

**LUST FOR LIFE : A REVALUATION OF SAUL BELLOW'S  
NOVELS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HERZOG**

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the award of the Degree of

**Master of Philosophy**

**BABU G.**

CENTRE FOR LINGUISTICS AND ENGLISH  
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI-110067. INDIA

1991

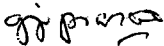


जवाहरलाल नेहरु विश्वविद्यालय  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI - 110067

CENTRE FOR LINGUISTICS AND ENGLISH  
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES

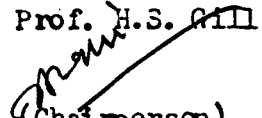
C E R T I F I C A T E

This dissertation entitled 'LUST FOR LIFE:  
A REVALUATION OF SAUL BELLOW'S NOVELS WITH SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO HERZOG', submitted by BABU. G., Centre  
for Linguistics and English, School of Languages,  
J.N.U., New Delhi, for the award of the Degree of  
Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not  
been submitted so far, in part or full, for any other  
degree or diploma of any university. This may be  
placed before the examiners for evaluation for the  
award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy.

  
G.J.V. Prasad

(Supervisor)

Prof. H.S. Gill

  
(Chairperson)

## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

Any attempt to transform my feelings of indebtedness to Mr. G.J.V. Frasad, my supervisor, into black and white, I know would be futile. No shadow of doubt crosses my mind, when I assert that had it not been for Mr. Prasad's patience, understanding and above all his tremendous concern, I could never have completed these documents, a product of sleepless nights and endless perspiration.

I can only remember with gratitude Prof. Meenakshi Mukherjee, who initiated my forays into the mind boggling labyrinths of modern criticism.

I bow before the magnanimity of the staff of Patriot and the Business and Political Observer, without which my M.Phil would always have remained an unfulfilled dream.

And, of course, I am obliged to my family, who are the real inspiration behind this endeavour.

Melancholy stalks me, as with hesitating steps, I stroll down the memory lane. Heat and dust, roused up by the frenzied wheels of youth, are yet to settle down. Scars, slowly replace the slough on wounds, perpetrated by the vagaries of fate. An ebbing pain pecks delicately at my heart, as with unbridled nostalgia, I gaze upon the tombs, sans epitah of my desires. Their phantoms flow out from these secluded sepulchres, waltz around me, naked, mournful, to the cadence of my sobs. A dirge slowly fills the crepuscular necropolis. I re-live those days.

Days, when in front of the altar of destiny, I genuflected and waited and waited for the apocalypse to beam from over the clouds, to lead me to the gates of the Emyrean. Days in the garden of Gethsemane when out of the unfathomable depth of my despair, the pathetic cry for salvation emanated, echoing through the minute cells of my very existence, "Eloi! Eloi! Labasabacthani! (My God! My God! Why has't thou forsaken me!)

But days pass. Life trickles back. Night of despair gives way to the twilight of hope. Hope mixed with ashes of life, recreates another pegasus. A pegasus on whose dreamy rainbow wings, I get ready to strive for the celestial.

Babu. G.

WHERE was it that I heard of how a condemned man, just an hour before his death, said or thought that if he had to live on some high crag, on a ledge so small, that there was no more than room for his two feet, with all about him the abyss, the ocean, the eternal night, eternal solitude and eternal storms - and he would remain there, on that narrow strip of ground for all his life, for a thousand years, through out all eternity - would be better to go on living thus than to die at once! Only to live, to live on! No matter how - only to live.

Dostoevsky

( Crime and Punishment )

## C o n t e n t s

Chapter I	Introduction The Man, The Works, and The Critics	1
Chapter II	Pre-Herzog Novels	21
Chapter III	Herzog	71
Chapter IV	Post-Herzog Novels	108
Chapter V	Conclusion Return and Reaffirmation	141
	Bibliography	154

\*

Chapter I - Introduction

---

The Man, The Works, And The Critics

---

## Brief Biography

Saul Bellow's parents emigrated to Canada from Russia in 1913. His father was a businessman. They settled down in the town of Lachine, Quebec. Saul Bellow was born there in the year 1915. He was the youngest of four children. And as Saul Bellow himself said, "Until I was 9 years old, we lived in one of the poorest and most ancient districts of Montreal, on the slope of St. Dominick street between the general hospital and Rachel market. In 1924 we moved to Chicago. I grew up there and considers myself a Chicagoan, out and out."<sup>1</sup>

He attended the University of Chicago, received his bachelor's degree from Northwestern University in 1937 with honours in anthropology and sociology. Again to quote Saul Bellow: "Graduate school did not suit me, however. I had a scholarship at the University of Wisconsin, and I behaved very badly. During the Christmas vacation, having fallen in love, I got married and never returned to the University. In my innocence, I had decided to become a writer."<sup>2</sup>



But his departure from university life was not final. "For intermittent periods, Bellow has lived by free-lance writing, but for most part he has combined the profession of writer with that of teacher, considering, rightly enough, that it is better for a writer to be a responsible educator than a hack journalist or a desperate bohemian."<sup>3</sup>

Saul Bellow served in the Merchant Marine during the second world war.

His first novel, Dangling Man, was published in 1944. And, in 1947, his second novel The Victim appeared. In 1948 he was granted a Guggenheim fellowship and spent two years in Europe, where he started The Adventures of Augie March. His anthropological studies took him to Mexico, and in 1955 he spent some time on an Indian reservation in Nevada, where he wrote Seize the Day. It was published in 1956. Henderson the Rain King appeared in 1959.

The Adventure of Augie March won the National Book Award for fiction. His two later novels, Herzog, published in 1964, and Mr. Sammler's Planet, published in 1970, too won the National Book Award for fiction. He is the only novelist to win three National Book Awards. Humboldt's Gift published in 1975, was awarded the Pulitzer prize. In

October 1976, he was awarded the Nobel prize.

In 1965 Saul Bellow won the International Literary prize for Herzog, becoming the first American recipient of that prize. In January 1968, the Republic of France awarded him the Croix de Chevalier des Arts et Lettres, the highest literary distinction given by that nation to non-citizens.

Mr. Bellow published The Dean's December in 1982, More Die of Heartbreak in 1987, A Theft in 1988 and The Bellarosa Connection in 1989.

He is also the author of the play The Last Analysis and of three other one-act plays. He has contributed both fiction and criticism to many leading general and literary magazines, including Partisan Review, The New Yorker, and Esquire. During the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict he served as a war correspondent for Newsday.

He has taught at Princeton University, Bard College, University of Minnesota, New York University, and University of Chicago.

Most of Bellow's life as a writer has been spent in New York, Minnesota or Chicago, and most part of his life has been related to university teaching.

### About Bellow's Works

Tony Tanner believes that the strength of Saul Bellow's works "represents a coalescence of energies, a convergence of of traditions - Russian, Jewish, American."<sup>4</sup> Bellow is a pertinent critic of the American society, especially about its spiritual vacuum. He himself has said, "We Americans are in the grip of a boundless desire... that our desires are infinite does not mean that we are spiritual; it only means that we are not sure what satisfaction is."<sup>5</sup>

Criticising Oscar Lewis' book Five Families, Bellow wrote: "Human history can fairly be described upon one level as the history of scarcity, and now that technology extends the promise of an increase of wealth we had better be aware of a poverty of the soul as terrible as that of the body."<sup>6</sup>

Bellow admits that the human soul, in the material world is suffocating. It is a gas chamber where clocks tick away to the eternity. But, still Bellow believes that "human spirit is inextinguishable. Society may move towards its death with false concepts of progress and prosperity - but somewhere, somehow the human spirit will start to disengage itself, to protest, to assert its need for time values, for real freedom, for genuine reality."<sup>7</sup>

This belief in the eternal soul, the sense of human spirit as an essence of its own, capable of joining issue with the world at large, Tony Tanner believes, is Russian in nature. The Continental or the European novel envisages society as an arena in which life is worked out. Individuals find or lose themselves in the complex community life.

But in the great Russian novels, society even at its most remarkable condition, is seldom considered to be the ultimate condition, and containers of man. "So often there is the sense of extreme human needs, compulsions, forces which can dissolve, dismiss or transcend the social limits of life. There the human spirit is a tremendous palpable reality capable of scattering and distancing any claim that the material world is the ultimate reality."<sup>8</sup>

Bellow definitely was influenced by the great Russian novelists particularly because they often assert with uncompromising conviction the capacity of the human spirit to spurn the whole range of social values and pursue the unlimited freedom. It was the Russian writers who questioned the nineteenth century European ideals of material pleasure, as a measure of human progress.

Daniel Fuchs has said that,

Bellow, on the other hand, seems to be the leading contemporary exponent of the "Russian"

way. The idea of a writer as teacher rather than martyr, citizen rather than artist, journalist rather than aesthetician; the idea of literature that is flexible enough to be tendentious and broad enough to be inspiring; a literature that refuses to adopt the pose of objectivity, detachment, and disenchantment with life in quest of compensating salvation of form and avoids comparing the artist with God - all this bear witness to the Russian experience.<sup>9</sup>

He continues:

The Russian world never think of art as religion, yet moral feeling in their work is charged with an energy, a yearning, a hope that may finally be described as religious. This art respects, indeed thrives, on mental effort and expresses, as Irving Howe has remarked, "that 'mania' for totality which is to become characteristic of our time."<sup>10</sup>

Bellow has been often compared to Dostoevsky. Bellow himself has admitted to the influence of Dostoevsky in his earlier novels.

Jonathan Wilson writes:

A large part of the experience of a Bellow hero will always be designed to illuminate or reflect his deeper conflict. In this respect Bellow is akin to Dostoevsky, revealing his vision of the world through a world that he creates to support that vision. Dostoevsky's fictional world is full of perverts, lunatics, drunks, prostitutes, and murderers, who are there, primarily not because Saint Petersburg was overpopulated with such people, but because the terms of Dostoevsky's governing dialectic demand that such characters exist to test it out. It is the same with Bellow. Bellow will not, or cannot image a wise man who is not also an eccentric, or a

petty criminal, just as Dostoevsky cannot, or will not imagine, a whore who does not have a golden heart or a murderer who is irredeemable."<sup>11</sup>

Daniel Fuchs reflects the same idea, when he writes,

But if Bellow is a novelist of intellect, he is not an intellectual novelist. He eschews the thesis novel, one which proceeds because of an idea; this he considers "French" (Gide, Sartre, Robert-Grille). Bellow sees his characters in their personal realities, sees them as selves, or better souls, whose thoughts move with the inevitability of emotions. This is in his view, the "Russian" way with ideas (Tolstoy, Dostoevsky).<sup>12</sup>

"The central impetus in both writers", says Daniel Fuchs, "in periods marked by ideological confusion and in novels full of explainers, is the quest for what is morally real. Ivan Karamazov's 'If there is no God everything is permitted' is the sort of immoralist proposition that they must refute."<sup>13</sup>

Jonathan Wilson, while comparing Dostoevsky and Bellow, brings in Freud too:

Bellow sees the world much as Freud was beginning to see it, when he outlined his bleak vision of the human predicament in Civilization and Its Discontents. The "big thing" that Freud knew in that book and that Bellow recapitulates in a fascinating way in his novels is that the civilized world is a place where human beings are painfully caught between their values on one hand and the desires on the other. In Bellow's fictional world as in Freud's real one, the reward of civilization - law, order, cleanliness, "civilized" behaviour are more at the expense of the great individual frustrations.<sup>14</sup>

Though there are deep similarities between the three, they part ways, according to Jonathan Wilson, on their differences in attitudes that each takes towards his own vision of the world. For, while Bellow's vision is bleak, it is neither tragic nor terrifying. This, I believe, is because the profound "thing" that Bellow knows is not always something that he wants to know. Unlike Freud, Bellow seems able to detach himself from his own insights into human nature - or atleast to allow his characters to do so. As a result (and this is where Bellow parts company with Dostoevsky) the term of Bellow's governing dialectic, especially in his most recent novels, are often ghostly, unreal.<sup>15</sup>

But Jonathan Wilson's arguments, especially about the differences between Dostoevsky and Bellow sound unconvincing. He has stated that,

For Dostoevsky the dialectical polarities that he established between, let us say, crime and punishment are vital forces, of the greatest importance to his heroes and palpably substantial to the author himself. By contrast, in Bellow's fiction from Herzog onward, the implied vision of the world - that it is difficult to inhabit and impossible to escape - is no longer central to hero. Herzog (like Sammler, Citrine, and Corde) wryly contemplates his existence in the world as something "other" and is even to regard his own divided personality from an ironic distance.<sup>16</sup>

This contention is entirely wrong. For Bellow's heroes, the implied vision of the world - that you have to live,

for you cannot escape - are indeed vital to their existence. They can look at things, ironically, but that does not diminish the impact of their vision. In fact, it is this vision that makes Sammler, a septuagenarian, continue his existence, or for that matter Herzog or even Albert Corde. The only character, who is detached in the way Jonathan Wilson argues is Charlie Citrine in Humboldt's Gift. But even for him, the vision is central, for his detachment essentially hinges on that.

On the other hand, Daniel Fuchs asserts that,

In Bellow and Dostoevsky the world that we know is in good measure a world of ideas, positions, solutions... Dostoevsky's attack is centered on the utilitarian and revolutionary; while not excluding these Bellow's is directed at more recent utopian attitudinizing, including the psycho-analytic, the technocratic, the modernist visionary. The world is the same, but the material was changed somewhat, partly because Bellow has a common-sense sympathy for a number of the liberal utilitarian proposition which Dostoevsky burlesques. For Dostoevsky suffering is the mother of human consciousness; Bellow is willing to grant this, provided one holds, as he does, that pleasure is its father. Still, both writers reduce the Babel to a comic dimension from the point of view of a more traditional truth to be told. Both take confidence from older, "obsolete" truths, residues of a religious tradition.<sup>17</sup>

Another great influence on Saul Bellow was Jewish writings. Not only Jewish writings, even the religion has influenced Bellow a lot. Most of his characters are Jews.



And throughout his works, one find this "Jewishness" recurring again and again. Tony Tanner quotes from Bellow's review of Sholom Aleichem's The Adventures of Motel the Cantor's Son to bring out the influence of Jewish literature on Bellow:

The Jews of the ghetto found themselves involved in in an immense joke. They were divinely designated to be great and yet they were like mice. History was something that happened to them; they did not make it. The nations made it, while they, the Jews, suffered it. But when history had happened it belonged to them, inasmuch as it was the coming of the Messiah - their Messiah - that would give it meaning... The most ordinary Yiddish conversation is full of the grandest historical mythological, and religious allusions. The Creation, the Fall, the Flood, Egypt, Alexander, Titus, Napoleon... may get into discussion of an egg, a clothes-line, or a pair of pants. This manner of living on terms of familiarity with all times and all greatness contributed, because of the powerlessness of the chosen, to the ghettos sense of the ridiculous. Powerlessness appears to force people to have recourse to words. Hamlet has to unpack his heart with words, he complains. The fact that the Jews of Eastern Europe lived among menacing and powerful neighbours no doubt contributed to the subtlety and richness of the words with which they unpacked.<sup>18</sup>

Bellow also follows his style of mixing quotidian matters with profound philosophy. He has commented on Montague's ability "to pass with ease from kitchen matters to metaphysics". This "unpacking" certainly contributed much to the richness and humour of Bellow himself.

But even with this profound influence of Jewishness, it becomes easy for a reader to identify with the protagonist.

It could be because, as Leslie Fiedler said, in post-war period of atomisation, uprooting and "universal alienation", the "image of the Jew tends to become the image of everyone."<sup>19</sup>

Commenting on Tony Tanner, Jonathan Wilson says,

For Tony Tanner, Bellow's heroes are exemplary modern American protagonists in what they appear to be caught uncomfortably between a desire for freedom from the societal patterning that would provide it. Bellow's heroes, caught between "fixity and flow" plump for what Tanner neatly calls "flexibility"; in doing so they enact a fundamental American system that embodies the anxious and classic American fear that "that which defines you at the same time confines you."<sup>20</sup>

One feels Tony Tanner's argument that Bellow's heroes are representative Americans as ridiculous. Perhaps, he was influenced by Walt Whitman and Dreiser, as he was influenced by Dostoevsky but that doesn't mean that his heroes are typical Americans. The emergence of capitalism round the world, and the urbanisation and misery, cuts across barriers and become the problem of the humanity as a whole. So to try to contain Bellow's heroes in the boundary of America would be a gross injustice to his genius. Perhaps, the situation, specific in nature, may be peculiar to America, but the problems that his protagonists face are not American alone - it is a problem of the modern man.

Jonathan Wilson is right when he says:

Bellow's novels... finally reveal far more to us about their author than they do about the country in which he lives. The work of a solipsistic writer whose novels gradually become increasingly autobiographical Bellow's fiction presents a series of brilliant characterisation - particular studies of simple American life. What primarily interests Bellow, as he grows older, is himself. Our response to his novel will finally be governed by the extent to which one share his fascination. We must be prepared to follow his heroes in the world, but, perhaps, not to see the world in his heroes.<sup>21</sup>

Bellow's style is realistic for most part. It can rightly be labelled 'traditional' especially when compared with works of Pynchon or Barth. Both of them frustrates the reader's search for a narrative. Jonathan Wilson says:

The post-modern form has long been seen as a schizophrenic response to a schizophrenic universe, a subjective vision in a world disintegrated into myriad "subjective visions". By contrast, the form of the traditional realistic novel has come to symbolise an ordered and governable world. Thus Saul Bellow's realism is seen to constitute a mimesis of an ordered world and his narratives to imitate the order and "truth" that his novels so plangently affirm.<sup>22</sup>

Daniel Fuchs believe that Bellow is a post-modernist par excellence. For, no other writer so consistently goes against the proclaimed edicts of modernism. "His very inspiration comes from a resistance to the celebrated aesthetic ideology of modernism, with its tendency towards monumentality and its perhaps inevitably concomitant tendency towards

coldness."<sup>23</sup>

The aim of Bellow's fiction is to deny nihilism, immoralism and the aesthetic view. He is the heir of the first modernists, the Romantics, rather than the arch-modernists.

"Like Keats, he is certain of nothing but 'the holiness of heart's affection!', he has not lost belief in the self, or even the soul. In Bellow we may have trouble locating good and evil, but we are never beyond it. Immoralist activity, the ultimate nihilistic act, may be a temptation, but it is a temptation which must be overcome."<sup>24</sup>

Daniel Fuchs argues that the general characteristics of modernism - alienation, fragmentation, break with tradition, isolation and magnification of subjectivity, threat of void, weight of vast numbers and monolithic impersonal institutions, hatred of civilization itself - are obviously authentic in one way or another. No definition of post-modernism can avoid them, nor can any post-modern writer. But what Bellow does, "is resist total absorption by them and repudiate the orthodoxy of 'experimentation' which derives from these characteristics of the modernist aesthetics. Above all, he tries to dramatize states of emotion and consciousness that prove there is more to life than this aesthetic assumes."<sup>25</sup>

### Aim and Scope of the Study

Saul Bellow is considered to be a life-affirming author. One who believes that life is more than the material extravaganza. As was stated earlier, he believes in the resilience of human spirit, in its eternity. "Majority of Bellow's critics find him to be a lone voice on the apocalyptic battlefields, still sounding the virtues of humanism, upholding the values of community, and beating back the emissaries of despair."<sup>26</sup>

John J. Clayton whose book on Bellow is a celebrated work, has given the opening chapter's title as "In Desperate Affirmation". According to Clayton, Bellow "rejects the denigration of ordinary life of the individual and tries to show in his fiction the possibilities for finding meaning in such lives. In all his novels, the defense of human dignity and human possibilities, even in a dehumanised age, stands central."<sup>27</sup>

Tony Tanner remarks: "Bellow neither capitulates to the contemporary world nor does he renounce it. The adventure all takes place between those two rigid, extreme reactions. Aware of all that is corrupt and destructive in modern world, Bellow refuses to traffic in pessimism."<sup>28</sup>

Ihab Hassan says that Bellow's novels are an "affirmation of reality".<sup>29</sup>

M.G. Porter has found that Bellow's novels may be characterised by their "affirmative tone of celebration". The title is a pointer to Porter's conclusion, Whence the Power? The Artistry and Humanity of Saul Bellow.<sup>30</sup>

Malcolm Bradbury categorises Bellow's novels "in the same affirmative tradition: as the late works of Faulkner, Hemingway, Steinbeck and Sinclair Lewis."<sup>31</sup>

Jonathan Wilson says there are three major grounds on which this view has largely been based. First one is Bellow's form. Howard Harper has written that "Each of (Bellow's) novels is a brilliant and original conception; each creates its own unique view of the human condition, in which the form itself becomes meaning."<sup>32</sup> About his form we have discussed earlier in this chapter.

Jonathan Wilson's second major argument is that it is also based on the supposed "affirmation" of his heroes: "Bellow's heroes move towards something... euphoric and affirmative."<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Jonathan Wilson points out Marcus Klein, who writes:

Bellow's characters... remain much the same... and they face problems which are reducible to a single problem: to meet with a strong sense

of self the sacrifices of self demanded by social circumstance. Alienation, the sense of separate and unconciliating identity must travel to accommodation,

and Eusebio L.Rodrigues, who has tried to demonstrate how the Bellow protagonist is "always in search of the human" and how the novels clearly suggest that they are projections of Bellow's own arduous climb towards true humanness.<sup>34</sup>

Jonathan Wilson's last point says that it is based on what Bellow himself has said about his work and the work of others in his interviews, speeches and discursive prose. To prove his point Jonathan Wilson points out major critics who have resorted to it. Some of them are Tony Tanner, John J. Clayton, Howard Harper, and Keith Michael Opdahl.<sup>35</sup>

This study is an attempt to revalue Bellow's works, in the light of his text alone, doing away with all extraneous or foreign props like Bellow's interviews and non-fiction writings, and to find out if this "affirmation", a key word in 'Bellow Criticism', can withstand the onslaught. The apocalyptic call to live and let live ( an optimism, churned out of life's tragic contradictions ) - is it inherent in Bellow's works? Or is it the mere product of the minds of critics?

