

Madeleine as the Master of Her Own Fate —A Feminist Reading of Madeleine in *Herzog*

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ABSTRACT

Saul Bellow has been criticized for his portrayal of female characters from the perspective of the male angle. This essay is intended to make a detailed analysis of the major female character Madeleine in *Herzog* from the perspective of liberal feminism and to reveal Bellow's feminist ideas in his characterization of such a female character, in an attempt to refute the comment that Bellow's women characters are all silenced and portrayed from the perspective of the male angle. In the novel, Madeleine is shaped into the master of her own fate, who rejects the identity imposed on her as a conventional housewife, and who rebels against the conventional definitions of women as subordinate, obedient and weak. She courageously pursues knowledge and seeks her professional identity outside home. She values mutual respect, mutual support and understanding, true love and the pursuit of her own happiness.

Keywords: *Saul Bellow, Herzog, Madeleine, Betty Friedan, liberal feminism*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Saul Bellow and *Herzog*

Saul Bellow's masterpiece *Herzog* depicts the inner suffering of the title hero, Moses E. Herzog, who is originally a historian with a promising future, but now is experiencing a spiritual as well as emotional crisis: his wife Madeleine demands a divorce from him and runs away with his friend Gersbach. This notable novel has received much critical attention and has been discussed from such perspectives as characterization and theme. As far as characterization is concerned, there is a general consensus about the female characters created by Saul Bellow: they are mostly written from the perspective of the male angle. Leslie A. Fiedler points out that Bellow's works are "lacking in real or vivid female characters", because women are usually "introduced" and they appear as "nympholeptic fantasies"^[1]. He says, "Madeleine, the wife, seems a nightmare projection bred by baffled malice rather than a realized woman; and Herzog's passionate involvement with her remains, therefore, unconvincing"^[1]. The Chinese scholar Liu Wensong shares similar views with Fiedler on Bellow's female characters, arguing that women's "physical characteristics are highlighted as objects of the male gaze" and "women's voices are

silenced or absent" in Bellow's texts^[2].

In my opinion, it might be inappropriate to conclude that women characters are all silenced and written from the perspective of the male angle in Bellow's texts. My thesis is intended to make a detailed analysis of the major female character in *Herzog*, Madeleine, to illustrate Bellow's feminist ideas as they are reflected in his characterization of such a female character. I hope that my research will offer an inspiring feminist reading of Saul Bellow's female characters and provide a new angle from which we can examine his female characters. This research can help the reader better understand Bellow's female characters and his feminist ideas.

1.2. Betty Friedan's *Theory of Liberal Feminism*

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan articulates a pervasive sense of discontent with the phenomenon that women are defined solely in terms of their relation to men as wives, sex objects, mothers and homemakers, rather than as independent subjects. She argues that the feminine mystique has successfully entrapped lots of women within the private sphere and has excluded them from the public world. She penetratingly points out that a woman is handicapped by her sex^[3]. To get rid of the troublesome feminine mystique, Friedan strongly suggests that women with spirit and intelligence should

not and must not conform to the identity of housewife, because “[a] woman cannot find her identity through others—her husband, her children. She cannot find it in the dull routine of housework”^[3]. In the novel *Herzog*, the leading female character Madeleine, is a woman with spirit and intelligence who refuses to be a brainless beauty in a fairy tale; instead, she tries to live her life as a real and independent human being. She is not handicapped by sex, desires power and also exerts it over men. She revolts against the identity imposed on her as a conventional housewife and pursues her individual development and happiness bravely. Madeleine resembles Thea Fenchel in *The Adventures of Augie March* and Margaret in *Seize the Day*. But compared with these two other female characters, she is more carefully described and she stands as the archetype of domineering women who strive to be the master of their own fate^[4].

2. MADELEINE’S REJECTION OF THE IDENTITY IMPOSED ON HER AS A CONVENTIONAL HOUSEWIFE

Maternity, the natural biological role of women, is traditionally regarded as the major and the only social role of women, and it stereotypically determines that a woman’s place is in the home. However, unlike traditional image of image, Madeleine despises her husband’s supremacy in the family and revolts vehemently against the conventional image of women—“angels in the house”.

