CHAPTER III

ABSOLUTION: 'AN AGE OF EMBATTLED WOMEN'

"Unrelated by blood was she to the man that she
slew."

Aeschylus

Describing the Sabbath dinner he attended with Alexandra
in honor of the Werblowskys, Bellow observes in To Jerusalem
and Back:

Three adolescent children, two daughters and
a son, wait on us under the supervision of
their mother. The Professor, in patriarchal
style, is served first. His wife, pleased with
all he does, all he says, visibly dotes on him—a
rare sight this, in an age of embattled women.
Yet who could fail to share the pleasure the
soft and gentle Mrs Werblowsky takes in her
husband as he lounges in his large chair, presiding
over the table? (JB 53)

Bellow obviously takes delight in the scene where the lady
serves the husband at the head of the table in patriarchal
fashion and the mother, in turn, is happily helped by the
children. He continues and confesses:

My own heart must have a feudal compartment.
I have a weakness for hierarchy (JB 53).

One may not, however, be justified in pouncing on Bellow, taking
the foregoing account of the Weberian ideal as conclusive
evidence of a retrograde, reactionary philosophy. His obser-
vations here show his patent patriarchal leaning but the larger
question of his treatment of women in the power structure of
the family in his fiction has to be studied with his refusal
to allow his patriarchal to harass their wives beyond conscionable limits. Bellow's private observations serve as a valid index when we examine certain critical positions on the man-woman equation, for instance, the view expressed by Denis Donoghue in *The Ordinary Universe* that Bellow is "a man's novelist." "The reason is, perhaps, that in Bellow's fiction," the critic says "... women are there merely to give the hero something more to suffer; they merely add to the noise and fret of his life." There are, however, exceptions to the rule and Cinderellas are not altogether missing. Iva, in *Dangling Man*, a career woman like Stella, does not share the latter's guile. In spite of Joseph's negative portrayal she seems to be gentle and well-behaved. It is Joseph who unnecessarily troubles himself in becoming wary of her independence. Walter, six years younger than Susie, Iva's friend, ill-treats the baby Barbara and gags her with a handkerchief for disturbing him in his sleep. For, he believes that he has been trapped into the marriage. When Iva advises Susy Farson, on learning this outrage, to leave her husband, Joseph the chauvinist resents. Joseph has an affair with Kitty Daumler. Later he avoids her for sometime telling himself that he is not the sort of man to keep too many irons in the fire. But when Kitty passes on to the next man and bangs the door on him he regrets that he "had irrevocably thrown away the comfort and pleasure she had offered me in an existence barren of both" (DM 103). If his life has become barren, as he confesses, it is certainly not Iva's fault. It is his own choice, the choice of an enquiry into conundrums "that alienates him from
his wife, his friends, his family."\(^1\) It is not that Joseph is
blind to his blazing lapse. He admits:

Iva and I had not been getting along well. I
don't think the fault was entirely hers. I had
dominated her for years; she was now capable of
rebell ing (as, for example, at the Servatius party)
... was it possible that she should not want to be
guided, formed by me?

It is the traditional fear of men, the anxiety that their
women might leave, after all, the confines of their feminine
mystique. Joseph dislikes the strength of Dolly, his sister-in-
law, he-spanks Etta his niece who challenges, even before her
marriage, the myth of male power in asking Joseph to stop playing
his Haydn record. Malin sees in the beating the symbolism of
Joseph's "basic hostility ... toward all women - a hostility
which is fearful at the same time."\(^2\) It is the outlook of the
patriarchs like the successful Isaac Braun and the rampageous
Henderson. It is an essential component of the Judeo-Christian
belief. But the Henderson formula, the-merely-my-wife thesis
is efficiently challenged by warlike women in Bellow's fiction
so much so that in the novels following Seize the Day the
aggression of women and the victimization of man becomes the
basic pattern with the exception of Henderson the Rain King.
There is an uneasy truce in The Dean's December where the woman
strikes at times but not kills. The expression 'truce' should
not, however give the impression that there is a war and that

\(^1\) Walter Allen, The Modern Novel: In Britain and the United
States (New York: Dutton, 1965) 322.

