SAUL BELLOW AND EXISTENTIAL HUMANISM: A CRITICAL STUDY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

By

Minakshi Chakraborty

Supervisor

Dr. Benoy Kr. Banerjee

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL
RAJA RAMMOHUNPUR, DARJEELING – 734430
WEST BENGAL, INDIA
2004

DECLARATION

This is to certify that the subject matter of the dissertation is a record of work done by the candidate herself under my guidance and that the contents of this dissertation did not form a basis of the award of any previous degree to her or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else and that the dissertation has not been submitted by the candidate for any research degree to any other University.

Benoy Kr. Banerjee

Signature of the Supervisor/Guide

Date: 19.3.04

SAUL BELLOW

(1915 .....)

"The Centre, Then, Radically Affirms Being"

CONTENTS

PREFACE

Saul Bellow

When *Saul Bellow* published his first book, the time had come for a change of climate and generation in American narrative art. The so-called hard-boiled style, with its virile air and choppy prose, had now slackened into an everyday routine, which was pounded out automatically; its rigid paucity of words left not only much unsaid, but also most of it unfelt, unexperienced. Bellow's first work, *Dangling Man* (1944), was one of the signs portending that something else was at hand.

In Bellow's case, emancipation from the previous ideal style took place in two stages. In the first, he reached back to the kind of perception that had found its already classic guides in Maupassant, Henry James, and Flaubert, perhaps, most of all. The masters he followed expressed themselves as restrainedly as those he turned his back on. But the emphasis was elsewhere. What gave a story its interest was not the dramatic, sometimes violent action, but the light it shed over the protagonist's inner self. With that outlook the novel's heroes and heroines could be regarded, seen through and exposed, but not glorified. The anti-hero of the present was already on the way, and Bellow became one of those who took care of him.

Dangling Man, the man without a foothold, was thus a significant watchword to Bellow's writing, and has, to no small extent, remained so. He pursued the line in his next novel, *The Victim* (1947)

and, years later, with mature mastery in *Seize the Day* (1956). With its exemplary command of subject and form, this last novel has received the accolade as one of the classic works of our time.

But with the third story in this stylistically coherent suite, it is as if Bellow had turned back in order at last to complete something which he himself had already passed. With his second stage, the decisive step, he had already left this school behind him, whose disciplined form and enclosed structure gave no play to the resources of exhuberant ideas, flashing irony, hilarious comedy and burning compassion, which he also knew he possessed, and whose scope he must try out. The result was something quite new; Bellow's own mixture of rich picaresque novel and subtle analysis of culture, of entertaining adventure, drastic and tragic episodes in quick succession interspersed with philosophic conversation with the reader - that too very entertaining - all developed by a commentator with a witty tongue and penetrating insight into the outer and inner complications that drive us to act, or prevent us from acting, and that can be called the dilemma of the age.

First in the new phase came *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953). The very wording of the title points straight to the picaresque, and the connection is perhaps most strongly in evidence in this novel. But here Bellow had found his style, and the tone recurs in the following series of novels that form the bulk of his work: *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), *Herzog* (1964), *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), and *Humboldt's Gift* (1975). The structure is apparently loose-jointed, but for this very reason gives the author ample opportunity for descriptions of different

societies; they have a rare vigour and stringency, and a swarm of colourful, clearly-defined characters against a background of carefully observed and depicted settings, whether it is the magnificent facades of Manhattan in front of the backyards of the slums and semi-slums, Chicago's impenetrable jungle of unscrupulous businessmen intimately intertwined with efficient criminal gangs, or the more literal jungle in the depths of Africa, where the novel, *Henderson the Rain King,* the writer's most imaginative expedition takes place. In a nutshell, they are all stories on the move, and, like the first book, are about a man with no foothold. But (and it is important to add this) a man who keeps on trying to find a foothold during his wanderings in our tottering world, one who can never relinquish his faith that the value of life depends on its dignity, not on its success, and that the truth must triumph at last, simply because it demands everything except - triumphs. That is the way of thinking in which Saul Bellow's "anti-heroes" have their foundation and acquire their lasting stature.

Bellow is very explicitly an urban novelist. The city he writes of whether it be New York or Chicago, is a melting pot of races, a dense agglomeration of misery and competition. Survival is a Darwinian struggle, but in this study I have tried to show that the direction of Survival, in Bellow's work, is essentially moral. It turns towards understanding and the acceptance of others. Through some of his novels I have made an effort to show that his heroes are frequently at odds with the society they inhabit, searching for the freedom of self, but it is

as much the self as the world that must undergo a proper adaptation. This being so, his novels have a dense moral and psychological dimension which owes a good deal to Dostoevsky and similar European novelists, and his urban landscape is not simply anonymous, but a landscape of the spirit which must be realized as reality and turned into a condition for growth and self-renewal. There is an explicit resistance in his novels, in particular in *Herzog*, to those who would instruct us in the bleak absurdity of reality, who say that man is necessarily alienated, who tell us that the age of the moralized and personal self is finished. Bellow gets much of his energy as a writer, and his standpoint is not, as many critics have suggested, one simply of adaptation to the system, but one that liberally seeks to restore a true sense of fullness of self hood, that demands that the world be made for men. There is a core of deeply realized humanity in his clear conviction that the essential task is to discover the basis of individuality and brotherhood in a world of singularly complex reality. In this thesis it is explored that most of his heroes bear the burden of working out in the most difficult circumstances a satisfactory relationship to other men and to the moral demands of the self in a universe intensely complicated philosophically and socially. A world in which, as one of these heroes Henderson, puts it, no man has a place any longer. Through his novels, he works these themes with an exuberant imaginative zest. In part this comes from the richness of a prose that can effectively allude to moral matters because it has all the force of Jewish soul - searching rhetoric behind it; which can reach from the comedy of

suffering to the ideal of aspiration towards human grandeur, which can sustain appeal to the transcendental and eternal as a consistent and fundamental element of his style. In the earlier novels the essential theme of inquiry is man's obligations towards others, in the later ones it becomes an often euphoric exploration of the grandeur of self.

In the works I have considered here, and in the fiction published later as well, Bellow has been moving toward a hedged affirmation: an insistence upon the importance and possibility for each man of fulfillment in knowledge and spirit, with a recognition always of the cost of such fulfillment. In qualified terms he has revived the cult of personality and, paradoxically, given us the clue to the social history of the post war years. Preoccupied with what it feels like, what it takes, what it means to be a human being, Bellow has made man the vital centre of his work. No guiding philosophic conception shapes his image of man, he is concerned with man alive. Augie says, in one of his introspective passages, that he seeks simplicity, and one is reminded of Thoreau's 'Simplify! Simplify!' and then of his famous declaration of faith, "I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear, nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life..."

So it is with Bellow, who wants no confining philosophy or myth, who has no patience with passing social phenomena, who finds the essentials of human experience in human beings seeking themselves and seeking love.

The present study, is basically analytical in nature and hence collection and analysis of books both primary and secondary have been the major source of findings. For the purpose of arriving at a particular conclusion reliance is placed on documents, books, statements and resolutions relating to existential philosophy and liberal humanism. In the process of analysis some reflections of authors and critics of Bellow are consulted with a view of supporting the contention. References are made to secondary sources, articles, papers published in leading journals, national and international, regional and local dailies and weeklies and data is also collected on the internet both primary and secondary.

Since no thesis is complete without a bibliography, I have prepared the same following the instructions as laid down in the MLA Handbook.

In presenting this work I should like to make a mention of all those whose invaluable assistance I have received.

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor Dr. Benoy Kumar Banerjee. It has been his constructive criticism, useful suggestions and moral support which has led to the shaping of this dissertation. He placed at my disposal all his time with the utmost understanding, infinite tolerance and patience. The drudgery of writing and re-writing was converted into a fascinating challenge under him. It was through him that I learnt to see the author in a new perspective. It was his constant encouragement and motivating influence that spurred me on

to complete the dissertation.

I wish to express my thanks to all the teachers of the English Department who through the years have shaped my understanding of literature.

I would like to thank very earnestly Rev. Mother Damien, ex Principal, Loreto College, Darjeeling for her guidance and support.

I wish to thank and acknowledge the help that I received from Central Library, North Bengal University, American Centre Library, Calcutta, Loreto College Library, Darjeeling, St. Joseph's College Library, Darjeeling and Indo-American Centre for International Studies, Hyderabad.

However, the greatest support throughout the progress of this work has been my family, especially my late father, who took upon himself the onus of providing me with the opportunity of writing out this thesis. The blessing of my mother and my in-laws made the rigours of this effort enjoyable. My husband Pradipta and my baby boy Anurav's unstinted co-operation, love and best wishes never let my spirits slacken. Last but not the least, the printers Shri Satyen Ghosh and his entire family, deserve a special vote of thanks for their keen co-operation.

Minakshi Chakraborty

INTRODUCTION

Ihab Hassan has said of Saul Bellow that "praise now comes as naturally to Saul Bellow as the light of day." (1982, 267) A Nobel laureate in 1976, winner of three National Book Awards, two Guggenheim Fellowships, one Pulitzer prize, and many other honours besides, he fills our expectations of a major novelist and aligns himself with the central tradition of Western literature. For his achievement, though deep in the American grain appears more and more universal in its apprehensions of reality.

Adhering intuitively to "the axial line of existence" (Bellow: 1953 : 283) Bellow's quest for that reality has taken him through many climes of his life and our age. Born in 1915 in Lachine, Canada, he was the fourth and last child of Russian Jewish emigrants from St. Petersburg. He came with his parents to Chicago in 1924, settling down on Division Street. Like Augie March, fictive Chicagoan free style and city-bred, Bellow has remained faithful to the genius of that place, though he has travelled far to Stockholm and Paris, Kyoto and Jerusalem. A literary intellectual, read widely in history and philosophy, sociology and anthropology, he yet refuses to render the rough texture of American experience into abstract schemes or parodic games. A Jew by birth, who grew up speaking Yiddish and Hebrew, French and English, he maintains both his old-world heritage and complex new-world fate without constraint to his vision.

Bellow's work changes, develops over six decades. But his fidelity to some vital concerns, some "friendly truths", gives that work continuity, marking it with the seal of an original temper. For the centre of that novelistic temper is not fashionably "hollow", nor, despite all our "distractions", does the centre break. Quite the contrary: "Out of the struggle at the centre has come an immense, painful longing for a broader, more flexible, fuller, more coherent, more comprehensive account of what we human beings are, who we are, and what this life is for, "Bellow declares in his Nobel speech. The centre, then, radically affirms being.

The character of Bellow's evolving style, like that of his social perceptions, partly derives from the situation of the serious writer whose feelings must run counter to the dominant culture, for whom art and authority must remain disjunctive. Thus the most affirmative of American novelists must also dissent, giving scope to his opposing self when the world attempts to seduce or dissolve that self, as mass society and modernist thought, respectively, threaten to do. Resolutely, Bellow resists as well as himself. "One can seduce the public by giving them precisely what they want. Or, with the authority of art, one can risk their displeasure by telling them what is really in their hearts and hope that somehow or other, one will get through" he remarks. It is, of course, the system of urbanization, mechanization, faceless bureaucracy, large industrial and business corporations, multi-nationals, mass media and other means of manipulating individual lives by remote control, has

resulted in vague feelings of anxiety, alienation, meaninglessness, futility, along with an acute personal sense of isolation, loss of identity, impotence, lack of freedom and contingency.

When placed against the deep-rooted American tradition of free and assertive individualism – the ideals of the pioneer, the frontier adventurer, the self-made man – the need for a philosophy which can comprehend and come to terms with the peculiarly modern predicament of angst and individual impotence, without altogether abrogating traditional values, is understandable. Existentialism by its emphasis on the individual consciousness, personalized values and subjective ethics can claim to offer modern man a modern form of salvation. This is evinced by its emotively loaded, quasi-religious vocabulary e.g. despair, crisis, dread, choice, commitment, freedom, transcendence, authenticity.

Bellow has used existentialism in his fiction because it vindicates the individual despite his limitations and failures by insisting that he can transcend facticity in his own consciousness. Bellow by paradoxically making the ineffectual individual both creator and arbiter of his own values, his existentialism allows the individual to retain the lost vestiges of his human dignity through a neo-stoic affirmation of the self in metaphysical revolt.

My aim in this paper is to depict in the light of the major novels of Bellow that they have worked within the motion from the feeling of seclusion of the hero to his final accommodation with society

or community. Through four successive chapters, each dealing with one novel at a time, I would like to show that Bellow's characters despite the variousness of mood and style of his work, remain much the same. And they face problems, which are reducible to a single problem: to meet with a strong sense of self-the sacrifice of self-demanded by social circumstances. Alienation, a sense of separate and unconciliating identity must travel to accommodation. Bellow's inspiration is finally in other, deeper sources, but as the novels have worked themselves out they have dealt in the terms presented by the history in which the characters have found themselves. The dialogue between alienation and accommodation is what first of all they are about.

In my dissertation which deals with some of the major novels, of Bellow, I would like to point out that there are certain attitudes and insights which have given his work an aspect of originality that's entirely his own. The first three novels carry strong echoes from Dostoievsky, Kafka and Camus, and their slender, tight structures give little idea of the direction his muses were to take eventually. However, even then, it was clear to some discerning readers that Bellow was seeking to break away from the European existentialist despair – a distinctive badge of the fashionable 'wastelands' of the day. And though some of the earlier heroes like Joseph. Asa and Augie are all weighed down by despair, and that imagery of suffocation, engulfment, entrapment and drowning are persistent, they do make efforts to break out into open air and

sunshine. For Joseph, the dangling man, the highest ideal construction is the one that unlocks the imprisoning self. Asa Leventhal in *The Victim* remains a haunted persecuted figure so long as he keeps his spirit under lock and key. Similarly Augie March in *The Adventures of Augie March* graduates to a humanist epiphany which makes him conceive of himself as a servant of love, a neophyte. That is, in the luminous mystery of responsiveness, acceptance, he tries always to align himself with the axial lines of existence truth, love, peace, bounty, usefulness and harmony. He experiences darkness, which no human being evades. Still after all his tribulations, hearing a servant girl laugh, he thinks that's the animal that rides in him, the laughing creature, forever rising up and so he refuses to lead a disappointed life. We can see how this big, comic book restores wonder and a certain blatancy to fiction and despite its excesses, sets an example to post-war novelists intent on accommodating themselves.

Again, Bellow's apotheosis of man's ordinariness, and his radical distrust of all those seeking a unique destiny has a refreshing candour about it. Almost from the beginning, he was seeking to make the point that there are private little blessedness and graces that are worth more than all the clever philosophies put together.

Bellow's early heroes' dangle as victims but Joseph, Leventhal and Augie are intensely aware of themselves as victims. In this dissertation, I have made a modest effort to show that it is precisely Bellow's commitment to the fact of his heroes who have developed self-

awareness that has led him to exploit the introspective space between history and personality, the precious human space in which morality, humour, grace and creativity may conceivably exist. "In fact, the steady current of development from Bellow's earliest work to his latest can be appreciated partially in terms of his painstakingly honest efforts to widen that space between – to present victim man with valid opportunities to enlarge his human capacities." (Rovit: 1975 : 161) Joseph, Leventhal Augie Henderson, Herzog and Sammler are continually victimized, but they are not victims; for want of a better descriptive term, we could call them survivors.

Bellow shows his readers that man at his worst and best, regardless of circumstances can do more than lament his fate; if nothing else, he can give thought to his conscience and responsibility to others. The crux of all his writing, he insists, "is believing in human beings, and this caring or believing or love alone matters. (Bellow: 1957 : 20).

Saul Bellow seeks fictional answers to fundamental questions about human existence and action in our day: "Why were we born? What are we doing here? Where are we going? In its eternal naivete the imagination keeps coming back to these things." His novels from *Dangling Man* (1944) to *Humboldt's Gift* (1975), are imaginative responses to the challenge of being human in today's complex and chaotic world.

Saul Bellow writes that man today, even more urgently

than in the past, has to discover who and what he is. "The great question", writes Bellow, "seems to be when will we seek new and higher forms of individuality, purged of old sicknesses and corrected by a deeper awareness of what all men have in common?' Each of Bellow's protagonists (who are different manifestations of contemporary man) travel in search of humanness, the search gathering, momentum, height, and complexity as one fictional stage succeeds another.

Bellow had to use and develop fictional forms to dramatize this search. This thesis will modestly attempt to understand how some of the novels of Bellow are put together; while doing this Bellow's suggestion is accepted that art has "something to do with the achievement of stillness in the midst of chaos." Bellow himself cannot explain how the artist achieves this stillness, this form, and this order: "I don't say that the novelist knows what order is, but he relies on his imagination to lead his towards it." In a work of art the imagination is the sole source of order. There are critics who assume that you must begin with order if you are to end with it. Not so. A novelist begins with disorder and disharmony, and goes toward order by an unknown process of the imagination.

Each of Bellow's novels demonstrates that the Bellow protagonist is always in search of the human. The novels clearly suggest that they are projections of Bellow's own arduous climb toward true humanness. Each novel marks a stage of the Himalayan ascent, the quest and the humanness manifesting themselves in richer and

increasingly complex forms. This dissertation itself assumes the form of a quest, for it is a journey through and an exploration of the fictional universe that Bellow has created.

The quest begins in the foot hills with Dangling Man.

CHAPTER – I

SAUL BELLOW AND EXISTENTIAL HUMANISM

A literary proverb holds that every writer has but one story to tell. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that every writer is compelled by a single issue. The novelist's plots and characters, however, different, express the same human dilemma: he continually struggles to solve a problem that haunts him. This problem is personal, of course, but it is also in the novelist who commands our attention to a reflection of the larger society. We are compelled as Lionel Trilling says by the writer whose "inner struggle provides us with the largest representation of the culture in which we, with him are involved (Trilling: 1953 : 176).

Saul Bellow is clearly such a writer. Whatever Bellow's final position in literary history, he creates in his present reader a deeply personal response. He too, as he has said of Hemingway, "has found out some of the secret places of our pride and trouble." (Bellow: 1953 : 338).

Winner of a string of prizes, Nobel and Pulitzer included, Saul Bellow has given us a sequence of novels – The Dangling Man, Herzog, and Humboldt's Gift among them – that, according to his Nobel citation, combined "human understanding and subtle analysis of contemporary culture" and forged an original style by juxtaposing adventure, tragedy and philosophy.

Bellow had read much in modern European existentialism before he wrote his first novel *Dangling Man* (1944). And Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* was first published in French in 1943. It is not known whether he had read it before he wrote his first novel, but what is more important is that Bellow did write in an intellectual climate pervaded by the raw material of existentialism – a climate marked by the loss of traditional faith, the sense of a hostile, indifferent or absurd universe and the consequent need for man to turn to his own inner resources. This ethos is clearly reflected in *Dangling Man* and Bellow's second novel *The Victim* (1947).

There are various strands in existentialist philosophy and it will be hard to find two existentialist thinkers with identical views on all elements that their thought covers. But one view that could be perhaps called cardinal to this body of thought is that the possibility of choice is the central fact of human nature. Almost all of Bellow's fiction dramatises what has come to be known as modern man's predicament, his loss of moorings and of a sense of community, his feeling of isolation from a world which he finds absurd and the despair resulting from these.

But in an interview Bellow himself has said that his books are concerned with free choice. He says, "I seem to have asked in my books, how can one resist the controls of this vast society without turning into a nihilist, avoiding the absurdity of empty rebellion? I have asked, are there other, more good-natured forms of resistance and free choice? And I suppose that, like most Americans, I have

involuntarily favoured the more comforting or melioristic side of the question. "He also says, I've tried to suggest this in my books that there may be truths on the side of life. I am quite prepared to admit that being habitual liars and self-deluders, we have good cause to fear the truth, but I'm not at all ready to stop hoping. There may be some truths which are, after all, our friends in the universe." (Harper: 1967 : 48).

A concern with what Bellow himself has called man's "sub-angelic" nature is also a persistent presence in all his fiction. As Bellow himself has said in the context of modern fiction:

> "The dread is great, the soul is small; man might be god like but he is wretched; the heart should be open, but it is sealed by fear. If man wretched by nature is represented, what we have here is only accurate reporting. But if it is man in the image of God, man little lower than the angels who is impotent, the case is not the same. And it is the second assumption, the sub-angelic one, that writers generally make. For they are prone, as Nietzsche said in Human, All Too Human, to exaggerate the value of human personality. I don't know whether exaggeration is quite the word, but what it suggests we can certainly agree with. Why should wretched man need power or wish to inflate himself with imaginary glory? If this is what power signifies it can only be Vanity to suffer from impotence. On the nobler assumption he should have at least sufficient power to overcome ignominy and to complete his own life. His suffering, feebleness, servitude then have a

> meaning. This is what writers have taken to be the justification of power. It should reveal the greatness of man. And if no other power will do this, the power of the imagination will take the task upon itself." (1957 : 15).

This was said in 1957 in an essay called "Distractions of a Fiction Writer: which is a vital document to an understanding of Bellow's thinking on modern fiction in general and his own fiction in particular.

Ihab Hassan's discussion of the contemporary American novel in *Radical Innocence* is worth detailing because of its representative nature. He equates the modern American experiences the conditions of which are gratuitous action, encounter with absurdity, anarchy, death, and nihilism, with the existential. The helpless individual is pitted against technology and all contemporary political systems. The search is for self-definition and freedom, and the necessity is for retreat into selfhood. Hassan concludes that existential awareness is based on the discovery of the "aboriginal self" which in turn is the primal anarchic American self. Hassan's account is representative of those tendencies which transform existentialism by grafting it to a liberal humanism. What results is a paradoxically affirmative value system capable of providing something like salvation for modern man.

It will be useful to examine briefly such notions as

meaninglessness, alienation and subjectivity, which usually support popular versions of existential philosophy. Alfred Kazin explains the predilection for meaninglessness as a "temporary fatigue" representing the sometimes frolicsome dependency of intellectuals who see no great place for their moral influence – for changing things – in a future laid out in advance by technology. (1973 : 245) The tendency to reify meaninglessness emerges from within existential thought itself. Theodor Adorno in his critique of Heideggar (in which he traces the tendency within Heideggar's existentialism to align itself with German nationalism) connects the experience of meaninglessness with the presence of leisure in a society, which does not provide real freedom for the individual. Powerlessness and nothingness instead of being seen as a historical state of affairs are "eternalized" as the "pure essence" or substance of man : "actual, avoidable, or at least corrigible need." Is revered as "the most humane element in the image of man." (Tarmowski & Will: 1964 : 34-36).

The concept of alienation, which has a central place in existentialism, has acquired a broad significance and range in our century. In sociological terms alienation can mean loneliness, the absence of relationships, the feeling of dissociation from others or the explicit rejection of social values and norms, the sense of both powerlessness in the face of existing social structures as well as the sense of their meaninglessness. While sociological categories of alienation register the inability to relate outside one's self, existential categories, on the other hand, indicate alienation from the self the

failure to experience oneself which may come from an excess of conformity or a lack of individuality or spontaneity. Consequently they call into question the criteria of self-hood. Heidegger in *Being and Time* (1927) equates alienation with being cut off from one's potential "authentic" existence (a Being – toward Death) by over involvement in the present or a superficial understanding of oneself. For Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) alienation is the individual's experience of himself as an object, which is not a disparity to be overcome but a fact to be acknowledged. Alienation as a sociological category is a historical phenomenon susceptible to change, but as an existential category it is axiomatic becoming almost the quintessence of human nature. It is therefore both an eminently social and an asocial concept.

