CHAPTER II

ROMANTIC LOVE AND COMPANIONATE MARRIAGE

Romantic love is a put-up job utilized to trap women into giving up their identities.

Caroline Bird

Romantic love, introduced to western culture by late eleventh century troubadours, according to G. Marian Kinget, a Michigan State University psychologist is "nearing the end of its nine hundred year run."¹ The tell-tale symptoms—pain of longing, wide-eyed idealization of the beloved and vibrato of the soul—long established as the preferred form of sexual attraction and marital bondage are fading fast. Kinget observes that romantic love is dying out since its original conditions have ceased to exist. The idealization of lovers has now given way to "reality testing" and young people are casting a cold eye on prospective mates to check for flaws. Social assumptions that promote romantic love—that women are weak and need protection—are rapidly breaking down. Extended longing crucial to romantic love has been dealt a death blow by the pursuit of casual sex and the pill. Says Kinget:

The notions of agony and ecstasy traditionally, associated with this kind of love have become meaningless— in fact, quaint²

Bellow's women seem to have understood this much better than his men. They resist getting lost in adolescent notions

¹"Love is Dying," Time 26 Sept. 1977:46
²"Love is Dying," 46.
of agony in love. They do not require an Other women’s Forum for learning the meaning of affairs and the realities of life. Conversely the males unlearn the iniquities of their ancestors and plunge headlong, in an exchange of roles, become victims of love, the timeless love of the iron for the load stone. It is going to be a reverse tyranny now, a tyranny that disproves the accepted postulates of strident feminism such as the one carried in the epigraph. Asa falls in love with Mary, a sister of one of his friends. After their engagement Mary confesses her attachment to a married man. She has been seeing this gentleman during her engagement with Asa. Asa stays away when he learns about this. Again, after two years at Mary’s insistence through letters, they correspond and finally get married. For, in her second letter, Mary admits that she tried to end her infatuation by becoming engaged to Asa, but assures him at once that “she had not chosen him indiscriminately.”

Neither when they are going steady, nor after the marriage, Mary feels the pangs of separation as keenly as Asa. She enjoys the fine Baltimore summer weather and writes intimately on open cards whereas Asa pines for her passing his fingers over her photo. It is Asa’s commitment to married love which moves him to prepare coffee for Allbee, an unusual gesture, when the latter tells him about the death of his dear Flora in an automobile accident. Asa finds conjugal separation irreconcilable and asks his sister-in-law Elena why Max does not leave Galveston and come back to

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3 Saul Bellow, *The Victim* (1947, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984) 20. Further parenthetical references will be preceded by **TV**.
New York where he has got a flat. Elena replies nonchalantly:

'Oh, he makes good money down there; he works fifty, sixty hours a week. He sends me plenty! She did not appear to feel abandoned or even greatly concerned about Max's absence (TV 16)

Mrs Harkavy appreciates Asa for his involvement with his wife. When her son Harkavy sports with Asa in his distress she interrupts.

'Daniel, it's not a thing to joke about, if a couple is devoted' his mother said. 'It's nothing to ridicule. These days when marriages are so flimsy it's a real pleasure to see devotion. Couples go to City Hall like I might go to the five-and-dime to buy a hinge. Two boards on a hinge, and clap, clap, clap, that's a marriage. Wire your wife, Asa, it's the right thing and it's sweet. Never Mind' (TV 71-72)

Jealousy, according to Bertrand Russell "has been the most potent single factor in the genesis of sexual morality" and has contributed much to fatherhood, with all its economic implications and the foundation of the patriarchal family. This is what Asa suffers from, more keenly than any other Bellow hero. And this is what Allbee kindles in him when he says. "But you see a lot of marriages where one partner takes too much from the other. When a woman takes too much from a man, he tries to recover what he can from another woman. Likewise the wife" (TV 166). This theory of nature-and-ideals-at-odds, especially in marriages instead of estranging Asa and

\footnote{Bertrand Russell, "Our Sexual Ethics," Why I am Not a Christian and Other Essays (London: Allen, 1983) 119.}
Mary, as it happens in the case of Othello and Iago, bring him closer to the "maxims of the Sunday school."\(^5\) Asa's commitment to married love is at once the result and cause of his jealousy.

