

The Role of the Intellectual in an Era of Crises:

Study in Saul Bellow's *Herzog*

دور المثقف في عصر الأزمات: دراسة في رواية هيرزوك لسول بيلو

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Abstract

Saul Bellow (1915-2005) is an American novelist, playwright, essayist, and short story writer. He is the Nobel Prize winner in literature in 1976. He is recognised as a novelist of the intellectuals for all his works are concerned with the figure of the intellectual who goes through a multiple of crises. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the pros and cons of the intellectual's role and behaviour; and to trace his reactions in dealing with such intense crises so as to find a suitable elucidation.

Keywords: The intellectual; emotional, spiritual, and intellectual crises; intellect; knowledge; society; education; experience; Romanticism and Transcendentalism.

الخلاصة

يُعد سول بيلو (١٩١٥-٢٠٠٥) روائي وكاتب مسرحي وقاص أمريكي حائز على جائزة نوبل للأدب في عام ١٩٧٦. اشتهر بيلو بروائي المثقفين كون جميع أعماله تتعامل مع شخصية المثقف الذي يُقاسي أزمات متعددة. إن الهدف من هذا البحث هو لتوضيح إيجابيات وسلبيات دور وسلوك المثقف؛ ولتعقب ردود فعله في التعامل مع هكذا أزمات حادة من أجل الوصول لتفسير مناسب.

كلمات رئيسية: المثقف، أزمات عاطفية وروحية وثقافية، الذهن، المعرفة، المجتمع، التعليم، الخبرة، الحركة الرومانسية وحركة التسامي.

Herzog (1964) is Saul Bellow's sixth novel. It probes the modern intellectual's crises and their multiplicity within society. The novel had acquired a highly critical acclaim since its publication, and occupied the first place at the best-seller list for a number of successive months. What makes it achieve this appreciation, according to Bellow, is that *Herzog* "described a common predicament," and appealed "to those who have been divorced, to those who talk to themselves, to college graduates, to readers of paperbacks, autodidacts, to those who yet hope to live a while. . . ."¹ Indeed, these are the main themes in *Herzog*.

One year after its publication, the novel made Bellow win the second National Book Award for fiction. Many notable critics agree that *Herzog* is one of the substantial and controversial novels of ideas in post-war America. It is regarded as the culmination of Bellow's literary career too, for it "seems to summarise and contain all the questions, the problems, the feelings, the plights, and the aspirations" in modern age.² Bellow emphasises the role of the intellectual who is overwhelmed and overburdened by personal and impersonal crises in a perplexed society.

These crises penetrate the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual levels. They attribute to the everlasting conflict within psyche between mind and heart, intellect and emotions, and interests and ideals, which constitute a predominant dichotomy in the novel. The novel is concerned with the title character, Moses E. Herzog. He is a middle-aged intellectual, author, professor, and Ph.D. holder, who is divorced twice. *Herzog* is a "blending of the probing, introspective, well-made novel of ideas with the fast and loose, free-swinging picaresque quest novel," to convey his themes freely.³

Narrative technique is employed to show that Herzog is preoccupied with crises that could lead him to madness. From the opening sentence, the narrator of the novel declares, “If I am out of my mind, it’s all right with me, thought Moses Herzog.”⁴ This phrase confirms that there are immense crises that make the protagonist wish to be out of his mind. Yet, it is said ironically. It is also shown that there are two points of view: the protagonist’s and the narrator’s. In this respect, “Bellow establishes a distinctive tone of voice which blends wry sadness, sober contemplation, and wild humour.”⁵

Herzog’s irrational attitude can be ascribed to temporary obsession and grief over his second divorce. The numerous points of view give a credible description to the protagonist and his predicaments and puts “emphasis on effect, rather than storytelling.” Hence, the “abnormal state of mind [is] caused by circumstances of the past and present, related by a third-person.”⁶ With his preoccupied mind, Herzog commences his mental journey to analyse his domestic, academic, philosophic, and religious beliefs in a clear-cut way, and conveys his ideas through the imaginary and written letters.

