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# The role of the family in the novels of Saul Bellow from 1964 to 1982

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**2015-01-20**
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# THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN THE NOVELS OF SAUL BELLOW FROM 1964 TO 1982

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

Johannesburg 1988

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the relationship of the protagonist with his family in four novels by Saul Bellow. It devotes a chapter to each of the novels published by Bellow between 1964 and 1982, namely Herzog, Mr Sammler's Planet, Humboldt's Gift and The Dean's December. It considers the contributions of individual members of the protagonist's family to the major themes of these novels and discusses the ways in which these characters help or hinder the protagonist's spiritual growth. This study also traces recurring patterns of family relationships and their implications.

While the family still acts as a cohesive force, its diminished ability to offer the same degree of support in the protagonist's adult life as it did in his childhood adds to his difficulty in coping in an increasingly fragmented society. Bellow exploits the deep-seated values and expectations traditionally associated with the family to add weight to the relationships which the protagonist has with those around him and to heighten the effect of disruptions in his interpersonal relationships.

*DECLARATION*

I declare that this dissertation *is my own*, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been *submitted before for* any degree or examination in any other University.

(Yvonne Duff)

Twenty ninth day of July, 1988.

To my own family for their help and encouragement.

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PREFACE

In the novels of Saul Bellow from 1964 to 1982 the family provides a structure which links many of the diverse characters through whom the consciousness of the protagonist is shaped. Various literary critics have considered the roles of a number of the characters which are discussed in this dissertation, but a place remained for an examination of these characters in the context of the family unit. In addition to many of the major characters being members of the protagonist's family, the functions which they perform are often dependent upon the fact that they have a *particular family relationship* with him. Not only is the position of a character within the protagonist's family relevant to his development in each particular novel, but certain patterns of family relationships are repeated in different novels and may be seen to highlight ideas and themes to which Bellow returns.

I have concentrated on the four novels published by Saul Bellow from 1964 to 1982 in order to keep the dissertation sharply focused. In this dissertation I have sought to examine not only the way in which individual members of the protagonist's family contribute to the meaning of each novel, but also the *significance* of patterns of family relationships which are common to two or more of the novels.

I wish to thank my supervisor, Mr S.G.Foskin for his patience and guidance in the task of shaping the argument in this dissertation.

I would like to acknowledge the financial assistance of the HSRC who awarded me a bursary for this research.

In this dissertation I have used the following abbreviations in page references:

| | |
|---|---|
| H | Herzog: Text and Criticism |
| MSP | Mr Sammler's Planet |
| HG | Humboldt's Gift |
| DD | The Dean's December |

Herzog: Text and Criticism

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The family occupies a prominent position in most of Saul Bellow's novels. The fact that Saul Bellow generally chooses to set his protagonist - and therefore much of the action - in the context of a family structure warrants consideration, for the family is more than a random collection of characters. Family relationship provides a context for the action which possesses intrinsic meaning and which elicits certain social expectations. The family is ideally expected to be a source of mutual support and unconditional love and to provide a sense of belonging. The fact that the protagonist's childhood home typically does this whereas the family which he experiences in adulthood fails to do so, points to the demise of the family as a source of support over recent decades.

Because characters who are blood relatives have usually been known to one another for long periods of time, the relationships tend to be deeper. This sense of long-term intimacy is particularly vividly portrayed in The Dean's December in Corde's feelings for Elfrida and Maxie. Family relationships brought about through marriage also seem permanent even though the form of the relationship changes. Where divorces have occurred, the protagonist is unable to return to life as if he had never been married. Apart from having been changed by the influence of his spouse in the course of their marriage, there are often children born to the couple which bind them irrevocably together. The sense of responsibility which the

protagonist feels for his minor children prompts him to grapple with, rather than run away from his particular problems. This is certainly the case for Moses Herzog and Charlie Citrine. A similar sense of responsibility for the welfare of children is evident even after the children reach their majority. In the parent-child relationships of Elya Gruner and his children, Wallace and Angela, and Elfrida and her son, Mason, there is a sense of obligation on the part of both parents and children, if only vaguely defined. Wallace and Angela Gruner remain financially dependent on their father, differing from Sammler and Shula who are also reliant on Elya, in that the children view Elya's financial support as a right rather than a privilege. Elya Gruner in turn expects his children to exercise responsibility in the lifestyles made possible through his money, hence his disappointment in both his children. Mason Zachner expects his mother to remain single after she is widowed and to devote her attention to his needs. While she remarries in spite of his wishes, she lives modestly in order to ensure a large legacy for Mason after her death.

The nature of the protagonist's family relationships plays an important part in establishing the set of circumstances which allow him the time for reflection and which may even prompt his mind to function in the particular manner unique to each novel. In Herzog a traumatic second divorce throws the grieving Moses Herzog into a state of extreme mental excitation, verging on a mental breakdown. It is this state of emotional turmoil and hyperactive intellectual clarity which drives Herzog to reappraise his life and to pit various theories of human existence against each other in the context of his own experience. The isolation which makes Albert Corde's extended meditation

possible in *The Dean's December* originates in a family crisis. Corde and his Rumanian wife, Minna, rush from Chicago to Bucharest to be with her mother who lies dying in a state hospital. Corde is left alone for a large proportion of their stay in Bucharest on account of Minna's preoccupation with her mother's dying and also due to the existence of both linguistic and cultural barriers between him and her family. This solitude allows Corde time to reflect at length on his recent past actions, their consequences and on his peculiar way of apprehending the world. Charlie Citrine, in *Humboldt's Gift* is largely estranged from his family. Divorced and seldom seeing his children, the le[illegible]oness of his family relationships parallels the superficiality of most of his present relationships. In contrast to this, his upbringing in a supportive, emotionally charged Jewish household provides him with a deep need for unconditional [illegible] and a sense of belonging. This need undergi[illegible] studies in anthroposophy which promises wholeness through a renewal of the individual's relationship with the dead (among whom are many Charlie holds dearest). Artur Sammler, hero of *Mr Sammler's Planet*, is financially supported by his nephew, Dr Gruner, and is thereby given the leisure to observe the world and formulate [illegible]s ideas about it, largely through interactio[illegible]ith his extended family.

The family unit (nuclear and extended) provides the protagonist with an environment in which relationships automatically have meaning. Fragmentation of the family is usually accompanied by a corresponding disruption of a sense of the [illegible]eaningfulness and coherence of life. This is particularly the case in *Herzog*, as indicated previously, wh[illegible] the break-up of Herzog's second marriage results in extreme mental

anguish and drives him to challenge the world views imposed on him by philosophers and associates alike. Only when he has *succeeded in* putting his relationships with the various members of his family *into proper perspective*, is he able to establish a tentative sense of stability in his life.

Family ties are an important cohesive force, compelling characters, who would quite possibly otherwise choose not to associate with each other or the protagonist, to interact in ways which affect the structure and themes of Bellow's novels. Through his contact with his family, a group of people linked by blood and social convention rather than common interests, the protagonist is exposed to a diversity of views and possible learning experiences. These may range from the outlook on life of Valeria Rarosh to that of Mason Zachner in The Dean's December, or from the lessons in death given by Mother Herzog to the insights into the nature of humanity unwittingly given by Madeleine and her lover, Gersbach, in Herzog. While the family acts to bring diverse characters together, the tensions which inevitably result from their different and even conflicting interests highlight the distractive nature of life. This may be demonstrated with reference to Mr Sammler's Planet. Most of the main characters in this novel are members of Sammler's extended family. This bond draws together a collection of individuals, whose actions and concerns are predominantly self-centred. Hence the flood which results from Wallace's intensive search for his father's illegal abortion remuneration, Margotta's unannounced departure from Gruner's home in the only transport available at the time with her most recent romantic interest, and Shula's leaving Sammler's shoes to bake in the oven, necessitating a detour on the way

to the hospital to fetch new shoes from home, all combine to hinder Sammler from reaching Gruner with an important message before the latter's death.

Mr Sammler's Planet is not the only novel in which the family serves to thwart the protagonist as he strives towards his particular goal. Charlie Citrine, in Humboldt's Gift, is involved in a legal wrangle over money with his ex-wife, Denise. While the necessity of money is acknowledged, Charlie's battle with Denise and their lawyers over finances is arguably one of the chief causes of his continued lack of creativity and is a major distracting force as he seeks to devote his attention to his study of anthroposophy. The bonds which a family presupposes paradoxically may serve to emphasise the alienation of the protagonist. In The Dean's December, the antagonistic viewpoint to that of Corde with regard to his ideas on society and its proper relation to justice and humanity, is strikingly personified in the form of his nephew, Mason. This sharp conflict of ideology is made all the more painful for Corde by an unwillingness on his own part to contribute towards discord within the family. Corde is generally not understood by others when he speaks his mind, as he does in his articles on Chicago. His sense of isolation in this regard is highlighted when even his sister, Elfrida, is unable to see things from his perspective.

The attitudes of the main character's family towards him are significant in that they affect our perception of him. Sammler's status as a confessor figure is predominantly the result of his family's attitude towards him as they confide their secrets to him. Corde frequently refers to the way in which he is perceived by his family, his self-effacement serving

to engage the reader's sympathy. Mason's unreasonable antagonism towards Corde is particularly effective in enhancing Corde's image as a reasonable, feeling man. Herzog's interaction with his family, particularly as regards Madelaine, serves acutely to bring to light his masochistic tendencies. Julius is able affectionately to point out the danger inherent in Charlie's other-worldliness which causes him to be attracted to women who seek to harm him.

The relationship which the protagonist has with his family may act as a comment on, or may supply material for the evolution of ideas and life philosophies to be found, particularly in Mr Sammler's Planet, Herzog and The Dean's December, where the family is of greater prominence than in Humboldt's Gift. The members of Sammler's family, for example, with their self-centred concerns, indicate the unreadiness of the world for the ideas and views held by Sammler and, to an even greater extent, those held by Dr Lal. In each of the novels the protagonist generalises from the specific situation in which he finds himself, and relates it to general philosophies. In this way the death of Corde's mother-in-law leads him to more general reflections on the subject of death, or a confession of fetishism to Sammler by a relative leads him to consider the ignominy of possessing only a minor as opposed to a major vice. Herzog's rejection of the Waste Land outlook as a general principle foreshadows his rejection of his own self-indulgence in pessimism.

The extent to which the Jewish identity of the family in Bellow's novels is of significance will be considered in view of the fact that The Dean's December is the only novel among those being studied in which the protagonist and his family are clearly

not Jewish. Saul Bellow is far from being a formula writer, but certain patterns of family relationships do recur from one novel to another. In both Herzog and Humboldt's Gift, for example, the parents of the protagonist are immigrant Russian Jews and the emotional climate in their respective homes is almost identical. Later, the ex-wives, Madeleine and Denise, exploit their former husbands financially. In both Mr Sammler's Planet and The Dean's December there are examples of corrupt and excessive sexuality in particular members of the family. There is also a rebellious youth who is representative of young radicals, in both families. The bearing which such similarities have on the concerns of each novel will be discussed.

Although the four novels under consideration are not the only ones in which the family plays a significant role, I chose to concentrate on them for the following reasons. Firstly, the confinement is intended to keep the dissertation sharply focused while simultaneously allowing enough scope for demonstrations of similarity and diversity in Saul Bellow's use of the family in his novels. Secondly, this selection restricts the main argument to Bellow's more mature works. Bellow himself states that he prefers not to talk about his early novels as he feels that he became a different person once he had broken through the barrier of outside expectations about what his writing should be like and established his own distinctive style.[1] He says that in The Adventures of Augie March, when he threw off the restraints in this respect, he "went too far."[2] In Herzog he learned "to tame and restrain" that style.[3] From Herzog his work also takes on a deeper seriousness than in, for example, The Adventures of Augie March or Henderson the Rain King.

He relies less on spectacle (hunting lizards with eagles, encounters with lions, esoteric rain-making ceremonies and the like) to develop his meaning.

Many of the characters which are discussed in this dissertation have been examined in varying degrees of detail by critics. On the whole, however, their interest in them has been as characters in general and not within the context of their family relationships. For this reason it would appear that some characters have been barely touched upon and others such as Herzog's children, disregarded entirely. There is also very little criticism which directly considers the role of the family as a structure in Bellow's novels and what there is tends to be cursory. For example, Robert R.Dutton and Eusebio L.Rodrigues both briefly consider the significance of the husband - wife relationships. With Saul Bellow's increased emphasis on ideas, there has accordingly been a tendency on the part of critics, especially with reference to the novels written after Herzog, to focus on what the protagonist thinks and says - his ideas - rather than the protagonist's interaction with other characters or the influence of characters on the ideas. This is a pity as the characters are not there simply for the mediation of ideas. Saul Bellow's characterisation remains excellent and deserves close attention. Two critics whom I have found to be particularly useful in my research are J.J.Clayton and Daniel Fuchs. Both these critics seem to have a strong feeling for the way in which the characters with whom the protagonist comes into contact contribute to his development and to the meaning of the novel. Critics such as Judith Schefflar, Esther Marie Mackintosh and Sanford Radner have been of great use in illuminating the roles of the female family members in these novels.

In this dissertation a chapter has been devoted to each of the four novels under consideration. I have sought to examine each novel within the framework of the *following considerations:* firstly, the functions of individual members of the protagonist's family with particular reference to the ways in which they interrelate with him to contribute to the meaning of the novel; secondly, the characteristics of family groups and members *which are common* to more than one novel; and thirdly, shifts which take place in the role of the family from one novel to another.

2. HERZOG

Having mismanaged his life to the extent that he now *finds himself* on the verge of a mental breakdown, Moses Herzog, the protagonist in this novel, is forced to review and deal with the events of his past which have brought him to *this point*. This task, which he has avoided undertaking for years, is necessary if he is to salvage some hope for a less disasterous future. Arising from his "need to explain, to have it out, to justify, to put in perspective, to clarify, to make amends," (H p. 2) Herzog surveys his life from childhood to the present, interspersing recollections of past events and conversations with ideas relating to a multiplicity of subjects. A host of idiosyncratic characters, many of whom appear in but one or two encounters with Herzog in the novel, are conjured up *to bring out* particular aspects of Herzog's personal life. Apart from Ramona, Herzog's present lover, and Valentine Gersbach, Herzog's ex-best friend, there are only three distinct *sets of characters* who consistently reappear throughout the narrative and who may be inferred as having been of greater significance in Herzog's development than have the other characters. They are the family into which Herzog was born and the families which he establishes through his two marriages.

From the beginning of Herzog's self-examination, his failure in family relationships constitutes a major part of his self-condemnation:

> Resuming his self-examination, he admitted that he had been a bad husband - twice. Daisy, his first wife, ha had treated miserably. Madelaine, his second, had tried to do <u>him</u> in. To his son and his daughter he was a *loving* but bad father. To his own parents he had been an ungrateful child. To his country, an indifferent citizen. To his brothers and sister, affectionate but remote. With his *friends*, an egoist. *With love* lazy. With brightness, dull. With power, passive. With his own soul, evasive.
>
> Satisfied with his own severity, positively enjoying the hardness and factual rigour of his judgment, he lay on his sofa, his arms rising behind him, his legs extended without aim.
>
> (H pp. 4-5)

While Herzog reels off his catalogue of sins very glibly in this, his first extended meditation, I would *suggest* that this very glibness, as well as being symptomatic of his masochistic tendencies, is a defence against experiencing the full anguish of such an appraisal, and that much of the novel concerns Herzog's coming to terms with each of these *self-indictments*. *In* the course of the novel, Herzog must seek redemption in each of these relationships mentioned so that he can learn genuinely to love, develop a non-masochistic stance towards authority figures and gain inner peace through having a *realistic self image*.

In <u>Saul Bellow In Defense of Man</u>, John J.Clayton writes:

> The fable underlying Bellow's fiction begins in a ghetto-Eden. The specifically Jewish *character* of the setting is important but not essential. What is essential is the combination of suffering and family love, the combination of a brutal exterior world with a close family world - *though one of* conflict.[4]

Clayton's observation is particularly appropriate in the case of Herzog. Herzog is deeply attached to the memory of a childhood which centres almost exclusively in the experience of his poverty-stricken and suffering family, with only brief mention of friends and associates outside the family circle. Referring to "the figures of his childhood,"[2] Brigitte Scheer-Schäzler writes:

> It seems plain that the stature of these people and the diminishing importance of all others indicate Herzog's love for them, reveal the richness of emotion they continue to elicit from him....[3]

Herzog's mother, who dies in his adolescence, is the figure most closely associated with this period of Herzog's life. Just as Herzog describes his childhood as "my ancient times. Remoter than Egypt," (H p. 140) so Mother Herzog is identified with historical remoteness. She is Herzog's "long-dead mother," (H p. 3) "one of the dead dead, without effect on the new Generation," (H p. 134) with a mind which was "archaic, filled with old legends, with angels and demons." (H p. 147) Such temporal distancing reflects the extent to which Herzog feels the loss of his childhood; the adult Herzog is banished from the childhood "ghetto Eden" and the security which he knew then. It also lends Herzog's memories of his relationship with his mother a universal resonance. Early in the novel, for example, Herzog remembers her cleaning his cheeks with a handkerchief moistened at her mouth. He goes on to generalise this experience: "All children have cheeks and all mothers spittle to wipe them tenderly." (H p. 33) Such generalisations convey the idea that Herzog's life experience is of more than merely personal significance, that there are universal issues at stake. In the above mentioned

example the issue of the relevance of remembering the dead and their actions *is raised*. *Herzog* vacillates between a rational rejection of, and an emotional surrender to this memory involving his mother. As an adult he thinks that he should live life as his own with no recourse to the beloved of the past, yet he cannot push aside the fact that he involuntarily does remember her and is deeply stirred by the remembrance. *Herzog* cannot decide whether memories such as that of his mother's tender little acts are relevant to life, but *fears* that they are "probably symptoms of disorder." (ibid.) His forceful endeavour to nullify the memory *of what seems* to be a rather innocuous gesture on the part of his mother contrasts strongly with his general eagerness *as regards remembering* the past. This suggests that he is striving to suppress more than just this small reminiscence and that should his memories of his mother's relationship with him take command, matters which threaten his self concept might emerge. It would appear that owing to his present state of instability, in which Herzog lacks the mental strength which he once had to repress so-called "unfinished business", his psyche now pushes *these unresolved* problems to the forefront of his consciousness. Herzog's mind flits from the diagnosis of his *memories* to the *sinfulness* of constantly thinking of death. That the two are related will be demonstrated in a later *consideration of the* influence of Herzog's parents in the evolution of his attitude towards death. Herzog closes this reverie with a quotation from Blake's poem, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell": "Drive your cart and you plow over the bones of the dead." (ibid.) In so saying he concedes the inevitability of thinking of one's dead as one goes through life, and is able to dismiss thoughts of his mother for the moment. It may be seen that Herzog *uses generalisations* to avoid focusing on the specific issues which disturb him.

Brigitte Schaer-Ziegler draws on an aspect of the relationship between Herzog and his mother when she assesses the role of memory in Herzog:

> Reminiscing for Herzog means a reliving of his former life to find a new attitude toward the past, to himself, and therefore inevitably to the present. When he remembers his selfishness and callousness toward his mother, he now experiences the full measure of guilt that he formerly evaded. He "reaches" the present a wiser man, having at the same time - through his renewed and intensified suffering - atoned for his old guilt.[4]

If memory of a generalised sort plays such a regenerative role in Herzog, his memories of his family are of heightened importance for he tries to repress those over all others. They are accordingly the seat of the greatest guilt and those which he most needs imaginatively to encounter, thereby breaking the stranglehold of the past on him.

It has been stated earlier that Mother Herzog is the figure most closely associated with Herzog's childhood. This is not only because his experience of her lasted for only a little longer than the duration of his childhood, but because she more than anyone else, loved and cosseted him. Ruth R.Wisse's comments on the danger of the Jewish family situation are most pertinent in regard to the relationship between Herzog and his mother:

> The family situation, smothering the boy in more love than he would easily find again; endowing him with greater importance than his peers would concede him; placing him at the centre of a comprehended circle, whereas he would subsequently find himself floating around some ill-defined circumference; all this blesses the child with a secure sense of

self even as it bedevils his later abilities to "get along."[5]

Mother Herzog is exceedingly proud of her boy, Herzog. She even boasts of him to the formidable Aunt Zipporah: "What a little tongue it has. Moshele could talk to the President." (H p. 96) In his state of psychological disorder Herzog wonders with wry amusement what he would say to the President. He recognises that he does not have the capacity for communication that his mother projected, limiting himself now to letters never to be sent.

Mother Herzog's love for Moses is shown to be sacrificial in nature. Herzog recalls with pain an incident in which his mother, breathing heavily and obviously worn out, is pulling him across the snow on a sled and is admonished by an old woman not to sacrifice her strength to children. Herzog pretends not to understand her words to avoid having to get off the sled and his mother continues to drag the spoilt child along. Such love on her part, while being an admirable example of altruism, bears a number of negative ramifications for its object, Herzog. Through giving of herself regardless of the cost to her, she unwittingly reinforces self-centredness in the boy, encouraging insensitivity towards others when his own material or psychological comfort is threatened. The outworking of this may be seen in Herzog's absorption with his own hurt feelings when he annoys his father to the extent that the latter threatens to shoot him out of despair and outrage at the attitude of smug self-reproach which he perceives. Only years later in retrospect is Herzog able to recognise the egotism within himself at that time: "...and he, confused, reluctant, burning, stung because his misery was not recognised in his father's house (his monstrous egotism making its peculiar demands)...."

(H pp. 249-250) Through the experience of selfless love for him as a child, Herzog comes to perceive love as his right, ·ner than something which he needs to earn. Sandor Hi ·lstein observes this as he shrieks, "All he wants is everybody should love him. If not, *he's* going to scream and holler." (H p. 83) One of the most significant consequences of Mother Herzog's wholehearted exertion for Herzog is that failure on his part to *comply reciprocally with any* wish of hers appears ungrateful and is a source of guilt which persists long into adulthood. Mother Herzog's desire for Herzog was for him to become a rabbi. While trying on a suit of flashy new clothes in New York, Herzog reflects on how far he is from her ideal:

> Herzog's mother had had a weakness for Jews with handsome beards. In her family too, all the elders had beards that were thick and rich, full of religion. She wanted Moses to become a rabbi and he seemed to himself gruesomely unlike a rabbi now in the *trunks* and straw hat, his face charged with heavy sadness, foolish utter longing of which a religious life might have purged him.
>
> (H p. 22)

Herzog's guilt can be seen in the use of the word "gruesomely" to describe how unlike a rabbi he looks. In addition, in thinking that "a religious life might *have* purged him" of the causes of his present unhappiness, it appears that Herzog at least partly blames his troubles on his rejection of the life which his mother desired *for him*.

Ruth R.Wisse points out that most recent literature in which the stereotypical Jewish mother-son relationship is considered, "emphasise[s] the uses of love as a means of domination, and the exaggerated expectations of success as a catalyst to failure."[6] She goes on to note of Saul Bellow's writing, however, that:

> ...the example of Herzog would lead us to temper this generalization somewhat, since it suggests that demands for love and success may be constructive as well as the opposite. ... Bellow is one of the very few *American* Jewish writers to consider and present another interpretation of the same observable phenomena: that love and those expectations explain *why Herzog* "characteristically, obstinately, defiantly, blindly but without sufficient courage or intelligence tried to be a marvellous Herzog, a Herzog who, perhaps *clumsily*, tried to live out marvellous qualities vaguely comprehended." [7]

Mother Herzog's influence is not solely harmful. When placed in a correct perspective, the sense of personal worth which Mother Herzog instils in Herzog can be a weapon against despair, for Herzog can never fully accept the idea of total personal worthlessness. It is *this sense of his own* - of each individual's own - value which keeps him striving towards recovery. While he may not succeed in becoming "a marvellous Herzog," (H p. 93) *Herzog does succeed in doing some good* and is able to recognise it as such: "But this good is no phony. I know it isn't. I swear it." (H p. 207)

In her thesis entitled "The Women Characters in the Novels of Saul Bellow", Esther Marie Mackintosh categorises Mother Herzog under the heading of "Defeated Women." In the dissertation abstract she writes:

> The *Defeated Women*, including such characters as the mothers of Augie March and Moses Herzog, are generally weak, unattractive, often sick or tired, victimized, submissive and sad. [8]

While Mother Herzog may indeed exhibit these characteristics, Mackintosh has failed to mention a quiet, but deep-seated resilience in her which raises her from the level of the absolute helplessness of Augie March's mother. Sarah Herzog unobtrusively asserts her will in the realm of her ambitions for her children despite opposition from Aunt Zipporah and even Father Herzog:

> "They'll take what they like from you, those laite," said Zipporah. "Now isn't it time you used your head? ... Make a legitimate living. Let your Helen and your Shura go to work. Sell the piano. Cut expenses."
> "Why shouldn't the children study if they have intelligence, talent," said Mother Herzog.
> "If they're smart, all the better for my brother," said Zipporah. "It's too hard for him - wearing himself out for spoiled princes and princesses."
> She had Papa on her side, then. His craving for help was deep, bottomless.
>
> (*H* p. 146)

Mother Herzog might cry of Aunt Zipporah, "Why is she my enemy! What does she want? I have no strength to fight her," (H p. 147) but the fact remains that her *children*, unlike *Zipporah's*, receive an education rather than going straight out to work. Herzog inherits a good measure of this same spirit of resistance, and it helps him greatly in his struggle against his enemies and at times against his own depressive tendencies as he doggedly presses on to achieve equilibrium. In spite of the fact that he is emotionally devastated by the circumstances surrounding his divorce from Madeleine, believing that his life "was, as the phrase goes, ruined," (H p. 3) Herzog is able to denounce the facile propagation of the Waste Land outlook in a letter to a fellow scholar: "I can't accept this foolish dreariness. We

are talking about the whole life of mankind. The subject is too great, too deep for such weakness, cowardice - too deep, too great...." (H p. 75)

Mother Herzog's deep commitment to her family at times finds expression in her simple devotion to her daily chores. Herzog recalls her response to the news of her brother's death: "She wept all day. But in the morning *she cooked* the oatmeal nevertheless." (H p. 139) Herzog exhibits a similar consciousness of responsibility towards his children, and it is an awareness of *this which acts as a substantial* motive for his recovery: "He could not allow himself to die yet. The children needed him. His duty was to live. To be sane, and to live, and to look after the kids." (H p. 27)

One of the most important functions of Mother Herzog concerns her part in the development of Herzog's conceptualization of death, one of the central themes of the novel. It is she who gives Herzog his first painful lessons in mortality. The first takes place *when she faints* on reading of her brother Mikhail's death and unintentionally confronts Herzog with a facsimile of the physical manifestations of death. Moses is forced to *recognise his helplessness* in the face of what appears to be death, although in this case Mother Herzog recovers and resumes her part in the daily routine of the family.

