with dirt». The American wished to rule — he has received authority, to be more exact, an illusion of authority. Together with a title of the Rain King the owner of which inherits to the leader of a tribe, Henderson inherited all hardships, humiliations and all dangers connected with the position. The situation looks more comic owing to the fact that the person living in the twentieth century, the graduate of a prestigious university, the participant of the world war, became a toy in the hands of semiliterate priests who had said goodbye to the Stone Age not so long ago. Moreover, the latter have made Henderson believe in the action of ultramundane, uncontrollable forces, and «the educated monarch «treating psychology like William James and Wilhelm Reich, has completed process of «education of the character». We face the severe paradox of the American writer who has shown that only the fear of death made Eugene return to a society, to reconcile with its laws. S. Bellow put into Dafu's mouth the prophesy: «Fear is the governor of mankind!.. As a forming force, it is next to Nature only» [2; 241]. However returning of the character to people is not his consent choice, in the system of the novel's conventions the decision of the American acts as a manifestation of a gregarious feeling. Similarly, the Biblical Daniel's prophecy told to a proud monarch, that the latter would live among animals, became especially ominous: if a society is a herd, its members are animals, any spiritual search is devoid of any sense.

Nevertheless Bellow believes, that having restrained his arrogance and having chosen a way of perception, Eugene is ready to apprehend original moral ideas. It follows from the last chapter of the novel which narrates about Henderson's touching care towards the

orphaned boy. In the supreme form of life a soul of a person should become similar to a soul of a child who feels instinctive, disinterested love to his neighbor, reads Nietzsche's parable. Bellow tried to embody this idea in the end of the book. However, he does it a little bit artificial, thus this episode strongly contrasts with the rest of the novel. The idea that Dafu's death entailed Henderson's moral attitude, is quite unpersuasively proved by the author. Even the author's use of biblical allusions when he compared Dafu to Christ who had suffered for mankind, cannot make reader believe in regeneration of the character. And the actions of the American traveler who has followed the death of his African friend and patron — murder of the guard of a tomb, the uproar made by Eugene in the American consulate in Khartoum — convince us: the hero has remained true to himself. Therefore the pertinent question is: what was the essence of the moral lesson taken from the Eugene's African experience, i.e. what was the morals of the parable?

Certainly, Eugene's African adventures have left a trace in his soul, have allowed him to understand some secrets of human psychology, to learn his own nature to some extent. But at the same time the protagonist's search of the purposes of existence frequently followed the false path, and in this respect Henderson's «African» experience did not differ much from his «European» or «American» ones. Even if the sufferings, experienced by the traveler on final stage of his «apprenticeship» have changed his world outlook to some extent, simply speaking it is late to begin all over again. Understanding it, Henderson confessed in the letter addressed to his wife: «Being already on St. Elena's island, Napoleon spoke much about morals, but it was already a bit too late» [2; 265].

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