CHAPTER V

CASUAL SEX: 'AN ACT OF CITIZENSHIP'

Nature has placed mankind under
the governance of two sovereign
masters, pain and pleasure

Jeremy Bentham

Havelock Ellis, still at the beginning of his career as
spokesman for the new freedom in 1886 wrote in Women and
Marriage: "Sexual relationships, so long as they do not result
in the production of children, are matters in which the
community has, as a community, little or no concern."1 Thomas
Hardy lamented the regulation finish of writers dealing with
man-woman relationships: "they married and were happy ever
after." In 1886, Mrs Oliphant enrolled Hardy in "The Anti-
Marriage League," a band of intrepid novelists who displayed a
"disposition to place what is called the Sex-question above all
others as the theme of fiction." And the fiction of sex and
the New Woman had arrived. Moses E Herzog, nearly a century
later, watching the trial of the accused German intern in a
Brooklyn hospital appreciates the generous gesture of the magis-
trate and propounds his view much in the manner of Havelock
Ellis.

Sexual practices of any sort, provided they didn't
disturb the peace, provided they didn't injure
minor children, were a private matter. (H 234)

This is but a prosaic view of the matter. The lyrical elegance
with which he celebrates the sex ideal in the following words

1 Havelock Ellis, qtd. in Gail Cunningham, Marriage,

2 Cunningham 45.
is certainly beyond the reach of Ellis or Reiss.

The erotic must be admitted to its rightful
place, at last in an emancipated society which
understands the relation of sexual repression
to sickness, war, property, money, totalitarianism.
Why, to get laid is actually socially constructive
and useful, an act of citizenship. (H 173)

Like a responsible citizen in a Reichian nonrepressive state
Herzog wallows among beauties both East and West, Ramona, Wenda,
Sona and the rest. Still in principle he opposed affairs with
students. Ramona is made for affairs; she has just divorced
Harold after breaking off with George Hoarley. The relationship
begins in the cab passing from the lecture hall to Ramona's
large West Side apartment, when she asks him to feel how her
heart is beating. Ramona who believes in 'no sin but the sin
against the body, the true and holy temple of the spirit' (H 158)
is excited by ideas and loves talking. She hails from Buenos
Aires and has an international background. 'She has read,'
Herzog notes 'Mercure, N. C. From all those neo-Freudians' (H 216).
She believes that the body is a spiritual fact, the instrument
of the soul. She is 'a true sack artist' (H 23) and is endowed
with 'the simple strength of simple desires' (H 159). She has
'passed through the hell of profligacy and attained the seriousness
of pleasure' (H 158). For Kierkegaard said that 'civilized
beings become really serious' only when they have known hell
through and through' (H 156). 'But is that the secret goal of my
vague pilgrimage', wonders Herzog. 'Do I see myself to be after
long blundering an unrecognized son of Sodom and Dionysus?' (H 23).
'What a lot of romances! thought Herzog. One after another—were
those my real career' (H 174). Here, we believe in the
religion of civilized people, that is, creative and polymorphous
pleasure entertains Herzog but not the suggestion for a divorce
with her poor, resourceful looking instead suffering from heart
disease. In fact, she insists that Herzog rest wygma t; she
delinks family from sex. Herzog too follows the aristocratic mode
and steps outside institutional norms. "Two carriages, two
children, and he was setting off for a week of carefree rest" (H 29)
And he seems to challenge with Reich the Freudian notion that
"the dichotomy of nature and culture, individual and society,
sexuality and sociality was an inevitable one" and work towards
the establishment of a nonrepressive social order. In the end
he rejects restrictive bondage and family, the patriarchal and
authoritarian culture of his forebears. Here these dichotomies
are operative; he retains sex. The "victim of one voracious
female" is thus in "easy control of several others."4 Herzog
however is a true believer in the religion of sex. He does not
deny the privilege to his women. When, for the first time, he
comes to know from Lucas Ashfield about Madeleine and Gersbach
he is initially shocked and goes into a dead faint. Because he
has never viewed Gersbach, 'an addition to the social life of
Hyde Park,' 'so genial,' 'so noisy' (H 49) on these lines. Perhaps
the oddness of the combination jolts him but then he recovers
quickly. He sees no need for shedding tears.

