

HUMOUR AND ITS FUNCTION IN TWO OF SAUL BELLOW'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

To successfully answer the question of the function of humour in any given work is not easy. There is so much of the martyr in Saul Bellow, due perhaps to his Jewish background, that in order to make his reading more palatable for the average reader, he needed to ameliorate his martyr complex with a lot of humour. Bellow's novels seem to be posing the question of how you can be an intellectual and still live in this world. If in *Mr Sammler's Planet* there is not a clear answer, in *Humboldt's Gift* there seems to be: you survive this world with humour and compassion.

RESUMEN

No hay respuesta fácil a la pregunta de cuál es la función del humor en una obra determinada. Hay tanto del mártir en Saul Bellow, debido a su herencia judía, que necesitó suavizar sus novelas con buenas dosis de humor. Sus novelas parecen plantear la cuestión de como puede un intelectual sobrevivir en este mundo. Si en *Mr Sammler's Planet* no hay respuesta en *Humboldt's Gift* parece ser: se sobrevive gracias al humor y la compasión.

In most of Saul Bellow's novels there is an element of humour, which might be divided into three levels for analysis. Physical comedy is the humour in the early theatre, the silent movies and still in the circus. Humour of the second sort, repressive humour, need not be as visual as that of the first level. Sexual, political, or religious jokes, where humour acts as a relief from repression or inhibition (Freud 90-116), belong here. The third level of humour requires a high command of language and its stylistic devices. Its main channel of expression is irony. The audience for this sophisticated humour is cultivated and refined. It is a kind of humour so subtle that uncultivated people do not enjoy it.

Before we continue our discussion we need to make a further distinction about the meaning of the comic and humour in this essay. In *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* Freud considers that humour is one of «the species of the comic» (229). I make a different distinction between the comic and humour. Comic is connected with automatism, rigidity of movements or thoughts. Humour is more intellectual. It involves ideas. A fall is comic. However the person who has fallen can react humorously, by making a joke of it, or, comically, by angrily kicking the banana peel. Bellow's novels reveal a conflict between lower and higher forms of humour. Though it is common for a writer to resort to different levels of humour, what is not so common is the mingling of intellectual with physical, resentful, and even scatological humour in a single work. The diverse levels of humour as described above have dictated the overall organization of the present essay.

While in Saul Bellow's novels the characters do not commonly trip or strike one another in order to create a comic situation, he does sometimes deal in humorous situations that fall into the first level. In *Mr. Sammler's Planet* Shula's apparition while her father and Dr. Lal are philosophizing is dramatic, and the intention behind it is humorous: «Then Shula-Slawa came down the stairs. Lal, who saw her first, had an impression which made Sammler immediately turn» (206). This is situational humour, as the reader can very easily visualize the stupefaction painted on Lal's face that makes Sammler start. The narrator, however,

does not use too many words. The reader has to supply the rest, which is an element of the third level. The comedy of Lal's surprise and Sammler's start is followed by a description of Shula's attire. Her sari is made out of a piece of material found in a drawer, and is not properly worn. Shula has painted her face in white, wears false eyelashes and a Hindu spot made with lipstick on her forehead. A strange vision with more potential for humour in a movie than in a novel. But perhaps the most important element in this scene is its timing. Mr. Sammler's and Dr. Lal's intellectual discussion is interrupted by Shula's ridiculous apparition. Shula's comic entrance has a double function. Structurally, the temporary interruption of intellectual discussion provides rest for the reader. Thematically, it seems to imply that in today's busy world there is no time for philosophies. We have only to remember that after the discussion is renewed, it is again interrupted by the breaking of the pipes and consequent flooding caused by Sammler's nephew, another comic character.

Because they are easy to grasp caricatures also belong to the first level of humour. Saul Bellow is a very interesting example of a caricaturist. *Mr. Sammler's Planet* is not essentially a funny book as we could consider *Humboldt's Gift* to be. The former is more pessimistic. It has, however, its butts of humour, especially in its caricatures. Sammler, a very critical man, finds everybody rather grotesque, with the exception of his protector, Dr. Grunner. Margotte, his niece, has fat legs; Feffer is overweight; Emil has a heavy bottom. In Sammler's eyes, no one seems to be free of a laughable feature. Shula, Sammler's daughter, is probably the most perfect example of a caricature. Even her wig of «mixed yak and baboon hair and synthetic fibers» (34) seems to be a caricature of a normal wig.

