CHAPTER IV

MARITAL BOND-AGE

Will never understand what women want. What do they want? They eat green salad and drink human blood (H:48).

There is nothing on earth as cruel as a rotten marriage (F:25).

4.1.0. Marriage is considered to be a 'holy covenant' as it provides companionship and support, creates a proper environment for procreation, and minimizes the possibility of illicit relationships. As the story of mankind has shown, marriage, in due course of time, has become the most important social and religious ceremony. Every religion considers marriage as a 'holy covenant', where man and woman have their roles to play so that the sacred institution continues for ever. In Judaism "marriage is a paradigm of completeness as it is considered as 'holy covenant'" (Geller and Kottun 1976:44). Christianity considers marriage holy because St.Paul compared the relationship between husband and wife to the relationship between Jesus and Church. The significance of marriage and companionship is much emphasized in the Second Chapter of
Genesis: "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an helpmeet for him.... Therefore shall man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:18, 24). From this, it is very clear that marriage is a significant aspect of man's life as it provides him companionship and support. And so, in due course of time, family has become an essential unit of society and everything in society centres around this basic unit.

4.1.1. As time passed, this traditional idea of marriage has completely changed and in the twentieth century the very concept of marriage as a social institution has taken an entirely different meaning so much so marriages have begun to fail leading to separation and resulting in divorces. This may be due to many obvious reasons such as the after effects of industrialization, the two world wars, technological and economic stresses. As a result of this, the family came under strain and the functions left in the family are just affectional and procreative. The functions of modern family have begun to decline with major changes in the structure of the family. The family gradually has surrendered to other social institutions the functions previously concentrated within it. But after World War II, the world has seen a resurgence
and revival of interest in the family as a social institution. Much of American fiction is concerned with family, either its survival or breakdown. So, it is but natural that the two important post-war novelists of America, Bellow and Cheever, share these concerns and offer their insights on the family in general and marriage in particular. In their case, the disintegrating family is the central concern when marriages quite often break up and their protagonists, particularly Bellow's, are single married men.

4.2.0. Marriages more often break up in their fiction, more so in Bellow's, where his protagonists are much married and much divorced men, some of them with mistresses too, may be because Jewish religion recognized polygamy. Though in Cheever's fiction divorce is rare, still there is separation and marital disharmony. Their fiction deals with the conjugal disruption resulting from the restlessness of self of the hero. Marital disjunctions are the outcome of marriages which are loveless or vicious as there is no sharing between the partners protecting each other. Either the partners abuse each other or they are indifferent. On the whole, we don't see any traditional functions of marriage such as companionship and support but we have disruption of conjugal relationships and illicit sex,
sometimes even homosexuality as in Cheever's novels. Marriages end with mutual bickerings and hatred. Almost all protagonists suffer from some family problems leading either to separation or divorce. Herzog, Henderson, Citrine are divorced, Joseph and Wilhelm get separated from their wives in Bellow's fiction and Moses and Farragut are separated from their wives in the world of Cheever. Moses' wife Melissa runs away to Rome with a delivery boy and Farragut's "spectacularly cruel wife" Marcia deserts him in his hour of need. Of all their protagonists only two of them, Asa in The Victim and Nailles in Bullet Park seem to enjoy untroubled relationships with their wives Mary and Nellie respectively. To some extent, Coverly the protagonist of Wapshot Chronicle has some good relationship with his wife Betsey. The reasons for their marital disharmony may differ but this is a common factor in their fiction. We see clearly patterns arising out of these disharmonious marital bondages.

4.2.1. Their protagonists do not seem to be creating lasting bonds that lead to emotional stability. Marriages inevitably fail in their fiction with one main difference between their attitudes to marriage and separation. In the case of the Bellow hero, even after the marital bond is broken, the emotional involvement continues and it becomes
more intensified as he relives it. It may be because the family exists in the memory of Bellow hero as a vigorous, vital force. But the separation in the case of Cheever hero is final and there is no need for him to relive that memory as he is not bound by family ties. Another important difference is the way in which these conjugal relationships are portrayed. In Bellow's novels, wives are defined, analysed and described by the estranged husband narrators. Women are portrayed exclusively from the point of view of male hero. The wives are perceived through the minds of the male protagonists who completely overshadow them. It is a patriarchal world where women have secondary place.

4.2.1.2. Most American fiction is written almost exclusively from the masculine point of view, reflecting prejudices, fantasies, sexual anxieties and values of male writers. "In his characterization of women and commentaries on women's role in the larger world, Bellow clearly belongs to the 'misogynistic' tradition that includes novelists such as Sinclair Lewis and Ernest Hemingway" (McCadden 1980:9). Bellow's fiction doesn't deal with the problems of women or the challenges that a modern woman faces in establishing her identity in a patriarchal society. His fiction deals with the problems of men in a modern American society and so much so his narration is much dominated by
his hero's awareness. As a result the protagonists predominate the action where women are given secondary place in the Jewish patriarchal world.

4.2.1.3. Cheever adopts the traditional omniscient narration to describe the conjugal relationships of his protagonists in his novels, where we see the husband and wife meet one another on equal terms though many of them fail to create enduring marital bonds. But in Falconer, as in Bellow's novels, the protagonist remembers his broken relationship with his wife. Marcia is described and analysed from Farragut's point of view. He complains in a very agonizing tone, "There is nothing on earth as cruel as a rotten marriage" (F:25). On the whole we have a common pattern which presents the peculiar tensions between the spouses in the novels of Bellow and Cheever that show the failure of love except in a few cases. We see a clear pattern of doomed love and cooled passion permeating the relationships of couples in their novels. Their protagonists feel that they are victims of their domineering wives. But there are different types of wives and we get three predominant images of wives in their novels - the 'maternal wives' such as Iva, Mary in Bellow and Betsy, Nellie in Cheever; 'the castrators' like Madeleine, Margaret in Bellow and Marcia in Cheever; and 'exotics'-
Madeleine in Bellow and Melissa in Cheever. Because of the domineering roles played by 'the castrators' and 'the exotics' either in the patriarchal society of Bellow or in the matriarchal society of Cheever, marriages do break up leading to separations between the spouses. These domineering wives also have archetypes, Xantappe and Mrs. Noah.

4.2.1.4. The failure of marital relationships in their fiction has some autobiographical overtones. The personal lives of Bellow and Cheever have influenced much of their works. Bellow has married five times and divorced four times leading to severe alimony problems with one of his wives. All his marriages and divorces must have made him a sort of misogynist and this manifests itself in the curtailed portraits of women, particularly wives, that appear in his novels. Like the author, the Bellow hero is also a much married, divorced man. Though there seems to be some change in his attitude of portrayal of women in Dean's December as Corde is the first protagonist of Bellow to have more or less untroubled relationship with his wife Minna, his last novel More Die of a Heartbreak is called a work "fired by Misogyny" (Kazin 1987:3). So the conjugal disruptions in Bellow's personal life seems to have
influenced much of his thinking and attitude toward women in his novels.

4.2.1.5. Unlike Bellow, Cheever was married to only one woman, Mary Winternitz, with whom he spent forty years of his married life. But their relationship was haunted by frequent quarrels, alcoholism and his homosexual relationships. Their's was a sort of love-hate relationship. Cheever's family life was on the verge of collapse and his drinking was out of control. As his marriage was almost collapsing by 1973, and his drinking prevented any serious literary output he even contemplated suicide. Mary announced that she could no longer live with his drunken behaviour. Within one year he overcame his alcoholism by attending meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous and their marriage survived. All his novels are autobiographical as pointed out by Meanor, "There is certainly no doubt that much of Cheever fiction comes directly out of his own life experience and is autobiographical" (1995:1). So Cheever's troubled marital relationship is very much reflected in the lives of his protagonists, particularly Moses and Farragut.

4.2.2. Bellow's concept of women is also influenced by the Jewish traditional view of women where the women, particularly, mother, belonged to the "Kitchen world" and
was a bread winner of the family. But his fictional wives are no more traditional Jewish women confined to the kitchen. They are present day 'emancipated' Jewish women with higher aspirations. Most of the wives of the protagonists are ambitious and they hate being chained to household work like their mothers. As they are emancipated females they are either portrayed as "bitches" or "dependable housewives". Bellow seems to be opposed to the concept of "emancipated female ethic" which has become an order of the day. He doesn't seem to make the imagination leap into the consciousness of his fictional female characters. Vinola rightly points out, "The point of view adopted in it is unapologetically male-oriented, with all its Biblical notions of female inferiority". (1982:81). The cultural prejudices against women influenced Bellow's treatment of women characters in his fiction. Sullivan says that Bellow's women characters suffer unequal treatment because his "protagonist tends to be a middle-aged Jewish male with a world view to match his ethnic bias" (1975:101).

