THE PATTERN OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN FOUR SELECTED NOVELS OF SAUL BELLOW

BY

ABI MOHAMMAD NIZAMUL HUQ

Bachelor of Arts
University of Dacca
Bangladesh
1969

Master of Arts
University of Dacca
Bangladesh
1971

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Thesis Adviser

Dean of Graduate College

PREFACE

Bellow's treatment of the family has aroused interest among critics since the beginning of his literary career. Some critics have maintained that Bellow's fiction shows the disintegration of the family. Some dissenting critics, however, have contended that Bellow's fiction shows the hero receiving emotional and spiritual sustenance from the family.

Bellow's late fiction aroused my interest in his treatment of the family and I found in my reading that Bellow continually endorses the sacredness of family relationships and exposes, with unerring precision, those traits of personality and erroneous attitudes which hinder the proper fulfillment of family relationships.

I also found that Bellow's advocacy of family cohesion has been present in his work from the beginning of his career. The distinctive feature of his late fiction is that his advocacy of family solidarity has become more and more insistent.

His critical writings have substantiated my hypothesis. All his writings reveal that his feelings for family and society are the inevitable product of his world view and of the American literary tradition to which he belongs.

I would like to thank Dr. Gordon Weaver, my thesis adviser, whose constant help and encouragement have helped me during the writing of this dissertation. Special praise is due to him because of his constant encouragement throughout the period of my study in this university. I would also like to thank Dr. Edward Walkiewicz, my academic adviser, who helped me with constant encouragement and valuable suggestion. Not only has Dr. Walkiewicz been my constant guide in the writing of the several drafts of my dissertation, he has also been my helpful teacher in the study of modern American literature in general. As my academic adviser, he has always helped me with his keen insights and overall academic guidance. I take this opportunity to acknowledge with deep gratitude my perpetual indebtedness to him. I would also like to thank Dr. Jeffrey Walker and Dr. Lionel Arnold, who provided valuable suggestions and inspiration through the final draft of the manuscript. The English Department of Oklahoma State University, through the graduate assistantship program, supported my studies and provided me with valuable teaching experience. Finally, this study would never have been possible without the constant support and encouragement of my wife, Momtaz Mahal Huq.

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NOMENCLATURE

(DM) Dangling Man (New York, 1944)

(TV) The Victim (New York, 1947)

(AM) The Adventures of Augie March (New York, 1953)

(STD) Seize the Day (Greenwich, 1956)

(HRK) Henderson the Rain King (New York, 1959)

(H) Herzog (New York, 1961)

(MSP) Mr. Sammler's Planet (New York, 1970)

(HG) Humboldt's Gift (New York, 1975)

(DD) The Dean's December (New York, 1982)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

That the family is pervasively present in Saul Bellow's fiction is obvious to any careful reader. A number of critics have commented on Bellow's treatment of the family in his fiction. Some of these comments are perceptive and illuminating, whereas others appear to be one-sided, if not flagrantly imperceptive. Some critics have studied the relationship between the protagonist and his parents; others have discussed the protagonist's relationship to his brothers and sisters. A number of critics have commented on the relationship between the protagonist and women--wives, ex-wives, and mistresses--while some others have studied the relationship between the protagonist and his children. There is a lack of critical consensus regarding Bellow's treatment of the family. Moreover, no full-length work dealing with the whole gamut of family relationships in Bellow's entire oeuvre has yet appeared. Molly Stark Wieting, in 1969, and Bessie Michael, in 1970, have discussed the pattern of family relationships more elaborately than many other critics who have made brief general statements about the topic. However, since Wieting and Michael have made their studies, Bellow, the protean artist, has

written books in which newer patterns of family relationships are discernible, warranting a fresh investigation of Bellow's opinions regarding the family.

This study will show that, contrary to what some critics believe, Bellow's works do not demonstrate that the family as an institution is disintegrating or decaying, and that Bellow shows images of family cohesion and endorses the sacredness of family relationships. It will be seen that though the treatment of the family varies from book to book, there is an underlying pattern in Bellow's thoughts about the family. It will be seen that Bellow exposes with unerring precision those factors which obstruct the proper fulfillment of family relationships. He also suggests that the protagonist needs the family, because the family is still capable of ministering to the protagonist's spiritual needs. And the protagonist needs more and more this ministration and sustenance the family has to offer because he lives in an age when many of the ancient pillars of faith are crumbling.

Some critics have felt that Bellow shows the disintegration of the family. For example, Rueben Frank, writing in 1954, states that the theme of the disintegration of the family can be seen in The Adventures of Augie March, as well as in his two earlier novels, The Victim and Dangling Man.[1] Irving Malin, writing in 1958, recognizes the central position of the family in Bellow's fiction, but he also feels that the Jewish family is decaying:

> The family is at the heart of Bellow's fiction; it is the 'holy centre' of values . . . Family closeness has always been important in Jewish literature, not only in our century, but in ancient times.[2]

Malin further states that in the biblical lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, one can discern the close relationship between father and son. The prevalent belief in ancient Jewish culture was that, just as the Jews followed the Heavenly Father, the Jewish son would follow the earthly father. Even when there was conflict between the father and the son, the kinship between them ultimately asserted itself. The woman in the ancient Jewish family did not have a very important role. Only in the literature of the last hundred years has the Jewish woman changed her role and become authoritarian and meddlesome. In fact, her new role contributes to the already decaying family structure (Malin, p. 56).

Earl Rovit also makes some significant generalizations about Bellow's treatment of the family:

> Typically, his [Bellow's] protagonists are products of fairly sizable families; frequently one parent is dead or institutionalized. In their maturity the protagonists tend to live apart from their brothers and sisters, to marry one or more times, and to sire children on all their

> wives. But what is more to the point is that they are "family-minded" people. Reluctantly accepting the obligations of marriage and fatherhood, they make sporadic efforts to understand and improve their relationship with their wives, they search the faces of their nephews and nieces for family likeness, and they are subject to sudden overwhelming seizures of love for those who are connected to them by ties of kinship. And yet, in a perverse way, they manage to evade attachment to even their most intimate relatives and friends.[3]

It is impossible to agree with those critics who maintain that Bellow's novels demonstrate the breakdown of the family. In fact, it is possible to take the three novels that Rueben Frank mentions as demonstrating the disintegration of the family and find in them images of family cohesion. Indeed, The Adventures of Augie March and The Victim show the enduring nature of the family as an institution. In Dangling Man, the protagonist is temporarily alienated from his wife because of his sudden deterioration as a social being. However, he succeeds in regaining the original beauty and normality of his wedded life once he is reconciled to society. Moreover, while it is possible to agree with Malin that the family is at the heart of Bellow's fiction, it is necessary to add that Bellow's fiction does

not demonstrate the decay of the Jewish family. Also, it is not out of perversity (as Rovit suggests) that some Bellovian protagonists evade attachment to their most intimate relatives. In fact, a profound spiritual turmoil forces the Bellovian protagonist to be alienated, not only from his family, but also from society. During this phase of alienation, the protagonist takes stock of his life situation. In fact, he can be most alone when he is in the midst of other people. Through his efforts to understand himself, the protagonist usually finds a solution to his spiritual problem. He then re-establishes his relationship with both his family and society.

Rovit has made another critical pronouncement which requires some modification. He asserts,

> The "family" comes into actual existence only when the protagonist desires contact or aid; otherwise, except for the subplots in The Victim (in many ways, Bellow's most uncharacteristic novels) and in Mr. Sammler's Planet, family obligations exert no real demands on the protagonist. (Rovit, p. 147)

It is difficult to see, in the first place, why Rovit considers The Victim an "uncharacteristic" Bellow novel. In fact, most of Bellow's protagonists are, in a sense, victims of their temperaments, of their inherited past, and often of the greed and neuroses of uncongenial life partners.

One can add at least The Adventures of Augie March and The Dean's December, and the important short story "A Silver Dish" to the list of exceptions that Rovit makes to his generalization. As Richard Chase puts it, "As Bellow is always showing, their [the Bellow heroes'] very adaptability lays them open to forms of tyranny--social convention, a job, a father, a lover, a wife, their children, everyone who may want to prey upon them."[4]

It is necessary to sift some other important conclusions that Rovit reaches:

> In other words, the idea of family has much the same force in Bellow's work as does religion. It intrudes itself on the present as an ironically unusable past. It compels the memory of a way of life in which personality seemed not to be fragmented and isolated; in which men were integral parts of a congenial whole, able to share their griefs and joys spontaneously and directly, instead of carrying them onerously on their shoulders. But more than a memory, it is also an unattainable standard of moral obligations. (Rovit, p. 147)

Actually, the Bellovian protagonist tries to recreate the family cohesiveness which he witnessed in his childhood. While some other adult members of the family seem to have outgrown the intense family feelings (often the reality

is exactly the opposite), the Bellovian protagonist feels an urgent need to cling to the ways of loving prevalent in his childhood. Sometimes, especially in the late novels such as Mr. Sammler's Planet and The Dean's December, the protagonist is seen to live up to his own ideals of family life. One reason for this tenacity is that the Bellovian protagonist (usually he is Jewish) doesn't want to part with his heritage.

Louis D. Rubin rightly asserts that Jewish ghetto life, both in Europe and in other large American cities, was traditional, familial, and closed. When the Jew entered the mainstream of modern, secular American life and could have unrestricted participation in a community of power and influence, he felt the need to redefine and reassert his highly developed spirituality and intellectuality. He could not forget his identity.[5] The implication is that the Jew could not lose sight of the traditional Jewish family structure. Bellow also shows that his protagonists cannot but owe allegiance to the traditional Jewish concept of the family.

Molly Stark Wieting has asserted that the Bellovian protagonists are alienated from family and humanity and are finally reconciled to both:

> Like the world in general, his [the protagonist's] father usually adheres to harsh, materialistic values and rejects what

> he considers his son's immature and unrealistic approach to life. His mother, on the other hand, represents in his mind the humanity and love that he longs to find. Thus his refusal to accept the harshness of the world and his insistence on his own personal vision are symbolized by his rejection of his father and his fondness of the memory of his mother. . . .
>
> And just as his alienation was symbolized by a family relationship, so is his reconciliation. This time he is reunited with his family through a reunion with a brother or a brother substitute.[6]

Wieting also mentions that there are some exceptions to her generalization. When one considers the novels Bellow published after Wieting's study was completed, one finds that these exceptions proliferate. In Bellow's late work, there is at least one exception to the pleasant mother-son relationship. Moreover, some protagonists are never alienated from their fathers at all. Even those protagonists who are alienated from their fathers have, despite the differences of opinion, considerable affection for their progenitors.

The protagonists' fathers are sufficiently individuated. Their characters and roles vary from one work to another. On a rare occasion, the father may be a deserter,

but the grown-up sons do not hate his memory. Moreover, the protagonist may have a father whose ideology the protagonist later discards, without showing any disrespect to his memory. Also, the protagonist may have a father whom he may not admire, but he still loves him. Another kind of father is the thief. Though the son dislikes the father's crime, nevertheless he loves the unworthy father. Sometimes, the father is very harsh, in the sense that he wants the son to get a good job and prove himself worthy. In such cases, the father is usually harsh with the son for the son's own good. Under his severe discipline, the son may groan, but the son also feels love for such a father. The excessively selfish or materialistic father, such as Dr. Adler in Seize the Day, is indeed very rare in Bellow's fiction. Some of the severe fathers have toiled incessantly only to feed the many mouths in their families. A responsible father like this is assisted in his endeavors by a wife who is a true helpmate in every sense of the term. The Bellovian protagonist can never forget this kind of affectionate mother; nor can he forget the hardship of the original family and the intense loving and parental sacrifice that he witnessed as a child. However, a mother who is normally kind may become somewhat cold towards her grown-up son if he fails to satisfy her financial needs. This last phenomenon is very rare and, even where it occurs in Bellow's works, the mother is seen to be entirely dependent on the son.

The relationship between the protagonist and his brothers is both complex and highly interesting. Mark Harris points out,

> Joseph, Augie, Henderson, Herzog, Charlie Citrine--all, all are later sons overwhelmed by older brothers. . . . Older brothers are rich, encouraging the dependence of the later son. They offer lavish material rewards for obedience and conformity. They tempt their younger brother, exploiting him as they exploit everyone else; they use him. They rescue him from difficulties brought upon himself by his own passionate act or intellect, and thereby they enjoy vindication.[7]

This generalization needs some modification. For example, in The Victim, the protagonist Asa Leventhal is the elder brother, and he develops an unambiguous and totally selfless affection for his younger brother who is merely a humble workman. Augie March has differences of opinion with his elder brother, Simon, but Simon does not use him; he only wants Augie to succeed in life in the manner which he, Simon, considers to be possible or proper. In fact, Augie is inordinately devoted to Simon, and even the elder brother shows symptoms of affection for the younger brother. Herzog is never used by his successful brothers, Will and Shura; on the contrary, though they recognize Herzog's

differences from them, they are always ready to extend a helping hand to Herzog when he faces any problem. Thus, Patrick Morrow is right in saying, "Two of the more admirable Bellow heroes, Herzog and Augie, have a cohesive family, capable of giving its members some rhetoric of self-assurance and values for defense and enrichment."[8] In fact, the Bellovian protagonist may have differences of opinion on major issues with a brother, but ultimately, motivated by brotherly love, the brothers succeed in bridging the gap to a considerable degree. Frederick J. Hoffman's judgment is therefore balanced: "[A]lmost all of Bellow's novels contain this family circumstance of the two brothers divergently interested and ambitious, alternately clashing with each other or trying to reach across their differences to each other."[9] Thus, we see Citrine's elder brother Julius wanting to help Citrine, and for a large span of time, Julius has actually done so. Joseph's relationship with Amos has periods of misunderstanding, but even they are reconciled with each other at the end of Dangling Man.

The protagonist normally has a harmonious relationship with his sister, but there are exceptions. That a sister can exploit a brother can be seen in The Last Analysis. Sometimes, a sister may be motivated by self-interest, even while she is ostensibly trying to do some good for the protagonist. However, the self-interest may be intertwined with some genuine love for the brother.

Another critic, Leslie A. Fiedler, has commented on the protagonist's relationship with his family. Fiedler asserts, "The typical Bellow protagonist is the man whose wife has left him or has gone off to her mother's, the man returning to a house in disorder."[10] Fiedler further comments that the typical Bellow protagonist is

> essential man, man stripped of success and belongness [sic], even of failure; he is man disowned by his father, unrecognized by his son, man without woman, man face to face with himself, which means for Bellow face to face not with a fact but a question: "What am I?" To which the only answer is: "He who asks!"[11]

This is generally true; however, it can be seen that the pattern of family relationships varies from novel to novel. The protagonists are individuated; they are placed in various situations; and they are endowed with various kinds of life history. Joseph is different from Asa; Augie is different from both; and Dean Albert Corde is different from all of them. This is just a representative sampling. Of the four protagonists mentioned here, Asa and the Dean enjoy a happy relationship with their spouses. Joseph is alienated from his spouse for a protracted period, but even he is reconciled to her at the end. Augie, after his marriage, has some misunderstanding with his wife, but as the novel comes to an end, Augie and

his wife Stella are gradually but surely eradicating the sources of their conflict. On the other hand, there are some protagonists--Tommy Wilhelm, Herzog, and Charlie Citrine--whose alienation from their spouses is so complete that they have to sever their links with them and start looking for congenial women.

Discussing the protagonists' relationships with their wives, W. M. Frohock suggests, "All have trouble dealing with women who, on the whole, do not sound very hard to deal with, and each in his own special way has a talent of saying and doing the wrong thing."[12] It is true that the Bellovian hero often aggravates the conflict with his spouse, but it is difficult to accept the idea that the women with whom the protagonists develop some conflicts are not "very hard to deal with."

In fact, when the Bellovian protagonist establishes a family of his own, he finds that his expectations of happiness are often unfulfilled. The reason is that there is some basic incompatibility between him with his idealistic yearnings and his spouse who is materialistic, unfeeling, cruel, or neurotic. Moreover, an uncongenial spouse is almost invariably of a lesser stature than the protagonist's affectionate and self-sacrificing mother whose image never fades from his memory. Victoria Sullivan states,

> Women are very important to him [the Bellovian

> protagonist], but he often finds them strange, illogical, and disturbing. They represent one more pressure on his already overburdened psyche. He is a man who finds it difficult to love; his marriages fail; he is a weekend father. His relations with the opposite sex are fraught with tension and pain.[13]

This study will show that the protagonist is sometimes happily married. If the protagonist is unhappily married, he decides to break the marital relationship and then he goes from mistress to mistress in search of happiness. When his efforts do not succeed, he tends to reach stasis by clinging to a simpler level of life. He may end up living a life all by himself. And if he has a mistress clinging to him (and this time it is the kindly mistress who orbits the protagonist as a solitary satellite), the progatonist's relationship with her ends up being clearly defined, reasonable, and within limits. He may end up deciding to marry a mistress whom he likes, but the machination of his ex-wife (from whom he may not be divorced) may prevent him from marrying her. Some protagonists may be perverse enough to create difficulties for good spouses, and one protagonist even divorces a good spouse, only to regret it later. One protagonist has an affair with a good mistress, even while he has a good wife, and then rejects both and marries a cruel and neurotic

woman who nearly succeeds in doing him in. The Bellovian protagonist, however, never accepts defeat, and from one kind of domestic misfortune to another, he proceeds, hoping to reach a point of stasis, where he may find peace and happiness.

It is necessary to note that the Bellovian protagonists whose homes are once or twice broken by divorce never forget their children. Such a protagonist is full of schemes to bring up the children in a proper manner. When he thinks of marrying again, he wonders whether the new wife will take kindly to the children of his previous marriage. Citrine fears that his excessively vicious ex-wife may desert his children the moment she wins a lawsuit and gets what she wants from him. When Herzog wants to remarry, he wonders whether he will be able to give a new home to these deserted children of his previous marriage.

The Bellovian protagonist may have children who are not yet adolescents. Most of them are loving and docile. If the protagonist is divorced, these children miss their father. On the other hand, an aged protagonist may have unruly children, almost invariably sons. These rebellious sons are of two categories. One type of rebellious son, even while trying to do things his own way, still feels that his father should enlighten him about life, should give him guidance, and should hand him down clear concepts which he may use. The other kind of son is purely materialistic and malevalent; all that a son like this wants is

his share of the father's money. If the son is frustrated in getting what he wants, he may even turn against his father, humiliating and saddening him in the process.

Although there are, thus, various kinds of family relationships in Bellow's fiction, it is clear, as Denis Donoghue indicates, that "The only mode of society which Bellow's men take seriously is the family."[14] In fact, the Bellovian protagonist can never repudiate his original family. He may be happily settled in a family of his own, searching heaven and earth to establish one after his first attempts have failed, or, failing in that, he may have reached a momentary point of rest, taking stock of his life situation before making the next attempt. In any case, it is safe to assert that Bellow has emphasized the beauty and importance of family relationships right from the beginning of his career. He has also shown the factors which create tensions and discords within the precincts of the family. Especially in his latest lovel, he has shown the protagonist and his wife, each once-divorced, attaining, because of their wisdom and enlarged sympathies, peace and happiness in their conjugal life. Theirs is the ideal relationship which Bellow obviously endorses.

This study concerns itself with a detailed analysis of Bellow's treatment of the family in four selected novels, The Victim, Seize the Day, The Adventures of Augie March, and Henderson the Rain King. However, before this analysis is undertaken, it is necessary to discuss briefly some of

Bellow's other principal works. In the next chapter, the salient features of these principal works will be pointed out. The various patterns of family relationships that we discover will definitely prove that Bellow considers the family not only vital, but that he sees it as an indispensable insitution, the cornerstone which sustains the whole edifice of human society. Finally, this study will conclude with a discussion of the tradition that Bellow belongs to and with Bellow's views on the nature of the predicament that modern man is confronted with, the elements in human nature which can help man in overcoming his problems, the ideal nature of man's relationship to his immediate family, and the ideal nature of man's relationship to the entire family of man.

NOTES

[1] Rueben Frank, "Saul Bellow: The Evolution of a Contemporary Novelist," Western Review, 18 (Winter 1954), 110.

[2] Irving Malin, Saul Bellow's Fiction (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1959), p. 56. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[3] Earl Rovit, "Saul Bellow," in American Writers, Vol. I, ed. Leonard Unger (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), pp. 146-47. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[4] Richard Chase, "The Adventures of Saul Bellow: Progress of a Novelist," Commentary, 27 (April 1959), 330.

[5] Louis D. Rubin, "Southerners and Jews," Southern Review, 2 (Summer 1966), 711.

[6] Molly Stark Wieting, "A Quest for Order: The Novels of Saul Bellow," Diss. Texas at Austin 1969, pp. 7-8.