3 Wilhelm Reich, qtd. in Richard King, The Party of Eros:
Radical Social Thought and the Realm of Freedom (Chapel

4 Victoria Sullivan, "The Battle of the Sexes in Three Bellow
Novels," Twentieth Century Views ed. Earl Rovit (Englewood
Here are two examples. The house on the corner, altogether too old for all concerned. (M 31)

It is 'a queer house, sort of "nice."' (M 31) and Herzog accepts it. Then Magdalene tells her about a girl who had raid her at fourteen 'to keep it quiet.' Herzog dismisses the affair; "It happens to many, many people," and adds: "Can't have a whole life on that. It doesn't mean that much." (M 123) Magdalene views this "broad-minded conclusion" as indifference and proceeds to stress that it was a whole year of excruciation. Her fourteenth year was entirely blacked out. Herzog is not jealous with Rosane either. When she talks about his reference to her 'austere, virtuous' with 'too many men.' Herzog sincerely says: "Too many? No, Rosane I don't look at it that way. If anything, it does a lot for my self-esteem to be able to keep up." Rosane assures Herzog about his powerful system. She says he is physically youthful and helps him discover the 'prince of the erotic Renaissance' (M 165) in him. Knitting culture and sex into one, Rosane talks about the joy of survival, the Dionysiac revival in terms of Magdalene Christianity since 'there was simply no other way to talk.' (M 193) about such life. Valentine’s Daybook, 'a second Herzog' (M 197) qualifies and stands up to the requirements of citizenship in the wonderland of unbridled joy. Which is to say he steals Herzog's wife.

Sammler is Bellow's only hero who, in his 'postcoital perspective' makes a dead set against the polymorphous sexuality that Bellow himself derided in modern literature. Sammler decries with as much vehemence as he could muster, the erotic ease of Samoa among the younger generation. Mead has this to say of the Samoans:
The attitude to erotic virginity is a modern one. Christianity has, of course, introduced a moral premium on chastity. It is ironic that this attitude with reverence but complete scandalism and the concept of celibacy is absolutely meaningless to them.

Mead respectively emphasises that her book is about the Samoa and the United States of 1928-1933. The American youth of the sixties, especially Semler's youngster, do look upon celibacy as meaningless but with a difference. There is no reverence lurking in their attitude, towards virginity, as Mead finds among the Samoans. The American sexual revolution, therefore is complete. In Semler's pet planet sex is all work and all play. The old hermit who bitterly attacks these American phenomena is forced to listen to the tales of the Paspai generation around him.

Walter Bruch, enamored of women's arms, is at present, 'kung up' on the round, dark, heavy arms of a cashier in the drugstore. He tenders a large bill against a small purchase for a quarter or a dime. As the cashier is making the change, Bruch places his attache case against the counter, presses and reaches a climax. Bruch, in his sixties relates the sordid tale to Semler. He insists on being heard and keeps like a child, saying his whole life has been like that. Semler figures it out as an old nineteenth century Craft-Ebing trouble. He assures him that he does not have to worry too much. Because there is no longer any isolated Victorian sex suffering. Contemporary society is inured to it. However, he offers to pray for him. Bruch stops weeping.

at the mention of prayer and laughs uncontrollably at the joke. For, he sees that Sammler too is in trouble. That is, if Bruch's problem is sex Sammler's illness is religion. Angela's aim in life is to be gay, pleasure-giving, exuberant, free, beautiful, healthy and swinging, to boot. She carries a great statement to males, in her personality, 'the powerful message of gender' (MSP 57). She communicates chaos to Sammler as she tells him about the Acapulco affair. She participates in a party, a sex party, with Wharton Horricker on her side. It is an exchange with another couple. Horricker has his fill of pleasure but later becomes sullen as he broods retrospectively on the true spirit of participation, the extraordinary sense of community, with which his would-be wife chose to swing. Sammler is terribly struck by the ways of these flower children. What follows is only the tip of Sammler's vituperative iceberg.