4.2.2.1. At the same time the Bellow hero doesn't underestimate his opponent in the battle of sexes. Sometimes he has to fight battles with such strong women like Madeleine, Margaret, Denise though these women are
filtered through his consciousness, possessing reality as they act upon him. His relations with the opposite sex, like that of his author, are fraught with tension and pain. In Bellow's fiction the emancipated woman is considered as a "bitch" and the other woman like Iva or Mary is considered a "dependable housewife". Bellow's patriarchal methodology refuses to go deep into the feminist social psyche and this results in a marginalised position of women in his fiction. Any analysis of man-woman relationship can be attempted only in the context of a patriarchal and so his novels "present a study in patriarchal behaviour and are particularly suitable for this type of analysis" (Goldman 1982:Xl). The model of the virtuous wife of the sentimental love tradition who accepts subordination to her husband is the "dependable housewife" in Bellow's fiction for whom he seems to have some sympathy and not for the wife who doesn't accept her husband's predominant role in a patriarchal culture.

4.2.3. While Bellow's fictional world doesn't seem to have a role and place for "the emancipated woman", Cheever's methodology allows to present a good analysis of women and sometimes create an enduring bond that leads to emotional stability as in the case of Coverly and Betsey in his first two novels and Nailles and Nellie in Bullet Park.
Cheever is not opposed to 'the emancipated female ethic' though, he too presents a traditional patriarchal New England Society and culture which are deteriorating in his fiction. He sentimentalizes the past and presents a traditional society of New England where "his heroes fall from a condition of Ethnic happiness childlike innocence into the chaos and pain of adult knowledge" (Meanor 1995: XI-XII). In such a deteriorating society women become independent and emancipated. In this sentimentalized past society women seem to have domineering roles; they order, dictate and decide things. They are so liberated and domineering that made Leonard to comment "Women in Cheever's fiction are supposed to be mysterious and unfathomable, like God" (1982:25). Women have 'power'; they rule and govern the fictional world of Cheever as it is shown by Honora, Sarah, Melissa, Betsey, Nellie and Marcia, all domineering women with higher aspirations.

4.2.3.1. The modern housewives in Cheever's fiction like Sarah, Betsey, Melissa, Nellie and Marcia have definite roles to play in their husband's lives. They are not mere sketchily developed sympathetic creations relegated to the margins of story as in the earlier novels of Bellow or 'wish-fulfilment' beauties seen from a misogynistic perspective like Madeleine, Denise, Thea, Margaret, erotic
and destructive in his later novels. The wives in Cheever's fiction like Melissa, Betsey, Nellie and even Marcia, who is presented from the point of view of Farragut, are all fully developed three-dimensional characters who create lasting emotional stability or a destructive disharmony in their relationships. Like Bellow, Cheever, too, seems to be sympathising with the "dependable housewives" like Betsey and Nellie rather than the more emancipated, destructive women such as Melissa and Marcia. Hence, we find in the patriarchal world of Bellow's fiction, women are given secondary place, marginalised and treated so, where as in Cheever's fictional world, it is more of a matriarchal pre-domination where women are more often domineering and devouring and sometimes even "spectacularly Cruel" as we see in the individual discussion of their novels.

4.3.0. Joseph in **Dangling Man** strikes the keynote to the man-woman relationship in Bellow's novels when he says, "I had dominated her for years. She was now capable of rebelling" *(DM:80)*. And this kind of domination by the man and the rebellion by his woman lead to marital disjunctions in Bellow's fiction. Joseph, who is waiting for the Army call for induction, is supported by his wife Iva, whom he has dominated throughout, though he acknowledges, "Iva, my
wife, has been supporting me" (DH:9). In this novel we have the first instance of a recurring pattern where the hero is unhappily married to a sexless wife and the resultant marital disharmony and separation. This marital problem is the result of the troubled relationships between spouses in his novels where women are either "Victims" or "Victimizers"; the willing female" or "the castrating wife" (Sullivan 1975:101). In the early novels we have the former category and the latter are found in his later novels. Because of his troubled relationship with his sexless wife, the Bellow hero seeks sexual pleasure with a submissive mistress

4.3.1. Joseph lives in an inexpensive apartment, supported by his wife. He records, Iva, my wife, has been supporting me. She claims that's is no burden that she wants me to enjoy this liberty, to read and do all the delightful things I will be unable to do in the army (DH:9).

As it is common with the Bellow hero, he has an uneven relationship with his wife. He admits, "Iva is a quiet girl. She has a way about that discourages talk. We no longer confide with each other; in fact there are many things I could not mention her" (DH:9). He spends much of his time as a bachelor as his relationship with her deteriorates. Iva is a sensible, hard-working, devoted
wife. She is "a dependable" wife, a representative of "the sentimental love tradition who accepts her secondary place in the patriarchal society with only one hope of giving her husband complete happiness by pleasing him" (McCadden 1980: 20). She tries her best to make things pleasant for Joseph. In spite of her self-denial and service to her husband, Joseph feels unhappy and resents her assumption of the role of bread-winner of the family and seeks his sexual pleasure with other women.

4.3.2.2. As Joseph becomes indifferent to her, Iva begins to show signs of impatience. It is mainly because of her paranoia. During his dangling days we see her changing from a submissive wife to a nagging wife. In a very convincing way, she fights back and complains of neglect:

It's months and months since you took an interest in me. Lately, for all you care, I might just as well not be here. You pay no attention to what I say. If I didn't come home for a week you wouldn't miss me (DN:77).

But he receives this charge in silence and tries to explain that, "it is the situation we are in" (DN:77). She tries to explain what it is to her, "You mean you'll go away soon, and that'll be the end of it" (DN:77). Instead of talking and coming closer to her, Joseph goes to seek pleasure in the arms of his mistress Kitty. Like all intellectual
heroes of modern American fiction, Joseph tries to dominate his wife's intellectual and aesthetic taste. He tries to change her into one of "Burckhardt's great ladies of Renaissance and no less profound Augustan women" (DM:81). But he encounters resistance from her and she cannot be shaped into an intellectual woman that he wants her to be. She has her own desires, tastes and values. After all his trials, he realizes it is difficult to change her according to his needs and requirements. He records his realization in his own misogynistic way:

Eventually I learned that Iva could not live in my infatuations. There are such things as clothes, appearances, furniture, light entertainment, mystery stories, the attractions of fashion magazines, the radio, the enjoyable evening. What could one say to them? Women - thus I reasoned - were not equipped by training to resist such things. You might force them to read Jacob Bohone for ten years without diminishing their appetite for them; you might teach them to read WALDEN but never convert them to wearing old clothes. Iva was formed at fifteen, when I met her, with likes and dislikes of her own which (because for some reason I opposed them) she set aside until the time when she could defend or simply assert them. Hence our difficulty (DM:81).

4.3.1.3. But Joseph and Iva become closer as his day of induction into Army is coming nearer. He himself says, "Iva and I have grown closer" (DM:126). He realizes that judging her on the basis of her intellectual ability is unfair because she lacks the ability to excel at intellectual
life. He makes all these concessions for her submissive behavior. But once she tries to assert herself, Joseph feels disturbed. Though he lives at her expense he doesn't want to get humiliated or feel embarrassed when he goes to encash her cheque. He refuses to go to the bank because he has been turned down twice as he does not have sufficient identification. He thinks that he has been made to earn his upkeep. Joseph complains about Iva becoming "the bread winner (DH:148) and "the provider" (DM:148) who takes it "for granted that I have nothing to do" (DM:148). Iva who "grew white" at his charges, accuses him of twisting "everything around" (DM:148) and of becoming "so mean and ugly-tempered" (DM:149) before falling on her bed in hysterical crying. The helpless Joseph cries out, "I should get out for good. This is not sort of life. Stop that crying" (DM:149). And so Joseph unable to face his wife who is becoming authoritative or to acknowledge his mistake, volunteers for immediate induction, because "it is impossible to resist any longer" (DM:183).