2.1. Madeleine’s Rebellion against the Conventional Definition of Women as Subordinate to Men

In patriarchal society, men are in a position of domination while women in a position of subordination. Very often the husband dominates the family while the wife has to subordinate her interests to those of her children and her husband. However, liberal feminists point out that it is unfair for women to subordinate their wishes to the general good of the family and to be confined to narrow roles of housewives. Friedan insists that “women, no less than men, should be free to develop and express their talents within the framework of marriage,” and “the self-realization for the wife [is] no more threatening to the family than [is] self-realization for the husband”^[3]. In *Herzog*, Madeleine is shaped into a woman who is self-conscious of women’s equality with men, and who rebels against the conventional definition of women as subordinate to men.

Firstly, Madeleine refuses to be regarded as a subordinate. She shouts at Herzog, and expresses her unwillingness to be treated as the saved while Herzog is the savior. He helped her once. After then, he thinks of

her as his pitiful little girl who needs his help all the time. In Herzog’s eyes, Madeleine is so weak that only her husband can help her. His idea of men’s supremacy is demonstrated fully. In their relationship, Madeleine is more like a pet or a slave to Herzog than an equal individual. Nevertheless, Madeleine refuses to be treated as a subordinate who needs to be helped and protected by her husband all the time; what she wants is to be treated as men’s equal, and to be an independent and integrated human being. She does not think of herself as inferior to her husband, and she positions herself as his equal. Therefore, Madeleine decides to take her initiative to choose her own way of life. She refuses determinedly and firmly to be considered the saved while her husband the savior. Once in their quarrel, Madeleine articulates her dissatisfaction with and anger at being patronizingly treated by Herzog:

So now we’re going to hear how you SAVED me. Let’s hear it again. What a frightening puppy I was. How I wasn’t strong enough to face life. But you gave me LOVE, from your big heart, and rescued me from the priests. Yes, cured me of menstrual cramps by servicing me so good. You SAVED me. You SACRIFICED your freedom. I took you away from Daisy and your son, and your Japanese screw. Your important time and money and attention.^[5]

Madeleine wants to be treated as men’s equal rather than a pet or a doll, so she is irritated by Herzog’s constant remarks about himself as Madeleine’s savior and rescuer. What she says expresses her resentment against her husband’s male Chauvinism.

The second evidence of Madeleine’s consciousness of the equality and her rebellion against the subordinate position is her complaint about Herzog’s attitude toward their spousal sex life. In his eyes, feminine eroticism is regularized in order to cater for men’s needs. What’s more, he thinks that since Madeleine has got so much help from him, she should and must be grateful to him and satisfy his needs. It seems to Herzog that his own desires and needs are above everything. Therefore, he does not have to respect Madeleine’s own rights or her feelings, and ruthlessly demands her to make love with him on the floor. Nevertheless, Madeleine, a new woman who strives to be the master of her own fate, holds a different attitude toward spousal sex life. She positions herself as Herzog’s equal instead of his doll or his slave. And she firmly believes that her husband should show respect for her rights as a woman and his wife. She complains to aunt Zelda that Herzog has her make love with him on the floor, in spite of the fact that she does not want to do so. The complaint shows her resentment against Herzog’s regularizing her eroticism to cater for his needs. As Friedan suggests, a woman, no

less than a man, has a “basic need to grow and fulfill unfeminine in a traditional sense, [permitting] women to fully experience sexual fulfillment and the peak experience of human love”^[3].

Another example of Madeleine’s rebellion against the traditional concept of women as subordinate to men is her despise of Herzog’s supremacy in the family as a man and husband. At the beginning of the 20th century, the conventional women deferred their husbands as the unquestioned head of the family. However, in *Herzog*, Bellow portrays Madeleine as a woman who refuses to acknowledge her husband’s supremacy in the family, and has her say in the important matters of the family. It is Madeleine, rather than Herzog, that decides to buy the house in the country and to move out when she wants to. She dares to break through the barriers to pursue a new and happy life and demands a divorce. She dares to accuse her male chauvinist husband Herzog of disrespecting her rights as a person, always criticizing her and forcing her back into housework. What’s more, she dares to challenge the traditional division of work within the family and tries to get out of men’s spiritual control. Madeleine refuses to “stoop, to compromise, to conform to the sterile stereotype of wife and motherhood as all and only, or to bow in elaborate deference to male authority and opinion on any and all questions”^[6].

