M. A.

T H E S I S

THE MISPLACED URBANITE: A STUDY OF THE URBAN EXPERIENCE OF SAUL BELLOW'S PROTAGONISTS

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

DEPARTAMENTO DE LÍNGUA E LITERATURA

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THE MISPLACED URBANITE: A STUDY OF THE URBAN EXPERIENCE OF SAUL BELLOW'S PROTAGONISTS.

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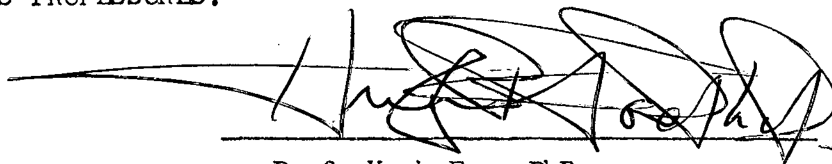

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introductory

1.1. Statement of Problem.......... 1

1.2. Review of Criticism.......... 11

1.3. Statement of Purpose.......... 32

2. The Dangling Man.......... 34

3. Asa, The Guilty Urbanite.......... 55

4. Augie March, The Unadoptable Eagle.......... 75

5. Tommy Wilhelm - The Life of The Salesman.......... 102

6. Herzog - The Bucolic Moses.......... 121

7. Roots versus Wires versus Telemetry.......... 136

8. Citrine - The Chicago Greenhorn.......... 153

9. Tying Things Together.......... 170

ABBREVIATIONS

1 - DM - *Dangling Man*

2 - V - *The Victim*

3 - AM - *The Adventures of Augie March*

4 - SD - *Seize the Day*

5 - H - *Herzog*

6 - HG - *Humboldt's Gift*

7 - HRK - *Henderson the Rain King*

8 - MSP - *Mr. Sammler's Planet*

A B S T R A C T

The city plays an important role in the works of Saul Bellow. Seven of his eight novels (Dangling Man, The Victim, The Adventures of Augie March, Seize the Day, Herzog, Mr. Sammler's Planet and Humboldt's Gift) have as their basic setting two of the largest American cities - New York and Chicago.

But the city is not simply a setting in Bellow's novels. It acts simultaneously as a physical, sociological and psychological context, being therefore capable of interferring directly in the life-dramas of its inhabitnats.

The analysis starts with a brief review of pertinent criticism. Next, each of the seven novels is analysed one by one in detail in order to detect the peculiarities of each of them in their treatment of the urban experience of their protagonists.

Bellow's treatment of the city is identified as being essentially similar to the treatment given by the urban sociologist Louis Wirth, in that both see the urban experience more as a loss than as a gain.

The Romantic approach to the metropolitan milieu makes the Bellowian protagonists highly vulnerable to the urban way of life. They are inextricably attached to the past in all senses and are, therefore, incapable , and consciously unwilling, to enjoy the benefits of the megalopolitan system.

Furthermore, the level of efficacy of Bellow's protagonists in the urban environment is sensibly reduced because they lack the protective immunity of authentic urbanites, as described by urban sociologists and philosophers. It is this lack of immunity which makes their behaviour incompatible with the city ways and makes them prefer the country. It is a general rule that Bellow's protagonists leave the city either actually or mentally. Even if they happen to stay, they never show any sympathy for the city. In this sense, Saul Bellow corroborates the anti-urban tradition of American intellectuals.

R E S U M O

A cidade desempenha um importante papel na obra de Saul Bellow. Sete de seus oito romances (Dangling Man, The Victim, The Adventures of Augie March, Seize the Day, Herzog, Mr. Sammler's Planet e Humboldt's Gift) têm como seu cenário básico duas das maiores cidades americanas - Nova York e Chicago.

Mas a cidade não é apenas um cenário nas obras de Bellow. Ela age simultaneamente como um contexto físico, sociológico e psicológico, sendo, portanto, capaz de interferir no drama de seus habitantes.

A análise inicia com um apanhado da crítica pertinente. A seguir cada um dos sete romances é analisado detalhadamente para detectar as suas peculiaridades no tratamento da experiência urbana de seus protagonistas.

O tratamento Bellowiano da cidade é identificado como sendo essencialmente semelhante ao do sociólogo Louis Wirth, no que se refere ao fato de que ambos consideram a experiência urbana mais uma perda do que um ganho.

A abordagem romântica do meio ambiente metropolitano torna os protagonistas de Bellow altamente vulneráveis ao modo urbano de vida. Eles estão inextricavelmente ligados ao passado sob todos os aspectos e são, portanto, incapazes de, e conscientemente se recusam a gozar dos benefícios do sistema megalopolitano.

Outrossim, o nível de eficácia dos protagonistas de Bellow no meio ambiente urbano é sensivelmente reduzido por carecerem da imunidade protetora dos urbanitas autênticos, conforme descritos por sociólogos urbanos e filósofos.
É esta falta de imunidade que torna seu comportamento incompatível com os modos urbanos e fá-los preferirem o campo. Via de regra os protagonistas de Bellow, quer real quer mentalmente, deixam a cidade. Mesmo quando permanecem na cidade, eles nunca mostram qualquer simpatia por ela. Neste sentido, Saul Bellow corrobora a tradição anti-urbana dos intelectuais americanos.

1. INTRODUCTORY

1.1. Statement of Problem

Some meaningful works have been written about the city in American literature and a lot has already been written about Saul Bellow, but very little has been said about the city in Saul Bellow's novels, although critics, in general, cannot avoid mentioning it in their studies, no matter what they concentrate on. This dissertation is concerned particularly with the city as perceived and judged by the Bellowian protagonists in seven of his eight novels - Dangling Man, The Victim, The Adventures of Augie March, Herzog, Seize the Day, Mr. Sammler's Planet and Humboldt's Gift. *

What does the Bellowian city do to the protagonists? What is their life in the city like? What changes does the city produce? What sort of behaviour is required from the protagonists in order to survive and be effective in the city? These are some of the questions this dissertation poses. In the light of the main sociological theory of urbanism, I try to show the social psychology inherent in the urban way of life, the peculiar social relations determined by the urban scene and the effect that this scene may have on the personality of the urbanites that inhabit Bellow's metropolises and, to some extent, cities in general.

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* The reason why Henderson the Rain King is not included is that, while all other novels refer to a journey of protagonists within the city (and it is this experience which invariably makes them prefer the country), HRK refers to a move from a pastoral environment to a primitive one. It is essentially the story of a pig breeder, Eugene Henderson, who discovers, in primitive Africa, that he can still become an Albert Schweitzer at the age of fifty. Although Henderson does show some rejection of the city, his trajectory only very indirectly can be said to suffer the effects of urbanism. The presence of the city as an environment in which the characters move is a condition sine qua non for this dissertation. Unhappily, HRK lacks this condition.

But the search for these answers is as old as the cities themselves. Throughout history, intellectuals have worried about the effects of urbanization upon the the individual and upon society as a whole, its order and cohesion. Although man has lived in cities for only about two percent of his history on earth [1], the urban explosion that has transformed villages into cities and cities into metropolises in recent periods is a problematic thing and thus many intellectuals, especially in the last two centuries, have written about it. And it couldn't be different; the numbers which tell us about the growth of cities during the industrial revolution are literally astonishing to the common observer, to social scientists, philosophers and intellectuals in general. The population of London, for example, was 864,845 inhabitants in 1801. In 1891, less than a century later, its population was 4,232,118, i.e., over four times as large. Similarly, during this same period, the number of English cities which had over 100,000 inhabitants grew from two to thirty. [2] New York experienced an even greater increase in population. In a period of sixty years - 1800 to 1860 - the number of New Yorkers grew from 60,000 to 600,000, i.e., exactly ten times as many. [3]

Since the industrial revolution this trend continues at an accelerated rate. If the present rates are maintained, says Kingsley Davis, [4] by the year 2000 over half of humanity will be living in cities of over 100,000 inhabitants. The projections foresee that by this time 25 percent of the world population will be living in cities of over 1,000,000, three cities will have over 64,000,000 people and one city will have over 100,000,000 inhabitants. The meaning of so many zeroes in a number is expressed through the writings of thinkers of many nations throughout the world, which today has almost become a science by itself known as the sociology of the city.

The nineteenth century cities can hardly be mentioned without mentioning names like John Ruskin (1818 - 1900), Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809 - 1863), William Morris (1834 - 1896), Friedrich Engels (1820 - 1895) Karl Marx (1818 - 1883) and many others who lived during one of the most intense periods of urbanization, only comparable to the recent urbanization of the third world countries. Each of these authors had his complaints about the city, although their opinions and views can sometimes oppose each other.

Proudhon would complain about the move towards the past which he said was creating a museum city. What was the luxor Obelisc doing at Place de La Concorde? Shouldn't it be at Louvre? Each nation should create its own art and use the power of its science and technology to create the housing and social conditions which are meaningful to its own citizens. "The first thing we have to take care of is housing", said Proudhon, "the people need to be well housed: this is more than convenient, for they are sovereign and kings." [5]

John Ruskin and William Morris were the first ones to complain about the nomadic behaviour of the urban man, a conclusion taken from the observation that two thirds of the city dwellers were composed of immigrants and also from the high death rates of English cities and the low life expectancy of its inhabitants which, at the time, averaged 34 years of age. As Ruskin said: "We consider our houses only as temporary lodging. ...if man lived like a man, his house would be a temple." [6] Despite their move towards the past in search of a pleasant architecture for our cities, Morris and Ruskin tried to apply their aesthetic views to their socialist perspective of the ideal society - in direct opposition to the industrial system then viciously flourishing.

Engels is referred to as the father of urban sociology, a title conferred to him for his accurate descriptions of the housing conditions and life in the nineteenth century English cities. In his book The Housing Question, first published in 1897, Engels declares that the housing problem is just a part of a broader social problem which only the revolutionary action can solve. Nevertheless, he courageously defends partial and pragmatical solutions, always emphasizing his refusal to separate the housing question from its economic, social and political context. Engels also sees that the solution for the housing question cannot be achieved as long as the dichotomy between city and country continues to exist. Only the suppression of this opposition, through a profound change in the structure of capitalist society can lead us to a feasible solution, an idea not very unsimilar from that introduced by one of Bellow's characters in Mr. Sammler's Planet, and also somewhat similar to Frank Lloyd Wright's rural city.

Marx sees the city, based on the same data Engels collected, as a simultaneously liberating and alienating force. The city is the cradle of the bourgeoisie and of the proletariat and therefore also the cradle of class conflicts. Even though labor conditions are alienating in the city, the city, because of its density and number of people, allows the workers to organise and acquire an unprecedented strength which, he believed, would unavoidably change world society and move it towards a socialist form of organization.

These are some of the main ideas about urbanism which preceeded the systematic organization of the experiences about urban life made by Louis Wirth in the 1930's, and which was first published in 1938 under the title "Urbanism as a Way of Life". This study of Louis Wirth shows strong influence from thinkers like Georg Simmel, whose student Park is said to

have been [7], and Oswald Spengler and his pessimistic descriptions about the decline of the West. Wirth's studies were made in Chicago and his theory that there is such a thing as an "urban way of life", along with Robert E. Park's studies (both are from the University of Chicago and worked together) is known worldwide and described as the School of Chicago. In the same way the nineteenth century studies of urbanism cannot fail to mention Marx, Engels, Ruskin and Proudhon, the twentieth century has necessarily to mention the school of Chicago and its founders Wirth and Park.

The study of Wirth's theory of urbanism is especially important for this study of the city in Saul Bellow's work first because his studies were carried out in Chicago, one of the two cities Bellow is concerned with, and second because Bellow studied at the same university Park and Wirth were teaching, and at departments with strong kinship. Park and Wirth belonged to the sociology department, while Bellow was an anthropology student. It is most probable that they met in the corridors or in meetings on campus, but it is certain that Bellow knows Wirth's and Park's theory as only a very dedicated student of sociology can know it.

But what does the theory of Wirth say? As the very title of his famous essay suggests, Wirth believes that urbanites have a way of life which distinguishes them from ruralites and that this distinction stems from the very recognition of the city as an ecological and social force capable of acting upon the behaviour of the individuals who inhabit it, and capable of changing the social groups which form it.

Wirth starts his essay with a definition of city. "For sociological purposes", he says, "a city can be defined as a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals." [8] This definition of Wirth is accepted even by sociologists who oppose his theory frontally. Although it does not distinguish between rural and urban settlements, the definition is operational enough to allow us to infer the notion

that urbanism is a relative concept and that the numerical criterion allows us to see urbanism as a matter of degree. Therefore, a sentence that says "Crime rate is higher in the urban than in the rural areas" should be read as "Crime rate increases with the increase of the number of people in a given settlement." This notion is vital for the understanding of today's sociological studies of the city, and also for the understanding of words like "city", "country", "urban" and "rural".

As it is natural to think, Wirth's theory of the city is based on the trinomial size, density and heterogeneity, as introduced in his definition. Wirth sees at least thirteen consequences that can be said to derive directly from this trinomial, all of which closely related to Bellow's city as seen through the eyes of his characters:

1 - The size of the population and its diversity are closely related to the weakening of links among urbanites. Having no common tradition, no common origin, no common past, urbanites tend to be only loosely related to each other. This creates the need for developing formal methods of social control in opposition to the consuetudinal control of rural areas.

2 - The more the city grows, the less probable it is that the individual knows the other inhabitants personally. The direct consequence of this impersonality is the fragmentation, superficiality and the segmentariness of inter-individual relations. Consequently, the urbanite views the relationship with others as "a means to achieve certain ends", behaving, therefore, in a more rational, sophisticated and calculating way than people from small communities. Anonymity is also a natural development.

3 - The larger the city the more developed is the division of labor, emphasizing again the use of social relations for achieving specific ends. In a city, large enterprises tend to replace the family business "because enterprises have no soul". They can recruit their workers according to their demands of efficiency and from a vast circle of people. The relation

between individuals becomes more and more occupational. The home and the place of work can be in completely different parts of the city. It is usually separated from the home.

4 - The more a city grows the more difficult it becomes to gather all its population. Indirect communication systems have to be developed. Newspapers, journals, magazines, radio, TV and other impersonal mass media replace the gossiping of rural areas and small towns.

5 - The greater the density of population in a given settlement, the greater is the differentiation and specialization. As Fischer puts it when talking about the increase in population density: In simplified terms, the shift from primary through secondary to tertiary industry means the shift from land-to-machine-to-paperwork." [9] The consequence is a world of much greater complexity than the one provided by the rural settings.

6 - Physical contacts are close in a city, whereas most social contacts tend to be superficial. A direct consequence of this fact is the prototypical complaint of urbanites about loneliness in the middle of a crowd.

7 - Sentimental and emotional links are generally non-existent between co-workers and neighbors, creating more competition than cooperation between them. In order to keep so many quick and weak contacts, meaningful and ordered formal routines have to be established in order to control the frictions resulting from so many psychic stimuli.

8 - Interaction in densely populated areas tend to be greatly varied. As a consequence city dwellers may belong simultaneously to very different and sometimes conflicting groups. At the same time, the loyalties in a large city are less limited to a sometimes tyranical family or group and the urbanite's mobility becomes greater geographically and socially. Finally, the urbanite shows greater ability to accept the various nuances of different behaviours and views, becoming more sophisticated, tolerant and more willing to refuse a world judged in terms of all or nothing.

9 - The segmental relations and the labor division tend to level the individuals through the standardization of goods and mass production. The monetary sense of urbanites also tends to level all goods and services quantitatively. Everything can be bought and any service can be done if there is money to pay for it. The monetary economy reflects the greater intellectuality of the urban man, who hardly ever knows who he is selling something to, or whether or not this is being made good use of. Everything is reduced to the simple objective question "How much?" While this may mean a useful democratization, it also means fitting people into schemes, cultural, economic and political, leaving them without real choices.

10 - The segmental roles, the necessity of developing more secondary than primary relations expresses itself in a sort of blasé attitude, an attitude of reserve, indifference which is sometimes perceived as cold, rude and formal. The urbanite, incapable of carrying on multifaceted relations with most other urbanites, develops immunities which do not allow the immense variety of stimuli to affect his health and well-being.

11 - The substitution of primary contacts for secondary ones, the weakening of family links is clearly expressed in the new ways of the urban family which is transferring many of its traditional roles such as child rearing and education to specialized institutions. Besides, urban families are smaller, in general, and frequently have no or just a few children. The typical urban family is usually referred as nuclear, i.e., composed of father, mother and children, with hardly any contact with previous generations.

12 - The loosening of primary links leads the individual to take part in formal associations in order to strengthen his individual interests joining others who share these same interests, instead of recurring to primary groups as would be more common in smaller communities.

13 - Personal disorganization, crime, corruption and disorder are

more likely to occur in the more urban settlements, since the weakening of primary ties and their substitution for formal associations do not satisfy the integrity of the human personality, leading, therefore, to individual instability, social anomie or normlessness and pathology.

These are the main ideas produced by Louis Wirth's essay "Urbanism as a Way of Life". It clearly repeats most ideas introduced by Park's 1916 paper called: "The City: suggestions for an Investigation of Human Behaviour in the Urban Environment". It also shows a strong influence of Georg Simmel's essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" from whom Wirth actually borrows the words "blasé attitude" and "reserve". The great validity of his theory, I repeat, is that he for the first time systematized the notions which were spread around the works of many theorists that preceeded him. As we could well see, he not only defined what a city was, but proposed as well an analysis of the urban way of life from three different perspectives, that is, (1) from the view that a city is an ecological entity, a physical structure with a peculiar strength and a technology of its own; (2) as a social system with a specific organization of its composing groups, with characteristic urban institutions and social interactions; (3) as a set of attitudes, ideas and personalities with a typical behaviour.

In order to avoid later difficulties, it should be said that the individual's interaction with the physical context of the city - buildings, crowds, smells, heat, cold and the like - is referred to in this dissertation as para-individual relation; the interaction of the social context with the individual, i.e., individual with family, friends, associations and institutions, constitute inter-individual relations; the individual behaviour, his inner conflicts, instability, indecisions and anxieties which can be said to be also of urban nature are referred to as intra-individual relations. The reason for such a choice lies in the fact that

when analysing the novels we necessarily have to analyse what happens to the individual in these three dimensions.

Many objections to the Wirthian theory, alsoknown as Determinist theory, have been presented by other two theories, the subcultural and the compositional. The questions raised by these theories are of great importance for us because they frequently question the Wirthian theory head on, as is mainly the case of the compositional theory which literally denies any sort of influence of urbanization upon the individual and the social groups as described by Wirth. Subcultural theory is in a way a synthesis of both compositional and determinist theories and, although it recognizes the effects of urbanism upon the individual and the social context, it does not agree with most of the Wirthian explanations for these effects.

Nevertheless, our preliminary intention is to identify, in the light of sociological theories of urbanism, the effects of Chicago and New York upon the Bellowian characters. In this sense the Wirthian theory has proved to be directly applicable and helpful in the description of Bellow's megalopolises and in the analysis of the drama and conflicts of his characters. Bellow's city is clearly a Wirthian city, and the inclusion of other theories becomes important only if our intention is to question Bellow's and Wirth's version of the city. This will be touched at the conclusion of the dissertation. Meanwhile, we shall stick to the Determinist approach and only mention the views of other thinkers "en passant" in order to enrich our analyses.

1.2. Review of Criticism

In 1954 Blanche Housman Gelfant published a book called The American City Novel in which she makes an analysis of the development of the American urban novel during the twentieth century. The book gives us a significant insight into the novelists who created what may be called the "city novel", a novel with characteristic themes, tempos and images, and therefore distinguishable from novels of other settings. Besides, Mrs. Gelfant offers us a meaningful and supportable picture of the American urban way of life, both from the literary and from the sociological points of view. In fact, Blanche Gelfant's book is the first and one of the few attempts to look at the city novel from a sociological point of view. She is also the first critic to come to the conclusion that the sociological theory of urbanism corroborates exhaustingly the literary perspective of the urban milieu.

Furthermore, Gelfant's The American City Novel is the first and only work which defines the urban novel as a literary genre with specific social backgrounds, literary methods and merits. Thus, the city novel expresses underlying concepts of a special way of life which has shaped the writer's mind and the interaction of the characters in his novels.

Blanche Gelfant also distinguishes between three types of city novels: the portrait, the synoptic and the ecological novel. The portrait novel has the city revealed to the reader through a single character. The best representative of this kind of novel, according to Mrs. Gelfant, is Theodore Dreiser. Synoptic novels are those in which the total city, having a personality of its own, is revealed to the reader. John dos Passos, says Gelfant, is the best representative of this kind of novel. Dos Passos not only continued with the line of social criticism started with Dreiser but also made aesthetic and symbolic use of the potentialities of the urban material. Finally, The American City Novel defines the ecological novel

as the one which focuses upon a small microcosmic area of the city - a neighborhood or a block, for instance. This kind of novel requires from the writer a careful use of the specific local language and ways in his descriptions and characterizations. James T. Farrel with his Studs Lonigan is the best example of this kind of novel.

A final consideration which has to be made about Gelfant's The American City Novel is her view of the city as a precipitator of the human drama. Gelfant, similarly to sociologists, regards the city as (1) a physical place, usually referred to as "physical context" in sociological literature, (2) "an atmosphere" which affects the individual's emotions and psychological outfit and (3) as a "way of life", i.e., a set of values and manners capable of distinguishing the city from a rural area. Any true city novel must contain these three elements in order to become an "organic whole in which material and form have become one aesthetic integer." [10] By "material" Gelfant understands the author's specific view of the urban environment and by "form" she means those techniques, images, style, tone, theme and structure - which better express the peculiar attitude of a writer toward the city as a place, an atmosphere and a way of life.

Gelfant's The American City Novel cannot be read as being a continuation of George Arthur Dunlap's The City in The American Novel, 1789 - 1900. Dunlap's book came out in 1934 and it analyses literary works concerned with life in New York, Philadelphia and Boston during the last century. His work is doubtlessly of the greates interest in terms of his descriptions of the city plagues, epidemics, poverty, villainy and the great disasters of the cities during that period. It also includes some curious descriptions of the religious, political, literary and social life in these three cities, as seen by writers of that period. It is my view, however, that Dunlap's book cannot be taken as a predecessor of Gelfant's work for it lacks the support of a sociological theory of urbanism and,

therefore, the capacity of logically extrapolating the localities to which studies are restricted, for his very restriction is based on the misconception that other American cities lack the "homogeneity" necessary to "illustrate urban life".[11] A matural consequence of such a study is that it tends to become social gossip instead of socio-literature. The mother of urban socio-literature in the United States is certainly Mrs. Gelfant and not Mr. Dunlap.

Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten, with the risk of committing a serious injustice, that Dunlop's book was written twenty years before Gelfant's. This time lag is vital if we remember that the first true systematization of the sociology of the city came out in 1938, four years after Dunlap's book came out. It could be argued that he should at least have heard of Park's article on the city which was published in 1916. It is indeed surprising that his bibliography does not mention any sort of sociological literature whatsoever, which, I insist, indicates that Dunlap and Gelfant are doing two very distinct types of work - the former uses a rather impressionistic approach, the latter a clearly sociological one. My interpretation of Bellow's work follows essentially the parameters established by Gelfant, except for my broader inclusion of theories of urbanism which have been developed rather recently, and some sporadic historical notions which directly relate both to the city in general and to the Bellowian city, to which Gelfant makes no reference.

Another interesting book about the city in American literature is a critical anthology organized by James Pickering and called The City in American Literature. It came out in 1977 and is intended to be a companion to The Small Town in American Literature - an anthology organized by David M. Cook and Craig G. Swauger, and first published in 1969. Both anthologies can be regarded as composed of two contrasting and complementary parts - the first concerned with the views of American writers and

poets of the small town, and the second concerned with the views of the large cities. Although neither of the anthologies has the intention of entering into definitive critical considerations - their intention in an anthological work could not be different - they cannot help mentioning the general trend in the attitude of American men of letters regarding the city and the small town.

Cook and Swauger say that essentially the attitude towards the small town is an ambiguous one. Until the first half of the nineteenth century the small town was viewed through the eyes of romantic idealism which considered the small town as the ideal place for living and working. It provided a safe place for one to bring up one's family and, mainly, it endowed its dwellers with a sense of belonging, of having roots, of being part of a community which is free from the "ills of civilization". [12] But Cook and Swauger call our attention to a radical change in attitude with the coming of realism. Writers in the last part of the nineteenth century began to reveal that the morality of the small town, the education, the cultural poverty, its conservantism, its resistance to change, its single set of mores made the people lead the same "dreary lives of people living elsewhere". [13] What examples could illustrate this view better than Mark Twain's short story The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg or even his Mississipi river towns? What example could illustrate better the narrowmindedness, intolerance and resistance to change than Willa Cather's The Sculptor's Funeral or Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio? Even boredom is revealed as something not merely urban, but also belonging to small town life. What is William Saroyan's Locomotive 38, The Ojibway, if not a relief from small town monotony?

James Pickering's The City in American Literature, because of the anthological characteristic of his book, does not make thesis statements about the attitudes of American writers towards city life. Nevertheless,

he makes it clear that the American writer is essentially and almost exclusively an anti-urban intellectual:

> What one is struck by, finally, is the remarkable similarity of their (the writers') concerns and attitudes, by their constant use and reuse of certain basic themes, moods, situations, types and motifs, and, above all, their common understanding of just how crucial and very often just how definitive the city can be in influencing and molding the lives it touches.[14]

The attitudes and concerns of American writers regarding the city share similarities even in writers that belong to different literary schools or traditions, which stresses their common European, biblical and classical past, where the attitudes toward the city were already prejudicial and negative. Although we can say that the attitude toward the small American town changed radically with the advent of realism, we cannot say the same regarding the attitudes toward the city. Pickering makes it clear that from Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Hawthorne, and Poe to Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, James T. Farrell, Flannery O'Connor or John Updike, the basic attitude has remained the same, although each writer has in a way created his (her) own city of his (her) own imagination, obviously reflecting the standpoints of their particular schools. In this sense, Upton Sinclair's city would be very different from Emerson's or Jefferson's. While Sinclair would link the evils of the city to the social structure of the capitalist society, Jefferson and Emerson would link the country to success, individual fulfillment, stability and, especially for Jefferson, democracy. The city, in their view, threatened the real values of the new nation, established essentially on the notion that "Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God,"[15] and that "the proportion which the aggregate of the other classes of citizens bears in any state to that of its husbandmen, is the proportion of its unsound to its healthy parts, and it is a good enough barometer whereby to measure its degree of corruption."[16] The redemptive and reinvigorating forces can only be found in the

country, close to nature and not in the urban milieu. Nevertheless, despite the crucial differences which exist from writer to writer, because of their peculiar treatment of their common subject matter, it is clear that hardly any voice of America's most distinguished writers spoke in favour of the city and its ways of life, which might lead us to believe, like Jefferson, that "the most essential values of American life are agrarian ones," [17] and that contemporary and nearly contemporary writers like Saul Bellow, Arthur Miller, John Steinbeck and others show a total incapacity of breaking away from this tradition.

Pickering's book is particularly interesting for the general idea any reader may get from it. His merit is especially in that his anthology includes samples of writings of the last two centuries, including contemporary urban poets like Joyce Carol Oates, Robert Lowell, Leroi Jones, James Merrill and others. Nevertheless, most of Pickering's ideas can be traced back to another book - The Intellectual Versus The City (Boston, 1962) by Morton and Lucia White.

The Intellectual Versus The City starts with the interesting idea that any student of the city can adopt two attitudes towards the American anti-urban tradition. The first one is to turn his back to what people like Jefferson, Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Poe, Frank Lloyd Wright and others have said and regard them as irresponsible, alienated intellectuals who never actually faced the city's problems and who fled in order to dedicate themselves to idle metaphysics. The second possible attitude is to take these intellectuals seriously and try to profit from their experiences in order to improve our present and future urban experiences. For the Whites, the second is the only attitude which can render justice to the greatest minds the United States has so far produced.

The Intellectual Versus The City is a corroboration of Blanche Gelfant's demonstration that the American literature has been traditionally anti-urban

since its very origin. The Whites, however, also include in their analysis politicians, thinkers and even Frank Lloyd Wright, the almost contemporary architect, creator of the organic architecture - an architecture which tries to eliminate the distinction between city and country and to adapt architecture to the natural relief of the landscape. In fact, the contribution of the Whites to the understanding of the urban phenomenon in the mind of American intellectuals is precisely the demonstration that politics, philosophy, romance, poetry and architecture walk hand in hand against the American city and against the city in general. Thus Frank Lloyd Wright's conceptions of an organic rural city is nothing but an application of views inherited from Jefferson, Emerson and Thoreau.

It should be said that Jefferson actually sketched the city of his dreams. For Jefferson, the ideal city should be constructed like a chessboard, with the black squares reserved for buildings and the white squares reserved for plants and gardens. Furthermore, it should be remembered that Emerson's <u>Nature</u> came out at a time when the American urban population witnessed an eleven-fold increase". [18] It certainly cannot be doubted that Emerson was presenting the Americans with what is nothing but the direct opposite to the city - life close to nature. With the intense process of urbanization, it is natural that the cities of the time did not have the conditions to assure a good quality of life for the enormous mass of ex-ruralites. High death rates naturally accompanied the process due to the general deficient sanitary conditions of large cities. It is, therefore, natural that Emerson and Jefferson should be such harsh critics of what was happening to America, a country with so much land to be used. The European cities were the best example of what not to be imitated. It was Emerson's and Jefferson's belief that America should do without cities, although Jefferson could not deny that Paris was enviable for its cultural and artistic life, which America was still missing. Frank Lloyd Wright, therefore, in

his attempt to bring together city and country is expressing at the same time the refusal of the city in esthetic, social and philosophical terms, but he is implicitly admitting, like Jefferson and Emerson, that the cultural benefits of the city might never be achieved with the total dispersal of the population.

Yet, it would be both unfair and not wholly true to say that Frank Lloyd Wright simply copied the romantic views inherited from Emerson, Jefferson and others. It is doubtless that Wright has his roots in the romantic, agrarian Emersonian ideology. Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten that Wright is the author of a great number of books all of which were published after 1932, i.e., almost a century after Nature (1836) was published. This means that Frank Lloyd Wright had a peculiar experience of urbanism, like all realist authors, in fact, which cannot be directly traced back to the romantic school. The Intellectual Versus The City makes a point in saying that romanticism is not enough to explain the American anti-urban tradition. The fact that intellectuals are against the city does not leave it implicit that they are in favour of "untouched nature", that they would love to follow the Thoreauian experience at Walden Pond. The fact that Stephen Crane and Upton Sinclair call the city a "jungle" does not mean that they are praising it. In fact it means that the city is a world governed by beasts where the law says that only the strongest can survive. Nor is Dreiser being agrarian when he compares the city a beast. Their allegorical value is not one of peacefulness but of cruelty. As Dreiser describes New York in his Sister Carrie, the city is like a sea and

> the sea [is] full of whales. A common fish must needs disappear wholly from view - remain unseen. 19

Therefore, the greatest contribution of a book like The Intellectual Versus The City is the verification and conclusion that not all American

intellectuals are heirs of Natty Bumpoism and Emersonianism. The anti-urban tradition is evident, but it cannot be mechanically attributed to the same causes. The reasons why intellectuals have criticized the city are many, and though they are often due to a romantic heritage, it is simplistic and naive to believe that ALL anti-urbanism stems from romantic views, mainly when they are directly contradicting themselves as the views just introduced. As the Whites put it, there were always two contradicting notions in the history of anti-urbanism in America. The first, the romantic notion, criticised the city for being too civilized; the second the realist and naturalist notion criticized it for being too uncivilized. Nevertheless, Morton and Lucia White state that

> The American city has been thought by American intellectuals to be: too big, too noisy, too dusky, too dirty, too smelly, too commercial, too full of immigrants, too full of Jews, too full of Irishmen, Italians, Poles, too industrial, too pushing, too mobile, too fast, too artificial, destructive of conversation, destructive of communication, too greedy, too capitalistic, too full of automobiles, too full of smog, too full of dust, too heartless, too intellectual, too scientific, insufficiently poetic, too lacking in manners, too mechanical, destructive of family, tribal and patriotic feeling. And just because different intellectuals have disliked the city for so many different reasons, it is unlikely that one simple hypothesis will provide THE explanation of why American thinkers have found the city objectionable. [20]

To this list of "toos" we could add many other excesses traditionally attached to the city and to the urban way of life. But this would be just another drop in a sea of anti-urban feelings. What should concern us now is what has been said about the Bellowian city and to what extent it breaks or fits this tradition.

An interesting conclusion that one comes to when reviewing books that deal with the city in literature is that none of them mentions Saul Bellow or the Bellowian city. This is quite understandable if we consider that Bellow is still a living author and that most books do not include the post-

war period. This would somehow justify Blanche Gelfant and Morton and Lucia White, and it would justify completely George Dunlap. It does not, however, explain why James H. Pickering did not mention Bellow in his anthology, when he mentions so many other contemporary writers - most of them without half as much fame as Saul Bellow enjoys in the world and in the United States. It is, in my view, an unforgivable flaw of Pickering's anthology. Whatever caused this flaw, it is certain that Pickering never read Bellow or critical essays on Saul Bellow, for none of these essays, although their intention is not to analyse the city, can avoid mentioning it in their exposures. No matter what is said about Saul Bellow's book, the urban environment has to be mentioned. Or would Pickering say that the fact that all of Bellow's novels, except for Henderson the Rain King, take place in the largest American cities is a mere accident, without any importance in the development of the human drama? If this is his conclusion, he will certainly not find any support in Bellow's books and from Bellow's critics. Mr. Pickering's exclusion of Saul Bellow from his anthology must be based on grounds which find no justifiable evidence in the texts, books, essays, criticism, interviews I have so far come across.

But what do critics of Saul Bellow say about the city? What is their intention in mentioning the urban environment? Is this their main concern or is it just an en passant reference whose intention is to support other theses? In other words, are they trying to support the thesis that Bellow is essentially an urban or anti-urban writer who treats the city in specific ways and, therefore, has his characters assume traits which conflict or adapt to the urban milieu? The answer is that they use the urbanness in Bellow's novels in order to support specific points they want to make and which are directly or indirectly connected to the city as a sociological, ecological and psychological force. Nevertheless, there is no critical book which concentrates specifically on Bellow's treatment of

the city. This treatment, with its emphasis on and exclusiveness about city matters in Bellow's novels is essentially my own.

Furthermore, there has been a general tendency of critics of Saul Bellow to approach his novels psychologically, structurally, formally, psychoanalytically rather than sociologically. Besides, many books are concerned with specific formal aspects on specific books without great relevance to my study. This tendency is responsible for the lack and almost non-existence of critical material dealing directly with the city in Saul Bellow's novels. But, as I said before, most critics, although not dealing directly with the city, have presented some ideas about the Bellowian metropolis.

The best critical work on Bellow, with great comprehensiveness as far as the thematic aspect of the novels is concerned, is John Clayton's Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man. Clayton's concern in his book is two-fold: first, his intention is to show that Bellow is a positive writer, a moralist who cannot be associated with other contemporary nihilists who want to deny the last hope there might still exist for the individual. Clayton reminds us of Bellow's Library of Congress address where he says:

> One would like to ask (Sartre, Ionesco, Beckett, Burroughs, Ginsberg) 'After nakedness, what?' 'After absurdity, what?' [21]

Bellow is overwhelmed by the overevaluation of the id in a book like Naked Lunch, where the ego simply disappears. Similarly Bellow cannot accept the overemphasis on the disintegration of the ego found in writers like John Barth, J.P. Donleavy, Robert Coover or Elkin, where the last possibility of hope for humanity is put into the hands of naive, petty, merciless or, literally, crazy Gods, which means, therefore, that there is no hope.

Bellow, says Clayton, "affirms; and he attacks the writer who, feeling the encroachment of the public realm of the private, responds by ex-

hibiting his "power of despair". Nevertheless, Bellow affirms through denial, i.e., through his refusal of the present conditions of contemporary society, through an almost systematic demonstration of the disintegration of modern life, through its neglect of basic values like family, tradition and community life. In this sense, Bellow also accuses Jack Kerouac who "goes off to the coastal mountains of California to nurse his infantile ego."[23] It is Bellow's belief, therefore, that only the demonstration of these problems, followed by a positive determination of man, can avoid further social ailments. Bellow sees no use in being another "prophet of doom". Things are bad enough the way they are. There is no need for further pushing in the same direction. Bellow, as Clayton says it, is "in Defense of Man", not Against him.