4.3.1.4. But there are occasions when he feels that Iva is endeared to him. When Joseph is in bed with a cold, Iva comes home early to nurse him back to health. While she is mothering him, Joseph is calm and comfortable with his illness and happy being treated as a child. He writes in
his journal, "I gazed up at the comfortable room and heard the slight, mixed rhythm of her breathing and mine. This endeared her to me more than any favour could" (DM:98). Joseph who has been ignoring her because she failed to live up to his "plan" is able to feel the full weight of her existence. When it is time to leave for Army Joseph worries where she should stay and doesn't want her to stay with her parents. He writes in his journal, "I love Iva too much to turn her over to them" (DM:97).

4.3.1.5. Until the end, Iva remains the good wife trying to make his last free days comfortable, but Joseph is too self-absorbed to show special concern for her. But one entry in his journal says, "She didn't look well. There was a blemish on her face that always shows up when she is disturbed. I feel weak myself, standing in the sunlight" (DM:153). The last entry in his journal says that he "would like to" show more grief at leaving for her sake. He writes "For her sake, I would to. And I am sorry to leave her" (DM:159). He cannot but leave her. McCadden rightly says, "Their marriage that was sustained by her commitment is the final casualty of the dangling days. Joseph leaves for the Army without any thought of returning to the life of the past with his wife" (1980:34). She has to go to her father's place and he accepts the insecurity, absurdity
and uncertainty of life instead of family security, support, companionship and togetherness. So we see in the very first novel of Bellow, his idea of man-woman relationship becomes quite clear. Aharoni summarises Bellow's attitude to man-woman relationship in his novels. She says,

Bellow brings his protagonist to a full realization that Iva is not only his wife, but a person in her own right, with tastes of her own and a personality of her own, and that he has to accept her the way she is. Thus at the outset of his brilliant literary career, Bellow already clearly shows his concern with relationships between men and women, and with the depiction of the female situation in modern life" (Aharoni 1982:97-98).

4.3.2. Asa Leventhal, the protagonist of The Victim, is a happily-married man. Bellow presents Asa's love for his absent wife Mary as a profound part of his being. Mary is away helping her widowed mother move to Charleston. She, like Iva and like most of Bellow women, remains an abstraction. Asa loves his wife with all his heart and he is never unfaithful to her. As she has gone down South, she exists only as a picture under the glass of Asa's desk. There are a few postcards which arrive from her. The reader is not allowed to share their intimate phrases. Mary represents normality and peace for Asa, but his lovely musings about her fail to bring her alive. Asa and Mary exchange letters. But whatever little information available
to us in the novel tells us that Mary is portrayed as a traditional Jewish wife who is a loving 'helpmate' to her insecure husband. She is a typical Jewish housewife who reminds us of the ideal of a woman in Proverbs: "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband" (12:6).

4.3.2.1. Mary belongs to the first category of wives in Bellow's novels, "the dependable housewife", who is maternal towards the hero. She is maternal, dedicated to her family and above all a virtuous woman whose only concern is her husband's welfare and happiness. As a mothering wife, she protects her husband from his fears of madness which Asa thinks he may inherit from his mother. She is "an idealized figure, a symbol of stability, as well as a sign that the future can be ordered in a rational way" (McCadden 1980:46). Mary is the only "solace" for Asa in a threatening anti-Jewish world. When Asa speaks of his fears of mental illness in his own character she realizes that he can be easily overpowered by anybody. As for his fears she tells him that he is ready to believe anything and everything about himself. Confidently she tells him, "That's because you are not sure of yourself. If you were a little more sure you wouldn't let yourself be bothered" (TV:49). He remembers his mother's mad-looking face that was "a familiar face and yet without anything in it
directed towards him" (TV:48). He fears contamination by her insanity. Mary asks him to go to the doctors who treated his mother to find out the real nature of her illness. She ends her counsel with one final advice, "The only proof there is anything wrong with your mother is that she married the father of yours" (TV:49). Nevertheless Mary's words are beneficial on the whole.

4.3.2.2. As she is away they exchange letters. She has sent a postcard with intimate references on it. He becomes emotionally depressed without her. Coming home to his apartment Asa, who feels "being alone unendurable", thinks clearly of her presence, "Dear Mary! If she were only here now to put his arms around and kiss" (TV:59). He feels her absence keenly. But she cannot come as long her mother needs her. She is inaccessible again, he will miss her even more than he does now. And she will miss him. We see her with Asa after a few years when they meet Albee and his girl friend, at a theatre. Mary is pregnant and Albee congratulates him for following orders: "Increase and multiply" (TV:238).

4.3.2.3. Asa Leventhal loves his wife deeply. She is also devoted to him. Such a happy relationship between a husband and a wife is something very rare in Bellow's novels. In fact of all the Bellow heroes, he is the only
one who is happily married and has an untroubled relationship with his wife. More than this, she is his friend, philosopher and guide. She helps him to come out of his unnecessary fears of inheriting his mother's insanity. In Bellow's novels, Mary is the only wife, who is traditional, lovingly serving her husband, seeking happiness within marital life. She is a perfect wife whom the Bellow hero needs.

4.3.3. After all his adventures with various women Augie March, the protagonist of The Adventures of Augie March, says, "I've had a hard time deciding just what I should do... I want to get a place of my own and have a family. I'm tired of knocking around" (AAM:544). He marries a film actress, Stella. Augie marries Stella, but he knows the ways of love are dangerous. Even after the marriage he cannot be certain that he has found his identity at last as a family man. Augie is involved with many women as Bellow entangles his protagonist with a wide variety of women. But Augie finally marries a woman very much like himself to whom he writes "an endless letter chronicle" (AAM:567). Stella tells him lies and notices that they both are the kind of people other people are always trying to fit into their schemes. They are able to love each other because they do not try to make love into
something else, into "truth" or God or business success.

4.3.3.1. After he decides to marry Stella, Augie wonders whether she is "a vain person, injurious or cynical" (AAM:547) but it doesn't make any difference to him now. He has doubts about himself whether he is "a foolish, uncorrected, blundering, provisional, unreliable man" (AAM:547). But the fact is that he loved her and it is true. He feels that he has come to the end of his "trouble and hankering" (AAM:547) and it is conclusive. After all this thinking he marries Stella and they have only two days of honeymoon as he has to board his ship assuring her, "Don't worry about that. I love you too much to go and get sunk on my first trip out". (AAM:566). But he is not sure whether he will return. His mind keeps asking him whether "I'd ever see Stella again" (AAM:573). But he takes six months to come back to her again.

4.3.3.2. Augie is tired of all his adventures and he wants to get a place where he can have a settled life with her. But they are not destined to settle at one place as they leave for Europe where Stella works with a film company in Paris. So Augie follows her to Europe where he spends his time adjusting to her plans to become a famous actress. Like all Bellow heroes, he too realizes that his wife wants to "be independent" (AAM:606) though he tries
several times to influence her and change her according to his desires. When he learns about her story of involvement with a man named Cumberland, he is very much disturbed because she has not been honest with him. When he confronts her with this news, she says, "I should have told you. But what difference does it make? It proves that I love you and didn't want to lose you by telling you" (AAH:604). The fact is that Cumberland "oppressed" her and Augie hears all that story of oppression he says, "I always wince when I hear husbands and wives talking to each other about past marriages and affairs. I'm usually sensitive in this respect" (AAW:607). He asks her to overcome that situation and stop that relationship immediately as he is to ship again in a week and he doesn't want to be mulling it over for months and months. He threatens." If you won't promise to stop I can't come back" (AAM:608) and she promises him. Though Augie has relationship with many women, his relationship with Stella may last for even though he is much worried about her lies. But Augie is concerned about his failure to find a woman who shares his commitment to the ideals of love. Though he is disappointed by his marriage, he still remains "fantastic" about love.

4.3.4. Of all the novels of Bellow, *Seize the Day*
presents the most disharmonious conjugal relationship between Tommy Wilhelm and his wife Margaret who can be labelled as a "Victimizer" and "Castrator." Wilhelm's relationship with Margaret is almost broken. As in the early novels, the wife here remains a "shadowy" character, but her presence is felt throughout the novel by her husband. She is living separately and she rings up Wilhelm regularly asking him to send money for her maintenance. Wilhelm says that she "hits" him, "she seems to live for that alone" (SD:52). Wilhelm regards her as a "Castrating" woman who demands not only to be equal but to be superior. He has to support her and the two children who are living with her. She regularly agrees to divorce him and then thinks over again, setting new and more difficult conditions. During his period of worst financial crisis, Margaret never shows any sympathy nor has she a few words of compassion and encouragement.

