

## Four Discourses and Sinthomatique Writing in Saul Bellow's *Herzog*: A Lacanian Approach

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper studies sinthomatique writing in Saul Bellow's Herzog in the form of letter-writing. Referring to Lacanian theory, the Sinthome is discussed in the study as a system of signification that exploits the unconscious digging for jouissance. Connected to jouissance in writing unconscious, the Sinthome is the fourth ring in the Borromean knot that protects a subject against psychosis by intersecting the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real orders. This study further develops the idea of the Sinthome in relation to the Four Lacanian Discourses. In respect to Discourses of the Master, University, Hysteric, and Analyst, the following procedure is introduced for a subject excluded spatially and socially: foreclosure of master signifier, rejection of desire, reception of jouissance, and communication of the unconscious. The subject in above-mentioned moves needs a sinthome to protect his/her subjectivity against disintegration. Regarding Jacques Lacan's example about James Joyce in using specific styles and epiphany, letter-writing is introduced as the Sinthome in Herzog that helps Herzog deliver his subjectivity from dissolution. Herzog is a character on the verge of breakdown and madness after his second divorce. He reconfigures his subjectivity when he forecloses AMERICA as master signifier, no longer enjoys knowledge, receives contradictions and truth, and ultimately jots down his unconscious. Finally, the role of the Sinthome is explored in the production of art. The Sinthome is considered as a kind of unique discourse through which a psychotic artist is enabled to originate new artistic productions.*

*Keywords: Jacques Lacan; the Sinthome; Four Discourses; Saul Bellow; letter-writing*

### INTRODUCTION

Herzog's letters look up into the condition of modern world and suffering enforced by it to which a recount on identity is the only way out. To this end, a modern man, like Herzog, needs to resist, sacrifice, and carry on in retaining a valuable and assertable life. Herzog is the best example of the man of 60s confronted with several problems: a scholar unable to finish his book, a man in trouble with women, a father compelled to leave his children, an intellectual doubtful of many great thinkers, and a Jew who unable to adapt himself to modern lifestyle. Out of every private and public space, he is secluded to the only space remaining, writing letters. Obviously, letter-writing, in which a large number of ideas and theories from distinctive fields are presented and criticised, has healing power over inflicted Herzog. No article yet has analysed the healing and magic power of writing in *Herzog* (1965) deeply. Thus, it could be a prominent subject of study in different fields particularly psychoanalysis. Saul Bellow's *Herzog* then is an extensive source of study that practically helps achieve results admitting the power of writing space in helping mental disorders.

The shift from linguistics to topology, representing the properties of spaces, marks the later accounts in Lacanian theory which open a new chapter in psychoanalytic criticism. It is followed by introduction to the Sinthome: unanalysable, associated with unconscious and jouissance, and the fourth ring in the Borromean knot. Inscribed in writing, the topological account of the Sinthome is significant, for it starts a new prospect in analysing writing spaces. Lacan exemplifies James Joyce as a writer deploying the Sinthome in the forms of epiphany and special distortion of language. Letter-writing in Saul Bellow's *Herzog* may well be considered another example in this respect that produces the Sinthome. The protagonist of this novel, Herzog, is an intellectual Jew trying to endure and live on in the contemporary modern life. His two divorces and their harsh repercussion along with memories highlighted after his obsession into his current peculiar state of mind comprise the accounts of the novel and Herzog's movement toward full breakdown. What actually helps him in this course is letter-writing, letters Herzog writes to "newspapers, to people in public life, to friends and relatives and at last to the dead" (*Herzog* 1965, p. 7). Experiencing a severe mental and psychological collapse, letter-writing is writing space that Herzog deploys as the Sinthome in order to survive the situation.

The present article, so, attempts to study letter-writing in *Herzog* functioning as the Sinthome that provides Herzog with the last string to protect his subjectivity against dissolution and madness. To this end, the Sinthome is presented in detail in respect to Lacanian theory with a thorough account of the functions of the Sinthome and in relation to the Four Lacanian Discourses (it is part of the present study's contribution to Lacanian theory). The follow-up elaboration is concerned with the Name-of-the-Father, desire, jouissance, and the unconscious. Letter-writing is analysed afterwards in *Herzog* in order to designate its function as the Sinthome. The final argument is then on the presence of spaces (it is not limited to style and epiphany as it was discoursed by Lacan on Joyce) in literary texts that function as the Sinthome and also the role of the Sinthome in the production of art.

#### THE SINTHOME, ITS ORDER, AND THE FOUR DISCOURSES FROM SYMPTOM TO SINTHOME

The term *Sinthome* is the archaic French spelling for symptom that Lacan adopts in 1975 as the title of a seminar that includes elaborations on topology, more comprehensive notions on the Borromean knot, and considerations over Joyce's writings. Like many other terms in Lacanian theory, the Sinthome has been subject to modifications and development in Lacan's work. Lacan's contemplations over the concept of the symptom prompt the detailed conception of the Sinthome. Earlier, Lacan regards that symptom is interpretable in the signifying order and its truth is vested in the articulation of a signifier in relation to another. Considered by Lacan (2006) as a ciphered message, symptom is said to be "structured like a language" (p. 223) and "already inscribed in a writing process" (*Ecrits* 2006, p. 371). Later on, in his seminar *Anxiety* Lacan (2014) elaborates that "the symptom is not, like acting-out, calling for an interpretation," for the symptom "in its nature is jouissance" and "it is sufficient of itself" (p.125). This marks the radical shift in Lacan's thought of linguistic symptom as a ciphered message to topologic Sinthome determined when the subject is linked to both jouissance and the unconscious. The Sinthome is then a signifying origination, referred to the unconscious and modelled on jouissance, beyond analysis.