It seems to me that things poor professionals once had to do for a living, performing for bachelor parties, or tourist sex-circuses on the Place Pigalle, ordinary people, housewives, filing-clerks, students, now do just to be sociable. And I can't really say what it's all about. Is it maybe some united effort to conquer disgust? Or to show that all the repulsive things in history are not so repulsive? I don't know. Is it an effort to "liberalize" human existence and show that nothing that happens between people is really loathsome? Affirming the Brotherhood of Man? (MSP 128)

The divorce between sex and love is complete in contemporary life. Even H.G. Wells has talked to Sammler about sexual passion. To his astonishment Sammler heard from Wells that, in his seventies he was still obsessed with girls. Wells had many arguments for
a total revision of sexual attitudes to accord with an increased life span. He believed that there would ultimately emerge a larger, stronger, better nourished, better oxygenated, more vital human type, perfectly autonomous going nude "while attending tranquilly" to duties. Sessler has observed that even doctors made gestures to their patients. Forgetting the Oath they joined the Age. Angels chooses Sessler not for confession but correspondence. "The honor of her confidences belonged to Sessler, the European, before whom these new phenomena, the American phenomena" (MSP 55) cry for recognition. She gives an account of how she used whisky and burst in on Wharton Horricker, a crank about health and sleep. "Grass didn't turn her on as she best liked turning on." Her conception of the ideal man is as follows: "A Jew brain, a black ... a Nordic beauty is what a woman wants" (MSP 55). She has been carrying on with Horricker for the last two years. However, "fidelity, strict and literal was not Angela's dish." Her desire for Horricker is "an old-fashioned need" (MSP 55). Reflecting about the Negro's exhibition Sessler believes that was intended to communicate authority.

As within the sex ideology of these days, it well might. It was a symbol of super-legitimacy or sovereignty. It was a mystery. It was unanswerable. The whole explanation. This is the wherefore, the why. See? Oh, the transcending, ultimate, the silencing proof. (MSP 46)

And, more prurient than the grand black show is Wallace's "scientific objectivity," his curiosity to know the dimensions of obscene might.

It wasn't actually black, was it. It must have been a purple kind of chocolate, or maybe the colour of his palms. (MSP 148)
Someone always, like Bruch or Angela knocks at his door to tell him about 'such superstressed carnaturalness' (MSP 46). In spite of his repeated requests to drop the subject Wallace sincerely pursues his doubts about the exhibition. He wants to know whether the black youth was uncircumcised. When Sammler replies in the affirmative Wallace wonders if that is really the preferred form. Women, he says, are animals and the gentle-dainty-lady-line is not to be believed. He goes on to talk about Angela's relationship with Horricker. Angela has given him a good report about him. "He's a long strong fellow" but is "too muscular to help the flow of tender feeling." (MSP 148) Angela and Wallace seem to have a liberal exchange of notes on the subject. And Horricker's cable arms and heavy weight-lifting pectorals do have their problems. Sammler does not exclude even his wife from his psychology of sex. He recalls the keenness of his daughter, then a small girl who accurately read the passions of her parents. Living with the cultural beat of England in Woburn Squares, the little girl, he says, must have observed that the very mention of Wells had 'a combined social-erotic influence on her mother' (MSP 75). Sammler does not proceed to judge Wells. But the fact is: he was a horny man, besides being a biologist, a social thinker, concerned with power and world projects. He moulded opinion, furnished interpretation for the educated masses and also needed 'a great amount of copulation' (MSP 25). Samoa is at the back of Sammler's mind when he castigates the salacious Shula:

One species: but the sexes like two different savage tribes. In full paint. Surprising and shocking each other in the bush... (MSP 165)
But the Samoans Mead lived with are not an avirgous tribe.
They had "grace and zest and gaiety" too, even without the kind of art and literature and architecture which has left us some-
thing of Greece and Egypt after their civilizations were gone..."  
Sandler's planet is a land of mindless pleasure, a world of the Highland flings. Doris Scheddt in Humboldt's Gift is worried only about children like the psychologist, Ellis. She has nothing whatsoever against sex except her 'dark fear of pregnancy.'
'She worried when you hugged her naked in the night,' Citrine says, 'last a stray spermatozoan ruin her life' (HG 440). He celebrates sex in the same romantic and transcendent Herzog style Renate 'this glowing person' strikes him as very wonderful because she is 'in the Biblical sense unclear.' She makes his life 'richer with the thrills of deviation and broken laws' (HG 431). He is pleased with her even when she is cross.
Even to lie unconscious beside her was a distinct event. As for insomnia, Humboldt's complaint, she made that agreeable, too. Energizing influences pressed into my hands ... during the night. I allowed myself to imagine that these influences entered my finger bones like a sort of white electricity and surged upward to the very roots of my teeth. (HG 327)
It is amazing to see how fully the battered souls, Herzog and Citrine, utilise their freedom for polymorphous pleasure. Such women as Ramona and Renata "seem to be Bellow's idea of a conso-
lation prize for agonizing intellectuals" like Herzog and Citrine In fact their fractured marital lives are a blessing in disguise.
What they have lost in the rupture is only the company of their

6 Mead 99
children. Nonetheless, in spite of their transcendent pleasure
of free love, they tenaciously resist the idea of marriage.
Their creator who makes public pronouncements against the
rempaging free impulse must be secretly conniving with his
characters. The glorification of the act is so rich and religious
that Sennler's tirades melt into thin air against this apotheosis.
Renata hails from liberal and a sound sex culture. Her mother
the Senora kept her daughter in perpetual uncertainty about her
paternity. Until she was twelve Renata was given to believe
that her father was a certain Signor Biferno, a fancy leather-
goods dealer in Milan. She quarreled with Biferno who went home
to his wife and kids. Then the Senora avenged herself on him
with a young Frenchman. Renata too follows the mother's example
when Citrine hesitates to marry her, for the men sex is a matter
of joy which fills the gaps in their souls. In their atomistic
conception of life it is delinked from all institutional moorings.
It is pursued as an end in itself. But this inevitably leads
them to affection and love. Citrine cries when Renata locks him
out in favor of another guy. But for the women, the genrosas and
Ramona's recreational sex has its ends: power, means and glory.
However Ramona is not as calculating as Renata.

Cantabile knowing Citrine's weakness for women offers to
share Polly with him, in order to make him agree to his terms.
Polly is the one who comes to him when his wife leaves for her
job at Mundelein. Cantabile proceeds in a matter-of-fact way
to tell Citrine what 'the three of us can do together' (HG 183),
with himself at the head of the bed. Szathmar too suggests
fantasy combinations sometimes. He is always preoccupied with
'getting on top' 'introduction' and 'all the dirty tricks he called sexual freedom' (HG 209). "I was into the sexual revolu-
tion, "Szathmar boasts, "before anybody ever heard of it." (HG 209. His one aim now is to get Renata and Citrine together somehow
where he will be present in spirit, perhaps with the hope that
it will eventually develop into a threesome. Citrine says:

If I was susceptible to the West Side sex malaris
Szathmar could not resist the arranging fever. (HG 210)

Citrine believes that 'Eros was using my desires to lead me from
the awful spot I was in toward wisdom' (HG 211-212). He tells
himself, when he goes to the dark bar with Renata that this will
be absolutely 'his last idiocy' (HG 210).