The basis for the over-valuation of subjectivity lies in the importance of existential though gives to the conscious subject as meaning giver: the world acquires existence only to the extent that it enters individual experience. Truth and value are located in the self-discovery and the self-creation of the individual in his attempt to arrive at his authentic self and subsequently freedom.

Existentialism becomes a means for transcending the limiting social environment. By making subjectivity a supreme value some critical commentary on Bellow elevates his protagonists into symbols of the general human condition, of a transcendental conception of humanity. Subjectivity becomes the central component of a humanism in which an exaltation of the nature of "Man",

measure of all things, is conjoined with his refusal to be defined either by his environment or by history. The premium placed on the subjective individual self increases in proportion to his actual dehumanization in society. The intactness of the self then must be maintained at any cost. Existentialism in some popular readings of the modern American novel is transformed into a liberal humanist value. Liberal humanism puts its belief in a universal human nature, insists on the freedom of the individual to realize his human capacity, and opposes those social institutions which denies the individual his right to self development; when grafted on existentialism (or vice versa) it allows the individual to realize his human capacity, it allows the individual to be exalted even while he is shown as helpless. This in turn becomes a means of reconciling the individual to his historical plight.

The tendency stemming from existentialism, which retreat into self-hood as a means of salvation provides a foundation for a religious optimism about the fate of the universe. This in turn leads to the search for redemption in every modern novel. For example Ihab Hassan's new hero; the "rebel-victim", bearer of an "existential" and "self-made" morality which is full of "ironies and ambiguities" is endowed nevertheless with a "will" which is "always in some sense redemptive". (1973 : 25)

Critical commentary on Bellow, which acclaims him as an existential novelist usually, claims for him a redemptive and transcendental humanism. Howard Harper and R.R. Dutton define

Bellow's existentialism in Sartrean terms: man himself is the measure of all things and he is what he chooses to be. They see Bellow's heroes as drifting aimlessly, indulging in gratuitous action, haunted by or confronting death, trapped and alienated yet searching for identity and meaning. Dutton stresses the value of subjectivity for Bellow and like Nathan A. Scott Jr. rejects all social determinism for Bellow's characters. For Scott the "Central moments" in the experience of a Bellow character are those in which he, "transcending the immediate pressures of his environment and the limiting conditions of the social matrix, asks himself some fundamental questions about the nature of his own humanity (1973 : 105). Dutton locates Bellow in the humanist tradition for continuing to exalt the nature of man. For Harper Bellow's protagonists are initiated into "a larger transcendental conception of humanity" which transcends the limited and limiting dimension of "pure reason" (1967 : 20). For Scott though Bellow's protagonists are burdened by "the pressure of concrete circumstance" and the "bitter taste" of "in authenticity the novels still move towards "disburdenment" and reconciliation. He sees Bellow as being critical of such existential notions as allegation, Angst and nothingness. He ascribes this partially to Bellow's deepening "conviction that the way into blessedness and felicity is the way of what Martin Heisleggar called Gelassenheit of acquiescent submission to the multileveled and medical mystery of existence, the way of falling into peace." But Gelassenheit need not "entail any abdication from the social contract" for Bellow "knows that the world supports and confirms the sacrament of selfhood

only in the degree to which it is organized along the lines of some viable form of co-existence." (1973 : 108)

Nathan Scott does not entirely reject the determination of the individual by external factors – he attempts to have it both ways by combining the sacramental view of self with a recognition of concrete factuality and fellow manhood. Similarly, John. J. Clayton takes an ambiguous stand. Bellow for him has an existential sensibility which takes cognizance of the despair, alienation's, and emptiness of modern life, yet takes a stand against the "wasteland" and opts for "brotherhood and community". Bellow values individuality but sees social redemption as coming through replacing individuality by concern for others. Clayton takes a moralistic stance and opts for a non-solipsistic existentialism. His rejection of the negative character of existentialism comes from the affirmative character of his liberal humanist standpoint. So we are given a portrait of Bellow as a critic of existentialism who had nevertheless accepted its central assumptions; living in the here and now, rejecting the "constructed" self, obsessed with pure being, accepting the "necessity of confronting one 'sown death in order to become authentic." (1968 : 4) Max. F. Schulz depicts Bellow as a moderate existentialist who rejects reason and modern positivism in favour of a more encompassing embrace of experience – of the whole man. Bellow resists both existential despair and nada as well as naïve optimism and settles for a humanism, which accepts the pain of existence. The contours of this humanism are now familiar: the heart

as a guide to morality, the psychic and spiritual triumph over a sleuth bravely confronted, the celebration of individual identity while aiming for an equilibrium between the individual and society, the maintenance of the "integral self" – "civilization exists, Bellow would have it, only so long as the individual can retain his selfness intact". (1969: 128, 29) All these critical commentaries find some kind of redemption in Bellow's fiction whether it is affirmation of man's unique individuality, the celebration of the whole man, the acceptance of community or submission to the mystery of existence.

Bellow's relation to both existentialism and humanism is oblique; the so-called redemptive aspects of his fiction in fact result in a strange quiescence, which reveals the true nature of his concern for man. Josephine Hendin has called the intelligence of Bellow's heroes "a diversion from the real world" – "ideas provide relief" from personal problems but "no solutions". (1978 : 213) The individual consciousness seems to be Bellow's version of fate – the significant theme in *Herzog* for him is "the imprisonment of the individual in a shameful and impotent privacy", which is not an "intellectual privilege" but "another form of bondage," (Tanner: 1971 : 304) Despite this recognition on Bellow's part the failure of his protagonists to break out becomes an existential inversion of the success ethic, his badge of success.

Herzog and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* present a view of man, which elevates his selfness at the same time as it acknowledges his social

impotence and futility. This combination works as an assertion of faith in Man as well as a simultaneous rationalisation of his helplessness. Bellow's fictions, imply an unchangeable social reality in which the individual's impotence becomes a universal category and must therefore, along with his subjectivity, be elevated if some semblance of humanism is to remain intact. So Dutton's description of Herzog – as the intellectual suffering from self-doubt regarding his social relevance as well as a symbol of the general human condition – unwillingly reveals the paradox on which Bellow's fiction seems to be based.

For Bellow the existential perspective functions as a gesture toward the autonomy of the individual but in his fiction the content of this autonomy is in doubt. If any effort is to be made to see existentialism in perspective – both as a critical response to the contemporary situation as well as a philosophy which contains the potential for being transformed into an instrument for buttressing that very situation – then this is more than a significant trend. The tendency in post-war Europe has been for existential philosophy to align itself overtly with politics, as in Sartre's Marxism, or to become apolitical as with Camus. In Bellow there is a discernible tendency to revitalize an existing liberal humanism with an existential attitude. Inversely, he colours the existential stance with an ethical and religious tincture.

The titles *Dangling Man* and *The Victim* are themselves suggestive of alienation, uncertainty and despair. And much of what

happens to the protagonists would seem to justify this reading. But such a reading takes into account only one aspect of the protagonist's situation – his alienation and despair in *Dangling Man*, and his uncertainty and struggle for self-identity in *The Victim*. In the existentialist outlook man's encounter with the world around and with his own self is crucial and to that extent both these novels are suffused with the existentialist atmosphere. As I have discussed earlier, the other existentialist step – exercise of the will, the making of a choice and the end of alienation – is also, though in a sub-dued way, present in these novels. It seems to me that the bulk of these short novels being given over to the protagonists' despair and his rather hopeless looking struggle, the quiet, almost muffled, note signifying the choice to affirm possibility and to connect himself with human kind is overlooked. In *Dangling Man, The Victim* and in *The Adventures of Augie March*, the protagonist squarely and comprehensively encounters himself. Even in a novel such as Augie March, defined from the very first as episodic, Bellow is finally moral, seeking a pattern, a meaning, an explanation of cause. Augie after all seeks a fate good enough, and his life is strewn with traps. His cheerful nature is increasingly tested by blows. And at the end, the reader is reminded that the whole book is a reminiscence by a rather saddened individual seeking to retain his buoyancy. Richard Pearce puts the matter very nicely when he writes that Bellow "continually affirms the heroic potential of character, the rational order of plot, the possibility of attaining wisdom through an understanding of cause and effect". (Peace: 1975 : 80)

In this dissertation it would be our endeavour to show that although the three Bellow protagonists are unable to accomplish anything that significantly reshapes their world, they do manage to save themselves by coming to an accommodation with the world as it is. The three Bellow heroes lift themselves out of their malaise by discovering within themselves an essential force for life.

"Nobody truly occupies a station in life any more. There are mostly people who fell that they occupy the place that belongs to another by rights. There are displaced persons everywhere." (Bellow: 1953 : 2) These happen to be the words of Bellow's displaced millionaire Eugene Henderson, but they could have been spoken by almost any of Bellow's characters, or, for that matter, by Bellow himself.

The creation of a recognisable character type, the Bellow hero is Bellow's major accomplishment. The faces and individual circumstances of this hero have varied from fiction to fiction. He has been rich and poor, well and ill-educated, he has grown from youth to middle age, gone to war, multiplied his wives and mistresses, narrowed and extended his field of operations with the world. But when we compare the personal of his earliest published sketches in 1941 (*Two Morning Monologues*) with his later ones, we realize that the alterations in the hero are surprisingly superficial. He postures to a Dostoevskian rhythm in *Dangling Man.* He is clumsy and vulnerable in *The Victim* and *Seize the day* and in *Augie March* he affects the free wheeling manner of an unlikely re-incarnation of Huck Finn and finally, in the character of Moses Herzog, he absorbs

all his previous follies in a comical apotheosis of despair. The variations among the individual protagonists seem largely to be due to the expedients of their different dramatic settings. Any one of them could collapse into a paroxysm of welcome tears over a stranger funeral bier." Any one of them could fulminate with the righteous rage of a Jeremiah and be capable of no greater violence than the spanking of a fifteen-year-old niece. And any one of them could find himself knotted in impotent frustration, praying desperately: "For all the time I have wasted I am very sorry. Let me out of this clutch and into a different life. For I am all belled up. Have mercy." The Bellow hero is a composite of them all, a blend of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus a cogent blur of modern man as comic sufferer. He is Jewish, an avid undisciplined reader with an erratic memory for assorted trivia and passages of moral exhortation, a city dweller oscillating between seizures of inarticulate yearning ("I want!") and "narcotic dullness". In a strange way he is the introspective inversion of the Hemingway hero, his most immediate Chicago predecessor. Like him, he is fearfully alone and afraid, like him he struggles incessantly to achieve dignity and to impose a moral dimension upon life. But unlike him, he is cursed or blessed with a pervasive sense of irony, he is mistrustful of action sceptical of heroics, painfully aware of the limitations of reason as only an intellectual can be, but unwilling at the same time to surrender himself to the dangerous passions of unreason.

His heroes are frequently at odds with the society they inhabit,

searching for the freedom of self. But it is as much the self as the world that must undergo a proper adaptation. This being so, his novels have a dense moral and psychological dimension which owes a good deal to Dostoevsky and similar European novelists, and his urban landscape is not simply anonymous, but a landscape of the spirit which must be realised as reality and turned into a condition for growth and self renewal. There is an explicit resistance in his novels, in particular in 'Herzog', to those who would instruct us in the bleak absurdity of reality, who say that man is necessarily alienated, who tell us that the age of the moralised and personal self is finished. It is in conducting his quarrel with such views that Bellow gets much of his energy as a writer, and his standpoint is not, as many critics have suggested, one simply of adaptation to the system, but one that liberally seeks to restore a true sense of fullness of self-hood, that demands that the world be made for men. There is a core of deeply realised humanity in his clear conviction that the essential task is to discover the basis of individuality and brotherhood in a world of singularly complex reality. Most of his heroes bear the burden of working out, in the most difficult circumstances a satisfactory relationship to other man and to the moral demands of the self in a universe intensely complicated philosophically and socially, a world in which as one of these heroes, Henderson, puts it, no man has a place any longer. Through his novels he works out these themes with an exuberant imaginative zest. In part this comes from the richness of a prose that can effectively allude to moral matters because it has all the force of

Jewish soul searching for rhetoric behind it, which can reach from the comedy of suffering to the ideal of aspiration towards human grandeur, which can sustain and appeal to the transcendental and eternal as a consistent and fundamental elements of his style. In the earlier novels the essential theme of inquiry is man's obligations towards others. In the later ones it becomes an often euphoric exploration of the grandeur of self. The euphoria is sustained often, as a relieving comedy then carries this sense of grandeur without at all diminishing the nature of significance of human suffering and pain. "Herzog, though not Bellow's best book, draws all these themes and qualities together in its portrait of Moses Hersog, the disturbed Jewish intellectual moving through New York and Chicago and quarelling, in letters addressed to the great living and the great dead, with their pessimistic answers to the problems of the world, with their abstract historicism and fading humanism."

Bellow has characteristically channelled his intelligence towards questions concerning the moral possibilities of contemporary life, he has staunchly identified himself as a writer who very consciously wrestles with the desperate ambiguities of morality in a world where religious sanctions no longer operate save as a sentimental judgement and an unappeasable nostalgia. The problematic theme to which Bellow has been irresistibly drawn is that of trying to reconcile virtue with the fact of self-consciousness : can modern man attain "dignity", can he live a good life when he

must assume the traditional function of God, when he himself must judge his own frailties, cowardice's, and ignoble motives? Bellow's struggle to arrive at a workable moral identity which has led him inevitably into the ambiguous modes of comic and grotesque irony, that style that is the last ditch defence against despair.

For Bellow, a story line seems more than anything else a weblike scenario that he weaves more and more tightly around his captured protagonist, it is primarily a method of presenting the stifling power of the human predicament in order to measure his hero's ability to endure the harrowing weight of his own life. In effect, the typical Bellow plot is rarely more than a device to bring his protagonist and his reader into a heightened emotional awareness of the thin slaver of freedom that life permits to consciousness. Bellow never fully succumbs to the stark naturalistic view. Joseph, Leventhal and Tommy Wilhelm are clearly victims, but they are victims who are intensely aware of themselves as victims. And it is precisely Bellow's commitment to the fact of their developed self-awareness that has led him to exploit the introspective space between history and personality, the precious human space in which morality, humour, grace and creativity may conceivably exist. In fact, the steady current of development from Bellow's earliest work to his latest can be appreciated partially in terms of his painstakingly honest efforts to widen that space between – to present victim man with valid opportunities to enlarge his human capacities. Augie, Henderson, Herzog and Sammler are continually victimised, but they

are not victims, forwant of a better descriptive term, we could call them survivors. Bellow's survivors pick their way gingerly through the detritus of their experience, straining to maintain a precarious balance between the irrevocabilities of the past and the dwindling possibilities of the future. Bellow cautiously explores and exploits the introspective space within. His individual fictions have a strong family resemblance to one another and his thematic concern with the ambiguities of morality and personality has grown suppler and more tensile with his increasing craftsmanship. Along with this mastery, his later novels seem to breathe an air of richer repose, Bellow gives the impression of moving with larger ease and freedom through the bleak foreground of his own world as he gains confidence in the reality and value of the creative self-consciousness.

But Bellow's ambiguity also results from the very ambition of his quest for meaning. His intention has remained intensely moral. His hero always seeks some revelation: Bellow himself always shares that quest. His novels often begin with a brilliant conception, the idea of the ambiguous victim or the character of Henderson and his protagonists' claim of having solved a problem. Henderson tells us at the outset that "living proof of something of the highest importance has been presented to me." And Herzog feels "confident, cheerful, clairvoyant, and strong." Bellow's novels often end with Bellow labouring to keep his hero's promise.

But Bellow's difficulty in ending his novels does suggest an art divided against itself. His protagonists find their pain in

division and seek the revelation that synthesizes. Bellow's use of debate and dialogue, contrasting pairs and parallel plots, his penchant for summary and his repetition of situation all attempts to resolve conflict.

This dissertation is an attempt to define the conflict in four Bellow novels *Dangling Man*, *The Victim*, *The Adventures of Augie March*, and *Herzog*, and to show through these novels how Bellow is aware of the buoyancy of man, and takes it as a cause for celebration. He is aware of the ultimate helplessness of man before fate and takes it, without sentimentality or apology, as something mysterious; but his final *appeal* is not to the resolution of man's conflict with fate but to the spectacle of man seeking resolution.

In book after book, Bellow reveals the journey of his hero from within to without, from one's self to society, from guilt to freedom, from idea to reality. And in all this journey or quest, Bellow emphasizes the beauty and virtue and holiness of experience qua experience. It's only when the victims learn the strategies for survival and are prepared to undertake adventures of spirit that they can hope to live authentically in this irrational world. In fact, the theme of salvation is almost wholly related to the recovery of the spirit in the midst of life's squalor, pain and tragedy.

What distinguishes Bellow from many other contemporary American novelists is the tension he manages to create between the actual world and the trust he puts in man. He does not exclude from

his fiction the violent chaotic, corrupt, and dangerous world he sees out there; he plants his characters firmly in it. But he does not describe the situation as totally helpless and absurd, nor does he give us an interpretation of history as ineluctably leading to utter destruction. Sarcasm and nihilism are not his cup of tea. Reason, human reason, is still of paramount importance to Bellow, for it enables man to understand... In Bellow's novels, therefore, the individual is seen in conflict with society and with himself. But Bellow remains well within the humanist tradition. Indeed he is conscious of the chaos of the world and of the arbitrary quality of civilised society... but he sees no choice for man but to go on living among those elements. He sees escape or refusal as impossible or impractical.

Jonathan, Wilson's *On Bellow's Planet : Readings from the dark side* (1985), sets out to explain the reasons why the majority view of Bellow as a lone voice on the apocalyptic battlefields, still sounding the virtues of humanism, upholding the values of community is one that represents an error of some magnitude. (On Bellow's Planet: Readings from the Dark side, Ganbury, New Jersey: 1985 p. 18) Dangling between humanist dream and persecuted reality, Wilson proposes that Bellow's fiction resolves into a 'Static dialectic' with masochistic heroes who persistently attack the objects of their own desire and behaviourally contradict their most cherished ideals. There is, he finally claims, an energy of paralysis writ large throughout Bellow's fiction, unable to realize life-affirming humanism

in the reality of their lives, his heroes "sustain themselves by falling back on their intellects and imaginations. Ultimately, then, Wilson acknowledges the humanist dimension in fictions but insists that it is only a safety valve through which the hero temporarily escapes from reality: "Submerged in this harsh, unaccommodating world, Bellow's heroes persistently try to imagine a better one... Denying any objective validity to their own negative experience of the world, the heroes imagine a world of truth, order, harmony, and love to which they aspire, and to which they are sentimentally attached, but in which they never arrive" (Wilson, p. 19)

Saul Bellow's humanity and compassion radiate from every novel, his skill is incredible – in particular, his ability to describe experience in a human voice so that the texture of the experience comes through, and his ability to convey the philosophical-moral complexities of human life without losing that life itself. Bellow being the spokesman of modern culture voices certain uncertainties, its complexities, its paradoxes. So Saul Bellow's fiction contains some inter-related contradictions. Bellow takes a stand against the cultural nihilism of the twentieth century against Dada, against the Wasteland, against the denigration of human life in modern society yet Bellow is himself essentially a depressive, and his imagination is as horrified by the emptiness of modern life as is Ionesco's.

Bellow rejects the tradition of alienation in modern literature, *and his fiction emphasizes the value of brotherhood and community,* yet his main characters are all masochists and alienates.

Bellow is particularly hostile to the devaluation of the "separate self" in modern literature, and he values individuality nearly as highly as did Emerson. Yet in novel after novel he is forced to discard individuality, not simply because the individual is insignificant in the face of terrible forces, but also because individuality is undesirable, a burden which keeps the human being from love. The state of grace which his heroes approach is an anonymous state which is the polar opposite of the individuality Bellow loves and wishes to defend, but it is a state which enables Bellow to keep faith in the human being and in the possibility of his union with others.

We can better understand these contradictions by understanding their origins in Bellow's characters. They feel guilty, unworthy to live, they defend the human being in order to defend themselves. And so the Darkness and the struggle to escape the Darkness describe the psychic condition of Bellow's heroes before they describe the human condition; Bellow is a psychological novelist before he is a social novelist or moral spokesman. And the solution to the contradiction over individuality is also psychological before intellectual, that is, the heroes find that only by becoming unburdened of their guilty selves and entering the "shared condition of all" can they hope to become worthy.

CHAPTER – II

AFFIRMATION IN DANGLING MAN

Dangling Man, published in the mid 1940's took its term from the forties and pushed a dour hero over the arc from the impossibility of alienation to the death in accommodation.

Intellectuals have often used the major catastrophe of their age – its plague or war or fire – to describe the human condition. Joseph, the Dangling Man of Bellow's first novel, is no exception. He views his imminent draft into World War-II as the epitome of death and determinism.

The opposition between an enslaving world and man's desire for freedom is of course a common literary theme. The conflict, which Bellow defines, however, lies not between the self and the world but tow attitudes toward the world. Joseph speaks of preparation rather than action. He admits the victory of the world over his physical being and seeks a source of value that is inherent in his inner self. He seeks not to do battle with the world, like the ordinary hero, nor to make those symbolic gestures by which the Hemingway hero proves his dignity, but to discover within himself the reality which renders such conflict superfluous. Since Joseph's consciousness is central to the novel, all else being peripheral, a valid approach to the theme can be made through an analysis of his view of himself. To himself, Joseph is the 'I', the participant in

experience and the source of contemplation, as well as the he, an object to be discussed and commented upon. This ability to view himself as a separate entity is both liberating and limiting in its range: it brings into perspective not only the two places on which Joseph lives, but also the crippling inability of the viewer in him to remedy the sickness from which the viewed suffers. The viewer can note the symptoms but cannot define the causes and diagnose the ailment. As a participant in experience, Joseph is time bound and history ridden – he cannot escape the society in which he is born and the challenge that it poses:

> "Whether I like it or not, they were my generation, my society, my world. We were figures in the same plot, eternally fixed together. I was aware, also, that their existence, just as it was, made mine possible. And if, as was often said, this part of the century was approaching the nether curve of a cycle, then I, too, would remain on the bottom and there, extinct, merely add my body, my life, to the base of a coming time."
> (Bellow: 1945 : 25)

As a spectator and thinker, on the other hand, Joseph would stand no finitude; in fact, he would jump time and space, if possible, and attain being, for ordinary existence disgusts him, though he considers it a prerogative to answer the vital existential question. "How should a good man live; what ought he to do?" (Bellow: 1944 : 39) *Dangling Man* is about Joseph's confrontation with these questions during the period of waiting which follows his

resignation from his job in the American Travel Bureau to respond to the Army's call for induction. Joseph's peculiar position in society gives him both the leisure and the impetus to discover his self. He seeks the answer to the questions by submitting himself to a painful trial of loneliness and self-scrutiny, discovering in the process that all possible avenues of escape into life-status, ideology, aestheticism, religion, family and friends have been barred to him. Being unemployed he has lost his sense of place and security in the society. His disillusionment with Marxism derives from his recognition that vital answer cannot be sought in radical political ideologies. The superior world of imagination, of art and books, which represented to him earlier "an extended life, far more precious than the one I was forced to lead daily." (Bellow: 1944 : 10) now appears inadequate for his purposes, though it continues to serve well for his artist friend John Pearl who has discovered in it a connection with "the best part of mankind." (Bellow: 1944 : 91) His quest for a happy citizenry, however, excludes God, since the pre-condition for religious initiation, to him, is a "miserable surrender... born out of disheartenment and chaos." (Bellow: 1944 : 68) He also turns away from his family and friends, thus rejecting another source of purposive and cohesive living. He refuses the offer of his brother Amos to help him out of his difficulties and does not feel impelled to renew contacts with his friends. From his wife he already feels alienated, though he continues to live with her and be supported by her in his unemployed state.