The constraints of an M.Phil dissertation--time and material - forces the researcher to adopt a method by which

an overall picture of Bellow's novels, covering four decades (Dangling Man published in 1944 to The Dean's December, 1982) is obtained together with an exhaustive look at Herzog, his most celebrated work.

Thus the chapters are divided into 'Pre-Herzog Novels', 'Herzog', and 'Post-Herzog Novels'.

The pre, and post-Herzog chapters, if not as intensive as the one on Herzog, are certainly not superfluous. The general tenor of the works, the philosophical outlook, the problem, the crisis and its resolutions are looked into.

The researcher also attempts to find out, if there is a gradual metamorphosis in the writer's outlook. Is there a discernible growth, not in his style, but in his outlook. Is it possible to say that Bellow was evolving, slowly through the decades that separate Dangling Man and The Dean's December? These are the same of the other question that the researcher will be trying to resolve during the course of the dissertation.



All references to Saul Bellow's works  
are to the following editions:

- Dangling Man New York: Meridian, 1960.
- The Victim New York: The Vanguard Press Inc., 1947.
- The Adventures of Augie March, New York: The Viking  
Press, 1953.
- Seize the Day New York: The Viking Press, 1956.
- Henderson, The Rain King, New York: The Viking Press, 1959.
- Herzog, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications Inc.,  
1964.
- Mr. Sammler's Planet, New York: The Viking Press, 1969.
- The Last Analysis, New York: The Viking Press, 1970.
- Humboldt's Gift New York: The Viking Press, 1975.
- The Dean's December, London: The Alison Press/Martin  
Secker and Warburger Ltd., 1982.
- More Die of Heart Break, New York: Dell Publishing,  
1987.
- Theft: A Novella, New York: Penguin Books, 1988.
- The Bellarosa Connection, New York: Penguin Books, 1989.

\* \* \*

### Footnotes

1. Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow, Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965, p. 1.
2. *ibid.*
3. *ibid.* p. 2.
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.* pp. 2-3.
6. *ibid.* p. 3.
7. *ibid.* p. 5.
8. *ibid.*
9. Daniel Fuchs, Saul Bellow: Vision and Revision, Durham: Duke University Press, 1984, p. 29.
10. *ibid.*
11. Jonathan Wilson, On Bellow's Planet, London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1985, p. 14.
12. Daniel Fuchs, *op.cit.*, p. 3.
13. *ibid.* p. 29.
14. Jonathan Wilson, pp. 13-14.
15. *ibid.* p. 15.
16. *ibid.*
17. Daniel Fuchs, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
18. Tony Tanner, *op.cit.*, pp. 7-8.
19. *ibid.* p. 9.
20. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

21. *ibid.* p. 26.
22. *ibid.* p. 17.
23. Daniel Fuchs, *op.cit.*, p. 4.
24. *ibid.* p. 9.
25. *ibid.* p. 10.
26. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 16.
27. John J. Clayton, Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man, Bloomington; Indiana University Press, 1968, p. 24.
28. Tony Tanner, *op.cit.*, p. 15.
29. Ihab Hassan, Radical Innocence : Studies in Contemporary American Novel, (1961), reprint New York: Harper and Row, 1966, p. 290.
30. M. Gilbert Porter, Whence the Power? The Artistry and Humanity of Saul Bellow, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1974, p. 196.
31. Malcolm Bradbury, Saul Bellow, London and New York: Methuen, 1982, p. 22.
32. Howard Harper, Desperate Faith: A Study of Bellow, Salinger, Mailer, Baldwin and Updike, Chapel Hill : North Carolina Press, 1967, pp. 62-63.
33. Tony Tanner, *op.cit.*, p. 7.
34. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 173.
35. *ibid.* p. 173.

TH-3691



DISS  
O, III, 3, N15:8  
N1

Chapter II

---

Pre-Herzog Novels

---

## Pre-script

As was stated in the introduction, in this chapter we analyse all novels written by Saul Bellow before Herzog. Each book is discussed separately. The treatment as stated earlier, is not exhaustive. In general, what is attempted here, is to find out the problems, the crises that Bellow faces and to discuss whether Bellow is able to resolve these, the direction in which the pre-Herzog novels tend to move. Can we say that Herzog is the climax of an evolution, that starts with Dangling Man? These questions are not entertained separately. But the answers obviously are inherent in the study.

Each novel is discussed under a separate title. These titles are not pointers to the novel, but to the inferences drawn. The novels discussed in the order of their publication includes Dangling Man, his first novel, The Victim, which Diana Trilling commented as "morally one of the farthest reading books our contemporary culture has produced", The Adventures of Augie March, a novel in the



Picaresque and Bildungsroman style, Seize the Day, a novella and considered to be Bellow's most tightly constructed work, Henderson the Rain King, usually compared to as a modern sequel to Don Quixote, and often parodied as 'Connecticut Yankee in Africa'.

### Dangling Man : The Zoo Story

Spartacus is the product of generations, which existed at the mercy of callous boots and flashing whips. Tortured between the diktats of the crown, and the edicts of temporal, terrestrial gods, to dream in itself, then was to live. Freedom was an Utopia, a mirage, enticing the weary man to his Calvary. It was man's quest that made him traverse through the unknown, uncharted mires of life. Revolution and counter revolution, upsurges and coup d' etats, all for that ever elusive freedom.

At last, centuries of humanity's yearning answered. The gateway to eternity is here. Freedom, at last. Man is born free. But there is no society to put fetters on his hand. Spartacus, resurrected as a million heroes, waltz around to the tunes of Beetles and Bach. And then the anti-climax. The 'freedom' becomes a burden. Tuned, conditioned to the impulses of control, man cannot gauge, come to terms with a situation where he is forced to choose.

Fetters for man, is a reality. Bereft of that he has no existence. A masochist humanity delights in agony. Agony for it is truth. Agony for it is life. Agony for it is existence. Deprived of the cross, deprived of the trek to Golgotha, humanity crashes through rudderless, like a canoe tossed upon the stormy seas. Spartacus, disappointed, in military uniform and with a rod, leads another exodus to their crosses. Long live regimentation.

This in short is the philosophical outlook of Saul Bellow's first novel, Dangling Man, published in 1944. It is the diary entries of an unemployed man, Joseph - waiting to be drafted into the army. His wife Iva looks after him. The diary covers a four-month period and the entries focus more on the inner tribulations and trials, speculations and thoughts, rather than the outer reality. Joseph is riddled by the mystery of life. He is free, but he does not know what to do with his freedom. Further, he is confused what the real freedom is. Joseph discovers, according to Keith Michael Opdahl, the truth of Saul Bellow's warning to writers that "you must manage your freedom or drown in it".<sup>1</sup>

"There is nothing to do but wait, or dangle, and grow more and more dispirited. It is perfectly clear to me that I am deteriorating, storing bitterness and spite which eat like

acids at my endowment of generosity and good will"(p.12) admits Joseph in the beginning itself. As Tony Tanner says, he "seems to exist in a permanent benumbed state, out of reach of the world and not fully moored in it. The American hero has, indeed, habitually been thrown back upon himself, enduring a sombre aloneness which survives all surface changes of mood."<sup>2</sup>

Joseph contradicts himself throughout the book. But this contradiction is a part of his system to resolve the precipitating crisis. About his very existence, he has contradictory feelings: "It is a narcotic dullness. There are times when I am not even aware that there is anything wrong with this existence. But, on the other hand, there are times when I rouse myself in bewilderment and vexation, and then I think of myself as a moral casualty of war." (p. 18).

Perplexed with his own life, Joseph tries to identify with Goethe's vision of life. He is moved by what Goethe writes in Poetry and Life: "This loathing of life has both physical and moral causes. All comfort in life is based on a regular occurrence of external phenomena. The changes of day and night, of seasons, of flowers and fruits, and all other recurring pleasures that come to us, that we may and should enjoy them - these are mainsprings of our



earthly life. The more we are open to these enjoyments, the happier we are; but if these changing phenomena unfold themselves and we take no interest in them, if we are insensible to such fair solicitations, then comes on the sorest evil, the heaviest disease - we regard life as loathsome burden."(p. 18)

He desperately tries to keep the outside world at bay, but in vain. He is disappointed no doubt with life. Perhaps, it could be his disappointment that makes him create a cocoon around himself. Joseph states that "the worlds we sought were never those we saw; the worlds we bargained for were never the worlds we got."( p. 26)

There is a gradual transformation in Joseph. He realises the changes that are occurring and tries to draw sharp distinction between his 'old self' and his 'new self'. Jonathan Wilson writes that "on the fundamental dichotomy of the two selves, Joseph constructs a net of ideational opposites that are at once the substance of the novel and the dialectical underpinning of the novel".<sup>3</sup>

Joseph's older self does not believe that the world is evil. Neither is he ready to believe that it is good. For him, the world is both, and therefore it is neither. "Merely to make a judgement of that kind is, to representatives of either position, a satisfaction" ( p. 29).

Also, to Joseph's 'older self', judgement is only second. It looks around with wonder. Perhaps, like a child who looks at the world and gets thrilled at the marvellous life. Every object for the child is a curiosity. The old self looks at humanity enthralled at "men, drugged and clear, jealous, ambitious, good, tempted, curious, each in his own time and with his customs and motives, and bearing the imprint of that strangeness in the world. In a sense everything is good because it exists. Or, good or not good, it exists, it is ineffable, and, for that reason, marvellous." ( p. 30 )

But for all this almost humanitarian outlook, his old self suffers "from a feeling of strangeness". He does not feel that he belongs to this world. He feels that he is an outsider, an alien. It is like standing in a zoo, and watching the animals curiously, and being always aware that you do not belong here. There is an outside world - a world which you inhabit, a world to which you belong.

But what would happen when one realises that there are no exits. One cannot escape. One is confronted with a Hobson's choice. One becomes paranoid. Somebody, somewhere is conspiring to keep you in this alien world, for ever. Joseph's feeling of strangeness, sometimes takes the form almost of a conspiracy: not a conspiracy of evil, but one

which contains the diversified splendours, the shifts, excitements, and also the common neutral matter of an existence. If the world is made for wonder, it makes even more for uneasiness and one clings to the nearest passerby, to brothers, parents, friends and wives."(p. 30). But for the new Joseph, the world is constantly threatened by what Hobbes say, "nasty, brutish and short", "a place where natural generosity and good will are necessity turned into bitterness and spite."(p. 12).

But the transition that Joseph claims as having taken place sounds unconvincing. It is not possible to say that change is complete. As Jonathan Wilson states, "As the novel progresses, Joseph is revealed to us as a divided personality, one who simultaneously entertains antithetical notions of the world and of the self. Bellow's interest, it turns out, is not in Joseph's philosophical development, but in rendering of his personality as is brought about by his pervasive "dangling".<sup>4</sup>

But Joseph admits that our existence is constantly threatened by its possibility of turning into "nasty, brutish, and short". No one is immune from it. It pervades everywhere: "One was constantly threatened, shouldered, and, sometimes invaded by "nasty, brutish and short", lost fight to it at unexpected corners. In the colony? Even

in the self. Was anyone immune altogether? In times like these? There were so many treasons; they were a medium, like air, like water; they passed in and out of you, they made themselves your accomplices; nothing was impenetrable to them". ( p. 56 ) But how to put a barrier against this? How to stop this omnipresent threatening "nasty, brutish and short"? Joseph finds it difficult to find an answer, though he realises that it is there in everyone. It haunts him for days.

One day he realises that he is still an apprentice in suffering and humiliation, perhaps, the way to redemption: "I had furthermore, no right to expect to avoid them. So much was immediately clear. Surely no one could plead for exception; that was not a human privilege. What should I do, with them, how to meet them... with grace, without meanness. And though I could not as yet apply that answer to myself, I recognised its rightness and was vehemently moved by it. Not until I was a whole man could it be my answer, too". ( p. 67 )

But Joseph, then is faced with a more complicated problem. How to become a total man? He knows that he is too weak for that. Nor does he possess the will to command its realisation. Then, in such a situation where can Joseph find help, which he needs? He rules out god,

not because he "was full of pride that" he "could not accept the existence of something, perhaps, of which" he "has an idea, or merely fraction of an idea. That was not it. He "did not want to catch any contrivance in panic..." ( p. 68) Seeking help of God would mean trying to attain an answer by sacrificing the very mind that sought to be satisfied. He feels that "from the anti-dote itself another disease would spring" ( p. 68 )

But in that desperate longing, Joseph gets the answer. An answer which is not completely new, but one which he has "frequently considered". He realises that out of one's own strength it was necessary for one to return "the verdict for reason, in its partial inadequacy, and against the advantages of surrender". ( p. 68 )

Joseph believes that one of the reasons for the human suffering is the "sense of personal destiny". Out of this arises, plans, and idealizations which are dangerous, "they consume us like parasites, eat us, drink us, and have us lifelessly prostrate. Yet we are always eagerly inviting the parasite, as if we were eager to be drained and eaten". ( p. 88 )

Every man is taught that there is no limit to what a man could be. This in turn leads to competitions, struggles.

Jealousy, fear, hatred, soon gets into the bandwagon. And as Joseph says: "Because of these things, we hate immoderately and punish ourselves and one another immoderately. The fear of lagging pursues and maddens us. The fear lies in us like a cloud. It makes an inner climate of darkness. And occasionally there is a storm and hate and wounding rain out of us". ( p. 89 )

Joseph ridicules himself often. He is not ready to move out into the world. Nor does he believe that keeping to oneself like a prisoner in a dungeon is the end of all life. He desires to come out into the world, but is unable to. He realises slowly the value of others. Goodness, which only can prevent the possibility of "nasty, brutish and short", can be achieved "only in the company of other men, attended by love." But, as he thinks, "in this room, separate, alienated, distrustful, find in my purpose not an open world, but a closed, hopeless jail. My perspective end in the walls. Nothing of the future comes to me. Only the past, in its shabbiness and innocence. Some men seem to know exactly where their opportunities lie; they break prison and cross whole Siberias to pursue them. One room holds me". ( p. 92 )

But his deep introspection, slowly paves way for his return to life. There is a qualitative change in his

approach to life. Joseph begins to feel that the ideal situation of life would be one which "unlocks the imprisoning self"

He notes: "We struggle perpetually to free ourselves. Or, to put it somewhat differently, while we seem so intently and even desperately to be holding on to ourselves, we would rather give ourselves away. We do not know. So, at times we throw ourselves away. When what one really want is to stop living so exclusively and vainly for our own sake, impure and unknowing, turning inward and self-fastened." ( p. 154 )

The eternal struggle, the quest, Joseph believes, is for freedom, that is pure: "The quest, I am beginning to think... All the striving is for one end. I do not entirely understand this impulse. But it seems to me that its final end is the desire for pure freedom. We are all drawn towards the same craters of the spirit - to know what we are and what we are for, to know our purpose, to seek grace". ( p. 154 ) As Tonny Tanner puts it: "Man must make the descent into the deep hollows of his being in order to attain that self-knowledge which is the indispensable condition of purposive action and the caring of the grace".<sup>5</sup>

Together with the knowledge that the quest in life is for freedom, Joseph also realises the transient nature of the objective world. The external world changes so fast ! How can you trust it. Ten years ago he was at school; and before that.. such reality according to Joseph "is actually very dangerous, very treacherous. It should not be trusted... Or that there was no trusting them, save through a wide agreement, and that my separation from such an agreement had brought me perilously far from the necessary trust, auxiliary to all sanity". ( p. 190 )

Joseph decides to enter into such an agreement, for it is essential to his return to life. By his agreement, Joseph is actually discarding his unique thoughts, perceptions and falling in line with the ordinary. But these thoughts are not the only thing that he sacrifices.

He gives up something greater, more valuable. He surrenders his freedom for he knows: "We are afraid to govern ourselves. Of course. It is so hard. We soon want to give up our freedom. But we hate it. And soon we run out, we choose a master, roll over on our backs and ask for the leash" ( p. 167-68)

Freedom without comprehension, for Joseph is as bad as bondage. And if this freedom could be cancelled, to achieve



his new found goal, his desire to stop living exclusively and vainly for one's own sake', Joseph is only too willing to oblige. Contrary to the belief that the book ends on a note of defeat, it seems that it ends with a note of triumph. Joseph, may not have been able to utilise his freedom, but from the neurotic exhaustion of perennial contemplations, Joseph has understood that comprehension, essential to make freedom meaningful, comes only through selfless service.

Joseph is not running away from life, when he opts for the army. On the contrary, he is returning to it. "Perhaps the war could teach me, by violence, what I had been unable to learn during these months in the room". ( p. 191 ). As a common soldier, he will be able to enjoy, as Goethe wanted, "the recurring pleasures that come to us", the mainsprings of our earthly life. Perhaps, the army will help 'unlock his imprisoning self', to meet suffering and humiliations with 'grace' and 'without meanness'. Joseph in a way is growing back into his childhood. Like a child, now, he will look at the world with marvel and curiosity.

The Victim : Hot Stars and Cold Hearts

Joseph grows out of his neurotic dullness. But, for Asa Leventhal, the hero of Bellow's second novel The Victim, there is no growth, nor is there a retardation. There is no enlightenment, nor is there a quest.

Bellow reaffirms that the world is oppressive, that for the individual the external world is his enemy. Everyone is plotting against another to usurp the place. Together with this is the haunting feeling that individuals are mere specks, of no consequence to the world at large.

Asa Leventhal, a middle-aged trade journalist, is temporarily left alone in New York, when his wife goes to visit her mother. Kirby Allbee an old acquaintance suddenly drops into his life. Allbee insists that Leventhal is responsible for his losing job. Leventhal refutes him, first. But, he would like to help Allbee, somehow, if not for anything else, at least to keep his conscience clear. Allbee brings a woman into Leventhal's house, when he is not there, is caught and chased out. That night Allbee again returns and tries to commit suicide by igniting gas. Perhaps his intention was to kill Leventhal also, which he denies later. But Allbee is found out in time and the tragedy is avoided.

After two or three years Leventhal and Allbee meets again. But this time Allbee, apparently wealthy, is occupying a theatre box with a beautiful but faded movie star, while Leventhal with his pregnant wife is sitting in the stalls.

Keith Michael Opdahl believes that "Leventhal and Allbee play out the split Joseph suffers in his room".<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Wilson also states that The Victim belongs to a group of novels that, since the romantic period, has thematically centered on "doubles" a combination of hero and his "darker" self, who nevertheless assumes an autonomous personality".<sup>7</sup>

Even if this contention is set aside, one point becomes very clear, as one proceeds through the paper, that Leventhal has only a passive, secondary role in the novel. The one who is active is indeed Allbee. Leventhal provides the background, the necessary situation, where Allbee can play his role.

Saul Bellow's philosophical outlook, his view, all is conveyed through Allbee, who can almost be termed as eccentric.

Leventhal, as one can expect from a trade journalist, is out and out an ordinary human being. Unlike Joseph he doesn't indulge in abstract speculations. He is not at all

bothered about the oppression and the claustrophobia that the soul suffers in a mechanised concrete jungle. Allbee is actually the intrusion into his "idyllic" existence. He snatches Leventhal's romantic Emyrean and exposes him to the vulnerabilities of reality.

Allbee thus acts as both the medium and the message from the external world, systematically undermining Leventhal's ivory tower existence. This agent provocateur at one stage, tries not only to destroy Leventhal's fragile world, but tries even to annihilate him. His suicide attempt could very well have been a homicide attempt.

Allbee does not believe in the uniqueness of the 'individual'. He has already seen through the hollowness of individual triumphs:

The day of succeeding by your own efforts is past. Now it's all blind movement, vast movement, and the individual is shuttled back and forth. He only thinks he's the works. But that isn't the way it is. Groups, organisations succeed or fail, but not individuals any longer. ( p. 70-71 )

Allbee mocks at people who claim to be social successes: "But you find people who have their luck and take the credit for it, too - all brains and personality, when all that happened was that they were handed a bucket when it rained". ( p. 71 )

With force, a hallmark of Bellow's fiction, Allbee brings out the triviality of human existence: "... we're not gods, we're only creatures, and the things we sometimes think are permanent, they aren't permanent. So one day we're like full bundles and the next we're wrapping paper, blowing around the streets." ( p. 76 )

The constant attack, almost like fusillade has its impact on Leventhal. It sends shockwaves through his life. He is forced to think about life's unpredictability and hollowness. How fragile man is: "Man is weak and breakable, has to have just the right amount of everything - water, air, food; can't eat twigs and stones; has to keep his bones from breaking and his fat from melting." ( p. 99 )

Leventhal starts feeling that the life is an egg race: "We are all the time taking care of ourselves,...watching out on this side and on that side, and at the same time running as if in an egg race with the egg in a spoon." ( p. 99 )

Allbee yet again in another encounter hammers down the truth that human beings suffer not because of their fault, but because evil is as real as sunshine: "We do get it in the neck for nothing and suffer for nothing, and there is no denying that evil is as real as sunshine." ( p. 146 )

Nobody is indispensable in the world. We are merely bubbles in a cauldron. It is there and gone at the next moment. Man doesn't even have the liberty to decide to be or not to be: "We don't choose to be born, for example, and unless we commit suicide we don't choose the time to die, either." ( p. 193 )

Allbee hits out at the traditional concept of individual's glory and the occidental religion:

'For whom was the world made?'... And the answer is, 'For man.' For every man? Yes, for every last mother's son. Every man. Precious to God, if you please, and made for his greater glory and given the whole blessed earth... For everybody who repeats 'For man' it means 'For me'. 'The world was created for me, and I am absolutely required, not only now, but forever...'

He put the question with an unfinished flourish...

'Who wants all these people to be here, especially forever? Where are you going to put them all? Who has any use for them all? Look at all the lousy me's the world was made for and I share it with. Love thy neighbour as thyself? Who the devil is my neighbour? I want to find out. Yes, sir, who and what? Even if I wanted to hate him as myself, who is he? Like myself? God help me if I am like what I see around. ( p. 194 )

No wonder, Allbee states, "Hot stars and cold hearts, that's your universe".