[7] Mark Harris, Saul Bellow: Drumlin Woodchuck (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1980), p. 90.

[8] Patrick Morrow, "Threat and Accommodation: The Novels of Saul Bellow," Midwest Quarterly, 8 (Summer 1967),

391.

[9] Frederick J. Hoffman, "The Fool of Experience: Saul Bellow's Fiction," in Contemporary American Novelists, ed. Harry T. Moore (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), p. 84.

[10] Leslie A. Fiedler, "The Breakthrough: The American Jewish Novelist and the Fictional Image of the Jew," in Recent American Fiction: Some Critical Views, ed. Joseph J. Waldmeir (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), p. 108.

[11] Leslie A. Fiedler, "Saul Bellow," Prairie Schooner, 31 (Summer 1957), 110.

[12] W. M. Frolock, "Saul Bellow and His Penitent Picaro," Southwest Review, 53 (Winter 1968), 36.

[13] Victoria Sullivan, "The Battle of the Sexes in Three Bellow Novels," in Saul Bellow: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Earl Rovit (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975), p. 101.

[14] Denis Donoghue, "Dangling Man," in Saul Bellow: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Earl Rovit (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975), p. 22.

CHAPTER II

BELLOW'S PRINCIPAL OTHER WORKS

A chronological analysis of Bellow's principal other works, namely, Dangling Man, Herzog, Mr. Sammler's Planet, Humboldt's Gift, and The Dean's December, reveals the evolving nature of Bellow's ideas regarding the family. Moreover, a chronological study of some important short stories, "A Trip to Galena," "By the Rock Wall," and "A Silver Dish" and two short plays, "The Wrecker" and "Orange Souffle" also reveals some significant aspects of family relationships.

In his first novel, Dangling Man, Bellow shows how indispensable the family is for the protagonist. His latest novel, The Dean's December, reiterates the same truth while also demonstrating how an overall development in family relationships can take place.

Chester E. Eisinger has suggested that the relationship between Joseph and his brother Amos in Dangling Man "is ambiguous: it is never severed but it is always uneasy and almost always hostile."[1] Actually, Joseph is reconciled with Amos, Iva, and all the members of his family towards the end of the novel. This reconciliation takes place after he decides to request the draft board

to summon him to service. His dissatisfaction with Amos is caused by his dissatisfaction with his niece Etta, whose upbringing is so faulty that she judges a man by his possessions, even when the man happens to be her own uncle. Bellow makes it quite clear that such materialism is false and undesirable, both within and outside the family.

Joseph's crisis starts when he is inducted into the army and leaves his job at the Inter American Travel Bureau. Lack of regular employment takes him further and further away from the orbit of society. It is during such turmoil that the Bellovian protagonist tends to get alienated from the original family or his own family or from both. This alienation is an indication of the hero's spiritual turmoil, and his subsequent reconciliation with the family shows the hero's returning health, mental growth, and new-found spiritual poise.

When he is in turmoil, Joseph is distant from his wife Iva, though she is a devoted wife and looks after and provides for him. In the past, Joseph had plans to establish a "'colony of the spirit,' or a group whose covenants forbade spite, bloodiness and cruelty."[2] At Harry Servatius' party, Joseph finds that a jealous friend of Minna hypnotizes her and pinches her arm. This cruelty punctures his faith in "the colony of the spirit." Towards the end of the novel, Joseph succeeds in regaining faith in the Brotherhood of Man, but during his crisis, he considers only his wife's weaknesses, and he is oblivious

to her strengths:

> Eventually I learned that Iva could not live in my infatuations. There are such things as clothes, appearances, furniture, light entertainment, mystery stories, the attractions of fashion magazines, the radio, the enjoyable evening. What could one say to them? Women--thus I reasoned--were not equipped by training to read Jacob Boehme for ten years without diminishing their appetite for them; you might teach them to admire Walden but never convert them to wearing old clothes. (DM, p. 98).

But Iva had provided for him, without any rancor, all the time he waited for the draft call. Her only complaint is that for months and months he has not shown any interest in her. Gradually, he admits that he and Iva do not confide in one another. He even creates occasions to quarrel with her. He then develops a clandestine relationship with a woman named Kitty Daumler. Later, he finds that the strain of leading a double life is too much for him. He learns to accept limits in sexual relations with women and parts from Kitty Daumler, after explaining to her that his relationship with her will never exceed the limits of decent friendship. Afterwards, when Joseph tries to meet Kitty in her apartment, he finds her entertaining a male friend, and returns home humiliated. Later, he is

reconciled to his wife Iva. Already, we find the protagonist of Bellow's first novel instinctively groping towards the ideal of a monogamous marriage which Dean Albert Corde, the mature, sixty-year-old protagonist of Bellow's latest novel, The Dean's December, confirms.

During his crisis, Joseph cannot appreciate the normal loving relationship between spouses. He doesn't like his mother-in-law, Mrs. Almstadt. But Mr. Almstadt normally does not criticize his wife. On a visit to his father-in-law's house, Joseph one day asks Mr. Almstadt, "How did you ever manage to stick out [with Mrs. Almstadt] so long, Mr. Almstadt?" (DM, p. 21). The old man's perspective is not distorted; therefore, he is justifiably perplexed and angry at this question.

As his alienation intensifies, Joseph realizes that he doesn't have either character or resource enough to use his freedom. In fact, his character deteriorates during the period of his enforced idleness. He realizes,

> I had not done well alone. I doubt whether anyone could. To be pushed from oneself 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 these months in the room. Perhaps I could sound creation through other means. Perhaps. But things were now out of my hands. The next move was the world's.

> I could not bring myself to regret it. (DM, pp. 190-91)

As Joseph requests the draft board to summon him to service, his character improves, and his attitude toward the whole world changes. He is reconciled with all his relatives. On the eve of his departure, he meets his and Iva's relatives and bids farewell to them. His changed attitude to Iva is revealed when he admits that he is sorry to leave her.

Another hero, Herzog, faces trouble when his second wife, Madeleine, indulges in adultery with his insincere friend, Valentine Gersbach, who is a married man with a son. The explanation that Herzog gives for leaving his first wife Daisy is that his relationship with Daisy bored him. With Daisy, Herzog's life had respectability, stability, order, and purpose. Daisy was a conventional Jewish woman: "Stability, symmetry, order, containment were Daisy's strength."[3] Herzog admits that he brought out the worst in Daisy by his own irregularity and turbulent spirit. It is obvious that there is something in Herzog that makes it impossible for him to appreciate even the good qualities which Daisy possesses, though it is equally true that Daisy's good qualities oppress Herzog precisely because they are excessive.

Unless the protagonist finds happiness in marriage, he breaks the relationship, though he may later regret his decision. His regret arises out of the fact that he cannot

blame the spouse for the incompatibility; she simply fails to satisfy him in spite of her good qualities. It was probably Herzog's dissatisfaction with Daisy that drove him into the arms of his Japanese mistress Sono Oguki. Sono was kind to Herzog, and, unlike Madeleine, she was entirely undemanding:

> Sono asked for no great sacrifices. She did not want me to work for her, to furnish her house, support her children, to be regular at meals or to open charge accounts in luxury shops; she asked only that I should be with her from time to time. But some people are at war with the best things of life and pervert them into fantasies and dreams. (H, p. 173)

Though Sono offered Herzog sensual pleasure and affection, and though she went out of her way to make him happy, she failed to win a commitment from him. One reason was that she could not offer him intellectual sustenance. She didn't know much about his idealistic yearnings. Herzog was also stirred by notions of his Jewish superiority. Once, during a visit to her apartment, Herzog wondered what he, with his Jewish heritage, was doing between the dirty green sheets of a Japanese girl. One cannot blame Sono for what she had to offer; unfortunately, like Daisy, she couldn't engage the whole man. The Bellovian protagonist rarely makes major compromises in marriage. He must

find repose in marriage like a dove in its nest; otherwise, he goes on endlessly in quest of the right woman.

Later, Herzog makes a calamitous choice by marrying Madeleine, who is entirely unsuited to him. Madeleine herself admits that she is somewhat abnormal. Herzog knew her carnally even before he married her. That she is a split personality can be seen right from the beginning. After she makes love to Herzog at night, she is distant from him in the daytime. In the morning, she puts on the make-up of a middle-aged lady, so as to make some amends for her backsliding (she is a recent convert to Catholicism). Whatever love she has for Herzog gradually disappears in the course of the marriage.

After his marriage to Madeleine, Herzog feels that he has made a fresh start in life. Herzog does everything he can to satisfy her, but the course of the marriage shows that a spouse who is greedy, crafty, cruel, and neurotic can only make it impossible for her husband to be happy with her. There is not much stability in Madeleine. To satisfy her, Herzog quits his academic position and goes to the countryside. After one year, Madeleine is dissatisfied with life in the country and wants Herzog to go back to Chicago. She also wants Herzog to get a job for Valentine Gersbach, her partner in adultery. After another year, Madeleine suggests to Herzog that they ought to be divorced.

Madeleine tells Herzog that she had never loved him and that she will never do so. Madeleine is not only

ungrateful, she is also treacherous, because it is only after she makes him sign a lease for a house that she tells him about her decision to divorce him. Herzog points out Madeleine's desire to hurt him. He feels that what Madeleine longs most to do is to "strike a blow" (H, p. 8). Dr. Emmerich's verdict also reveals the same essential truth about her: "She's a violent, hysterical woman" (H, p. 14).

Herzog also comes to learn about Madeleine's selfishness. During one of her crises with Herzog, Madeleine tells him that she is still young, beautiful, and full of life. She asks, "Why should I waste all on you?" (H, p. 21). When Herzog remembers this statement, he scrawls, "A bitch in time breeds contempt" (H, p. 21).

After her break with Herzog, Madeleine and Valentine spread the rumor that Herzog's sanity has collapsed. They also consider whether Herzog can be committed to an institution. Madeleine is so duplicitous that she makes people believe all her slander about Herzog. Madeleine had complained to her Aunt Zelda that Herzog was overbearing, gloomy, and demanding. She complained that he brooded a lot, that he had to have his own way, and that he wore her out, asking for help and support.

However, Herzog's version is that he became reckless only after Madeleine threw him out. About Madeleine, Herzog tells Aunt Zelda, ". . . She's sick. She's a diseased woman--I took care of her" (H, p. 37). After his

bitter experiences, Herzog makes a devastating comment about womankind: "Will never understand what women want. What do they want? They eat green salad and drink human blood" (H, pp. 41-42). The implication is that women prey on their men. Herzog would be nearer the truth if, instead of condemning women in general, he were speaking only about Madeleine, his sick ex-wife.

Herzog declares that Madeleine's intention was to take his place in the learned world, that is, to overcome him. As a result, he was writhing under her "sharp elegant heel" (H, p. 76). Bellow clearly shows that competitiveness within marriage can only produce disastrous consequences. Herzog has no doubt about Madeleine's utter lack of compassion: "Oh, Shapiro, the victor of Waterloo drew apart to shed bitter tears for the dead (slain under his orders). Not so my ex-Missis" (H, p. 76). Toward the adulterer Valentine, Herzog's attitude is one of utter disgust.

Moreover, since he feels that Madeleine has damaged his masculinity considerably, Herzog wonders how he can attract other women and regain his self-respect. At this juncture, Herzog develops an affair with kind, sensual Ramona. She listens patiently to Herzog's account of his excruciating experiences with Madeleine and tries to reassure him that he is still masculine. She is sympathetic to Herzog; her only drawback is that she seems to think that sensual delight is the summum bonum of human existence. Ultimately, the developing protagonist cannot be content

with mere sensuality. Therefore, though at times he admits that he is seriously considering marrying Ramona, Herzog actually is rather detached from her. Ramona's relationships in the past had brought her only unhappiness. Since she is approaching middle age, she needs the security of marriage. But one wonders how she, with a rather limited view of life, can give succor to a man like Herzog, especially since she needs help as badly as Herzog does.

Herzog thinks that as long as he remains masculine, Ramona will listen to him with glistening eyes, with more and more sympathy. The implication is that, for Herzog, the type of wisdom that Ramona stands for is merely sexual wisdom. However, there is something more in Ramona than merely an exclusive kind of wisdom. She wants to guide Herzog to the Good. She wants Herzog to continue his scholarly work, interrupted because of his pain and confusion. Herzog, however, has other criteria to judge Ramona by. Though she is kind to him, he wonders what would be her relationship with his daughter June. Thus, it is small wonder that at the end of the novel, Herzog still considers Ramona merely a lady friend and does not make the final decision to marry her.

Later, when Herzog learns that June was once shut in a car while Madeleine and Valentine were quarreling inside the house, he becomes furious because his daughter is very important to him. Taking his father's gun, he rushes to Madeleine's apartment to kill Madeleine and Valentine.

However, when he sees Valentine giving June a bath, he changes his mind. He sees that Valentine is not totally inhuman. He also realizes that Madeleine and Valentine at least love each other truly. Later, Herzog has an unfortunate automobile accident when he takes June out for a ride. He is brought to the court where Madeleine is also summoned. There, Herzog realizes that Madeleine's hatred of him borders on insanity. Herzog feels that Madeleine desires his death. After this, the last bond between Herzog and Madeleine is severed, and Herzog wants to leave this troubled phase of his life behind. Herzog tells Phoebe that he wishes Madeleine good luck and goodbye and gives Madeleine his blessings and hopes that Madeleine will have "a busy, useful, dramatic life including love" (H, p. 273). Herzog forgives her because he is not a man of violence. Moreover, he realizes that she is entirely uncongenial to him. Thus, he decides to forget her totally.

It is clear that, even during his crisis, Herzog does not forget his children. He reflects,

> Two marriages, two children, and he [Herzog] was setting off for a week of carefree rest. It was painful to his instincts, his Jewish family feelings, that his children should be growing up without him. But what could he do about that? (H, p. 23)

Herzog first wants to do some real good for the children.

In fact, he feels that it is his duty to be sane, to live, and to look after his children. His vacation merely helps him to think through his problems and to decide on the future course of action.

Also, during his crisis, Herzog periodically remembers his brothers Willie and Shura and his sister Helen. Herzog thinks that if he were in the hospital, his brothers and sister would take care of him; they would also pay for his two children. Herzog knows that he could always borrow money from Shura, since stinginess is not one of the traits of the Herzogs. Bellow makes clear the unambiguous nature of Herzog's feelings for his brothers and sister:

> Shura knew everyone, paid off everyone, and despised everyone. Toward Moses his contempt was softened by family feeling. . . . It amused Shura that his brother Moses should be so fond of him. Moses loved his relatives quite openly and even helplessly. His brother Willie, his sister, Helen, even the cousins. It was childish of him; he knew that. He could only sigh at himself, that he should be undeveloped on that significant side of his nature. He sometimes tried to think whether this might be his archaic aspect, prehistoric. Tribal, you know. Associated with ancestor worship and totemism. (H, p. 78)

Actually, Herzog is being ironic when he says that because

he loved his original family helplessly, he was "undeveloped." In fact, he subtly explains that by loving his original family, he is paying allegiance to his Jewish heritage, a habit of mind which he can never truly be ashamed of.

Moreover, when Herzog is arrested and brought to the court, he calls Will, who comes to the court to pay the bond money. The two brothers are especially fond of each other. In spite of Herzog's remonstrations, Will has him examined by a doctor. Also, Will shows his concern by visiting Herzog in Ludeyville. Will asks Herzog not to make any more mistakes, and Herzog gives him his reassurance: "I'm not being left in anyone's hands" (H, p. 338).

Usually, most of the Bellovian protagonists experience some kind of crisis, and it is precisely during their crises that they tend to be alienated from their families. In each case, the protagonist succeeds in overcoming his crisis to some degree. With the return of health, the protagonist goes back to the bosom of his family. It is not only the family members with whom his ties are strengthened, but his ties with the wide world of humanity are also restored in the process. Herzog's career is no exception to this pattern. He had kept himself away from his brothers and sister during his crisis. He feels joy when he is freed from Madeleine and makes the following resolution: "I mean to share with other human beings as far as possible and not destroy my remaining years in the same way" (H, p. 322).

Once he reaches the point of stasis, Herzog restores normal relationship with his brothers and sister.

Throughout the novel, Herzog remembers his deceased parents, indicating the strong love he feels for his original family, the strong family ties that he had noticed in his childhood, and the type of family that he himself would like to have. Herzog's parents originally came from Russia to Canada as immigrants. Herzog's mother was gentle, hard-working, and sacrificing; she assisted her poor and luckless husband in every possible way. Once she was pulling Herzog on a sled, over crusty ice, on a short day in January. A baba appeared and asked her, "Why are you pulling him daughter?" (H, p. 139). The baba added, "Daughter, don't sacrifice your strength to children" (H, p. 139), without producing any perceptible effect on Herzog's mother.

Father Herzog was a failure in almost everything that he attempted. Very often, the lot of this immigrant family was struggle, frustration, and pain, but these merely served to strengthen the family ties. Herzog's grandfather remained in Russia and once wrote, "Shall I ever see the faces of my children and who will bury me?" (H, p. 139). Father Herzog would cry privately at such a letter. To make matters worse, he did not prosper as a businessman, since he was not unscrupulous. However, in spite of the poverty and struggle of the family, all the family members were bound together by strong ties of affection.

In later life, Father Herzog becomes somewhat successful. Towards Herzog, the father appears to be a harsh disciplinarian. But if this apparent harshness is analyzed, one will discover affection and concern hidden behind the deceptive exterior. Once, Herzog's father is angry with him and threatens to shoot him. The cause of this rage is money. Herzog is broke and wants his father to underwrite a loan. The old man questions him critically, about his job, his expenses, and his child. He has no patience with Moses because he feels that Moses is simply wasting himself. In fact, Father Herzog is pained by his son's lifestyle. Actually, Father Herzog wants his son to be worthy. Father and son are reconciled later. Then there is more of the same. Finally, death claims Father Herzog.

In this novel, Bellow shows how love can survive in one spouse even when a marriage has broken down. A secondary character, Madeleine's mother Temmie, shows great devotion to her ex-husband Pontritter. Even after their separation, they continue to have a relationship. Pontritter was a famous impresario. Temmie's room is filled with mementos of her ex-husband's triumphs. She had accepted wrongs from her husband and forgiven him. She prepares the old man's income tax returns for him. She keeps all his records; she even washes his socks. This she does even after Pontritter had been unfaithful to her in their married life. Bellow cannot be hopeless about the institution of the family when he sees people preserving

love and affection even under such trying circumstances.

In Mr. Sammler's Planet, Bellow shows a spouse cherishing the memory of her deceased husband for a long period. A secondary character named Margotte Arkin, the widow of Ussher Arkin, honors the memory of her deceased husband for three years before she attempts to win the affection of Dr. Govinda Lal, a Hindu scientist: "She [Margotte] kept the bedroom piously unchanged, after the death of Ussher--his swivel chair, his footstool, his Hobbes, Vico, Hume, and Marx underlined."[4] In fact, Sammler, the protagonist of the novel, notices that before she met Dr. Lal, Margotte tended to impersonate her deceased husband. Margotte was left a childless widow, and for three years after her husband's death, she tries to keep alive the memory of her deceased husband: "Margotte, continually recalling Ussher, spoke of him always, Germanically, as her man. 'When my man was alive . . . my man used to say'" (MSP, p. 20).

In this novel, Bellow has portrayed an ideal character who relates properly not only to his own family, but also to distant relations and to everyone he comes in contact with. Starting with this late novel, Bellow creates more and more central characters who are capable of fulfilling their responsibilities to members of their own families, and who are also aware of their responsibilities to others who are not blood relations. In the novel under consideration, Dr. Elya Gruner is one such character. He is an

ideal character, though Bellow endows him with some negligible human weaknesses. Sammler's profound admiration of Gruner is significant, because Sammler is the protagonist and is highly reliable by virtue of his age, experience, and wisdom.

Gruner had brought Sammler over to the states about twenty-two years before, digging him out of the DP camp in Salsburg because Gruner had "Old World family feelings" (MSP, pp. 10-11). For twenty-two years, Sammler and Shula had been Elya's dependents. He paid their rents and supplemented the Social Security and German indemnity checks even though Sammler is Elya's uncle only through Elya's half-sister. Although Sammler knows that the rich are usually very mean, he finds Elya an exception: "He [Elya] had left the old country at the age of ten, he was sentimental about Cracow, and wanted to reminisce about grandparents, aunts, cousins with whom Sammler had never had much to do" (MSP, p. 76).

Bellow illustrates at great length Gruner's positive attitude towards family and towards people in general; he obviously endorses it. Moreover, Sammler learns from Gruner how to react to his own family. Thus, it is necessary to discuss in detail Gruner's relation to his family and fellow humanity.