Herzog recalls two further occasions when Mother Herzog tried to educate him regarding death. He does this after witnessing the three criminal trials. (H pp. 225-240) As he leaves the courtroom, Herzog is struck by an overwhelming sense of evil. Evil and death are closely related in Herzog. In Saul Bellow in Defence of Man *John J.Clayton* argues that the Bellow hero's sense of alienation springs directly from his

anxiety over death and his unwillingness to accept the evil inherent within himself. Because the Bellow hero perceives death as the result of evil, he projects his own evil onto others, so seeing them as evil and *necessarily separate from* him. In thus fleeing from evil and its resultant death, the hero becomes alienated both *from others and* from self.[9] Herzog considers himself to be radically different from the criminals whom he has been watching: "A man who looked so fine and humane would be outside police jurisdiction, immune to lower forms of *suffering and* punishment." (H p. 230) Outside the courtroom, however, he suddenly realises that the burning, bitter feeling which he is experiencing is a sensation of evil which has come from within himself, not from the people whom he has just been observing:

> My whole life beating against its boundaries, and the force of balked longings coming back as stinging poison. Evil, evil, evil...! Excited, characteristic, ecstatic love turning to evil.
>
> (H p. 232)

It is in this context that Herzog recalls the occasion when his mother *did not* lie to him about his own nature, did not lead him to think that he could be more than human, "a marvellous *Herzog" and thus escape* death, the ultimate consequence of being human. Herzog recalls Mother Herzog "proving" that Adam was created from the ground by rubbing her palm with her finger until something resembling earth appeared. In repeating her action in the courthouse, Herzog symbolically reminds himself of "what a human being *really* is." (H p. 233) He is of the same human stuff as those whose trials he has just been watching, and *implicit in such* an acknowledgement is a reminder of his having the same capacity for evil. Herzog then goes on to remember the *period during* which it was

clear that *Mother Herzog was dying*, Herzog's refusal to accept that his mother was dying is indicative of his denial of death in general. Bellow's juxtaposition of Herzog's unwillingness to *recognise Mother Herzog's* state and his contrasting total absorption with philosophy and history suggests that Herzog retreats into the realm of ideas in an effort to deny those parts of reality which are distasteful to him. This may be seen in the following passage:

> The week of her death, also in winter. This happened in Chicago, and Herzog was sixteen years old, nearly a young man. It occurred on the West Side. She was dying. Evidently Moses wanted no part of that. He was already a free thinker.
>
> (H p. 233)

Herzog's scholarship is exposed as an ideal construction which he employs to evade the issue of his own finitude.[10] Mother Herzog's death, coming at the time of Father Herzog's increasing Americanization and Herzog's submersion in the world of scholarship *can be seen to echo symbolically* the passing of traditional Jewish culture as the prime means of making the world comprehensible:

> But by and by he [Father Herzog] became an entrapreneur again.... He shaved his mustache. And then Mama started to die. And I was in the kitchen winter nights, studying The Decline of the West.
>
> (H p. 233)

Herzog recalls having difficulty in recognising his mother's eyes, an indication that he is deliberately distancing himself from her. In retrospect he realises that this was because he was actively resisting her attempt to communicate to him the reality of death:

> Her hair had to be cut during her illness, and this made those eyes hard to recognize. Or no, the shortness of her hair merely made their message simpler: My son, this is death. I chose not to read this text.
>
> (H p. 234)

Mother Herzog, fully cognisant of her imminent death, knows that there will be a "day of reckoning" for *Herzog when* he will have to confront the issue of death and she tries to comfort him. (ibid.) Herzog now sees his refusal to acknowledge both her dying and her gestures of comfort towards him as having been a spiritual burden to her, similar to the physical burden which he was to her when he had refused to get off his sled as a child in Montreal. The analogy points to the sense of guilt which pervades Herzog's relationship with his dying mother. Herzog recalls coming into her room in the closing moments of her life. It is significant that he is carrying his school books, symbolising his intellectual ambitions and his denial of death, as he begins to speak to her. She silences him by holding up her blue finger nails and nodding to him "as if to say 'That's right, Moses, I am dying now.'" (ibid.) Horrified by the unmistakable evidence that "*she was beginning* to turn into earth," he sits at her bedside as she wishes, but consciously distracts his attention to the sounds of the street outside. (ibid.) Herzog's memories of his behaviour at his mother's death bed bring him face to face with the way in which his denial of death prevented him from intimately and genuinely sharing with her when she clearly needed his love and attention. While much yet has to take place as regards Herzog's restabilisation, he comes a little closer to reality and redemption in his confession that he was not the all-loving, tender-hearted individual which he would like to believe himself to have been, but "a bookish, callow boy." (H p. 235) He admits to himself rather that "it

was his brother Willie, after all, who had the tender heart." (ibid.)

Herzog's memories of Mother Herzog, in a sense, act as a barometer of his guilt. As his state of disorder *deepens, his subconscious* releases repressed memories which implicate him with increasing measures of guilt. These memories appear to constitute a means of expiation. Having owned *his guilt towards her, Herzog* is able, in his final letter to her, drafted at Ludeyville, to think of her in a spirit of love, peace and a new self-acceptance. The thought of his mother is once again related to the thoughts of death, but this time his meditations on the subject are characterised by tranquillity rather than anxiety or horror. He begins: "The life you gave me has been curious ... and perhaps the death I must inherit will turn out to be even more profoundly curious." (H p. 326) At last Herzog is able to refrain from *agitated, fearful concern* in the presence of the mystery of death, neither anxiously striving to avoid nor to hasten it. Having overcome catastrophic thinking as regards death, *Herzog can look upon his* life simply as "curious" rather than as the complete disaster which he describes it as at the beginning of the novel. He has learnt to be satisfied with the life which is his, rather than indulging in pointless self-flagellation for a life which he has failed to make for himself. He writes: "But I am still on the same side of eternity as ever. It's just as well, for I have certain things still to do. And without noise, I hope." (ibid.) In his being aware of still having tasks to perform, his life appears to be beginning to take on a *coherent, if only vaguely planned form,* instead of consisting of merely a series of frenzied, impulsive decisions and actions. In this letter to the late Mother Herzog, who reminds him of his failed ambitions, Herzog calmly notes the disappearance of

some of his oldest goals, implicitly suggesting that he will strive no longer to feed the ambitious spirit which characterised him as a youth. Herzog looks back on his recent emotional turmoil, facing squarely the fact of his own mismanagement, but with muted optimism goes on to write: "I may turn out to be not such a terrible hopeless fool as everyone, as you, as I myself suspected." (ibid.) Herzog's newfound wisdom is apparent in that *he does not now* claim to have fully gained mastery over these emotions, but recognises that through averting total disaster, the future holds a modest hope for him. Herzog's peace *with life and* with death is reflected in his new peace with the memory of his dead mother. His guilt atoned for, he is able to send her and the company of the dead his most loving wish: "So...Peace'" (ibid.)

The transformation of Herzog's memory of his mother from one of guilt and repression to one of love constitutes a major aspect of his progress towards a tentative peace with the world and himself. To this end Herzog also has to negotiate the memory of his father in *overcoming his state of* psychological imbalance and facing up to the evil within himself which he possessed but refused to acknowledge in the past. Father Herzog's influence over Herzog extends from the latter's childhood and beyond Father Herzog's death into the central time span of the novel. Herzog's attitude towards his father exhibits different characteristics through his lifetime and these can be divided into three distinct phases. The first phase incorporates Herzog's childhood in which he loves and worships Father Herzog as "a sacred *being, a king.*" (H p. 147) The second phase appears to commence somewhere after Herzog's mother's death and extends until Father Herzog's death. During this period Herzog's relationship with *his father* is characterised by conflict stemming on the one hand

from Herzog's thinly disguised arrogance and masochism, and on the other hand from Father Herzog's inability to tolerate these attributes. In the third phase Herzog looks back on this relationship with a mixture of nostalgia and remorse, his recent suffering having given him greater - though not complete - insight into his past behaviour. In an attempt to reduce the guilt which he feels, he identifies, or overidentifies, with his late father to the extent that he takes Father Herzog's revolver in order to shoot Madeleine and Gersbach for what he perceives as their crimes against him and his daughter.

Initially, as is the case with Mother Herzog, Father Herzog is linked to Herzog's mythical golden age of childhood. Early in the novel, for example, Herzog remembers how his father used to buy overripe pears for train journeys to the seaside and would dextrously peel them on the train. This memory is typified by the tone of longing characteristic of Herzog's childhood reminiscences. The impact which Father Herzog had on his son is reflected in the vividness with which he is described and in the way in which the experience of the whole Herzog family is shown to arise from the fluctuating fortunes of Father Herzog.

The section of Herzog devoted to an extended account of the protagonist's childhood begins with a description of the typical series of events following the dumping by the police of the Herzogs' drunken boarder on their outside stairs. Awakened by Ravitch's tuneless singing, the whole family's attention focuses on Father Herzog's response to the situation. It is immediately apparent that Father Herzog is an emotional man, showing something of the "wider range of human feelings" to which Herzog's heart is so greatly attached. (H p. 140) In this scene Father Herzog makes a show of anger and unwillingness to help

Ravitch, but cannot conceal his grudging amusement and pity. Having previously lived as a gentleman in Russia, it is an affront to his pride to have to care for the soiled, degraded Ravitch. Herzog notes that the drunken boarder was to Father Herzog "one of the symbols of his changed condition." (H p. 136) Ravitch's plaintive refrain, "I'm broke without a penny / Vich nobody can deny," (ibid.) reinforces Father Herzog's awareness of his own desperate financial circumstances. In spite of this, Father Herzog manifests pity and kindness towards Ravitch and helps him to his room. Clayton shows how this scene sheds light on Herzog's relationship with his father:

> Ravitch, the old, drunken, self-pitying immigrant is in the novel to help explain Herzog's sacrifice of suffering. Ravitch suffered and told his story; in response Herzog's father pitied and cared for him. In an analogous way, perhaps Herzog's suffering will produce pity and love.[11]

This argument is borne out as one considers Herzog's expectations of his father in their encounter which leads to Father Herzog becoming so angry with his son that he threatens to shoot him. Herzog comes to his father as "a prodigal son, admitting the worst and asking the old man's mercy...." (H p. 249) Having as it were told his story to Father Herzog and not received the desired response of pity and financial aid, Herzog is "confused, reluctant, burning, stung because his misery was not recognized in his father's house...." (ibid.) Herzog had only taken cognisance of his father's capacity for sympathy, failing to consider that Father Herzog would expect a greater sense of self-respect from his son than he would from a mere boarder.

Father Herzog is a picture of the archetypal Jew as described by Bellow in his article, "Laughter in the Ghetto".[12] He is a mixture of "desperation and high style," his cracked coat, once lined with fox fur, a reminder of his self-appointed affluent destiny. (*H* p. 137) Father Herzog walks with such dignity and flamboyance that his manner of walking is described as a "one-man Jewish march...." (ibid.) In "Laughter in the Ghetto" Bellow writes:

> The Jews of the ghetto found themselves involved 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. Every male child was potentially the Messiah.[13]

Father Herzog has failed at everything - even bootlegging - but he retains a *special sense of* self-worth. Clayton says of him: "It is from this father-king that Herzog derives his belief in the dignity of the individual."[14] Herzog may question the value of the individual personality from a theoretical viewpoint, but the example of his father supersedes this. He states: "Personalities are good only for comic relief. But I am still a slave to Papa's pain." (H p. 149) Father Herzog clings to the sense of his own value because he intuitively recognises that to deny his worth would be to place *himself on the side of death*. At the lowest moment in his life he indignantly rejects the alternatives to tackling life on his own terms:

> What should I do, then! Work for the burial society? Like a man of seventy? Only fit to sit at deathbeds? If Wash corpses? If Or should I go to the cemetery and wheedle mourners for a nickel? To say El malai rachamim. If Let the earth open and swallow me up!
>
> (H p. 149)

Father Herzog's refusal to deny that he matters keeps him from crumbling in the face of adversity. Similarly, Herzog declares that his own life is ruined and suffers eloquently, but he never surrenders to despair and permanent disorder. In spite of his self-pity and hypochondria Herzog's main drive is always for recovery.

Father Herzog's buoyancy is not facile optimism. Herzog describes himself as a slave to his father's pain, suggesting that this is the main characteristic of his life. Father Herzog's pain is evidence of his lifelong struggle against the forces of moha.[15] He is shown to be engaged in a constant search for business opportunities "to rescue him from illegality." (H p. 138) He has in fact been making a living in ways disapproved of by society for years. In Russia he lived as a gentleman for ten years on forged papers. Such illegality was, however not uncommon as Herzog intimates: "But many gentlemen lived on forged papers." (H p. 136) Through Father Herzog, Bellow is able to demonstrate in a sympathetic way, Sandor Himmelstein's harsh declaration that "We're all whores in this world," (H p. 89) and the prostituto's inferred message to the magistrate, "Your authority and my degeneracy are one and the same." (H p. 229) Father Herzog is only a bootlegger, a criminal in the eyes of society, because he "lacks the cheating imagination of a successful businessman." (H p. 138) Like every other human being, Father Herzog struggles for a living, using whatever resources are available

to him. Herzog recalls of him when they lived on Napoleon Street: "His father was desperate and frightened, but obstinately fighting."(H p. 140) Through the comical, pitiful yet strangely noble figure of Father Herzog, Bellow portrays what J.J.Clayton calls "the eternal joke - human striving the irresistible force, meha the immovable object."[16]

Father Herzog's impressive list of failed attempts at becoming a business entrepreneur and his refusal to give up his lofty ambitions in spite of this, forms part of a pattern in the Herzog family. There seems to be a legacy of failure on a grand scale which is passed down through the generations in the Herzog family. Grandfather Herzog dreams of becoming wealthy by amassing large amounts of Czarist currency in preparation for the return to power of the Romanoffs. The demise of his aspirations is reified by the fact that the roubles become nothing more than playthings for Willie and Moses Herzog. Father Herzog somehow manages to fail in every business enterprise which he undertakes, even as a sack manufacturer during the war when it was thought that no one could do so. Just as Father Herzog repeatedly fails in business, so Herzog successively fails in his interpersonal relationships. His greatest ambition in this regard centres in establishing the model family with Madeleine in the Berkshires and is a dismal failure. In retrospect Herzog ruefully thinks:

> The husband - a beautiful soul - the exceptional wife, the angelic child and the perfect friends all dwelt in the Berkshires together. The learned professor sat at his studies. ...Oh, he had really been asking for it.
>
> (H p. 125)

The failure of this ideal is particularly painful because Herzog considers himself to be a family man.

While Father Herzog's bootlegging may be viewed as a symbol firstly of his failure to achieve success in a *socially approved manner* and secondly of his struggle against those forces in the universe inimical to human survival, for Herzog it functions primarily as a means of drawing the family together *into a closely-knit* unit. The details of Father Herzog's bootlegging comprise a secret which sets Herzog's family apart from society as a whole. This isolating function is shown clearly when Herzog vividly recalls as a child having to conceal his father's occupation from outsiders.[17] It is within the confines of this isolated family that Herzog feels completely secure and this could well have been a significant factor in his agreeing to Madeleine's initial idea of cutting themselves off from society at large in the *Berkshires. The bonding* function of Father Herzog's bootlegging lasts long after his death. Near the end of the novel when Willie has his doubts as to Herzog's mental stability, Herzog *asks him, "Was it any more* fantastic for me to have those wives, children, to move to a place like this than for Papa to have been a bootlegger? We never thought he was mad." (H p. 333) Reminded of their common peculiar way of life as children in the context of Father Herzog's bootlegging, Willie is prepared to allow that Herzog's unconventionality is not necessarily insanity.

As a child Moses Herzog worships his father and internalises many of his characteristics with the *result that he bears a closer resemblance to Father* Herzog than do any of his siblings. Apart from a tendency towards failure regarding his highest goals, Herzog internalises his father's *incapacity for* violence. While Father Herzog would like to consider

himself capable of violence at least in self-defence as he tries to intimate when challenged by Aunt Zipporah, Herzog knows all too well that "all of Papa's violence went into the drama of his life, into family strife, and sentiment." (H p. 146) Similarly, *Herzog fantasises about what might have happened had* he physically assaulted Madeleine when she announced her decision to divorce him, but is shown to be unable to actualise such violence. Another trait *which Herzog* inherits from his father is a desire to surrender at least part of the responsibility for his life to others from time to time. While still in Russia, Father Herzog relies heavily on his brother in law, Mikhail, to finance his business schemes. According to Aunt Zipporah he went through two substantial dowries at that time. In America he tries to borrow money from his wealthy sister, Zipporah, to finance his bootlegging. Herzog says of him, "His craving for help was deep, bottomless." (ibid.) Early in the novel *Herzog records going to see* Dr. Emmerich in the hopes that he will be found unwell enough to be sent to hospital for a while where "he would not have to look after himself." (H p. 13) *Looking back on his reasons* for staying with Sandor Himmelstein at the time of his divorce from Madeleine, Herzog is able to see how damaging this tendency is: "Very well, Moshe Herzog - if you must be pitiable, sue for aid and succour, you will put yourself always, inevitably, in the hands of these angry spirits." (H p. 86) Herzog's resistance to Will's suggestion of "supervised rest" when Will visits him at Ludeyville is indicative of his recovery in that he now wishes to retain responsibility for himself.

Both Herzog and his father are stubborn, emotional and egocentric men. Much of the conflict which characterises their relationship in Herzog's adulthood stems from this similarity. It takes the deep shock

engendered by his witnessing the trial of a woman accused of murdering her child, for Herzog to begin remembering these tempestuous years at any length. Prior to this, Herzog dwells predominantly on memories of his father at the time when Herzog was dependant upon him and their relationship was harmonious. From the time that Herzog sets out for Chicago to the time he leaves it for the Berkshires, he engages in symbolic acts of *identification with his late father* which are coupled with memories of the troubled times with Father Herzog and which appear to act as a means of reducing his guilt. Before Herzog leaves for Chicago to deal with Madeleine and Gersbach, he changes from his flashy new clothes into an old seersucker suit, so identifying with the old values of his father. The critic J.J.Clayton elaborates:

> Herzog's actions in Chicago emanate from this projected guilt onto Madeleine and Gersbach. To go there he dresses in an old seersucker suit; that is, he leaves his decadent self (madras jacket) behind and symbolically becomes his father. He returns to his dead father's house, the prodigal son, the lost sheep, to take up his father's values, to judge with his father's criteria.[18]

Clayton further suggests that Herzog's visit to his late father's house, *now occupied by his aged* stepmother, Aunt Taube, but still endowed with a strong sense of the presence of Father Herzog, is a symbolic visit to the underworld.[19] Herzog's entire visit to Chicago has much to do with the resolution of his attitude towards death. While driving to Taube's house Herzog specifically refers to it as the house in which his father died. He recounts the story of Father Herzog's death using the same soil imagery with which he described Mother Herzog's death: "and then he died, and that vivid blood of his turned to soil, in all the

shrunken passages of his body." (H p. 242) Father Herzog is seen as a representative of the tragedy of the human condition which consists of only a brief but meaning-infused *episode between two voids*. In keeping with the generalisation of Father Herzog's death and in contrast with the personal anguish expressed in his description of Mother Herzog's death, Herzog's tone here is one of pathos and quiet sadness rather than horror at death.

Once at the late Jonah Herzog's house, while waiting for Aunt Taube in the parlour, Herzog studies photographs portraying three generations of male Herzogs in the form of Marco, *himself* and Father Herzog. The genuine innocence of Herzog's son is juxtaposed with the counterfeit innocence which Herzog cultivated by refusing to acknowledge the existence of evil within himself. The photograph of Father Herzog is void of evidence *of those qualities which Herzog* has recalled with fondness: "his troubled masculine defiance, his one-time impetuousness or passionate protest." (H p. 245) This reinforces the impression that Herzog is acting on impulses which originate in his own psyche rather than *in objective reality*. As he sits and pretends to listen to Aunt Taube, Herzog's mind wanders compulsively to thoughts of his late father, concentrating on the events of the day on which Father Herzog threatens to shoot him.

After a lifetime of struggling for financial security, in his old age Father Herzog becomes obsessed with the problem of how to divide his estate among his children. Because concern for money has become an ingrained part of his personality, the *apportionment* of wealth directly follows his apportionment of esteem towards his children. The frequency with which he changes his will reflects the impossibility of reducing his complex feelings towards his children to

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a monetary value. Herzog notes, for example, the mixture of love and disapproval which his father felt for him in his last years alive: "his heart ached angrily *because of me.*" (H p. 248) Father Herzog's attitude towards money exemplifies the words of Mintouchian, one of the most important reality teachers in The Adventures of Augie March: "Why do you have to think that the thing that kills you is the thing you stand *for? Because* you are the author of your death."[20] Father Herzog confides to Herzog that but for the fact that he owed Tante Taube too much money, he should have divorced her long since. As a result of his marriage to the placid, deadly slow Tante Taube, Father Herzog is gradually robbed of much of his spiritual and emotional vitality. Herzog refers to her eyes as the "large, luminous, tame eyes, the eyes that had domesticated Father Herzog...." (H p. 248)

Of the incidents related to his parents that Herzog recalls, a remarkably high proportion are concerned with the subject of death. Reviewing the events leading up to their quarrel, Herzog reflects on the way in which Father Herzog *faced his own* death. Like Mother Herzog, Father Herzog is fully conscious of the nearness of death, but far from accepting this with sorrowful passivity as she did, he suffers a despair which is with him continually. Herzog partakes in the horror with which Father Herzog *refers to his death*, using terms usually reserved for allusions to birth: "I don't know when I'll be delivered." (H p. 249) Herzog is at a loss for words of comfort and resorts to his usual defence mechanism of avoiding the issue, saying, "Don't torment yourself, Papa." (*Ibid.*)

Herzog's mind shifts from the subject of Papa Herzog's despair regarding death to that of his quarrel with Father Herzog, suggesting that the latter also has to

do with death. Already annoyed with Herzog on account of his failed marriage to Daisy and the impending disaster of his liaison with Madeleine, Father Herzog becomes increasingly enraged as he perceives Herzog's affected meekness and then the "angry demand" which his humility masks. (ibid.) Father Herzog banishes him from the house, asserting that he intends to cut Herzog out of his will, and condemning him to the death of the down and out: "Croak in a flophouse." (ibid.) The critic J.J.Clayton identifies the above-mentioned curse on Herzog by his father with the judgement on Aleck, "if you keep this up you'll be in Potter's field." (H p. 229) and with the sleazy hotel in which the child was murdered by his mother.[21] The common factor of sexual licentiousness in these two trials supports Clayton's theory that Father Herzog condemns Herzog for an essentially sexual or Oedipal crime. It is important to note, however, that it is Herzog's petulant reply of "All right, maybe I won't." to Father Herzog's impetuously saying "Go. And don't come .o my funeral." that sends Father Herzog rushing for his revolver. While Father Herzog may be seen as partly to blame for the crisis by making such a suggestion, Herzog (the self-confessed family man) is guilty of disrespect to his father in a patriarchal culture and therefore of violating deeply held family bonds. Father Herzog's reaction to this is illuminated by his earlier response to the mention of his own father's death in a letter from Grandfather Herzog:

> The old man wrote, "Shall I ever see the faces of my children? And who will bury me?" Father Herzog approached the next phrase two or three times, but could not find his full voice. Only a whisper came out. The tears were in his eyes and he suddenly put his hand over his mustached mouth and hurried from the room.
>
> (H p. 138)

Having clearly had a great deal of love for his father and no doubt expecting the same from his son, it is small wonder that Father Herzog is furious at the apparent indifference of Herzog towards his death. Herzog's growth in maturity since this time is reflected in the fact that he now recognises his responsibility for the incident and the "monstrous egotism" behind his wish to be seen as the innocent victim of the world's evil. (H pp. 250-251) It is nevertheless clear that Herzog's masochism yet has to be overcome fully as he not only concurs with his father's appraisal of him, but insists that Father Herzog should have meted out the punishment of death which Herzog irrationally feels that he deserves. Herzog appears to fluctuate between the extremes of embracing excessive guilt or denying that culpability which rightfully is his. Here again, just as he has displaced the sense of the evil within himself onto the outside world in the past, he uses the judgement on him by his father to reinforce his condemnation of Madeleine and Gersbach as demonstrated by Clayton below:

> Moses still feels that the sentence should have been carried out. But he transmutes self-judgement into judgement of Mady and Gersbach; he changes his own sentence of death into theirs. Becoming the father, he takes Father Herzog's antique pistol, wraps it in the Czarist roubles he had played with as a child - thus associating himself with the ancien regime, with traditional values, and returning him to the security of childhood - and he goes off to kill his guilt in the persons of Mady and Gersbach.[22]

Herzog's identification with Father Herzog is emphasised repeatedly during Herzog's visit to Aunt Taube. He is mentioned as having inherited Father Herzog's dexterity and elegance, as have his siblings.

After Herzog has taken the revolver, Aunt Taube perceives him as the image of Father Herzog: "...in Moses she saw Father Herzog again, nervy and hasty, impulsive, suffering." (H p. 253) Aunt Taube sets out Father Herzog's teacup for Herzog from which he drinks before his abrupt departure. This would appear to foreshadow the fact that Herzog is about to recreate something of Father Herzog's experience. The Russian roubles, as well as being a link with the "ancien régime" (H p. 216) are a symbol of illusion. For Grandfather Herzog the money never amounted to more than dream wealth. By placing the revolver in a nest of these roubles, Herzog unconsciously shows that his intended execution of Madeleine and Gersbach is centred in fantasy.

Herzog's view of Madeleine and Gersbach (Gersbach being an extension of Madeleine, having conspired with her to humiliate Herzog) is distorted by a combination of his suffering at their hands and his displacement of the sense of his own evil onto them. Herzog views Madeleine and Gersbach as emotional monsters, incapable of any genuine human affection or concern. He interprets their looking up of June in Gersbach's car while they have an argument as gross child abuse. His conceptualisation of Madeleine and Gersbach is warped to the extent that Herzog irrationally identifies them with a couple whom he observes in court on trial for the murder of the woman's child and, as Clayton puts it, "in horror and self-righteousness flies, as judge and executioner, to Chicago."[31] Clayton points out a number of similarities between Madeleine and Gersbach and the couple on trial to help to account for this identification:

> There are a number of connections between the couple and his [Herzog's] *wife and Gersbach*. Like Gersbach, the girl is lame; like Mady (and like himself), she was sexually abused as a teenager; they had kept the child locked up as Gersbach had locked June up in the car. Of course the differences are enormous, but the similarities help to account for Herzog's *trip to Chicago*.[32]

The replacement of Herzog's fantasy-based image of Madeleine and Gersbach with a reality-based image is set in motion by a sudden flash of insight as he watches Gersbach bath June. Herzog realises that his view of the couple as his great persecutors is an inaccurate one:

> As soon as Herzog saw the actual person giving an actual bath, the reality of it, the tenderness of such a *buffoon* to a little child, his intended violence turned into <u>theatre</u>, into something ludicrous. He was not ready to make such a complete fool of himself. Only self-hatred could lead him to ruin himself because his heart was "broken." How could it be broken by such a pair?
>
> (H p. 256)

Through this experience he comes to perceive his own irrational behaviour which he has previously taken so seriously as "ludicrous" (H p. 256) and can challenge his previous assumption that he had been irreparably hurt by Madeleine and Gersbach. He begins to recognise the role of his own complicity in his injury. It is of great significance that Herzog here recognises the role of "self-hatred" in his misery; he had previously blamed it entirely on the malevolence of Madeleine and Gersbach. In not killing the couple Herzog also demonstrates that his ability to project his sense of evil onto others is limited. Through acknowledging

that those whom he thought of as wholly evil are capable of acts of kindness, Herzog's view of Madeleine and Gersbach and of humanity in general becomes more balanced and tolerant. He declares: "The human soul is an amphibian, and I have touched its sides." (H pp. 257-258) In so doing he shows a new comprehension of the multidimensionality of mankind. Herzog's failure to shoot Madeleine and Gersbach may also be seen as a symbolic re-enactment of Father Herzog's failure to carry out his threat to shoot Herzog. Through an irrational identification with his father, Herzog comes to new insights essential for his spiritual recovery. This suggests that such behaviour transcends pathology for Herzog and supports his later affirmation that his order is to be found in disorder. Through imitating his father's inability to shoot him, Herzog is able to progress beyond the guilt related to his causing the original incident and to be amused at the ironies of that piece of "theatre." (H p. 258) From this point, Herzog increasingly takes responsibility for his emotional state.