Augie is another devoted lover who is "magically restored to his vigorous self by the all-absorbing love of Thea."\(^6\) But Thea Flenchel epitomizes Marian Kinget's reality type. She is more realistic than Mary and cruelly so. Augie pities the lizards doped with ether for feeding Caligula. Thea chides him.

She said, 'Oh, you screwball! You get human affection mixed up with everything, like a savage. Keep your silly feelings to yourself. Those lizards don't want them, and if they felt the way you do they wouldn't be lizards - they'd be too slow, and pretty soon they'd be extinct. And look, if you were lying dead the little lizard would run down your open mouth to catch beetles, as if you were a log!'

'And Caligula would eat me!'

'Could be'

'And you'd bury me?'

'Because you're my lover. Of course. Wouldn't You me?' (AM 405)

Augie is obviously pained; but he cannot expect more from the lady who believes in evolutionary ethics, the law of the jungle. It is bootless to lament, but Augie does.

'Unlike Lucy Magnus, she never called me husband, or by any domestic term. I sometimes believed her marriage views, except that they weren't polemical, were similar to Mimi's (AM 405)

\(^5\) Russell 116.

Thea, however, is found to be "specially loving" (AM 407) when they move into the room to change for Sunday p.m. in the Zocálo. In this intimate moment Augie comes to know the essence of her character. That is, though they are both in love they are not "quite the same in purpose." 'She had the idea of an action for which love makes you ready and sets you free' (AM 407). This necessarily means that 'he could make the move from love to the next necessary thing' with little loss of time. For, she has an eagle to look after! She cannot linger on love longer than necessary. It is just concupiscent love and Thea, by no means is the weaker vessel.

She took my arm, not because she needed its support on the sharp cobbles, but to keep close... (AM 407)

"Sex love in the relation of husband and wife," asserts Engels" is and can become the rule only among the oppressed classes, that is, at the present day, among the proletariat, no matter whether this relationship is officially sanctioned or not. But here all the foundations of classical monogamy are removed. Here, there is a complete absence of all property, for the safeguarding and inheritance of which monogamy and male domination were established."7 Engels' thesis must be largely true of history but it does not make sense in Bellow's fiction where male domination is not a rule but an exception as in the case of the couple Isaac and Sylvia Braun. Even here there is no harassment of Sylvia. Humboldt beats Kathleen and that is perhaps the only instance of wife beating in Bellow. Love, in his fiction, romantic or married makes the men pusilanimous.

7 Engels, Origin, 71
How cleverly Stella manipulates a contract when Augie, much against the advice of Clem asking him to wait, in view of his peculiar makeup, rushes into marriage. She spells out her conditions one by one. She buys a ticket in the Sweepstakes every year and is also a mystic, a Gurdjieff follower. She spends a lot of money on clothes, Stella says, and further, owes a good deal. Augie sees no objection in all this. He is quite willing to clear her dues. But finally, Mintouchian's 'ancient wisdom' (AM 554), his knowledge of the inner-consciousness of women who are prepared all the time for the death of their men, proves true. Stella is found later hiding a lot from her husband, especially her past and present with Cumberland. She dishes out untruths as a matter of course. Augie finds himself at odds with this star stuff; his hopes of a new family are dashed. The problem with Augie and Thea and Stella and Augie, as is the case with many Bellow couples is: One is more violently in love than the other and it is almost always the man. Joseph, the one who is utterly devoid of connubial sensibility, is an exception.