Leventhal starts feeling that this universe is weighing down on him. The constant exposure to Allbee's cynical outpourings has its temporary effects: "He had the strange

feeling that there was not a single part of him on which the whole world did not press with full weight, on his body, on his soul pushing upward in his breast and downward in his bowels." ( p. 257-58)

But ultimately Leventhal rejects all that Allbee preaches. A combination of downright contempt and his impotency in understanding, or grasping what Allbee is talking about, makes Leventhal immune to these doctrines. Leventhal is not certainly cut out to chase the elusive meanings of life. He is content to be at his wife's side and share the quotidian joys of life.

After being exposed to Allbee's plight and suicide attempt, Leventhal concludes, in a manner more appropriate to his almost mechanical view of life, that:

It was understandable that a man suffered when he did not have a place. On the other hand, it was pitiful he should envy the man who had one. In Leventhal's mind, this was not even a true injustice, for how could you call anything so haphazard an injustice? It was a shuffle, all, all accidental and haphazard. ( p. 285)

But against all these odds, man has to live. The question why remains as enigmatic as life itself.

Perhaps, Allbee's outlook is the best. When you are tired of one life, start another. You have to fill the void: "It makes sense to me that a man can be re-born

again. - I will take a rain check on the kingdom of heaven, but if I'm tired of being this way I can become a new man." ( p. 228)

And Allbee changes, from a man, alcoholic and desperate, to a wealthy, high society gentleman. He has no qualms about it. "I am not the type that runs things. I never could be. I realised that long ago. I'm the type that comes to terms with whoever runs things. What do I care? The world was not exactly made for me." ( p. 294)

Allbee is more of a Bellovian hero than Asa Leventhal. Like other heroes of Bellow, Allbee suffers humiliation, is deprived of love, and finds existence a nightmare. The crisis is in his life. And this has to be resolved by him. It can be rightly argued that Allbee is the hero of the novel, and Asa Leventhal, a mere narrator. Almost all Bellow's heroes are led to the brink of suicide by forces outside their control, but all of them return before taking the last and final step into oblivion. And that is one more reason why I feel that Kirby Allbee is the real protagonist of the novel, for he almost commits suicide, but is forced back into life. In the end Allbee is no more interested in knowing who runs the world, he is only interested in living. The lust for life, replaces the lust for truth.



The Adventures of Augie March :  
Not Dying Amidst the Deathly Evidence

"The Adventures of Augie March is Bellow's tour de force", says Jonathan Wilson.<sup>8</sup> Tony Tanner says that in an interview in the same year the book was published, Bellows had talked about the writing of the book. "The great pleasure of the book was that it came easily. All I had to do was to be there with buckets to catch it. That is why the form is loose."<sup>9</sup>

Saul Bellow has made a departure from his two earlier books, at least in his style. It was no more compact, tightly organised with a rigid form. Robert Penn Warren makes an interesting point in his 1953 review. He asks why Bellow deserted the "Flaubert-James" tradition, adopted in his first two novels and says, "it would be interesting to know what led Saul Bellow to turn sudden from a method in which he was an expert and in which, certainly, he would have scored triumphs".<sup>10</sup>

Tony Tanner quoting Ihab Hassan answers: "In portraying a victim who is ruled by necessity, a writer will be led to a closed form, while in following up a rebel, who gives the illusion of escaping from necessity, he will be drawn to an open form."<sup>11</sup>

Jonathan Wilson takes a broader outlook. According to him: "The publication of the Adventures of Augie March, coincided in the United States with that of Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man and in Germany with that of Thomas Mann's Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man and, collectively, the three novels consolidate a picture of a new socially disenfranchised postwar hero."<sup>12</sup>

Keith Michael Opdahl says that Saul Bellow "in his first two novels... examined the war in moral terms, defending subjective value by means of a transcendent vision, but reversed his tactics in Augie March".<sup>13</sup> He is right in saying that Saul Bellow has changed his tactics. He has resorted to a new style, but his claim that Bellow is not defending subjective value by a transcendent vision in Augie March, is far from truth.

Augie March is Bellow's attempt at both the Bildungsroman and the Picaresque. But Jonathan Wilson says that to what extent, Saul Bellow was successful remains unclear. He believes that Augie March lacks one essential quality of being in the genre of Bildungsroman. The character of the hero never develops. There is no growth for Augie March.

Bildungsroman demand progress and growth on the part of the hero: a character must get 'built' or at least comes to the point where his

'taking of a first step' is credible, and the development of his personality should be more or less linear. These generic qualities are fundamentally at odds with the kind of characterisation in which Bellow specialises. It is Augie's fate to repeat a pattern of experience in which he is controlled rather than controlling. He never learns anything from what happens to him and like, all those who do not learn from history whether personal or social, Augie is doomed to repeat it.<sup>14</sup>

Tony Tanner airs the same view, though in a different manner: "And Augie himself looks very like a Picaresque hero, to such an extent that Leslie Fiedler saw him as a unique combination of the picaresque 'Schlimazl' and Huck Finn. Yet there is an important difference to be noted. The traditional picaresque hero is himself, full formed, from the outset; his adventures multiply incidents without issuing in wisdom. But Augie is in fact trying to discover what he himself is in the deepest sense. The structure of the book, therefore despite its air of improvisation, its tone of strolling, arbitrary recall, is directed and controlled by deeper concerns... The adventures turn out to have contained a quest".<sup>15</sup>

But, even if Saul Bellow has liberated himself from the "Flaubert James" mould, his character can not escape the "Bellovian" dilemma of existence and freedom, in The Adventures of Augie March. The focus of the book is on the struggle of Augie March to carve out a fate of his

own. But the struggle for an independent fate is hampered by Augie's quest, his longing for love and familial relationship. This contradiction in Augie, the longing to be independent on one hand and on the other his thirst for love and sympathy, form the adventures of Augie.

This quest for love leads Augie to form a series of relationships. In the absence of the real father, and a self-effacing mother, the influence is more of father and mother figures who enters his life. Grandma Lausch, William Einhorn, Mrs. Renling, Simon March, Thea Fenchel, Stella Chesney, Mintouchian, Basteshaw are the examples. But some of these characters are Augie's brothers, lovers and wives. As Jonathan Wilson says, "Augie both craves and resists the company of these parent figures, and his desire to achieve an 'independent fate' is, at one level, always synonymous with his desire to break from the domination of one of what he calls his "destiny moulders".<sup>16</sup>

Augie, according to Jonathan Wilson, never grows into an adult. If he grows up, perhaps, he might understand the futility of his quest, the desire to be independent and his yearning for deep attachments. At one point in the novel Augie points out that: "Kindly explain! An independent fate and love too... what confusion!" ( p. 401). But no one provides an answer. As Jonathan Wilson points out, "for to

do so would be to expose the futility of Augie's quest. Bellow cannot allow his hero to conclude that he cannot have his dialectical cake and eat it too."<sup>17</sup>

Conclusively, Jonathan Wilson says:

No matter how many times the hammer of experience hits Augie over the head, he must continue to search both for love and for a pristine autonomous self. Augie's 'adventures' have large surface differences which account for their fascination, but at base they are the same 'adventure' - a conflict with adulthood and with all that it symbolises for Bellow and Augie both.<sup>18</sup>

Tonny Tanner reflects the sentiments of Jonathan Wilson, though in a more forceful language about the parent figures that try to dominate Augie. He calls them the Machiavellians. Saul Bellow uses the word in the beginning of the book as well as at the end. In fact, he wanted to name the book "Life Among the Machiavellians".

In the beginning of the narration, Augie introduces Grandma Lausch, the first person, who tries to influence his life and Augie describes her as "one of those Machiavellis of small streets and neighbourhood that my young years were full of". (p. 84). At the end, when Augie escapes from the lunatic Basteshaw, who has plans to radically change the whole human race, Augie comments: "To feel the truth, I am good and tired of all these big personalities, destiny moulders, and heavy water brains,

Machiavellis and wizard evil doers, life-wheels and imposers-upon, absolutists." ( p. 524)

Tony Tanner categorises the different types and modes of manipulation at work in the world of Augie March: "Instruction (Grandma Lausch), advice (Einhorn), adoption (Mrs. Renling), familial coercion (Simon), seduction (Thea), and violence (Basteshaw); powers and influences may be exercised for different motives, and the manipulations may vary enormously in human quality. But such is the world of the book; the individual self continually enticed or threatened, pushed or drawn by other people's version of what life is for and how it should be led".<sup>19</sup>

Augie's attitude towards Grandma Lausch sets the pattern for all his subsequent relationships with authority figures. Augie loves her, no doubt, but he lists her faults, always qualifying: "still the old lady had a heart". "Augie admires Grandma's resilience, and is somewhat in awe of her regal styles. Yet he is at odds with the absolutist philosophy that governs her actions and is perturbed by her vindictive behaviour", says Jonathan Wilson.<sup>20</sup>

This ambivalent attitude towards Grandma Lausch is present in all his other relationships too. Augie finds Einhorn his first employer, brave, acute, and endowed with a praiseworthy "philosophical capacity", ( p. 60) and yet on

other occasions he appears to Augie as "selfish, jealous, autocratic, carp-mouth, and hypocritical". ( p. 99 )

Augie's ambivalence is a product of the contrasting qualities of the characters that surround him, but has a deeper roots in his own personality. Jonathan Wilson says that "Augie has a tendency to both elevate and denigrate anyone with whom he engages in a 'child/parent' relationship".<sup>21</sup> This ambivalence is reflected in his approach to life also. He does not know what to choose. He miserably fails in identifying what he wants out of his life. He tries always to resist, but often he is the victim of other manipulations. Out of his own frailty, he admits:

Everyone tries to create a world he cannot use he often can't see. But the real world is already created, and if your fabrication does not correspond, then even if you feel noble and insist on the being something better than what people call reality, that better something needn't try to exceed what, in its actuality, since we know so little, may be very surprising. If a happy state of things surprising; if miserable or tragic, no more than what we invent.  
- (p. 378)

The world around Augie is brutal. It is fake. A make-believe world of Tom Thumb's. Augie lashes out at mankind: "Nothing genuine is allowed to appear and nobody knows what is real. And that's disfigured, degenerate, dark mankind - mere humanity." ( p. 401 )

But Augie raises the question, when everyone in his make-believe world is going around with a purpose, an aim, determined to achieve, hell what may happen, can you let yourself "limp in feeble and poor, some silly creature, laughing and harmless?" ( p. 401)

Augie knows that he cannot:

No! You have to plot in your heart to come out differently. External life being so mighty, the instruments so huge and terrible, the performances so great, the thoughts so great and threatening, you produce a someone who can exist before it. You invent a man who can stand before the terrible appearances. This way he can't get justice, but he can live. And this is what mere humanity always does. It is made up of these inventors and artists, millions and millions of them, each in his own way trying to recruit other people to play a supporting role and sustain him in his make believe. ( p. 402)

Augie believes that the great human struggle is to recruit others to your view point: "That's the struggle of humanity, to recruit others to your version of what's real. Then even the flowers and the moss on the stones becomes the moss and flowers of a version." ( p. 402)

Augie is not capable of any deep relationship. At certain levels, he is forced to cut them off. Could be because he feels that others are trying to manipulate him or perhaps because he is not capable of any commitment. Jonathan Wilson says:



For Augie, as for all Bellow's heroes, deep attachment after a brief fireworks display, is deathly...More significantly, Augie's relationship with Thea, almost forces him to "grow up" and recognise the mutual exclusiveness of his twin desires for love and independence. However, Bellow cannot allow to resolve his problem by understanding them. For Augie's problems and his search for their solutions are the *raison d'etre* of the novel.<sup>22</sup>

But Augie realises his weakness, though he is not capable of overcoming it. He states at one stage: "It might be in the end that the closer thing in itself is bitterness, because to arrive at closer thing needs courage, because its intense, and intensity is what the feeble humanity of us can't take for long." ( p. 402)

Individuals are not safe in this universe. To avoid persecution it is better to turn into a type, a mould, so that the life can go on:

Personality is unsafe in the first place. It is the types that are safe. So almost all make deformation on themselves so that the great terror will let them be. It is no new. The timid tribes people, they flatten down heads or pierce lips or noses, or hack off thumbs, or make themselves masks as terrible as the terror itself, or paint or tattoo it's all to anticipate the terror which do not welcome your being. ( pp. 402-03)

But Augie also knows that there are individuals who fight this terror and wrestle with this great fear to win a right to existence. But these are so few, that they are inevitably made the "fathers of a whole people". ( p. 403)

Augie was not one among the few selected. He was just a common man, run of the mill:

Whoever could give me cover from this mighty fire-running terror and wild cold of chaos I went to, and therefore to temporary embraces. It wasn't very courageous. That I was like many others in this way was no consolation. If there were so many they must all suffer the same way I did.(p.403)

Augie never learns from experiences. Truth has to be dictated to him for he cannot see it, even where it is strewn around him. Stelle, whom he marries later, has to tell him, what his problem is: "You and I are the kind of people other people are always trying to fit into their schemes..." ( p. 384)

Suddenly, when Augie confronts this truth, which he could not recognise before, a sudden upsurge of feelings, overtake him:

I was grateful for her plain way of naming a truth that had been hanging around me anonymously for many long years. I did fit into people's schemes. It was an emotion of truth that I had, hearing this. Mainly of truth... here was a woman who would not put me on trial for my shortcomings or judge me. Because I was tired of being socked on the head and banged by judgements." ( p. 384)

Perhaps, one feels that it is a turning point in Augie's life. That he is going to change. But, as usual, ultimately his resolutions fade away, leaving him as he was, a clay to be moulded upon by external forces.

Augie decides it is better to be what you are, rather than try to be something that you are not. Perhaps, he was always trying to be what he was, though he always ended up as anything but his true self. He tells Mirtouchian friend of his wife Stelle, and one of the last father figures of Augie March in the book:

that I have always tried to become what I am. But it is a frightening thing. Because what if what I am by nature is not good enough?... I suppose, I better, anyway, give in and be it. I will never force the hand of fate to create a better Augie March, nor change the time to an age of gold... It is better to die what you are than to live a stranger for ever. ( p. 485)

In the final stage of Augie's 'adventures', we find Augie enlisting in the navy and packing off to fight the Nazis. But his ship is torpedoed. Augie adrift in a life boat with a murderous lunatic - Basteshaw, is obliged to listen to his fanatical renderings, until he manages to free himself. Jonathan Wilson argues that

the episode is profound in its symbolization, for it seems to have reverberations throughout Bellow's canon. In order to free himself, Augie must work up a physical energy that seems to figuratively correspond to all intellectual energy, that Bellow's late heroes produce to counteract their paralysis. All Bellow's heroes have to be "tied up" before they can get their juices flowing and discover the range and extent of their powers. ( p. 23)

There is no profound change in Augie towards the end. But Tony Tanner feels that, if not a change, atleast he has reconciled, not with society, but with life. Augie is able to look back at life as a series of errors, but as Tony Tanner says, "he has gained the 'saints' intimation', that blessedness covers the whole creation, but covers it thicker in some places than in others."<sup>24</sup>

Augie is not ready to accept defeat. He refuses to lead a disappointed life. For Augie knows, "Not that life should end is so terrible in itself, but that it should end with so many disappointments in the essential".(p.412) And Augie's quest according to Tony Tanner is "to discover how most positively to cope with this fact." "We are not, cannot be living", continues Tanner, "the dwarf end of all times, so there must still be occasion of redeeming greatness and nobility."<sup>25</sup>

Life, its greatness may not be evident easily. But the only hope, is not to give up being optimistic. And Augie, never willing to bow down in front of adverse situation, reasserts his faith in the last scene.

As he is riding in his car alone, he thinks of Jacqueline the French maid who had accompanied him, and of Mexico, where she dreamed to go, and starts laughing:

What is so laughable, that a Jacqueline, for instance, as hard used as that by rough forces, will refuse to lead a disappointed life? Or is the laugh at nature - including eternity - that it thinks it can win over us and the power of hope? Nah, Nah, I think. It never will. But that probably is the joke, on one or the other, and laughing is an enigma that includes both. ( p. 536)

And Augie ends his narration as "a sort of Columbus of those near-at-hand", adding, " I may well be a flop at this line of endeavour. Columbus too thought he was

a flop, probably, when they sent him back in chain, which did not prove there was no America." ( p. 536)

As Tony Tanner states,

Augie has not really found any new continents of life's possibilities - indeed we leave him in a very old one, tied to a corrupt business and deceptive wife. His farewell is not a consummation, but a gesture - countenancing hope, refusing despair. Not dying amidst the deathly evidence.<sup>26</sup>

Once Augie himself says that he had "a feeling about the axial lines of life, with respect to which" one must be "straight" or else one's existence becomes mere "clownery, hiding "tragedy". Augie says that he must have had a feeling since he was a kid about these axial lines, which made him want to have his existence on them and so he has said 'no' like a stubborn fellow to all his "persuaders", just on the obstinancy of his memory of these lines, which was never entirely clear. Augie also feels that he has felt these "thrilling lines" again. And as he says:

When striving stops, there they are as a gift.  
I was lying on the couch here before and they suddenly went quivering right straight through me. Truth, love, peace, bounty, usefulness, harmony!  
And all noise and grates, and distortions, chatter, distraction, effort, superfluity, passed off like something unreal. ( p. 454)

Augie also feels that any man can come back to these axial lines. Perhaps, even if Augie is tied to a corrupt

business and married to a deceptive wife, it won't be long before he dumps them, for the pull of the axial lines will be too intense for him to ignore.

Seize the Day: Deeper than Sorrow

Many critics consider Seize the Day as Saul Bellow's most tightly constructed work. The hero of the novella, Tommy Wilhelm, is out of work, is estranged from his wife, who is demanding more and more support payments, and is imploring to his father, Dr. Adler, a successful doctor, now in his eighties, to bail him out of the financial whirlpool, which is sucking him down. At the end of it, we find him sobbing profusely in front of a coffin, after being cheated of the last dollars that he had by Dr. Tamkin whom Jonathan Wilson calls as the "surrogate" father of Tommy Wilhelm.

Keith Michael Opdahl believes that Seize the Day depicts the throes of a drowning man. Tommy Wilhelm faces complete submergence in failure".<sup>27</sup> Opdahl's criticism hovers around the ambiguity of Wilhelm's drowning, which is both a failure and a triumph, and which is the central problem of Seize the Day. This sinking of Tommy Wilhelm is poignantly described by Saul Bellow. Wilhelm "feels a splash of heartsickness as he stands in front of the corpse. (p. 117)

When he begins to cry, at first softly and later hysterically Opdahl says that the drowning is complete:

Soon he was past words, past reason, coherence. He could not stop. The source of all tears had sprung open within him, black, deep, and hot, and they were pouring out and convulsed his body, bending his stubborn head, bowing his shoulders, twisting his face, crippling the very hands with which he held the handkerchief. His efforts to collect himself were useless. The great knot of ill and grief, in his throat swelled upward, and he gave in utterly and he held his face and wept. ( p. 118)

Bellow concludes:

The heavy sea-like music came up to his ears. It poured into him, where he had hidden himself in the centre of crowd by the great and happy oblivion of tears. He heard it and sank deeper than sorrow, through torn sobs and cries towards towards the consummation of his heart's ultimate need. ( p. 118)

Contrasting interpretations have been given to this "drowning" of Tommy Wilhelm, which according to Keith Opdahl suggest that Wilhelm's drowning is a source of confusion much like the unresolved conflicts of other stories - with one difference. Bellow's other novels are not clear because of a contradiction between the separate elements of plot and metaphor, or speech and action, but Seize the Day is unclear because of the ambiguity of a single image. <sup>28</sup>

Daniel Fuchs in Vision and Revision states:

The story ends not in fragments but with magnified image of man. Tommy Wilhelm struggles against the alienation that threatens to engulf him. The last

words tell us in axiological certitude of his "heart's ultimate need". What is this need? Bellow speaks of "the happy oblivion of tears" through which Wilhelm sank "deeper than sorrow" towards consummation of it. Here we see a meaningful suffering, affirmed rather than denied, a testimony to its transfiguring, restorative effect; we see a truth as old as the religion Bellow refuses to dismiss. The powerful ending - "the real Russian bang" in Mark Schorer's phrase - of the novella derives from a yearning, a moral certitude, which modernism denies.<sup>29</sup>

Tony Tanner evokes almost the same sentiments:

Thus the book ends. It is blurred, deeply emotional, beyond clear exactness of statement, yet the release is fast and powerfully communicated. What is he weeping for? Many things coalesce in his tears. The dead man is a reminder of the inevitable death of the self, at the same time he is a very specific man to Tommy, helpless and friendless on this day of reckoning. Tommy's tears are both for humanity and for himself. Yet they also reveal an awareness of the supreme value of life, sheer life itself, existence beyond the assessment of financial success or failure.<sup>30</sup>

But Jonathan Wilson, who has viewed the book entirely as one that depicts a father-son relationship, differs from the conclusion arrived by Tony Tanner and others. Wilson says,

The man in the coffin calls up not only Wilhelm's "dying self" and "humanity" but more specifically Wilhelm's father and Tamkin (the surrogate father). Wilhelm's last meeting with his father takes place in the morgue like massage basement of the Hotel Gloriana, while it is Tamkin who has supposedly disappeared into funeral chapel never to appear again. Wilhelm at the end of the novel, "stripped naked" has lost both his fathers. He is metaphorically an orphan.<sup>31</sup>



Alder's parting words to his son are:

"You want to make yourself into my cross.  
But I am not going to pick up a cross. I will  
see you dead, Wilky by Christ, before I  
let you do that to me".( p. 110)

Jonathan Wilson feels that this play on Christ's passion signifies Wilhelm's total abandonment. His father, Dr. Alder and surrogate father, Dr. Tamkin rejects him. He is an orphan now. "Wilhelm's mourning" in the funeral parlour signals an unwanted "birth" into manhood, but rather than accepting it and rather than arriving in "reality" when the spell of both fathers is broken, Wilhelm apparently floats up and embrace what Tanner et al calls an affirmation of "sheer life itself" and what I would call a denial of sheer reality itself."<sup>32</sup>

Jonathan Wilson affirms that Wilhelm cries because he was made an "orphan" and also because he identifies himself with the dead man. Not so much because he too will have to die one day, but because his "fathers" dead to him, he is also to a large extent, dead himself. "Unwilling to grow up and unable to define himself except in opposition or submission to his "fathers". Wilhelm has no "being" when he is disconnected from them. "If sinking "deeper than sorrow" suggests that Wilhelm's tears are also tears of joy, it can only be because he has imaged the death of his oppressors".<sup>33</sup>

The "drowning" image, definitely has a positive tenor. The words which Saul Bellow uses like "the flowers and lights fused ecstatically" and "the great and happy oblivion of tears", all signify this. Wilhelm is at the rock bottom of his suffering. There is no further that he can sink. His existence, if at all, he has an existence now, has to be an upliftment. He has to emerge from the mires of life. In fact, he is not sinking deeper than sorrow, but transcending it. Transcending the sobs and cries towards the consummation of his heart's ultimate need. A movement towards a higher form of existence.