These unsent letters are recurrent ideas throughout the novel and they symbolise communication. Herzog yearns to explore the true reasons behind his critical situation, and the response of the modern age in such surroundings. Being “fallen under a spell,” he tries to keep his mind well-balanced, through “writing letters to everyone under the sun” (H, 1). The process of writing is a significant technique employed in English literature. It is developed into a genre that is called the epistolary novel. In his *A*

Glossary of Literary Terms, M. H. Abraham defines it as “the narrative [which] is conveyed entirely by an exchange of letters.”⁷

The significance of Herzog’s letters lies in their various purposes: personal and impersonal, funny and gloomy, and political and philosophical. These unsent letters are regarded as part of Herzog’s consciousness as he expresses, “I seem to have been stirred fiercely by a desire to communicate, or by the curious project of attempted communication” (H, 162). They play vital roles in Herzog’s life: through them he examines his crises in details; restores some peace of mind through disburdening himself of that clutter; and has “*a chance to consider—think matters over, and reach a more balanced view*” (H, 101).

The Emotional Crisis

The emotional crisis is mainly concerned with what stimulates Herzog feelings, that is, how to deal with his heart in a critical question like divorce. In this sense, the title of the novel is related to that dilemma and the “Herz” part means “heart” in German. The title is German in origin and it has the literal meaning of the word Duke.⁸ Unquestionably, it is associated with the protagonist’s personality. Herzog has undergone an emotional crisis for he is in love with Madeleine; and he sacrifices almost everything, emotionally, financially, and intellectually in order to please her.

He makes unusual efforts to pass it through checking his past relationships with his wives and mistresses. Herzog’s life deteriorates when Madeleine asks for a divorce because she “had great charm, and beauty of person also, and a brilliant mind” (H, 5). By intending the student of Romanticism and the follower of heart to be an emotional crisis, Bellow

wishes to demonstrate his mastery over comedy and irony. The symptoms of this crisis begin to come out in Herzog's behaviour while lecturing at a New York night school:

Professor Herzog had the unconscious frankness of a man deeply preoccupied. . . . He was reasoning, arguing, he was suffering, he had thought of a brilliant alternative . . . longing, bigotry, [and] bitter anger. . . . The class waited three minutes, five minutes, utterly silent. (H, 2)

As a devastated intellectual lying on a sofa in his Ludeyville house, he contemplates the reasons that led to his plights, thus "late in spring Herzog had been overcome by the need to explain, to have it out, to justify, to put it in perspective, to clarify, to make amends" (H, 2). The sofa is another influential motif that has a symbolic meaning related to psychology. It stands for the psychiatrist's chaise lounge. It is apparent that Herzog is in "the position of a mental patient who is trying to create some order out of personal chaos."⁹

The protagonist plays a double role while "[thinking] on the malodorous sofa" (H, 3): an analysed and analyst simultaneously. Herzog begins recalling his first marriage to Daisy; and the reasons that led to his divorce. He concludes that his boredom and ambition; and Daisy's conventional nature in treating him and Marco, are the main reasons behind that divorce. Herzog's attitude starts changing in different aspects because "as long as was married to Daisy, he had led the perfectly ordinary life of an assistant professor, respected and stable" (H, 5); a life that he is no longer interested in.

Pessimistically, Herzog responds mentally under the influence of what Sigmund Freud called "the work of mourning" in his essay "Mourning

and Melancholia.” Freud describes this state as losing both “interest in the outside world,” and “capacity to adopt any new object of love that is not connected with thoughts.”¹⁰ Hence, although he has experienced a divorce earlier; the “strain of the second divorce was too much for [him]. He felt he was going to pieces—breaking up” (H, 7).

Herzog’s relationship with Madeleine is demonstrated ironically, because she is regarded as one of the “Reality Instructors” (H, 125) who instruct Herzog with facts that led to self-knowledge. The term includes several characters like Herzog’s wives, mistresses and lawyers. It also means people who think they know more than the protagonist does. Herzog, in this sense, notes, “*They want to teach you—to punish you with—the lessons of the Real*” (H, 125). Under the tutelage of Madeleine, Herzog realises many harmful acts and shocking feelings; from her, he learns about envy, treason, unfaithfulness, lust, and hatred.