Bellow himself had three divorces. Mark Harris writes that he had assumed that after two mistaken marriages Bellow had at last formed with Susan a permanent bond. Unfortunately Bellow had a legal entanglement "consuming souls and pockets" lasting for more than ten years at the end of which "the parties had achieved a deadlock."³ And the Pittsburg press had announced

³Mark Harris, Saul Bellow, Drumlin Woodchuck (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1980)
that Bellow had been sentenced for default in alimony payments to his third wife. Propriety, however, demands that the author's personal problems cannot be pushed further. After about a year of life in Chicago, Madeleine demands a divorce. She refuses to listen to Herzog when he talks of marriage, in the vocabulary of the passions, as a tender relationship resulting from the overflow of feeling, and all the rest of that! (H 199) She even lectures about the right way to perform the conjugal act and has already planned out everything with Valentine Gersbach in Boston. She charges Herzog with being on "a meek kick" to keep her in line by a new tactic (H 199). Miserable as it is, Herzog is forced to agree to the divorce.

And the divorce was painful. He was in love with Madeleine; he couldn't bear to leave his little daughter. But Madeleine refused to be married to him and people's wishes have to be respected. Slavery is dead. (H 13)

'It's painful' says Madeleine 'to have to say I never loved you. I never will love you, either!' And she declares finally: 'So there's no point in going on' (H 15). Obviously Herzog is defeated in the game of love by the stable Eskimo woman. She does not care a rap for Herzog's sweet love talk. She is not prepared for a lifelong commitment. 'She was in an ecstasy of consciousness,' as Herzog puts it; and that was 'one of the very great moments of her life' (H 15). It must be something like the feminist consciousness that characterizes books like The Feminine Mystique and The Second Stage, written in the sixties where the author Betty Friedan writes about the emptiness
of women's lives trapped in traditional marriages, their stereotyped roles and stifled creativity. Anyway Herzog knows his place.

There was flavour of subjugation in his love for Madeleine. Since she was domineering, and since he loved her, he had to accept the flavour that was given. (H 14)

The strain of the second divorce is too much for Herzog. He feels he is going to pieces and on the advice of Dr Edvig, borrows money from his brother Shura and goes to Europe. When he comes back from his culture tour Madeleine tells him through Gersbach not to come near the house on Harper Avenue. The police, she warns, have his picture. Despite all this Herzog resists getting ensnared in marriage with Ramona, his pet student, a flowershop owner. What sort of mother will Ramona make? Will this priestess of Isis, he wonders, take a little girl to Macy's paradise? Commenting on her eagerness for marriage, Herzog says "Simple and general human conditions prevailed among the most seemingly sophisticated" (H 23). He does not allow himself to be carried away her erotic monkey-shines into the establishment of marriage. He cautions himself: "To accept too many favours from Ramona was dangerous. He might have to pay with his freedom" (H 24)

Freedom is what Citrine too harps on. Thus, aggressively resisting remarriage to the end, Herzog divided between the need for sex and passion for children strives steadily towards 'a better cleaner world than "marriage."' Citrine takes cover behind his case with Denise to brush aside the proposal of marriage. Renata in her impatience, invites him once again.
"Marry me and you'll still be hailing me at eighty. By ninety when you can't, I'll love you still" (HG 328). She assures him that they will be Lord and Lady Citrine if he teamed up with her. Finally she reminds him indirectly of the night she lay beside Flonzaley the mortuary king and locked Citrine out. She mentions it in passing but he is sure the message is meant to echo, reverberate. Still, he refuses to fall a prey to jealousy and marry her 'just to keep her honest for a few days in Milan' (HG 354). Her Attic or Botticellian loveliness does not affect his idea of freedom, the freedom that Herzog successfully preserves till the end. Later he gives in to the offer of marriage and tries to marry Renata before she comes to learn that he is broke. His idea is to live en famille with Roger and his own little girls in Segovia and try to see if he could move from mental consciousness to the purer consciousness of spirit" (HG 414). Renata marries Flonzaley with whom she had fallen out for sometime. Her mother the Senora connives with her in this marriage for the money in it. When he reads the letter from Renata setting out the philosophy behind this marriage, Citrine cries like an adolescent. He feels like "a forsaken codger snuffling disgracefully from a beautiful floozy's abuse" (433) Earlier on the night when Renata locks him out, George tells him how much he respects him for being able to suffer, at his age, the agonies of love. Herzog, in spite of his 'madness' is much more Senecan in grief than Citrine. His connubial record however, is not altogether unstained. He has abandoned Daisy, his first wife in his
infatuation for Madeleine. Daisy who now 'tries to make the house cheerful' for Marco's sake is daily accused by her mother Polina of 'going with men.' Polina has grown senile and believes that Moses had divorced Daisy because 'she was a streetwalker, carried the yellow ticket' (H 229). Daisy, who is revealed occasionally through the consciousness of the hero in flashes certainly does not deserve this much. Unfortunate women like Daisy are not altogether absent in Bellow but they are marginalised and never receive the focus of attention. Valentine's wife, for instance is a gullible type whose only complaint against her 'ideal husband' is: He is so horny and 'she couldn't keep up the pace,' about this she complains to her 'best friend' Madeleine (H 223). Herzog and Mrs Gersbach might be an ideal match in an egalitarian married life. But there is rarely any such pair in Bellow's fiction. Herzog's idea of freedom is really laughable at least inasmuch as he respects it in others as well. When Renata persists in her divorce decision, Herzog feels like flogging her 'until her buttocks bled,' because 'he had done everything for her—everything' (H 16). But he bears down this mental violence and walks off because 'slavery is dead' and 'people's wishes have to be respected' (H 13).