After his decision against shooting Madeleine and Gersbach, Herzog ostensibly has no reason for continuing to carry the revolver. He nevertheless deliberately takes it with him the following morning when he intends to do no more than go on an outing with his daughter, June. It would appear that he is once again inviting trouble, for by a freak accident he is arrested for the possession of this unlicensed firearm. Clayton maintains that "it is typical of the 'accidents' moral masochists arrange for themselves."[23] He further argues that through this, Herzog is imitating his father's failure as a bootlegger. Father Herzog was carrying the revolver to no avail on the night on which he was hijacked and beaten up (punished for his attempt at liquor running).[24] Herzog's reflections on Father Herzog's

reasons for buying the revolver show that Herzog's behaviour in Chicago is quixotically modelled on his father's way of coping with his fears:

> *He was almost certain* Jonah Herzog, afraid of the police, of revenue inspectors, or of hoodlums, could not stay away from these enemies. He pursued his terrors and challenged them to blast him (Fear: could he take it? Shock: would he survive?

(H pp. 286-287)

Father Herzog precipitated confrontation with the objects of his fear. Before his decision to come to Chicago, Herzog appears to prefer fleeing from his current problems and mulling over past hurts to dealing with either in a positive manner. He runs away from Ramona and *then from* Libbie and Arnold Sissler, desiring, but fearing the consequences of dependence on their help. In Chicago however, acting symbolically in the guise of his father, Herzog *seeks out and* challenges those people about whom he feels most anxiety. His first goal is to confront Madeleine and Gersbach and to execute them for their sins against him. He sets about preparing for this in an uncharacteristically deliberate way. After finding himself unable to kill them, he visits Phoebe Gersbach to see whether she would be prepared to divorce her husband on the grounds of his adultery with Madeleine and thus give Herzog an ideal opportunity to begin a custody suit. Herzog's "accident" forces a meeting between *himself and Madeleine* at a time when he is at a severe disadvantage, but after initial alarm at the idea of this meeting Herzog realises that "Perhaps that was what he wanted after all, a chance to confront her." (H p. 294) Although he fails in each case to fulfil his original intention, Herzog derives some healing insight, some greater emotional maturity from every one of these encounters. Thus he fails to

kill Madeleine and Gersbach, but *gains* a deeper insight into the nature of the human; he fails to gain an ally in Phoebe Gersbach, but learns to adopt a kindlier, more generous view of her weakness regarding his betrayal at the hands of her husband and Madeleine; he has a bizarre accident which spoils his outing with June, but the accident precipitates a meeting with Madeleine in which he is able to demonstrate a new, healthier, non-masochistic way of relating to her.

While clearly symptomatic of his mental disturbance and sense of guilt, Herzog's symbolic imitation of his father nevertheless functions to force Herzog from his state of *self-pitying passivity into action* which results in his beginning to move, albeit in a roundabout fashion, towards spiritual recovery. The scene in which Herzog observes Gersbach bathing June has been hailed as the turning point of the novel by many critics. While this scene is definitely of importance, such a viewpoint fails to accommodate the fact that Herzog continues to act under the control of his father's memory, in accordance with his irrational "filial idea" (H p. 289) and proceeds to get himself into deeper trouble rather than to show only *increasing signs* of improvement. I would suggest that the turning point of the novel occurs when Herzog declares to himself that his self-indulgent imitation of the father, and by *implication* his peculiar masochistic behaviour in general, must stop:

> But all this has got to stop. By this he meant such things as this ride in the squad car. His filial idea (practically Chinese) of carrying an ugly, useless revolver. To hate, to be in a position to do something about it.
>
> (H p. 289)

In rejecting dependence on symbolic imitation of his father, *Herzog* shows that he is abandoning his tendency to hand over the responsibility for his actions to others. His statement of intent to take control of his own *life is a definite* indication of an increase in his emotional maturity.

Herzog marries twice and both of his wives play a major part in revealing various aspects of his personality and in mapping out his psychological development. The significance of his wives differs from that of his parents in that he is able to choose the former. Because Daisy and Madeleine differ from one another so radically, it would appear that in each woman Herzog seeks a particular set of character traits which he feels he requires to complement his own changing needs. In his first wife Daisy, Herzog seeks the orderliness necessary to produce a coherent body of work from his "huge involvement - huge but evidently formless - in the history of human thought." (H p. 127) Remarking on the role of Daisy in relation to the way in which Herzog's memories function in *Herzog*, R.R.Dutton writes:

> ...Herzog's mind is the setting for the action, much of it backward moving. Many of the *events, scenes, and* characters are thus, in terms of good psychiatric dogma, abstractions or symbols of forces that play upon his mind. For example, Daisy, in all her *orderliness*, is a symbolic reflection of his life at the university.[25]

Rodrigues considers that in relation to Herzog's studies of the history of thought, with "her need for system, stability, symmetry, order and containment, Daisy stands for the Enlightenment."[26] In this context he suggests that "Herzog's travels from Daisy to Madeleine parallel the travails of the self as it

journeys from the eighteenth century to our day."[27] Dutton chooses to place emphasis on Herzog's wives in relation to Herzog's psychological development in general as well as to his studies. Herzog says of Daisy: "Stability, symmetry, order, containment were *Daisy's strength.*" (*H p.* 136) Dutton writes:

> Daisy and all she *stands for* are part of Herzog's mind; and Bellow depicts in this relationship the thesis that man can stand only so much reason and order; that he longs for *subjective research*, to stretch himself, to flee from a world cold with intellect alone.[28]

According to Dutton, Daisy is part of a pattern in which Herzog seeks fulfilment through the indulgence of one part of his nature while denying other parts. He traces how Herzog moves from the order and stability of Daisy to the sensuality and emotionality of Sono, the ambition of Madeleine and finally the reassuring sexuality of Ramona. In this context Herzog is on the right track when he wonders whether his string of romances was his real career.

While *Daisy certainly* does embody the nature of Herzog's life in the days leading up to the success of his book Romanticism and Christianity, her role is not limited merely to that of *acting as a symbol for* a part of his past life. Her story is relevant to Herzog's present predicament in that it contributes towards the pattern of betrayal which is evident in Herzog. It is revealed that Herzog is not the only person who has been sexually betrayed. He himself has a series of adulterous affairs while he is married to Daisy and shows little sympathy for any pain which he may cause her through his behaviour. When he discovers that Madeleine has been unfaithful to him, however, he is outraged to the extent that he feels justified in

executing her for her crimes against him (though he conceals his motive behind that of protecting his daughter against supposed abuse by Madeleine). Herzog's lack of fidelity to Daisy makes his declarations of being a victimized innocent ring a little hollow. He is shown to be unwilling to subject himself to the same moral strictures which he places on others, and knowing of his treatment of Daisy shows one that his anguish contains a measure of posturing.

Herzog's desire for a mother figure is apparent in his expectations of Daisy during their marriage. He fully expects Daisy to sacrifice her wishes in the interests of furthering his studies in the same way that he never questioned his right to selfless service from his mother. Daisy's grudging compliance combines with her love of organization to turn her into a symbol of stifling orderliness. It is only years later that Herzog acknowledges his responsibility for her having developed in this way. His growing awareness of his effect on the lives of others rather than only of their effect on his, is indicative of an increased maturity of outlook in Herzog.

As with most of the characters in Herzog Madeleine, Herzog's second wife, is presented predominately through the filter of his memory. Because Madeleine is the catalyst of Herzog's psychological breakdown it is inevitable that the picture which he paints of her will be distorted by his bitterness and his impressions of her will be shaped by his suffering.

Judith Scheffler writes of Madeleine:

> She is portrayed not through her interaction with Herzog, but totally through her impact

> upon his suffering soul. The reader, Herzog, and probably Bellow too, gaze *in wonder* at this female dynamo whose character eludes grasp because she is so uniformly and abstractly threatening.[26]

In view of the fact that Herzog's chief neurotic obsession is his betrayal by Madeleine, it is essential that he comes to adopt a mature, realistic attitude towards her if he is truly to achieve significant psychological growth and healing. Although she is presented with greater complexity and at greater length than many of the other characters in the novel, it would appear that Bellow is more *concerned* with Madeleine as a force than as a fully rounded personality, and with her effect on Herzog than with her development as a character in her own right. R.R. Dutton says of her role:

> Madeleine serves a complex *function* in Bellow's work, but her central purpose is to represent the object of man's pursuit and adoration of what is nebulously called "success." ... Certainly her personality supports the idea. Everyone admires her great beauty; she is vain, demanding everyone's admiration and attention; she insists on *dominating* every situation. Deceitful and nasty to those in her power, she is always looking for new recruits to her standard. She is *especially anxious* to attract those who are ambitious....[27]

The major flaw in Dutton's postulation that Madeleine represents success is that once Herzog has pursued and married (symbolically possessed) her, he proceeds to fail in every important area of his life. His studies *collapse;* his *grasp* of the works of philosophers which he had previously thought he understood weakens, he

loses the approval of his father and siblings through his rejection of Daisy in favour of Madeleine; he finds himself unable to communicate intimately with his son Marco; he is emotionally manipulated and financially exploited by Madeleine and is finally cuckolded under the most humiliating circumstances. I would suggest that rather than success as such, Madeleine represents ambition of the most ruthless, *single-minded kind.* Such ambition is strongly evident in Herzog from the outset of their relationship. Madeleine enters Herzog's life at a time when he has just made his first major mark on the academic world through his book, Romanticism and Christianity. Having established his reputation as a scholar, Herzog plans a second book in which he intends

> ...to wrap the subject up, to pull the carpet from under all other scholars, show them what was what, stun them, expose their triviality once and for all.
>
> (*H p.* 119)

In accordance with the "tougher, more assertive, more ambitious" (H p. 6) tone of this planned book, Herzog rejects the mundane stability offered by Daisy for a more dramatic lifestyle with Madeleine.

> In marrying Madeleine and resigning from the university (because she thought he should), digging in at Ludeyville, he showed a taste and talent also for danger and extremism, for heterodoxy, for ordeals, a fatal attraction to the "City of Destruction."
>
> (ibid.)

The new family unit which Herzog creates by marrying Madeleine is of great importance to him as he visualises himself as hereby creating a model family,

later sardonically described as "...the husband - a beautiful soul - the exceptional wife, the angelic child...." (H p. 125) Through this family unit and in conjunction with his academic research, he intends showing how mankind should fill the emptiness inherent in the private life which has resulted from the "liberation of the masses by production." (ibid.) Reflecting on this period of his life, Herzog wryly comments on the absurdly inflated self concept to which his pride and ambition had led:

> The progress of civilization - indeed, the survival of civilization - depended on the successes Moses E.Herzog. And in treating him as Madeleine injured a great project in the eyes of Moses E.Herzog was so grotesque and deplorable the experience of Moses E.Herzog.
>
> (ibid.)

It is entirely fitting that Herzog should woo and marry Madeleine as she possesses and even magnifies many of the qualities in which he takes such pride. Both are vain regarding their physical appearance. Herzog says of Madeleine, "The satisfaction she took in herself was positively plural - imperial." (H p. 21) The narrator states of Herzog, "he was vain of his muscles, the breadth and strength of his hands, the smoothness of his skin...." (H p. 12) As outlined above, Herzog is proud of his intellectual achievements. Madeleine too takes an immense pride in her studies as is clear on the occasion of Shapiro's visit. Herzog identifies her central ambition at this time as being "to take my place in the learned world." (H p. 76) Both Herzog and Madeleine are reputed to be very charming people.

While Madeleine with all her magnificent qualities complements Herzog's pride, she serves a further purpose in appealing to his masochistic tendencies. In marrying Madeleine, Herzog deliberately sets himself up for her to "trip him, bring him low, knock him sprawling and kick out his brains with a murderous bitch foot." (H p. 93) In the course of their courtship Madeleine's authoritarian nature is clearly recognisable. Watching her putting on her make-up Herzog notes: "Despite the soft rings of feminine flesh, there was already something discernibly dictatorial about that extended throat." (H p. 111) Madeleine is frequently described as "masterful" and Herzog feels powerless to assert himself when confronted by her will. This may be illustrated in his reaction to Madeleine's demand during their courtship that they be married in the Church and their children be baptized and brought up as Roman Catholics: "Moses gave a dumb half-nod. Compared with her he felt static, without temperament." (H p. 117)

Herzog enters marriage knowing that he will be dominated and bullied by Madeleine. The account of their courtship makes this clear, in addition to the fact that Herzog rejects his Japanese mistress, Sono Oguki, in favour of a relationship with Madeleine. He states his reasons as follows:

> To tell the truth, I never had it so good, he wrote. But I lacked the strength of character to bear such joy. That was hardly a joke. When a man's breast feels like a cage from which all the dark birds have flown - he is free, he is light. And he longs to have his vultures back again. He wants his customary struggles, his nameless, empty works, his anger, his afflictions and his sins.
>
> (H p. 169)

Presumably, through marriage to Madeleine, he succeeds in repossessing his "dark birds." Even when he dominates her, Herzog appears to be doing so at least partly in order to invite retribution at a later date. This may be seen in his comment on her anger at being *required* by him to make love with him on the bathroom floor at Ludeyville:

> She complied, but he could see when she lay down on the old tiles that she was in a rage. Much good could come of that.
>
> (H p. 219)

When Madeleine breaks the news that she wants a divorce, Herzog sees it as the natural and fitting outcome of his behaviour: "What he was about to *suffer, he deserved;* he had *sinned* long and hard; he had earned it." (H pp. 8-9) This suggests that his ridiculously inflated ambition and his marriage relationship with Madeleine are *his way of inviting* punishment for his sins. His ambitions are such that he could do nothing but fail to achieve them and his hopes of creating an ideal, mutually loving relationship with a woman who views feelings as "that line of platitudes" and "sentimental crap" (H p. 116) can be seen as similarly doomed. Madeleine provides Herzog with his greatest opportunity to suffer and thereby hopefully to purge himself of his sense of guilt while simultaneously indulging in the feeling of being a wronged and innocent man.

Madeleine is unique among Bellow's castrating female figures in that a sufficiently thorough picture of her family background is given to provide an etiological basis for her maltreatment of the hero. The disaster which is to come of their marriage is foreshadowed in the relationship between Madeleine's parents and in her attitude towards them. Despite Madeleine's extreme

hatred of her father they share a significant number of characteristics. He is described as "burly, masterful ... with ... a certain peevish power and intelligence in his dark face." (H p. 28) Madeleine too is described as "masterful" (H p. 31) with a "brilliant mind." (H p. 53) Both are manipulative and self-centred and each at some stage manufactures a false self image: Pontritter with his Spanish costumes and Madeleine with her make-up of a middle-aged Catholic convert. Madeleine loathes her father for his ability to exploit others to his own advantage, yet she makes use of a series of people, from her mother to Sandor Himmelstein, in order to cuckold and then profitably divorce Herzog. While writing to Sono Oguki, Herzog thinks wryly: "It would not be practical for her to hate herself. Luckily, God sends a substitute, a husband." (H p. 174) Herzog's cynical observation could well be true.

Madeleine is bitter towards both her parents. She despises Tennie's submissive, self-effacing attitude towards Pontritter as much as she hates Pontritter's domineering nature. In her marriage to Herzog, Madeleine imitates the pattern of dominance and submission characteristic of her parents' marriage. She feels threatened and strikes out angrily when Herzog attempts to assert authority, seeing him in her father's role at those times. On the other hand, when he submits to her she becomes equally enraged. Herzog writes to Dr. Edvig: "I can tell you that my meekness during those crises infuriated her, as if I was trying to beat her at the religious game." (H p. 57) At these times Herzog exhibits the selfless compliance which Madeleine scorned in her mother. In crushing Herzog, Madeleine symbolically hits out at her parents who she claims almost destroyed her.

The episode in which Herzog sees Gersbach bathing June and recognises that only with his cooperation can

Madeleine and Gersbach ruin his life, marks a new phase in his perception of, and way of relating to Madeleine. Although this is the case, one cannot expect his attitude towards her to switch from one based predominantly on fantasy to one grounded entirely in reality in only a few minutes. Bellow is too much of a realist to allow Herzog's habitual way of thinking and behaving to be set aside so easily, yet he does have faith in the individual's ability to change. Consequently he goes on to present this new attitude as gradually emerging as the dominant one, with repeated lapses into old patterns with regard to Madeleine. In conversation with Phoebe Gersbach whom Herzog visits directly following his moment of epiphany, he refers to his previous suffering as "all that hysterical stuff...." (H p. 263) This strengthens the sense that Herzog recognises and wishes to reject the morbid indulgence in self-pity which has hitherto characterised his behaviour. In a positive vein he goes on to assert that he now feels little loathing for Madeleine and is even able to say that she is welcome to all she extorted from him. His blessing of Madeleine and his good wishes for her future happiness are however overstated, and the impression remains that Herzog has not yet quite succeeded in replacing his neurotic feelings with the comparative neutrality which he claims to feel towards his ex-wife. Phoebe Gersbach's reaction to his words confirms that an element of hysteria is still present in his attitude: "If he were a wild pig, and those bangs of hers a protective hedge - Phoebe's brown eyes were as vigilant as that." (ibid.)

The ultimate test of Herzog's psychological transformation is his meeting with Madeleine in the police station after his motor accident and this encounter consequently warrants close scrutiny. As mentioned previously, there is a suggestion that he

may unconsciously have engineered the confrontation. Although it would seem that he wishes to test his new outlook, the meeting is characterised at first by behaviour which the "old" Herzog would have exhibited and is by its nature one which would foster these old behavioural patterns. The situation which Herzog's actions have created for his meeting with Madeleine is one in which he is automatically at a disadvantage. He has put the life of their daughter at risk in the accident, has been arrested for the possession of a loaded, unlicenced firearm and in his dishevelled state hardly appears to be in control of his life. Herzog is overwhelmed by anxiety upon Madeleine's entrance and remains entirely passive while she at once takes control by a symbolically significant series of actions. She firstly takes the child for whom he has up until now been responsible, from Herzog. She then discards the container of milk, thus symbolically denigrating Herzog's role as provider for their child, and she questions the police officer rather than Herzog regarding June's welfare, suggesting that she does not recognise Herzog's competence to take responsibility for their child, as well as indicating her hostility towards him.

As she answers the sergeant's questions, Madeleine systematically seeks to worsen Herzog's position. As the interview proceeds there seems to be a tension between Herzog's thoughts regarding Madeleine and the way in which he interacts with her. His thoughts of her are detached and analytical, as he first considers her nature, establishing that she is a mixture of "pure diamond and Woolworth glass," (H p. 299) and then convincingly plots what he would assume to be her thoughts and feelings as she attempts to undermine his already precarious standing in the eyes of the law. Despite this apparently high degree of insight into her way of thinking, Herzog's speech to Madeleine

consists of impulsive, blustering interjections which merely gain him a reprimand from the sergeant. In the course of their courtship and marriage, Herzog had habitually used his knowledge of her thoughts and emotions to invite punishment upon himself through her and now, even as he watches himself repeating this pattern with a feeling of distress, he is hard pressed to change it:

> Herzog shook his head, partly at himself. He had made the kind of mistake today that belonged to an earlier period. As of today it was no longer characteristic. But he had to pay an earlier reckoning. When will you catch up with yourself! he asked himself. When will that day come!
>
> (H pp. 300-301)

Herzog's outbursts only succeed in suggesting that he has good reason to fear Madeleine's insinuations and that they therefore contain more than an element of truth. Only when Herzog gains control of his defensive impulses and rejects "all that hysterical stuff" in deed as well as in his mind, does he realise that it *is a recognition on the part of the sergeant* of Madeleine's "haughty peculiarities" (H p. 301) which will discredit her testimony rather than his vehement denials. As he begins to practise his newfound attitude of calm reasonableness and relative detachment in relation to Madeleine he is able increasingly to "bring out the hidden Madeleine, the Madeleine he knew." (ibid.) To her fury Herzog robs her of the ability to accuse him convincingly of intending to murder her using one of the two bullets resting on the table before them. In coolly asking Madeleine for whom she thinks the second bullet was intended, Herzog tantalises her with the opportunity to make his already bad position far more serious, while at the same time knowing that she dare not risk

the inevitable public revelation of her relationship with Gersbach which would provide Herzog with the information necessary for a successful custody suit for June. While getting the better of Madeleine is a triumph in itself, the greater victories are firstly over Herzog's masochism in that he avoids punishment by checking Madeleine's accusations, and secondly over his unrealistic ideas about Madeleine in that he is able to bring out characteristics which he knows her to possess to the extent that they become evident to a realist like the sergeant.

In spite of the fact that both Herzog's marriages fail, his perception of himself as a family man remains intact and is integral to his self-concept. He believes that his being a family man is part of what makes him attractive to Ramona: "She senses that I am for the family. For I am a family type, and she wants me for her family." (H pp. 197-198) Herzog's relationship with his children plays a key role in enabling him to retain such a self-image. While perhaps not particularly interesting as characters in their own rights, the children are a significant factor in Herzog's life and psychological development. The mere fact that Herzog fathers a child whom he loves and to whom he is irrevocably committed in each of his marriages, brings about a situation in which he can never entirely abandon his relationships with his ex-wives as something belonging to the past. The children are agents for bringing Herzog into contact with Daisy and Madeleine after the break-up of each marriage.

Bellow uses the ways in which certain characters exploit Herzog's relationship with June firstly to *expose* their true rather than their professed values and secondly to reinforce Herzog's credibility as regards his analysis of those involved in his

betrayal. Bellow, for example, verifies Herzog's claim that Madeleine is exploitative and self-centred by revealing that she used money left by Herzog in the keeping of Sandor Himmelstein for June's use in a possible emergency, to buy herself clothes. That Himmelstein hands over the money to Madeleine knowing there to be no such emergency, shows that June is not his major concern despite his declarations to the contrary:

> Sandor suddenly began to yell. "I don't give a shit about her [Madeleine]. I don't give a shit about you. I'm looking after that child.
>
> (H p. 87)

Sandor Himmelstein complements the process whereby Madeleine attempts to strip Herzog of all that he values. Herzog dotes on June, and the physical separation from her which results from Madeleine throwing him out of the house is extremely painful to him. Himmelstein exacerbates this pain by assuring Herzog that June will have forgotten him by the time he next sees her. He then goes on to usurp Herzog's sense of paternal responsibility, reducing Herzog to merely the medium by which he can obtain the money with which he, Sandor Himmelstein will care for June. This is vividly dramatised in the conversation between Herzog and Himmelstein over an expensive life insurance policy in which the latter has decided that Herzog should invest, naming June as the beneficiary:

> "As the lawyer, I have a social obligation to the child. I've got to protect her."
> "You? I'm her father."
> "You may crack up. Or else die."
>
> (ibid.)

In the divorce proceedings between Herzog and Madeleine, Himmelstein discourages Herzog from suing

for the custody of June. As what Bellow terms a "reality instructor," (H p. 125) Sandor Himmelstein is convinced that the facts of life are intrinsically nasty and in order to teach Herzog that truth is fundamentally unpleasant he deprives him of even the hope of successfully gaining custody of June.[33]

> "You're not going to fight for the kid's custody, are you?" Sandor said to Herzog.
> "Suppose I do?"
> "Well," said Sandor, "speaking as a lawyer, I can see you with a jury. They'll look at Madeleine, blooming and lovely, then you, haggard and grey-haired, and bam! there goes your custody suit.... I know this isn't easy for you to hear, but I better say it. Guys at our age must face facts."
>
> (H p. 83)

Herzog himself is not above using his concern for June to validate his own unsavoury plans. He claims to be acting in her interests when he rushes off to Chicago to execute Madeleine and Gersbach and thereby to "save" her from their influence and what he sees as their cruelty (of which he has only one relatively minor example as cited in Geraldine Portnoy's letter). He does not even consider the possible harmful psychological effects on June of killing her mother and he has no apparent plans for at least removing June from the house before he kills Madeleine and Gersbach. Admittedly his scheme is irrational and impulsive and there is arguably never a serious possibility of it being carried out, but the fact remains that at this point Herzog would appear to be using the protection of his daughter to validate his thirst for revenge.

The way in which Herzog relates to his children reflects his state of mind at the time. While Herzog is still married to Daisy and in the days before his

affairs with *Sono* and *Madeleine* respectively, he has a close, relaxed and openly loving relationship with Marco. He delights in sharing activities with him as shown when Daisy and Marco return to Connecticut from Ohio after the death of Daisy's father:

> ...Daisy returned. Sad, clear-eyed, mostly mute, resistant. But a wife. And the child! *The thaws began* - ideal for making snowmen. Moses and Marco lined the drive with them.
>
> (H p. 128)

After his separation from Daisy, however, Herzog experiences difficulty in communicating with Marco. Although their mutual love is implicit in their conversations, every meeting is an ordeal for Herzog who ends up reciting historical facts just to have something to say to Marco. *His inability to verbalise* his love for his son or to engage in conversation on a personal level highlights his uneasiness regarding his lifestyle at this time - separated from his wife and splitting his free time between two mistresses. The mental letter which Herzog composes before his trip to Martha's Vineyard, requesting Daisy to visit Marco in his place on Parents' Day at the summer camp, reflects his increased self-absorption and desire to free himself from social obligations. Conversely, a decrease in Herzog's self-centredness is shown in his *care for June on* their outing while he is in Chicago. Herzog consciously orientates himself towards enhancing June's enjoyment rather than his own gratification. This is shown, *for example, when he* empathises with June's distress at having spoken about Gersbach against her mother's instructions and he quells his curiosity to hear more about Madeleine and Gersbach, laughingly agreeing to change the subject. After his accident, his first thought is for the safety of June rather than for his discomfort. Most

indicative of a more authentic concern for others is his decision not to see June again, though he would dearly love to do so, until "he was ready to do June good, genuine good." (H p. 303)

The children represent the genuinely and legitimately innocent, in contrast with Herzog who claims an innocence to which he is not entitled. Herzog refuses to *acknowledge the presence of evil* within himself, summing up his attitude to life in the rhyme, "I love little pussy." He thinks that if he refuses to know evil, he will be protected from it. Part of his reason for his journey to Chicago is a desire to prevent June from being exposed to unpleasant life experiences which he considers inevitable should she be left with Madeleine. Herzog's change of attitude in this respect after seeing Gersbach bathing June is reflected in his purchase of a periscope for the child. Herzog now realises that it is better for June to mature and learn to cope with the complexities of the mixture of good and evil in life as she discovers them than for her to be artificially protected from such discoveries by him.

