

**The Protagonist's Resistance to the City's Alienating
Forces
A Study of Saul Bellow's Herzog (1964) in the Light of
Louis Wirth Theory of Urbanism**

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Received: 17/08/2021; Accepted: 04/12/2021

Abstract:

The present paper attempts to explore the urban vision of Saul Bellow. In so doing, one of his fictional works (Herzog, 1964), is analyzed in order to determine precisely how the fictional city acts as a reality metaphor. More simply put, it seeks to read the selected novel in the light of Louis Wirth theory of urbanism, and strives to prove that the city in the opinion of Bellow is infernal, as it forced the protagonist to be alienated and then kept him victim and hostage in such a hostile environment, which is evidenced by its physical filth and poverty, its alcoholism, violence and organized crime, its political corruption, and its greed and the breakdown of family. As a conclusion, in spite of all these deterministic forces and social pressure imposed by the city, and in order for Moses Herzog, the protagonist, to maintain his dignity and humanism, he refused to surrender and accepted to undergo the process of resilience and resistance.

Keywords: Alienation, Bellow, Herzog, city, Wirth theory, resistance.

Résumé

Le présent article vise à explorer et définir la vision urbaine de Saul Bellow à travers l'analyse de son œuvre fictive Herzog (1964); afin de déterminer rigoureusement la manière dont agit la ville allégorique comme une métaphore de la réalité. Ce travail cherche à étudier le roman à la lumière de la théorie, dite l'urbanisme, de Louis Wirth ainsi qu'il essaie de démontrer que la ville, selon Bellow, est infernale du moment qu'elle a amené le protagoniste à être aliéné, victime et pris comme otage dans un environnement si hostile, comme en témoignent sa saleté et sa pauvreté, son ivrognerie, la violence et le crime organisé, son abâtardissement politique, sa cupidité et la dissolution des liens familiaux. Il est conclu avec l'idée qu'en dépit de toutes ces forces déterministes imposées par la ville, et afin que le personnage entretienne sa dignité et son humanisme, Herzog a refusé de se rendre et se prêter de subir la démarche de la résistance.

Mots-clés: Aliénation, Ville, Bellow, Herzog, Théorie de Wirth, Résistance.

مستخلص: مقاومة البطل لقوى المدينة المؤدية للاغتراب دراسة
لشاول بيلو هيرتزوج (1964) في ضوء نظرية ويرث للتخضر
تحاول هذه الورقة التحري عن معنى الرؤية الحضرية لشاول بيلو
وتعريفه من خلال استنطاق عمله الخيالي هيرتزوج (1964)، ثم تحديد
الطريقة الدقيقة التي أدت بها المدينة الخيالية استعارة تخص الواقع، كما
تسعى إلى قراءة الرواية المختارة في ضوء نظرية لويس ويرث عن

التحضر. وعليه تهدف الدراسة إلى إثبات أن المدينة بحسب بيلو جهنمية بما أنها أجبرت بطل الرواية أن يكون مغترباً، ومن ثم جعلته ضحية ورهينة في هكذا بيئة معادية، وهو ما يتضح من قذارة المحيط والفقر، وإدمان الكحول والعنف والجريمة المنظمة، وفسادها السياسي وجشعها وانهايار روابط الأسرة. وخلص البحث إلى أنه على الرغم من كل هذه القوى القطعية التي تفرضها المدينة، وبغية أن يحافظ البطل على كرامته و إنسانيته، رفض هيرتزوج الاستسلام وقبل الخضوع لعملية المقاومة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاعتراب، المدينة، بيلو، هيرتزوج، نظرية ويرث، المقاومة.

Introduction

Countless volumes have been written on the interconnectedness between literature and the city to such an extent that there emerged a purely distinguished genre called City Novel. Some meaningful works have been written about the city in American literature and a lot has already been written about Saul Bellow, but very little has been said about the city in Saul Bellow's novels, especially the idea of the city acting as an alienating force. It is, therefore, the city's greed, violence, poverty and breakdown of family that put on the individual a huge pressure, forcing him to a state of isolation and alienation and so leading him to feel a stranger and outsider within his community.

