CHAPTER IX

BELLOWS PHILOSOPHY OF KINSHIP

We must love one another or die

W.H. Auden

What exactly is Bellow's attitude towards family and kin-ship? The answer, obviously is not simple. Bellow places the problem in a complex welter of ideas. It involves, among other things, a study of many basic but overlapping categories: love, marriage, power, freedom and sex. Bellow seems to believe as Bertrand Russell writes: "Of all the institutions that have come down to us from the past none is in the present day so disorgani-zed and derailed as the family."\(^1\) Marriage, as an institution becomes a dismal failure in Bellow's fiction. Mintouchian in Augie March scales the heights of scepticism as he lectures Augie on the infirmities and the secrets of men and women in marriage. The 'stronger teacher' imparts his ancient wisdom to the young lover in his desperate need for marriage from a literal vantage point: the fifty eighth storey of a building in midtown Manhattan. This happens a week before Augie and Stella get married. Mintouchian begins by saying he does not want to make Augie gloomy by talking about his strokes which imply death. Augie replies that he loves Stella too much to consider death. Mintouchian delivers one by one his deadly rapier thrusts. He observes that Stella, like every other woman, has thought of her future both with and without her lover. He recites the song of little girls.

I should worry, I should care,
I should marry a millionaire,

He should die and I should cry,
I should marry another guy. (AM 554)

He says that this thought takes shape in "inner consciousness" (AM 554) which is outlaw and accepts no check; that a good deal of secret and conniving goes on in the human mind. Mintoshian cites instance after instance to substantiate his theory. A client's wife once reported that she lost a valuable bracelet. She was the mother of three children and the wife a wealthy gentleman who had given her hundred thousand dollars worth of property retaining only the power of attorney. The insurance investigator found that the woman had turned over the bracelet to her lover, "a bum with a prison record," under pressure. Everybody knew the affair except the gull, her husband, who simply refused to believe it. "My respected spouse, mother of children, who shows me constant affection and proofs of loyalty?" the husband wailed. "My dear wife, my beloved of years?" (AM 555). All the same there was incontrovertible proof. The husband did not throw her out even though law was on his side. The fact is that she loved her husband also. Later both of them were reconciled and seen holding hands in a newfound love in the movies. Mintoshian's concern here is not morality but the burden of secrets.

The secrecy is what the real burden is ... Do you say a double life? It's secret over secret, mystery and then infinity sign stuck on to that. So who knows the ultimate, and where is the hour of truth? (AM 556)

This is how Allbee manipulates Asa's jealous passions. Talking about the man and the woman who swing in marriage he says: "Nature is too violent for human ideals, sometimes, and ideals ought to
leave it plenty of room" (TV 166) Augie reflects rebelliously that he 'would never agree that love had to be adultery' (AM 558) and is afraid that Mintouchian might interfere in his marriage scheme. Augie's and Asa's understanding of marriage and morals determines their outlook on life and values. Augie violently rebels against the idea of inconsistency in love and marriage even though he passes from woman to woman. Whether he will be a restrained, monogamist in spite of his disappointment or turn into a reveller is not to be seen. But in the later novels infidelity loses its sting and swinging becomes currency in married life for both man and woman. The swingers compartmentalize love, sex and marriage and escape from the muddle of nature and values. An understanding of the flippancy of basic emotions, drives Asa compulsively into more and more family involvement. Proximity, not estrangement, is Asa's solution. He is the most unusual Bellow character; he stands alone in his tenacious attachment to wife and family.

As for freedom, it is in Herzog that Bellow comes to grips with the conflicting claims of freedom and familialism more certainly than in any preceding or succeeding novel. Herzog thus occupies a pivotal position in the understanding of the kinship motif. The professor shuns remarriage and kin groups and opts for an exclusive life in his estate after the encounter with Madeleine in the police station. He shares his bread with rats. New kinship patterns emerge beyond the limits of the species. Herzog does not however shut out sex. The perfume from Renata's shoulders stirs "the progenitive lustful quacking (H 344) in the depths. That is the "cosmic idiotic masculine response," but that does not
detract from the merit of his amoral transcendentalism. What does he try to transcend? Is it a flight from history? No. Herzog feels free from Madeleine but is still "responsible to reason, responsible to children" (H 332). But his dwelling is a Walden-like retreat.