Henderson the Rain King : Grun-tu-Molani

Henderson the Rain King has been often compared to Don Quixote, Tarzan, Gulliver, Huckleberry Finn, Hank Morgan of Connecticut Yankee, Captain Ahab of Moby Dick, etc.

Tony Tanner says that at least one critic had concluded "that this was one of those books clearly constructed for delight and despair of meaning hunters."<sup>34</sup> Jonathan Wilson says that "Bellow sent his hero back, not to his mother's womb, but to its closest approximation - the womb of mankind. As in Seize the Day, In Henderson the Rain King, the hero is desperate to be reborn."<sup>35</sup>

Henderson the Rain King, according to Keith Michael Opdahl, is exuberant, spontaneous, and wildly comic about the ambiguities of wrath and rebellion. In Henderson the Rain King Bellow once again tries to cope with his religious imagination, but he does not do so by an ambiguous transcendent vision but by Henderson's lesson in philosophic idealism."<sup>36</sup>

Eugene Henderson, on the surface, appears to be a unique Bellow hero. He is the scion of a patrician New England family and a multimillionaire by inheritance. Henderson is thus released from the twin burdens that afflict all of Bellow's other heroes with the exception of Albert Corde - Jewishness and money, says Jonathan Wilson.<sup>37</sup>

Henderson in the beginning is frustrated. Tony Tanner feels that

his great tradition cannot provide him with a function, a satisfying role, a mode of self-realisation... He feels a vague need for some discipline... but he feels "displaced", has no sense of station, and feels the need to find out some basic truth about the self and its destiny before he can make terms with society.<sup>38</sup>

Henderson too is on a quest to find out his role, the meaning of his existence: "I had come to look upon the phenomena of life as so many medicines which would cure my condition or aggravate it. But the condition! Oh my condition! First and last that condition". ( p. 65)

So Henderson's African journey is an attempt to transcend his nauseating condition. To escape the horrendous condition of his life which he finds unbearable:

Oh! shame, shame! Oh! crying shame! How can we? Why do we allow ourselves? What are we doing? The last little room of dirt is waiting. Without windows, so for God's sake, make a move, Henderson, put forth effort. You, too, will die this pestilence. Death will annihilate you and nothing will remain, and there will be nothing left but junk. ( p. 40)

"The encroaching, suffocating litter and rubble of a life lived badly, lived pointlessly, oppresses Henderson to the point where he has to make a colossal effort of disburderment, mentally and physically", says Tony Tanner.<sup>39</sup> The suffocation could be because as Henderson feels, because of our attitude to life, which says that we too must move, and do our share in the world. "The earth is a huge ball which nothing holds up in space except its own motion and magnetism, and we conscious things who occupy it believe we have to move too, in our own space. We can't allow ourselves to lie down and not do our share and imitate the greater entity." ( p. 79) This could be the urge that forces Henderson to move out into Africa.

But this africa, according to Keith Michael Opdahl is;

Just as Leventhal's tropical city, is a projection of his inner self, so Henderson's Africa is a metaphor of his deepest being - the harsh internal

nature he would reject. Henderson's Africa exemplifies the metaphorical cast of Bellow's imagination and his yolking of personality and metaphysical principles. It also embodies, in two tribes Henderson visits, the element of love and terror which Bellow's heroes find in themselves.<sup>40</sup>

Henderson returns again and again to his miserable condition. He is obsessed with it:

Oh! It is miserable to be human. You get such diseases. Just because you are human and for no other reason. Before you know it, as the years go by, you are just like the other people you have seen, with all those peculiar human ailments. Just another vehicle for temper and vanity and rashness and all the rest. Who wants it? Who needs it? These things occupy the place, where a man's soul should be. ( p. 83)

Strangely we find Henderson, like Saul Bellow's earlier character Joseph in Dangling Man, arriving at a similar conclusion about life:

The world may be strange to a child, but he does not fear it the way a man fears. He marvels at it. But the grown man mainly dreads it. And why? Because of death. So he arranges to have himself abducted like a child. So what happens will not be his fault. And who is this kidnapper - this gypsy? It is the strangeness of life - a thing that makes death more remote, as in childhood. ( p. 84)

Henderson seems to believe that even the human condition is pathetic, man still wants to live. He is overwhelmed by the three words Queen Willatale tells him. Perhaps, he expected it. He had hoped that she will spell that into his ears, the mystery that surrounds life: " I believed the queen

could straighten me out, if she wanted to; as if, any minute now, she might open her hand and show me the thing, the source, the germ - the cipher, the mystery, you know." ( p. 79 )

"Grun-tu-Molani", the queen says. ( p. 85). It means man wants to live. And Henderson identifies with that. "I could not bear how sad things have become in the world and so I set out because of this Molani." ( p. 85)

The travel to Africa, could be also the symbolic representation of what Henderson yearns for. His desire to move from 'Becoming' to 'Being'. Henderson is asked by king Dahfu, what kind of a traveller he is? While answering this, Henderson feels that he should have answered also

that some people found satisfaction in being (Walt Whitman: "Enough to merely be, enough to breathe! Joy! Joy! All over joy!). Being. Others were taken up with becoming. Being people have all the breaks. Becoming people are very unlucky, always in a fizzy. The Becoming people are always having to make explanation or offer justifications to the Being people. While the Being people provoke these explanation... Enough! Enough! Time to have become. Time to Be! Burst the spirit's sleep. ( p. 160)

But Henderson feels that all struggles cannot be won. Especially the struggles of desires. A confession that all his endeavours were in vain. He writes to his wife: "I don't think the struggles of desire can ever be won. Ages of

longing and willing, willing and longing, and how have they ended? In a draw, dust and dust." ( p. 285)

But this is not the individual fate of one Henderson alone. It is the curse of humanity. Not the scourge of modern age, alone. Its genesis coincides with the genesis of human beings. As King Dahfu explains to Henderson:

No, graves are not deep but insignificant, a mere few feet from the surface and not far from fearing and desiring. More or less the same fear, more or less the same desire for thousands of generations. Child, father, father, child, doing the same. Fear the same. Desire the same. Upon the crust, beneath the crust, again and again and again. Well, Henderson, what the generations for? Please explain to me. Only to repeat fear and desire without a change? This cannot be what the thing is for, over and over and over. ( p. 297)

Henderson acknowledges that truth:

All you hear from guys is desire, desire, desire, knocking its way out of the breast, and fear, striking and striking and striking. Enough already. Time for a word of truth. Time for something notable to be heard. Otherwise, accelerating like a stone, you fall from life to death. Exactly like a stone, straight into deafness and still repeating, I want, I want, I want, then striking the earth and entering it for ever. ( p. 297)

But is there no end to misery, by-product of desire and fear. Henderson has no answer. But this question riddles him: "May be time was invented so that misery might have an end. So that it shouldn't last forever? There may be

something in this. And bliss, just the opposite, is eternal? There is no time in bliss. All the clocks were thrown out of heaven." ( p. 314)

Jonathan Wilson states that,

Henderson ends up in Africa with much the same feelings that he had in America. He is twice made witness to the absurdity of ritual - once with cows and once with lions - and he is also made deeply aware of the danger that is involved in plumbing the depth of one's being. Henderson does not want to accept reality on its own uncompromising terms - but neither does he wish to come at reality, via his violent, flashing center. Confronted by the "ordered" society of Arnewi, Henderson is driven to create chaos; confronted by the dark chasms of the Warriri world, Henderson recoils from it in horror."<sup>41</sup>

But even if Henderson was not able to realise his goal, his trip to Africa cannot be said to be a complete failure. The interpretation of Keith Michael Opdahl seems to be more accurate. He writes:

Thus Bellow leaves his awakened hero on the way home to America and new life. In the second chapter he had portrayed the reality Henderson denies by a vision of an octopus in an aquarium. As Henderson looks at the creature, he was horrified by "the soft head with its speckles, and the Brownian motion in those speckles, a cosmic coldness in which I felt I was dying." ( p. 19) The "cosmic coldness" is the death which awaits him in an inanimate universe and the inhumanity within the human heart. By the end of his African journey, Henderson can face both the internal and external reality.<sup>42</sup>

Tony Tanner echoes the same feeling:



Henderson is a kind of fool, but persistent enough in his folly to reach the threshold of wisdom, and when he struggles to grasp and hold the notion of a new nobility attainable by men, then, whether he is waking or sleeping, comic or profound, we listen to him; and listening we suddenly seem to glimpse, what it might mean to burst the spirit's sleep. (p. 402)

Daniel Fuchs too agrees with this view:

As for Henderson's final assertion of love, there is a middle-aged, mellow quality to it that may convince because it does not demand too much. Africa, has awakened Henderson, so the possibility of love seems natural enough. In a sense it has washed him clean, renewed him, given him that second, higher innocence through experience, so that the concluding image of man and child appropriately compliments "... that child, that whiteness, the turning of circles, all bespeak an inner harmony that the soul-searching Henderson has won...44

The letter that Henderson writes to his wife Lily, is itself an example of his changed attitude towards life. This change, but takes place long before Dahfu meets his untimely death. But Dahfu's death only accelerates Henderson's change. In his letter, he talks about love and tells Lily: "I probably have not said this lately, but I have the feeling for you, baby, which sometimes wrings my heart. You can call it love. Although personally I think the word is full of bluff." Henderson has reached such a stage, that he feels that word love, corrupted and misused, cannot fully convey his feelings for his wife.

Considering the fact, that in the beginning he just wanted to escape from the total atmosphere, which he felt was suffocating, this is a great change. But his change is not superficial. It is total. He is coming back to America, not to repeat, all those errors that he had committed in his life. It is to lead a life, with which he can serve others. He wants to become a doctor. He writes to Lily:

I may apply for missionary work, like Dr. Wilfred Crenfell or Albert Schweitzer. Hey! Axel Munthe - how about him? .. But we might try India. I do want to get my hands on the sick. I want to cure them. Healers are sacred. 'I have been so bad myself I believe there must be a virtue in me, finally.'" ( p. 284)

The love that he feels for the Persian boy is real. He finds happiness in playing with him. Jonathan Wilson says:

The plane carrying Henderson on the last leg of his journey makes a stop symbolically enough in Newfoundland. Henderson steps out into the icy air and begins to run in circles on the runway. With him is a small orphan boy he has made friends with on the flight and lion cub, secreted from Warriri and supposedly containing the soul of Dahfu. Together they go "running - leaping, leaping, pounding, and tingling over the pure white lining of the grey Arctic silence" (p. 341). Bellow leaves us this lyric moment, a profoundly beautiful image of love and friendship. This, he seems to suggest, is Henderson's Newfoundland.<sup>45</sup>

The ecstatic outburst of thrill encompassed in Henderson being called from "non-existence into existence". ( p. 284)

## Post-script

After examining the first five books of Bellow, we find that the underlying theme of all these books is the same - the reaffirmation of life. Joseph feels that pure liberty or freedom is the main quest in life, which he can obtain only through returning to life. Asa Leventhal, the only hero, not to be nagged by the mysteries of existence, finds happiness in the quotidian life. Perhaps, the only hero in Bellow's canon, who obtain this "peace and joy" without any kind of suffering, for which all others had to undergo humiliation and agony. This is why I have argued earlier, that the real hero is Kirby Allbee, the one who suffers and through that very suffering transcends disappointment. Augie March, despite his not so desirable situation at the end, is sure to find the axial lines of life, truth, peace, love, bounty, usefulness and harmony. For, as Augie himself has stated, at any time any man can return to it. Henderson returns to America, no to life, with a reaffirmation of his faith in love and service. Tommy Wilhelm transcends to a realm, "deeper than sorrow".

Thus though the plot and situation and characters change, we feel Bellow, again and again, hammering down the intellect, the sacredness of life - a sacredness which

does not seem obvious at all in these modern times to their modern heroes.

### Footnotes

1. Keith Michael Opdahl, The Novels of Saul Bellow, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967, p. 29.
2. Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965, p. 18.
3. Jonathan Wilson, On Bellow's Planet, London: Associated University Press, 1985, p. 40.
4. *ibid.* p. 41.
5. Tony Tanner, *op.cit.*, p. 21.
6. Keith Michael Opdahl, *op.cit.*, p. 174.
7. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 53.
8. *ibid.* p. 78.
9. Tony Tanner, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
10. *ibid.*
11. *ibid.*
12. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 89.
13. Keith Michael Opdahl, *op.cit.*, p. 70.
14. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 80.
15. Tony Tanner, *op.cit.*, p. 44-45.
16. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p.80.
17. *ibid.*
18. *ibid.* p. 80-81.
19. Tony Tanner, *op.cit.*, p. 46.
20. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*p. 81.

21. *ibid.* p. 82.
22. *ibid.* p. 93.
23. *ibid.* p. 94.
24. Tony Tanner, *op.cit.*, p. 52.
25. *ibid.*
26. *ibid.* p. 54.
27. Keith Michael Opdahl, *op.cit.*, p. 96.
28. *ibid.* p. 98.
29. Daniel Fuchs, Saul Bellow: Vision and Revision, Durham: Duke University Press, 1984, p. 79.
30. Tony Tanner, *op.cit.*, p. 79.
31. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 111.
32. *ibid.*
33. *ibid.*
34. Tony Tanner, *op.cit.*, p. 70.
35. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 111.
36. Keith Michael Opdahl, *op.cit.*, p. 119.
37. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 117.
38. Tony Tanner, *op.cit.*, p. 12.
39. *ibid.* p. 74.
40. Keith Michael Opdahl, *op.cit.*, p. 40.
41. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 128.
42. Keith Michael Opdahl, *op.cit.*, p. 138.
43. Tony Tanner, *op.cit.*, p. 86.
44. Daniel Fuchs, *op.cit.*, p. 120.
45. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

Chapter III

---

H e r z o g

---

Herzog is a treatise on the dilemma of existence. It is a long debate interspersed with anecdotes, each the starting point of a chain reaction of arguments and counter arguments. It is the story of Moses E Herzog, an academic ostracised from his world, somnambulating through the corridors of life, at times, with a shudder, awakening to the nightmare reality, and slowly sinking back into the unreal trance. It is a novel about death, but not of death alone. It is also of survival, re-birth and regeneration.

Moses E Herzog's name is derived from Ulysses written by James Joyce, according to Tony Tanner, in which there is a minor character called Moses Herzog, who is a put upon merchant. Tanner also writes that Herzog, "seems to summarise and contain all the questions, the problems, the feelings, the plights, and the aspirations worked over in previous novels, and it follows them out to extremist reaches."<sup>1</sup>

As we have seen earlier also, for Saul Bellow, existence is not a stretch of void, bounded on its extremities



by birth and death. It is not a monad, a monochromatic prism engulfing the protoplasm of life. It is not a journey through the mirage of time, sans meaning, sans rendezvous. Existence for Bellow is a random collection of bliss and agony, arranged haphazardly on the spokes of time. It consists of a shoal of emotions, conditioned to explode or implode, according to the vagaries of temporal reality, imposed on a host of transient needs, love, sex, ecstasy and sublimation. Existence for Bellow, is not the means to an end. It is the end in itself.

The novel Herzog as Keith Opdahl says is the compulsive re-working of the past by a man who has been deeply hurt".<sup>2</sup> The actions which Herzog remembers, which is the actual present of the novel, is very simple and direct. Herzog at the end of his school term in New York decides to flee from his mistress Ramona, to some friends at Martha's vineyard. Once there he decides to return immediately to New York, where he continues the letter writing which has lately become his compulsion. Spends the evening with Ramona, visits a court room, witnesses a child murder trial, rushes to Chicago, where he almost kills his ex-wife and her lover, who was once his best friend. He takes his daughter June to an aquarium next day, meets with an accident, and appears

before police court for carrying concealed weapon. He then flies to Berkshires, returning the novel to its beginning.

The past events which Herzog remembers as he travels, also form a straight forward story. He had divorced his first wife Daisy and married the beautiful Madeleine, settling with her in the Berkshires to write a book on the Romantics. She insists that their marriage can be saved only by moving into Chicago and taking their friends, the Gersbachs, with them. Once there, she forces Herzog to meet a psychiatrist. And one day suddenly announces her decision to divorce and pack off Herzog from his own house. Herzog goes to Europe to recover from the shock, and returns to New York more miserable and finds that Gersbach and Madeleine are lovers.

"Twice married, twice divorced; turned out of his own house by his wife Madeleine adulteress; betrayed by his best friend Gersbach, adulterer; deprived of his young daughter; ignominiously bullied and used by his psychiatrist, his lawyer, and his doctor; pitied by his family and friends; unable to pursue his academic profession; and financially desperate"<sup>3</sup> Herzog undoubtedly is the quintessence of modern man. Cut off from the moorings of his life, Herzog wanders tossed up in the storms of reality, unable to rudder his consciousness to any destination, ostracised from

society, he lives in a world of thoughts and memories. To escape the torturing pains of reality, he has to escape into the world of illusions - edified on memories sweet and sour. "How he doted on his memories! What a funny sensual bird he was! Queer for recollections, perhaps?" ( p. 36)

Herzog finds solace in memories, for memories radiates from a time, a period, when Herzog lived... a life. It was tough, it was bitter, it was merciless, but still it was life. "... So we had a great schooling in grief. I still know these cries of the soul. They lie in the breast, and in the throat. The mouth wants to open wide and let them out. But all these are antiquities - Yes, Jewish antiquities originating in the Bible, in a biblical sense of personal experience and destiny." ( p. 184)

He craves to go back. Back to his childhood. "My ancient times. Remoter than Egypt. No dawn, the foggy winters. In darkness the bulb was lit." ( p. 174) An irrepressible desire to be back with his mother who spoiled him with love, his bootlegger father, dreaming Shura, and asthmatic Willie, forces him to move down the memory lane, unconsciously. Napoleon street with its filth, dirt and stink was his home. He wants to be there always:

Napolean street, rotten, toylike, crazy and filthy, riddles, flogged with harsh weather - the bootlegger's boys reciting ancient prayers. To this Moses' heart was attached with great power. Here was a wider range of human feelings than he had ever again been able to find. The children of the race, by a never failing miracle, opened their eyes on one strange world after another, age after age, and uttered the same prayers in each, eagerly loving what they found. What was wrong with Napolean street? Thought Herzog. All he ever wanted was there. ( p. 174)

Memories transfer him to a world, where he can exist. A world to which he 'belongs'. He is not an alien there, an outsider. He is a prince, whose diktats, with uncompromising servility are listened to. A part of an ebbing cosmos, which with undeterred fortitude, holds forth against the absurd, sans solutions of existence. An Eden which he has lost. And lost as Adam did - poisoned with knowledge. No cosmic power can bring that back to him.

Ignorance is bliss. He is condemned to haunt the past in fleeting reminiscences and live in the twilight zone of past and present. "To haunt the past like this - to love the dead! Moses warned himself not to yield so greatly to this temptation, this peculiar weakness of his character. He was a depressive. Depressives cannot surrender childhood - not even the pains of childhood." ( p. 177)

It is to this Emyrean that Herzog wants to return to. His life becomes another quest for the Grail, a Jason after

the golden fleece. The present is intolerable. The world throttles him. They torture his soul. An alien groping blindly through the dark alleys of life. "A man is born to be orphaned, and to leave orphans after him." ( p. 40)

Riddled by the mystery of existence, of life, he desperately searches for an anchor. An anchor which can hold him still and whisper the ultimate truth of creation. He cannot accept that man is a microscopic speck in the infinite universe. An ant, no, a microbe, creating images of splendour and power, and reigning over an illusory empire. Herzog is horrified at this prospect. "The novae twisting and the world coming into being, the invisible magnetic spokes by means of which bodies kept one another in orbit... then after a billion years, light-years, this child-like but far from innocent creature, a straw hat on his head, and a heart in his breast, part pure, part wicked, who would try to form his own shaky picture of this magnificent web." ( p. 63)

He has seen early in his life, the triviality of human  
pomp

Sarah Herzog opened her hand and said, "Look carefully, now, and you will see what Adam was made off.

She rubbed the palm of her hand with a finger, rubbed until something dark appeared on the deep-lined skin, a particle of what certainly looked to him like earth.