To further develop his idea on the three orders and their interconnection, Lacan introduces his topology of the Borromean knot in which the three orders of the Imaginary, the

Symbolic, and the Real are rings intersected and bound to each other, although they are independent. In extending his topology, Lacan finds a fourth ring inevitable and introduces the Sinthome as the fourth ring. As the truth itself, unanalysable, and beyond meaning, the Sinthome is considered as the fourth ring in Borromean Knot that ties three orders of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real together. The Borromean knot authorises Lacan to conceptualise that the three orders are interdependently connected, and if one is disturbed or fails, all three are transformed. Despite the primacy of the Real in *R. S. I* (Book XXII), it is in the seminar of 1975–76 that Lacan reads psychosis as the unknitting of the Borromean knot, and suggests that it may be controlled and protected against by the Sinthome as the fourth ring.

Writing invocations and explorations are decided by writing unconscious and jouissance where radical foreclosure is the case. Lacan's own example in this regard is James Joyce's writing where the Sinthome allows Joyce to avoid psychosis, marked by the radical absence of the Name-of-the-Father. As Lacan (1976-7) states in *Le Sinthome*:

Joyce has a symptom which departs from this: that his father was lacking, radically lacking – he never speaks of anything else ... it was in wanting to make a name for himself that Joyce came to compensate for the paternal failure. (p. 94)

In fact, it is in the name of “*sinthomatique* writing” and as a modality to jouissance that the unconscious is inscribed, “Joyce's writing effects a suppletion, makes up for the failure of the knot to cohere, by reconstituting the knot as well as the place it allows the subject” (Thurston 1999, p. 157).

#### THE FOUR DISCOURSES OF LACAN

Lacan introduces the four discourses of Master, University, Hysteric, and Analyst that engender, respectively, four main social-spatial effects of “(1) educating/indoctrinating; (2) governing/commanding; (3) desiring/protesting; and (4) analysing/transforming/revolutionizing” (Bracher 1993, p. 53). They work through the four factors of master signifier ( $S_1$ ), knowledge ( $S_2$ ), the divided subject ( $\$$ ), and the *object petit (a)*. A master signifier is “any signifier that a subject has invested his or her identity in-any signifier that the subject has identified with (or against) and that thus constitutes a powerful positive or negative value” (Bracher 1994, p. 111). It makes signification possible for other signifiers. Fashioning a link among signifiers, knowledge provides systems of articulation through which the subject can identify. Signifiers, of any kind, produce and reproduce themselves in knowledge. Concerning the subject, “the fact that something remains hidden produces the divided subject, whose division is the effect of the master signifier, and which the master signifier has the function of covering over” (Bracher 1994, p. 113). The lack and gap in significations, embedded to the systems of articulation, divide the subject but this division is supposed to remain hidden. And finally, *object petit a* is leftover and surplus after the subject's introduction to the Symbolic. It is the object cause of desire that simulates and activates desire.

The discourse of the Master attempts to “enact an autonomous, self-identical ego. The discourse of the Master promotes consciousness, synthesis, and self-equivalence by instituting the dominance of master signifiers, which order knowledge according to their own values and keep fantasy in a subordinate and repressed position” (Bracher 1993, p. 59). As a totalizing discursivity, it exercises dominance over fields of articulation “from the most intimate and subjective realms to the most common and collective” (Bracher 1994, p. 119), impregnating them with images, marks, signs, figures, tropes, reflections, symbols, and so forth that altogether

inspire unity and wholeness. It endorses a certain way of articulation and executes disciplines through its master signifiers; it is accomplished through concealing the truth about the master signifiers which are, like any other signifier, a being of language and cause of division.

The discourse of University provides the spaces of knowledge that the discourse of the Master requires. It rationalises and legitimises the position of the Master discourse as it propagates truth about it securing continuity, unity, and wholeness. The knowledge for practices of identifications is given through the systems of articulation that the University discourse offers, in which the subject has to construct subjectivity in view of them. What, actually, the Master discourse does through the University discourse is inscribing and introducing its signifiers as master signifiers. In other words, the University discourse produces spatial hegemony through the partial fixation of meaning accomplished by incorporating signifiers into master signifiers.

Master signifiers operate domineeringly and covertly. Bare and uncovered then, master signifiers cannot exercise their power and control. It takes place “by confronting the lack in its relation to the cause of desire (a) that the impetus behind the S1 can be understood and, perhaps, redirected or displaced” (Bracher 1993, p. 65): this is the discourse of Hysteric. The hysterical structure is operative and at work when the master signifiers fail to satisfy the subject. Seeing “subjective division, the contradiction between conscious and unconscious, and thus the conflictual, or self-contradictory nature of desire itself” (Fink 1995, p. 133), the subject refuses to follow master signifiers and wishes for substitutions.