He walked quietly into the woods, the many leaves, living and fallen, green and tan, ... The silence sustained him, and the brilliant weather, the feeling that he was easily constrained by everything about him within the hollowness of God, as he noted, and deaf to the final multiplicity of facts, as well as, blind to ultimate distances. Two billion light years out. Supernovae (H 332-333)

Herzog has rejected the sordid facts as well as his brooding agony, his star-gazing consciousness. He enjoys an inner effulgence matching the surrounding light.

Daily radiance, trodden here within the hollowness of God. (H 333)

The final letters he writes are to God and his mother, the creators, before the final calm descends on him.

How my mind has struggled to make coherent sense. I have not been too good at it. But have desired to do your unknowable will, taking it, and you, without symbols. Everything of intensest significance. (H 333)

This is really unique. Herzog affirms civilization and expresses faith in the values of family and religion. He is 'responsible' as he has always been to these values. But he cuts out the irreconcilable stuff. He wants family minus wife and God minus symbols. In a newfound state of calm he lies down near the locust trees.

They bloomed with a light, tiny but delicious
Flower: he was sorry to have missed that.

(H 333)

Lying with his arms behind him and his "legs extended anyway" he is lying as he had lain less than a week ago on his little sofa in New York but now he feels altogether "different," "confident, even happy in his excitement, stable" though he has fears that "the bitter cup would come round again by and by." But the following pages see him gaining in confidence until he gets rid of the habit with an air of certainty in the very last line of the novel: "Nothing. Not a single word" (H 348). Herzog accepts property too. He no longer wants to turn over "the famous house, the house of happiness" to the Bhave movement in India, because he has a big extended family here, amid the locust trees and the hermit shrubs. He will neither rent it out nor sell it.

Well, this was his own, his hearth; these were his shrines, catalpas, horse chestnuts. His rotten dreams of peace. The patrimony of his children—a sunken corner of Massachusetts for March, the little piano for June painted a loving green by her solicitous father. (H 330)

Herzog has his aims. He believes like a responsible father in patrimony. Thus "this lovely green hole" (H 339) becomes the cuddle-hole of Herzog and the "relief from the pursuit of absolutes made life pleasant" (H 330). For Herzog life is going to be a curious blend of purpose and freedom. He thinks of the children and what he could do for them. He has plans to visit Marco at camp on the sixteenth and hopes to bring him here next month, if Daisy allows. He is going to have the lights and phone turned on with the help of Tuttle "the master spirit" of
Ludoville. The broken home, the skeletons in the toilet bowl, the owls in the fixtures, the half-painted piano, the remains of meals, the wife-deserted atmosphere (H 337); all this is going to take a new shape and colour. It would be awkward to run away from the ruins of life. Herzog will come to terms with them and mould a new quotidian, yet transcendental order out of the bone heaps. And all this purposeful activity will go on not under the supervision of some ferocious female, not even Ramona but in absolute freedom. Writing to Kierkegaard he says:

I am really in an unusually free condition of mind. 'In paths untrodden,' as Walt Whitman marvellously put it. 'Escaped from the life that exhibits itself...' Oh, that's a plague, the life that exhibits itself, a real plague! (H 331)

Herzog wipes out existential unrest together with the causes that breed this, the most outstanding among them being, matrimony. There is however no tirade against marriage as such or Madeleine in the lost pages. Hatred is eschewed. But the fact is that Herzog cannot relate to women, hereafter except in a "noncapitalistic" way. Even Ramona cannot change this outlook. She invites him to the party at Misselis but Herzog declines saying: 'No parties. I'm not upto them' (H 343). He has no objection, however, to Ramona having a 'look at the Herzog estate.' She cannot take up permanent residence here as his wife. 'She will help him with the dishes and then he'd see her to her car.' Herzog cannot afford to "enact the peculiarities of life" anymore. Which are done well enough without his "special assistance." Sex however, is not a lost cause. Herzog has no illusions about the lustful quacking in the depths Quack. Quack. The approach is faultlessly
atonistic. God minus paraphernalia, family without wife, children without mother, sex without marriage, kinship without constraints which cuts across the plant and animal kingdom. It is the problem of power which is the main cause of such a unique choice. Will is very much worried about Herzog's talent for a fatal choice. Seeing Ramona's intimacy with Herzog, he asks with concern: 'Am I leaving you in good hands, Mose?’ Herzog confidently replies 'I'm not being left in anyone's hands' (H 345). Herzog has survived a blatant and ghostly exercise of power, by his wife. He will shun authority for all time to come. As for religion, he has progressed towards an awareness of God but he would never seek Him through official channels. He would rather write to Him on postcards, even though they might never be posted. Herzog does not believe in the "idolatrous concepts of God quite unrelated to the transcendent, self manifesting Thou of the Bible who is known only through his Word in history and encountered only in personal commitment, faith and obedience." 2 Herzog passionately mumbling 'Thou movest me' (H 347), arrives at his unique final philosophy of family and religion, both divorced from power. It is as much a result of his bitter experiences, as his communion with nature. As he writes to Nietzsche:

Nature (itself) and I alone together, in the Berkshire, and this is my chance to understand...
I know you value cheerfulness-true cheerfulness, not the seeming sanguinity of Epicureans, nor the strategic buoyancy of the heartbroken. I also know you think that deep pain is ennobling,...(H 326)

In an unique fit of understanding, Herzog appreciates the core of Nietzsche's philosophy, his "most absolute, most piercing

questions." How he enabled man to live with the void and "not lie himself into goodnaturedness" but to question "into evil, through evil, past evil." Thus Herzog, with his curious blend of nihilistic truth and transcendental piety shows that he can serve both God and Mammon. He signs his letter: Yours, under the veil of Maya, M.E.H. It is not only that, as Ramona says, no woman can pin him down; nor even any school of philosophy. Herzog resists being appropriated into any system, family or religion or a belief system. He is a free man, a free thinker who weaves out of the multicoloured strands of thought his own philosophy of life and kinship. The scrub-up by Mrs Tuttle symbolises the cleansing of all neurotic nonsense, the wiping out of all traces of power, and its inordinate inhuman exercise. The new Herzog estate will be an egalitarian establishment devoted to the values of love, freedom, beauty and sanity as well. Herzog has not said goodbye to kinship. He is still devoted.

I still carry European pollution, am infected
by the Old World with feelings like Love-Filial
Emotion. Old stuporous dreams. (H 288)

'The sight of Will stirred Moses' love for him' (H 335), but he is not willing to be towed by anyone. In Herzog's extended family of birds and rodents Wrens nest under the scrolls of the porch; orioles live in the giant elm; squirrels nest in the flues; grubs, ants and long-legged spiders are not lacking. There is a rare blending of the quotidian and the transcendental as Mrs Tuttle, with her head tied up in a bandanna cleans the floor, and Herzog after cutting a few swathes to clear the yard, gets tired and lies stretched in the lawn chair, facing south.
As soon as the sun lost its main strength
the hermit thrushes began, and while they sang
their sweet fierce music threatening trespassers,
the blackbirds would begin to gather in flocks for
the night, and just towards sunset they would
break from these trees in waves, wave after wave,
three or four miles in one flight to their water-
side nests. (H 347)

Herzog abandons himself to daily work and nature's music. Herzog
does not want any intruder now. Mrs Tuttle is not an intruder.
She comes only to do the assigned work and with her, Herzog does
not have to move beyond exchange of civilities. Who else can
disturb this private peace, this rhythm, this work and joy un-
soiled by the canker of insane thought?

To have Ramona coming troubled him slightly,
it was true. But they would eat. She would help
him with the dishes, and then he'd see her to her
car. (H 347)

Thus this devoted student of hedonism sheds everything; he does
not see much use for even Ramona. It is a composite vision that
forges civilization, history, nature, God and doubt. Doubt has
its use in ennobling man's nature. Herzog, in his release, as
TLS observes has at last "truly achieved the withdrawn and god-
like position of observer-novelist."

