

ANALYSIS

The Dean's December (1982)

Saul Bellow

(1915-2005)

“Albert Corde, dean of men at a Chicago college, accompanies his Rumanian-born wife Minna, an astronomer, to Bucharest to be with her dying mother. Communist authorities deny visiting rights as a means of punishing the old woman, a lapsed Communist, and the young one because she defected to the West. This example of the state's control of individuals is balanced by the anarchy that the Dean witnesses in his home city when a campus murder case leads him to write articles dealing with the violent ways of life to which black people are driven, both those on the streets and those in jails.”

James D. Hart

The Oxford Companion to American Literature, 5th edition
(Oxford 1941-83) 189

“In *The Dean's December* (1982) Bellow confronts more directly than in any of his other novels, political and social problems; he contrasts the near anarchy of the slums of Chicago with the authoritarianism of the Communist world and sees a ‘moral crisis’ in both the West and the East. In the current moral crisis, ‘the first act of morality was to disinter the reality, retrieve reality...represent it anew as art would represent it’.”

Allan Chavkin

The Heath Anthology of American Literature 2
(D.C. Heath 1990) 1856

Michael Hollister (2015)