The full departure is the position of the subject in the discourse of the Analyst, where the subject confronts his/her alienation and desire, and breaks off from the fundamental fantasy sustained by the Master discourse and its signifiers. The discourse of Analyst is a counter-discursive formation that breaks the assumptions of the Master discourse actively and allows the divided subjects to establish individual subjectivity (Fink 1995, p. 136). The truth in the Analyst discourse presents itself “in an alteration of things that are strictly opposed, which is necessary to make turn around each other” (Lacan 1991, p. 110). The Analyst discourse subverts the master signifiers through disclosing the attempts in the Master discourse in suppressing and concealing *object petit a*.

#### THE SINTHOME, BEYOND DISCOURSE

In case the subject fails to identify with social spaces constructed by master signifiers, the Sinthome as an order helps the subject create his/her own personal space independent of social spaces; it means the Sinthome provides the subject with possibilities working without master signifiers and forming a new fundamental fantasy. As Miller (2007) puts:

We can see here what is meant by the construction of the fundamental fantasy, which causes a lot of worries in analysis—*Am I constructing my fundamental fantasy properly?*  
The construction of the fundamental fantasy is strictly dependent on interpretation insofar as it trims the symptom down. (p. 69)

The Sinthome, in fact, allows the subject to exclude the former fundamental fantasy and form a new one. This traversal is directed toward a void of signification with dead spaces where the subject finds master signifiers impracticable. Failed and alienated by master signifiers and consequently separated from the Symbolic, the subject traverses the fundamental fantasy sustained by master signifiers and reinscribes a series of original and individualised master signifiers through the Sinthome by connecting to the unconscious. It is actually achieved through certain moves in the four discourses (respectively, though there is no clear-cut boundary):

foreclosure of master signifier, rejection of desire, reception of jouissance, and communication of the unconscious. In fact, the Sinthome proceeds and provides moves beyond discourses.

Lacan elaborates that when the Name-of-the-Father is foreclosed by the subject, an unfillable chasm is constituted in the Symbolic order that leaves the subject in a psychotic structure. The Name-of-the-Father is a signifier that functions as “father” symbolically. It is a key signifier that structures the subject’s the Symbolic. Having social and cultural importance, similarly master signifiers occupy the position of the Name-of-the-Father in the discourses. When a master signifier is foreclosed by the subject, s/he is left in a void of signification and consequently excluded from social order and cultural support. Thus, a psychotic subject is structured when master signifiers are foreclosed by the subject. It is not always voluntary position to be occupied by the subject; the master signifiers are foreclosed by the subject when s/he is not capable of locating and adopting the signifying order provided by master signifiers.

As it is mentioned beforehand, the master signifier in the discourse of the Master is rationalised through the discourse of the University. It is provided through arousing certain desires and with guarantees for their satisfaction. The discourse of the University, in this regard, defines certain subject positions so that the subject could be interpellated and identified (Bracher 1993, pp. 19-22). Lacan believes that these identity-bearing positions, determined through knowledge, are operated by master signifiers. When a master signifier is foreclosed by the subject by its failure to provide a signifying order or represent his/ her signifiers, the images of the past, and fantasies, the desire rationalizing and justifying that master signifier is repudiated by the subject as well. By rejection of desire, its opposite pole emerges: jouissance. Braunstein (2003) stipulates:

Jouissance is the dimension discovered by the analytic experience that confronts desire as its opposite pole. If desire is fundamentally lack, lack in being, jouissance is positivity, it is a “something” lived by a body when a pleasure stops being a pleasure. (p. 104)

Desire promises the subject the fulfillment of the lost object; however, jouissance does not aim for any kind of fulfillment, it does not even maintain a goal. Jouissance breaks the usual process of experiencing and encountering old and familiar objects by directing the subject to “the satisfaction of drive” (Lacan 1992, p. 209) where the subject experiences the pain of his/her own death, death of his/her body. In other words, jouissance is the satisfaction of the death drive as Lacan states “jouissance-in the sense in which the body experiences itself-is always in the nature of tension, in the nature of forcing, spending, even of an exploit” (qtd. in Braunstein 2003, p. 103). The repudiation of jouissance is inevitable for the subject if it is to be introduced to the ‘LAW of desire,’ since jouissance is connected to the Other (mother’s body as the first instance of Other). Considering that jouissance of Other is not obtainable, the subject consumes his/her own body in order to substitute jouissance for desire, and this is the reason jouissance is coupled with the death drive, and the reason why in jouissance one experiences his/her own death.

Furthermore, jouissance provides the subject with a specific condition to the unconscious, where the unconscious can speak for itself. The unconscious in communication helps the subject go beyond the symbolic realm and its limitations. The subject in this condition is able to assimilate images, signifiers, and fantasies inconsistent with master signifiers and related desires. In consequence, the subject can redefine and reconstitute the Symbolic to include and acknowledge that left-out part of his/her being. In speaking for itself, the unconscious goes beyond conflicts and attempts to fulfill the identified gaps and lack by itself, and it is achieved through writing a suppletion and reconstitution in knots.