Citrine has avidly read Marx. He has lost faith in marriage
like Herzog because of its institutionalization and the struggle
for power. But he becomes less sure about himself in the end and
decides to marry Renata with the hope of a life with children.
He is not as mature as Herzog in loneliness. He suffers 'adolescent
heartache' and goes broke when he is not able to impress the

\(^3\)Review of Herzog, Essays and Reviews from TLS 1965: 34
'vulcanized hearts' of Renata and her mother. Having failed once again with women Citrine delights in the thought of living with children and Orangutans. "Orangutans are very charming," he says: "An Orangutan friend sharing my apartment would make me very happy" (HG 479). Whereas Citrine's passion for kinship outside the species lurks on a mental level, Herzog establishes a life in the company of animal cousins. He likes even the field mice that chew his wax. Herzog comes to terms with the realities of a broken home and fragmented life better than Citrine. For Citrine the last scene is: death, fate, pallbearers and mortal remains. In woman April with Waldemar and his mother side by side in the new graves at the Valhalla Cemetery, he takes an honorific position along the casket. Holding a handle, he refuses to believe that "any human fate could be associated with such remains and superfluitities" (HG 485)

Humboldt, Humboldt and this is what becomes of us.

The truth that emerges is death and the vignette that precedes it is the broken home. When the funeral director asks if someone has a prayer to say, Menasha sings "Goin', Home," an old American spiritual. The realities of the broken home, loss of kinship and purpose, and Death, the only antidote to the misery of the soul, reign supreme along with painful reminiscences at the end. Herzog has escaped from "the life that exhibits itself" but Citrine is still tied to it. The harassed heroes could easil resort to power, when it becomes inevitable and save the family, in the interest of children, if not their own. But they are too mushy. Herzog shuns wife-beating. He lives down his mental violence even when he is grossly provoked. In an early draft
of the novel, Herzog observes that beating would have helped the marriage and that it would have been a sad way to keep the love of your wife."⁻⁴ This is in heroes, like their creator, believe mostly in patriarchy. Bellow finds it gratifying to see that no Orthodox family in Jerusalem observes the Sabbath more fully than the Werblowskys (JE 52). He confesses, as noted in ch III, about the 'feudal compartment' in his personality. Is he such an ardent cup-bearer for the patriarchy of early modern England where "a wife serves the husband and eldest son at the table, but rarely sits down with them?¹ The fact, perhaps, is: Perhaps Bellow believes that the historical man-woman iniquities do not operate any longer in contemporary society as a rule. Women, by and large have liberated themselves through career opportunities; at home they have become powerful through micro-manipulation. Bellow does not however seem to be unhappy at the progress and liberation. He is quite sad that the liberated female has gone all out to subjugate the male. The domineering females like Grandma Lausch, Aunt Zippora, Aunt Rose work havoc not only with their men but also with their female kinfolk. Many women are harassed by their more powerful superiors. This "monstrous regiment of women"⁻⁶ - a phrase Stone uses to describe the queens who attained to power by genealogical accident during the


⁻⁶ Stone 50.
sixteenth century - crushes both men and women. In the nuclear core of the Bellow family power flows increasingly to the wife over the husband and to the mother over the children. This is quite contrary to the carefully enunciated historical feminist position. Nevertheless Bellow does not seek, through this equation to revive the Platonic doubts about the woman as a reasoning creature. It is not antifeminist polemic. Bellow does not set out to deny history. He has just presented the families which have escaped this historical tyranny and fallen victim to a reverse injustice. However the fact that he tenaciously clings to the pattern deserves analysis. It must be a strong conviction about female tyranny - and not an insular prejudice, that prods Bellow to make Alvarez Polvo, without any immediate provocation, erupt into bitterness about women.

From this remark, without notice, he took a deep plunge into the subject of women, and he carried Clarence with him. Women, women, women! ... He tightened his hold on Clarence and pulled him close as he boasted and complained and catalogued and confessed. He was ruined! They had taken his money, his health, his time, his years, his life, women had - innocent, mindless, beautiful, ravaging, insidious, malevolent, chestnut, blonde, red black.... Clarence felt hemmed in by women's faces, and by women's bodies.