Herzog tells his wife sarcastically, “Maybe I married you to improve my mind!” but, she answers seriously, “Well, I’ll teach you, don’t worry!” (H, 125) Unlike Daisy who stands for Herzog’s intellect, Madeleine stands for his emotions. Although Madeleine’s function is to embody Herzog’s quest for success, she intends to seize his name, money, reputation and learning to achieve her own success.¹¹ Herzog portrays Madeleine as an outrageous woman who is concerned with self-satisfaction only; accordingly, he imagines that “she had beaten him so badly, her pride was fully satisfied, that there was an overflow of strength into her intelligence” (H, 9). He affirms that Madeleine marries an ambitious man like him so as “to trip him, bring him low, knock him sprawling and kick out his brains” (H, 93).

Divorce has not only a direct impact on Herzog's relationships, but also on his psyche, that is why he is described as a dead man emotionally. To use Eugene Hollahan's words, "*Herzog* is . . . a psychologically acute depiction of a major American social problem. Divorce is a kind of psychic death, and Herzog must mourn over his failed marriage."¹² In a psychiatrist's opinion, the divorced man tends to have the "decreased work efficiency . . . compulsive and frenetic dating . . . isolation from family and friends; limited and superficial relationships with women."¹³ Indeed, these features are applicable to Herzog's attitudes.

While in Europe, He meets Ramona Donsell, an intellectual lady who works as a florist. He now needs a woman like Ramona to listen to him and to save him from insanity. In return, she becomes the source of his calmness, compassion, and sanity. Through her status and job, Ramona stands for Herzog's retaining identity that was torn between his intellect with Daisy and his emotions with Madeleine. Unlike Madeleine, Ramona "is more than willing to slave all of Herzog's wounds to reassure him of his intelligence and masculinity," and to "take good care of this sick Herzog," by offering him food, sympathy, as well as love.¹⁴

As a persuasive reality instructor, Ramona convinces Herzog to rejuvenate his low spirits through body. He wonders, "But is that [rejuvenation] the secret goal of my vague pilgrimage? Do I see myself to be after long blundering . . . Dionysus—an Orphic type . . . ? (H, 17) Herzog's "vague pilgrimage" "is charted not only in emotional and spiritual terms—but in intellectual terms as well. Though the final form of his resolution seeks its references in the heart, Herzog must also do battle with the windmills of philosophy."¹⁵

After analysing his relationships with women, Herzog puts an emphasis upon his intellectual achievement. The reference to Herzog's romantic attitude is stressed throughout the novel so as to show the sense of the self which encounters the hostility of the modern age. He finds some shortcomings that make him unable to face that crisis, unless he comprehends the meaning of his own self. Likewise, Jonathan Wilson directs attention to the fact that the "Romantic view . . . elevates subjectivity, foregrounds feelings, and asserts the claims of the individual in the face of alien and crushing necessity. Herzog, however, despite the fact that he is drawn to Romanticism, is also a skeptic.¹⁶

Herzog approves at the other Romantic traits, particularly, when he asserts, "I keep my heart with William Blake" (H, 133). He totally concurs with Blake whose "Songs of Innocence and Experience" presents one of the most notable Romantic sensibilities: the transformation of the individual from innocence to experience through consciousness. This transformation is accepted by Herzog, who has "naive" and "childish" personality that prevents him from comprehending the world being full of betrayal, suffering and experience, beside, loyalty, contentment, and innocence. Therefore,

[H]e had been a bad husband—twice. . . . To his son and daughter he was a loving but bad father. To his own parents he had been an ungrateful child. . . . To his brothers and his sister, affectionate but remote. With his friends, an egotist. With love, lazy. . . . With his own soul, evasive. (H, 4-5)

Emotionally depressed, Herzog hopes to overcome his plight intellectually. But he finds himself in the middle of an intellectual crisis, consequently. This leads to a conflict between the emotions and the intellect which is

embodied by Herzog's personal relationships with his wives and mistresses and by his education and the philosophers' theories.