4.3.4.1. Margaret demands more and more money. In his desperation he cries "I'll have to pay and pay for rest of my life" (SD:53) as she belongs to a family where women live long. He complains to his father that she is "strangling" him and can't catch his breath, "she just has fixed herself on me to kill me" (SD:53). He shows his father how she is choking him by choking himself. Though
Sullivan classified Bellow's women characters as "Victims" and "Victimizers" (1975:101), it is the Bellow hero who is more or less a "Victim" of his wife and Tommy Wilhelm is the most victimized of all. He tells his father, "From the time I met her I've been a slave. The Emancipation Proclamation was only for coloured people. A husband like me is a slave, with an iron collar" (SD:54). She senses that he wants to marry another woman if she gives him a divorce and so she refuses. He appeals to her, "Take everything I've got, Margaret. Let me go to Reno. Don't you want to marry again"? (SD:102). On the whole, she lives in order to punish him. Aharoni rightly analyses the relationship between Wilhelm and Margaret when she says, "Tommy Wilhelm exclaims that he will never understand 'money and women' the implication being that money and women are on the same level inanimate, material matter, and mere commodities" (1992:104).

4.3.4.2. As he has to pay his wife, Wilhelm appeals to his father for help but the old man refuses. Whenever he receives an urgent message from Margaret he is always thrown "into a great fear for the children" (SD:118). She has the bringing up of the children as her burden, while he must expect to pay the price of his freedom. He wonders whether she is the woman he lived with. He wants to ask her
whether it is necessary to deal with him like this now and have no mercy. She talks him that he deserves the misery he is facing now. He tells her to go for work making use of her degree. But she refuses saying that the "growing boys need parental authority and home" (SD:121). He begs her:

Margaret go easy on me. You ought to. I'm at the end of my rope and feel that I'm suffocating.... 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 (SD:121).

And merely to pronounce the word "love" makes him tremble.

4.3.4.3. Margaret is not a woman who can understand his predicament and she shouts back at him, "I won't stand to be bowled at" (SD:121). Coming out of the phone booth Wilhelm tells himself, "I'll get a divorce if it's the last thing to do" (SD:123). He wants to start again with Olive, his mistress. He wants Olive to stand by him so that Margaret cannot win. But we know that Wilhelm is so weak that he cannot win the struggle with Margaret. So, Sullivan says, "She will win from what we see of her... Such men are the casualties of modern marriage - they have too much honour to just run away from the situation, but too little self-confidence to carve a successful new life" (1975:107).
So we see that Wilhelm is separated from his wife who remains constantly on his mind. He hates her, yet remains emotionally dependent on his cruel ex-wife. Margaret "appears as a murderer of the spirit who takes satisfaction in Wilhelm's suffering. She does not want to understand his predicament or become involved with his problems, but chooses, instead to hurt him" (McCadden 1980:106). She claims her legal right to get her alimony.

4.3.5. The Gentile hero of Saul Bellow's fifth novel, *Henderson the Rain King*, is also not free from marital problems. Like his Jewish counterparts, he too is a husband with a divorced wife and an estranged wife. Henderson divorces his first wife Frances after twenty years of married life. There are poles apart in temperaments. Frances is "schizophrenic" and prone to philosophical contemplation. Henderson is a chaotic man who goes in search of meaning in life to Africa leaving his family behind. He confesses that Frances is "a remarkable person, handsome, tall, elegant, sinewy, with long arms and golden hair, private, and quiet. None of her family can quarrel with me if I add that she is schizophrenic for she certainly is that" (*HRK*:8). He is forced to marry Frances so as to please his tyrannical father. After he returns from War, Henderson and Frances are divorced and she is now in Switzerland with one of their kids. Henderson says, "I
was delighted with the divorce. It offered me a new start in life" (HRK:8). So he goes to marry Lily Simmons with whom he manages to have a successful marriage. Unlike the Jewish heroes of Bellow, Henderson doesn't seem to be bothered by any conjugal problems. But he too has some patriarchal views about women and tries to dominate his wives. He manages to live with her for twenty years because Frances is "withdrawn which protected her" (HRK:8). In fact his love affair with Lily makes Frances ask for divorce which he readily agrees to give. He is delighted to divorce his first wife and marry Lily.

4.3.5.1. Henderson somehow manages to achieve a happy second marriage with Lily who is a passive woman before Henderson's mad onslaughts. He gives her a terrible time worse than Frances, raves at her in public and swears at her in private. He treats her as a stranger at parties and shakes her hand too as if she were another lady guest, a stranger like the rest. It is done on purpose and Lily knows it. When they are alone she cries out at him, "Gene, what's the big idea? What are you trying to do?" (HRK:9). But he says, "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; because I, the sole heir of this famous name and estate, am a bum and she is not a lady
but merely my wife - merely my wife" (HRK:10). So we see once again the patriarchal views of women expressed by this gentile hero of Bellow. Like all the Bellow heroes, he considers women as secondary citizens and in Henderson too we have a domineering man and male chauvinist. He always threatens her that he will shoot himself with an idea of upsetting her balance. Lily is worried because her father had committed suicide in the same way with a pistol.

4.3.5.2. Lily is the major female character in the novel other than the African Queen. She is a large woman who pursued him with a lot of energy before their marriage. It is she who seduced him when he was still married to Frances. Lily in her marvellous way - always marvellously - begins to make him suffer. She says, "You think you can live without me, but you can't... anymore that I can live without you. The sadness just drowns me" (HRK:19). But she discovers later the fact that actually living with him is something like walking into a nightmare. He plagues her any way he likes. Sullivan says, "Like most Bellow women she is a touch crazy, a touch perverse, and as Henderson points out on several occasions, her hygienic habits are questionable" (1975:108). He complains, "She herself was not very cleanly, and for one reason or another we couldn't get anyone from neighbourhood to do the cleaning. Yes, she
swept up once in a while, but towards the door and not out of it, so there were mounds of dust in the doorway (HRK:32-33). Then she runs to sit for her portrait. But the big beautiful Lily with her dirty habits satisfies Henderson sexually. But something disturbs him and the daily voice "I want, I want" arises again. He says, "Family life with Lily was not all that might have been predicted by an optimist" (HRK:30). She is busy in getting her portrait painted and it goes on for six months before he takes off for Africa. He fails to establish a smooth relationship with her as he somehow feels that she is a 'blackmailer'. She also ignores Henderson's reality and philosophizes like his first wife. When he asks her to wash her undergarments, Lily says, "The earth itself is like that, corrupt. Yes, but it transforms itself" (HRK:20).

4.3.5.4. In Africa, Henderson realizes how much he loves his wife daily as he says, "You know I really love that big broad, and for my own amusement sometimes I like to think of her part by part" (HRK:229). It gives him "wonderful satisfaction" (229). In a letter he expresses honest commitment to Lily, "Lily, I probably haven't said this lately, but I have true feelings for you, baby, which sometimes wrings my heart. You can call it love. Although personally I think the word is full of bluff" (HRK:265).
This new tone of gentleness is the result of his suffering while he was away from her. He now has a true feeling "for her as the battle for power between them is over. Now he can love her and also be true to himself. He wants to get back to his wife and children. He wants to be "at home where my wife loves me" (HRK:307). Hence he is coming back home to rejoin his wife and children. With "tender feeling toward her" (HRK:308) he returns to her. Henderson comes back to his wife whereas the other Bellow heroes go away from their wives choosing ultimately freedom and not attachment.