As Bellow had experienced alienation and fragmentation, his novels cannot be void of themes of estrangement, powerlessness and nothingness. The majority of his novels depict an individual struggling to find meaning, unity, and truth in a hostile world. In spite of all these deterministic forces, his characters manage to maintain their dignity and humanism. Tonny Tarner, who has written extensively on Bellow, refers to him as the novelist of man suffocating in society. He sees Bellow's novels as an affirmation of human dignity and human possibilities even in a dehumanized age. (Qtd in Hyland)

Being a city writer, Bellow's main characters are searchers in the city. There is always a direct relationship between the chaos of the city and his protagonists own fragmented condition. The city is the showground in which Bellow's protagonists act, and through their acting and their reflections; they exhibit the author's own view of social reality, showing a society of increasing materialism and consumerism. Thus, the struggle between the protagonist's humanism and social patterns is very frequent in all his novels. It is worth noting how Bellow has been influenced by many philosophers and sociologists whose impacts are evident all along his writings. Thus, this paper attempts to analyze his masterpiece Herzog (1964) in the light Louis Wirth Theory of Urbanism. It should be mentioned that Wirth's theory of urbanism is chiefly important for this study of the city in Saul Bellow's work for two reasons: first, because his studies were carried out in Chicago, one of the two cities Bellow is concerned with, and second, because Bellow studied at the same university Robert Park and Louis Wirth were teaching. Although both belonged to different

departments, Wirth taught at the sociology department; while Bellow was an anthropology student, still the influence was remarkable.

2. Objectives of the Study

This paper is particularly concerned with the city in Bellow's novel Herzog acting as cruel forces pressing his protagonist into a state of alienation. It seeks to follow the journey of Herzog, the protagonist in the city and to explore the influence and pressure imposed by the city. Light is cast on Herzog, who is regarded as a prey, a victim who is most of the time struggling to find truth and meaning to his existence. Moreover, it attempts at depicting the protagonist efforts to resist and keep his dignity and humanity in the face of a cruel and hostile environment.

Hence, the following problematic addresses:

What sort of behaviour is required from the protagonist in order to overcome the city's alienating forces?

Does the protagonist resist or surrender to the pressure imposed by the city?

3. Review of Literature

When reviewing books that deal with the city in literature, it becomes relevant to state that none of them mentions Saul Bellow or the Bellowian city. This is quite understandable if we consider that Bellow is a postmodern author and that most books do not include the post-war period. Bellow's entire novels take place in the largest

American cities, except for Henderson the Rain King (1959), which is set in primitive Africa.

In this line of thought, John Clayton, In Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man (1971), views Bellow as a positive writer- a moralist. Although we can say that the attitude toward the small American town changed considerably with the emergence of realism, we cannot say the same regarding the attitudes toward the city. James Pickering makes it clear that from Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Hawthorne, and Poe to Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser or John Updike, the basic attitude has remained the same, although each writer has in a way shaped his own city of his own imagination, clearly reflecting the perspectives of their particular schools. In this sense, Upton Sinclair's city would be very different from Emerson's or Jefferson's. While Sinclair would link the evils of the city to the social structure of the capitalist society, Jefferson and Emerson would link the country to success, individual fulfillment, and stability.

It follow then, that hardly any voice of America's most distinguished writers spoke in support of the city and its ways of life, which might lead us to side with Jefferson's belief, that "the most essential values of American life are agrarian ones," and that contemporary writers like John Steinbeck, Arthur Miller, Saul Bellow and others show a total incapacity of swimming against the tide.