History had decreed that men and women had to
become acquainted in these embraces. I was
going to find out whether or not Renata was
really my fate, whether the true Jungian
anima was in her. (HG 211)

Citrine is so well-informed in the art that with a mere touch
he can tell the woman who makes a man ecstatic from the one who
makes him ill. He confidently observes with professional pride:
'There were no two ways about it.' (HG 211). Unexpectedly, he
runs into Naomi Lutz, now fifty three, the object of his adoles-
cent years at the Wabash El. Unabashed, Citrine declares:

I loved you with my soul, Naomi ....
I've often thought, Naomi, that I lost my
character altogether because I couldn't
spend my life with you. It distorted me
all over, it made me ambitious cunning complex
stupid vengeful. If I had been able to hold
you in my arms nightly since the age of fifteen
I would never have feared the grave. (HG 213)
All this exuberance is not altogether false. It must have its grain of truth, the 'involuntary spontaneous truth.' So Citrine is 'still the same old Charlie,' (H3 312) as never grew up perhaps. It is another sad truth about Bellow's loners. They experiment with ideas and also with sex and with their searching eye for essentials integrate all experience in a marvelous way. But still many of them are love-starved adolescents, emotionally insecure, living in the past and refusing to stride into the future. As Naomi and Hersona rightly observe, Herzog and Citrine never allow themselves to be pinned down. They pursue sex to their utmost satisfaction but when they rise they find their problems still unresolved. Herzog says:

I subscribed at one time to the theory that it was pleasure and pleasure only that gave one the strength to be moral, that pleasure was fundamentally a question of health, and that the only possible source of goodness and happiness was instinctual gratification. I no longer believe this to be true.

Pointing out this letter Herzog writes to Spinosa in the midst of his act with Hamona, Daniel Fuchs observes that Herzog "rejects the biological determinism" of both Freud and the neo-Freudians by denying the cardinality of pleasure."8 They worry about their children, yearn for their company. Their efforts to legitimize and glorify sex as the best course of life, free of all family trouble, do not carry conviction with themselves. There is no absolute renunciation, however, and the sex question deserves an in-depth study. The women are different. They are basically reality types. Naomi too has had her ups and downs. Her husband

'went on the loose' (HG 215) Naomi tells him, and she had to bring up two kids. She is now facing life without much fuss. She has 'a man friend' and part of the day she is 'crossing guard at the grammar school' (HG 215). But Citrine still formless is given to golden memories.

There was nothing alien in Naomi. My feeling for her went into her cells, into the very molecules that, being hers, all had her properties. (HG 214)

It is this headlong passion, for ideas and people, sex and love that renders the Bellow men emotional wrecks. It is again this trait that impels realists like George Swiebel to tender proper advice.

Maybe you should marry Renata. Only don't get faint on your way to the license bureau. Do the whole thing like a man. Otherwise she'll never forgive you. Otherwise she'll turn you into an old errand boy. (HG 316)

Bellow's ruined heroes rarely take advice.

There are references to 'the sexual epidemic' in The Dean's December. Corde is heard talking about it to his sister, by Mason. Elfrida is one who thinks very much in terms of sex. She asks Corde why he left Paris and his apartment on Rue Vaneau was he running away from some French broad? Corde replies that "there are plenty of broads that can inspire leaving—even going into hiding, or taking holy orders!" (DD 134). Also he refers to the saying that 'no man of what he called "intellectual enjoyment" would immerse himself and his posterity in American barbarism' (DD 135). Valeria and Gigi have their suspicions about Corde's stability in marriage because of his American liberal background. The Rick Lester murder affair, in which Corde takes interest, is an unidentified sex problem.
According to Mason it is unnatural sex craving on the part of Rick Lester. He wanted Riggle Hines to go into the toilet with him. It is not Lucas Ebry who wanted the skinny broad, Mrs Lester. He was, Mason asserts, never in need. Because at the restaurant 'they would come around and ask for him, plenty of white ones' (DD 45). To Corde Mason represents:

The true voice of Chicago - the spirit of the age speaking from its lowest register; the very bottom. (DD 46)