One of Elya's pastimes is to do genealogies. Once Elya asks Sammler, "Uncle Artur, can you tell me anything about my grandfather's brother in the old country?" (MSP,

p. 83). Sammler cannot satisfy Elya. The man that Elya was inquiring about was known as Hessid. Elya remembers that Hessid had a mill for cornmeal, and a shop near the castle: "Just a small palace with a few barrels" (MSP, p. 84). Elya remembers many details about Hessid:

> Hessid. A fine-looking old man with a broad white beard. He wore a derby, and a very fancy vest with watch and chain. Called up often to read from the Torah, though he couldn't have been a heavy contributor to the Synagogue. (MSP, p. 84)

Elya tells Sammler, "I loved old Hessid. You know I was a very affectionate child" (MSP, p. 84).

Moreover, to help Shula, Elya had to invent work for her. He had also saved her from her insane husband Eisen by sending Sammler to Israel to bring her back to New York. Elya has also done his duty to his two unworthy children, Angela and Wallace. He has given Angela a fortune so that she can live a happy life. But Angela is so erratic and so perverse that instead of marrying Wharton Horricker and settling down to a normal life, she carries on bizarre sexual experimentation with strangers, offending both Horricker and her father in the process. Also, Elya has invested a lot of money for Wallace, who has never acquired stability enough to carve for himself a dignified place in society. Though his children are obviously unworthy, Elya has always felt concern for them. Wallace is so heartless

that even when Elya is on his deathbed, he is not beside his father. He is busy hunting for his father's hidden money.

Elya had also tried to do his duty by his wife who is now dead. Elya's deceased wife had considered herself to be Elya's social superior: "Her [Mrs. Gruner's] job was to refine him, to help him build his practice. . . . Gruner had believed in the social superiority of his wife" (MSP, p. 77). There was no overt tension in Elya's marriage because he had accepted the social superiority of his wife. Choosing an inferior role in marriage when a man is not truly inferior might indicate either a man's weakness or his greatness. When one considers Elya's overall perfection as a human being, one cannot but conclude that Elya's choice of an inferior role in marriage signifies his greatness. Moreover, Elya reveals his concern for Sammler at a time when he knows that his death is not far away. Elya tells Sammler,

> "I was going to say, it's not safe to run down there [Riverside Park]. I don't want you mugged. When you're winded from running, some crazy sonofabitch jumps out and cuts your throat! Anyway, if you're too stiff to run you're far from feeble. I know you're not a sickly type, apart from your nervous trouble." (MSP, p. 85)

Elya adds, "You still get that small payment from the West Germans? And the Social Security? Yes, I'm glad we had

the lawyer set that up, about the Germans. And I don't want you to worry, Uncle Artur" (MSP, p. 85). Sammler sees Elya as "a dependable man--a man who took thought for others" (MSP, p. 85). Bellow writes, "In short, if the earth deserves to be abandoned, if we are now to be driven streaming into other worlds, starting with the moon, it is not because of the likes of you, Sammler would have said" (MSP, p. 86).

No one is excluded from Elya's affection:

> His [Elya's] habit, even in passing through a room, was to touch, to take people's arms even perhaps getting medical information about their muscles, glands, weight, or the growth of their hair. (MSP, p. 151)

Also, Elya is deeply worried about his family even during his last illness. Angela, visiting her father in the hospital, tells Sammler about Elya, "But acting so normal. Talking about the family. He was so glad to see you and hoped you'd come back tonight. And he still keeps worrying about Wallace" (MSP, p. 152).

It is clear that Elya's benevolence touches society at various points. Elya has made large contributions to the Weizmann Institute. Sammler notes that "[u]ndisclosed charities were his [Elya's] pleasure. He had many strategems of benevolence" (MSP, p. 283). Sammler tells Lal that Elya had taken care of him and Shula for "[t]wenty-two

years without a single day of neglect, without a single irascible word" (MSP, p. 215). Sammler declares, "Elya was a physician and businessman. With his own family, to his credit, he had not been businesslike" (MSP, p. 260).

Sammler's castigation of the heartlessness of Wallace and Angela when their father is dying proves how much like Elya's is Sammler's view of family unity. Wallace bothers his dying father about money. Even Angela, who herself is irresponsible and heartless, dislikes Wallace for his callousness in bothering their dying father. What is incomprehensible is that Wallace is flying a plane shortly before his father's death. Sammler totally disapproves of Wallace's behavior. In this novel, as in all his later works, Bellow shows more and more people advocating strong family attachments.

The chauffeur Emil tells Sammler, "If it was my own dad, I'd be at the hospital right now. We old guys have to go along" (MSP, p. 258). The conversation between Sammler and Emil reveals how fervently Sammler upholds the sacredness of family relations:

> "Are you a family man, Emil--do you have children?"
> "Two. Grown up and graduated."
> "Do they love you?"
> "They act like it."
> "That's already a great deal." (MSP, p. 269)

Furthermore, Sammler rebukes Angela because she is

deficient in family feelings and because she does not know how to relate properly to people in general. For example, though Angela has a protracted affair with Horricker, she humiliates him by indulging in strange sexual experimentation with strangers right before his eyes. Moreover, Sammler suspects, after Angela's relationship with Horricker deteriorates, that Angela has perhaps another successor in view after Horricker. Without fidelity and commitment, Bellow demonstrates, one cannot relate properly either to one's family or to humanity. Since Sammler, like Elya, believes in human love, he dislikes the fact that human attachments are very often extremely short-lived.

Sammler tries to force Angela into seeing what is shocking in her callous behavior to her dying father. He rebukes Angela for coming to the hospital, wearing a kindergarten dress. He also explains to her what is noble in her father's character. He tells her that Elya "is on an old system" (MSP, p. 302). Sammler declares that he has learned something from Elya: "He [Elya] knew that there had been good men before him that there were good men to come, and he wanted to be one of them. I think he did all right" (MSP, p. 303). Sammler further adds that being human is not a natural gift at all, and that "[o]nly the capacity is natural" (MSP, p. 304). Sammler suggests to Angela,

> ". . . If you love him [Elya], you can make some sign. He is grieving. He's in a rage. He's

> disappointed. . . . Don't you see, Angela? You wouldn't need to do much. It would give the man a last chance to recollect himself." (MSP, p. 306)

In other words, Sammler wants Angela to seek her father's forgiveness. Angela replies that he is talking to the wrong person: "Even for my father it would be too hokey" (MSP, p. 306). Sammler reminds Angela of what she could do in Mexico, and what she can't do at her father's deathbed. However, in spite of his best efforts, Sammler cannot make Angela share his perceptions regarding the family.

After Elya's death, Sammler weeps. He notices that in the lips of the deceased Elya, "bitterness and an expression of obedience were combined" (MSP, p. 313). Sammler's prayer over the dead body of Elya is highly appropriate and also memorable, because this prayer indicates how deeply Sammler had loved his benefactor and how completely Sammler had accepted Elya's way of relating to the family and to humanity:

> "Remember, God, the soul of Elya Gruner, who, as willingly as possible and as well as he was able, and even to an intolerable point, and even in suffocation and even as death was coming was eager, even childishly, perhaps (may I be forgiven for this), even with a certain servility, to do what was required of him. At his best this man was much kinder than at my very best I have ever been

> or could ever be. He was aware that he must meet, and he did meet--through all the confusion and degraded clowning of this life through which we are speeding--he did meet the terms of his contract. The terms which, in his own heart, each man knows. As I know mine. As all know. For that is the truth of it--that we all know, God, that we know, that we know, we know, we know." (MSP, p. 313)

There is evidence that Sammler had believed in family cohesiveness in the past, before the actions in the novel unfold. Sammler affords us a glimpse of the last moments he and his wife Antonia were together before she died. As a Polish Jew, Sammler experienced the Holocaust. Both he and his wife, together with countless other Jews, had to dig their own graves. Sammler had been hit in one eye with the butt of a rifle, and that eye was damaged forever. Sammler dug beside his digging wife. He reminisces, "When she [Antonia] faltered he tried to help her. By this digging, not speaking, he tried to convey something to her and fortify her" (MSP, p. 273). On the brink of the mass grave, Sammler reveals the depth of his affection for his doomed spouse. However, he cannot save his spouse, and he merely succeeds in making a miraculous escape.

Though Sammler, from the beginning, had believed in family cohesiveness, this sense deepens in the course of

the novel. This deepening reaches its climax after the death of Elya, from whom Sammler obviously learns a lot about how a human being should relate to his family and to humanity. In the course of the novel, Sammler's attitude toward his daughter Shula undergoes a profound change. This change is also an indication of his growth as a human being. At first, Sammler sees his daughter Shula as an eccentric. Shula had been seen hunting through Broadway trash baskets. She had a shopping bag with salvage, loot, coupons, and throwaway literature. Later, she "stole" the only copy of Dr. Lal's scientific manuscript which contained references to H. G. Wells. Sammler condemns Shula's behavior, without realizing that it was only for his sake that Shula took Dr. Lal's manuscript. Shula is very eager to see her father finish the work on H. G. Wells. In fact, She had magnified in her mind her father's interest in H. G. Wells. She is shocked when Sammler reveals that he had not even read all the works of Wells.

Later, Sammler learns about Shula's devotion to him. He is also startled to find that Shula poses as an eccentric and wears exotic dresses only to attract admirers. This She does only to cover her loneliness. Towards the end, Sammler is protective of Shula. Shula had tried to fascinate Lal. However, Sammler dissuades her from being interested in Lal. Sammler doesn't think that Lal would make a good husband for Shula, since he would be doing research for sixteen hours a day. He feels that Shula is too

sensitive for that. Shula had made one mistake by marrying Eisen. Sammler doesn't want her to make a second mistake. He tells her, ". . . I have to protect you from failures I can foresee. A father should" (MSP, p. 264). The following conversation between Sammler and Shula reveals the solicitude and responsibility that Sammler now feels for Shula:

> ". . . We must take care of each other. As you look after me on the H. G. Wells side, I think about your happiness. Margotte is a much less sensitive person than you. If a man like Dr. Lal was mentally absent for weeks at a time, she'd never notice. Don't you remember how Ussher used to speak to her?"
>
> "He would tell her to shut up."
>
> "That's right."
>
> "If a husband treated me like that, I couldn't bear it."
>
> "Exactly . . . " (MSP, pp. 264-65)

Now, Sammler tells Shula that he may try to work again on the H. G. Wells project. Sammler is concerned about Shula's moral nature. He doesn't want Shula to meddle with the hunt for Elya's hidden money. But Shula gets the hidden money and tells her father that she has disobeyed him in his own interest. Sammler advises her to turn over the money to Elya's lawyer Mr. Widick. Shula agrees, but Sammler knows

that she will keep some of the money. Sammler's final statement reveals his newly upsurging love for his daughter: "You're a good daughter. The best of any. No better daughter" (MSP, p. 311).

The next novel, Humboldt's Gift, also reveals Bellow's thoughts regarding the family. In this novel, the progress of Charles Citrine is very much similar to the progress of Herzog. The one major difference is that whereas Citrine is once-divorced, Herzog is twice-divorced. Moreover, Citrine's mistress is greedy and cruel, belonging to the group of the castrating ex-wives like Margaret, Denise, and Madeleine, whereas Herzog's principal mistress is kind-hearted and truly sympathetic in spite of her limitations as a human being.

Citrine is divorced from Denise because of incompatibility. Denise does not have much sympathy for Citrine's pursuits. For example, she wants him to live in an exciting place, meeting people whom she considers to be interesting. She doesn't appreciate his hanging around his old school friends in Chicago. Though she settles down in Chicago with him, she feels that she has made a sacrifice for his sake. She accuses him of being, at heart, "a kid from the slums."[5] Citrine feels that there is a large amount of truth in Denise's accusation. Denise feels that she is an upper-class person. Denise's father was socially inferior to her mother, and Denise's mother had cured Denise's father of his vulgarity. Denise has tried to

imitate her mother's strategy. Elya Gruner in Mr. Sammler's Planet succeeds with his wife, who has pretensions to social superiority, because he totally gives in to her. Citrine, as an intellectual with a pronounced ego of his own, doesn't give in to Denise and thus fails in his marriage. After separation, Denise is merciless to Citrine, telling him that he is not as great an artist as he considers himself to be, that he is an ageing man who tries to hide his baldness, and that his mental life is going to dry out. She further blames him for being unprepared to have a serious relationship with her. She blames him for being snobbish and proud; she accuses him of trying to be a law unto himself.

Citrine knows that Denise is not entirely wrong about him. He knows that he is living badly and he is not all there. But since Denise has not much sympathy for him, he feels that Denise is an uncongenial person.

Of course, there is an indication that Citrine's life with Denise was good at one phase of their marriage. But misunderstandings, intolerance, and lack of sympathy on Denise's part gradually poisoned the relationship. There is ample evidence that Denise is extremely materialistic. In fact, Citrine's money is more important to her than Citrine himself. Citrine recollects, "Daily at breakfast Denise asked when I was going to make my will" (HG, p. 114). Denise also has a sharp tongue, and she doesn't allow Citrine to get away with a single thing. Moreover, for

Denise, Citrine's endless sensibility is insufferable. She feels that he should do something about it, for example, see a psychiatrist. Citrine feels that Denise is tired of having to support him emotionally.

Moreover, one has the feeling that Denise's own psychological problems contribute a lot toward the breakdown of her marriage with Citrine. We learn that Denise suffers from conflicts of her own. She has the feeling that she is nothing. She cries at night. Perhaps Citrine is intolerant, although this is not amply made clear in the novel. However, it is significant that Renata later suggests that Citrine couldn't forgive a woman who kept him awake at night with her conflicts.

From the time of the divorce, Citrine is engaged in endless lawsuits with Denise. After the case starts, Citrine has to pay a lot of money to her. When he meets her demands, she makes newer ones. Citrine thinks that Denise is a lunatic, and that, if he gives her all his money, she will want more.

However, even after the separation, Denise has some power over Citrine. One cannot but suspect that in spite of Denise's intolerance, materialism, and cruelty, in one part of her soul there is some genuine feeling for Citrine. As Joseph Francis McCadden indicates,

> The Bellow men want desperately to divorce themselves emotionally from their wives but that is

> impossible, for even after the marriage bond that ties husband and wife together is broken, the involvement continues, indeed is intensified as it is relived.[6]

In fact, the break between Denise and Citrine does not appear to be as complete as the final break between Herzog and Madeleine.

Denise and Citrine are once seen together at court. During this meeting, Denise thinks that Citrine is declining physically and mentally. She tells him that she feels sorry for him not only because she is the mother of his children, but because she knows that once he had brains and talent. Denise admits that both she and Citrine made mistakes. She wants Citrine to marry her again. Her daughters also want the reunion of their parents. She knows that she would be taking a risk, because Citrine is not in very good shape. She assures him that she would stop the legal fight, for a starter. However, Citrine chooses not to renew his relationship with her.

It is clear that Bellow's intellectual protagonists such as Herzog and Citrine have difficulties in finding an appropriate life-partner. This can be seen in Citrine's various encounters with women. In his highly emotional adolescence, Citrine had loved Naomi Lutz. While he was away from her, she married a pawn-broker. At that time, Citrine was not financially solvent. Maybe, he thinks, she

was frightened by the mental burdens and responsibilities of an intellectual's wife. He had talked to her mostly about poetry and history, and she had told him that she would disappoint him.

Citrine, however, had loved one of his mistresses, Demmie Vonghel. Demmie had anomalous traits in her personality. She taught school; at the same time, she was a juvenile delinquent. Moreover, she feared hell, and believed that she was possessed by unclean spirits. She also experienced the kind of night terrors a child might have. A person with a genuine sense of sin can be an authentic human being and also interesting. Demmie was so to Citrine. Citrine was loving and sympathetic to her, and Demmie requited his feelings. Demmie was also protective of Citrine. When Citrine's friend Humboldt became mad, she gave Citrine practical advice as to how Humboldt could be truly helped financially and in every possible way. When Citrine wanted to see Humboldt in the hospital, Demmie wanted to go there herself, thinking that if Citrine went, Humboldt would attack him. She knew that, at the moment, Citrine was busy with his play. When Citrine became famous, Demmie acted as his trainer, his manager, his cook, his lover, and his strawboss. The relationship between Demmie and Citrine would have culminated in marriage. However, Demmie died in a plane crash, leaving Citrine grief-stricken. Citrine spent several months in the jungle looking for her. In retrospect, Citrine thinks that Demmie's goodness was genuine

and deep.

It can be seen that the Bellovian protagonist does not suffer from incompatibility with every woman. Love and compatibility are indeed possible for him. But he may meet the right woman too late or he may lose her through death. Indeed, if death once snatches the right woman from his side, he may not see the like of her again though he never gives up the hope that he will someday meet someone with whom he will not be mismatched.

Citrine's relationship with another mistress, Renata, is ambiguous and unsatisfactory. Initially, she is courteous to him. Later, we find that like Madeleine she is a spendthrift. Making a husband spend more money than he can afford is actually a sign of thoughtlessness and lack of sympathy. Moreover, she is not very faithful to Citrine. While carrying on a relationship with him, and urging him to marry her, she simultaneously carries on a relationship with the mortician Flonzaley. Renata is guided in her strategies by her cunning and materialistic mother. Citrine suspects that Renata must have had an unauthorized look at his bank statement. She has no sympathy for Citrine's idealistic aspirations. She dislikes his spending a large sum of money on the Ark journal. She does not understand that Citrine is not merely concerned about his personal pleasure, success, or happiness, but that he is equally concerned about the rest of humanity. It is obvious that she cannot be a worthy life-partner for Citrine.

Renata also cannot hide well her basic cynicism regarding human relationships. Once she sings a rhyme before Cirtine which opens "breath-taking perspectives of candor":

> "When the dear
> Disappear
> There are others
> Waiting near." (HG, p. 291)

Citrine realizes that Renata is basically a utilitarian, and he certainly doesn't have much use for utilitarianism. In fact, one wonders whether Citrine does not put off marrying her because deep down in his heart he knows that she lacks sympathy and compassion. Actually, she is motivated in her desire to marry him not because of deep love for him, but because she desires the security of being married to a celebrated and wealthy personality. She is pragmatic, like Naomi Lutz, but without her compassion. Therefore, Citrine is in for a big surprise when he, very probably out of mingled feelings of love and despair, goes to Europe to marry Renata and start a new life with her. He is stunned when he learns that Renata had become impatient with his procrastination and had married Flonzaley. Citrine sheds tears for Renata, but he is also astute enough to understand that Renata had left him precisely at a moment when his financial situation was rather alarming. It is obvious that a worldly woman like Renata would not stick to a man whose luck had run out.

Renata's desertion leaves Citrine temporarily dejected. He seems to have reached a point of stasis, and until the end of the novel, we do not see him reaching out toward any other mistress. But during his protracted crisis, Citrine never forgets either his own children, Lish and Mary, or his original family.

Citrine regularly takes Lish and Mary to the piano teacher, even after he is divorced from Denise. This shows his basic responsibility and concern. Mary asks Citrine about his previous life. Citrine likes this daughter, who is like him, and he has plans for her. Perhaps she, and hopefully her husband, will take up Citrine's work when he is too old to continue it. He keeps notes and memos in a locked drawer for her. One remembers the hopes that Herzog has for his daughter June. Herzog hopes that one day June will be someone like Madame Curie. The other possibility is that she will grow up and in her turn will give birth to children who will be entirely ignorant of her soul. When Herzog ruminates on what June will grow up to be, he fears whether she will grow up ". . . a melancholy beauty like Sarah Herzog, destined to bear children, ignorant of her soul and her soul's God . . ." (H, p. 274).

Moreover, Mary asks Citrine about his mother and wants to know whether Citrine had loved her. Citrine's reply shows the depth of his affection for his original family, even for people who somehow touched the fringe of the family:

> "Oh, I loved them all terribly, abnormally. I was all torn up with love. Deep in the heart. I used to cry in the sanatorium because I might never make it home and see them. I'm sure they never knew how I loved them, Mary. I had a TB fever and also a love fever. A passionate morbid little boy. At school I was always in love. At home if I was first to get up in the morning I suffered because they were still asleep. I wanted them to wake up so the whole marvelous thing could continue. I also loved Menasha the boarder and Julius, my brother, your uncle Julius." (HG, p. 64)

Citrine feels unhappy because he leaves his two daughters at home while pursuing Renata to Europe. He feels that his behavior is wrong. However, he consoles himself with the idea that his going to Europe is merely the prelude to his waking up: "After all, Christian in Pilgrim's Progress had taken off too, and left his family to pursue salvation. Before I could do the children any real good, I had to wake up" (HG, p. 294). In other words, like Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, Citrine wants to save himself from destruction first before he is capable of doing some genuine good for the daughters he leaves behind.