In *Humboldt's Gift* we also find very remarkable caricatures. Thaxter is perhaps the best example of these. He has «impressive stature», «warts», «distorted nose and leopard eyes» (252). However, as in the case of Shula, what makes him a real caricature is what he wears: a broad-brimmed hat «bought in a shop for black swingers» (246), a blue velvet suit, a cape and canvas boots. This is visual humour. We cannot imagine Thaxter's presence on the screen without it eliciting some kind of laughter

from the audience. From the examples shown thus far, we conclude that in visual humour there are two directions: one kinetic or slapstick, and the other static, caricature.¹

Scatological humour, though frowned upon by all at some times in history, and at all times by some, is a very rich source of humour. Unlike physical or cruel humour² it does not seem to have been exhausted and is still very much in demand as we can see by the quantity of films, T.V. shows and books that use it as soon as censorship becomes lax. In many of his novels Saul Bellow, looking perhaps to ameliorate the profound thinking in which some of the characters indulge, relies on scatology to achieve humour. In *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, a serious novel for the most part, the springs of humour are mainly scatological. Sammler's philosophical considerations about the uncleanliness of most of his readers are comic (36). Of all of Saul Bellow's characters, Sammler is the one who seems the most obsessed by body odour. Most characters in the novel are defined by their smell.

In *Humboldt's Gift*, there is a lot of bathroom humour, but as it is an essentially funny novel, such humour is only an ingredient added to other humorous resources. Nevertheless, we should analyze this. In the next scene, following George Swivel's advice, Charlie Citrine has not paid his poker debt to Cantabile, who in turn smashes Citrine's Mercedes 280-SL as a warning. Charlie then decides to pay his debt. They meet at the Russian Baths. Cantabile is carrying a menacing gun. However, Cantabile chooses to humiliate his victim with a biological action, as Citrine explains:

... he wanted to humiliate me ... he was aware that I was as they would say in Chicago a *Brain*, a man of culture or intellectual attainments. Was this why I had to listen to his rumbling and sloping, and smell his stink? Perhaps fantasies of savagery and monstrosity, of beating my brains out, had loosened his bowels. (83)

This is a clear example of humour of the senses, not as much visual as connected with other senses. The humour in this passage is twofold. First, we have the unexpected quality of the punishment inflicted by a Chicago gangster who is carrying a menacing Magnum, and secondly, we

have a biological need. Cantabile is expressing his opinion of Citrine's intellectual prestige, but at the same time, by using scatological humour the narrator seems to imply what he thinks of the Chicago gangsters. This scene parallels the punishment inflicted on Sammler by the black pickpocket in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (49). With different styles, both Cantabile and the black pickpocket want to prove they are in charge, as they rely heavily on their *machismo* in the punishment they inflict.

Sexual humour connects with scatological humour but requires a higher level of understanding. Children laugh at obscene jokes because a forbidden word has been mentioned, not because they understand it. I do not believe a child could understand completely the second tale on the seventh day in *The Decameron*. Through the ages sexuality has always been a rich source of humour³ as sexuality can be enjoyed by both performer and spectator. With regard to obscene jokes Freud says: «A person who laughs at smut that he hears is laughing as though he were the spectator of an act of sexual aggression» (97). This visualization makes this kind of humour very close to the first level. However, because it can be expressed not only in coarse language but also so subtly that only a few people might understand it, it has to belong to a higher level. Depending on the subtlety of its expression, sexual humour can be socially acceptable or frowned upon.

In sexual humour there are different topics. In *Humboldt's Gift* there are several passages in which men are so convinced of their male magnetism that they exhibit themselves beyond the limits established by a civilized society. In one of them, after his appointment at Princeton, the half-naked poet Humboldt chases a girl. In another, Citrine, witnesses how, after suffering a heart attack, his lawyer Szathmar exposes himself, as if by accident, every time a nurse enters his room (205). However, in *The Dean's December*, Max Detillion is just pure exhibitionism as he is described in the following paragraph:

... Detillion's own image when he was in was of course quite different. He was anything but a screwer of girls. No, he was the agent or personification of Eros, all aflame, all gold, crimson, radiant, experiencing divine tumescence, bringing life. The power to bless womankind was swelling in his pants. (105-6)

Another character's opinion of Max Detillion's prowess is less flattering and the pairing of the two perceptions yields humour: «Zaehner said his [Detillion's] dick was hanging out» (106).