Sammler and Corde are exempted from the sex rage. Henderson swarms women in Africa. Among the youngsters Asa Leventhal alone stays away from extramarital sex. It is his jealousy and possessive nature that renders him indifferent to other women and makes him long for his wife's company. Allbee's reference to the 'nice little tender things' (TV 154) fails to provoke him. He is very anxious to retain the love of his wife. He brushes aside, with much difficulty the thoughts of her past. Allbee's talk of nature-and-ideals in marriage rakesles in his mind. Thus his conventional taboo morality, born out of jealous preoccupation with the wife that saves him from adventures. This is mainly the reason behind the unimpaired conjugal unit. Asa is the rarest Bellow character who entertains no notion of individual freedom in marriage. He binds himself hand and foot and leads a simple trouble-free existence. Separation from the wife, temporary as it is, is the most terrible crisis in his life and never any Henderson-like WANT. But Joseph the first Bellow hero knows the game. When Iva thinks Joseph goes for a walk along the lake shore his 'custom after quarrels,' (DM 106), he goes to Kitty Daumler. He is ambivalent about his interest, however and
does not heartily pursue the affair. In Joseph one finds the rudimentary Herzog, a nebulous Citrine, who is still not bold enough to celebrate the sex ideal. Morris in *A Silver Dish* educates Woody Selfst.

Morris said that if titties were not fondled and kissed, they got cancer in protest. It was a cry of the flesh. And this had seemed true to Woody. (HW-SD 200)

Morris's theory launches Woody in a sincere quest looking from bosoms to husbands and from husbands to bosoms. He is too smart a student of sex to be tied down "forever by the sexual theories he hears from his father."

Personally, he had gone far out of his way to do right by women in this regard. What nature demanded. He and Fop were common, thick men, but there's nobody too gross to have ideas of delicacy. (HW-SD 200)

This is the "nature" that Allbee hints to Asa to disturb his peace: the nature that, according to Renata, motivates her marriage with Flonzaley without further dallying over an unwilling Citrine. Citrine is swayed by too needs: the need of "a higher life" and that of a creaturely existence. Citrine "rooted and sorted" his way through mankind and assumed that he had" needs and perceptions of a Shakespearian order." He does not however give in entirely to "a life of thought" which Richard Durnwald glorified. He rationalizes:

I had decided to listen to the voice of my own mind speaking from within, from my own depths, and this voice said that there was my body, in nature, and that there was also me. I was related to nature through my body, but all of me was not contained in it.

(HG 186)
It is this awareness which launches Herzog and Citrine, with every sex act, into the realms of thought. Their fascination for sex is not merely a flame of concupiscence. The thought potential that sex carries is their added attraction. Herzog raises sex to the status of metaphysics, as he picks up the phone and answers Ramona.

... Ramona calling him to a life of pleasure on the thrilling wires of New York. And not simple pleasure but metaphysical, transcendent pleasure — pleasure which answered the riddle of human existence. (p 157)

Sammel blames it all on two European importations "remarkably successful" in the United States: psychoanalysis and existentialism "both related to the sexual revolution" (MSF 56).

But what was it to be arrested in the stage of toilet-training? What was it to be entrapped by a psychiatric standard? Who had raised the diaper flag? Who had made shit a sacrament? What literary and psychological movement was that?

(MSF 39)

No character in Bellow's fiction is so appalled as Sammler at the start of the revolution in private relationships.

Millions of civilized people wanted oceanic, boundless, primitive, neckfree nobility, experienced a strange release of galloping impulses, and acquired the peculiar aim of sexual niggerhood for everyone. (MSF 130)

In the matter of sex also, the Marxist position is reversed in Bellow's fiction. Maintaining that the monogamous family culminated in the beginning of civilization Engels observes: "It is based on the supremacy of the man ... Now, as a rule, only the man can dissolve it and cast off his wife." Engels points
out that the Code Napoleon expressly concedes "the right of conjugal infidelity" to the husband as long as he does not bring his concubine into the conjugal home. But modern literature is too full of instances where the woman is not just as equal as her male partner, but in many cases more enterprising. Bellow gives the pride of place to women in this respect. Angela is an innovative contributor to the cause. The Acapulco group exercise is actually suggested by the wife on the other side and not the man; Angela throws herself body and soul into the game. She has no illusions of jealousy and exclusivism. Engels himself later tries note of the micromanipulation of women trapped in apparently unequal marriages and authoritarian monogamous families.