> He [Herzog] felt certain she would love the periscope. There was much to be seen in that house on Harper Avenue. Let the child find life. The plainer the better, perhaps.
>
> (H p. 267)

The children are important primarily in that they are the only living people towards whom Herzog feels responsible. This sense of responsibility is one of the major factors which prevents Herzog from lapsing into the self-indulgence of insanity or even the oblivion of death:

> He could not allow himself to die yet. The children needed him. His duty was to live. To be sane, and to live, and to look after the kids.
>
> (H p. 27)

The role which his children play in compelling Herzog to communicate with others at a time when his inclination is to block the world out and to confine himself to his memories and ideas, is demonstrated in his response to the ringing telephone after he has spent a whole day in turning over his past and writing letters:

> The telephone rang - five, eight, ten peals. Herzog looked at his watch. The time astonished him - nearly six o'clock. Where had the day gone? The phone went on ringing, drilling away at him. He didn't want to pick it up. But there were two children, after all - he was a father, and he must answer. He reached for the instrument, therefore....
>
> (H p. 150)

By the time that Herzog is recovering his full self-possession at his home in the Berkshires, responsibility to his children is practically synonymous with his allegiance to sanity:

> And I had better look out, thought Herzog, people do get put away, and seem even to intend it.... But I have no intention of doing that - I am responsible, responsible to reason. This is simply temporary excitement. Responsible to the children.
>
> (H p. 325)

As the novel draws to a close, the nature of Herzog's relationship with his family contributes to the overall picture of spiritual recovery. He has renewed contact with his siblings through his brother Willie,

*symbolising the confirmation of* bonds which find their origin in the nurturing childhood home. He has tackled the root causes of conflict in his relationships with his father and ex-wives and has overcome the guilt of not becoming the man which he thinks his mother would have wished him to be. Whereas Herzog had previously desired to get out of visiting Marco at his summer camp, he now writes to Marco expressing his eagerness to see him at the camp and, moreover, to spend time on holiday with him thereafter. His experiences of the past few days seem to have freed him from at least some of his inhibitions in communicating with Marco. In addition, Herzog becomes involved in creative ventures for June. Even if his composition of the *Insect Iliad* and his plan to paint the piano green and send it to June are not altogether practical, such creativity in the interests of benefiting another is indicative of health and renewal.

## 3. MR SAMMLER'S PLANET

In Mr Sammler's Planet Saul Bellow presents a hero markedly unlike any from his earlier novels in which some psychological maladjustment or inadequacy in the hero has to be overcome in order for him to cope with his life situation. While there is still scope for personal development in Sammler through the life experience offered within the framework of the novel, "the focus of madness is in the age rather than the hero...."[1] Daniel Fuchs notes that there is accordingly "an increasing objectivity in the new work, a movement away from the dramatization of obsessions...."[2] The shift in focus of this novel has a significant effect on the way in which Bellow uses the family. Whereas in *Herzog* the family is used primarily to help to establish various aspects of Herzog's character and the factors leading to his near psychological break-down, in Mr Sammler's Planet the family is used to reflect characteristics of life in America in the late sixties. Sammler has no particular desire to become actively involved with the decadent society of the day. In order to get Sammler to apply his judgement to society, Bellow brings a distilled version of his society to him via the members of his family. It is significant that all but three of the *main characters* in this novel (the Negro pickpocket, Lionel Feffer and Dr Lal) are members of Sammler's extended family. Because he is involved with them by force of circumstance rather than by choice, Sammler is in an ideal position to act as a credible social critic, able to share in their lives without losing the advantage of objectivity. Were it not for his relationship with his nephew Elya Gruner, for example, Sammler would be unlikely to seek the company of

people such as Angela and Wallace. Through the pair he is brought into contact with the nature and values of the "New Generation" of the late nineteen sixties. With the exception of Shula, *Sammler is only distantly* related to the rest of his family as presented in the novel and he accordingly reserves a greater measure of tolerance for her idiosyncrasies than he otherwise might.

Shula is the only person in the novel for whom Sammler is directly responsible. As the only other remaining member of Sammler's nuclear family, his daughter Shula is in Sammler's words, "wavering witted" and therefore remains dependent on her father for emotional support and through him on Elya Gruner for financial support although she is now in her forties. Certain parallels can be drawn between Sammler's relationship with Shula and his attitude towards mankind. In the same [illegible] he is capable of strong affection for her not allowing his assessment of her character and actions to be swayed, Sammler maintains a compassionate and tolerant attitude as he diagnoses the ills of his society. Also, just as he defends Shula against Lal's harsh suggestion that she is a "psycho" (MSP p. 163), so Sammler declares his faith that humanity will not carry out its apparent death wish evident in history and [illegible] itself up. Sammler's affection for Shula is stated repeatedly and counterbalances the accusation levelled at Sammler by certain literary critics that he is merely a cold, unsympathetic judge.[3]

Shula does not fit into the stereotypes of the women in previous Bellow novels as listed by critics such as E.M.Mackintosh and L.L.Peontek.[4] As a result of her simple-mindedness she retains certain childlike qualities. She talks to flowers, reminding Sammler of the heroine in Alice in Wonderland and she worships

her father unreservedly and without regard to any faults he may have. She also exhibits the irresponsibility of a child. At the same time, however, she shows adult characteristics in her desire for romantic involvement, her concern for preparing for her and Sammler's future on finding Gruner's abortion money and her degree of self-consciousness in that she knows that she is an eccentric type.

Shula is responsible for much of the comedy to be found in Mr Sammler's Planet. Accounts such as that of her rearing a demonic chicken which almost drives Sammler to the brink of insanity and that of her baking Sammler's shoes serve to lighten what otherwise tends to be a rather sombre portrayal of modern society. Shula personifies distraction. Firstly, through her theft of Dr Lal's manuscript and then by absent-mindedly leaving Sammler's shoes to bake in the oven, she thwarts his desire to carry out what he sees as his duty, namely to be at Elya Gruner's death bed in order to offer comfort which only he can give. Her conviction is that nothing should be more important to Sammler than his memoirs of H.G.Wells, which she considers represent his duty to mankind as a high priest of culture.

As a child, Shula internalized her parents' pride in their cultivated circle of acquaintances, developing what Sammler terms a "nutty devotion to culture," (MSP p. 159) intended to please Sammler and to get his attention.[6] Shula translates her devotion to culture into reality by promoting the memoirs of H.G.Wells which she considers to be Sammler's "lifework". In Herzog, the way that culture and art have been debased by becoming the property of the "mass man" is represented by Valentine Gersbach with his pretentious claims to being a great man of culture. In

Mr Sammler's Planet Shula's self-confessed inability to read more than a few pages of one of the books by the writer with whom she is so preoccupied points to a further trivialising of culture. Shula represents those who do not even claim to understand art and yet, for the sake of the status which excellence offers and other factors extraneous to art, is concerned to further it. In her ham-fisted way Shula does all she can to help Sammler, whom she views as a cultural Prospero, to further his studies. She hires readers from the local university, buys bargain books which she thinks are relevant and finally steals Dr Lal's manuscript in the hopes that it will help Sammler. For Shula, art is virtually a religion, overriding normal ethics and exempting the artist from any crime which he may commit in its cause. She challenges Sammler with this concept when he accuses her of theft in taking the manuscript:

> "... A creative person wouldn't stop at anything. For the creative there are no crimes. And aren't you a creative person?"
>
> (MSP p. 139)

Although there is no evidence of Sammler actually being in the process of writing the memoirs of H.G.Wells, Shula clings tenaciously to the idea that he is diligently doing so. In view of the fact that Shula has never read one of H.G.Wells' books, it is worth considering why she should be so concerned about a further record of his ideas being made by Sammler. One major reason is that as long as she is supporting Sammler in his cultural project, Shula partakes in the immunity and special status possessed by those who are creative. She anticipates reflected glory when Sammler becomes famous as a result of publishing the memoirs:

> Their elevation would be joint elevation. She would back him, and he would accomplish great things in the world of culture.
>
> (MSP p. 158)

For Shula the knowledge that her father is engaged in creative cultural endeavour provides her with the "magical powers" to banish thoughts of death [6] and to "make sublunary objects remarkable." (MSP p. 158) It is also important to Shula that he be involved in something which she feels she could promote and thus share in. Through the project she attempts to reinforce his links with life and with her. Sammler perceives that through her theft of Lal's manuscript she wishes to regain his attention and redirect his energies so that she can feel involved in his concerns once again:

> And of course in Shula's view he had been getting too delicate for earthly life, too absorbed in unshared universals, excluding her. And by extravagance, by animal histrionics, by papers pinched, by goofy business with shopping bags, trash-basket neuroses, exotic heartburn cookery she wished to implicate him and bring him back, to bind him and keep him in the world beside her.
>
> (ibid.)

Sammler also observes that Shula's theft identifies her to a certain extent with the pickpocket, in that both thefts reflect the lawlessness of "the Age." In the present age to which he hereby refers, that which is unrestrained is glorified and by succumbing to impulse, shaking off moral and ethical considerations, whether it be the crimes of the pickpocket and Shula or the promiscuity of Angela, one partakes in the "oceanic, boundless, primitive, neckfree nobility" and

"accelerated exaltation" of the primitive.(MSP p. 130) She carries out her theft in the name of art: the pickpocket's theft is practically an art form; the style with which he carries it out fascinates Sammler although the latter has no particular affinity for criminals. The theft is also a test for Sammler to see whether he is truly creative: "So then, was Papa a true creative irtransigent - capable of bold theft for the sake of the memoir? *Could he risk all for H.G.*?" (MSP p. 159) The theft furthermore provides Shula with a form of sexual gratification, creating the opportunity for Shula to meet more intimately with Lal.[7] She reduces Lal's extensive scientific research to a level at which it becomes relevant for her: "Shula wanted Govinda Lal to see that the orange circle between the eyes had lunar significance. She kept tilting her face, offering her brow."(MSP p. 167) Shula is only interested in Lal's research in so far as it can be exploited to make her sexually attractive to him. From this it would appear that science as well as art runs the risk of being vulgarised at the hands of the mass man.

Of course *Shula intends the orange dot on her forehead* to appeal to Lal's cultural as well as scientific background, hence the accompanying dangerously wrapped sari. Poor "sensuality-bent" Shula only succeeds in looking odd. Although Sammler refers to her sexual potential in flattering terms as "this woman with her sexual female form ... (especially beneath the waist, where a thing was to make a lover gasp,)" (MSP p. 158) Shula is really a parody of sensuality. This is emphasised early in the novel, when she is placed in the environment of the super-sexual Angela and shown to be a comical misfit in that setting:

> Shula visited Angela in the East Sixties, where her cousin had the beautiful, free, and wealthy young woman's ideal apartment. Shula admired this. Apparently without envy, without self-consciousness, Shula with wig and shopping bag, her white face puckering with continual inspiration (receiving and transmitting wild messages), sat as awkwardly as possible in the super comfort of Angela's upholstery, blobbing china and forks with lipstick.
>
> (MSP p. 25)

She does, however appear to have a concept of sexual decorum as indicated by her verdict on her estranged husband, Eisen's sexual behaviour: "sexually he was a very gross person." (MSP p. 212) Shula's evaluation of Eisen as a poor husband on the grounds that she could never discuss things with him may have had far reaching consequences. Sammler speculates that perhaps the emergence of Eisen as an artist is partially an attempt to gain her respect for him:

> Even Eisen, perhaps, to recover her esteem ... had left the foundry and turned artist. Had probably lost track of the original motive, to show that he was, like her father, a man of culture.
>
> (MSP p. 166)

As men of culture Sammler and Eisen could hardly be less alike. Eisen is the only artist in the novel and though his art might not be of a particularly high standard, he is very serious about the role. He describes his having become an artist as the climax of a struggle for survival and wholeness:

> Twenty-five years ago I came to the Eretz a broken man. But I wouldn't die. I couldn't shut my eyes - not before I did something like a human being, something important, beautiful.
>
> (MSP p. 137)

Although Sammler views Eisen's pretentions at being an artist sardonically, he recognises that Eisen may well fit in with what American society seeks in an artist. The very pathology evident in his work is in his favour as in the modern scheme of things "madness is *higher knowledge*." (MSP p. 54) Despite seeing his art as a creative enterprise, Eisen's work promotes the forces of death rather than life. His portraits render his subjects corpse-like *and he uses his grotesque* medallions to bludgeon the Negro pickpocket almost to death. While Eisen, a man totally lacking in human sympathy and able to rationalise brutality with cheerful ease, is presented as the artist befitting the times, the character of this period is most vividly conveyed through the persons of Angela and Wallace Gruner. Jointly they reflect the norms and attitudes of the age, with each specialising in particular aspects of the generation which they portray. Angela's "speciality" appears to lie in the *area of* sexual licence while Wallace's is in that of the bohemian rebel.

Bellow deliberately *stresses* Wallace's childlikeness. More than once Wallace is described as having a boyish appearance. He is also ascribed to "the Shula category" by Sammler, suggesting that Wallace, too, despite his high IQ is out of touch with reality. Sammler's reference to Wallace's "merest hint of faecal carelessness" (MSP p. 72) in Freudian terms suggests that Wallace is fixated at the anal stage. This observation links Wallace to the radical who heckles Sammler at Columbia University and whose behaviour is described as "sex-excrement-militancy" (MSP p. 37) The association of the young radicals with excrement combined with the explicit reference to psychoanalysis points to the immaturity of their views. *Reflecting on the young people's* behaviour, Sammler thinks:

> But what was it to be arrested in the stage of toilet training! What was it to be entrapped by a psychiatric standard (Sammler blamed the Germans and their psychoanalysis for this)! Who had raised the diaper flag? Who had made shit a sacrament?
>
> (MSP p. 39)

Sammler considers their lack of dignity in their rejection of him and his views as a betrayal of their heritage as intellectuals. Wallace characteristically places the onus of his generation's lack of dignity on the shoulders of the previous generation by attributing it to their having "a different set of givens." (MSP p. 194)

Wallace is portrayed as being childish, with only a loose commitment to his impulsively conceived schemes. Sammler notes that "Wallace could turn suddenly earnest, but his earnestness lacked weight." (MSP p. 197) Daniel Fuchs convincingly defends Bellow's unflattering portrayal of Wallace and the radicalism of the young, middle class rebels of the nineteen sixties whom he represents:

> It may be thought that the triviality of his self-expression is not adequate to the moral seriousness of the book ... or, perhaps not truly representative of the moral seriousness of the affluent rebels. Yet irresponsibility was also the order of the day, and Bellow successfully defines this aspect of revolt without pain as a flip rejection of any established values. If his father is a Zionist, Wallace has a sudden, short-lived passion for Arab culture. If his father is American middle-class, Wallace is enamoured of Castro, whom he considers a "bohemian radical" who has "held his own against the Washington superpower."[8]

Anything which might require moral fortitude or responsibility is discarded by Wallace, hence the short-lived nature of so many of his enterprises.

Wallace's constant shifting from one scheme to another is also symptomatic of what Sammler identifies as a rejection of imitation and a striving for originality in the hopes of self-discovery. It is an ironic touch that Wallace intends to break out of his father's mould using his father's money. He states his reason for needing to "crash out of the future" which his father has prepared for him as: "Otherwise, everything just *goes* on being possible, and all these possibilities are going to be the death of me." (MSP p. 197) According to Sammler, "possibility" increases as a result of a striving after originality, the latter being *inherently unattainable*. *Wallace's* frenetic shifting from one project to another reflects the search for originality of the young people in revolutionary garb whom Sammler appraises as "Casting themselves into chaos, hoping to adhere to higher consciousness, to be washed up on the shores of truth." (MSP p. 120) Wallace himself indulges in a flirtation with the idea of revolution, confessing an admiration for Fidel Castro. Should his plant-identifying venture fall through, Wallace plans to visit Castro to enlighten him regarding the shortfalls of the Russian Revolution in ushering in a new stage of history, presumably with the intention of suggesting a way of achieving these aims. In nurturing such an ambition Wallace shows his unselfconscious arrogance.

Wallace strives against any constraint and consequently the prospect of restrictions imposed by a steady income from a trust fund on his father's death horrifies him. The very idea of self-control strikes him as an insuperable obstacle. When Sammler suggests that Wallace censor messages from his unconscious such as that which results in the flood at New Rochelle, Wallace says "No, it's just the mortal way I am. You can't hold it down. It must come out." (MSP p. 195) It

would appear that Wallace manifests another mutation of the popular desire for boundless freedom. His enthusiasm for space travel supports this idea. He is ready to set off just for the sake of going. Dr Lal's dream of an advanced, disciplined civilization on the moon seems pitifully idealistic when according to Wallace vast numbers of people view an excursion to the moon as no more than a joy-ride. Wallace herein contributes to the ironic comment on the fitness of mankind for a project such as Lal's.

Wallace's childlikeness is reinforced by his having an ambivalent sexual identity. He is described as once having been "nearly a homosexual." (MSP p. 72) This does not prevent him from declaring homosexuals as diseased and abnormal. His interest in sex appears to be purely academic. During a time when he was ostensibly practising law, he unbuttoned his stenographer's dress, not by way of a sexual advance, but merely to examine her breasts. Sammler says of this incident, "his interest in the breasts had evidently been scientific." (MSP p. 79) Later, Wallace casts himself in a role allied to that of a zoologist to prompt Sammler to give him a detailed description of the Negro pickpocket's penis. He discusses Angela's sexual exploits with the same detachment.

If Wallace's attitude towards sex may be said to be one of detached interest, Angela's is one of enthusiastic involvement. Whereas Wallace is generally described in terms of his childlikeness, Angela is described predominantly in terms of her sensuality. Initial descriptions indicate her tremendous sexual vibrancy: "Cheeks bursting with colour, eyes dark sexual blue, a white vital heat in the flesh of the throat, she carried a great statement to males, the powerful message of gender." (MSP p. 57) In the most evocative description of her she is called "a rolling

hoop of marvellous gold and gem colours." (MSP p. 46) In her robust sexuality she *foreshadows Renata of* Humboldt's Gift. Sanford Radner's analysis of Bellow's message regarding women in that novel, mainly through the medium of Renata, as being that "women are deceitful deplorers" holds good for Angela, too, even if she is unintentionally so.[9] This is shown primarily through her relationship with Wharton Horricker:

> Wharton received serious consideration from Sammler. He sympathised with him, understanding the misleading and corrupting power of Angela, insidious without intending to be. What she intended to be was gay, pleasure-giving, exuberant, free, beautiful, healthy.
>
> (MSP p. 57)

Most descriptions of Angela contain undercurrents which suggest that she is inherently threatening to man and falls short of the splendid image which she intends to convey. The first time that she is mentioned she is identified with antisocial elements of society in that she donates money for the defence of black murderers and rapists. Sammler notes that "inside the elegant woman he saw a coarse one." (MSP p. 58) Oppressed partly by the imminence of her father's death, but apparently more so by his censure of her recent sexual exploits in Mexico, Angela's sensuality becomes distorted and grotesque: "Her figure was heavy, breasts a burden, knees bulging and pale against the taut silk of the stockings." (MSP p. 122) "If Angela was looking so wan that even the frosted hair, usually so glossy and powerful, seemed to bristle dryly and Sammler thought he saw the dark follicular spots on her scalp, it was because she had been wrangling with her father." (MSP p. 124) Olfactory imagery is used to undermine Angela's

superficial elegance. "As she detached herself from the plastic seat, and the evening was quite warm, an odour was released. Both low comic and high serious." (MSP p. 132) Angela herself declares, "Oh a woman is a skunk. So many odours." (MSP p. 56) Such odours, ordinarily masked by perfume, emphasise her sexual decadence:

> Sitting near her, Sammler could not smell the usual Arabian musk. Instead her female effluence was very strong, a salt odour, similar to tears or tidewater, something from within the woman. Elya's words had taken effect strongly - his 'Too much sex.'
>
> (MSP p. 237)

Bellow's references to unpleasant female odours clearly have a moral corollary. It may be recalled that Madeleine in Herzog was recorded as having an unpleasant sexual odour.

The most explicit indictment of Angela as a corrupting force, particularly threatening to men, comes from Wallace:

> Between those thighs, a man's conception of himself is just assassinated. If he thinks he's so special she'll show him. Nobody is so special. Angela represents the realism of the race, which is always pointing out that wisdom, beauty, glory, courage in men are just vanities and her business is to beat down the man's legend about himself. That's why she and Horricker are finished, why she let that twerp in Mexico hall her fore and aft in front of Wharton, with who-knows-what-else thrown in free by her.
>
> (MSP p. 150)

In spite of Wharton Horricker's devotion to fashion, both sartorial and sexual (he is initially in favour of his and Angela's partner-swopping in Mexico), he cannot cope with Angela's enthusiasm for gratuitous

sexual experimentation. He obviously *still clings* to the belief in there being a need for certain limits to one's behaviour. Angela, on the other hand, like her brother, refuses to accept that inhibition of impulse can have any worth. She cannot take even partial responsibility for the end results of her actions, in this case estrangement from Horricker and hostility from Elya. Fuchs identifies these traits with the infancy cult of the late sixties:

> *In her experimenting* with the polymorphous perverse, Angela gives us a more sophisticated version of the cult of the child. She makes infant impulse adult routine.[10]

Sammler describes Angela as "a big, shapely woman childishly dressed, erotically playing the kid." (MSP p. 237) Explicit references to Angela and Wallace as being developmentally retarded are made in the novel. Sammler notes that "in Angela's expression as in Wallace's there was something soft, a hint of *infancy or of baby reverie*. The parents must have longed overmuch for babies and so inhibited something in their children's cycle of development."(MSP p. 127) The refusal of Angela and Wallace to *check* their impulses regardless of the consequences, contains a comment on civilization:

> ...civilization has been built, among other things, on renunciation or the *willingness* to forego immediate gratification when higher purpose was involved. Wallace and Angela tell us that there is no higher purpose. This is the *message of the New Generation*.[11]

Such a perspective lends a distinctly disturbing note to Wallace's suggestion to Sammler that Angela may well represent a social norm rather than the exception, "You prefer to think that she's off the continuum. What if she's not?" (MSP p. 148) In fact Sammler does see her as representative of the times. Early in the novel Sammler is shown to gain an insight into philosophical trends and the breakdown of *civilised society* through his observation of her:

> Listening to Angela carefully, Sammler perceived different developments. The dark satanic mills changing into light satanic mills. The reprobates converted into children of joy, the sexual ways of the seraglio and of the Congo bush adopted by the emancipated masses of New York, Amsterdam, London.
>
> (MSP p. 28)

Sammler refers to Angela's confidences in him as "communicating chaos." (MSP p. 55) While Sammler claims not to enjoy hearing Angela's confidences, he does receive some gratification from them, similar to that which he derives from watching the pickpocket in action.

> If he heard things he didn't want to hear, there was a parallel - on the bus he had seen things he didn't want to see. But hadn't he gone a dozen times to Columbus Circle to look for the black thief?
>
> (MSP p. 57)

Through the fact that the activities of Angela and the pickpocket hold a fascination, even for Sammler, the attractiveness of the philosophy of self-gratifying impulse which they represent is revealed. Much of the lack of restraint and the rebellion against any form

of limitation which characterises the age is portrayed through the medium of sexual licence. The seat of the will is asserted by Schopenhauer to be the genitalia. While the sexuality of Angela appears impressive, even glamorous, Bellow gives a cameo of such sexual decadence aged by fifty years or so in the person of Walter Bruch. Bruch, a man of over sixty and decidedly unattractive, exemplifies the conflict inherent in the modern desire for submission to Nature without being prepared to give up the higher emotion which such a submission presupposes. Fuchs writes:

> Perhaps the pathetic, elderly Bruch, a marvellous nut, speaks most clearly to the disjunction between the moral and the physical, growing up and aimless sensuality. Masturbating in public over visions of sensuous arms, while at the same time pursuing "a highly idealistic and refined relationship with some lady" (MSP p. 49), he plays alone in his room with toys he buys at F. A. O. Schwartz, an ironic comment on the revolution of the children in a century accustomed to disproportion.[12]

Bruch is shown to be a slave to impulse, helpless before the demands of his genitalia and anguished at his lack of self-control. In Bruch Sammler's observation, "make Nature your God, elevate creaturelines, and you can count on gross results" (MSP p. 46) is realised. Because he is so obsessed with himself, Bruch exaggerates the significance of his disorder. Sammler pities him, realising that more upsetting to Bruch than the humiliation of his fetishism would be the realisation that he was "ravaged by a vice that was not a top vice." (MSP p. 51) It would seem therefore that through his fetishism, Bruch participates in the prevailing struggle for originality and in so doing becomes trapped in an endless repetition of behaviour patterns

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which he claims to find almost unbearable. Deviant sex or excessive sexuality is presented with death-related rather than creative and life-oriented overtones. Bruch's two chief obsessions are sex and death. He enjoys play-acting at being at his own funeral. This association of sex with death is not exclusive to Bruch, but is also to be found in Sammler's description of Angela's Mexican trip as "a billiard table in hell." (MSP p. 77) In her final bitter encounter with him, Sammler observes Angela through a yellow light, previously associated with the light in the mausoleum in which he lasted out the war following his near-death experience: "Brightness like this, the vividness of everything, also dismayed him. The soft clearness of Angela's face, the effort of her brows - the full mixtura of fineness and rankness he saw there." (MSP p. 239) In this passage there is the suggestion that Angela, with all her sexuality, exists in a context of death rather than life. Bruch *represents the philosophy of the "Now Generation"* carried to its logical conclusion. Already the signs of burnout are evident in Angela as Elya observes:

> You see a woman who has done it in too many ways with too many men. By now she probably doesn't know the name of the man between her legs. And she looks. ...Her eyes - she has fucked-out eyes.
>
> (MSP p. 143)

Ironically, while Elya broods over the promiscuity of his daughter, she views herself as an innocent victim of prejudice and blames her deviance on him. She finds pleasure in his penchant for gambling as then "she had hereditary vice to point to." (MSP p. 63) She furthermore alleges that Elya was fully aware of her sexual exploits and that he lived vicariously through them. While Sammler does not presume to judge to what extent Elya had "delegated Angela to experience the

Age for him," (MSP p. 131) the evidence does point to his not being aware of the breadth of her sexual hedonism, believing her to "be having herself a time" while still "handling herself maturely and sensibly." (MSP p. 143) It is only in the face of impending death that he looks more closely at Angela's activities in an attempt at "making things plainer"(ibid.) and begins to see the more sordid aspects of her brash sensuality.

While Sammler generally observes those around him with a lack of censure, few earn his praise and even fewer his admiration. Elya Gruner is the chief of these and as such merits close examination. While Elya has a plain appearance his hallmarks seem to be kindness, pleasantness and nobility. Elya earns from Sammler the honour of being considered fully human. He does this through what Sammler terms completing his assignment:

> ...[Elya] has had his assignments. Husband, medical man - he was a good doctor - family man, success, American, wealthy retirement with a Rolls-Royce. We have our assignments. Feeling, outgoingness, expressiveness, kindness, heart - all these fine human things ... Anyway there is Elya's assignment. That's what's in his good face. That's why he has such a human look.
>
> (MSP p. 243)

Elya's heroism would seem to lie chiefly in doing his duty with patient dedication and without protest, finding value in what he can achieve within his given parameters. This contrasts with the demand for limitless freedom endorsed by the next generation.