> "We no longer confide in each other", he says, "in fact, there are many things I could not mention to her. We have friends, but we no longer see them... the main bolt that held us together has given way, and so far I have had no incentive to replace it." (Bellow: 1944 : 12)

This distrust of others finds an eloquent expression in Joseph's behaviour with his father-in-law, when the latter falls ill. Joseph regards his mother-in-law as insufferable and asks his father-in-law rather tactlessly how he had managed to tolerate her so long. Old Almstadl's complacent fondness for his wife puzzles Joseph, particularly because he knows that it does not result from hypocrisy or passive resignation. Joseph does not share Old Almstadl's acceptance of life's ordinariness. While he is able to sense the exact nature of the old man's sentiment for his wife, he is unable to recognise the necessity of such an outlook for himself. In Bellow's moral framework, he is therefore, found lacking "in the determining quality of humanness – the power to love, to believe in the existence of human beings as such." (Bellow: 1962 : 30)

When a friend tells him that he is "all fenced around" (Bellow: 1944 : 54) Joseph ignores the remarks, mistakenly believing that by withdrawing from the suffocating actuality of life, it is possible to arrive at a more refined conception of the self. Joseph fails to see that such an attitude pre-supposes ideal categories and that it can inflate the ego and intensify loneliness. Isolation, as Karl Jaspers puts it, seldom leads to a refined state of being:

> "The individual cannot become human by himself. Self-being is only real in communication with another self-being. Alone, I sink into gloomy isolation – only in community with others can I be revealed in the act of natural discovery... isolated or self-isolating being remains mere potentiality or disappears into nothingness." (Kaufmann: 1959 : 147)

Joseph can be compared with the protagonist of Dostoevsky's *Notes From Underground*. Both can theorize efficiently about ideal possibilities but cannot transform them into existential realities. But important as the parallel is, it is also very essential to distinguish between the situations of the two protagonists. To Dostoevsky's hero the events have already happened: the recall of what he calls his evil memory is thus necessarily tinged with the insights he has gained in the course of his trial. Bellow's hero, on the other hand, is in the midst of experience: events are happening to him and he is unable to chart his mental growth as perceptively as Dostoevsky's hero can. He, therefore, does not realize that in his quest for an intangible world of the spirit as opposed to the tangible, visible world, he has ceased to be authentic. The underground man's description of the generalized man fits him perfectly:

> "We are oppressed at being men – men with a real individual body and blood, we are ashamed of it, we think it a disgrace and try to contrive to be some sort of impossible generalized man. We are still born, and for generations past have been begotten, not by living fathers, and that suits us better and better. We are

developing a taste for it. Soon we shall contrive to be born somehow from an idea." (Shishkoff: 1969 : 140)

The impossibility of translating his dream of the "Colony of the spirit" into reality is brought home to Joseph at the Servatius party. Joseph is revolted by the insult heaped on his drunken and hypnotized hostess Minna Servatius by Abt, an old suitor she had rejected long ago. His own wife gets drunk and has to be helped into the cab. Feeling let down by the imperfections of human nature, Joseph realizes that there are many "treasons" that corrupt his cherished ideals: "they were a medium, like air, like water; they passed in and out of you, they made themselves your accomplices, nothing was impenetrable to them." (Bellow: 1944 : 56) He is also conscious that a search for the ideal to the exclusion of everything else is self-defeating because the ideal might never be reached. This makes people place a high premium on greatness, on the notion of being exceptional, unique, and set apart.

Joseph learns soon that the ordinary and the dismal, the crass and the stubborn, in fact all that constitutes reality cannot be avoided. His day to day encounters with relatives and friends and even with total strangers force on him the recognition that he too is common, vulnerable to anger, suspicion and humiliation, often an object of pity. His maidservant arrogantly smokes in his presence, making him feel that he is of no consequence. He flares up when an old communist acquaintance deliberately ignores him in a restaurant. He quarrels with his wife when she asks him to cash

her pay cheque and suspects that she is making him run errands because she supports him. Accused by his niece Etta of attempting assault on her person, Joseph is struck by her facial resemblance to him and recalls with discomfiture that the mother of a boyhood friend had once called him Mephistopheles. Joseph is unable to rid himself of the feeling that in his semblance with Etta and Mephistopheles he shares with mankind its evil. Identified, thus, with the sordid aspects of life almost involuntarily, he discovers that there is another fact of reality – the fear of death, which he cannot evade. Although in his waking hours Joseph tries to ignore his fear of death, in his dreams he is unable to control its projection. The inescapable truth of morality dawns upon Joseph in many of his dreams. In one dream he hears foot-steps behind him in a muddy backlane and, overtaken, finds the swollen face of the man who has collapsed in the street coming toward him, "Until I felt its bristles and a cold pressure of the nose, the lips kissed me on the temple with a laugh and a groan. Blindly I ran..." (Bellow: 1944 : 122) The ream suggests that howsoever strong one's claims on uniqueness, the kiss of death is implanted on every face. The laugh and the groan indicate the irony and the pain involved in the inevitable condition of being human, a condition shared by all men. The insights Joseph gains in the course of the novel are brought to a focus in his dialogues with the spirit of Alternatives. Bellow uses these dialogues with a double advantage: they offer the reader an additional angle to view Joseph's situation, but, more significantly, they help Joseph to arrive at the truth about himself through a process of self-analysis.

In his first session with the spirit, Joseph confesses that though in many ways he himself is alienated, he considers alienation a fool's plea because the alienated individual is so much a part and product of the world he sets out to reject that his very denial implicates him (Bellow: 1944 : 137). His attempt to renounce the world merely prompts him to move away from himself.

In order to bridge the gap between the self and the world, most people invent their own ideal constructions of reality. But Joseph wonders whether the gap between the ideal construction and the world can really be bridged. Although Joseph is unable to find an answer to this question, he is convinced that the basic urge behind the invention of all ideal constructions is the same – the desire for pure freedom:

> "The quest, I am beginning to think, whether it be for money, for notoreity, reputation, increase of pride, whether it leads us to thievery, slaughter, sacrifice, the quest is one and the same. All the striving is for one end; I do not entirely understand this impulse. But it seems to me that its final end is the desire for pure freedom. We are all drawn toward the same craters of the spirit – to know what we are and what we are for, to know our purpose, to seek grace. And, if the quest is the same, the difference in our personal histories, which hitherto meant so much to us, become of minor importance". (Bellow: 1944 : 154)

The highest ideal construction, according to Joseph, is "the

one that unlocks the imprisoning self." (Bellow: 1944 : 153) obviously, Joseph is here distinguishing between the "public self" and the "true self" without taking into account the contradiction inherent in his formulation. If the quest of all men is the same and if differences in personal histories are of little value, how far is one justified in conceiving a self – a personal, separated self – which has to be realised from the prison of the public self? And, then, if a personal self is non-existent, where is the need for an ideal construction to liberate it? Not aware of this dichotomy, Joseph fails to see that his acknowledgement and affirmation of the fate of mankind, in life and death, runs counter to his quest for an autonomous identity that may preserve him "in this flood of death that has carried off so many like me." (Bellow: 1944 : 167) He is conscious of the duality of his position, but cannot reason it out.

Joseph's uneasiness and confusion derive from his growing feeling that his search for an autonomous self has been futile and that he has not found a satisfactory answer to the problem of good life. As a result, he is at a loss to make any use of his freedom. He precipitates his draft call after a quarrel with his neighbour and his landlord, finding it impossible to withstand the unceasing and relentless pressure of the world around him. He feels that loneliness has not helped him in his struggle and hopes to evolve a more accommodating and comprehensive attitude to reality by participating in war and violence, which evoke unexpected responses in men and reveal them in their essential form:

> "I had not done well alone. I doubted whether anyone could. To be pushed upon one entirely put the very facts of simple existence in doubt. Perhaps the war could teach me, by violence, what I had been unable to learn during those months in the room. Perhaps I could sound creation through other means. Perhaps." (Bellow: 1944 : 190 – 191)

The pattern of Joseph's self-discovery has greater affinity with Antione Roquentin's in Sartre's *Nausea*. Both the heroes, alienated from themselves and their environment, view their respective situation as observers and hope to find security in the neat roles they attempt to construct for themselves to overcome the nausea of a meaningless life. Like Sartre, Bellow qualifies his affirmation in proportion to the limitation of his hero and makes it more a matter of perspective than of explicit statements and overtly suggestive actions. Though by enlisting himself in the army Joseph does not reach an ideal positive freedom, yet he is spared the predicament of Dostoevsky's underground Man who suffers from spite and inertia and delights in degradation for its own sake. Joseph is also saved from creating ideal constructions of reality, which give an illusion of meaning and do not allow men to know the truth about themselves. Then, there is Joseph's assurance that he would "be a member of the Army but not a part of it." (Bellow: 1944 : 133) using the period of his service as a "spiritual preparation" (Bellow: 1944 : 191) for sounding "creation through other means." (Bellow: 1944 : 191) This is not an altogether hopeless desire because it is accompanied by the recognition that reality cannot be captured in

ideal constructions, that "there are no values outside life" (Bellow: 1944 : 165) and that a belief in an autonomous self to the exclusion of all human relationships is illusory.

It is true that Joseph's request for induction fulfils the thematic requirements of the social and psychological stories, and thus is an affirmative decision. Joseph's sense of strangeness, as we have seen, may be taken as a symptom of his alienation from the world. In joining the army Joseph joins society, accepting historical limitation, and takes his place among other mortal men, accepting physical limitation. But the issue in *Dangling Man* is not Joseph's evasion of the army but his preparation for it. When Joseph hopes that "the war could teach me, by violence, what I had been unable to learn during those months in the room." (Bellow: 1944 : 191) he confesses that he has failed in his goal. Bellow's portrayal of an evil world which cannot merely be accepted, his sympathetic treatment of Joseph's instinctual answer to that world – the need for an essential transcendent self – and the evidence that Joseph is close to just such a sense of the self, all seem to rule out the optimistic interpretation. Joseph gives himself to society and possible death because he is unable to give himself to imagination or faith. Joseph seeks the freedom to be found in meaning rather than meaninglessness. Seeking a reality higher than the self, finding none in a society which, as Bellow has said of "the greatest human qualities," has "no vocabulary for them and no ceremony (except in the churches) which makes them public." (Bellow: 1960 : 414)

Joseph might well argue that only the self is proof of the greatest reality. Joseph dangles, he is rational, he is defeated because he withdraws from society to the self but he also sees that it is the self, which is morally aware and thus representative of whatever moral order may exist.

CHAPTER – III

THE VICTIM AS SURVIVOR

Bellow's metaphor in "*Dangling Man* went far towards expressing the era, and his protagonist was decidedly alive. In creating a living situation and character, however, Bellow had sacrificed qualities, which were less important than his achievement and yet essential to a polished novel. The journal form by which he examined Joseph permitted him to avoid the development of a real plot. Except for a very general pattern, he had treated each entry as a separate entity without sub-ordinating it to a preconceived design of the whole. Joseph stood out in part because the other characters were a pale background for the sharp lines of his own character. The novel's striking flashes of colour and texture contrasted with a dominant black and white of abstraction. Bellow had to show that he could tell a more inclusive, varied story, that he could breathe life into more than one character and evoke a physical world larger than a single room. He had to tighten his control over his imagination and broaden its scope.

In accomplishing his second task, broadening the scope of his imagination, Bellow intensely evoked the city. "On some nights New York is as hot as Bangkok, *The Victim* begins, "The whole continent seems to have moved from its place and slid nearer the equator, the bitter grey Atlantic to have become green and tropical, and the people, thronging the streets, barbario fellahin among the stupendous

monuments of their mystery." (Bellow: 1947 : 3) Bellow expanded the use of metaphor in *The Victim* to use the city, the way earlier American writers used the forest or sea: the city symbolises the world's destructive power. The city, having "slid near the equator", reflects the tropical intensity of too much life. Having planned the hallucinatory quality of his city to be a reflection of Leventhal's suspicious state of mind – a creation of his sick imagination, Bellow shifts to an urban primitivism in which the city represents reality itself.

The physical description is, I think, one of Bellow's finest achievements in the novel. He never lets us forget the shifting heat or the mute, pressing crowds. If we take Scholossberg's comments as Bellow's own, we might assume a relationship between this physical evocation and one of Bellow's recurrent affirmative themes – the peace man finds in accepting the physical world. Man's gloomy struggle is unnecessary, Bellow suggests, because man can obtain salvation by merely accepting the richness and multiplicity of the physical world. Scholossberg claim that paper grass in the grave makes all grass paper, holds out the promise that real grass in the grave makes all grass real, that man may find a home in the world if he accepts its inevitable limitations. As he does in *Dangling Man.* Bellow argues for the acceptance of the world, but creates one, which can hardly be accepted. He passes not only from Leventhal's imaginary fear to the need to accept evil as real, but from the wisdom of acceptance to the need for transcendence. Although Bellow does not conclusively affirm religious experience in *The Victim*, he comes

much closer to it than in his first novel. Here too the final chapter provides a focal point for the issue. Among the many reasons for an impression of a shift in tone is the fact that Leventhal cautiously affirms transcendence.

Everyone in our society, Leventhal thinks assume that a promise had been made entitling him to a particular economic position or seal in the social theatre. Most people either feared they didn't deserve their ticket, as he had, or were frustrated like Allbee at not receiving the ticket they felt they deserved. Many feared they would get no ticket at all. But the reality was different. For why should tickets, mere tickets be promised if promises were being made, tickets to desirable and undesirable places. There were more imprtant things to be promised. Leventhal loses his fear of ruin when he sees that the real promise of life lies deeper than social arrangements. Having made this leap, he concludes that "possibly there was a promise, since so many felt it. He himself was almost ready to affirm that there was." (Bellow: 1947 : 286)

This promise refers in part to the serenity Schlossberg finds in acceptance of our limited humanity. But stating it in the theological terms, however, as a promise that is more than the potential of the given world, one that "had been made... at the start of life, and perhaps even before." Leventhal implies a larger reality behind the physical. (Bellow: 1947 : 286 – 287)

Levanthal is also Bellow's typical hero in that he is called

upon to be a good man in the face of great difficulty. Leventhal suffers, like Henderson, from "the good that I would that I do not." (Bellow: 1959 : 124) Creating heroes who desire or are forced to act compassionately, Bellow tests that compassion by a threatening world.

> "Leventhal is called upon not to be kind or decent, but to be moral – to risk his own interest for the sake of another who is not only obnoxious but who may be beyond help." (Opdahl: 1967 : 69)

Leventhal discovers in his difficulty like the hero of the story *"By the Rock Wall"*, that "everything that was not firm, everything the least bit false, not strict – the being loosely humane, relatively considerate, fairly decent – everything like that was knocked down on the first serious consideration" (Bellow : 1951 : 215) Whether he is to dispose of Allbee or risk his own security to help him, Leventhal needs the same sense of self as Joseph, one which is "strong in itself" rather than in its social role and which can accept or reject the world as it wills. Leventhal too finds that an externally derived identity is inadequate: the real threat is Allbee's hatred, the fact that his claims are unreasonable, and the fact that the highest morality requests that Leventhal help him – all these factors raise the issue above our practical social standards and require a morality and strength that lie deeper than the external world. Allbee himself of course needs a similar confidence in his identity. In that Leventhal retreats from the world to his secure but limited existence, and Allbee would "be all", - asserting an unlimited

will – the two characters play out the drama implicit in the boy and the gambler in Bellow's first short story. They also play out the two sides of Joseph's character and they also suggest, more directly than the previous works, the necessity for an essential self, which accepts inevitable victimisation because it glimpses something higher.

Like Joseph, Asa Leventhal is a solitary with few friends, and a depressive. He feels burdened by a constant struggle against the world, because of a difficulty, which is at once psychological and moral, as in the case of Joseph. The theme of this book is the casting off of his self-imposed burdens by learning to accept himself and others rather than to judge and blame, by learning to have an open heart. Asa's chief burden, like Joseph's, is his pride, which is the very antithesis of true dignity. Bellow wishes to reveal the true beauty and dignity of the human being, but his beauty and dignity can be realised only by admitting that you are nearly human by accepting rather than blaming yourself and others. "The Victim also concerns that obligation of the human being to others." (Clayton: 1968 : 31) The relationship of the individual and the mass, is partly the question of *Dangling Man*. The image of futility, immensity, helplessness of humanity's suffering, what can you do to stop all this suffering? Many are called, few are chosen, why one and not another? These precisely are the problems raised in *The Victim*.

Asa Leventhal, a city Jew of guilts and duties – the city, his job, his brother's family are all weights on his back – blames everyone

and assumes that everyone is blaming him. Kirby Allbee, another victim and anti semite, does indeed blame him, accusing Asa of having intentionally cost him his job years before, the loss of which led to poverty, his wife's death and his degeneration.

Two plot strands develop. In the first, guilty Asa tries to deal with Allbee, to get rid of him, to understand him, to help, him, to beat him up. Allbee, not revealing what he is after, insinuates himself more and more deeply into Asa's life – visiting him, following him, living with him, locking him out of his own house while Allbee has sexual relations with a pick up, finally trying to kill Asa and himself. Asa begins by refusing to acknowledge responsibility, moves toward helping Allbee, and ends by expelling him, no longer quite so afraid of Allbee as an image of his own possible failure and a projection of his own self hatred. As in Malamud's *Last of the Mohicans*, a stranger forces the hero to see his own spiritual failings – and departs. Now Asa can call his wife, who has been south with her mother, and asks her to come home.

If Asa is healed, it is due partly to the second plot strand. Out of a sense of duty, he takes charge of his brother's family when Max is away. Partly on Asa's responsibility, Max's son Mickey is sent to the hospital, where he dies. Asa's emotional involvement here – his change from blame of Max for being away from his family to love of Max, and from duty to concern – helps make Asa aware that a man is not flawless, that in humility he must take responsibility even for what he is hardly responsible.

The last chapter of the novel occurs years later Asa, however, looks younger. The burden of guilt and so of struggle is lighter now. Meeting Allbee Asa no longer sees him as the persecutor. They have both changed: Allbee is now externally happy and semi-successful but essentially the same; Asa is externally the same but essentially changed, owing to an "expansion of the heart" and a recognition of his merely human status.

Saul Bellow's dramatic plot – dramatic in that it is founded on an active conflict between individuals is based directly on a novella by Dostoievsky, *The Eternal Husband* Bellow himself says that the parallel is obvious to him now, although not at the time he wrote the novel. (Nashesoffen: 1964 : 10) I shall not compare the two works in depth; but I will point to a number of similarities and differences which show clearly the influence of Dostoievsky on Bellow's early fiction how much he was working in the Russian's moral, psychological mode, and, more important, the changes Bellow makes, changes which significantly aid him in celebrating the dignity of the human being.

The theme of Dosteievsky's novella is the dignity of a man. Like Asa Leventhal, Alexey Velchaninov is unwell physically and burdened with guilt. To each comes a double, a projection of his guilty nature, when Leventhal and Velchaninov have hurt in the past. The heroes reject these doubles as wild animals, as less than human. The victims, Trusotsky and Allbee, prey on the guilt ridden heroes with a combined hatred and love. Trusotsky tells Velchaninov than he had

loved him and looked up to him, he begs Velchaninov to drink with him, he kisses his hand and he cares for Velchaninov like a mother when Velchaninov is sick. Allbee wants to rub his fingers through Asa's kinky "Jew" hair, he feels hurt that Asa is not intimate with him, finally he brings a woman into Asa's bed not only, it seems to take Asa's place but bind himself to Asa. Fiedler says, "Allbee... is Leventhal's beloved as well as his nightmare..." (Fiedler: 1964 : 99) Nightmare : for at the same time, each victim hates enough to kill; not only do Trusotsky and Allbee wish to kill their enemies, but Leventhal and Velchaninov also threaten a number of times to kill their persecutors; at the end, both antagonists indeed try to kill. In each case this attempt cuts the cord between the doubles. The hero is freed. The process of becoming free in each case is quite complex and nearly the same Velchaninov and Leventhal must draw close to their enemies, identify with them, pity them. Asa acknowledges his responsbility, offers help, and understands that Allbee is a suffering human, not merely his persecutor; Alexey acknowledges his kinship with Trusotsky – "We are both vicious, underground, loathsome people" (Garnett: 1951 : 443) and then, in humility, tells him, "You are better than I am: I understand it all; all..." (Carnett: 1951 : 455) But in both cases there is the need for the attempted murder, the physical scuffle, the expulsion. Afterwards each hero is healed. Velchaninov in no longer sick, no longer depressive, Leventhal's health is also impreved, and he is happier, less burdened. Both encounter their doubles again, but greet them now as whole men who have regained their dignity.

Yet inspite of all the similarities, Bellow has written his own novel, but only in its creation of an American urban environment – where else is there so brilliant an evocation of the deadly weight of a metropolis in summer? – or in its added complexity and integration of material, the substitution of Laventhal's brother's family for Velchaninov's friends in the country is a fine move, but especially in its development of the theme of human dignity.

The theme has its central expression in the two-page speech of the old Yiddish journalist, Schlossberg. It is a speech which has no parallel in the *Eternal Husband* and, like most of Bellow's important choral speeches, has no function in the plot. It is, perhaps, the central speech of Bellow's fiction.

> "I try to give everybody credit", declared the old man. "I am not a knocker. I am not too good for this world."
>
> No one contradicted him.
>
> "Well", he said, "and what am I kicking for?" He checked their smiles, holding them all with his serious warm, blue gaze. "I'll tell you. It's bad to be less than human and it's bad to be more than human. What's more than human? Our friend" he meant Leventhal, "was talking about it before. Caesar, if you remember, in the play wanted to be like a God. Can a God have disease? So this is a sick man's idea of God. Does a statue have wax in its ears? Naturally not. It doesn't seat, either, except may be blood on holidays. If I can talk myself into

it that I never sweat and make everybody else act as if it was true, may be I can fix it up about dying, too. We only know what it is to die because some people die, and, if we make ourselves different from them, may be we don't have to? Less than human is the other side of it. I'll come to it. So here is the whole thing, then. Good acting is what is exactly human. And if you say I am a tough critic, you mean I have a high opinion of what is human. This is my whole idea. More than human, can you have any use for life? Less than human, you don't either."

He made a pause – and it was not one that invited interruption – and went on.