2.2. Madeleine’s Revolt against the Conventional Concept of Women as Docile and Silenced

In the novel *Herzog*, Bellow depicts Madeleine as an independent individual with her own thoughts and personality, and as a woman who knows very well how to take the right of speech to defend herself when she is treated unjustly. This goes against the conventional concept of women as docile and silenced.

Madeleine refuses to become what is called a ridiculous “Ph.T.” (Putting Husband Through)^[3], and tries to live as a subject with intelligence, instead of an object of her husband’s desire. She knows what she wants and dares to seek it. She makes acquaintance with her husband’s friends in order to have intellectual communication with them. This is what she wants but what she fails to get from her husband. She reads a lot in order to enlarge her horizon; she continues her study and tries to get a doctoral degree. She is not a docile and obedient wife. She shows her intolerance of her husband’s violence and domination. She always gets her own way and refuses to listen to her husband. Even when she is pregnant, she rides a motor, regardless of Herzog’s warning that it’s unsafe for a pregnant woman to drive. When Herzog says that she must at least get a driver’s license, she replies mischievously, “If a state trooper [stops] her, she could sweet-talk him”^[5]. Madeleine knows how to make use of her charming

appearance to her advantage through manipulating men’s pity and tenderness. She resists the forces in society which say that women should behave appropriately, stay at home, drown in love and have low professional expectations.

Unlike Daisy, a traditional housewife who remains silenced, Madeleine knows very well how to reason with her husband and to defend herself when she is wronged. When her husband reproaches her for her extravagant spending in furnishing the house and the disorder of the surroundings, she argues with him in defense of herself and criticizes his frugality in return. She defends herself and argues that it is in the twelfth century so their old home needs to be decorated and the old oilcloth on the kitchen table needs to be replaced, which require a lot of money. In return, she complains that Herzog is so frugal that he does not want to make any change to the house and the family stuff, though they are old and worn-out. Herzog wrongly takes the necessary furnishing as a waste of money. When Herzog accuses her of sloppy housekeeping, she defends herself by saying, “This crappy old house...needs four servants, and you want me to do all the work”^[5]. Madeleine does not behave like a docile and silenced wife. Instead, she has her say in the family’s decision-making. When her husband criticizes or blames her, she is able to defend herself verbally.

2.3. Madeleine’s Revolt against the Conventional Concept of Women as Weak and Dependent

Madeleine also refuses to behave like a weak and helpless housewife. As a strong-minded woman, she knows how to protect herself when in danger. After her divorce from Herzog, she thinks that “[Herzog’s] behavior [is] so strange and...so menacing, that she [warns] him through Gersbach not to come near the house on Harper Avenue”^[5]. She is afraid that Herzog will do harm to her and her new family, so she resorts to judiciary agencies. She warns Herzog that “[the] police [has] a picture of him and would arrest him if he was seen in the block”^[5]. She “[threatens] him with arrest if he...[dares to show] his face near the house”^[5]. She tells the sergeant that she wants to “be protected from any sort of violence” one time when she is in the police station with Herzog^[5].

Madeleine, unlike Daisy and Sono, refuses to be a dependent woman who revolves around men. She always makes decisions for and by herself. As a woman, Madeleine decides to be a scholar just like her husband and courageously pursues her academic study. To search for the aim and the meaning of life, she decides to convert to Catholicism. She is pious in religious belief. After a night of love-making, in the morning she would have liked Herzog to disappear, partly because being with him together without getting married gives her a

sense of guilt as a Catholic and partly because she does not want to be late for her service in the Church. Herzog is uncomfortable with Madeleine's such behavior because he is used to being a "favorite". His mistress Sono, who is always tender and considerate to him, revolves around him and "rates him higher than kings and presidents"^[5], and his first wife Daisy also depends on him and does all the housework and childcare to support him in his research. But now, Madeleine, who "wants him there at night", actually asks him to disappear in the morning. She refuses to revolve around him and behaves just like an independent individual who places one's own feeling and thoughts first and others' second. In the end, Herzog has to admit that "he [is] dealing with a new female generation"^[5]. Besides, Madeleine also makes her decision to divorce Herzog when she is intolerant of Herzog's male Chauvinism, which further confirms her independent personality.

It is evident that in the novel, Madeleine is molded into a woman who courageously rejects the conventional image of the housewife that is imposed on her. She dares to rebel against the conventional definition of women as subordinate, docile and silenced, weak and dependent. By characterizing such an independent and rebellious female character, Bellow clearly conveys his feminist idea: women are men's equal; they should and could revolt against the conventional image of them—"angels in the house".

