small part in lots of tasks within the cell. . . . So the starting point for systems biologists isn't the gene but rather a mathematical model of the entire cell. Instead of focusing on key control points, systems biologists look at the system properties of the entire network. In this new vision of biology, genes aren't discrete nuggets of genetic information but more diffuse entities whose functional reality may be spread across hundreds of interacting DNA segments." Instead of a single gene's being responsible for schizophrenia, for example, the condition "may represent a network perturbation generated by small, almost imperceptible, changes in lots of genes."

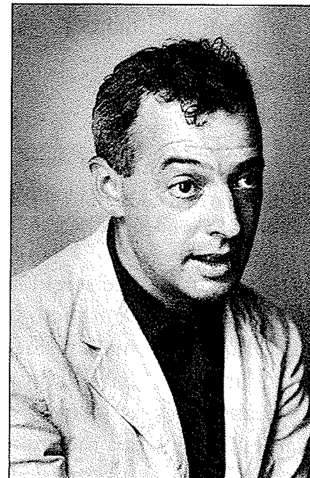
To pursue this new vision, systems biology centers "are popping up in cities from London to Seattle." Unlike traditional biology departments, these centers generally have on staff not only biologists but physicists, mathematicians, and engineers. "Rather like the systems they study, systems biology centers are designed to promote interactivity and networking."

ARTS & LETTERS

Paying Tribute to Mr. Bellow

A Survey of Recent Articles

Saul Bellow, whose exuberant novels shouldered their way through the second half of the 20th century, died on April 5, at the age of 89. Recipient of three National Book Awards, a Pulitzer Prize, and the Nobel Prize for literature, Bellow, whose books included *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), *Herzog* (1964), *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), and *Humboldt's Gift* (1975), continued to write until shortly before his death. The veins of the tributes to Bellow this spring were as varied as his characters. But united as they were in praise, his eulogists could not agree on his essential qualities: Was he a misanthrope or a champion of flawed humanity? Was he the first modern American novelist to successfully embrace a European mode, or the quintessential American writer?



Saul Bellow in 1953

"Bellow's dark philosophical moods are what defined him as the most European of American novelists, though he is often celebrated—especially by British writers—as the epitome of American literary exuberance," critic Lee Siegel wrote in *The Nation* (May 9, 2005). "But Bellow was really a nationally unaffiliated free agent who exuberantly used European lines and pulleys to get America under control of his imagination, just as he wielded an American idiom to throw off any claim that Europe might have had on his creative will."

In *The Guardian*'s pages (April 7, 2005), novelist Ian McEwan proclaimed Bellow uniquely American as he explained why British writers tend to lay claim to him. "What is it we find in him that we cannot find here, among our own? I think what we admire is the generous inclusiveness of the work—not since the 19th century has a writer been able to render a whole society, without condescension or self-conscious social anthropology. Seamlessly, Bellow can move between the poor and their mean streets, and the power elites of university and government, the privileged dreamer with the 'deep-sea thought.' His work is the embodiment of an American vision of plurality. In Britain we no longer seem able to write across the crass and subtle distortions of class—or rather, we can't do it gracefully, without seeming to strain or without caricature. Bellow appears larger, therefore, than any British writer can hope to be."

Bellow himself was famously impatient with people who tried to read too much into his work, or trace too deliberately the development of his writing over the course of his career. And so, in *The New Republic* (April 25, 2005), critic James Wood, a longtime friend of Bellow's, concluded his tribute by setting aside the encomiums and simply returning to the man himself: "Like anyone, writers, of course, are embarrassed by excessive praise, just as readers are burdened by their excessive gratitude—one cannot keep going on about it. And, eventually, it is easier to turn the beloved literary work into a kind of disembodied third party: to admit that the work itself exceeds the writer, that it sails . . . away from the writer and toward the delighted reader. In the final year of Saul's life, as he became very frail, I would read some of his own prose to him, something he would doubtless have found, as a younger man, mawkish or cloying or tiresome. It did not feel any of those things, as Bellow sat there in forgetful frailty; rather it felt as if I were gently reminding him of his own talent and that he was grateful for this, and perhaps grateful for my gratitude. But, in truth, I could not thank him enough when he was alive, and I cannot now."

Whitman Samplers

"Whitman in Selected Anthologies: The Politics of His Afterlife" by Kenneth M. Price, in *The Virginia Quarterly Review* (Spring 2005), One West Range, P.O. Box 400223, Charlottesville, Va. 22904–4223.

"I am large. . . . I contain multitudes," Walt Whitman boasted in "Song of Myself," and the century and a half since publication of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* in July 1855 has proved him right. We've invented any number of Whitmans, from free spirit to prophet to patriotic sage to civil rights advocate to gay icon. Price, who is a professor of English at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, traces the political uses to which Whitman's "fluid identity" has been put in a number of 20th-century anthologies of the poet's work and in a 21st-century collection meant to comfort Americans after the 9/11 attacks.

The earliest of the anthologies belongs to the "Little Blue Book" series that Emanuel Haldeman-Julius published out of Girard, Kansas, from 1919 to 1951, for working-class audiences. Along with Shakespeare, Hardy, Poe, Thoreau, Balzac, Kipling, Wilde, and the like, Haldeman-Julius introduced readers to the Soviet constitution and to an array of controversial thinkers, including Havelock Ellis and birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger. As many as 500 million of these Little Blue Books may have been sold over the years—for 10, five, and even two and a half cents a copy. (Tempered by his capitalist success, Haldeman-Julius, who began as a committed leftist, ended up a liberal New Deal Democrat.)

The publisher, says Price, saw Whitman as "a sympathetic figure who was compatible with his own views on religion, politics, and sexuality," and it was in a context emphasizing socialism and openness about sexuality that the poet appeared in the series. Blue Book 73 had three different versions: *Walt Whitman's Poems*, *Poems of Walt Whitman*, and *Best Poems of Walt Whitman*. These were not critical editions, to say the least, and they often misrepresented Whitman's meaning by rearranging the poems. Moreover, the cheap-looking volumes would never have met the aesthetic standards of the poet, who was always particular about his books' appearance. But the cheap look made possible a low price, and that assured the series the widest distribution.

However little Haldeman-Julius charged, he "could not match the absolutely free distribution of the World War II Armed Services Editions." In *A Wartime Whitman*, edited by Major William A. Aiken, the poet became, through judicious selection and "editorial intrusiveness," the champion of the American way of life that soldiers were fighting to defend. Aiken "goes to some pains to make Whitman's comradely love safe for the troops." Indeed, writes Price, "the Whitman who emerges from the Armed Services Editions is a virile heterosexual man, a trumpeter of democracy, a