PREFACE

What began for me as incidental curiosity grew gradually into a major concern that has persisted ever since I did my M.Phil on Saul Bellow. But all along, I felt that Bellow's style has not been given due importance in spite of the large amount of criticism available.

There also seems to be a clear development of narrative style in Bellow's fiction; the convention of realism—the dominant mode of nineteenth century British fiction and the immediate mode for the first generation of the American novelists, was the pattern that Bellow followed in the initial stage. With the development of space activities and war reconstruction Bellow moved on to fantasy as a form of narration but abandoned it to develop a comic mode, which, he still continues. Nevertheless the main concern of this study has also been to examine the various ways in which "point of view" has been handled. Thus the focus of this dissertation is on the agency or narrating agent or narrator, the medium by which events are narrated, focalization, the perspective from which they are narrated; and discourse.

Narratology, is of relatively recent pedigree with a set of identifiable conventions that make a given text recognisable as a narrated story. As all art is traditional
in that artists learn their craft from their predecessors to a great extent. They begin by conceiving the possibilities open to them in terms of the achievements they are acquainted with. They may add to the tradition, opening up new possibilities for their successors, but they begin inevitably within a tradition.

The terms highlighted in the study of narrative—author, story/fabula, plot, discourse, narrative, voice/presence, order, duration, mood, perspective/point of view—are in many cases indication of precisely those elements which are problematised in modernist and post-modernist prose fiction. The loss of omniscience, multiple and often contradictory perspective—all these familiar components of the modernist and post-modernist manifestos draw our attention towards that practice of fiction which we have christened narrative or narratology. All the works discussed are already famous works, and have been bestsellers since they were first published. My post-graduation in Political Science, and Journalism, as well as English Literature, helped me a great deal (Bellow himself is a political commentator and anthropologist), to grasp Bellow's journalistic form which continues to engage my interest as his style, gradually takes on the quality of a particular sensation, evoking as precisely as the fragrance of mango-blossom, its own essential flavours, even in memory.