Nonetheless, as Morton and Lucia White put it in The Intellectual Versus the City (1962), that from Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright -- the nation's great

intellectual leaders speak out against the ills and evils of the American city. They state that:

The American city has been thought by American intellectuals to be too big, too noisy, too dirty, too commercial, too full of immigrants, ... too industrial, too pushing, too mobile, ... destructive of conversation, destructive of communication, too greedy, too capitalistic, ... too heartless, too intellectual, too scientific, insufficiently poetic, too lacking in manners, too mechanical, destructive of family, tribal and patriotic feeling. And just because different intellectuals have disliked the city for so many different reasons, it is unlikely that one simple hypothesis will provide the explanation of why American thinkers have found the city objectionable.¹

4. Literature and the City

The exceptional and rapid growth of American cities of late 1880's and 1890's led to the publication of a great number of considerable urban novels, such as those by: William Dean Howells, Stephen Crane, and Hamlin Garland. Twentieth-century literature is said to belong to the city, for the city, in the words of Blanche Gelfant, "epitomizes the twentieth-century and focalizes the main themes of twentieth-century life." The literature reveals that American writers have

¹ Morton, Lucia White. *The intellectual versus the city: From Thomas*

Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright. Harvard University Press and MIT Press,

Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1962

assumed two utterly opposed visions of the city, which Eugene Arden, Gelfant, Irving Howe, and others variously label as, on the one hand, "optimistic," "romantic," or "pastoral," and on the other hand as "pessimistic," "apocalyptic," or "evil." Arden, for example, says in connection with the New York novel that he found two principal types, one which celebrated the city; and the other which condemned it. Of the two visions, the dominant vision of the city is evil.²

While rural life represented peace, harmony, and accommodating family, social, and religious life, the city in the opinion of those writers and thinkers was infernal, as evidenced by its physical debris and poverty, its violence and organized crime, its materialism, greed, and the collapse of family connections. The innocent hero who arrived in the city, believing it to be "a land of milk and honey," shortly discovered its brutal realities. He had to struggle to overcome great obstacles and in the way was corrupted and forced to compromise. Most importantly, he was defeated by the merciless environment and forced to withdraw. Arden, Gelfant, and others hold the view that novels which depicted the city as evil were invariably superior to those which portrayed the city as exciting, and full of promise and opportunity. City fiction, as viewed by both the realists and the naturalists, presented only the dreadfulness of urban life, with its chaos, messy pace, and crime.

² Singh, Yashoda Nandan, *The City as Metaphor in Selected Novels of James Purdy and Saul Bellow* (1979). Dissertations. 1839. https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/1839

Nonetheless, recent critics have noticed another attitude toward the city in American fiction, describing this vision as "ambivalent." Speaking of the Chicago writers of the post-1880 period, Sarah Cohen, for example, observes that "The corruption and dynamism of Chicago both fascinated and repelled them." (139) Discussing the urban landscape in Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), Guy A. Szuberla says that "Dreiser found that Chicago's skyscraper architecture and its long, sweeping vistas provoked a feeling that . . . might best be called the urban or technological sublime." According to Dreiser, this represents the emptiness and the meaninglessness of urban life. In Robert Nadon's opinion, writers, like Bellow and Mailer, move toward an affirmation of the city and accommodation with its realities in their infrequent depiction of the city in all its "variety, excitement, and power," but their cityscapes "are predominantly negative, containing images of filth, debris, noise, and heat that contribute to a symbolic view of the city as either a wasteland or inferno." (Nadon, 442) These analyses generally show the urban setting as a stagnant environment against which protagonists either succeed or fail.

Many scholars centre their comments and criticism on Bellow's urban vision. Gilbert M. Porter, for instance, gives notice to the subject of Bellow's urban vision by saying that in Bellow's novels, we find "vivid renderings of city life" In Saul Bellow (1971), Robert R. Dutton observes that in Bellow's world "society is rendered in an almost naturalistic manner [an] unchanging, indifferent, yet powerful background against which his protagonists in all of their sensitive awareness, their vitality, their frustrating absurdities, are seen." Later he clarifies: "Bellow sees nothing inherently evil about the city."