"You see? It's true". ( p. 285)

Herzog confronts fully the nauseating picture of total meaninglessness:

And then he died, and vivid blood of his turned into soil, in all the shrunken passages of his body. And then - the body, too - ah, God! - wastes away; and leaves its bones, and even the bones at last wear away and crumble to dust in that shallow place of deposit. And thus humanised, this planet in its galaxy of stars and worlds goes from void to void, infinitesimal, aching with its unrelated significance. ( p. 297)

But Herzog does not want the life to be dispensed off. It is confusing, devoid of meaning and utterly insignificant. Yet, he wants to live. Continue this drudgery. For with all its agony, Herzog loves life. "Do I love mankind? Enough to spare it, if I should be in a position to blow it to hell? Now let us all dress in one shroud and walk on Washington and Moscow. Let us lie down, men, women and children, and cry, "Let life continue - we may not deserve it, but let it continue." ( p. 67)

About the individual, his freedom, hopes and dreams, Herzog cynically observes: "No true individual has existed yet, able to live, able to die. Only diseased, tragic, or dismal and ludicrous fools who sometimes hoped to achieve some ideal by fiat, by their great desire for it. But usually by bullying all mankind into them." ( p. 86)

Herzog views the modern man with contempt. Can we call ourselves human beings? Creatures, animals, that is what they are. Creatures whom even death despise:

But do you call these men! We are only creatures. Death himself must be afraid of us. I can see death coming before God to say. "What shall I do? There is no more grandeur in being death. Release me, God from this meanness". Courage, honour, frankness, friendship, duty, all made filthy, sullied. So that we loathe the daily bread that prolongs useless existence. There was a time when men were born, lived and died.(p. 166)

Yet, Herzog almost contradicting himself, ridicules the tendency to compare the present to an ideal past of the human kind. Perhaps, it was the projection of Herzog's individual quest to a mega canvas, encompassing into it, the history, the evolution of humanity:

We have fashioned a new Utopian history, an idyll, comparing the present to an imaginary past, because we hate the world as it is. This hatred of the present has not been understood. Perhaps, the first demand of emerging consciousness in this mass civilisation is expressive. The spirit released from servile dumbness, spits dung and howls with anguish stored during long ages. ( p. 203)

This also contradicts what Herzog is doing in reality. As an individual, he exists by retreating into the past. His present is a ceaseless struggle, to replace it with the past. But to humanity at large, he denies the same privilege, sermonising that past was servile, was dumb, was

intolerable.

But this apparent contradiction is resolved when we perceive that what Herzog says has a totally different dimension. May be out of the chaos, he was trying to resuscitate the individual. For, past is a reality only for the individual. For the collective group, mankind, past is imaginary, a myth. And without a past how can there be a present...? Herzog bombards the idea of humanity. Mankind is a myth. There are only individuals - suffering, tortured, insignificant individuals.

He laughs as he realises that "three thousand million human beings exist, each with some possession, each with a peculiar treasure".( p. 216) Herzog wants to assert that individuals, may be insignificant, inconsequent, but, only they exist.

And the only excuse for this individual to exist is that he is born. Birth legitimises life. But a human birth, does not endorse a human life:

Where is that human life, which is my only excuse for surviving! What have I to show for myself! Only this! His face was before him in the blotchy mirror. It was bearded with lather. He saw his perplexed, furious eyes and he gave an audible cry, My God! Who is this creature? It considers itself human. But what is it? Not human of itself. But has the longing to be human. And like a troubling dream, a persistent vapour. A desire. Where does it



all come from? And what is it? And what can it be! Not immortal longing. No, entirely mortal, but human. ( p. 270)

Life is not the only thing that poses a problem for Herzog. If he is baffled by the question of life, he is horrified at the prospects of death. Life, he finds hard to render it some meaning. But then, what is death? What is there behind that door?: "For the life of me I could not understand. I often thought I was going to have apoplexy, to burst. The more comfort you gave me, the closer I came to death's door." ( p. 108)

Herzog finds it difficult to choose between life and death. Who is more lucky? The dead or the surviving. To embrace the unknown void, or to continue the drab existence:

We are survivors in this age, so theories of progress ill become us, because we are intimately acquainted with the costs. To realise that you are a survivor is a shock. At the realization of such election, you feel like bursting into tears. As the dead go their way, you want to call them, but they depart in a black cloud of faces, souls. ( p. 96)

Herzog believes that it is the knowledge of death that makes us human beings. And is perhaps the cause for all vices: "History, memory - that is what makes us human and our knowledge of death. For knowledge of death makes us wish to extend our lives at the expense of others. And

this is the root of the struggles for power." (p.201).

It might be childhood trauma that makes Herzog so much obsessed with death. He loved his mother deeply and her death rocked him. Even after the passing of time, he still remembers vividly the last sagging fight of his mother against death:

He came into her room when she was dying, holding his school books, and began to say something to her. But she lifted up her hands and showed him her finger nails. They were blue. As he stared, she slowly began to nod her head up and down as if to say, "that's right, Moses, I am dying now." He sat by the bed. Presently she began to stroke his hands. She did this as well as she could; her fingers had lost their flexibility. Under the nails they seemed to him to be turning already into the blue loam of graves. She had begun to change into earth. He did not dare to look but listened to the runners of children's sleds in the street. ( p. 287)

This fear of death, often turns into fear of the "dead" too.

He was afraid of his own sanity. Living like this, especially after the death of Daisy's father. Moses thought he saw him, met him in the woods, and when opened doors he encountered his father-in-law, vivid and characteristic, waiting by a table or sitting in the bathroom. ( pp. 159-60)

Totally confused Moses even starts writing to the dead. Was he able to transcend the barrier that separates life and death?:

He realised that he was writing to the dead. To bring the shades of great philosophers up to date. But then why should not he write the dead? He lived with them as much as with the living - perhaps more; and besides, his letters to the living were increasingly mental, and anyway, to the unconscious, what was death? Dreams did not recognise it. ( p. 225)

The dead has become a part of his life.

His close friend Lucas Asphalter, is also baffled by death. But he believes that death could be a solution to life. He goes to the absurd extent of enacting his own death: "As I gaze up from my coffin, at first I can keep my attention on my death, and on my relations with the living, and then other things come in - every time." ( p. 330)

Herzog acknowledges the power of death. The omnipotent and the omniscient. He does not know what death is. But he is aware that death is the supreme lord. Nothing can escape from his hold. It is only just a matter of time. Even God is powerless in front of him:

Not God is dead, that point was passed long ago. Perhaps it should be stated Death is God. This generation thinks - and this is its thought of thoughts - that nothing faithful, vulnerable, fragile can be durable or have any true power. Death waits in these things as a cement floor waits for a dropping night bulb. The brittle shell of glass loses its tiny vacuum with a gust, and that is that... You think history is the history of loving hearts? You fool! Look at these millions of dead. Can you pity them, feel for them? You can nothing!

There were too many. We burned them to ashes, we buried them with bulldozers. History is the history of cruelty, not love, as soft men think. We have experimented with every human capacity to see which is strong and admirable and have shown that none is. There is only practicality. If the old God exists he must be a murderer. But the one true god is Death. ( p. 353)

The main thrust of history, Herzog says with pathos, is the "victory of death, not of rationality, not of rational faith." ( p. 354) He cannot understand how Proudhon can suggest that "God is evil". Herzog disagrees with that. It is "our own murdering imagination turns out to be the great power, our human imagination which starts by accusing God of murder. At the bottom of the whole disaster lies the human being's sense of a grievance, and with this I want nothing more to do." ( p. 354)

Death and memory thus play havoc with Herzog. He is aware that he is on the verge of insanity. But he can do nothing. "These acute memories are probably symptoms of disorder. To him, perpetual thought of death was sin. Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead." ( p. 46) But Herzog cannot live without fondling his memories. They have become an integral part of his life. "But, I with my memory - all the dead and the mad are in my custody, and I am the nemesis of the would-be-forgotten." ( p. 167).

But these thoughts do not help to solve his problems. No, they are good only in creating more and more confusion. Existence became a multi-layered realm of the abstract: "But can thought wake you up from the dream of existence? Not if it becomes a second realm of confusion, another more complicated dream, dream of intellect, the delusion of total explanations." ( p. 206 )

Caught between the urge to escape the harsh realities of existence and the horror of death, Herzog inevitably moves to this "second realm" of confusion. He felt that the outside world was not able to understand him. The world out there was confused. He was sober. But he has the duty to explain it to them. To make them understand, to bring them around. He "had been overcome by the need to explain to have it out, to justify, to put in perspective, to classify, to make amends." ( p. 8 )

But Herzog is also aware that he has some problems. He never tries to refute it. "But he knew, he was immoderate - worse than that temporarily deranged." ( p. 50 ) Or as the narrator tells, "He had moments of sanity, but he could not maintain the balance for very long." ( p. 116 ) Or at another instance, "Herzog tragically sipping milk in Philadelphia, a frail hopeful lunatic, tipping the carton

to quiet his stomach and drown his unquiet mind, courting sleep." ( p. 134)

But being mad in a world turned upside down, Herzog believes, is emancipation. It lifts you up from the rut of life. It breaks the stranglehold of reason. It cracks the mould and lets you out free to adopt any protean dimensions. "Emancipation resulting in madness. Unlimited freedom to chose and play a tremendous variety of roles with a lot of coarse energy." ( p. 265)

This total freedom juxtaposed with death, gives man two alternatives. As an expression of freedom he can disintegrate totally. Or acknowledge that life is the waking spell of existence and continue, irrespective of the void beyond. But these choices, these posers, though coming from an insane mind are very significant. For, it proves to be most crucial in Herzog's existence:

Since the last question, also the first one, the question of death, offers us the interesting alternatives of disintegrating ourselves by our own will in proof of our "freedom", or the acknowledging that we owe a human life to this waking spell of existence, regardless of the void. ( After all we have no positive knowledge of that void). (p. 382)

Herzog makes the choice. He returns to life. But how is this possible? In a world stranger than fiction nothing should raise the eyebrows of the sober. But Herzog himself has an explanation for it: "In these days of near delirium and wide ranging thought, deeper elements of feeling had heightened his perception, or made him instill something of his own into his surroundings. As though he painted them with moisture and color taken from his own mouth, his blood, liver, bowels, genitals." ( p. 339)

Herzog is quiet. He has lived through the nightmare. The devastating storm has left everything in ruin. He is no more angry. No more vindictive. His soul has been purified in the fire of agony:

Nietzsche himself had a Christian view of history. Seeing the present moment always as some crisis, some fall from classical greatness. Some corruption or evil to be saved from... To some extent many of us do think we have to recover from some poison, need saving, ransoming. ( p. 71)

Living through the incinerators of life, Herzog knows that he has to be saved. He has to be lifted up from this mortal pain of death and existence. But he also realises that his agony is not the end of all, but the beginning of the process towards emancipation. A long night's journey into light: "The light of truth is never far away, and no human being is too negligible or corrupt to come into it." ( p. 382)

Herzog knows, now, that suffering is needed. The vanity, the ego, the feeling of 'I' has to be crushed, pulverised, and only from that pulp can the new man be created:

It was enough to make any man pray to God to remove this great, bone-breaking burden of selfhood and self-development, give himself a failure, back to the species for a primitive cure. But this was becoming the up-to-date and most conventional way of looking at any single life. In this view the body itself, with its two arms and vertical length, was compared to the Cross, on which you knew the agony of consciousness and separate being. ( p. 117)

Herzog analyses his own tortuous existence, based on this point of view:

His recent misfortunes might be seen as a collective project, himself participating, to destroy his vanity and his pretensions to a personal life so that he might disintegrate and suffer and hate, like so many others, not only on anything so distinguished as a cross, but down in the mire of post-Renaissance, post-humanistic, post-Cartesian dissolution, next door to the Void. ( p. 118)

Man is ready to take a lot of non-sense. He is ready for crucifixion, ready for the gallows, to the halter, provided resurrection is a certainty:

But a man doesn't need happiness for himself. No, he can put up with any amount of torment - with recollections, with his own familiar evils, despair. And this is the unwritten history of man, his unseen, negative accomplishment, his power to do



without gratification for himself, provided there is something great, something into which his being, all beings can go. ( p. 353)

Herzog in his letter to Mermelstein even refutes Kierkegaard, who according to Herzog had expounded suffering and Hell to make mankind serious:

I venture to say Kierkegaard meant that truth has lost its force with us and horrible pain and evil must teach it to us again, the eternal punishments of Hell will have to regain their reality before mankind turns serious once more. (p.385)

But Herzog does not believe so. He even mocks at philosophers who professes the meaninglessness of life - a dig at existentialists:

Let us set aside the fact that such convictions in the mouths of safe, comfortable people playing at crisis, alienation, apocalypse and desperation, make me sick. We must get it out of our head that this is a doomed time, that we are waiting for the end, and the rest of it, mere junk from fashionable magazines. Things are grim enough without these shivery game. People frightening one another - a poor sort of moral exercise. (p. 386)

Advocacy of suffering, Herzog believes, should not lead mankind to its doom: "You have to have the power to employ pain, to repent, to be illuminated, you must have the opportunity and even the time." ( p. 386). Herzog says this for he knows that, "More commonly, suffering breaks people, crushes them and is simply unilluminating. You

see how gruesomely human beings are destroyed by pain, when they have added torment of losing their humanity first, so that this death is a total defeat." ( p. 386)

But this is not the case of people with powerful imagination, like Herzog:

Why not say rather that people of powerful imagination given to dreaming deeply and to raising up marvelous and self-sufficient fictions, turn to suffering sometimes to cut into their bliss, as people pinch themselves to feel awake. I know that my suffering, if I may speak of it, has often been like that, a more extended form of life, a striving for true wakefulness and an antidote to illusion... ( p. 386)

But Herzog agrees with Nietzsche on some points, especially about pain: "I also know you think that deep pain is ennobling, pain which burns slow, like green wood, and there you have me with you, somewhat. But for this higher education survival is necessary. You must outlive the pain." (pp. 388-89)

Herzog is confident about it, for he himself has outlived the most shattering experience of his life. As is evident now, he believes in life and feels there is something more than what is visible, what is obvious to our senses:

The necessary premise is that a man is somehow more than his "characteristics", all the emotions, strivings, tastes, and constructions which it pleases

him to call "My Life". We have ground to hope that a life is something more than such a cloud of particles, mere facticity. Go through what is comprehensible and you conclude that only the incomprehensible gives any light. ( p. 325)

What he must do is that, he must put an end to his Quixotic behaviour. But was he another Quixote? Herzog himself has doubts:

A Quixote imitates great models. What models did he imitate? A Quixote was a Christian and Moses E. Herzog was no Christian. This was the post-Quixotic, post-Copernican U.S.A., where a mind freely poised in space might discover relationships utterly unsuspected by a seventeenth century man sealed in his small universe. There lay his twentieth century advantage. Only... in nine-tenths of his existence he was exactly what others were before him. ( p. 349)

Quixote or not, he decides to end, to put a full stop to his insane activities:

He decided that this foolishness must stop, or things would go even worse... No, weakness, or sickness, with which he had copped a plea all his life (alternatively with arrogance), his method of preserving equilibrium - the Herzog gyroscope - had no further utility. He seemed to have come to the end of that. ( p. 347)

The decision is almost rammed into Herzog, for it comes after a fatal accident he has with a truck, while taking out his daughter June to a museum.

Herzog also decides that it is foolish to look for fulfillment in interpersonal relationships. The innumerable affairs,

the countless number of women who came into his life and left like a shadow, bear testimony to this: "But at least one thing became clear. To look for fulfillment in another, in interpersonal relationships, was a feminine game. And the man who shops from woman to woman, though his heart aches with idealism, with the desire for pure love, has entered the female realm." (p. 233)

Herzog no more searches for his evasive past. Not because he wants to negate it, but because, he wants his present to be complimentary to it. After dreadful adventures, a voyage into the realm of insanity and back, an arduous struggle with the reality filled with "Reality-instructors", who "wants to teach you - to punish you with - the lesson of the Real." ( p. 157)

Herzog understands that what he was searching for was not the past per se, but the quintessential spirit of the past, that lend rainbow colours to his existence once.

Herzog's innumerable affairs has an intimate relation with his obsession with the past. In every woman, who comes into his life, he is searching, trying, to re-live those days, submerged into his subconscious mind. Every woman for him is an uncut stone on which he could sculpture his past. But unfortunately with one stroke of his hammer the stone breaks into a thousand pieces.

In Herzog's system of the temporal world, man-woman relationship occupies a paramount place, not only because coitus signifies the unconscious human urge for the ultimate union with the unknown - death, or perhaps universe or God - but also because, he believes it to be a thoroughfare to the past.

Procreation may be the ultimate aim of all man-woman relationships, but certainly it is not the sole arbitrator of this complex, mysterious, awe-inspiring relationship. And it is this factor alone that elevates man to a pedestal above the quadrupeds. And unfortunately it is this factor alone that leads to unending nightmares of marriage corridors.

Herzog finds no marital bliss. Bliss, of course, is a subjective reaction to a specific situation. One man's flesh is another man's poison. And for Herzog, this is buried in the deep layers of the past. He enters into a series of relationships, gets disgusted and at last realises that bliss is not to be found in interpersonal relationships.

Daisy, his first wife, enshrouded in Herzog's subconscious mind and often returning in his atrophied memories, if not a paradigm of virtue, is indeed a study in contrast to Madeleine. Herzog has no reason to divorce her, but his vaunting ambition to make life more colourful. As Saul Bellow

puts it, Herzog has not only a talent for polemics but "in marrying Madeleine, he showed a taste and talent also for danger and extension, for heterodoxy, for ordeals, a fatal attraction to the city of destruction." ( p. 13 )

Daisy is a simple country girl, who loved her family and found ecstasy in the normal dull routine of life. Not being ambitious, she had no qualms about the higher abstractions of life. Her cosmos is bounded by the four walls of her home.

She never questions Herzog - for she believes that he is omniscient, as all husbands are. She is content to stand by him and wait: "Of course a wife's duty was to stand by this puzzling and often disagreeable Herzog. She did so with heavy neutrality, recording her objection each time - once but no more. The rest was silence..." ( p. 158 )

Herzog's memories about Daisy are not strained by the erotic, for her strength is not her curves or bust, but it is "stability, symmetry, order, containment". ( p. 158 ) She could be summed up in Herzog's words itself: "Sad, clear-eyed, mostly mute, resistant. But a wife." ( p. 160 )

In a world of infidels, fidelity stinks. It becomes a wound, which bleeds profusely. Take Phoebe Gersbach, wife of Valentine Gersbach, Herzog's intimate friend turned his

wife Madeline's lover. She knows that her husband is hooked by Madeline's charm. But she has no escape. A no exit situation. For, she has "only one business in life, one aim, to keep her husband and protect her child."(p.76)

It is a vegetable life that she leads. It is a case of her God, dying young. She is condemned to be a slave, for in a world of might, the meek has no place. Existence becomes not a right, but a privilege. A concession, a gift of the powerful. And Phoebe knew that she was weak: "I was seeing a psychiatrist and he advised me to keep away from you, most of all from you and all your trouble. He said I was not strong enough, and you know, it is true - I am not strong enough." ( p. 320)

Phoebe accepts her role of an unfortunate, neurotic middle-class woman, without even a whimper. "She acknowledged the creative depth of modern degeneracy, all the luxuriant vices of emancipated swingers, and thus accepted her situation as a poor, neurotic, dry, unfortunate, mud-stuck, middle class woman." ( p. 322) All that Phoebe can do is to cling on to Valentine and suffer in silence. Her husband's adultery meant nothing to her. For, "sexlessness was her strength; she wielded the authority of the superego." ( p. 322)

Perhaps, the same sterile predicament helps her to overcome the bitter reality:

Anyway to her, having Madeleine's body could never seem a big deal. She might have pitied Herzog's stupid eggheadedness his clumsy way of putting his troubles into high-minded categories or simply his suffering. But she probably had only enough feeling for the conduct of her own life, and no more. ( p. 76)

Phoebe's existence, like Herzog, is tethered to her agony. What happens if this bond breaks? Will she be an orphan, denied even the right to suffer? She has no strength to find an answer. For, she knows, "with Gersbach, she could still be a wife. She cooked, ironed, signed checks. Without him, she could not exist, cook, make beds. The trance would break. Then what?" ( p. 323)

Herzog and Phoebe are almost two sides of a same coin, in their respective cravings for their beloveds. But there is an essential difference. Phoebe has no courage to find out, what happens if her ties with Valentine are broken. So she continues the vegetable existence. But, an answer is forced in Herzog's case. Madeleine throws him out, and he has to live. And so he survives. He overcomes.

Happiness is such an elusive thing. El Dorado may be at your door steps. Yet, to take that crucial step forward you hesitate. You have nagging doubts or filial attachment to



torturing sorrow, or mortal fear of your impotency to shoulder the perennial bliss.

Sensuous, affectionate, tender and understanding, Sonu Oguki, from the land of the rising sun, was Herzog's perfect amour. He himself admits that, "to tell the truth, I never had it so good... but I lacked the strength of character to bear such joy." ( p. 210) Sonu Oguki's love for Herzog remains a mystery. For, devoid of motives, it rests on a plane, rarefied and noble. Everyone had an axe to grind, save her. What did she find so irresistible in a man, past his prime, dwelling in the twilight zones of sanity? What was this source of uxorial admiration, that makes her rate him "higher than kings and Presidents". ( p. 213).

All deep relationships are beyond the point of logic. In the realm of sentiments and sentiments, reason loses moorings. And so let it be with Sonu Oguki. She has no demands. She has no complaints. For, she never expects anything from Herzog, save his presence. "She asked only that I should be with her from time to time." ( p. 215)

But Herzog, destined to suffer cannot tolerate the good, the soft, the tranquil for long: "Some people are at war with the best things of life and pervert them into fantasies and dreams." ( p. 215) The call of pain bids him.

No force can stop the fatal progress towards the forbidden fruit. He must leave Sonu Oguki, her warmth, her salt bath and her Yiddish French, only to regret later, "Other men have forsaken the west, looking for just this. It was delivered to me in New York city." ( p. 215)

Perhaps Sonu Oguki's love, affection and sex, are still far away from the ecstasies of Herzog's childhood. How can one stop, for an oasis, when one is on the way to Utopia? This can be the only reason for Herzog to leave Sonu Oguki.

Ruthlessness is complimentary to ambition. Blind to sentiments, it marches ahead, stamping to pulp, love, affection, kindness - weaknesses that can jeopardise your tryst with destiny. Madeleine Pointritter, caricatures the modern woman determined to bombard the phallogentric world. Herzog is a mere tool, a means to an end. And his daughter - an occupational hazard, perhaps. Herzog knows this, and he himself admits:

I understood that Madeleine's ambition was to take my place in the learned world. To overcome me. She was reaching her final elevation, as queen of the intellectuals, the castiron blue stockings. And your friend Herzog writhing under this sharp elegant heel. ( p. 98)

Again with a punch of self-pity, Herzog says: "Madeleine by the way, lured me out of the learned world, got in herself, slammed the door and is still in there, gossiping about me." ( p. 98 )

But Herzog, the intellectual, the historian, can do nothing. No wonder, at times he loathes himself. Mocks at high-brow jargon and gobbledegook. Perhaps, he would have relinquished this world of insanity for the bliss of love: "The world should love lovers; but not theoreticians. Never theoreticians! Show them the door. Ladies, throw out these gloomy bastards! Hence, loathed melancholy! In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell." ( p. 211 ).