Ramona who has broken off with an assistant television producer George Hoberly wants to marry Herzog, "a family type," (H 205) easily governable if caught but very 'hard to pin down' (H 160). She needs the identity that marriage bestows. But Renata who "always smiled and behaved like a courtesan" (HG 440) seeks marriage with Citrine for power, glory and means. When
her plan fails through, she gets another man, blames Citrine for the many ailes in his temperament and his passion for Humboldt which, she adds, has speeded the deterioration of their relationship.

"If you think You're on earth for such a very special purpose I don't know why you cling to the idea of happiness with a woman or a happy family life. This is either dumb innocence or else the last word in kinkiness. You're really far out and you take up with a person who's far out in her own way, and then you tell yourself that what you really want is a simple affectionate relationship" (HG 432)

Trachtenberg quotes Schopenhauer: "I say that every being without an exception acts with strict necessity, but exists and is what it is by virtue of its freedom." 9 Schopenhauer thus Schopenhauer thus reverses, according to Trachtenberg, the character of esse and operari to situate freedom in the realm of being rather than doing. Fanatically devoted to freedom, Citrine is thus pushed out of history, as he hesitates for a considerable time to compromise on it. Citrine's love of freedom is not just Vedantic or romantic, but because of his early involvement in Marxism, 'noncapitalistic.'

Sammler the defender of the capitalist faith lives to see the order crumbling around him. Marriages which generally subserve this order dissolve into thin air. Shula, his own daughter threatens her father's cherished belief system, when she forgets all about Eisen and vies with Margotte for the hand of Govinda Lal. Sammler does not protest against Shula's desire

for marriage with Lal because he is an Asiatic. He is not against exotic marriage. But what worries him is Shula's flippancy.

... But scientists make bad husbands. Sixteen hours a day in the laboratory, absorbed in research. You'd be neglected. You'd be hurt. I wouldn't allow it'

'Not even if I loved him?'

'You also thought you loved Eisen!'

'He didn't love me. Not enough to forgive my Catholic background. And I couldn't discuss anything with him. Besides, sexually, he was a very gross person. Things I wouldn't care to tell you about, father. But he is extremely common and lousy. He's here in New York. If he comes near me, I'll stab him.' (MSP 212)