## LETTER-WRITING, THE SINTHOME OF HERZOG

### HERZOG, A MAN ON THE VERGE OF PSYCHOSIS

Herzog is a Jewish man in his forties provoked by certain sentimental and intellectual complications. After his first marriage to a conventional Jewish wife called Daisy, his second marriage is to Madeleine, whose dismissal actuates Herzog's deep-rooted disturbing feelings. He is not able to get over his situation and becomes involved in aimless explorations and haphazard actions that include writing letters addressed to friends, family members, and well-known persons; talking to Ramona, Vineyard Haven, Harvey Simkin, and others; and visiting his house in Ludeyville, courtroom, and the home of his stepmother.

The origins of Herzog's psychotic condition are traceable in his connection to his immigrant father. His situation is somehow parallel to Father Herzog in the sense that Herzog's moving from one place to another resituates his father's lifelong displacements, "I do seem to be a broken-down monarch of some kind, he was thinking, like my old man, the princely immigrant and ineffectual bootlegger" (*Herzog* 1965, pp. 6-45). And still Herzog is "a slave to papa's pain [that one may call it displacement or homelessness]. The way Father Herzog spoke of himself" (*Ibid*, p. 155), since one can say that "home," the sense of place, and nationality are transferred through the father, in addition to society, culture, LANGUAGE, and LAW. In fact, one's Name-of-the-Land comes through his Name-of-the-Father (as it is accepted in most parts of the world that one's nationality follows the father's), all of which Herzog seems to lack.

Herzog lacks a proper symbolic father, whose image in the novel is represented in the image of his own father who lived with forged papers in Petersburg, escaped to Canada, and then moved to Chicago, so both he and his father suffer from a lack of belongingness to a place; for that reason, Herzog is inclined to masculine women that sustain him with both the sense of father and land (through their body) (Goldman 1983, p. 141). In other words, his marriage to women is marriage to land. Ramona is an example in this regard as after Herzog's failure with Madeleine, "Ramona did look like a hope" for "a man bursting with unrecognised needs" (*Herzog*, p. 215). Herzog confesses to Madeleine "maybe I married you to improve my mind" (*Ibid*, p. 131), and this is further reinforced by these women as Ramona advises body as 'a spiritual fact' that can satisfy needs. However, it seems these marriages are temporary as Madeleine provides Herzog with this bitter truth that "You'll never get the surroundings you want. Those are in the twelfth century. Always crying for the old home" (*Ibid*, p.130). In fact, Herzog is in double sufferings; he is bursting with the modern sense of transcendental homelessness and his lifelong and historical Jewish displacement<sup>1</sup>.

So "the letter-writing Herzog is an exile in his own land" (Glenday 1990, p. 111). What actually and ultimately redeems Herzog from ongoing psychotic phenomenon is his *sinthomatique* writing of letters. In fact, writing is the only place for him to live as Theodor Adorno (2005) vividly puts: "For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live" (87). Herzog's letters are addressed to friends, relatives, philosophers, historical and political figures, dead, and even to God, but they are never sent. In point of fact, writing letters delivers Herzog with spaces in which he can express his troublesome condition freely, as it is both caused and not considered by other spaces. The addressors are not really those entitled in each letter, yet the real addressor is truth itself that provides Herzog with both pain of finding his self as fragmented and the pleasure of speaking to the cause of division in the unconscious. Writing letters is actually Herzog's "negative freedom of a kind of speech that has given up trying to gain recognition, ... the singular formation of a delusion which—whether fabular,

fantastical, or cosmological, or rather interpretative, demanding, or idealist objectifies the subject in a language devoid of dialectic” (p. 231) in the words of Lacan (2006) in *The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*. Herzog speaks in the language of systems and discourses he addresses in the letters and simultaneously repudiates to be part of them.

#### AMERICA AND THE UNIVERSITY

AMERICA is in fact the master signifier signifying other signifiers such as democracy, freedom, equal opportunity, individuality, home, progress, modernity, science, technology, family, hope, prosperity, success, new life, humane society and so forth. It has been thought to be ready “*for its great age*” (Herzog, p. 72) fulfilling what has not been accomplished in history. Bellow and his characters think of it in the tradition of liberal humanist humanism delivering freedom and development in full scale, a place especially for those who have been marginalised and excluded. It is actually a central signifier in symbolizing enlightenment and modernity that encompasses significant signifiers such as reason, new ideas, tolerance, advancement, rationalism, and urban life. AMERICA seems to promise all that Herzog, a Jewish scholar coming from a diasporic family, needs. AMERICA is, in fact, a master signifier that provides other signifiers with meanings; It is in fact a land with many significations, which have been mainly promised in American Dream. It is the Name-of-the-Father master signifier, as it was discussed, that legitimises and rationalises itself through the Discourse of University. The University discourse, in Lacanian terms, does not just refer to university, yet educational system, bureaucracy, or social and cultural institutions struggling to consume a field can be considered part of the University discourse that creates a totalised system of knowledge in its entirety. It is a hegemonic discourse (enforcing consistency into diversity) that provides meaning and justification for the master signifier and all signifiers circulating around it. The discourse of University is in fact the true ‘reality-instructor,’ as Herzog names it, which wants “*to teach you-to punish you with-the lessons of the real*” (Ibid, p. 132).