\(^2\) Irving Malin, Saul Bellow's Fiction (Carbondale:
Southern Illinois UP, 1969) 73.
the woman conquers; the woman wages the war but the man does not enter the fray. He runs, lest he should be killed. He runs until he stumbles, like Wilhelm, on a corpse and cries to his heart’s need. The efforts of seasoned patriarchs like Dr Tamkin to prop up the likes of Wilhelm for a proper fight are of no avail. Tamkin advises Wilhelm not to allow Margaret to make him suffer because it defeats the original object in leaving her. How? Tamkin cites the example of the blind man Rappaport, a bigamist not given to a secret life but "regular patriarch" (SD 97) hiding nothing from anybody. He had two wives and two separate families, one in Williamsburg and the other in the Bronx. This is the way, Tamkin says, to free oneself from morbid guilt feelings. Wilhelm does not take the cue, from the classic case where the male, a blind male, becomes free and powerful by playing one woman against the other in the open. Obviously he does not want to divide his time between Margaret and Olive, the one who is willing to marry him outside the Church when he gets divorced. Instead he begs before Margaret, who, sensing the arrangement is not willing to release him from technical kinship.

He cried, "Take everything I've got, Margaret. Let me go to Reno. Don't you want to marry again? No. She went out with other men, but took his money. She lived in order to punish him. (SD 94)"

But this is not Tamkin's way of dealing with blind power. Dr Tamkin, in his inimitable orotund style gives the answer:

"Innately, the female knows how to cripple by sickening a man with guilt. It is a very special destruct, and she sends her curse to make a fellow
important. As if she says, 'unless I allow it, you will never be a man.' But men like my old dad or Mr. Rappaport answers, 'Woman, what art thou to me?' You can't do that yet. (SD 97)

Wilhelm, he says, is 'a halfway case' (SD 97) who wants to follow his instinct but is worried still. The basic fact, however is: Wilhelm, regardless of his prowess is unwilling to take on a woman, "a castrating woman - a woman who demands not only to be equal but to be superior" (SD). He is not interested in living with Margaret in spite of his passion for the children, because it means challenging her authority at every turn or meekly submit to her once and for all. He cannot do either and therefore he kneels before her once and for all to be released. That is 'the price of his freedom (SD 113). This 'freedom' crops up again and again; it appears in Herzog and also Humboldt's Gift. For perhaps the first time he felt,' as Herzog puts it in the end, 'he felt what it was to be free from Madeleine. Joy! His servitude was ended, and his heart released from its grisly heaviness and encrustation' (H 320). Love of freedom bands together these three suffers. They neither want to rule nor to be ruled. Their indifference to power gives us our basic insight into their instability in marriage. If a woman is making a dead set at her man, Wilhelm's solution is just to stay away from her and not to take preemptive time-tested measures like the blind man's, in order to hold in check female excess. He had better choose another woman, one who espouses the same indifference towards power, that is, a woman like Olive. If his Roxbury life with Olive is any indication, the small, pretty dark girl, is not a
power type. She has no penchant for family fundamentalism perhaps because she is the daughter of a freethinker, an osteopath. She wakes up Wilhelm almost in tears at being late for Mass. It is the usually disorganized Wilhelm - that is the popular impression - who helps her hitch her garters, smooth out her slip and dress and even put on her hat, when she does it with "shaky hands" (SD 94). He drives in second gear in his forgetful way and tries to calm her. For her timidity knows no limits; she gets out a block from the Church to avoid gossip. It is no wonder Wilhelm chooses to fall for this meek type when finally Margaret drives him to the ultimate. Sadly disowned by a selfish father who chooses to part with neither money nor sympathy for the son who badly needs both, Wilhelm desperately tries to prevail with Margaret when he summons him, as usual on phone, for money. That is, Margaret must have a job with the degree that he helped her to get. Margaret says "Absolutely not" (SD 113) on the excuse of children. At the same time she curtly informs him that she will not accept postdated checks.

You ought to patch things up with Rajax Corporation. They'd take you back. You've got to stop thinking like a youngster." (SD 112)

Wilhelm reaches the acme of suffering.