But Sammler considers his own daughter a gross woman, a member of the Gender Club. With her sari and false eyelashes and the Hindu spot on her forehead, she gets close to Lal who stands astride the flowing pipe to arrest the stream. Sammler studies this nearness with concern as 'if standing and proximity could lead to blending' (MSP 19) He asks his daughter, like a pharisaical Asiatic father, to stand back and not get drenched. He wonders how his poor child, 'a creature caused by him and adrift in a formless, boundless world' (MSP 157) could easily alter her affections; and steal a scientist's manuscript besides, for this very opportunity to meet him. If Shula's attitude to love and marriage is so confusing, Angela's outlook is con founding. Angela has daringly gone in for group sex with a couple at Acapulco, with Wharton Horricker on her side. It is, actually, to use a current expression, consensual adultery.
She has taken delight in the exchange but Horricker who led her into it is in a pique. And Angela, resenting this classical male jealousy, wonders aloud in the presence of Sammler if she still were to marry Horricker. Sammler concludes that healthy young women have their needs and that, human attachments being so light, there were probably lists of alternates drawn from preconscious preserves of men they met accidentally. Margotte on her part, talks about the resemblance that Govinda Lal bears to Ussher Arkin, her dead husband. Sammler bitterly muses. 'With an outer space perspective perhaps immediate urgencies and egoism are lessened and marriage would be a kindlier association - sub specie aeternitatis' (MSP 179) He wonders how he could pull Shula- intellectuals kindle up her womb - already smitten with this Indian, out of this triangle. Ther is some reason for Margotte, a childless widow for three years to go to great trouble to interest a man like Govinda Lal on the mental level. All this is symptomatic of the loss of values and culture in the Woodstock generation. When he runs to Feffer one day after the Columbia incident, Sammler asks him about the girl who helped him. That is Fanny. 'Not my wife' Feffer happily disowns.' Just a girl I ... now and then, and look after! Sammler is unable to believe this. Feffer jauntily clears his misgivings.

'Nowadays girls are (willing) Still somewhat shy. Not really so marvellous in the sack. In spite of big tits. Married of course. The husband works at night' (MSP 100)

So it is Angela everywhere. To escape from the agony of the times, Sammler takes refuge in memories of Elya Gruner's Tudor-style-half-timbered house. It emerges in his consciousness as the
symbol of the stable family, the monogamous ideal. Elya and his wife used to play shuttlecocks in this house, a house of misconceived purposes, now under siege.

Milda had been an agreeable person, cheerful, amiable, high-pitched, even at times breezy. But strictly correct. Often the doctor would demonstratively embrace her and say, 'The World's best wife. Oh! I love you, Hil (MSP 221)

Elya was demonstrative but Milda was not. This is however, Sammler says, not to 'badmouth' her.

There was in his conduct a strong element of propaganda. It came to him, perhaps, from the American system as a whole and showed his submissiveness. Everyone, to everyone, had a way of making propaganda for the good.

Democracy was propagandistic in style. (MSP 221-222)

However all is not rosy here in this dispensation. There are concealed here some of the world's well-kept secrets.

But Elya had certainly been disappointed in his wife. Sammler hoped that he had love affairs. With a nurse, perhaps? Or a patient who had become a mistress? (MSP 222)

Sammler faithfully committed to his advocacy line makes light of the affair. His canonical purity is diluted in the following lines.

Sammler did not recommend this for everyone, but in Elya's case it would have been beneficial. But no, probably the doctor was respectable. And it's a doomed man that woos affection so much. (MSP 222)
Sammler unambiguously identifies his benefactor, his personal life and his political system but perspicaciously bypasses his lapses. Elya may be excused, so to say if he tramples, in his innocence or necessity, the monogamous ideal because his wife was not equally demonstrative. The New Rochelle house thus rises in Sammler's esteem as a place of emotional security, a symbol of the benevolent old order, the patriarchal family, a monument of perishing values, literally inundated by the Beat generation, the Bakhin boy Wallace. And after Elya, or even as he is sinking, the Deluge!