The last resource of sexual humour we are going to analyze has to do with language. In real life the use of obscene language has any of the following functions: to show who is in command, to make somebody angry or to arouse laughter. Foul language can be used to convey realism to a literary work, but sometimes is used as a comic resource. Since Saul Bellow tries to imitate everyday language in his novels, there is a great deal of swearing and the use of obscene words in his dialogues. As in real life, some of Bellow's characters try, through obscene language, to prove they are tough. Other characters have other motives. Denise, Charlie Citrine's upper-class wife uses foul language about his friends to make him angry. Of George Swiebel she says: «I can't bear to see his ass on my sofa» (41) and calls Citrine's lover «Renata Fat-Tits» (225). Citrine tells us Denise is a judge's daughter who grew up in Highland Park, but the language she uses does not agree with her upbringing. One of the most important qualities of the comic is its lack of anticipation, its unexpectedness, its surprise. If foul language continues making its appearance in books or movies, and if more upper-class ladies resort to it, foul language will no longer be funny. It will lose the element of surprise and the humorous effect derived from a forbidden act. Nevertheless, in *Humboldt's Gift* the humour of Denise's words is not as yet exhausted. In spite of the harsh colours in which she is depicted, Denise proves to be witty and to have a sense of humour, and the reader finds her comments amusing.

A discussion of the comedy of types is the next natural step in the analysis of humour. According to Henri Bergson, «to depict characters, that is to say, general types, is the object of high class comedy» (149). Satirical types are comical. They are different from caricatures as they are more subtle. The satirical type usually involves a pretension. The pretension is what is exhibited, but it is just a cover for the real thing that lies hidden.⁴

Among the types there is one who usually creates humour: the insane. Through the ages the behaviour of the insane has been a source of humour for the sane. As E. C. Riley says in his work on *Don Quijote*:

The degrading treatment of the insane throughout Europe is well known. They were regarded as objects of mirth even by the most humane. But it is hypocritical to go to the other extreme and pretend the deranged behaviour is never funny. The antics of Don Quixote are the prime source of the book's comedy. (49)

In *Humboldt's Gift*, Humboldt, the character who gives the work its name, becomes insane. He becomes more absurd as he goes crazy, but he was also funny before. His craziness is of the jealous type: he is convinced his wife is having an affair with a Rockefeller. Humboldt's jealousy is comic. However, the other characters do not make fun of him. We are in the twentieth century and that could offend the sensitivity of some readers.⁵ Some critics accuse Humboldt of being a schemer as proven by his plan to get a chair in Princeton and to get Citrine to pay for his new car. However he is rather a pathetic or tragic figure: He is a poet in a civilization that does not have room for intellectuals—the theme of the novel. At the end, when he is dead, he is granted honour and money for a bizarre plot he had once written for a movie—an ironic finale.

There are in *Humboldt's Gift* some satirical characters who are typical of the twentieth century American scene. In *Mr. Sammler's Planet* we hear about Dr. Gruner's mafia connections; in *Humboldt's Gift* we see the real gangsters in action. One member of Charlie's racket club is Vito Langobardi, «a most important underworld personality, so high in the organization that he had become rarefied into a gentleman and we discussed only shoes and shirts» (67), and indeed a gentleman who does not dare to go to X-rated movies: «What if the show got raided and they arrested me? How would it look on the papers?» (67).

This transposition of values is comedy. The character Langobardi is new, but the pretension to appear respectable is an element in comedy, similar to Moliere's M. Jourdain's desire to be a *gentilhomme*. Then there are the low class gangsters like Rinaldo Cantabile who is a mocking figure. He is no more than a clown. But, while Langobardi appears only a couple of times and just a few lines are dedicated to him each time, Cantabile is one of the most important characters in the action. Besides being a comic

character, Cantabile also represents a transposition or, perhaps, a transition of values. His wife, Lucy, is a professor at Mundelein College and she is working on her Ph.D. And contrary to what we should expect from a gangster—usually associated with the macho image—, Cantabile is really proud of his wife's achievements and wants her to get her degree, and this will be one of the motives of the action. So, here again we have the world of appearances: a gangster interested in the high-brow prestige of the academic world.