The second intention of Clayton's book is to analyse the psychic pattern in Bellow's novels. It is Clayton's interpretation that Bellow's characters act according to what he calls "ideal constructions", which makes them create specific versions of reality. Since reality does not always coincide with their personal version of it, they feel frustrated, bitter and low. In this context, everything becomes an idealization, sometimes with megalomaniac tendencies. The father-son relationship is idealized, the husband-wife relationship is idealized, friendship is idealized - and then, when reality proves that it is not the way it was supposed to be, the characters feel depressed, persecuted and unwilling to share the benefits society can offer them. Clayton calls Bellow's characters "moral(social) masochists", an interpretation which is perfectly acceptable but which, in my view, has to be seen in relation to Bellow's anti-urban stand, which includes a general refusal of the pragmatic, commercialized, atomized world of the cities. That the Bellowian characters view the world and create their own version of it is more than obvious all throughout the novels, but it does not suffice to answer a basic question which this dissertation might pose to a critic like Clayton: Why is it that the protagonists feel mis-

placed in the urban environment, if other characters also view the city from their own perspective. In other words, why does it serve for some as an establishment of order in chaos, while for others all it creates is a feeling of misplacement, a sense of foreigness and incompatibility? While Clayton recognizes that Dr. Adler in Seize the Day idealizes the gains of his son and feels frustrated when his son does not live up to these dreamed gains, Clayton does not say why Dr. Adler feels perfectly at ease and happy in his hotel apartment in the heart of New York, while Tommy can't stay in it for a single day without having his nerves blown up.

Clayton has clearly no intention to answer these questions. Yet his book is no less interesting. Nevertheless, as it was stated beforehand, to fully understand the city, a threefold orientation, with special emphasis on the nature of the individual's relationship with the city as a social, ecological and psychological phenomenon, has to be adopted. In other words, it is insufficient to say that the characters' city is a "version"*; it is necessary to identify which elements in this "version" harmonize and which elements conflict with the city as defined by sociological knowledge.

Sarah Blacher Cohen has also produced an interesting book called Saul Bellow's Enigmatic Laughter, where she says that Bellow has written human comedy and not divine comedy, putting into confrontation the grossness of the common soldier with his wishes to achieve "absolute purity". As Cohen puts it: Bellow's novels "are comedies in which the protagonists are not resolute pilgrims making their steady progress to the 'celestial city', but faltering penitents, never quite able to extricate themselves from the snares of their terrestrial cities."[24] The enigmatic laughter is, then, produced by the decontextualization of the protagonists. While they dream of celestial cities for "more than human" beings, they are still wandering around terrestrial cities, where the existing conditions make them awkward,

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* For Bellow "version" means a little private world of the individual. Thus, each and every individual has his own version of reality.

misplaced and, consequently, laughable. The enigmatic laughter Mrs. Cohen is talking about becomes then a little less enigmatic for it can be clearly understood in the context of the confrontation between the individual and his environment, between the individual and his possibilities of surviving as a "common soldier" who is safer wandering incognito in a threatening environment than in behaving angelically or with manners that do not fit his specific milieu.

In a way, we are back to Bellow's affirmation of the possibilities of the individual and of mankind. It is an affirmation through denial. Man is neither ready for celestial nor for terrestrial cities, but this does not mean that man is nothing. At least, this is the only interpretation we can give to Bellow's statements that "[he] cannot agree with recent writers who have told us that we are Nothing. We are indeed not what the Golden Age boasted us to be. But we are Something."[25] And we are something, Bellow seems to be saying, even if the city and contemporary society denies it to us. We have at least to try "to do right in a bad world" seems to be his message.

Again it should be remebered that Cohen has no intention to analyse the city in Saul Bellow. The fact that she mentions it when proving her point is that the city can hardly be isolated and avoided in any sort of interpretation. That the laughter has to do with the city is certainly true, but Cohen naturally demonstrates that this is not the only way it is produced. This, however, is another story.

Leslie Fiedler wrote an article entitled "Saul Bellow", in which he demonstrates that the mythic power of Bellow's novels is embodied in characters like Augie March, Asa Leventhal, Tommy Wilhelm and Joseph, who, through their "most intimate awareness of loneliness and flight",[26] become "public symbols" capable of replacing the "rural myths and images no longer central to our experience."[27] Thus, Fiedler synonimizes the contemporary

experience with the urban experience and demonstrates that "we recognize the Bellow character because he is openly what we are in secret, because he is us without our customary defenses. Such a protagonist lives nowhere except in the city; he camps temporarily in boardinghouses or lonely hotels, sits by himself at the corner table of some seedy restaurant or climbs backbreaking stairways in search of another whose existence no one will admit. He is the man whose wife is off visiting her mother or has just left him; the man who returns to find his house in disorder or inhabited by a squalid derelict; the man who flees his room to follow the funeral of someone he never knew." [28]

What Fiedler is saying, then, is that Bellow's protagonists, because they are highly mobile, live here and there, wander about without a destiny, are cut off from family, woman, father and mother, because they feel and behave as strangers, are lonely and rootless - because these are their basic traits - they can live nowhere else but in the city, and because the citification of the world today is unprecedented in history, the experience of the coeval urban individual becomes the experience of the individual of our society in general. This affirmation finds support not only in Bellow's words (he frequently in his novels universalizes the urban experience as the social experience) , but also in sociological writings such as those of Kingsley Davis and his essay on "The Urbanization of Humanity." Fiedler's mythical approach corroborates, therefore, my sociological approach to Bellow's protagonists, in that loneliness, foreigness and mobility are traits that also figure in my description of the urban man, even though they are not the only ones. Furthermore, Fiedler shows no interest whatsoever in explaining the causes of the abovementioned traits, taking it for granted that they imply myths intrinsic to the contemporary man, without mentioning that they may be a result of urbanism itself. Again, Fiedler's view explains only part of the issue. It does not not explain why certain characters do

feel at home in the city and how they manage to do so.

Ralph Freedman has written the most specifically pertinent essay to this dissertation. Freedman's essay is called Saul Bellow: The Illusion of Environment". It is Freedman's view that Bellow's city is at one time naturalistic and symbolic and, therefore, the heroes are simultaneously "centers of consciousness as well as victims of a relentless environment." [29] Protagonist and environment establish a relationship in which both prove to be "equally evanescent as well as stable, equally prone to interchanging their active and passive states." [30] In other words, what Freedman is saying is that the individual can determine the world and be determined by it and that the protagonist can, therefore, become either active or passive and that, because of this alternative interplay, the environment is somehow always an illusion, with the individual's microcosm, his internal image, only rarely matching the macrocosm, the external image, or the world's image.

Freedman's "Saul Bellow: The Illusion of Environment" basically repeats Clayton's notion of "ideal constructions" , stressing the same idea that the world is a point of view, a "version", in Bellow's novels. The main difference between both critics, it seems to me, lies in that Freedman goes a little farther in his exploration of the environment. First, he contrasts the deterministic environment of the realist and naturalist writers with that of the symbolist artist, in order to demonstrate that Bellow synthesizes both notions when he is able to employ a metaphysical and an epistemological motif in his treatment of environment. Secondly, Freedman hints at the possibility that the protagonist's drama in Bellow's fiction results from the incapacity to adequately bring together illusion and reality. This is at least what can be understood from his conclusion that " [Augie] is more vulnerable than his brother Simon, who sees affiliation with things [position and money]," [31] in opposition to Augie who

is always Diogenes-like seeking people and the comprehension of the world. Furthermore, Freedman also remarks, consistently with this dissertation, that "only on the concluding page, in a fleeting reduction of the hero's life to rural simplicity, is this contradiction momentarily resolved." [32] Though Freedman hints at the protagonist's inherent incompatibility with the urban environment as the very unfolding and catalyzation, he does not take the obvious next step which is the identification of the various elements which lie at the very basis of this incompatibility. This last part is essentially my own contribution to the understanding of Bellow's city.

Irving Malin wrote about Saul Bellow's novels, concentrating especially on form, i.e., the imagery and the style. Malin's essays "Seven Images" and "Herzog" throw some light on my essentially thematic interpretation of Bellow's books. As I said before and repeatedly, it is almost impossible to talk about Bellow without mentioning the city. Malin is just another example of this. While talking about the irony in Herzog, Malin very wisely remarks that "although irony as a style of life" dominates Herzog, it apparently disappears when he looks at Nature. He does not have to be ironic toward 'pastoral' - he delights, as do all of Bellow's urban heroes, in fresh air and sunlight." [33] The fact that irony disappears when he looks at nature and is with nature shows that rural-mindedness is one of the causes of conflicts between the protagonist and the urban environment. Interestingly enough, Malin corroborates the thesis of this dissertation from a strictly formal approach.

Similarly, Malin describes seven images which appear in Saul Bellow, as the prevailing ones. These images all lead to the basic themes of the novel and also to the reinforcement and clarification of the environment in which Bellow's protagonists live their lives. The seven images selected by Malin are: (1) weight - image that identifies the pressures of reality upon the characters and the burden they unavoidably have to carry; (2) deformity -

the constant presence of blind, deformed, idiotic, insane people in the city emphasizes the general deformity of "sick humanity" among whose paths the protagonist has to wander; (3) cannibalism - the placement of most of Bellow's novels during the depression emphasizes the idea that "people consume people as the germ consumes the body". [34] Man cheats other men, man kills other men, man exploits other men. Therefore, the protagonists have to survive in a world which weighs upon them with its general sickness and that literally nourishes mutual destruction; (4) prison - Heaviness, ugliness and violence makes the characters feel imprisoned in their own impotence to do something about it; (5) the beast - In Henderson the Rain King, Eugene Henderson assumes characteristics of the animals he is with and somehow we are led to believe that his improvement as a human being has to do with his move away from the dirtiness of the pigs into the nobility and strength of the lion. Similar conotations can be found in Seize the Day, where Tommy Wilhelm is frequently equated to animals in a typical naturalistic way, as if Bellow were suggesting that the environment the protagonists are in is nothing but a jungle inhabited and governed by beasts of all sorts; (6) movements - because the environment is oppressing him with its sickness, deformities, with its devouring violence and with its imprisonment of the human beasts, the Bellowian protagonist wants to move. Movement becomes, then, an image without which it is impossible to understand Bellow's novels. Movement is intrinsic to the urban environment and, also in this respect, Malin reinforces my descriptions of Bellow's city; (7) mirror - the Bellowian protagonists are able to feel cold in the hottest summer as they are able to wander around the city with agrarian values. "The mirrors demonstrate that their quests are frequently distorted," [35] which is again the same as saying that Bellow's protagonists tend to follow "ideal constructions" as Clayton calls it, or that there is a conflict between symbolic and naturalistic environments, as Freedman wants it.

As we can see, Malin's formal approach to Bellow's works is highly helpful in describing and understanding the relation of the individual and his environment, and because this is essentially what this dissertation is about many of his ideas were employed in the effort to distinguish the specific effects of urbanism upon the characters of Saul Bellow.

A very different kind of criticism is that of Daniel Weiss. His article "Caliban on Prospero: A Psychoanalytic Study of the Novel Seize the Day, by Saul Bellow" introduces explanations for the familial and social conflicts which the protagonist of that particular novel faces, which have very little in common with those of my sociological reading. As the title of the article indicates, Weiss tries to explain the father-son conflicts, as well as the conflicts of Tommy Wilhelm with the urban society as a whole psychoanalytically. Weiss identifies the same sort of conflicts most critics identify in the novel, i.e., the father-son conflict, the son-success conflict, the son-money conflict, the son-organization conflict and the like. What makes Weiss's article so different from my interpretation is his explanation of these conflicts. While this dissertation emphasizes the sociological elements which determine the confrontations, placing, therefore, Seize the Day in the bulk of Bellow's work and in the context of the urban environment, Daniel Weiss restricts himself exclusively to Seize the Day and defines Tommy Wilhelm as a "moral masochist, the victim, for whom suffering is a modus vivendi, a means of self-justification." [36] Since the father is the natural oedipal rival of the son, the son tends towards the destruction of the father figure. This wish for the death of one's own father leads to the son's feeling of guilt in the father-son relationship: he feels he has to suffer in order to deserve the father's love. As Berhard Berlinger says: "Suffering has come to mean being worthy of love." [37] The father, on the other hand, is the punishing figure, always seen as right in opposition to the son who sees himself as wrong. Masochism is always ac-

companied by sadistic feelings. Weiss distinguishes between two types of sadistic regressions - the oral and the anal type. The oral regression in Tommy Wilhelm's case would explain why he is speaking, eating, drinking, smoking and biting his nails all the time, revealing the causes of the "mountain of ticks" he is. Similarly, being incapable of acting according to the acceptable anal traits of society, Tommy refuses cleanness, carries crushed cigarette butts in his coat pockets, walks around with stained fingers and, therefore, is regarded as a slob by his father. The extension of this behaviour is Tommy's refusal of money, success, possessions, order and other traits directly associated with what "might be called the 'anal phase' of civilization." [38] As Weiss puts it: He cannot retain money; his retentions like so many of his other traits, are at an infantile level. His principle character trait is his messiness, his dirt, the barely acceptable substitute for feces." [39]

This sort of psychoanalytic analysis is certainly very revealing applied to the father-son relationship in Seize the Day. It could also be applied to other novels by Saul Bellow, mainly Dangling Man, The Victim, Herzog and Henderson the Rain King. The psychoanalytic approach reveals a world completely different from that revealed by sociological interpretations, which proves not only that Bellow can be read at other levels of interpretation but also that the same diagnosis may have its origin in many different symptoms. The symptoms which this dissertation tries to detect are those brought to focus by urban sociology.

It would be impossible to write briefly about all critics of Saul Bellow for he is today no doubt one of most widely written about authors in the United States. Reviewing all the criticism on him would be on one hand impossible and on the other completely undesirable in our case because the criticism is inevitably repetitive. It is my belief that the books, essays and articles so far reviewed are the ones which most directly touch the topic

under discussion in this dissertation: the Saul-Bellowian city. Many other critical works are in my hand, including Hugh Callow Hartman's excellent PhD. thesis entitled Character, Theme and Tradition in the Novels of Saul Bellow, Marcus Klein's A Discipline of Nobility: Saul Bellow's Fiction and J. C. Levenson's Bellow's Dangling Men. I believe, however, that most of these critics' ideas, at least those directly pertinent to the thesis of this dissertation, can be found throughout the following analyses of individual novels.

1.3. Statement of Purpose

This dissertation proposes to analyse seven of the eight Bellowian novels so far written - Dangling Man, The Victim, The Adventures of Augie March, Herzog, Seize the Day, Mr. Sammler's Planet and Humboldt's Gift - in the light of urban sociology, especially in the light of Louis Wirth's theory of urbanism.

All the novels above have as their basic setting two of the largest American cities - New York and Chicago. The purpose of this dissertation is to detect the sort of treatment that is given to them by Bellow and what is their relation to the protagonists's drama and to the city as described by urban sociology.

Once this connection is established I intend to demonstrate that the city, as a social, physical and psychological context, is constantly in strong and meaningful conflict with the protagonists of the novels. There is no peace and no ease for the Bellowian protagonists in the urban milieu. As a physical context, the city affects their ears, their nose, their finger-tips and their eyes; as a social context, the city affects their inter-individual relations, spreads their friends, their kins, disorganizes neighborhood, breaks community life, generates mobility, specializes people and dismantles their families; as a psychological context, the urban environment produces anguish, neurosis, loneliness, "psychic overload", alienation, rootlessness, coldness, distance, segmentariness, a domination of brain over heart, distrust, anonymity, neurosis, impotence and unhappiness.

But for Bellow's protagonists "to be affected" does not mean to accept". They rebel against the ways of the city, and their behaviour becomes incompatible with the ways dictated by the city to urbanites in general. Feeling impotent and lacking the basic immunity that urbanites generally possess, the Bellowian protagonist undergoes long and frequent depressions and wishes to

flee the city and move to a pastoral environment. This wish is made to come true in various ways - either directly through the actual departure of the protagonist, through the departure of a kin to another town or again through the mere mental waderings of the protagonist around teluric landscapes, a dream which is hoped to be fulfilled some day. The flight from the city may involve ambivalently a renunciation of, and a move into, freedom. In either case, flight is preferred to remaining in a devouring environment, which is incompatible with the ways of the protagonists. When adaptation to the city does occur, it so happens as a mere strategy to survive and hardly ever because the protagonist accepts the urban experience and its implications.

Needless to say, Bellow's city is hellish, wicked - the prototype of social evil. In this sense, Bellow can be placed exactly within the anti-urban tradition of North-American literature, and his objections to the city are frequently closer to the romantic ideals than to the complaints of the realist and naturalist schools, although we cannot classify Bellow in either one or the other movement. His anti-urbanism sounds perhaps so harsh precisely because he utilizes all the instruments available in his battle against the great symbol of modern civilization: the city. And the fight against the city means, at the same time, a fight in favour of all those values - family, community, tradition and the like - which urbanism is said to be weakening and causing to disappear. Therefore, Bellow's anti-urbanism has to be read not as an expression in defense of Man, but of a man who is hard to find in the contemporary megalopolises. Bellow's ideal man definitely resembles ruralites much more than the urbanites described by urban sociology.

2. THE DANGLING MAN

Dangling Man, Saul Bellow's first novel, came out in 1944. It is written in the form of a journal, showing a strong influence, both in form and content, from Sartre's La Nausée (1938). * It marks in fact the beginning of a career which will always, in a way or another, move back and forth and around the same basic ideas and principles. Dangling Man is the first expression of Bellow's views, which all his later novels not only contain but develop and enrich. As in all his later novels, Bellow is, already in 1944, a man deeply concerned with the characteristics of the large cities. Through Joseph in Dangling Man, we perceive Bellow's consciousness of what he refers to in his book as the megalopolis.

The city first impresses Joseph because of its enormous varieties of activities. To Joseph's astonishment and wonder, one can find anything in the megalopolis, i.e., a large city like Chicago or New York. Although Joseph grew up and lived all his life in the city, he cannot help being impressed by the fact that almost any kind of human activity is performed in it.

> For every need there is an entrepeneur, by a marvelous providence. You can find a man to bury your dog, rub your back, teach you Swahili, read your horoscope, murder your competitor. In the megalopolis, all this is possible.[1]

In other words, in the city you can find creative as well as destructive instruments of all kinds. All your needs will find someone who is willing to give them professional assistance. The city is a wide-open market for all kinds of talents to develop, from criminals to politicians, from the religious freak to the excentric, avant-garde artist. As Robert Ezra Park[2]

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* for a comparison of both books see Clayton, John - Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man - Indiana University Press - USA, 1971, pp. 57-58.

says it, it is in the diversity of interests and tasks that the individual finds "the opportunity to choose his own vocation and to develop his individual peculiarities."

But, if the city is the place where anything can be found, where any kind of (mainly tertiary) economic activity can be performed, it is not true, however, that happiness is assured for all its dwellers. The German saying that says "Stadt Luft macht frei" (City air makes you feel free) is not true for Bellow's characters, at least his main characters, who are constantly aware of the neurotic, traumatic and generally sick presence of the city in their daily lives. It is the task of this chapter to identify some of the main forces that somehow make his protagonist perceive the gigantic human conglomerates in specific ways, either because the environmental pressures act as deterministic forces or because his psychological formation is incompatible with the standard rules of urban life. In other words, we can either talk about the city as determining Joseph's behaviour in Dangling Man or we can talk about his psychological construct, or, still, about the inter-relation of both. In any case, we can be sure of one thing: Joseph is out of place in his own city and it is this incompatibility of city and character which is largely responsible for his dramatic experiences in Dangling Man.

Bellow's descriptive power has its first rehearsal sessions in this short novel. The environment described presents already the common characteristics of novels such as Seize the Day, Herzog, The Victim, The Adventures of Augie March and Humboldt's Gift - that is, the city interacts with the character, as if it were part of him, as if he wore it like one has to wear a shirt. The city becomes humanized and bestialized, being capable of expressing itself as such, or being perceived as such through its industrial, mechanical and technical language. Even the language of

birth and hope takes on threatening colours, shapes and noises:

> Immense wreaths were mounted on buildings in the green, menacing air; the thousands upon thousands of shoppers ground through the stores and the streets under the smoky red façades and in the amplified roar of carols. [3]

Although the passage refers to a Christmas preparation in downtown Chicago, we can immediately perceive that Joseph does not see a pleasant city at all. It is not a sign of birth or joy or salvation. In fact he sees it as a menacing, crowded, smoky and aggressive place. It is definitely a place to be hated more than loved, to be sought less than avoided.

It is not surprising, therefore, that, some days later, looking out of his window, Joseph asks himself:

> "What would Goethe say to the view from this window, the wintry, ill-lit street, he with his recurring pleasures, fruits and flowers?" [4]

This is a question full of sorrow. The sorrow over something which Joseph's city has lost, the "pleasures, fruits and flowers". For him nothing is left of Goethe's pleasant romanticism. It is all a cold, uninviting, gloomy street. Neither would Goethe nor does Joseph enjoy the coldness and general paleness of the Chicago environment. They both belong to another place and to another era. The drama, however, is Joseph's and not Goethe's. It is Joseph who has to find a way of living and surviving in Chicago.

And Chicago is not a place where any sort of animate being can stay at rest. It is swarming, it is moving, it is rattling. No living creature can manage to enjoy peacefulness in it. Man can't. Pigeons can't. The trees can't. The megalopolis is a place for machines, flashing lights, sparks, iron, soot, billboards, trains and anything else which is not in between complete inanimateness or inertia. In other words, it is no place for living. It is a place for the dead, a place for things.

> On the platform the rush-hour crowds were melting under the beams of oncoming trains. Each train was followed by an interval of darkness, when the twin coloured lamps of the rear car hobbled around the curve. Sparks from the street below were caught and blanked in the heavy, flat ladder of ties. The pigeons under the sooty, sheet-iron eaves were already asleep; their wadded shadows fell on the billboards and, with every train, fluttered as though a prowler had sprung from the roof into their roost. [5]

If we take the pigeons as they have been referred to in theological/biblical writings*, i.e., as a sign of hope for humanity, then Bellow seems to be saying that our hope of surviving in the city is the minimum. Man is more liable to be covered by soot or being harmed by criminals than capable of enjoying a flight towards fulfillment or enjoying a peaceful night's sleep. This interpretation becomes even more feasible if we take into account the bulk of Bellow's work and his insistence upon the brutalization of the two largest American cities, New York and Chicago. Nevertheless, it is already in Dangling Man, in 1944, that we see a boy "playing king in a paper crown." [6] What startles Joseph is that this little boy seems to be playing peacefully until the moment he falls into the boy's sight. It is then that

> He suddenly converted his sceptre into a rifle. He drew a bead on me and fired and fired, his lips moving as he said 'bang' [7]

This scene of violence performed or enacted by a little boy (or by the kings of this world?) could suggest isolately that violence is something innate and has nothing to do with the environment man is living in. Nevertheless, I am unwilling to believe that Bellow is limited to this view, not only in Dangling Man but in the rest of his work as well. The scene just quoted relates in fact to a broader kind of violence in the urban environment. Bellow is saying that, although one does not know the whole city,

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* see Isaias 55,6

probably because of its size, variety and possibilities, one does know it because of its abstract, unmistakable and predictable characteristics. And one of these characteristics is its environmental pressures and violence:

> I started back, choosing unfamiliar streets. They turned out to be no different from the ones I knew. Two men were sawing a tree. [8]

Joseph does not believe in the neutrality of the environment. For him the environment interacts strongly with his psychological constructs. This is carried to such an extent that sometimes the reader may have the wrong impression that the environment is fully dominated. Curiously enough, Joseph is able to transform/"control" his perceptions of the seasons, as there is also some evidence that he can do so with the city.* Nevertheless, when his friend John Pearl complains about the "treelessness" and the unnatural, too human deadness of New York",[9] he cannot help feeling sorry for his friend.

> I know what he feels, the kind of terror, and the danger he sees of the lack of the human in the too human. ...it happens in all cities. And cities are 'natural',too. He thinks he would be safer in Chicago, where he grew up. Sentimentality! He doesn't mean Chicago. It is no less inhuman. He means his father's house and** the few blocks adjacent... it gives me a sense of <u>someone else's recognition of the difficult, the sorrowful, in what to others is merely neutral, the environment.</u> [10]

It is significant to see that Joseph feels very strongly about t h e urban environment. He does not only see it as a huge conglomerate of people, buildings, offices and industries, but as an active inhuman (although human) force which can inject into us the sorrows and difficulties of life.

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* It was not hard to imagine that there was no city here at all, and not even a lake but, instead, a swamp and that despairing bawl crossing it (<u>DM</u>, p. 79)

** The underlining is mine

And for Joseph this is the truth. This is how He perceives the city. For him there is no feeling safe in it. Safety has to do with feeling at home, feeling at one's father's home, being with one's family. Unhappily for Joseph, Chicago is not his home. He has serious reservations about his father's coercive advice and is not at all sympathetic towards his step-mother; his in-laws become every day more and more distant from and less important for him. There is nothing that holds him to the city. He is living in it not because he feels he belongs to it or because he identifies with it. His being there is a mere accident, an accident which will preoccupy all of Bellow's main characters in the later novels. Joseph is in the city like the butterfly in this quotation:

> I even saw in a brick passageway an untimely butterfly, out of place both in the season and the heart of the city, and somehow alien to the whole condition of the century. [11]

Joseph's out-of-placeness and out-of-timeness in the urban setting is deeply connected to his incapability of accepting the hereness and nowness of things in general. As Bellow says later on, in his Nobel Prize novel, he is incapable of seizing the day. He is butterflying over steel and concrete, among soot and violence, at the wrong season. There is obviously an awareness on Joseph's and Bellow's part of the misplacement under discussion.

Bellow chose two different ways of expressing this misplacement of Joseph's. It can be expressed indirectly as we just saw, through animals and plants, or other creatures, or directly, as in the very beginning of the novel:

> There was a time when people were in the habit of addressing themselves frequently and felt no shame at making a record of their inward transactions. But to keep a journal nowadays is considered a kind of self-indulgence, a weakness, and in poor taste. ... Do you have feelings? There are correct and incorrect ways of

> indicating them. Do you have an inner life? It is nobody's business but your own. You have emotions? Strangle them. [12]

It is implied in Joseph's first comment that he is doing something out-of-fashion, outdated. Nevertheless, he does what he does and wishes that he could be carried back to the time when people were closer to each other, when and where they would greet each other when meeting on the street, and when and where they felt no shame of expressing their inner feelings. In the urban environment, where thousands and thousands of people swarm around the streets, where people are shouldering each other in public places without even noticing it, man is not worried about closeness. There might, after all, be some truth in Georg Simmel's [13] idea that the "physical proximity and the narrowness of space make mental distance more visible". Man, in the city, has become his own business, a little isolated island with no expression, with no communion with his fellowmen, tortured by pentup emotions and strangled by inner feelings. Man has become the expression of individualism, the fulfillment of which is the city - clearly a different notion from that expressed by Emerson and Thoreau to whom man's individuality found its fulfillment in nature. Bellow is not at all critical of individuality. Quite the contrary: he seems as in the quotation above, to be preaching its fulfillment in an environment where this is possible. What Bellow _is_ criticizing is the move from individuality to individualism which became epidemic in our cities. While individuality is a virtue, individualism is a sickness which only communion can cure. Therefore, Bellow's characters want to run away from the city in order to escape contagion. But, this is not an easy task for them. They are already victims of the underlying city relationships, and although not fully convinced of it, they do realize that there is something good in it at times, mainly when disturbances can be foreseen in primary relations.

In his room, Joseph can neither view the present nor nourish the

future. The room separates him from the real present world and prevents him from imagining the future. But he enjoys it. It allows him to bring back, although in a shabby way, the innocence of the past. It is the past that concerns him. And when Joseph speaks of the past we should think not only of his childhood but mainly of a past that belongs to another era and to another environment where the urbanites cannot disturb his pastoral and telluric imagination. With this in mind, we understand why the room holds Joseph so much. The past is in it with him, and this makes the future impossible to predict and the present impossible to seize.

> Some men seem to know exactly where their opportunities lie. They break prisons and cross whole Siberias to pursue them. One room holds me. [14]

Joseph's drama which partly stems from the incompatibility of past and present, also reflects his forced attachment to his environment. All through the novel we feel that Joseph is willing to cancel out the environment, to dominate it, to transform it, to perceive it differently, to perceive it in a more pleasant way, without taking advantage of it. But how can you banish your world? By decree? Certainly not. In order to be successful, your steps have to move along both practical and theoretical paths. In other words, there has to be a thorough understanding of the underlying relationships which attach you to a specific environment so that practical and successful moves toward fulfillment may be taken. Joseph's awareness that the world does not cease to exist because one says so is clear from this quotation:

> The world comes after you. It presents you with a gun or a mechanic's tool, it singles you out for this part or that, brings you ringing news of disasters and victories, shunts you back and forth, abridges your rights, cuts off your future, is clumsy or crafty, oppressive, treacherous, murderous, black, whorish, venal, inadvertently naive or funny. [15]

These words are very similar to Georg Simmel's in his work called "The Metropolis and Mental life".[16] Simmel stresses the fact that the greatest problem of city life is the individual's struggle for autonomy and individuality in a world in which "sociotechnological mechanisms" act as crushing forces upon its dwellers. It is clear that these sociological considerations greatly reduce the credibility of interpretations which in my view overemphasize the paranoiac tendencies of Bellow's characters. These interpretations lack the notion of the city as a sociologically independent entity, with an organizational structure of its own and with specific, formal coercive devices acting upon the individual.

The problem with Joseph in Dangling Man is that his urbanity established by decree rather than by choice. He has always lived in the city, yet he never chose to be an urbanite. And because he has lived in the city, he has had to see its soap operas, its cheap thrillers, the Hollywood dream... , he has had to read its magazines and listen to its radios. But, does this "having to" imply acceptance? Does it express his truth? Or does it belong to him just because he happens to be borne and brought up in the city? In other words, is he a Chicagoan because he believes that Chicago is THE place worth of him, or is he a foreigner in his own city?

We have already seen how foreign he feels in his home metropolis. He wants to leave it, go away, flee from it. The world, however, in an oppressive force. It has past and it has history. And this past and this history is inside yourself as well. Therefore, the word will follow you, no matter where you go, with its murderous, treacherous and oppressive claws. And there are only two alternatives left for you: either you obey or you die. This is perhaps where Joseph's greatest dilema lies: he doesn't want to obey, but he doesn't want to die either. He chooses to escape, joining the army - a naive way of prolonging his drama, without any foreseeable solution for it. It is a temporary renunciation of individuality,

a temporary renunciation of autonomy and freedom in a world in which determinism and slavery stem from the very collective experiences in the metropolitan atmosphere.

The renunciation of individual freedom and autonomy means, on the other hand the very escape from his environment and, consequently, it becomes, ambivalently, a search for freedom embodied in his hope to survive and probably come back to his country, as Eugene Henderson, the Rain King, did. But his escape into the army also means his refusal to adapt to the "citiness" of his community, i.e., to its way of life and to its environment. As I said before, the city seems to allow you two choices only: obedience or death. By escaping, Joseph is, at least temporarily and also considering the warfare the country is in, choosing death. The search for and the simultaneous refusal of freedom becomes, therefore, a suicidal/homicidal movement, as it it defined, many years later, by Dr. Tamkin in Seize the Day. By condemning the city to death, Joseph is recognizing his victimization and accepting his role as a non-benificiary. In a way, therefore, Joseph is liable to be accused of profound participation and responsibility in the 'crime' committed against him by the city. It is this participation in his own 'deathwardedness' that has led critics in general, e. g. John Clayton, Daniel Weiss and Malin, to emphasize so much the masochistic and paranoiac tendencies of Bellow's characters, It seems to me, however, that this attitude of Joseph's should also be considered in the light of material and economic success which he also refuses systematically. This takes us to another notion: the notion of authenticity which tells that Joseph is not a joke, but that he is seriously refusing to adapt to a society he cannot stand. The arguments of the masochism searchers are then somewhat weakened, given that Joseph, logically, has only one alternative to choose.

The large city is an ideal place for anonymity. Joseph's refuge is,

however, risky enough to provoke emotional lack of control. He would probably prefer a butterfly-coloured, tree-green bucolic refuge, where nature would embrace him warmly. Nevertheless, it is sociologically safe to say that, anonymity is if not impossible at least undesired in rural settings. At the same time, Bellow's characters, in general, certainly not excluding Joseph, are anxious for developing primary - typically rural - inter-individual relations. The incongruities become an insoluble puzzle for Joseph: he is forced to choose between primary relations or anonymity. Both can be desirable at different times and situations. The large city encourages anonymity and Joseph makes good use of it in his eager way to escape explanations, something which typically happens in primary inter-individual relations, where the level of expectation is extremely high.

> I'm always afraid of running into an acquaintance who will express surprise at seeing me and ask questions. I avoid going downtown and, when I must go, I carefully stay away from certain streets.
> 17

For a city man, primary relations are most of the time not welcome. They are psychologically too demanding. Primary relations ask for exposure, and exposure implies 'disagreeable' explanations in Joseph's case. The city, because of its size and agglomeration, supplies excellent possibilities for disguise. It so happens that Joseph choses not to become acquainted with anybody else. It ultimately means his conscious recognition of greater freedom, a freedom which is essentially urban by nature.

> I have fallen into the habit of changing restaurants regularly. I do not want to become too familiar a sight in any of them, friendly with sandwich men, waitresses, and cashiers, and compelled to invent lies for their benefit. 18

It was Sartre who said that "hell are the others" *. This is particularly true in environments in which inter-individual relations are essentially primary. Although it is undeniable, as we have already seen, that

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* In his book Huis Clos, 1944.

the power of coercion is truly remarkable in a city, it must be recognized that Sartre's statement is especially applicable where friendliness and familiarity are involved. The mechanisms of control of behaviour in a megalopolis are essentially different from those of rural environments. Huck's home town - its mono-religiosity, 'frontier-puritanism' and 'sivilized' manners, or Willa Cather's little Kansas town - to which one has to adapt or die - has very little in common with Bellow's megalopolis, except that there too one has to adapt or die. The main difference consists in the fact that in the city, coercion, heterogeneity and variety coexist, while this does not occur in a rural environment. As Joseph well said in a previous quotation of mine, in a megalopolis you can find anything you need and even more than that. In other words, what is being said is that coercion diminishes in direct proportion to the possibilities of choice the individual has. If hell are others, as Sartre poses it, because of inherent coercion in relations, then we can for sure state that hell in a city is a millionfold less painful and burning than in a rural setting, where familiarity and friendliness lead to a high degree of mutual inter-individual expectations.

In a city it is very easy to do what Joseph did, i.e., to transform the others into functions. Joseph does this when he is escaping from familiarity and friendliness, when he is escaping from primary relations. He, for example, under this circumstance, doesn't talk about names, he rather mentions the sandwich men, waitresses and cashiers. These functional definitions are strictly urban and the individuals will be referred to as such as long as their relations do not reach the primary level, as long as they remain essentially urban, in the determinist sense of the word.

The fact that Joseph knows who he is talking to at the bank where he went to cash a cheque for his wife does not mean anything except that the

urban man feels the need of being called by his name in an environment where the name is otherwise unimportant.

> MR FRINK stood in brass letters on the wooden block at his finger tips. [19]

Joseph was quite unwilling to cash the cheque for Iva, his wife. He had good urban reasons for it. It is not difficult to understand that secondary relations imply, besides greater inter-individual distance, a significant development of suspicion. One way, the easiest way in fact, of avoiding this inherent, a priori urban distrust is identification, an official bureaucratic reference which finds in the city the most fertile ground for flourishing. Robert Ezra Park [20] calls our attention to this aspect of city life when he says that what once had its control based on the mores is now being controlled by 'positive law.'

The truth, however, is that identification has to be sufficiently impressive in order to achieve positive results in a large city. The same way an outsider is frequently not welcome in small communities because he does not possess the adequate rural credentials, i.e., a close relationship to and identity with the community, Joseph is not accepted because his credentials are not urban enough to satisfy the presidents or vice-presidents of banks.

> I had been turned down twice last fall; once because I had insufficient identification and, again, when the vice president, looking from my cards to me and from me to my cards, once more said,
> 'How do I know you're this person?'
> I replied, 'you can take my word for it.'
> [21]

The comic effect of this scene is remarkable. But where does the effect stem from? Would Joseph's statement be comic in a rural community where he, hypothetically, lived? It seems most unlikely to be taken as something which can be immediately checked upon and controlled by the com-

munity. In fact, the whole scene would hardly ever occur in a small rural community, where personal contacts avoid identification. In a small community, Joseph's word would most certainly be profoundly meaningful. Transactions do not work in the same way in a megalopolis where this sort of statement can only be made meaningful when primary relations are involved. Therefore, we cannot help concluding that the vice president, and not Joseph, is behaving correctly - "correctly" meaning "urbanly" - for he is perfectly aware of the protection urbanites need in order to survive in a large city like Chicago, where violence is all over the place at all hours of the day. Joseph should know better than to feel bitter about Mr. Frink. Mr. Frink is in his right place, and, darwinistically, fit to survive in the megalopolis. Joseph is not. And yet, he has data enough in his hands to understand Mr. Frink's suspicions. Why, in effect, is he at that specific bank? The answer is out of fear. He is there because his wife, Iva, is afraid of carrying money around the Chicago streets. With this in mind, we can easily understand that Mr. Frink's suspicions are just another dimension of the same basic urban fear, and it is perfectly justified. It was in this context that Robert Ezra Park said:

> In the small community, the normal man, the man without genious or excentricities, is the most likely to be fulfilled. The small community hardly ever tolerates eccentricities. The city, on the other hand, rewards it. Neither the criminal, the handicapped, nor the genius have in the small town the same opportunity of developing their innate disposition that he invariably finds in the large city.
> 22

In a city there is good soil for any sort of human activity to flourish. In a small town, such as that in Willa Cather's The Sculpture's Funeral, the author shows that high sensitivity cannot express itself.