Sammler's ideology - the term is an unhappy choice-takes us back to Engels. Qualifying Morgan's view of the advance of the monogamous family as an approximation to the complete equality of the sexes, Engels says:

In the family, he (the husband) is the bourgeois; the wife represents the proletariat.\(^{10}\)

This typical Marxist view is the culmination of Engels' pain-staking analysis of the three chief forms of marriage, which, by and large, conforms to the three main stages of human development. For savagery - group marriage; for barbarism - pairing marriage; for civilization - monogamy, supplemented by adultery and prostitution. In monogamy the men have successfully retained the sexual freedom of the earliest form, group marriage but denied the same to women. Women also, under conditions of stress, Engels believes, had a tendency towards adultery. Indicting the bourgeois marriage of civilization and

\(^{10}\)Engels, *Origin*, 74.
the contradictions inherent in monogamy - flourishing hetærism on the part of the husband, and adultery on the side of the wife - Engels writes:

The Catholic Church doubtless abolished divorce only because it was convinced that for adultery, as for death, there is no cure whatsoever. In Protestant countries, on the other hand, it is the rule that the bourgeois son is allowed to seek a wife for himself from his own class, more or less freely. Consequently, marriage can be based on a certain degree of love which, for decency's sake, is always assumed, in accordance with Protestant hypocrisy.11

The Jewish family establishment of Elia as well as that of Isaac has no doubt subjugated the female. All the same, the women in this dispensation are not destroyed by the patriarchs. As for independence, they have no identity outside the patriarchy where they have been defeated. The Marx-Engels position, which Sammler tries to demolish, is true of some Jewish patriarchs in Bellow's fiction, and to a certain extent, of even the Christian Henderson. But it fails in most cases. It is the women who get out of hand and reign, rule and destroy wherever, and in whatever condition, they live. The monogamous family, evolving from the pairing family, mainly tried to ensure children of undisputed paternity for the inheritance of the father's wealth and for that purpose subjugated the woman. It was not in any way the fruit of individual sex love, for the marriages remained marriages of convenience.

11 Engels 70
It was the first form of the family based not on natural but on economic conditions, namely, on the victory of private property over original, naturally developed, common ownership. The rule of the men in the family, the procreation of children who could only be his, destined to be the heirs of his wealth - these alone were frankly avowed by the Greeks as the exclusive aims of monogamy.

Engels' exposition of the family in history is very much convincing. Nonetheless Bellow's women, especially, Margaret, Madeleine and Derise seem to set out to blow this history to smithereens. They are not the victims of civilization. They are not chattel in the capitalistic households of their lords. In fact there is a curious reversal of roles. In America, a nation of historical redress, these women mercilessly hound their men out of existence. Herzog is a product of patriarchy. He wants to be a patriarch himself. He has property and for inheritance, children, to boot. But Madeleine relentlessly hits him with her iron heel and kicks him into the scrap-heap. Engels has no case at all in Bellow. And therefore, to return to New Rochelle, Elya's ancient house, a symbol of the benevolent order in the eyes of Sammler, is most likely to perish with Sammler. If Angela inherits it she will put it up for sale, Wallace says, because she has no sentiments. It is understandable, because she is marching back into history with her Acapulco horde, brushing aside the love and marriage of the much-maligned civilization, towards promiscuity perhaps and the Original Communistic household. And Wallace, determined to
crash out of the restrictive destiny to be offered by his father, is bound for the moon. He might break rank and crash-land on his father's estate. In any case Sammler has no good news. Elya is passing away with the values of love and marriage. And the family might literally perish. For, there is none in Elya's family to 'inherit' the wealth in the responsible tradition of patriarchy.

Joseph and Henderson in spite of their different religious background believe in authoritarian marriage and take the patriarchal line. They do not treat their wives as equals. Joseph freezes out Iva as a woman who cares little for the higher values of life even as he is living off her. He fraternizes with Kitty, 'a simple, warm, uncomplicated, and matter-of-fact' (DM 96) girl, for whom 'marriage as such did not exist. There were only people. (DM 97) Iva lives, and believes as Joseph says, in a world of "clothes, appearance, furniture, light entertainment" (DM 98) He dislike his mother-in-law Mrs Almstadt as well and calls her vain, stupid and proud. 'They' should not allow her to be an equal. The lady taking care of her sick husband and also her son-in-law is rather bossy. Men should not be "dog-like". "What have I got to do with husbands' love or wives' love?" Henderson boasts. "I am too peculiar for that kind of stuff." He treats Frances his first wife. Opprobriously, as he admits, himself.