5. The City in the Views of Philosophers and Sociologists

Throughout history, intellectuals have been worried about the effects of urbanization upon the individual and upon society as a whole. The continuous struggle between the city and its dwellers has captured the attention of many philosophers and sociologists. For instance, Friedrich Engels, who is referred to as the father of urban sociology, is plainly on the side of the worker and a radical critic of the bourgeois owner interested in resistance and mobilization. He devotes chapters to strikes and other forms of organized efforts by workers and their families in their effort to improve their conditions. This is, especially true in Chapter IX (Working-Class Movements)

The atmosphere is polluted by the stench and is darkened by the thick smoke of a dozen factory chimneys. ... The creatures who inhabit these dwellings and even their dark, wet cellars, and who live confined amidst all this filth and foul air -- which cannot be dissipated because of the surrounding lofty buildings -- must surely have sunk to the lowest leel of humanity. 3

Engels and Marx wrote and published many books on alienation among workers. They also attempted to expose the rough distribution of wealth gained during the Industrial Revolution. Their writings see capitalism as an exploitative

- 1 Friedrich. Engels The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844: With Preface Written in 1892. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

system that benefits the owners of land and means of production more than the labor force. In his early work on cities, in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1844 (1892); Friedrich Engels ventured to take a road that has not been taken either by Marxism or by students of the city. Engels identified an ethnographic interpretation of the lived experience of people who find themselves trapped in modern cities. Similar to Engels, Karl Marx sees the city as a simultaneously liberating and alienating force. The city is the cradle of the bourgeoisie and of the proletariat.

The twentieth century has necessarily to mention the pioneers of urban sociology: Louis Wirth, Robert Park, and other Chicago colleagues such as Ernest Burgess, and Homer Hoyt, who developed it into an approach that became known as the Chicago School. The contribution of the mother of urban socio-literature in the United States cannot certainly pass unnoticed. Blanche Gelfant, also distinguishes between three types of city novels which are: the portrait, the synoptic and the ecological novel. In the same line of thoughts, James Pickering's states in *The City in American Literature* (1977),

6. Bellow- the City Writer

Saul Bellow was born of Russian immigrant parents in Lachine, Quebec, Canada, on July 10, 1915. When he was nine his family moved to Chicago, Illinois, and to this city Bellow remained deeply committed. Bellow is one of the most celebrated novelists of the postwar years, credited with returning a brash vitality to the American novel at midcentury.

As a contemporary American writer, Bellow has been exhaustively studied lately, with a huge engagement of both his style and his tight attachment with the problems of contemporary man. W.J. Sewell says that "Saul Bellow represents a post-modern writer, that is, a writer whose fiction has turned away from a concern with social values to embrace the inner values of the individual," Bellow's novels are good evidence of this assertion. Thus, the struggle between the protagonist's humanism and social patterns is a point in common in all his novels. His latest novel exposes society itself, as a battlefield for the protagonist. All of Bellow's novels has the city as their setting, except *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), which is a major work where most events took place in primitive Africa, (although Chicago is mentally and spiritually present in this novel). In *Seize the Day* (1956), The Ansonia Hotel on Broadway and 73rd Street, was the setting for a large portion of his novella which is described as a Baroque palace, "with towers, domes, huge swells and bubbles of metal gone green from exposure..." (Berger, 2005)

Bellow's efforts to find a place as a city writer and intellectual in the tradition of modern urban fiction were not easily accepted. Even his intentions to come to terms as a city man and Jew with the emerging cosmopolitan world of post-war America were received with harsh criticism. Against all these rejections, objections and claims, Bellow was able to confirm his place as a city writer, as he himself, stated in an interview — "I don't know how I could possibly separate my knowledge of life, such as it is, from the city" In addition to being a refined city novelist, Bellow, also re-defined the novel, broadened it, liberated it, and most importantly, made it warm with human sense.

Cities in the view of Bellow are not just concrete spaces but also signs of human emotion and spirit. Each city is unique in terms of having its own characteristics with its suburbs and centers; its categorization, its intellectual and concrete architecture as well as its narratives bearing witness to its diversity and enthusiasm.

In most of his writing, Bellow stresses on his description of the city; on its hostile environment as well as its pressures, that represent major forces driving his characters to the general state of alienation. New York is crowded with "barbaric fellahin". For Bellow, Chicago has two faces, i.e. a coin with two sides: the positive as well as the negative side that are encompassed in his fiction. His characters, sometimes, travelled to Mexico and Europe, to upstate New York and the western desert. But Chicago and New York were his Paris and his London.