In this regard, Himmelstein, Gersbach, Madeleine, and Herzog himself are somehow all agents (reality-instructors) of the University, which are part of causes for Herzog’s alienation and separation from reality. Himmelstein, Herzog deliberates, “is another [reality-instructor], but cruel. It’s the cruelty that gets me, not the realism” (Ibid, p. 36). His cruelty emanates from his materialist and pragmatic way of life from which emotion, a characteristic of human being, is excluded and banished forever. “Impregnated with modern ideas” (Ibid, p. 99), Himmelstein reflects on facts of life as fierce and nasty, human nature perfidious, and human soul whorish. Individuality, to Himmelstein, is the biggest lie in history that has made people to live and respire in a bubble of illusion; and this is only the somber and degrading truth capable of shattering this “persistent infantile megalomania, or (from Marxian point of view) a stinking little bourgeois property to historical necessity” (Ibid, p. 99). For the people whose “*great need, their hunger, is for good sense, clarity, truth-even an atom of it*” (Ibid, p. 34), a man like Gersbach “makes realities nobody can understand” (Ibid, p. 201). He is a manipulator, trickster, defacer, “ringmaster, popularizer” who “makes all sorts of people feel that he has exactly what they’ve been looking for” (Ibid, p. 222). He is capable of completing all unfinished ideas, restating all thoughts, and explaining everything. He is a skillful imitator and gamer of ideas in a way he influences others that he is superior and greater than originals. Gersbach “can be gay. Innocent. Sadistic. Dancing around. Instinctive. Heartless. Hugging his friends. Feeble-minded. Laughing at jokes. Deep, too. Exclaiming ‘I love you!’ or ‘This I believe’” (Ibid, p. 201), in other words, occupying positions people yearn and apply for. He knows what others want and he

manipulates the orthodox reality in a way to serve them. One of the victims of Gersbach, in this regard, is Madeleine. She is a neurotic<sup>ii</sup> submitted to such realities firstly through his father who was ‘American Stanislavsky;’ despite her resentment for her father, she willingly plays the roles others submit her to as she is a lover, charming person, Catholic convert, scholar, etc., in the course of the novel. She instructs realities to others through her superior performances, “Everyone close to Madeleine, everyone drawn into the drama of her life became exceptional, deeply gifted, brilliant” (Ibid, p. 44). She is one of the discourse of University’s making-people-believe machines who supremely performs identities introduced by this discourse.

Herzog himself is an intellectual in command of ideas more than others, a modern man “swamped with ideas, metaphysics and values, and surrounded by messy facts” (Tanner 1965, p. 88). He is an “anachronistic protagonist[s], academic[s] out of step with the ideas of [his] times” (Naughtons 2015, p. 121). Herzog is confined to the reality of commodified intellectuality where the self is despised; individualism is retired to seclusion; a meaningful concept is not specified to experiences; “the writer automatically scorns contemporary life” (Bradbury 1965, p. 62); and, suffering is honored and advocated. Herzog is an historian intellectual “transformed by science. Confronting with a dilemma and trouble, he diverts thinking into high-minded thoughts in the history of ideas; in fact, he ponders over his modern experiences in the context of past intellectual figures, which means he does not have a personal space of thinking and he has to rely on automated old ideas. “*Living amid great ideas and concepts, insufficiently relevant to the present, day-by-day, American condition*” (Ibid, p. 112), he is somewhat strange to ordinary human experience as the true source of facts and values. In other words, as an intellectual, he had substituted the true reality in ordinary life and personal experiences with the intellectual reality where “no philosopher knows what the ordinary life is, has not fallen into it deeply enough” (Ibid).

#### HERZOG’S OBJECTIONS

The novel represents Herzog’s gradual objections to and detachments from realities, not only coming from people around him, but also from history. His aberrant state of mind is affected by his failures in identifying and internalizing identities mobilised by dominant discourses. Herzog no longer is able to recognise himself in social formation and interpellations<sup>iii</sup> provided by the University discourse; accordingly, he realises himself a failure as husband, father, son, friend, a modern man, a Jew, an intellectual, a historian, etc. In fact, in addition to concepts and signifiers defined by AMERICA (as master signifier) that are foreclosed to him, identities and interpellations provided by the University discourse are rejected by Herzog as they do not involve his eccentric condition. His repudiation of being contained by identity-makers cause him to be “accused of being “dogmatic” and “sectarian”” (Zizek in [www.lacan.com](http://www.lacan.com)), or separatist and mad.