Furthermore, in this novel, we don't find the protagonist suffering from any kind of conflict with his father. As

a child, Citrine was confined to a TB sanatorium, and his parents took turns visiting him. Later on, Citrine, as a grown-up person, cannot forget his father. When Citrine's car is smashed by Cantabile, Citrine is nervous and looks for help, and he has no one but himself. It is at such moments of crisis that the Bellovian protagonist demonstrates how deeply the memory of the father is embedded within his consciousness:

> The usual craving. I looked for help. I longed for someone to do the stations of the cross with me. Just like Pa. And where was Pa? Pa was in the cemetery. (HG, p. 70)

The conversation between the middle-aged Naomi and Citrine also shows the nature of the family relationships in Citrine's childhood as well as Citrine's adult attitude toward the family:

> "But you people all loved each other. You were like real primitives that way. Maybe that's why my father called you greenhorns."
>
> "Well, Naomi, my father became an American too and so did Julius. They stopped all that immigrant loving. Only I persisted, in my childish way. My emotional account was always overdrawn. I never had forgotten how my mother cried out when I fell down the stairs or how she

> pressed the lump on my head with the blade of a knife. . . . Whether it was a lump on the head, or Julius's geometry, or how papa could raise the rent, or poor mama's toothaches, it was the most momentous thing on earth for us all. I never lost this intense way of caring--no, that isn't so. I'm afraid the truth is that I did lose it. Yes, sure I lost it. That's always been the problem." (HG, p. 299)

It can be seen that Citrine wants to recapture the same kind of family relationships that he had experienced in the past. What is more important is that he wants to put into practice as an adult what he had assimilated as a child from his own family.

Citrine's relationship with his brother Julius is interesting and throws light on the indissoluble links that bind the Bellovian protagonist to his original family. Throughout the novel, Citrine is plagued by one problem after another. When Citrine is in a state of nervousness, he knows that there is only one man who can help him, his practical brother Julius, who is a successful businessman. Citrine discusses his relationship with Julius and both his and Julius' attitude to their immediate families and the attitude to their original family:

> I loved my stout and now elderly brother. Perhaps he loved me too. In principle he was not in

> favor of strong family bonds. Possibly he saw brotherly love as an opening for exploitation. My feelings for him were vivid, almost hysterically intense, and I could not blame him for trying to resist them. He wished to be a man entirely of today, and he had forgotten or tried to forget the past. Unassisted he could remember nothing, he said. For my part there was nothing I could forget. . . . I don't think he was always grateful to me for remembering so well. My own belief was that without memory existence was metaphysically injured, damaged. And I couldn't conceive of my own brother, irreplaceable Julius, having metaphysical assumptions different from mine. So I would talk to him about the past, and he would say, "Is that so? Is that a fact? And you know I can't remember a thing, not even the way Mama looked, and I was her favorite, after all." "You must remember how she looked. How could you forget her? I don't believe that," I said. My family sentiments tormented my stout brother sometimes. He thought me some sort of idiot. (HG, pp. 244-45)

What is surprising is that the real truth about Julius' family feeling is different from what Citrine supposes it to be. It is Julius who extends practical help to Citrine.

Moreover, Julius has given a donation of twenty thousand dollars in memory of his parents, and a brass plate in the living room engraved with the names of his parents shows Julius' attitude to his deceased parents.

Moreover, Citrine makes it clear that his affection for Julius is entirely unsullied by any desire on his part for material benefit:

> He himself [Julius], a wizard with money, built shopping centers, condominiums, motels, and contributed greatly to the transformation of his part of Texas. He wouldn't refuse to help me. But this was purely theoretical, for although the idea was continually in the air between us, I never actually asked him to give me any. In fact I was extremely reserved about making such a request. I was, if I may say so, merely obsessed, filled by the need to make it. (HG, p. 245)

Citrine's family feelings are intense. Although Julius is not as demonstrative about his feelings as Citrine, he also has feelings of affection for Citrine. Citrine's family feelings remain unaltered even though there is no material help from Julius. However, Julius does help him in various ways so that life becomes easier for Citrine. Actually, both the brothers are concerned about each other's happiness and welfare.

When Citrine hears that Julius has to undergo a major

operation, he immediately rushes to his brother's side though Renata subtly suggests that Julius would never have altered his plans for Citrine's sake. Citrine thinks that Julius is usually aware of whether a blood relation is trying to take advantage of him. Some amount of caution is not unnatural in a human being, but it should be noted that this caution does not undermine Julius' affection for Citrine.

Furthermore, Julius tries to invest Citrine's money in profitable investments. Almost invariably, Citrine's money is doubled in the process. From Citrine's investment, Julius makes the barest minimum profit. But it is obvious that Julius' basic motive is not to make money for himself but to make money for his idealistic brother Charles.

However, although Julius loves his brother, he cannot understand Citrine's intellectual nature. Julius cannot appreciate the type of intellectual Citrine is and the type of thing he writes. Also, Julius is incredulous when Citrine tells him that he has not laid any money aside for his personal use. Julius wonders how a brother of his could behave so foolishly. Julius, a practical man of the world, cannot understand the unguarded behavior and the innocent and impractical nature of Citrine; that is one additional reason why he tries to help Citrine so much.

In this novel, we find the deepening of Citrine's family feelings. Initially, Citrine was not close to his brother's wife Hortense. But he sees her at close range during Julius' operation. Citrine's considered opinion is

that Hortense is a good woman. When Julius, knowing that his brother's finances are in bad shape, suggests that at this juncture he should take care of Citrine, Hortense agrees. Hortense's agreement to aid Citrine financially indicates how genuinely she, just like her husband and brother-in-law, desires to strengthen family ties.

Moreover, some of the secondary characters in this novel are seen to be deeply aware of their obligations to their families. George Swiebel, Citrine's friend, is such a character. Swiebel, a remarkably kind man, takes care of his old parents, of his sisters, of his ex-wife and their grown-up children. The number of people who fulfill their obligations to their families is considerable enough for us to conclude that Bellow endorses the idea of family cohesion.

Kathleen, Humboldt's wife, is also devoted to her husband. Citrine infers that Kathleen allows herself to be a captive to her husband. She reads most of the time and doesn't go out much. Their having different religions does not hinder their love. Kathleen continues to adore Humboldt under truly trying circumstances. First, Humboldt suffers from many delusions. He once told Citrine that Kathleen's father had wanted to get her away from him. Humboldt says that at one time Kathleen was sold to one of the Rockefellers. Humboldt had hired a detective, who could not do anything. Second, while nearly mad, towards the end, Humboldt invents a lover for Kathleen and then tries to kill him. While mad, Humboldt even tries to run down Kathleen in his car.

Humboldt watches Kathleen's every movement, driving her to flee. Their divorce, however, does not mean the cessation of love. She tells Citrine that though she loves Humboldt, she cannot stay with him any more. Kathleen knows that after she runs away, Humboldt will be all alone. She also knows that Citrine and Humboldt love each other. She wants Citrine to help Humboldt when she leaves him. Later, after Humboldt's death, Citrine again meets Kathleen, and the remembrance of Humboldt brings tears to her eyes. Her love for the deceased Humboldt triumphs over death.

Another secondary character also demonstrates his faith in family unity. This character is Waldemar, Humboldt's uncle. Humboldt keeps him in a nursing home, but even during his last days, Humboldt thinks of removing him to better quarters. During Citrine and Renata's visit to the nursing home, Uncle Waldemar reveals the causes of some of his agony:

> "Anyway, if I, the last member of my family, can tell you what's on my mind, my dead are all over the place, one grave here, and the other to hell and gone, my sister in that joint they call Valhalla for the German Jews and my nephew buried in Potter's field. What I want is to re-unite the family again." (HG, pp. 336-37)

Waldemar says that if there is any value to Humboldt's legacy, the first money should be spent to transfer

Humboldt's remains so that he may join the family (in death). When Citrine gets the money from the films made out of Humboldt's legacy and from Citrine's collaboration with him, Citrine gives the late Humboldt's share to Uncle Waldemar. Then Citrine, Uncle Waldemar, and Menasha rebury the remains of Humboldt and his mother side by side in new graves at the Valhalla cemetery.

Humboldt's Gift demonstrates once again the idea present in Bellow's first novel--the belief that the institution of the family is vital and that there are enough men of good-will to keep this institution growing from strength to strength. Moreover, there is an increasing number of people demonstrating heroism in their efforts to fulfill their obligations to their families. Bellow demonstrates this belief once again in The Dean's December, his latest novel.

Dean Albert Corde, the protagonist of this novel, is mature and capable of love. He marries into a family in which real love binds everybody together. Corde lives in America with his wife Minna. He goes with Minna to Bucharest, where there is a Communist regime, to see his dying mother-in-law, Dr. Valeria. He finds that relationships in his wife's family are marked by kindness: "Here everybody was kind--family and friends, warm-hearted people--he liked them very much, to him they were 'Old Europe.'"[7]

Valeria is in intensive care and after their first visit, subsequent visits are forbidden. Minna and the Dean

violate official regulations when they visit Valeria for the second time, without getting official permission. The Superintendent of the hospital becomes angry and declares that Minna and her husband can visit Valeria only one more time. The implication is that if Valeria continues to live after that one visit, her family will not be allowed to see her, even while she is dying. The Dean and Minna visit Valeria one more time; they also make arrangements so that Gigi, without getting any permission, can somehow get into the hospital and have a last look at her sister Valeria. It is clear that Minna, the Dean, and Gigi are so family-minded that their love for the dying Valeria triumphs over the fear of punishment.

Valeria cherishes the memory of her deceased husband, Dr. Raresh. In fact, she never forgets him and never remarries. Dr. Raresh was a humane physician, a Christian, and a moral communist. Indeed, it was Dr. Raresh's perfection as a human being that made another ideal person like Valeria give him her entire heart. Bellow shows more and more that ideal characters do exist, and that, because of their maturity, humanity, and wisdom, these characters can achieve total harmony in marriage. These ideal characters are also capable of bringing up children in the proper spirit. In fact, the affection between Valeria and Minna reveals images of concord and harmony and profound affection and commitment in family life which are truly beatific.

After Raresh's death, Valeria shows her love in various ways. Dr. Raresh, it is implied, is killed by the very regime which he helps to establish. Valeria also comes into disfavor with the regime. Later on, she is "forgiven." But when she is asked to rejoin the party, she refuses the offer. She explains to the Central Committee that she loves the memory of her late husband. Gigi says, "When she [Valeria] had to make an important decision, she went to the grave to talk to him about it" (DD, p. 106). Valeria also brings food for the beggars in the cemetery.

It has already been suggested that those ideal characters who have profound feelings of love for the family also know how to love humanity. Valeria is no exception. Later on, we will see that Corde as an intellectual and Minna as an astronomer are both serving the cause of human progress. Corde notices that within the confines of the Communist regime, Valeria had created a community of her own which was characterized by affection and humanity. She had protected her sister Gigi. Even characters who in the workaday world have dubious occupations give their allegiance to this love community: "She [Ionna the concierge] was a blackmailer, but she also gave her heart. For there was a love community of women here. The matriarch was Valeria" (DD, p. 72).

Moreover, because of her goodness, Valeria could give sustenance to so many people. After her disillusionment with the new socialist regime, Valeria

> went back to the old discipline, believed in the good, probably took it all seriously about the pure in heart seeing God, and the other beatitudes. . . . Her ashes would be placed beside those of her husband. (DD, p. 130)

Minna says that after her death, Valeria has become a symbol to many people: "It isn't political, it's just the way life has to be lived, it's just people humanly disaffected" (DD, p. 185).

However, Corde had to prove himself worthy before he was truly admitted into Valeria's family. Corde had been divorced once, for reasons not spelled out in the text. One infers that if the divorce took place because of his own fault then he must have undergone radical change as a human being before he could achieve harmony in his marriage with Minna. Or the first wife could have been uncongenial to him. Minna's first divorce can be explained in a similar manner. Moreover, Corde was reputed for his erotic instability, and Valeria and Minna were warned about this trait in Corde's character. Later on, Corde proved himself to be truly faithful to Minna. After several years of observation, Valeria became satisfied about the Dean. Moreover the family seems to be proud of Corde, of his becoming a Dean, receiving an honorary degree from Grinnell, and his writing a long article on Chicago, in which he exposed the abuses in County Jail.

Furthermore, in this novel, there is a remarkable extension of love to one's in-laws. The Dean has genuine affection for Valeria. It was Valeria's custom to spend some holidays abroad with the Dean and Minna. Since she didn't have a penny of her own during these holidays, "[t]he son-in-law wanted very much to buy her coats, dresses, hats, purses, tickets, excursions, dinners, music, airline tickets" (DD, p. 14). The Dean's love for Valeria becomes manifest at her deathbed. Knowing Valeria's anxiety about Minna's future, the Dean wants to signify to Valeria that he will keep Minna from harm. To Valeria, he says, "I also love you, Valeria" (DD, p. 128).

Furthermore, Bellow's protagonist is capable of praising his wife without any reservation:

> He [the Dean] gathered, moreover, that the colleagues and cousins were extremely proud of Minna's scientific eminence. He was with them there. It warmed him to think how much there was also on the human side; if it had been appropriate to let himself go, he would have told them how rich she was in human qualities. (DD, pp. 56-57)

However, although Bellow shows that mature and loving human beings can attain peace and happiness in marriage, he also shows that unhappiness may be the lot of many couples. In fact, unhappiness is caused by either one or more of the same old factors: greed, materialism, neurosis, or cruelty

in the woman, and maybe intolerance, lovelessness, or some other imperfection in the husband. The marital relationship of a secondary character named Vlada, a responsible woman, shows that even though a wife may be faultless, the husband's neurosis may cause a marriage to fail. Vlada was married once many years ago. By her own admission, "her ex-husband . . . had been one of the world's permanent and growing population of educated lunatics" (DD, p. 217). The Dean's judgment of Vlada's character shows that had Vlada been married to a suitable partner, her marriage would be a success, for she had all the qualities which would make her a good wife: sympathy, intelligence, decency, and stability.

Throughout the novel, we learn about the Dean's attitude to his original family. For one thing, he loves his sister Elfrida: "Elfrida had always been gentle with her brother. For his part, Corde had always tried to protect Elfrida . . ." (DD, p. 82). Again, money plays a significant role in the obstruction of sympathy and affection between family members. Elfrida's son Mason, who doesn't see eye to eye with the Dean on matters of ideology, knows that his mother loves her brother, who may, if he is named executor, cheat Mason out of the legacy. The Dean realizes all this: "And I assume the Mason problem comes down to money, somewhere along the line" (DD, p. 90).

Moreover, the Dean and Mason hold different opinions regarding a serious political issue. A black parollee

named Lucas Ebry is accused of killing Rickie Lester, a white student at the Dean's college. The Dean becomes very active in this case. There is a "tricky racial angle" to the case, but Corde persists:

> The radical student line was that the college waged a secret war against the blacks and that the Dean was scheming with the prosecution, using the college's clout to nail the black man. (DD, p. 30)

Mason is the proponent of this view, but though the Dean is patient with his nephew, the Dean doesn't budge an inch from his position and sees to it that the investigation is carried out. The Dean's attitude shows that the ideal Bellovian protagonist is properly related not only to his family, but also to humanity.

As in most of Bellow's fiction, the Dean's relationship with his mother had been particularly affectionate. He recollects that after his mother's death, he mourned more than he realized. Toward his successful father, the Dean betrays no sign of hostility. The Dean considers both his father and Mason Senior as a type which he calls "Barbarian." The term is somewhat pejorative. But the Dean doesn't forget to mention that though he had no admiration for either his father or Mason Senior, he was affectionate to them both.

Furthermore, it can be seen that the protagonist's

family feeling is so richly developed in this novel that his love extends not only to his wife, but to his wife's aunt as well. After Valeria's funeral, the Dean is concerned about Gigi's future, just as Minna cannot think of leaving for Chicago before making arrangements for her aunt's security.

Moreover, Minna is upset because Valeria had once expressed a desire which Valeria could not fulfill: to live to the age of ninety. Minna had naively thought that what Valeria had said would turn true. Valeria had done her duty. She had protected Minna and sent her out of the police state. Now she is gone. It is very difficult, almost impossible, for the Dean to console Minna. Minna temporarily flies into a rage against Corde, who, in her opinion, seems to be giving a lecture on contemporary man's life on earth. In Chicago, the Dean hospitalizes her. After she recovers, she takes her husband to Mount Palomar observatory where, to observe the night sky, she ascends with her husband to the top of the telescope. Bellow writes, "She [Minna] was Corde's representative among those bright things so thick and close" (DD, p. 312). The truth is that both the Dean and Minna have wisdom, compassion, and humanness to such an extent that they cannot but succeed in their devotion to each other.

Like the novels, several of Bellow's shorter works show some significant aspects of family relationships. The first of these shorter works is Bellow's short story "A Trip to Galena." In this story, Bellow shows how a sister

may be loving toward a brother, while, at the same time using him for her own advantage. The protagonist Weyl reveals to a patient and good-hearted listener named Scampi that he took a trip to Galena with his sister Fanny and her fiance. Fanny wanted Weyl to marry, because she felt he hadn't done well by himself. She took him to meet the Neffs, her in-laws to-be, because the Neffs had marriageable daughters. Weyl was irritated and suddenly left, producing a bad impression on the Neffs. Ostensibly, Fanny took her brother to Galena only because she desired his welfare. There is no doubt that she desired her brother's welfare. At a deeper level, however, she was actuated by the desire to make her own position doubly secure by showing off her family to her would-be in-laws. Bellow shows that though there may be love among family members, very often this love may be tinged with self-interest. But even this kind of love is a positive good, and Bellow suggests that this condition is almost inescapable. Human nature being what it is, man can hardly ever get rid of self-interest.

The next story to be considered is Bellow's powerful short story "By the Rock Wall." In this story, Bellow shows chasms of distance separating man and wife, but still Bellow shows the protagonist making a courageous decision to cling to his wife, to do the best of a bad job, and to minimize their differences as far as it is humanly possible.

Willard and his wife Genevieve disclose to each other

the infidelities which they had hidden for fifteen long years. But it was not initially Genevieve's desire to cheat her husband; Willard had actually forced her, as it were, to engage in adultery. Once, while he and his wife were vacationing in Europe, after spending some time with his wife, Willard had wanted to go to Sienna alone. His wife had understood that his desire was to chase other women. She did not like the idea. She would have liked him not to leave her forlorn and constrained to travel all alone from Rome to Amalfi. At one moment, Willard had almost changed his decision of going alone to Sienna. But he had gone and, in his absence, Genevieve had taken up with a beachboy. Willard did not enjoy himself in Sienna, because he remembered that the last look his wife had given him at the moment of parting was one of reproach.

In the past, when challenged, Genevieve had concealed her affair with the beachboy. As the story opens, in a rare moment of candor she discloses to him her adultery. She also gets to know about his infidelities. Initially, Willard is staggered. Later, he realizes that no one belongs to another absolutely. Even his flesh conceals something hidden to his wife. Willard reflects, "There was nothing in the world that was absolutely for oneself. Nothing--Nothing! Neither she for him, nor he for her."[8] There is a part in man that knows no marriage; there cannot be perfect communication between two human beings. Only God knows the totality of a human soul. Moreover, Willard

realizes that he feels pain at the fact of his wife's complicity because he wants to possess his wife entirely, to have her all to himself. Finally, he realizes that he is not unique; like him, there are countless people who are betrayed by their spouses.

Willard becomes more humane when he realizes that both he and Genevieve had swindled each other and that they have to transcend their condition. There may be something beyond this state; there may not be. But he is heroic in his decision insofar as he tries to go beyond the condition of nightmarish deadlock in which neither happiness nor normal human existence seems to be possible. He expresses his courageous resolve in these words: "Now I know she has done just as I have. She has and I have; exactly the same, both of us. We'll have to try to get beyond it" (pp. 215-16).

In "The Wrecker," Bellow shows a wife's genuine sympathy for her husband, even when her mother is highly critical of the son-in-law. Albert, the protagonist, is seen wrecking an apartment because he has been unhappy there for the past fifteen years of his life. The city has bought the whole building to demolish it and build a school there. The city authorities have given a handsome bonus to every family, so almost everyone leaves some days in advance. But Albert, unlike other tenants, has refused the thousand dollar bonus. Albert's mother-in-law, who is visiting Albert and his wife Sarah, considers Albert a person of unsound mind and wonders why he refused the bonus.