You've got to let me breathe. If I should keel over, what then? And it's something I can never understand about you. How you can treat someone like this whom you lived with so long. Who gave you the best of himself. Who tried. Who loved you." Merely to pronounce the word love" made him tremble. (SD 114)
Margaret pooh-poohs his love talk and hangs up. And Wilhelm in the final throes of his agony, tries to rip the phone from the wall, grinds his teeth and makes a stifled cry, hurries into the street and decides his destiny.

"I'll get a divorce if it's the last thing I do," he swore. ... I'll have to sell the car for junk and pay the hotel. I'll have to go on my knees to Olive and say, 'Stand by me a while. Don't let her win. Olive!'" (SD 115)

Wilhelm who goes on his knees before Margaret for his release is once again prepared to go on his knees—to the one who never wants it—for bondage. His predilection for soft types, those who shun power and his abhorrence of authority is thus established. He rules out going back to Margaret, who does not want to win him by love but tow him from a vantage point, in the manner of an authoritarian. She tries to show that 'he would be better off with Margaret again than he was today' (SD 113). In fact she is as much of a power establishment as Rojax corporation. 'And he could not return to her any more than he could beg Rojax to take him back' (SD 113). Margaret and Rojax are synonymous and coextensive entities. Wilhelm would rather beg a meek type like Olive, as Herzog gladly washes dishes for Ramona. It is the refusal perhaps, to pursue power, submit to it, or even relate to it in any form that renders Wilhelm and Olive disorganized, as also many other celebrated sufferers like Herzog, and Citrine. Not only the dialectical view of Marx and Engels, about women's place in modern marriage but also the historical view of radical feminists lose their value with Bellow's female absolutists. Bellow's women do not have to
reconcile with a humiliating and circumscribed existence in married life. The anatomy-is-destiny ethos which blights women everywhere in contemporary life does not afflict them. Because, they capture power and hold their husbands to ransom. Elizabeth Janeway points out that in America many women had "bought in" to social mythology and agreed to have "private power in return for public submission." This must be true of Madeleine and Denise. Bellow's men pay for the black deeds of their chauvinist ancestors; for the crimes of history.

It is true, of course that, as Kate Millett observes in Sexual Politics, that the character structure patriarchy creates in both sexes is "a habit of mind and a way of life." It is equally true that women with a will escape from their destinies and turn the tables against their partners. This is well exemplified in The Old System.

Isaac was master, Cooking, backing, laundry, all housekeeping, had to meet his standard ... Maybe the slightest troubling ambiguity in one of Cousin Sylvia's eyes was the effect of a suppressed historical comment ... Without Aunt Rose's curses. (MM-OS 64-65)

The description tones in with history. Sylvia is a glorified servant in the establishment of a millionaire patriarch and has no individual existence outside these limits. Isaac is a power type. This is domination and it is the male, in consistence with the Marx Engels position, who rules. But the male ruler


Kate Millett, qtd. in Eisenstein, 9.
in Bellow's fiction is no match for the female counterpart.
In the same Braun family there are female absolutists. Aunt
Rose, Dr Braun recounts, ruled like an empress. "She was
building a kingdom with the labour of Uncle Braun and the
strength of her obedient sons" (MM-OS 49). With 'the rigid
madness of the orthodox' and 'their haughty, spinning, crazy
spirit she rejected one after another, the prospective brides
of Isaac calling them 'a false dog' 'candied poison' 'an open
ditch' and 'a sewer' (MM-OS 53). That is more, 'Uncle Braun
died angry with Aunt Rose. He turned his face to the wall with
his last breath to rebuke her hardness' (MM-OS 52). The men,
his sons 'burst out weeping' but 'the tears of the women were
different' (MM-OS 52). And Aunt Rose to cap it all, defied
Uncle Braun's will and collected rents in the slums of Albany
and Schenectady from the property he had provided for her sons.
Thus she made her husband, the propertied business man, an invalid
in his own place, took over the patriarchate and turned it, so
to say into a matriarchate. Tina too became a ruler. 'She had
a totalitarian air,' says Dr Braun.' And not only towards others.
Towards herself, also. Absorbed in the dictatorship of her huge
person' (MM-OS 62). She 'consulted her own will' (MM-OS 54) in
marrying Fenster 'a Biblical fool' (MM-OS 68) as gullible as he
was bald. Like her mother who thrived on Uncle Braun's labor,
Tina is back of Fenster's business. She never faced any challenge
from her husband Fenster, a mere creature. No wonder she carried
her passion for power to perverse proportions in her deathbed,
demanding money for meeting her brother. But Isaac in spite of
the power that goes with 'the Jewish pater families' considered her still as 'our baby sister' (MM-OS 53) and met her on her terms. Dr Braun searches the roots of her power in the following words:

She never tried to please. Her aim must have been majesty. Based on what? She had no great thoughts. She built on her own nature. On a primordial idea, hugely blown up! (MM-OS 62)

Even the pursuit of sex for this power crsak is not a tender act of passion but an exercise of will. Dr Braun, Tina's childhood bridegroom recalls 'the scowling, smouldering Tina in the attic' and the 'violent strength and obstinacy of her crinkled, sooty hair' (MM-OS 54). Margaret Mead analysing male-female equation in primitive cultures takes note of the fact that clever, self-willed women have successfully manipulated in the male bastion in spite of historical handicaps. "In certain cases, as in Tchambuli society" Mead writes, "women appeared to have less power, although in fact they wielded quite a lot; yet, in a ritualistic way, they had to defer to the men."5 It is equally true of civilization. Aunt Rose, in Dr Braun's opinion is 'the original dura mater- the primal hard mother', (MM-OS) a symbol of hardcore power. Examining the complex matrix of gender power relationship Lipman-Blumen writes about the female's choice of a new tool, micromanipulation. "The only realistic response of many women," Lipman-Blumen says," to such overwhelming institutionally based macromanipulation is micromanipulation, the use of interpersonal behaviors and practices to influence,

if not control, the power balance." This tool, chosen by the historically defeated female to adapt to male-dominated institutional structure becomes a deadly weapon in the hands of Bellow's ruling females. Their male counterparts are no match for them and are just overthrown without so much as a slanging match.

In the cut and thrust between Wilhelm and Margaret, the final phone conversation, Wilhelm cries and cringes but Margaret just disposes. She has no patience to daily over her husband. This is the case, therefore, with Bellow's problem-couples, Margaret-Wilhelm, Madeleine-Hertzog and Denise-Citrine; the man so fully cultivates the Jungian animus and the women the animus, beyond the levels required for a harmonious integration of personality, that it leads to an absolute reversal of gender roles. The outcome is naturally disastrous. These couples do not just find themselves at cross purposes in marriage. The women, in full cry, vanquish their callow men and even as these poor souls kiss the earth, carry the battle to absurd heights still tilting at these nonentities.

Augie learns 'the lessons and theories of power' (AM 116) at an early age in two family establishments. The first is Grandma Lausch's regime and the next is Einhorn's. Both are absolutists. The crippled Einhorn has been indulged by his father, the Commissioner as a young boy. He 'bought his paralytic son a bride,' (AM 116) paying off the bride's cousin. 'That she loved Einhorn wasn't any evidence against this, for it'd be constitutional with her to adore her husband.' Einhorn, with his