"...If a human life is a great thing to me, it is a great thing. Do you know better? I'm entitled as much as you. And why be measly. Do you have to be? Is somebody holding you by the neck? Have dignity, you understand me? Choose dignity. Nobody knows enough to turn it down..." (Bellow: 1947 : 133-135)

The wisdom of Schlossberg is that human life has dignity; human life has greatness and beauty – but only on condition that it is human life, not sub-human or more than human. Schlossberg's attack on the "more than human" was seen earlier in Bellow's assault on greatness and ideal constructions in *Dangling Man*: Man tries to make himself into a God, de-humanising himself to remove himself from humanity and hence from mortality. It is a perfect description of the roots of Joseph's alienation. If this is wisdom that Asa Leventhal already possesses (it was he who pointed to Caesar as a false ideal of greatness,

"he must learn how it applies him, for like Caesar, he rejects his human weakness and projects it onto others. Asa lacks still more the complementary wisdom that to be human means to feel human concern; that to be human means to be responsive to the suffering of others.

Less than human, human, more than human is not one continium; a man who is more than human will also be less than human. Both deviations involve a detachment from humanity, a refusal to admit that one is like other men. But while there is not one continium the philosophy of Schlossberg does see man as occupying a middle state traditional in Judeo – Christian theology. Being human rests on the admission of this middle state. When Schlossberg says that he is not too good for this world, one is reminded of Peretz short story, "If Not Higher" (*Treasury*, p. 233) in which Litvak, mistrustful of the rabbi of Nemirov, who disappears every Friday morning at the time of the Penitential prayers, hide under the rabbi's bed. Early he hears the rabbi's groans of suffering for all Israel; then he sees the rabbi dress in peasant clothes and go anonymously to help a sick woman. The rabbi brings her firewood, kindles it, in spite of her objection that she cannot pay, and as the fire burns recites the prayers. The Litvak becomes the rabbi's disciple and even after, when another disciple tells how the rabbi of Nemirov ascends to heaven at the time of the penitential prayers, the Litvak does not laugh. He only adds quietly, if not higher. Higher not by leaving the earth but by involving himself with it; he does not remove

himself from humanity but enters it, listening to and heeding its groans.

Here is the standard old Schlossberg and Bellow apply. By the end of this morality novel Asa has largely succeeded in meeting it. And so, the novel is affirmative in spite of its dark tone, much more completely than *Dangling Man*. But a man has difficulties in becoming exactly human and thereby choosing dignity.

Through the growing sense of the reality of others, through his growing awareness of their kinship with him, Asa has become, in Schlossberg's terms, human. Now he can call his wife home, he is ready for her. That he has changed permanently we know by the final chapter, which finds him healthier, happier and a father to be. Like *Dangling Man, The Victim* move toward a re-definition of what human is, a definition, which goes beyond Scholossberg's wisdom. In the middle of the novel Asa's dream of expulsion from the railroad station leads to an overwhelming sense of truth found. "Yes, I do know it, positively, will I know it in the morning? I do now." (Bellow: 1947 : 169) Typically for Bellow, Asa does not hold onto it; he oversleeps, wakes up irritated. But for a moment, he knew.

To retell the dream in greater detail: the dreamer is in a terribly crowded station trying to get to the second section of a train he has missed. Pushed into a corridor, he tried to go down through a newly constructed gate to the tracks. But a contractor in a fedora steps him – the other man, a workman, is not able to interfere with

his boss – and pushes him out into the alley; his face is covered with tears.

There is no simple relationship between this dream and the truth that eludes Asa. It is like Asa's strange pain on awakening after the birthday party at the Harkavya. Again truth approaches out of sleep. Again there is the reaching out for some ultimate truth about the self, a truth just out of reach. Here it is seen as a kind of birth, hence the significance of the birthday party. Asa himself new born: doubled over, unable to breathe or cry, at the same time it is Asa giving birth, giving birth to the elusive truth. Often in Bellow we find this imagery of personal re-birth, redemption into a new life.

It is a sense, a vision of the unity of all persons, the essential alikeness of all persons, each mysteriously containing all. This is where the movement towards perception of the other as real, toward identification with others, and toward acceptance of self, of others, and of death, has been leading toward a submergence of individuality in a transpersonal, anonymous self. It is the vision of victim and victimiser as one.

How can the human being posses dignity among so many all wanting as he wants? The answer: each man is everyman, All-Be: in touching Allbee, Asa touches all of humanity, indeed, he becomes all of humanity. Asa, feeling guilt, rejects responsibility, accepting responsibility, he feels less guilt. One responds, to relieve

of the other's suffering. And if all are one, the other's suffering is one's own too.

To what extent does Asa live with this truth? Bellow emphasizes that Asa's change is partial. But far more successfully than Joseph the Dangling Man, Asa ends his alienation. Beginning, like Joseph, as a solitary, separated from his wife and hostile to the few friends he has, he goes much further than Joseph in Joining humanity without surrendering to society. His success heralds the over eager affirmation of Bellow's next novel. *The Adventures of Augie March.*

CHAPTER – IV

THE INTENSER QUEST FOR THE ADVENTURES OF AUGIE MARCH

Narrator of his own inexhaustible experience, Augie March begins with his boyhood in Chicago. Poor and Jewish, Augie starts life economically and socially alienated, yet he is neither bitter nor vengeful, only eager to absorb the knowledge and experience he hopes will help him discover a good enough fate to live by.

Bellow in *The Aventures of Augie March* sought not to transcend the elements which destroy personality but to meet them on their own terms – to match them by the very force, the Whitmanian gusto of his prose. The best defense is an offense; Bellow attempted to celebrate man and the world by the very qualities his early protagonists abhor. As Irving Kristol says, Bellow wresteled with demons in his first two novels; in Augie March he "jumped in their midst, bussed them, and inquired if they had read any good books lately." (1954 : 74) Having created two characters who were strangers in a frightening world, Bellow turned in *Augie March* to a hero who joyusly feels at home in a colourful Chicago. To Norman Podhoreta, Augie's adventures reflect "the intellectual's joyous sense of connection with the common grain of American life." (1958 : 579) Bellow celebrates America at the same time he rejects false values. While other writers struggled to discover a new ideology, and felt themselves disarmed by the size and lethargy of their culture, Bellow

turned from ideology to a world justified in itself. He argued for accommodation not by the usual indirect means of an alienated hero, but by a forthright example of engagement. "Those days," Augie says "whatever touched me had me entirely." (Bellow: 1953 : 315) Having progressed from Joseph's rejection of the world to Leventhal's qualified acceptance, Bellow now made another leap, rejecting Flaubertian polish and despair to create a rough – hewed, energetic new world. Marcus Klein defines this experience as well as Augie's character when he says of fiction since world war-II: "The hero chooses community – he assumes racial obligations, or he declares himself a patriot, or he makes love – and he discovers that he has sacrificed his identity, and his adventures begin all over again." (1962 : 30)

If *Augie March* caught the spirit of the fifties, however, it did so by embodying some of that era's difficulties. Norman Podhoretz goes on to say that in "the willed spontaneity of the writing, the abstractness of the hero... we can also detect the uncertainty and emotional strain that lurked on the underside of the new optimism." (1958 : 579) The conflict between Augie's announcement that he will write catch as catch can - promising an episodic novel – and his assumption of moral growth – claiming a Bildungsroman – suggests that this uncertainty exists in the novel's form. If Bellow worked to contain an unruly story within his planned structure in *The Victim*, he works to impose order upon an ostensibly open story in *Augie March*. Because it involves Augies education or change, the

question of the novel's form is also the question of Augie's character. Augie presents himself as a man of love open to any and all experience. As Chester Eisinger describes him, he is "an uncommitted wanderer upon the face of the earth, Savouring experience for its infinite variety and cherishing his independence to seek it out where he may." (Eisinger: 1963 : 355). But other critics describe a different Augie: they feel that Augie's joy is spurious, that he is not the affirmative hero he appears to be. Augie ventures into the world, but he is not a part of it; his constant movement is an evasion rather than an engagement of life. Podhoretz said that Augie "goes through everything, yet undergoes nothing." (1964 ; 218) and V.S. Pritchett calls Augie "a neutral, the indifferent man." (1954 : 803) Because there is a close relationship between commitment and characterization, as Robert Penn Warren has pointed out, this issue becomes one of the fullness or life of Augie's characterization. Some critics claim that Augie's character is thin because he lacks those commitments, which might give it substance. John Aldrige summarizes this problem when he charges that as a man committed to nothing Augie can have no dramatic centrality; his conflict with society can never be really intense or meaningful because there is nothing at stake, no piece of spiritual opposition which might endow him with tragic or pathetic value.

There are of course many possible answers to this problem. Part of the issue lies in the complexity of Augie's character : he contains something adoptional about him at the same time that he

is resistant. "You've got opposition in you," Einhorn tells him. "You don't slide through everything. You just make it look so." (Bellow: 1953 : 117) This ambivalence belongs to all of Bellow's heroes, as we have seen, but it also belongs to the thought of the fifties. The difference of opinion over Augie's character is based in part on the critic's interpretation of commitment, an issue still with us. To Eisinger, Augie's lack of a concrete, specific commitment is his glory; Augie is engaged in the broad spectacle of life rather than a small corner of it. To others, engagement means concrete commitment: to talk of life or experience is too abstract, too easy, too much of a rationale for rejecting what lies at hand. There is a sense in which Augie March, like other contemporary novels, pays lip-service to engagement but celebrates our real day-dream of invulnerable self-containment. Then too Augie may be neutral precisely because of his health. His claim that it is enough to be among the animals, released on the ground as they were in their broom or in their air, is a claim to a connection with the natural world – a major theme in our fiction – but it is also a confession of innocence. If Augie embodies the values implied in much of our waste land literature, including Bellow" first two novels, he may well reveal a potential shortcoming of those values : he is heartless or neutral in the way that all innocence is neutral.

Bellow's adoption of the form and spirit of the picaresque novel in *Augie March* admirably suited his celebration of force. As Robert Heilman suggests in his eassy on "The confessions of Felix Krull, "the

techniques of the picaresque novel minimize the reader's sympathy for the rogue's victims – making acceptance of a cruel world possible. The novelist precludes reader identification with the victims by sketching them vaguely or with the broad strokes of caricature. He maintains a swift pace from episode to episode so that the implications of the rogue's acts never sink in. He also creates a population that desires or deserves to be swindled: the rogue merely satisfies the victim's unconscious masochistic desires. Viewing his characters from the outside, where they become lost in a multitude of people, the picaresque novelist rejects the fine moral distinctions of the private self to find his perspective and value in the broad spectacle of man.

Bellow's use of these techniques to match the world of force raises still another reason for the difficulties in Augie's character. To be at home in a destructive world the Picaro must, be hard-boiled or neutral. Thus Augie is committed to an abstraction and is resistant. He searches for a fate good enough, a search that keeps him aloof from the world. But as a vulnerable, loving heir to Mama and Georgie, Augie is really the opposite of the Picaro. Good hearted, spontaneous and vulnerable, Augie is in fact more of a travelling victim than rogue. His character is thin because Bellow was compelled to minimize Augie's sensitivity to the world of force if Augie was to remain an affirmative character. Bellow does this by using the techniques directed at the Picaro's victims on Augie himself. Bellow early in the novel dissolves the self-hood of his protagonist in the broad spectacle of Chicago. He succeeds in creating a hero

who feels nothing at all Augie himself fits a comment Marcus Klein makes about Bellow's style: by accepting everything, Augie really accepts nothing." (1962 : 217)

This strategy permits Bellow to begin the novel on a note of joy. Augie recognises evil, the beatings he receives, the selfishness of Grandha Lausch, the atrocities that made an stheist out of a local junk collector, but he sees evil externally, its horror diluted by a colourful mass of detail. But Augie finds it increasingly difficult to dismiss evil as a colourful external. His resilience is tested in the first half of the novel by increasingly heavy blows, and he himself comes to see that he is a travelling victim. He lives, like Joseph, in a society in which people have gone underground. Fearful of the death or determinism inherent in physical existence, they are too self-absorbed to offer him the love he seeks. They are, as Bellow wrote "people testing to find whether they can eat without tasting, view without suffering, make love without feeling and exist between winning and losing in an even state of potentiality." (1954 : 313) Each builds a particular version of reality in place of the physical one he denies, and views Augie as an adjunct to it. *Augie March* and another distinguished novel of the decade, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, define a culture in which the generous or the human is lost in desperate ideology. While Ellison's protagonist is invisible because of race and institutions, Augie is invisible because of private ideals. What all this means, Augie says, "is not a single Tower of Babel plotted in common, but hundreds of thousands of separate

beginnings, the length and breadth of America." (Bellow: 1953 : 152)

Augie's rejection of Grandma, Einhorn and Mrs. Renling had been a rejection of their sterile worlds. Searching for love, he had sought an equivalent to his original family, a goal fulfilled when Simon makes a comeback by marrying for money. Simon recruits Augie to help him run a coal-yard, his wedding present. He also wants his brothers to get in on a good thing and marry Lucy Magnus, his sister-in-law. Augie objects to the calculation involved, but he loves his brother, and the Magnus family might provide the community so far denied to him. But Simon is even more enslaved by his dominant idea than Augie's previous patrons, for he has to live up to certain expectations. "He had his pockets full of money as an advance on his promised ability to make a rich man of himself and now had to deliver." (Bellow: 1953 : 224) During his busy life with Simon and Lucy, Augie makes friends with a waitress named Mimi Villars who is dominated by her idea of love. In surrendering herself to it she becomes pregnant and asks Augie, who is merely a friend, to accompany her during an abortion. Augie obliges, but the Magnus family learns enough of the details through a third party to suspect him of being the father. Lucy chooses to keep her inheritance by staying with the outraged family. To Augie's horror, so does Simon. "This is where I shake you, Augie," he shouts, "before you do worse to me." (Bellow: 1953 : 275) Scorched bitter, foul and violent," (Bellow: 1953 : 281) the good hearted young man finds himself

deprived of community once more "you do all you can to humanize and familiarize the world," Augie tells us, "and suddenly it becomes more strange than ever." Our way of humanising the world is to create a "Small circle that encompasses two or three heads in the same history of love", but it is impossible for us to maintain it. "Try and stay, though, inside. See how long you can." (Bellow: 1953 : 285) Augie's disillusionment with Chicago is crystallized by the injustice he sees as a labour organizer. When the professional thugs of a rival union give him the second beating of his life, his reaction is far from light hearted with "the dry snot of fear in his blood clotted nose," he is overcome with disgust. He is "harrowed by ... hate" for Chicago. (Bellow: 1953 : 308) He finds himself very much in love with Thea Fenchel, Esther's sister, who asks him to go to Maxico with her. He accepts her offer.

Augie's hatred for the city and his brooding reaction to his beating suggest the changes that occur in his character. He now feels and judges his experience. This provides him with the self he lacks earlier. Bellow shifts from Augie's early joy to his later disillusionment and from the Machiavellians as a centre of attention to Augie himself. He also becomes increasingly concerned with Augie's inner life.

By the beginning of chapter fourteen, however, Bellow has adopted a different view of Augie and a different approach to the novel. Bellow begins the Mexican adventure with Augie's own warning about the future – revealing a reversal in his character. Committed to another

for the first time, Augie confesses that his alliance with Thea fills him with fear. Mexico too trembles with a frightening force, but it is now part of nature rather then an industrial city. Thea, the most open of all the Machiavellians in her obsession with force, hopes to match this environment with a primitive venture: she trains an eagle to hunt rare Mexican lizards. Augie joins her project out of love for her, but he also realises "how ancient it was, the kind of ambition that was involved or the aspect of game or hazard." (Bellow: 1953 : 344)

Augie also discovers that he has reason to worry about his old protections. He discovers that he is not the man he thought he was. A discovery that destroys the identity that supported him. The eagle proves to be a coward, and Augie and Thea drift apart, Thea to the hunting of snakes and Augie to a brooding convalescence among the expatriates in town. When Augie spends a night on a mountainside making love to Stella, another beautiful woman. Thea breaks with him and Augie suddenly confronts the truth about his impulsive nature. Sick with guilt, he sees the justice of Thea's charge that "love would be strange and foreign to you no matter which way it happened, and may be you just don't want it." (Bellow: 1953 : 396) He sees with horror that he "wasn't a bit good hearted or affectionate," and that his "aim of being simple was just a fraud." (Bellow: 1953 : 401) He had in fact used love to flee the world he had never really accepted. He had fled to Simon and Lucy after suffering isolation and near starvation, he had fled to Thea from the

agony of his beating. No longer the happy hero of engagement, he now sees that he had fled to Stella from the difficult love of Thea.

Augie's recognition that he is not a man of love drives him back upon himself, where he too as he says of Georgie, makes "the struggle that we make if we consent to live. Just as though, the time for it coming round, we left what company we were in and went privately to take a few falls with our own select antagonist in his secret room." (Bellow: 1953 : 4,19) Like Bellow's other heroes, Augie broods over his past mistakes. He now sees that his commitment to possibility had been no commitment at all. No longer a larky young man in search of adventure, Augie yearns not for a Machiavellien who can love but the ability within himself.

This insight and struggle give Augie an inner life and a substantial identity. Complaining that "you are nothing here nothing," he confesses an alienation similar to Joseph's and Leventhal's. He is also like them in his glimpse of transcendent reality – one which he claims has changed his life and which qualifies Bellow's celebration of the world. Augie discovers, he says, "the axial lines of life, with respect to which you must be straight or else your existence is mere clownery, hiding tragedy." Because the lines offer him a sense of autonomy, Augie climes that he can now live truly in the world. The vision is what he had sought all along – and what Bellow's narrative had implicitly promised – the revelation, which offers a fate good enough. Because the lines justify Augie's rejection of the Social world and imply that a

meta-physical purpose lies within the physical, they might well supply the novel's climax. But Bellow dismisses the vision, perhaps because it is sudden or inconsistent with his original celebration of force.

Having achieved his revelation, Augie is like the other heroes in his flight from the internal self. Joseph and Leventhal retreat from the world, but they also withdraw from their internal being: they live in the narrow thread of consciousness between the awesome reality outside and the even more frightening reality deep within. If Augie had fled to temporary embraces to avoid the world's terror, he had also fled to an external reality to avoid facing his inner being: he has almost no inner life earlier in the novel because his adventures are an evasion of that identity.

In the final chapter – Augie having hailed a ship and survived the war, Bellow presents a nostalgic brooding hero who has failed in his search for a fate good enough. Eager to serve humanity, Augie makes his living by bribing European officials in order to sell surplus pharmaceutical goods on the black market. He has decided that love and home alone are a worthwhile fate, but he is deprived of both by Stella's obsession with a previous lover. Travelling about Europe by himself, alone even when with Stella in their Paris apartment, Augie is "bored sick... as any one gets, crawling around on the surface of life by himself: "I have written out these memoirs of mine," he says, "since, as a travelling man, travelling by myself, I have lots of time on my hands." (Bellow: 1953

: 519) *Augie March* Begins as a naturalistic novel and ends as a personalist one, for Bellow assumes an environmental determinism which he subsequently rejects in favour of the unconditioned self. Augie and Bellow had originally assumed that a "man's character is his fate," telling us that "all the influences were lined up waiting for me... which is why I tell you more of them than of myself." (Bellow: 1953 : 343) But Augie now adds that a man's fate or what determines his life is his character. He also sees that it is the internal self, which defines and contains reality. At the end, when he has like Donatello become a full character, Augie defines his fate as a struggle with the world and himself. His claim that he is "a sort of Columbus of those near at hand" who believes that "you can come to them in this immediate terra incognito that spreads out in every gaze," (Bellow: 1953 : 536) is less a summary of his character than a recognition of what has been true throughout the novel, that he has to make a long voyage to reach his fellow man.

The stories Saul Bellow wrote collected in *Him with his foot in his mouth and other stories* are marked by such personal feeling and most of them by such good humour and lightness of mood that one wonders what is going on with Bellow, Ask him and you get an answer. All my axes are hanging on the wall now, unground, "he says, "and I have no urge to take them down, I don't know what it is. The mood is lighter, more at ease. I suppose I am getting rid of the melioristic and reforming side of myself. Like many American

writers I was always pulling for something. I wanted to add my might to the general improvement fund. But I am much less concerned now. I have done my duty by democracy." (Bruckner: 1984 : 52)

If there is a change in Bellow's mood and direction, there is nothing casual about it. He can laughingly say that "all my writing life I have been trying to shed responsibility," but if one points to the emotional distance between the new stories and the sombre anger of his novel. *"The Dean's December"* published in 1982, he says "that was a cri de coeur, I just could no longer stand the fact that the city and the country were in decay under our very eyes and people would not talk about the facts. They might talk about money to change things, but never about what was actually happening. No one laughs any more. So it was a cry. But I don't know whether anyone heard it." (Bruckner: 1984 : 52)

In his best selling book, *More Die of Heart Break*, Bellow proves everything from modern sexuality to the state of popular culture. Bellow spoke expansively with senior editor Alvin P. Sanoff about his critically acclaimed new novel. "The book began to come into focus when it struck me all at once that certain subjects, which in the past were treated very seriously are now the subject of teasing parody. *Dr. Strange Love* was a high comedy based on the impending destruction of the human race. I began to think: What has happened to human beings to make them accept this as entertainment? "It's because a lot of things that used to mean so much to us – love, murder, family relations have been

emptied of meaning and feeling. Now they are toyed with purely as a mental game." (Bellow: 1987 : 52)

These developments are signs of an important transformation in modern life, a sort of nihilism. Things we used to think of with dread now can make us laugh. The first world war had a lot to do with this shift. Movements of art sprang up afterward such as Dada and Surrelism. They had to do with the meaninglessness and cheapness of life and the interchangeability of persons and faiths. Saul Bellow's real concern was to know how serious people hold their own against nihilism. In this environment, the questions facing a "true person" (in a time when most people are fabricated) are "How do you protect yourself, and how do you read reality? Do people who carve out a higher life for themselves have the acumen and the general shrewdness, strength and determination to hold their ground against what they conceive to be decadence?" (Bellow: 1987 : 52)

In the book of Genesis, God simply thought that it was not good for Adam to be alone, so there had to be somebody else. That somebody else happened to be flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. This myth – if that's what it is – really teaches us the whole story: Self-enclosed love is a kind of destruction of the person. But economists tell us that selfishness really assures the prosperity and safety of society. The message of Milton Friedman is "Don't worry, because there's an invisible hand that co-ordinates all and makes certain that the synthesis of so many private wills, each striving for its own interests, will be a community and the only kind of community worth having, a free one

of separate persons?" (Bellow : 1981 : 52) That may be prescription for a capitalist democracy, but it could also become a very common cause of madness. Saul Bellow discussed this with Friedmand once, he said "You're always talking about the enlightened self-interest of economic man. But you can see for yourself that so many people are nuts. So how can you depend on their enlightened self interest?" Friedman said, "They're not nuts when it comes to money."

According to Bellow, people ask ideological questions but writers don't like to give ideological answers, because they're not true. What's true is what you learn through your existence and what's supported by the weight of real events. Otherwise, it's just a statement and statements are cheap.

The assertion of brotherhood has become an affirmation of contract. The breaking of the error of the uniqueness of the self has become self-denial. And if there is a sense of universal connections, that sense contains no joy. There can be no doubt, of course, that Bellow is working with authentic materials of contemporary history, and what now is implied by Bellow's work so far is minimalisation of faith in the human connection. The fiction of Saul Bellow, may be considered exemplary. The material of Bellow's fiction was the response of sensibility and imagination and intelligence and personality – the privacy of everybody, but in its highest instances – to the moment in history. The significant, symptomatic canting term of the moment in history seemed to me to be alienation. Everybody, after any preliminary

motion of thought, was alienated. The term had come to be honorific and pretentious, Bellow had made it mean something, something hurtful, and by so doing had rescued all of us from feelings of privileged malaise. Where there had been symptom, he had created severity dilemma and challenge.