Although Joseph understands the complexity of the urban environment, his rejection of the urban phenomenon leads him into conflicts, like the

abovementioned ones, which could otherwise be avoided. If everything can flourish in a city, why cannot criminality? The essential difference, it seems clear, between Joseph and Mr. Frink is that the latter uses urban devices and the former is rather rural in his approach to Chicago. The vulnerability of Joseph in the urban milieu is only comparable to Jim's * blackness in a white world where slavery is not yet abolished. Survival in such circumstances is something one has to fight for. As Robert Ezra Park said, when talking about the city as an intensifier of the effects of crises:

> Any crisis involves three possible changes: greater adaptation, reduced efficiency or death.
> 23

The incident which Joseph goes through at the bank is just one aspect of the greater crisis he is in: the confrontation with the urban society as a whole. Joseph cannot adapt, although in some circumstances we might think that he wants to:

> 'That's a city cheque, Mr.... Frink, is it? He acknowledged the name. 'Certainly there isn't much risk in accepting a city cheque.'
> 'If you know who the endorser is,' said Mr. Frink, ...
> 'Now, where do you work, Joseph?'
> In such cases I generally answer that I am working at inter-American; it is an impressive reference and not a wholly false one; ... but because he addressed me by my first name, as though I were an immigrant or a young boy or a negro, I said - dismissing diplomacy without a second thought - 'I'm not working anywhere now. I'm waiting for my draft call.'
> 24

With this answer Joseph obviously reduced his efficiency in the urban environment once more. How could Mr. Frink trust a man who has no job - a vital reference for a vice president of a Chicago Bank - and who is waiting for his draft call and soon may be leaving the city. Obviously, Joseph did not feel happy for having been turned down. His unhappiness about it all, however, seems to have its roots more in the procedure than in the

* As in Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

refusal itself. Joseph, only too late, understands that he made a serious mistake by taking Mr. Frink's polite words as a sign of intimacy, when they actually meant a business strategy to deal with unknown customers:

> 'I realize it's difficult to deal with the public efficiently and still politely. All the same, people don't like to be patronized at the same time.'
>
> 25

It seems as if Joseph does not possess the protective "organ" which Georg Simmel talks about in his "The Metropolis and Mental Life" [26] Simmel states that the urban man, differently from the rural man, is the possessor of a special "organ" which is able to protect him against the "threatening discrepancies" [27] of city life. The urban man, he says, "reacts with the brain rather than with the heart." [28] This is certainly not Joseph's attitude. For him, as for anybody, survival and success require adaptation. But Joseph, like all of Bellow's protagonists, is incapable of adapting easily. They simply cannot get into the system and enjoy its benefits. They would feel guilty if they did. Being successful, as I have said before, means for Joseph profitting from other people's hardships. And his heart tells him that this is the wrong thing. Thus, as in the scene above, the heart tells his brain what words to say in order to justify his feelings.

Instead of adaptation, Joseph chooses death. But, at the same time, he is afraid of death, which leaves him only the alternative of acting with a low degree of efficiency in the urban setting:

> Myself, I would rather die in the war than consume its benefits. When I'm called I shall go and make no protest. And, of course, I hope to survive. But I would rather be a victim than a benificiary. I support the war, though perhaps it is gratuitious to say so; we have the habit of making these things issues of personal morality and private will, which they are not at all.
>
> 29

Joseph's support of the war should not be misunderstood. It does not

imply his acquiescence to the urban society he is living in. What it means is his recognition that the American society can still offer possibilities which the German imperialism emerging on the other side of the ocean cannot. Joseph's attitude is then an attitude of option between the greater and the lesser evil, rather than between the good and the bad.

The support of the war is in fact the first sign of Joseph's cooperation with the system. His crisis, however, stems from the dilemma that he has to choose between two equally undesirable alternatives. In other words, the American establishment only justifies one's sympathetic commitment to it because of the total undesirability of the ideology coming from Germany. It has no recognizable inherent qualities which are worth being fought for. Joseph is going to shoot and be shot at for what he calls "half-certain reasons, as in all wars." [30]

"Desirable alternatives" are an imaginary thing for Joseph. First, because there is nothing particularly worth being chosen in either form of imperialism, and, second, because there is not much of an individual choice within the system. "Personal morality", "private will", "personal future", - these are categories that belong to the past, and Joseph looks at them with scornful disbelief.

> 'There is no personal future anymore. That's why I can only laugh at you when you tell me to look out for my future in the army, in that tragedy.' [31]

The army means tragedy and massiveness. It means the loss of individuality, the annihilation of personal choices. It means ultimately a bee-like loss of individual freedom and total submission of individual interests and motivations to collective goals.

The question that now springs up is what, after all, is Joseph looking for? The city he himself described as the paradise of cosmopolitanism.

He himself knows that he can hide much better in the crowdedness of the city, and thus avoid being questioned about his personal life and beliefs. The answer to the second point is that deep in his mind (or rather in his heart) - as I believe I was able to demonstrate - Joseph prefers to develop primary relations instead of the looser, business-like, transient, city contacts. In order to solve this problem, the rural environment, the George-Lennie kind of dream,* is much more appropriate. Nevertheless, it does not seem enough to say that Joseph is more rural-minded than urban-minded. Although this is true as far as inter-individual and para-individual relations are concerned, it does not seem so clear when we consider him on an intra-individual level. Intra-individually, Joseph is an ambiguous character, suffering from frequent conflicts between brain and heart. Joseph will eventually end up in what he is running from. In this sense, he is Bellow's foreshadowing of Tommy Wilhelm of Seize the Day, whose conflict between logic and impulse unavoidably leads to his failure.

Similarly, Joseph loves individuality but goes into the army where freedom is cancelled and where "in other hands", he is "relieved of self-determination."[32] At home, in Chicago, Joseph found out from his niece that "beggars can't be choosers",[33] a notion which comes up again and again in books like Seize the Day, The Adventures of Augie March and The Victim. In the army, as well as in the countryside, choices will be even more determined by the taste of others and will consequently suffer a significant reduction in scope.

Dangling Man is a novel which end ambiguously, like all of Bellow's novels. The puzzling and uncertain endings have almost become a "conditio sine qua non" for a Bellowian novel. But more than a novelistic style, it somehow expresses Bellow's uncertainty about his own creation. His novels are in a way, although Bellow openly denies it, a foreshadowing of John Barth's Lost in the Fun House or Robert Coover's Universal Baseball Association, Henry

* I'm referring to John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men

Waugh Inc., books in which the authors consciously have their narrators lose control over their objects of creation.

If Dangling Man is a novel of affirmation of "individual life in contemporary America" as J. Clayton wants us to believe, the this affirmation can only occur in a roundabout way, i.e., through the very denial/refusal of individuality and individual freedom. Still, according to Clayton's terms, through the redemption of the individual "society will be redeemed." [34] Personally, however, I am more for Robert Ezra Park's type of explanation, which considers adaptation as the only way of avoiding death and increasing efficiency in the urban society, although this does not necessarily mean a full acceptance of its ways. In either explanation, it is the individual versus the social forces that concern us. The difference is in that Clayton emphasizes the redemption of society through the individual's redemption. The problem, as I have been trying to demonstrate, is much more complex than that. Adaptation of the individual to the ways of the environment is essential for survival and for the minimum efficiency. No matter how redeemed Joseph comes back from war, if he comes back, it is hard to believe that he will be successful in the urban environment with his rural way of approaching life. What Harvey Cox says about the church in the large cities, could also be said about Joseph:

> They came to the city with a village theology and they tripped over an essential defense resource - the polite refusal of intimacy - without which the urban existence could not be human. They did not take into account that the technopolitan man has to cultivate and protect his private life. He has to restrict the number of people who have his phone number or know his name. [35]

It seems to me, therefore, that Bellow's theme is not so much the redemption of society as it is of the survival of the individual in an environment in which he has to give up a number of notions which are more applicable to rural settings. The hardships which accompany Bellow's hero along

his trajectory have their roots in an half-explainable - half-sentimental, half-rational - maladjustment.

Summing up, the city, regarded as an environmental and sociological entity, is strongly refused by Joseph. The environment is wholly oppressive and its sociological synthesis is internalized in Joseph's mind to such an extent that the city follows him everywhere. On the other hand, the secondary relations upon which the city's cosmopolitan life is set does not correspond to Joseph's personal wishes. He constantly wants to develop primary relations despite the fact that this means greater coerciveness, greater exposures and personal explanations. Joseph dislikes, then, not only the city's physical environment, but also its sociological dimensions.

At the intra-individual level, we cannot see things that clearly. Joseph suffers from lack of psychic immunity, of what Louis Wirth also calls the blasé attitude. His heart seems to be stronger than his brain and his conclusion are, therefore, not always the wisest. His joining the army, his refusal of money, his quarrels with his former Communist Party comrade, his quarrels in general, his preference for primary relations - all these situations tell us of his half-rational, half-sentimental approach to life. It is this conflict between brain and heart which does not allow Joseph to develop, with sufficient immunity, normal urban relations. It also makes it difficult for him (and for us?) to have full reasons and to fully explain him. But isn't exactly this trace of Joseph's that makes us see him and feel him as "exactly human"?

Finally, Joseph's renunciation of individuality may perhaps tell us something else about the city, where the individual, although shouldering his fellowmen on the streets, without exchanging a word, has become an isolated island, weak and expressionless. In this setting, the individual's strength can only be expressed through organizations, associations, institu-

tions, and the like. Is Bellow saying, like Louis Wirth, that the renunciation of individuality is the only way a city man has of showing the individual's strength. This might be an interpretation for this particular novel. It does not, however, fit in most of Bellow's work, as we shall see in the next chapters. What happens in Dangling Man is that Joseph ends_up concluding that man, although always fighting for freedom, always searching for it in all places, feels helpless, useless, bored and oppressed once he achieves it. Dominated by these feelings, he welcomes society or its representative powers. Joseph's surrender, therefore, can also mean, in the context of all other Bellowian novels, the very search for that which Hartman's * "terrible freedom" cannot offer. The heroine of Tess Slesinger's The Unpossessed - the modern liberated woman - associates her feelings of impotence, loneliness, anguish and despair with her personal freedom in a way which is very illustrative in the case of the rural/urban Joseph. In an interior monologue, the heroine of The Unpossessed says:

> We wept because we could not weep, we wept because we could not love, we wept because... we care about nothing, believe in nothing, live for nothing, because we are free, free, free, like empty sailboats lost at sea.
> [36]

Similarly, Joseph takes hold of the army. The army means more, much more than the mere renunciation of individual freedom. It ambivalently also means a move towards freedom, a different sort of freedom, a freedom of caring, loving, believing in something, living for something and, if necessary, dying for something. His dangling in the city cannot offer him that. Perhaps the army can. Perhaps in the togetherness of the army he may find the compass that will guide him through the immense sea of human conflicts.

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* Hugh Callow Hartman - Character, Theme and Tradition in the Novels of Saul Bellow - PhD. Thesis, University of Washington - 1966 - Chapter Two.

3. ASA, THE GUILTY URBANITE

Bellow's second novel - The Victim - came out in 1948, four years after Dangling Man had been published. Technically, it is an entirely different piece of writing: Bellow abandons forever the diary form and tries his skills at writing in third person singular.

Despite these technical differences, however, The Victim brings up the very sames themes that were found in Dangling Man, except for their intensity and strength which are here multiplied a thousendfold. The constant participation of the environment in the individual's activities, the same kind of inter-individual secondary and primary relations, the business world, the world of the brain versus the world of the heart, family disintegration, the liberalization of life, the out-of-placeness, the competition, the suspicion, the isolation, the loneliness - all these themes inhabit Bellow's urban life, and it is impossible to understand his novels without taking them as the central topics of our analysis.

In an "artificial-nigger" kind of style, Bellow introduces us to New York, somewhat different in the way he introduced us to his Dangling Man's Chicago. Although Dangling Man does not give us a pleasant picture of Chicago, we can safely say that it is not painted as badly as New York is in The Victim. Asa Leventhal, the main character of the novel, and his ghost-like companion, Allbee, who accuses Asa of having caused his present unemployment and misery, wander in the New York heat having their actions and their thoughts greatly determined by the para-individual environmental forces:

> The benches formed a dense, double human wheel; the paths were thronged. There was an overwhelming human closeness and thickness, and Leventhal was penetrated by a sense not merely of the crowd in this park but of innumerable millions, crossing, touching, pressing. What was that story he had once read about Hell cracking open on account of

> the rage of the sea, and all the souls, crammed together, looking out? [1]

The world is "an overcrowded place" [2] determined by the rage of forces out of the individual's capacity to control. And the "closeness", the "thickness", the agglomeration in general cannot make Asa avoid thinking of a story he once read and whose name he can't remember, but whose images of hell are astonishingly similar to the ones he encounters here in New York. The world is overcrowded with people, with "no room for the dead. Even they get buried in layers, I hear". [3] Even cemeteries are overcrowded in Bellow's New York. Yet, the dead are dead and do not demand, need, fight, insist. They don't want anything; so, they can still have their little place. But what about the living?

> Do you want anything? Is there anything you want? There are a hundred million others who want that very same damn thing. [4]

It should be remembered that The Victim tells a story that takes place during the great economic depression of the thirties - a time in which the country as a whole was undergoing serious economic and social difficulties * and during which the city especially - because of its characteristically secondary and tertiary economic activities - felt the crisis even more strongly. Asa'a and Allbee's activities are tertiary (as are those of all Bellow's protagonists), which makes them not only more urban but also makes their situation in the urban environment even more difficult and vulnerable in times of crisis. "In those unsettled days when he was

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* Os que não recorreram ao suicídio, nem quiseram engrossar as filas dos mendigos, ou disputar pratos de sopa ou pedaços de pão nas associações beneficentes, instalavam-se nas esquinas vendendo maçãs. Era estranho ver o contraste entre seus sobretudos e chapéus de boa qualidade e aquele trabalho humilde". (Report by Francisco Silva Júnior in Correio do Povo - Sunday, October 28, 1979 - "Nova York - 1929". A Quebra da Bolsa - p. 17).

job-hunting",[5] things were in fact so difficult for Asa that his suspicion of existing black lists was the only explanation for the many times he had been turned down when asking for a job:

> Leventhal suspected, in the days that followed, that the black list was real enough, for firm after firm turned him down. It was only when he found his present job that his suspicions faded and he ceased to fear Rudiger.[6]

Paranoia, if we can call Asa's fear that way, has a socio-historical explanation as well. The great depression promoted the tremendous unprecedented urban mass competition, effecting the consequent impotence of the individual, especially in the area of labor relations, at a time when unemployment reached enormous numbers and when dismissals were an economically justifiable commonplace. Asa's paranoiac behaviour stems from his lack of understanding of the historical moment he is living in. In other words, although he knows that if a living creature wants something there are a million others who want that very same thing, he is incapable of placing himself in this specific situation. As an urbanite, someone who has lived in New York most of his life, he should know that large numbers of people became extremely poor overnight during the great depression * and that even the very rich were looking for jobs. In fact, this decade was the first time in history that the American government decided to interfere a little in the reordering of the economic activities of the country. It was, in a way, the end of unquestioned laissez faire in American history, and it was the first general outburst of distrust in economic and social solidity/stability, after a period of wealthy promises. Now only two things could

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* A partir do dia 30 de outubro, a bolsa fechou por dois dias e meio. Seguiram-se o desemprego em massa, as falências, a bancarrota, a depressão. Nos primeiros três anos, cinco mil bancos faliram, o número de desempregados subiu a 15.000.000, o comércio exterior dos EEUU reduziu-se em um terço. (Correio do Povo, October 28, 1979 - Porto Alegre , p. 17)

save a man in a megalopolis: high level of specialization or the right connections:

> No, he said, there was no vacancy in his office. An experienced man might find something even now, in bad times. An inexperienced one didn't have a chance. Unless by a freak - his shoe shone over the burnished heater - unless he knew someone influential.
> 7

Asa thought he had the right connections, but they soon proved to be insufficient and powerless. Therefore, Asa had to face the swarm of the world, where "a hundred million others" want the same thing you happen to want. Thus the crowdedness itself becomes a motif of difficulty and hardship. And one of its main elements is competition. The importance attributed to competition is The Victim is not found in any other novel with such an intensity, although it can be heavily found in later novels such as The Adventures of Augie March and Seize the Day. In The Victim, however, competition is behind Asa's and Allbee's conflicts, becoming one of its main dramatic sources. It is during this period of tremendous unemployment that Asa Leventhal is looking for a job. Having used all his connections unsuccessfully, Asa meets Allbee, a Christian, at a party. Allbee, as promised, arranges an appointment with his boss for Asa. Being once again denied a job, Asa agressively curses Allbee's boss, who, therefore, fires him. That he got fired because of Asa's curses is, obviously, Allbee's version of the story, some years later when Allbee, now living a ragged life, decides that Asa has to pay for what he did. By now, Asa hardly remembers who Allbee is and has almost completely forgotten about the incident with his boss. Now he has a steady job and can't remember clearly the causes of the difficulties during the "job-hunting days". It is only when Allbee keeps following him and accusing him that he (and we) starts realizing that Allbee's dismissal might as well have been a consequence of human competition, to which Asa so often makes reference.

Human agglomeration implies violent competition. Concomitantly, the fight for survival may mean the exclusion of many of our brothers. Bellow gives us the impression that it is impossible to walk in a city without elbowing somebody on the stomach or shouldering others into the ditch. The similarity of Bellow's descriptions with those made by Engels during the last century, is remarkable as far as crowdedness and carelessness are concerned. In such a world Bellow successfully makes "The tale of the Trader and the Jinni" from Thousand and one Nights, allegorically epitomize the story he tells in The Victim. The tale works as a preamble to the story and it goes like this:

> It is related, o auspicious King, that there was a merchant of the merchants who had much wealth, and business in various cities. Now on a day he mounted horse and went forth to recover monies in certain towns, and the heat oppressed him; so he sat beneath a tree and, putting his hand into his saddle-bags, he took thence some broken bread and dried dates and began to break fast. When he had ended eating the dates he threw away the stones with force and lo! an Ifrit appeared, huge of stature and brandishing a drawn sword, wherewith he approached the merchant and said, 'Stand up that I may slay thee even as thou slewest my son!' Asked the merchant, 'How have I slain thy son?' snd he answered, 'When thou atest dates and threwest away the stones they struck my son full in the breast as he was walking by, so that he died forthwith.' 8

Asa's drama is similar to the merchant's drama. Both are oppressed by the heat and both committed a 'crime' without being aware of it. Asa's drama stems from the accusation that he not only contributed indirectly and unintentionally to Allbee's unemployment, but mainly because he half-believes in his guilt. In the same way the merchant asks "How have I slain thy son?", Asa keeps asking what, when, how and where he ruined Allbee's life.

Although the victim in "The Trader and the Jinni" is "rural", the story allows us to regard the merchant and his urbanity as a victim as well. This ambiguity of interpretation is perfectly recognizable in Bellow's story as well, where the victim can be either Allbee or Asa, depending on how we look

at the story. What matters here, however, is that the preamble story, although rural, applies perfectly to an overcrowded world like New York City, where thrown-away date stones would most certainly fall on a man's head and kill him. Thus, the urban setting makes Allbee's and Asa's story even more believeable and meaningful. Bellow is saying that in a city it is impossible to become successful without treading on an urbanite.

Here we should recall Joseph's refusal of money and success and his willingness to be rather a "victim than a beneficiary".[9] In this sense, Asa is an extension of Joseph, with the difference that the former is a middle-class citizen, holder of a good job, a successful editor of a small commercial magazine, whilst the latter is jobless, unsuccessful and living on his wife and brother's money. It is true that both novels take place during a "dangling period". Joseph is waiting for his draft call and Asa is waiting for his wife who travelled to visit her relatives. Nevertheless, the special position, the historic moment and the sometimes naive perception of the world is what makes Asa so different from Joseph, in spite of their similarities. In other words, Asa is a well-off Joseph with the same sensitivity of the latter. Or still: Asa can be said to be a Simon - as in The Adventures of Augie March - with the sensitivity of Augie, Joseph or Tommy Wilhelm. Asa does not directly refuse money as do Augie and Joseph. He is, on the contrary, extremely job-conscious and still not at ease, even in an emergency, to skip it for a few hours. For Asa it is an apprehension that "they had met the deadline without him",[10] perceiving the danger of being a perfectly replaceable part in the urban machinery. Asa is deeply concerned with keeping his job. His fear is, as we have already seen, not a mere paranoia - but a behaviour which is greatly justifiable and understandable in the particular historical conditions which American society as a whole was in.

Finally, what makes Asa a dramatic character is his rural sense of neighborhood relations, which, in the urban environment, develops into a

sense of guilt and suspicion - "the nagging suspicion that the other guy may be right".[11] By rural neighborhood relations is meant, "close", "familial" or "primary", in opposition to "urban" which means "weak", "loose", "distant", "secondary".

The implication of guilt in Asa's suspicious way of acting leads us to the question as to the nature of this guilt. Where does it have its roots? Is his behaviour typically urban?

Asa's guilt can be explained at the intra and inter-individual levels of action. In other words, it is latent in his inner constructs until it gets stirred up by the presence of The Other. It is a Sartrean way of reminding the individual of The Other's attachment to you. It is this Sartrean method which tells Asa about his "crime" against Allbee - the crime of contributing towards his ruin while getting a job for himself - which is the essence of the entire plot. As a typical Bellowian character Asa cannot help feeling guilty over success, as if success meant taking a too large a piece of society's common cake, as if doing so can only be detrimental to others. But, while in Dangling Man Joseph simply refuses money and success, because this means treading on others, Asa Leventhal in The Victim takes his piece and half-accepts his guilt for ruining the other guy's life. In this sense, Asa becomes more ambivalent and dramatic than Joseph. The intensity of Asa's conflicts reach high levels of dramaticity that force us to regard him as an urban mind in conflict (and therefore tragic) or as a rural fool lost in the modern technopolis (and therefore a mocking tragedy.)

Asa's sense of guilt becomes still clearer if we consider his orthodox Jewishness in a Christian world and its unavoidable conflicts resulting from his attraction to and repulsion from both sides. In the cafeteria scene, Leventhal expresses his doubts about the status of the assimilated Jew. What was Disraeli for instance? A Jew? An Englishman? An Italian Jew? Disraeli's problem of identity becomes the Jews' problem - out-

castness, foreigness in their own place of birth. Asa's conflicts with his Jewishness becomes even more evident when Max, his brother, tells him:

"You would probably want me to marry a Jewish woman?????" 12

Asa takes this so much to heart that he immediately and very strongly affirms that he had never, never in his life said such a thing. And his words are true. He never said so, but he certainly felt like doing it. It is a clear conflict between logic and sentimental attachment. Otherwise, why would he have cared about Allbee's rude comments on Jewish songs and Jewishness at Willinston's party? Besides, why would he have to worry about his father's approval or disapproval of Max's marriage? So, Asa is a deeply worried personality because his inner religious feelings do not match the urban diversity of New York City. What Bellow is clearly saying, then, is that neither orthodox Christianity nor orthodox Jewishness can be peaceful inhabitants of the city. This, in my view, suggests, in a Harvey Cox * kind of way, a new sort of theology - a theology for the urban man - a secularized theology. And in this sense one cannot help aggreeing with Bellow when he says, opposing most critics of his work, that he is not a Jewish writer but a writer who also writes about Jews. Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether Bellow is really proposing what Harvey Cox proposes. On the contrary, considering the bulk of Bellow's work, Bellow seems most likely to be suggesting that the theology is right - it is the city and its ways which are wrong.

But let's turn to sociology for a moment in order to throw some light on some other aspects of the urban drama. Louis Wirth's theory of the city is based, as we said before, on the trinomial size, density and heterogeneity. With regards to all three aspects, Wirth's definition of the city is perfectly applicable also to this particular novel by Saul Bellow. It was Wirth's be-

* I'm referring to his book The Secular City, 1965

lief that we could not talk about a city without taking these three elements into account. These led to an expectancy of certain conditions (which we could call "urban") described in the introduction to this thesis. According to Wirth's terms, we could say that all of Bellow's cities fulfill the above-mentioned requisites: they are large, densely populated and heterogenous.

Although "crowdedness" is a typically urban element,* what concerns us here especially are the consequences of this human agglomeration. As R. Ezra Park said, urbanization implies a significant change in neighbourhood relations. While in the rural areas, all neighbors invariably know each other to the point of developing close relationships, in large cities people may live side by side for years, without even knowing each other's name, without even caring about learning them. In other words, their relations are essentially secondary. It is this typically urban relation between neighbors which startles Asa when Allbee keeps telling him that he would like to know who and what his neighbor is:

> Love thy neighbour as thyself? Who the devil is my neighbour? I want to find out. Yes, sir, who and what? Even if I wanted to hate him as myself, who is he? 13

Allbee's Roman Catholic notion is not perfectly applicable to the city, as well, at least not in the orthodox way he puts it. How can you in this crowded world of the city know who your neighbor is? Allbee does not know, and his running after Asa can be interpreted as a search for a neighbor. And, if the popular saying "Good fences make good neighbors" is true, then Allbee and Asa can never become good neighbors, because neither of them is sufficiently protected by psychological "fences". They insist on primary relations in an environment where avoiding them is almost a conditio sine qua non for survival.

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* Physical contacts are close in a city, whilst the majority of social contacts are superficial (Louis Wirth - in Sociologia Urbana - R. N. Morris - Zahar Editores, Rio de Janeiro, 1972 - p. 19)

Independently of the type of relations involved, Allbee is sure that every living man has the right to a place in this world. The way he approaches the urban failure of providing a dignified life for all its dwellers is Romantic/Christian/ Emersonian. The urban failure or society's failure is recognized by Asa as well. Asa cannot help feeling guilty. He does accept Allbee's accusations that he owes the other guy something, no matter how strange he looks:

> 'Oh, you do owe me something.'
> 'Am I the only one that does? Haven't you done anybody else a favour? I looks as if I'm the only one. And what do I owe you? ... I could shove you out in the hall and shut the door in your face with a clear conscience.'
> 'In your position - if I were in it, and I don't say that I could be - my conscience wouldn't be clear.'
> 'All right, conscience! I don't want to discuss my conscience with you,' said Leventhal. 'It's late.'
>
> 14

Although Asa does not want to admit individual guilt regarding Allbee's problem, we feel that somehow he cannot get rid of him. In other words, he tries to be realistic about it. He tries to blame reality, society as a whole, the city as a whole, but his Emersonian/rural outlook still holds him to Allbee, who can be perfectly regarded as the spirit of alternatives found in Dangling Man. Thus, since conscience is involved, and since he has gone too far already regarding the expression of his feelings toward Allbee, he escapes with the excuse that "it's late".

In fact, it is both late at night and too late to talk about Asa's conscience. He knows he admitted his güilt since the first day they met in the public park. There and then Allbee accused Asa of having caused him to lose his job. From that moment on, Asa is tortured by the suspicion that Allbee may be right. It is precisely this guilt which prevents him from taking Allbee's words as a joke, or beating him up or at least fighting him off more vehemently. It is no doubt his guilt which allows Allbee to slowly

creep into his soul and into his life, up to the point that they get to Sharing Leventhal's apartment. It is unnecessary to say that this housing of a down-at-heel stranger is a very unusual thing for a New York City man to do. According to Louis Wirth, the urban man usually develops superficial social contacts and restricts his primary relations as much as possible.

We have already seen in the previous chapter that sociologists tend to regard the city as the place for the brain and the country as the place for the heart. In "The Metropolis and Mental Life" Georg Simmel refers to the urbanites as possessors of a blasé attitude which assures them with the necessary immunity to survive in a city.

In these terms, it is clear that Asa is highly defficient as far as personal antidotes are concerned. His susceptibility towards the attitudes, words or ideas can be seen all through the book. Asa does not exactly belong to the universe of "hot stars and cold hearts".[15] He just happens to be in it.

> It was up to him . He had only to insist that he wasn't responsible and it disappeared altogether. It was his conviction against an accusation that nobody could expect him to take at face value. And what more was there for him to say than that his part in it was accidental? At worst, an accident, unintentional.
> 16

Althoug logically/brainwise Asa's argument is not fully convincing to the reader, it does tell us that for his romantic approach to society the logic works. (Un)happily for him, his heart has a strong voice and its manifestations a lot of weight. He cannot simply neglect a man who tells him that he is suffering because of his fault. Asa had learned that he should not distrust people. Asa's education seems to transform the whole city of New York into a small community where distrust is impossible. Thus, according to his education it is preferable "to be taken advantage of rather than re-

gard everyone with distrust." [17]

Suspicion in The Victim has even gotten into the family, where greater confidence should be expected, since family relations are very naturally primary relations. This is true for most of Bellow's families, but we should not forget to point out vital peculiarities for the understanding of the city family. This will be done in the following paragraphs.

As in all of Bellow's novels, the family in The Victim is undergoing a fast process of disintegration. We know something about Asa's father's social biases, we learn something about Asa's mother's mental problems, we also know something about Max's wife, Elena, who has an Italian Roman Catholic background. The family as a whole seems to be affected by a "general wrong".

The fact that Asa's father is dead is not an isolated topic in Bellow's stories. It happens in almost all of them. Mothers too, frequently have serious mental or physical problems, although they still sometimes represent the cozy side of family life. Nevertheless, in general, there is something wrong with mothers or mothers-in-law. Either they are dead as in Dangling Man, The Victim, Herzog, Humboldt's Gift and Seize the Day or they are blind (AM), bossy (SD) or insane as in Mr. Sammler's Planet and The Victim. In The Victim, specifically, the mother-in-law acts in Leventhal's mind as a catalyctic force in the development of his suspicion. Without saying a word, sitting in the dark corner of the living-room, she reveals to us how suspicious a character Asa is and how worried he is about his Jewish suspicions. It is curious to notice that this does not happen with Max who, like the city, has completely absorbed the old lady's and his wife's different national and religious background.

About this variety of backgrounds, races, religions, cultures, that inhabit a city, it should be said that since only very recently the urban

population has not reproduced itself but depended essentially on imported labor * to develop its enormous variety of economic and social activities. It is no wonder, therefore, that the city has become the gathering place of all kinds of races, peoples, cultures, religions and nationalities. Louis Wirth, when talking about this specific topic concludes that:

> The city not only tolerated but rewarded individual differences. It brought peoples together from the remote reaches of the world because they are different and, therefore, useful to each other, and not because they are homogeneous or think likewise.
> 18

Max, in Louis Wirth's terms is then part of the urban structure which is capable of marrying the difference and enjoying it. Max, unlike his brother, accepts the day-to-day contact with variety, opens, as Hayakawa** would say, the communication channels, and thus makes the different become familiar.

Furthermore, it should also be said that Max's detachment from his father's family - his Italian Roman Catholic wife is the best example - allows him to live more urbanly, not only in the sense that he can look for foreigness and diversity but also in that he can cope with the replacement of primary relations by secondary relations, which, according to Wirth, has "weakened the family links and the social significance of the family, [made] neighborhood disappear and corroded the traditional basis of social solidarity." 19

How does Asa behave in such an environment? Does his overall psychology make him an urbanite fit to survive, with enough immunity so as not to be

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* A heterogeneidade da população urbana é também assinalada por linhas raciais e étnicas. Os estrangeiros e seus filhos constituem aproximadamente dois terços de todos os habitantes de cidades com um milhão ou mais de habitantes. (L. Wirth - as in O Fenômeno Urbano - Zahar Editores, Rio de Janeiro - 1976, p.107)

** I'm referring to his book Language in Thought and Action, 1965.

singled out as a victim? As it was said before, Asa lacks the blasé attitude which enables urbanites to survive in the city and enjoy its benefits. Distance, for example, does affect Max. It makes him look and feel awkward in front of Asa. The difference, however, is that it does not nourish his suspicions to a point in which they become an illness or a torture. But what about Asa? How does he, for instance, react towards Max's mother-in-law? He thinks that she thinks that

> the marriage was impure to her. Yes, he understood how she felt about it. A Jew, a man of wrong blood, had given her daughter two children, and that was why this (the child's ilness *) was happening.
> 20

Harvey Cox as well as Louis Wirth emphasize in their respective works that in the urban environment the place of living is dissociated from one's working place. It is not uncommon in cities to travel for an hour or so on a bus in order to get to one's office or factory. This illustrates Max's mobility and separation from the family and also helps us to explain why members of the same family sometimes don't even know each other's names. It is this distance that causes the obstruction of the communication channels and leads to estrangement. The movement from estrangement to suspicion has then a clear psychossociological explanation. Sociologically, it has to do with mobility, diversity, relativity of values and with the social and geographical space occupied each of the family members. Psychologically, it is the rural kind of individual attachment to family, religion and past operating. In fact, Asa's drama is Antigone's drama in Sophocles' tragedy. It is the conflict between family feelings and city determinations. As in Sophocles' Antigone, Bellow's brothers usually move in different directions, showing different kinds of loyalties.

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* The explanation in brackets is mine

In The Victim, the motif, slightly twisted, appears again. Here it is Max, the wanderer, who is less successful economically, who is also the happier husband and the man who feels reconciled with the world. Asa, on the other hand, more successfully economically, is tortured by the world, because of his incapacity to relate to it realistically, because he cannot help believing that society is the way it is because of individual actions like his. In this sense, I repeat, Asa lives in the romantic Emersonian world of the XIXth century, where it was believed that the world could only be saved through the betterment of the individual.

So, Max and Asa Leventhal, although brought up in the same family, face the world in quite different ways, and follow different paths in their lives: they reside in different parts of the city; they hardly ever meet; Asa lives a sedentary life, sticking faithfully to his job while Max is a more nomadic type, constantly looking for work in other cities*; Asa married to an American Jewish woman, while Max married to a daughter of Italian, Roman-Catholic immigrants - something which Asa could have never done, given his "faithfulness" to his family's past. Finally, they have become so separate from each other that they no longer feel at ease when together. They have almost become strangers:

> Max addressed him diffidently, a little formally, feeling his way with a queer politeness, almost the politeness of a stranger. Subdued, worn, and plainly to Leventhal's eyes, tormented, he was making an effort, nevertheless, to find an appropriate tone, one not too familiar. ... How should they talk when they had never, since childhood, spent an hour together?
> 21

This estrangement between brothers could very easily happen in an urban environment, where social, mental and geographical mobility is intense

* O local de trabalho tende a se dissociar do local de moradia, pois a proximidade de estabelecimentos industriais e comerciais torna uma área indesejável, economica e socialmente, para fins residenciais. (L. Wirth - as in O Fenômeno Urbano, Zahar Editores, Rio de Janeiro - 1976, p. 103)

and where cosmopolitanism and labor division contribute significantly towards the spreading of family members around a megalopolis like New York.

Max's marriage to a Roman Catholic is, in Asa's view, the result of the disintegration of family life, and can, very easily, be attributed to variety, to the enormous possibilities of human contact with the most different groups, weakening, therefore, as L. Wirth puts it, the family loyalties which in rural areas can be seen to be tyrannical, but which in a city find a less fertile soil, given the enormous possibilities of divergent outlooks. The probabilities of such estrangement between brothers in a rural setting would be the minimum, since the whole environment, characteristically set upon primary relations, little mobility, low density of population and reduced heterogeneity would not allow it to happen. Sentences like "I realize we are not so close" [22] or "Well, you've turned into a suspicious character" [23] apply perfectly to the urban setting where people although physically close, generally relate to each other superficially. Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe in his work "L'Organisation Sociale en Milieu Urbain" recognizes that even though family kinship still exists among certain city groups, "the closed family of the open societies of the city replaced the open family of the closed village communities." [24]

It should be understood that "closed" does not mean only the closeness or togetherness. What it also means is the reduction of the family to a small nucleus, generally, concentrated upon father, mother and a few children. In urban families, it is said by the Chicago School, the connections between relatives tend to weaken extraordinarily fast. A closed nuclear family, therefore, is exactly what we find in The Victim as, in fact, in all of Bellow's novels. Bellow's families have either no children, two children or at most three children - which once again tells us that Bellow is dealing with urbanites and not with ruralites in his novels, although the protagonists of his do not live up to these expectations.