Herzog problematises and questions the realities introduced by people addressed in letters. His confrontations with and separations from Himmelstein, Madeline, Gersbach, memories of the past about father Herzog, Will and Shura his brothers, Nachman, Dr. Edwig, etc., are necessary to his mental development. Likewise, Herzog’s objections to and departure from the grip of ideas are essential in this manner, and this happens to him through letters that locate him and “his experience in the whole thought of the west” (Bradbury 1965, p. 273) which hints at “an equation between Herzog’s history and contemporary history” (Hyland 1992, p. 64). As a historian interested in Romanticism, Herzog rejects Romanticism’s proposition for the perfect unified self and also he finds it impractical in contemporary life as Chavkin (2014) states



“the relevance of his romantic humanistic values in a society that finds them omelet is not just a philosophical issue but one that bears upon his daily life” (p. 118). On the other part, he is against Nietzsche and Spengler as propagandists of doomed time as well. He believes true human nature has been mistreated among intellectuals in history as he states:

*Man has nature, but what is it? Those who have confidently described it, Hobbes, Freud, et cetera, by telling us what we are “intrinsically”, are not our greatest benefactors. This is true also for Rousseau. I sympathize with Hulme’s attack on the introduction by the Romantics of Perfection into human things, but do not like his narrow repressiveness, either.* (Herzog, p. 135)

He is also suspicious about big but rootless theories and ideas such as Professor Hoyle’s ‘Gold-Pore Theory,’ Heidegger’s ‘the fall of quotidian,’ or Father Teilhard de Chardin’s ‘inward aspect of the elements.’ He even calls to question the results some theories and principles promised as he taunts Nietzsche that “we’ve seen enough destruction to test the power of the Dionysian spirit amply, and where are the heroes who have recovered from it?” (Ibid, p. 326). He contemplates over personal freedom, as essence of human life, and release from historical limitations; in so doing, he distrusts Hegel’s idea that history precedes freedom. In writing to Pulvar, he emphasises on the freedom, even free of historical senses, as necessity for self-awareness that helps one find ‘the inspired condition.’ But, in writing to Mr. President, Herzog points to the fact that the life of people is becoming business, since gradually people are losing their freedom and everyday private life to business-makers.

In point of fact, Herzog is an analys and and at the same time an analyst of himself. Letters are spaces where he undergoes treatment and simultaneously analyses himself. Letters are of the order of circulation directed to the master signifier, and they investigate a pure personal identity free of identities provided by the University discourse. In this way, “‘self-identity’ is isolated from any quality” (Brousse 2007, p. 85), imposition, and division. Letters, in fact, exclude Herzog temporarily from the signifying chain and enable him to go further and write his own self-identity. It is only by confronting lack, divided and fragmented self, and truth hidden behind realities that Herzog is able to approach his self-identity. At the time of writing letters, Herzog is less anguished or affected by the master signifier, so his writings appear as the counterpoint to the process of the signification that the University discourse constrains.

Whereas bodies -e.g. women and books- are foreclosed due to his incapacity of representing himself through them and his resistance to be consumed by the Master, writing letters empowers him to name himself and to create his identity. As Herzog finds out that his sufferings are because of confusions, abstractness, conundrum, and puzzlement caused by realities, he problematises and objects to these established considerations in order to recognise and create a new world since he believes “there are new possibilities still to be discovered, a new form of transcendence” (Bradbury 1965, p. 276). Thus, finding himself disoriented, Herzog seeks to substitute new realities in order to reorient himself in the world.

#### THE PLEASURE OF WRITING THE UNCONSCIOUS

Not only does Herzog resist recognizing extraneous body and self that disrupts and constrains him, but he also enjoys speaking about his sufferings from early childhood, his concern and apprehension about June, his wretchedness for his failures in marriage, and his constraints in completing his book. His confessions further develop into his letters where he enjoys exposing identifications and ideas that have severed his life. Although the exposition of the causes of

separation and alienation pleases him, it pains him to speak about the effects of realities. Letter-writing is then a space where he experiences *jouissance*, as Braunstein (2003) puts:

*Jouissance* appears in guilt, in remorse, in confession, in contrition, more in paying than being paid, in destroying more than in conserving. Its essence is in suspension of the reflex act, of the pursuit of satisfaction, of service to community, of the “good reasons” governing rational behavior. (p. 108)

He treats himself by the pleasurable habit of writing letters in which he puts to words the nature of his sufferings. On the one hand, the images of the past further disturb him (as ego is not formed in identifications; a key process in the Imaginary order); on the other hand, he is defenseless in real social spaces (the effects of the Symbolic order). Thus, he seeks shelter in the *Sinthome* of writing letters as the only solution to his growing psychotic condition. As it is mentioned in the novel “*a letter gives one a chance to consider-think matters over, and reach a more balanced view*” (*Herzog*, p. 107).

Grasped in temporal pulsations of letter-writing, *jouissance* is delivered because of communicating the unconscious, which is consequently procured by speaking about the effects of signifiers (master signifier and other signifiers connected to it). In so doing, *Herzog* speaks about lack, gap, and void in signification; he collects images, words, signifiers, and names at hand, and “repeats them to himself over and over so that in the end they lose their signification for him” (Gault 2007, p. 75). The *sinthomatique* writing allows the psychotic *Herzog* to pinpoint the void with dead spaces, as a result to prepare him to reestablish a new space of signification filling the void. *Herzog* discards signifiers, then he confesses about their effect (of castration), and he eventually finds out that he can be the master on his own; in other words, the *sinthomatique* writing of letters delivers him to new self-understanding and self-identity, and consequently paves way to new possibilities of knowledge devoid of void.