Albert's crusade is a spiritual crusade. He wants to demolish the place where he had been unhappy in the past. He even says that he is wrecking the place for the sake of his health. His marriage with Sarah seems to have been an ordinary marriage, with all its pleasures and pains. But Sarah is sympathetic to him. To demonstrate her allegiance to her husband, she even argues with her mother:

> MOTHER-IN-LAW The way you stand up for him!
>
> WIFE Of course I do. Ain't I the man's wife? I know what he's been through if you don't, and if he wants his revenge on the place it's his by right.[9]

Sarah becomes angry only when Albert starts wrecking the bedroom. She asks him whether he had never been happy in that room. Albert agrees that surely there were spells of happiness; however, he adds, "You can't have happy times if you have to swallow all the grievances" (p. 281). Sarah warns him that if he continues to wreck the bedroom, he will have to go to the new apartment alone. But Albert still goes on wrecking the apartment. When the chandelier falls down on his head and hurts him, Sarah's sympathy is aroused. Then, there is a sudden change of attitude in both Sarah and Albert. Sarah starts wrecking the apartment, saying that she will not hesitate to demolish even the bedroom. It is now Albert who is hesitant about joining her in the job of wrecking the apartment. When Sarah asks him whether he is

with her or not, he reluctantly agrees to join her. Sarah then says, ". . . maybe the best way to preserve the marriage is to destroy the home" (p. 287). Albert mildly responds that maybe what she says is true. Sarah's decision to wreck the apartment shows that she wants to get rid of her previous unhappiness arising out of temporary domestic discords. She, like Albert, is enthusiastic about renovating their marriage, thereby drawing themselves closer to each other, and Bellow shows in this play the strengthening of family ties.

Furthermore, in his short play "Orange Souffle," Bellow shows that his protagonist can respond favorably when someone is genuinely affectionate to him, but if he finds that someone is approaching him with an ulterior motive, he is immediately alert and defensive. The two central characters of this play are Hilda and Pennington. Hilda is a middle-aged prostitute and Pennington is a very old millionaire. She dresses him during one of their meetings, and he is puzzled by her solicitude. To Hilda, the millionaire reveals in an indirect manner that he was not deeply committed to his family. One suspects that the members of his family, in their turn, had not shown as much affection and concern as would have satisfied his cravings.

Pennington wants everything between him and Hilda to be businesslike, as it had been in the past. Hilda tells him that he has never wanted to know anything about her background; he doesn't even know her last name. He becomes

interested when she tells him that she has been financially independent for some time and for six years he has been her only client. He asks her what is so special about him. He starts talking to her about his past life, and she is full of praise for him. However, she has an ulterior motive. She wants to be socially allied to him so that she can be a hostess in his big house, delighting everybody. The moment Pennington realizes that he is merely a means to an end, he loses interest in her and hurriedly leaves the house. She is left sobbing, full of anger. Her last words are, "Once they get you down, they never let you up! . . . Never, never!"[10] This short play shows that the protagonist is hungry for affection, but since neither his family nor his mistress can be genuinely affectionate to him, he is left dissatisfied and he cannot give his allegiance to either of them.

Moreover, in his short story "A Silver Dish," Bellow shows that a protagonist may hate the crime of his father but still love him. The protagonist of this story is a sixty-year-old businessman named Woody. His father Morris Selbst had many disqualifications: he deserted his own family; he used to bet on horses; and he stole a silver dish from the house of a benevolent Christian lady who was helping his family and patronizing his son Woody. One good thing about Morris, however, was that he truly loved his mistress Halina.

Although Woody did not like his father's theft of the

silver dish, an occurrence which had cost Woody his place in the seminary, he could look beyond his father's limitations and could be affectionately drawn toward him. We also come to know that Morris had returned his father's affection.

Woody is affectionate and dutiful not only toward his father, but also toward his old mother who requires nursing, and his two unmarried sisters who are sick and who periodically require hospitalization in a mental institution. Woody "took full responsibility for them all."[11] Probably because of maladjustment, Woody doesn't live with his wife. He has a mistress who also lives alone. But since his wife has not learned how to take care of herself, Woody does her shopping regularly. The scene in the hospital, where Morris is dying and Woody tries to restrain him from detaching the life-preserving tubes, shows the ingrained love of the family which is unkillable in the human heart. But Woody struggles unsuccessfully and the old man finally dies.

In summary, Bellow shows from the beginning of his career the faith he posits in the family as an institution. A chronological study of his works reveals the intensification of his positive feelings regarding the family, a development which can be further defined by a close analysis of four of his major novels. Of these four novels, Seize the Day illustrates two members of a family involved in a conflict because of their contradictory attitudes regarding the family. The three other novels, namely, The

Victim, The Adventures of Augie March, and Henderson the Rain King, illustrate how the protagonists deepen their awareness of family relationships after they pass through their crises. In all four novels, not only do the protagonists come closer to their families, they also come closer to humanity as well.

NOTES

[1] Chester E. Eisinger, "Saul Bellow: Love and Identity," Accent, 18 (Summer 1958), 187.

[2] Saul Bellow, Dangling Man (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1981), p. 128. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[3] Saul Bellow, Herzog (New York: The Viking Press, 1961), p. 128. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[4] Saul Bellow, Mr. Sammler's Planet (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), p. 20. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[5] Saul Bellow, Humboldt's Gift (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), p. 41. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[6] Joseph F. McCadden, The Flight from Women in the Fiction of Saul Bellow (Boston: University Press of America, Inc., 1980), p. 9.

[7] Saul Bellow, The Dean's December (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1982), p. 1. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[8] Saul Bellow, "By the Rock Wall," Harper's Bazaar, 85 (April 1951), p. 207. Subsequent references to this

work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[9] Saul Bellow, "The Wrecker," New World Writing, 6 (1954), 278. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[10] Saul Bellow, "Orange Souffle," in Best Short Plays of the World Theatre: 1968-1973, ed. Stanley Richards (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1973), p. 170.

[11] Saul Bellow, "A Silver Dish," The New Yorker, 54 (25 Sept. 1978), p. 41.

CHAPTER III

THE VICTIM

In The Victim, the familiar pattern of familial relationship can once again be discerned. The protagonist is not alienated from his spouse. He is somewhat remote from his brother and his brother's family, but that distance is not caused by any kind of spiritual turmoil. The conditions of modern life and the unequal social and economic positions of the families of the two brothers seem to have created the distance in the first place.

In course of the novel, the protagonist's family feeling deepens. The strengthening of family ties takes place in a natural manner. Though the protagonist, Asa Leventhal, is not close to his brother Max's family, his nephew's sudden illness makes demands on Asa's family sense. Max is away from his home, and Asa is required to take care of his sick nephew during Max's absence. Asa gives a good account of himself, and though Mickey later dies, Asa does his utmost to save his nephew. In course of the novel, Asa comes closer to his brother's family and closer to his wife Mary.

Just as he becomes anxious about his sick nephew, Asa is afflicted with a personal crisis, and he ultimately succeeds in overcoming it. In the process of trying to overcome

his crisis, Asa develops as a human being and his general attitude to humanity is substantially improved. The deepening of the family sense and the growth of positive feelings towards humanity take place side by side in Asa's psyche. These two types of growth are intertwined because of the close juxtaposition of the critical illness in Max's family and the personal crisis in Asa's life. Thus, one can safely assert that Asa's deepening family sense positively influences his attitude towards humanity and vice versa. Asa's development is very similar to the development of other Bellovian protagonists, who, at the conclusion of their quests, show a deepening of family sense and an increasing love for humanity.

At the outset, it would be a good idea to take stock of Asa's family background, which is different from the family history of Bellow's heroes such as Joseph and Henderson. Asa's family background is particularly significant because the influence of the original family is pervasive in Asa's life in various ways. Asa's father is selfish and not self-sacrificing like Citrine's or Herzog's father:

> His [Asa's] father, who had owned a small dry goods store, was a turbulent man, harsh and selfish toward his sons. Their mother had died in an insane asylum when Leventhal was eight and his brother six. At the time of her disappearance

> from the house, the elder Leventhal had answered their questions about her with an embittered "gone away," suggestive of desertion. They were nearly full grown before they learned what happened to her.[1]

The grown-up Asa discards his father's selfishness and harshness. Asa also does not either hate or show any disrespect to his memory. Asa, unlike his father, becomes more and more humane.

Asa's mother's insanity is also crucial in this novel. The total insanity of the protagonist's mother is not typical in Bellow's fiction. Moreover, in The Victim, Bellow shows that the insanity of a parent does not stop at the precincts of the original family.

In fact, the madness of Asa's mother casts a lingering shadow in the novel and serves to define the distinction of character between Asa and his brother Max. The remembrance of his mother's madness creates an element of uncertainty in Asa's character and approach to reality. Asa fears the threat of oncoming madness. He has not forgotten his mother's screaming. With such an inheritance, Asa is already predisposed to expect calamity. On the other hand, Max is never perturbed by the memory of his mother's madness.

Before discussing the deepening of Asa's family feeling, it is necessary to examine the crisis Asa experiences and the way he develops a positive attitude towards humanity as

a whole. Bellow almost invariably shows that genuine family feeling in the protagonist is linked to a genuine love and concern for humanity. Love for humanity is not easily achieved. The protagonist normally has to undergo a personal crisis before he can emerge with a renewed dedication to humanity. Asa's development follows a similar pattern.

As the novel unfolds, Asa is the editor of a trade paper. At this stage, Asa's relationship with humanity is imperfect. He is not completely at ease in his environment. While Asa is on duty one day, he gets a message from Elena, his brother Max's wife, that her son Mickey is sick. As Asa leaves in the middle of his work, he overhears his chief, Mr. Beard, saying,

> "Takes unfair advantage, like the rest of his brethren. I've never known one who wouldn't. Always please themselves first . . ." (TV, p. 5)

After a few days, Asa is visited by a personal nemesis. An old acquaintance named Kirby Allbee suddenly appears on the scene and starts accusing the stupefied Asa of being responsible for all the misfortunes that had befallen Allbee. All that Asa remembers is that one day, at a party, the gentile Allbee had made some anti-Semitic remarks. Allbee later arranged for an interview between his boss Rudiger and Asa. In that interview, Rudiger was unnecessarily rude to Asa, who in turn behaved rudely to Rudiger. Later, Allbee lost his job. This had set Allbee

adrift, and he later lost his wife, first by separation and then through death. Allbee later became an alcoholic and sank to the lowest depths of failure and degradation. Now, appearing before Asa, he accuses him of having tried to take revenge against Allbee for his anti-Semitic remarks by intentionally being rude to Rudiger. When Allbee's accusations become insistent, the ground gives way beneath Asa's feet, and Asa feels very much like Kafka's protagonist in The Trial.

Furthermore, the fact that Asa is already predisposed to calamity hinders him initially from dealing successfully with this crisis. Normally, Asa's secret fears are held in check. For example, when he first meets Allbee in the park, he feels superior to him. Also, he is as much amused as he is puzzled: "Who's this customer? An actor if I ever saw one. My God, my God, what kind of fish is this? One of those guys who want to think they can see to the bottom of your soul" (TV, p. 26). The conversation between Allbee and Asa at this first meeting becomes the central issue of the novel. Asa tells Allbee, "You haven't got anything to write me for. I haven't thought about you for years, frankly, and I don't know why you think I care whether you exist or not. What, are we related?" (TV, p. 29). Allbee laughs as he answers, "By blood? No, no . . . heavens" (TV, p. 29).

Allbee's laughter is actually a triumphant kind of laughter because this novel will make a rigorous examination of what it is that binds human beings together and will

come up with the answer that no son of Adam can claim to have nothing to do with any other human being.

Of course, Allbee's accusation is meaningless. Robert R. Dutton correctly asserts that "Asa is trapped by forces that are surely not of his own making."[2] Asa thinks that Allbee lost his job because of his drinking habit. Moreover, Allbee's thinking is characterized by a paranoid fear of a Jewish conspiracy. Significantly, in the past Asa also thought like Allbee. When he was unemployed, Asa felt that his name must have been included in a "black list," for firm after firm rejected him. After shouting at Rudiger, he expressed to Harkavy his fear that Rudiger could have him blacklisted. Harkavy disagrees and comments on his paranoia: "Now be careful. You have that tendency boy, do you know that?" (TV, p. 46).

At this juncture, Asa is very much like his father, who was also a victim of paranoid thinking:

> His [Asa's] father had lived poor and died poor, that stern, proud old fool with his savage looks, to whom nothing mattered save his advantage and to be freed by money from the power of his enemies. And who were the enemies? The world, everyone. (TV, p. 111)

Later on, as Asa develops more and more as a human being, he will be able to establish positive relationships with people--both family members and humanity in general. He

will then be able to leave his fears behind and will recoil from his father's view of life.

In fact, even before his troubles with Allbee had started, Asa was gradually becoming somewhat free from the treachery of paranoid thinking. When he became an editor, his suspicions about the "black list" faded and he ceased to fear Rudiger. It should also be noted that if his character did not improve substantially and his suspicions did not disappear, his attitude towards his brother's wife and his brother's mother-in-law would never have become truly positive. Indeed, his crisis with Allbee helps him in clarifying his vision of reality as a whole.

When Asa tells Harkavy about the menace that Allbee poses, Harkavy behaves as a man of the world, and his reaction is unambiguous:

> "If you don't mind, Asa, there's one thing I have to point out that you haven't learned. We're men of the world. It's almost a sin to be so innocent. Get next to yourself, boy, will you?" (TV, p. 88)

But Williston's reaction is somewhat different. Williston believes that whether Asa's rudeness to Rudiger was intentional or not, it had cost Allbee his job. Thus, though he is certain that he had intended no evil towards Allbee, he cannot feel completely innocent. When Asa thinks deeply about the whole affair, he concludes that

> It was, after all, something he could either take seriously or dismiss as an annoyance. It was up to him. He had only to insist that he wasn't responsible and it disappeared altogether. It was his conviction against an accusation nobody would expect him to take at face value. And what more was there for him to say than that his part in it was accidental? At worst, an accident, unintentional. (TV, p. 96)

Ultimately, Asa feels that it is necessary for him to accept some of the blame for Allbee's downfall. Asa's acknowledgement of Allbee's humanity is indeed momentous. Thus, Diana Trilling's judgement is entirely perceptive: "[R]ead solely as a novel about the Jewish situation, it is morally one of the farthest reaching books our contemporary culture has produced."[3]

What makes Asa aware of the common humanity that he shares with Allbee is the fact that he had narrowly missed Allbee's fate. David D. Galloway rightly says, "It is through Kirby Allbee that Asa achieves an awakening that will allow him 'to know what he is, to know what he is for, to know his purpose, to seek grade.'"[4]

Alan Coren has said, "There is nothing mystical about Asa Leventhal's alienation; his is no search for salvation, no hunger for a transcendental truth or meaning."[5] But it is difficult to accept this judgement. The Victim reminds

one strongly of the Catholic poet Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven," which argues that the sinner's lot is sorrow until and unless he turns his face towards God and makes his peace with Him. Similarly, Asa cannot regain spiritual calm unless and until he acknowledges his responsibility for his unsuccessful and ravaged brother, Kirby Allbee. Once Asa learns to be concerned about the fate of Allbee, Asa's relation to the human family, which is a magnified version of his immediate family, will be proper and beyond reproach. As Naomi Lebowitz indicates,

> Like Dr. Rieux, hero of Camus's The Plague, Leventhal ultimately realizes that to be merely human, neither more nor less, is the most necessary and difficult role. That he is initially less than human is attested to by the sudden appearance of a double.[6]

Asa suffers from feelings of guilt, because whereas people like Allbee "did not get away with it," he certainly got away with it. If one believes in a mechanistic universe in which each man is indifferent to his neighbor, such disparity poses no problem. But if one has the religious intuition that man is created in the image of his Maker, a successful man may feel some responsibility for those like Allbee who fail. It is significant that Asa, on his own initiative, accepts more and more responsibility for Allbee. Although Alan S. Downer has stated,

"It is never clear what 'The Victim' is about,"[7] this seems to be a superficial judgement. The truth is that it is impossible to miss what the novel is about; it is about the individual's basic link with humanity, a link which he can only deny at his peril.

Bellow also suggests that natural man is the inheritor of fierceness and cruelty. The unredeemed man exhibits the same viciousness and aggression as beasts of prey. Norman Podhoretz is correct in asserting that "What we have in The Victim is the vision of a city as a tiny village surrounded on all sides by a jungle that threatens at any moment to spill over and engulf the precious little oasis at its center."[8] Asa, on his visit to Elena's house on Staten Island, encounters the following spectacle:

> The towers on the shore rose up in the huge blocks, scorched, smoky, gray, and bare white where the sun was direct upon them. The notion brushed Leventhal's mind that the light over them and over the water was akin to the yellow revealed in the slit of the eye of a wild animal, say a lion, something inhuman that didn't care about anything human and yet was implanted in every human being too . . . (TV, p. 51)

Bellow makes it quite clear that just as the yellow tinge in the slit of its eye reveals that an animal is ferocious so too are humans marked by savagery. The question in Bellow's

novel takes the form of how a man should behave after he recognizes the inhumanity that is innate in him. While speaking about the qualities that constitute "good acting," Schlossberg says to Asa and certain other friends,

> "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? 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 sweat, either, except maybe blood on holidays. If I can talk myself into it that I never sweat and make everybody else act as if it was true, maybe 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, maybe 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. That is my whole idea. More than human, can you have any use for life? Less than human, you don't either." (TV, p. 133)

In other words, Schlossberg asserts that man should not rest satisfied until he succeeds in being fully human. Man

cannot transcend the limitations of the human condition, but he definitely can be in control of the promptings of his lower nature. Schlossberg further says, "Have dignity, you understand me? Choose dignity. Nobody knows enough to turn it down" (TV, p. 134). And dignity is what Asa ultimately chooses. Of course, Asa does not accept the entire blame for Allbee's fate, but he wants to do what he realistically can to help Allbee pursue a worthier fate.

Asa gradually learns what it is to be human: "He [Asa] liked to think 'human' means accountable in spite of many weaknesses--at the last moment, tough enough to hold" (TV, p. 154). Later, Asa intends to send Allbee to Shifcart with a reference. When Allbee is shelterless, Asa puts him up at his apartment and lends him money. Ihab H. Hassan's assessment of this is entirely right: "Man must finally stand up for his fellow man. Asa is compelled to stand up for Kirby whether he is friend or foe."[9]

Allbee explains to Asa the central tenet of Christianity--the repentance of fallen man--and he expresses to Asa his desire to reform: "I know that I don't have to be next year what I was last year" (TV, p. 228). When Allbee refrains from drinking for one evening and comes back home after having a haircut, Asa is elated at the sight of Allbee's supposed efforts to transform himself and is affectionately drawn towards him.

It is when Allbee reads the intimate postcards that Mary has sent her husband Asa, and when Allbee brings in a

prostitute to Asa's apartment, that Asa severs his relationship with Allbee and throws him out. This action is timely, because later on Allbee sneaks into the apartment and turns on the gas, ostensibly to commit suicide, and maybe to kill Asa as well.

After Allbee leaves, things go well with Asa in the next few years: "The consciousness of an unremitting daily fight, though still present, was fainter and less troubling" (TV, p. 285). His health improves, and he looks years younger: "Something recalcitant seemed to have left him; he was not exactly affable, but his obstinately unrevealing expression had softened" (TV, p. 295). And most important, he recovers spiritual poise: "And as time went on, he lost the feeling that he had, as he used to say, 'got away with it,' his guilty relief and the accompanying sense of infringement" (TV, p. 285). Thus, Mark Schorer is seen to have reached a correct conclusion regarding The Victim: "Alienation, relation, assimilation: the thematic progression is something like that."[10]

The last glimpse we have of Allbee is at the theatre where it becomes clear that Allbee has become the gigolo of a once famous actress, Yvonne Crane, who is now a fading beauty. The two men have differentiated themselves. Allbee wears a flower on his jacket: "The flower stuck Leventhal in a very curious way as a mark of something extraordinary, barbaric, rich, even decadent" (TV, p. 290). The description continues:

> On nearer sight, Allbee did not look good. His color was an unhealthy one. Leventhal had the feeling that it was the decay of something that had gone into the appearance of well-being, something intimate. There was very little play in the deepened wrinkles around his eyes. They had a fabric quality, crumpled and blank. A smell of whisky came from him. (TV, p. 292)

It is obvious that, unlike Asa, Allbee has not chosen dignity. However, since Asa had done his utmost to help reclaim Allbee, Asa is no longer plagued with guilt feelings.