Elya is a committed family man and it is largely his family which sets the constraints within which he lives. It is under pressure from his mother that he becomes a doctor rather than a lawyer as he would have

preferred. Later, he submits to his wife who believes it is her job "to refine him." (MSP p. 64) Hilda Gruner manufactures a lifestyle for Elya, complete with what she deems to be appropriate status symbols and even after her death Elya remains bound by the image which she created. Despite having the freedom which his wealth can purchase (such as his impulsive trips to Israel), Elya is portrayed as trapped by her, like a fish on a hook. Sammler says of Hilda, "She had had her hook in Elya. And there had never been any help for Elya." (MSP p. 228) This image of a hooked fish is particularly poignant as it is used by Wallace with reference to Elya's futile struggle for life against the inevitable bursting of the blood vessel in his brain from which no surgery can save him: "Any fish will fight. A hook in the gill. It gets jerked into the wrong part of the universe. It must be like drowning in air." (MSP p. 81) With the imminent prospect of his death, Elya's life seems more than ever to be characterised by a feeling of restriction. Sammler says of him, "Of his own free will he had probably done little." (MSP p. 142) With so many barriers between Elya and that which he desires, he invites sympathy, and indeed Sammler acknowledges that Elya is in desperate need of confirmation of the human bond. In being content to follow the dictates of duty in his life choices, Elya contrasts strongly with his children who flee responsibility in search of novelty and boundless freedom. He lives out on a personal level Sammler's conviction that mankind should seek to meet its spiritual needs with the resources available to it rather than continually grasping at external distractions such as moon excursions as a panacea for emptiness. Elya may not quite be the Knight of Faith, "able to carry the jewel of faith, making the motions of the infinite, and as a result needing nothing but the finite and the usual," (MSP p. 52) but one senses that he is about as close as one is likely to get in

this world where Sammler cannot even honestly imagine a noncorrupt society. It would seem to Sammler's way of thinking, that salvation comes through the path of duty. He affirms to Lal: "The pain of duty makes the creature upright, and this uprightness is no negligible thing." (MSP p. 177) If this is the case, Elya practically qualifies for sainthood. Marcus Klein argues that Sammler stands for the end of the striving of the will by a denial of the same. He states that: "Elya is Sammler's exemplary hero because Elya had opposed his own private desires and by doing his duty made himself greater than his own wilfulness."[13]
In a novel marked for its grim portrayal of the nineteen sixties, Elya at times might be construed as an incongruously idealised figure. Sammler dismisses his flaws with a generosity which he grants no other character:

> Sammler knew the defects of his man. Saw them as dust and pebbles, as rubble on a mosaic which might be swept away. Underneath, a fine, noble expression. A dependable man - man who took thought for others.
>
> (MSP p. 70)

The dubious morality of Elya's having performed illegal abortions for Mafia associates is remarkably underplayed in Sammler's deliberations. Efforts to imbue Elya's unhandsome features with moral nobility, occasionally verge on the ridiculous such as the description of Elya's being possessed of "courteous Jewish baldness." (MSP p. 63) Forced to acknowledge that Elya became wealthy through "the strange conventions of legitimate swindling," (MSP p. 62) Sammler argues that Elya is not as bad as he might be: "So if Dr Grunor had been corrupt, one should glance also at the other rich, to see what hearts they had." (ibid.) This would appear to be a rather arbitrary kind of virtue. Daniel Fuchs notes the discrepancy

between Sammler's humanist ideals and the man whom he admires for his humanity:

> Ethical wisdom, a reawakening to traditional truth, is what Sammler wants, still clings to. But if we have to look to contemporary physicians for the morally exemplary, the state totters. If Gruner is a brick, he is a cork brick. He is goodness at a remove in a book that *deals with intimations of the ideal.*[14]

Through the example of Elya and Sammler's evaluation of his life Bellow seems to infer that in the fallen world which is presented in this novel, the actual achievement of goodness is secondary to the willingness to imitate "higher representations." (MSP p. 120) Sammler says in praise of Elya: "He had an unsure loyalty to certain pure states. He knew there had been good men before him, that there were good men to come, and he wanted to be one of them." (MSP p. 243)

In his novels Saul Bellow repeatedly wrestles with the problem which death poses to the humanist. The imminence of Elya's death through most of *Mr Sammler's Planet* brings this issue into sharp relief. Ben Siegel maintains that Elya's death serves to show that the humanist is subject to the harsh realities of existentialism and that "regardless of circumstances, the individual can do more than lament his fate; if nothing else, he can give thought to his conscience and responsibility to others."[15] In this context Elya, the humanist, contrasts favourably with Angela, the postmodernist. When he feels death approaching, his concern is to spare her the anguish of being with him when he dies while she, though clearly grieving at the end of the novel, cannot bring herself to restore her relationship with her father by expressing remorse at having distressed him through her antics in Mexico.

As well as contributing to the sombre tone of the novel, Elya's nearing death lends it a quiet sense of urgency, giving Sammler a mission and so showing him to be more than a disinterested observer in life. It also crystalises a number of attitudes towards death. Wallace's attitude is one of denial. He openly states that he would rather not think about Elya's death as once the latter is dead, he is next in line. Wallace continues to treat Elya's imminent death in an offhand manner, reducing its meaning to statistical odds. He is deliberately absent when Elya dies. Through his flying accident he flirts with death in order to reinforce his sense of immunity from death. Angela is more concerned about her own unhappiness than any which Elya might be feeling. Sammler is the only character who recognises Elya's need for a confirmation of the human bond. He discerns this in Elya's preoccupation with genealogies at a time when distant relatives hardly seem relevant:

> Now what of Elya's unfinished business? Before the vessel wall gave out did he really want to go on about Cracow? ... No. Elya with strong family feelings he could not gratify, wanted Sammler there to represent the family. ... He must have believed that he had some unusual power, magical perhaps, to affirm the human bond.
>
> (MSP pp. 218-219)

By having survived his own death experience, Sammler has regained his "human actuality." (MSP p. 219) His intended message to Elya, however, seems to be that there is something intangible in human existence which transcends the grave:

> However actual I may seem to you and you to me, we are not as actual as all that. We will

> die. Nevertheless there is a bond. There is a bond.
>
> (MSP p. 209)

*In* Mr Sammler's Planet *the* family in some ways reflects principles of the human bond. Consciousness of the latter is vested in the family, even if the links are distant as with the relatives about whom Elya reminisces. These ties are not broken by death.

Even though she is not a blood relation, only the niece of his late wife, Sammler stays with Margotte as a member of her family. The effect of this *relationship*, combined with the fact that she is a widow is to make the dead appear an ever-present phenomenon, as Sammler remarks: "Wherever you looked, or tried to look, there were the late. It took some getting used to." (MSP p. 9) In her desire to do good, Margotta has much in common with Elya and yet he is eulogized while she is viewed with condescending sympathy. This could be due at least in part to the fact that she is a woman as may be induced from *Sammler's reflections* on the futility of Shula's passion for Lal: "Had her desires. Needs. Was a woman, after all. What could one do for a woman? Little, very little." Also, Margotte would appear to be avoiding facing up to certain aspects of reality thro ,h her desire to see goodness in all those around her. For this reason she refuses to acknowledge Shula's taking Lal's manuscript as theft and misinterprets Angela's attitude just prior to Elya's death. Such goodness, born out of deliberate naivety, is unacceptable to Bellow who never advocates flight from reality as a solution. Elya's continuing love for his children in spite of confronting the whole unpleasant truth about them is of a greater calibre. Another trying characteristic of Margotte, in Sammler's opinion, is her penchant for in-depth explanation, particularly as her ideas appear to be stale, common and stultifying.

Finally, she is too inept to admire. Elya may not always be good, but he is always conscious of what he is doing.

Though not given the startling high profile of that of Angela or the Negro pickpocket, Margotta's sexuality is of significance as it is an example of sexuality employed in a socially acceptable manner. She is the only character with motherly qualities. She seeks to care for Sammler and finds pleasure in a nurturing role such as when she provides a meal for Sammler, Lal and Shula. Her ailing pot plants also bear testimony to a desire for "something to foster as woman the germinatrix, the matriarch of reservoirs and gardens." (MSP p. 19) Margotta's attempts to grow pot plants come to symbolise the conflicting forces inherent in the human condition as on the one hand she devotes "so much breast and arm, heart and hope" to their care and yet simultaneously is responsible for the very clutter and lack of light which stunts their growth. (MSP p. 19) Judith Schaffler asserts that Margotta symbolises "misguided idealism."[16] This, she argues, "makes her the female embodiment of a force destroying the rational, progressive, refined social dream that Sammler embraces."[17] Such a stance, however, fails to take into account the incident in which Sammler relies on her assistance to contact Lal and prevent him from involving the police in the retrieval of his manuscript. Margotta is found to have the capacity to be efficient and helpful in a crisis situation. In George Guthridge's view the emerging love affair between Margotta and Dr Lal, in conjunction with Lal's interest in the moon which is a symbol of love suggests that the "concept of love in the modern world" does not die with Elya.[18] Hopefully Lal is able to direct her energies in a constructive manner.

Confining herself to an examination of the female characters in Mr Sammler's Planet, Judith Scheffler writes that Sammler's "fears are mostly for an age which apparently breeds Angelas, Margottas and Shulas."[10] Broadening the scope of this remark, one might add the names of Wallace, Bruch, Feffer and the Negro pickpocket to her list. Sammler does indeed look upon the products of modern American Society with anxiety for the way in which they will mould the human spirit in the future. His assessment of society is uncompromising, yet in his relationships with the various members of his family one sees that Sammler's judgement is tempered with compassion for human frailty.

## 4. HUMBOLDT'S GIFT

In Humboldt's Gift Charlie Citrine, the hero and narrator, interweaves the story of his relationship with the late poet Von Humboldt Fleisher and an account of his own recent personal crisis and spiritual struggles. Approximately the same age at the time of recounting this story as Humboldt was when he died, Charlie is acutely conscious of the similarities between the pattern of Humboldt's life and his own. In view of the prominent position which Humboldt occupies in Humboldt's Gift, the role of his family in this novel will be examined later in this chapter.

Like Humboldt, Charlie has experienced "success" and its accompanying fame and wealth, and has drifted into a creative doldrums, or in his idiom, has fallen into a deep sleep. He now dreads the thought of dying without fulfilling his potential, as Humboldt had done. This fear develops into a horror of death and then a determination, under the guidance of Rudolph Steiner's writings, to investigate the existence of immortal souls and how he might break out of his state of sleep through communicating with the dead.

In Saul Bellow in Defence of Man, J.J.Clayton observes that the Bellow protagonist "feels the need to communicate with and placate his significant dead".[1] Charlie Citrine makes more of an effort than any other Bellow character not only to contact his dead, but to obtain a reply. In Mr Sammler's Planet Sammler wished to comfort Elya with the belief in a death-transcending force which unites mankind. This idea is expanded in Humboldt's Gift with Charlie's

studies in anthroposophy. In a novel preoccupied with the fate of the dead and their relation to the living, Charlie's parents form part of the backdrop of his significant dead along with Dommie Vonghel and Humboldt.[2]

While Charlie does not recount his memories of his childhood home at the same length as Herzog does his, the two exhibit striking similarities. Both Mother Citrine and Mother Herzog are loving, family-centred, self-sacrificing, anxious women. Mother Citrine dies when Charlie is an adolescent as does Mother Herzog when Herzog is in his teens. The memory of each is revered by her respective son. Charlie says of Mother Citrine that to him "she had come to be a sacred person." (HG p. 340) Like Father Herzog, Father Citrine was a gentleman in the Old Country, forced to do menial jobs on coming to America. Both are hasty, desperate, angry and loving. While materially poor, each parental home is rich in emotion. Both sets of parents are immigrant Russian Jews.

The status of the Citrines as immigrants is important as their extreme emotionality is identified with their being immigrants. Naomi Walpor says to Charlie: "Doc told Mother that your whole family were a bunch of greenhorns and aliens, too damn emotional, the whole bunch of you." (HG p. 292) Through the process of Americanization, Father Citrine and Julius "stopped all that immigrant lov..g." (ibid.) Charlie and his mother retained this emotional disposition and remain linked to the Old World through it. It is appropriate that he leaves America and returns to Europe (the Old World) to gain a clearer perspective on the meaning of his life, for Charlie believes that in Europe: "Behaviour under these skies meant more than in

Chicago. It had to. There was significant space here." (HG p. 396) Through his family's immigrant status and by resisting becoming what he perceives to be truly American, Charlie has the option of not losing intuitive wisdom and the sense that life has intrinsic meaning. His opinion of the meaning of being American as far as the intellect is concerned is revealed in his insult to Julius:

> You're a real populist and know-nothing, you've given your Russian Jewish brains away out of patriotism. You're a self-made ignoramus and a true American.
>
> (HG p. 379)

The intensity of feeling in the parental home sets up a need for "intense caring" which accompanies Charlie through life. Charlie claims to lose the ability to care deeply for others, but his manner still appears to promise it, with far-reaching ramifications.[3] Humboldt's insistence on exchanging cheques signifying blood brotherhood is one consequence. Humboldt places the responsibility for this on Charlie, accusing him of arousing the "family feelings" which prompt him to propose the idea. While not stated specifically, it is probably at least partly this desire for intense feeling which attracts Charlie to Denise, for Denise is a highly emotional person. The compatability of Denise's temperament with the emotional climate of his childhood home is made clear through a comparison of the following two statements. He says of Denise: "with her everything was a production, everything was momentous, critical." (HG p. 57) Later he says of his childhood family:

> Whether it was a lump on my head, or

> Julius's geometry, or how Papa could raise the rent, or poor Mama's toothaches, it was the most momentous thing on earth for us all.
>
> (*HG* p. 292-3)

The roots of Charlie's adult emotional composition are *firmly entrenched* in the childhood home. Charlie speaks of the soul longing for a metaphysical, pre-birth home-world. Clayton argues that in fact this home world for which *Charlie feels such longing* is simply "the childhood home, the painful loving home nothing has ever replaced."[4] This has ramifications for Charlie's attitude towards the dead and the importance to him of remembering them. Clayton elaborates:

> To keep the dead with him, to stay loyal to their values, is to preserve in his heart the core of his childhood world. It is an antidote to his own anxiety over death.[5]

Although Charlie finds comfort in memories of his parents, these memories occasionally act as a sombre reminder of the physical reality of aging and death. Charlie is terrified when he cannot recall a particular word because he fears that he is succumbing to memory failure in the same way that his father did. His childhood home is, however, generally a source of *affirmation*. Charlie even uses his mother's beliefs as a touchstone. To his way of thinking, Professor Scheldt's claim that the soul leaves the body in sleep is validated by Mother Citrine's earlier *affirmation* of such an idea:

> As to the soul leaving the body when we sleep, my mother absolutely believed that.

> She told me so when I was a kid. I find nothing strange in that. Only my head-culture opposes it. My hunch is that Mother was right.
>
> (HG p. 341)

When considering what he might say to Julius to comfort him and reassure him of a life beyond physical experience, Charlie reverts to the vibrant childhood home for evidence. After *bringing to mind* powerful images of their family life, he gives the reason for doing so:

> I'll tell you why *I bring it up* - there are good aesthetic reasons why this should not be wiped from the record eternally. No one would put so much heart into things doomed to be forgotten and wasted. Or so much love. Love is gratitude for being. This love would be hate, Ulick, if the whole thing was nothing but a gyp.
>
> (HG pp. 381-382)

The nuclear family into which he *was born* elicits powerful longings from Charlie. He recalls more than once how he yearned for his parents and his brother while in the T.B. sanatorium and even how he suffered as a child if he awoke before the rest of the family, desperate for them to arise so that "the *whole* marvellous thing could continue." (HG p. 75)

Charlie feels very strongly about all people associated with his childhood, not only his late parents. Menasha elicits much nostalgia *from him and* Charlie says of Julius when he visits him in Corpus Christi:

> And even now I had come to get *something from*

> Ulick - I was revisiting the conditions of childhood under which my heart had been inspired. Traces of the perfume of that sustaining time, that early and sweet dreamtime of goodness still clung to him.
>
> (HG p. 386)

Julius would appear to be a rather unlikely person to offer such sublime inspiration. Reminiscent of Augie March's brother, Simon, and a kinder version of Philip Shawaut, in Bellow's short story "Him with His Foot in His Mouth," he is almost entirely preoccupied with success in business. It is interesting to observe how the materialistic Julius who is most skaptical of the world of ideas inadvertently indicates its legitimacy. Charlie notes, for example, that Julius's nature is far too complex to have developed in a single lifetime and probably points to several previous lives in which his soul has had time to progress. Also, because Julius is so committed to the material world and all it offers, those glimmerings of a need for that which would nurture the soul bear witness to the veracity of the transcendant.

Julius claims to reject, or at least claims not to understand, art, ideas and the past, yet covertly he has an interest in all three. Suspicious of art, Julius claims to find Charlie's highly acclaimed play tedious and irrelevant. He find it disturbing when art impinges on his territory by attracting "big money," yet he is prepared to pay five thousand dollars for a seascape. In Quest for the Human, Eusebio Rodrigues interprets Julius's longing for a seascape free from any landmark or sign of humanity, as symbolic of a desire for spiritual transcendence in America.[6] Julius berates Charlie for choosing to be an intellectual, describing his writing as "crap" and him as an "overeducated boob." (HG p. 374) Charlie is

aware however, that Julius shuts himself up in his office and surreptitiously reads the works of Arnold Toynbee, R.H.Tawney, Cecil Roth and Salo Baron. Julius goes to great lengths to deny any memory of the past and even says that he has forgotten what their late mother looked like. Such claims of forgetfulness of the past which are in step with materialism in that they suggest that only the present is relevant, are belied by the fact that he easily recalls an anecdote about Menasha when Charlie mentions their old boarder's name. He also deliberately prompts Charlie's recollection of a shoe repairer whom they knew as children. These hints of a regard for the immaterial in one so grounded in materialism suggest that the need for transcendence is an integral part of the human psyche and not, as Charlie fears, simply symptomatic of his own hysteria.

Julius, the "true American", is wary of anything which is not quantifiable or clearly utilitarian, whether it be spiritual theories or Charlie's sentimental love and obsessive memory. He translates love into material terms in order to cope with it or make it acceptable to him. For example, his love for his parents is concretised by a large donation to a hospital in their memory while his love for Charlie takes a practical bent in his gifts of clothing and offers of business deals. In this way Julius abides by the unwritten rules of success in America.[7]

Charlie's relationship with Julius helps to develop the theme of the role of the artist in America, a prominent concern in Humboldt's Gift. (HG p. 378) Charlie's wealth is incidental to his artistic endeavours, whereas Julius's activities seem to be motivated chiefly by the desire to amass wealth.

Charlie describes the recent ability of art to attract large amounts of money as "a humorous idea" whereby artists are made into capitalists, thereby co-opting them into the society which they attempt to criticise. Through Charlie's observation of Julius, Bellow illustrates the way that America absorbs art through adopting certain of its characteristics, seeming to turn capitalists into artists. A tongue-in-cheek parallel *is drawn between the balance sheets* of Julius's new building project and Chapman's Homer. Charlie describes both as "illuminated pages, realms of gold."[8] (HG p. 385) Charlie describes Julius as "a romantic poet" on the subject of coal. (HG p. 391) Bellow also skilfully juxtaposes Julius's "ecstasy of craftiness" while he visualises a paradisal hotel on the patch of land which they inspect, with Charlie's lofty visions of rousing "that Messiah, that saviour *faculty the imagination" so that* "finally we could look again with open eyes upon the whole shining earth." (HG p. 386) Charlie's search for higher wakefulness is contrasted with Julius's present wakefulness to money. Bellow appears to imply that business takes on metaphysical characteristics in order to decoy the soul from its search for true transcendence. Charlie observes:

> Business, sure of its own transcendent powers, got us all to interpret life through its practices. Even now, when Kathleen and I had so many private matters to consider, matters of the greatest human importance, we were discussing contracts options producers and sums of money.
>
> (HG p. 403)

Humboldt represents the artist who leaves the path of *transcendence to succeed in* terms acceptable to

materialistic America. Humboldt's Gift traces Charlie's struggle to free himself from the consequences of such success, having perceived its dangers.

Julius illuminates certain important forces operating within Charlie. He is aware of the contradictory forces of sex and high mental life within Charlie's make-up. (HG p. 378) Charlie later is compelled to reject sex (as offered by Rebecca Volstad after Renata's departure) in order to nurture his metaphysical concerns. Julius observes that Charlie is asleep, although his concern is Charlie's dormancy regarding materialism. It is while observing that Julius would be prepared to engage in large-scale bribery in the interests of personal gain that Charlie recognises that his "sleep" makes him a "negative sinner" in contrast to Julius, the active or "positive" sinner. (HG p. 385) Charlie's sleep apparently stems at least partly from a desire, similar to that of Herzog, to consider himself an ingenu. He describes himself as "a peculiar soul and, in my own mind, almost comically innocent." (HG p. 40) His sleep which takes the form of both passivity and aloofness from the world around him, preserves his self image of innocence. This, however, does not protect Charlie from the consequences of sin as his attitude prompts others either to sin on his behalf or to sin against him. Hence Cantabile feels driven to act against Denise on Charlie's behalf by threatening her life, while the charming Thaxter and the highly strung Denise exploit Charlie financially to varying degrees. This life pattern promotes the development of masochistic tendencies in Charlie. Regarding his preferences in women, he states, "I would never be greatly interested in any woman incapable of harm, in

any woman who didn't threaten me with loss." (HG p. 403) Julius more bluntly points out that Charlie "picks women who cripple him." (HG p. 391) Like Herzog, Charlie chooses a wife who will persecute him and onto whom he can project his own guilt. Charlie willingly, even gratefully, accepts Denise's criticism (of which she has a plenteous supply). During their marriage he deliberately antagonises her *in order to incur her wrath.* He prefaces his account of the night on which he brings George Swiabel, whom Denise loathes, home for dinner by stating: "as a matter of fact I wanted the *conflict to increase,* and I provoked Denise." (HG p. 44)

Denise is clearly one of Saul Bellow's castrating woman characters. Charlie notes that in Denise's scathing references to Renata, "the trend of her epithets, it seemed, was to make a man of Renata and a woman of me." (HG p. 57) Julius observes that "she'd fit in with the Symbionese or Palestine Liberation terrorists" (HG p. 374) As in Herzog, money is recognised as a vital substance and Denise's main line of attack against Charlie is that of financial persecution. Each time he agrees to her proposals regarding a financial settlement in their divorce *proceedings she increases* her *demands* until eventually she requires money which Charlie does not have and sees little chance of earning. Charlie's lawyer states: "castration, that's all it *is,* when a woman is after the money." (HG p. 230)

The Bellow hero's choice of a wife is of great significance because he tends to select someone whom he considers will complement him in areas in which he feels inadequate. The marriage also generally indicates a commitment, at least for the duration of

the marriage, to the principles by which the wife is motivated. Denise accordingly reflects Charlie's ambitious spirit, although this commonality ultimately becomes a source of conflict. She is a social climber and surrounds herself and Charlie with influential people. Charlie is equally ambitious, but his ambition is to show his superiority to, not to join, the intellectual establishment. He sets out to "lay them all low." (*HG* p. 61) The critic Robert R.Dutton notes Denise's role as "a figure of intellect" and draws attention to the ultimate reason for Charlie's rejection of her: "Charlie gets a divorce from this life of the mind; for despite her intelligence, she had been bad for my idea.'"[9] Denise has a strong opinion of what is and is not acceptable to the intelligentsia, as she makes clear when she meets Charlie at the courthouse.[10] Dutton further suggests that Charlie's idea has to do with his religious intuitions and therefore "needs powers beyond those of intellect."[11] Charlie's difficulty in disentangling himself from Denise's clutches parallels his difficulty in freeing himself of rational skepticism in order to pursue his anthroposophical investigations.

As with *Herzog*, a consequence of his assumed innocence is that Charlie attracts people who take it upon themselves to educate him regarding the unpleasant aspects of both life in general and himself in particular. Denise is a reality instructor par excellence. She educates Charlie in two major ways. The first is incidental to her causing him to be so much in the setting of the divorce courts. According to Charlie the regular frequenting of the law courts necessitated by Denise's lawsuit has been illuminating as regards the nature of society. Through this

experience he comes to "realise *how universal* the desire to injure one's fellow man is." (HG p. 264)

The second way in which she educates Charlie is through lectures intended to enlighten him as regards his failings. Her ability to co-opt other people to facilitate her persecution of Charlie suggests that she speaks not only for herself, but on behalf of society at large.[12] She considers her criticism of Charlie to be for his own good and he notes that "In these conversations ... Denise believed that she was *concerned*, solicitous, even loving." (HG p. 222) Denise mercilessly analyses Charlie's "symptoms of mental and physical decline" (ibid.) and suggests that should Charlie follow her advice, she could "straighten him out." (HG p. 223) During their marriage Denise tries to mould Charlie into what she needs: an intellectual giant in the *echelons of upper* middle class society with a reputation built on mixing with important people like the Kennedys. As such a man's wife she would have the status which she so keenly desires. Even their divorce does not deter her from nurturing the hope of taking up this place in society. With great singleness of mind, she stores up information about Charlie's activities to use as ammunition against him, and as previously indicated, makes ever-increasing financial demands on him. She then offers the tantalising (in her view anyway) *suggestion* that he would find release and salvation through remarrying her. The strength and persistence of her persecution of Charlie shows the power which the intellectual *establishment of America* exerts in order to draw the artist into its sphere of influence where his creative energy is channelled in socially approved, non-threatening ways and ultimately stifled.

In the battle to win Charlie back to her, Denise exploits their two daughters, Lish and Mary. Firstly, they form part of her economic assault in that she claims to require a large divorce settlement for their sakes. Denise insists that they have every possible material advantage, for as Charlie wryly observes, "mine were rich man's daughters." (HG p. 49) Secondly, the girls form part of her psychological assault on him. She repeatedly stresses that the divorce has traumatised them. Charlie paraphrases her argument:

> ...if those kids were ruined it would be my fault. I had abandoned them at a most perilous moment in the history of civilization to take up with Renata.
>
> (HG p. 57)

When Charlie says that their missing him is normal, Denise exclaims "Nothing is normal for them. They miss you painfully." (HG p.220) Apart from heaping guilt on Charlie, Denise uses the girls' welfare as an additional motivation for their remarriage. While Charlie's guilt fails to affect him to the extent that he is prepared to comply with this suggestion, it does make him feel a very strong need to "wake up" in order to do them good. In their innocence, Charlie is overwhelmed by their being "so savable." (HG p. 287) As such they embody a sense of hope for the future, similar to the way that June does in Herzog.

In Saul Bellow in Defence of Man, Clayton observes "a conflict between contradictory traditions" in Bellow's novels. On the one hand there is the old, heart-felt one belonging to "the world of our fathers" and on the other hand, the modern world of distraction in which death is final, belonging to the sons.[12] In

this context the Oedipal conflict in Herzog and Mr Sammler's Planet takes on a much broader cultural significance. Clayton suggests that in Humboldt's Gift, little is written about Charlie's father in order to focus instead on Humboldt as Charlie's spiritual father. Charlie, like Herzog, finds himself acting out aspects of his "father's" life. In Charlie's case it comprises playing "the role of the *self-destructive* artist."[14] Clayton states that "The struggle of the protagonist is to survive both the judgment and the failure of the internalized father."[15] Contrary to *the case in Herzog*, Humboldt as the father figure consciously assists Charlie in breaking free from the stranglehold of this internalisation. He does this directly through the legacy which he leaves behind and thereby also indirectly through the renewal of Charlie's relationships with Humboldt's ex-wife, Kathleen and his Uncle Waldemar.