Rinaldo Cantabile is considered comic even by the other characters. His threats are not taken seriously. George Swiebel considers him a punk (63), a drop-out (40) who has «seen the *Godfather*» (39). At the Playboy Club nobody shows much respect for him (93). He gets swindled by Stronson's phony company. A policeman makes fun of Rinaldo and all the Cantabiles (278). His uncle, who joined the police force,⁶ was laughed at and humiliated by two hoodlums (64). At the end, Charlie can get rid of Cantabile without letting him have more than his share (470). Since Cantabile realizes that he does not inspire much fear, he is always making threats and this is what makes him such a comic character. He likes to exhibit his Magnum, but apparently he never shoots it. His most comical threat is the one which he directs against Stronson when he presents Citrine as his hit man (277). And here Cantabile loses again: in spite of having been swindled out of his money, he is sent to jail for an arms violation.

A type somewhat different but with some points in common with all the above is the great spender of somebody else's money. In *Humboldt's Gift*, Saul Bellow has left us such a character. Thaxter is the big spender who lives on the ignorance, faith or benevolence of his best friends. He seems to represent somebody the writer is sore at. Though he is a comic character, he does not have many redeeming features. After each of his appearances, the reader feels sorry for Citrine, the narrator.⁷ Thaxter is a mysterious person, perhaps a CIA agent. Saul Bellow likes to play with twentieth-century institutions and personalities⁸ in order to create humour and convey realism. Thaxter, a very cultivated man and excellent

journalist, cannot hold a job: «What he needed was an ingenious and patient editor to send him on suitable assignments» (252), which reminds us of *The Lazarillo's* squire. For different reasons they both want society to adapt to their needs and recognize and reward their values.

Most comic characters in Bellow's novels do not personify a single vice. They are a mixture of several drives. However, there are some who approach the traditional concept of type and who had appeared in previous novels. The spiteful, vengeful wife appears in almost every one of Bellow's novels. She is Margaret in *Seize the Day*, Madeleine in *Herzog*, Denise in *Humboldt's Gift*. They seem to be interested not only in draining their ex-husbands of all their money, but also of their vital fluids.⁹ This is not comic. Yet, the situation of the abused husband and the abusive wife has always been a comic element in folklore. Moreover, Denise's sharp tongue displays her sense of humour as seen in previous examples.

Another type Bellow likes to repeat is the oversexed, plump young woman. She is Ramona in *Herzog*, Angela in *Mr. Sammler* and Renata in *Humboldt's*. Physically the three are the same. Sexually, Renata does not need to change partners the way Angela does, but both are rather grotesque. However, Angela is capable of feeling love for her father, while Renata leaves her only son, an eight-year-old, in a foreign country, in the care of the man she has just jilted, while she goes off on her honeymoon. In the way they dress, they resemble one another (*Humboldt's* 203, *Sammler's* 300). Renata and Ramona have even more in common. They seem to be one and the same character. Even their cosmopolitan background is similar: Ramona is Argentinian (25), while Renata's mother, the Señora, pretends to be Spanish. They are supposedly the weaker sex but in their relations with their male counterparts—Saul Bellow's spokesmen—they prove to be stronger. And they add themselves to the long list of female types who people that old and popular literature against women.

Humour of the third level, intelligent humour, is the most difficult to explain because it lacks physical elements and because it is so subtle that it

is not always readily comprehensible and often goes beyond at least part of the audience. Humour of the third level is the kind of humour directed at man's highest faculties. It is a kind of elitist humour, and irony is perhaps its most important element. As Roy Paul Nelson says:

When you use irony your words mean one thing to the uninitiated, something quite different to the person in the know. You create an intimacy between you and your more intelligent readers. (Condensed in Helitzer 66)

In its highest form this kind of humour is not directed to provoke laughter, but is received instead with a smile. In this kind of humour there is little or no room for comical elements.

Saul Bellow is perhaps one of the wittiest contemporary writers. He is very knowledgeable and, at times, more than witty, his characters seem to be scholars teaching a lesson. We have some of that in Oscar Wilde's narrative too. Bellow's characters seem to boast about their extensive reading. Nevertheless, in the long monologue, in which Sammler exposes his thinking to Dr. Lal, there are examples which mingle sophisticated with physical humour.