In The Victim, however, Asa Leventhal feels guilty about this family distance, as he feels guilty about the general distance which exists among human beings in the urban environment. Asa wuold like to make up for what he should have done before, regarding his brother's family. He feels as though he mistreated Max's family by not keeping constantly in touch with them, although there is no evidence that Max has ever looked for him and his wife. In fact, after the child's death, Asa expresses the wish that it "ought to bring the family closer together." [25] Before that, Asa takes his nephew out for a Sunday tour around New York. He does it, however, with the clear intention of bringing the larger family together:

> It was fortunate that Philip was talkative, for if he had been shy, Leventhal would have thought he was being reproached for his past neglect, not to be made up for in a single afternoon. [26]

Bellow's family in The Victim, as it was mentioned before, does not have close relationships as one would expect in a rural setting. Max and Elena, for example, do not even know the name of Asa's wife.

> 'Sure you'll be welcome. Any time. Is she going to be back soon?'
> Leventhal noticed that Max did not mention Mary by name. Like Elena, he probably did not know what her name was.
> 'Mary? Just as soon as I can get her to come. I'm going to phone her tonight.'
> [27]

Now that Max is leaving New York with his family and at moments of extreme necessity, such as illness and death, the family comes together. The process of disintegration of family life in the rural sense is obvious. The city has no place for large open families. Here in New York, only a small father-mother-children kind of family can survive. But this is not exclusively a New York trait. It applies to Bellow's Chicago as it applies to all contemporary megalopolises. Here dissolution starts with marriage, which. according to Mrs. Harkavy, "These days /.../ are so flimsy. Two boards on a hinge, and clap, clap, clap, that's a marriage." [28]

Being aware of the loss of the rural family closeness, having even become aware that they are becoming strangers in their own families, being incapable of accepting the New York way of life, it is understandable that Asa is happy about the fact that Max is leaving the city. It means for him the possibility of assuring the continuation of a family life which was being (in Leventhal's eyes) seriously harmed. Asa was constantly intending to call his brother's attention about the fact that sending money to a family does not make of you a family father. So, when Asa says to his brother

> 'I'm glad you finally got Elena to come around. It is going to be all good. I'm glad for Phil's sake, especially. When you are settled we'll come down and visit.
> 29

he is in fact saying that he hopes that this move out of New York (which is "no place to bring [Philip] up" [30] will better his family life and, therefore, make their mutual brotherly relations better. If Max organizes his life, there might be some hope for their family to exist somewhat beyond its individualized nucleus. Besides, this again reminds us of Sophocles' Antigone - not the fight between the two brothers - but Antigone's refusal to obey city determinations in favour of family feelings. Again Asa's drama is similar to Antigone's.

Concluding: we cannot analyse Bellow's novel without taking into account the persistent presence of the city with its ecological and sociological dimensions. The city is a crowded hell where family feelings are perishing and where man is sunk in the relativity of human diversity. Asa's drama is the drama of a man who cannot understand adequately the changes of his environment and the new family which the urban environment demands. The city is a place where one has to learn how to tolerate differences and perhaps do what Max did: marry the differences and enjoy their pleasures.

The city is also a place for the mind and not for the heart. Feelings which in a way or another attach you to the past, to a religious tradition or to a cultural tradition can only be detrimental to yourself and diminish your resources up to the point of extreme vulnerability.

Primary relations cannot be developed everywhere all the time. At first, Bellow seems to be saying, against all urban sociologists, that it is feasible to live a life of limitless affection and dedication. Not without paying the price for it - the price of losing the necessary immunity of urbanites, the price of being "the only person in the city without a destination," [31] the price of becoming a victim of city Allbees.

Although Asa says that he does not understand Emerson, he adopts a clearly Emersonian approach to life until the very end of the story. Like Emerson, he believes that the individual, through his personal improvement can change society, leaving it implicit that the city is what it is because it is nothing but the agglomeration of individuals who have not learned to care. And because even he himself has been attracted by this general carelessness, he feels a self-destructive sense of guilt. But, the story ends with hope. Asa's wife is back and pregnant. In other words, family life goes on and there is hope of continuation. Allbee and Asa meet again, both of them reconciled with life. We are still sunk in noisy New York and yet both are happy, as if both had found out that it is not the individual "who runs things" but something which is out of their control somehow. Emerson seems to have gone out of fashion. The city can be a place where life is possible, but first one has to be able to kick the Allbees of the city out of one's home and learn to carry on secondary relations.

Finally, Louis Wirth's theory of the city is perfectly applicable to Bellow's city in that it stresses size, heterogeneity and density as its characteristic elements. It is from this trinomial that most unpleasant consequences derive. It is only when Asa learns to interact realistically with the environment that he is able to feel reconciled with it. In the same

way Joseph renounced individuality through going into the army, abandoning temporarily his own individual freedom in the name of a fight against the Nazi threat, in The Victim Asa has to learn to reject the individualized approach towards the solution of the world's problems. It is as if Bellow were saying that this is the only way of assuring the integrity of the individual and free him from Allbee's tyranny. Learning to live as an urbanite does not mean to care less; it means learning to care without being tortured by the experience. It means learning to be a psychiatrist who does not have to acquire the patient's illness in order to cure him. It finally means to accept Louis Wirth's idea that the city has a strength that easily surpasses its physical borderlines. Asa Leventhal is actually the only Bellowian protagonist who seems to show some eventual tolerance as to the city's ways. Neverhteless, he never really refuses his rural mindedness. In fact, until the end of the story we are led to believe that his attachment to Allbee was perfectly worthwhile and an experience to be imitated by other urbanites.

4. AUGIE MARCH, THE UNADOPTABLE EAGLE

The five-year period which separates The Adventures of Augie March from The Victim must have been a period of intense writing for Saul Bellow, for it produced a six-hundred-page novel of the best quality, different in size and style from his first two novels, Dangling Man and The Victim.

In The Adventures of Augie March Bellow goes back to his first person writing, without, however, sticking to the diary form of Dangling Man. The Adventures of Augie March is stylistically a completely different book. As the very title of the novel may well suggest, it is a picaresque novel, with the hero telling his own story with an open-shirt/ bare-footed/ informal style and language. As Fiedler says it in "Mr. Bellow's America":

> The language is so appropriate to the theme that one is tempted to say that language *is* the theme.
> 1

The very first paragraph of the book tells us about the narrator's language and style. It is a new style for Bellow - only comparable to Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. The style is loose, colloquial, everyday language with everyday tragic and comic images, with the villainous and noble seen through the eyes of Augie March's urban experience - an experience which joyfully mixes the popular city wisdom with the educated/ bookish wisdom of a self-made intellectual. This is how The Adventures of Augie March starts:

> I am an American, Chicago born - Chicago, that sombre city - and go at things as I have taught myself, free-style, and will make the record in my own way: first to knock, first admitted; sometimes an innocent knock, sometimes a not so innocent. But a man's character is his fate, says Heraclitus, and in the end there isn't any way to disguise the nature of the knocks by accoustical work on the door or gloving the knuckles.
> 2

With his free-style metaphors, with its images built upon the concrete and actional, with its built-in "parenthetical remarks" in the place of subordinations and "superordinations" [3], with its use of social metaphors, The Adventures of Augie March becomes the easiest-to-read novel that Bellow has ever written, despite its considerable length.

It is no wonder, therefore, that The Adventures of Augie March became Bellow's first commercial and critical success, as it the book does have the mythic qualities Leslie Fiedler claims. [4]

The best way of starting to analyse this particular novel contentwise is with the idea of the discoverer. Augie March sees himself as an explorer of new grounds (geographically, socially and psychologically) - a Columbus in search of a new "continent". Augie's trajectory is the trajectory through America in order to discover it through the most intense exposure to its variety. It is the discovery of America through experience, not the experience of a Thoreau in the woods, but the experience of a man brought up in the streets of Chicago, involved with its people, both as individuals and in groups. There aren't two well-defined banks to the river of experiences Augie crosses. It is the crossing itself, with its successes and failures, with its sad and happy incidents, which is important. When the book starts, we are already well into the hero's life/ experience. We learn about it through digressions and retrospects. When the book ends, Augie is still travelling, with much experience - it is true - but still involved in another trip in the European countryside. Only death could put an end to Augie's adventures - which are clearly synonymous to life itself. But death never comes to Bellow's protagonists, and Augie promises to carry us still further. So, we end the trip travelling. The novel ends but the feeling is of continuity. Life goes on and there are more adventures to come.

In "Mr. Bellow's America" Fiedler says about The Adventures of Augie March:

> It is, moreover, possible to see the entire novel as a series of episodes in which families and individuals attempt to adopt Augie while he, always tempted by the attractions of stasis, manages to escape them. [5]

So, the adventures of Mr. March end with Augie describing himself as a Columbus, a man who is still in search of America through "those near-at-hand", each one with his "terra incognita". Will he be successful? Augie does not know. Even if he proves a failure in his search, this does not prove that what he is searching for does not exist:

> Look at me, going everywhere! Why, I am a sort of Columbus of those near-at-hand and believe you can come to them in this immediate terra incognita that spreads out in every gaze. I may well be a flop at this line of endeavour. Columbus too thought he was a flop, probably, when they sent him back in chains. Which didn't prove there was no America. [6]

Augie is in search of fulfillment and self-discovery, always trying to divine the "future by regarding the flight of birds" [7] as the Roman priests, called Augur, did, and which is where the name Augie stems from. Yet, although he is able to train an eagle to hunt (the eagle is ironically called Caligula and is a coward) he is unable to see his own future and keeps acting as if he were always compelled to move into new episodes "seemingly [like his father] for liberty. Most likely for more trouble or suffering." [8] But Augie is "looking for something lasting and durable" [9] mainly after his unsuccessful experience with his girlfriend Thea Flenchel in Mexico. Now that Augie is back in Chicago, he wants to leave it and move to a more pastoral scenery, as if he discovered that Chicago is not the best place for a man with his bucolic Mexican experience to live:

> 'I aim to get myself a piece of property and settle down on it. Right here in Illinois would suit me fine, though I wouldn't object to Indiana or Wisconsin. Don't worry, I'm not thinking about becoming a farmer, though I might do a little farming, but what I'd like most is get married and set up a kind of home and teach school.'
> 10

It so happens that Augie - a young man who has had the most incredible experiences in life, having gone through wealth and poverty, the greatest success and failures, is incapable of imagining a realistic future for himself in the city. He even gets to the point of envying his idiot brother George who, unlike him, has a profession and a steady job. Georgie has become a shoemaker while Augie is still wandering around the urban world not knowing what to do, unspeacialized in a specialized world:

> Sometimes I wished I could become a shoemaker too.
> 11

Perfectly within the bucolic-Transcendental tradition of writers like Steinbeck and Arthur Miller, Bellow creates a character who cannot abandon the idea of having his small piece of land, far away from the threat of the city - a George-Lennie kind of dream in Of Mice and Men or a Willy Loman dream in The Death of a Salesman. In a nineteenth century romantic mood, Augie, in Paris, goes mentally back to the Walden Pond nourishing his pastoral, Arcadian dreams. The story ends in the countryside. Augie is alone with nature, far away from the city and yet being carried away by "the complex" and hearing the natural and "the simple like a far horn." [12]

Why should a man like Augie March, a self-made intellectual who had all the chances of being successful in the city, be willing to leave all these offerings (adoptive offerings, it is true) and move on towards new discoveries? Any answer to this question has to take into account the relation of Augie with the city as a sociological and environmental entity, capable of producing

unique individual responses to it, as well as his psychological background which contributes towards his "Weltanschaung".

Augie's adoptiveness, as stated by Fiedler, is perhaps the main psychological trait to be mentioned about Augie. It is also in a way connected to his sense of family-loss and to his search for roots and belonging. Although Augie does not admit that he is alone in the world (that is only partly true) he can be seen as an orphan - and that is how everybody who surrounds him sees him:

> People have been adoptive toward me, as if I were really an orphan.
> 13

Augie's father does not live with the family any longer and his life as a family-member has been relatively short. Early in life, the family moves towards total disintegration: the mother is blind, the youngest brother is an idiot, Grandma Lausch, the old lady who, machiavelianly, brought them up, is falling to pieces and is taken to an asylum; his brother Simon is obsessed with the idea of becoming rich and even gets to the point of selling the house and everything in it in order to achieve his goal. His mother goes to live at a home for blind people, Georgie, the idiot, stays at a recovery house where he learns his shoe-making profession, Grandma Lausch is sent to an asylum, Augie does not share his brother's views about getting rich prostituting himself and using other people, so that he is definitely an orphan in the narrow and broad senses of the word.* Lacking the family upon which to rely, Augie goes into the world to search for a family, and this idea will remain with him for the rest of his life.

In his search for a family, Augie acts emotionally most of the time, being completely incapable of learning from previous similar experiences.

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* He didn't tell me, nor did he seem curious as to what was happening to me, having decided in his mind that I was nothing but a handyman at Einhorn's. (AM - Penguin edition, 1977 - p. 95)

He just moves in and out of mistakes without coming out of these encounters a new person, but feeling, on the contrary, as if he had done the only correct thing a man can do in such circumstances and asking for the reader's sympathy. Thus, sentimentally, the reader is led to share Augie's feelings, laughing with him, but mainly considering him unmistakably authentic and "worthy" in his way of being. Let us consider, for instance, his involvement with Mimi, his hostel girlfriend, with whom he is not in love nor sharing a bed, but with whom he gets so deeply involved that he does not mind spoiling all his economic future and breaking his engagement to the rich Lucy Magnus. Augie is naive enough to think that the world will believe him when he says that he had never had sex with Mimi and that they are nothing but close friends. The reality is that not even his brother Simon believes him and breaks off their relationship. So, in a world where your own brother does not trust you, Augie keeps behaving as though the world is a reliable place where one can love everybody. Augie seems to suggest that people in general know how to distinguish between the various forms of love "Agape", "Eros", "Libido", "Philia" and "Ectasy" - when in fact this is nothing but an intellectual and naive illusion which leads him to disaster. The funny thing, however, is that the reader's behaviour toward Augie is affected by his sentimentality and we cannot help coming to the conclusion that Augie is truly The great guy and that we would undoubtedly have done the same thing were we in his place.

Another episode which is worth mentioning involves Thea Flenchel, one of two sisters with whom Augie falls in love. Thea is an authoritarian type of woman and, crazily enough, takes him to a rural Mexican setting where they start training an eagle (Caligula) how to hunt. In spite of the name, Caligula is a coward. Trained at first to snatch dead, defenseless prey, Caligula escapes every time its prey snatches back or reacts. With a clear allegoric

effect, the reader is transported to Augie (the name eagle in Spanish is Aguilla) and forced to ask whether Aguilla is not Augie and whether that isn't precisely what Augie has been doing all his life. The same way Aguilla escapes every time the prey hits back, Augie escapes every time a new foster-parent shows up.

Augie's relationship with Thea fails for various reasons. First, Augie gets involved with another woman, whom he helps to escape from her husband, in the same way he had previously gotten involved with Mimi. In Stella's story, Thea leaves him alone and penniless in Mexico. Again he wants Thea to believe that there was nothing sexual going on between Stella and himself. Obviously, Thea does not believe him and their relation comes to an end.

Thea is clearly conscious that Augie is a sentimental type. Augie pities Caligula for his failure, which can be read as pitying himself. Thea makes this very clear when both of them have a talk about the lizards Caligula is supposed to learn how to attack:

> She said, 'Oh, you screwball! You get human affection mixed up with everything, like a savage: keep your silly feelings to yourself.' 14

Besides calling Augie a savage, Thea is saying that his feelings do not correspond to those of an urbanite. Augie has more to do with the primitive than with the urban/ "urbane" in general. Thea, therefore, is not willing to cope with a man who is unable to keep proper a distance from people. Thea is able to hit back. Augie is not. Thea accepts their particular "war", gets involved with Talavera and rejects reconciliation. Augie still refuses "war" and proposes reconciliation. Augie insists on refusing to listen to Grandma Lausch's advice:

> 'Nobody asks you to love the whole world, only to be honest, ehrlich... the more you love people the more

> they'll mix you up. A child loves, a person respects.
> Respect is better than love.
>
> 15

Although Augie is now a grown up man, he behaves - using Grandma Lausch's words - like a child. He still insists on carrying on primary relations with each and every soul he encounters - an attitude which is clearly disastrous in the urban environment. It is not surprising, therefore, to see Thea leaving him. Thea gets really hard on Augie when she says that Stella asked him for help because he looks "so damn obliging and she figured she could do what she wanted with him." [16] This accusation takes Augie mentally back to Chicago where Thea had predicted that he would run away with another woman. At that time, Augie was so pleased that he had no secrets from her. Now, however, there was a new consideration to be made: now it seemed to him "as if it were fatal to be without hidden things".[17]

But not only Augie should be made responsible for the failure of his relationship with Thea. It is true that Augie's mind is under the domain of the heart, that he hasn't learnt the basic Grandma-Lausch lesson on man's incapacity to love all men, that he is a child, that he is rurally primitive, but one should also consider that Thea, on the other hand, lacks some basic authenticity, and, in her determination to be a success at all costs, she removes from her life all the people and things that stand in her way. She is looking for special people and that is why she chose Augie:

> 'I'm sorry you are here now. You are not special. You are like everybody else. You get tired easily. I don't want to see you anymore.'
>
> 18

Thea acts toward Augie as she acted toward the eagle. As long as the bird meant hope, possibility of success, it deserved the best treatment and care. The moment it, unwillingly, let her down, she simply neglected it and cursed it. With Augie she followed the same ritual. She loved him tenderly while he was promising - she despised and hated him when he fell

off the horse and showed how poor a hunter he was and how similar to Caligula he behaved.

Out of all this, one general conclusion can be drawn: Augie March, throughout his life, from childhood to adulthood, follows more his heart than his brain, and his psychic patterning, determined during the early years of his life, remains essentially unchanged. And this psychic patterning dictates that his inter-individual relations have to be primary with almost everybody, reverberating negative and disastrous consequences upon those with whom relations should be and have to be primary.

The adoptiveness to which Fiedler refers deserves special attention in the sense that Augie is constantly looking for a family which he does not have, in an urban world where this sort of relation is frequently not understood, misunderstood or simply negatively exploited.

It should be said that the impulse of others to adopt Augie is not selective at all. Augie is being adopted since he was a child, by all sorts of people - neighbours, businessmen , thiefs, women, maniacs, his brother, bums, and a long list of others. How does he react towards them? Always primarily and, therefore, without profound sympathy - a sympathy, it should be said, frequently undeserved.

Einhorn, the businessman who insists on recovering his losses during the crash, treats Augie like a son and disciple. Augie sees him as a sort of Napoleon - a conquistador in the Chicago jungle - despite his paralysis. Einhorn is a bossy little fellow who lives in his wheel chair telling the world what to do. His knowledge of dishonesty, criminality, dirty business tricks, the "mafia of poolrooms" is all taught to Augie, and yet Augie seems not to learn a single thing from it. He remains naive, naive to the extent that he gets involved with Joe Gorman, a searched-for criminal, in an illegal business of transporting Canadians over the border. They are travelling in a stolen car without Augie's knowledge. The car is followed by the

police and Gorman gets caught and sent to jail. Augie, happily enough, is able to escape, but, joining a group of bums on his way back to Chicago, gets caught and has to spend a night in jail as well. Now, what startles us here is that Augie's greatest grief was to have lost sight of one of the bums he had travelled with the day before. He keeps thinking that the old bum might be thinking that he did it on purpose, and this losing contact with a down-at-heel stranger pains him deeply. About Joe Gorman he says after the incident:

> I suffered over Joe Gorman caught and beat.
> 19

This emotionality of Augie is stressed over and over and over again, in all parts of the book, from beginning to end. And because his emotionality is honest, he both suffers and is respected by his few friends. But even they keep telling him all the time that it is silly to behave the way he does in a city like Chicago, where criminality and exploitation (we are in the thirties) flourish. His friend Clem, a psychology student who said he was on campus "only because of the pussy" [20], after a long chat in which Augie tells him about the "axial lines of life", how his life will change, how he won't get into other people's schemes any longer, how he will set up "a kind of home and teach school" to little homeless children - after this long chat even Clem cannot help advising him:

> 'But if you make the kids so good, how will they get along in the world? They will have to pass their whole life alone.'
> 21

Clem obviously considers Augie's plan another fantastic idea of his sentimental, romantic brain. He expresses openly his disbelief in the fulfillment of these plans. And so it happens. Augie gets into the merchant marine and is getting ready to go to Europe when Clem once again comes and

tells him:

> 'Dont't push your luck. Don't take a risk with the clap. Don't tell your secrets to anybody to satisfy their curiosity. Don't get married without a six-month engagement. If you get in dutch I can always spare you a few bucks.'
> 22

Clem, in spite of his friendship, is another Machiavellian adoptionist like all the others Augie gets in touch with. He, too, wants to get Augie into helping him open a counselling office where they would be able to do legally (because of his psychology degree) what others do illegally and get put in jail for. The truth, however, is that Clem reveals a great understanding of Augie's character, sensitivity and vulnerability. It is curious to notice, for instance, that once on the ship, on their way to Europe, as if Clem knew exactly what he was talking about, every single soul on the ship comes to Augie for advice, and he starts doing what he had a while ago refused to do with Clem.

Another friend of Augie's, Padilla, works, in a way, less as an adoptionist and more as the kind of spirit of alternatives as found in Dangling Man. Padilla, an excellent, truly outstanding, mathematician is the symbol of rationality to whom Augie keeps recurring at moments of difficulty and with whom he never develops a steady, day-to-day relationship. With Padilla, it is brain, consciousness that decides; with Augie, it is conscience and heart that make the ultimate decisions. Padilla, after a long time without having met Augie (these separations could be easily interpreted as the domination of heart) is startled by Augie's honesty. At that time Augie was in the dog-washing business. Padilla is trying to talk him into going to the university and getting his degree. Augie argues that he is broke and that he could not pay the fees. It is then that Padilla explains how he does it:

> 'I'll explain how I feel about it. You see I don't have larceny in my heart; I'm not a real crook. I'm not interested in it, so nobody can make a fate of it for me. That's not my fate. I might get into trouble, but I never would let them make it my trouble, get it?'
> 23

Augie tries to follow Padilla's advice, but his inner constitution does not allow him to become a "gifted crook" as Padilla was. He gets into the business of stealing books (reads them all before selling them) and eventually gets caught by a detective, who luckily enough, is one of his childhood friends and therefore everything is arranged amicably. But even here, with his detective friend, an adoptive relationship goes on. Augie explains to his friend that he is stealing books in order to help out a friend (Millie) who needs to undergo an abortion. His friend immediately gets him the money, obviously not without counselling him conveniently about the necessity of avoiding marriage/children as much as possible. He knew better than anybody what it meant to be married and father of a child. He knew how enslaving the whole affair was. Augie should avoid it and, if it was to avoid it, he could help Augie out of it with money.

This is a series of relevant incidents which do not merely constitute another Augie March adventure. They are incidents which are pertinent to the main theme of the novel: the survival of the individual among urbanites with whom Augie is incapable of developing secondary relations, being, therefore, loved, exploited and alienated by the people who surround him.

It has been unanimously pointed out by urban sociologists - from Louis Wirth to Lewis Mumford, and even by Engels in his startling descriptions of English cities of the last century - that the urban man characteristically develops secondary inter-individual relations while the rural man shows greater attachment to family/clan/soil/nature. It doesn't require much intellectual effort to perceive that Augie is, in this sense, a man completely out of place

in the city. His rural mind and psychology, his arcadia dreams, determine his approach to other individuals, emphasizing his need for these feelings which the way of life in the city has deprived him of. His family has been mutilated and is spread all over Chicago. The clan has reached a total disintegration, any attachment to the soil became impractical and impossible. In this sense, it seems wiser to refer to Augie's relationship to the city as maladjustment or incompatibility rather than as alienation, since the latter usually also implies isolation, insulation and separation - something which does not happen to a significant extent with most of Bellow's protagonists. The drama of Bellow's protagonists develops more because of the nature of interactions rather than because of their absence.

One of the distinctive features between rural areas and urban conglomerates is mobility. Urban sociologists unanimously recognize in mobility a trend which is highly pertinent to the city population, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. The Adventures of Augie March is a book in which mobility plays a vital role and makes us see the novel as a trip through the urban world, as it had been said before. Augie, throughout his life, experiences a long list of activities which economically are also very urban, i.e., belonging to the tertiary sector of economy: service. More concretely, Augie does throughout his life things such as handling out bills, counselling doing office work, helping an old maniac write a book, selling army surplus goods, washing dogs, selling paint, selling stolen books,- all activities which can be classified under the category "service".

Economists usually classify economic activities as primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary activities are those directly connected to the soil, like farming, mining, cattle raising and dairying, and refer, therefore, to a world strictly rural in kind. No such activity can be found in any of Bellow's novels, except in Henderson, the Rain King, but even there in the remote reaches of Africa, the world is somewhat urbanized, telling us that

Bellow is not writing about real Africa, but about a "mental metropolitan Africa", with clearly westernized, intellectual kings.

Secondary activities are those which comprehend industry, manufacturing and transformation of raw materials. Although these activities are essentially urban, Bellow's characters are only very seldom involved in them - a clear indication that Bellow's city is a version of reality and not reality itself.

Tertiary activities are those which comprehend commerce, trade and service in the broadest sense. Bellow's novels, in general, can be placed at this level - which tells us again that, besides being an urban writer, he views the city as a conglomerate where mainly tertiary activities are developed - another indication that Bellow's city is a version of reality, a recreation of real Chicago and real New York.

Economic mobility in The Adventures of Augie March and other novels as well, can only be seen within a given sector and never bleeds over into another sector, as if Bellow did not feel free to touch another economic area, perhaps because of his intellectual upbringing. The fact does not, however, make Bellow's novels monotonous as one might imagine. In fact the possibilities of choice within the same sector are enormous in a megalopolis like New York or Chicago. Nevertheless, the sticking to one sector of economy makes the careful reader of Bellow perceive the presence of the teacher, the philosopher, the boastful intellectual in all his books, sometimes camouflaged in secondary characters. Furthermore, Bellow's picture of Chicago, for instance, has very little to do with a book like The Jungle by Upton Sinclair, where our attention is concentrated upon the secondary sector of economy.

Bellow made a career writing about the tertiary sector of economy. The immense variety of experiences that Augie March goes through mirrors out the wide range of possible activities within one single sector of the urban economy. Furthermore, it is of high relevance to consider R. E. Park's words

which directly express the congruence with the destiny of Bellow's characters:

> There are conditions peculiar to the life of large cities (referred to under the heading: Mobility of the population of large cities) which make the control of vice especially difficult.
>
> 24

A quick look at the Chicago of The Adventures of Augie March reminds us of the Chicago of Alcapone, crime, mafias, depression. The adventures of Augie are also adventures through criminality and vice which involved him in many occasions and which meant a way of living for many of the characters with whom he interacts. Just to mention some of these activities, we should remember that Einhorn, even though a victim of the depression, overcomes it because of his familiarity with crime and illegal manoeuvres around the Chicago underworld. Simon is entrapped by a gang involved in easy money-making, as well, losing everything he possesses, even his mother's house and furniture; the way Simon overcomes these losses is through illegal and dishonest involvement with the police, which he literally "owns", and through insincere exploitation of human feelings. Furthermore, we have already seen how Padilla managed to survive during his university life. We have seen how Joe Gorman made a living through stealing, robbing and other illegal transactions. Milli also stole the clothes she wore. But better than all these explanations is Augie's own analysis of his position:

> I was around people of other kinds too. In one direction, a few who read whopping books in German or French and knew their physics and botany manuals backwards, readers of Nietzsche and Spengler. In another direction, the criminals. Except that I never thought of them as such, but as the boys I knew in the poolroom and saw also at school, dancing the double-toddle in the gym at lunch hour, or in the hot-dog parlours. I touched all sides, and nobody knew where I belonged. I had no idea of that myself. ... But it was easier for the gangsters to take me for one of them. And a thief named Joe Gorman began to talk to me about a robbery.
>
> 25

The school is open to all sorts of people: readers of Nietzsche and Spengler, botany students, physics students, great mathematicians like Padilla, gamblers and criminals in general. So were the poolrooms. In both places both kinds of people had access, so that, criminal or not, you soon became a familiar sight to the gangsters and liable to receive an invitation to crime. Intellectuals and criminals meant practically the same thing for Augie. This becomes even more reinforced if we recall Padilla and Clem, the psychologist, and their illegal ways of acting.

If we consider the adventures of Augie March adventures through criminality, we could also call it adventures through the Depression of the thirties. Bellow reminds us all the time that his story takes place during the great depression. Many of his friends and acquaintances were affected by it and had a hard time overcoming it. "Jimmy's family was hard hit by unemployment - Tommy lost his job at City Hall when the Republicans were pushed out by Cermak - and Jimmy was working a great deal." [26] Clem and his stepfather were also out of work. When his mother told him that "a neighbor's son was working as a pin boy in a downtown alley for thirty cents an hour" [27], Clem replied that if he could not find anything better than that he would rather swallow cyanide. The effects of the depression were seen all around Augie and Einhorn, but, at the same time, there were people who made heaps of money during this time of economic crisis. And one of them was Simon who could not help bragging about his success during such a time:

> 'I certainly do have the gold touch. After all, I did start in the Depression when everything was supposed to be over and done with.' [28]

It is clear that Simon's success during these days has to do with his unscrupulous ways towards other people. Owning the police and having married a rich daughter, Simon is free to act and exploit whoever he wishes and in

the way he thinks to be more appropriate.

Since crime was wide-spread in Chicago during the thirties (as it was in New York - see third and seventh chapters), Simon, Einhorn and everybody else could be said to represent the spirit of the times, the Zeitgeist, and Bellow would therefore soung highly deterministic in his approach to explain the behaviour of his characters. This interpretation can be strongly supported in all of Bellow's novels. The presence of the environment is remarkable in his work because it never acts as a mere stage, but as an active force. Therefore, Bellow is also aware of history and society as forces determining the actions of the individual. Here we should recall Padilla's comment about Augie's sense of purity, goodness and virtue, in a society where this has very little value:

> The big investigation today is into how BAD a guy can be, not how good he can be. You don't keep up with times. You're going against history. Or at least you should admit how bad things are, which you don't either. You should cut out this junketing around and go back to the university!
> 29

Augie does not deny the truth in Padilla's words, and in fact moves further on, showing a good comprehension of the urban world and the way its labor forces operate.

> You know why I struck people funny? I think it was because of the division of labour. Specialization was leaving the likes of me behind. I didn't know spot-welding. I didn't know traffic management. I couldn't remove an appendix, or anything like that.
> 30

This is clearly a rehearsal in being logical, in finding explanation, in understanding things through the power of the mind - a trend which Bellow emphasizes in Seize the Day and Mr. Sammler's Planet, Bellow's last novel. But even though Augie is able to think logically, he is unable to put his thinking into practice, so he continues being a "specialist in generalities",

never going to a university or never specializing in anything.

Augie's anxieties and his entrapment by short-sighted criminals like Joe Gorman is caused by his "incapability to adjust to the reality situation." [31] Clem again seems to have the best understanding of his friend. Clem introduces him to some basic terminology in psychology, letting him know the meaning of a Skinnerian word like "reinforcement" and also some Freudian definitions:

> And you know you're going to ruin yourself ignoring the reality principle and trying to cheer up the dirty scene. You should accept the data of experience.
>
> 32

This incapacity to learn through experience, to accept the reality of history,* space, time, city is what answers the question: why is Augie March a troubled hero, and such an easy prey of other people? As Augie himself recognizes, he doesn't know where he is, to what group he belongs, and has no professional qualification to face the city.

But it would be an oversimplification to say that Bellow moves his characters according to the pressures of the environment. This is to a large extent so, but Bellow also attaches a significant power of intra-individual orientation to his characters. His characters are not puppets, but living creatures with feelings and contradictions, with thoughts and the possibility of inner-oriented change. The difference between Augie and most of the characters that surround him is the incapacity to accept the rules of the game in playing it. Augie is very similar to Joseph and Asa in this particular sense. He, too, prefers to be a victim than enjoy the benefits of an oppressive system.

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* Augie is inextricably attached to the past, and when he talks about History he is actually talking about his own and his family's history: "I had a family enough to suit me and history to be loyal to, not as though I had gotten off of a stockpile. (AM, p. 179)

Being a beneficiary would be using other people, taking advantage of them. And "them", as we have already seen, for Augie does not mean a simple anonymous human being, a simply unit in a city of millions - for him it means "brothers", "buddies", "relatives" - people with whom only primary relations should be developed. He wants to be brothers with each and every soul, be it whoever it is.

A final aspect which should be mentioned under the heading "mobility" has to do with the physical mobility itself, i.e., contemporary nomadism. Since I will be analysing this aspect in greater detail in the next chapter of this dissertation, I shall just mention some aspects related to Augie's mobility. Augie is a traveller through the city and the world. He lives on all sides of Chicago for a certain amount of time. He goes to Mexico, he comes back to Chicago, he goes to Europe, comes back, goes again and then ends his trip travelling. Augie is a perfect contemporary nomadic type, having no definite home, no definite job, always on a tentative basis. He is the man who tries out all sorts of things without ever settling down. Each job is a new home; but Augie, in Spengler's terms,* is not an authentic urbanite. He needs more than a job, he needs more than a given condition; he needs to get out of the city, move to the country, settle down and enjoy the fruits that the pastoral environment can offer him and which the city can not. Bellow's protagonists don't express any special love for their hometown or home city.** They are foreigners and they express their foreigness together with their family feelings and their desire to abandon the urban milieu.

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* Oswald Spengler (1880 - 1936) says: ... um número restrito de cidadãos autênticos, que se sentem em casa onde quer que suas condições psíquicas sejam satisfeitas. (in O Urbanismo by Françoise Choay - Editora Perspectiva, 1979 - São Paulo - p. 342)

** with the remarkable exception of Charles Citrine in Humboldt's Gift. See chapter eight.

So far, we have seen Augie's relation to family, more specifically to the city family, to friends, to lovers and to the historical reality. Nothing has been said so far about his view of the city as a physical, environmental entity.

We are already familiarized with his opening of the book where he refers to Chicago as that "sombre city", leaving it implicit that he is not living there any longer. Later, in the book, we discover that he is writing in Paris, where he is living with his wife, Stella, whom he had helped to escape from her husband in Mexico. Stella is unfaithful to him - at least that is what Augie wants us to believe. Augie feels somewhat subjugated to Stella because he loves her more and, therefore, she always has it her way. Besides, Augie feels that Stella loves him in the same way people love Paris, i.e., subjectively, theatrically. His former Communist friend, Frazer runs into him and tells him how inspired he is by Paris, the City of Man. Augie does not answer, but asks himself:

> Which man is it the city of? [33]

And he answers his own question:

> Some version again. It's always some version or other. [34]

Augie is constantly made aware that what people call reality is nothing but their own subjective version/ vision of it. He recognizes at the same time that this is the only way of staying alive. Each one has to create the life and the reality which allows him to live happily. Life would be unbearable without this simplification:

> The reason why I didn't see things as they were was that I didn't want to; because I couldn't love them as they were. But the challenge was not to better them in your mind but to put every human weakness into picture - the bad, the criminal, sick,

> envious, scavenging, wolfing, the living-on-the-dying... Mostly people wanted to be let alone. And they dug for unreality more than for treasure, unreality being their last great hope because then they could doubt that what they knew about themselves was true. [35]

The intra-individual orientation becomes a way of enduring reality. It becomes order in chaos. It puts everything in its right place and allows you to control it, dominate it, understand it and explain it. In other words, this means that when people are talking about reality, they are in fact talking about an unreality which they created in order to make life more bearable for themselves. Every time there is a confrontation with other people, what happens is a confrontation between "versions", because, as Augie puts it, people are always trying to convince you to accept their version, their view of reality.

If there is no possible absolute perception of reality, if our inner microcosm has no direct correspondence with the outer macrocosm, there is also no possibility of being photographic about things. Photography is a mechanical view. The moment the senses get involved, the moment the mind acts upon the object, a "version" of that object is being produced. That's how Bellow regards the world and that's how he regards the city: as a painting capable of infinite intepretations.

And because the city is a "version", Bellow's city has feelings, has life, it acts upon us, it emanates energy. How are these feelings? How is this energy which it emanates? They are negative. Bellow's version is the version of a destructive city. His city is either too hot or too cold. "Chicago summer afternoons"[36] are unbearable and the "cold, wet, blackened Chicago day" [37] doesn't even allow things "laid out to be still"[38] to be still.