His men characters major or minor suffer invariably as Herzog suffers under Madeleine's elegant heel. If Bellow was consciously committed to some partisan faith, it would be very difficult to find out. Feminist historians see woman as irredeemably trapped in conventional marriage and the nuclear patriarchal family; Bellow parades unfortunate patriarchs with their catalogues of
complaints and reverses perspective. In _A Father-to-Be_ Rogin hates his spendthrift wife who crushes 'personal aims' (MM-FB 145). He looks upon himself as a victim of the institution of marriage, and the life force which in its progress towards its own fulfillment tramples individuality and uses men as "for its own ends like mere dinosaurs or bees, exploiting love heartlessly, making us engage in the social process, labour, struggle for money, and submit to the law of pressure" (MM-FB 145). Dr Tamkin in _Seize the Day_ suggests that most men choose the cross and sign their own doom, whereas some wise people like Dr Adler abandon all family obligations and have a splendid time. Rogin rebels against being 'a damned instrument' and declares: "I won't be used" (MM-FB 145). He desperately reasons:

> Take away the externals, like the muscles, deeper voice, and so forth, and what remains? A pair of spirits, practically alike. So why shouldn’t there also be equality? I can’t always be the strong one. (MM-FB 147)

Bellow perhaps believes that feminist philosophy has now become a crusted dogma and that in any case, has no universal application. He presents the other side of the picture. Rogin's mild-mannered wife Joen is the best example of micromanipulation in the family power structure. It is the man who is trapped. 'The flurry of rubbing' and 'the warm fluid of his own secret loving spirit' are all powerfully suggestive of the intimacy that men like Rogin fall for at last, in spite of their protestations of individuality and personal aims. While Herzog and Citrine thus spurn the family establishment with varying degrees of conviction, Sammler the oldest of the _piously affirms his belief in the authoritarian_
family establishment as the only lasting value for human ties. A renegade Marxist, he has grown out of his prejudices and the individualistic tradition of Herzog and Citrine. He sadly observes that nearly three revolutionary centuries have shaken "the bonds of Church and Family" and have given free play to libidinous urges. Living ever since 1947 under the protection of Dr Elya Gruner's 'capitalistic' family establishment— he has begun to realize the value of these "sacred absurdities." He is the only one who feels and mourns, like a son for the death of Elya. They are too absorbed in their Elvis Presley high-jinx concerns to spare time for a deathbed scene. Wallace and Angela waiting for their father's death are worried about inheritance, their legitimate share and their immediate problems of business and sex. The girl is no better than the boy. Both adore property and neglect the man who built it. Shula, Sammler's ungrateful, avaricious daughter wants to loot Elya's hidden dollars "the hassock upholstered with packages of hundred-dollar bills" (MF 247). She resents her "ancient father's stubbornness and stupid" rectitude as he sternly orders her to turn over the bundle to Mr Widick and not to mention anything about this to Wallace. Angela clad in a green band of exhibitionist cloth— Sammler calls it a microskirt— sits carelessly in the hospital probably worrying about her next partner. On the same day, elsewhere Wallace testflies for his project and crashlands in Westchester Sammler, who has to worry about his next meal and once-in-a-month vodka, when Elya is gone, is genuinely distressed to

7 The view of the family as a 'sacred absurdity' is our appropriation from Herzog's dialectic. This is discussed in the last chapter.
see him dying. What is more agonising for Sammler than Elya's death is the studied indifference of Elya's children. He rushes to the hospital to see him before it is too late. He puts in his best to persuade Angela to "think of something to say" (MSP 246) to the dying father and to make amends. "He's an old system," observes Sammler. "I've always been sceptical of that myself" (MSP 242). He has "learned much from him;" that is, "feeling, outgoingness, expressiveness, kindness, heart - all these fine human things which by a peculiar turn of opinion strike people now as shady activities" (MSP 243). And now he abandons all his learned scepticism and is agog to pay tributes to "the system" that is passing. It might become too late if he does not stop figuring. Angela is too proud. She asks him superciliously if he wants her to go in for "an old-time death-bed scene." Sammler is sore. With mounting bitterness he says: "Diversions, group intercourse, fellatio with stranger - one can do that but not come to T.S.H.S with one's father at the last opportunity. He's put an immense amount of feeling into you." The relationship is ruptured. Angela flies into a violent fury: 'What do you mean about fellatio? What do you know about it?' Sammler, no doubt is less adequately informed. It is in the context of Sammler's failure with Angela at this crucial moment of Elya's life - he has passed away rendering the Sam-Angela exchanges a mockery - that Sammler explodes with the intellectual ferment and emotional fury of a seputgeneration lifetime. The eruption touches "a Spenglerian edge" when he ruminates as Sheppard says pungently, on the decline of the West Side.
Perhaps if we were in India or Finland we might not be in quite the same mood. New York makes one think about the collapse of civilization, about Sodom and Gomorrah, the end of the world,... But it is in the air now that things are falling apart, and I am affected by it. I always hated people who declared that it was the end.