Furthermore, the growth in Asa of a positive attitude towards humanity parallels the growth in him of positive family feelings. In the course of the novel, Asa's family sense is considerably deepened. At the beginning of the novel, Asa has very little to do either with his brother Max or Max's family. When Asa goes to Max's house, he finds that his elder nephew Philip doesn't even know him. Also, Elena doesn't know the name of Asa's wife, who is for the time being away from Asa, visiting her recently widowed mother and helping her to move from Baltimore to Charleston. However, the sight of his nephews spontaneously revives Asa's family feeling and tells him what to do. Alan Coren notes that Asa handles "family problems and responsibilities with a duty characteristic of his race" (Coren, p. 624). Asa immediately takes an active role when he sees the sick

Mickey. He argues that Mickey should be taken to the hospital. Elena thinks that Mickey is better off at home, where she can take care of him herself. On his second visit to Elena's home, Asa is very sympathetic toward Philip. Later, on a Saturday afternoon, Asa takes Philip out on an outing. He does so to make up for his previous neglect. Thus, it is seen that family feeling may lie dormant for a long time in the Bellovian protagonist, and when circumstances are propitious or when contingencies demand it, the protagonist may express it in abundance.

In the course of the novel, Asa's attitude to his brother undergoes a profound change. Initially, when Asa learns from the doctor that Mickey's condition is serious, Asa is furious about his brother Max. He mentally composes a letter: "'Dear Max, if you can tear yourself away from what you're doing . . . if you can manage to get away for a while . . .'" (TV, p. 62). Asa also does not want to spare his brother; he is angry because he thinks that Max is not fulfilling his duties as a family man: "He [Max] sends them money and that makes him a father. That's the end of his responsibilities. That's fatherhood, that's his idea of duty" (TV, p. 137). Actually, Asa is not quite fair to Max, since Max is anything but irresponsible towards his family. Max must keep his family in Staten Island because he cannot find a flat in the over-crowded city where he is working. Indeed, Max's own family is entirely cohesive, and genuine affection binds the family members together.

Later, Mickey dies, and Max comes too late to see Mickey alive. At Mickey's funeral, Asa and Max come closer:

> The sight of him [Max] hit Leventhal with a terrible force. He had been prepared to meet him in anger; his very first word was to have been a rebuke. But now, instead of speaking, he took in his brother's appearance, the darkness and soreness of his swollen face, the scar at the corner of his mouth from a cut received in a street fight years ago in Hartford. (TV, pp. 180-81)

Clasping Leventhal's hand and stooping over it, Max cries. Elena takes to her bed, crying most of the time. Thus, it is inevitable that Max will turn to his brother when he suffers bereavement.

Later Max goes to Asa's apartment, a place he never visited. When Max enters the house, it is as if he were entering a stranger's home. Asa recollects that since childhood he and Max had not spent an hour together. Though the brothers were not as close to each other as was possible or desirable, a death in the family brings them closer, making them aware of the ties that bind them together.

Initially, Asa betrays a lack of charity in his evaluation of Elena and her mother, just as he betrayed a lack of charity in his judgement of Allbee. Asa tells Max that Elena reminds him at times of his mother, and Max is somewhat

indignant. Asa also misinterprets Elena's looks at the chapel. He thinks that Elena is unhappy about him because he has talked her into sending Mickey to the hospital. Actually, Asa fails to realize that Elena is not angry with him but mute with pain at the death of her son. Asa also wants Max to throw Elena's mother out. Asa is prejudiced against Elena's mother, who is a Catholic. She had once said that if Elena married anybody but a Catholic, she would sever all relationship with Elena. Now that Mickey's illness has drawn Elena's mother to Max's household, Asa fears that she may have a pernicious influence on Elena, and subsequently there may be trouble in the family.

What Asa fails to realize is that it is concern for Mickey that has drawn Elena's mother to Max's household in the first place. She has not come to Max's family to be a domineering figure there. Max is not at all troubled. He reassures Asa that Elena's mother will not exert a pernicious influence on the household. About his mother-in-law, Max says, "I know she doesn't like me. So what? A worn-out old woman. I feel sad, sometimes, when I look at her" (TV, p. 241). Max is thus charitable toward and tolerant of people in general, even people who do not like him. One sees the extent of the spiritual development that Asa has to undergo before he, like his brother, can emerge as a person genuinely belonging to the human race.

Asa becomes aware of his exaggerated and unfounded fears and prejudices regarding Elena and her mother after

Max clarifies his attitude towards them. Thereafter, Asa's attitude toward them changes, just as his attitude toward Allbee had changed. Bellow is religious in the sense Coleridge and Nathaniel Hawthorne are religious. Bellow thinks that if a man is to be truly human, he must make allowances for the weaknesses of his fellow human beings. Coleridge's ancient mariner can only be purged of his guilt when he can accept and bless the "slimy creatures" of the sea. Hawthorne's Young Goodman Brown cannot be purged of his guilt because he considers that everyone, including his wife Faith, is guilty, and that he alone is guiltless. Thus, he goes through life as an outcast, as an Ishmael, without recognizing the enormity of his sin--the absence of genuine compassion for others. Bellow is also like Bernard Malamud in this respect. The protagonist of Malamud's The Assistant succeeds in saving his soul when he shows true compassion for the Jewish grocer and his destitute family after his death. Another Malamud protagonist, Fidelman in Pictures of Fidelman, can only save his soul when he starts loving others, and the last sentence of the novel shows Fidelman returning to his home in America and attempting to save his soul by loving men and women.

Bellow also shows in The Victim that inter-racial and inter-religious marriages may create harmony. Elena, a Catholic, had married Max, a Jew. Elsewhere in Bellow's fiction, it can be seen that a man's marrying a woman of the same race and religion does not ensure that there will

be harmony in the couple's relationship. For example, Charlie Citrine and Denise in Humboldt's Gift are both Jewish, but their relationship becomes increasingly meaningless and terminates in permanent separation.

In The Victim, one finds unmistakable evidence that Max and Elena are quite happy together. Max tells Asa: "I've got to get back to my job, and we don't want to be separated again" (TV, p. 241). Max also pays glowing tribute to what Elena had done for him in the past: "During the depression when I was laid up, she [Elena] went out and peddled stuff from door to door" (TV, p. 241). Moreover, when the family was on relief, Elena had a brother who wanted to involve Max in a racket which could have brought Max some money. Elena said "no," whereas another woman, Max feels, would have said, "'Go ahead'" (TV, p. 241). So, the family stayed on relief, but in retrospect, Max pays a tribute to his wife's honesty and perspicacity.

Towards the end of the novel, Asa emerges as a truly loving elder brother. In a conversation with Max, Asa tries to console him. Max tells him, "I feel half burned out already" (TV, p. 242). Asa's reply indicates how genuinely he tries to inspire his brother. Asa says, "Half burned? I'm older than you and I don't say that" (TV, p. 242). Asa further adds, "There have been times when I felt like that, too, that's a feeling that comes and goes" (TV, p. 242).

At the moment of parting at the subway, Max and Asa

have a conversation which is significant:

> "If you need me for anything . . . "
> Leventhal said.
> "Thanks."
> "I mean it."
> "Thank you." He extended his hand. Leventhal clumsily spread his arms wide and clasped him. (TV, p. 243)

The conversation reveals that Asa has truly begun to love his brother.

Moreover, not only does Asa come closer to his original family, but also he comes closer to his wife Mary. One can appreciate Asa's increasing love for Mary if one considers their premarital relationship. When Asa first fell in love with Mary, there was no sign of trouble on the horizon: "That she was still not accustomed to thinking of herself as a woman, and a beautiful woman, made Leventhal feel very tender toward her" (TV, p. 15). But later Asa came to know, through her confession, that she could not break off an old attachment with another married man. The relationship between Asa and Mary was interrupted for years. Then they started to correspond again and later were married. Asa felt convinced when Mary reassured him that she had not "chosen him [Asa] indiscriminately" (TV, p. 17).

In the course of the novel, Asa shows his dependence on his wife. We are told, for example, that "Since Mary's

departure his [Asa's] nerves had been unsteady. He kept the bathroom light burning all night" (TV, p. 25). It is suggested that Mary has the power to restore normalcy. To Harkavy, Asa declares that Mary's absence has been hard on him. Again, when Asa is going to send a wire to Max, Mrs. Harkavy thinks that he is going to send the wire to his wife. Mrs. Harkavy's point of view can be accepted by the reader, and her positive feelings regarding devotion in marriage reveal Bellow's own attitude toward the institution:

> "Daniel, it's not a thing to joke about, if a couple is devoted, it's nothing to ridicule. These days when marriages are so flimsy it's a real pleasure to see devotion. Couples go to City Hall like I might go to five-and-dime to buy a hinge. Two boards on a hinge, and clap, clap, that's a marriage. Wire your wife, Asa, it's the right thing and it's sweet. Never mind." (TV, p. 82)

After Allbee goes away, Asa is eager to have his wife back. He experiences "a kind of intoxication." He stops before Mary's picture on the desk and caresses her face "with his thumb over the glass" (TV, p. 279). Mary is equally eager to come back. Asa becomes impatient and mentally tries to visualize the scene of Mary's arrival at the station platform. He wonders how he would embrace her

and what greetings he would use to welcome her back: "He [Asa] struggled over a choice of greetings" (TV, p. 280). In the culminating scene, when Asa is seen with Mary at the theatre, she is pregnant. Her pregnancy holds the promise of new life, and Asa's attitude towards her gives an indication of his and Mary's conjugal felicity: "Her [Mary's] skin looked very pure, and his heart rose as he watched her, intent on the play" (TV, p. 288).

Moreover, Bellow shows love sprouting in the most unlikely place, and indicates that even a derelict may be faithful to a spouse, even after the spouse repudiates him. We find in The Victim a derelict like Allbee expressing genuine love for his deceased wife. Although Allbee is often unreliable in his protestations, the grief that he shows for his deceased wife seems to be authentic. At least one character in the novel, Mrs. Williston, endorses Allbee's love for his deceased wife. Asa had thought about Allbee's wife that "She was much too good for him, much too good" (TV, p. 73). However, when Allbee tells Asa what his reactions are to his wife's death, one cannot but be impressed by Allbee's feelings:

> "You long for your wife when she goes, if you love her. And may be sometimes if you don't love her so much. I wouldn't know. But you're together, she bends to you and you bend to her in everything, and when she dies there you stand,

bent, and look senseless . . . " (TV, p. 74)

Allbee also tells Asa that he didn't want his wife to leave him. Later, when Allbee brings a prostitute to Asa's bed, Asa is enraged and tells him, ". . . I thought you couldn't get over your wife" (TV, p. 271). Allbee replies, "Don't you mention my wife!" (TV, p. 271). Allbee further adds, "Leave things alone that you don't understand" (TV, p. 271). The implication is that casual sensual relationships leave Allbee's remembrance of his wife entirely unsullied.

Finally, it can be said that the protagonist Asa Leventhal becomes a balanced and humane person through his encounter with Allbee. The encounter, which is shocking, unexpected, and painful, forces Asa to look within himself and to determine anew his relationship with his own family and with humanity. In the process, he grows both mentally and spiritually. He develops the proper attitude that a mature human being should adopt towards mankind in general. He learns to feel compassion for Allbee. He feels concerned for his nephew, the dying Mickey, whom he had neglected in the past. He learns to accept Elena, a relation to whom he had not been just, and Elena's mother, an unhappy old lady to whom one could not afford to be unkind. His relationship with his brother develops to the extent that it leaves both of them refreshed, renewed, and satisfied. Moreover, he emerges as a loving and affectionate husband, proud of his wife, and eagerly awaiting the moment when a child will be

born unto him. Asa's expectation of the birth of a child is immensely significant, for fatherhood normally not only commits a person to his own immediate family, but it also commits him irrevocably to the human race.

Thus, Bellow once again has shown in this novel that the family as an institution is truly vital and indispensable. Moreover, it is through the family that man learns that all human beings are expected to love one another. This is the supreme realization that the Bellovian protagonist must finally have--a realization that a unity subsists through everything even when things very often appear to be diverse, chaotic, and unrelated. In Seize the Day, Bellow presents one of the most potent forces that can hinder people from realizing this unity even within the precincts of the family.

NOTES

[1] Saul Bellow, The Victim (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1947), p. 13. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[2] Robert R. Dutton, Saul Bellow (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 20.

[3] Diana Trilling, Review of The Victim, Nation, 166 (3 January 1948), p. 25.

[4] David D. Galloway, "The Absurd Man as Picaro: The Novels of Saul Bellow," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 6 (Summer 1964), 231.

[5] Alan Coren, Review of The Victim, Punch, 249 (27 October 1965), p. 624. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[6] Naomi Lebowitz, Humanism and the Absurd in the Modern Novel (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. 118.

[7] Alan S. Downer, Review of The Victim, New York Times Book Review, 52 (30 November 1947), p. 29.

[8] Norman Podhoretz, "The Adventures of Saul Bellow," in his Doings and Undoings: The Fifties and After in American Writing (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1964), p. 211.

[9] Ihab H. Hassan, "Saul Bellow: Five Faces of a Hero,: Critique, 3 (Summer 1960), 31.

[10] Mark Schorer, "A Book of Yes and No," Hudson Review, 7 (Spring 1954), 137.

CHAPTER IV

SEIZE THE DAY

Excessive materialism is a potent factor that can cause, as Bellow shows us, disruptions within the family. If it does not always cause the total disintegration of the family, it can at least obstruct the smooth flow of sympathy among the family members. Bellow has written in "The Uses of Adversity" about the perils of materialism:

> The lives of the Castros with their new wealth stand as a warning that the heart may empty as the belly fills. . . . now that technology extends the promise of an increase of wealth we had better be aware of the poverty of the soul as terrible as that of the body.[1]

Before we pass on to a discussion of the devastating effects of materialism on the family, it would be proper to discuss how pernicious Bellow considers the effects of materialism to be when it is pervasive in society.

In one of Bellow's short stories entitled "The Gonzaga Manuscripts," the central character Clarence Feiler makes a trip to Madrid from California in quest of some manuscripts that the famous poet Gonzaga, now dead, is supposed to have

left behind him. The poems are love poems addressed to the Countess del Nido, Gonzaga's friend and literary executor. Guzman asks him to talk to a nephew of the deceased secretary to the Countess. One of these nephews puts him on the track of a cousin of his, Alvarez-Polvo. Polvo is interested only in money, and thinking that Clarence must be an American businessman, he brings out shares of stocks in a pitchblende mine in Morocco. When Clarence expresses surprise, asking what in the earth he has to do with a pitchblende mine, Polvo answers, "What any businessman would want. To sell it. Pitchblende has uranium in it. Uranium is used in atom bombs."[2] In disgust and despair, Clarence parts from Alvarez-Polvo and, before he leaves, he learns that the poems were buried with the Countess and that no copies were ever made of them.

In the story, then, a sensitive young man feels the impact of the baneful effect of materialism. His scholastic quest is rendered meaningless in a world where most people are under the sway of the money. Elsewhere, Bellow shows us how devastating that kind of materialism can be when it operates within the precincts of the family. In "A Father-to-Be," Bellow shows that materialism can adversely affect the relationship between a man and his would-be wife. In an important play entitled The Last Analysis, Bellow shows that materialism can create havoc not only in the relationship between a husband and wife, but also in the relationship between a father and a son.

In "A Father-to-Be," we find a thirty-one-year-old research chemist named Rogin, who is beset with financial anxieties which neither his fiancee nor his mother seems to appreciate. He is doing all he can to pay Joan's debts because she is jobless and she is not willing to condescend to accept any ordinary job. Moreover, Joan, like Madeleine in Herzog, has expensive tastes. She is not considerate enough to find out how her expensive tastes affect Rogin. Rogin also has to put a brother through college. Rogin's mother seems to be dependent on him, and even she shows less affection for him because he cannot fulfill all her material needs: "She had always spoiled him and made his brother envy him. But what she expected now! Oh, Lord, how he had to pay, and it had never occurred to him formerly that these things might have a price."[3]

Rogin is going to have supper with Joan and, on his way to her apartment, Rogin studies the man sitting next to him in the subway train. This passenger seems not to impress Rogin, and he reminds Rogin strongly of Joan. Rogin thinks that forty years hence, he may have a son who will look like this stranger. Rogin doesn't find anything in common between himself and this stranger.

As Rogin comes into the house, Joan begins to treat him as a baby. She insists on washing his hair with a shampoo. Rogin has rehearsed some angry words to say to her, but as she starts washing his hair, he forgets everything:

> [She] pressed against him from behind, surrounding him, pouring the water gently over him until it seemed to him that the water came from within him, it was the warm fluid of his own secret loving spirit overflowing into the sink, green and foaming, and the words he had rehearsed he forgot, and his anger at his son-to-be disappeared altogether, and he sighed, and said to her from the water-filled hollow of the sink, "You always had such wonderful ideas Joan. You know? You have a kind of instinct, a regular gift." (p. 155)

Joan may be a spendthrift; she may be callous to Rogin's financial anxiety; but she is not cruel like most of the castrating ex-wives in Bellow's fiction: Margaret, Madeleine, or Denise. However, Rogin's bitterness about her callousness seems to be something settled in his soul. Therefore, one wonders whether he merely represses his bitterness towards Joan and pretends to feel affection for her, or whether because of genuine love for her, he ignores the imperfection of her nature. Thus, Tony Tanner is right in expressing doubts regarding the resolution of the story: "Whether this is an ennervated capitulation or a courageous assumption of life's duties is not discussed."[4]

In The Last Analysis, Bellow more clearly shows how family relationships are almost entirely ruined because of excessive greed or materialism. The central character is

Bummidge who is taken advantage of not only by the members of his own family, but by nearly everyone who has anything to do with him. Bummidge is a failed comedian who once was very successful. He is afflicted with "Humanitis," a disease which afflicts him when he considers the plight of human existence. As the play opens, he tries to act as his own analyst, investigating his past for the secret of his life. He tries to relive his past over closed-circuit television, telecasting it to a convention of psychoanalysts at the Waldorf.

Bummidge reveals that he had a period of early hostility towards his father. Actually, he couldn't accept the discipline his father imposed on him. His father had to slave away from the age of thirteen, and since there was poverty in the house, he wanted his son to emulate him. But in spite of this juvenile hostility, Bummidge loved his father. When his father had his last illness, Bummidge felt profound pity for him: "Pa . . . oh, Pa, your lip is so white. Age and weakness have suddenly come over you. . . . Papa, don't go from us."[5] Though Bummidge also had some negligible kind of early difficulties with his mother, in retrospect, he says that his love for his mother outweighed his love for his father. He says, "I put a rose bush on Mama's grave. But Papa's grave is sinking, sinking" (p. 29).

Bummidge's wife Bella is estranged from him. So far as greed is concerned, she is no different from Margaret in Seize the Day or Denise in Humboldt's Gift. When Bummidge

was in his heyday, she exploited him. While describing the cast of characters, Bellow writes about her, "Bummidge's estranged wife. Not as estranged as he would like her to be. Bella is proud of her businesslike ways, her air of command. She is an aggressive woman . . ." (p. x). About Bummidge's mistress, Bellow writes, "The relationship has obviously faded. She does not expect to get much more from him and is tired of humoring him" (p. x). Even Bummidge's sister wants to take advantage of him. Bummidge's cousin Winkleman had also made millions on Bummidge. His greed has dehumanized him. He says, "It's true, I no longer care who lives and who dies. Still I have to pursue my own way" (p. 11). Bummidge's son Max is furious with his father because his father had raised for his program thirty-five thousand dollars on the property in Staten Island which is Max's in trust. Bummidge, like Tommy Wilhelm in Seize the Day, feels that fathers should be fathers and sons should be sons. He admonishes Max: "My boy, this war of fathers and sons is a racket. Humankind has a horrible instinct for complaint. It's one whole section of the death instinct" (p. 33). But his ideas are entirely lost on Max.

When Bummidge is successful and Fiddleman showers him with television offers, Bummidge turns them down. His desire is to establish a Platonic Academy of Comedy. He wants to lead an austere life, rendering genuine service to the poor, the sad, the bored, and the tedious of the earth. Bellow makes it amply clear how well-nigh impossible it is for a

man, if he is surrounded by greedy harpies like the relatives of Bummidge, to find happiness in life and to retain the lustre of his soul. Appropriately, he repudiates all his false relatives, saying, "You came between me and my soul" (p. 117). Bummidge is then prepared to meet his scientific colleagues with a mind divested of encumbrances.

Although these shorter works examine to some extent the effects of materialism on family relationships, Bellow treats the topic much more fully in Seize the Day. In the novel, we find a wealthy and materialistic father withholding aid from a helpless son whose resources have failed him. Moreover, Tommy Wilhelm, the son, gets no sympathy from his wife, who is also harsh, cruel, and materialistic. When Tommy is constrained to seek aid from a pseudo healer, all his money is stolen. Since Tommy believes in the sacredness of family relationships and in the qualities of mercy, pity, and fairness, and since the world denies him, what stance is he supposed to adopt towards his family members and toward the world as a whole? How can he save his soul and grow as a human being?