The Self may think it wears a gay new ornament, delightfully painted, but from outside we see that it is a millstone. Or Again, this personality of which the owner is so proud is from the Woolworth store, chip tin or plastic from the five-and-dime of souls. (234)

Sammler is discussing an elevated subject, however the comparisons he uses belong to the twentieth century everyday America. I think this is an example of the third level of humour; in spite of the visual element of Sammler's symbolism, its highbrow subject makes it this type of humour. With their small intuitions and comments Bellow's characters have created certain phrases worth mentioning. With the exception of Sammler, in general, it is not the narrator who is the creator of these phrases, but a minor character. Thus, in *The Dean's December* it is not the Dean but his brother-in-law, Zaehner, who makes the following comment about the tenure system of universities: «a professor with tenure is like a woman on welfare with ten illegitimate kids. They are both set for life,

never again have to work» (274)¹⁰ Or George Swiebel's joke about the Germans and Citrine's Mercedes 280-SL in *Humboldt's Gift*: «Murder Jews and make machines, that's what those Germans really know how to do» (35). I believe that this joke belongs to the third level because it is intelligent and it is made by a Jew (the author, the narrator, and the joker are Jews). Had it been made by a Gentile it would be too cruel to qualify for the third level. This joke, however, is not as innocent as it appears. It has a racial undertone, and its motive is the Jewish resentment against Germans.

One way to achieve humour of the third level is through the intrusions of the narrator. The narrator is the best source of irony, and irony, though not restricted to the third level, is one of the most important ingredients of it. The humour of the narrator usually belongs to the third level, because his is usually the kind of subtle humour that requires a certain intellectual maturity on the part of the reader in order to be enjoyed. And because of the love the narrator usually feels towards his characters it is very easy to sense his feelings of compassion behind the ridiculous misfortunes of his hero. Nonetheless, keeping humour on the third level throughout a whole novel, is not common.

Humboldt's Gift is a funny novel because of his narrator. Charlie Citrine is a comic character with a sense of humour exemplified in his vision of the world in which he is immersed. He is comic because he likes to personify the martyr, and the abused husband. Citrine perceives himself to be a money making machine surrounded by cannibals who want to drain him of his money: his ex-wife Denise, her and his lawyers, the judge, his friend Thaxter with his brilliant projects, Humboldt with the blank check, Renata, the Senora, Cantabile. Charlie's naivete extends to other areas and this makes his image more comic. By following his friend Swiebel's advice, he gets his Mercedes totally wrecked. He is mistaken for Cantabile's hit man and fingerprinted by the police. In Madrid, instead of meeting Renata as agreed, he is left with her child, while she marries his rival, Flonzaley, in Rome. Fate has taken everything—love, money,

inspiration—from Charlie, but at the end fate brings him a legacy and Charlie can start anew. In spite of all his adversities, Charlie never loses heart and notwithstanding his naivete and his martyr complex, when it becomes necessary, Charlie shows he is in charge. Unlike Tommy Wilhem in *Seize the Day*, who expects his rich father or the Stock Market to solve his problems, and when everything fails, the only thing he can do is cry.

Charlie has a sense of humour, but he does not make many jokes; rather he quotes those of his friends, especially George Swiebel. In *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, Sammler also has a sense of humour. He jokes about Angela's miniskirt (300), but he lacks Charlie's warmth. He is too cold; he has come from the dead. He is fond of and very thankful to his nephew, Dr. Gruner, but he is deficient in family feelings. Charlie is more like Gruner. He has strong family feelings, and is capable of embarrassing his brother, Ulick (380). Sammler is aloof at times: he closes the car partition because he does not want to talk to Emil, whereas Citrine, a Pulitzer Prize winner does not mind being called Charlie by Cantabile and anyone else. The different personalities of the narrators (though *Mr. Sammler's Planet* is written in the third person the narrative is seen through Sammler's eyes) makes a difference in the mood of these two novels. One example of Charlie's sympathy is his description of Renata's mother:

I couldn't argue with the Senora. I had seen her one morning before she was made up, hurrying toward the bathroom, completely featureless, a limp and yellow banana skin, without brows or lashes and virtually without lips. The sorrow of this sight took me by the heart, I never again wanted to win a point from the Senora. (320)

Because of its affectionate tone, this example is humour of a higher sort, in spite of the fact that the narrator has used humour of the first level—caricature—in the description of the lady. Had the narrator omitted altogether the physical description of the Senora and left it to the reader's imagination, it would have been a perfect example of humour of the third level.

Saul Bellow's novels are in some measure satirical. In them Bellow satirizes the United States as representative of twentieth century civilization.

Besides satirizing the types that abound in this our civilization, he satirizes certain institutions such as the university and its tenure system (*Humboldt's* 120), the theatre and its adaptation of play to actor (*Humboldt's* 152), and the greediness of lawyers and psychiatrists. Freud believes that hostile jokes are a form of defense (97). Most of Bellow's humour seems disguised resentment, while his sexual and scatological humour would act as a relief from the oppression of the norms of civilization. Bellow sounds angry with the university, the theatre, lawyers and psychiatrists. At Princeton, Charlie feels he has been snubbed by one of the regular faculty members (123), however, very significantly, it is not Bellow's speaker who is interested in a profession he qualifies as «ass-kissing» (128); the one who is looking for a permanent position is Humboldt. It is in *The Dean's December* where we find Bellow's harshest criticism of academic life with his comment about «a professor with tenure» (274), mentioned above.