... But I was flat, dead wrong. (MSP 244)

But radical revision of once cherished opinions is, for Sammler, not an act of pride, but pain, an outcome of compulsion. The attitude towards civilization deserves attention. Bellow himself deprecates organismic theories. But Spengler exercises an excessive charm on Bellow's characters. Here Sammler begins to believe in the collapse of values much against his will. Sammler's worries about the durability of civilization are in keeping with his almost anti-Marxist view of life. Herzog dismisses Freudian thesis of the origin of civilization as nothing more than metaphor. The collapse of civilization too is very much a metaphor. Sorokin observes that Danilevsky, Spengler and Toynbee have committed a "fatal error" in their conception of High Culture or civilization as a completely integrated, meaningfully consistent and causally unified whole. He maintains that "the whole vast superstructure of the civilization" life cycle, erected on this foundation, crumbles by itself." Sammler vents his steam on Shula, who adores the Marilyn Monroe ideals of Angela, when she says without shame she will use the loot for getting "dressed at Lord and Taylor" "for a chance with somebody" (MSP 248-249). Dr Cosbie gives the final message. Sammler firmly says: "What I want is to see my

nephew. How do I get to him? Give me directions" (MSP 250). When the doctor tells him that he will have to wait and see him at the chapel, Sammler, rarely given to extremities pounces on him in an unbelievable fit, an ecstatic show of clan aggression: "Take my word for it. I am determined. Let us not have a bad scene out here in the corridor" (MSP 251). Dr Cosbie knows better than to trample this noble excitement. Sammler, if he has been, as he says, a symbol so far, has now lost the objectivity of empty reasoning and has become victim number one of a solipsistic family dogma. He suffers like a son, though not like Angela and Wallace, to see his patron, his nephew, a parental figure gone. "One more reason to live trickled out"

Uncovering Elya's face Sammler prays in a mental whisper. 'At his best this man was much kinder than at my very best I have ever been or could be. (MSP 250-251)

Irving Howe praises Bellow's "rare gift of transforming dialectic into drama, casuistry into comedy, so that one is steadily aware of the relationship between his discursive passages and the central narrative." For the last words of Sammler's Planet Howe reserves his best tribute: "These lines, like all of Bellow's endings," he says constitute an overwhelming stroke. They "carry the truth as a precious cargo." He continues:

In him alone, the tradition of immigrant Jewishness, minus the schmaltz and schmutz the decades have stuccoed on to it, survives with a stern dignity... The Sammlung is complete.  

Irving Howe, rev. of Mr Sammler's Planet, Harper's 240. 1437 (1970) 112.

Howe 114.
The "terms of contract" Sammler speaks of in his final emotional outbreak are nothing but kinship and kindness. Like Augie's axial lines family speech, Sammler's "we know—we know" epiphanies tend to be obfuscated by the approbation of the critics who do not care to place the words where they belong.

He was aware that he must meet, and he did meet—through all the confusion and degraded clowning of this life through which we are speeding—he meet the terms of his contract. (MSF 251)

Elya's family feeling, his kinship passion is truth, that all of us know; the only hope for survival of values. It is no matter if it is a component of bourgeois morality. Elya the family-minded man established his 'old system', the benign patriarchal family to pursue the values of kinship, brotherhood and philanthropy. Sammler does not mind any longer if Elya was lacking a little in proletarian morality. It does not at all matter that he had something—Sammler is convinced that he had something—to do with the mafia. What values do these youngsters, both men and women, have to show except their inadequate Baby Doll costume and their majestic private authenticity black or white. Elya was a benign patriarch 'with a passion for kinships' (MSP 68). He realized the inescapable terms every man knows in his inmost heart.