Seize the Day depicts the agonies of a man whose last resources are about to fail him. Tommy Wilhelm, who has foolishly quit his job and who has given about seven hundred dollars (the larger part of his savings) to a charlatan named Dr. Tamkin, has no money to pay his hotel bill with or to meet the demands of his estranged wife Margaret, who does not show any consideration for him. His father is

staying at the same hotel, but his father, Dr. Adler, extends no practical help to him in his direst need. Thus, Robert R. Dutton's conclusion is correct: "One of the major themes of Seize the Day . . . is the isolation of the human spirit in modern society."[6]

It is not that Tommy has led the life of a useless person all his life. On the contrary, until he left his job (though he left the job foolishly, he left it out of a sense of honor), he had scrupulously looked after his wife and two children and fulfilled his social obligations. However, on that fateful day of reckoning, Tommy realizes that he had made a number of crucial mistakes in the past, sometimes against the promptings of his heart. First, he had denied his father by changing his name. Early in the nineteen-thirties, because of his good looks, he had felt that he could build a successful career in the film industry. Therefore, leaving school against the wishes of his family, he had gone to Hollywood. There, he had stubbornly tried for seven years to become a screen artist. Although long before that time he had recognized the folly of persisting, he had remained in California out of pride or laziness:

> At last he turned to other things, but those seven years of persistence and defeat had unfitted him somehow for trades and businesses, and then it was too late to go into one of the professions. He had been slow to mature, and

he had lost ground.[7]

Tommy had been taken in by the promises of Maurice Venice, who had promised him a career in films. Later, he found out that Maurice Venice was a kind of trickster. Also, Tommy had thought several times about not marrying Margaret. Then, against the warnings of his deeper self, he had gone forward and married her. Even in his maturity, he makes a serious mistake. As the novel opens, we learn that he has handed over his savings to Dr. Tamkin to invest in lard, even though he had an intuition that Tamkin could not be trusted.

Adler knows his son's condition. But he is too materialistic to care for a middle-aged son:

> He behaved toward his son as he had formerly done toward his patients, and it was a great grief to Wilhelm; it was almost too much to bear. Couldn't he see--couldn't he feel? Had he lost his family sense? (STD, p. 15)

Adler, a rich, successful, and retired physician, is an inveterate lover of self: "He [Adler] had always been a vain man. To see how his father loved himself sometimes made Wilhelm madly indignant" (STD, p. 16). Adler feels that he has earned the right, because of his wealth and success, to lead a peaceful life in his old age. No son or daughter, especially an unsuccessful son like Tommy,

has any right to disturb him with pleas for help.

In fact, Wilhelm had told his father on one occasion,

> "Father--it so happens that I'm in a bad way now. I hate to have to say it. You realize that I'd rather have good news to bring you. But it's true. And since it's true, Dad--what else am I supposed to say? It's true." (STD, p. 15)

But his father had no answer for him. While thinking about his father, Wilhelm remembers a line from Shakespeare's sonnet seventy-three: "Love that well which thou must leave ere long." This line, in the context of the novel, shows what people can normally expect of an old man like Dr. Adler who is about to reach the end of his earthly pilgrimage. As a man grows old, usually he becomes mellower because he has to leave for good the world and all that he has loved therein. But materialism and inordinate self-love have hardened Adler's heart so much that he cannot, even for a single moment in the novel, behave as a kind old man or a normal father. Ironically, the lesson that Shakespeare's line contains will be learned by Wilhelm himself; it is he who will look with eyes kindled with love and compassion on everybody, including strangers.

Wilhelm remembers another verse from Milton's "Lycidas": "Sunk though he be beneath the wat'ry floor." Milton's "Lycidas" is an elegy over the death of a young man. Just as Edward King, in death, deserves our sympathy, similarly a

down-and-out young man like Tommy Wilhelm, who is, metaphorically speaking, about to "drown," also deserves our sympathy. But Dr. Adler is not prepared to show active sympathy to Wilhelm.

Dr. Adler believes in the materialistic values of the age. He knows Tommy's real state, but on one occasion he brags to another old man that Wilhelm is a sales executive, and that Wilhelm did not have the patience to finish school. Wilhelm remembers that even when he was young his father was not a "pal" to him. Wilhelm asks his father innocently what year Wilhelm's mother died. His father does not remember, but Wilhelm knows: "As though he didn't know the year, the month, the day, the very hour of his mother's death" (STD, p. 32).

When Wilhelm and Adler are discussing the death of Wilhelm's mother, Adler thinks that Tommy is complaining to him about his mother's death. A loveless man can thus misconstrue even an innocent question. When Adler cannot remember the year of his wife's death, he pleads that an old man's memory is unreliable. But Wilhelm knows that if he were to ask the old man what year he had interned, the doctor would give an accurate answer. Still, his son doesn't bear a grudge against him: "All the same, don't make an issue. Don't quarrel with your own father. Have pity on an old man's feelings" (STD, p. 32).

Wilhelm cannot forget his mother (usually, the protagonist's mother, except when she is institutionalized, is

extremely affectionate to the children). So he visits her grave periodically. On one such visit, Wilhelm finds that the stone bench between his mother's and grandmother's graves has been overturned and broken by vandals. He wants his father to pay for a new seat, but Adler receives the suggestion cooly and does nothing about it. However, Wilhelm pays a man at the cemetery to say prayers for his deceased mother.

Wilhelm certainly has his faults. After he gave up his job, he did nothing practical to get another. Moreover, he expects too much from his father, with whose nature he is more or less familiar. However, Wilhelm also has some truly admirable qualities. Unlike his harsh and materialistic father, Wilhelm feels that affection and compassion should be the basis of transactions among family members. Later, Wilhelm will learn that sympathy and compassion should be the basis also of dealings among all human beings.

In contrast, Adler's harshness towards his son is utterly indefensible. He plays the perennial disciplinarian and refuses to feel any sympathy for his son when it is obvious that even a total stranger would feel genuine sympathy for him and would try to do something concrete to help him.

Wilhelm is a man who would never willingly hurt any man's feelings. But even he cannot avoid conflicts with his father:

> But in conversation with his father he was apt to lose control of himself. After any talk with Dr. Adler, Wilhelm generally felt dissatisfied, and his dissatisfaction reached its greatest intensity when they discussed family matters. (STD, p. 34)

It can be seen that the source of the conflicts between Tommy and his father is traceable to their divergent attitudes towards the family. Tommy earnestly believes in family cohesion and mutual helpfulness among family members, but his father is an individualist who believes that a man's duty terminates when his children are grown up.

The institution of the family would be greatly damaged if all fathers started behaving like Adler, but fortunately, most fathers are not as hard-hearted as he is. Significantly, Adler, because of his erroneous attitude, has become alienated from both of his children, Tommy and Catherine. And because of Adler's inflexible attitude, Tommy faces almost total ruin and destitution.

Wilhelm is profoundly desirous of changing what his life has turned into as his prayer indicates:

> "Oh, God, let me out of this trouble. Let me out of my thoughts, and let me do something better with myself. 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 balled up.

> Have mercy." (STD, p. 30)

But Wilhelm is caught totally unprepared for the contingencies of life, and he is forced to ask his father for help, something he has never done before.

Not only is Adler without compassion, but Margaret also has no sympathy for Wilhelm. Materialism has frozen her family feelings. She will not give him a divorce, and he has to support her and his two children. She regularly agrees to divorce him, and then thinks things over and sets new and more difficult conditions. She goes out with other men, but still takes Wilhelm's money. For the first time, he sends her a postdated check, and she protests. She also sends bills for the boys' educational policies, due the following week. She doesn't bother to understand that Wilhelm is almost destitute.

It is not that Wilhelm does not have feelings for his children. In fact, though he is separated from his children, he is a responsible father. The children are never far away from his thoughts:

> They were his kids, and he took care of them and always would. He had planned to set up a trust fund. But that was on his former expectations. Now he had to rethink the future, because of the money problem. (STD, p. 35)

Wilhelm's major problem is how to get money to take care of

his children.

Margaret also loves her children, but she makes the care of the children a pretext to punish Wilhelm. When Wilhelm tells her to get some kind of job to help raise them, she refuses even though she is a qualified person. She says that she won't have the children running loose, but this is merely a pretext, for the children are grown up. Actually, she is so selfish that she does not care about what happens to Wilhelm. Wilhelm reminds her that he once loved her and had given her his best. Moreover, they had lived together for long. Now he wants some consideration from her, but she is relentless in her demands, taunts him, and even refuses to sign a joint return with him.

In Bellow's work, the estranged husband is suspicious of his wife. Wilhelm feels that Margaret is turning his two sons against him. He normally takes the sons out, but he feels that his sons do not know how much he cares for them.

Moreover, as has been noted, though Bellow's husbands may suffer from serious maladjustment with their wives, as a result of which divorce or separation becomes inevitable, the same men may have a pleasant relationship with their mistresses. Wilhelm loves his mistress, Olive, but cannot marry her because Margaret will not divorce him. Margaret is not only materialistic, but she is cruel and shrewd.

Wilhelm delivers a tirade against the acquisitive mentality of people like Margaret and his father:

> "How they adore money . . . Holy money! Beautiful money! It was getting so that people were feeble-minded about everything except money. While if you didn't have it you were a dummy, a dummy! You had to excuse yourself from the face of the earth." (STD, p. 41)

Wilhelm says that when he had money, others bled it from him, implicitly accusing the one-time beneficiaries of his wealth who now do not care for him. Neither Adler nor Margaret has genuine concern for Wilhelm because they fear that Wilhelm has nothing to give them.

Adler hides his indifference to his son by saying that he can have sympathy for real ailments. In other words, Adler insinuates that Wilhelm's ailments are fictitious, not real. But Wilhelm, knowing that his ailments are real, feels that he has a claim on his father. Richard Chase is entirely right when he says,

> Of course, they [Wilhelm's wife and his father] have their point but Wilhelm is not entirely wrong in thinking that there is something sinister and inhumanly aggressive in their nagging insistence that (as Augie would say) he allow himself to be recruited to their versions of reality.[8]

It is obvious that although the father has forgotten the traditional relationship between him and his son, the son

holds tenaciously to traditional familial relationships and specifically to the concept of fatherhood:

> And, furthermore, he [Wilhelm] could not succeed in excusing his father on the ground of old age. No, no, he could not. I am his son, he thought. He is my father. He is as much father as I am son--old or not. (STD, p. 49)

Adler, moreover, offers useless advice to his son. He prescribes exercise and the baths for a patient who is drowning. As Wilhelm tells his father,

> "Well, Dad, she [Margaret] hates me. I feel she's strangling me. I can't catch my breath. She just has fixed herself on me to kill me. She can do it at long distance. One of these days I'll be struck down by suffocation or apoplexy because of her. I just can't catch my breath." (STD, p. 55)

Four years back, when Wilhelm and his wife separated, he gave her everything. He had only wanted their dog, Scissors, but she would not give it to him. Adler says that possibly Wilhelm's problem with Margaret was sexual, and that if this was so, he should have persisted. Wilhelm's answer indicates that Adler may be partially correct, but that there was wider incompatibility: "She wouldn't be like me, so I tried to be like her, and I couldn't do it"

(STD, p. 57). Finally, because he was becoming sick, he separated from her.

The father, like a true diagnostician, devoid of emotional involvement, inquires why Wilhelm lost his job with the Rojax Corporation. He insinuates that it may have been the result of a problem with either a man or a woman. The suddenness of such an accusation reveals that the doctor indeed does not know his son, is unaware of his sensitivity or his inalienable decency.

This rigorous inquisition merely leads to Adler's assertion that he himself had no problem with Wilhelm's mother. Wilhelm says that Margaret cannot be compared to his mother. A typical Bellow protagonist, he considers his mother perfect, whereas his estranged wife cannot reach such perfection. Wilhelm says that his mother never did any harm to his father; in fact, she was a true helpmate to him, everything that a wife has traditionally been supposed to be.

Finally, after all subterfuges are exhausted, Adler comes out into the open and plainly declares that he cannot aid his son:

> "I can't give you any money. There would be no end to it if I started. You and your sister would take the last buck from me. I'm still alive, not dead. I am still here. Life isn't over yet. I am as much alive as you or anyone.

> And I want no body on my back. Get off. And I give you the same advice, Wilky. Carry nobody on your back." (STD, p. 61)

Adler has adopted a philosophy according to which one's money is dearer to one than one's son or daughter or brother. It is possible for a person to live in accordance with such a dangerous philosophy, but a person who holds this erroneous philosophy cannot but be finally alienated from both family and humanity in general.

As the novel unfolds, it becomes clear that Adler is very far from understanding the mind of his tragic and pitiable son. Wilhelm says, "It isn't the money, but only the assistance; not even assistance but just the feeling" (STD, p. 63). This statement makes clear that Wilhelm has all along looked for true sympathy and affection from his father, and that his father has all along been afraid to show him any sympathy just because he doesn't want to part with his money. As Norman Podhoretz suggests,

> The world of Seize the Day, indeed, might fairly be compared with the world of The Deer Park, for each in its own way is an image of society at the end of its historical term, a civilization whose particular compromise with nature has all but broken down. . . . The nature to which Bellow wishes to return in Seize the Day is not the instinctual nature that Norman Mailer talks

> about, but nature as theologians have conceived of it: a harmonious universe ruled over by God, a universe in which man has reassumed his proper place in the cosmic hierarchy.[9]

What Wilhelm says of his own feelings about his father shows how unsullied his family sense is in spite of the gross materialism he sees all around him, most shockingly in his own father:

> "If he was poor, I could care for him and show it. The way I could care, too, if I only had a chance. He'd see how much love and respect I had in me. It would make him a different man, too. He'd put his hands on me and give me his blessing." (STD, p. 63)

As one reviewer of Seize the Day put it, "The human qualities of the characters are revealed most fully in the portrayal of Tommy Wilhelm . . ."[10]

Since his family fails him, Wilhelm seeks the help of society. He believes that Dr. Tamkin can help him. However, Wilhelm will later learn that Tamkin is a charlatan and a cheat. First, Tamkin sifts the nature of Wilhelm's family feeling. Wilhelm reveals to Tamkin the genuineness of his feeling for his father. Second, Tamkin, as a supposed healer, is the only person to whom Wilhelm turns for help. When Tamkin cheats him, Wilhelm finds out that

nobody else will tell him what to do about his own life. Wilhelm must look within himself and discover his true nature, and if he is to save his own soul in a world in which most people are selfish, he has to change his old self somewhat and adopt a different stance towards life as a whole. As a result of his soul-searching, Wilhelm succeeds in feeling empathy for humanity rather than being alienated from everyone.

There is one revealing exchange between the pseudo-psychologist Tamkin and Wilhelm. Tamkin questions Wilhelm about the money Wilhelm will get after his father's death. What the cynical Tamkin does not understand is that Wilhelm would be far more happy to have his father alive than to inherit his money. Tommy's reply reveals his real concern for his father: "When I get desperate--of course I think about money. But I don't want anything to happen to him. I certainly don't want him to die" (STD, p. 101). Tamkin does not seem to be entirely convinced; his brown eyes glitter shrewdly at him. Wilhelm tries to convince him once and for all about his real feelings towards his father:

> "You don't believe it. Maybe it's not psychological. But on my word of honor. A joke is a joke, but I don't want to joke about stuff like this. When he dies, I'll be robbed, like. I'll have no more father." (STD, p. 101)

But even then Tamkin asks him, "You love your old man?" (STD, p. 101). Wilhelm replies with total honesty: "Of course, of course I love him. My father. My mother--" (STD, p. 101). William J. Handy is entirely right in saying that

> The key to the understanding of the deeper meanings of the novel [Seize the Day] does not lie in the social and economic failures of the novel's central figure . . . We see that behind all of his social aspirations and economic ambitions lies a driving need to be recognized. And what is singular is that it is not social recognition that he really seeks; it is recognition from his father.[11]

Unfortunately, Wilhelm does not get from his father the emotional support that he needs so desperately.

When Wilhelm turns to Tamkin, the latter behaves as if he were a genuine spiritual healer. But, actually, Tamkin is not a healer at all. As Tony Tanner notes, "Tommy Wilhelm also lives in a world of Machiavellians but this time they exert a real and sinister power and by the end of the book he is genuinely exhausted, bowed down, at the end of his tether" (Tanner, p. 58). Robert H. Fossum is also right in pointing out that "Tamkin . . . tempts Wilhelm with 'success.' For like Mephisto, Tamkin's illusory picture of 'realized potential' includes money and

'social power.' It does not include self-possession."[12] Fossum further adds that Tamkin's "emphasis on guilt-free expression of the instincts corresponds to Mephisto's offer of sensual delights" (Fossum, p. 202).

However, although Tamkin is a cheat, some of the ideas he utters are touched with genius. Bellow's irony is that at times the criminal can express profound truths without being aware of their profundity. For example, much as Matthew Arnold draws a distinction between the ordinary self and the best self in Culture and Anarchy, Tamkin draws a distinction between the two souls in man:

> "'What are thou?' Nothing. That's the answer. Nothing! So of course you can't stand that and want to be something, and you try. But instead of being this something, the man puts it over on everybody instead. You can't be that strict to yourself. You love a little. Like you have a dog and give some money to a charity drive. Now that isn't love, is it? What is it? Egotism, pure and simple. It's a way to love the pretender soul. Vanity. Only vanity, is what it is. And social control. The interest of the pretender soul is the same as the interest of the social life, the society mechanism. This is the main tragedy of human life. Oh, it is terrible! Terrible! You are not free. Your own betrayer

> is inside of you and sells you out. You have to obey him like a slave. He makes you work like a horse. And for what? For who?" (STD, p. 77)

Tamkin shows Wilhelm the path to freedom:

> "The purpose is to keep the whole thing going. The true soul is the one that pays the price. It suffers and gets sick, and it realizes that the pretender can't be loved. Because the pretender is a lie. The true soul loves the truth. And when the true soul feels like this, it wants to kill the pretender. The love has turned into hate. Then you become dangerous. A killer. You have to kill the deceiver." (STD, p. 78)

He also tells Tamkin that like a parasite, the pretender soul takes away the energy of the true soul, thus enfeebling it in the process. Moreover, Tamkin gives momentous advice to Wilhelm:

> "The spiritual compensation is what I look for. Bringing people into the here-and-now. The real universe. That's the present moment. The past is no good to us. The future is full of anxiety. Only the present is real--the here-and-now. Seize the day." (STD, p. 73)

However, Tamkin does not know the value of what he is

saying. His values are commercial values; otherwise, he would not be a swindler. And thus his notion of carpe diem is materialistic and unimaginative. Associated with this idea is the idea of getting rich through intelligent investment. Bellow himself, however, intends the expression "seize the day" to carry an entirely different meaning, to suggest that man, at best a pilgrim and wayfarer, must love the world fully as each day slips by. This is the lesson which only Wilhelm in the novel is capable of learning.

Learning this, Wilhelm grows to love humanity. He was capable of loving his family even before his crisis started, and he never loses his family sense. Moreover, one of his major preoccupations was how to deal with the problem of communication between man and man. Wilhelm had noticed that this problem existed mainly in cities, and that is why he had once expressed to his father his desire to leave the city and to go to the countryside:

> "You had to translate and translate, explain and explain, back and forth, and it was the punishment of hell not to understand or be understood, not to know the crazy from the sane, the wise from the fools, the young from the old or the sick from the well. The fathers were no fathers and the sons no sons. You had to talk with yourself in the daytime and reason

> with yourself at night. Who else was there to talk to in a city like New York?" (STD, p. 91)

One of the reasons why Wilhelm is deeply impressed by Tamkin's idea of the real soul is that Wilhelm feels that if people cultivated the real soul, a father would be a real father, and a son would be a real son. In fact, people would be themselves. Then there would be communication among human beings:

> [W]hat Tamkin would call the real soul says plain and understandable things to everyone. There sons and fathers are themselves . . . There truth for everybody may be found, and confusion is only--only temporary. (STD, pp. 91-92)

Wilhelm is aware of the necessity of human communication; he is profoundly stirred by the idea of the oneness of humanity or the Brotherhood of Man. This is an idea which does not animate any other character in the novel: Adler, Tamkin, Margaret, Mr. Perls, or Mr. Rappaport. Ironically, the one who is the most human of them all suffers the worst. Wilhelm remembers that while he was walking through an underground corridor beneath Times Square, he had a realization:

> And in the dark tunnel, in the haste, heat, and darkness which disfigure and make freaks and

> fragments of nose and eyes and teeth, all of a sudden, unsought, a general love of all these imperfect and lurid-looking people burst out in Wilhelm's breast. He loved them. They were his brothers and sisters. He was imperfect and disfigured himself, but what difference did that make if he was united with them by this blaze of love? And as he walked he began to say, "Oh my brothers--my brothers and sisters," blessing them as well as himself. (STD, p. 92)

This realization was short-lived, but on this day of reckoning, he decides to make it permanent. Wilhelm's considered opinion is that "There is a larger body, and from this you cannot be separated" (STD, p. 91). Once again, it is to be noted that Bellow thinks that love for the family should go hand in hand with love for the wider body of humanity. At the moment of spiritual clarity, the Bellovian protagonist shows both kinds of love: love for the family and love for humanity.