But Herzog is in love with Madeleine, and desperately needs her. Dr. Edvig the psychiatrist, sums up this hysteric affection as "depressives tended to form frantic dependencies and to become hysterical when cut off, when threatened with loss." ( p. 70 ) Sandor Himmelstein, his friend and lawyer mocks, "every man is a sucker for some type of broad." ( p. 102 ) Zeroing in on Herzog, he blatantly says, "Because you are a high-brow and married a high-brow broad. Somewhere in every intellectual is a dumb prick." ( p. 103 )

Sex for Madeleine has no emotional dimension. And she never believes in mixing these up. It is a physical need.

Perhaps, a man for her is only an extension of vibrator. Best disposed off after use: "She wanted him there at night. She would even, half with rancor, take his hand and put it on her breast as they were falling asleep. But in the morning, she would have liked him to disappear!"(p.140) Night for physical copulation and day for intellectual masturbation. The new female generation.

The degeneration of sex into a mechanical act is obvious when Herzog experiences her indifference to it: "We had intercourse the night before. But as soon as it was done, she turned on the light, picked up one of these dusty Russian folios, put it on her chest, and started to read away. Not a kiss, not a last touch." ( p. 78)

The cognisance of her sexual magnetism, coupled with fanatical obsession for success, turns her psyche into a gun powder keg. Unable to balance the tremendous forces at work, at times she is caught in the whirlpool of insanity. Herzog warns her about it. But Madeleine with her sharp intellect has already adjusted to live with it: "She said it was not exactly news to her that she was abnormal. In fact, she took the whole thing calmly. 'Anyway, it will never be boring', was what she said." (p. 74)

Jonathan Wilson is right in saying, "Madeleine, as well as being a great bitch, is also the great architect of chaos in Herzog's life. She bounces checks, refuses to clean up the house and betrays Herzog with his best friend, Valentine Gersbach. Irresponsible and extravagant, she is everything that dull Daisy was not."<sup>4</sup>

Madeleine, unabashedly usurps all that is valuable in Herzog's life - His fame, child, his house and his money. Mocks at his memories and spits at his dreams and leaves him almost an orphan. She destroys him completely. Or she thinks so and moves in with Gersbach, her new paradigm of success. But she is wrong.

Herzog survives. He outgrows his depression and exorcises once and forever Madeleine from his system:

His servitude was ended and his heart released from its grisly heaviness and encrustation. Her (Madeleine's) absence, no more than her presence itself, was simply sweetness and lightness of spirit... it was a delicious joy to have her removed from his flesh, like something that had stabbed his shoulders, his groins, made his arms and his neck lame and cumbersome. ( p. 381)

In his ecstasy over his victory, he writes to his psychiatrist: "My dear sage and imbecilic Edvig. It may be that the remission of pain is no small part of human happiness. In its primordial and stupider levels, where now and then a closed valve opens again..." ( p. 381)

One question that haunts the reader is that had not Madeleine thrown him out, would that relationship have survived? It is inevitable that the relationship should break up. For, as I stated earlier, Herzog is certainly not after conjugal bliss, but after his past. Every relationship is an attempt at brooking the Lethe. And every attempt is a miserable failure.

Ramona, according to Robert R. Dutton, is the earth goddess (she runs a floral shop), who is more than willing to salve all of Herzog's wounds, to reassure him of his intelligence and masculinity, his virility and value.<sup>5</sup> Madeleine has systematically destroyed Herzog. Sex for Herzog is not a mere physical indulgence. It reflected fertility, virility and growth. "But his sexual powers had been damaged by Madeleine" ( p. 22) which is restored step by step by Ramona.

Ramona is his lover, nurse, mother, all rolled into one. Reflecting back, Herzog often thinks of Ramona and feels "that perhaps it had been simply a question of right woman, all along." ( p. 24) Ramona understands Herzog. Madeleine is not an easy adversary. But Ramona, only Ramona can challenge her in every field. Like Madeleine, she too is voluptuous, adept in the game of sex and has sharp intelligence, but unlike her, was not ambitious.

What Ramona wants is a stable life - A family, a man, who can be trusted. Herzog is aware of this:

Ramona had not learned those erotic monkey shines in a manual, but in adventure, in confusion, and at times probably with a sinking heart, in brutal and alien embraces. She now must yearn for stability. She wanted to give her heart once and for all, and level with a good, become Herzog's wife and quit being an easy lay. ( p. 27 )

Herzog reciprocates her feelings, though he often avoids her frank overtures, fearing that it may undermine his freedom. But he genuinely wants her. The only problem being that he was still haunted by the rotten cadaver of Madeleine. He wants to be purged off that and wants to start life on a clean slate:

Ramona truly was a desirable wife. She was understanding. Educated, well situated in New York. Money. And sexually a natural masterpiece. What breasts! Lovely ample shoulders. The belly deep. Legs brief and a little bowed but for that very reason especially attractive. It was all there. Only he was not through with love and hate elsewhere. Herzog had unfinished business. ( p.86)

But "Ramona transformed his wishes into sexual excitement and to give credit where it was due, turned his grief in a useful direction." ( p. 195) And when Moses confesses to her about his sexual failure, Ramona is astonished and says that no woman can find fault with Moses. He tells her that he "was often a flat failure with Madeleine. It might be the release of his angry feeling against

Mady that improved his performance". At this Ramona looked severe. 'I don't know - it might be me - have you considered that?', she said." ( p. 195)

Herzog is not merely on the look out for carnal pleasures. But carnal pleasures that leads to revival of spirit. The resurrection from death. And this is where Ramona's role becomes crucial:

She, Ramona, wanted to add riches to his life and give him what he pursued in the wrong places. This she could do by the art of love. She said - the art of love which was one of the sublime achievements of the spirit. It was love she meant by riches. What he had to learn from her - while there was time; while he was still virile, his powers substantially intact - was how to renew the spirit through the flesh ( a precious vessel in which the spirit rested). Ramona, bless her! ( p. 228 )

Unlike Madeleine, for Ramona, sex is not a mechanical act. It is the sublime achievement of the spirit. Sex for her is means to an end - reward of the spirit through flesh.

But is Herzog able to transcend time and reach his childhood innocence, through Ramona? No! But something spectacular happens! Ramona preaches into his ears, the ultimate truth behind temporal bliss. The enlightenment that he receives, the wisdom that is churned out of agony and suffering, and is preached into him, that his past is beautiful because he derived his strength from his simple desires,



in his childhood. This is what Ramona teaches him: "But as one recovers self-confidence one learns the simple strength of simple desires." ( p. 188)

To realise this truth, Herzog frees life from the time scale that stretches from infinity to infinity. And once time is obliterated, past, present, and future, becomes an amalgamation of memories and hopes and actions. This is chaos. Beyond the limited comprehension of the mortal. But out of this frenzy, Herzog comprehends the truth, the essence, the wisdom and returns to the transient spell, balkanised into past, present and future - the life. But why? As he wrote to his dead mother:

The life you gave me has been curious and perhaps the death I must inherit will turn out to be even more profoundly curious. I have sometimes wished it would hurry up, longed for it to come soon. But I am still on the same side of the eternity as ever. It's just as well, for I have certain things still to do. ( p. 397)

He decides to spend the rest of his life, not secluded, but among the common people. It is not in seclusion that you find the real life, but out there in the world. "I mean to share with other human beings as far as possible and not destroy my remaining years in the same way. Herzog felt a deep, dizzy eagerness to begin." ( p. 392)

"The real and essential question is one of our employment by other beings and their employment by us. Without this true employment, you never dread death, you cultivate it. And consciousness when it doesn't clearly understand what to live for, what to die for, can only abuse and ridicule itself." ( p. 333) This Herzog understands. The truth which he practised without preaching, without being aware, while he was young. The truth that made his life meaningful. To this end his life is devoted now.

And then he is totally free. Free from thoughts, free from nagging memories and liberated from Madeleine:

He was surprised to feel such contentment... contentment? Whom was he kidding? This was joy! For perhaps the first time he felt what it was to be free from Madeleine. Joy! ( p. 381)

He no more wants to be something else. He is satisfied to be himself. No more chasing mirages. No more dream castles. No more compromise with the self to suit the outside world's tantrum:

Why must I be such a throb-hearted character... But I am, I am, and you can't teach old dogs. Myself is thus and so, and so will continue thus and so. And why fight it? My balance comes from instability. Not organisation, or courage, as with other people. It is tough, but that's how it is... Perhaps, the only way I am able to do it. ( p. 102)

Jonathan Wilson states that,

Herzog's goal is a kind of transcendental peace, an inner and outer quietness: he yearns to still the babble of tongues inside him, to rid his mind of clutter and to exorcise the ghosts of his disastrous marriage. If doing so takes him by way of nineteenth - and twentieth century German existential theories that he must ponder over and discredit before he can dismiss, then so be it.<sup>6</sup>

Tony Tanner sums up Herzog as "Joyous sanity growing out of remote exhaustion... a change of heart, a turning to the sun. Not resignation but a profound 'let be', accompanied peace and a prayer of praise such as can only be uttered from the other side of suffering."<sup>7</sup>

At the end of the novel, Herzog is back in his country house in Ludeyville, which according to Jonathan Wilson is "a parodic romantic retreat, a Yeatsian tower, that Herzog ironically calls "Herzog's folly".<sup>8</sup> Alone in his garden, Herzog discovers that at this time, he has "no messages for anyone. Nothing. Not a single word." ( p. 416)

The exorcism is over.

### Footnotes

1. Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow, Edinburg and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965, p. 87.
2. Keith Michael Opdahl, The Novels of Saul Bellow, University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1967, p. 140.
3. Robert R. Dutton, Saul Bellow, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982, p. 115.
4. Jonathan Wilson, On Bellow's Planet, London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1985, pp. 134-5.
5. Robert R. Dutton, op.cit., p. 127.
6. Jonathan Wilson, op.cit., p. 133.
7. Tony Tanner, op.cit., p. 102.
8. Jonathan Wilson, op.cit., p. 142.

Chapter IV

---

Post-Herzog Novels

---

### Pre-script

This chapter is devoted to the novels that Saul Bellow has written after Herzog. After Herzog, Saul Bellow has written six novels. The constraints of time and scope of an M.Phil dissertation forces me to limit this study to just three novels. The Bellarosa Connection which appeared in 1989, A Theft, which was published in 1988 and More Die of Heartbreak published in 1987 are excluded. The three novels taken for discussion are Mr. Sammler's Planet, his most controversial work, that left even his most ardent critic and admirer John J. Clayton agitated, Humboldt's Gift, which almost reads like the continuation of Herzog, and The Dean's December, the least successful of all Bellow's novels.

Almost all the questions that we discussed in the earlier chapters are discussed here also. Some critics believe that post-Herzog Bellow heroes are different from the earlier ones. Since heroes are an integral part of the novel, they cannot afford to be different, without it

effecting the whole structure of the work. When the structure of the work is affected, it naturally changes the novel. This question will be thoroughly looked into. If the post-Herzog novels are different, how? And if not, what is the philosophical outlook that underlies all Bellow's works? This chapter will be an attempt to answer these questions.

Mr. Sammler's Planet : Of Sensualists without Heart

Mr. Sammler's Planet is considered to be outside the usual Bellovian pale. Many critics have felt that it is radically different from all his previous works. Jonathan Wilson has quoted Malcolm Bradbury as having said that Mr. Sammler's Planet is "a work of social indignation, a radical revolt against the radical revolt of 1968."<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Wilson writes further: "Some critics, especially those who had devoted articles or books to explaining or articulating Bellow as 'life-affirming' writer, felt almost betrayed by Artur Sammler's book-length harangue against radical students, libidinous young women, and members of the black underclass."<sup>2</sup>

John J. Clayton in his book, Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man concludes: "I hope... that Bellow returns to the planet he used to share with us". But he had actually

planned to end it as "it is his sympathy with... manifold humanity, the apprehension of the mystery inherent in living human beings - a mystery which signifies their value - for which we read Saul Bellow".<sup>3</sup>

Daniel Fuchs writes after examining the manuscripts of Mr. Sammler's Planet that,

Bellow never gave a thought to compromise in writing. Indeed, they show that his inspiration came from what he unswervingly considered the madness of the moment... Surely there was no failure of nerve here, as some alleged, but a demonstration of courage that came short of clairvoyance.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Daniel Fuchs says that in an interview given to James Howard of Life, Bellow has asserted about Mr. Sammler's Planet that,

I had a high degree of excitement in writing it and finished it in record time. It is my first thoroughly non-apologetic venture into ideas. In Herzog and Henderson the Rain King I was kidding my way to Jesus, but here I am baring myself nakedly.<sup>5</sup>

But later Bellow reverses this assessment "coming to think of Sammler as a novel excessively argued. Far from baring himself naked, he came to think that the novel was not personal enough."<sup>6</sup>

Jonathan Wilson also quotes Max Schulz who feels that "the impoverished view of man (that) Bellow gives us in



Mr. Sammler's Planet" seems to upset either "a real shifting of philosophical ground" on Bellow's part or a "fictionally indigested reaction to the frustration of mid-twentieth century existence."<sup>7</sup>

Mr. Sammler, many critics feel was nothing more than a mouthpiece for Saul Bellow, especially when Sammler champions order, sexual conservatism, public restraint and self-control. This is because Saul Bellow's reaction to the upheavals of the late 1960s are well known. Ben Siegel has pointed out that while novelists do necessarily share their hero's views, Artur Sammler's reactions to people and events are totally consistent with those expressed by Saul Bellow in essay, lecture and interview.

But to reduce the novel Mr. Sammler's Planet as a virulent campaign against the late 1960's upheaval would be a gross injustice. One would certainly agree with Jonathan Wilson, when he writes that,

Bellow the novelist,.. is governed by creative impulses that do not always square with the presentation of a one-sided view of things - Whatever that side may be. And, while Sammler's pontifications lend the novel its reactionary air, Bellow's fictional methodology ensures that Sammler will turn out to be as twisted a spokesman for "order" as was Augie March for "freedom".<sup>8</sup>

Dismissing Mr. Sammler's harangue's against the world in which he lives as the superficial outburst of senility,

we find that Mr. Sammler like other Bellovian heroes, is caught in the whirlpool of existence, unable to identify the reasons, nor its meaning, but compelled by an unknown force to live. Once we understand this septuagenarian, plagued by the chaos of modern civilisation, we realise, that the man is the message, the message the man.

Mr. Sammler is not just another old man, finding it difficult to adjust to the growing anarchy of a world, slowly being devoid of sentiments and humanness. He is a man who has experienced the agonies and ecstasies of life. He has seen the most brutal face of civilisation. He has also witnessed the glory of civilisation.

He has known London in pre-war days, and had civilised existence with acquaintances like H.G.Wells. But, he has also witnessed Auschwitz, where his wife was murdered, and he climbed out of a mass grave one eye lost to a Nazi rifle butt. He has escaped from the anti-semites of Poland:

When Antonia was murdered. When he himself underwent murder beside her. When he and sixty or twenty others, all stripped naked and having dug their own grave, were fired upon and fell in. Bodies upon his own body ensuing. His dead wife somewhere nearby. Struggling out much later from the weight of corpses, crawling out of the loose soil... (p. 92)

Mr. Sammler has even committed murder. Cold blooded murder, when his victim implored with him to spare his life,

He made him fling away his carbine... Sammler ordered the man to take off his coat. Then the tunic. The sweater, the boots... He asked for his life. Red-headed, a big chin bronze-stubbed, he was scarcely breathing. He was white. Violet under the eyes. Sammler saw the soil already sprinkled on his face. He saw the grave on his skin. The grime of the lip, the large creases of skin descending from his nose already lined with dirt - that man to Sammler was already underground. He was no longer dressed for life. He was marked, lost. Had to go. Was gone. "Don't kill me. Take the things." Sammler did not answer, but stood out of reach. "I have children." Sammler pulled the trigger. The body then lay in the snow. A second shot went through the head and shattered it. Bone burst. Matter flew out. ( pp. 138-39)

No wonder, Sammler says, "the best and purest human beings, from the beginning of time, have understood that life is sacred." ( p. 18) Then why did he kill? To preserve 'his' sacred life. And because life is sacred, Sammler continues to exist, even when the outside world suffocates him. On the one hand, Mr. Sammler wants to live, on the other hand he is pained over the triviality of life. "Did one have a right to expectations, being like those bubbles in the flask?" ( p. 89) Mr. Sammler asks desperately. This ambivalence is the perennial problem of all Bellow's characters. Sammler points out that 'human beings suffered the humiliation of inconsequence, of confused styles, of a long life containing several lives.' ( p. 26)

Sammler mocks human beings, often remembering the quotation of Max Weber which he has learned by heart, "Specialists

without spirit, sensualists without heart, this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilisation never before achieved." ( p. 54) Sammler ridicules every institution of civilised man. "Democracy for him was mere propaganda. From government, propaganda entered every aspect of life." ( p. 87) He ridicules revolution:

There were no revolution that he could remember which had not been made for justice, freedom and pure goodness. Their last state was always nihilistic than the first. ( p. 76)

And he has contempt for New York, the city where he lives. "Great cities are whores. Doesn't everyone know? Babylon was a whore... Pencillin keeps New York looking cleaner. No faces gnawed by syphilis, with gaping noseholes as in ancient times." ( p. 163)

And of the times in which he lives, Mr. Sammler says,

The dark satanic mills changing into light satanic mills. The reprobates converted into children of joy, the sexual ways of seraglio and the Congo bush adopted by the emancipated masses of New York, Amsterdam, London... He saw the increasing triumph of Enlightenment - Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, Adultery...the privileges of aristocracy (without any duties) spread wide, democratised, especially the libidinal privileges, the right to be uninhibited, spontaneous, urinating, defecating, belching, coupling in all positions, tripling... combing the leisure and luxurious inventiveness of Versailles with the hibiscus covered erotic ease of Samoa. Dark romanticism now took over. ( pp. 32-33)

Mr. Sammler feels that lack of a spiritual life is

leading humanity to disaster:

The middle class having failed to create a spiritual life of its own, investing everything in material expansion, faced disaster. Also, the world becoming disenchanted, the spirits, and demons expelled from the air were now taken inside. Reason had swept and garnished the house, but the last state might be worse than the first. ( p. 145)

As the external world increases its pressure, Mr. Sammler feels that it is time to leave this planet altogether. Perhaps, man needs another planet, from which he can begin from the very beginning..." A time to gather stones together, a time to cast away stones. Considering the earth itself not as a stone cast, but as something to cast oneself from - to be divested of. To blow this great blue, white, green planet, or to be blown from it." ( p. 51 )

But as the external world is chaotic, so is the Mr. Sammler's internal one. Obsessed with thoughts of death he knows that his generation is fast disappearing. Only a few are left. And they too may leave, at any time, any moment. "His late wife. The widow's late aunt. Wherever you looked, or tried to look, there were the late. It took some getting used to." ( p. 8 ) Mr. Sammler, perhaps, sees his own future when he says, "Humankind could not endure futurelessness. As of now, death was the sole visible future." ( p. 75)

Every encounter with death, brings back to Sammler the memories of the murder that he committed. He has no escape from that guilt." A sudden escape of red fluid, and the man was gone. With all his will, purpose, virtues, his good record... his love and despair over son and daughter. When his life - or this life, that life, the other life - was gone, taken away, there would remain for Sammler, while he lasted, that bad literalness, the yellow light of Polish summer heat..." ( p. 92)

Nor could he escape from the bitter memories of Auschwitz:

In contraction from life, when naked, he already felt himself dead. But somehow he had failed, unlike the others, to be connected. Comparing the event, as mentally he sometimes did, to a telephone circuit: death had not picked up the receiver to answer his ring. ( p. 138)

Thoughts of death often leads to God. For, the mystery of death and the craving for an after life, inevitably ends man with the notion of a Supreme Being:

Is God only the gossip of the living? Then we watch these living speed like birds over the surface of a water, and one will dive or plunge but not come up again and never be seen any more. And in our turn we will never be seen again, once gone through that surface. But then we have no proof that there is no depth under the surface. We cannot even say that our knowledge of death is shallow. There is no knowledge. ( p. 236)

His obsession with death increases as days pass by. It comes to a climax, when he identifies with the dead. Watching the fight between Feffer and the pick-pocket, Mr. Sammler feels that he was powerless:

To be so powerless was death. And suddenly he saw himself not so much standing as strangely leaning, as reclining, and peculiarly in people, and as a past person. That was not himself. It was someone - and this struck him - poor in spirit. Someone between the human and not-human states, between content and emptiness, between full and void, meaning and not-meaning, between this world and no world. ( p. 290)

Caught between a gruesome existence and a mysterious death, Sammler craves for deeper understanding of existence. Only through true freedom, liberation, man will be able to escape from this unreality to the reality:

Things met within this world are tied to forms of our perception in space and time and to the forms of our thinking. We see what is before us, the present, the objective. Eternal being makes its temporal appearance in this way. The only way out of captivity in the forms, out of confinement in the prison of projections, the only contact with the eternal, is through freedom. ( p. 57)

Mr. Sammler in his quest searches for the reality even in Hindu philosophies:

I learned that only ideas are not overpowered by will - the cosmic force, the will, which drives all things. A blinding power. The inner creature fury of the world. What we see are only its manifestations. Like Hindu philosophy - Maya, the veil of appearances that hangs over all human experience. ( p. 209)

Mr. Sammler is horrified at the fate of human existence. What is existence? What is death? Why this life? He doesn't know but he tries to give a rational explanation:

You have been summoned to be. Summoned out of matter. Therefore here you are. And though the vast over-all design may be of the deepest interest, whether originating in a God or in an indeterminate source which should have a different name, you yourself, a finite, are obliged to wait, painfully, anxiously, heartachingly in this yellow despair. And why? But you must. ( p. 90)

But then more than this, a more horrifying prospect:

The earth was a grave: our life was lent to it by its elements and had to be returned: a time came when the simple elements seemed to long for release from the complicated forms of life, when every element of every cell said, "Enough". The planet was our mother and our burial ground. ( p. 182)

Mr. Sammler tells Govinda Lal, the Indian scientist that most forms of personal existence seem to be discredited and that there is a peculiar longing for "non-being". Mr. Sammler feels that people want to visit all other states of being in a diffused state of consciousness, not wishing to be any given thing, but instead to become comprehensive, entering and leaving at will. Why should they be human? Ask Mr. Sammler. He also feels that transcending the unsatisfactory humanity "is also getting rid of the human being." So he feels that there is no difference between transcending and the human existence and non being. But then comes the most



crucial part of Mr. Sammler's outlook:

Maybe man should get rid of himself. Of course. If he can. But also he has something in him which he feels is important to continue. Something that deserves to go on. It is something that has to go on, and we all know it. The spirit feels cheated, outraged, defiled, corrupted, fragmented, injured...The spirit knows that its growth is the real aim of existence... The best... is to be disinterested. Not as misanthropes dissociate themselves, by judging, but by not judging. By willing as God wills. (p.236)

The ending of Mr. Sammler's Planet therefore need not come as a shock to any close reader. For, as many critics believe there is no about face. No sudden realisation. As was stated earlier, the man is the message, the message man. So his life itself, exemplifies his philosophy, that growth of the spirit is the real aim of existence.