4.3.8. In *Herzog*, Bellow presents the most important marital disjunction between Herzog and his two wives, Daisy and Madeleine. Moses Herzog's life centres around women and his main means of self-definition comes through his relationship with women, his wives and mistresses. Throughout the novel we see Herzog trying to distinguish between genuine love and "potato love" which he defines as amorphous, swelling, hungry, indiscriminate, and cowardly. In this attempt his sexual relationships become central to the novel. Herzog's first wife Daisy was a "cooler, regular and a conventional Jewish woman" (H:132). She had been formal, full of domestic rules and addicted to listing all duties and engagements on a large bulletin board. "She
was childishly systematic about things... Stability, symmetry, order, containment were Daisy's strength" (H:132-33). Daisy, pure, neat, frigid, is the embodiment, in spite of her Jewishness, of the New England Puritan ethic. She is a reflection of its academic life and part of his condition. He had written his best book on history during the period when he was married to her and he became an academic success, "As long as Moses was married to Daisy he had led the perfectly ordinary life of an assistant professor, respected and stable" (H:12),

4.3.6.1. Life with Daisy is dull and uninspiring and so he eventually leaves her. He wonders, "What really happened? I gave up the shelter of an orderly, purposeful, lawful existence because it bored me, and I felt it was simply a slacker's life" (H:109). He recognizes that he has treated her miserably but he wants a life that is a little less ordinary and he turns to Madeleine. He prefers a "bitch" to "the dependable housewife". He abandons his steady Jewish wife Daisy and goes after a more challenging, stimulating female, Madeleine, hoping to find the same qualities which he rejected in Daisy. He is an intellect with an unsatisfied hunger for knowledge and life. About his relationship with Daisy, Dutton says, "Bellow depicts in this relationship the thesis that man can stand only so
much reason and order: that he longs for subjective research, to stretch himself, to flee from a world cold with intellect alone. After all man is also a creature of the heart—certainly Herzog is" (1971:128).

4.3.6.2. Herzog marries Madeleine hoping to find happiness in this relationship. Madeleine is portrayed to us through Herzog's consciousness as brilliant, beautiful, ambitious, restless, aggressive and outspoken. He admires her intelligence, her beauty, and her will-power and self-control. Most women in the novel admire her. But to many critics she is a "bitch-goddess" of success as her central purpose is to represent the object of man's pursuit and adoration of "success". She insists on dominating every situation. She is not shadowy like other fictional wives in Bellow. "Madeleine is flesh-and-blood, walking, talking fantasy of 'female fatale', an eternal Eve. She is beautiful ... cunning, unprincipled, sexy, cold, dependent, undependable, fiercely intellectual and totally unsympathetic" (Sullivan 1975:103). According to one of the old students of Herzog, Madeleine is so "vivacious, intellectual and a charmer ... a beautiful brilliant person with a fate of her own" (H:105).

4.3.6.3. Madeleine attracts those who are ambitious. Had Herzog been a plain, average, unambitious person she would
not have married him: "What she had been looking for, high and low, was precisely an ambitious Herzog. In order to trip him, bring him low, knock him sprawling and kick out his brains with a murderous bitch foot" (H:100). It is obviously her bitchiness and her egotism that excites him. She troubles Herzog in many ways - she takes his best friend as her lover, she tries to prevent him from seeing his daughter. Still he can't stop being obsessed with her. Madeleine is a victimizer and victim. Herzog chooses her as his torturer. Madeleine, in her intensity, is deeply divided, loving Herzog at night and hating him in the morning as she puts on make-up in a conscious effort to forget the night. She takes everything that Herzog can give her - his name, money, reputation and even his learning. To please her, he quit an academic position which was perfectly respectable and bought a big old house in Ludeyville. But she would not live there. Their marriage is not something that could last for ever. She has never loved him. She says, "It's painful to have to say I never loved. I never will love you, either. So there is no point in going on" (H:15). But he sincerely says, "I do love you, Madeleine" (H:15). During one of their quarrels, she has a new look at herself nude before the bathroom mirror and says, "Still young ... young, beautiful, full of life. Why should I waste it all on you" (H:27). Herzog the masochist
suffers all that. In one of their quarrels, she hits him in the face and jumps at him with her fists like a street fighter, "Herzog turned and took those blows on his back. It was necessary. She was sick" (H:63).

4.3.6.4. Herzog is attracted to the aggressive, masculine woman. He is a sexual as well as moral masochist, he speaks of "writhing under this sharp elegant heel" (H:82). There is a "flavour of subjugation in his love for Madeleine" (H:14). Even though she says "We cannot live together any more" (H:15) he still thinks that he will win by "the appeal of passivity, of personality, win on the ground of being, after all, Moses - Moses Elkanah Herzog - a good man, a Madeleine's particular benefactor. He had done everything for her - everything" (H:16). Madeleine decides that she and Moses cannot make it after all she wants divorce. He is in love with her and he can't bear to leave his little daughter. But Madeleine refuses to remain married to him. The strain of second divorce is too much for Herzog. Before separation, Madeleine gets what all she wants and then gets rid of him to go and live with his best friend, Gersbach. After all his bitter experiences with Madeleine, Herzog expresses his contempt for women in these words: "What do they (women) want? They eat green salad and drink human blood" (H:48); "the bitches come and bitches
4.3.6.5. There is a very important reason for the failure of marriage between Herzog and Madeleine - her intellectual calibre and academic advancement. Aharoni makes the point very clear when she says, "There is a basic antagonism between their marriage and Madeleine studies. Like many modern intellectual women (Madeleine was a brilliant Radcliffe graduate) Madeleine finds that her family life does not give her sufficient scope, challenge, or satisfaction; she feels the deep need for further growth and for pursuing a career" (1982:89). He knows that she has a "brilliant mind" (H:11) but his male chauvinism doesn't allow him to help her in pursuing her career. He realizes that there is a strong intellectual competition between them, and Herzog, the intellectual, feels threatened that his place in the academic world will be occupied by his brilliant wife and he would have preferred to keep her unlearned. He writes to Shapiro:

I understand that Madeleine's ambition was to take my place in the learned world. To overcome me. She was reaching her final elevation, a queen of intellectuals, the sastrion blue stocking... Madeleine, by the way, lured me out of the learned world, got in herself, slammed the door, and is still there, gossiping about me (H:82-83).
On her part, Madeleine feels she is not given the opportunity to grow and her frustration comes from the feeling that Herzog thwarts her intellectual drives and aims.

4.3.6.6. Madeleine doesn't like his patronizing attitude. Herzog expects her to be thankful to him for all his generous deeds but she asserts herself and cannot take it any longer. In one of their quarrels, she cries out desperately:

So now we're going to hear how you SAVED me. Let's hear it again. What a frightened puppy I was. How I wasn't strong enough to face life. But you gave me LOVE, from your big heart, and rescued me from the priests. Yes, cured me of menstrual cramps by serving me so good. You SAVED me. You sacrificed your freedom. I took you away from Daisy and your son, and your Japanese screw. Your important time and money and attention. (H:130-31).

She gets her divorce and moves away with Gersbach to lead a happy life with him. Herzog wishes her "a busty, useful, pleasant, dramatic life. Including love. The best people fall in love and she is one of the best" (H:271). So Madeleine emerges as a "new woman" who makes her own choices and who ultimately takes her destiny with her own hands rather than being defeated by a patriarchal society. "She embodies in her character and her action the "free" woman who struggles to achieve her chance of growth and
her goal of an independent, as well as her goal of finding real love" (Aharoni 1982:105).

4.3.6.7. In his conflict with Madeleine, Herzog seems to have wanted a wife, a substitute for his mother, Yiddish mama, who would have lived only for him and children. But Herzog leaves such a wife, because it bores him to have the shelter of an ordinary life of an ordinary man. He is the one who gets the same treatment from Madeleine as he himself has given to Daisy. Herzog, according to Aharoni, "comes to realize that he is not only the victim who has been caused to suffer rejection at the hand of a partner but he too had inflicted suffering of the same kind on various women" (1992:103). Towards the end of the novel we see Herzog a completely changed man, at peace with himself and satisfied. He retires to his Ludeyville cottage. There he understands what it was to be free from Madeleine, "He was surprised to find such contentment... contentment?" (H:320). His independence from Madeleine involves not a sense of loss but of joy. At last he is free from the bondage of his former wife.

4.3.7. Charlie Citrine's wife Denise in Humboldt's Gift is a typical wife in Bellow's novels who seduces the hero into marriage. As a domineering woman she wants to dominate her husband, and when she fails in her attempt,
she tries to beat him into submission. Denise, like most of Bellow women, is concerned with money and power. She is also presented to us through the consciousness of her husband, Charlie. So we see Charlie recollecting his experiences with his divorced wife in the novel. Right from the beginning, Denise used to comment on his "vulgar company" (HG:42). Charlie says Denise has "an intensely marital personality" (HG:42). Denise an "upper class person" dislikes his "vulgar company" and she asks him not to bring his friends to their house. She finds fault with him as she is moving with his old Chicago school chums and she feels that her husband is doing things below his status. Charlie tells his friend George, "She may think she is offering me blessings of an American marriage. Real Americans are supposed to suffer with their wives and wives with husbands ... It is classic U.S. grief and ... For a Jew it's a step up" (HG:45).