After recovering his subjectivity with the help of *sinthomatique* writing, *Herzog* concludes “perhaps he’d stop writing letters. (*Herzog*, p. 348). However, initially *Herzog* broods over his notes as “fragments-nonsense syllables, exclamations, twisted proverbs, and quotations or, in the Yiddish of his long-dead mother” (Ibid, p.9). One can say they are types of *lalangue*<sup>IV</sup> and in one way or another connected to *jouissance* and the unconscious. *Lalangue* is reserved in the unconscious in a very unique way to every subject. As a pre-linguistic realm before the introduction of a subject to the Symbolic order and before subjective division to the unconscious, letters are in fact non-communicative (as they are never sent) of language and the true sources of *jouissance*. Thus, they are a matrix of *jouissance*, unconscious, formation of letters, and new conception of meanings. Letters, in other words, are a backward movement to *lalangue* for the experience of *jouissance* and communication of the unconscious, then a forward movement for creation of a new link of meanings. The development is obvious in the course of the letters *Herzog* writes as it grows from simple writings to the critical rejection of social formations and then to the creation of a new social link. Letter-writing helps *Herzog* reach his final peace with himself and society.

There is a close relationship between *jouissance* and death experience in reaching for the *Sinthome*. In the novel, *Asphalter* speaks about his strategies or exercises at the time of his own breakdown (as the *Sinthome* is unique for each person) that are similar to *Herzog*’s own strategy of writing letters:

"The main one is facing your own death."  
"How do you do that?"  
"You pretend you have already died," Asphalter began...  
...  
"Ah? So you construct it all. Must be pretty hard. I see...." Moses sighed.  
"It takes practice. You have to feel and not feel, be and not be. You're present and absent both. And one by one the people in your life come and look. Father. Mother. Whoever you loved, or hated."  
"And what then." Herzog, wholly absorbed, looked at him more obliquely than ever.  
"And then you ask yourself, "What have you got to say to them now? What do you feel for them?" Now there's nothing to say but what you really thought. And you don't say it to them because you're dead, but only to yourself. Reality, not illusions. Truth, not lies. It's over."  
(Ibid, pp. 276-77)

The unrecognizable joy of letter-writing for Herzog is transgression in the inscription of impossibility, in contrast to desire that demands him to look for the lost impossible object. This process is highlighted with the close experience of death since letter-writing is the jouissance in satisfaction of death drive. This jouissance is followed by the consumption of the body as well. In other words, the sinthomatique letter-writing is a body-event in which the writer dies in his own writing<sup>v</sup>. Herzog dies in his letters; on the one hand, he cuts off some parts of his body into letters, which is painful, and on the other hand, he enjoys seeing his dead body on letters, a body that may cause his death if he cannot detach himself from it. He has to write if he wants to live again, as Herzog writes "*death - die - live again – die again – live*" (Ibid, p. 9). Letters are, in fact, pieces of Herzog's body dying in the process of writing. Thus, writing, if it is a recreation of identity and restoration of name in substitution for the-Name-of-the-Father, is death-like experience for the writer. In this regard, Herzog ponders "*for dying means that it is all over, but dying the death means to experience death*" (Ibid, p. 111).

#### THE SINTHOME, AS AN ARTISTIC FUNCTION

Extensively, it seems appropriate to expand on the Sinthome as a way to artistic creation. This kind of artistic production which is connected to the Sinthome is concerned with a person in psychotic condition or what is generally considered as mad<sup>vi</sup>. The Sinthome protects a psychotic person's subjectivity against disintegration. It is a knot or link that associates psychotic with writing, writing with art, and in so doing psychotic with art. Mad, here, is one who is not accepted or unable to communicate in social spaces. S/he cannot involve in the chain of signifiers flowing in spaces, and as a result s/he is not discursively defined. Thus, his/her psychotic condition is because of disintegration in regard to orders of the Imaginary the Symbolic where one forms and projects identities. Rejection or lack of comprehension concerning truth defined in social spaces may, then, lead this psychotic figure to a level of truth beyond the accepted discursive truth. The idea is that a psychotic person in the position of artist has access to plenty of ways to reach the Sinthome and produce art. In other words, every art has its means to the sinthomatique space that allows psychotic person reclaim his subjectivity through producing art. Writing space in literature provides such possibility. This may happen through shift in narration, configuring epiphany, manipulating fictional representation, using techniques such as stream of consciousness or metafiction, blurring the worlds of reality and fiction, and so forth. Saul Bellow, whose biographical accounts are clear in the figure of Herzog in the novel, takes advantage of letter-writing, which is one of the first and basic narration means in storytelling, for delivering his detachment from every possible social and spatial space. In fact, writing provides him/her with a space to explore personal heterogeneous truth. By

extracting his subjectivity in the space of writing, he is able to fill the void he feels in reality. In other words, fictional space of writing helps him reach to new points of understanding about reality. This is the reason *sinthomatique* writing is flavored and enriched with vividness, distinctness, artificial self-creation, and “pure form of real beyond” (p. 53). *Sinthomatique* writing, as a moment of truth, involves in the process of artistic production as unknown facts and spaces are enlivened afterwards.

