

<<夕阳尽处是长安>>

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前言

This book began as a dissertation in the late 1990s when I was doing my Ph. D. in Shanghai International Studies University under the supervision of Professor How Weirui and Professor Yu Jianhua, to whom I would like to express my deepest gratitude for their kind encouragement and academic guidance. It has gone through a long-interrupted revision to make it a concise explanation of Saul Bellow's success as a post-war American novelist with a detailed examination of his literary career as illustrated by his early novels from *Dangling Man* to *Herzog*. With the currently-not-so-honoured humanist critical tradition as the referential framework, the book focuses on the significance of Bellow's consistent thematic concerns and his growth as a conscientious artist characterized by a constant quest for an artistic form appropriate to incorporate his vision of contemporary culture and genuine humanity. I choose Bellow's six early novels for the study because I obstinately believe that they form an integrated unit of Bellow's artistic development which clearly reveals his effort to re-channel the mainstream American literature represented at that time by Ernest Hemingway and his passionate quest for a proper form and style to communicate his vision of life and humanity. Each of these novels is a fascinating account of the protagonist's strenuous campaign to come to terms with himself during a severe emotional or intellectual crisis, and an exploration of Bellow's fictional world constituted by the six novels surely helps us to get acquainted with the writer's belief in the immortal man spirit and his intention to revolutionize our consciousness against a horrible modern world of distractions where, according to Bellow, a positivistic, rationalistic world view and modern technocratic civilization are enthusiastically endorsed while tender human feelings and the wisdom of the heart are contemptuously dismissed. Attentive readers can discern Bellow's acute consciousness of this dichotomy between the head and the heart in his six early novels which lucidly demonstrate his search for its reconciliation as is repeatedly suggested by a vision of union and equilibrium at the ends of all these stories. Bellow, in my mind, is a writer with whom we do not have much difficulty falling in love because, throughout his literary creation, he has been encouraging us to brood over a serious question: "What are we truly?"

"or, to borrow his own summary of the question from his *Herzog*, " [how] to be a man. In a city. In a century of transition. In a mass. Transformed by science. Under organized power. Subject to tremendous control. " It is an intensely intriguing essential question although it resists any definite or conclusive answer, and it is beneficial for us to stop our "egg race" occasionally for a while to think about it and to laugh a bit. As Joe Scotchie said in a memoriam to Bellow, " [w]hat Saul Bellow had to say was of great significance. And his wide-ranging works, mixing comedy, high seriousness, and deep reflection among a colourful and full-blooded cast of character will always be an inspiration to those who read them." Bellow died, but the questing spirit that characterizes his literary creation over such an extensive period of time lives on in his works and will keep on inspiring his readers. This is certainly Bellow's extraordinary gift to all of us.

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内容概要

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作者简介

张钧，1965年生。
东北师范大学外国语学院副院长、副教授。
曾获东北师范大学文学硕士（1989年）和上海外国语大学文学博士（2001年）学位，2003-2004年作为富布莱特研究学者在美国芝加哥大学研修。
长期从事英语专业教学与研究工作，主要研究方向为20世纪英美文学。
2000年以来，主持、参加省部级研究及校级教学改革项目5项，发表论文10余篇。

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章节摘录

Caligula's failure evaporates Thea's obsessed pursuit of nobility , and "the slump from nobility of pursuit harmed everybody" (AM 356) .The house , in spite of its beloved name-Casa Descuitada-Care free House is no longer a place of love and hope for happy-go-lucky Augie."The house was dull while Thea was in her laboratory. Dull isn't perhaps the word when you consider what disappointment and wrath were kept down. And I couldn't stay in bed while Caligula was being neglected , if only for the reason that he'd become dangerous through hunger , let alone the humane side of it" (AM 356) . Benton Harbour is no Eden of milk and honey , nor is the primitive region of Mexico where Augie and Thea hunt for the giant lizards. 6There the heat was thick; it collected stagnant in the rocks , which were soft and eaten by rain acids in to grottos and Cambodian shapes. The lizards were really huge , with great frills or sails-those ancient membranes. The odor here was snaky , and we seemed in the age of snakes among the hot poisons of green and the livid gardenias" (AM 353) . It is more hell-like , and appropriately , Augie rushes into a hunting accident while they attempt to give Caligula another try. The old horse Bizcocho cracks Augie's skull and "had broken a leg and Thea shot him" (AM 362) . As for Caligula , Thea sends him away. The whole project of creating a nobler reality by hunting with a manned animal ends with "the crackup of hopes and ridiculing of expectations" (AM 363) . Gradually becoming bored of staying in the house with Augie , Thea goes hunting alone and Augie starts to go around with some others and "put all my time into gambling." "With Thea " I behaved as though nothing was wrong , and yet I knew we were slipping" (AM 369) . He painfully realizes his problem. Thea is obsessed with her snakes and "I was resentful of the snakes and that she tended them" (AM 369) . Their conflict comes up to the surface. Thea does not like the "gang" Augie lingers with and I'd be damned if I could get myself into Thea's excitement about catching snakes. It was too extreme a way of making out , with that vigor that couldn't be satisfied in ordinary pursuits. If she had to go and snatch these dangerous animals by the throat with a noose , and keep them and milk their venom from them , okay. But I knew at last that definitely there was one thing that was not for me" (AM 370) . Augie does not share Thea's enthusiasm with her animal world. Thea gets her divorce but declines Augie's proposal to get married. "Then I remembered how once when afraid of pregnancy she let escape the fear of explaining to her family that I was the father" (AM 372) . Augie finally gets some idea of the difference that lies between his conception of reality and that of Thea : "Everyone tries to create a world he can live in , and what he can't use he often can't see. But the real world is already created , and if your fabrication doesn't correspond , then even if you feel noble and insist on there being something better than what people call reality , that better something needn't try to exceed what , in its actuality , since we know so little , may be very surprising. If a happy state of things , surprising; if miserable or tragic , nor worse than what we invent" (AM 378) . He becomes aware that all human constructions are fabrications to conceal the truth or at least some aspects of the truth. To "create a world" is to falsify and the invention also extends to love. He has not been able to escape from this weakness , either.

Then the episode of Stella pops out. She asks Augie to drive her out of the town , to help her "out of trouble" while Thea demands Augie go down to Chilpanzin go with her.

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