Chicago also smells bad. While Augie held the dog-washing job he got in close contact with one of those sources of bad smell, for people would

move away from him when he was on a bus. But the main source of bad smell and disgust, about thirty years after Upton Sinclair published The Jungle, still seems to be the stockyeards with its fertilizer and rats:

> Well, this is how it was in Chicago when I came back. I stayed on the South Side. I got my case of books back from Arthur and I read in my room. The heat of June grew until the shady yeards gave up the smell of the damp soil, of underground, and the city-Pluto kingdom of sewers and drains, and the mortar and roaring pots of roofers, the geraniums, lilies-of-the-valley, climbing roses, and sometimes the fiery devastation of the stockyards stink when the wind was strong.
>
> 39

The rat-populated streets of Chicago paint the city as "barbarous".[40] But still more barbarous seem to be the housing conditions described by Augie. The monstrousness of these descriptions are only comparable to those of London, Liverpool and Manchester made by Friedrich Engels in the nineteenth century in his book The Housing Question, as well as Upton Sinclair's Chicago as described in his The Jungle:

> Also, the going into the houses satisfied my curiosity. It was finding ten people to a room and the toilets in excavations under the street, or the rat-bitten kids. That was what I didn't like too much. The stockyards reek clung to me worse than the smell of the dogs at Guillaume's. And even to me, as accustomed to the slums as Indians are to elephants, it was terra incognita. The different smells of flesh in all degrees from desire to sickness followed me.
>
> 41

As I said before, the city is a living force in Saul Bellow's work. Besides being the kingdom of sewers, drains, smells and heat, as we have already seen in the previous chapters of this dissertation, it is a living beast, a living energy, a rattling snake, hell.[42] This is how Augie perceives the city, looking at it from the twentieth floor, at his rich brother's apartment:

> I hadn't had a look at Chicago yet since my return. Well, here it was again, westward from this window, the grey snarled city with the hard black straps of rails, enormous industry cooking and its vapour shuddering to the air, the climb and fall of its stages in construction or demolition like mesas, and on these the different powers and sub-powers crouched and watched like sphinxes. Terrible dumbness covered it, like a judgement that would never find its word. [43]

In this terrible dumbness of "black, sodden Chicago",[44] complexity reaches amazonic dimensions. Because it is larger than imagination itself, the city is inintelligible for the individual, it wears him out, it exhausts him. Looking at it, Augie cannot help but think of the Ezekiel cauldron of wrath where everything, even though an expression of human achievement, symbolizes our meaninglessness, our nothingness. The insignificance of the individual in a place which looks more like hell than a place for human beings to live, is, we should remember, a repetition of ideas introduced to us in his first two novels as well.

Augie March, as well as Joseph, is followed by the city wherever he moves to. The city is internalized in their minds, against their will, generating their inner conflicts, as it was already seen in the second chapter of this dissertation. In Mexico, for instance, in a rather rural setting, Augie discovers that he has "Chicago eyes" [45] and he thinks that in Chicago he has seen "the real thing" [46], and keeps judging the world from this Chicagoan standpoint. Early in the novel, Augie had already mentioned this oppressive, deterministic pressure of the city upon the individual when he said:

> But when there is no shepherd-Sicily, no freehand nature-painting, but deep city vexation instead, and you are forced early into deep city aims... [47]

Whether you want it or not, the city forces you, to some extent, to adopt its ways, its difficulties, its "suicides" [48], "evictions" [49], its

its violence, its historical moment, its "meanness" [50], its sense of "foreignness" [51], "ethnic variety" [52], its "fire and smudge mouth ... gorping to us" [53], its urban peculiarities, its aims. But what are these city aims ? Bellow does not hide his feelings about them. They emphasize your incapacity, your smallness, your nothingness, your aloneness, your insecurity. No matter how long you live in a city you can never feel truly safe in it because

> the city is a place where a person who goes out for a peaceful walk is liable to come home with a shiner or bloody nose, and he's almost as likely to get it from a cop's nightstick as from a couple of squareheads who haven't got the few dimes to chase pussy on the high rides in Riverview and so hang around the alley and plot someone. [54]

But the city with its "structures and towers and skyscrapers..." [55] does not exist without a history. There seems to exist a practical impossibility of living without cities. It is a necessary evil. In the history of urban America this was first recognized by Thomas Jefferson * who at a first stage in life was deadly against cities, but who later, mainly for economical reasons, believing that the United States of America would never become a truly self-sufficient industrial country unless cities were allowed to develop, favoured their growth. Urban development and industrial development were one and the same issue for Jefferson, although he was aware of the negative effects of the city upon a large percentage of its population. In order to understand that, a simple look at the great European cities of the time was necessary. But Jefferson somehow believed that the evils of European cities ot the time did not have to be imported. Good plans could perhaps avoid them. So Jefferson even designed a plan, planting the first seeds of Frank Lloyd Wright's naturalistic and organic conception of architecture. In the same way, Saul Bellow seems to suggest through Augie March that the ci-

* his plan of the ideal city was that of a chessboard where houses could only be built on the black squares, leaving the white squares for parks and gardens.

ty is a necessary evil - a natural disgusting fruit of any civilization.

> There haven't been civilizations without cities. But what about cities without civilizations? An inhuman thing, if possible, to have so many people together who beget nothing on one another. No, but it is not possible, and the dreary begets its own fire, and so this never happens.
> 56

But the city, the natural output of any civilization, may not be civilized, i.e., it may lack the necessary warmth for human beings to live. Augie's observations do not reflect the Huck-Finn type of "sivilized", of being careful, of having good manners, etc., Augie is driving at the profound lack of the "caring-for-the-other-guy" attitude, because of which Asa Leventhal felt such a strong sense of guilt, the dreariness into which the urban man has sunk, the aloneness and the coldness, the inhumanity of the city. One should also note the symbolic use of winter in Augie March's observations about the city. The coldness of winter functions as a powerful image of the distance which characterizes secondary urban relations, and which seem rude and brisk to a man like Augie March, incapable of relating to people in such a way.

The intensity of the discussion about the same basic urban issues is painfully clear. Bellow brings up the same issues over and over again, adding them, however, new colours, shapes, dimensions and intensity. In this "crescendo", Bellow's city becomes a more and more inhospitable, insalubrious, violent, degrading, insincere, unbearable place to live. The individuals, however, (because Bellow allows a lot of freedom to his protagonists) are not led into the "city aims". Chicago acquires the characteristics of the jungle, where the major law is "cheat if you want to survive". Even the protagonist, Augie March, is talked into dishonest business a couple of times. Somehow, however, he always manages to get out of it and start anew. His psychology

- similar to Joseph's and Asa's - does not fit with success and leads him always to refuse it.

Augie's specific relation to the city is, then, one of awe and disgust. He cannot accept the city as an environmental and sociological entity. He wants to leave it, and, eventually does it. The book, as we said, ends in a pastoral scene in France where he can feel the peacefulness of the open field, but where he can never get completely rid of the "distant city noises".

Augie's relationship with individuals adds almost nothing to the scheme of inter-personal relations introduced in Bellow's first two novels. His relations are all primary like Joseph's and Asa's, which means that he is incapable of developing common urban relations, becoming, therefore, a "problematic" character and an easy prey of urban maliciousness and swindling.

The sense of family is stronger than it was in the previous novels, but the protagonist's family is completely disintegrated, losing even its nuclear characteristic that it still had in Dangling Man and The Victim. Augie, however, dreams of having a family of his own someday in the countryside. At the same time, he is never able to break up his relationship with his brother who frequently breaks with him, because of very egotistic, commercial, pragmatic interests. Augie always wants to stay close, remain "brothers."

The Depression is seen much as in The Victim. Here, however, we have a lower level of abstraction where greater detailed descriptions are conveyed to the reader, regarding mainly criminality, violence, white-collar crimes and the unemployment crisis. These descriptions, it is my opinion, are responsible for the greater life that The Adventures of Augie March has when we compare it to other Bellowian novels.

The housing problem in the large city is really brought up for the first time in The Adventures of Augie March. The references found in the first two novels are meaningless when compared to it. The housing question, as Engels calls it, is, however, closely connected to mobility, and here, too, the novel

acquires greater intensity, although it is also strongly present in The Victim, as we have already seen in chapter three. But mobility and housing will be dealt with again in the next chapter when we shall be analysing Seize the Day, a novel where these two themes become a major issue of modern times and I would say the central theme of the book.

5. TOMMY WILHELM - THE LIFE OF THE SALESMAN

Seize the Day is Bellow's fourth novel. It was first published in 1957, proving once more Bellow's determination to keep his pace regarding his artistic production, with one novel every forth or fifth year. Even though Seize the Day is a short novel (it has a little more than one hundred pages), it was singled out for special praise by the Swedish Royal Academy in 1976, establishing definitely Bellow's international recognition as a fiction writer of the highest merit. The novel's strength, consistency and the international relevance of its theme, the reification of man, was probably the rationale behind the Swedish Academy's decision, although this is characteristic of all of Bellow's novels.

The book is written in the third person and its mood is very similar to that of The Victim where Asa Leventhal wanders around New York, troubled with his inner conflicts and with his relationships to the world. Like The Victim, Seize the Day introduces us to a man, Tommy Wilhelm, who becomes a victim of a number of social and psychological circumstances, which are directly related to his inadequacy to city life.

Alfred Kazin wrote an introduction to Seize the Day in 1968 in which he says that "the protagonist is the city man who feels that the sky is constantly coming down on him" [1]. This observation is not totally wrong if we consider that indeed that is how Tommy Wilhelm, the protagonist, feels. The mistake, however, is in that Tommy cannot be taken as an authentic urbanite, even though he wears a city shirt. Psychologically and socially he cannot be qualified as such. The whole book proves it and this is precisely the point of this dissertation. Even physically there are indications that Bellow does want Tommy to look more like a peasant than like the son of a city doctor. Tommy is systematically described as an animal in the characteristic naturalistic style. Frequently he is seen as a "fair-haired hippopotamus", [2]

"Wild bear! Dumb mule! ...wallowing hippopotamus!" [3] There are still other references which tell us that the protagonist of Seize the Day is physically not a typical man of the commodities market, but rather somebody grotesque, crude, animalistic - tough enough to wrestle with hard work in the fields.

But if Bellow's previous novels are about people who cannot be happy with success, money and victory, Seize the Day adds just a new element to the theme. The novel can be interpreted as the story of a loser who finds out that he has to win. Having been a loser all his life he "couldn't afford to lose any more. He had never won. Not once. And while the losses were small they weren't gains, were they? They were losses. He was tired of losing." [4]

Like Joseph and Augie, Tommy, too, had had his reasons for avoiding success. He had always preferred to be "a victim than a beneficiary" [5] and the reason for it was that

> Wilhelm was especially horrified by the cynicism of successful people. Cynicism was bread and meat to everyone. And irony, too. [6]

Interesting enough when Tommy decides to try the movies he is chosen to perform the role of a loser "the type that loses the girl to the George Raft type or the William Powell type," [7] which makes him definitely a loser everywhere. He simply cannot place himself in the skin of the successful or victorious.

There are, however, indications in the book that Wilhelm is a loser because he feels superior. In the same way as Augie, Tommy feels he is above the average, that he is better than the great majority of men. Like Augie, Tommy sees himself "among famous men, Garcia, Edward the Seventh, Cyrus the Great" [8] and always in need of being "freed from the anxious and narrow life of the average," [9] a "true discipline of nobility" as Klein would call it.

This megalomania and superiority feeling is strictly linked with Tommy's masochism and he cannot help recognizing that he in fact is the one that suffers most from his attitude of placing himself above other people:

> And though he had raised himself above Mr. Perls and his father because they adored money, still they were called to act energetically and this was better than to yell and cry, pray and beg, poke and blunder and go by fits and starts and fall upon the thorns of life. [10]

So, the decision to stop being a loser and to become a winner has a logical explanation. Unlike a true masochist, Tommy feels he has suffered enough throughout his life. He has decided notto go on committing the same mistakes over and over again. He is even aware that life is a big mistake and that a man can "spend the entire second half of [his] life recovering from the mistakes of the first half." [11] Nevertheless, it is a point of honour with some of Bellow's characters that one should nourish some ambition despite his age. This is what moves Henderson and this is what moves Phillipa, Tommy's sister, who at forty still wishes to become a painter. Therefore, even though his father accuses him of turning his problems into a career, Tommy Wilhelm decides that it is "the others who get him. You know - make [him] feel oppressed." [12] It could be easily argued that this paranoia is just another aspect of the same masochism, but the Sartrian existentialist influence is heavily present in this statement as it is in Dangling Man and it expresses a centripetal and not a centrifugal movement, where the individual is the centre. Simply to say that paranoia, masochism and megalomania explain the conflicts that Tommy undergoes is an oversimplification which denies the power of the social, urban structure that, as we have seen in the previous chapters, is enormously active in all Bellowian novels.

We should at least partially explain Tommy's conflicts in terms of the interrelation between Tommy and the urban environment he is placed in. This

interaction between the individual and the social avoids the isolation of the individual's psychic pattern from the social forces among which this pattern acquires its expression. This interpretation makes Bellow's protagonists, on the other hand, look relatively less neurotic, allows them to have a fair chance of leading a happy life in another environment and, on the other hand, transforms the novel into a powerful criticism against the reification, money-centeredness and materialism of man.

The necessity of placing Tommy in New York and having him always connected to this environment when interpreting his actions stems from the fact that he does not, like all other Bellowian protagonists, interact as a common, typical urban man would. Here we should recall Georg Simmel's article "The Metropolis and Mental Life" where he says that the city man, who can obviously express himself in a multitude of individual forms, creates for himself an organ of protection against the "derootment" through which he is threatened by the transience/ contrasts and hostility of the environment. "He reacts not with feelings, but with reason ... so the reaction to the new phenomena is transferred to the less sensitive of the psychic organs, the one which is most separated from the depths of our personality." [13]

The place where the brain dominates is the city. And because the brain does not dictate Tommy Wilhelm's actions, he is a failure in the urban milieu. In monetary transactions no feelings are involved. Brain dictates what to do and how to do it. Urbanites act "scientifically", i.e., they study the market and follow logical procedures. Emotional choices are disastrous in such circumstances and are nottaken into account. As Georg Simmel puts it in his work "The Metropolis and Mental Life", money only matters as a common exchange value which levels all qualities, all peculiarities - everything based on the aspect of quantity. "If the affectionate relations among people are based

upon their individuality, the rational relations transform man into an element of calculations, indifferent in themselves and concerned only with production, an objective value."[14] Thus the sentimental colors which are usually attached to environments in which individuals get to know each other personally disappears, and the individuals whom society forces us to live with concern us only as far as they supply a certain function which can be objectively evaluated.

The question which we now have to ask ourselves is whether Tommy Wilhelm fulfills these conditions, at least to some extent. The answer is no. During his entire life, Tommy Wilhelm acted according to what his feelings told him. The contradictions between brain and heart are striking. They somehow never converge. When the brain says "x", the heart says "y", and Tommy does "Y". The following quotation illustrates what I mean:

> After much thought and hesitation and debate he invariably took the course he had rejected innumerable times. Ten such decisions made up the history of his life. He had decided that it would be a bad mistake to go to Hollywood, and then he went. He had made up his mind not to marry his wife, but ran off and got married. He had resolved not to invest money with Tamkin, and then had given him a check.[15]

Had Tommy followed his brain he would have remained in college and gotten his degree. But for him this was just another delay. He wanted life to start and, above all, he wanted to overcome the "narrow life of the average."[16] Later, however, he recognizes that it was a bad mistake and that before getting married and before going to Hollywood he should have prepared himself for a career in the university, as his father had wanted. But at that time, Tommy Wilhelm was already demonstrating how emotional he was and how little he relied on the power of the brain and on the pragmatism of his environment:

> I didn't seem even to realize that there was a depression. How could I have been such a jerk as

> not to prepare for anything and just go on luck and inspiration? [17]

In the same way as Augie, Tommy somehow does not "accept the data of experience." ** He moves where his inspiration takes him to and hopes that luck will not let him down. He may even understand what is going on around him; he knows how difficult the times are; he knows how he should behave in order to be successful during such times; but because the implications and connotations of success are disgusting and mean treading on and exploiting other people, Tommy prefers to follow his heart and not to follow the average pattern behaviour. Unhappily for him this brings him many problems and he suffers for it. Among these problems we should mention the loss of his job, his quarrelsome incompatibilities with his father and his bankruptcy in the commodities market.

When the reader meets Tommy, he is, like Joseph and Asa, "dangling". He has just left his job as a sales representative and is living in a hotel in New York - the same hotel his father is living in. The first question that we ask ourselves is about the reason for his joblessness. The answer comes later in the book:

> Feeling* got me in dutch at Rojax. I had the feeling that I belonged to the firm, and my feelings were hurt when they put Gerber in over me. [18]

His emotional involvement with his working place does not permit Tommy to realize that for the urban man in general what matters is the job, the function he performs. His individuals peculiarities do not matter. What the city man wants is the performance of a given function so that the enterprise can run efficiently. And in this sense, no human being is unreplaceable. Tommy isn't either. City life must go on. It cannot depend on the emotionality or

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* The underlining is mine.

** In AM. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977. p. 503.

on the particular feelings of any particular individuals. In other words, Tommy Wilhelm reverses the order of priorities. He thinks that HE belongs to the firm when in fact HIS WORK belongs to it, HIS FUNCTION is what matters to the enterprise. The individual as a particular being in want of specific satisfactions and fulfillment of unique psychological needs is irrelevant in the urban environment where efficiency and capacity to produce and function is the priority above all priorities. In such a world, the inter-individual relations tend to be, as it has been repeatedly pointed out in the previous chapters, essentially secondary or "segmental" - as some authors prefer to call it. Here is the reason for Tommy's unhappiness. How can he lead a happy life if he is incapable of keeping his feelings from everybody that runs into him or that he runs into? Jane Jacobs*, an authentic defender of the truly urban way of life in the megalopolises and a harsh critic of the narrow ways of small town people, says that even though one cannot have an open house in the large cities, it must be recognized that no urbanite wants it:

> In small agglomerations, everybody knows our affairs. In the large city, only those people in whom we trust know about them. This is for most of its inhabitants one of the most precious characteristics of the large city.[19]

Jane Jacobs is obviously not talking about people like Tommy Wilhelm, Augie, Asa or Joseph. She is not talking about any of Bellow's protagonists. Her considerations - as all the considerations of sociologists - take into account a general behaviour of the city man. And this general behaviour shows that privacy is something without which the urban man cannot live. Tommy Wilhelm is somehow aware of this when he says that feeling led him to so many mistakes. But it is not only a question of preferring to follow the heart instead of following the brain. It is also a question of not being able to accept a truly urban way of life or behaving like an urbanite, in all

senses. Let's for a moment consider his meeting with Mr. Perls, a hotel neighbor, a stranger, somebody Dr. Adler asked to join them so that he would not have to have breakfast alone with his son. Although Tommy Wilhelm had never met the man before, in a matter of minutes, his own life is being discussed, his personal habits, his present joblessness, etc. Tommy realizes this a bit too late and then gets angry at his own imprudence:

> Now God alone can tell why I have to lay my whole life bare to this blasted herring here. I'm sure nobody else does it. Other people keep their business to themselves. Not me. [20]

Even though Tommy says he is sure that nobody does what he does, he still does not understand that this is the common behaviour of urbanites. He instead attributes it to hiw own stupidity and to the cleverness of others, when in fact the drama stems from an individual incompatibility with the urban sociological phenomenon that dictates specific procedures which have to be followed if we want to guarantee a high level of efficiency, as Robert Ezra Park puts it (see p. of this dissertation).

Therefore Tommy Wilhelm keeps thinking - wrongly it should be said - that he is a fool incapable of living a happy life because of his excessive openness to cleverer minds that at the same time remain closed:

> Why does it have to be me and my life that's discussed, and not him and his life? He would never allow it. But I am an idiot. I have no reserve. To me it can be done. I talk. I must ask for it. Everybody wants to have intimate conversations but the smart fellows don't give out, only the fools. The smart fellows talk intimately about the fools, and examine them all over and give them advice. Why do I allow it? [21]

The conflict between Jane Jacob's ideas and Tommy Wilhelm's words is notorious. While Mrs. Jacobs, like all sociologists, says that privacy is one of the most precious things the urban man has and that he does not wish at all to open himself up to everybody he meets on the street or at parties

or meetings, Tommy says the opposite - i.e., that everybody <u>wants</u> to have intimate conversations, but that cleverly enough they never talk about themselves, and instead speculate about other people's lives. When Tommy mentions cleverness, isn't he in fact recognizing the existence of something like a "reality principle", a sociological force acting upon the individual's psychology and which tells him how to act under certain circumstances in a given environment? It is most certainly so. And this interpretation indicates that Tommy Wilhelm's lack of cleverness is in fact lack of immunity, lack of the blasê attitude mentioned by Georg Simmel. It is not that urbanites are as clever as Tommy thinks, it is that they know how to act with a high level of efficiency in their own environment - something which Tommy Wilhelm has not yet learned, in spite of having been born in New York.

Besides misinterpreting his incapacity to hide his own feelings, Tommy Wilhelm lives (from a sociological standpoint, at least) another illusion regarding his inter-individual relations. Because he had some affinity with movies and acting, he thinks he knows what acting in real life is. Bellow (or should I say the narrator?) hints at the wrong direction Tommy's mind is taking and somehow ridicules him when in the opening chapter of the book, in the very first lines he says;

> When it came to concealing his troubles, Tommy Wilhem was not less capable than the next fellow. So at least he thought, and there was a certain amount of evidence to back him up. He had once been an actor - no, not quite, an extra - and he knew what acting should be. Also he was smoking a cigar, and when a man is smoking a cigar, wearing a hat, he has an advantage; it is harder to find out how he feels. [22]

The half-actor, after his long journey of mistakes, is still incapable of coming up with a convincing explanation of his inter-individual contacts. In reality, Tommy Wilhelm is repeating the course of previous events (the story is told with frequent flash-backs and flash-forwards), i.e., he thinks one thing and than goes and does the opposite. Here we have the same thing.

He thinks he can hide his feelings from other people because he is wearing a jacket and a tie, and smoking a cigar, but, then, he goes and totally "exposes himself" at breakfast. Clothes and cigars have, therefore, little to do with a man's ability to hide feelings. In other words, clothes and cigars do not make an authentic urbanite, a man capable of telling his personal feelings only to those in whom he trusts, and a man, therefore, capable of relating secondarily to other human beings. Although it is undeniable that the way of dressing and what is smoked is indicative of the way of being/ acting/ behaving, there is no guarantee that this hold true in a society like the American where poor and rich, young and old, businessmen and intellectuals, factory workers and university students eat hamburgers and drink Coca-cola, and where T-shirts and blue jeans can hardly be said to be indicative of any sort of class or status distinctions. Marcuse's one-dimensional society is perhaps the best example of the massification which affects contemporary society and the industrial man. In this society, where so many things are mass-produced - from clothes to culture - individual feelings are something which very few city men would think of hiding behind clothing. Instead, the urban man has developed proper mechanism, such as the blasé attitude, secondary relations, reserves, tolerance to variety, etc., which allow him to move rather safely in his home environment. It's this kind of thing which does not make an urbanite expose his inner feelings like Tommy, who even tells his private life to the newsagent with whom he has no other connection whatsoever, except that he buys his daily paper there.

When Dr. Adler, Tommy's father, says that "big as he was [Tommy] could charm a bird out of a tree"[23] isn't he also saying that Tommy Wilhelm's sentimentality makes him fitter for rural settings than for the city? He is not the man to make millions at the commodities market. He is not the man to live in a society where man's success is based on the millions he can make and where cheating is a natural ingredient to the process of getting

these millions. How could Tommy, with his sentimentality, get involved with business activities where he would need "smart lawyers to get [him] out of taxes by a thousand schemes?" [24]

Tommy Wilhelm is unable to live in a world where exploitation is the father of success and the success of his father. This is a world that is not trustworthy. In fact, the very rulers of society do not deserve our confidence. And Tommy whole-heartedly agrees with Tamkin's comments:

> Maddest of all were the businessmen, the heartless, flaunting, boisterous business class who ruled this country with their hard manners and their bold lies and their absurd words that nobody could believe. They were crazier than anyone. They spread the plague. [25]

Again the heartlessness of these men that "trade on anything, ... steal anything, ... are cynical right to the bones" [26] is what makes New York a place impossible to live in.

Tommy Wilhelm's preference for the country is expressed even more emphatically than Augie's. Seize the Day is full of these references, making the demonstration of my inadequacy thesis a rather simple job. After showing his familiarity with flowers, seasons and time of year, Tommy and his father carry on the following dialogue:

> '... But even though I was raised here, Dad, I can't take city life any more, and I miss the country. There is too much push here for me. It works me up too much. I take things too hard. I wonder why you never retired to a quieter place.'
> 'I am a city boy myself, you must remember!' Dr. Adler explained. 'But if you find the city so hard on you, you ought to get out.'
> 'I'll do that,' said Wilhelm, 'as soon as I can make the right connection. Meanwhile --' [27]

Everything is a strain for Wilhelm in the city. An advertising leaflet placed under the windshield swipers of his car makes him immediately nervous.

The only thing he can imagine is that he was fined and this is enough to spoil his day and have a "heart failure a block away." [28] The city with its cars and traffic and noise becomes a place where lunatics can live. It is in fact a hell where only distrust, exploitation, neurosis, madness, unreliability and electronic complexity can breather the "false air" [29] which floods t h e city streets. The metropolitan hell is acknowledged by Tamkin and Tommy's dialogue in which Tamkin explains that all murder is a form of suicide and all suicide is a form of murder. Tommy is so impressed by Tamkin's descriptions that he cannot help commenting that "so it's not the world," but "a kind of hell," [30] to which Tamkin replies that if not hell it must at least be a kind of purgatory. The way Tamkin paints the world, there is no place for any decent human being. Tommy simply disagrees to that:

> 'Well, he said, 'there are also kind, ordinary, helpful people. They're - out in the country.' [31]

It could not be stated in a clearer way. Bellow's protagonist, more than Joseph, more than Asa and even more than Augie March, emphatically stresses the evil of the megalopolises and the impossibility of finding there any psychological balance. What is the way out? The way out is getting out of the city as soon as possible, as fast as possible, and trying to start a new life in the country. Wilhelm expresses his wish a number of times, making it sound profoundly Emersonian in that only in contact with nature Tommy Wilhelm can achieve satisfaction and happiness.

Determined that he will change his life, Tommy Wilhelm says:

> 'I will get out of here. I don't belong in New York any more. [32]

With regards to his inter and intra-individual relations, it has already been demonstrated that he never actually belonged to New York, or to any large

city. But now that he found it out, he misses the sense of belonging as he misses somebody who cares for him - certainly the major reason of Tamkin's success with him. But Wilhelm is not only looking for roots and belonging. He is also looking for the possibility of recovering "the good things, the happy things, the easy tranquil things of life." [33]

> Recovery was possible. First he had to get out of the city. No, first he had to pull out his money... [34]

It was stated before that Seize the Day can be read as the novel of a loser who wants to win, who is tired of losing. Now we came to the conclusion once more that this reading is possible, but we should add that Wilhelm attaches his success to his leaving the city. He won't leave for the country before he has the money to do so, which reminds us of another Willy, Arthur Miller's Willy Loman, who spends his whole life dreaming of something similar. The loser, therefore, wants to be successful in order to leave the city - an environment in which he and the reader both know he cannot be successful because of the negative connotations that this success implies.

What should be kept in mind when studying Tommy Wilhelm's goal is that he does not allow himself to ever just "make money" in order to become something like a successful businessman. He knows how important money can be in one's life and in one's relationship to the world. But if he has to depend on it he would rather pass for a dummy, because he cannot help expressing his repeated disgust towards the love of money, towards the adoration of money, towards the "beatification" of money. Besides, in the hands of people in general, money also means "keeping middle-aged men as children." [35] In other words, it maintains the domination of fathers over their sons as Dr. Adler dominates Tommy Wilhelm. Therefore, nothing in connection with money and success reminds Tommy Wilhelm of pleasant things. So, his ultimate goal is not money, but getting out of the mad/ hellish/ murderous city through

the money he expects to recover in the commodities market.

There are two final topics which must be analysed in this chapter: Bellow's treatment of the family and contemporary nomadism. None of these topics is new, but, as I said at the beginning of this dissertation, very little is new once one of Bellow's novel has been studied. What varies is the emphasis, and in Seize the Day great emphasis is attributed to family relations/ quarrels and to the mobility-nomadism-housing question.

The first thing that calls our attention when studying the family in Seize the Day is its dissolution. In Dangling Man, Joseph still had a father and stepmother living under the same roof. In The Victim, Asa Leventhal still maintains a weak relationship which somehow surpasses the strictly nuclear family; The Adventures of Augie March spreads the family members around the city splitting its nucleus, dissolving it and transforming Augie into an orphan. There is no father in the family. Seize the Day puts us face to face with a father and a son living in a hotel, in separate apartments, having nothing in common whatsoever, except perhaps for the past which, although common to both of them, one doesn't want to remember and the other one doesn't want to forget. Dr. Adler is described as a man of fine manners, urbane/ urban/independent/ successful/ retired and owner of a "considerable fortune." [36] His son, on the other hand, is described as an animal, a brute, neurotic, akward, drug-hooked creature, completely dependent on family feelings.

The father-son crisis starts when Tommy Wilhelm, now jobless and in need of money, comes and tells his father about his difficulties. Dr. Adler does not want to know about them. He simply refuses any sort of help to his son, and treats him as if he were just another person met at the hotel and with whom there is no sort of attachment. The fact, however, is that Dt. Adler is the type of man who values monetary success above all things. Tommy Wilhelm's incapacity to become prosperous, to become a rich man, makes Dr. Adler feel

ashamed of his own son. This can be clearly perceived when he talks about his son to other people. There is always an "ideal construction" (as John Clayton calls it) in his mind. He brags and boasts about his son's success to other people, revealing to the reader that Tommy would be loved by his father if he lived up to his father's expectations. The following passage illustrates this picture rather clearly:

> But he had heard the old man bragging to another old man, saying, 'My son is a sales executive. He didn't have the patience to finish school. But he does all right for himself. His income is up in the five figures somewhere.'
> 'What - thirty, forty thousand?' said his stooped old friend.
> 'Well, he needs at least that much for his style of life.
> 'Yes, he needs that.' [37]

Dr. Adler's whole way of behaving towards his son shows that he is "ashamed of Tommy Wilhelm " [38] because he has no education, no university degree, no fine manners, no great life style, no money, no decent job - everything that a rich urban man like Dr. Adler thinks is necessary for life, especially in the city.

Another "sore point" [39] between them was Tommy's insistence on family links of which Dr. Adler has freed himself to a great extent and to which Tommy is attached. When we imagine that Tommy gets angry at his father because he does not remember exactly the year his mother died, although many years have passed, we immediately perceive that Tommy's conception of family is strictly rural, based on the extensive rather than nuclear variety. After all, we cannot forget that Tommy Wilhelm is married and has two sons. It is true that he is divorced, but still this would no revive his memory of year, month, day, the very hour of his mother's death. His divorce does not have anything to do with his frequent visits to his mother's grave. The truth is that Tommy never forgot his mother, his sister and father he left behind when

he got married. There are indications in the novel that he regularly said prayers for his mother (or had them said) and visited the cemetery with frequency. This information on Tommy Wilhelm's attachment to his family is particularly important in that it once again stresses his ideal of having an extensive family in an environment where, according to sociologists in general, the family becomes nuclear, i.e., composed of father, mother and a few children, with hardly any contact with the generations left behind in the process.

Tommy's preference for an extensive kind of family is furthermore stressed when he makes comments on the behaviour of some old ladies who do not follow the same style of life that his grandmothers did and to whom he would like to be still attached:

> The old people idled and gossiped over their coffee. The elderly ladies were rouged and mascaraded and hennaed and used blue hair rinse and eye shadow and wore costume jewlery, and many of them were proud and stared at you with expressions that did not belong to their age. Were there no longer any respectable old ladies who knitted and cooked and looked after their grandchildren? Wilhelm's grandmother had dressed him in a sailor suit and danced him on her knee, blew the porridge for him and said, 'Admiral, you must eat.'[40]

A last thing which needs to be analysed in this chapter is the new conception of home which is introduced in Seize the Day. The whole story takes place in the hotel Adler lives, having retired from medical practice. Jobless and homeless, Tommy Wilhelm goes to the same hotel his father is living in and expects to find a home there, something of the family life he lost. After all, he was "his son"[41] and Dr. Adler was his father: "He is as much father as I am son."[42] Although father and son are under the same roof, ("the roof is twenty-six stories up")[43] they are not living together or sharing a life together. Dr. Adler simply does not want to be bothered by this "regular mountain of ticks"[44] that his son is. Wasn't this the very reason why he

had moved to a hotel instead of keeping his home? But Tommy Wilhelm thought that a father did owe the son some sympathy, at least at a moment when things were so difficult for him. But his father would tell him that he kept his sympathy for "real ailments", suggesting that with Tommy suffering was already a habit as it actually to some extent was. Nevertheless. for months now Tommy Wilhelm stayed on the 23rd floor of the Gloriana Hotel. His father's apartment was on the fourteenth floor and so they almost never met. When they met, their contacts usually increased Tommy Wilhelm's anguish and uneasiness with his father.

It is the law of hotel life that contacts are brief, for a hotel's function is to serve travellers during a relatively short period of time. How could a man like Tommy, with the characteristics previously described, be happy

> in a hotel where everyone was busy and contacts were so brief and had such small weight, how could it satisfy him? He could be in people's thoughts here and there for a moment; in and out. He could never matter much to them. 45

The hotel can be regarded as a miniature city as far as the inter-individual relations are concerned. Contacts are brief and superficial, relations are secondary, with no sentimental links, a high level of individual privacy is maintained, hardly any involvement with another individual's affairs occurs.

Another aspect which makes the hotel similar to the city is that it does not create any sort of deep attachment to its user. The hotel, like the city apartments, does not mean a home, but a house, a place which offers us shelter for a certain amount of time and which will be replaced by another when necessity shows up. As Frank Lloyd Wright once said, "the city is nothing but a form of another of rent." 46 Tommy Wilhelm's and Dr. Adler's home isn't different. They can use it as long as they pay their rent - they can never, however, say that their hotel apartment is THEIR home. Hotel apartments are not something to be bought - they were created to meet the needs of large masses

of people who have to live under constant mobility because their activities, directly connected to city life, transform them into modern nomads. John Ruskin (1§18 - 1900) worried about the increase of vice in the architecture of the large cities of the last century called our attention to the fact that man was developing again his nomadic habits of primitive ages:

> I think that the nomadic habits, which today have become almost a necessity to our existence, more than any other characteristic of our modern life, is t h e profound cause of the vices of our architecture. We consider our homes only as temporary lodging ... if men did live like men their houses would be temples. [47]

In Seize the Day the hotel - Dr. Adler and Tommy Wilhelm's home - has nothing of a temple. It offers them shelter, food and services in exchange for money, but it does not have the touch of "family-feeling" and the sentimental attachment which, let's say John Steinbeck so well expresses in Grapes of Wrath, where the Grandfather of the family simply refuses to leave the land on which he has lived his whole life. Forced to get on the truck which will take them to California, the old man dies. This sort of attachment to one's home is strictly rural/ primitive and no such behaviour can be expected from nomadic urbanites. The fact that Bellow places his characters in a hotel indicates that family closeness cannot exist among them. Nevertheless, Tommy Wilhelm goes into it expecting to find a fatherliness which, if found, could not be more misplaced than in a New York hotel. This "out-of-placeness"/ dislocation of Tommy Wilhelm in the large city could not be made more obvious. His behaviour is characteristically incompatible with the typical urban behaviour and with his father, Dr. Adler, who epitomizes the personality of the contemporary urban man, in the terms of Louis Wirth, Georg Simmel, Robert Ezra Park, Chombart de Lauwe and others who summarize the ideas around the theory of the city and the contemporary urban man.

In our time people like Iannis Xenakis (1922 -), the idealizer of the cosmic vertical city[48] and Jane Jacobs - a fanatical apologist of the

megalopolitan way of life, would find Dr. Adler rather fit to survive in the urban milieu, without any chance of becoming a "problem." On the other hand, people like Oswald Spengler (1880 - 1936) who see the advent of the metropolis as the aging/ decadent period of our civilization, or even M. Heidegger (1880 -1977), who etymologically shows how contemporary man is not only facing a housing problem but mainly a problem of learning how to "inhabit", which for him constitutes the very essence of being. For these two thinkers and others as well, Seize the Day presents to the reader a protagonist who sensibly questions the very basis upon which the urban way of life is set upon, with its dreams/ ideals and complexity. It is this controversy that emerges from the readings of Bellow's work which enriches the contemporary polemics about life in the megalopolises. Seize the Day is just one example of it. Seizing the day is nothing but being adapted to and familiar with the here and now: the environment and the historic moment this environment is going through. Tommy Wilhelm cannot be said to be either familiar with or adapted to the city he is living in. If familiar, he refuses to adapt; if adapted he wouldn't be Tommy Wilhelm - the problematic character, the misplaced, the outcast.