The Intellectual Crisis

Herzog's intellectual crisis, like his emotional crisis, is resulted from his second divorce. It is concerned with the protagonist's mind rather than with his emotions. The novel is a study of that mind which is burdened with ideas. Intellectually and academically, Herzog's contributions were so imminent that he "made a brilliant start in his Ph.D. thesis—*The State of Nature in 17th and 18th Century English and French Political Philosophy*. He had to his credit also several articles and a book, *Romanticism and Christianity*" (H, 4). Intentionally, Bellow formulates the titles of Herzog's thesis and book symbolically to represent the two poles of conflict inside him. The title of the thesis signifies "a life of the reason and intellect," while the title of the book stands for "an impulse of the emotions and the heart."¹⁷

This treatment is a renewal to Herzog's conflict between intellect and sensibility as one of the conflicts during the Sixties. The zeitgeist theme is stressed here, a theme which is connected with intellectuality. Zeitgeist, as a German word in origin, means "the general mood or quality of a practical period of history, as shown by the ideas, beliefs, etc." It simply means a topic which is "common at the time," or the "spirit of the time," interchangeably.¹⁸ As an alienated intellectual, Herzog reflects on the spirit of his time through his "wistful reflection on the values of the past and his ultimately regenerated hope for the future, both of which are distilled in a crisis of the present."¹⁹

Herzog quits his position at the college, not because he is a bad scholar; but to satisfy Madeleine's domineering attitudes that keep him fluctuating among leaving his academic position, buying a house at the Berkshires, moving to Chicago and finally divorcing her. His career is praised for its popularity in general and its contribution to history in particular:

Herzog did not leave academic life because he was doing badly. On the contrary, his reputation was good. His thesis had been influential and was translated into French and German. His early book . . . was now on many reading lists, and the younger generation of historians accepted it as a model of the new sort of history, 'history that interests *us*.' (H, 5)

Herzog's intellectual crisis initiates with his leaving the academic field, and it is amplified with his disability "to continue his studies in Romanticism." He painfully recalls that the "results [of his studies] lay in the closet, in an old valise—eight hundred pages of chaotic argument which had never found its focus" (H, 4). Overburdened with his crises, Herzog confesses that he is so engaged with someone inside him; thus, he acknowledges, "*There is someone inside me. I am in his grip. When I speak of him I feel him in my head, pounding for order. He will ruin me*" (H, 11).

This state of being in "ruin" testifies the presence of an acute intellectual crisis blaze. As a result, Bellow gives an idea about his protagonist's engagement with someone who controls him mentally through referring to the Faustian legend. Indeed, being a dramatist, and novelist, Bellow attempts to incorporate specific allusions to drama in his novel in order to call attention to his comic vision through serious situations and to convey the idea of the world-like theatre.

In *Herzog*, there are several phrases related to the Faustian legend. This allusion goes back to Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1594), and to Goethe's *Faust* (1808-1832). Both works illustrate that the ambitious and dissatisfied Faust is possessed by Mephistopheles, the evil spirit. By hinting at the Faustian legend in *Herzog*, "Bellow casts his protagonist into the dramatist tradition of Faust . . . to interpret Herzog's experiences and dilemmas through the Faustian myth, and further, to see Herzog as representative of the intellectual development of man since the Renaissance."²⁰ The reference to the Faustian legend confirms that there are affinities between the characters of both Faust and Herzog. The parallels can be found in ambition, conflict, and preoccupation.

Herzog, like Faust in Goethe's *Faust*, is ambitious and haunted by Mephistophelean characters like Madeleine and Gersbach. Herzog's studies embody the theme of ambition and show Faust's dissatisfaction with sciences. Herzog's "first work, showed by objective research what Christianity was to Romanticism. In the second he was becoming tougher, more assertive, [and] more ambitious" (H, 5). Moreover, his character became unleashed and rugged by having "a strong will and a talent for polemics . . . a taste and a talent also for danger and extremism, for heterodoxy, for ordeals" (H, 6).