Looking at the dead body of Elya Gruner, Sammler says in a mental whisper: "... He was aware that he must meet, and he did meet - through all the confusion and degraded clowning of this life through which we are speeding - he did meet the terms of his contract. The terms which, in his inmost heart, each man knows. As I know mine. As all know. For that is the truth of it - that we all know, God, that we know, that we know, we know, we know." ( p. 313)

So Mr. Sammler, reaffirms his faith in life and continues his existence, for he knows that he has to meet the terms of his contract, which in his inmost heart, he alone knows.

Humboldt's Gift : Trying for the Celestial,  
Ballon springs no leak.

Daniel Fuchs in his essay on Humboldt's Gift begins:

The familiar Bellow tension between aspiring self and resistant world, spiritual seeking and material finding, issued into a story of a poet engulfed by the contradictions and a friend straining to reconcile them. The anti-theases here are so sharp that they can be held together - when they are held together - only by a comic perspective. 9

Humboldt's gift, one feels is almost an extension of Herzog. For most of the characters reappear, though in different names and garbs. Jonathan Wilson says:

Humboldt's Gift most vividly recalls Herzog, but it is umbilically connected to all the other novels. Charlie Citrine who in himself is very close to Moses Herzog, is divorced from the bitchy but beautiful Denise and embroiled in an affair with the sexy but demanding Renata ... Reincarnations of Madeleine and Ramona, Denise and Renata are not the only familiar figures. Citrine's brother Julius is Herzog's brother Shura ...<sup>10</sup>

Though a superficial resemblance could be established between Bellow's characters in Humboldt's Gift and other novels and most of the "Bellovian dilemma" is vividly present in the novel, where Humboldt's Gift differs from the rest is the transcending of these dilemma, which is not a solution, but a movement to a higher stage of reconciliation with existence and death.

Going through the manuscripts of Humboldt's Gift, Daniel Fuchs has written that the novel was a fusion of two separate novels. One about Humboldt and New York and the second one about Sweibel and Cantabile and Chicago. Humboldt's Gift came into being by the comic juxtaposition of the two and Bellow believed for a long time that it was his funniest book.

Richard G. Stern in New York Times magazine has written that origin of the novel was the death of Saul Bellow's old friend, poet Delmore Schwartz, who had died amid poverty and squalor. Bellow, as Charlie Citrine sees Humboldt eating a pretzel in the street, had seen him and could not face him. Bellow began to write a memoir, which later turned fictional. At the same time he was working on another book, based on the life and stories of another friend, David Pelz, a contractor, a health freak. And in words of Stern "Pelz's character and misadventures melted into the book about Humboldt, and another deeper Bellovian narrator came along to hold the worlds together."<sup>11</sup>

Daniel Fuchs writes that,

Written over a period of eight years, Humboldt's Gift was a vortex in search of a center. In all those years there was a constant element, the character of Humboldt. What was not constant was the way Humboldt was conceived, the person doing the conceiving, and the precise ambience of the conception.<sup>12</sup>



The narrator of the novel, who holds the two worlds together, Charlie Citrine, has lived a life, according to Daniel Fuchs, "which is a tale of two cities, New York and Chicago; culture and anarchy, you might say, except that culture veers towards anarchy and anarchy towards culture."<sup>14</sup> The novel about the poet Delmore Schwartz did not become a reality, until, as Bellow himself said in an interview to London Sunday Times, "I got into some of the characters around him; they took the book over and it became interesting and possible."<sup>15</sup>

Charlie Citrine, perhaps, is the only Bellovian character who does not seem to suffer intensely, for all Bellovian characters, the outside world is hostile, to which they become reconciled, because life is sacred. Asa Leventhal of The Victim also suffers not much. But as is stated earlier, his stature as the hero of the novel is debatable. More than that, unlike Citrine, he has no quest, to fathom the deeper realities. But Citrine, as Jonathan Wilson has pointed out, "is in an advanced Bellovian stage, in which the pulling of his life in order has nothing to do with working out his feelings about his ex-wife Denise, deciding whether or not to marry his lover Renata, finding financial equilibrium, setting up a stable home, or even coming to terms with his own neuroses. Discovering the light-in-being has put him beyond all that riddle."<sup>16</sup>

Instead of reacting to the outside world, Charles Citrine has reached a stage, where he can view the events with absolute detachment. This is something which Artur Sammler yearns for. As Sammler says, "the best... is to be disinterested. Not as misanthropes dissociate themselves, by judging, but by not judging. By willing as God wills." (Mr. Sammler's Planet, p. 236) As Charlie Citrine says, "How sad about all this human nonsense which keeps us from the larger truth. But perhaps I can get through it once and for all doing what I am doing now." ( p. 141)

A brief comparison with Sammler will vividly bring to fore the difference between Charlie Citrine and other characters of Bellow. When Sammler is confronted with a crime, it stimulates his consciousness and brings the world back to him in full force; he "receives from the crime the benefit of enlarged vision." ( p. 12 ) But Charlie Citrine is humiliated - forced at gun point to watch Cantabile loosen his bowels - Citrine finds out that, "In a situation like this I can always switch out and think about the human condition over all... Humankind is full of nervous invention of this type, and I started to think ( to distract myself) of all volumes of ape behaviour I had read in my time, of Kohler and Yerkes and Zuckerman..." ( p. 83)

Jonathan Wilson writes that,

Citrine is an expert at what he calls "turning out". Whatever is happening to him in the external world seems almost irrelevant to what is going on inside him. Unlike Sammler, the world does not interfere too much with Citrine's private meditations. Rushed around by Cantabile, Citrine is able to concentrate his mind on Rudolf Steiner. The state that Citrine comes closer than any other Bellow hero to achieving is one that Bellow's Joseph outlines and lauds in the pages of diary - a state in which one is free of the mind-polluting world.<sup>16</sup>

In a conversation Von Humboldt Fleisher, who is himself a father figure of Charlie Citrine, tells him that,

I think you may be... one of those Axel types that only cares about inner inspiration, no connection with the actual world. The actual world can kiss your ass... You leave to poor bastards like me to think about matters like money and status and success and failure and social problems and politics. You do not give a damn for such things. ( p. 122)

If it is true, what is wrong with that, asks Citrine back.

Jonathan Wilson feels that like most of Bellow's heroes, Citrine too is drawn to determined, powerful, assertive individuals, who tend to make him feel 'impotent and paralysed,' and in whose company he can behave only like a child. But, this impotence, paralysis is transformed into something positive by all Bellow's characters, for Jonathan Wilson considers this to be Bellow's heroes, most important and vitally self-preserving achievements. The incident, where Citrine is forced to go to the top of a half built sky scraper along with

Cantabile, tread upon open floors and look down from dizzying heights - which clearly symbolises, according to Jonathan Wilson, Citrine's 'Bellovian impotence', - Citrine's reaction is positive:

But however scared and harassed, my sensation, living soul was also gratified. I knew it took too much to gratify me. The gratification - threshold of my soul had risen too high. I must bring it down again. It was excessive. I must, I knew, change everything. ( p. 102)

Jonathan Wilson writes that,

the "sensation" that Citrine loves is not so much the danger, but the complete humiliation and paralysis. Like Artur Sammler and the black pick-pocket, Herzog and Madleine, Henderson and Dahfu with the lion, Wilhelm and his father, Augie and Simon, Leventhal and Allbee, and Joseph and the army, Citrine denies his energy, his "gratification", from his relationship with a figure to whom he is deeply attracted and who can offer him only impotence. For Bellow's heroes, paradoxically, a productive crisis is one that is paralysing.<sup>17</sup>

But here perhaps Jonathan Wilson is wrong. It is true that most of Bellow's characters desire "gratification" from a relationship which can offer only impotence. But Charlie, Citrine's case is different. Humiliation for Citrine is not an end itself. For him it is just another instance of growing out of human vanity. As any spiritual text will point out, growing out of one's vanity, ego, is only the first step towards spiritual awakening. Citrine's behaviour should be analysed, taking into consideration, this aspect. As

Citrine himself reveals:

I want to be clear however, that I speak as a person who had lately received or experienced light, I don't mean "The light". I mean a kind of light-in-the being, a thing difficult to be precise about, especially in an account like this, where so many cantankerous erroneous silly and delusive objects, actions and phenomena are in the foreground. ( p. 177)

This humiliation, which actually one feels is a part of Citrine's growth, is reflected in other aspects too. Though his affair with Renata is not fulfilled, he still looks after her son with love and affection when she dumps him at his care. This growth can be seen in his disaffection towards money. As he tells Cantabile, "It's true I have got no money left, but I have been doing better without money than I ever did with it." ( p. 458)

Unlike Bellow's other characters, Citrine is obsessed with death. Herzog also ponders about death. But Herzog's meditation on death is a by-product of his thoughts on existence. In fact, for Herzog, death-thoughts are complementary in nature. But for Citrine it is not so. It just supplements his life. His existence is no headache for him. He has attained, as stated earlier, a detachment. But death baffles him. And his life it seems becomes a quest to unravel that mystery.



This quest, which is perennial in all Bellow's characters, e.g., Joseph thirst for liberty in the Dangling Man, becomes, in Citrine, for death. In the beginning of the narration Citrine says, "I spent far too much time, mooning about and communing with the dead." ( p. 9) This fatal attraction for death harbours, as Citrine himself feels, on the borders of insanity. He feels the dead are lucky, for they have left the horrible existence on earth.

My waking character is far from sound...And all such things must be utterly clear to the dead. They have finally left the problematical cloudy earthly and human sphere. I have a hunch that in life you look outward from the ego, your center. In death you are at the periphery looking inward. ( p. 10)

Citrine's detachment with the external world and growing consciousness of death, makes him think that he too is becoming 'dead-like'. "I found certain characteristics were beginning to stick to me. As time went on, for instance, I found myself becoming absurd in the manner of Von Humboldt Pleisher." ( p. 107) Though in the beginning Citrine is horrified about death, later he becomes fascinated by it. Under the influence of Steiner he was experiencing something new: "I seldom thought of death in the horrendous old way. I was not experiencing the suffocating grave or dreading an eternity of boredom, nowadays. Instead I often felt unusually light and swift paced." ( p. 221)

Citrine starts feeling that death is a necessity. He feels that Spinoza's arguments are wrong, which says that if a dislodged stone has consciousness, it would think, "I am flying through the air." Citrine argues that if it had thoughts, it would not be a mere stone. It could also originate movement. Citrine feels that the power to think and know is real freedom. And thinking will make it obvious that spirit exists. Physical body, he feels is an agent of the spirit and its mirror. The body is the spirit's memorandum to itself. As Citrine says, "The earth is literally a mirror of thoughts. Objects themselves are embodied thoughts. Death is the dark backing that a mirror needs if we are to see anything." ( p. 262)

Citrine says that "the thought of the life we are now leading may pain us as greatly later on, as the thought of death pains us now." ( p. 336) Citrine feels that it is the ignorance of death that is destroying humanity: "Ignorance of death is destroying us... no honourable person can refuse to devote his soul to this problem of problems. Death has no serious challenge, from science, or from philosophy or religion or art..." ( p. 350 )

Citrine has even learned to tackle death. He asks that if after all the glory and passionate vividness, oblivion is all one has to expect, what options are left. "One option

is to train yourself gradually into oblivion so that no great change has taken place when you have died..."( p. 357) which is what actually Citrine is trying. In any transformation, which is slow and deep, there will be a phase when one feels that you are not here or there. The pull of the external world and the quest for higher meanings make you dangle in the mid-air. Citrine experiences this. As Jonathan Wilson points out, "Aware that he is stimulated by crisis, Citrine is further aware that his pervasive "dangling" has somehow caused him to be "not free". Unable to generate a sustaining interest in the world that he inhabits and unable to achieve the measure of transcendence that he claims to desire, Citrine recognises that he is turning into an invisible man."<sup>18</sup> As Citrine says,

I was aware that I used to think, that I knew where I stood (taking the universe as a frame of reference). But I was mistaken. However, at least, I could say that I had been spiritually efficient not to be crushed by ignorance. However, it was now apparent to me that that I was neither of Chicago nor sufficiently beyond it, and that Chicago's material and daily interests and phenomena are neither actual and vivid enough or symbolically clear enough to me. So that I had neither vivid actuality nor symbolic clarity and for the time being I was utterly nowhere.(p. 260)

But where Jonathan Wilson perhaps goes wrong is in the assumption that this condition - the "dangling condition" - is the eternal state of Citrine. He does not recognise that it

is a temporary phase, a transient one, which inevitably has to lead to higher stages.

Failing to read this basic tenor of the book, most of the critics have lambasted Bellow and have written that the novel leads nowhere and a compromise had to be hammered out. And this compromise, according to them has destroyed the force of the book. Most of them feel that the end is not convincing at all. Daniel Fuchs in his exhaustive study on Humboldt's Gift writes:

The exhaustion of Charlie Citrine and the shaky form his affirmation takes seem intimately related and point to a gap between the ideal and the real so wide that it can only lead to an unconvincing denouement. Humboldt's Gift, for example, is supposed to be comic poetic justice, but it may more easily be perceived as a boomerang. Trying for the celestial, the balloon springs a leak. 19

Jonathan Wilson echoes almost the same sentiments when he writes:

Charlie Citrine, who "knows" the static contraries of both his own personality and of the world that he inhabits, fails to be energised by them. Citrine has no quest, and, consequently, Humboldt's Gift has no real dialectical thrust. This is partly because Citrine's self-knowledge coalesces with the informing vision of the novel in which he appears, and is partly because he is not so much an imagined character - with the distance and tension that implies - as an avatar of his creator.<sup>20</sup>

Both these views are a result of the limited understanding of the novel. Jonathan Wilson's statement that

Charlie Citrine has no quest is absolutely wrong. Perhaps, he would have been right, if he had stated that Citrine's quest is different from other Bellow protagonists. Other heroes of Bellow have a quest for life, but for Citrine, it is a quest for death. And this quest is very evident. And since its presence automatically guarantees the dialectical thrust, to say that it is absent is erroneous. And once the focus of the quest of Charlie Citrine is established, we find that the typical ending, typical of a Bellovian novel is very much present in Humboldt's Gift too.

The contention of Daniel Fuchs that the affirmation of Charlie Citrine, which lends an artificiality to the final denouement depends upon identifying what Charlie Citrine is affirming. The graveyard scene, where Humboldt's body is buried, is one of the most poignant endings of Bellow's novels. The half-sung song of Menasha, mixing pain with memory and the sombre mood, all lends an air of man's meaningless existence and as Charlie Citrine thinks, "this is what becomes of us." His memory races back, and all those strange and odd characters from childhood return and Citrine observes, "They were all gone but ourselves".

For Charlie Citrine it is a reaffirmation of his faith in death, a celebration of death, a longing to be back among the dead, whom he loved and cared for. A time to cast

away the quotidian needs and knock at the doors of eternity.

The Dean's December: Bellow's Weltanschauung,  
Sans Bellow's World

The Dean's December is, perhaps, Bellow's least successful book. The book fails totally. Perhaps after writing Humboldt's Gift Saul Bellow's genius got exhausted. In every creative writer's life, there comes a time, when a kind of sterility possess them. The Dean's December is probably a product of such a phase. That it Bellow has transcended and has written books like More Die of Heartbreak in the eighties, which challenged even the greatness of Herzog and Humboldt's Gift, is a different matter.

A "journalist, highbrow professor, dean and intellectual" ( p. 88), Albert Corde has come to Bucharest with his Romanian born wife Minna to visit her dying mother. In Chicago, Corde has left behind a double crisis. A student in the college, where he is dean has been murdered. A black whore and her pimp have been arrested and accused. Corde has ensured a reward for implicating them, which ultimately ends up with his being labelled a racist. The chief accuser is his nephew. The defending counsel in the trial is Corde's first cousin Max Detilion, a man determined to dirty the image of Corde.

Another problem is with his Provost, Alec Witt. Corde has written a series of articles in Harper's magazine on Chicago. Since it is a devastating attack on the establishment it offends almost everyone, especially the authorities of his college.

Mirna's mother dies and after the funeral Corde returns to New York. By this time, an old friend Dewey Spangler, a famous columnist, goes public with some comment made by Corde in private. Corde resigns from the post of the college dean.

Daniel Fuchs says "The Dean's December is a tale of two dismal cities. Bucharest is a disaster, an instance of 'the penitentiary state.'... where Bucharest is full of debilitation and death, Chicago is full of depravity and decadence, the 'soft nihilism' of West."<sup>21</sup>

Many critics feel that the setting of the novel in two cities is just the exterior manifestation of the split in the hero Albert Corde. Jonathan Wilson, who believes that almost all of Bellow's heroes are caught between a need for order in life and a propensity to create chaos, feels,

the setting of the novel is also divided between representatives of order and chaos. The time and action shift from east to west, from Bucharest to Chicago. In Eastern Europe, Corde is witness to totalitarian cruelty, to arbitrary order at its most unnerving and ridiculous... Corde, in a

general way, cannot help but note the fear, circumspection, and hint of betrayal implicit in practically every human transaction that is undertaken in Bucharest... In Chicago Corde bears witness to the detritus of crime and hardship brought down upon the city by inadequacy of its governors, the unmitigated violence of its criminals...<sup>22</sup>

Bellow's vivid description of New York and Chicago have always been brilliant. But Jonathan Wilson feels that "the cities in his most recent novels are ultimately maps of a single consciousness rather than representations of urban life. The city is at the service of an idea: the 'Idea' that the world is irrevocably split in the same way as its representative Bellowian inhabitant."<sup>23</sup> Concluding his comments on Humboldt's Gift, Jonathan Wilson has written that Bellow seems to have consumed himself in Humboldt's Gift. For this reason, when it comes to Dean's December, the autobiographical element is completely discarded.

This could have been the main reason, why unlike Herzog, Citrine, or even Sammler, Albert Corde is not able to evoke any interest. Ever since the publication of Herzog, Bellow has more or less chosen to reconstitute himself in the person of his novel's protagonist. Nobody doubts that Herzog and Citrine are autobiographical figures. Jonathan Wilson laments that until the publication of The Dean's December, he had tended to believe that Bellow's self-consumption was detrimental to his fiction. Herzog and



Citrine drew their fictive authenticity from the autobiographical elements in their persona. "It is paradoxical", writes Jonathan Wilson, "and ironic that when Bellow half-heartedly attempts to 'imagine' a personal history for Albert Corde, the result is to render him inauthentic and even less 'present' than his predecessors".<sup>24</sup>

The Dean's December is one of the few Bellow's novels in which the married hero does not have several mistresses or even one. Strangely, one finds that the hero is married happily. The Victim is the only other novel where the hero, Asa Leventhal, is happily married. In the Dangling Man, Joseph though married to Iva, seeks the help of Kitty. Augie gets married at the end, but unfortunately the wife is deceptive. Henderson was not at all happy with Lily in the beginning. Sammler is a widower, whereas Herzog and Citrine are fighting divorce suits in the court.

Contrary to his earlier style, Bellow does not reveal much about his hero's personal history. Repeatedly in the narration, Albert Corde makes reference to his "erotic instability" ( pp. 9, 53, 198 ), but no further information is given. Curious reader will have to depend on his knowledge about Herzog, Augie March or Charlie Citrine to authenticate the statement. The reader is imaginatively drawn to fill in the void with Sonu Oguki, Ramona, Daisy, Madeleine, Renata and others.

At the end of the novel, one finds Corde, his troubles almost over, inside the giant telescope at Mount Palomar, ascending upwards with his wife Minna, who is an astronomer. It is "damn cold". And Corde is not interested in coming down. He wants to be with his wife, or move among the celestial bodies of the heaven! He looks at the sky and says, "The sky was tense with stars, but not so tense as he was, in his breast. Everything overhead was in equilibrium, kept in place by mutual tensions." Perhaps, Corde is comparing the tension that he himself is suffering due to the chaos of the world, to the harmony visible in the heavens.