3. MADELEINE'S PURSUIT OF ACADEMIC STUDY

To refute the conventional housewife image, Friedan insightfully points out that a woman should not and does not need to just do those household chores like cleaning, washing and cooking, and she should also have her own career outside home. If she sticks only to her role as a wife and mother, she can not give full play to her intellectual capacity. "With the vision to make a new life plan of her own, she can fulfill a commitment to profession and politics, and to marriage and motherhood with equal seriousness."^[3] Friedan proposes that a woman should also find her professional identity when she fulfills her commitment to her marriage and motherhood.

Dissatisfied with her life as a housewife, Madeleine tries to build up her own identity as a scholar by pursuing her academic study. Considering herself "too young, too intelligent, too vital, too sociable to be buried in the remote Berkshires, she [decides] to finish her graduate studies in Slavonic languages"^[5]. She is described as "[owning] her survival to intelligence"^[5]. Madeleine is so avid for scholarly chat that the moment it comes to academic exchanges, her blue eyes become warm and brilliant and the blood glows in her face.

One of the reasons why Madeleine marries Herzog is

that she admires his intelligence and extraordinary talents^[7]. Originally, she wishes that she could share her ambitions and purposes in life with Herzog, and that he could give her some useful directions in her process of pursuing knowledge. However, quite different from her expectation, Herzog immerses himself totally in his work, showing no concern for her study. He does not have any idea of what sort of doctoral degree Madeleine is pursuing, let alone giving her any academic assistance. She wants her husband to guide her and emotionally support her in her pursuit of scholarship. But for Herzog, what he wants is a devoted, tender and caring wife who takes the family as the most important thing in her life and who is pleased to hear his constant preaching of his glorious past to satisfy his sense of achievement and his pride^[8]. At last, Madeleine realizes with bitterness that Herzog would never be willing to become her helpmate in scholarship; what he wants is nothing but to push her back to her housework. So she has to depend on herself if she wants to achieve something in the academic field.

With this realization, Madeleine begins to devote herself wholeheartedly to her study. To enrich her mind, she makes acquaintance with some of her husband's scholarly friends and takes full use of every opportunity to hold intellectual communication with them. When she has the opportunity to exchange her thoughts on culture with learned Shapiro, she is very excited. "Madeleine [is] greatly stirred ...[and finds] each other exceedingly stimulating"^[5]. Her voice grows reedy; her throat sounds positively like a clarinet; she is bursting with ideas and feelings. All of these show that she is greatly stimulated by the thought-provoking conversation. What's more, she is so captured by the rich knowledge of Shapiro that "culture—ideas—[has even] taken the place of the Church in Mady's heart (a strange organ that must be!)"^[5]. When it comes to talk about the younger Soloviev, of whom Madeleine has made a study, she seizes the chance to present her talents and gives a brief lecture on the younger Soloviev's career and thoughts confidently and freely. When Shapiro praises her intelligence, she is flattered and happy. She shows it off to Herzog, with an intention of reminding him that how high a value other people have set upon her, and at the same time she criticizes him for showing no respect for her intelligence and knowledge.

In Madeleine's eyes, her husband is "disrespectful of her rights as a person" and always "criticizing her mind and forcing her back into housework"^[5]. Herzog's male chauvinism blinds him to his wife's lack of the sense of fulfillment and her need for and her right to the pursuit of knowledge^[9]. He is unable to realize that in modern society what a career woman needs is her husband's support, and he does not know that a career woman has to fight against the existing patriarchal norms and figure out her own value in the world by seeking her own professional identity. Herzog's indifference and hostility to her pursuit of knowledge agonize and distress

Madeleine, who knows clearly that she has to continue her study without Herzog's understanding and emotional support.

Just as an old saying goes, knowledge is power, Bellow is aware that women's subordinate position can be largely attributed to the fairly systematic ignorance patriarchy imposed upon them^[6]. In Friedan's words, "Education, and only education, has saved, and can continue to save, American women from the greater dangers of the feminine mystique"^[3]. When Bellow shapes Madeleine into an extraordinary character who seeks her academic identity courageously, he seems to present the idea that women should go out of their houses, pursue their education and search for their identities outside home, because only when they have received education and started their career can they bring their intelligence and energy into play. Women, just as Friedan argues, can not ignore the fact that they would not find real fulfillment unless they pursue their goals in the participation of social paid careers, not at home, not in part-time jobs or in voluntary work^[3].