Phrases, like "more ambitious," "talent for polemics," and "heterodoxy," are related to the Faustian legend. Being a bored professor, Herzog is similar to Faust and his flight to Poland for giving lectures there, is reminiscent to that made by Faust under the will of Mephistopheles, they "flew through angry spinning snow clouds over white Polish forest, fields, pits, factories, rivers dogging their banks, in, out, in, and a terrain of white and brown diagrams" (H, 32). Geographically, Herzog's trip is noteworthy

for he was giving lectures in almost the same places where Faust was working, especially, Eastern Europe, where Herzog lectures in “Copenhagen, Warsaw, Cracow, Berlin, [and] Belgrade” (H, 7).

The common ground for both Herzog and Faust is Cracow, where there “was a frightening moment in Cracow, in the hotel room, when the symptom appeared” (H, 24), just a “little infection he had caught in Poland” (H, 13). Correspondingly, “in Goethe’s work, Cracow is the precise setting for Faust’s teaching and for his bargain with Mephistopheles.”²¹ While explaining his intellectual crisis to Zelda, Madeleine’s aunt, Herzog asserts that “his study was supposed to have ended with a new angle on the modern condition, showing how life could be lived by renewing universal connections . . . revising the old Western, Faustian ideology” (H, 39); yet, he could not come up with a conclusion.

Disappointed with his incomplete work, Herzog is split into two persons: one wishes for throwing away the intellectual life; while the other desires for equilibrium. He asks himself, “Did I really believe that I would die when thinking stopped?” (H, 265) Herzog’s inner conflict is shown in the ambitious and non ambitious personalities, which also assert his state of rebellion. The protagonist is not only mourning his divorce, as it is mentioned earlier, but also his literary career which he thinks neither develops him personally nor historically. Hence, he “also mourns the loss to his scholarly career. During the marriage, he made no progress on the *magnum opus* that was to revolutionize intellectual history and tell everyone in the modern world how to live; he doesn’t even know how *he* is supposed to live.”²²

Though Herzog depends upon his intellect in solving his current crisis; he is dominated by his heart that makes him “the intellectual who refuses to create an order in chaos through narrow ways of the common man,” because his “version of life has to be a synthesis of the simultaneously coexisting little worlds which form our earthly civilisation.”²³ Through placing a professor in the middle of an intellectual predicament, Bellow wants to ridicule the role of the intellectual in post-war American society. Dissatisfied with this negative role, he wishes to change it into an affirmative one.

In a letter to the Governor Stevenson Adlai, an intellectual who lost the US presidency for Dwight D. Eisenhower, Herzog sympathetically writes: “*Like many others I thought this country might be ready for its great age in the world and intelligence. . . . But the instinct of the people was to reject mentality and its images, ideas, perhaps mistrusting them as foreign.*” Bellow also shows the position of the intellectual in the society as a figure viewed as “*foreign*” (H, 66).

Herzog wonders about his interest in social and political issues, and then, he ascribes all that interest to his Faustian spirit. This spirit makes him ambitious and curious in learning things that represent him personally. He addresses himself, “*Dear Moses E. Herzog, Since when have you taken such an interest in social questions, in the external world? Until lately, you led a life of innocent sloth. But suddenly a Faustian spirit of discontent and universal reform descends on you*” (H, 68). In another letter, Herzog discusses the intellectuals’ social attitudes and criticises civilisation for its pessimistic views. He then wonders:

Are all the traditions used up, the beliefs done for, the consciousness of the masses not yet ready for the next development? Is this the full crisis of dissolution? Has the filthy moment come when moral feeling dies, [and] conscience disintegrates . . . ? But we mustn't forget how quickly the visions of genius become the canned goods of the intellectuals. The . . . commonplaces of the Wasteland outlook, the cheap mental stimulants of Alienation I can't accept this foolish dreariness. We are talking about the whole life of mankind. (H, 74-75)

These ideas are imposed by the intellectuals who disbelieve in the intellect; instead they believe in pessimistic views. Herzog, as a mouthpiece of Bellow, asserts the rejection of “*foolish dreariness*” that characterises the modern man with his ideas of “*Wasteland*” outlook and “*cheap mental stimulants of Alienation*” and substitutes them with the belief in life that is worth living.