CHAPTER - V

HERZOG'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE INSPIRED CONDITION

Bellow is concerned, throughout his literary development with the diminished stature of the individual in everyone's perception but his own:

"It's obvious to everyone that the stature of characters in modern novels is smaller than it once was, and this diminution powerfully concerns those who value existence. I do not believe that the human capacity to feel or do can really have dwindled or that the quality of humanity has degenerated. I rather think that people appear smaller because society has become so immense." (Kunitz: 1955, page 73) Bellow's considerable achievement as a writer has been to portray, against the unquestionably dwarfing forces of modern society, the honest, often successful struggle of the individual striving to define himself as a man within a narrowing range of active possibilities.

In style *Herzog* combines the two main impulses of Bellow's fiction: realism and romance. Like *Dangling Man, The Victim,* and *Seize the Day,* it conveys the sense of a real sufferer hedged in by circumstances and neurotic attitudes; like *Augie March* and *Henderson the Rain King,* it possesses an exuberance and a sense of infinite possibilities: The combination is possible because this is not the novel of a sufferer in the city but of a sufferer who contains the city within him. Moses Herzog calls himself a "prisoner of

perception" (Bellow: 1964; 72), but actually perception is his prisoner. He sees only what he needs to see, and we see only what Herzog sees.

Herzog is a novel about a man freeing himself from a paralyzing obsession with his ex-wife. Almost all of the action takes place inside Moses Herzog's head as he spends a week and a half in feverish thought going over the break up of his marriage and all its contingent elements: betrayals, lies, child-custody problems, alimony, untrust-worthy shrinks, bad friends, deceitful lawyers, conspiring relatives.

The opening line of *Herzog* gives us an indication that things may, in fact, be changing for Bellow's burdened and struggling heroes. "If I am out of my mind it's all right with me." (Bellow: 1964 : 1) thinks Moses Herzog, which seems to be good news as it certainly has not been all right for the five heroes who have preceded him in Bellow's canon. From Joseph thought Henderson, a craziness induced by crisis (and vice versa) rends Bellow's heroes to quite devastating effect, but although Moses Herzog suffers in much the same way as his forebears (almost everyone he knows cheats and betrays him), he seems to be enjoying himself. As he himself puts it, "Moses, suffering, suffered in style" (P. 16)

The frame of the novel "Herzog" is the ecstatic reminiscence of Moses Herzog, a college professor, as he temporarily lives at his country home in the Berkshires. Like Augie March, Herzog does his

internal labour: the novel consists of the compulsive reworking of the past by a man who has been deeply hurt. The action which Herzog remembers – the actual present of the novel – is also simple and direct. He decides at the end of the school term in New York to flee from his mistress, Ramona, to some friends at Martha's Vineyard. Once there he decides to return immediately to New York, where he continues the letter writing, which has lately become his compulsion. He spends the following evening with Ramona, visits a courtroom the next day, and then flies to Chicago, where he comes close to murdering his ex-wife and her lover – his best friend. He takes his daughter June to an aquarium the next morning, has an auto accident, and appears before a police court for carrying a concealed weapon. He then flies to the Berkshires, returning the novel to its beginning. The past events, which he remembers as he travels also, form a straight forward. Story, although they are revealed in fragments. He had divorced his first wife and married the beautiful and neurotic Madeleine, settling with her in the Berk shires to write a book on the Romantics. She had insisted that he could save their marriage only by moving to Chicago and taking their friends, the Gersbachs, with them. Once there she insisted that Herzog see a psychiatrist, saw him herself at the doctor's request, and then one fall morning announced her decision for divorce. Herzog went to Europe to recover from his misery, returned to New York worse off than before, and discovered that Madeleine and Gersbach were lovers even before he moved them all to Chiago.

Each of these story levels repeats the hero's confrontation of an evil in the past – the pattern of nearly all of Bellow's novels. Herzog in the Berk shires remembers the evil he had seen in New York and Chicago, where he remembers the evil he had seen even earlier. In part because of the distance he finds in this triple remove, Bellow once again moves closer to issues and ideas he previously qualified. Herzog is larger than life not because of caricature – although there are some elements of it in his characterization – but because of the intensity of his emotion. More like Willard than Grebe, feeling all the pain and conflict of the other protagonists, Herzog confronts almost every issue raised in Bellow's previous fiction. That he does so in a novel that is realistic rather than picaresque or fantastic makes his struggle a victory over the elements that caused Bellow to abandon "The Crab and the Butterfly." Herzog carries masochism to lengths for greater than Wilhelm, attempts to kill not a cat or a stranger but people close to him, and at the same time arrives at the clearest affirmation in Bellow's fiction of the views that might save him. He makes a complete decision for social services, finding his salvation in a practical, hard – headed manhood, and an unqualified avowal of faith in God, telling us that "this was by no means a 'general idea' with him now." (Pg. 266) Although twenty-five years and six books separate Herzog from Bellow's first short story, "Two Morning Monologues," Herzog embraces the two general views which Bellow then contrasted – the reliance on an inner vision and the determination to act in the social or external world.

If Herzog embraces both the internal and the external, however, he creates a problem by doing so. This issue revolves around the question, as Herzog puts its, of "whether justice on this earth can or cannot be general, social, but must originate within each heart." (Pg. 219) Herzog is divided on this question. When he writes a letter to Eisenhower he tells him that "to Tolstoi, freedom is entirely personal. That man is free whose condition is simple, truthful – real." He suggests that society is a distraction from more important issues. Man must meet his fate, as Joseph tried to do, by discovering the self which is real or autonomous. But Herzog also tells Eisenhower about Hegel who "understood the essence of human life to be derived from history. History, memory that is what makes us human, that and our knowledge of death." (162) Herzog rejects both of these ideas at the time because he is "bugging" but his mention of them in the same breath defines the issue which Herzog confronts and embodies. Herzog wants to "renew universal connections" – to lose himself in something larger than personality – and he defines competing individuals.

As dramatized in the novel, the division between the social and the personal is also an aesthetic one. Herzog's own emotional conflict between the passive and the active corresponds to the division in his thought. In part because Bellow assumes a point of view close to Herzog's – purposely blurring the distinction between narrator and protagonist – our questions about Herzog are questions about the novel's art. Like many personalist novels, Herzog appears to be the

subjective confusion of a passive hero – a novel that is formless. What action or story exists is obscured by the brilliant letters and disconnected memories which fill the book." Overcome by the need to explain, to have it out, to justify, to put in perspective, to clarify, to make amends," Herzog writes to everyone – from Marshall Field and Co. to God himself. Bellow reveals a great deal of Herzog's past by these means, but he clearly offers them for their own sake: they are at once intellectual play and a brilliant critique on the values and problems of our society. They seem to be a tread upon which Bellow strings spectacular thoughts and events – a concept which, like that of the dangling man or the victim, threatens to remain static.

There is some question whether Herzog ever changes: circling back upon itself, the novel seems to portray a state of mind rather than a story or a significant event. Thus most critics recognize that Herzog finds peace at the end, but reject it as insignificant or unconvincing. Irving Howe writes that Herzog contains a "superbly realized situation but hardly a developing action" and Marcus Klein argues that the ending "is a little suspect, only a baiting of a resolution." Tony Tanner recognises a movement from "corrosive restlessness to a point of temporary rest," but holds that we are inside Herzog's mind for the bulk of the novel" – going over things, witnesses of this endless, silent self-examination. It is not systematic: like his life it is mismanaged and pattern less." (Irving Howe, New Republic, 151) (September 19, 1964), 23. Marcus Klein, The Reporter,

31 (October 22, 1964), 54. Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow (Edinburgh, 1965), 88, 89.

Although the novel gives this effect, it does contain a definite form. Herzog convincingly changes, does so in a clearly developed action, and in the process unites the letters, his memories, and the present events. Bellow finds form first of all in Herzog's struggle to reject personalism, which he has abandoned at the novel's beginning but which he continues to embody. Herzog defines his rejection and struggle in terms of the contemporary intellectual scene. Our general belief that the modern age is a wasteland, he says – the view that God is dead, society corrupted by size and technology, and the individual overwhelmed – has given rise to a disastrous withdrawal from the world to the private self. We have embraced subjectivity, aestheticism, emotionalism, and personalism in an attempt to save the self from the "void". Herzog too, had reacted to this nihilism, though he had assumed he was combating it. Believing that "the strength of a man's virtue or spiritual capacity is measured by his ordinary life," Herzog had retired to a private life in the Berkshires in order to demonstrate the reality and the practicality of spiritual virtues (106). "The revolutions of the twentieth century, the liberation of the masses by production," he believed, "created private life but gave nothing to fill it with. This was where such as he came in." (Pg. 125) Everyone had claimed that "you must sacrifice your poor, squawking, niggardly individuality – which may be nothing anyway but a persistent infantile megalomania, or (from a Marxian

point of view) a stinking little bourgeois property – to historical necessity." To assert the value of the individual against this view, Herzog had "tried to be a *marvelous* (in italics) Herzog, a Herzog who, perhaps clumsily, tried to give out marvelous qualities vaguely comprehended (93). Herzog sees that his intention had been just another case of the self driven inward by a difficult and apparently meaningless world. It had been note confrontation of the void but flight from it.

But Herzog turns inward as well as out ward. It is an affirmation of society, it is also an affirmation of "the inspired condition," or man's highest subjective experience. The modern world demands our participation, but it also gives special significance to our highest values. "To live in an inspired condition, to know truth, to be free, to love another, to consummate existence, to abide with death in clarity of consciousness... is no longer a rarefied project." Herzog's spit between the passive and the active finds its parallel in the division in the novel between a traditional structure, recording Herzog's struggle with personalism, and a subjective structure, growing almost unconsciously out of his character. Here too conclusion grows out of the protogonist's experience, and especially out of the evil he confronts – an evil which belongs to existence rather than society, and which is Herzog's basic problem. Although this story contradicts Herzog's affirmation of society, it exemplifies Bellow's growing ability in his fiction to contain and use the ambivalence he feels. He does this in Herzog not by metaphor,

comedy or characterization – although Herzog is at once a meek and a difficult, aggressive man" – but rather by Herzog's own achievement of a hard–headed attitude toward the world. More than in anything else, Herzog earns his salvation by the practical acceptance of the mixture and ambivalence either in himself and his faith. This too, Bellow makes clear, is related to our intellectual scene. Like those around him Herzog had assumed that the world was in crisis and that desperate measures were needed to cope with it. He comes to see that this erroneous view leads to cures that compound the problem. Even a writer such as Nietzche, he says, had "a Christian view of history, seeing the present moment always as some crisis, some fall from classical greatness, some corruption or evil to be saved from." Our retreat from society, our sensationalistic celebration of dread, and our acceptance of violence and obscenity as philosophic truth all derive from our feeling that "we have to recover from some poison, need saving, ransoming." (54) Herzog is aware of our danger, but he rejects the modern sense of crisis to insist upon a modest, level headed perspective. Herzog rejects personalism at the same time that it affirms it, bearing on a central division in our thought, but it is most of all the story of an impulsive man who simultaneously achieves the homely virtue of common sense and the uncommon virtue of religious failth.

By embracing society and *its* values, Bellow comes closer *in Herzog* than he ever has *in* unifying his drama and *his* character's thought. That some of Herzog's experience and almost all of Bellow's

technique carry implications that contradict this stated theme, however, reflects the conflict that still exists. The most dramatic evidence of this split lies in Herzog's position as a new man. He withdraws from the city to find peace at his country home-which he has established as a symbol of his evasion of society and evil. Cured of passivity, personalism, and solitude, he finds j9Y while thinking about himself, alone, "lying under the open window *with* the sun *in* his face" (313). He has embraced moderation, but his state *is* ecstatic. He has dedicated himself to social issues, but he enjoys the small sensations of nature rather than the sweep of social forces. His solitude, his absorption with himself, and his internal source of strength ally *him* with those early American personalists, the Romantics. Like Thoreau he has temporarily withdrawn from society to live alone in nature, where he achieves the joy and simplicity that Augie and Wilhelm only dream of in their cities: "The stars were near like spiritual bodies. Fires, of course; gases-minerals, heat, atoms, but eloquent at five in the morning to a man lying in a hammock, wrapped in his overcoat" (1).

Herzog is a divided novel because *its* art reflects this happy isolation rather than Herzog's new social affirmation. Herzog's view that "the *whole* was required to redeem every separate spirit" requires an aesthetic different from that which Bellow uses (156). It is true that Bellow laughs at his emotional hero, and that a large number of characters appear, testifying to the color and power of the *whole,* but the value of the novel lies not in the general scene but in Herzog, a

brilliantly unique character. *Herzog* finds its subject and structure in the protagonist's quest for insight into himself, and the external events are largely memories-a subjective experience. So too with Bellow's use of time: in that the past overshadows the present in the novel, time is subjective and events are given value by Herzog's emotional needs. Bellow shapes many scenes around Herzog's awareness of the real motives beneath external and social poses, and even the letters, which carry private thought into the public realm (and which are never mailed), give rise to thoughts and memories which are franker and more subjective than the written words. The letters, in fact, may be viewed as a device permitting a novelist to write about the private life of a passive character.

What is true of Bellow's technique is also true of the novel's content. However much Herzog pleads for social service, the novel is about his internal and private experience. Herzog never participates in social service himself, and he embraces that goal in part because society provides him personal justice. He decides to go to Chicago because of the emotional intensity of the evil he views in the courtroom, and he decides not to murder because he sees Gersbach washing June in the bathroom. He proves his new man- hood in his private relations with Ramona, and his thought and affection at the end are directed toward family-toward June and his brother Will-rather than toward social issues. Herzog embraces society, but he speaks of it in terms of brotherhood and spiritual community rather than as institutions, causes, or customs.

Because all of Bellow's heroes feel the same ambivalence toward the world that Herzog feels toward his past, this cycle illustrates and summarizes the form and the meaning of the other novels as well. Each of Bellow's heroes finds the climax of his story -and a sense of great release-in a confrontation with death. Joseph's final walk in the Alley is associated with the ancient figure of his dreams, and his subsequent request for induction-itself a confrontation of death-brings relief. Leventhal awakes to find his life in danger, Allbee about to die, and, at the end of their struggle, a sense of completion. Augie too undergoes such an experience in his fight with Basteshaw in the lifeboat and his violent breakup with Thea. Wilhelm breaks down before a corpse and Henderson witnesses Dahfu's death. In each case the hero vacillates before a threat or ordeal and then confronts the source of that threat in the death scene. In each there is a pattern of resistance, embrace and release-reminiscent of Leventhal's description of the swinging door. In all of them the hero identifies with the dead person and comes close to doing violence himself. Although each of these scenes takes its specific meaning from the novel in which it appears, they all point to a single meaning. Even specific chapters and sections within Bellow's novels end on a note of calm after the hero has confronted a lesser form of evil or death.

Herzog does not resolve his problems, but Herzog's acceptance of the "inspired condition" is a significant advance in Bellow's struggle with them. One may break out of personality not only by turning outward to society, but by turning inward to a universal truth

approached through private imagination. As Dahfu says, nature is a mentality and the imagination a source of truth. Herzog's acceptance of his imaginative vision resolves the other heroes' fear of subjectivity at the same time that it opens the novel to a reality larger than Herzog's consciousness. As Herzog gazes upon himself, his feelings are narcissistic, but they are also full of the mystery of his being. What appears to be self-absorption is really, as in Whitman's poetry, a celebration of the human species and the transcendent Self. Herzog's last letter is a joyful acceptance of the Self-a welcome and well-earned affirmation after his masochistic thrashing. "I look at myself and see chest, thighs, feet-a head. This strange organization. I know it will die. And inside- something, something, happiness. ..Thou movest me!' That leaves no choice" (340). Herzog sees himself as an object of wonder he would grant to all. He is imperfect, confused, self-de-structive, but his being dwarfs the imperfections of personality. He may continue to turn inward while talking of civility-the image of him lying there talking to himself is somehow definitive-but his acceptance of himself may be the prerequisite to social service.

That Herzog's acceptance of the "inspired condition" is qualified, however, is all important: the visionary is real but mixed- valid, but not to be blindly trusted. Herzog's explicit affirmation of society and faith derives from his ability to live with ambiguity and paradox. He has discovered his interest in the external world by turning inward, has affirmed community by ceasing to write letters, has affirmed the inspired condition by examining society, and has found joy by

returning to pain. He is a Moses, who cares deeply about religious faith and a Herzog, or prince, who is interested in society, duty, and power. But he is most of all a man who has accepted the identity that lies within this division.

An Epistolary Road Map for a Modern-day Moses: The Kierkegaardian Strait Gates in Saul Bellow's Herzog

"He who loves God without faith reflects upon himself, he who loves God believingly reflects upon God."

- Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling

"I am going through a change of outlook", confides Herzog to Ramona, his "true friend" (Bellow: 1964 : 15), with whom - and whom alone - the protagonist seems to have kept open his communication channel in the midst of deafening noises. Yet to what extent Ramona has succeeded in receiving and decoding Herzog's message remains questionable, though her responses certainly sound both enthusiastic and supportive. For, while Herzog realizes, self-critically, that he has intended his previous metaphysical conceptualizing to help him enter "into a secret understanding with life to spare [him] the worst" by "flirting a little with the transcendent" (189), Ramona, ironically, still presents herself as just another "reality instructor" offering arguments and advice that add to Herzog's "misfortunes... as a collective project" (93). Indeed, from a Hegelian synthesizer, a "befuddled Idea merchant[s]" with a "compulsion to joust with Big Ideas, to one-up the best that has been thought and said" (Pinsker: 120, 118), to a Bellovian hero with " a purely receptive attitude of mind" engaged in "the Heraclitean listening

to the essence of things" (World 8, 9), Herzog's change is "a change of heart - a true change of heart!" (Bellow: 201), one that is existential by nature.

The form of the novel, in this sense, further suggests Herzog's existential condition. In his study of Saul Bellow, Tony Tanny observes that monologue, not dialogue, constitutes the predominant mode of narrative in Bellow's "own work, from his earlier stories to his latest novel," and that Herzog, by comparison, "is the silent monologist par excellence" (445, 453). Enacting the protagonist's intense "lasting inwardness... incommunicado in the most crowded urban conglomerations in history" (Tanner: 1971 : 446), this monologic discourse serves to bring to the fore a human situation, a certain way "to exist," meaning, when traced to its "original Latin, *existere*,.... 'to stand out from' or 'away from' or 'apart from' (Scott: 1978 : 13). As a manifestation of isolation, it takes the form of letters in *Herzog*, letters that are written but never sent - letters that record Moses Herzog's change from his despair at "this great, bone-breaking burden of selfhood and self-development" (92-93) to his being "pretty well satisfied to be" (340). It is these letters, as Sidney Finkelstein asserts, that provide "the means through which Herzog works out his own solutions, which turn to a vaguely religious existentialism" (265).

As such, these letters, although arranged in a seemingly random sequence, can be seen as constituting an epistolary road map for a modern-day Moses, whose change outlines a mental as well as

emotional trajectory informed of Kierkegaard's philosophy. Following Herzog's itinerary through these letters, one detects a tripartite progress, one that parallels the Kierkegaardian paradigm of the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. It represents, as Scott existence - three distinct ways in which [Herzog faces] himself and his world" (34).

Herzog's letter writing, with all its intensity and passionate engagement, presents an existential act in that it reifies the protagonist's inwardness, foregrounding what Kierkegaard designates as "the despair which is conscious of being despair" (FTSD 180). This "conscious despair" functions as a bridge linking the aesthetic and the ethical. Not a "break but a transfiguration", it constitutes "an imperative requirement" for "a higher form of existence" (E/O 233, 197). Viewed in this light, Herzog's aesthetical stage - one marked largely by " the despair which is unconscious that it is despair, or the despairing unconsciousness of having a self and an eternal self" (FTSD 175) - is not articulated but only briefly reflected and interrogated in these letters.

No one can describe the life of an aesthete more accurately than Herzog when he writes, in a letter addressed to himself, "until lately, you led a life of innocent sloth" (68). Not without a satirical overtone, the phase "innocent sloth" euphemizes what Kierkegaard calls "neutrality" (E/O-II 173), a stance that finds its expression in "a sophisticated and romantic hedonism" (MacIntyre: 338). Thus incurred, then, is the absence on Herzog's part of "any great commitments of

goals of purposes" (Scott: 35). In his "self-examination", for instance, Herzog comes to the realization that

> he had been a bad husband - twice... To his son and his daughter he was a loving but bad father. To his own parents he had been an ungrateful child... To his country, an indifferent citizen. To his brothers and his sister, affectionate but remote. With his friends, an egotist. With love, lazy. With brightness, dull. With power, passive. With his own soul, evasive. (4-5)

The aesthetic in Herzog, to paraphrase the above passage in Kierkegaardian terms, "is that by which he is immediately what he is" and, as a result, "he constantly lives in the moment" (E/O-II 182, 183). Moreover, one particular guise in which the aesthetic appears in Herzog is, to use Scott's words, "the detached intellectual who, as it were, takes a stand outside the world, giving himself to nothing but purely theoretical and speculative issues" (35). Both Herzog's early studies (his Ph.D. thesis, his articles, and his book *Romanticism and Christianity*) and his later research plans are, in fact, Hegelian syntheses intended to systematize the world by manufacturing a

> new sort of history, 'history that interests us' - personal, engagee - and looks at the past with an intense need for contemporary relevance... a history which really took into account the revolutions and mass convulsions of the twentieth century, accepting, with de Tocqueville, the universal and durable

> development of the equality of conditions, the progress of democracy. (5, 6)

An aesthete, Herzog indeed is, as his self-diagnosis describes, "narcissistic... masochistic... anachronistic" (4), reflecting upon himself only, no matter what. As such, his portraiture is rendered in apt details by H.J. Blackharm:

> One who lives in the aesthetic, plays emotionally and imaginatively with all possibilities, renounces nothing, commits himself as little as possible in vocation, marriage, belief, enjoys a literary interest in all faiths and customs and relationships, comes and goes in his wishes and desires of the moment, and is subject to fortune and misfortune. One who lives in the intellectual, claims to rise above the world of change and chance, to regard and judge everything from the point of view of the eternal, with detachment, to put everything in its place in the system, coordinated and understood. (10) (Blackham: 1961 : 10)

But Herzog's life as an aesthete will soon be overtaken and overshadowed by the despair, which is caused by "the gap between actuality and expectation, between what he did and what he might have done" (Pinsker 125). In fact, the novel begins with Herzog's mind at war with itself due to the chaos in his personal life and his increasing distrust in his Hegelian project (3-6). His overwhelming "need to explain, to have it out, to justify, to put in perspective, to clarify, to make amends," and his realization that "I cannot justify" (2,3), signal, then,

a point of transfiguration where the aesthetic and the ethical stages of Herzog's life are juxtaposed side by side. On the one hand, one finds that "the reason why the man who lives aesthetically can in a higher sense explain nothing", as Kierkegaard contends, "is that he constantly lives in the moment, yet all the time is conscious only in terms of a certain relativity and within certain bounds" (E/O-II 183). On the other hand, it is this consciousness of his own limits that forces Herzog to face the reality and, more importantly, to choose. "When a man despairs he chooses", asserts Kierkegaard. "He chooses himself, not in his immediacy... but... in his eternal validity"; therefore, "the act of choosing essentially a proper and stringent expression of the ethical" (E/O- II 213, 170).