As a novelist, Saul Bellow stumbles upon an urban, mechanical massed world. Most of his works had for its protagonist a migrant from a rural area, a young man or woman, who experienced the city's excitement and freedom as well as its corruption. The urban setting was seen as an unchanging, detrimental, or indifferent force to be overcome by the protagonist. Therefore, the protagonist long journey ends either in death or failure.

Bellow's city, noticeably, was Chicago. His novels are not simply set in the 20th century, they are about that century with its overwhelming transformations, and its savagery. These elements are not dealt with in abstract, but filtered through the unexpected and inexplicable change in the

character's behaviour, of an individual trying to figure out where he stands in relation to the mass of which he belongs to.

Bellow visited New York frequently, and lived there at various points, but he was never comfortable in the city. "I congratulated myself with being able to deal with New York," he told Philip Roth near the end of his life, "but I never won any of my struggles there, and I never responded with full human warmth to anything that happened there."

Still, in New York and at Princeton, where he spent a year teaching creative writing, Bellow made friends with many of the critics who dominated literary life in the nineteen-fifties. (Zachary, 2015)

Being a city writer, Bellow's main characters are searchers in the city. There is always a direct relationship between the chaos of the city and his protagonists' own disorganized condition. His main characters are searchers not only for the reality of self but also of meaning in society.

In *Dangling Man* (1944), Bellow's first novel, the protagonist, Joseph, attempts to establish a relationship with the world where the individual can remain himself without surrendering to society's values. In *The Victim* (1947), as Tony Tanner, points out, the protagonist's "deeper fear comes from an uncertainty about his position and stability in the cruel, indifferent chaos of the modern city." (Qtd in Tanner44). The acknowledgement of the urban masses is a great leap forward in the protagonist's coming to terms with the city. *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), shows Augie, the protagonist, for the first half of the novel accepting

the city uncritically, but there is a shift in the novel and by the end Augie's disappointment with Chicago is absolute. In *Seize the Day* (1956), Dr. Adler personifies social pressures that are intrinsic in the urban setting while Wilhelm, the protagonist, rejects the materialistic world. In *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), we see the protagonist trying to escape the pressures of society, and going to Africa, where he still "thinks in city metaphors and of city events; the city maintains its pressures, and alive within his other speculations is the city idea of people, nameless, faceless, with whom no communication is possible." (Barboza, 1979)

7- Reading Herzog in the Light of Louis Wirth Theory of Urbanism

It is worth noting, that the influence exerted by Wirth on Bellow cannot be denied. Both the urban sociologist, Louis Wirth and Saul Bellow, see the urban experience more as a loss than as a gain. It is a general rule, that Bellow's protagonists leave the city either actually or mentally. Even if, they happen to stay, they never show any compassion for the city. But the city is not simply a setting in Bellow's novels. It acts simultaneously as a physical, sociological and psychological context, being therefore capable of interfering directly in the life-dramas of its inhabitants. Sharing the same idea, Wirth believes that people, who live within urban centers, have a way of life, which distinguishes them from people who live in a rural area, and that this peculiarity originates from the very recognition of the city as an ecological and social force capable of acting upon the behavior of the individuals who inhabit it. Moreover, it is even capable of changing the social groups, which form it.

Wirth starts his essay with a definition of city. "For sociological purposes", he says, "a city can be defined as a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals." (Wirth, 1938) Besides attempting to approach a definition to the city, one has to consider three main factors: population size, density, and social heterogeneity. The most common way to define a city was by population size, or the total number of people. But Wirth was unsatisfied with this definition alone, arguing that there are more factors, which must be taken into consideration. Wirth argued that in addition to size, another defining feature of the city- density, which refers to the number of people settled in a particular area, will impact how individuals interact with one another and with the city itself. Finally, Wirth believed that social heterogeneity was the third defining quality of a city. Heterogeneity, in this context, refers to the different racial and ethnic groups that make up a place. For him, cities have always been melting pots and destinations for immigrants.