Herzog yearns for an alternative which affirms his optimistic belief in forming a synthesis of his intellectual and emotional impulse; therefore, he proposes that “*to survive these idiocies. . . . Anyway the intellectual has been a Separatist,*” argues Herzog, “*What kind of synthesis is a Separatist likely to come up with?*”(H, 322) The answer should be with a “transcendental affirmation, in which he frees himself from the compulsion of intellectual systemizing and relaxes in the freedom of an emotional/intuitional synthesis.”²⁴

Through adopting Truman's phrase jokingly, Herzog says, “*What this country needs is a good five-cent synthesis*” (H, 207), because he thinks that “[i]ntellect cannot by itself build a society of peace, respect and mutual understanding”²⁵ in which one is able to make a reconciliation between his contradicted elements. In this sense, M. Gilbert Porter proclaims, “Herzog solves the conflict between his sensibilities and his intellect by moving through existentialism to transcendentalism.”²⁶ This transformation should

be achieved spiritually, whether by believing in God, or by recalling the dead. Although Herzog does the two spiritual issues; he finds himself encountering a new crisis spiritually.

The Spiritual Crisis

Among the crises that Herzog encounters throughout the novel, is the spiritual crisis which is related to the human spirit rather than to the human self. The form of the novel refers to this dilemma throughout the protagonist's journey of development. *Herzog* is also regarded as a Bildungsroman that is a novel of education or of development. This German literary term means a novel whose subject "is the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences—and often through a spiritual crisis—into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world."²⁷

Likewise, Bellow in an interview, comments that "[a]ny Bildungsroman—and *Herzog* is . . . —concludes with the first step,"²⁸ a certain course of development. Bellow adds that Herzog is "caught in the middle of a spiritual crisis, overwhelmed by the sheer 'muchness' of the world and frightened by the stubborn fact of death." Besides, Herzog "reject[s] both optimism and easy despair."²⁹ Like Everyman who has faith in God, Herzog realises that he is a sinner and his crises are resulted from his ambition and dissatisfaction, so he is in need of remorse and redemption. In this regard, Daniel Walden states,

[Herzog's] approach to redemption included an invocation to God and a symbolic sweeping out and washing out of the dirt of his life . . . he was both participant and sufferer, witness and a symbol of his

generation's agony. But . . . he reasserted only a partial relationship with the spiritual, with the incomprehensible.³⁰

Herzog also mourns his separation from his parents by death, so he "is re-experiencing separation anxiety, whose symptoms in adults are similar to those . . . reactions among children to loss of a parent include . . . rage and protest over desertion, maintenance of an intense fantasy relationship with the lost parent, persistent efforts at reunion [and] anxiety."³¹ Herzog says, "This year I covered half the world, and saw people in such numbers—it seems to me I saw everybody but the dead. Whom perhaps I was looking for" (H, 67). John Clayton's proclaims that

There are, essentially, four ways in which the hero hides from death: he plays the suffering . . . he grabs himself in a sense of importance, of special destiny . . . he turns reality into construction in which he can live safely; [and] he acquiesces to the Father and/or identifies with the father.³²

From a different standpoint, Herzog's relationship with his father, Jonah, is different from that with his mother. Jonah wishes Herzog to be a successful businessman while Herzog strives to be a successful scholar. Both Herzog and his father are failure in their careers: Moses can neither finish his book nor maintain a professional position; Jonah tried to be baker, businessman, manufacturer, broker and bootlegger, but he failed in all jobs.

While recalling his mother, Sarah, in almost three events, Herzog lives with these memories spiritually. The first memory begins when Sarah was pulling him on a sled "over crusty ice, the tiny glitter of snow," her father stops them to exclaim, "Why are you pulling him, daughter . . .

! Don't sacrifice your strength to children" (H, 139). This event shows the image of a devoted and sacrificing mother, and Herzog's carelessness and self-criticism for not reacting.