If there is resentment in Bellow's comments about university policies, he shows even more bitterness towards one or all of his ex-wives. There is a painting from Picasso's Cubist period, which is a portrait of Olga, his second wife, the aristocratic daughter of some Eastern European general. She is drawn with her mouth full open. As you look at the painting you can hear her yelling. Bellow makes the same gift to his ex-wife that Picasso made to his. However, the satire in *Humboldt's Gift* seems directed at a society that lets the genuine artist succumb, but glorifies the bizarre creation. A genuine creator who tried hard, Humboldt could never attain a stable position in society. However, the bizarre script he and Citrine wrote for fun is an economic success. And as the novel ends, it is easy to anticipate that Humboldt's last script, conceived by an insane mind, is going to be another economic success.

We have found that our conception of three levels of humour can be applied to Saul Bellow's novels. However, in literature, especially in the narrative, the only sensual material is the characters on the page. Contrary to what happens in a film or even in the theatre, we realize that any reader has to go through a process of deciphering and turning into meaningful units any written scene, even the most visual or scatological. For this reason,

a humorous writer must choose his words very carefully and use only the necessary ones because of the importance of timing and speed in humour. Consequently, a humorous narration of the first level can be at times as difficult for the writer to successfully accomplish as one of the third level.

Bellow's novels reveal a conflict between lower and higher forms of humour and this mixing involves many risks. The comedy based on personal resentments threatens to undercut or degrade the comedy of some higher sort, directed at the painful position that all of us are in a half-crazy world. The ultimate effect is this, both the physical comedy and the intelligent jokes help to create a full and believable sensibility, capable of being sublime and petty and noble and resentful, and therefore make the best and funniest moments in the novel humanly plausible.

To successfully answer the question of the function of humour in any given work is not easy. Humorists seem to be making fun of something while at the same time embracing those ideals. In order to be a successful writer Bellow needed to make use of humour. There is so much of the martyr in Saul Bellow, due perhaps to his Jewish background, that in order to make his reading more palatable for the average reader, he needed to ameliorate his martyr complex with a lot of humour. We have also the fact that Bellow relies heavily on very intellectual discussions, however as a concession to the reader he likes to abruptly interrupt these philosophical considerations with comic situations of the lowest level. Bellow's novels seem to be posing the question of how you can be an intellectual and still live in this world. If in *Mr Sammler's Planet* there is not a clear answer, in *Humboldt's Gift* there seems to be: you survive this world with humour and compassion.

NOTES

- 1 Kinetic humour is probably older. It is difficult to imagine cave men worrying about aesthetics. However, physical deformities involving weaknesses were probably laughed upon and punished in very early ages.

- 2 Nowadays the use of cruel humour is considered to be in bad taste.
- 3 According to Melvin Helitzer, «Close to 50% of all humour is based upon sexual activity» because «all of us ... are more concerned with sexual adequacy than any other single subject» (25).
- 4 Not all comical types are necessarily satirical. There are some which, due to the love with which they are depicted, reach the third level of humour. Dickens is probably the author who relies more heavily on those lovable types. Mr. Micawber or Miss Betsey are good examples of it. For the most part, Bellow's types do not fall into that category.
- 5 In his essay on humour Pío Baroja says: «... un Cervantes actual no haría que a su Don Quijote le golpearan tanto. Desde la época en que se escribieron estos libros a acá, nuestra sensibilidad se ha afinado» (*Caverna* 94).
- ..6 In *Humboldt's Gift* Saul Bellow seems to be equating the legitimate and the illegitimate organizations. A policeman can also belong to a family of gangsters.
- 7 The Spanish writer Pío Baroja also likes to present himself as a martyr who has been economically taken advantage of by other writers.
- 8 In *Humboldt's Gift* Senator Javits and Bobby Kennedy are mentioned and in *The Dean's December* the Notre Dame Irish.
- 9 In *Herzog*, Herzog says that women «eat green salad and drink human blood».
- 10 It is difficult to know if Saul Bellow has hard feelings about the University tenure system or if he is just making an innocent joke.

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