Jonathan Wilson writes that "moving between heaven and earth, between the coldness of the stars and that of the "death house" ( p. 311), between intimation of transcendence and mortality, Corde momentarily feels that he would like to remain suspended, gazing into the enveloping star lit darkness, rather than return to earth."<sup>25</sup>

Definitely the book ends with a reaffirmation of life and a will to transcend the world, which can no longer sustain the interest of Albert Corde:

Through these distortions you saw objects, forms, partial realities. The rest was to be felt. And it wasn't only that you felt, but that you were drawn to feel and to penetrate further, as if you were being informed that what was spread over

you had to do with your existence, down to the very blood and the crystal forms inside your bones.  
( p. 311)

The culmination, as in all Bellow's novels, is lyrical, but unconvincing. It looks artificial, as though something had been juxtaposed for the sake of an ending. But this failure is the result of the total dryness experienced throughout the book. One is naturally inclined to agree with Jonathan Wilson's observation, "Unfortunately, as far as the vitality of The Dean's December is concerned, when the "personal history" is discarded, so too are all those mesmerizing and edifying bitches and bullies, who so enliven the novels in which they appear, what we are left with in The Dean's December is a series of dry intellectual messages: Bellow's Weltanschauung without Bellow's world."<sup>26</sup>

#### Post-script

In all his novels, the Bellovian dilemma remains the same. The same problems are discussed - sometimes intensely, sometimes not. From Mr. Sammler's Planet to The Dean's December, we find the same Bellow urging us to live, in a world which has turned utterly pessimistic.

Mr. Sammler's Planet is often considered to be different from the rest, though it is only superficially. Mr. Sammler, after living the horror of Nazi regime feels contempt for a generation, existing in verbal harangues on the establishment, is only natural. But, the focus of the book is different.

Mr. Sammler, even after seeing the dark side of his world, still wants to live, for he wants to complete his contract, a contract about which every man knows in his heart.

Humboldt's Gift is different in that sense. For, Citrine is not reaffirming his faith in life, but in death, at the end. This actually is a radical change. Perhaps, Saul Bellow's only book in which we find his whole philosophy just turned upside down.

The Dean's December, the last book to be discussed seems to say that in a totalitarian as well as in a democratic set-up, life is tough. Yet, man must continue to live. Perhaps, to transcend the quotidian and rise up to the stars.

Except for Humboldt's Gift, in the rest of the books one finds Bellow being preoccupied with the same obsession. Humboldt's Gift does not look different, superficially, for death cannot be discussed without discussing existence. And the pains and pleasures of existence is the wellspring of Bellow's canon.

### Footnotes

1. Jonathan Wilson, On Bellow's Planet, London: Associated University Press, 1985, p. 143.
2. *ibid.* pp. 143-44.
3. John J. Clayton, Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968, pp. 253-54, 260.
4. Daniel Fuchs, Saul Bellow: Vision and Revision, Durham: Duke University Press, 1984, p. 208.
5. *ibid.* p. 208.
6. *ibid.*
7. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 144.
8. *ibid.*
9. Daniel Fuchs, *op.cit.*, p. 233.
10. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 163.
11. Daniel Fuchs, *op.cit.*, p. 235.
12. *ibid.*
13. *ibid.* p. 233.
14. *ibid.*
15. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 158.
16. *ibid.* p. 161.
17. *ibid.* p. 166.
18. *ibid.* p. 161.
19. Daniel Fuchs, *op.cit.*, p. 234.
20. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 171.

21. Daniel Fuchs, *op.cit.*, p. 306.
22. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p.36-37.
23. *ibid.*
24. *ibid.* p. 33.
25. *ibid.* p. 38.
26. *ibid.* p. 35.

Chapter V - Conclusion

---

Return and Reaffirmation

---

From the readings of Saul Bellow's texts it becomes clear that he has a central vision. All his novels exemplify this. Saul Bellow in his works, creates a universe, which bear testimony to his vision. Jonathan Wilson quoting Isaiah Berlin, divides writers and thinkers according to a figurative interpretation of the hedgehog and the fox. According to this, on one side are those who:

relate everything to a single central vision, one system less or more coherent or articulate, in terms of which, they understand, think and feel ... and, on the other side, .. those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory. Connected, if at all, only in some de facto way... The first kind of intellectual and artistic personality belongs to hedgehog, the second to the foxes; and without insisting on a rigid classification, we may, without too much fear of contradiction, say that, in this sense Dante belongs to the first category, Shakespeare to the second; Plato, Lucretius, Pascal, Hegel, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Proust are, in varying degrees, hedgehogs; Herodotus, Aristotle, Montaigne, Erasmus, Moliere, Goethe, Pushkin, Balzac, Joyce are foxes!<sup>1</sup>

Saul Bellow's works definitely have a "foxy" appearance. This is because so many issues, independent of each other are discussed in the works. Another reason is the flexibility



of the text to accommodate different layers of interpretation. Herzog, according to Jonathan Wilson, is a novel about a man freeing himself from a paralysing obsession with his ex-wife.<sup>2</sup> Nobody can refute this. But everybody knows that Herzog is something more. Or take Tony Tarrner, who believes that Bellow's characters are American protagonists caught in a dilemma of identity and independence. But, we know that Bellow is merely deploying a specific situation to project a universal truth. Precisely it is because of these things that Bellow's novels get a 'foxy' appearance.

Jonathan Wilson says that "despite the foxy appearance of Saul Bellow's novels, in which an unusually wide range of seemingly disparate issues are discussed, his fiction is, I would suggest, the work of a hedgehog. For, like Berlin's novelists/hedgehogs, Dostoevsky and Proust, Bellow's novels articulate a system, a single vision of the world."<sup>3</sup>

Analysing each novel deeply, we find the issues that Bellow confronts are the same. The protagonists change, the situations differ, but the issues remain perennial. Now, what is the central issue, or the focus of Bellow's novels? It can be worded simply: The world is hostile, it is suffocating, it is strangulating, and catalysing this process is the knowledge, that life is meaningless. Yet, Bellow says, there is an inherent lust in every man for life.

What is life? What am I, a speck in the mighty cosmos, an inconsequent microcosm, doing here? All Bellow's heroes are baffled by this question, and all Bellow's heroes fall back dazed, unable to comprehend the ultimate truth.

For four decades, Bellow wrestles with this question: What is existence? Joseph in Dangling Man, Allbee in The Victim, Augie March, Henderson, and Wilhelm in Seize the Day. All of them are puzzled by this, and so are Sammler, Herzog, and Albert Corde. All these characters are entirely different, each one facing a specific situation, each one coming up with his own resolution. But there is, in these characters, a unity in diversity. All of them transcend their immediate quotidian reality and stretches their arms towards the incomprehensible, ultimate truth. And unfortunately all of them fail. For, they have to fail. For they are not gods, but mere mortals, bound by flesh and blood, and driven by immortal longings.

But Bellow's heroes in their quest can triumph only when the ultimate riddle of life is solved by mankind. Their defeat is not unique, but universal, their defeat is not ignoble, but it has a halo of its own. It levitates them from the level of the ordinary to the extraordinary. It clubs them together with all time great philosophers, who

throughout the innumerable centuries, grappled with this question of questions, and ended up defeated, humiliated, and confused.

The opposite of triumph need not always be defeat. For defeat can always be the stepping stone towards success. It is despair. The state of ultimate rejection. The phase of utter hopelessness, embalmed by the fear of persecution. A no exit situation. And all Bellow's heroes are desperate. But this despair does not lead them to suicide, nor does it lead them to rejection of life. This is where Bellow's heroes are different.

They may not be able to unravel the mystery of life. Perhaps, the jigsaw puzzle of existence is beyond their comprehension. A child is not aware of the biology of mammary glands, as it sucks its mother's breast. It is an instinctive action. And so to exist, one need not know the ultimate truth behind the facade of existence. It is enough that you exist. This is what Bellow's heroes do. They render meaning to a meaningless existence.

Daniel Fuchs writes:

The central thrust of Bellow's fiction is to deny nihilism, immoralism, and the aesthetic view. He wishes to make art possible for life. Where the artist hero sought isolation, the Bellow protagonist longs for community and ironic distance gives way to the nearness of confession.<sup>4</sup>

Jonathan Wilson notes,

Submerged in this harsh, unaccommodating world, Bellow's heroes persistently try to imagine a better one. While they are being persecuted, cheated, betrayed, or humiliated by their fellowmen, Bellow's heroes yet protest that, against all the evidence, the world must be at least half governed by a set of values that are positive and rewarding. Denying any objective validity to their own negative experience of the world, the heroes imagine a world of truth, order, harmony, and love to which they aspire, and to which they are sentimentally attached, but in which they never arrive.<sup>5</sup>

Or as Lionel Trilling pointed out, "the idea that the norm of life should be one of order and peace, honour and beauty" is an idea that we associate with Shakespeare and not with our apocalyptic twentieth-century novelists. According to Trilling, Bellow is almost unique in his positive assertions, so that as readers we are so shocked by his position that "we respond with discomfort and embarrassment."<sup>6</sup>

Joseph, in Dangling Man decides to join the army, Augie March is positive about the axial lines of life to which any man can return at any time, Henderson wants to study medicine, join some missionaries and come to India to treat patients, Wilhelm transcends sorrow. Herzog is at peace with himself, having understood the "strength behind simple desires". Sammler decides to continue to live, to meet the terms of the contract, about which everyman in his innermost heart knows. Albert Corde wants to stay

on top of Mount Palomar, peeping into the eternity.

The only problem is Asa Leventhal, in The Victim. But, then, who the real hero of that novel is always debatable. One often feels that Kirby Allbee is the hero. For, he is the one who suffers the Bellovian dilemma of existence. Asa Leventhal is a passive man, moaning about his wife, contented to live in a self created cocoon. Kirby Allbee suffers the vagaries of fate. His wife is lost. He is thrown out of job. Drunkard, womaniser, and what not. Yet, at the end we find him coming to terms with life, or as he says, "I am the one who comes to terms with whoever runs things."

A closer look reveals that this is the resolution all Bellow's heroes take. Herzog's discovery of the simple strength of simple desires, Henderson's quest for service, Joseph's determination to place himself at the army's disposal, are all essentially same... coming to terms with life. A reaffirmation of the faith in life.

The only book which stands differently is Humboldt's Gift. The difference is not fundamental. In fact the issues are same. Where it differs is, from which side of eternity you look at it. Charlie Citrine believes that death is the black surface in the mirror, needed to reflect life.

And at the end Charlie Citrine too reaffirms his faith. But not his faith in life, but his faith in death. If one views life and death, as two sides of the same coin - existence - then Charlie Citrine's resolution is no different from other Bellow's heroes. The difference, as stated earlier, is just in the angle from where it is viewed.

Critics, always look for some sort of growth in writers. Growth is an integral part of existence. The writers in course of time can change their attitudes, outlook or even their styles. But as far as Bellow is concerned it is difficult to discuss a growth that is obvious. Though the characters and situation change, we find the same imponderables facing us again and again. The same characters, in different garbs, telling the same facts, in different language, in different methods. Jonathan Wilson says rightly:

What we apprehend in Bellow's fiction is not, however, a protagonist who is merely the sum of his ideas but one whose "mind" - a mixture of memory, fantasy, creative imagination, and ideas - becomes the substance of the novel. It is the mind of a highly unique individual. To a man the central characters in Bellow claim not to know "who they are". As such they easily become receptacles for ideas, for they are constantly testing out versions of reality or of identity in an apparent attempt to solve their own "identity" and "reality" problems.<sup>7</sup>

This is not the case of just one character. This is the case of everyone. Joseph, Herzog, Sammler, Citrine, Augie

Henderson. In every one of these novels, we move more through the mind, of the inner world of the protagonists, which like a cistern is filled with ideas, events only to be systematically emptied in the next moment. To establish their identity, it seems inevitable that they have to try and discard all available masks.

Jonathan Wilson feels that there is a change, a drastic change from Herzog onwards. The change is not in style. The changes, according to him is in the characters. He writes,

From Herzog onwards, thanks to their ability to change reality into language - or any kind of sophisticated internal musings - Bellow's heroes no longer struggle with the fact that they are being paralysed, bullied, cheated, repressed, oppressed, or in some vital way restricted either by an individual, a group of individuals, or society as a whole. Instead they seem almost grateful to find themselves in the state of being that they know catapults them into higher states of mind. Bellow's late heroes give up on trying to solve the insoluble problems of their existence.

In this context Jonathan Wilson is wrong. There is no perceptible difference between pre-Herzog and post-Herzog heroes. The ability of the heroes to change reality into language or any kind of sophisticated internal musings, is not at all a post-Herzog phenomena. This ability we find in almost all Bellow's heroes. Joseph, Bellow's first hero changes reality into language through his diary. Asa Leventhal, recaptures memories in his language. For, The Victim

is basically his memories and musings. Wilhelm does the same in Seize the Day. Augie March explains to his friend Clem Tambow in vivid terms, his concepts about axial lines of life. Henderson's change in outlook towards his life, is best reflected in his letter to his wife Lily. So the claim that ability to translate reality into language or internal musings is a post-Herzog development carries no truth.

Jonathan Wilson also claims that Bellow's late heroes give up trying to solve the insoluble problems of their existence. That is true. But not only Bellow's late heroes, all heroes of Bellow, give up the quest to unravel life and instead decides to live. All of them may have different reasons, to return to life. But what is essential is their return to life. As was stated earlier, all of them give up their quest, for they know that they are chasing an impossible dream.

Jonathan Wilson claims that post-Herzog heroes do not suffer. Except Charlie Citrine in Humboldt's Gift, all the rest suffers. They react to the events in the society. Albert Corde writes on Chicago's darker side in Hampers, a journal. He also strives hard to bring to book the murderers of one



of his students, for which he gets branded as a racist. Sammler goes to the police station to lodge a complaint against the pick pocket. He occasionally lectures to students. Post-Herzog heroes do not live a secluded life. Especially Artur Sammler and Albert Corde.

But Charlie Citrine is different. He is the only Bellow hero, who transcends the quotidian reality that he can view almost everything with detachment. When he is humiliated by the criminal Cantabile, forced at the gun point, to watch him loosen his bowels, Citrine finds it easy to switch out and think about human conditions in general. On one occasion, we find him saying that he can even manage without money. As the novel proceeds, we find him getting more and more detached to the world. But this detachment is not born out of dejection. It is an outgrowth of his quest. For Charlie Citrine it is a lust for death, not a lust for life. In this respect, he stand out as the black sheep in Bellow's fold.

But does this lust for death indicate that Bellow has turned volte face and is embracing the concepts of existentialism, which considers life absurd and nauseous. Does it mean that Bellow has switched outlooks, ever since he made Herzog say, "Let us set aside the fact that such convictions in the mouths of safe, comfortable people playing at crisis,

alienation, apocalypse and desperation, make me sick"(p.386)  
Is Bellow embracing what he rejected, ridiculed once?

All these apprehensions are misplaced. It stems from a pathological view, that reads death as the end-all. This fear psychosis is a product of the material outlook, which rejects man's spiritual and metaphysical discussion as nonsense. The faux pas in reading nihilistic, pessimistic, degenerating tendencies in the conviction 'lust for death', is committed from man's neurotic obsession, that one craves for death, only when life becomes unbearable. What they don't realise is that the desire for death could be the result of man's unquenching quest to unravel the mystery of existence. They cannot imagine a Nachiketas, turning down boons of imperial luxury, for the sake of the ultimate truth. It is this impotence which forces a misreading of Bellow's hero's action.

Charlie Citrine is not a modern Nachiketas, but a Nachiketas in the making. It is his irrepressible urge to fathom the unknown depths of existence that makes him crave for death. It blossoms, not out of dejection, but out of a hunger for knowledge. Thus Bellow is again rejecting the fundamentals of modern man's misery, that Sartre and others propounded. For Charlie Citrine the world is neither nauseating nor is it charming. It attracts him not. Neither does

it repulse him. He is a cut above its stranglehold. Charlie Citrine's deep longing for death, reflects not the craving for the doom, but the striving for the apocalypse.

Four decades of writing and Bellow's lust for life has not diminished, nor his problems with it. From agony to ecstasy, from pathos to humour, from philosophy to polemics, he swings, but like a pendulum, governed by the laws of simple harmonic motion, bridled by the axial lines of life, Bellow's canon oscillates in a specific philosophical frame. No attempt to catapult out of this frame is discernible, for Bellow knows that it would only bring his whole Weltanschauung down. So we hear again and again Bellow's heroes' cry, a cry rising from the deep recesses of their heart, grun-tu-molani, grun-tu-molani (I want to live, I want to live). Life may be the dance of damned in the catacombs of horror, life may be a hopeless trek in a dreary desert, with the burning sun to break your loneliness, life may be the excruciating pain in the torture chambers, from where the clocks were thrown out, but still, if only for a fleeting second, Bellow's heroes want to live, to live, for they are conscious that life in itself is life's greatest gift.

\* \* \*

## Footnotes

1. Jonathan Wilson, On Bellow's Planet, London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1985, p. 13.
2. *ibid.* p. 130.
3. *ibid.* p. 13.
4. Daniel Fuchs, Saul Bellow: Vision and Revision, Durham: Duke University Press, 1984, p. 9.
5. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 19.
6. Liong Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity, London: Oxford University Press, 1972, pp. 19, 41.
7. Jonathan Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 22.
8. *ibid.* p. 142.

## B I B L I O G R A P H Y

### Saul Bellow's Works

Saul Bellow

Dangling Man, New York: Meridian, 1942

\_\_\_\_\_ The Victim, New York: The Vanguard Press  
Inc., 1947.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Adventures of Augie March, New York:  
The Viking Press, 1953.

\_\_\_\_\_ Seize the Day, New York: The Viking Press, 1956.

\_\_\_\_\_ Henderson, The Rain King, New York: The  
Viking Press, 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_ Herzog, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications  
Inc., 1964.

\_\_\_\_\_ Mosby's Memoirs & Other Stories, New York:  
The Viking Press, 1968.

\_\_\_\_\_ Mr. Sammler's Planet, New York: The Viking  
Press, 1969.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Last Analysis, New York: The Viking  
Press, 1970.

\_\_\_\_\_ Humboldt's Gift, New York: The Viking Press,  
1975.

\_\_\_\_\_ To Jerusalem and Back: A Personal Account,  
New York: The Viking Press, 1976.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Dean's December, London: The Alison  
Press/Martin Secker and Warburger Ltd.,  
1982.

\_\_\_\_\_ More Die of Heart Break, New York: Dell  
Publishing, 1987.

\_\_\_\_\_ Theft : A Novella, New York: Penguin  
Books, 1988.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Bellarosa Connection, New York:  
Penguin Books, 1989.

Major Works on Saul Bellow

- Baumbach, Jonathan      The Landscape of Nightmare, New York: New York University Press, 1965.
- Bhattacharya, Sailesh R.      An Enquiry into the Fundamentals of Existentialism, Calcutta: Firma KLM Pvt Ltd., 1979.
- Bradbury, Malcolm      Saul Bellow, London and New York: Methuen, 1982.
- Clayton, John J.      Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1979.
- Cohen Sara B.      Saul Bellow's Enigmatic Laughter, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974.
- Domergues, Pierre      Saul Bellow, Paris: Grasset, 1967.
- Doughlas, Mary      Purity and Danger, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966
- Dutton, Robert R.      Saul Bellow, New York, Twayne, 1971.
- Eisinger, Chester E.      Fiction of the Forties, Chicago: Illinois, London: University of Chicago Press, 1963.
- Fuchs, Daniel      Saul Bellow: Vision and Revision: Durham: Duke University Press, 1984.
- Galloway, David      The Absurd Hero in American Fiction: Updike, Styron, Bellow, Salinger, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1966.
- Guttman, Allen      The Jewish Writer in America: Assimilation and the Crisis of Identity, New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Harper, Howard      Desperate Faith: Study of Bellow, Salinger, Mailer, Baldwin and Updike, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967.

- Harris, Mark Saul Bellow: Drumlin Woodchuck, Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1980.
- Hassan, Ihab Radical Innocence: Studies in Contemporary American Novel, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961.
- Howe, Irving (ed.) Saul Bellow, Herzog: Text and Criticism, New York: Viking Press, 1976.
- Josipovici, Gabriel The World and the Book: A Study of Modern Fiction, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968.
- Kermode, Frank 'Bellow's Herzog', in Frank Kermode, Continuities, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968.
- Klein, Marcus After Alienation: American Novels in Mid-Century, Mountain View, C.A.: World, 1962.
- Malin, Irving Jews and Americans, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (ed.) Saul Bellow and the Critics, New York: New York University Press, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Saul Bellow's Fiction, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969.
- Mc Cadden Joseph F. The Flight from Women in Fiction of Saul Bellow, Washington DC: University Press of America, 1980.
- Mc Connell, Frank D. Four Post-War American Novelists, Chicago, Illinois, London: University of Chicago Press, 1977.
- Nooren, Robert G. Saul Bellow: A Reference Guide, Boston, Massachusetts, G.K. Hall, 1978.
- Opdahl, Keith The Novels of Saul Bellow: An Introduction, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967.

- Porter, M. Gilbert Whence the Power? The Artistry and Humanity in Saul Bellow, Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1974.
- Reinhardt, Grossman Phenomenology and Existentialism, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.
- Rodrigues, Eusebio L. Quest for the Human: An Exploration of Saul Bellow's Fiction, East Brunswick, N.J., London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1981.
- Rout, Earl Saul Bellow, Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (ed.) Saul Bellow: A Collection of Critical Essays, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1975.
- Sartre, Jean Paul Existentialism and Human Emotions, New York: Castle
- Scheer-Schaller, Brigitte Saul Bellow, New York: Ungar, 1972.
- Schraepen, Edmond Comedy in Saul Bellow's Works, Liege, Belgium, University of Liege Press, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (ed.) Saul Bellow and His Works, Brussels: Vrije Universiteit, 1978.
- Scott, Nathan A. Three American Moralists, Mailer, Bellow, Trilling, Notre Dame, Indiana; University of Notre Dame Press, 1973.
- Tamer, Tony Saul Bellow, Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_ City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970, London: Jonathan Cape, 1971.
- Trilling, Lionel Sincerity and Authenticity, London: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Warnock, Mary Existentialism, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.



Wilson, Jonathan

On Bellow's Planet: Readings from the  
Dark Side, London and Toronto:  
Associated University Presses, 1985.

Wisse, Ruth R.

The Schlemel as Modern Hero, Chicago:  
University of Chicago Press, 1971.

\* \* \*