I treated her like a stranger before the guests because I didn't like to see her behave and carry on like the lady of the house; ... she is not a lady but merely my wife - merely my wife. (HRK 10)
Calm and passive wives like Frances and Daisy are not treated well by their husbands. But, taken together Bellow's women are more merciless. In guilt, the indifferent Henderson who behaves badly by his wives, as he himself admits, stands no comparison with the inimical Madeleine who remorselessly implicates her partner at the police station. In "Henderson and in Herzog," says Jeanne Braham, "Bellow draws from both romantic and naturalist traditions in American literature to suggest that knowing emerges out of connections to human experience larger than the solitary self." The immediate community that is larger than the self is the conjugal family. Both Henderson and Herzog learn through marriage. Henderson realizes the need for marriage and family; Herzog learns the need for staying away from all this though he affirms for all others the value of such civilized life.

'Maybe I married you to improve my mind!' said Herzog 'I'm learning.'
'Well, I'll teach you, don't worry!' said the beautiful, pregnant Madeleine between her teeth. (H 131)

The idea of marriage as a bitter but valuable lesson in life is expressed by Robey in his interminable lecture to Augie:

He started to tell me of his five marriages,
taking his share of the blame for each divorce.
But the marriages formed part of his education;
therefore he had to evaluate them. (AM 508)

The pain of a broken life, Herzog writes to Nietzsche, is 'higher education' (H 326). And he sleeps on a mattress without sheets, 'his abandoned marriage bed' (H 7). Henderson's

fulminations against Lily have no substance. None of us is willing to believe that she is a 'con artist' (HRK 205) who tries to exploit him. Henderson's accusations that she is a reckless spendthrift and that she used him as a character reference are all inspired by her refusal to camp among the Copper Eskimos for the honeymoon. Hearing her say that he was unkillable, Henderson puts an 'antagonistic interpretation on it,' as he admits 'eventhough I knew better' (HRK 10) And to punish her he treats her like a stranger before the guests. Henderson himself gives an account of how he treated her worse than Frances who was like 'Shelley's moon, wandering companionless' (HRK 8). He 'raved at her in public and swore at her in private' (HRK 8). Joseph makes his confession in a similar vein as he walks out on Iva after an unprovoked quarrel with her over the missing book Dubliners. "I don't give a bloody damn about the house," he shouts as he quits.

I shut the door with a crash, already aware, under my anger, that this was beneath me and altogether out of proportion to the provocation.

(DM 95)

The Dean's December is very much concerned with stability in marriage. Dean Corde who haunts his wife's room, much like Joseph, in Bucharest is certainly not a Victor nor entirely a victim in marriage. But Minna is closer to the reality types, though she does not share the wickedness of Margaret or Madeleine. It is an uneasy relationship between them.
Minna marrying Dean Corde: a superclear mind had made a dreamer’s match. 13

After day-long preoccupations with abstractions the Dean is not blessed with proximity in the night. He stretches beside Minna along the edge of the bed and 'goes into a state of blankness for the rest of the night' (DD 136). Back in Chicago, after the death of Valeria, Minna's mother, the habit continues. 'He did not make full use of the double bed but slept on its edge as if he had been laid there like a yardstick' (DD 279). The marital bond looks as thin as gossamer at times, as when Minna flies into a rage when Corde talks about nihilism and Jung when he takes her out for a walk. Curiously, it is Minna who asks for psychological explanation, for her anguish and inability to grow out of her dependency on her mother. Her mother has broken her promise to live up to ninety like Pablo Casals. Corde takes the beating magnanimously. It is a reward for his effort to wean her from the telephone and divert her thoughts from the dead mother. He acts responsibly. 'A thankless role,' as he says 'the solicitous sensible husband' (DD 252). However he dislikes his own 'academic baby talk' (DD 260). But what exactly is the root of the trouble?