Subsequently, as introduced in his definition, Wirth's theory of the city is based on the three dimensions, which are: (1) size, (2) density and (3) heterogeneity. Louis Wirth sees at least thirteen consequences, which can be said to derive directly from these dimensions, all of which are closely related to Bellow's city as seen through the eyes of his characters. Among the thirteen consequences, emphasis, in this paper, is put on the most prominent ones: namely those which have a direct relation with Bellow's characters; and more precisely the ones related with the study of the protagonist in Bellow's Herzog. These consequences include the following:

1- The more the city grows the less probable it is that the individual knows the other inhabitants personally. And the more a city grows the more difficult it becomes to gather all its population. The direct consequence of this impersonality is the fragmentation, and superficiality of inter-individual relations.

2- The greater the density of population in a given settlement, the greater is the differentiation and specialization. The consequence is a world of much greater complexity than the one provided by the rural settings.

3- Physical contacts are close in a city, whereas most social contacts tend to be superficial. A direct consequence of this fact is the prototypical complaint of urbanites about loneliness in the middle of a crowd.

4- The monetary sense of urbanites also tends to level all goods and services quantitatively. Everything can be bought and any service can be done if there is money to pay for it. Everything is reduced to the simple objective question "How much?"

5- Personal disorganization, crime, corruption and disorder are more likely to occur in the more urban settlements, since the weakening of primary ties and their substitution for formal associations do not satisfy the integrity of the human personality, leading, therefore, to individual instability, social anomie or estrangement and fragmentation.

From the five consequences listed above, one can conclude that the city is heightening three dimensions:

individualism, anonymity and superficiality. With regard to the first dimension, Wirth sees cities as promoting individualism. In other words, people in a city follow their own interests over the interests of a collective. Second, he sees anonymity as a defining feature of cities. Urban residents do not know each other well. For the people that urban residents do know, these relationships are characterized by what Wirth called superficiality. This means that relationships are impersonal. From within the three dimensions, Wirth became famous for the expression 'lost in the crowd'.

The interaction between the individual and the city can be grouped into three categories. The first category is referred to as Para-individual Relations in which the individual interacts with the physical context of the city - buildings, crowds, smells, heat, cold and the like. In the second category, the individual interacts, with the social context i.e., individual with family, friends, associations and institutions, which constitutes Inter-individual Relations. With regard to third category which includes the individual behaviour, his inner conflicts, instability, indecisions and anxieties can be said to be also of urban nature is known as Intra-individual Relations.

The reason for such a choice lies in the fact that when analyzing the novels we inevitably have to analyze what happens to the individual at the level of these three dimensions.

Nevertheless, our preliminary intention is to identify, in the light of sociological theories of urbanism, the effects of Chicago and New York upon the 'Bellowian' characters. In

this sense, Bellow, has many common things with Wirth, for Bellow's city is undoubtedly a 'Wirthian' city.

8- Herzog's Alienation Due to the City's Forces

Admitting the influence of the city in contemporary society, Wirth says that the contemporary world could be called "urban" owing to the influence of the city upon the social life of man. For Bellow, the city is the living moment of man's collective actions. The city seems to fascinate him due to its complexity. Viewed with two faces, the city according to Bellow is the place of compressed human misery, but it is also the place for human involvement. With regard to Wirth, the more densely cities become populated, the more lives are characterized by feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Bellow's fiction is a response to concrete historical circumstances, the ones that are lived today, in which the rational, free individual appears to occupy a deteriorating territory. This position of the individual in contemporary society is crucial in Bellow's work, since he shares the essential humanist "demand for a free development of a many-sided, integrated man, " which is becoming Utopian, as pointed out by Georg Simmel: The individual has become a mere component in an enormous organization of things and powers which tear from his hands all progress, spirituality, and value, in order to transform them from their subjective form into the form of a purely objective life.(Simmel,409) Much of Bellow's work shows his commitment to the problems of modern "selfhood." He sees the problem of the individual in the middle of the masses.

Thus, money and values are consequently two opposing and dominant elements in the structure of most of Bellow's novels, including *Herzog*.⁴ In a society which produces for the market, people become conversant with consumption and so money becomes excessively and unrealistically important affecting inter-individual relations, becoming the main element of relation among people who are used as instruments. Authentic personal relationships are minimized and moral values are replaced by compulsory materialist values. As Georg Simmel says, "money is concerned only with what is common to all: it asks for the exchange value, it reduces all quality and individuality to the questions: How much"? (Simmel, 417). He quotes Bellow's words on the matter, providing a good image of the money-oriented society. "Love, duty, principle, thought, significance, everything is being sucked into a fatty and nerveless state of 'well-being', says Bellow.