world-gypping letters and operations, 'grabbed command in business.' The most important real-estate brokers in the district, the Einhorns control much property. Einhorn Senior, who had four wives — in a way worthy of Engels' criticism — is the reigning chief. But the son rules. They are steeped all the time in insurance and property, lawsuits and legal miscarriage, 'sour partnerships and welshings and contested wills,' (AM 86). They are ably assisted by the informers Goblin, Kreindl, Clem and Jimmy. Augie joins this classical patriarchate and becomes 'not just metaphorical right hand but virtually arms and legs' (AM 72) to Einhorn. Here the woman, in keeping with the character of a male power establishment, is just an adjunct. Tillie 'worshipfully obeyed him and did his, biddings and errands just as the rest' (AM 87) of the staff. The woman is trapped in an unequal relationship where Einhorn feels free to pursue women without number outside marriage. Kreindl teaches Augie about the privileges of the male. Telling Augie that Simon has made a mistake in fixing his affections on Joe Flexner's daughter, he says that the young girl with enviable 'things like that' 'is too independent for a young fellow' (AM 215). 'She needs an older man, a cooler head who can say yes and do no.' (AM 215). He further advises Augie that a young man should never be in a hurry to marry. He must have a plenty of jig-jig before he settles down. 'To come together with a peepy little woman,' he declares 'who sings in your ear. It's the life of the soul!' (AM 215) Einhorn 'the family leader,' the chief, the man of administration and thought,' and besides, 'the word's charm boy,' (AM 117) has many handmaidens like Lollie Fewter. Mildred Stark,
a crippled woman who comes two or three times a week to type
some letters for Birkorn finally ends up, as his 'handmaiden'
his full-time secretary, servant and confidant. But these
patriarchs are no match for the grand dame, the matriarch
Grandma Lausch, who builds her empire with much more efficiency
in less imposing surroundings. 'She was tyrannical,' says
Augie, 'and a snob about her Odessa lustre and her servants
and governesses...' (AM 16). The first victim of her rule is
a woman, her own daughter who languishes in 'her love-originated
servitude' (AM 15). She gave in to 'a marble-legged Olympian,' a
laundry driver, and for that ancient original sin Grandma
Lausch is still administering 'the penalties under the standards
of legitimacy, representing the main body of married womankind'
(AM 16). Augie's mother, like the mothers of heroes who are to
follow, is a meek type. Engels says: 'The overthrow of mother
right was the world-historic defeat of the female sex.' 7 Augie's
mother and Herzog's figure prominently among the defeated women.
The wives in Bellow in denying their men the company of their
children ruin father right and push back history. But Grandma
Lausch is a strict ruler. There is no place for compassion in
her 'kitchen religion' (AM 17). She mercilessly banishes Augie's
idiot brother George from the house in spite of Augie's protests
and Mama's silent disapproval. Mama is not capable of anything
better. She 'surrendered powers' to her and 'took her punishment
in drudgery.' She occupies a place 'among women conquered by a
superior force of love, like those women whom Zeus got the better
of in animal form and who next had to take cover from his furious
wife (AM 15). Mama is a 'prime example of this weakness' (AM 19).

7 Engels, Origin, 57
But Simon, who sides with Grandma in the banishment of George himself turns into a power monger later. It is evident in the way he treats his mild-mannered mother-in-law Mrs Magnus. Authoritarian and indulgent at once, this eminent patriarch bawls her out 'about the cheap clothes she wears' (AM 495) 'looking like the scrubwoman' (AK 496). It is Augie's training in Grandma's establishment that helps him in his movement with Einhorn 'a man who needed someone beside him continually'. The services his staff renders make him 'autocratic' (AM 76). The Commissioner and Einhorn do not even care to keep their surroundings clean because of the innumerable men at their beck and call. Augie ridicules this sordid power exercise in his characteristic way.

I understand that British aristocrats are still legally entitled to piss, if they should care to, on the hind wheels of carriages. (AM 77)

But Augie keeps up because what he 'had had under Grandma Lausch made an inconsiderable thing of it to be porter for an hour.' He studies the origin of the power craze in the misguided individual in a splendid way. Grandma's tact and sultanism he says 'originated in things we little understood: disappointment, angry giddiness from self-imposed, prideful struggle, weak nearness to death that impaired her judgement, maybe a sharp utterance of stubborn animal spirit, or bubble from human enterprise, sinking and discharging blindly from a depth' (AM 68).

Augie's psychology of power helps him to formulate his philosophy of life. He not only witnesses the noontide of Grandma's power but also its decline and death. Power slowly passes into
Simon's hands. He takes care of the surplus and no longer
Grandma, 'as in the old administration' (AM 110). But Mama
weepes over her strange alteration (AM 111) forgetting that
Grandma laid most of her strength on Mama as boss-women,
governing hand, queen mother, empress. Grandma's banishment of
George and near-senile kitchen scandals couldn't shake 'the
respect and liege feeling so long established' (AM 111). Finally
Grandma goes, the Georgie way. The passing of the old order
is richly portrayed by Augie:

Yes, she made retirement out of banishment,
and the newly created republicans, the wax not
cool yet on their constitution, had the last pang
of loyalty to the deposed, when mobs silent,
see off the limousine, and the prince and princely
family have the last word in the history of
wrongs. (AM 113)

The recurrent depiction of the family as a power establishment,
and the analogies to political authority are not just humorous
and incidental. Power, in fact, is the crux of the family
problem in Bellow's fiction. Men and women are made or marred
depending on their relation to its exercise. All that Augie
learns in the matriarchal and patriarchal camps are not lost on
Augie. His lessons shape his destiny and he wants to establish
a patriarchate, not a cruel one but benign one, after his marriage.
He feels more secure under man's rule than woman's rule. He has
seen Tillie subdued but not crushed in Einhorn's patriarchate;
but his own mother is badly bruised in Grandma's matriarchate.
He wants to do justice to the poor injured souls, Mama and George
in his own family establishment, a foster home where the wronged
will be rehabilitated. But this action requires the help and coordination of his wife who must agree to stand by him. Stella, however, is too big for this and she was her own concerns to pursue. Augie is neither willing to invade her freedom not entirely ready to bid farewell to his dreams. This is what makes for the ambiguous end. The power equation between Augie and Stella is precarious. Since Augie is not the sort of man to pursue power at the expense of another individual he does not thrust his views and preferences on Stella. But then there is no family life without leadership and there is no saying, at the end, how long this marriage will last. In the subsequent novels, with the exception of Henderson, women get into the saddle, while the men hesitate and begin to ride headlong towards ruin.

Irving Malin raises certain pertinent questions about power: "What explains Herzog's divorce from the various 'spiritual fathers' and 'exotic' women? Why can't he accept their 'reality instructions'? Why does their power—indeed power itself—not trouble him?" Malin's finding is incidental but is very valuable for our purpose. Indeed power troubles him as it troubles Wilhelm, and to a lesser extent, Augie. It is Herzog's renunciation of power that leads Madeleine to jilt him mercilessly in spite of his passionate pleas, and to boot, harass him without limit. She lives with Herzog's friend Gersbach and tramples in her exuberance and strength an innocent woman, Phoebe. Herzog chooses to be 'a fool' because 'not to be a fool' requires 'difficult alternatives', like the pursuit of power.

Anyway, who was that non-fool? Was it the power-lover, who bent the public to his will—the scientific intellectual who administered a budget of billions?

8 Malin, Saul Bellow's Fiction, 151.
Clear eyes, a hard head, a penetrating
government intelligence - the organizational realist?
How wouldn't it be nice to be one? But Herzog
worked under different orders - doing, he trusted,
the work of the future. (H 131)

Herzog in his good will and wisdom pursues, after all, folly.
He abandons the home that entails a constant power struggle and
coming on top of it; and devotes himself to the progress of
civilization, the pursuit of philosophical projects. Madeleine,
in turn commits the folly of arrogance. Instead of striving to
treasure a man of such enormous good will, she consciously
chooses never to wrestle with her, she injures him.

The progress of civilization -indeed, the survival
of civilization - depended on the success of
Moses B. Herzog. And in treating him as she
did, Madeleine injured a great project. (H 132)

But what good will Herzog's chapter on 'Romantics and Enthusiasts'
bring to civilization, if he just lets the family be ruined,
merely because of his unwillingness to resist, to discipline,
to rule? The family, after all is the fundamental prop of the
civilization that he so happily champions.