In fact, the whole process explored in Saul Bellow’s *Herzog* in regard to Four Discourses and the *Sinthome* contributes to Lacan’s (1976, p. 7) elaboration in *Le Sinthome* “concerning art - how is artifice able to target expressly...” (p. 6). Lacan exemplifies Stephan as the very James Joyce in his own writing in analysis; likewise, *Herzog* is Saul Bellow himself in efforts to find answers to the enigma of his life. It is one possible reason for his works being full of biographical accounts, “in most of the novels prior to *Herzog* there is an autobiographical element, but in *Herzog* and the series of novels that follow it this element is vastly increased” (Hyland 1992, p. 61). Saul Bellow speaks about lacks of modern life in the figure of *Herzog* writer of letters; in so doing he explores the roots of his suffering, the means of exit, and the tracks of new possibilities. Writing spares psychosis, thinking and rethinking spaces; however, it requires new ways of putting new ideas and thinking. *Sinthomatique* writing actually accompanies with new style of writing in which the heterogamous is applied. Thus, to achieve the heterogynous, a psychotic author has to trigger and dig deep into the unconscious in order to grip the hole and void and put it into expression. In other words, Saul Bellow has access to new possibilities of knowledge in the space of letter-writing that its full representation require author put his suffering into this space that it consequently cause his salvage. *Sinthomatique* writing and its *jouissance* are unique since *lalangue* or let say personal discourse, where new artistic productions lie, is unmatched in the case of each individual. So one can claim this kind of writing is a kind of unique discourse that a psychotic author procures after rejection of some social discursive orders. Where the Symbolic order in Lacanian theory refers to usually collective spaces signified through language, the *sinthomatique* writing is unique personal space that can provide a writer like Saul Bellow with space signified personally, which is the mean to individual artistic production.

## CONCLUSION

As a function of artistic production, the *Sinthome* may appear in variety of forms in literary texts. Arranged to protect an author from disintegration, it is performed in the form of letter-writing in Saul Bellow’s *Herzog*. Although it appears in different forms yet the function is the matching; one can compare Joycean and Bellowian writings to see both authors suffering from lack of the Name-of-the-Father utilise the *sinthomatique* writing (though differently) as the fourth ring in Borromean knot in order to deliver themselves from psychosis. The procedure had been clarified about James Joyce by Jacques Lacan in seminar *Le Sinthome*, in which the *Sinthome* is presented as unanalysable, truth in itself, and associated with the unconscious and *jouissance*. But the present study develops further the idea of the *Sinthome* into Four Lacanian Discourses. The discourses of Master, University, Hysteric and Analyst are introduced by Lacan as well, where each is characterised respectively by domination, knowledge and truth, resistance and deliberate subversion.

To protect subjectivity against psychosis caused by social spaces, one needs to make certain moves in the four discourses: foreclosure of master signifier, rejection of desire, reception of jouissance, and communication of the unconscious. Herzog is subject to AMERICA and its signifiers. Knowledge produced by these signifiers creates realities such as university, materialism, individuality, modernity, family and so forth that Herzog is slave to. As university professor, he is the direct product and agent of systematic knowledge. Her failures in roles created by this knowledge and his failure in marriages and work gradually alienate him from master signifiers that once had promised him a full satisfied life. Herzog understands the contradictory nature of all knowledge produced through University and no longer enjoys the value of knowledge since truth about Master and University is revealed. Thus, he separates from master signifier and its realities, and starts producing his own personal signifier through which he is going to create new reality and understanding. The whole procedure is provided by the Sinthome that reconsiders and intersects the orders of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. In fact, when a subject confronts with dead social spaces in which s/he is not able to develop his/her identity, s/he attempts to create new spaces that writing is one. This study believes sinthomatique writing created by psychotic authors opens new areas of writing style in which burdensome established literary rules are weakened, and the present study demands further studies in this regard.

#### END NOTES

<sup>i</sup> And this is the case in most of Bellow's characters, as their troubles start off with conflict they confront with women as Levy (2017) states "his novels come up with a biased and distorted perspective: that of a male (anti)hero, in deep existential conflict about his gendered cultural identity and prone to self-pity or downright misogyny as he reassesses his sentimental failures" (108).

<sup>ii</sup> Levy-Stokes (2001) elaborates on the neurotic subject in *A Compendium of Lacanian Terms* as a subject who:  
does not want to sacrifice his/her castration to the *jouissance* of the Other (*Écrits*, 1977).  
It is an imaginary castration that is clung to in order not to have to acknowledge Symbolic castration, the subjection to language and its consequent loss of *jouissance*. (p.107)

<sup>iii</sup> Althusser in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" states that a subject recognises himself/herself through interpellation (drawing on Lacanian Mirror Stage). It is the process by which ideology provides individual with social identification. It happens mainly through social institutions such as family, school, university, media, religious and political groups, etc. as each prepare the individual with subject positions and their related identities.

<sup>iv</sup> In Lacanian theory, *lalangue*, as foundation of the Symbolic, is unparalleled among subjects, implying the fact that it can be particular but limited to each subject's personal explorations in language. It remains in the unconscious, and by providing enigmas and further meaning possibilities, there it has effects on *jouissance*.

<sup>v</sup> This part of body can be considered abject in terms of Julia Kristeva as she defines abjection to be something that has been rejected, but which is still a part of the subject, and... [and] it is a threat" (qtd. In Mohamed Ali 2013, p.12).

<sup>vi</sup> Psychotic is equivalent to mad in Lacanian theory.

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