Most of the action of the novel reveals the world of the big city, with its conflicts, its indifference, its smashing power, as in this description : "In emancipated New' York , man and woman, gaudily disguised, like two savages belonging to hostile tribes, confront each other. " (*Herzog*, 232).

But the city is also seen in its glamour, as *Herzog* sees New York on his way back from Ramona's: "In spite of the buses which glazed the air with stinking gases, he could smell the fresh odor of the soil,... the buses pouring poison but the

⁴ In order to avoid any confusion, *Herzog* which is written in italics refers to the title of the novel, while the other name refers to the protagonist of the same novel.

flowers surviving , garnet roses, pale lilacs... "(Herzog, 254). All the characters in the novel, which are part of the web in which Herzog is caught, are products of the city, and play their games in an alienatory society.

In the following passage, Bellow talks of Moses Herzog, who suffers on his sofa, while in the background lies "the trembling energy of the city, a sense and flavour of river water, a stripe of beautifying and dramatic filth contributed by New Jersey to the sunset." (Herzog, 264) And most vivid of all, Moses Herzog, Bellow's most achieved dreamer, the least practical of men in an America of enthusiastic, material pursuits. In Herzog, Bellow brought to perfection the art of fictional digression. When the hero goes to visit his lover, the lovely Ramona, he waits on the bed while she goes off to change her clothes. In those moments, Herzog reflects on the way the entire world presses in on him, and Bellow seems to set out a kind of the challenges the novelist must confront, or the reality he must contain or describe. As illustrated below,

Well, for instance, what it means to be a man. In a city. ... In a society that was no community and devalued the person. Owing to the multiplied power of numbers which made the self negligible. Which spent military billions against foreign enemies but would not pay for order at home. Which permitted savagery and barbarism in its own great cities. At the same time, the pressure of human millions who have discovered what concerted efforts and thoughts can do. As megatons of water shape organisms on the ocean floor. As tides polish stones. As winds hollow cliffs. The beautiful

super machinery opening a new life for innumerable mankind.
Would you deny them the right to exist?⁵

Compared to other protagonists in other novels by Bellow, Herzog is more conscious and self-critical than his antecedents. He also confronts almost every issue raised in Bellow's previous fiction. Bellow's own words give us evidence of his development. He said: "In writing Herzog, I felt I was completing a certain development, coming, to the end of a literary sensibility. This sensibility implies a certain attitude towards civilization—anomaly, estrangement, the outsider, the collapse of humanism. What I'm against is a novel of purely literary derivation — accepting the cannon of Joyce and Kafka" (Qtd. in Kim 38). In Herzog, we confess, through the letters and internal monologues, not only a brilliant critique on the values and problems of the American society, but also a rejection of the nihilistic philosophies, in favour of a positive attitude towards modern civilization. Herzog's understanding of the "social meaning of nothingness" is very noteworthy. For him, man's awareness of nothingness, far from being a cause for despair and denial of all value, should give him a sharp realization of the value of social relationships. In this regard, William D. Markos says, "Bellow called for writers to see life directly rather than accept views of life perpetuated by the tradition of a pessimistic literature." (Markos, 12)

2 ⁵ Walker, Marshall. *The Literature of the United States of America*. The Macmillan press, 1983 .p 161.

In The Novel and Social Reality, Michel Zerafa said:" Implicit in the text of the novel are the propositions that man never lives by himself, and above all, that he has a past, a present and a future." (Zerafa, pp.10-11) It implies that there are internal as well as external forces that press the individual to life which he has not chosen for himself.

According to Emile Dürkheim, society confronts us as an objective reality. It is external to ourselves, surrounds us, and encompasses our life on all sides. We are in society, located in specific sectors of the social system, which predetermines and predefines more or less everything we do. We are located in society not only in space but also in time. In the Durkheimian perspective, he sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability, to live in society means to exist under the domination of society's logic. That is to comply with social facts, or societal norms, values, and structures. In other words society dictates for us the way to behave, think and act.