4. MADELEINE'S PURSUIT OF HER OWN HAPPINESS

Madeleine, as the master of her own fate, also courageously pursues her own happiness. She asks her husband to respect her as his wife; after failing to win the due respect that she desires, she asks for a divorce bravely. After she divorces him, she is ready to pursue her own happiness as an independent individual. Later she chooses to live with Gersbach and enjoys their relationship because with him, she finds mutual understanding and happiness. Her pursuit of her own happiness is reflected in her effort to handle her relationship with two men, Herzog and Gersbach.

4.1 Her Relationship with Herzog

When Madeleine falls in love with Herzog, she is serious about their relationship. She does not want to be his mistress. In her eagerness to pursue her happiness, she does not intend to have a lifelong affair with him. Instead, she makes it clear to him: "I want to be married" and "don't expect me to go along in the ordinary loose way"^[5]. She thinks that she will be happy if she is his wife rather than his mistress. Considering herself as men's equal, Madeleine dares to challenge the convention that a man should propose marriage to a girl, and not the other way round. She asks Herzog to marry her. "What makes you think I intend to have a lifelong affair with you? I want some action"^[5]. She contrasts sharply with those conventional voiceless women, like Herzog's mistresses Sono and Ramona, who also want to marry him or keep a stable relationship with him, but who never dare to ask him to divorce his wife Daisy. What's more, though both of them are well aware that

Herzog is having a love affair with other women, they forgive him and accept this fact. Yet, Madeleine is quite a different type of woman. She is "strong-minded" and "terrifically attractive". She makes her own decisions and takes her fate in her own hands. She thinks that she has the right to speak for herself and bravely asks Herzog to divorce Daisy, or their affair will end in "nothing"^[5]. She has her own desires and needs, and she refuses to become an object of men's desire. She loves Herzog but she refuses to cater for his needs. Madeleine wants to be the subject of desire, not just to fulfill the desire of others but also to fulfill her own^[10].

Besides, she asks Herzog to respect her faith as an independent individual and as his equal. "She said no relationship between them was possible if he didn't respect her faith"^[5]. She is an independent woman with her own idea about love. In her eyes, love is based on mutual respect. However, Herzog, as a man with patriarchal ideas, doesn't respect her or treat her as his equal after marriage. Madeleine is interested in scholarly chat and wishes to take her doctoral examination, but in Herzog's eyes, Madeleine should concentrate herself on taking care of the family, so he tries to deprive her of her right to pursue academic study. He does not understand her desire for knowledge and her pursuit of a professional career, let alone supporting her. As a harsh husband "neurotic and with an intolerable temper", he never feels sympathy with his wife; instead, what he does, in Madeleine's words, is "forcing her back into housework"^[5]. After failing to save their marriage, Madeleine realizes with bitterness that since Herzog does not respect her as his equal, she will never be happy again if their marriage continues.

Refusing to be confined to the narrow role of the housewife and eager to pursue her own happiness, Madeleine takes the initiative and makes a rational decision to demand a divorce from her male chauvinist husband. She bravely informs Herzog that they "can't live together any more" though it's a great humiliation to her to admit defeat in this marriage because she has put all into it and she is crushed by this^[5].

Friedan suggests that before, it was only the man who had the economic and social independence to get a divorce^[3]. Women were deprived of the right to ask for a divorce, no matter how bad a marriage they were trapped in. However, Madeleine, as a new independent woman, dares to say "no" to her husband, struggles to achieve her goal in life and endeavors to find her true love. Moreover, Madeleine is also ready to take some of the blame for the divorce. She says that "she [is] prepared to shoulder some of the blame"^[5]. Later when she looks back on the marriage, she realizes that "for the first time in her life she [knows] clearly what she [is] doing"^[5]. We can see that Bellow portrays Madeleine as an independent, mature and responsible woman who skillfully handles her relationship with her husband

Herzog, and who dares to seek her own happiness.

4.2 Her relationship with Gersbach

After she divorces Herzog, Madeleine finds her true love—Gersbach, who wins her love because he treats her as his equal and respects her. Their relationship is based on mutual understanding and love. It is the harmonious relationship that a new woman should look for.