Herzog too has witnessed, like Augie, much exercise of
power at home. Aunt Zippore, 'a stormy woman, a daughter of
fate,' used her strength on poor Mama who cooked the oatmeal for
the children the day after she learnt the news of her brother
Mikhail's death in Moscow. She had completely forgotten the
equipage and life style in her Old World. She was at the time of
Zippore's harangues, just cook, washerwoman, seamstress on
Napoleon Street with her hair turned grey, teeth gone and
fingernails wrinkled. "Ahora imagine!" Nana's housekeeping and it was a painful sight to see the poor woman crying afterwards in agony: 'Why is she my example that lives she went? I have no strength to fight her' (5:153). This unearned antagonism appeared to her mystical, a matter of souls. Aunt Lippore found fault with Nana for 'putting on style' referring to her old-time servants and coso men in Petersburg. Nana pathetically replied: 'I have forgotten all about servants, I am the servant.' Then Papa went to Aunt for help she launched her usual criticism as a preemptive measure to fend him off. Innocent women are not altogether absent in Bellow's fiction. But they are mostly the heroes, mothers; mercilessly trampled by their own gender. It is this blatant exercise of misuse of power in personal relationships that perhaps makes Bellow's goody-goody men shun it altogether. That again is the cause of their distrust of the female in power. He leans towards male power though he is not personally interested in it. He passionately recalls memories of his father and praises him in the typical patriarchal fashion as a sacred being, a king. He knows that his father disliked Aunt Lippore's unmerited castigation of his mother. Herzog overcomes his own baser nature and abandons the idea of killing as soon as he sees Gersbach affectionately bathing June. But Madeleine touches a new low in meanness at the police station, where she is asked to testify. To the specific query whether Herzog gave her a hard time she glowers at him and replies vengefully that his psychiatrist warned her. She makes 'brilliant use of error' because she is very much aware that her illegal relationship with Gersbach offers grounds for a custody suit. When Herzog
pitelessly asks the police to ask her if he has ever missed a single support cheque, she says that she has given Herzog's photograph to the Hyde Park police; so as to alert them if he should prowl around her house. The tic and violence in her face, as she testifies, expresses 'a total will that he should die' (H 302). No patriarch in Bellow, however cruel, is given to this much spite and vengeance. If the author's intentions are to deliberately malign the weaker vessel, well, he alone knows the secret. But the tales are not entirely unbelievable. And it is not for nothing that Melin calls Madeleine 'the archetype of domincering women' who in Bellow's description, eat green salad and drink human blood.9

Shula and Angala are cast in the Madeleine mould. In her newfound affection for Govinda Lal, Shula revives her old accusations against Eisen. She tells him that Eisen never forgave her catholic background. She regrets very much that she let him beat her in Haifa and now declares that she will stab him, if he come near. Sammler, unable to believe her cruelty asks: 'you amaze me, Shula. You would actually stab Eisen with a knife?' (MS 212). Shula swears with rage and categorically asserts that she will kill him 'with a fork.' However Eisen does not get killed because he is indifferent. The purpose of his visit to New York, is not Shula as she imagines, but art. Sammler knows this and much more. Which is, he has too many irons in the fire to bother about Shula. Sammler himself is close to Eisen and the intimate relationship is proves that Eisen is not entirely to blame for the marital failure. Sammler knows his daughter as Wallace knows all about his sister. Wallace who

9Malin 149.
believes that women are more dangerous than men' (MSp 148)
declares that angels have no tender feelings whatsoever. 'Just
some guy between her legs - everyone is her lover,' he says.
He hurriedly adds: 'No, Anyman.' (MSp 149).

She's a female-power type, the femme fatale.
Every myth has its natural enemies. The enemy
of the distinguished-male myth is the femme
fatale. Between those thighs, a man's conception
of himself is just assassinated. (MSp 150)

Wallace observes that she represents 'the realism of the race'
and that 'her business is to beat the man's legend about himself.
That is why, he believes, she is finished with Horricker who
has not been able to appreciate, to the extent required, the
'spirit of participation' in which she threw herself into the
swinging game in Acapulco. The lesson in the Shula-Eisen, Angela-
Horricker equation is that these women need some excuse to pass
on to the next man. Strong or imbecile, the male cannot stop
the hellbent female. There are of course betrayals in patri-
archy. Elya Gruner praises Hilda for running the house like
I.B.M. and for making him 'real Ivy, a gentleman' (MSp 221).
But he pins her down in monogamous virtue and frees himself
occasionally from the constraints of morality. Still there is
a lot of difference between the male and female absolutists.
Elya never repudiates his wife. Whereas the female like Madeleine
besides betraying her man, proceeds further to wipe him out of
existence. "The pattern of a positive characterization of men
and negative characterization of women is occasionally broken,
but mainly in the portrayal of minor characters. Humboldt is
a possessive husband, 'an eligible candidate for power' (HG 29).