9- Herzog's Resistance to the City's Forces

In the majority of Bellow's novels there is the idea of the characters resistance to the forces imposed by the city. These forms of resistance and resilience can be inferred from his fictional works, namely his masterpiece Herzog, in which Bellow shows a deep desire for the liberation of man from chains, whether imposed by society or by the mind.

Thus, we think it also relevant to expose some sociologists' views of the contemporary city, which is the intellectual, economical and political centre of modern society. It is not then surprising to find an urgent call by

Bellow's protagonists for the preservation of autonomy and individuality. As Georg Simmel puts it in his essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life,"(1903) "the deepest problems of modern life derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, " (Simmel,409)

Howe wrote that Herzog was a novel "driven by an idea"—the idea that modern man can overcome alienation and despair. The imaginative feature of Herzog is a series of letters that the protagonist, in his misery, composes not only to Madeleine and Gersbach but to famous people (like President Eisenhower) and philosophers (like Heidegger and Nietzsche).

Critic Alfred Kazin, wrote early in Bellow's career, "One of the key themes of his fiction,... is the attempt of his protagonists to get a grip on existence, to understand not themselves (they know that this is impossible), but the infinitely elusive universe in which, as human creatures, they find themselves,"(Rourke, 2005) But for all the difficulties, his characters face, much of Bellow's fiction is persistently optimistic. At the end of the novel Herzog enters into "a theandric relationship with the world around him." In The Subject of Bellow's Fiction (2015), Jack Ludwig⁶ wrote, "Bellow is after something greater." The greater something turns out to be "man's contradiction, his absurdity, and his alienation." (Menand, 2015)

⁶ Jack Ludwig (1922-2018), literature professor, Canadian-born American-resident novelist and short story writer.

In his faith of a positive affirmation of life, Bellow places supreme value on the individual, whom he considers capable of self-realization, through unconditional freedom of the spirit; this absolute freedom being 'the state at which Bellow's protagonists arrive after fighting out all the conditions imposed on them, reaching thus a true reconciliation of the self. In the same line of thought, Sewell refers to this as, "through an alienation-reconciliation pattern," which consists of "temporary separation from social conformity as a means towards a private reconciliation with society and their reconciliation with the self." (Sewell, 1976)

Conclusion

This paper attempted to investigate the dialectic between alienation caused by the city's forces and the different channels of resistance.

It was based on proposing to conduct a thorough analysis of Bellow's *Herzog* following the progress of *Herzog*, the protagonist, highlighting his journey to find out truth and meaning to his existence. Its mere focus was based on the supposition that the characters of the novels are caught in complex web which limit their freedom keeping them preys and victims in a hostile world. It is intended to confirm that unlike the naturalists' writers who dehumanize their characters, Bellow rejects the idea that people are determined to exist and live according to what nature and society dictate for them. Rather, he believes in the possibility of overcoming the alienatory forces; and instead of surrendering, his characters are able to go through a process of resistance. Bellow holds a positive view-a view which is optimistic.

Bellow is certainly a writer torn between two cities: Chicago and New York. His experiences and his observations about the two cities contributed a lot to the accomplishment of his novels. Another pleasure is the chance to hear Bellow describe Chicago, where most of his greatest novels were set. The city both trapped him –which is the case for Moses Herzog, who was the prey the city's vicious circle who has been trapped by the life's abundance and at the same time it horrified him; to such an extent that he cannot escape it fear and filthiness.

There is no doubt that following the progress of the protagonist, Moses Herzog, Bellow shows a deep desire for the liberation of man from chains, whether imposed by society or by the mind. Through his protagonist's journey, Bellow shows that there are grounds for comfort, rather than despair over living and that through his efforts which consist of trials, errors and experience, the protagonist is able to find out approaches to life and subsequently displays ways of coming to terms with existence. All the characters in the novel, which are part of the web in which Herzog is caught, are products of the city, and play their games in an alienatory society. His protagonist, Moses Herzog, is seen making positive steps resulting from the acceptance of ups and downs in life towards affirmations and connectedness.

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