Herzog's ethical stage, in this sense, begins with his "despair in thought" (Kierkegaard E/O-II 198-199), a despair that is articulated through his letter writing. No more than an aggregate of fragmented and disconnected lines addressed to himself with a pathos bordering upon lunacy, the first letter nevertheless ends with a firm-sounding note, "Choose one" (3). Such an imperative, from Herzog to himself, suggests what Kierkegaard calls the "willed despair" (E/O-II 217), which highlights the existential dimensions of Herzog's letters and letter writing. For, "when one has truly willed despair", as Kierkegaard remarks, "one has truly chosen that which despair chooses, i.e., oneself in one's eternal validity"; and for Herzog to write, in this sense, is to engage the world on his "own behalf" (E/O-II 217, 173). And existential thinking, as Scott puts it, is

> facing the concrete actualities of one's life, undertaking to think through all the questions they raise about the meaning of one's humanity, and doing this in as profoundly serious a way as possible. Existential thinking, in other words, is not the detached cogitation of an uninvolved spectator, but the passionate exploration of one infinitely concerned, and absolutely engaged, by the object of his thought which is nothing less than the meaning of his own selfhood. The reality which an existential thinker lays hold of is a reality which has cost him something, a reality which he has suffered through and endured... this is the cardinal principle of Kierkegaard's thought - which means that there is no other route into his ideas except that which leads through the circumstances of his life. (26-27)

In addition, to choose oneself as a result of "willed despair" is to express "the whole personality ... [related] to the absolute" - with "absolute" being "I myself in my eternal validity", which is realized by way of a withdrawal or isolation from the world in the form of unsent letters; and by so doing, Herzog is able to act "not outwardly but in himself", thus putting himself, rather paradoxically, "in the most intimate connection and the most exact cohesion with a surrounding world" (E/O-216, 218, 245). Furthermore, what distinguishes Herzog's determination to "choose one" is his passion, his mental and emotional intensity. More than anything else, writes Kierkegaard, it is "the energy, the earnestness, the pathos with which one chooses" that "announces [one's] inner infinity" (E/O-II 171).

That being so, Herzog's first letters, while demonstrative of his determination to choose, are saturated with fear. "There is something inside me", Herzog writes. "I am in his grip. When I speak of him I feel him in my head, pounding for order. He will ruin me" (11). Through the mouths of Russian Cosmonauts who, projects Herzog, "have been lost; disintegrated", he sends out his message of "SOS - world SOS", which is immediately decoded into a direct and explicit personal appeal in a letter addressed to his friends: "I need help in the worst way. I am afraid of falling apart" (11). To choose, for Herzog at this stage, is to fear, since to exist on his own behalf means to move away from the familiar, reassuring systems of conceptualization, to become "more and more an individual and less a mere member of a group" (Copleston 335). Such a move, or change, brings Herzog resultantly face to face with a void, an emptiness, and forces him to confront the unknown, the uncertainty, and the absurdity of the present. Be that as it may, this fear does not so much freeze Herzog in his transfiguration as it constitutes a "key experience on the margins of the ethical ... through which one may come to censure oneself as an individual"; for fear, as does despair, "point[s] in the same direction" (MacIntyre 338). Being the "state which produces a qualitative leap from one stage in life's way to another" (Copleston 348), fear as such is characterized then by a concomitant critical consciousness on Herzog's part of his fear in various guises, followed by a courage of effort to overcome it. Writing a letter to Daisy, for instance, Herzog "noted with distaste his own trick of appealing for sympathy" (Bellow 12). Fear,

specified by Kierkegaard as "a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy" (Kierkegaard 38), thus colours Herzog's view of his condition and of the world immediately prior to his choice to "anchor his existence in genuine moral commitments" (Scott 36).

"The ethical", writes Kierkegaard in *Either/Or*, "is defined as duty, and duty in turn is defined as a congeries of particular propositions" (II 258). One such "incumbent" (II259) proposition whereby Herzog decides "as to how and where he should 'apply' himself in the world of which he is a member" (Scott 36) is the primacy of humanity. "We must be what we are. That is necessity he proclaims of "I am Herzog. I have to be that man" (66, 67). The sequence in which Herzog makes these two pronouncements - "We" preceding "I" - points to a crucial property of the ethical stage in that Herzog remains a "member" of a group and has not yet become what Kierkegaard would like to regard as an "individual". In other words association with others in a collective venture ,as Blackham observes. "[is] not an absolute venture but a substitute for one, 'a fictious movement of the spirit, a gesture in the direction of the absolute' (21). In this sense, the ethical is also termed by Kierkegaard as "the universal" based on relativity, which is "itself tells for everything outside it"; and Herzog, as its "physical and psychical" constituent has "his ethical task [which] is to express himself constantly in it, to abolish his particularity in order to become the universal" (FTSD 64 - 65). To be ethical, then, is to articulate within

a certain moral and obligatory parameter, and to be universal is to de-individualize. By way of letters, Herzog's "relief of speech" provides him with a channel through which he is able to fulfil his moral commitments, thus "translat[ing] him into the universal" (FTSD 122).

As the mouthpiece on behalf of humans, Herzog's letters now body forth several major changes: from the previous narcissistic "I" to the present "humanity", anxiety to affirmation, complaint to acceptance, and "innocent sloth" to serious and passionate engagement. Whatever the change, the focal point is to dismiss "superfluous ideas... a great mass of irrelevancy and nonsense" (Bellow 362). For, as Kierkegaard asserts, "He who lives ethically... does not allow indefinite thoughts to potter within him, nor tempting possibilities to distract him with their jugglery" (E/O-II 263). Neither does Herzog. "One can't become Utopian", writes the protagonist in a letter to Dr. Bhave. "It only makes it harder to discover where your duty really lies" (48). With this belief, Herzog passionately engages himself to clear away the "ideas that depopulate the world" (95). Writing to Heidegger, for instance, he calls in to question "the fall into the quotidian", asking sarcastically, "When did this fall occur? Where were we standing when it happened?" (49). In a letter to the *New York Times*, he strongly protests against the idea of comparing "human life to Risk Capital in business" (50). With emotion, he further points it out to Edvig, the psychiatrist, that his "Protestant Freudianism" has "a lousy, cringing, grudging concept

of human nature" (58). To "the canned Sauerkraut of Spengler's 'Prussian Socialism', the commonplaces of the Wasteland outlook, the cheap mental stimulants of Alienation, the cant and rant of pipsqueaks about In authenticity and Forlornness" and so forth, Herzog responds : "I can't accept this foolish dreariness. We are talking about the whole life of mankind. The subject is too great, too deep for such weakness, cowardice - too deep, too great" (74-75). He further points out, in his letter to General Eisenhower, that "that man is free is to be released from historical limitation" (162). Consequently, "the problem as I see it", writes Herzog to Harris Pulver, "is not one of definition but of the total reconsideration of human qualities. Or perhaps even the discovery of qualities" (164). Not only does he describe Spinoza's "thoughts" as "random association", which he believes is "a form of bondage" (181), he also reminds Monsignor Hilton of "how little relevance certain ancient ideas have" (188).

Herzog's dismissal of "objective thinking", which is considered by Kierkegaard as a distraction from despair, a pretense for impersonal behaviour (E/O-II 216), is accompanied by his newly emerged acceptance or resignation with regard to his attitude toward the world around him. Herzog has, as his childhood friend Nachman observes, "learned to accept a mixed condition of life" (134). Believing that "in a spiritually confused age ... a man who could feel as he did might claim a certain distinction", he writes to Father Teilhard de Chardin, expressing his concern about "the inward aspect of the elements", thus seeing human existence as a spiritual entity with its own centre (157,

159). In addition, his courtroom experience, his car accident, his humiliating episode in the police department where he is booked for carrying a loaded gun, and his witnessing of Gersbach's tenderness in bathing his daughter June combine to lead to his conviction that "the human soul is an amphibian" (257) and that the world is a mixture of "everything horrible, everything sublime, and things not imagined yet" (258). As a result in "a few memoranda to himself", which "were not very coherent or even logical, but ... came quite naturally to him", Herzog writes,

> The dream of man's heart, however much we may distrust and resent it, is that life it, is that life may complete itself in significant pattern. Some incomprehensible way. Before death. Not irrationally but incomprehensibly fulfilled. (303)

Herzog's emphasis on heart and his embrace of incomprehensibility, as articulated in the above passage, comprise the two essential ingredients of what Kierkegaard calls "the infinite resignation", the preparatory nature of which he thus defines in *Fear and Trembling:*

> The infinite resignation is the last stage prior to faith, so that one who has not made this movement has not faith; for only in the infinite resignation do I become clear to myself with respect to my eternal validity, and only then can there be any question of grasping existence by virtue of faith... [Faith] has resignation as its presupposition. (57, 58)

It is by virtue of this infinite resignation, argues Kierkegaard, that one becomes capable of gaining one's "eternal consciousness", which is the "love to God" (FTSD 59). With his acceptance of the world as it is, Herzog's love to God is then expressed in his awareness of his failure in his duty to God, of his potential to reach God, and of his determination to follow God. "Lord", Herzog confesses in a letter, "I ran to fight in Thy holy cause, but kept tripping, never reached the scene of the struggle" (128). To Ramona, he writes, "The light of truth is never far away, and no human being is too negligible or his heart: "How my mind has struggled to make coherent sense. I have not been too good at it. But have desired to do your unknowable will, taking it, and you, without symbol. Everything of in tensest significance. Especially if divested of me" (325 - 326).

If, as Kierkegaard proclaims, "In resignation [one] make[s] renunciation of everything" (FTSD 59), then the last but by no means the lest thing that Herzog must give up in order to embark upon the religious stage is his abstract thinking in the form of letters. For, as is the case with Abraham who, significantly, "was not a thinker", "faith begins precisely there where thinking leaves off" (FTSD 26, 64) owing to the nature of faith as a paradox.

As discussed earlier, the ethical, according to Kierkegaard, is the universal, with one's existence prescribed as a congeries of moral duties and commitments. Herzog, being the defender of humanity on behalf of others, presents himself then as a member, a

component, subsumed into a well-defined system. His obligatory task is to articulate, through letters, the governing ethical norms and principles, a task that demands the erasure of his individuality or particularity. In this way, his relationship with the absolute becomes mediated by letters, in that he "determines... his relation to the absolute by his relation to the universal" (*FTSD* 80). Yet "precisely because of their universality," as Scott argues, these ethical norms and principles "have only a very limited relevance to the concrete and uniquely existing individual," whose "search for [one's] own essential reality... in behalf of [one's] own humanity" entails movements that transcend the ethical (38,41). Hence the paradox of faith, in that "the individual, after having been in the universal, now as the particular isolates [oneself] as higher than the universal (*FTSD* 65). So does Herzog, who, by virtue of his infinite resignation, "determines his relation to the universal by his relation to the absolute," a relation that "does not permit of mediation, for it is founded precisely upon the fact that the individual is only the individual" (*FTSD* 80).

The ultimate expression of such an individual "in an absolute relation to the absolute" (*FTSD* 103) is, paradoxically, silence. Defined by Kierkegaard as "the mutual understanding between the Deity and the individual," silence enacts "the terrible responsibility of solitude" as a result of "a teleological suspension of the ethical," a movement of faith "(capable of transforming a murder into a holy act well-pleasing to God" (*FTSD* 97, 123, 64). In other

words, Herzog's movement of faith through inarticulation is made by virtue of its absurdity when judged from the standpoint of the ethical that demands articulation. To be religious, along this line of reasoning, is to be ethically incomprehensible. "Faith is this paradox," Kierkegaard writes, "the individual absolutely cannot make himself intelligible to anybody" (*FTSD* 81). Being «the highest passion" (*FTSD* 130), faith, in this sense, is what Scott describes as '(a form of radical trust... [a] 'letting go' of the material things of this world ...a great leap" out from articulation into silence (42, 43).

Herzog's experience of "Bildungsroman" (Interview 362) toward the religious is not, of course, accidental. On the contrary, his intense and passionate engagement with the modernist perceptions in the ethical stage is already punctuated by his self critique and periodical revelations. His ridicule of any abstract thinking as no more than «a good five-cent synthesis" (207), for instance, is quickly followed by his realization that '(he did not need to perform elaborate abstract intellectual work" and that "not thinking is not necessarily fatal" (265). "Did I really believe that I would die when thinking stopped?" asks Herzog, in reminiscence. "Now to fear such a thing-that's really crazy" (265). Further contributory to his belief in non thinking is his experience in silence, an experience that takes him to a realm where "everything is to be acquired in stillness, and in the silence of the divine" (*E/O-I* 31):

> The silence sustained him, and the brilliant weather,

> the feeling that he was easily contained by everything about him within the hollowness of God, as he noted, and deaf to the final multiplicity of facts, as well as, blind to ultimate distances. (325)

And Herzog's being "pretty well satisfied to be, to be just as it is willed" preludes his religious phase in which "he had no messages for anyone. Nothing. Not a single word" (341).

In marked distinction from his other works, Bellow's *Herzog* is constructed in a double discourse. A largely dialogical/descriptive discourse delineates a chaotic modern milieu, to which an exclusively homological/analytical one constitutes an existential response. Each presents a paradox. For, whereas the obvious physical movement depicted in the former turns out to be circular, the seeming meditative stasis manifested in the latter proves to be progressive. Thus structured, the Kierkegaardian thesis that "inwardness is higher than outward ness" (*FTSD* 79) finds its expression in Herzog's existential relay: by starting to write letters, he takes a leap out from the aesthetic into the ethical, and by ceasing to write them, out from the ethical into the religious.

CONCLUSION

Saul Bellow is most concerned with the relation between ideas and life, worries about the place of the intellectual in contemporary America, a society that prizes in achievers while it patronizes and occasionally pities its thinkers. What is surprising is that Bellow, at least partially, agrees with the practical American's criticism: if the life of the mind has value, and it surely does for Bellow, its value does not lie in solving the problems of day to day living. Bellow told his Paris Review interviewer: "To be an intellectual in the United states sometimes means to be immersed in a private life in which one thinks, but thinks with some humiliating sense of how little thought can accomplish." (Rovit: 1975 : 16) Bellow's fictional thinkers find it impossible to accomplish almost anything. From Joseph in Dangling Man, unable even to cash a cheque as he drifts aimlessly while waiting for the Selective Service to select him, to Humboldt Fleisher of Humboldt's Gift the supernova who blazes across the literary firmament only to darken into a self-destructive obscurity. Bellow's intellectual heroes are acutely aware of the reasons for their alienation from the rest of society, but they are unable to think their way through to an accommodation with it. Thinking leads only to more thinking – not to action. Although Bellow's protagonists are unable to accomplish anything that significantly reshapes their world, a number of them do manage to save themselves from Humboldt's fate by coming to an accommodation with the world as it is. Often, this accommodation

requires a new sense of self and of a protagonist's religion to the human community. Bellow's heroes lift themselves out of their malaise by discovering within themselves an essential force for life.

To know the cause of his anxiety, his failure, his rage is the Bellow protagonist's deepest desire. If Bellow has a mean side that revels in the joys of the page, he has a serious side too, almost inspite of himself, as his imagination seeks the thread that unifies experience and thus explains it. In even a novel such as Augie March, defined from the very first as episodic, Bellow is finally moral, seeking a pattern, a meaning, an explanation of cause. Augie after all "seeks a fate good enough," and his life is strewn with traps. His cheerful nature is increasingly tested by blows. And at the end, the reader is reminded that the whole book is a reminiscence by a rather saddened individual seeking to retain his buoyancy. Every Bellow wanderer is caught up in the "urban clutter" of noise, dirt, and smell, and each is forced to recognize that all dreams of escape – geographic or spatial are sentimental nonsense. Spring season or pastoral life, Africa or Mexico, moon or ocean bottom – not one guarantees relief from inner demons or outer pressures. Man must struggle at home for his emotional life, Bellow insists, and in an age that is complex, hostile, and increasingly proud of being revolutionary. But for Bellow, the times are "more disheveled than revolutionary." (Kulshrestha: 1972 : 9) Every Bellow hero, from the dangling Joseph to the beleaguered Artur Sammler, each is, like Moses Herzog, a displaced, intellectual

victim whose survival depends on his rejecting these exploitative forces. Each tries to wrench from urban disorder a measure of moral coherence. Herzog has only to glance from his window to be reminded that the city amid dust clouds and clamour, demolishes and rebuilds itself unendingly, while in his head his blood pounds as relentlessly "for order."

Bellow's characters are inseparable from their ideas. Bellow often has sought a plot that would contain a number of ideologies and has imagined a quest that is mental as he seeks to dramatize nothing less than the act of thinking. And yet there are too many thoughts finally for the plot line to be easy, since it is an idea after all which provides the shapes of a novel. We're accustomed, if truth be told to nothing serious ideas for they often contain the novel's theme. What can we do if a dozen ideas find their way into extended statement? If sensation is so rich in a Bellow novel that it dazzles the protagonist, so, too, is the thinking, forcing us to sort it out, distinguishing among ideas that are playful or meant to be rejected or viewed as a source of salvation. Alfred Kazin points out, Bellow gives us situations whose vividness is that we share them, "though" ... so much ordinariness no doubt invites condescension and even Surprise." (1976 : 8) We might add that it invites misunderstanding, too, for with so much grand theorizing in the mouths of Bellow's eccentrics, we might miss the quiet, realistic point Bellow is making. Bellow's fiction often finds its key in a highly specific, exceptionally modest aspect of daily life – the fact, say, that leisure, however

ambitiously conceived, can lead to ennui (Dangling Man) or the way summer heat and loneliness can make one jumpy (The Victim). Augie March might well have begun with the observation that few Americans know how to listen or the fact that without a sustaining national ideology Americans create their own theologies, becoming side street messiahs. In novel after novel, Bellow, like Henry James, portrays a special but ordinary phenomenon – a certain light or mood or psychology, the "sense" of a character such as Augie March, or the way a mediocre man in America tries desperately to "seize the day" or be outstanding.

Such phenomena are particularly mis-leading because of Bellow's belief in the moderate. Bellow portrays our essentially undramatic daily life, mixed as it is, so that extremes seldom obtain and moderation seems a prime virtue. Successes are often diluted, failures are usually tempered, and we know so little about any occasion that a moderate tone is best.

If such modesty creates a problem in Bellow's plot, however, he is successful in surmounting it. When at his best, he's also successful in achieving order within his chaotic imaginative world. It is fascinating to note that Bellow often describes the victory of his protagonists as a clearing away of the extraneous. "He leaves his protagonist ready to begin issues defined, emotions controlled, the oppressive diversity of the world somehow controlled, the oppressive diversity of the world somehow stilled." (Kumar & Mckean: 1968 : 51) Bellow terms the obstacle on its head in short, by making the

confusing richness of his world the source and mainspring of his plot. Like the readers and the author, the protagonist struggles toward clarity. "I feel that art has something to do with the achievement of stillness in the midst of chaos." Bellow has said, "I think that art has something to do with an arrest of attention in the midst of distraction." (1967 : 190) One of Bellow's most important means of arresting attention is his use of reminiscence as all of his first person novels dramatize a character reviewing his disorderly experience, seeking an order within it. As Bellow wrestles with the recalcitrance of his material, so, too does his protagonist.

Bellow writes what we must call a novel of perception or revelation in which the protagonist desires more than anything else – more than getting the girl or the job or the whale – to see. One of Bellow's greatest tasks is to invent plots or situation that will permit this revelation. Joseph's diary, Leventhal's interviews, Augie's passive listening again and again Bellow presents the Jamesian conversation, two people grouping to see. Thus Henderson goes to Africa and Herzog reviews his experience. The Bellow protagonist is desperate for insight.

He stares and stares at the world, like a child staring at a corpse, seeking to penetrate its surface appearance. When critics complain of Bellow's plotlessness, they mean that the real activity in Bellow's novel is this act of looking and that it seems to belong to Bellow as well as his characters. Every time Bellow describes a scene,

he seems to hope that his imagination will supply the metaphor of image that will unlock the mystery. His protagonists tend to hold still. If the use of nostalgic recall permits Bellow to dramatize the protagonists quest for clarity, it also permits him to dramatize his own desire for revelation. But however active the host of characters and memories, it is the visible world that fascinates the hero. If he's not on a couch or at a rooming house window, he's on a train or in a cab or on a plane, looking and looking and looking.

Bellow sought an image of good. His fiction teems with images for the destructive or evil: could he imagine a similar concrete, figurative expression of the good?

Characters such as Augie March attempt to demonstrate the validity of love in a world of force. Tommy Wilhelm never turns nasty in the face of humiliation and is the kind of gentle person a Darwinian world crushes. In Africa Henderson found the cow people, and in the character of Mr. Sammler, Bellow seems to have worked out a combination of benevolence and strength. And yet what is crucial is that the essence be found in the world, as a tangible, physical principle. Tommy Wilhelm feels suggestive tugs deep within him, but these are interiors. Bellow sought an image of the spiritually benevolent in matter itself, finding it perhaps in a passage in Henderson. Among the Arnewi, whose cows express something of the gentle, benevolent principle Bellow would imagine, Henderson becomes convinced, he says, "that things, the object world itself, gave me a kind of go-ahead sing." I felt the world away under me,

"he says, "some powerful magnificence not human." It's a light, a "mild pink color, like the water of watermelon," and it creates in him as "I snuckered through my nose and caressed the wall with my cheek," a serene confidence: "a state as mild as the color itself." (Bellow: 1959 : 100 – 102)

One of Bellow's greatest problems grown from precisely such perceptions. Bellow's imagination carries him beyond the perimeters of our common human experience and even our common belief, for the most part, so that he's left with the problems of working both the experience and its implications into his plot.

The perception of an essence is more or less static. Bellow's task has been to dramatize this act, to send his protagonist on a quest to Africa or about the streets of Chicago. It's also to put obstacles in the way of the search – distractions, difficulties, dangers, perhaps in our society, as in Humboldt, or in the protagonist's own character as in Humboldt, or in the protagonist's pain – the dim, monstrous, urgings from inside as religious yearning. Thus Bellow has worked a metaphysical bias into the texture of his work. Certainly the sense he conveys is that the physical world is permeated with something beyond our sense. The protagonist's painted awareness of the mystery of his being adds another dimension, a depth and richness to a simple scene. Even when Herzog gets off a subway he sees a crowd of people dying. "On faces, on heads, the strong marks of decay: the big legs of women and blotted eyes of men, sunken mouths and inky nostrils." The crowd becomes a reminder not only

of mortality, but of the simple, incredible mystery of our species. The protagonist is obsessed with the felt strangeness of humankind, the cipher of human consciousness: "Signs in almost every passing face of a deeper comment or interpretation of destiny – eyes that held metaphysical statement." (Bellow: 1964 : 178 – 179)

Bellow's affirmative stance, at times nearly ostentatious may ignore some darker reaches of the spirit, and so lend itself to popular simplicities: Yet in refusing disappointment on behalf of us all he defends is human sense and presence, as Herzog does in his letter to God. Certainly Bellow, despite a certain impatience that could narrow his judgement, possesses distinct clairvoyance about discovering issues, questions, problems before they are seen by most others. In many of his public pronouncements, Bellow also tries to avoid the extremes of optimism and pessimism, the black and white of paranoia. In assigning to his heroes the task of self-creation, of awakening the soul to itself amidst time's miseries, he proves himself a new Gnostic; but this Gnostic holds no contempt for the world or its infinite particulars, alights neither nature nor history. Heir of a central vision and art's high mystery, Saul Bellow joins those generous forebears, who believe that the universe could deliver itself to our listening.