The other event is Sarah's talk about the creation of Adam. This scene begins when Herzog was six-year-old and wondered, "how Adam was created from the dust of the ground." Sarah responds by rubbing the palm of one hand with the finger of the other until "something dark appeared on the deep lined skin, a particle of what certainly looked to him like earth" (H, 232). By drawing a real incident that is happened in Freud's childhood, Bellow wants to show his opposite view or contradiction to the former's notion about death. Besides, the message for each is different: for Freud, death is natural; while for Herzog, it is metaphysical. Freud submits to death while Herzog resists it. Therefore, Jonathan Wilson proclaims:

For Freud and Bellow both, or Freud and Herzog both, facing the reality of death is paramount to both the health and humanity of the individual. But to Freud that 'facing' must be unillusioned, the reality must be accepted in a natural form undistorted by the intrusion of metaphysical speculation. For Bellow and Herzog, it seems unlikely that . . . [they] "have come to better terms with death" (H, 232) without the aid of some as yet unidentified transforming metaphysical agent.³³

Herzog reminiscences the last event in which he was sixteen and his mother was dying. Instead of taking care of her; he was studying. He continues that she comes to be sure he will stop reading in such a poor light. She looks ill as if she were saying, "*my son this is death*," Herzog comments at the present time "I chose not to read this text" (H, 234). Symbolically, through this incident, Bellow shows that his protagonist prefers "to consider cultural rather than personal decline. . . . It isn't only at

the time of his mother's death that he intellectualizes to keep away anxiety over death"; but, to avoid it.³⁴

The protagonist shifts between his past and present to show his religious inclination, through remembering his parents' death and through his faith in God. Herzog's letter to God exemplifies the necessity of selfless devotion, and moral submission and commitment. Herzog asks, "*How my mind has struggled to make coherent sense. I have not been too good at it. But have desired to do your unknowable will, taking it, and you, without symbols*" (H, 325-26). In addressing God, Herzog becomes spiritually pure and redemptive; his character is developed from a state of self-ignorance to self-knowledge. Likewise, his prayer to God is "an instinctive rejection of the modernist negative apocalypse. The comedy and intellectuality of *Herzog* is rounded out by a tone of personal elegy vis-a-vis Herzog's familial past."³⁵

Unlike some pessimistic post-war characters, Herzog does not consider committing suicide as an alternative to his predicaments; instead he thinks of himself, children and life as opposite to death, and even "in the midst of his acute crisis, Herzog is able to hold in check his thoughts of death by his senses of duty to himself, to his children, to life."³⁶ He is shocked by the society's worthless principles which lead to a crisis of consciousness and of existence. Such a crisis is caused by the disappearance of morals and faith in God.

As a result, Herzog reaches a self-realisation by turning from pessimistic existentialism to optimistic transcendentalism. Herzog does not think of suicide as an alternative. Instead he believes in hope, and he wants to live by dismissing evil, "*He* could not allow himself to die yet. The

children needed him. His duty was to live. To be sane, and to live, and to look after the kids. . . . He was getting away from all burdens” (H, 27).

Herzog returns to his country house with a new experienced self that emphasises on freedom in spite of the dreariness of the alienated society. He states, “Nature (itself) and I are together, in the Berkshires, and this is my chance to understand . . . agitated, yes, but also cheerful” (H, 319). As a sign to his satisfaction, Herzog paints an old piano with green in order to send it to Junie. He is symbolically confronting death by establishing life through music and green colour.

Thus, equilibrium is achieved between emotions and intellect; and between soul and body. Herzog gets rid of his suffering, alienation, pride, and the Faustian spirit. They are substituted by a joyful life, accommodation, humiliation and modesty, faith in God, and redemption. In the country house, which stands for paradise that replaces the ruined and hellish cities, Herzog’s spell and the obsession with Madeleine and Gersbach are vanished. On a couch again, Herzog feels comfortable with the tranquillity of the rural nature; and with the noise of Mrs. Tuttle’s broom. He admits, “But that’s just it—not a solitary thing. I am pretty well satisfied to be, to be just as it is willed, and for as long as I may remain in occupancy” (H, 340).