The relationship between Gersbach and Madeleine is based on mutual understanding because they have known each other for a long time and they understand each other's desires and needs. Gersbach understands what Madeleine has endured and what she wants now because he has his own trying experiences of rising from terrible defeat, so that he can feel others' pain and torture intently. He knows that it is Herzog's "nagging" and "lousy details" that cause Madeleine to rebel. Herzog thinks that he has sacrificed a lot to satisfy Madeleine's needs, which shows his love for her. Yet, he does not really understand what Madeleine wants. Sometimes he does what Madeleine asks him to do, but he does not figure out why Madeleine asks him to do it and what she really asks for. Ironically, it's Gersbach, rather than her husband, that knows what Madeleine really loves and hates.

Gersbach understands Madeleine's feeling of emptiness, which is a result of her being trapped in the boring and suffocating housework, and her persistent and painstaking effort to search for her professional identity^[11]. Herzog complains about Madeleine's sloppy housekeeping, saying, "The house is all trash and garbage and Russian books and the kid's unwashed clothes"^[5]. But Gersbach has different opinions of this. He says, "She wants you [Herzog] to admit her importance. You [Herzog] are a ferimter mensch"^[5]. In Gersbach's opinion, Madeleine always struggles to obtain recognition from the one she marries^[12]. Meanwhile, Madeleine also understands Gersbach's feelings and appreciates his talent. His poems, ridiculous and comical to Herzog, are so moving to Madeleine that they could move her into tears.

Their relationship is also built upon love. Gersbach turns his tenderness and love into his care for Madeleine and her little daughter June. Gersbach admires Madeleine, and he expresses his love to Madeleine by writing poems and reading them to her. He also loves and cares for her daughter June, who likes him and even tells her biological father Herzog that "[uncle] Val is very nice"^[5] because he can make faces to her to make her laugh, take her out to play and bathe her. It seems to June, that he has turned into a gentle and playful father. Gersbach's care and love for June even moves her biological father Herzog so deeply that he gives up his will to revenge — his original intention of killing

Gersbach and Madeleine. This episode, in return, reflects Gersbach's deep love for Madeleine, because without his deep love for the woman, he may not be so tender and take such good care of her child. In this way, Gersbach plays the role of a dutiful husband and devoted father. Madeleine also shoulders her family responsibility as a wife; she is found by Herzog doing cleaning and washing in the kitchen. With mutual understanding and love, they share the housework and childcare, and succeed in maintaining a stable intimate relationship.

By contrasting Madeleine's harmonious relationship with Gersbach with her suffocating and torturing relationship with Herzog, Bellow calls for women to pursue their own happiness bravely. He challenges the deep-rooted concept that women can only be divorced, and suggests that women have the right to ask for a divorce as well if they're trapped in a bad marriage.

5. CONCLUSION

To fulfill one's selfhood, Friedan calls for women to integrate a serious and lifelong commitment to society with marriage and motherhood. Only in this way can women feel less conflicts and unnecessary frustrations as wives and mothers, find her identity as a full human being and finally live a happy life^[3]. What Madeleine does in her process of fulfilling selfhood echoes Friedan's call.

Determined to shake off the conventional image of a woman, she first reacts vehemently against the identity imposed on her as a conventional housewife. Taking herself as men's equal, she then courageously pursues her professional identity outside home and pursues her own happiness, struggling to be the master of her own fate. The failure of her marriage with Herzog makes her realize that "marriage and motherhood are an essential part of life, but not the whole of it"^[3]. After she divorces Herzog, she chooses Valentine Gersbach, the man who regards her as his equal, respects and supports her pursuit of another identity outside home. Finally, with Gersbach, Madeleine successfully combines marriage and motherhood with professional career. She succeeds in seeking her professional identity, and at the same time, she fulfills her role of wife and mother. Bellow's characterization of Madeleine corresponds to Betty Friedan's idea of a new woman.

Thus we can conclude that although some of Saul Bellow's female characters might be written from the perspective of the male angle, he does portray some other female characters from the perspective of the female angle, among whom Madeleine is a good example. Through shaping Madeleine into the master of her own fate, Bellow echoes Friedan's call for a new woman, expresses his disregard of the deep-rooted concept of discrimination against women in a

male-centered society, and conveys his liberal feminist ideas: women should rebel against the identity imposed on them as conventional housewives; they are men's equal, and therefore they have the rights to pursue individual achievement; they can combine their marriage and motherhood with their career.

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