In contrast to the disastrous choices which Humboldt makes in the context of his artistic career, his choice of wife seems remarkably fortuitous. In Kathleen, Humboldt's wife, Bellow provides one of the least neurotic pictures of a woman to be found in his novels. *She has* elements of the Bellow mother figure in her passivity and willingness to sublimate her desires for the sake of her husband, but she differs firstly *in having an air of serenity and secondly in* that she places a limit as to how much she is prepared to sacrifice for the person whom she loves. In her serenity and passivity she acts as a foil and a stabiliser for Humboldt. The fact that she is unable to prolong the episodes of tranquillity in his life attests to the vastness of his need. Charlie notes tyrannical tendencies in Humboldt, and as the latter

deteriorates these become ever stronger. What begins as a whispered confidence to Charlie that Kathleen had once allowed her father to sell her to a Rockefeller becomes a series of public accusations of infidelity and promiscuity against her. She runs away from Humboldt when such obsessive *accusations combined with* his treatment of her as a prisoner become too oppressive.

She and Charlie share a number of characteristics as they each their respective relationships with Humboldt. In each one's relationship with him, Humboldt is the dominant party. Charlie uses a sexual image to describe this:

> Lie there. Hold still. Don't wiggle. My happiness may be peculiar, but once happy I will make you happy, happier than you ever dreamed. When I am satisfied the *blessings* offulfilment will flow to all mankind. ... I too was supposed to go along, and in another fashion I too was to hold still.
>
> (HG p. 26)

It is Kathleen's flight from Humboldt that initiates the inevitable break-up of the friendship between Humboldt and Charlie. Later, it is a letter from Kathleen that informs him of the existence of the legacy from Humboldt. In this way she initiates the reconciliation between the friends across the gulf of death. After receiving the legacy Charlie is no longer tormented by his failure to greet the dying Humboldt in New York. Kathleen, like Charlie is a sleeper. Charlie, himself struggling to awaken, thinks that he detects "signs that she too was coming out of a state of spiritual sleep." (HG p. 365)

Sanford Radner asserts that "the *last fifty pages of* the novel reflect the affirmation of male bonding, as all feminine influence is evacuated."[16] In making such a statement Radner ignores the quiet but significant presence of Kathleen who, albeit in a subdued way, becomes an important source of support for Charlie. She is able to provide him with much-needed ready money from a director's perusal of the Corcoran story script She offers him the opportunity to act as an extra in a historical play, an episode which he anticipates with pleasure. In contrast to Renata, she expresses enjoyment at being able to listen to him talk and she takes his mystic concerns seriously. While in New York, Charlie *recognises Kathleen as a woman* to whom he can talk. At this time he feels that to talk of metaphysical things would be absurd because his lifestyle is out of keeping with such *lofty considerations.*[17] *Once* Charlie is freed from his sexual preoccupations the possibility of meaningful dialogue with Kathleen reemerges. Charlie observes that Humboldt may have intended one of the functions of his legacy to be that of bringing him and Kathleen together:

> It was not appropriate to mention this, but possibly Humboldt's idea was to bring us together. Not to become man and wife necessarily, but perhaps to combine our feelings for him and create a sort of joint memorial.
>
> (HG p. 364)

Despite the above-mentioned hint of marriage between Charlie and Kathleen as a remote possibility, there is a general lack of sexual overtones in their relationship and this is a significant omission. In Bellow's novels sex, guilt and death are often closely

related. This is vividly conveyed in the scene where Charlie, having rushed back to Chicago after seeing Humboldt in the street in New York, returns to Denise for *comfort*. Charlie's recollection of Denise sitting naked on the bed, brushing her hair and ready to give him consolation through sex, is juxtaposed with images of death and pathology, the smell of butchered livestock of past decades which hangs in the air, crime and incendiarism on this "rape and murder night." (HG p. 115) The lack of sexual attraction between Charlie and Kathleen bodes well for a future intellectual relationship.

The critic J.J.Clayton notes that Humboldt's Gift differs from previous Bellow novels in that instead of ending with a desire on the part of the hero to reinforce the human bond by becoming more involved in society, Charlie moves towards isolation in his anthroposophy studies.[18] This is not entirely an accurate observation, for while Charlie assuredly does break a number of ties (such as those with Cantabile, Renata and Thaxter), he renews old *bonds* (with Kathleen, Menasha and Uncle Waldemar). Charlie moves away from exploitative relationships and in their place establishesrelationships based on trust, mutual respect and love. Humboldt's Uncle Waldemar acts as a guardian of Humboldt's gift and letter to Charlie. Charlie, in turn, organises the reburial of Humboldt and Humboldt's mother. He also ensures that Waldemar gets his fair share of the royalties from Calofradda, which enables him and Menasha to move out of the bleak confines of the old age home. *Becoming more closely* associated with Humboldt's family and finding vestiges of his childhood home in the person of Menasha contribute significantly towards Charlie's tentative salvation.

## 5. THE DEAN'S DECEMBER

In The Dean's December Saul Bellow breaks with a number of patterns established in his earlier novels. These pertain to the nature of the marriage relationship, descent, and childhood home of the hero. Albert Corde is happily married to his wife and though a previous divorce is mentioned, as is a sexually remiss past, that part of his life is not probed at all. His first wife is not named or described, nor for that matter is Minna's first husband. When compared with the repeated interweaving of past and present such as that which occurs in the previous three novels, these omissions may be seen to concentrate the attention of the reader more clearly on the present crisis of which Corde is so painfully aware. In its emphasis on the sickness of the times The Dean's December and Mr Sammler's Planet have much in common. Sammler observes the trends of the age as reflected back to him by the New York scene. Corde traces the spirit of the age as it manifests itself in the Chicago scene. Each is deeply disturbed by what he discovers.

Albert Corde is one of the few Bellow heroes who does not have a Jewish background. He is, instead, of Irish and Huguenot descent, a Midwesterner of at least eight generations. This precludes him from automatically being an alien by virtue of his birth. Any "un-American" qualities that he may display are a result of personality rather than ethnicity. Corde also has the right to criticise American society, as an ethnic "insider."

In The Dean's December the childhood environment is portrayed as one in which the hero feels out of place; as a child Corde does not like the hotel life and does not enjoy the outings preferred by his father. The childhood home is no longer one of unconditional acceptance and vibrant emotion. It is one presided over by the angry eyes of Corde's dying mother. Like Sammler's and unlike those of Herzog and Citrine, Corde's childhood home is an affluent environment. Father Corde "cut a figure here as a big hotel man and public personality." (DD p. 101) He is "a man about town." (DD p. 91) While this home does not provide the warmth and emotion of Herzog or Charlie Citrine's childhood homes, Father Corde does pass on a certain calm courtesy and style. This stands Corde in good stead when he has to protect Valeria unobtrusively on seeing that her energy is failing during her final trip to London. But for all his style, Corde still classifies his father as "low Chicago male company." (DD p. 91) along with the likes of Judge Sorokin and Mason Zaehner senior.[1] The familiar tension between father and son, so prevalent in Bellow's novels, is clearly evident. Corde is conscious that his late father would disapprove of his polemical articles on Chicago.

In spite of his childhood home appearing not to have been a particularly happy one, Corde exhibits powerful feelings for his sister Elfrida. It is in Corde's love for Elfrida that one sees the outgrowth of the type of love typically to be found in the Bellow hero's childhood home. These feelings have an almost mystic element. His love for her is not based on anything in particular that she says or does, but on an appreciation simply of what she essentially is: "If Corde's love for Elfrida had an extreme, almost

exaggarated character, it was perhaps because she was curiously put together...." (DD p. 86) Elfrida in turn loves him unconditionally. Paradoxically, Elfrida's love for Corde serves to emphasise his isolation. Neither Elfrida nor Minna can see the reason that Corde feels compelled to write his Chicago articles or why it is so important for him to find and prosecute the felons responsible for Rickie Lester's murder. Their lack of understanding of Corde's motives acts as a comment on the extent to which society has been infiltrated by forces against civilization. As a result, now even "good" people cannot see the necessity for wrong to be challenged if in doing so one disturbs the status quo. Elfrida is equivocal about Corde's role in pushing for an arrest in the Lester murder case, though she finally concedes that it is understandable that Lydia Lester should wish to see the felons punished: "I can see why she wants those people sent to jail. It's perfectly natural. She must feel she owes it to her husband." (DD p. 102) Elfrida nevertheless does not appear to see the need for the trial in a wider social context. To her Corde's desire to expose evil is simply evidence of a tendency to "go overboard" (DD p. 104)

Elfrida's partiality towards Chicago and her own wealth would appear to prevent her from seeing the unpleasant side of the city. She tends to see only that part of Chicago which reflects favourably on it. The difference in focus between her and Corde is apparent in their contrasting memories of their life in the hotel as children:

> The Cordes had lived for years in a huge old apartment on Sheridan Road, but she preferred to remember the razzle-dazzle hotel life, the banquets, the big kitchen, the jazz bands,

> the bar gossip, and she told people, with a satisfaction her brother didn't share, "We were a pair of hotel brats." He was more apt to recall the drunks, freaks, noise-makers, check-kiters, the football deadheads, the salesmen and other business dumdums.
>
> (DD pp. 86-87)

To an extent, Elfrida seems to act as an intermediary between the opposing extremes of Corde's rejection and Zachner's embracing of the materialistic hedonism of wealthy Chicago. Although she disapproves of Corde's articles and loves the glamour of Chicago, she has not altogether been absorbed by it. She tacitly blames Mason's delinquency on their affluent lifestyle in suburbia and [illegible]'s attendance at a private school there. She spends only little on herself, rather saving her money to inherit. She also resists being drawn into any against either Corde or Mason and Zachner.

Corde's Harper's articles, with their "poetic" rather than journalistic style, comprise an attempt by him to perceive the truth about Chicago. On a more personal level, in his relationship with Elfrida, this concern for finding truth beyond conventional systems of explanation[2] is reflected in his desire to discern her "depth level." (ibid.) The critic, Malcolm Bradbury, states the central theme of The Dean's December as follows:

> The problem Bellow seems directly to pose is how we write an adequate account of our perceptions, and find our state of being, in a world that is so pressing as to make any system of explanation suspect, for modern life is run with systems of explanation, concepts.[3]

As Elfrida discusses Mason's problems with Corde in terms which he sarcastically refers to as originating in "ladies' magazine pedagogy or the Lake Forest *psychiatry*," (DD p. 92) Corde reflects that:

> These times we live in give us foolish thoughts to think, dead categories of intellect and words that get us nowhere. It was just these words and categories that made the setting of a real depth level so important.[4]
>
> (DD p. 93)

The "depth level" appears to be similar in nature to the axial lines. It *comprises a union* which transcends everyday interaction, particularly between those who love one another. Corde locates it in "the natural warmth of his sister." (DD p. 92) He says that "in him it was represented if you liked by his feeling for Elfrida...the *apperceptive mass of a lifetime*." The "depth level" appears to be associated with both feeling and true perception brought about by intimate and usually lengthy association. His favourite of Elfrida's features is the point of her upper lip because he *interprets* it as *being* "a reading of true feeling." (ibid.) This points to a fundamental aspect of the "depth level"; it comprises perception which can be trusted. One could interpret Corde's life quest as one to find the "depth level," not only as it *manifests itself in* his immediate interpersonal relationships, but in societal relationships such as those which he explores in his Harper's articles.

Corde displays resistance to Elfrida's remarriage; this *possibly* stems from his desire for her to develop her ability to communicate with him at a deeper level. At one point in their conversation Corde notes that he "was trying to get Elfrida to talk with him in his way. She was his sister, she ought to be able to do

it. She ought to be willing." (DD p. 100) He recognises nevertheless that *she feels threatened by* his theoretical way of speaking and though he encourages her to come around to his way of perception, he will not coerce her:

> "Don't you worry, Elfrida," he had said to her before he left - meaning that he would not molest her, would not try to get her to talk his way.
> She drew a long, thankful breath....
>
> (*DD* p. 103)

Corde's reaction to Elfrida's marriage to Sorokin is influenced by his attitude towards Chicago. *Corde does* not dislike Chicago, but is also acutely conscious of its flaws. In a similar way, he places Sorokin in the category of "low Chicago male company." (DD p. 91) He nevertheless gives him credit for his amiability and for not being as corrupt as many other people within the system. Consequently Corde is not as dismayed at her choice of a husband as Elfrida, who does not perceive these nuances of Corde's opinion, expects him to be.

Because he is so fond of Elfrida, Corde is anxious to discover what she thinks of his articles on Chicago. He is disappointed, though not surprised to discover that she disapproves of them. Her sense of loyalty towards *Father Corde and Zachner*, as well as towards Chicago, prevents her from feeling anything else. Chicago is repeatedly shown to be more than a specific place. It symbolises the decadence of the Western world and is not merely a phenomenon to be observed, but an *indoctrinating force, providing an* education in its norms and values for those who come within its sphere of influence. For Elfrida, the experience of Chicago carries the same weight as the writing of giants in the realm of ideas has for Corde: "She had

no need of Proust or Freud or Krafft-Ebing or Balzac or Aristophanes. Chicago had it all." (DD p. 93)

An important realisation for Corde, as he reflects on his conversation with Elfrida from his vantage point in Bucharest, is that to a large degree his articles on Chicago and his fervour for justice in the Lester case form part of an ongoing conflict with Zaehner, his late brother-in-law:

> "...underlying the whole of his recent phase of eccentricity (it wasn't at all eccentric from within) was his continuing dispute with Elfrida's husband, the late Zaehner. Contra Zaehner might have been the true title of those articles on Chicago."
>
> (DD p. 103)

In The Pagan's December, Zaehner personifies the uncivilised and uncivilising spirit of Chicago: tough, cynical, brutal, boorish. Corde describes Chicago as "the contempt centre of the USA" (DD p. 46) and the person with whom he most strongly associates such contempt is Zaehner.

Corde's feelings towards Zaehner illuminate his mixed *feelings about Chicago. Despite his disapproval of* Zaehner, he states that he had enjoyed certain of Zaehner's characteristics, including "his growling wit, his unpressed look, his practical jokes." (DD p. 87) Corde even has a feeling of affection towards Chicago types. Reacting to Elfrida's remarriage, Corde says:

> I didn't dislike Mason senior. He was the special kind of highly intelligent top-grade barbarian I grew up with - people like my own father and my uncles. People to whom I was affectionately attached.
>
> (DD p. 228-229)

Because he is so strongly associated with Chicago, Zaehner's attitude towards Corde *reflects* the way Chicago is likely to receive a man like Corde:

> He despised his brother-in-law, a man large enough to be forceful, smart enough to be rich, proud enough to be contemptuous. To him Corde was a cop-out, a snob."
>
> (DD p. 87)

Zaehner feels threatened by Corde because by not acknowledging the *necessity of exploiting* others to achieve material success, Corde implicitly denies the legitimacy and worthiness of Zaehner's lifestyle. Corde, with his "tacit comment" exposes the inconsistencies in Zaehner's self-image:

> Sometimes he [Zaehner] was more Darwinian - the struggle for existence *in the Loop* jungle. Some jungle! Who were the lions and tigers? It was more like the city dump. Rats were the principal fauna. And it wasn't Zaehner who struggled for existence; he arranged for others to do the struggling. And of course Zaehner sensed how mixed a view his brother-in-law took of him. You didn't have to be terribly deep for that. Corde had the trick, while keeping his mouth shut, of transmitting opinions. He looked at you with *a newspaperman's* silent irony. Well, Zaehner was affronted by these opinions. It was people like himself, Zaehner, who lived the life characteristic of the city and of the country, who were realistically connected with its operations, its historical position, its power - the actual American stuff. They were at the centre. And who the fuck did this dud dean think he was!
>
> (DD pp. 93-94)

It may be seen from this passage that, like Charlie Citrine, Corde is up against the pragmatic claims of materialistic America that it manifests all that reality comprises. Later, Dewey Spangler, another

Chicago type, dismisses Corde and his opinions on Chicago by suggesting that Corde is "as *unlike his* fellow Americans as he can be." (DD p. 296) The narrator wryly comments, "He disposed of the Dean by describing him as an unwitting alien." (ibid.) Zachner repeatedly infers, in one of his favourite statements, that Corde and other thinkers are *isolated* from the real life of present-day society ar therefore not entitled to criticise it: "I make my living by tipping over garbage cans, but at least I go in the alley and tip them over myself." (DD p. 47) This accusation of being out of touch with *reality is one which* Corde takes seriously, particularly when it is tacitly levelled by Minna as well.(DD p. 261) Only after much deliberation does he conclude that their judgement of him is unfounded:

> He was like everybody else, but not as everybody else conceived it. His own *sense of* the way things were had a strong claim on him, and he thought that if he sacrificed that sense - its truth - he sacrificed himself. ... Did this signify that he did not belong to the life of the country? Not if the spirit of the times was in us by nature. We all belonged.
>
> (ibid.)

He realises that others reject his views because they see only the generalities, in which there is no coherence, while he is attempting to bypass the old, dead categories of perception in order to discern the underlying and unifying truth in existence which comprises reality. If indeed Corde's recent actions are part of an ongoing struggle between him and Zachner, it is doubly ironic that it is a statement by Zachner, repeated out of context by Dewey Spangler, which sinks Corde's career as an academic.[5] It is also significant that Corde's most antagonistic adversary in The Dean's December is Zachner's son and

namesake.

Mason has a number of key attributes in common with Zaehner. He is arrogant, contemptuous, and convinced of having a grasp of reality lacking in Corde. He is not, however, a clone of Zaehner and adds a new dimension to the role of antagonist. In Mr Sammler's Planet the spirit of the age is primarily represented by Angela, Wallace and the Negro pickpocket. In The Dean's December that function is assumed by Mason with Lucas Ebry and Riggie Hines in the background. In The Dean's December, as in Mr Sammler's Planet, lawlessness and anarchic energy is represented by low life blacks. In The Dean's December, however, the crime has worsened from theft to murder while the majestic Negro pickpocket has degenerated into the figure of Lucas Ebry, a "shrunken, twisting figure, burnt out...." (DD p. 48) Any vestiges of glamour which remained clinging to the idea of abandonment to impulse as represented by the pickpocket are erased in The Dean's December. Though Ebry and Hines are the perpetrators of the murder, the focus falls chiefly on Mason, the self-appointed ambassador of the street people to Corde. Corde recalls at length the confrontation between him and Mason when Mason comes to harangue him regarding the events leading up to Lucas Ebry's trial.

Like Wallace Gruner in Mr Sammler's Planet, Mason has failed to grow up. His immaturity is immediately apparent in his flippant approach to the social issues which he brings up in his argument with his uncle. "Corde absolutely refused to go along with this bright bitterness, the barrels-of-fun line that Mason tried to take with him." (DD p. 19) His desire to confront Corde on an adult basis only serves to emphasise his immaturity: "He was here on a mature basis (to fight), meanwhile shuffling and grinning. His ultra-bright hey-presto look was insolent." (DD p. 40) If Wallace

Gruner is fixated at the anal stage, according to the psychoanalytic model, Mason is fixated at the stage during which the Oedipal complex is encountered. With Eashner, Mason's biological father dead, the role of father in this struggle appears to have been transferred to Corde. That Mason wants his mother to devote herself only to him, is shown in his gift to her of a book on how to be fulfilled as a widow. He tacitly dismisses remarriage as an option for her. The Oedipal nature of Mason and Corde's conflict is highlighted by Mason's unreasonable resentment both of Elfrida's esteem for Corde and of Corde's love for his sister. Mason himself intimates that the fact that they are related is significant to him when he challenges Corde, saying, "Does the *relationship* embarrass you - nephew against uncle?" (DD p. 48) Corde observes that Mason's primary motivation for the interview with him is "mostly ... to needle his uncle and he hoped - craved, longed - to drive his needle deep." (DD p. 40)

Mason is also one of Bellow's least engaging reality instructors, exhibiting unmitigated bigotry. In the course of the interview Mason declares "Uncle Albert, you don't *know* a *damn about what goes on.*" (DD p. 52) The narrator notes:

> He [Mason] was here as a representative of the street people but he intended also to teach his ignorant uncle some lessons about Chicago's social reality.
>
> (DD p. 40)

Corde is shown to be a more self-assured sort of hero than many previous Bellow heroes in that he immediately evaluates Mason's argument and challenges those areas in which it is flawed. In contrast, Herzog generally accepts unquestioningly the views of the

reality instructors with whom he comes into contact. Only much later and after extensive suffering does he reject their views. In his refusal passively to accept Mason's evaluation of him, Corde appears not to have the masochistic streak so prevalent in many Bellow heroes. While he certainly brings some of his problems upon himself through the writing of his Chicago articles, they are a side-effect of seeking to do good rather than a result of a desire for punishment by others. In his support of the good he does not deny evil (and thereby lose his ability to perceive it), but exposes evil through his articles and through his role in bringing Ebry and Hines to justice. He also admits to Mason that injustices do indeed exist in their society which may well be disadvantageous to the black street people. In so doing he shows that he is not the blind representative of the establishment which Mason wishes to brand him as.

Corde, like Sammler, is challenged by the younger generation regarding his competence as a social analyst. In The Dean's December, Mason challenges Corde's right to exercise any form of judgement over the street people on the basis that their existence is too alien for him to comprehend. Mason identifies the life lead by this underprivileged social group as reality and therefore implicitly brands Corde's lifestyle as one out of touch with reality. Mason's accusation is in line with his father's assertion that Corde is not involved with "the actual American stuff." (DD p. 94) A disturbing trend is evident in that the prevailing definition of reality degenerates from the cut-throat sophistication of Zaehner's business environment where survival of the fittest is interpreted in financial terms, to the brutish environment of the street people where survival of the fittest is a literal reality.

In common with Wallace Gruner of *Mr Sammler's Planet*, Mason displays a certain moral weightlessness. He applies different criteria of justice to different groups. His apparent fervour for justice regarding Ebry's supposedly unjust prosecution makes him indifferent to the murder of Rickie Lester as well as to the suffering of Lydia Lester and to the due process of law. Also, like Wallace Gruner, he is rootless. He will not commit himself to any particular ideology and is a university dropout with no plans for his future. Even his concern for identification with the black street people is relatively short-lived as he proceeds to move on to South America to "look over the revolutionary options." (DD p. 278) He simply *abandons Ebry*, for whom he defiantly pledged to fight Corde and the Establishment, in mid-trial. Mason's radicalism is far more threatening than Wallace's because he *is not merely indifferent* to, but despises all that is humane. This contempt for any human feelings which emerges in Corde and Mason's discussion regarding Lester's death is what most disturbs Corde about Mason.[6] He crystalises Mason's standpoint in the following words: "Let's not fuck around with all those high sentiments and humane teachings and pieties and poetry, and the rest of that jazz." (DD p. 46) In those sentiments Corde identifies "the true voice of Chicago - the spirit of the age speaking from its lowest register; the very bottom." (DD p. 46) Malcolm Bradbury identifies Corde as a "man of feeling."[7] As such, recognition of feelings comprises part of the intrinsic value of humanity and is integral to establishing dialogue. When confronted by Mason's biting incredulity at his reference to Lydia Lester's "decent instincts," Corde experiences overwhelming despair which manifests itself physically in the form of a blinding headache. (DD p. 48)

As a representative of the radicalism of his day,

Mason rebels against the values of the previous generation. As is the case with Wallace Gruner, he wants to rebel, but without forfeiting the use of his parent's charge account! The gap between his ideals and actions is made even more striking than those of Wallace in that while his rebellion takes the form of a desire to be accepted by the impoverished street people, he still keeps one eye on a substantial future inheritance. Corde speculates that part of Mason's hostility towards him stems from a fear that if Elfrida makes Corde the executor of her will, he might deal with Mason's inheritance as incompetently as he has done with his own financial matters in the past.

In contrast with his conspicuous concern and involvement with the problems of the black street people, Mason lacks the moral fibre to face up to his own problems, as shown when he runs away after Elfrida's remarriage. Perhaps it is Mason's inability to cope with his own circumstances which prompts him to redefine reality in terms of the world of the street people where he can live without "structure".[8] As he is not trapped at this level of society (for unlike his newfound friends, he has had a privileged upbringing and education and as previously mentioned has an inheritance to look forward to), Mason risks very little through this identification and it is probably his fundamental lack of commitment to his stated ideals which prompts the reader to view him with a modicum of cynicism. According to the narrator, Mason is partly motivated by a desire to gain distinction from the crowd by his association with the black street people, a friendship across the colour bar apparently being a rarity among them.

Another character who hopes to gain social distinction, albeit of a different type, from his association with the Ebry trial, is Maxie Detillion.

Corde's cousin is approached by Mason to represent Ebry. Unlike Mason, Max has a personal axe to grind with regard to Corde and he contributes to the sense of inverted morality which disquiets Corde in The Dean's December. After being exposed for swindling Corde out of over three hundred thousand dollars, Max incongruously feels himself to be the aggrieved party and takes the opportunity offered by the Ebry trial to get revenge on Corde. The fact that *he is Corde's* cousin is important to Max. This can be seen in his deliberately, yet apparently unnecessarily, mentioning that Corde is his cousin in a television interview. In turn, the family link between Corde and Max heightens Corde's sense of guilt for the suffering which Lydia Lester is forced to experience during the trial, particularly in the course of cross-examination by Max. Corde is conscious that his presence in the courtroom prompts Max to make his performance in court more sensational and consequently worse for her.[9]

> "No, I shouldn't be so sensitive about Max. But he comes every day and sprays the girl and the family with untreated sewage. It was me that got her involved, and I feel responsible...my family, after all.
>
> (DD pp. 99-100)

A preoccupation common to all of Saul Bellow's novels is that of determining the appropriate place for the self in a mass society, somewhere between the extremes of Romanticism which leads to egomania and Marxism which leads to a total disregard for the value of the individual. The critic Malcolm Bradbury observes that in The Dean's December Bellow contrasts:

> ... two primary versions of modern social order - the totalitarian system, where power and force are exerted against individuals, but where the traces of the old order still

> show in the dignified personal relations of domestic life; the pleasure-principle order of America, where a different kind of harness and toughness serve on the streets and in the practice of power, where the past is razed and an unfurnished meagre modern consciousness thrives.[10]

In Max, Bellow presents the reader with the type of person which adherence to the pleasure principle is likely to produce. Max is totally egocentric and governed by a desire for sexual hedonism. He habitually translates his experience of life to the common denominator of sexual gratification. In accordance with this he interprets Corde's close interest in him as admiration for his way with women. *His pleasure at being recognised by a waitress as* having been on television almost prompts him to proposition her. He is only restrained by the presence of Dewey Spangler. Max is an example of sexual egomania run riot and, as is often the case in Bellow's novels, images of sexuality are combined with images of degeneration and delusion. Max, oblivious to the fact that he is now beginning to show definite and unattractive signs of aging, views himself as:

> ...the personification of Eros, all aflame, all gold, crimson, radiant, experiencing divine tumescence, bringing life. The power to bless womankind *was swelling in his pants.*
>
> (DD p. 98)

Ironically, he reminds Corde of the reference by Shelley to King George III as "the old mad blind despised and dying king." (DD p. 96) Daniel Fuchs describes this quotation as "a psychic refrain indicating a lack of paternal principle, secure morality."[11] As with Walter Bruch and Angela Grunor in Mr. Sammler's Planet, abandonment to sexual impulse blocks the way for constructive interpersonal

relationships and orientates the proponent towards death.[12]

Maxie's relationship with Cordo has certain similarities to Kirby Allbee's relationship with Asa Leventhal in The Victim. There is the same sense of stifling intimacy to the point where the hero imagines that he can even feel the physical sensations of his adversary. There is also the same insatiable sense of injury and a desire for restitution on the part of the latter. Max has a quasi-erotic, love-hate relationship with Cordo. Although Max attempts to discredit and hurt Cordo with his insinuations during the trial, Dewey Spangler describes him as having "a super hard-on" for Cordo. (DD p. 23) It is ironic that Dewey Spangler should remark on this aspect of Maxie and Cordo's relationship as he does Cordo great harm through his article on Cordo while simultaneously wishing to establish an intimate relationship with him:

> "Yes, Dewey's done it to me this time. This was the Dewey who never had a college education letting us all have it. And at the same time wanting to draw close. And to take me in his embrace."
>
> (DD p. 299)

If Maxie stands for the corruption inherent in the Chicago system, Valeria, his moral opposite, stands for the integrity, control and respectability of the pre-war Rumanian nobility. Cordo's mother-in-law contributes significantly not only to the themes, but to the structure of the novel. In the first place, it is on account of Valeria's illness that Cordo is put in a position of physical, cultural and linguistic isolation. This not only gives Cordo time for meditation, but provides the mechanism whereby Chicago and Bucharest (and the world views they

represent) may be juxtaposed. Valeria also influences Corde's thoughts in more direct ways. Corde is initially prompted to contemplate his articles on Chicago as a result of finding in her study a copy of his first article which she had examined closely and annotated. Also, the fact that the events in Bucharest are moulded around Valeria's death and funeral sharply focuses Corde's thoughts on mortality.