4.3.7. Denise accuses Charlie of leaving big cities like London or Paris or New York and settling in the "deadly, ugly, vulgar, dangerous Chicago" (HG:43). She tells him "at heart you are a kid from the slums. Your heart belongs to the old west side gutters. I wore myself out being a hostess" (HG:43). She has expected him to move with psychiatrists or University professors but he is seen
with his Chicago chums, with freaks. She tells him that "It's a kind of mental suicide, death wish. You'll have nothing to do with really interesting people with architects or psychiatrists or University professors" (HG:43). So their fifteen year marriage is a continual conflict as she tries to change her easy-going, self-indulgent, absent-minded husband into a famous figure, the friend of bankers, politicians and college professors. But Charlie, like all the Bellow heroes, refuses to be controlled by his money-hungry, status-hungry wife who wants to destroy him for not fulfilling her desires. She is determined to make his life as miserable as possible.

4.3.7.2. Denise insults Charlie about his bald head and even goes into prophecy, "Your mental life is going to dry out. You are sacrificing it to your erotic needs" (HG:45). She has seen Charlie with his girl fringed Renata and finds fault with him, "You couldn't bear serious relationship that's why you got rid of me and children .... You are crazy with your own brand of pride and snobbery. There is nobody good enough for you ... I could have helped you. Now it's too late" (HG:45). He even accepts her charge that he is writing stuff that makes no sense to anyone. Charlie feels that such abuse does Denise more good than vitamins. He thinks, "Despite her intelligence, she had been bad for
my idea" (*HG*:45). So he divorces her and takes up Renata whom he considers a better woman.

4.4.0. If Bellow's protagonists fail to have happy conjugal relationships with their wives, claiming that they are either "victims" or "victimizers" of them, Cheever's heroes are subjects of 'domineering women' who are 'liberated', 'free', and 'emancipated new women' and above all 'oppressors'. Their power and significance in the modern Protestant world is very much emphasized in his very first novel, *The Wapshot Chronicle*, where Coverly says, "Women are powerful. They are kind and they mean very well, but sometimes they get very OPPRESSIVE. Sometimes you feel as if it wasn't right to be a man" (*TWC*:128) which is more or less the same opinion expressed by Herzog. So the heroes of Bellow and Cheever recognise the power and strength of women. But in Cheever's novels women are empowered and this pattern is very much visible right from his first novel to the last.

4.4.1. *The Wapshot Chronicle* deals with the adventures of the Wapshot brothers, Moses and Coverly, as they leave their Eden, St.Botolphs, to seek their fortunes in the modern world of American cities. Moses falls in love with Melissa, a ward of an ancient cousin, Justina Wapshot. The narrator says, "Melisa seemed to Moses, the instant he saw
her, to be by his lights a most desirable and beautiful woman" (TWC:211). In his love story, Moses reenacts Arthurian love quests as he wants to be with his beloved Melissa and climbs naked over the dangerous roof of the palace to visit her. So he has an exciting romantic quest in an authentic medieval setting to outwit the witch, Justina and win the damsel, Melissa. As Waldeband rightly says, "Moses is a satyr engaged in a comic-chivalric trial in a medieval setting" (1879:45).

4.4.1.2. Though Melissa becomes his wife she is still controlled by her guardian who is rather crazy. After a few days Moses realizes that their stay at Clear Haven is not conducive to their married life. Moses is much disturbed to see his wife so free with her former husband and he is even doubtful that they have some secret sexual relationship like he had with her before marriage. Moses is bewildered with all the happenings in this crazy place and he looks forward to get out of this castle with his wife at the earliest. Fortunately for him Clear Haven mysteriously burns to the ground during a party. Moses and Melissa reunite more deeply in love than ever.

4.4.1.3. During their stay at Clear Haven, their conjugal life is very much disturbed by the domineering witch and Melissa behaves like her guardian spinster.
Sometimes Melissa shuns her husband entirely and behaves like Justin. When Moses wants her to come to his bed Melissa complains, "I doubt that you love me.... I sometimes think you don't love me at all and of course you put too much emphasise on sex, oh much too much" (TWC:269). This is also the complaint of Madeleine against Herzog as we have seen earlier in the chapter. Melissa accuses Moses that he is always thinking about sex because he is not in business. She tells him, "You don't like your job and so think about sex all the time. I don't suppose it's because you're really depraved. It is because you are idle" (TWC:269). Though he expresses his love to her, she complaints, "Oh, you're so hateful and egotistical .... Your thinking is so crude and mean. You only want to hurt me" (TWC:270). She further tells him that she can't be a woman that he wants her to be, "I can't be all the things you want. I can't be wife, child, and mother all at once. It is too much to ask" (TWC:270).

4.4.1.4. Melissa thinks that Moses is too demanding in his conjugal life so she says she can't give everything he wants. And this heralds the beginning of the end of their marriage. He wants her to be a traditional housewife, serving him in all ways and satisfying his sexual urges. But Melissa is a different kettle of fish all together as
she is a representative of the "new emerging woman". Melissa refuses to have sex with him whenever he wants it. But all this is changed when Clear Haven is burnt to ground and Moses and Melissa go happily to New York. Thereupon, we are told that they are blessed with a son and Moses becomes eligible to inherit Honora's wealth as he is promised.

4.4.2.1. Moses and Melissa have a romantic love affair where she becomes "the desirable damsel of Moses' heart" (Waldeband 1979, 52). But in The Wapshot Scandal, Melissa becomes a major character who overshadows Moses. They go to live in suburban town named Proximine Manor, where life becomes boredom for Melissa. She becomes bored, disappointed and restless. Waldeband rightly analyses her character when he says, "She is important in this novel for her experience of a cruel midlife crisis which begins with boredom, is exacerbated by a serious illness, leads to marital infidelity, and ends with exile" (Ibid., 52). She becomes interested in pleasure and self-satisfaction, "a kind of erotic Venus run amuck" (Coale 1977:83). In Melissa, Cheever presents the modern woman of restlessness and dissatisfaction. Her life in a small urban town disturbs her a lot and sometimes we are given glimpses of her thoughts and feelings. Even in a party at this suburban town she becomes bored early in the evening and thinks,
Loneliness was one thing, and she knew herself how sweet it could make lights and company seem, but boredom was something else, and why, in this most prosperous and equitable world, should everyone seem so bored and disappointed" (TWS:40).

And so she longs for "some emotional island or peninsula that she had not ever discerned in her dream" (TWS:40).

4.4.2.2. The marriage of Moses and Melissa is based on their sexual compatibility and they have nothing in common. "They agreed on almost nothing else. They drank different brands of whiskey, read different books and papers. Outside the dark circle of love they seemed almost like strangers" (TWS:41). After that insight at the party, Melissa goes in search of some greater fulfilment. As things turn out, the delivery boy Emile Crammer is the young man who comes to her rescue to redeem her of her boredom. She has an affair with him which is discovered by his mother, who, in turn, informs Moses of it. Moses leaves her and spends his time drinking. Melissa goes off to Italy with her son after Emile places on her lawn a promotional Easter Egg having a free trip to Rome. Melissa's boredom and emptiness of her life turn her into a seductress, a dangerous woman. Melissa and Emile travel separately to Rome, she "buys" him at an auction in a male beauty contest and they live together in Rome. For this George Hunt rightly calls her "temptress
circe" and she undergoes a series of transformations and develops extraordinary sexual powers over Emile (1983:127).