Saul Bellow is our most important contemporary writer because his world-view, untrammeled by either excessive optimism or pessimism, genuinely explores the possibilities open to man, even

as his works register powerfully the pressures that have come to change the quality of life in modern times. Bellow's world-view is valuable to mankind in that it helps man to "make a clearer estimate of... [his] condition," without bringing in false increments of optimism or despair. The process of affirmation in Bellow's fiction is invariably realised through a powerful depiction of the characteristic tensions, trials, and tribulations of the modern world. It is this awareness of pain and suffering that life inheres which makes for tempered affirmation in his fiction. The crucial point to note is that the wasteland image assumed in Bellow's works is by no means the final picture of life, and his vision goes beyond it. In fact, Bellow's ultimate affirmative reality is like life itself -mixed, though "the melioristic side" that makes survival possible with dignity and values is eminently brought out. This study has examined the complex sensibility informing Bellow's world-view in relation to both the operation of the wasteland myth in Bellow as also his uneasiness with the facile pessimism of the wasteland vision.

Much of the existing Bellow criticism concentrates on the quality of Bellow's affirmation. While one school of critical opinion argues that his rhetoric more than the material of his fiction conduces to his affirmation, the other views his affirmation as the product of a genuine confrontation with the real. The present study focuses its attention on the essential affirming world-view of Bellow that emerges in relation and opposition to the wasteland motif that

is unmistakably present in his works. Bellow's novelistic affirmation is usually characterized by a sort of religious vision which brings into harmony life on this earth with the eternal beyond. However, the wasteland mood, part of the Bellow consciousness, tempers his affirmation and eventually leads to a vision of a life which is punctuated by sacred mystery.

The city remains a major thematic preoccupation with Bellow and, particularly in his later fiction the use of the city motif acquires a sharper focus and vivacity. The six novels discussed project the city as a veritable wasteland teeming in spiritual squalor and evil. The malevolence and soul-crushing aspect of the Bellovian wasteland is manifested in the individuals who people it. Some of the characteristic wasteland symptoms noted in Bellow's characters are neurosis, fragmentation, willful celebration of negative death-instincts, lust and heartlessness. Not only does the Bellow-novel project a wasteland ambience, but its structure in entirety accords with the wasteland myth. The motifs of renewal and rebirth which are part of the rejection of the wasteland are adroitly woven into the texture of the Bellovian fiction. The affirmation earned by the protagonist becomes possible because of his awareness that his deeper consciousness can cope with such monstrosities and even employ itself for the good 'of the community. This shift in the protagonist's consciousness bespeaks Bellow's unambiguous rejection of the wasteland vision and his espousal of a balanced and sanative vision.

In *Henderson the Rain King,* Bellow internalises in his protagonist the "city-vexation" and leaves him to sojourn, for the most part, in the deep wilds of Africa which, no less than Henderson's New York, is shrouded in a wasteland ambience, To declutter his 'consciousness, Henderson voyages into his deeper self .and discovers therein great reserves of life and spiritual strength. It is this "moral self- exploration" which assures Henderson a life of dignity and purpose, As Henderson gradually moves towards sanity" the motifs of renewal and rebirth bring in images of fertility and life underscoring the possibilities of meaningful existence.

Herzog presents an urban landscape, putrid with decay and death and haunted by evil. The protagonist, showing signs of disintegration, craves for some proof that life has meaning and thus prove the wastelanders reality- instructions wrong, Herzog comes to clarity only when the awareness dawns on him that there is God, and hence, hope for this universe, Bellow's rejection of the wasteland ideology is articulated through the images of fertility and resurrection which emerge in succession at the end.

Mr Sammler's Planet projects the city as a modern-day "Sodom and Gomorrah." The protagonist searches for human nobility in the modem world and discovers it in his cousin Elya. At Elya's death, Sammler prays to the Almighty for sending Elyas and thus making earthly life tolerable. Beginning on a dark muffled atmosphere, the novel moves towards a state that is reminiscent of the pastoral.

The "Chicagoland" of *Humboldt's Gift* comes to us as a place of deep distractions but it is always characterised by ambivalence. Seeking answer to the death mystery, Citrine, the protagonist, discovers that immortality is our human lot and the dead and the living can always commune with each other through love and forgiveness. Initially assuming chaos and disarray, the novel ends on a note of quietude and reconciliation, and the possibility for meaningful earthly existence is brought out through the symbol of the spring flower which survives against a backdrop of waste.

More than his' other novels, *The Dean's December* shows Bellow intensely preoccupied with the vexations characteristic of the modern city life. Alternating between two locales-Chicago in America and Bucharest in Germany- the novel effectively makes the point that the wastelanders peopling these cities are away and beyond redemption. However, Bellow's protagonist Corde, in coming to terms with the forces of history and seeing the human condition as it is, assures himself of personal redemption.

More Die of Heartbreak represents the city as an expression of the destructive powers of Eros, Thanatos, and Mammon. The protagonist, a Holy Knight figure, searches for love in the wasteland of decadent values and discovers the sources of love in himself, when his consciousness comes to near clarity. Avoiding the solipsistic world of plants and the death-celebrating human world, he goes to the Arctic cold zones to observe how life-forms survive against all odds and thereby derives spiritual stamina to face civilisation again.

Beginning on a mood of lassitude and indecisiveness, the novel moves towards resolution and clarity. In using the symbol of Phoenix at the end, the novel makes an unambiguous statement about the immortality that Benn achieves against the waste of the modern world.

In the treatment of the cityscapes, it is shown that Bellow's fiction originating in. a mood of wasteland moves steadily towards an affirmative stance that crystallises a radiant mood beyond both pessimism and optimism. Bellow's differences with the modernist thinkers establish the correlation between his fictional stance and his avowed public position regarding affirmation. Bellow faults the existential philosophers, psychologists, literary modernists and their contemporary "epigones" for glorifying the wasteland ideology and making it some kind of a modern- day "church." The whole gamut of Bellow's major fiction is examined in order to show the consistently evolving anti-modernist stance. The juxtaposition of fictional materials and public statements of Bellow clearly points to the fact that he does not put much faith in the wasteland and his deep moralistic concerns help him to steer clear of both excessive optimism and pessimism and posit hope in certain "enduring" and "essential" human values, which are not accounted for by the wasteland vision.

The affirmative stance of Bellow discussed with reference to the city and his quarrel with the wasteland ideologues leads us to examine the complex sensibility that is behind this balanced world-

view. Bellow's evidently manifest romantic-transcendental sensibility is to a large extent part of his redeeming vision. His vision is shown to have affiliations with the romantic and transcendental movements. A tough-minded romanticism and a transcendental strain of thought that is strongly tethered to human reality constitute Bellow's romantic transcendental sensibility. The figure of the Romantic quester and the motif of renewal are typical of many of the novels discussed here. Bellow's romantic - transcendental sensibility has a strong practical orientation in that the remedy it suggests emerges only after giving due consideration to the presence of evil and, more importantly, to a technologised society of masses that has become a modern reality. In essence, Bellow's belief in the regenerative quality of life powerfully manifested in the dialectic of his fiction effectively counters the wasteland vision.

In *Henderson the Rain King, Herzog,* and *Humboldt's Gift* there is an ostensible use of the motifs of renewal and resurrection and the quester figure often associated with romantic literature. Bellow's romantic-transcendental sensibility, while deeply humanistic in its concerns also establishes the relationship in which man stands to the eternal. Returning from Africa with the aim of serving his society, Henderson is seen experiencing an exuberant transcendence that places him and his world around in touch with the world of the spirit. Before embarking on his plan to employ his consciousness usefully for his society, Herzog attains to a serene transcendental mood, which reveals the source of the eternal mystery

pervading life. Having made amends to Humboldt by reuniting him with his mother in a more spacious grave, Citrine attests to the immortality that is our essential nature. Sammler, while acknowledging through his prayer Elva's meeting of "the terms of the human contract," also shows how Elya acted as the instrument of the eternal in bringing happiness and cheer to many. Uncowed by the horrors of the wasteland city, Benn goes to the distant North Pole to observe lichens and thereby discover the essential immortality that pervades human life. The only novel that does not capture this sensibility substantially is *The Dean's December*. However, Corde in clearly seeing for himself the "imminence of the last days" attains to a kind of liberation in his consciousness. Haunted by a sense of despair, apocalyptic-sounding *The Dean's December* yet projects a vision different from the wasteland vision, in the earnest effort it makes to come to grips with reality and to remedy the situation.

Herzog, Mr. Sammler's Planet, Humboldt's Gift and *More Die of Heartbreak* are overtly Jewish in tone and moral outlook. The protagonist of each of these novels journeys through his essential Jewish self and brings back "the remedy that will cure him of the wasteland disease. Though it has a Gentile for a protagonist, *Henderson the Rain King* is evidently Jewish in tone and sensibility and the particular quality of love that pervades the work is nothing but Jewish.

The problem of the wasteland has haunted the imagination of religious, philosophical; and literary thinkers ever since the dawn

of time. However, the change from an agrarian to an industrialised way of life with its attendant evils of mass culture and crisis in human values during the modern era has made the image of the wasteland peculiarly relevant to our age. In modern times the vision of the wasteland despair is remarkably brought out in T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner, not to speak of many of the contemporary literary artists across the Atlantic. The great modernist writers referred to often viewed modern life as a wasteland without much possibility of a redemption. There is no denying that their perception has a grain of truth. But, more often than not, they tended to exaggerate in projecting despair of modern life. Their genius came up with brilliant metaphors which crystallised their deterministic views of reality. These metaphors hold sway over the minds of the masses at present, and contemporary artists solemnly accepting the modernist verdict perpetuate a facile kind of pessimism in their works. Saul Bellow began his literary career at a time when the tide of modernism was still strong in the enlightened world. His initial works have much in common with the modernist spirit, but here also the typical Bellovian moral tone and earnestness point to the fact that, reality being a "multiverse," life would forever be a mosaic of multitudinous experiences. Even from the beginning of his career, Bellow has consistently opposed the tendency in contemporary literature to sell itself to the wasteland ideology. This opposition does not emerge out of any misperception of life's perils. In fact, Bellow's wastelands come to us with the terrifying reality of a nightmare. They are there in his works as living presences

demanding instantaneous action from the protagonists so that compared to Bellow's forceful portrayal of the wastelands, the wastelands of the modernists' pale into insignificance. Whereas the modernists portray a wasteland situation but are categorical in denying any remedy, Bellow, without disengaging himself from the angst of modern-day living, genuinely explores reality and discovers for us certain persisting human values. Saul Bellow, in this discovery of the "essential" and the "enduring" in being human, sustains the tradition of humanism in western literature which had earlier found nourishment in Dante, Shakespeare, Tolstoy and Dostoievski.

APPENDIX

THE NOBEL LECTURE

by

Saul Bellow

Dec. 12, 1976

I was a very contrary undergraduate more than 40 years ago. It was my habit to register for a course and then to do most of my reading in another field of study. So that when I should have been grinding away at "Money and Banking" I was reading the novels of Joseph Conrad. I have never had reason to regret this. Perhaps Conrad appealed to me because he was like an American — he was an uprooted Pole sailing exotic seas, speaking French and writing English with extraordinary power and beauty. Nothing could be more natural to me, the child of immigrants who grew up in one of Chicago's immigrant neighborhoods of course! - a Slav who was a British sea captain and knew his way around Marseilles and wrote an Oriental sort of English. But Conrad's *real* life had little oddity in it. His themes were straightforward - fidelity, command, the traditions of the sea, hierarchy, the fragile rules sailors follow when they are struck by a typhoon. He believed in the strength of these fragile-seeming rules, and in his art. His views on art were simply stated in the preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus.* There he said that art was an attempt to render the highest justice to the visible universe: that it tried to find in that universe, in matter as well as in the facts of life, what was fundamental, enduring, essential. The

writer's method of attaining the essential was different from that of the thinker or the scientist. These, said Conrad, knew the world by systematic examination. To begin with the artist had only himself; he descended within himself and in the lonely regions to which he descended, he found "the terms of his appeal". He appealed, said Conrad, "to that part of our being which is a gift, not an acquisition, to the capacity for delight and wonder... our sense of pity and pain, to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation - and to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts... which binds together all humanity - the dead to the living and the living to the unborn."

This fervent statement was written some 80 years ago and we may want to take it with a few grains of contemporary salt. I belong to a generation of readers that knew the long list of noble or noble-sounding words, words like "invincible conviction" or "humanity" rejected by writers like *Ernest Hemingway.* Hemingway spoke for the soldiers who fought in the First World War under the inspiration of *Woodrow Wilson* and other rotund statesmen whose big words had to be measured against the frozen corpses of young men paving the trenches. Hemingway's youthful readers were convinced that the horrors of the 20th Century had sickened and killed humanistic beliefs with their deadly radiations. I told myself, therefore, that Conrad's rhetoric must be resisted. But I never thought him mistaken. He spoke directly to me. The feeling individual

appeared weak - he felt nothing but his own weakness. But if he accepted his weakness and his separateness and descended into himself intensifying his loneliness, he discovered his solidarity with other isolated creatures.

I feel no need now to sprinkle Conrad's sentences with sceptical salt. But there are writers for whom the Conradian novel - all novels of that sort - are gone forever. Finished. There is, for instance, M. Alain Robbe-Grillet, one of the leaders of French literature, a spokesman for *"thingism" - choseisme.* He writes that in great contemporary works, Sartre's *Nausea* , Camus' *The Stranger,* or Kafka's *The Castle,* there are no characters; you find in such books not individuals but - well, entities. "The novel of characters," he says, "belongs entirely in the past. It describes a period: that which marked the apogee of the individual." This is not necessarily an improvement; that Robbe-Grillet admits. But it is the truth. Individuals have been wiped out. "The present period is rather one of administrative numbers. The world's destiny has ceased, for us, to be identified with the rise and fall of certain men of certain families." He goes on to say that in the days of Balzac's bourgeoisie it was important to have a name and a character; character was a weapon in the struggle for survival and success. In that time, "It was something to have a face in a universe where personality represented both the means and the end of all exploration." But our world, he concludes, is more modest. It has renounced the omnipotence of the person. But it is more ambitious as well, "since

it looks beyond. The exclusive cult of the 'human' has given way to a larger consciousness, one that is less anthropocentric." However, he comforts us, a new course and the promise of new discoveries lie before us.

On an occasion like this I have no appetite for polemics. We all know what it is to be tired of "characters". Human types have become false and boring. D.H. Lawrence put it early in this century that we human beings, our instincts damaged by Puritanism, no longer care for, were physically repulsive to one another. "The sympathetic heart is broken," he said. He went further, "We stink in each other's nostrils." Besides, in Europe the power of the classics has for centuries been so great that every country has its "identifiable personalities" derived from Moliere, Ramne, Dickens or Balzac. An awful phenomenon. Perhaps this is connected with the wonderful French saying. *"Sil y a un caractere, il est mauvais.* It leads one to think that the unoriginal human race tends to borrow what it needs from convenient sources, much as new cities have often been made out of the rubble of old ones. Then, too, the psychoanalytic conception of character is that it is an ugly rigid formation—something we must resign ourselves to, not a thing we can embrace with joy. Totalitarian ideologies, too, have attacked bourgeois individualism, sometimes identifying character with property. There is a hint of this in M. Robbe-Grillet's argument. Dislike of personality, bad masks, false being have had political results.

But I am interested here in the question of the artist's

priorities. Is it necessary, or good, that he should begin with historical analysis, with ideas or systems? Proust speaks in *Time Regained* of a growing preference among young and intelligent readers for works of an elevated analytical, moral or sociological tendency. He says that they prefer to Bergotte (the novelist in *Remembrance of Things Past)* writers who seem to them more profound. "But," says Proust, "from the moment that works of art are judged by reasoning, nothing is stable or certain, one can prove anything one likes."

The message of Robbe-Grillet is not new. It tells us that we must purge ourselves of bourgeois anthropocentricism and do the classy things that our advanced culture requires. Character? "Fifty years of disease, the death notice signed many times over by the serious essayists," says Robbe-Grillet, "yet nothing has managed to knock it off the pedestal on which the 19th century had placed it. It is a mummy now, but one still enthroned with the same phony majesty, among the values revered by traditional criticism."

The title of Robbe-Grillet's essay is *On Several Obsolete Notions.* I myself am tired of obsolete notions and of mummies of all kinds but I never tire of reading the master novelists. And what is one to do about the characters in their books? Is it necessary to discontinue the investigation of character? Can anything so vivid in them now be utterly dead? Can it be that human beings are at a dead end? Is individuality really so dependent on historical and cultural conditions? Can we accept the account of those conditions

we are so "authoritatively" given? I suggest that it is not in the intrinsic interest of human beings but in these ideas and accounts that the problem lies. The staleness, the inadequacy of these repels us. To find the source of trouble we must look into our own heads.

The fact that the death notice of character "has been signed by the most serious essayists" means only that another group of mummies, the most respectable leaders of the intellectual community, has laid down the law. It amuses me that these serious essayists should be allowed to sign the death notices of literary forms. Should art follow culture? Something has gone wrong.

There is no reason why a novelist should not drop "character" if the strategy stimulates him. But it is nonsense to do it on the theoretical ground that the period which marked the apogee of the individual, and so on, has ended. We must not make bosses of our intellectuals. And we do them no good by letting them run the arts. Should they, when they read novels, find nothing in them but the endorsement of their own opinions? Are we here on earth to play such games?

Characters, Elizabeth Bowen once said, are not created by writers. They pre-exist and they have to be *found*. If we do not find them, if we fail to represent them, the fault is ours. It must be admitted, however, that finding them is not easy. The condition of human beings has perhaps never been more difficult to define. Those

who tell us that we are in an early stage of universal history must be right. We are being lavishly poured together and seem to be experiencing the anguish of new states of consciousness. In America many millions of people have in the last forty years received a "higher education"—in many cases a dubious blessing. In the upheavals of the Sixties we felt for the first time the effects of up-to-date teachings, concepts, sensitivities, the pervasiveness of psychological, pedagogical, political ideas.

Every year we see scores of books and articles which tell the Americans what a state they are in - which make intelligent or simpleminded or extravagant or lurid or demented statements. All reflect the crises we are in while telling us what we must do about them; these analysts are produced by the very disorder and confusion they prescribe for. It is as a writer that I am considering their extreme moral sensitivity, their desire for perfection, their intolerance of the defects of society, the touching, the comical boundlessness of their demands, their anxiety, their irritability, their sensitivity, their tendermindedness, their goodness, their convulsiveness, the recklessness with which they experiment with drugs and touch-therapies and bombs. The ex-Jesuit Malachi Martin in his book on the Church compares the modern American to Michelangelo's sculpture, *The Captive.* He see "an unfinished struggle to emerge whole" from a block of matter. The American "captive" is beset in his struggle by "interpretations, admonitions, forewarnings and descriptions of himself by the self-appointed prophets, priests, judges

and prefabricators of his travail," says Martin.

Let me take a little time to look more closely at this travail. In private life, disorder or near-panic. In families—for husbands, wives, parents, children - confusion; in civic behavior, in personal loyalities, in sexual practices (1 will not recite the whole list; we are tired of hearing it) - further confusion. And with this private disorder goes public bewilderment. In the papers we read what used to amuse us in science fiction – *The New Tork Times* speaks of death rays and of Russian and American satellites at war in space. In the November Encounter so sober and responsible an economist as my colleague, *Milton Friedman,* declares that Great Britain by its public spending will soon go the way of poor countries like Chile. He is appalled by his own forecast. What - the source of that noble tradition of freedom and democratic rights that began with Magna Carta ending in dictatorship? "It is almost impossible for anyone brought up in that tradition to utter the word that Britain is in danger of losing freedom and democracy; and yet it is a fact!"

It is with these facts that knock us to the ground that we try to live. If I were debating with Professor Friedman I might ask him to take into account the resistance of institutions, the cultural differences between Great Britain and Chile, differences in national character and traditions, but my purpose is not to get into debates I can't win but to direct your attention to the terrible predictions we have to live with, the background of disorder, the visions of ruin.

You would think that one such article would be enough for a single number of a magazine but on another page of *Encounter* Professor Hugh Seton – Watson discusses George Kennan's recent survey of American degeneracy and its dire meaning for the world. Describing America's failure, Kennan speaks of crime, urban decay, drug-addiction, pornography, frivolity, deteriorated educational standards and concludes that our immense power counts for nothing. We cannot lead the world and, undermined by sinfulness, we may not be able to defend ourselves. Professor Seton-Watson writes, "Nothing can defend a society if its upper 100,000 men and women, both the decision-makers and those who help to mould the thinking of the decision-makers, are resolved to capitulate."

So much for the capitalist superpower. Now what about its ideological adversaries? I turn the pages of Encounter to a short study by Mr. George Watson, Lecturer in English at Cambridge, on the racialism of the Left. He tells us that Hyndman, the founder of the Social Democratic Federation, called the South African war the Jews' war; that the Webbs at times expressed racialist views (as did Ruskin, Carlyle and T. H. Huxley before them); he relates that Engels denounced the smaller Slav peoples of Eastern Europe as counter-revolutionary ethnic trash; and Mr. Watson in conclusion cites a public statement by Ulrike Meinhof of the West German "Red Army Faction" made at a judicial hearing in 1972 approving of "revolutionary extermination". For her, German anti-semitism of the Hitler period was essentially anticapitalist. "Auschwitz," she is quoted

as saying, "meant that six million Jews were killed and thrown on the waste heap of Europe for what they were: money Jews (Geldjuden)."

I mention these racialists of the Left to show that for us there is no simple choice between the children of light and the children of darkness. Good and evil are not symmetrically distributed along political lines. But I have made my point; we stand open to all anxieties. The decline and fall of everything is our daily dread, we are agitated in private life and tormented by public questions.

And art and literature — what of them? Well, there is a violent uproar but we are not absolutely dominated by it. We are still able to think, to discriminate, and to feel. The purer, subtler, higher activities have not succumbed to fury or to nonsense. Not yet. Books continue to be written and read. It may be more difficult to reach the whirling mind of a modem reader but it is possible to cut through the noise and reach the quiet zone. In the quiet zone we may find that he is devoutly waiting for us. When complications increase, the desire for essentials increases too. The unending cycle of crises that began with the First World War has formed a kind of person, one who has lived through terrible, strange things, and in whom there is an observable shrinkage of prejudices, a casting off of disappointing ideologies, an ability to live with many kinds of madness, an immense desire for certain durable human goods— truth, for instance, or freedom, or wisdom. I don't think I am

exaggerating; there is plenty of evidence for this. Disintegration? Well, yes. Much is disintegrating but we are experiencing also an odd kind of refining process. And this has been going on for a long time. Looking into Proust's *Time Regained* I find that he was clearly aware of it. His novel, describing French society during the Great War, tests the strength of his art. Without art, he insists, shirking no personal or collective horrors, we do not know ourselves or anyone else. Only art penetrates what pride, passion, intelligence and habit erect on all sides—the seeming realities of this world. There is another reality, the genuine one, which we lose sight of. This other reality is always sending us hints, which, without art, we can't receive. Proust calls these hints our "true impressions." The true impressions, our persistent intuitions, will, without art, be hidden from us and we will be left with nothing but a "tenninology for practical ends which we falsely call life." Tolstoy put the matter in much the same way. A book like his Ivan Ilyitch also describes these same "practical ends" which conceal both life and death from us. In his final sufferings *Ivan Ilyitch* becomes an individual, a "character", by tearing down the concealments, by seeing through the "practical ends."