For that is the truth of it—that we all know, God, that we know, that we know, we know. (MSF 251)

Bellow must have invested his most pious inclinations and impulses in this passage. How else could we explain the ecstasy of the oft-quoted words and also Bellow's annotation of the passage, as
he told his interviewers at Skidmore college in 1973?

You're to believe in it as much as you can believe the New Testament,... If that was good enough for the foundation of a religion, it's good enough for the conclusion of a book.\(^\text{11}\)

The family motif therefore is the central concern, as always, in the novel that earned Bellow the accolade: seer with a civil heart. And kinship is its vital question. Bellow's fiction however is not tendentious. Sammler's ecstasy is totally at odds with Corde's saber, even sceptical view of life.\(^\text{12}\) Sammler embraces ancient beliefs at full tilt. But Corde does not leap into religious faith. He is sober, sceptical and does not find much meaning in life. What do we make of the author's attitude then? Bellow says:"I never take it upon myself to make statements over which I have no mental or emotional control. I go with my deepest inclinations and what they say, they say. But I don't have any title for them." Whereas Death impels Sammler towards values, and civilization, Corde seems to wonder in Palomar: what is there in all this clowning if it leads only to the ultimate thing, extinction? For him, the cold out there cancels the validity of all other reflections. He is a concerned husband waiting for the return of his wife from her dizzy heights but there is not much cheer left in (his) life. This is the dual vision. Corde delights in abandoning consciousness like the cyclamens and does not trouble himself with intimations of God. Sammler too would like to abandon this "ape restiveness" (MSP 190), his hyperactive

\(^{11}\)"Literature and Culture: An Interview with Saul Bellow," Salmagundi 30 (1975) 6.

consciousness stimulated by "shocks" and revelations, like the black thief's, of the contemporary age but he does not have the strength of vision that Corde has, to accept nullity. Curiously Bellow himself longs for this. As he walks with John in the citrus groves in Jerusalem he bursts into a poetic celebration of the dissolution wish.

Many of the trees are still unharvested and bending, tangerines and lemons as dense as stars. "Oh that I were an orange tree/ That busie plant!" wrote George Herbert. To put forth such leaves, to be hung with oranges, to be a blessing - one feels the temptation of this on such a morning, and I even feel a fibrous woodiness entering my arms as I consider it. (JB 61)

Angela and Wallace, in sharp contrast do not care for the roots. "Roots are not modern," Wallace declares like a revolutionary! "That's a peasant conception, soil and roots." In Sammler's familialistic terms, Wallace's spiralling flight and crashlanding is a breach of filial contract. This boy Bakunin, this genius of liberty is out to demolish abevolent order and destroy property. Angela is anxious to flourish, and Shula too, on the ruins of this order. When the street brawl between the black youth and Eisen ends, Sammler rushes to Elya's hospital and reflects like Ijah in Cousins: "Dear brethren, let us all be human together. Let us all be in the great fun fair, and do this droll mortality with one another. Be entertainers of your near and dear" (MSP 236). Sammler, consistently takes a stand against the Marxist view of family and history. Sammler becomes more and more conservative as the novel progresses; but his concern for family and kinship is genuine. Sokolov notes: "Sammler's
paranoid reaction to every aspect of contemporary culture
could be dismissed as a reactionary, racist peevishness, if
Sammler didn't harangue the winds of change with such Lear-
like eloquence." In Cousins Bellow conceives a worldwide
kinship in the manner of C.H. Cooley and celebrates brotherhood
among nations in family terms. Ijah avoids remarriage like
Citrine and Herzog even though he finds single life ' tiresome',
because of 'the unpleasant considerations in marriage (HW-C 288);
he is torbidly exercised about cousins. He writes to Judge Eiler
of the Federal Court and helps his cousin Tanky Metzger. As the
 sprawling short story, a train of reflections as usual ends,
Ijah remembers his geography lessons in the Chicago schools. The
kids were given a series of booklets: "Our Little Japanese
Cousins," "Our Little Moroccan Cousins," "Our Little Russian
Cousins," "Our Little Spanish Cousins." Ijah ecstatically
observes:

I read all these gentle descriptions about little
Ivan and tiny Conchita, and my eager heart
opened to them. Why, we were close, we were one
under it all (as Tanky was very intelligent
"under it all"). (HW-C 292)

After all his "higher activities" (HW-C 232) and inspired talk
about philosophy and history, about Hegel, Spengler and the
Revolution he finds that he 'can't even extricate' himself from
the ties of Jewish cousinhood' (HW-C 246). And his ultimate
vision as the story closes is the child's idea of a world union
of cousins. The new identity forges the entire species.