Herzog rejects the existentialist views of life and replaces them by the romantic and transcendentalist views that affirm the need for love and human brotherhood. He lives “in an inspired condition, to know truth, to be free, to love another, to consummate existence, to abide with death in clarity of consciousness” (H, 165). At last, no messages are to be written or imagined any more, “[a]t this time he had no messages for anyone. Nothing. Not a single word” (H, 341). At last, this silence symbolises satisfaction with his current situation, renunciation to his society, but it is definitely not a resignation in improving both.

Notes

¹Gordon Lloyd Harper, “The Art of Fiction: Saul Bellow,” in *Conversations with Saul Bellow* ed., Gloria L. Cronin and Ben Siegel (Mississippi: The University Press of Mississippi, 1994), 66.

²Tony Tanner, *Writers and Critics Saul Bellow* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 87.

³M. Gilbert Porter, *Whence the Power? The Artistry and Humanity of Saul Bellow* (Missouri, The Curators of the University of Missouri, 1974), 189.

⁴Saul Bellow, *Herzog* (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), 1, 315. All subsequent quotations cited in the text are from this edition, with the abbreviation H and the page number(s).

⁵Ian Ousby, *An Introduction to Fifty American Novels* (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1980), 338.

⁶Eugenie Harris, *Saul Bellow's Herzog and The Adventures of Augie March and other Works* (New York: Monarch Press Simon and Schuster INC, 1966), 74.

⁷M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* 9th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009), 228.

⁸George P. Elliot, "Hurtsog, Hairsog, Heart's Hog?" in *Dictionary of Literary Biography Documentary Series An Illustrated Chronicle* Vol.3, ed., Mary Bruccoli (Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1983), 30.

⁹Robert R. Dutton, *Saul Bellow* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1971), 121-22.

¹⁰Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (1953-74)*, Vol. 14, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London, The Hogarth Press, 1957), 244.

¹¹Dutton, 131.

¹²Eugene Hollahan "Introduction" in *Saul Bellow and the Struggle at the Center*, ed., Eugene Hollahan (New York: AMS Press, 1996), xxi.

¹³Quoted in Andrew Gordon "Herzog's Divorce Grief" in Hollahan, 65.

¹⁴Dutton, 131.

¹⁵David D. Galloway, "Moses-Bloom-Herzog: Bellow's Everyman," in *The Critical Response to Saul Bellow*, ed., Gerhard Bach (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), 134.

¹⁶Jonathan Wilson, *Herzog Limits of Ideas* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 36.

¹⁷Dutton, 126.

¹⁸A S Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 8th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1795.

¹⁹Harris, 76.

²⁰Dutton, 135.

²¹Ibid., 136.

²²Gordon, 66.

²³Review of “Bellow’s Critique of the Intellect,” by Bruce J. Borrus, 13. <<http://www.ihadodesterro.ufsc.br/pdf/05.com>> [accessed March 3, 2012].

²⁴M. Gilbert Porter, “‘Weirdly Tranquil’ Vision: The Point of View of Moses Herzog,” in Bach, 145.

²⁵Review of “Bellow’s Critique of the Intellect,” 24.

²⁶Porter, *Whence the Power?* 5.

²⁷Abrams and Harpham, 229.

²⁸Harper, 73-74.

²⁹Michiko Kakutani, “A Talk with Saul Bellow On His Work and Himself,” in Cronin and Siegel, 181-82.

³⁰Daniel Walden, “The Resonance of Twoness: The Urban Vision of Saul Bellow,” in *Saul Bellow: The Man and His Work*, eds., M. A. Quayum and Sukhbir Singh (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 2000), 142.

³¹Quoted in Gordon, 68.

³²John J. Clayton, *Saul Bellow: In Defence of Man* 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 288.

³³Wilson, 68.

³⁴Clayton, 209.

³⁵Daniel Fuchs, “Saul Bellow and the Modern Tradition,” in Quayum and Singh, 124.

³⁶Chirantan Kulshrestha, *Saul Bellow: The Problem of Affirmation* (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1978), 46.

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