4.4.2.3. Melissa and Emile continue to have further sexual adventures. She is not "just an inconstant wife or a lust driven woman" (Waldeband 1979:53) but a woman who tries to regain her equilibrium throughout. She is not interested like her counterpart, Betsey, a traditional wife of Coverly, in running her house or arranging parties in an unfriendly and hostile neighbourhood of Ramsen Park. Melissa is a liberated, emancipated "new woman", of the type of Madeleine in Herzog who protests like Melissa, against using her as a sexual object to fulfill his physical needs. Herzog, though a misogynist, admires his wife's courage and power of mind whereas the average man Moses simply takes to drink and forgets his wife for ever. Madeleine knows what she wants in her life and once she finds that she can't get it from her husband Herzog, she leaves him to go and live with his friend Gersbach. But Melissa finds nothing in her life that provides a chance for a meaningful stability. Towards the end of the novel, we see Melissa as a tragic figure, shopping in the Supra- Marktet Americano in Rome with her hair dyed red so as to look young to match her young lover Emile. Cheever compares her to Ophelia, with tears wetting cheeks. She is not
gathering garland of flowers and coronets but salt, pepper, Bab-o-Kleenex and other groceries. Cheever describes, "She chants, like Ophelia, snatches of old tunes..., and when her coronet or fantastic garland seems completed she pays her bill and carries her trophies away, no less dignified a figure than any other" (TWS:235). Cheever invests her situation with almost tragic dignity as she is shopping in a supermarket. Commenting on this passage in the novel Waldenband says, "Neither domestic routines nor sordid affairs are sufficient to the need of Melissa felt for a more fulfilling life" (1979:54).

4.4.2.4. Of all the couples in Cheever's novels, Coverly and Betsy seem to be well-matched for each other and they are almost an ideal couple, antithetical to the other couple in The Wapshot novels, Moses and Melissa, whose marriage is a complete failure. As the novelist intended to make Coverly a successful brother and a good son of his traditional but boisterous father, he is given a good conjugal relationship with his wife, who is very traditional. In every aspect Coverly's marriage to Betsey MacCaffery is a complete contrast to his brother's. If Moses's love is a long and adventurous affair in a Medieval castle with all its excitement and mysteries, Coverly's love pursuit is quite like any other man's love affair.
There is nothing exciting in his affair. He sees his girl Betsey coming out of a sandwich shop like Venus in New York and takes an immediate liking to her.

4.4.2.5. Betsey is a thin, dark-haired girl raised in the bedlands of northern Georgia - an orphan. The moment Coverly sees her, he likes her because of her simplicity and small town manners. They are both from small towns and she rightly expresses her nature when she says, "I'm just a small town girl. I guess may be that's the trouble with me. I don't have this thick skin you need to get along well in the city" (TWC:156). She analyses correctly what's wrong with her and this small-town nature, her sensitiveness, her simplicity and her desire to be friendly with her neighbours cause problems in her otherwise happy conjugal life. Coverly courts her for a few days and marries her in a short time. To him,

She was the beloved; he was the lover - there was never any question about this and this suited Coverly's disposition and gave to his courtship and their life together the liveliness of a pursuit.... She was ready and willing to cook his supper and warm his bones at night (TWC:163).

What Coverly likes in her is "her human excellence" (TWC:163). Coverly marries her after informing his parents and spends a three-day honeymoon on an island cottage.
4.4.2.6. Coverly goes to San Francisco to work as a Taper at an army base where he misses his wife much and longs to be with her as he writes to her, "I sure wish you'd been in bed with me to warm it up" (TWC:164). His love for his wife is intense and genuine. Later Coverly sets up his family at a rocket-launching station called Ramsen Park, one of Cheever's most lifeless suburbs. But within a few days Betsey realises that "Ramsen Park was not a very friendly place" (TWC:227) where her neighbour refuses to return her smile in a friendly way as she has expected. She is pregnant and she wants to have four or six children so that she can raise them all with love and trust. She talks proudly about her husband and enjoys domestic life. She tells a store-keeper "I do all my husband's shirts, you know, and he high up in Taping Department and has to wear a clean shirt every day and then I do my own personal things as well" (TWC:228). She is a traditional housewife who enjoys doing things for her husband. She tells her husband that she will breastfeed her son. So in Coverly and Betsey we have an ideal couple, happily settled down in a small suburban town. To him, "She was his patchke, his fleutchke, his notchke, his everything that the speech of St Botolph left unexpressed. She was his little squirrel" (TWC:230).
4.4.2.7. But their conjugal bliss is disturbed by the unfriendly and strange behaviour of their neighbours in Ramsen Park, a symbol of modern mechanical world. As Betsey comes from a small town which is a very friendly place, she just believes in stepping out and making up friends. But the neighbours do not respond to her invitation. Betsey is very much disappointed as no one accepts her invitation for dinner that night. She feels terribly upset and begins to realise that there ran "the cutting thread, the wire of loneliness and that when thought she had been happy she had only deceived herself for under all her happiness lay the pain of loneliness and all her travels and friends were nothing and everything was nothing" (TWC:243). And that night she had a miscarriage. After this incident Betsey is quite unhappy and misunderstandings creep up between the husband and wife. She remains aloof from her husband and she prefers to be left alone. In a very agonizing tone she tells her husband,

I am sick of you, sick of your earned damned ways, sick of the way you stretch your neck and crack your knuckles and sick of your old father with his dirty letters asking is there any news.... I am sick of Wapshots and I don't give a damn who knows it (TWC:245).

She leaves Ramsen Park. "Betsey experiences a malady
resembling Melissa - losing interest in erotic activity - and leaves Coverly confused, depressed and desperate" (Meanor 1995:66). Before things take a bad turn, Betsey returns, happily transformed into her old vivacious self. Meanwhile, a visit to his brother's place and a letter from his father help Coverly through his sexual crisis that he felt during his wife's absence.

4.4.2.9. Every small thing disturbs Betsey and she complains in a bitter tone, "Nothing is all right. I hate Talifer. I hate it here. I hate wet toilet seats. The only reason I live here is because there is no place else in the world for me to go. I'm too lazy to get a job and I'm too plain to find another man" (TWB:59). Before things go worse Coverly is called to St Botolphs at once and so they pack and leave for his good old town. His aunt Honora is dying and she wants him to come and arrange a promised Christmas dinner for twelve blind men, evoking an image of the Last Supper. So Coverly arranges the dinner in which Betsey takes good interest and helps him in feeding those blind men. All is well that end well for Coverly and Betsey. But on the very same day Moses is seen drunk in a hotel and we are not told what happened to him later. And his wife is seen wandering in the streets of Rome buying all sorts of things.
4.4.3. The most conventional and ideal husband and wife that we see in Cheever's fiction are Eliot Nailles and Nellie Nailles in *Bullet Park*. This conventional couple's life is disturbed when their only son Tony takes to bed with some unknown illness and refuses to get up. Nailles loves Nellie deeply and the very first idea that we get about them is that they are a loving couple, attached to each other and a typical suburban family with Christian feelings. Nailles is a family minded man living a clean well-ordered life. We are told that "Nailles loved Nellie. If he had a manifest destiny it was to love Nellie. Should Nellie die he might immolate himself on her pyre, although the thought that Nellie might die had never occurred to him. He thought her immortal" (*BP*:23-24). He loves his wife and son deeply and protects them with all his powers: "The love Nailles felt for his wife and son seemed like some limitless discharge of clear amber fluid that would surround them" (*BP*:25). He has an absolute faith in the holiness of monogamy. He is a single-woman man and there are no instances in the novel which show that he is guilty of marital infidelity. The narrator says:

It was a domesticated organ with love of home cooking, open fires and thighs of Nellie. Had he any talent he would have written a poem to the thighs of Nellie. The idea had occurred to him. He sincerely would have liked to commemorate his spiritual and fleshly love. The landscapes that
he beheld when he raised her nightgown made his head swim. What beauty; what incredible beauty. Here was the keystone to his love of the visible world. (BP:24).

4.4.3.1. The couple seems to have less diversion than a comic strip. They have "erotic depths, origins, memories, dreams and seizures of melancholy and enthusiasm" (BP:24). When she is sensually disturbed during her visit to New York, Nellie looks around desperately for "honest mothers, wives, woman who took pride in their houses, their gardens, their flower arrangements, their cooking" (BP:31), all traditional jobs of a good housewife. Hunt remarks, "Consternated, Nellie becomes a suburban Diogenes in quest of an honest woman, a counterpart" (1983:167). She becomes increasingly anxious to return home where "she would be herself again, Nellie Nailles, Mrs Eliot Nailles, honest, conscientious, intelligent, chaste etc" (BP:32).