Two permanent social figures, previously unknown, appear on the scene along with monogamy - the wife's paramour and the cuckold. The man had gained the victory over the women, but the act of crowning the victor was magnanimously undertaken by the vanquished. 9

Prostitution is adultery turned into industry. Issac in The Old System 'fought on many fronts,' Dr Braun recollects, earning women's bellies. He knew the back stairs in Schenectady that led to the sheets. He delighted in his 'masculine reminiscences' recalling activists like Dvora the greenhorn. In Mosby's Memoirs Lustgarten - ironically a Marxist - tells Mosby that he heard about his wife Trudy going out with Alfred Ruskin while he was in the hospital. The poor fellow might never come to know that "Mosby was embracing Trudy in bed" 9 Engels, Origin, 67
when he was crossing the Rhine. Victor in that kind lives not just for ideas but for women, the class of women who turn him on. Retriva, "a North Shore mother of two, in a bed, deteriorating marriage" (KM:K 74) is one among them. She just flies to Buffalo for the sake of her lover, abandoning her two kids; and her quickies under pressure. Because "all have their parts to play in the great symphony of the instincts" (KM:K 99), she brings Victor to life again through "sexual resurrection" (E: 155). Beila, Victor's wife behaves with dignity and makes way for Victor and Trina. Vanessa her daughter gives her a book for "learning advanced techniques of lewdness" (KM:K 154).

Victor's reasoning behind the get together is: "We got here because you're a woman and I'm a man, and that's how we got here" (KM:K 157).

Devoted students of sex like Angeles and Trudy are out to fold up modern history and wipe out three thousand years of man-dominated monogamy. Sex is their 'united effort to conquer disgust' and to establish in the Marx-Engels way that "all the repulsive things in history are not so repulsive" (MSP 128). They look back to the times before the Middle Ages when "one came into the world married, married to a whole group of the opposite sex." 

In Bellow, married women who do not swing are rare. There is seldom, if ever, a cloistered spinster who believes sex to be "an abomination except within marriage" as Russell would put it. Why do almost all men and women in Bellow, as of course in a good deal of contemporary fiction, set such store by sex? Did Bellow ever mean it when he said literature cannot always hope to thrive on polymorphous pleasure? 'Moral'

Engels, 78
intention is one thing and artistic inclination is another. As Bellow talks about the hypocrisy of people who pass for agnostic Rationalists, the world abounds in well-kept secrets. Asked about the counter culture, Bellow observed that the sixties will be remembered as "the decade of frenzy and violent agitation" and goes on to say about Malamud and Updike: "I always feel, in those books a kind of ambivalence towards the counter culture, an obscure kind of fascination with forces actually subversive of civilization, an affirmation, in a sense of the primitive."  

Of this fascination, ironically, there is an abundance in Bellow. As he believes, and rightly so, writers are not very much capable of "originating a moral power by themselves — in conjunction with ... an ideology or a church, a belief or some- thing of that sort." However hoarse Bellow cries up conventional values in public utterances like Sammler, the complexity of life is too much of a burden to sustain taboo morality. Goodman maintains that urbanism, the economic independence of women, contraception, and unmarried and extramarital sexuality are inevitable. He states: "A dispassionate observer of modern marriage might sensibly propose, forget it; think up some other form of mating and child care."  