13 Raymond A. Sokolov, West Side Lear rev. of Mr Sammler's
Planet, Newsweek 2 Feb 1970: 49
We were not guineas, dagos, kreuts; we were cousins. It was a splendid conception, and those of us who opened our excited hearts to the world union of cousins were happy, as I was, to give our candy pennies to a fund for the rebuilding of Tokyo after the earthquake of the twenties. (HW-C 292)

He thinks of 'the seams of history, opening the bonds in dissolution (Hegel), the constraints of centuries removed' (HW-C 287-288). He proceeds at once by association of ideas to the concept of freedom, and probes his personal situation. Sitting in his Holy Sepulchre apartment at night, he says, he concentrates on 'strategies for pouncing passionately on the freedom made possible by dissolution' (HW-C 287). He goes to the Invalides to meet Scholem where the world cabbies, organizing session brings together some two hundred delegates from fifty countries. As he is lost in the absorbing vision of world cousinhood as a true uprooted loner, he loses sight of immediate kinship. It is Scholem, the emancipated Scholem who recognizes Ijah in 'this mighty hall'

Scholem is too stable a type, rooted in quotidian kinship to miss or falter, especially with a daughter around, but Ijah the unenviable solitary, flounders and becomes speechless as Scholem introduces him to his daughter as "My cousin!" Scholem leaves his daughter in the company of Ijah as he proceeds to make a speech to greet the delegates. Ijah has no daughter around to look after him; no stable ties to fall back on. His final ruminations, go with his plight.

Then I felt robbed of strength, all at once. Doesn't existence lay too much on us? I had remembered, observed, studied the cousins, and
these studies seemed to fix my own essence and to keep me as I had been. I had failed to include myself among them, and suddenly I was billed for this oversight. (HW-294)

Isabel then is proved right after all. Ijah in his exuberance for the cousins around has neglected his own self and conjugal ties. He is now helpless, without wife or daughter. No cousin can equal this young daughter who instinctively helps her father. Fortunately, Ijah left with Scholem's daughter is not, like Bellow's 'chemically youthful' old timers, drawn into reflections about silk skin and female odour. Instead he broods over his failure. Unable still to react to the 'hints' of Isabel, in his aversion to marriage, Ijah nevertheless realizes the folly of emptiness.

At the presentation of this bill, I became bizarrely weak in the legs. And when the girl, noticing that I seemed unable to walk, offered me her arm, I wanted to say, "What do you mean? I need no help. I still play a full set of tennis every day." Instead I passed my arm through hers and she led us both down the corridor. (HW-C 294)

Ijah has the strength of will and the power of freedom to spurn the advances of his ex-wife. But this empty freedom and destructive will fail with the newfound daughter, this lovable human crutch. Ijah looks upon her as his daughter and accepts her help. If only he had led, a more fortunate, or more orderly life, he would have been blessed with an affectionate grown-up daughter like Scholem's. Bellow's attitude to the family is subject to the pressures of overlapping and contending schools of thought: existentialism, romanticism, transcendentalism, nihilism,
Marxism, and psychoanalysis. That "Bellow's novelistic stance suggests a firm alignment with the nineteenth-century American transcendentalists," like other such views, is carefully enunciated but still reductionistic. Joseph flees; Wilhelm is broken for want of kinship; Augie and Henderson fly homeward; Citrine gropes between mysticism and meaninglessness, without wife and children. Ase never makes it a problem; he quietly brushes aside Albee's thesis of infidelity and joins his wife. Dean Corde is uneasily but responsibly aligned in marriage and specialises in nihilistic wisdom, to boot. Herzog stands out in unique achievement; he dismisses kinship but has it too. He is quite alive to the "age-free essence" that threads through himself and will but rejects protectionism. Finally, Herzog gives a valuable clue towards the understanding of family and social organization: consider it next in the last chapter, a special closing note.

14 Porter, Whence the Power? 191