Proust was still able to keep a balance between art and destruction, insisting that art was a necessity of life, a great independent reality, a magical power. But for a long time art has not been connected, as it was in the past, with the main enterprise. The historian Edgar Wind tells us in *Art and Anarchy* that Hegel

long ago observed that art no longer engaged the central energies of man. These energies were now engaged by science—a "relentless spirit of rational inquiry." Art had moved to the margins. There it formed "a wide and splendidly varied horizon." In an age of science people still painted and wrote poetry but, said Hegel, however splendid the gods looked in modern works of art and whatever dignity and perfection we might find "in the images of God the Father and the Virgin Mary" it was of no use: we no longer bent our knees. It is a long time since the knees were bent in piety .Ingenuity, daring exploration, freshness of invention replaced the art of "direct relevance." The most significant achievement of this pure art, in Hegel's view, was that, freed from its former responsibilities, it was no longer "serious." Instead it raised the soul through the "serenity of form above any painful involvement in the limitations of reality. " I don't know who would make such a claim today for an art that raises the soul above painful involvements with reality. Nor am I sure that at this moment, it is the spirit of rational inquiry in pure science that engages the central energies of man. The center seems (temporarily perhaps) to be filled up with the crises I have been describing.

There were European writers in the 19th Century who would not give up the connection of literature with the main human enterprise. The very suggestion would have shocked Tolstoy and Dostoevski. But in the West a separation between great artists and the general public took place. They developed a marked contempt

for the average reader and the bourgeois mass. The best of them saw clearly enough what sort of civilization Europe had produced, brilliant but unstable, vulnerable, fated to be overtaken by catastrophe, the historian Erich Auerbach tells us. Some of these writers, he says, produced "strange and vaguely terrifying works, or shocked the public by paradoxical and extreme opinions. Many of them took no trouble to facilitate the understanding of what they wrote—whether out of contempt for the public, the cult of their own inspiration, or a certain tragic weakness which prevented them from being at once simple and true."

In the 20th Century, theirs is still the main influence, for despite a show of radicalism and innovation our contemporaries are really very conservative. They follow their 19th-Century leaders and hold to the old standard, interpreting history and society much as they were interpreted in the last century. What would writers do today if it would occur to them that literature might once again engage those "central energies", if they were to recognize that an immense desire had arisen for a return from the periphery, for what was simple and true?

Of course we can't come back to the center simply because we want to; but the fact that we are wanted might matter to us and the force of the crisis is so great that it may summon us back to such a center. But prescriptions are futile. One can't tell writers what to do. The imagination must find its own path. But one can fervently wish that they—that we—would come back from the

periphery .We do not, we writers, represent mankind adequately. What account do Americans give of themselves, what accounts of them are given by psychologists, sociologists, historians, journalists, and writers? In a kind of contractual daylight they see themselves in the ways with which we are so desperately familiar. These images of contractual daylight, so boring to Robbe-Grillet and to me, originate in the contemporary world view: We put into our books the consumer, civil servant, football fan, lover, television viewer. And in the contractual daylight version their life is a kind of death. There is another life coming from an insistent sense of what we are which denies these daylight formulations and the false life—the death in life—they make for us. For it is false, and we know it, and our secret and incoherent resistance to it cannot stop, for that resistance arises from persistent intuitions. Perhaps humankind cannot bear too much reality, but neither can it bear too much unreality, too much abuse of the truth.

We do not think well of ourselves; we do not think amply about what we are. Our collective achievements have so greatly "exceeded" us that we "justify" ourselves by pointing to them. It is the jet plane in which we commonplace human beings have crossed the Atlantic in four hours that embodies such value as we can claim. Then we hear that this is closing time in the gardens of the West, that the end of our capitalist civilization is at hand. Some years ago Cyril Connolly wrote that we were about to undergo "a complete mutation, not merely to be defined as the collapse of the capitalist

system, but such a sea-change in the nature of reality as could not have been envisaged by Karl Marx or Sigmund Freud." This means that we are not yet sufficiently shrunken; we must prepare to be smaller still. I am not sure whether this should be called intellectual analysis or analysis by an intellectual. The disasters are disasters. It would be worse than stupid to call them victories as some statesmen have tried to do. But I am drawing attention to the fact that there is in the intellectual community a sizeable inventory of attitudes that have become respectable—notions about society, human nature, class, politics, sex, about mind, about the physical universe, the evolution of life. Few writers, even among the best, have taken the trouble to re- examine these attitudes or orthodoxies. Such attitudes only glow more powerfully in Joyce or D.H. Lawrence than in the books of lesser men; they are everywhere and no one challenges them seriously. Since the Twenties, how many novelists have taken a second look at D. H. Lawrence, or argued a different view of sexual potency or the effects of industrial civilization on the instincts? Literature has for nearly a century used the same stock of ideas, myths, strategies. "The most serious essayists of the last fifty years," says Robbe - Grillet. Yes, indeed. Essay after essay, book after book, confirm the most serious thoughts—Baudelairian, Nietzschean, Marxian, Psychoanalytic, etcetera, of these most serious essayists. What Robber-Gillet says about character can be said also about these ideas, maintaining all the usual things about mass society, dehumanization and the rest. How weary we are of them. How poorly they represent us. The pictures they offer no more

resemble us than we resemble the reconstructed reptiles and other monsters in a museum of palentology. There is much more to us, we all feel it.

What is at the center now? At the moment, neither art nor science but mankind determining, in confusion and obscurity, whether it will endure or go under. The whole species – everybody - has gotten into the act. At such a time it is essential to lighten ourselves, to dump encumbrances, including the encumbrances of education and all organized platitudes, to make judgments of our own, to perform acts of our own. Conrad was right to appeal to that part of our being which is a gift. We must hunt for that under the wreckage of many systems. The failure of those systems may bring a blessed and necessary release from formulations, from an over-defined and misleading consciousness. With increasing frequency I dismiss as merely respectable opinions I have long held—or thought I held—and try to discern what I have really lived by, and what others live by. As for Hegel's art freed from "seriousness" and glowing on the margins, raising the soul above painful involvement in the limitations of reality through the serenity of form, that can exist nowhere now, during this struggle for survival. However, it is not as though the people who engaged in this struggle had only a rudimentary humanity, without culture, and knew nothing of art. Our very vices, our mutilations, show how rich we are in thought and culture. How much we know. How much we even feel. The struggle that convulses us makes us want to simplify, to reconsider,

to eliminate the tragic weakness which prevented writers—and readers—from being at once simple and true.

Writers are greatly respected. The intelligent public is wonderfully patient with them, continues to read them and endures disappointment after disappointment, waiting to hear from art what it does not hear from theology, philosophy, social theory, and what it cannot hear from pure science. Out of the struggle at the center has come an immense, painful longing for a broader, more flexible, fuller, more coherent, more comprehensive account of what we human beings are, who we are, and what this life is for. At the center humankind struggles with collective powers for its freedom, the individual struggles with dehumanization for the possession of his soul. If writers do not come again into the center it will not be because the center is pre-empted. It is not. They are free to enter. If they so wish.

The essence of our real condition, the complexity, the confusion, the pain of it is shown to us in glimpses, in what Proust and Tolstoy thought of as "true impressions". This essence reveals, and then conceals itself. When it goes away it leaves us again in doubt. But we never seem to lose our connection with the depths from which these glimpses come. The sense of our real powers, powers we seem to derive from the universe itself, also comes and goes. We are reluctant to talk about this because there is nothing we can prove, because our language is inadequate and because few people are willing to risk talking about it. They would have to say, "There is a spirit" and that is taboo.

So almost everyone keeps quiet about it, although almost everyone is aware of it.

The value of literature lies in these intermittent "true impressions", A novel moves back and forth between the world of objects, of actions, of appearances, and that other world from which these "true impressions" come and which moves us to believe that the good we hang onto so tenaciously—in the face of evil, so obstinately—is no illusion,

No one who has spent years in the writing of novels can be unaware of this. The novel can't be compared to the epic, or to the monuments of poetic drama. But it is the best we can do just now. It is a sort of latter-day lean-to, a hovel in which the spirit takes shelter. A novel is balanced between a few true impressions and the multitude of false ones that make up most of what we call life. It tells us that for every human being there is a diversity of existences, that the single existence is itself an illusion in part, that these many existences signify something, tend to something, fulfill something; it promises us meaning, harmony and even justice. What Conrad said was true, art attempts to find in the universe, in matter as well as in the facts of life, what is fundamental, enduring, essential.

WORKS CITED

Bellow, Saul *The Adventures of Augie March*, New York : Viking Press, 1953.

- "By the Rock Wall", *Haroer's Bazaar*, 85 (April, 1951) 214 – 16.
- *Dangling Man*, New York : Ganguard, 1944.
- "Distractions of a Fiction Writer", *The Living Novel* Ed. Granville Hicks, New York : Macmillan, 1962, 1- 20.
- "Hemingway and the Image of Man" *Partisan Review* 20 (May – June, 1953), 455 – 62.
- *Henderson the Rain King*, New York, Viking Prers, 1959.
- *Herzog* New York : Viking, 1964.
- "Pleasures and Pains of Playgoing", *Partisan Review*, 21 (May – June), 1954, 312 – 17.
- "The Sealed Treasure", *Times Literary Supplement*, July 1, 1960, 21 – 31.
- *The Victim*, New York : Vanguard, 1947.
- *U.S. News and World Report*, Sept. 7, 1987, 52-55.
- *Writers at Work* Third Series, New York Viking Compass, 1967.

Bellow, Saul. *Herzog: Text and Criticism*, Ed. Irving Howe. New York: Viking Press, 1976.

- "A World Too Much with Us." *Critical Inquiry* 2.1 (Autumn 1975): 1-9.

Blackham, H.J. *Six Existentialist Thinkers*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.

Bruckner, D.J.R. "A Candid Talk with Saul Bellow" *The New York Times* 1984, 52-62.

Clayton, John J. *Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man* Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1968.

Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *History of Philosophy,* Vol. 7. London: Burns and Oates, 1965.

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor *Notes from Underground* Trans. Shirhkoff Serge, New York : Gowell, 1969.

- "The Eternal Husband", *The Short Novels of Dostoyevsky* Trans. Garnett Constance, New York : New York University Press, 1951.

Eisenger, Chester E. "Saul Bellow: Love and Identity", *Accent,* 18 (Summer, 1958) 179-203. Also in *Fiction of the Forties* (Chicago, 1963) 341-62.

Fiedler, Leslie "Waiting for the End", *Love and Death in American Novel,* New York: New York, University Press, 1964.

Finkelstein, Sidney, *Existentialism and Alienation in American Literature,* New York: International Publishers, 1965.

Harper, Gordon L. "Saul Bellow : An Interview", *Paris Review,* Third Series, (Winter 1965) 49-73.

Harper, Gordon Lloyd. "Saul Bellow: An Interview." *Herzog: Text and Criticism.* Ed. Irving Howe. New York: Viking Press, 1976. 345-64.

Harper, Howard and Dutton, R.R. *Desperate Faith : A Study of Bellow, Salinger, Mailer, Baldurn and Updike* Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, 1967.

Hassan, Ihab *Contemporary American Literature : 1947-72* New York : Frederick Urgar, 1973.

Hendin Josephine *Vulnerable People : A View of American Fiction since 1945,* Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1978.

Howe Irving, *New Republic* 1964.

Kauffmann, Walter Ed. *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre,* New York : Meridian Books, 1959.

Kazin, Alfred "Bright Book of Life", *American Navelists and Story tellers from Hemingway to Mailer* Boston : Little Brown and Co. 1973.

Kazin, Alfred, "Mr. Bellow's Planet", *The New Republic*, 10, 6 November, 1976 6-10.

Kierkegaard, Soren. *The Concept of Dread*. Trans. Walter Lowrie. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1957.

- *Either/Or*. Vol. I. Trans. David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson with Revisions and a Foreword by Howard A. Johnson; Vol. II. Trans. Walter Lowrie with Revisions and a Foreword by Howard A. Johnson. Garden City, NY: Anchore Books, Doubleday and Company, 1959.
- *Fear and Trembling and the Sickness unto Death*, Trans. With Intro. And Notes by Walter Lowrie. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1954.

Klein, Marcus, "A Discipline of Mobility : Saul Bellow's Fiction", *Kenyon Review*, 1962, 203-26.

Klein, Marcus, *The Reporter*, 1964.

Knut Tarnowski and Will Frederick, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, London: Routledge and Keggan Paul, 1973.

Kristol, Irving *Encounter*, 3 (July, 1954), 74-75.

Kulshrestha, Chirantan "A Conversation with Saul Bellow". *Chicago Review*, 23, (Spring-Summer) 1972, 9 – 11.

Kumar, K. and McKean, Keith Critical *Critical Approach to Fiction* New York : Mc. Graw Hills, 1968.

Kunitz Starley - Ed. *Twentieth Century Authors*, First Supplement, New York, 1955.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. "Kierkegaard, Soren Aabye." *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol. 4. New York: Macmillan Company and Free Press,

1967. 336-40.

Nashe, Jay and Offen, Ron "Saul Bellow", *Literary Times* (Chicago) Dec. 1964.

Opdahl, Keith Michael *The Novels of Saul Bellow : An Introduction,* University Park : The Pennysylvania State University Press, 1967.

Pearce Richard "The Ambiguous Assault to Henderson and Herzog" *Saul Bellow : A Collection of Critical Essays,* Ed. Rovit Earl Englewood Cliffs N.J. : Prentice Hall, 1975.

Pinsker, Sanford. "Saul Bellow, Soren Kierkergaard and the Question of Boredom." *Centennial Review* 24.1 (Winter 1980): 118-125.

Podhoretz, Norman "The New Nihilism and the Novel", *Partisan Review,* 25 (Fall, 1958) 576-90.

Pritchett, V.S. *New Statesman and Nation,* 47 (June 19, 1954).

Rovit, Earl Ed. Saul Bellow : A Collection of Critical Essays, Englewood Cliffs : N.J. Prentice Hall, 1975.

Schutz, Max F. *Radical Sophistication : Studies in Contemporary Jewish/American Novelists* Athens, Ohio : Ohio University Press, 1969.

Scott, Nathan A. *Three American Novelists : Mailer, Bellow Trilling,* Notre Dame, Indiana : University of Notre Dame Press, 1973.

Scott, Nathan A., Kr. *Mirrors of Man in Existentialism,* New York: Collins, 1978.

Tanner, Tony. "The Flight from Monologue." *Herzog: Text and Criticism.* Ed. Irving Howe. New York: Viking Press, 1976. 445-65.

Trilling, Lionel, *The Liberal Imagination,* New York : New York University Press, 1953.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCE

Saul Bellow

A thief – New York : Penguin Books, 1989.

"By the Rock Wall", *Harper's Bazaar,* 85, April 1951, 214-16.

Dangling Man New York : Vanguard, 1944.

"Distractions of a Fiction Writer", *The Living Novel : A Symposium,* Ed. Granirlle Hicks, New York : Macmillan, 1957, 1-20.

Henderson the Rain King New York: Viking Press, 1959.

Herzog, New York : Viking Press, 1964.

Him with his foot in his mouth and other stories. New York: Harper and Row, 1984.

Humboldt's gift. New York : Viking, 1975.

It all adds up : from the dim past to the uncertain future : a nonfiction collection – New York: Viking, 1994.

More die of heartbreak – New York: William Morrow, 1987.

Mosby's Memoirs New York : Viking Press, 1968.

Mr. Sammler's Planet, New York : Viking Press, 1970.

"Pleasures and Pairs of Playgoing", *Partisan Review,* 21 (May - June), 1954, 312-17.

Seize the Day New York : Viking Press, 1956.

Some Notes on Recent American Fiction", *Encounter,* 21 (November, 1963), 22-29.

Something to remember me by : three tales – New York: viking, 1991.

The Actual – New York, N.Y., USA : Viking, 1997.

The Adventures of Augie March New York: Viking Press, '953 "Culture Now", *Modern Occasions,* 1 (Winter, 1971), 162-78.

The bellarosa connection/Saul Bellow, New York, N.Y., USA: Penguin, 1989.

The Dean's December – New York : Pocket Books, 1983.

The last analysis : a play. New York : Viking Press, (1965).

The portable Saul Bellow/with a critical introd. By Gabriel Josipovici– (New York) : Penguin Books, 1978.

"The Sealed Treasure", *Times Literary Supplement,* July 1, 1960, 21-31.

The Victim New York : Vanguard, 1947.

"Two Morning Monologues", *Partisan Review,* 8 (May - June, 1941), 230-36.

Ravelstein - Saul Bellow, London, Viking, 2000.

Writers at Work Third Series, New York : Viking Compass, 1967.

Others

Barnes, Hazel, *The Literature of Possibility : A Study in Humanistic Existentialism,* Lincoln, 1969.

Barrett, William *Irrational Man : A Study in Existential Philosophy,* New York: New York University Press, 1958.

Bartre, Jean Paul *Nausea* Trans. Baldick Robert, Harmondewarth: Penguin, 1965.

Bree, Germaine: Camus and Sartre New York Delacorte Press.

Chatterjee, Margaret *The Existentialist Outlook*, New Delhi : Orient Longman Ltd. 1973.

Dakin, Arthur Hazard: Man The Measure Princeton Princeton University Press.

Distoyensky, Fyodor *Notes from Underground* Trans. Shishkoff Serge, New York : Crowell, 1969.

- "The Eternal Husband" : *The Short Novels of Dostoyevsky* Trans. Garnett Constance, New York : New York University Press, 1951.

Existentialism in American Literature New Delhi Heinemann.

Jones, Howard Mumford: American Humanism New York Harper and Row.

Macquarrie, *John Existentialism* Harnondosworth : Penguin, 1973.

Marcel, Gabriel: The Existential Background of Human Dignity Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press.

Murchland, Bernard: Humanism And Capitalism Washington, D.C. American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

Schiller, Ferdinand Canning Scott and Abel, Reuben (Introd): Humanistic Pragmatism New York Free Press.

Shinn, Roger Lincoln : The Existentialist Posture New York Association Press.

Steiner, George *Heideggar* Hassocks, Sussex : Harvester Press, 1973.

Venkateswarlu, D.: Humanism and Jewish American Drama New Delhi Prestige Publishers.

Wild, John: The Challenge of Existentialism Bloomington Indiana University Press.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Alter, Robert *After the Tradition,* New York: Dutton, 1969.

Baumbach, Jonathan "The Double Vision: The Victim by Saul Bellow", *The Landscape of Nightmare,* New York : New York University Press, 1965, (35-54).

Clayton, John J. *Saul Bellow : In Defense of Man,* Bloomington, Ind : Indiana University Press, 1968.

Donoghul, Denis *The Ordinary Universe,* New York : Macmillan, 1968.

Dutton, Robert R. *Saul Bellow* New York : Twayne, 1971.

Eisinger, Chester E., "Saul Bellow Love and Identity", Accent, 18 (Summer, 1958), 179-203.

Enck, John, "Saul Bellow : An Interview", Contemporary Literature, 6 (1965), 156-60.

Fiedler, Leslie A *Love and Death in the American Novel,* New York : New York University Press, 1960.

Galloway, David *The Absurd Hero in American Fiction* Austin, Texas : University of Texas Press, 1966.

Harper Howard and Dutton, R.R. *Desperate Faith : A Study of Bellow, Salinger, Mailer, Baldwin and Updike,* Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, 1967.

Harper, Gordon L. "Saul Bellow : An Interview", *Paris Review,* Third Series (Winter, 1965), 49-73.

Hassan, Ihab. *Radical Innocence* Princeton, N.J., : Princeton University Press, 1961.

Hendin Josephine *Vulnerable People : A View of American Fiction* since 1945, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1978.

Kazin, Alfred, "The Alone Generation", *Harper's* 219 (October, 1959), 127-31.

Klein, Marcus *After Alienation* New York : World Publishing, 1964.

Opdapl, Keith M. *The Novels of Saul Bellow,* University Park : The Pennsylvania State University Press : 1967.

Podhoretz, Norman, "The New Nihilism and the Novel", *Partisan Review,* 25 (fall, 1958), 576-90.

Rovit, Earl *Saul Bellow* Minnespolis : University of Minnesola Press, 1967.

Scott, Nathan A *Three American Novelists : Mailer, Bellow, Trilling* Notre Dame, Indiana : University of Notre Dame Press, 1973.

Shulz, Max F. *Radical Sophistication : Studies in Contemporary Jewish American Novelists* Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1969.

Tanner, Tony *City of Words* New York : Harper and Row, 1971.

Taxnowski, Kant and Will, Frederick, *The Jargon of Authenticity* London : Routledge and Keggan Paul, 1973.

Trilling, Lionel *The Liberal Imagination,* New York : New York University Press, 1953.

Articles

The Great American Augie. Christopher Hitchens. *The Wilson Quarterly* Wntr 2001 v 25 i1 p 22.

Bellow's Gift. (Author Saul Bellow) (Critical Essay) Bernard Rodgers. *World and I* August 200 v 15 i8 p 219.

The Novel and Public Truth: Saul Bellow's The Dean's December. (Critical Essay) Martin Corner. *Studies in American Fiction* Spring 2000 v 28 i1 p 113.

The demonic hegemonic : exploitative voices in Saul Bellow's 'More Die of Heartbreak.' Faye Kuzma. *Critique : Studies in Contemporary Fiction* Summer 1998 v 39 n 4 p 306 (18).

Mr. Bellow's planet. (Novelist Saul Bellow) Hillel Halkin. *Commentary* Oct. 1997 v 104 n 4 p 46 (6).

From poem to cartoon : comic irony in Saul Bellow's 'More Die of Heart break'. Elaine B. Safer. *Critique : studies in Contemporary Fiction* Summer 1993 v 34 n 4 p 203 (17).

Saul Bellow on the Internet -

Chris Wood - The Richmond Review, Book Review, Raveleten http://www.richmohdreviev.co.uk/books/ravetstein.html

Louis Menand - (Review) Bloom's Gift http"//www.mybook.com/articles/89.

Martin Corner - Moving out words : Conscioousness, discourse and attention Saul Bellow's fiction http;//www.pqdweb?Ts

Lorin Stein : ravelstein - http://www.salon.com/books/review/2000/04/14/bellow/

Stephen Moss - Critical response to Saul Bellow's long awarted Ravelstein http://www.books.guardian.co.uk/critics/reviews/9,5917,219810,00.html.

File://A:\bellow-lecture.htm (Nobel lecture) (The official website of The Nobel Foundation).