6. HERZOG - THE BUCOLIC MOSES

Herzog was first published in 1964 and, like The Adventures of Augie March (1957), won the National Book Award. It is a large novel, written in the third person, with the narration constantly interrupted by the many letters, mostly unmailed, which Moses Herzog, the protagonist, writes to all and sundry. The book is written in a flashback/flashforward style, where the Dr. of Philosophy and university professor, Moses Herzog, relates the occurence of the various pasts which preceeded his present life in the country, in Western Massachusetts, "in a rambly house in the Bershires." [1]

The title of the novel comes from the name of the protagonist himself. As the German root of the name clearly suggests, Herzog is the man with a Heart, indicating that only a man with a heart can be the Moses of his people, the guide, the leader who can orient the human race, showing the way it has to follow in order to escape the apocalypticism of the contemporary days, which adds nothing to the search of true solutions, but only nourishes the flames of helplessness, violence and despair. In a letter to Professor Mermelstein, whose book he was asked to review, he says:

> ... We must get it out of our heads that this is a doomed time, that we are waiting for the end, and the rest of it, mere junk, from fashionable magazines. Things are grim enough without these shivery games. People frightening one another - a poor sort of moral exercise. ... We love apocalypses too much, and crisis ethics and florid extremism with its thrilling language. Excuse me, no. I've had all the monstrosity I want. We've reached an age in the history of mankind when we can ask about certain persons, "What's this thing?" No more of that for me - no, no! I am simply a human being, more or less. [2]

Therefore, at the same time that Herzog recognizes the difficulties the world is facing, he strongly refuses the nihilistic views which contemporary writers like William Borroughs, Truman Capote, Elkin, Coover and others proclaim. The world is in a pretty bad shape, it is true, but mankind cannot give up the hope of reshaping it and making it better. Herzog's view is

a positive one, that of a Moses who does not accept leading his people to destruction. And the way of avoiding the feeling of doom is believing less in the "florid extremism with its thrilling language" which fashionable magazines praise so much and create a new way of relating to people, a way which is not only merely logical, artistic or artificial, but a way which includes the heart, because as he frequently repeats: "Le coeur a ses raisons." [3]

But what does this have to do with the city? What is its relevance to the topic of this dissertation? Doesn't Herzog live in the country from beginning to end of the story? The brain-heart controversy is constant in Bellow's novels and it is closely linked to the sociology of the city. John Clayton expressed what I mean better than anyone else could. He says, "this is not a novel of a sufferer in the city but of a sufferer who contains the city within him." [4] Viz a viz Herzog's mind, the reader is carried through New York and Chicago, learning how he feels about the cities themselves and about the people who inhabit them, especially his families, his wife and his friends. And because we see the megalopolises that Herzog wants us to see, we have to follow his trajectory through the city in order to understand his version of it. This procedure allows us to understand Moses Herzog's conflicts with the world he "left behind" when moving to his quiet house in the country of Massachusetts, where he broods over his past days in the city.

Curiously enough, having a name like HERZOG, Bellow's protagonist is an intellectual, a philosopher whose mind cannot stop thinking for a minute about each and every subject which concerns humanity - death, life, the army, love, taxes, women, the destiny of man, domestic oil reserves, you name it. But, as the name well suggests, he is a philosopher with a heart, with feelings: feelings which ultimately motivate his actions and guide him through the city. There, they frequently make him feel awkward and even comic. Although Herzog says that he spent most of his life trying to live coherently with his prin-

ciples, the truth is that the coherence of his actions is again and again determined by his inner feelings of all kinds, by his overemphasized sentimentality. Herzog has, for instance, a blind, exagerated/ sentimental faith in his friends, who laugh at him because of it. It is this faith which will make him lose his wife to his closest friend, Valentine Gersbach, one of the main causes of his suffering in the novel.

> 'Do you think Madeleine is an unfit mother?'
> 'Of course, I think so, but I hesitate to rush between the kid and her mother.'
> 'Is she living with this guy, your buddy? Remember when you were running away to Poland last year and made your will. You named him executer and guardian'
> 'I did? Yes... I remember now. I guess I did.'
> He could hear the lawyer coughing, and knew it was a feigned cough; Simkin was laughing. You could hardly blame him. Herzog himself was somewhat amused by his sentimental faith in "best friends" *, and could not help thinking how much he must have added to Gersbach's pleasure by his gullibility. [5]

This sentimentality can be seen with even more clarity when Herzog meets his friend Luke Asphalter, at whose apartment he spends a night. When Herzog sees that Asphalter has got "clean sheets on the studio couch for him" he warmly expresses his thankfulness, at which Asphalter replies:

> 'You're an old friend.'
> 'Thanks,' said Herzog. To his surprise he found difficulty in speaking. A swift rush of feeling, out of nowhere, caught his throat. His eyes filled up. ** [6]

The intellectual Dr. Herzog is not destitute of feelings, and follows them more than the average urbanites would in their inter-individual relations. His sensitivity is sharp enough to cause embarassment to others. At least this is the conclusion one can reach at when we look at the scene of his father's funeral:

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* and ** - The underlining is mine.

> Moses said to Shura, 'While he lived, Papa had the cops at his back. Now ...' Helen, Willie, all four children in the limousine, laughed softly at this remark. Then as the coffin was lowered and Moses and the others wept, Shura said to him, 'Don't carry on like a goddamn immigrant.' I embarassed him with his golfing friends, the corporation presidents. Maybe I was not entirely in the right. Here was the good American. I still carry European pollution, am infected by the Old World with feelings like Love - Filial Emotion. Old stuporous dreams.
> 7

This passage reminds us immediately of Joseph when he writes in the first pages of his journal that if a man has emotions he should strangle them, because that's what people around us expect. Joseph is obviously being ironic about it, as Herzog is ironic in the passage above. Nevertheless, the passage is revealing in that we learn how some urbanites are able to strangle their feelings and keep their rational/ artificial behaviour even in extreme situations, like the burial of one's own father. According to his brother Shura, only an immigrant could behave like Moses Herzog. A true American - this is Herzog's conclusion - could not express his inner feelings with such freedom before important people. The scene, although laughable, shows that Herzog is highly critical of the loss of family feelings by the metropolitan American man, something which urban sociologists almost unanimously call our attention to. The urban family, because of the division of labour which generates a high degree of mobility and spreads itself around a large area reducing their contacts in number and intensity. The family in such circumstances tends to become nuclear and hardly ever has more than a few children. Moses Herzog, however, a man charged with emotions in every cell of his organism, cannot follow this style of life where human indifference is reaching such uncontrollable levels. Moses Herzog is, in this sense, particularly similar to Tommy Wilhelm, who, after having lost the last cent he had in the commodities market, is pushed into a funeral. Seeing the body of the stranger, he weeps with all his soul and heart, making the people around the coffin think that he is a brother of the dead man or at least a very close relative. They are both right and wrong.

Wrong because he is not a true brother or relative of the dead man; right because for Saul Bellow's protagonists every human being is a brother, our neighbor, and we should love our neighbor/ brother as ourselves.

Similarly, Herzog cannot help being sentimentally affected by his second divorce. His fatherly feelings towards his children are too strong and he needs to express them. He confesses himself tired of divorces and admits that ten years ago he would have been able to stand all these situations, because "he felt he was wordly enough for it - realistic, cynical. But [he] was wrong. It's too much." [8] Again the lack of sentimentality in the world is criticized, and "wordly" becomes synonymous to "cynical", which at the same time comes to mean "realistic" - everything that Herzog insists he isn't, and which WE know he is not.

This view of the inter-individual urban relations as cynical/ artificial are repeated a couple of times in the book, but before we get to it we should take a look at Herzog's feelings toward family.

After his wife decided to leave him, Herzog writes a letter to her aunt who is in favour of his wife's attitude. In his letter he again shows how much he is family-attached, recognizing at the same time that his attitude had not been the wisest, mainly because of his insistance on "artificially" extending his family:

> Dear Zelda, Of course you have to be loyal to your niece. I'm just an outsider. You and Herman said I was one of the family. If I was patsy enough to be affected (at my age) by this sort of "heart-felt" family garbage, why I deserved what I got. [9]

If there was something that Moses Herzog could never hide, it was family feelings. He could not live without a family, an extensive, rural family. He simply loves them, all of them, helplessly, so much in fact that his brothers can't understand it:

> It amused Shura that his brother Moses should be so fond of him.

> Moses loved his relatives quite openly and even helplessly. His brother Willie, his sister Helen, even the cousins. It was childish of him; he knew that. He could only sigh at himself, that he should be so underdeveloped on that significant side of his nature. He sometimes tried to think, in his own vocabulary, whether this might be his archaic aspect, prehistoric. Tribal, you know. Associated with ancestor worship and totemism. [10]

In trying to find an explanation for his family feelings, Moses Herzog recognizes that they have nothing to do with the urban man, the man of the large cities. It must have something to do with his generic past, his nature, with a feeling of tribal totemism - a feeling which the megalopolitan man has lost completely and that primitive tribes nourish and base their community life on. This extreme example which compares a society based essentially on feelings and community life, with a society which is highly rational and completely void of community feelings, shows the extent to which Herzog is misplaced in the megalopolitan milieu. His brother Shura, on the other hand, personifies the typical urban man who despises universal concerns as idiocy and who tries to "set a hedonistic example to the community" [11] of the individual's capacity to prosper in the belly of Leviathan.

The retrospective self-analysès that Herzog makes, paint him not as the ideal human being, but as somebody full of weaknesses and, despite his already sentimental attachment to people, he still considers himself as unfit to perform the various roles life has chosen for him. He admits that he has twice been a bad husband. He had been a loving but a bad father to his children. He had been an ungrateful child to his parents; to his country he was nothing but an indifferent citizen; to his brothers and sister he was affectionate but distant, with his friends he had been egotistical.

This sort of analysis of himself indicates at least how concerned Moses is about behaving properly or, as he puts it, living a life as coherent as possible with his principles. His principles cannot be transcribed from the book, but it can be easily concluded that they demand a community life where the individual relates to other individuals not as a thing/ a function, but as an

integral human being - a community life where freedom, mutual respect, family life are shared by each and everyone. In other words, his principles address us to an environment which has little, if nothing, in common with the metropolitan way of life of cities like New York and Chicago. This is at least what we understand from Louis Wirth's theory which, incidentally, is based on studies of the Chicago way of life. The following quotation shows how Louis Wirth and most sociologists see the life of urbanites, the style of life to which Moses Herzog is saying NO:

> Characteristically, urbanites see each other as highly segmental functions. They evidently depend on a larger number of people to satisfy their vital necessities than rural people and find themselves, therefore, associated to a larger number of organized groups. But they depend less on private persons, while their dependence upon other people is confined to a highly fractionized aspect of their total activities. That's what is meant when we affirm that the city is characterized more by secondary than by primary contacts. The contacts of man in the city can really be face to face contacts, nevertheless, they are impersonal, superficial, transitory and segmental. [12]

Having experienced this style of life since childhood and seeing that it leads to family disintegration, to disrespect of the past, to the corruption of the traditional values, to the decline of the social meaning of family, neighborhood and, therefore, to the corrosion of the traditional basis upon which solidarity and respect were set, Moses Herzog refutes the metropolitan way of life and his comments put him in favour of a society which denies these ways. The fact that Moses is ironic about Martin Buber's theory of the I-Thou relation versus the I-It relation does not mean that he is against it. The reason why he mentions the theory is to emphasize the dramatic effect implicit in situations where the unexpected happens, i.e., that somebody takes advantage of true followers of such a view. Herzog truly believes, like Buber, that "it is wrong to turn a man (subject) into a thing (an object)." [13] Yet he believes, and he cannot be said to be completely wrong, that "through spiritaul dialogue the I-It relationship becomes an I-Thou relationship" [14] which

does not mean that "you have dialogue with a man and intercourse with his wife." [15] This would mean the exploitation of human feelings exactly by those who advocate the importance of those feelings. There is no other possible interpretation to his letter to his psychiatrist, Dr. Edvig, unless we have Herzog deny everything he expressed in the novel. Although Herzog is a highly emotional type, there is some logic and consistency to his emotions. Because it is his heart which dictates what his mind thinks and his mouth says, Herzog is a strong defender of a society where primary inter-individual relations shall reign, which is the same as saying that he is essentially anti-urban in his views and feelings.

Further consequences of the heart-brain controversy are Herzog's attachment to the past, the soil, the country and finally his expressed hatred toward the city as a physical/ ecological entity.

Both John Clayton and Leslie Fiedler regard Herzog as a kind of Thoreau who goes out into the woods in order to find his peace in communion with nature. He could not be seen differently. Before his present retirement to the country he had already tried twice to get out of the city, showing that it is not a momentary/ transient feeling, but something abiding and deeply-rooted.

> With Madeleine, Herzog had made his second attempt to live in the country. For a big-city Jew he was peculiarly devoted to country life. He had forced Daisy to endure a freezing winter in eastern Connecticut while he was writing <u>Romanticism and Christianity</u>*, in a cottage where the pipes had to be thawed with candles and freezing blasts penetrated the cupboard walls while Herzog brooded over Rousseau or practised on the oboe. [16]

As we can well see, Herzog is just another Augie, Tommy Wilhelm, Asa Leventhal and even Joseph. None of these protagonists can hide his peculiar devotion to the country. If we regard Bellow's protagonists as his alterego or not we will have to place Bellow, without hesitation, in the American intellec-

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* The underlining is mine.

anti-urban tradition, started with Jefferson and followed by Emerson, Thoreau, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, Frank Lloyd Wright and many others. An excellent analysis and outline of this anti-urban tradition in the American mind can be found in Norton and Lucia White's book called The Intellectual Versus The City [17]. Thus, placing himself unmistakably in the American tradition of anti-urbanism, Bellow repeats this theme in all his novels, through all protagonists and sometimes even through secondary characters.

Regarding their attachment to nature and refusal of the practical/ materialistic ways of the urban society, Tommy Wilhelm and Herzog are extremely alike. The words of one could perfectly be the other's. While Tommy Wilhelm is anxiously waiting for his money to get out of the city, Herzog takes the money he inherited from his father and invests ALL of it in the country:

> He had a small foundation grant, and his twenty-thoudand dollar legacy from father Herzog went into the country place.
> He turned into its caretaker. Twenty thousand and more would have gone down the drain if he hadn't thrown himself into the work - Papa's savings, representing forty years of misery in America. [18]

But nobody better than Herzog himself to say where he belongs to and what affinities and desires he has. His attachment to the country makes him overcome the mere mention of it and becomes an actual interpretation, with close relations to the concepts of the urban sociology. He actually goes into an analysis and interpretation of the behaviour of the rural and the city man:

> A creature of deep peculiarities, a web of feeling intricacies and ideas now approaching a level of organization and automatism where he can hope to be free from human dependency. People are practising their future condition already. My emotional type is archaic. Belongs to the agricultural or pastoral stages... [19]

Once planted in his country home in Berkshires, Herzog could cultivate his inner life and solitude. He felt great and amused sitting under HIS trees.

Besides, he was surrounded by neighbours who didn't create any trouble and whose names he knows. The neighbours were old and "rocking themselves to death on their porches, watching television, the nineteenth century quietly dying in this remote green hole." [20]

The Bellowian Walden Pond is even placed in the right century and is perfectly adequate for Herzog to finish his studies and write his chapter on "Romantic Moralism." Here, where he can get acquainted with the "odours of the soil and flowers", is the only place Herzog can feel at peace and happy - out of the metropolises where he grew up, out of the century he was living in.

His ex-wife Madeleine confirms Herzog's views about himself as being a person who is unavoidably attached to the past, to another century, to his unforgettable ancestors. In one of their fights, while Herzog complains about Madeleine's bouncing cheques, Madeleine describes him as follows:

> 'You'll never get the surroundings *you** want. Those are in the tweflth century somewhere. Always crying for the old home and the kitchen table with the oilcloth on it and your Latin book. Okay - let's hear your sad old story. Tell me about your poor old mother. And your father. And your boarder, the drunkard. And the old synagogue, and the bootlegging, and your Aunt Zipporah... Oh, what balls!' [21]

The sociological components of Herzog's city life show that its ways are inhuman, disrespectful towards the individual and his potentialities of developing as an integral human being capable of carrying on lasting, primary relations - a community and family life; heterogeneity and diversity are destroying a common past tradition upon which rural communities are based; totemic, tribal feelings belong to the past and not to the megalopolises; Contacts become more and more impersonal, superficial, transient and segmental; the urban behaviour tends to be rational and sophisticated, (something of which Herzog accuses his wife and brothers as well), and "self-expression of participation feelings becomes less spontaneous than in an integrated society." [22]

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* the italics are the author's

In other words, Bellow's disgust towards city life can be seen all through the present book as it can be seen in all his work, even in his Non-fiction book To Jerusalem and Back. It becomes axiomatic that Herzog, having spoken so positively about country life, cannot speak pleasantly about what he sees in the city. Therefore, I would like to make the final part of this chapter display his views of the city both as a sociological entity (reinforcing the points already mentioned) and as an ecological entity, emphasizing its congruence with the sociological descriptions.

I would like to start with a concrete example of heterogeneity and variety. While looking at the New York street public, Moses Herzog describes a picture, thematically very similar to the one seen in the "The Dangling Man" chapter of this dissertation. Both do not see the same thing, but both see that in a megalopolis everything can be found, which means that both are struck by the astonishing heterogeneity/ variety of the megalopolitan milieu. What Moses Herzog sees in the New York streets are

> the transvestite homosexuals painted with great originality, the wigged women, the lesbians looking so male you had to wait for them to pass and see them from behind to determine their true sex, hair dyes of every shade. Signs in almost every passing face of deeper comment or intepretation of destiny - eyes that held metaphysical statements. [23]

In a city where Jews, Chinese, Greek, Burmese, Spaniards, Poles and people of almost every nationality can be found, it is evidently difficult to preserve a community life as a whole where each and everybody would share the same values, folkways and mores, as would occur in small communities. Even in large ethnic concentrations, traditional values tend to disappear because number and density cause specific changes in neighborhood relations, creating, therefore, the same problems of functional relationships between individuals, anonymity and the loosening of family ties. Herzog's criticism has, therefore, a sociological justification and cannot be regarded as something produced by a "spectacular

intellectual labyrinth", or by a crazy mind.

It is a known fact for us that Louis Wirth based his theory of the city on three factors: size, density and heterogeneity. The anthropology student, Saul Bellow, is certainly familiar with Louis Wirth's theory, as well as with the major theories of urbanism which we know today. The familiarity of Bellow with these theories can be seen in all his books, through his characters, who constantly mention people like Proudhon, Marx, Engels, Buber, Heideger, Spengler, Ruskin and others. He never mentioned Louis Wirth, but the following quotation could almost have been taken from Wirth's "Urbanism as a Way of Life":

> Now I know it is no cinch to manage the affairs of this planet with its population exceeding two billion. The number itself is something of a miracle and throws our practical ideas into obsolescence. Few intellectuals have grasped the social principles behind this quantitative transformation. [24]

That the quantitative change of a population brings about a qualitative one is widely accepted in sociology, and Herzog seems to recognize it with remarkable lucidity. Looking down at New York and Chicago, what can you see if not crowds and crowds filling its streets! The number question is directly associated with density. And density besides reminding us explicitly of Seize the Day and The Victim also corroborates the previous affirmations: the significant change in the inter-individual relations when compared to the rural milieus. The extravagant vices and the violence of the large cities is the first visible consequence of these changes. Herzog is perfectly aware of them, as are all Bellowian protagonists and many of his secondary characters. The individual, because of the large numbers, gives away his importance to the power of organizations and institutions, and, therefore, becomes more and more meaningless and powerless to the society as a whole:

> ...what it means to be a man. In a city. In a century. In transition. In a mass. Transformed by science. Under

> organized power. Subject to tremendous controls. In a condition caused by mechanization. After the late failure of radical hopes. In a society that was no community and devalued the person. Owing to the multiplied power of numbers which made the self negligible. Which spent military billions against foreign enemies but would not pay for order at home. Which permitted savagery and barbarism in its own cities. [25]

In his letter to the President, Herzog again emphasizes the overpopulation and the danger that in the future more "adolescent gangs will dominate the underpoliced streets of big cities." [26] His knowledge of the violence, savagery and barbarism practised in the large cities is the reason why his criticism is directed to the society as a whole which wastes money fighting enemies outside the country while the enemies inside the country, inside the cities, are let to act in liberty.

Because of the vices, extravagances and violence, Herzog, very much like other protagonists of other Bellowian novels, sees the city as a hellish place which has its origin in the Freudian principle of death and destruction, Thanatos:

> Such trembling sorrow - he tried to think what term Freud had for it: partial return of repressed traumatic material, ultimately traceable to the death instinct? should not be imparted to children, not that tremulous lifelong swoon of death. This same emotion, as Herzog the student was aware, was held to be the womb of cities. [27]

Therefore, what can be expected of a death-based human conglomerate like the contemporary metropolises, if not death itself, misery, violence, desolateness[28], melancholy and nostalgia [29]. New York and Chicago for Herzog are nothing but an "asylum" [30], "closed-in, ponderous and sunless," [31] "clumsy [and] stinking"[32] with false-looking, graceless, corny" [33] flowers, where the chemical "ugliness" [34] can only remind you of damnation. Besides, it is a cold and mechanical [35] world in which even happiness is calculated upon a mechanical basis.

Herzog has had enough of it. He has realized that his psychic construct and his ideals do not fit the city's and, therefore, there is only one way of solving the problem: leaving the city. It's a Darwinistic matter of survival/ sanity, in which the fittest escape from aggregate madness:

> His duty was to live. To be sane, and to live, and to look after the kids. This was why he was running from the city now, overheated, eyes hurting. He was getting away from all burdens, practical questions... [36]

Furthermore, the city could be a terribly lonely place. Some people felt even lonelier than he. He wanted "more contact with life, meeting customers,"[37] but his situation wasn't as bad as the one he had read about:

> He had read lately that lonely people in New York, shut up in their rooms, had taken to calling the police for relief. 'Send a squad car, for the love of God! Send someone! Put me in the lock-up with somebody! Save me. Touch me. Come, someone - please come!'[38]

As a sociological and ecological entity the city is vehemently rejected by Moses Herzog, who realizes that his ways and his heart are totally incompatible with the urban milieu. Having the city in himself after a long existence inside it, he broods over the experience and concludes that sociologically it cannot offer a cohesive community/family life that he longs for. The hope for Herzog's survival is not in the city but in the country, surrounded by nature, quiet and pleasant neighbors, whose interests, names and motivations he knows. If Herzog does not want to identify with the deadness and cruelty of the city, he has to escape. And because he does escape, Herzog is a step further in relation to Seize the Day, where the protagonist, Tommy Wilhelm, only recognizes the death of the urban man, without, however, taking the next step which Herzog takes.

But is Herzog's anti-urban view also the way out for humanity? Bellow clearly wants us to believe that, from the beginning of his book and since the

first novel he wrote. Although one can perceive some anti-urbanism in many of the sociological writings about the city (they frequently tend to overemphasize its perils, corrosions and losses), I would like to end this chapter with the words of a man who is not a sociologist, but a theologian who is profoundly familiar with the contemporary theories of urban sociology - Harvey Cox. In his book called The Secular City he says:

> Should the modern writer be an anti-urbanist? The truth is that for a genuine literary artist, the city is a context and not a target for attacks. Many writers of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century did not see that the urban anonymity brought several benefits and not only horrors. A writer who becomes essentially anti-urban loses his pretensions for greatness, because what the morbid critics of anonymity many times do not say is that, first, without it life in the large cities could not be human, and, second, that it represents for many people much more a liberating rather than a threatening phenomenon. 39

Having seen how anti-urban Bellow is, the words would constitute a predatory devaluation of a writer who won the Nobel Prize for literature, two National Book Awards, the Pulitzer Prize and other prizes. The question, however, has to be regarded with some subtlety. First, it would be a shortsightedness to be willing to read a literary work strictly from the sociological point of view. A psycho-analytic, psychological or formal interpretation (which many critics follow with Bellow) is highly revealing and enriching, and can certainly resist a test of consistency very easily as well. Secondly, it has to be remembered that Bellow's anti-urbanism is always inextricably linked to his refusal of the monetary/pragmatic/ materialistic values upon which the contemporary urban society is established. The greed for money, ownership and the association of these with the idea of success has to be read as a criticism against the reification of man in general. And it is this sort of reading which in my view gathers large number of sympathizers for Saul Bellow, although (and here I must agree with Mr. Cox) it is impossible to follow him all the way in his move against the city and into the country - even if his name is Moses.

7. ROOTS VERSUS WIRES VERSUS TELEMETRY

With Mr. Sammler's Planet, Saul Bellow was awarded The National Book Award for fiction for the third time. It was published in 1970, three years after the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict (during which Saul Bellow served as a war correspondent for Newsday). His participation as a war correspondent certainly revived his Jewishness, several autobiographical echo of which can be found in the novel, in the person of Mr. Sammler.

But Mr. Sammler's Planet is not about the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict. It tells the story of Mr. Arthur Sammler, a Jew in his seventies who survived the second world war concentration camps, who killed a German soldier when caught alone in the forest, and who was left for dead by a German death squad. This experience with the Germans cost him an eye, hunger, pain and terror. He was finally saved by a Polish gravedigger who hid him in a Mausoleum. After the war, Sammler lived in England, in complete isolation from his extensive family. When the reader meets him, Mr. Sammler is an old widower living with his daughter, Shula, and his late wife's niece, Margotte, in the United States, more precisely, in New York. The reason why Mr. Sammler moved to New York is that his nephew, fanatically attached to family feelings, investigated his family genealogy and spotted Mr. Sammler in England. Dr. Grüner, being a rich man, did not hesitate to bring his uncle and his uncle's daughter to the United States, close to his family.

The action of the novel develops through the mind of the almost senile Mr. Sammler, who has gone through a war in which his race was under the threat of extermination and in which the whole world almost went to pieces, and who then again has to face the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1967. Mr. Sammler is a man who is not very optimistic about the world's capacity to live a peaceful and orderly life. In New York, Mr. Sammler goes through a number of unpleasant incidents (criminality, promiscuity scenes, mercenariness, his nephew's death) which fan the flames of his pessimism still further. This pessimism of

his is perfectly understandable if we consider his personal history, the history of humanity, the history of his people and the difficulty with which he moves through the New York scene. This difficulty is partly caused by his age, his partial blindness, his conservantism, but it is also greatly caused by the city as a physical and sociological entity.

But, before going into the analysis of Mr. Sammler's pessimistic view of the city and of the human society as a whole, we should recall that he had not always been like that. Years before, he had written various articles for magazines like News of Progress and The World Citizen. Sammler himself had even been included in the "Cosmopolis Project for a World State." [1] What kind of a project was it? A very optimistic one. Certainly highly utopian as well:

> the project was based on the propagation of the sciences of biology, history and sociology and the effective application of scientific principles to the enlargement of human life; the building of a planned, orderly and beautiful world society: abolishing national sovereignity, outlawing war; subjecting money and credit, production, distribution, transport, population, arms manufacturing et cetera to world-wide collective control, offering free universal education, personal freedom (compatible with community welfare) to the utmost degree. A service society based on a rational scientific attitude toward life.[2]

Now, after being familiar with the Russian Revolution, with the Spanish Civil War of 1936, with Mussolini's Facism, with World Wars I and II, Mr. Sammler realizes what a "kindhearted, ingenuous, stupid scheme it had been." [3] But this self-analysis does not only reflect his disappointment at his own naivitê of the past. It also demonstrates his disbelief in any sort of revolution which will bring liberty, equality and fraternity to all members of human society. All revolutions have been carried out with this purpose in the minds of revolutionaries. The outcomes have proven that somewhere in the process things have always been twisted according to particular interests of specific groups. Conscious of the paths which so many post-revolutionary governments have followed throughout history, Mr. Sammler is incapable of believing

that the present movements will be capable of bringing about a significant improvement of human society. Sammler becomes critical of intellectuals in general, but his criticism is mainly directed towards the new left, which is the reason why he was strongly criticized by John Clayton, who accuses Bellow of having created a character who "like the most vulgar reactionary, describes America's problem as spoiled children - licentious, rude and criminal - turning against all the decent traditions of western culture." [4] I must say that I do not totally share Clayton's view. It is true that Mr. Sammler paints the leftist intellectual as rude, spoiled, licentious, incapable of carrying on a pleasant discussion in which the force of arguments is greater than threatening devices as the one employed by the young man who interrupted Mr. Sammler during his speech about the cosmopolis. But this accusation has to be seen in a broader context, i.e., in the context of the general accusations Mr. Sammler makes against all aspects of society. Therefore, let's first take a look at the following quotation before saying anything else:

> 'Hey! Old Man!'
> 'In the silence, Mr. Sammler drew down his tinted spectacles, seeing this person with his effective eye.
> 'Old Man! You quoted Orwell before.'
> 'Yes?'
> 'You quoted him to say that British radicals were all protected by the Royal Navy? Did Orwell say that British radicals were protected by the Royal Navy?
> 'Yes, I believe he did say that.'
> 'That's a lot of shit.'
> Sammler could not speak.
> 'Orwell was a fink. He was a sick counterrevolutionary. It's good he died when he did. And what you are saying is shit.'
> Turning to the audience, extending violent arms and raising his palms like a Greek dancer, he said, 'Why do you listen to this effete old shit? What has he got to tell you? His balls are dry. He's dead. He can't come.' [5]

The rudeness of this scene is remarkable, but it cannot be taken in isolation. It is just another facet of a problem which Bellow keeps bringing up in almost all his novels. Herzog, for instance, is especially ironic about it when he says that "maybe dignity was imported from France, Louis Quatorze...

It all belongs to the museum now." [6] There should be no bad feelings about Mr. Sammler's words just because he is a foreigner - the first non-American Bellowian protagonist, in fact. All other protagonists have, in their own way, been extremely critical of the urban environment and of society as a whole. With Mr. Sammler, the same thing occurs. In fact, Mr. Sammler is in a way repeating Joseph's meeting with his former Communist Party acquaintance who, at the same bar where Joseph is, pretends that he doesn't know him. Joseph naturally gets mad at his ex-comrade's attitude, in the same way Mr. Sammler is disgusted by the young man's rudeness and flagrant disrespect towards another human being. It is, therefore, surprising that John Clayton should be willing to apply the words he uses, only to Mr. Sammler's Planet, after seeing all these scenes repeating themselves with different tonalities in all Bellow's novels. And, personally, I do not believe that John Clayton would say that the young man's attitude toward any human being - although it is hard to forget that Sammler is in his seventies - represents the "decent traditions of western culture."

Secondly, we have to see Mr. Sammler's criticism also in relation to the sexual aggression which, in this novel, specifically, seems to constitute a necessary element in the inter-individual relations. Sex seems to be the measurement unit upon which the whole idea of liberalism and urban life is set. The attention that the young man calls to the old man's dry balls cannot be seen in isolation. Sammler, in his trajectory through New York is sexually threatened and attacked at least two other times, which is clearly indicative that the image has a greater meaning than we could at first hand suppose. A significant scene is the negro pickpocket who follows Mr. Sammler into his appartment lobby and shows him his penis without saying a single word. The scene is described as follows:

> The pickpocket unbottoned himself. Sammler heard the zipper descend. Then the smoked glasses were removed from Sammler's

> face and dropped on the table. He was directed, silently, to look downward. The black man had opened his fly and taken out his penis. It was displayed to Sammler with great oval testicles, a large tan-and-purple uncircumcised thing - a tube, a snake; metallic hairs bristled at the thick base and the tip curled beyond the supporting, demonstrating hand, suggesting fleshy mobility of an elephant's trunk, though the skin was somewhat iridescent rather than thick or rough. Over the forearm and fist that held him Sammler was required to gaze at this organ. He would in any case have looked. [7]

The negro's intention was to warn Mr. Sammler that if he continued to follow him or if he said a word about his activity, he would be in trouble. It was his way of asserting his lordliness over the world. Isn't this sort of aggression exactly the same as the previous one? Aren't both aggressors setting their standards according to sexual measurement units? Clearly so. In both cases, Mr. Sammler is being told that he is an impotent old man and has, therefore, no right to be telling the world what to do and not to do. No sex, no rights, no ideas - that's what it seems to get at. Mr. Sammler, surprised, impressed and astonished by it, cannot hide his disgust for a society which has "made shit a sacrament" [8] and whose intellectuals have no nobility and act without any sort of dignity. And if intellectuals and judges of the social order had no dignity, what could you expect from criminals? His angry bitterness has its justification. It is, in my view, naive to call Mr. Sammler's Planet a "vulgar reactionary" novel when Bellow fills it with the very same things that he did in the previous novels, which were praised even by John Clayton. Secondly, the situations described show a high degree of verossimilitude in the urban context they are put in. In the urban environment, secondary relations reinforce non-involvement in matters which do not directly concern or affect us. This explains why somebody is able to shout with the rudest of terms at an old man, for practically no reason, without the involvement or the defense of a single soul. All the audience was able to do was make noise, while someone shouted "exhibitionist" to the young man, without, however, daring to stand up and defend Mr. Sammler. Again, therefore, we are struck with the intelligent parallel which

Mr. Sammler makes of the intellectual and the criminal (see p.   of this dissertation). The same way the intellectual is able to remain unpunished after his aggression, the criminal is able to make a career pickpocketing people on the same bus line, as if the "audience" belonged to him.

> The man did not seem to feel threatened by anyone. Took the slackness, the cowardice of the world for granted.[9]

The distance between individuals produced by secondary relations answers for what Sammler calls "cowardice" in the urban milieu. It's not that urbanites are possessed by cowardice and fear. They just mind their own business in a world where this is the law. What the criminal is taking for granted is not exactly cowardice and slackness, but the certainty that no individual easily assists or rescues another anonymous individual, because this becomes suicidal behaviour in the large cities where criminality runs rampant. Because Mr. Sammler does not "mind his own business as a man of seventy in New York should do,"[10] he is followed by the negro pickpocket and taught a lesson of proper urban behaviour. If Mr. Sammler connived with this sort of "proper behaviour" he wouldn't have told anybody about it. But he actually denounces it and the negro is first turned over to the police and then, because of the police's carelessness, Mr. Sammler denounces him to his grandnephew who fights and beats the negro on the street, under the eyes of a crowd of curious bypassers. These actions cannot allow us to label Mr. Sammler as a reactionary. Mr. Sammler is in his own rather impotent way fighting to change his planet and to create a better society, which later on Dr. Lal assures him is attainable on the moon. Mr. Sammler wants to change the present urban state of affairs and his attitude cannot be said to be a mere reactionary force. His attitude embodies an ideology of change or at least of hope of a new beginning. In fact, Sammler is the only protagonist who would not see the agrarian/ Emersonian system as feasible on this planet. Instead of moving to the womb of our civilization, Sammler moves away from the earth. On the moon, with totally different conditions and

profitting from the benefits of technology, man may perhaps start leading a new form of existence.

Mr. Sammler's Planet is a book permeated with family feelings as are all other Bellowian novels. The major difference, however, is that in this novel the protagonist is the one who is not the most attached. While in the other novels, the protagonist dictates the ideal family relations, in Mr. Sammler's Planet, Mr. Sammler just observes and respects the family closeness and dedication which brought him to New York, although he, sometimes, demonstrates that he is upset by the familial negligence of the younger generations, especially his grandnephew and grandniece. The two, in the eyes of Mr. Sammler, seem two nutty types whose primary concern is sex and money. These concerns undergrade their family estimations, although they never really move away from their father's shadow.