Balanced against the death of Rickie Lester, Valeria's death contributes to the symmetry of the events in Chicago and Bucharest respectively. *The differences* between the circumstances surrounding the two deaths reflect on the societies in which they occur. Valeria's dying is characterised by a high degree of institutional control, both by virtue of the fact that she is kept alive with the *aid of machines and* in that her daughter's access to her is controlled by the Colonel in charge of the hospital. This highlights the effect on the individual when governing structures seek to regulate every aspect of life. Rickie Lester's death, on the other *hand, takes place in a milieu of* chaos and feverish impulse which Corde sees as rife in the Chicago lifestyle. In contrast to the vindictive state manipulation, Valeria's dying is also marked by a high degree of caring involvement by others. Her family *and friends show great concern for her* while she is in hospital and many associates attend her funeral to pay their respects , spite of possible state disapproval. In contrast, Rickie Lester's poor group appears to be largely indifferent to his death. *This seems to point to a loss of* social cohesion in Western society at the level of the individual. For reasons to be discussed later in this chapter, in Eastern European society this cohesion survives at the level of ordinary relationships in spite of the *general repressiveness of* the Communist system as portrayed in The Dean's December.

Corde explicitly compares Valeria's extended and clear consciousness of death with the few seconds of realisation of imminent death experienced by Rickie Lastor. In so doing he comes to recognise a qualitative difference in their respective consciousnesses though they are both about to encounter death. Valeria subscribes to the "old discipline," identified with the blessings promised the *righteous in the Sermon on* the Mount and which assumes the possibility of unadulterated goodness. With his Chicago background which offers a totally different kind of "illumination"[13], Corde finds it easier to identify with the "modern consciousness" of Rickie Lastor, which is characterised by "a net of foolish assumptions and so much absurd unwanted stuff lying on your heart." (DD p. 131)

Morally Valeria may belong to an archaic ord[illegible] she maintains a strong interest in progress occurs in both the human and the natural sciences. She keeps up to date with the latest trends in psychiatry and she prompts Minna to enter the realm of the natural sciences, that area of study which, unlike history and literature, is "incorruptible." (DD p. 30) In a wa[illegible]alogous to the action of religion, Valeria trusts t[illegible] "science would save her [Minna] from evil." ( p. 253) Motivated by a consciousness of the harm done to *herself by the government and by* love for Minna and for that part of Minna which reminds her of her late husband, Valeria protects Minna from politics and directs her interests towards astronomy instead. Valeria deals with the authorities on Minna's behalf, (it is she, for example, who arranges for Minna to leave Rumania for the West). But in so doing, she prevents Minna from developing appropriate mechanisms for coping with the stress of life under that regime. This leads to a near physical and emotional breakdown for Minna when she has to cope with both her mother's

death and the vindictiveness of the authorities. In keeping Minna safe from politics through ignorance, Valeria keeps her childlike and dependent on her. This psychological relationship is reflected in her maintenance of Minna's room as it was when Minna was a schoolgirl. So that Minna need not worry about coping alone, she even promises her that she will live to ninety years of age. Corde observes that this is the type of promise which one would only make to a child. Valeria's death and the illness which leads up to it catapults Minna into a head-on confrontation with ordinary life from which she has previously been shielded. Fortunately for her, Minna had made an important independent decision (at the time against Valeria's wishes) in choosing to marry Corde, and this stands her in good stead. Though daunted at the prospect of having to take Valeria's place in protecting Minna, Corde is committed to continuing to do all he can to meet her needs.

Valeria gives her approval to Minna regarding her marriage to Corde, after several years' observation. Corde nevertheless continues to feel like "a longtime sexual offender still on probation," (DD p. 133) as if Valeria is continually weighing him in the balance. Even as she lies helpless on her deathbed, Corde is sure that her suspicion of him weighs heavily on her mind:

> He was certain that she had laid her dying plans carefully, but she couldn't arrange Minna's future. There was still the one open question: could he, Corde, this American, be trusted not to harm, or betray, or even ruin her daughter?
>
> (DD p. 69)

Corde is adamant that in spite of his womanising prior to marrying Minna and his coming from a Western

background (which he believes Valeria envisages as intrinsically unstable), he can be relied upon to love and care for Minna. This is partly what underlies his declaration to Valeria that he also loves her. In spite of his conviction that Valeria is still suspicious of him, Cordo admits that without acceptance from her the feeling of "human 'agreement'" which he experiences in the company of Valeria and Minna during their final stay together in London would be impossible. Cordo's worries regarding Valeria's trust or mistrust of him are quelled by Valeria's posthumous gift to him of a watch which had previously belonged to her beloved late husband. After receiving this he acknowledges that her acceptance of him must have come during her stay with Cordo and Minna in London. This contradicts his theory that her reaction to his declaration of love indicates the extent of her doubts about him. It suggests that in his speculation as to the cause of her violent reaction he projects his own self-doubt onto Valeria. The following passage shows that Cordo irrationally fears that Valeria has the ability to see the side of his nature which he would rather conceal from others:

> Now then, could Valeria entrust such a daughter to a man like Cordo? Suppose Valeria had seen him staring down at her in intensive care, what sort of face did that gauze mask cover - sane or what? A gentle soul, or a masked killer? Cordo was always afraid that that deep old woman knew his worst thoughts, instability, weakness, vices.
>
> (DD p. 69)

Cordo's questioning of his nature in the passage above is reminiscent of Herzog's anguished exclamation on observing himself in the mirror: "My God! Who is this creature? It considers itself human. But what is it?" (H p. 220) Both Herzog and Cordo feel deeply threatened about their respective negative

characteristics, and in attempting to deny those aspects, forfeit confident self-knowledge. Herzog is able to believe in his own innocence by denying the evil within himself and projecting it onto others. Corde wishes to believe in his ability to remain steadfast and faithful in an ever-changing world, particularly in his relationship with Minna, and so he projects his fears of instability onto Valeria. Valeria's reaction to his declaration of love could well be motivated by factors having nothing to do with mistrust in Corde's ability to care adequately for Minna.

This incident highlights the problem of authentic contact between people, a problem which deeply concerns Corde. During his argument with Mason he longs to explain that "men and women were shadows, and shadows within shadows, to one another."(DD p. 37) This indicates that Corde is aware of the near-impossibility for people of gaining an accurate perception of one another as human beings under normal circumstances. In this context it is significant that he takes the opportunity to tell Valeria that he loves her at a time when "he thought the soul was loosened in Valeria, ready to pull out, and that she could therefore know you for what you were." (DD p. 129) In his view she is now most likely to be able to perceive the truth of his statement. Corde acknowledges that his words seem strange by the normal standards, but then those standards seem inadequate for man to communicate clearly.[14] I would suggest that Corde's affirmation of love to Valeria elicits a startling response from her because it breaks through what Corde terms the "habitual state of hypnotic fixity" (DD p. 134) which characterises man's everyday experience of his fellow man. He regards his declaration as an "essential message" (DD p. 129) and the response which it prompts certainly indicates that

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it is important to her. Without trivialising or making it appear sentimental, Bellow repeatedly conveys the necessity for love and acceptance in human interaction. Valeria's dramatic reaction to Corde's words is a most powerful vehicle for this theme.

Corde observes that *Valeria is a matriarch to many.* Her dying is described in grand terms as an "emotional composition." (DD p. 13) As an important member of her community, her role is considered to be so crucial that in order not to lose it, both Minna and Gigi begin to adopt *her mannerisms.* Corde notes that Minna seems to become more authoritative while Gigi takes over Valeria's observation of him. Within her community Valeria's most important role is that of founder and overseer of a "mutual aid female network." (DD p. 107) *She carries out* this function in atonement for supporting the Marxists during her husband's lifetime. This concept is given prominence in The Dean's December. Also referred to as a "love community of women," (DD p. 76) it symbolises the quiet *resilience* of the human spirit in the face of crushing adversity brought about by totalitarian control. Describing the way in which caring individual relationships counterbalance the oppressive nature of prevailing social structures, Corde remarks, "You had *no personal* rights, but on the other hand, the claims of feeling were more fully acknowledged. (DD pp. 76-77) Probably because of the prominence given to feelings, the feminine nature of the network is emphasised, although there is a "male auxiliary" in the form of men such as Traian and Petrescu. (DD p. 76) This "love community" sustains Valeria in her last days. Corde notes:

> The woman doctor seemed particularly close to her. To have a woman in attendance was a good thing. She had probably said, "Your daughter

> has permission tonight." Valeria would understand what this signified. There again you saw the extent of the woman connection, its great importance.
> Dr Drur hadn't doped Valeria (professional courtesy) and she was dying in clear consciousness.
>
> (DD pp. 130-131)

This "love community" is able to accommodate such paradoxes brought about by the Communist system as the nature of Ioanna's relationship with Valeria and *Gigi*, a combination of affection and blackmail. Such a combination is unfathomable to Corde's *American* way of thinking.

Valeria's passing comprises part of the slow demise of a form of humanity which characterised the upper echelons of pre-Communist society. As previously mentioned, Valeria's world view is foreign to Corde in its clarity and antiquity. Without denying the *existence* of corruption in the old system, Corde sees the people attending the funeral as a pathetic, yet dignified affirmation "that there was a sort of life ... which at its most disgraceful was infinitely better than this present one." (DD p. 212) In Minna's conflict with the Colonel to see her mother, Corde perceives a broader issue:

> There was the Colonel in his tall broom-closet office, ruling on this, ruling on that, under a twenty-watt light. And there was personal humanity, a fringe receding before the worldwide process of consolidation. This process might seem too crude to be taken seriously, but don't kid yourself, it was shaping the future. And while this shaping went on, the inmost essence of the human being must be making its own, its necessary, its unique arrangements as it best could.
>
> (DD p. 107)

The "love community" of women is one such

"arrangement." Daniel Fuchs remarks that "The small female band of intimates in Bucharest are like delicate flowers growing out of stone, the most minimal strumming yet of the axial lines."[15] Bellow's use of the Rumanian women as an affirmation of the ability of the human spirit to cope with nihilism is less compelling than examples from previous novels, such as the maid, Jacqueline, at the end of *The Adventures of Augie March* who refuses to lead "a disappointed life"[16] or Ramona in Herzog, with her plucky approach to life. The concept of this "love community" of women nevertheless points to a general need for the kind of nurturance which is traditionaly expected to be found within the family structure.

Joining with Gigi to take on Valeria's role not only within this community, but also with regard to her other concerns is Minna. Valeria's death naturally affects Minna more than any other character in The Dean's December. Apart from having to cope with the grief which one would expect on the death of a parent, Minna feels obliged to take on tasks previously attended to by Valeria, for example, her protection of Gigi. In addition she is compelled to approach her relationships with other people from a new perspective. Before Valeria's illness, Minna left the task of dealing with people - most notably the political authorities - mainly to her mother.[17] While Corde recognises vaguely that she might turn her attention to him as part of her new observation of others, he does not seem seriously to consider that she might revise her opinion of him. In the conversation between Minna and Corde where she confides in him regarding her anger towards Valeria, she also observes that he turned out to be different from what she expected before their marriage. It would appear that Minna did not perceive that Corde's

approach to life would differ from that of most people to the extent that his views would able to *elicit* opposition to the degree which his Harper's articles do. It then strikes Corde with disturbing clarity that "now that Valeria was dead and she had only him, Corde, to depend upon, total revaluation was inevitable." (DD p. 258) Although Minna's lack of interest in people may have had its drawbacks as far as communicating with her was concerned, at least he had the security of her implicit trust. As described *earlier in this chapter*, Corde has an overriding desire to be accepted as absolutely stable and *reliable in his relationship with Minna*, and so her implied questioning of him touches his Achillas heel. In focusing *on his own needs in his attempt* to make a good impression on her, Corde fails to interpret her needs correctly (which *it would appear* is uncharacteristic of him). In this way he inadvertantly causes Minna to turn her anger upon *him. It is a* measure of his emotional growth that he progresses from this self-defensive reflex response to her doubts about him to an attitude of acceptance of his changeability. Furtharmore, this development implies an acceptance of his humanity, for to lay claim to unchangeability is to attempt to be "more than human" and is thereby a denial of humanity.[18]

> It was an uncomfortable sort of judgment, but Corde was beginning to realise that this was how he wanted to be judged. Minna gave *him* a true reflection of his entire self. The intention was to recognise yourself for what you (pitiably, preposterously) were. Then whatever good you found, if any, would also be yours. Corde bought that. He wasn't looking for accommodation, comfort.
>
> (DD p. 285)

Minna's experience of her mother's death is also significant in that it shows that artificially

maintained innocence is both ultimately impossible and potentially *psychologically harmful*. Minna has been sheltered from the harshness of life by design (Valeria's over-protectiveness) and the pain of death by chance (she was too young to understand the significance of her father's death). Valeria's death arouses *emotions of grief and hostility* within Minna, emotions which are part of the human make-up, yet which she finds foreign. Her previous lack of negative emotions resulted from a lack of involvement in life and if one follows the model as supplied in The Victim, *shows* Minna to be less than human. In the same way that Corde has to accept his capacity for change, Minna has to come to terms with her hostile emotions. Both Corde and Minna read Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience soon after their return from Bucharest and this may be seen as symbolic of their having gained a deeper understanding of "the two contrary states of the human soul" (DD p. 293) within each of them.[19]

The Bellow hero is usually either divorced or unhappily married.[20] This has the effect of emphasizing his isolation. Clearly it is extremely difficult to portray an alienated hero *in a happy* marriage as the latter generally presupposes mutual love and companionship. In The Dean's December, Bellow attempts to do just this. He distances Corde mentally from his wife without denying their love for each other in the following three ways. *Firstly, because* Minna is going through the crisis of her mother's death she is too caught up with her own problems to be unduly worried about his. Secondly, partly as a result of this preoccupation and as will be outlined below, the reader is for the most part *obliged* to take Corde's word that his marriage is a happy one. Thirdly, Minna's single-minded absorption with her study of astronomy usually diverts her attention from

those matters (social issues and ideas) which concern him.

Even taking into account the fact that both Minna and Cordo are under emotional strain due to their various problems, their relationship as demonstrated in the novel is not a particularly impressive example of mutual love and understanding. Cordo tells of Minna's *affectionate* nature, but for the major part of the novel she either rejects, or simply fails to respond to, his attempts at comfort and loving gestures. Only near the end of the *novel, as they* travel to the observatory, does Minna show affection for Cordo, and even then it is muted.

Cordo makes a point of expressing his pride in the fact that Minna is "rich ... in human qualities." (DD p. 61) While she does adopt her late mother's concern for her relatives and for those parents desperate to get their gifted children out of Rumania, her "human qualities" do not appear to extend to an interest in the fate of the thousands of people in Chicago whose plight Cordo highlights in his controversial articles. Cordo describes one of his periodic failed attempts to explain to Minna what he was doing in the course of his Chicago investigations. "He should have known from the fixed look of his wife's eyes not to talk to her now. Was he trying to *challenge the stars?*" (DD p. 165) "The stars" would appear to be Minna's criterion for relevance.

Intellectually their interests seem to be literally worlds apart: "She did boundless space, his beat was terra firma." (DD p. 257) This divergence of interests does serve a constructive purpose in their marriage to a certain extent, as it helps Cordo to feel less intellectually threatened by her than he might otherwise. No matter how confused the Bellow hero may

he, he typically has a better grasp of which ideas are germane to his situation than his wife or girlfriend does and is often rather patronising with regard to her views. Minna's ignorance of social history gives him an opportunity to parade his knowledge in this regard:

> She, from her side, was clever too. She let him tell her about Clemenceau or Chicherin or Jefferson or Lenin so that she could exclaim, "Really, I am so dumb!" ... Now, that was intelligent, and strategic, and sympathetically graceful. You might love a woman for her tactfulness alone.
>
> (DD p. 288)

Cordo is repeatedly struck by the paradoxical blend of a highly superior intelligence and childlike qualities in Minna. The nature of this combination, however, is not straightforward, and this fact is partly responsible for Cordo's blunder when he offers Minna a historical overview of her hostility towards her mother, rather than simply offering her the comfort which he fears is inadequate.[21] Minna's childlike nature could well be a significant part of her attractiveness to Cordo, with its connotations of innocence and relative asexuality. While the latter should not be overemphasised, it is worth considering in the light of Cordo's description of sexuality as dangerous and death-related in one of his Harper's articles.[10]

*In general, Minna sees* society as a far less worthy object of study than the natural sciences, hence her enthusiasm for Cordo to become involved in the Booch project. Cordo says to her, "You think this is the greatest, don't you. ...You think some of his class will rub off on me." (DD p. 11) Minna does not contradict him. Booch, like Lal in Mr. Sammler's

Planet, is concerned that science should contribute to the well-being of mankind. Minna represents a different phenomenon, for her study of outer space appears to be for its own sake, and not necessarily for the benefit of man. Minna with her "hard", empirical, scientific background, like Julius with his materialism in Humboldt's Gift, unwittingly points to the need within human beings for meaning beyond the physical world. The fact that she resorts to what Corde terms "magical" methods in dealing with life outside of her scientific studies (her unquestioning faith in Valeria's promise to live to ninety being a prime example), appears to suggest the impossibility of adequately apprehending existence without recourse to the transcendental.

Despite their divergence of interests, Minna and Corde are not as different from each other as might appear at first. Both appear mentally distanced from their surroundings. Minna is frequently referred to as looking absent-minded and Corde states that even when she seems interested in a topic of conversation, "you couldn't be certain that you really had her attention." (DD p. 164) Early in the novel, Corde is described as having "an intricate mind of an absent, probably dreamy tendency." (DD p. 8) Corde sees his prediction that Minna would "have to come down to earth one day" (DD p. 79) come to pass as she responds to the death of her mother. At the same time he recalls people often warning him that he would have to come down to earth.[22] Minna is not always particularly concerned about the content of Corde's conversation, being satisfied with the knowledge that he is respected. Equally, Corde is happy when Minna talks to him about astronomy, even if he cannot understand much of what she says, as long as her studies continue to provide her with a reason to live.

In the course of the novel, Corde experiences three major moments of insight into the nature of death, two of which occur as a result of his relationship with Minna. Through these epiphanies it is possible to trace a development in Corde's perception of death. The first occurs at the crematorium. In his capacity as Minna's husband, Corde is required to go below to where the furnace is, in order to confirm Valeria's identity. He describes this experience as a "death rehearsal." (DD p. 214) Cousin Dinculza, who takes it upon herself to guide Corde through the ceremonies at the crematorium and the cemetery, acts as his guide. She leads him down into the "underworld" beneath the floor of the reception hall, and then guides him back up again. The overpowering heat of the furnace lends this descent hellish connotations. There is an implication of the people in charge of the furnace being in possession of occult knowledge: "The people here ... wouldn't show their fires to outsiders." (DD p. 212) The portrayal of Corde squeezing through the narrow passage back to the upper floor is strongly suggestive of rebirth.[23] After this "death rehearsal," Corde possesses a heightened perception of the destruction of the [illegible] in death.[24] This thematically takes up where Humboldt's Gift leaves off, with Charlie Citrine's deep distress over the confirmation of the fact that there is no escape from the grave.

The second epiphany occurs as Corde sits alone on his balcony while Minna is in hospital. He has a perception which comes close to being extrasensory, of the indivisible way in which life and death are interlocked. Having faced the horror of physical destruction as described above, he gains an insight into death as complementing, rather than interrupting reality. The third epiphany occurs in the observatory at Mount Palomar, where Corde accompanies Minna after

she is discharged from hospital. As Corda, Minna and a laboratory assistant rise towards the giant telescope, an explicit comparison is drawn between the crematorium and the observatory and then important contrasts are noted which reflect Corde's changed perception of death:

> And because there was a dome, and the cold was so absolute, he came inevitably back to the crematorium, that rounded top and its huge circular floor.... But that dome never opened. You could pass through only as smoke.
>
> This Mount Palomar coldness was not to be compared to the cold of the death house. Here the living heavens looked as if they would take you in. Another sort of rehearsal, thought Corde. 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. What was it that his tensions kept in place?
>
> (DD p. 306)

Corde's point of reference has shifted from the cold confinement of the grave to the albeit cold, freedom of release into the "living heavens." (emphasis mine) He experiences a sense of contiguity between himself and the rest of the universe, identifying the tensions holding it in equilibrium with those which he feels within himself. He no longer sees himself as an isolated being, separate from all that is around him, but as part of a single reality which is drawing him to recognise its unity with him. He feels:

> ...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. Rocks, trees, animals, men and women, these also drew you to penetrate further, under the distortions (comparable to the atmospheric ones, shadows within shadows), to find their real being with your own.
>
> (DD p. 306)

As he describes this experience it becomes apparent that Minna's and Corde's fields of study are in fact directed towards the same objective, namely to come as close as possible to apprehending reality, to seeing things as they really are beyond the distortions, whether atmospheric or human. To this end, both Corde and Minna are involved in tracing patterns and relationships from a mass of data - his social, hers astrophysical. Both approach their respective tasks with a great sense of purpose, even a sense of having a mission.[25] This implied mission foreshadows Corde's intuitions as he ascends towards the great telescope. In addition to demonstrating this compulsion to explore reality, Minna's almost religious devotion to her work highlights the central position of love in The Dean's December, for it is only love that "brings Minna back from outer space." (DD p. 222)

In their pursuit of reality, Minna and Corde exhibit a form of division of labour. Corde describes Minna as his "representative among those bright things so thick and close." (DD p. 307) In turn, Corde is "justified to Minna the scientist as Albert the human husband." (DD p. 253) The tension between division and union, in this case exemplified by Corde and Minna's separate interests and single ultimate goal, characterises the entire novel. The conflict between Corde and Zaehner, Mason and Maxie is set against the unshakeable love between Corde and Elfrida; Corde is simultaneously repelled by Maxie and drawn into an intimate awareness of him; Corde's concern over possible future unreliability as regards Minna is contrasted with his past record of faithful attention to her needs. The family provides an ideal vehicle for the presentation of such concepts because a universally acknowledged link exists between the members of a family which has

both biological and social composites. Disturbances in these relationships carry more weight than those same disturbances would if they existed between mere acquaintances. In The Dean's December Saul Bellow uses this phenomenon to great effect to highlight the contrasting forces of fragmentation and unification which are at the centre of the novel.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters attention has been given primarily to the roles of individual characters in the protagonists' families with some observations regarding features to be found in more than one novel. In this context, it is now possible to observe patterns which emerge with reference to the way that Bellow has used the family in all four novels.

Although the significance of the protagonist's childhood home has been discussed at some length, it deserves to be reemphasised. The childhood home, particularly in the first three novels, is an emotionally vibrant, intensely nurturant environment. Mother and Father Herzog sacrifice and struggle firstly to survive and secondly to give Herzog and his siblings an education. Mother Citrine reacts with passionate concern to even minor family problems. Sammler's mother is referred to as spoiling him as a boy. Even in The Dean's December, Corde is aware of his mother's love and her pain at seeing him ridiculed by his uncle, though her influence appears to be more muted than in the other households mentioned. The degree of maternal influence in the first three novels may be a reflection of the high regard for the mother in the traditional Jewish household. In Corde's Gentile home the cultural influence tends towards producing a more emotionally restrained environment.

The warmth of the family environment which the protagonist experiences as a child does not preclude it from being a place where some hard lessons are learnt. It is often the first place where the

protagonist is forced to confront death. For example, Herzog, Citrine and Corde's mothers die while the boys are in their teens. There is also conflict between the protagonist *and either his father or a father figure.* Herzog's is the most detailed and vivid account in these four novels of such a clash, but it is also present in Corde's consciousness that his articles would have displeased his father. In Humboldt's Gift, *Citrine is unable to find peace until he has expiated* his guilt towards his spiritual father, Humboldt. In Mr Sammler's Planet, the friction between gen rations is given a fresh perspective in that it is displaced from Sammler onto Elya and his children. This allows *for greater objectivity on the part of the protagonist* in evaluating the nature of this discord. J.J.Clayton examines the phenomenon of conflict between fathers and sons at length. His observations in this regard place the internal struggles of the Bellow heroes in the historical context of the immigrant family in America around the turn of the century:

> ...I see intense versions of the Oedipus complex as historically limited - limited to family structures *in which* the father dominated, the mother nurtured, and within a social context of severe conflict between generations. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century immigrant family *fits this* pattern very closely.
>
> Bellow grew up in the midst of a conflict between contradictory traditions. This conflict was generational - father versus sons - at the same time as it was cultural. The modern world, the American world, assumes a life without God, a life in which death is final. Essentially, the world of distraction is this modern American world of the sons while the inner, true world is the "world of our fathers." The struggle between these worlds, which energizes the novel, is oedipal at the same time as cultural - is oedipal because it is cultural.