In spite of his articulate, strident espousal of the values of civilization Bellow has rendered most of marriages in his fiction inoperative. Perhaps he has unknowingly become a victim to the thought systems that

11 literature and Culture: An Interview with Saul Bellow,” Salmagundi 30 (1975) 6.

he thinks he has passed through. Bellow—admits, answering the question on psychoanalysis, "an interesting mistake of the twentieth century," that "it is very difficult to escape from any system of metaphors which successfully imposes itself on you." He cites as examples the powerful ideas of Marx and Freud. He would be glad to run over Freud, Bellow says, if he was "sitting on some grand metaphysical steamroller." Nevertheless, as it is quite obvious his fiction, has internalized Marxist, Freudian and evolutionary thought, ironically, in the process of repudiating much of it. Herzog, for instance, with his marriage tumbling like an ill-nailed raft, seems to try in his Ludeyville estate, as Goodman suggests, "some other form" of family life, for which our sociology has to find a suitable label. This is evident from Herzog's choice of individualism even as he rejects, or wants to reject like his creator, Freudian metaphor. Herzog rejects remarriage and opts for Aurolian single—hood in intimate communion with nature. Still he is very much alive to "the procreative, the lustful quacking in the depths" "the cosmic, the idiotic masculine response—quack" (p 344) that Ramona's perfume touches off. He chooses to live "concretistically" as Citrine wants to live. But how does this atomistic conception of sex without marriage and rejection of family tone in with his reflections on civilization? His choice certainly does not square with his analysis and findings. Earlier, he writes to Edvig:

If a common primal crime is the origin of social order, as Freud, Roheim et cetera believe, the band of brothers attacking and murdering the primal father, gaining
their freedom by a murder ... But all that is nothing but metaphor. (H 311)

Herzog happily exploits Freudian thesis, and goes on to attack the intellectuals who set out to denounce civilization.

I think, I can say, however, that I have been spared the chief ambiguity that afflicts intellectuals, and this is that civilized individuals hate and resent the civilization that makes their lives possible. what they love is an imaginary human situation invented by their own genius and which they believe is the only true end the only human reality. (H 311)

What he chooses actually is the culture of the primal horde. With his libertarian impulses, he would straightway fit into the idyllic world of Wilhelm Reich who wanted to carry forward in daily practice the findings of Freud. Freud himself believed, as he writes in Civilization and Its Discontents that "culture (or civilisation) of necessity had to restrain man’s instinctual strivings, if both man and civilization were to survive."13

Herzog does not choose to honour, after all his tortuous analysis, libidinal renunciation or sublimation; he follows, Reich, Freud's disciple who split with him later in his bid to invest Marxism with a psychology. Rejecting remarriage and family, yet retaining sex, Herzog has nothing to contribute to the civilization he defends, the civilization as we know it. He marks himself out for a destiny in highly individualistic style. Bellow's inclinations must have overtaken his intentions. That is how perhaps, defeating his own conscious choice of propping up family,

Freud, qtd. in King, Freud and Reich, 55.
property and civilization Bellow renders almost all the families broken. Family disorganisation looms large in his fiction; many of the lovers fulfill their wants including sex, outside the conventional family. Since the family in his fiction has lost almost all its functions - Katrine abandons her children to the maid and goes in for a quickie with Victor - we have every reason to believe that the withering away Marxist 'metaphor' and the Freudian primal horde 'metaphor,' as Bellow dubs it, are powerfully acting on Bellow's imagination.

Is Bellow then toying with the prospects of alternate forms, or as Goodman suggests 'some other form', of marriage and family? It must be so, conscious or unconscious. In emancipated New York," as Herzog visualizes, "man and woman, gaudily disguised, like two savages belonging to hostile tribes, confront each other" (p 495) in the ancient act of pride, health and good will. The men and women, with their splintered marriages and families closely resemble the primitive, communistic promiscuous society of the earliest times which Morgan brought to light after painstaking research. For the women in Bellow, sex gives freedom, a new identity and impulse and also the energy to perpetuate power. But the men have not reached the end of the road. Their inner turbulence is never adequately quelled. Still discontented, they move on from the salve of sex to the past, towards the parental home, their salubrious cubby-hole.

14 The only other explanation, if this view is not entirely acceptable, could be 'the dual vision' of Bellow. This is considered in Ch. IX.