Although Mr. Sammler considers himself a rational man above everything, he in fact is conquered by nis nephew's family feelings. No other reason, except the family ties, bring him to New York, in the same way as no other feeling takes him to Israel during the 1967 conflict. There seems, therefore, to be a contradiction between the real and the unreal feelings of Mr. Sammler. He himself seems to be aware of this dichotomy of his when he compares himself to Dr. Elya Grüner:

> On the surface I don't have much in common with Elya. He is a sentimental person. He makes a point, too much of a point, of treasuring certain old feelings. He's on an old system... I never had much natural liking for people who make open declaration of affection. Being a "Britisher" was one of my foibles. Cold? But I still appreciate a certain restraint. I didn't care for the way Elya courted everybody, tried to make contact with people, winning their hearts, engaging their interest, getting personal even with waitresses, lab technicians, manicurists. It was always too easy for him to say "I love you".[11]

Elya is the man who mostly resembles other Bellowian protagonists, all of them highly sentimental and incapable of developing secondary relations

in spite of living in cities with the size of New York and Chicago. As Mr. Sammler puts it, he is living according to an old system, i.e., a system which does not belong to the megalopolitan areas; Elya too much treasures family feelings and personal relations. This affection-based style of life, as we have seen in the previous chapters, is inadequate for the urban man in general. Isn't that the reason why Elya does not survive? Isn't his throat ailment actually a heart ailment? No matter what the answer is, Mr. Sammler takes Elya as a model of respectability, despite his recognition of the weaknesses in him. The contradiction which can be easily detected in Mr. Sammler's behaviour is caused by his necessity to maintain some restraint in his inter-individual relations when in fact he would like to do away with restraint. If on the surface he is very different from Elya, internally both are very similar to each other. It so happens that Mr. Sammler, after his grandnephew floods the house in order to find his father's money admits that "they were his people - he was their Sammler. They shared the same fundamentals." [12] And what are these fundamentals? Sammler does not tell us what they are, but we can easily infer that they are blood links, family ties and their common Jewishness. This is what underlies the main actions around Mr. Sammler's family. In the same way he had been brought to the States because of "Old World" family feelings, he had gone to Israel to bring Shula-Slawa, his niece by marriage, to New York. As we can see, one of their common fundamentals is the nourishment of the traditional, rural, extensive kind of family, where father, mother, sons, daughters, uncles, granduncles and cousins are asked to live close together and naturally share each other's concerns, sorrows and joys. In all this, what makes us feel astonished is that in a Bellowian novel a New York man can be so family-minded that even half-uncles like Mr. Sammler, and half-nieces like Shula Slawa are literally adopted in a very large and yet close family circle. The message Bellow is intending to convey to his readers is clear: in a world where family life is disintegrated and almost lost, family life is a hope, a redeeming hope.

This is most certainly the meaning Bellow wants us to see in these words of the narrator in Mr. Sammler's Planet:

> Contemporary contacts being somewhat unsatisfactory, he would gladly have helped Grüner to build up the past. [13]

So, in a very Herzogian way, Mr. Sammler is also moved by the past, by family life, by the life in community, everything the urban milieu cannot offer, unless someone as misplaced as his rich nephew, Dr. Grüner, shows up. As Sammler complains to his daughter: "You don't find (...) bosom buddies in these days" [14] anymore. We should add that this is something that belongs to the past and to environments where relations can still be personal and primary, as Dr. Grüner would like them to be and as Mr. Sammler would like to see them, for he, too, could have his heart easily "torn by feelings" [15] when thinking about his ancestors' experiences of life.

In a city where materialism predominates and where adultery and sexual libertinage are a daily commonplace, where emancipation, liberation and joy are easily attached to disrespect and dishonour, in such a world it is not easy to find other Dr. Gruners. What can be found with great facility is impersonality, indifference, non-involvement and, therefore, a high degree of criminality. The very number of pages in the novel dealing with criminality is surprising. The first half of the first chapter (a fifty-page chapter) is almost exclusively the narration of a pickpocket scene and Mr. Sammler's reactions to it. But Mr. Sammler pays more attention to it than the police themselves. The police are under the effect of size and number, two values which, according to Louis Wirth and sociologists in general, vitally affect the way of life in the large cities. When Mr. Sammler, for instance, tells the police about the pickpocket he had so many times seen doing his job on the bus, the police simply put him on a waiting list, saying that there were many other priorities to attend to, showing no interest whatsoever in the repression of crime, as if crime had nothing to do with them. The following quotation - a dialogue between Mr. Sammler and the police -

gives us an idea of this lack of concern for the general public:

> 'I understand. You don't have the personnel, and there are priorities, political pressures. But I could point out the man.'
> 'Some other time.'
> 'You don't want him pointed out?'
> 'Sure, but we have a waiting list.'
> 'I have to get on **your*** waiting list?'
> 'That's right, Abe.'
> 'Arthur.'
> 'Arthur.'[16]

In this anonymous planet of Mr. Sammler's, not even the police show interest in protecting you. It is a planet which is overcrowded and where there is even a waiting list for stopping crime. Mr. Sammler's planet is clearly the city, an overcrowded and riotous hell, with no place for old people, for people who inhabit the past and the country.

The old Mr. Sammler does show some understanding of New York as a city - a sociological and ecological context. Besides showing awareness of family disintegration, the loss of paternal respect, the lack of respect of people for each other in general, he also shows himself aware of the fact that New York is no place for an old man like himself. Crime moves around in great freedom and if one does not have an understanding of New York, we are most certainly liable to become victims of the city. Mr. Sammler, having seen his criminal perform so many times, is irritated by the lack of precautions people take while moving around the New York streets/ buses/metros:

> Then with the touch of a doctor on a patient's belly the negro moved back the slope leather, turned the gilded scallop catch. Sammler, feeling his head small, shrunk with strain, the teeth tensed, still was looking at the patent leather bag riding, picked, on the woman's hip, finding that he was irritated with her. That she felt nothing. What an idiot. Going around with some kind of stupid mold in her skull. Zero instincts, no grasp of New York.[17]

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* The italics are the author's.

What Sammler is saying is that in order to survive in a city like New York one has to have an understanding of its ways. Instincts have to be activated, the intellect has to be put to work. Only those who are fit for New York can survive. The others will be victimized or eventually perish, unless they leave or adapt, thus increasing their level of efficiency in their inter-individual relations, and their relations with the physical/ecological city.

The city traffic is constantly referred to in the novel. The old/half-blind Mr. Sammler cannot get used to it. His feelings about it are that he may at any time get run over, that he is being persecuted by the myriads of cars, trucks, buses, which are always some how moving in the same direction he is. And it moves noisily. Despite of it, the buses still were bearable. But with the pickpocket after him, he had to avoid using the bus, too. He from now on had to use these abominable underground trains:

> He could not use buses any more. From now on it was the subway. The subway was an abomination.[18]

The negro pickpocket had warned him, "instructed him to appear no more."[19] Now, Mr. Sammler dreaded another encounter with him. This dilemma lasts until his grandnephew finds out about the reason for his change of habits. The pickpocket is beaten and handed to the police. The worst of transportation, the subway, could be avoided. Neverhteless, there was no great reason for joy. The traffic is usually jammed up and heavy. Trucks are double-parked, triple-parked. The use of private cars is harmful and irrational. The whole system is enough to drive you mad.

The overall view of New York is not a pleasant one. Like Augie March, Herzog and other Bellowian protagonists, Mr. Sammler sees the ugliness of the city, its dirt, its bad smells, its coldness and hardness. In such a world people are prisoners and live isolated and lonely, with no community life, except for what comes from the air/ television/ the media which all apartments seem to share:

> Such was Sammler's eastward view, a soft asphalt belly rising, in which lay steaming sewer navels. Spalled sidewalks with clusters of ash cans. Brownstones. The yellow brick of the elevator buildings like his own. Little copses of televisions antennas. Whiplike, graceful thrilling metal dendrites drawing images from the air, bringing brotherhood, community to immured apartment people. [20]

New York is also a city where it is very difficult to walk, for another reason. Sammler had learned to be careful mainly on public paths, because they were "invariably dog-fouled," [21] with the grass "burned by animal excrements." [22] This "fuming, heaving, quivering, stinking" [23] city is something to be denounced as a problem. In it "you might see the soul of America at grips with historical problems, struggling with certain impossibilities, experiencing violently states inherently static." [24]

With all these problems and with all this ugliness, it is not surprising to find in Mr. Sammler's Planet the same origin which the city had in Herzog and Seize the Day: the devil. No God, no representative of gooness, of honour, of respectability, no artist could have created the city. Its only possible creator is the devil. Very often, while wandering around New York, Sammler thought of a sentence which he had once translated from Saint Augustine: "The Devil hath established his cities in the North." [25] Once Sammler had thought that the greyness, the gloom, the darkness and the rains of Northern cities were at least an opportunity for mental and intellectual achievements. One could at least think of trying to "come to terms with obscurity." [26] The cities of today, however, London, New York, Chicago, Amsterdam, Paris, etc. have made the "dark satanic mills [change] into light satanic mills." [27] In other words, the openness of evil has achieved such a degree in the cities that it can even be announced in revolutionary slogans - Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, Adultery, Criminality. The city of man as Frazer calls Paris in The Adventures of Augie March becomes the city of the devil together with all other cities of

the globe.

An interesting notion which had not yet been introduced in any of the previous novels is the city as a whore. Despite the innumerable sexual references in his previous work, the city had never received this treatment before. In a clear allusion to the sexual libertinage that goes on in New York, starting with his own family, Sammler says:

> Great cities are whores. Doesn't everyone know? Babylon was a whore. O la Reine aux fesse cascadantes. Penicillin keeps New York looking cleaner. No faces gnawed by syphilis, with gaping noseholes as in ancient times. [28]

Although the city is not as terrible as it might have been in ancient times when the benefits of science were not as known and employed as today, it is still horrible enough to symbolize the collapse of civilization, a decline that Spengler foresees in his Der Untergang des Abendlandes (The Decline of the West), and that Sammler seems to be pretty sure of:

> Perhaps if we were in India or Finland we might not be in quite the same mood. New York makes me think of the collapse of civilization, about Sodom and Gomorrah, the end of the world. The end wouldn't come as a surprise here. Many people already bank on it. ... I am not sure that this is the worst of all times. But it is in the air now that things are falling apart, and I am affected by it. [29]

If as Sepngler states it "the history of the world is read in the history of its cities," [30] then the history which will be read in the future about the Western civilization will not be very pleasant. The decay of the Western cities is evident and can be seen by anyone. Man has lost his attachment to the soil and nature, which means that he has reached old age. And this rootlessness of modern urban man is trespassing the traditional barriers which kept the city apart from the country and as two clearly distinguishable entities. Today, with the progress of science, communication, sociologists as well as Mr. Sammler's grandnephew recognize that this dichotomy will disappear.

After Wallace floods the house in order to discover the money his father was hiding, supposedly in water pipes, Mr. Sammler asks him whether he has no attachment to the house, no desire for roots. Wallace answers in a prototypical urban way:

> 'No, of course not. Roots? Roots are not modern. That's a peasant conception, soil and roots. Peasantry is going to disappear. That's the real meaning of modern revolution, to prepare world peasantry for a new state of existence. I certainly have no roots. But even I am out of date. What I've got is a lot of old wires and even wires belong to the old techonology. The real thing is telemetry. Cybernetics.[31]

Louis Wirth, in the 1930's called our attention to the widespreading influence of the city, which is reaching far beyond the boundaries of the metropolis, attracting, infact, the moste parts of the globe to its way of life.

In the nineteenth century, Friedrich Engels was already criticizing the bourgeois opposition between the city and the country, emphasizing that the problems of housing in a general anti-human context could only be solved with a radical change in the structure of society which eventually eliminate this dichotomy. At the same time, urbanists, from Owen, Fourier up to Frank Lloyd Wright tend to eliminate this distinction. In their model-construction the notion of the country versus city disappears. Contemporarily, Iannis Xenakis, the idealizer of the cosmic city, also mentions the disappearance of classic peasantry:

> Since the city will be vertical, it will occupy a minimum surface of ground. The liberation of the soil and the technical development of such a city will allow the recovery of large areas of soil. Tilling will be automatic and scientific ...; the classic peasant with his manual labor will disappear.[32]

The similarity of these affirmations with Wallace's is remarkable and shows that Bellow, the anthropologist and writer, is sharing the anxieties and interests of great intellectuals of all times - especially those concerned with

the urban issues. But there is a difference: while all of them hope that the solution for human problems can be found in a restructuring of our cities and of our society, Sammler, having gone through this utopian stage before, now believes that a perfect society, without its present vices, can only be possible in another world where life can be started anew, perhaps without the mistakes of the past. A book stolen by his daughter from a Hindu scientist, Dr. Lal, from Columbia University, revives his ideas about the creation of an ideal society somewhere away from this planet where everything seems helpless and lost. The book was called THE FUTURE OF THE MOON and it started with the question: How long will this earth remain the only home of Man?"[33] Mr. Sammler's reaction to this question tells us of his weariness with this world:

> How long? Oh, Lord, you bet! Wasn't it the time - the very hour to go? For every purpose under heaven. A time to gather stones together, a time to cast away stones. Considering the earth itself not as a stone cast but as something to cast oneself from - to be divested of. To blow this greates blue, white, green planet, or to be blown from it. [34]

Perhaps the most surprising fact about Mr. Sammler is that his disbelief in the possibilities of recreating a new world does not include only the city. While for the other Bellowian protagonists, the country still means something, still means a possibility of survival and a dignified human life in community, for Mr. Sammler there is very little hope for humanity on this planet. Too many mistakes have already been made, too many wars have taken place, too many revolutions have been a failure. And yet Mr. Sammler is not just presenting us his empty pessimism. First, there is his own personal history telling us that life is not at all a pleasant thing but a long interminable illness. Seconly, there is a final hope that questions the permanence of the wrongs - the power of the intellect, science, technology, all the contemporary and future scientific developments which may contribute towards the formation of a society based upon values which are more decent and capable of offering a pleasant and

happy life to all its dwellers. Perhaps someday we will all be liberated from the "spatial-temporal prison" [35] we are presently in. Perhaps we will get rid of our poverty of soul, which is the worst of all poverties of our civilization. Perhaps someday we will be able, as Dr. Lal foresees, to build cities without soot, without dog-shit all over the place, without crime, without war, without whores and promiscuity, without greed, without panic, without traffic jams, without prisons.

But on the moon, life would have to be very different - man would have to adapt to the new conditions, so completely different from the ones on Mr. Sammler's planet.

> Artemis - lunar chastity. On the moon, people would have to work hard simply to stay alive, to breathe. They would have to keep a strict watch over the gauges of all the devices. Conditions altogether different. Austere technicians - almost a priesthood. [36]

The moon would have to inhabited by completely different people from the ones we meet in Mr. Sammler's New York. No sloppiness would survive. No promiscuity would exist. A new sort of human beings - almost priests - would have to be responsible for the creation of an orderly, just society, with cities created by human beings and not by devils. Driving through New York in a car worth over twenty thousand dollars, Mr. Sammler still cannot forget the possibility of a new beginning. Even though he is in New York, his mind is "away from this death-burdened, rotting, spoiled, sullied, exasperating, sinful earth and already looking toward the moon and Mars with plans for founding cities." [37]

Mr. Sammler's Planet is certainly the most moralistic piece of writing that Bellow has so far produced. His criticism of world society and of large cities is bitter and sometimes hard to take. His pessimism seems sometimes far-fetched and even senile. Nevertheless, the criticism of the ways of the contemporary urban man do find support in the sociological literature and are ques-

tioned even by sociologists, urbanists and philosophers. To call Bellow a gratuitous pessimist would be an unforgivable mistake. Despite the calamities of this world, Bellow's work is still quite optimistic, with his optimism generally attached to the protagonists' moving out of the city and into the country. It acquires special relevance because his work harshly criticizes the reification of man, especially the urban man. Sammler does not believe in the country as a solution. He also doesn't want to go east as the other protagonists do. But Sammler, too, sees the possibility of a new hope. Even if the "promised land" cannot be found on this earth, does it mean there is no "promised land?" Mr. Sammler believes there is. His positiveness about the possibility of hope stands out like a flower that blooms powerfully among the ruins.

8. CITRINE, THE CHICAGO GREENHORN

Humboldt's Gift is Bellow's last novel. It came out in 1976 and for six months it was on the New York Times Bestseller list. This commercial success of the book was probably due to (1) Bellow's name - now worldwide known after his Seize the Day was chosen for special praise by The Swedish Royal Academy, and (2) because his book is very similar to his first commercial success, The Adventures of Augie March. Both novels share a number of common aspects: both are written in a loose, easy, straightforward style; both are highly comical in their seriousness; both are first person novel, which, in my view, is Bellow at his best. It is probable that these common characteristics of both books contributed sensibly to their easy selling and wide appreciation by the public. But the similarities between Humboldt's Gift and The Adventures of Augie March are still greater. Both novels also share a picaresque organization, and Charles Citrine, the protagonist of Humboldt's Gift, is nothing but a successful Augie March wandering around the Chicago, not of the thirties but of the sixties, with the same sort of attitudes - naive, misplaced and sincere. Charles Citrine is a grown-up Augie reliving the same financial, amorous, professional adventures that Augie March went through in his adolescence.

Humboldt's Gift tells the story of a successful writer, Charles Citrine, who lives in Chicago, and who somehow owes his career as a writer to a poet called Humboldt Fleischer. Humboldt, after whom the novel is named, introduced Charles Citrine to the literary world and after their first meeting they became close friends - a friendship that developed to the point that each of them carries a blanck check signed by the other and which can be cashed, according to their agreement, only in the worst circumstance. Their friendship was affected by Citrine's ascension and the simultaneous decline of Humboldt. Humboldt, a poet who dreams of financial success, which he sees as his only possibility of freedom, is not only a drinker, a bum and a bohemian. He

is also and mainly a schemer. He spends most of his money on lawyers trying to sue people who supposedly wronged him and from whom he expects to win indemnity. Through one of his schemes he is able to get a chair in literature at Princeton University. This, however, lasts only a few months because the foundation which was allocating the grant for him goes bankrupt and he leaves the university. This is the vertical path of his decline. His paranoia increases, he wastes more money on lawsuits and even suspects that Citrine is having an affair with his wife Kathleen. It is by this time that he cashes Citrine's check - just at a time when Citrine was having a broadway success with his play Von Trenck and when his bank account was at its best moment. Humboldt still manages to get some more money out of Citrine in the name of friendship, pretending that he is sick. After he finds out that Citrine paid his bill one week in advance, he checks out of the hospital and gets the money back. Ending his life miserably and in rags, Humboldt just before dying leaves a gift for Citrine and his wife Katheleen - a movie script. This script turns out to be a great movie and a real commercial success, as Humboldt had always dreamed of. Besides, the money comes exactly at a time when Citrine, now impoverished by constant female exploitation, is living penniless and lonely in a Madrid hostel.

The almost five-hundred-page novel has its plot livened up by the presence of a mafioso, Rinaldo Cantabile, whose wife is writing her Ph.D. thesis in literature and who decided to write it on Humboldt Fleischer. Learning that Citrine and Fleischer had been blood brothers, Rinaldo Cantabile gets in touch with him and asks him for some interviews, indicating that he would even get paid if he wrote the thesis himself. Citrine refuses but can't get away because of some money he owes Cantabile from a poker game. So, his property is invaded, his Mercedes is smashed to pieces and he is forced to move around Chicago doing what the Mafia tells him. He leaves for Spain after the police catches Rinaldo, but after some months he is discovered in his hostel by the

very same Rinaldo Cantabile. The story ends in Chicago, where at a funeral Citrine meets the few old friends of his who are not yet dead. He is presently living on Humboldt's money and hoping for a new beginning.

Almost the whole story takes place in Chicago, the city where Charles Citrine grew up and which he cannot leave, although he sees it as the very center of criminality, boredom, carelessness and ugliness. The reasons for such an attachment to the city is his attachment to the past and to his family, which is indicative that Citrine is in fact a rather faithful photocopy of the previous Bellowian protagonists, at least as far as their attitudes towards the city are concerned. Put another way: his attachment to the city is due to the fact that his family is buried there and for no other reason. After his Mercedes was smashed up by the Mafia, Citrine moves around helplessly. At this moment he recalls his father:

> The usual casting about, I was thinking as I went back to the beat-up Mercedes. How typical of me. The usual craving. I looked for help. I longed for someone to do the stations of the cross with me. Just like Pa. And where was Pa? Pa was in the cemetery. [1]

Father and mother are not any longer there in Chicago to help him and comfort him in difficult situations, in troublesome moments. But he acts as if they were. Nevertheless, he cannot leave his parent's place. He had left it once before, but had immediately returned. His ex-wife frequently accused him of not being adequately adapted to the urban way of life. Once, when one of his friends drowned in the Lake Michigan he had gone home to be comforted by his wife. She couldn't understand his exaggerated sentimentality about death, family and friends:

> She was asking tacitly how long I was going to sit on the chaise lounge in my socks, heart-wounded and full of obsolete sensibility. A nervous and critical person, she thought that I suffered from morbid aberrations about grief, that I was

> pre-modern or baroque about death. She often declared that I had come back to Chicago because my parents were buried here. Sometimes she said with sudden alertness, 'Ah, here comes the cemetery bit!' What's more she was often right. [2]

This sort of description of Citrine is made not only by his former wife. In fact most people he goes around with describe him in a similar way. Naomy Lutz, one of his former girl friends tells Charlie:

> 'But you people all loved each other. You were like real primitive that way. Maybe that's why my father called you greenhorns.'[3]

Naomi's father applied this emotionality to the whole Citrine family, which is not correct from what we can know about Julius, Charlie's brother. Julius is not like Charles at all. About his father and mother this might be right, although there is no further evidence about it in the book. About Charlie, however, this is definitely correct and it is confirmed by at least two other women of his - Demmie and Renata. Demmie calls him a "compulsive Heimischer type" [4] and Renata finds it "odd that an elderly fellow like [him] should be so eager to hear reminiscences of his mother." [5] Besides, Renata also accuses him of cancelling his plans in order to visit his brother who is having a heart surgery. She is sure that Julius would not have done the same for Charlie, but Charlie can do nothing but say that he has to go because Julius is after all his only brother. Renata, an extremely selfish woman who eventually destroys Charlie, admits that although Charlie is a very egocentric individual he has not learned the ABC of selfishness: Thus, she can't understand Charlie's incapacity of going to Europe with her without visiting his brother first:

> I can't figure why you're so crazy about this brother of yours. The more he puts you down, the more you worship the ground. [6]

This sort of reference to the family and its past are commonplace in the novel. Charlie's meetings with his brother are always embarassing to the latter. Charlie's memory of family matters, things lived in early childhood, like losing a tooth, or his mother's trembling Russian songs, always surprise Julius who can't even remember what his mother's face looked like. Charlie, on the other hand, cannot conceive that his own brother does not have the same metaphysical preoccupations that he is moved by, at least not before the heart surgery. After the surgery, Julius does change a little, becoming less pragmatical and more metaphysical, thus attributing a clear symbolic meaning to the heart surgery.

Remarkable, however, is Charlie's talk to his daughter. The child is asking him usual questions like what his mother did or if she was pretty or not. When the question turns into love, Charlie is overwhelmed by feeling and is incapable of controlling himself:

> 'You loved your mother?'
> Eager swelling feeling suddenly swept in. I forgot that I was talking to a child and said, 'Oh, I loved them all, terribly, abnormally. I was all torn up with love. Deep in the heart I used to cry in the sanatorium because I might never make it home and see them. I'm sure they never knew how I loved them, Mary. I had TB fever and also a love fever. A passionate little boy. At school I was always in love... I also loved Menasha the boarder and Julius, my brother, your uncle Julius.'
> 7

Citrine is obviously not only talking about his boyhood. The old Mr. Charles Citrine, the famous American writer, the winner of the Legion d'Honeur from the French government, a man with free access to the White House during the Kennedy time, this famous man still behaves like a greenhorn in a city like Chicago where the people who surround him - including his brother and women - cannot understand him. His misplacement could not be more evident. It is evident for the others and for Charlie himself. Even HE is forced to regard himself as abnormal.

Charlie's incapacity or difficulty to leave Chicago is not only cause by his family, however. His problem seems to be something more abstract like memory, an excessively good memory for an urban man. The same way he is attached to his family and friends, he is also attached to the past as a whole. As his former wife said, he was always pestering somebody with his old time memories. His heart is torn every time something that belonged to his past is destroyed. When he went to see his girl-friend's house and found out that it did not exist any longer, he felt depressed. Something else had been erased from his city, of hispast. But he could not forget it. "it was [his] own belief that without memory existence was metaphysically injured, damaged." [8] Thus, Citrine never forgets Humboldt, his blood friend, Menasha, the boarder, his parents, his women, his brother. Despite all the times he may have been disappointed with them, they are irreplaceable as all the things connected to his past.

But Charlie's attachment to the past does not prevent him from getting to know what is happening in his city and to criticize it. Because of his involvement with the Mafia, he gets to know the most astonishing sort of crimes committed in Chicago. One of them is the pounding of his car. Charlie was struck hard by this, not only because it was His car and an expensive , beautiful one, but also because he found out that he was wrong about his city:

> The attack on this car was hard on me also in a sociological sense, for I always said that I knew my Chicago and I was convinced that hoodlums, too, respected lovely automobiles. ... I said to my friend Renata that I might be knifed or stomped on an Illinois Central platform but that this car of mine would never be hurt. [9]

A new lesson was learned, and the lesson showed how much misunderstanding was guiding Charlie through the Chicago streets. He could see now that he had been a failure as "an urban psychologist." [10] What was the medicine for it? The medicine Charlie finds for it is the same which Georg Simmel, author of "The Metropolis and Mental Life", prescribes for urbanites:

> I knew that what you needed in a big American city was a deep no-affect belt, a critical mass of indifference. Theories were also useful in the building of such a protective mass. The idea anyway was to ward off trouble. [11]

These terms could be almost Simmel's. Simmel speaks of immunity - an immunity that can be obtained through intellectual predominance over the feelings and through a blasé attitude which sees the differences, the troubles, but does not allow the individual to get excessively involved with it, not to the point of becoming sick. (see p. 49 of this dissertation).

The Chicago of the Cantabile era is the same as the Chicago of the Capone era, as far as violence and corruption goes. In Humboldt's Gift this can be seen throughout the book. Chicago has not gotten better at all. It is a place where any sensible human being carries a gun in order to protect himself. It is a city where in one weekend twenty-five murders can be reported and where the real figure cannot be discovered. Chicago is also a city where everybody cheats. Ph.D.'s cheat, doctors cheat, poets cheat. All sorts of human beings are exploited in Chicago, even the weakest and most defenseless. People steal from the blind as they steal from women who in despair look for an abortion. How does Citrine react to this? He is familiar with it and, in some ways, has created his own defenses, his own immunities,(which the other protagonists do not possess) to make Chicago bearable:

> Such information about corruption, if you had grown up in Chicago, was easy to accept. It even satisfied a certain need. It harmonized with one's Chicago view of society. Naivité was something you couldn't afford. [12]

Citrine has to recognize that not being informed about these things that happen in Chicago every day made life more tolerable. "Chicago was more bearable if you didn't read the papers." [13]

So, in the sixties, Chicago is still living up to its reputation brought to the world in the Al Capone era. The police and the judges are clearly in-

volved with the Mafia and have no interest and power to jail any of them. In Spain, when Charlie asks Rinaldo Cantabile when he had gotten out of jail, Cantabile laughs at him:

> 'Are you kidding? When was I in jail? You don't know your own town at all. Any little Polish girl on confirmation knows more than you, with all your books and prizes.
> 'You had a smart lawyer.'
> 'Punishment is on the way out. The courts don't believe in it. Judges understand that no realistic sane person goes around Chicago without protection.'[14]

It is curious to notice that the only judge that Charlie mentions by name is called Urbanovich, indicating that CITY justice is being done and that, therefore, ironically, it has such peculiar traces in its determinations. If, as Claude Fischer says that, historically, "Virtue and Justice are distinctly pastoral" [15] then we can say that Mr. Urbanovitch is just another victim of the polis, (which today has reached megalomaniac dimensions) and he can, therefore, do very little besides what he does if he wants to survive in an environment which institutionalized crime and corruption. In other words: justice continues to be a pastoral thing for Saul Bellow. There is no place for justice in the city, mainly in a city like Chicago where crime strolls through the streets as if it were a distinguishable and respectable citizen.

And because crime has reached such threatening dimensions, and because people relate to each other only anonymously on the streets, attacks can be committed during day light and in front of the eyes of people:

> Last time I took a ride on Jackson El, two cats were slicing off a guy's pants pocket with razor blades while he pretended to be asleep. I was one of the twenty people watching. Couldn't do a thing.[16]

Like Mr. Sammler who sees a crime being committed, Citrine gets angry at his impotence to do something about it. He does not tell the police, however, as Mr.Sammler does. Nevertheless, this does not make them significantly different.

All it tells us is that Citrine, as a Chicagoan, might know his city a little better than Mr. Sammler, who only late in his life came to the United States and to a city with not quite the same criminal notiousness. It also tells us that this is not the type of life Bellow idealizes for the world society. But if one wants to survive in the megalopolis non-involvement, minding ones own business or pretending that one is asleep is just a vital necessity.

Chicago is also essentially an ugly city, with no attractions whatosoever for an artist who is supposed to be interested in esthetics. But as Charles' wife once told him, his "heart belong to the Old West Side gutters" [17] which, like Chicago as a whole, seems to possess nothing besides vulgarity, deadness, ugliness and danger. "Large parts of Chicago decay and fall down. Some are rebuilt, others just lie there. It's like a film montage of rise and fall and rise." [18]

The overall descriptions of the city in Humboldt's Gift confirm the previous descriptions of it in other novels. The city is still noisy, crowded, a sort of hell on the earth with its fire engines, police sirens, ambulance sirens yelping through the hot and cold Chicago nights. Besides, although the Chicago stockyards no longer exist, the old smells come back during hot summer nights and thecity "smells like stewing tripe." [19] Denise's comparison of the city with London, Paris and New York makes Chicago the worst place for a man to live in.

Nevertheless, Citrine cannot say that Chicago does not have its natural beauty, mainly if we drive along the Michigan Lake with its smooth white winter surface:

> In the matter of natural beauty Chicago had its piece of the action despite the fact that its over-all historical destiny made it materially coarse, the air coarse, the soil coarse. [20]

And what was Chicago's historical destiny? It had the destiny of becoming America's slaughter city because of the industries developed around the stock-

yards; it also developed international notoriousness with the Al Capone era whose criminality extends itself up to this day, in the 60's, when Citrine is driving along the Lake appreciating its beauty, sitting beside the mafioso, Rinaldo Cantabile, who is forcing him to follow him throughout the city. It is obvious that having this sort of person beside us, the most beautiful scenary loses its preciousness. So, the ugliness of Chicago is not only caused by its size, noise or its physical make-up, but also by its human composition and historical tradition.

If it were not enough to describe the streets as filthy, dirty, ugly, nauseating, the paradise of criminals, scoundrels and lunatics, the city is also described as being inhabited by boredom. Throughout the novel, Citrine is writing about "the history of human consciousness with special emphasis on boredom." [21] Chicago has apparently taught Citrine everything he needed to know to write about the subject. He needed no bibliography. Interminable contracts would bore him, Kierkegard, Stendhal and Baudelaire were boredom experts and he could have a great time going over his notes no boredom in the jurors' hall. In other words, life is boring and even death revealed to him "the solitude and boredom of the grave." [22] This extreme nihilism of Citrine is directly associated with his life in Chicago, a city which for him has no interest in culture whatsoever and that with its ignorance nourishes the pragmatism of the industrial society:

> My subject in the final Eisenhower years, was boredom. Chicago was the idea place in which to write my master essay - "Boredom". In Chicago you could examine the human spirit under industrialism. [23]

Citrine goes as far as trying to explain the origin of boredom. He gives two reasons for it. The first he says is the "lack of personal connection with the external world," [24] leaving it implicit that man has lost touch with nature and no longer understands the words it speaks or the meanings it conveys. Science with its rationality does not perceive the "spirit" that is in nature things and therefore "the moon the stars will speak to nonastronomers in spite of their ig-

norance of science."[25]

The second cause of boredom is man's "self-conscious ego."[26] It is this self-consciousness of man which makes him proud and detached from the whole "organized movement of life."[27] Therefore, man, most certainly the urban man, as seen by Georg Simmel, becomes immune to all sufferings, to society, to politics, unaffeted by anything whatsoever. It is clear that Bellow is directing these words against the urban man's way of life which according to all Bellowian protagonists is becoming more and more impersonal, more and more affected by the "psychic overload" which tends to make man more rational and less sentimental/natural in order to protect his sanity.

But boredom can also be a powerful "instrument of social control,"[28] especially if associated with terror. Stalin and Hitler are, according to Citrine, the best example of this. Both of them would bore their guests to death while choosing which one would be the next to be shot. But if boredom is especially effective with terror, isn't Chicago again THE perfect place for exerting this effectiveness? The threat which follows Citrine wherever he goes, and the threat which follows the urban man in all of Bellow's books answers the question. Isn't Bellow suggesting that modern, industrial society, is being controlled by the dictatorship of boredom and fear? There seems to be no starting and no terminal point for boredom. It starts tediously before birth and it continues even more tediously into the eternity of the tomb. And through all this, are the monstrosities of life, the fear and the anxieties, the mutual human exploitations - all increased a millionfold in the urban setting.

Despite his family attachment and his attachment to past experiences, Charlie does not feel completely at home in the place he considers his own. His city seems to be always trying to get him either through its judges, through its criminals, through its women and even through his friends. The judge Urbanovitch simply accepts anything his ex-wife Denise asks from Charlie; his friend, Thaxter, with whom Charlie was going to start a Journal, The Ark, also puts him in difficult financial situations without actually getting at anything; the Mafia, through Can-

tabile, is always persuing him and even his close friend Humboldt is capable of dishonestly getting money out of him. In all these situations, while feeling that urbanites, in general, are somehow after him, Charles feels that he is an outsider, that he does not belong to the city as he had always thought he did:

> And suddenly Chicago was not my town at all. It was totally unrecognizable. I merely imagined that I had grown up here, that I knew the place, that I was known by it, In Chicago my personal aims were bunk, my outlook a foreign ideology.[29]

Even Humboldt had called Charlie a foreigner a couple of times, insisting that he was not a "real American" [30] because of his abnormal gratitude in his relations to people. Even to the bohemian Humboldt, they seemed awkward for a man like Citrine who had grown up in Chicago.

One of Charlie's girlfriends, Naomi Lutz, whom he meets many years later, now married to another man, says that she had been in love with Charlie, but that she decided to get married to a "regular kind of Chicago person" [31] because she never understood what Charlie was talking about - which is another indication that his foreigness has its roots in a quite distant past and that he remained faithful even to <u>this</u> past of his.

This feeling of foreigness which Charlie goes through does not, however, mean that he does not perceive/ feel the city. The city is always in him, although its ways are not necessarily his, although their ways are frequently incompatible. Neverhteless, Charlie is highly sensitive to everything that happens in Chicago and mainly to what Chicago does to him, an almost inseparable part of its past and present. Chicago acts upon his psyche in a similar way as that described by Georg Simmel in his "The Metropolis and Mental Life". The "psychic overload" to which Simmel refers is supposedly caused by the multitude of decisions that urbanites have to make in face of the enormous amount of new situations encountered in their daily life in cities. This need to decide and to face, says Simmel, creates stress, strains os all sorts

and irritations. Here we should perhaps recall Tommy Wilhelm who expressed these tensions in words when he said that in the urban environment everything meant a little strain for him. Similarly, Chicago acts upon Charlie who frequently falls into his "Chicago states":

> My mind was in one of its Chicago states. How should I describe this phenomenon? In a Chicago state I infinitely lack something, my heart swells, I feel a tearing eagerness. The sentient part of the soul wants to express itself. There are some of the symptoms of an overdose of caffeine. At the same time I have a sense of being the instrument of external powers. [32]

Chicago, therefore, although it belongs to Charlie's past, cannot be a place for fulfillment. There is always something missing. Despite the variety of options it offers, the soul cannot find an echo for its desires. The "Chicago states" are definitely unnatural because in them the individual, victimized or dominated by external powers, can express nothing but his anguish and discontent.