> The oedipal conflict is left vague, shadowy, in Bellow's fiction, dealt with directly only in Seize the Day and Herzog. But it is there.[1]

Clayton goes on to argue that the *essential* task of the protagonist is to free himself from his internalised image of the father both as accuser and as failure.[2] He sees Mr Sammler's Planet as different from, and inferior to, Bellow's other novels in that its protagonist is identified with the fathers' judgementalism rather than the sons' existential quest.[3]

The early family setting, to which the protagonist is emotionally attached, creates an ideal which he finds to be irretrievable in his later life. Charlie Citrine admits to promising love of the intensity that he *experienced as a* child to women in particular, but is incapable of actually giving it. Herzog nurtures an ambition to *create a* "*model* family" with Madeleine and goes on to make a miserable failure of it. Margotte's bumbling mothering *and well-meaning*, but tedious discussions are a poor substitute for the culture-rich home of Sammler's youth. *Fragmentation and* discord within the family structure reflect fragmentation and discord in society. The family seems to be *one of many* casualties of social change and life in a mass society.[4] Even Corde's "happy" marriage cannot recreate the emotional haven of the classic Bellow childhood home, although Corde tries to direct his wife towards that ideal.[5] In The Dean's December another possible expression of the desire for an environment in which the nurturing maternal principle is dominant is to be found in the "love community of women." (DD p. 76)

A remnant and reminder of the emotionally rich childhood family exists in the relationship which the protagonist has with his siblings. Apart from Sammler who was an only child, the Bellow hero generally loves his siblings deeply. In turn, siblings are a source of unconditional love and concern. While they often see the protagonist as painfully lacking in common sense, they accept him, nevertheless. They generally have their own lives better ordered than does the protagonist and are usually wealthier or at least more materially stable than he is. This contrast underscores the hero's other-worldliness as he usually loses his money through the duplicity of those he should have known better than to trust. The siblings often demonstrate their care practically by assisting the protagonist when he is in a financial tight spot. Willie posts bail to get Herzog out of jail and earlier in the novel Herzog goes on holiday to Europe with the aid of his siblings' money after his first nervous breakdown. Julius offers Charlie lucrative investment opportunities.

The family feeling which the protagonist nurtures is often lavished on his children. Two patterns seem to emerge with regard to the younger generation in these four novels. Young children are generally associated with hope and potential for renewal. Herzog looks forward to improved relationships with Marco and June in the days following his emotional crisis, hoping to benifit both in various ways. Charlie Citrine sees his (and other) children as possessing an overwhelming capacity for salvation, and thereby receives additional motivation to succeed in his exercises in anthroposophy. Post-adolescent offspring, on the other hand, are identified with disillusionment and conflict. Grunor is deeply disappointed in Wallace and Angela.

Sammler feels that he leaves behind a poor legacy to the world in the form of Shula. Elfrida's embarrassment regarding Mason is reflected in her efforts to justify his behaviour through psychology. The generation of the protagonist and that of these "children" often face the problem of conflicting goals. Wallace and Mason are aggressive and antagonistic in their rejection of the previous generation's values. It is noteworthy that their rebellion is in a sense "empty," as they provide no original ideas to replace those which they despise. Combined with this rebellion is a general lack of commitment to their professed ideals. Wallace flits from one interest to another. Mason deserts his friend, Lucas Ebry, to "check out" his revolutionary options in South America. This reflects Bellow's concern that radicalism has degenerated into mere posturing in modern society.[6] The conflicts of interests and values between Elya and Angela and between Sammler and Shula are more incidental than intentionally provoked. The behaviour of Angela which offends her father is not even intended to come to his notice, but remains unrepented once it does. Shula's distraction of Sammler from his most important task (that of comforting Elya in his final hours) is a product of mingled good intentions and self-centred preoccupations. If the future lies in the hands of a generation of this calibre, one can sympathise with Sammler's lack of optimism.

The role of wives in these four novels by Bellow has been examined in some detail in this dissertation (in the chapters on Herzog and Humboldt's Gift). The general overview of their role which follows is intended to demonstrate that while their individual personalities may be flat, the functions which they fulfil are complex.

They are often identified with an area in the protagonist's life which needs complementing if he is to achieve something which he desires. Thus, Daisy provides Herzog with the disciplined, routine lifestyle which is necessary for him to achieve academic success through the writing of his book, Romanticism and Christianity. Madeleine, on the other hand, possesses a social and intellectual brilliance which he hopes to incorporate into his attempt to demonstrate to the world how to fill the void inherent in private life. Denise offers Citrine emotional intensity combined with an ambition to rise above the crowd and Minna holds out to Corde the affirmation of being totally trusted. Wives may represent a dominant feature of the hero's personality or an outlook on life to which he subscribes at the time. Both Madeleine and Denise reflect their respective husbands' ambition.

Conversely, the wives may represent a barrier between the protagonist and the object of his quest. Citrine states that Denise is bad for his "idea." Living with Madeleine brings Herzog's scholastic productivity to a standstill. She deliberately sets out to destroy him, exploiting him financially and emotionally. In Herzog and Humboldt's Gift respectively, Madeleine and Denise comprise objects for the transferral of the protagonist's sense of evil and a source of punishment for his resulting sense of guilt. Wives are usually "reality instructors." (H p. 125) Herzog exhibits discomfort at Daisy's barbed comments regarding his various mistresses precisely because they show up his failure as a family man, and that is one aspect of his self-image which he avoids scrutinising. Minna angrily points out the inadequacies of Corde's ideas when they fail to explain her feelings of resentment on her mother's death.

In Bellow's novels sexuality is often viewed as dangerous. It is therefore interesting to note that the two "good" wives, Kathleen and Minna, are childless and their sexuality is played down. Even Kathleen's alleged elopment with a Rockefeller is made to appear more a neurotic obsession of Humboldt's than a real occurence. In addition, Kathleen and Minna ha' no marked ideas of their own by which they might try to manipulate the protagonist.

It may be seen that Saul Bellow makes extensive use of the potential inherent in the intimacy of the family structure for both exploitation and nurturance. There is usually an implicit assumption on the part of the protagonist that the family which he generally tries to love unreservedly should be a source of love and understanding. This contributes to a heightening of his feelings, whether they be feelings of anguish at betrayal and misunderstanding or feelings of joy at being accepted and loved. Because the novels of Saul Bellow are entirely dominated by the thoughts and actions of the protagonist, the importance of any of the characters is solely dependent on the extent to which they impinge on the life of the protagonist. The significance of the family to the hero gives it prominence as a major area for consideration.

ENDNOTES

Introduction

1 Irving Howe (Editor)."Saul Bellow: An Interview by Gordon Lloyd Harper" in: Herzog, Text and Criticism. (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1974), pp.350-351.

In this interview between Gordon Lloyd Harper and Saul Bellow the following interchanges take place:

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned before the interview that you would prefer not to talk about your early novels, that you feel you are a different person now from what you were then. I wonder if this is all you want to say, or if you can say something about how you have changed.
BELLOW: I think that when I wrote those early books I was timid. I still felt the incredible effrontery of announcing myself to the world (in part I mean the WASP world) as a writer and an artist. I had to touch a great many bases, demonstrate my abilities, pay my respects to formal requirements. In short, I was afraid to let myself go.
INTERVIEWER: When do you find a significant change occurring?
BELLOW: When I began to write Augie March. I took off many of these restraints. I think I took off too many, and went too far, but I was feeling the excitement of discovery. I had just increased my freedom, and like any emancipated plebeian I abused it at once. ...
INTERVIEWER: Did another change in your writing occur between Augie March and Herzog? You've mentioned writing Augie March with a great sense of freedom, but I take it that Herzog was a very difficult book to write.
BELLOW: It was. I had to tame and restrain the style I developed in Augie March in order to write Henderson and Herzog. I think both those books reflect that change in style. I wouldn't really know how to describe it.

2 Irving Howe (Editor). p, 350

3 Irving Howe (Editor). p, 351

Notes

1 John Jacob Clayton, Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 33.

2 Brigitte Scheer-Schäzler, Saul Bellow (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Co, 1972), p. 97.

3 ibid.

4 Scheer-Schäzler, pp. 103-104.

5 Ruth R.Wisse, "The Schlemiel as Liberal Humanist" in Saul Bellow edited by Earl Rovit (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1975), p. 92.

6 ibid.

7 ibid.

8 Esther Marie Mackintosh, "The Women Characters in the Novels of Saul Bellow" in Dissertation Abstracts International, 41:253A.

9 Clayton, p. 99.

10 An ideal construction may be defined as a version of reality which man creates for himself in an attempt to reduce reality to a level where he feels that he can control it. This necessarily distances him both from reality as it is and from himself as he cannot rightly gauge his place in the context of reality.

11 Clayton, p. 198.

12 Saul Bellow, "Laughter in the Ghetto" in: Saturday Review 36, May 30, 1953: 13.

13 ibid.

14 Clayton, p. 202.

15 In Clayton, (pp. 111-112) moha is defined as "those forces which are in conflict with human plans, theories, desires..." and as "opposition of the finite."

16 Clayton, p. 202.

17 He had been eight years old, in the children's ward of the Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal, when he learned those words. A Christian lady came once a week and had him read aloud from the Bible. ... She seemed to him a good woman. Her face, however, was drained and grim.
"Where do you live, little boy?"
"On Napoleon Street."
Where the Jews live.
"What does your father do?"

My father is a bootlegger. He has a still in Point-St. Charles. The spotters are after him. He has no money.
Only of course Moses would never have told her any of this. Even at five he would have known better. His mother had instructed him. "You must never say."

(H pp. 22-23)

18 Clayton, pp. 216-217.

19 Clayton, p. 217.

20 Saul Bellow, The Adventures of Augie March (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1953), p. 550.

21 Clayton, p. 217.

22 ibid.

23 Clayton, p. 221.

24 Clayton, p. 222.

25 Robert R.Dutton, Saul Bellow (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1971), p. 122.

26 Eusebio L.Rodrigues, Quest for the Human (London: Associated University Press Inc., 1981), p. 176.

27 ibid.

28 Dutton, p. 129.

29 Judith Scheffler, "Two Dimensional Dynamo: The Female Characters in Saul Bellow's Novels" in: Wascana Review 1981 Fall, 16(2), p. 10.

30 Dutton, p. 130.

31 Clayton, p. 215.

32 Ibid.

33 [Himmelstein] "I'm talking facts, not shit."
[Herzog] "And you think a fact is what's nasty."
Facts are nasty."
You think they're true because they're nasty."

(H p. 86)

Mr Sammler's Planet

1 Daniel Fuchs, Saul Bellow: vision and revision. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1984), p. 18.

2 Ibid.

3 Two critics of critics who take such a stance are Alfred Kazin and J.J.Clayton as shown by the following quotations. In an article entitled, "'Though He Slay Me...' A review of Mr Sammler's Planet by Saul Bellow." in: New York Review of Books. (December 3, 1970 Vol XV No 10) Alfred Kazin states:

> But Sammler's opinions are set in a context so uncharitable, morally arrogant toward every other character in the book but one, and therefore lacking in dramatic satisfaction, that the book becomes a cri du coeur that does not disguise the punitive moral outrage behind it. ... But none of these things really accounts for the

fact that Artur Sammler dislikes everyone he sees on the ugly alarm-laden streets of the West Side and disapproves of everyone he knows except a vague kinsman, a doctor who got him to America and supports him. He dislikes all the women especially.

In Saul Bellow In Defense of Man. (Second edition) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 244, J.J.Clayton states:

As Bellow knows, Sammler, too, is guilty of a lack of humanity, of a rejection of the human contract.

Sammler tries to defend his own withdrawal. "The best, I have found, is to be disinterested. Not as misanthropes dissociate themselves, by judging, but by not judging. By willing as God wills" (p.236). Lovely! But does Sammler himself come close to meeting this ideal? Throughout the novel he continually judges. He seems, like Gulliver, perhaps like Swift himself, nauseated by humanity.

4 Esther Marie Mackintosh, "The Women Characters in the Novels of Saul Bellow" in Dissertation Abstracts International, 41:2553A. lists the basic stereotypes of women in Bellow's novels as the defeated women, the sensual women, the destructive women and the good women.
Louana L.Peontek, "Images of Women in Saul Bellow's Novels" in: Dissertation Abstracts International, 1981 Jan;41(7). lists the basic stereotypes of Bellow's women as the maternal woman, the castrator and the exotic woman.

5 It should be noted that the artist, the man of culture and the creative person are so closely related that they become interchangeable in Mr Sammler's Planet.

6 "Perhaps the inward, the intimate, the dear life - the thing that is oneself from earliest days - when it first learns of death is often crazed. Here magical powers must help, assuage, console, and for a woman, those marvellous powers so often are the powers of a man."

(MSP p. 157)

7 [Shula apologising to Lal] "'Still, for the sake of science, of science, and for the sake of literature and history, because my father is writing this important history, and you see ? help him in his intellectual, cultural work. There's nobody else to do it. I never meant to make trouble.'

No. Not trouble. Only to dig a pit and cover it with brushwood, and when a man fell into it to lie flat on the ground and converse with him amorously. For Sammler now suspected that she had run away with The Future of the Moon in order to create this very opportunity, this meeting."

(MSP p. 166.)

8 Fuchs, pp. 214-215.

9 Sanford Radner, "The Woman Saviour in Humboldt's Gift" in: Saul Bellow Journal 1981 Fall; 15(2): p. 22.

10 Fuchs, p. 214.

11 Fuchs, p. 218.

12 Fuchs, p. 219.

13 Marcus Klein, "A Discipline of Mobility: Saul Bellow's Fiction." in: Saul Bellow edited by Earl Rovit (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1975), p. 160.

14 Fuchs, p. 228.

15 Ben Siegel, "Saul Bellow and Mr Sammler: Absurd Seekers of High Qualities" in: Saul Bellow edited by Earl Rovit (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1975), p. 134.

16 Judith Scheffler, "Two-dimensional Dynamo: The Female Characters in Saul Bellow's Novels." in: Wascana Review; 1981 Fall; 16 (2), p. 13.

17 Scheffler, p. 12.

18 George Guthridge, "The Structure of Twentieth-Century Society: The Concept of the Intellectual in Bellow's Mr. Sammler's Planet" in: Saul Bellow Journal 1.1, 1981 Fall, p. 10.

Humboldt's Gift

1 John Jacob Clayton, Saul Bellow in Defense of Man (Second edition) (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 277.

2 Although Demmie Vonghel is one of Charlie's "significant dead," because she is not a member of either Charlie or Humboldt's family, her role will not be discussed in this dissertation.

3 Charlie confides to Naomi Wolpar:

> "...I never lost this intense way of caring - no, that isn't so. I'm afraid the truth is that I did lose it. Yes, sure I lost it. But I still required it. That's always been the problem. I required it and apparently I also promised it. To women, I mean. For women I had this utopian emotional love aura and made them feel I was a cherishing man. Sure, I'd cherish them in the way they all dreamed of being cherished."
> "But it was a phony," said Naomi. "You yourself lost it. You didn't cherish."
> "I lost it. Although anything so passionate probably remains in force somewhere."
>
> (HG p. 293)

4 Clayton, p. 280.

5 ibid.

6 Eusebio L.Rodrigues, Quest for the Human. (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, Inc., 1981), p. 272.

7 "Such communications [regarding the existence of life beyond the material] were prohibited under the going mental rules of a civilization that proved its right to impose such rules by the many practical miracles it performed...."

(HG p. 382)

8 In this observation, Charlie alludes to the first line of the sonnet, "On First Lookin into Chapman's Homer" by John Keats.

9 Robert R.Dutton, Saul Bellow (Revised edition). (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 151.

10 "You're a born crank, Charlie. When you said you were going to write that essay on boredom, I thought, There he goes! Now you're degenerating quickly, without me. Sometimes I feel you might be certifiable or committable. Why don't you go back to the Washington-in-the-Sixties book? The stuff you published in magazines was fine."

(HG p. 223)

11 Dutton, p. 162.

12 These include Judge Urbanovich and her network of informers regarding Charlie's movements. Indirectly, Charlie's lawyers also serve her purpose against him, as they seem unable or unwilling to protect him from her litigation.

13 Clayton, p. 270.

14 Clayton, p. 271.

15 Clayton, p. 272.

16 Sanford Radner, "The Woman Saviour in Humboldt's Gift" in Saul Bellow Journal 1981 Fall; 15(2): p. 24.

17 "An old chaser who had lost his head over a beautiful gold-digging paloska, a romancer who was going to fulfil the dreams of his youth, suddenly wanting to discuss supersensible consciousness and democracy's great poem of death! Come, Charlie, lets not make the world queerer than it already is. It was precisely because Kathleen was a woman to whom I could talk that I kept silent. Out of respect."

(HG p. 367)

18 Clayton, p. 283.

The Dean's December

1 To avoid confusion, in this dissertation Mason Zachner senior will be referred to as Zachner and Mason Zachner junior will be referred to as Mason.

2 Malcolm Bradbury, Saul Bellow (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 93.

3 ibid.

4 This concern for penetrating the smokescreen of generally accepted terminology and explanations is also prominent in Herzog, Humboldt's Gift and Mr Sammler's Planet.

5 [Dewey Spangler writes:] "He [Corde] made some memorable remarks about the varieties of public welfare in the United States. There are high welfare categories as well as low ones. Some professors work hard, said the Dean. Most of them do. But a professor when he gets tenure doesn't have to do anything. A tenured professor and a welfare mother with eight kids have much in common..."

The damage that these sentences would do was as clear as the print itself. By a process of instantaneous translation, Corde read them with the eyes of Alec Witt, the Provost. He thought, Dewey has done it to me. Alec Witt has got me now, convicted out of my own mouth. Of course I could try to say that I was only quoting, that this was Mason senior speaking, but Witt isn't going to listen to explanations, nor will he care what actually was said.

(DD pp. 298-299)

6 [Corde] "So that's your summary ... what he had in mind was an orgy. Instead there was a fight, and if he was killed he had death coming to him."
"What do you want to add? 'Appalled'? 'Aghast'? 'All shook up'?"
For Corde this was the worst moment of their conversation.

(DD p. 45)

7 Malcolm Bradbury, p. 93.

8 One can imagine that Mason would be attracted to a social group in which "... they have no structure. They don't plan, and don't 'do'; they only hang out." (DD p. 51)

9 In the courtroom, Maxie and Corde would occasionally look at eachother without speaking. Corde's presence may have made things harder for Lydia Laster, whom he had come to protect and support. In fact he saw that his being there aggravated Max's sensationalism, made Max more melodramatic.

(DD p. 95)

10 Malcolm Bradbury, p. 93.

11 Daniel Fuchs, Saul Bellow: Vision and Revision (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1984), p. 307.

12 Corde's observations on sexuality in his reference to the Spofford Mitchell case in his Harper's article explicitly link sexuality with death in a way more direct and disturbing than in any previous Bellow novel:

> And with the special confused importance, the peculiar curse of sexuality or carnality we're under - we've placed it right in the centre of life and connect it with savagery and criminality - it's not at all a wild conjecture. The truth may even require a wilder interpretation. Our conception of physical life and of pleasure is completely death-saturated. The full physical emphasis is fatal. It cuts us off. The fullest physical joining may always be flavoured with death, therefore.
>
> (DD p. 195)

13 Corde cites the story of a man who butchers a hog in his apartment, throwing the guts into the stairway where a woman slips on them and breaks her arm, as offering "illumination from a different side, Chicago light and colour...." (DD p. 132)

14 If we could say what we meant, mean what we said! But we didn't seem to be set up for it. We were set up instead in a habitual state of hypnotic fixity, and this hypnotic fixity was the real fantasmo imperium. Well, never mind the philosophy. But on her deathbed an old woman hears the deep voice of her son-in-law, and it tells her that he loves her. Loves! With what! Nevertheless it was true, however queer. There was nothing too rum to be true. He depended on that now.

(DD p. 134)

15 Daniel Fuchs, p. 306

16 Saul Bellow, The Adventures of Augie March. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1949), p. 617.

17 Until now she had had little interest in psychology. Her mother was the psychiatrist; she left all that to her. But now she was forced to study people. He wondered what her

powerful intelligence would make of them - of him.

(DD p. 79)

18 Saul Bellow, The Victim (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1947), p. 119.

In the following passage from which the reference to being more than human was taken, it may be seen that attempting to be more than human is linked to avoiding the inevitability of death: The speaker is Schlossberg, a respected reality teacher in The Victim.

"... It's bad to be less than human and it's bad to be more than human. What's more than human? Our friend-" he meant Loventhal, "was talking about it before. Caesar, if you remember, in the play wanted to be like a god. Can a god have diseases? So this is a sick man's idea of God. Does a statue have wax in its ears? Naturally not. It doesn't sweat, either, except maybe blood on holidays. If I can talk myself into it that I never sweat and make everybody else act as if it was true, maybe I can fix it up about dying, too. We only know what it is to die because some people die and, if we make ourselves different from them, maybe we don't have to? ... "

19 In Herzog there is a reference to Herzog having a pocket edition of Blake's poems with him when he goes to stay with Sandor Himmelstein. (H p. 80) He uses a slip of paper listing the traits of paranoia as his bookmark. This suggests that his overwhelming sense of victimisation has to do with his resistance to acknowledging the coexistence of both good and evil in the human heart.

20 An exception to this generalisation is the happy marriage of Asa Leventhal in The Victim. In his case, this sense of isolation is achieved by his wife having gone to another town to help her mother move house and leaving Leventhal alone and vulnerable to Kirby Allbee. Henderson's marriage in Henderson the Rain King shows potential for recovery, but only after his personal crisis is over as a result of his African experience.

21 She was as intelligent - phenominally intelligent - as she was childlike. The boundaries between intellect and the rest meandered so intricately that you could never guess when you were about to trespass, when words addressed to the child might be interpreted by a mind more powerful than yours."

(DD p. 254)

22 He had said often enough that she'd have to come down to earth one day. Not much of a prediction. He was sorry for the satisfacti.. he had taken in making it. How often people had told him that sooner or later he'd have to come down to earth. Well, here she was, anyway, with everybody else, and fighting with childlike passion.

(DD p. 79)

23 Dinoutza now drew him towards the stairs again and Joanna helped him as if he were a baby whose incompetence she pitied; but her bulk blocked his way. It was a tight fit in the staircase. Traian spoke sharply to her. On the first landing it was cold again. Corda felt cut in half by the extremes of heat and cold.

(DD p. 212)

24 This image of descent into hell and re-emergence with a deeper awareness of the implications of mortality has resonances of Dante's journey into hell and back in "The Divine Comedy."

25 On the journey to the crematorium the narrator comments:

> What a man he [Cordel] was for noticing! Continually attentive to his own promptings. As if he had been sent down to mind the outer world, on a mission of observation and notation." (p. 5)

Conclusion

1 John Jacob Clayton. Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man (Second edition) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 270.

2 Clayton, p. 272.

3 I disagree with these assertions by Clayton. In my view Sammler goes to great lengths not to display a judgemental attitude towards those around him.

4 "Mystic Trade - the American novelist Saul Bellow talks to Jim Douglas Henry." in The Listener. Thursday 22 May 1969, Vol 81, No 2095, p. 707.
In this article the following exchange takes place:
[Henry] But at the root of the revolution of which you speak there's a kind of crisis, a revolt of some sort. Is this simply due to the extraordinary economic growth of the American economy, producing too much affluence?
[Bellow] I think that it's a question of the rate of change, of the increased density of population, of the fact that people really don't know where they're heading, of the applicability or inapplicability of old or new ideas, of the fading out in their lives of the authority of the family, of the change in their sexual ideas, the fading away of the old religions, the re-emergence

of religion in different and jazzier forms, the television transformation that has occurred in the American life, the advertising pressures, the job changes. Familiar landmarks are missing.

5 He was also misleadingly domestic. She had never noticed how many household duties he took on - the groceries, cooking, vacuuming, washing windows, making beds. He did all this by way of encouraging or conjuring her to change her ways. Let's have a household. Let's not eat frozen TV dinners.

(DD p. 257)

6 Irving Howe (Editor)."Saul Bellow: An Interview by Gordon Lloyd Harper" in: Herzog: Text and Criticism. (New York; The Viking Press, Inc., 1974), pp.350-351.

In this interview Bellow makes the following comments about modern radical writers which may apply equally to the likes of Wallace Gruner and Mason Zaehne

For American writers radicalism is a question of honour. They must be radicals for the sake of their dignity. They see it as their function, and a noble function, to say Nay, and to bite not only the hand that feeds them (and feeds them with comic abundance, I might add) but almost any other hand held out to them. Their radicalism, however, is contentless. A genuine radicalism, which truly challenges authority, we need desperately. But a radicalism of posture is easy and banal. Radical criticism requires knowledge, not posture, not slogans, not rant.

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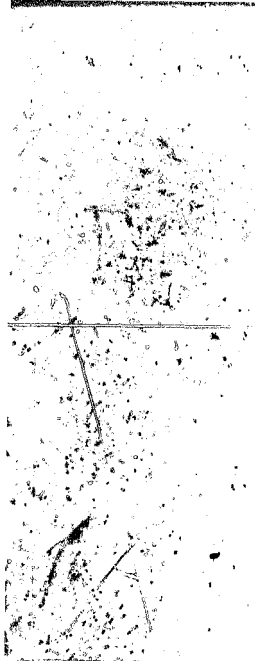
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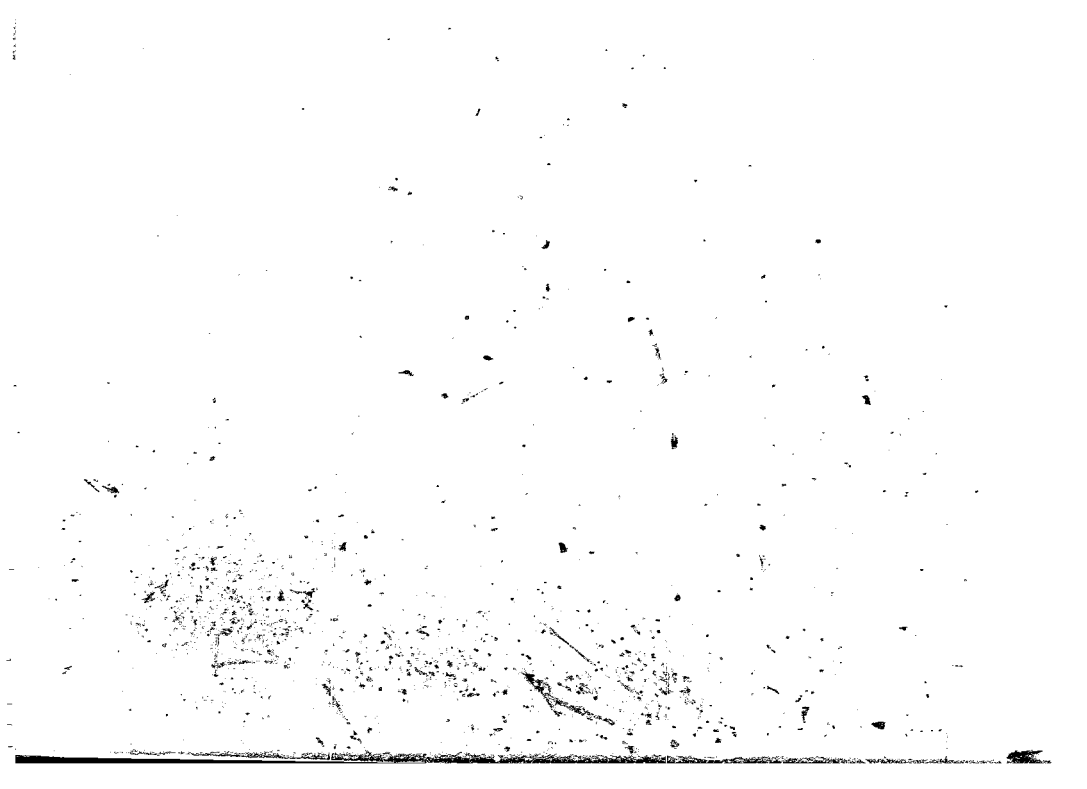
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**Author** Duff Y
**Name of thesis** The role of the family in the novels of Saul Bellow from 1964 - 1982 1988

*PUBLISHER:*
**University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg**
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