She had her doubts about Corde's good intentions. About her mother there were no doubts; she came from her womb and they were bound by true bonds. (DD 284)

Marital bondage is no substitute for blood links. And Minna looks at Corde only through the eyes of her mother and aunt.

13 Saul Bellow, The Dean's December (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982) 256. Further parenthetical references will be preceded by DD.
Valeria and Gigi do not readily trust Corde. The 'question of his stability' (DD 57) in marriage, Corde thinks, is very much discussed by the women. 'With his record of debauchery (something like Don Giovanni's 1,003 seductions), would he really settle down with their Minna?' This is the question that rankles in their mind. Because 'American behavior was wild by the standards of these old-fashioned Eastern Europeans' (DD 57).

He was by the strictest marital standards decent, mature, intelligent, responsible, an excellent husband. But within the historical currents he could not be viewed from a positive aspect because he was a representative of the rotten West, lacking ballast, the product of an undesirable historical development, a corrupted branch of humanity. (DD 133)

All the same Corde thinks of Valeria with 'extraordinary respect' because her humanity, as he sees it, springs from 'the old sources' (DD 107). She had taken a serious interest in Laing's psychiatry but her deeper life was curiously different.

She had loved her husband, that was why she become a Communist militant: she had loved her husband, loved her daughter, her sister. (DD 107)

Corde combines with his tribute to her family instinct a cruel gibe at Marxism. Thus examining the values of marriage and family that flourish under a Communist regime he adds strength to the reflections of the strictly conservative Sammler. He takes delight in the fact that Valeria visited her husband's grave in the wake of practical urgencies.

Here the deeper life was Byzantine, and even more archaic, never mind the Freud or the Laing - that was for the sophisticated, nervous public. (DD 108)
Valeria who, in Corde's view represented 'the older, indeed archaic, branch of humanity with its eternal fixtures' had every reason to search whether he was capable of sustaining in marriage a serious relationship' (CD 133). Ironically Corde with his predilections towards the old order stands up to it better than Minna. But Minna is not always worthy of his patience and concern. She is worried about her aunt and Mount Palomar, but listless about Corde. Corde is not visibly disappointed but thinks very often in terms of 'women, love, marriage' (CD 233). Looking at Vlada Voynich he muses like a matchmaker:

... she would make someone a dependable wife, a good warm embracer, and stable; she would be sympathetic, intelligent, decent - but above all she was stable. Corde often sized up marriageable women in this way, entertained notions about them - maybe illusions was the fitter word. (CD 215)

Vlada is leading a broken life. Her ex-husband was 'one of the world's permanent and growing population of educated lunatics.' Corde is delighted to observe that in a communist country, revolutionaries like Valeria tend their values on marriage. The Judeo-Christian tradition, monogamous ideal and lifelong commitment seem to be his preferred forms. Bellow's men do not easily embrace these ideals. But they are more tained than their women at conjugal ruptures which blight most of their lives. It is the men who speak up for love and not women. Kayo, who invites Augie to meet his family is warm and expansive unlike his wife, 'unfriendly, highly suspicious' (AM 520) and her avaricious mother who lives with them. He
educates Augie, who already has too much weakness for it, about the value of love.

Love is the only answer to more, being infinite. I mean all the forms of love, eros, agape, libido, philia, and ecstasy. They are always the same but sometimes one quality dominates and sometimes another. (AM 519)

Unfortunately Romantic love, noble as it is, does not ensure a balance of emotional investment. Companionate marriage does not maintain a workable love equation. In other words, the women in Bellow do not pursue their male partners as much as they are pursued by them. And marriage for most of them is plain civil contract with all the clauses weighing in their favor. Is it a deliberate Bellow pattern? Matching a scatter-brained nimble male with an aggressively practical female, as again, in the case of Herzog and Madeleine? The problem of power that is examined in the next chapter sheds some light on this question.