4.4.3.2. Nellie summons three doctors and all the three fail to make Tony get out of bed. Nellie is completely bewildered and doesn’t understand why her son has fallen sick. She tells one of the doctors that they are honest and decent people who go to church every Sunday. There is no reason why he should fall sick. She says, "We don’t tell lies .... I think Tony’s never told a lie.... We don’t read one another’s mail. We don’t cheat. We don’t gossip. We pay
our bills. Eliot loves me. We drink before dinner. I smoke a good deal" (BP:45). She says there is no reason to feel guilty about it. In Nailles and Nellie, we see the typical New England Puritan family, very conservative, traditional and god-fearing. Nailles remembers the day when his son was born in Rome, where he worked as a chemist for FAOU. He recollects her labour and the doctor's advice not to go for a second child, and how she nearly died of child birth.

4.4.3.3. Years later when Tony brings a war widow for dinner, Nellie is very much upset and goes to her bed crying. The parents can't bear their son sleeping with a widow as old as his mother at the very young age and they fear that the boy is going out of their control. But Tony assures his father that he will not repeat such things. Nailles can't bear to see his wife crying over her adolescent son's deeds and he protects her with all love and affection as a husband. When Nellie hears about some men's sexual adventures, he just can't understand how they can deceive their wives. He had fallen in love with his wife the first time he met her and the success of their marriage is not an affair of the heart - it is a matter of life and death. Nellie escapes seduction by her neighbours on two occasions and saves her chastity, though she is tempted. Her chastity is not spoiled, may be a chance
occurrence but she escapes from being guilty of marital infidelity. "So her chasteness, preserved by a fire, a runny nose, and some spoiled sturgeon eggs was still intact, although she carries herself as if her virtue was jewel - an emblem of character, discipline and intelligence" (BP:112).

4.4.3.4. So we find that in Nailles and Nellie we have a traditional couple. Nellie turns out to be a "maternal wife" strongly protecting "domestic feminism" and her only concern is the welfare of her husband and more so of her son. She is a dutiful traditional housewife concerned with domestic bliss. There is complete marital harmony between Nailles and Nellie.

4.4.4. Marcia, wife of Professor Ezekiel Farragut, in Falconer is a character who can be classified as a "castrator" a type which is rather common in Bellow's novels. Farragut is convicted for murder of his brother and he is serving his life sentence. Critics of Cheever called Marcia many names. Hunt says she is "an amalgam of Circe, Aphrodite, Sappho, Hera and Persephone" (1983:204). Leonard finds in her a typical Cheever woman who is "mysterious and unfathomable like God" (1982:25). Meanor calls her "spectacularly cruel wife" (1985:158). As she is filtered
through Farragut's memory and imagination "she appears a figure of detachment and displacement" (Hunt 1983:204).

4.4.4.1. Marcia is presented to us first when she comes to visit her husband Farragut in Falconer prison. She wants to apply for divorce and Farragut has to sign those divorce papers which she will bring herself. When he enquires her about their son, she says that he won't be visiting him as per the instructions of the Social worker, for the general welfare. He touches her hand but she pulls it away. He thinks, "Had she let him touch her for a minute, the warmth the respite, would have lasted for a week" (F:17). But "this spectacularly cruel wife" has no sympathy and kindness for her husband. Marcia is a beautiful woman and she is very much conscious of it. He remembers "She had been an authenticated beauty. Several photographers had asked her to model... She had accepted the compliments; her beauty had been documented" (F:18). She asks Farragut very narcissistically "Is there another woman of my age in this country who is as beautiful as I" (F:18). When he is tempted by her naked beauty and touches her, she stops him, "Stop fussing with my breasts. I am beautiful" (F:18). Like all beautiful woman she is worried that her beauty is only to be worshipped but not to be touched and spoiled. This kind of self-love reminds us of
Herzog's wife Madeleine, who also spends hours before the mirror appreciating her naked body.

4.4.4.2. Farragut remembers how she used to ignore him and clean the house. He comments that "the secondary female characteristic" (BP:19) was to mop drainboards, refrigerator doors and enameled surface. Such an opinion of women is held by every Bellow hero, particularly Joseph and Sammler. After a cocktail party she slept in his arms and he thought they were one. She snored as she slept in his arms and he loved to watch her sleep. She said, "I love to sleep in your arms" (BP:20). He remembers how they made love under the piano where they went to clean the mess made by their dog. He also remembers after that love making how she was seen kissing and embracing her girl friend. The next morning when he wished her, she simply brushed him aside and began kicking the old refrigerator and shouted, "I hate, hate, hate this... dirty old fashioned kitchen. I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls" (F:22). As a beautiful girl she would have dreamt of huge houses with expensive furniture and high life. But she was married to a college professor with average income.

4.4.4.3. On such days when Marcia was distempered, he knew, he would be lucky to get a cup of coffee, leave alone his breakfast with eggs. As he went out to pick some grapes
after the first frost which she liked for jelly he thought, "He cut them for her, but who was she? Sally Midland's lover? Yes, yes, yes! Face the facts .... But if she loved Sally Midland, didn't he love Chucky Drew?" (BP:23). Rest of the day he cleaned the house. All these are his memories. Now his wife is there asking for divorce when he really needs her. She tells him, "I wouldn't want to be married to a homosexual having already married a homicidal and drug addict" (BP:25). They argue about the accidental murder of his brother. Farragut argues that he is innocent but she can't believe it as she says, "All penologists say that all convicts claim innocence" (BP:25). Instead of coming to her husband's moral support, she accuses him of murder and believes that he has really killed his brother and not accidentally as he claimed. Suddenly he remembers the last year of their marriage and their frequent quarrels. He remembers very clearly what she said, "I don't have to listen to your shit anymore..... You've ruined my life, you've ruined my life" (BP:25). He wanted to say, "There is nothing on earth as cruel as a rotten marriage" (F:25) but the sentence was on the tip of his tongue only. Now she says, "You are the biggest mistake I ever made. I thought my life was one hundred percent frustration, but when you killed your brother I saw that I had underestimated my problems" (BP:26). She is frustrated and
she cannot pull on with him. And so she asks for divorce forgetting to see his point of view. He is a prisoner and he needs her full support so as to survive the sentence period. But she never thinks about his problems and simply decides to divorce him.

4.4.4.4. Once he was sent to a rehabilitation centre to check his addiction, the doctor advised him not to exert himself for six weeks and to avoid excitement. When he returned home, Marcia didn't even receive him properly. She used to make all sorts of noise to excite him which made him faint, dizzy and short-winded. He realized that "the home coming of a drug addict was not romantic" (F:49). When she came down and asked him whether she could get him anything, he asked for "some sort of kindness. A little kindness" (F:50). She became angry and shouted at him, something like Madeliene shouting at Herzog:

Do you expect kindness from me at a time like this? What have you ever done to deserve kindness? Drudgery. A superficial and meaningful life. Dust. Cobwebs. Cars and cigarette lighters that don't work. Bath tub rings, unflushed toilets, and international renown for sexual depravity, clinical alcoholism and drug addiction, broken arms, legs, brain concussion and now a massive attack of heart failure. That's what you have given me to live with, and now you expect kindness (F:50).

His heart condition worsened, his vision got dimmer and he
fell asleep. But when he awoke Marcia was cooking something in the kitchen and he was still alive.

4.4.4.5. At the murder trial she remained silent without a single word in his defence. He says, "Marcia had said nothing in his defence" (F:198) although she smiled at him when she was on the stand. In a "spectacular cruel" way, she did not come to his help when he needed it most. She had no word of defence in his favour. She knew it was only an accidental fratricide. A few words of defence from her would have done much good to her husband. She remained indifferent and detached. Even during the visits to the prison, she remains detached and passionless. Only once she shows some signs of accommodation when he openly admits that he has boy friends in prison. Later when he escapes from the prison we are not sure that Farragut will straight go to his wife first. "He walked along nicely. Rejoice, he thought, rejoice" (F:211) as he comes out of the jail. He rejoices his freedom and he has no inclination to visit his estranged and shortly to be divorced wife.

4.5.0. Thus, we see in the novels of Bellow and Cheever that marriages break up leading to separation or divorce. The protagonists complain that they are the victims of their domineering wives. When the wife extends
to her husband her motherly role of disciplinarian, scolding, nagging, or withholding her services, her husband reacts as negatively as a child. For him the very qualities desirable in a good mother - firmness, decisiveness, organizing ability seem undesirable in a wife. So, a submissive wife, happy to be supportive is the ideal; a domineering wife is ridiculed or hated.