10 Joseph F. McCadden, The Flight from Women in the Fiction
when Kathleen reaches into the pocket of Dubanks, a negro composer, for a match to light her cigarette. Humboldt clutches her with sensational violence, twists her arm behind her back and punches her in the belly. Then he pulls her by the hair into the Buick. Citrine does not relish Humboldt’s aggression because Dubanks, after all is an old friend and well known to the circle. Interestingly Demmie finds fault with Kathleen saying ‘it means something if a woman gets into a man’s pocket.’

Julius is a typical patriarch. He earns his fortune in Chicago by his underworld connections. He loses his wealth in the divorce and makes a second fortune in Texas. In his second family he has stored up ‘dozens of suits and hundreds of pairs of shoes, shirts beyond inventory, cuff links, pinkie rings, large houses, luxury automobiles.’ And, in this ‘grand-ducal establishment’ he ‘ruled like a demon.’ (HG 355) His wife Hortense, ‘a rose garden beneath her gruffness, dialed bankers for him when he applied his genius to maps and blueprints.’ Julius resembles Augie’s brother Simon. Citrine himself, a Marxist in youth, — Julius burnt his Marx and Lenin pamphlets — does not approve of all this affluence and style and the subjugation of women this system entails. That is why, perhaps, he suffers at the hands of Denise, the arch absolutist who has strength enough to beat Julius and Humboldt in the power game. Citrine confesses that he is ‘somewhat afraid of Denise’ because she wields a certain power. In the White House after dinner, Citrine watches her cornering JFK in the Red Room for private talk. With her intelligence, she will make an excellent Secretary of State for the President if only he found some way to walk her before 11 a.m.

She is ‘an intensely martial personality’ (HG 40) much more litigious than Humboldt, who merely threatens. From the time of
the divorce, Citrine observes, he is entangled in 'endless lawsuits' and the world has seldom seen a more aggressive subtle resourceful plaintiff than Denise' (HG 57). She takes after her mother who tried to straighten her father and cure him of his vulgarity. He was a federal judge hailing from the same West Side. Denise refuses to serve Citrine's friend George Swiebel, who observes that Citrine has stopped breathing and that she will give him cancer. Citrine replies: 'She may think she's offering me the blessings of an American marriage. Real Americans are supposed to suffer with their wives, and wives with husbands. Like Mr and Mrs Abraham Lincoln. It's the classic US grief, and a child of immigrants like me ought to be grateful. For a Jew it's a step up' (HG 42-43). What is most cruel in Denise is, when Citrine goes without leaving a forwarding address she threatens: 'Okay, if the kids get killed you can read about it in the paper' (HG 310). She has stripped him of everything but his costly cotton undershirts. Even Minna at times scales the 'altitudes of power' (DD 293) in her resentment and charges at her husband who is given to 'wifely anxieties' (DD 250). She sets him off on his pet subject for comfort and when he goes on all evening about the sovereign human atoms and nihilism, she bursts. 'It was no ordinary outburst' says Corde 'She was tigerish, glittering with rage. Her altered face, all bones, turned against him' (DD 259).

Most of Bellow's women are 'embattled women' persecuting their men. Three of them stand out as the most wicked. They are invested with an enormous fund of cruelty. They are extremely irritated with their men's behavior, manners, and in fact,
everything about them. They are Margaret, Madeleine and Denise. Of the three Margaret and Denise are sketchily presented. Madeleine gains more credibility in portrayal. All the three are mainly seen through their victims' eyes. Madeleine is more exposed than the other two in direct presentation. Nothing seems to explain their rabid hate towards their men. They go the whole hog as absolutists and establish an authoritarian and cruel matriarchate. Could it be that the author has not been able to find an 'objective correlative' - Susan Lenger does not approve of the phrase used by T.S. Eliot in his criticism of Hamlet - for the excessive wickedness of these ladies? Is it some arcane stuff 'that the writer could not drag to light, contemplate, or manipulate into art' as it is the case, according to Eliot in Shakespeare's sonnets? There is no reason, however to disbelieve the accounts of the anti-heroes about their wives. These ladies are not entirely unconvincing; their cruelty drives the crackpot men to their nonfamily skid-row plight.