Charlie's feeling of foreigness and incompatibility can also be seen in his attitude against money and against the pragmatism of American society, of which Chicago is a book, "a mysterious book of urban America" [33] in which it is possible to "read something about modern life." [34] Like in all the previous novels, Bellow again presents us a protagonist who, though he happens to be rich, does not like to make money nor think about it. The money that he has made itself with his success and with no effort on his part. His disgust for the idea of money, together with the female voracity, is what eventually makes him lose everything. Charlie feels guilty for the very fact that he has money and, therefore, has to think about it. Money seems to make people pursue him in almost all situations. The very idea of true friendship can be questioned on this basis. His wives and girl-friends, his friends, even Humboldt, and Rinaldo Cantabile - all of them have a clear monetary interest in their relations with Citrine. Charlie becomes, then, an anguished person, because

somehow these situations force him into thinking about money, which he thinks is degrading:

> ... I actually think too much about money. It's no good trying to conceal it. It's there and it's base. [35]

These ideas are obviously not new after the analysis of six other novels. It should be remembered that even Mr. Sammler's Planet contains this notion. Mr. Sammler simply refuses to touch the money his daughter finds hidden in their house. For him it was also base to behave like his grandnephew, who could hardly think about anything else besides money. This very same behaviour forms a pattern which holds true for all Bellowian protagonists, indistinctly. In Humboldt's Gift, specifically, Charlie religiously follows his bosom friend, Humbold's advice. After Charlie's Broadway Hit, Humboldt had warned him not to "be taken in by the Broadway glamour and the commercial stuff." [36] Humboldt always wanted money and spent most of his life sueing people in order to get it. Nevertheless, he insisted on saying that money should mean the freedom of thinking and writing what our heart tells us and not what commerce tells us is more profitable. The interesting aspect of it all is that Charlie has money and thinks it is base to mention it. While other writers in the novel see it sd their freedom, Charlie sees it as a hindrance, as a nuisance. Also in this respect Charlie was not a Chicagoan. He was able to perfectly distinguish between love and money, while most Chicagoans, even his bloodfriend Humboldt, are not:

> I was perfectly aware that in business Chicago it was a true sign of love when people wanted to take you into money-making schemes. [37]

Charlie is irritated by this monetary side that "love" is taking in the American mind. That is why he says that love, "at this particular career of mankind, expressed itself in American promotional ideas and commercial deals."[38]

A world in which love is something to be bought, where a Ph.D. thesis is something to be bought, where wives want nothing from you except the last cent you have in your pocket - this world is not a world where man can achieve fulfillment and happiness. The world became far too pragmatic and any sensible man should try to find a way of "getting around pragmatic America" [39] which, because it had an "empty continent to subdue" [40] never concentrated on philosophy or art, but only on the practical ways of asserting its dominion over the land.

Finally, still regarding money and pragmatism, we should mention that Chicagoans in general, starting with the judge Urbanovitch, are not sensitive persons as Citrine is. The problem, however, which stresses Charlie's foreigness and incompatibility is that urbanites cannot believe in the sensitivity of a man whose income is as high as Charlie's:

> Sensitivity in a mature Chicagoan, if genuine, was a treatable form of pathology, but a man whose income passed two hundred thousand dollars in his peak years was putting you on about sensitivity. Sensitivity plants didn't make that kind of dough. [41]

Only a greenhorn, only an immature person could be possessed by sensitivity in a city like Chicago, with its pragmatism, rationality and rudeness. Charlie proves to be an abnormal man in a normal city, although he does seem to show some glimpses of normality when he proves to have his "troubles of a Chicago nature" [42] in his relationship with the anthroposophist, Dr. Scheldt, who introduced him to the mysteries of the spirit, and at which he is tempted to react in the ordinary Chicagoan way, despite the seriousness of the questions.

After such a trajectory through unpleasant excitements, it is no wonder that Citrine decides to accept Renata's (his new girlfriend) suggestion to leave Chicago, which , as I said before, like the U.S.A. in general, becomes synonymous of culturelessness, ignorance, criminality, filth, and the like. The dislike for Chicago and by extension the whole U.S.A. can be best expressed

in Renata's couplet about the Chicago airport:

'Without O'Hare, it's sheer despair.'[43]

Charlie sees, then, no other way out of his predicament than leaving the U. S.A. Similarly to Augie March, Joseph and Henderson he leaves his nation; similarly to Herzog he leaves his city, although without moving to a pastoral scenary as Herzog does; different from Tommy Wilhelm, Herzog, Asa and Augie, he never strongly expresses his wish for living in the country, although this can be easily inferred from his systematic opposition and criticism to the city ways. Since urbanization is a matter of degree (i.e., the more people a given city has the more urban it is said to be,* and vice versa, we can safely say that a tiny part of Charlie's satisfaction during his stay in Madrid is also due to the lower degree of urbanization of this city. But Madrid contributes more to Charlie's satisfaction because it is in another nation where he feels quite at home, mainly because the Spaniards "resembled [his] parents and [his] immigrant aunts and cousins,"[44] and also because the American justice and American women and the American Mafia are not after him. Temporarily he is moneiless but pleased in his isolation. But then the Mafia comes in, Humboldt's gift comes in, money comes in and he goes back to Chicago for the exhumation and reburial of his old friend Humboldt and his mother. Old age is coming and with it death is approaching. It might finally be that death and life are not the threatening boredom Citrine had so far thought them to be. In the midst of death and in the midst of the City there is a flower blooming as a sign of hope, of continuity, of a new beginning:

> 'What's this, Charlie, a spring flower?'
> 'It is. I guess it is going to happen after all. On a warm day like this everything looks ten times deader.'
> 'So it's a little flower,' Menasha said. Here's another, but what do you suppose they are called, Charles?
> 'Search me,' I said. I'm a city boy myself. They must be crocuses.'[45]

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* see Claude Fischer's The Urban Experience, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., New York, 1976 - p. 26.

Humboldt was exhumed and reburied and finally achieved the recognition he had always dreamed of. For Citrine this is also the sign of a new hope for his own life, although he plans to "take up a new kind of life" [46] in Europe. What this new life is going to be like isn't easy to know. All we can say is that he won't continue in the United States, that he won't admit any sort of contact with Rinaldo Cantabile any longer, that he won't write commercially and finally that he won't waste any of his time "discussing contracts options procedures and sums of money." [47] From now on he is going to concentrate on higher things, on the things of the spirit, something which the modern man and especially the urban man Bellow describes has lost or at least replaced by the historical pragmatism of American civilization.

9. TYING THINGS TOGETHER

From what we have seen in our analyses of the seven novels, the citification of man and humanity is not a pleasant thing for Bellow's protagonists. It is simply impossible for them to live a pleasant and happy life in the city. The citiscape itself, its mores and minds are totally unbearable for any truly sane man. The solution is to flee, or at least to try to. And almost all Bellowian protagonists do so: Joseph goes into the army and to Europe; Augie does the very same thing and ends his trajectory wandering in a European rural landscape; Herzog moves out of the city and goes to live in his country house, among pastoral nineteenth century spirits; Tommy Wilhelm dreams of getting the money he needs to clear out of New York and gain his peace; Eugene Henderson goes into the wilderness of Africa in order to be able to be reborn; Charles Citrine, the hero of Humboldt's Gift, will end up in the European countryside if nothing goes wrong with him once more, and, finally, Mr. Sammler is dreaming of a new society on the moon, a new world without the vices and mistakes of the past, a new promised land for humanity, away from this planet, away from our earthly cities. Even though Asa Leventhal, the protagonist of The Victim, remains in New York, his anti-urbanism is enough to lead us to believe that, as soon as he can, he will move out of New York, probably joining his brother who has already done what he had always wished to do. It can be said, therefore, that the Bellowian novel follows a basic pattern which tells us that the protagonists hardly ever stay in their original urban environment, and always dream of moving into a more rural or less urbanized setting.

But the trajectory of Bellow's protagonists through their cities tells us that physical, social and psychological contexts closely relate to each other and that this inter-relation points to the incompatibility between city and protagonists, which the latter ones try to come to terms with through an eventual avoidance of the "citiness" that surrounds them. Interestingly enough, Bellow inverts the traditional westward solution of other American writers. His char-

acters move east, to Europe, to Africa - as if Bellow were suggesting that our way out is in the roots/ in the womb of civilization.*

Before avoiding the city, however, the protagonists have to feel their way into it in order to decide that it is no place worth of living, that it is no place for love, care and dedication. All sorts of disagreeable experiences have to be gone through. No matter how you approach it, Bellow's city is objectionable. The physical context is disgusting, the sociological context tells us about the wrong direction the city is moving in, and the psychological context tells us that the adaptations needed in order to survive go against the protagonists inner beliefs and, therefore, demand their vehement refusal.

The first thing that calls our attention in Bellow's physical city is its dirt and filth. Streets filled with dog-shit do not allow the soul an unpreoccupied walk; the black dust in the air, on things and trees tell you that the world is being poisoned by chemicals and industrial pollution and that only artificial flowers can now grow; filth abounds in the streets and the West Side gutters remind you that Poles, Puerto Ricans and who knows who else will have to experience its desolateness, feeling no pride whatsoever in having belonged to them. Furthermore, the city also smells bad. The Chicago slaughter houses will never be forgotten. Even though they no longer exist, in warm Chicago nights, their stink comes always back. Besides, the city wastes, the sewage, the industrial pollutants - all contributes to your assurance that the air you are breeding is city air and, consequently, lacking purity. The only feeling that can remain, therefore, is a feeling of uneasiness, disgust, worry and impotence.

The city also touches us in other ways. The noise of sirens, the buzzing of the crowds, the rattling of the traffic - everything makes you feel that somebody is being caught and beaten up somewhere, that people are moving side

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* Mr. Sammler and Asa Leventhal are the only two exceptions. Both stay in New York: Sammler with his mind directed towards the moon and Asa concentrated on the birth of a new human being. Asa is also concerned about his brother's family which has just left New York. As Asa says, New York is no place to bring up one's children - a clear indication that he will leave the city as soon as he can.

by side without knowing each other and, because of it, pushing you toward death, or finally reminding you that the world cannot stand still for one single second; it always has to move, on and on, on and on. The crowds remind you of a story about hell, the sirens let you know that another life was taken or is in danger - everything makes you believe that hell does not have to be searched - we are living right in it.

The facilities that the city offers are generally affected by the distortions of the social context. Only the rich and the very rich have easy access to them. The university costs money and so the Augies and Padillas of the world have to steal books and sell them in order to get some extra income; You can't get into a hospital in an emergency unless you exhibit (like Augie March) fine high-class-looking clothes, and the police's protection is clearly given to those who own it because of their economic power. The refusal of money/ power and success that pervades the protagonists' minds is, therefore, also a refusal of the cannibalistic implications of money success and power.

Finally, the physical urban context reveals ecological violence towards the city dwellers. The heat is hellish and unbearable; the long winters are dull, wet, melacholic and ineffably cold. Even the skies seem to be hanging upon the city as a threatening/ oppressive burden that has to be carried by humanity. The cityscape definitely offers no reason for joy, nothing to make a man happy.

The urban social context in Bellow's novels took into considerations the primary groups, i.e., family, community, neighborhood; the secondary groups, i.e., the formal associations like labor unions, army and school; the working situations, the ethnic compositions, the social mobility, the urban variety, criminality and inter-individual relations in general - all of which are similarly described by Louis Wirth's urban sociology.

As we have seen, Louis Wirth describes urban inter-individual relations as being essentially secondary, i.e., impersonal/ segmental. The urban individual essentially relates to other individuals in one single direction. The relation

can be an employer-employee relations, a seller-buyer, a doctor-patient relation, but it hardly ever goes beyond that. The relationship occurs and remains mostly between anonymous individuals who do not try or even wish to get involved with each other more deeply. What we have attempted to do is show that this is not what the Bellowian protagonists do. Joseph cannot believe that a former Party comrade can pretend that they are strangers. Later on, when referred to by his first name at the bank, he feels so at ease that he opens up too much and is turned down by the bank's vice-president. Asa Leventhal goes much further. His incapacity to develop secondary relations reaches such a point that he is capable of bringing his ghost-like companion - an almost complete stranger - into his apartment, just because he feels he owes the other guy something. Similarly Augie March does not only work for the Einhorns. He actually becomes a son. He does not only work at Mr. Rengling's shop, he in fact lives at their home and is temporarily adopted as their son. Tommy Wilhelm also leaves his job because he cannot understand that the enterprise can see him only as a function, when he feels he belongs to the firm. Moses Herzog recovers his sanity in an environment where anonymity is impossible and where the neighbors are known by their names. Charles Citrine is such an emotional type that even Rinaldo Cantabile, a Chicago mafioso, is able to conquer part of his heart for a meaningful period of time. Needless to say, therefore, Bellow's city is inhabited by protagonists who do not adapt to its ways. Behaving like the city asks them to would mean knowing people only partially, one-sidedly. It would also mean caring less and accepting individual non-involvement, even in criminal situations as the one described in Humboldt's Gift, where under the eyes of a little crowd, two criminals peacefully perform their crimes and remain unpunished (see chapter 8 of this dissertation). And not caring for the other guy makes the Bellowian protagonist feel guilty - a guilt which results from the conflict between the urban environment and the coercive rural mind. Nevertheless, it can also very easily be traced back to the guilt brought to the Christian world by the Jewish "Christ-killers."

Furthermore, accepting secondary relations as a basis for life implies the acceptance of general distrust and suspicion. The actual distance that separates individuals is proportional to the suspicion that exists between them, Bellow seems to be saying in The Victim, when Asa Leventhal is suspicious even of his own family. But man should trust man, and because this is Asa's rural belief, and because he insists on sticking to it, here is another source of his guilt, a guilt that according to him all urbanites should feel.

Here we once again identify another pattern in Bellow's novels: protagonists are incapable of developing secondary relations in the urban environment and, when they think that they can, they feel they are collaborating with a system which is all wrong, oppressive and mean and, therefore, they feel guilty.

The city in Bellow's novels is excessively large for a holistic, rural type of community to develop. Saul Bellow does mention the existence of concentrations within the city of different ethnic groups. There is a Puerto Rican ghetto, a Jewish ghetto, a Polish ghetto. But even these concentrations, which in sociology are also described as "urban villages", do not form communities. Some community life did exist during the protagonists' childhood. There is some indication of that in The Adventures of Augie March, although to their unhappiness it becomes meaningless very early in their lives. Bellow is saying, like Louis Wirth and his followers, that the city weakens the community ties because people have to work to make a living, and, in the city, this means having to search for work where there are offers. Frequently, these offers are not within the ghetto and the characters have to move out of home as did Augie March, Asa Leventhal and all others.

For the very same reason and also because the increasing number of people in a city does not allow us to know each other personally, the neighborhood relations are affected and practically extinguished, questioning as well the traditional creed of Christian society: "love thy neighbor as thyself." Rural neighbors know each other by name, usually visit each other and are mutually helpful in dif-

ficulties. Neighbors in rural areas are not unfrequently as close as or even closer than relatives. What happens in Saul Bellow's books is that neighborhood in the rural sense has practically disappeared. There are some rural traces in The Adventures of Augie March, when their neighbors take care of Augie's blind mother for some days, before she is taken to the asylum. Usually, however, there is not much neighborliness in the lives of Saul Bellow's characters. The Victim clearly illustrates that neghbors are inexistent or regarded only as a last resource. During the illness of one of Asa's nephews, his sister-in-law calls him for help. They could not be more distant from each other. They barely know each other's name, and yet he is called and not the neighbors with whom they have been sharing the very same building, possibly, for years. This confirms recent statistical information that shows that city dwellers still recur a great deal to family in situations like death or illness, indicating that the traditional roles of neighborhood do no longer exist, dismantling, ipso facto, significantly the traditional community life. This dismantlement of neighborhood achieves its highest degree in Seize the Day, where the main characters, Dr. Adler and his son, Tommy Wilhelm live in a hotel, the very symbol of contemporary nomadism/ mobility/ "deneighborization" and "decommunification."

The same is true for the Bellowian and for the city family in general. The main characteristic of the urban family is its small size. Kingsley Davis [1] tells us that in 1930 urban women had 41% less children than rural women. The usual typical urban family is said to have very few children. The Bellowian family has, in fact, never more than four children, and in this sense, sizewise, it is also clearly urban.

Another characteristic of the urban family is nuclearity. The urban family, in general, is said to consist of father, mother and children. In rural areas there is a greater interpenetration of different generations and more distant relatives. In this respect, Bellow's family is also clearly urban, for

there is hardly any sort of interrelation between distant kins or even with grandfathers, grandmothers, except in Mr. Sammler's Planet, where the rural-minded and unripe Dr. Gruner brings his uncle Arthur Sammler to the United States. Generally, however, this is not the rule, although this is the very wish of all Bellowian protagonists, and thus another reason for their incompatibility with the urban milieu. Bellow's protagonists would prefer to live in an environment where fathers and sons live closer together and see each other more often. And this place, according to a national survey in the U. S. A. (Klatzky, 1971) is the countryside.

Urban sociology also notes that city dwellers divorce more easily.[2] In this sense, too, Bellow's family is urban. His protagonists are usually wifeless and frequently womanless. Joseph, although he "gigolôs" his wife, does not care a damn about her. There is no communication whatsoever between them and both seem to believe tha Joseph's going into the army is actually the best thing he can do for both of them; Asa Leventhal's story takes place during his wife's visit to her parents in another city. Although Asa seems to be reconciled with the world with the coming birth of his first child, during the story he frequently hints that it is more pleasant to be without a wife; Augie March is constantly being deceived by women. He actually goes through a number of divorces and ends up in Paris with an unfaithful wife; Tommy Wilhelm is divorced and being cruelly exploited by his former wife; In Herzog, the protagonist loses his wife to his best friend who was secretly cuckolding him; old Mr. Sammler is a widower full of sexual fantasies and misconceptions regarding females, and finally, Charles Citrine, the hero of Humboldt's Gift, decides to leave for Spain in order to escape his former wife, who keeps suing him until he can stand it no longer. Ironically, he goes to Spain with another woman, Renata, who exploits him in an even more terrible way: she runs away after some days and leaves her son with him.(Renata, significantly means "reborn", suggesting that his reborn wife could not act otherwise.) It is, therefore, an obvious conclu-

sion that, also as far as the number of divorces are concerned, Bellow's family tends more toward urban than toward rural environments.

There is a correlation between the size of a community and the number of people living in families. The general consensus [3] is that the larger the community the more likely it is to find a meaningful number of individuals living in situations which are not family homes. Thus, we meet the lonely bachelor, the student that shares a room with other collegues, the immigrant that is looking for a job and temporarily lives in a hostel, and so on. In Bellow's novels similar housing situations are frequently found. Joseph hardly goes out of his room where he is writing his journal and brooding about life. He clearly resembles a university student sunk in his books; Augie March has no definite place we or he can call his own. He is a wanderer from the beginning to the end of the novel; Tommy Wilhelm had been a salesman and used to travel most of the time. While the novel lasts, he is staying at his father's hotel. Eugene Henderson most of the time keeps moving around the African wilderness, and Citrine also ends up in a poor hostel in Madrid, only to be taken out of it by Humboldt's gift. Anyway, temporarily, there is no way of knowing where he lives. All we know are his plans of moving to a quiet European countryside setting. The housing situations, therefore, tell us not only about the mobility of Bellow's protagonists, but they also demonstrate the dispersal of the individual around the megalopolitan environment and his disjunction from family. It is, then, needless to say that it is most unlikely to find members of an extended family sharing a common household as it is more common in very rural settings. Mr. Sammler's Planet is again an exception to the rule and can be very easily understood in the context of Dr. Grüner's rural mind. But, I repeat, this is not the rule. Dr. Gruner is the embodiment of the protagonists' wishes with the difference that he does in New York what others want to do out of the city.

The message conveyed to us by Bellow's family is that it is moving towards, and actually undergoing, a fast process of total dissolution. While sociology says that primary groups are being weakened, Bellow is saying, more

radically, that they are facing extermination, that there is no hope whatsoever for them to survive in the city. Isn't this a logical explanation of why Dr. Gruner dies in Mr. Sammler's Planet? Doesn't it also mean that his rural dreams are dying? Isn't it also meaningful that he dies in the city while all other protagonists, who think alike and have similar dreams of family closeness, community life and pastoral, bucolic environments, remain alive and achieve sanity and new hope in their search for, and move into, the country? Bellow's proposal seems logical and clear: it is impossible to recover family closeness in the city. It is not just a matter of gathering one's family as Dr. Gruner wants it. If it were that easy, Augie, Wilhelm, Joseph, Herzog or any other protagonist would not hesitate in creating their own family community in the city. Things are, however, complicated by other aspects of the social context, and personal beliefs, work, mobility, variety, heterogeneity, etc. - all these are variables which act upon different individuals and help to make them different, even though they are brothers. These uncontrollable variables are, for example, responsible for the varying kinds of loyalties found in the same family. This would explain, for instance, why Max Leventhal married a Roman Catholic, non-Jewish woman, while Asa would have never admitted such a marriage for himself.

Furthermore, gathering the family is not enough because a group's loyalties can also conflict with personal beliefs. In this sense, getting together with the family requires some homogeneity from its members. Bellow's families are visibly heterogeneous. Usually the brothers follow different directions. It is common that one of the brothers rebels against the establishment. And the rebel is always the protagonist. The non-protagonist brother is generally the defender of the establishment values. He is usually a pragmatic, success-minded materialist. In other words, the non-protagonist brother is the one more adapted to the urban milieu and, therefore, achieves financial success and political power. If the protagonists wish to live with their brothers as a family, they

have to resemble them, share their interests, become cold-hearted, dress like they do, tread on people like they do, exploit people or buy and bribe the police like they do. But they cannot act that way. These city ways are not to be agreed with. Bellow's protagonists, therefore, choose to leave the city and dream of recreating, in the country, the family, the community, the neighborliness that the metropolises have extinguished.

Still another vital element in Bellow's city is crime. Criminality is present in all of Bellow's novels. These crimes go from simple cheating, to stealing, robbing, torturing and killing. The most illustrative examples are those found in <u>The Adventures of Augie March</u>, <u>Herzog</u>, <u>Seize the Day</u> and <u>Humboldt's Gift</u>. Augie March actually directly participates in a number of criminal practices. He learns how to steal electric power, how not to pay for phone calls, how to cheat the insurance companies, how to bring people illegally across the border. Herzog is also profoundly shocked by the death of a little boy, violently tortured and beaten up to death. In <u>Seize the Day</u> we have Dr. Tamkin - a pseudo-psychologist, a pseudo-economist, a pseudo-poet who manages to swindle the last money out of Tommy Wilhelm's pocket and invests it in the commodities market. Finally, <u>Humboldt's Gift</u> is the most violent description of Chicago, as far as crime is concerned. The city seems to be inhabited by criminals of all sorts. Violent deaths are reported - all of them unpunished by the authorities, police and judges, who are in all cases owned by the "mafias" of the city.

But Bellow's city is not imaginary in this respect. Sociology demonstrates that indeed "it is a reality that virtually all rates of crime in the United States increase with the size of the community." [4] And Fischer* goes further when he says, almost like Charles Citrine, that "because people do not report most crimes, the actual rates are usually two or more times greater than indicated in the figures." [5] It is, therefore, part of the urban experience to co-

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*Fischer also indicates that this is not true for other cities of the western world as far as violent crimes are concerned. Crimes involving death are as common in rural as in urban areas, suffering no visible effect of urbanism. As Fischer clearly indicates: "Ninety percent of homicides occur between relatives or friends; in about half the rapes, the victim knew her attacker by sight." This

habit with crime, "to feel anxiety about crime."[6] This anxiety is expressed in the carefulness of certain characters like Mr. Frink in Dangling Man or in the nervous uneasiness of characters like Tommy Wilhelm, Arthur Sammler and Asa Leventhal.

In Bellow's city, violence has to be expected from all sides as well. It may come from the Mafia, from the judges, from the police, from death squads, gangs, negroes and even from within one's own family. There is, for Bellow's protagonists no visible reason why they should stay in the city, with its corruption, threats and institutionalized violence. An interesting question that cannot be answered is if Bellow, while writing Humboldt's Gift, was aware of the fact that only in America there is a great correlation between urbanism and violent crime - crimes involving homicide and rape. Humboldt's Gift was published in 1976, while the statistics just mentioned date from 1969. Familiar with these data or not, Bellow certainly reflects his awareness that the American city tends to be the most violent city in the Western hemisphere. Another indication that Bellow might have been familiar with this sociological information is his insistance on typically presenting urban crimes, in his novels. It was an English soldier who once said that the rural, small town criminal is different from the urban one. While the former acts occasionally, the latter is a full time professional. Wirth, Park and Fischer would certainly agree on that. Fischer, however, for the first time applies his theory of the "critical mass" also to the explanation of crime, indicating that the larger the city the more probable it is for individuals of similar interests to get together, even criminals. Bellow's awareness of this social aspect seems to lie in his insistance on bringing in the Mafia and other gangs in his books - criminals that make a living on the proceeds of their ill-doings.

...rule is, however, broken in the U.S.A. where violent crime is also higher in the city than in rural areas.

All sociological literature is unanimous in recognizing that urban society is more prone to crimes in general. Robert Ezra Park and Louis Wirth attributed it to the weakening of family links, community links, neighborhood links, anonymity and to the general incapacity of following a common set of values applicable to all urban dwellers, described as being rather heterogeneous ethnically, economically, culturally and socially. In such an environment the degree of coerciveness becomes so low that the individual is very easily led to anti-social behaviour.

This theory is contested by the subcultural school of urban sociology. This school explains the higher rates of crime based on the notion of critical masses, as explained before. There is no relation between the weakening of family links and community links and the rate of crime. It is not very hard to say which theory applies better to Bellow's novels, although it should not be forgotten that Bellow is not trying to give us sociological explanations. He is, above all, an artist painting the city, and his painting contains images and not explanations. And the images that we get of Bellow's city are images which tie together crimes, loss of family, loss of community, secondary relations, heterogeneity, variety, mobility, working situations, the deterioration of neighborhood, the spreading of friends and also the physical city. Living in the city is, therefore, essentially a loss of traditional, rural, romantic values. Thus, it would be difficult to attribute subcultural views to Bellow's novels. For his protagonists, I repeat, the urban experience is a loss and not a gain.

Bellow's objections towards the city, as a physical context, are directly attributed to dirt, noise, bad smells, crowds, traffic, limited access to facilities and the ecological violence expressed through heat, cold and the threatening and heavy colour of the skies.

The city, as a sociological context, is accused of making man impersonal, formal, non-involved in his inter-individual relations. The urban community is dead, the urban family is undergoing its dissolution and moving towards death,

the neighborhood relations are already practically extinguished, disengaging itself from its traditional, rural and small-town roles. Friends are spread all over the city and can hardly be seen; heterogeneity and variety put inumerous mores side by side, breaking the wholistic community still further apart; mobility, a natural consequence of the city which imports the greatest part of its labor and which forces individuals to abandon their families in search for available work, is creating an uprooted, nomadic man without any sense of belonging. Finally, Bellow blackens the image of the city with his powerful descriptions and references to a variety of violent and non-violent crimes.

Having described the city as a social and physical contexts, and having seen what the city does to primary groups, let us sum up the general profile of the urban individual and tie together the main ideas presented along the individual chapters of this dissertation.

Bellow's protagonists suffer from at least the following ailments: psychic overload, stress, nervous tension, rootlessness, loneliness, powerlessness or impotence, distrust, suspicion and disorientation. The best example of psychic overload, nervous tension and stress is Tommy Wilhelm. For him every little detail in the city is a strain. In the same way, Moses Herzog has his very sanity put in doubt because of the inumerous details of city life, judges, lawyers, intellectuals, university, traffic and so on.

The feeling of rootlessness is actually not best expressed by a protagonist but by a secondary character in Mr. Sammler's Planet, Wallace. This character embodies the authentic urbanite, who, although uprooted is perfectly happy in the urban milieu. Wallace says that he has replaced his roots by wires, but that even he himself, with his wires, is outdated. The real thing, he explains, is telemetry, cybernetics - suggesting that it allows man a lot more freedom of movement, without forcing a man to remain tied up to the soil, to buildings, or snail-like to one's shell. This is the sort of attitude that

makes characters like Augie March, Asa, Sammler, Joseph, Tommy Wilhelm and Citrine sick. For them their place of birth, their city, the house of their parents, the house of a girl friend are extremely important, although they recognize that their is not much time to love such things in the city, because most of it is torn down even before one gets to thinking about loving them. Therefore, when we say that Bellow's protagonists suffer from rootlessness, we are referring to the fact that they wish to belong to and yet feel that they do not fit in the environment they are in. Put another way, the protagonists' roots find no adequate soil where to fix themselves and flourish. In this sense, the rootlessness is more a city ailment than an individual ailment, with the peculiar difference that authentic urbanites, like Wallace and Dr. Adler, do not see it that way. For authentic urbanites, rootlessness is a liberating force and not an ailment.

The feeling of loneliness is best expressed in Herzog, when Moses tells us of city dwellers that, feeling unbearably lonely, decide to call the police and ask them to please touch them, talk to them, put them in jail with somebody. With this example, Bellow seems to be willing to extrapolate the loneliness of his protagonists, who belong to no community, to no family, to no fathers and mothers, who cannot stay close to their brothers, whose friends are hardly met, who are abandoned by their wives and have no contact with their own children, if they happen to have them. In other words, the protagonists feel stripped bare of everything a man needs for a fully enjoyable life.

Powerlessness and impotence are directly relatable to all Bellowian protagonists. They constantly show their awareness that they are living in an environment which dictates what they have to do and what they cannot do. The city is an inexorable moving gear that forces you to follow its pace or throws you out of its privileged boundaries. "Beggars can't be choosers" says Joseph's niece to him. Beggars never belonged to the privileged boundaries of the system by their very nature of beggars. Thus, refusing to accept success, money and power,

i.e., refusing to become a part of the system - they feel powerless or impotent in face of the very system they are willingfully refusing. It is this consciousness of Bellow's protagonists that makes them authentic to the reader and deserving of his sympathy. Thus, the powerlessness in face of the environment becomes also a symbol of individual strength, for the Bellowian protagonist forces us to ask ourselves, what after all does being strong mean, surrendering to the city ways or fighting and denying these ways? The answer that Bellow gives points to the latter. The protagonists go through difficult situations because of these refusals. Augie could have found a home very soon, had he accepted his brother's urban ways. Joseph would not have to remain living in the abominable conditions if he had not systematically refused any sort of money from his rich brother, and Tommy Wilhelm would not have suffered so much with New York if he were not constantly dreaming about the peaceful country life. But, as I said, the reader feels sympathy towards these sufferers of Bellow, because he knows they are being sincere. We feel their impotence against the city but we also feel in them the power of the conscious objector, the power of a Thoreau, in jail, asking Emerson what he was doing out of jail, the power of a Sartre refusing the noble prize in order to accuse the bourgeois forms of recognition of individual value. Similarly, Bellow's protagonists systematically refuse to "pay their taxes" and "receive their prizes."

The element "suspicion" and "distrust" must also be looked at in a roundabout way. It is not exactly that Bellow's protagonists are themselves essentially suspicious, but that they are not suspicious enough for urbanites in general. The National Opinion Research Center Social Survey in 1972 indicates that a meaningfully larger group of people feel that they will be taken advantage of by other people if the chance happens to occur.[7] The problem with Bellow's protagonists is that they sometimes don't know if they should trust people or if they should not. The clearest example, I repeat, is Asa Leventhal. Asa Leventhal simply doesn't know what to do about Kirby Allbee. Is he right in

what he is saying or is he just trying to take advantage of him? The doubt remains till almost the very end when Asa decides that Allbee is actually taking advantage of him, and kicks him out of his home. But before this happens, Asa is terribly tortured with the idea that Kirby Allbee might not be lying and that therefore he should do something for him. The end of the novel seems to suggest that his dedication was not in vain, for Allbee is recovered and Asa does not feel guilty any longer.

Still in The Victim there are clear indications that Asa's guilt also stems from his Jewishness. His relation to his brother's mother-in-law - an Italian Roman-Catholic - indicates that he suspects that she considers him a Christ-killer and, therefore, somebody of impure blood. But, as I noted before in chapter three, we cannot forget that Max, Asa's brother, is also a Jew and yet he is able to marry to a Roman Catholic woman. He also affirms that the old woman, contrary to what Asa thinks, is greatly attached to him, clearly showing the lack of basis of Asa's Jewish suspicions. What happens with Asa is that he is extremely attached to the past, to tradition, to his parents' Jewishness and is, therefore, unable to be as tolerant towards other forms of behaviour, projecting simultaneously this incapacity of his and these biases of his upon the others.

Tommy Wilhelm also exhibits some suspicion in many moments of his life. His life, however, is a mountain of mistakes not because of his suspicions but because he was never quite sure whether his suspicions had a basis. This uncertainty of his is what makes him become the victim of characters like Maurice Venice and Tamkin. He knows that he could not trust these people, but then, that is what everybody says, that is what Dr. Adler says, that is what the urban environment tells you. Tommy, however, cannot follow these ways, because they are not his. He refuses to play the urban game. The result is his failure in the city and his constant reassurance that he has to move out of it. The same thing happens with Joseph, Augie March, Charles Citrine, Herzog or any other Bellowian protagonist. Incapable of developing secondary relations, they are incapable of

fully adopting suspicion as a pertinent part of their lives.

I have repeatedly pointed out that Bellow's protagonist is misplaced in the city because he is unable to do what urbanites in general do. It is about time to bring these urbanite traits together in order to build up our final conclusion about the protagonist's misplacement.

Louis Wirth, in his "Urbanism as a Way of Life" and Georg Simmel in his "The Metropolis and Mental Life" speak about the tactics which urbanites use when facing the urban way of life. Both speak of the immunity which urbanites are able to produce with their blasé attitude towards the world in general, other people, other things, other behaviours, other novelties. It is this blasé attitude which, according to these authors, make urbanites act in a way which seems distant, uninterested, uninvolved and cold. It is also this attitude which allows them to survive through the enormous psychic stimuli that fall upon them and which are a direct consequence of urbanism itself.

Another way of surviving in the city is not relating closely, i.e., primarily to people. Urbanites develop secondary relations because they realize that they cannot love the whole world as Augie March wants to or as Asa tries to. It is impossible to know the names of everybody in the city. It is also impossible to know everybody personally or by sight in large metropolitan conglomerates like New York or Chicago. Secondary relations are, then, a powerful tool of inter-individual tolerance in the urban environment.

Anonymity is also a meaningful device urbanites use - mostly unwillingly - to survive. It is not only impossible to know or be known by everybody, as it is desirable that everybody cannot spot us in the phone book. Life in the city would be impossible under circumstances in which the individual's privacy could not be maintained. A feeling of meaninglessness is usually associated with anonymity but it is undeniable that anonymity is the only way of making the individual's life meaningful in the contemporary metropolis. Part of Bellow's

protagonists' drama lies in that they very easily get to know the names of their news agents, their hot-dog sellers or their restaurant waiters.

Lacking the immunity that urbanites need in order to be efficacious in the city, and showing complete incapacity to develop secondary relations, we can conclude by saying that Bellow's protagonists are unfit for the megalopolitan way of life for at least the following reasons: they are not careless enough, uprooted enough, cold enough, formal enough, rational enough, superficial enough, close enough, suspicious enough, blasé enough.

Saul Bellow fits, then, perfectly within the anti-urban tradition of the American intellectuals, as it was demonstrated by Norton and Lucia White, Blanche Gelfant, James Pickering, George Arthur Dunlap and by the inumerous examples presented in this dissertation. The city is attacked both with realistic/naturalistic devices and with romantic/Emersonian ones. In this sense, Bellow uniquely epitomizes the American anti-urban tradition and produces an anti-urbanism of his own which neatly reflects the determinist school or urban sociology, and whose main representative is Louis Wirth.

Contemporarily, the compositional and the subcultural schools of urban sociology are putting in doubt many of Wirth's descriptions of the urban man and of the urban groups, and, ipso facto, many of his explanations. The compositional theory frontally denies any sort of effect whatsoever of urbanism upon life in the cities. Differences that may exist between rural and urban areas, they argue, are due to the composition of the population that inhabit these areas. Herbert Gans is the main representative of this line of thought, whose merit is not our task to determine.

The subcultural theory is in fact a synthesis of both compositional and determinist schools. While it admits that most of Wirth's descriptions are still meaningful and accurate, it considers his explanations as biased and unsupportable by statistical evidence. It, furthermore, admits that the composition of the urban population does play an important role in the urban social

behaviour, but it at the same time recognizes that number, size and density of population directly affect the life of social groups and individuals, not in the Wirthian way, i.e., by reducing the power of, or weakening, primary groups, but through the creation of critical masses capable of adding new dimensions to the life of urbanites, through the creation of meaningful subcultures which the rural settings cannot offer. The difference is clear: Wirth's and Bellow's approach to the city is essentially anti-urban. For both of them the urban experience is fundamentally a loss with practically no gains; for Claude Fischer and his Subcultural approach life in the city has to be seen positively. For him, the contemporary megalopolises are an endless source of human gains, because only in the large conglomerates is it possible to have critical masses capable of allowing us to express our personal desires without the castrating coerciveness of small communities.

Whether Wirth and Bellow are right or wrong in their pessimism about the urban experience is something difficult to say. Contemporary, very recent, evidence frequently contradicts them. Neverhteless, there is a whole tradition backing them - a tradition that has its roots in the cities of evil like Sodom and Gomorrah, cities which had to be destroyed in the name of purity and good will, a tradition that exists as long as there are cities. Can we deny this tradition? Bellow does not deny it. His answers to the urban experience may be sociologically wrong, but the questions he asks have never been as pertinent as today when humanity is experiencing an unprecedented growth of its cities.

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