Before Wilhelm is compelled to look within himself to effect a change of attitude towards his fellow men, he tries to sound his father for the last time. The final confrontation between Wilhelm and his father takes place in the massage room. Wilhelm had placed a note in his father's mailbox, asking him to help him with some money. When Wilhelm learns that he has lost his money in

speculation and Tamkin is nowhere to be seen, he desperately seeks help from his father. As usual, Adler refuses and asks him to get money from someone else. Wilhelm expostulates with him, and when he reminds his father that there are things other than money that a father can give his son, Adler explodes in anger: "You want to make yourself into my cross. But I am not going to pick up a cross. I'll see you dead, Wilky, by Christ, before I let you do this to me" (STD, p. 119).

In total despair, Wilhelm leaves his father and starts walking aimlessly. He drifts into a Jewish funeral home. There he sees a corpse and bursts into tears:

> He [Wilhelm] cried at first softly and from sentiment, but soon from deeper feeling. He sobbed loudly and his face grew distorted and hot, and the tears stung his skin . . . Soon he was past words, past reason, coherence. He could not stop. The source of all tears had suddenly sprung open within him, black, deep, and hot, and they were pouring out and convulsed his body, bending his shoulders, twisting his face, crippling the very hands with which he held his handkerchief. His efforts to collect himself were useless. The great knot of ill and grief in his throat swelled upward and he gave in utterly and held his face and wept.

> He cried with all his heart. (STD, pp. 127-8)

Actually, Wilhelm alone among those present is crying. Some people in the chapel think that Wilhelm must be someone closely related to the deceased "to carry on so" (STD, p. 128). It is obvious that Wilhelm's recent experiences have affected him to such an extent that he has to have sympathy for any kind of human suffering. Thus, Clinton W. Townbridge states, "The escape turns out to be a pilgrimage, the victim a penitent, and the descent into hell the necessary suffering out of which the soul is born."[13] Townbridge further adds that "Bellow's great achievement in Seize the Day is that he finally forces us to see Wilhelm as a kind of hero" (Townbridge, p. 73).

Thus, Wilhelm is not only mourning for the stranger whose funeral is taking place, but he is also mourning for himself, for his old father, and for every man, for he sees before himself what is in store for every human being. An awareness of death helps him to recognize and express sympathy for humanity, without which life is hardly livable. His love for family is now supplemented by his love for mankind, and he has succeeded in forging for himself a noble and viable philosophy of life. As Tony Tanner puts it,

> Thus Bellow admits that society with its increasing materialism threatens to suffocate the soul with its profusion of things. But, he

> asserts, the human spirit is inextinguishable. Society may move towards its death with false concepts of progress and prosperity--but somewhere, somehow, the human spirit will start to disengage itself, to protest, to assert its need for true values, for real freedom, for genuine reality. (Tanner, p. 5)

Herbert Gold is also right in seeing Seize the Day as one of the central stories of our day.[14] It would be a mistake to think that Wilhelm is merely grovelling in self-pity. Wilhelm's reaction transcends mere self-pity, because he sees the pity of existence and the common human nature which unites all human beings.

In The Adventures of Augie March, a different Bellow protagonist also starts out in life with a fully developed and commendable attitude towards his own family. But like Tommy Wilhelm and like a typical Bellow hero, he too learns from life the proper attitude that one should adopt towards humanity. For Augie March, this insight proves immensely helpful to him in establishing his own family.

NOTES

[1] Saul Bellow, "The Uses of Adversity," Reporter, 21 (1 October 1959), p. 45.

[2] Saul Bellow, "The Gonzaga Manuscripts," in Mosby's Memoirs and Other Stories (New York: The Viking Press, 1968, p. 140.

[3] Saul Bellow, "A Father-to-Be," in Mosby's Memoirs and Other Stories (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), p. 149. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[4] Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), p. 59. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[5] Saul Bellow, The Last Analysis (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), p. 27. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[6] Robert R. Dutton, Saul Bellow (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 77.

[7] Saul Bellow, Seize the Day, introd. Alfred Kazin (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1956), p. 11. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[8] Richard Chase, "The Adventures of Saul Bellow:

Progress of a Novelist," Commentary, 27 (April 1959), 326.

[9] Norman Podhoretz, "The Adventures of Saul Bellow," in his Doings and Undoings: The Fifties and After in American Writing (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1964), pp. 220-21.

[10] Anon Review of Seize the Day, Booklist, 53 (1 December 1956), p. 174.

[11] William J. Handy, "Saul Bellow and the Naturalistic Hero," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 5 (Winter 1964), 540.

[12] Robert H. Fossum, "The Devil and Saul Bellow," Comparative Literature Studies, 3 (1966), 202. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[13] Clinton W. Townbridge, "Water Imagery in Seize the Day," Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, 9 Summer 1967), 63. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[14] Herbert Gold, "The Discovered Self," Nation, 183 (17 November 1956), p. 436.

CHAPTER V

THE ADVENTURES OF AUGIE MARCH

The nature of the protagonist's quest in The Adventures of Augie March is best understood when the sub genre of the novel is understood, particularly because there is a lack of critical consensus regarding Augie's character and the lessons he learns at the end of the quest. The quest itself is important in this novel, as in every Bellow novel, because the quest very often helps the protagonist to develop a deepened family sense. If he already has strong family feeling, he also learns to have a truly developed attitude to humanity. When the protagonist learns to relate properly to both family and humanity, it can be said that he has achieved a measure of success in his quest for wholeness.

A number of critics have commented on the form of Augie March. David D. Galloway is of the opinion that because of its flowing language, bumptious hero, and its mammoth episodic structure, it can be considered a modern picaresque and, in fact, it has been compared to the great picaresque novels of the past.[1] However, other critics have noticed that Augie is different from the traditional picaresque hero. Tony Tanner, among others, states,

> The traditional picaresque hero is himself, fully formed, from the outset; his adventures multiply incidents without issuing in wisdom. But Augie is in fact trying to discover what he himself is, in the deepest sense.[2]

Indeed, at the outset, Augie does not have enough wisdom, though he has a developed family sense. It is only at the end of his quest that he becomes wise enough to establish a family of his own on a solid foundation. Moreover, his attitude to people becomes truly vitalized.

The novel opens with the delineation of Augie's original family. He undertakes his quest when he becomes an adult. Thus, before we discuss the nature and significance of his quest, it would be appropriate to examine how Augie relates to his family.

The picture of Augie's childhood in Chicago that Bellow delineates shows the indissoluble family bonds that bind the family members together. It is a link that endures throughout the novel, with slight and temporary fluctuations in the relationship between the siblings Augie and Simon. At the very outset, Augie says,

> My own parents were not much to me, though I cared for my own mother. She was simple-minded, and what I learned from her was not what she taught, but on the order of object lessons. She didn't have much to teach, poor woman. My

brothers and I loved her.[3]

Augie has no sister, only two brothers. One brother, Simon, grows up into an intelligent person, but the other brother, Georgie, is feeble-minded. A song which the feeble-minded Georgie used to sing shows how much their love for their mother was taken for granted:

> "Georgie Mahchy, Augie, Simey
> Winnie Mahchy, evwy, evwy love Mama."
>
> (AM, p. 3)

Augie comments, "He [Georgie] was right about everyone save Winnie, Grandma Lausch's poodle, a pursy old overfed dog" (AM, p. 4).

Actually, the family bonds had to be strong because otherwise the family could not have survived. Augie and Simon have only vague memories of their father, because their father deserted the family when the children were young. Within the family, Augie's father was mentioned only at rare moments of necessity. Augie says that his father was a soldier and wore a uniform. Then he guesses that his father used to drive a truck for Hall Brothers laundry on Marshfield. When the brothers grow up, neither they nor their mother ever says anything about the family deserter. On a later occasion, Augie tells Clem Tambow, "I don't know about my unfortunate father--he seemed to have done as most others, get in and then take off.

Seemingly for liberty. Most likely for other trouble or suffering" (AM, p. 457). Augie certainly doesn't feel happy about his father deserting the family, but he intuitively understands that his father must have been in trouble or been suffering, which explains his conduct. Thus, Augie is sympathetic, and not unduly harsh to his father.

When the March brothers are still young, authority in the home is wielded by a boarder, who establishes herself in the family as Grandma Lausch. She rules because Augie's mother is a simple-minded woman who is unable to understand the complexity of the world. It is Grandma Lausch, a Machiavellian, who instructs Augie to lie to the charity people in order to get spectacles for his mother. Grandma Lausch tells the March children,

> "Nobody asks you to love the whole world, only to be honest, ehrlich . . . The more you love people they'll mix you up. A child loves, a person respects. Respect is better than love." (AM, p. 9)

Augie is pliant enough to bow to Grandma Lausch's policy of duplicity and hypocrisy. In the absence of a responsible man in the household, everyone has to obey what Grandma Lausch dictates. However, even when Augie matures and becomes somewhat wiser, he does not lose entirely his characteristic pliantness.

Augie seems to inherit this quality from his mother. She is meek and hard-working; not only is she Grandma Lausch's servant, but Augie says that she is "Winnie's servant" (AM, p. 3) as well. Augie's mother sewed buttonholes in a coat factory in a Wells Street loft. Augie says that she "occupied a place, I suppose, among women conquered by a superior force of love, like those women whom Zeus got the better of in animal form and who next had to take cover from his furious wife" (AM, p. 10).

Certainly, both Augie and his mother are submissive, and submissiveness is often a negative quality. As Augie matures, his submissiveness is minimized somewhat, and on occasions he learns to rebel against things which are distasteful to him. His quest effects this positive change. His mother, on the contrary, remains a feeble-minded and helpless woman. When Augie compares her to those women of whom Zeus took advantage, he does not want the comparison to appear as entirely inappropriate and ludicrous. The comparison is, of course, somewhat funny because Augie's parents cannot realistically be compared to Zeus and his consorts. But there is a basic similarity between Zeus's victims and Mrs. March, who trusted her lover and was later rejected. That Mrs. March, in spite of her mishap, shows the sweetness of her nature when she is bruised signifies that, according to Bellow, some measure of heroism is not impossible for humble people in the modern world. In fact, Mrs. March seems to radiate a

faith that there may be an end to suffering.

Unlike some of Bellow's other protagonists, Augie is never so disturbed mentally and spiritually as to alienate himself from his original family. Pat Trefzger Overbeck mentions Augie's affectionate relationship with his mother.[4] Robert Gorham Davis recognizes Augie's love for his entire family: "He [Augie] loves his family including his second brother who is an idiot."[5] At every major stage of the family history, Augie's inalienable sympathy for the family is evident. Robert R. Dutton is thus perceptive in his judgement: "Augie is an unconditional humanitarian."[6] For example, when Grandma Lausch suddenly decides that the feeble-minded Georgie should be institutionalized to prevent him from doing mischief to the neighborhood girls, Augie, like his mother, is very unhappy, and he opposes Grandma Lausch, arguing that Georgie has not yet done any harm. Augie's reaction is very different from Simon's and shows some basic early differences between the siblings. Simon agrees with Grandma Lausch in this matter, but he does not say anything openly and emphatically so as to avoid causing any pain to his mother. It is not that Simon doesn't have any sense of responsibility for Georgie, but he probably senses more than Augie that Georgie might easily get into trouble.

Georgie is actually quite an important character in the novel, because he is never very far away from Augie's mind. As Augie becomes more mature, he takes Georgie into

consideration while devising any utopian plan. Before Georgie's departure for the institution, Augie starts spending almost all his time with him, "pulling him around on the sled, walking him in the park, and taking him to the Garfield Park conservatory to see the lemons bloom" (AM, pp. 55-56). Augie also buys a valise for Georgie, since it is going to be Georgie's permanent possession. And when Augie and his mother part from Georgie, leaving him in the institution, all three of them burst into tears. In fact, as Augie notes, there is something lacking in the March household after Georgie is sent to an institution: "After that we had a diminished family life, as though it were care of Georgie that had been the main basis of household union and everything was disturbed" (AM, p. 58).

Once Georgie is institutionalized, Simon and Augie undertake their own quest for identity, quests which determine the character of the families they themselves subsequently establish. Developing different general philosophies of life, they also develop different attitudes toward the family. Augie's final outlook is a product not only of his own experiences but also of his perception of his brother's failure.

Although the two brothers are significantly different from one another, they are genuinely affectionate to each other and they are always concerned about each other's welfare. Simon returns his brother's love and feels responsible for him. Speaking about Simon's practical design for

him, Augie says, "[H]e intended to carry me along with him, when it was time, the way Napoleon did his brothers" (AM, p. 53). Bellow here implies that though Simon does not have the same stature as Napoleon, still he shares with Napoleon the impulse to do good to his brother. Of course Simon is so materialistic that he cannot function as a proper guide for Augie's development. In fact, Augie's ideas regarding certain aspects of family relationships are markedly different from Simon's.

On certain occasions, Simon does things which Augie would never do. When Simon is infatuated with Cissy Flexner and wants to raise money to marry her, he sells the flat and leaves his mother with the Kreindls. When Augie finds out, he pawns his clothes and puts his mother in a nursing home. Moreover, when Simon wants to marry Charlotte Magnus, a woman with money, Augie, on principle, does not like the idea. Simon doesn't think that there is much in the idea of marrying for love. He tells Augie,

> "Do you see anything so exceptional or wonderful about it [marriage] that makes it such a deal? Why be fooling around to make this perfect great marriage? What's it going to save you from? Has it saved anybody--the jerks, the fools, the morons, the schleppers, the jag-offs, the monkeys, the rats, the rabbits, or the decent unhappy people or what you call nice

people?" (AM, p. 198)

It is obvious that Simon has seen some marriages made ostensibly for love turn out badly. He has fallaciously taken the notion to heart that all love marriages are doomed to end that way. He tells Augie,

> "Don't you see people pondering how to marry for love and getting the blood gypped out of them? Because while they're looking for the best there is--and I figure that's what's wrong with you--everything gets lost. It's sad, it's a pity, but it's the way." (AM, p. 199)

Simon marries for money, and his materialism will actually distort his relationship with his wife Charlotte. Bellow shows in this novel as he has done in Seize the Day, that materialism normally has disastrous consequences within the family. It is to be noted that Augie does not marry for money. The differences between the brothers here are crucial and will determine the subsequent fate of their marriages.

Simon has accepted a world which is both naturalistic and deterministic. Men and women behave in particular ways, and that fact settles everything. He has to pay for his lack of faith. Augie, on the contrary, continually learns from his immersion in experience. Augie's desire is to pursue a "fate good enough" (AM, p. 318). His ideas

are not as rigid as his brother's; the world he believes in is an open-ended world, where human history has not come to an end and many good things are yet to be.

Simon marries for money, but happiness eludes him right from the beginning. Happiness is a factor which he didn't seem to have taken into consideration, but the truth is that happiness or its opposite exists in real life. After marriage, maybe to forget his unhappiness, Simon becomes a compulsive buyer of shirts, underclothes, slacks or shoes, items of which he has a surplus. Simon seems to compensate for the deprivation he had experienced in his childhood. As Augie notes,

> "I also knew that in the barber shop and on the shopping trips he was aiming to refresh himself; he slept badly and was looking flabby and ill, and one morning when he came to fetch me he locked himself in the toilet and cried." (AM, p. 224)

Moreover, Simon has received money from his father-in-law's family as an advance on his supposed ability to make a rich man of himself. Ultimately, Simon succeeds in amassing a great amount of money, but in the early stage he is tense and troubled. It is at such times that family members need one another, and in this novel the protagonist gives sustenance, rather than receives it. Augie stays with Simon for long periods of time and helps him in his

business. Augie says, "So I spent most of these months with him. I won't say we were never closer--he kept his ultimate thoughts stubbornly to himself--but we were never more together" (AM, p. 230). What Augie learns is also important: Simon is afraid of going bankrupt and he is in reality afraid of the Magnuses.

Money also makes Simon reckless. He worries and, shortly afterwards, he needs his pick of easily procurable women to satisfy his lust. Augie's comments on this phenomenon are perceptive: "The girls were not always frightened of him; he had a smell of power, he was handsome and I don't know what floors his bare feet left in shade-drawn hot rooms" (AM, p. 231). Simon clearly makes use of his affluence to drown his unhappiness in sensuality. Though he has to curb his promiscuity later because of pressure from his wife Charlotte, he never seems to find that happiness which he had once ignored because of his desire for wealth.

The open clash between Simon and Charlotte comes later. Simon has a protracted affair with a girl named Renee. What is surprising is that Simon tells Augie that Charlotte could do what he himself is doing. At the same time, to protect himself from Charlotte and Renee, Simon tells Augie in front of Renee that Charlotte is as close to him as anybody else in the world, and that he will not leave Charlotte under any circumstances. One wonders how much sincerity there is in such protestations. The truth is

that Charlotte knows that Simon married her for money, and Simon also knows that Charlotte knows the truth. Thus, to forget his unhappiness, Simon "shops" from woman to woman. Moreover, his relationship with Renee is particularly unsatisfactory, because Renee insists on having all the amenities that Charlotte enjoys. Simon and Renee have fights over such items as clothes, gloves, a bottle of perfume, or a servant. Renee one day makes an unsuccessful attempt at committing suicide. One suspects that she is faking. Meanwhile, Charlotte comes to know about this clandestine affair and demands that he end it.

Later, when Simon and Charlotte meet Augie in Europe, Augie learns that Renee had accused Simon of getting her pregnant, and that Simon had gone to Charlotte for aid. Charlotte protected him by saying that the child could belong to any of three of Renee's lovers, but Simon's vulnerability gave Charlotte an opportunity for revenge. She tells him, ". . . What did she [Renee] love you for? Your fat belly? Your scar on your forhead? Your bald spot? It was the money. It never was anything except the money" (AM, p. 532). Simon does not answer back. Charlotte's accusation is particularly insulting to Simon because, since he himself had married for money, he cannot accuse Renee of wanting money from him. Simon's materialism and promiscuity stand in the way of attaining happiness, and Charlotte does not spare him for his lovelessness.

However, when Charlotte criticizes Simon's faults,

Augie notices that Simon is ashamed. Augie's family feeling is strong enough to make him sympathetic to his hapless brother. Augie tries to justify Simon, and he asks himself what Simon's secrets amount to: "[A]ll they were about was his mismanaged effort to live. To live and not die. And this was what he had to be ashamed of" (AM, p. 533). Augie also declares his undying affection for Simon: "I love my brother very much. I never meet him again without the utmost love filling me up. He has it too, though we both seem to fight it" (AM, p. 533).

In fact, Augie shows his affection for Simon on numerous occasions. When Simon wanted him to marry Lucy Magnus, Augie had gone through the motions of paying court to her. Simon promised to support him if he wanted to study law and had grandiose plans for Augie. He would even pay for Augie's courtship of Lucy, build him up with Lucy's family, and remove the obstacles in the path of Augie's marriage to her. Actually, Simon wanted to see his brother successful and settled in life. Augie's reaction shows both his pliantness and his affection for Simon: "And I may as well say that I had a desire to go along with him [Simon] out of the love I felt for him and enthusiasm for his outlook. In which I didn't fundamentally believe" (AM, p. 239). Moreover, after there arises a misunderstanding between Augie and Simon regarding the nature of Augie's involvement with Mimi Villars, Augie makes it up with his brother at the earliest opportunity.

Chester E. Eisinger writes,

> Augie . . . suffers from terrible gestures of rejection from Simon. But he can surmount Simon's opportunistic and harsh treatment to make an outright declaration of love for his brother and to accept him, despite their differences. Augie, knowing love, the love for his brother and the love for his wife Stella, finds himself and maintains his independence.[7]

Simon's behavior is sometimes harsh, and Augie's relationship with Simon has its ups and downs. But in spite of their differences, they reach out affectionately towards each other. Another critic, T. E. Cassidy, has recognized the affectionate, though sometimes ambiguous, relationship between Augie and Simon: "The one constant thread is the great but bumpy love between Augie and his money-worshipping brother, Simon."[8]

Like Augie, Simon also has deep feelings for his original family. Simon never forgets his mother and he sees to it that his mother is comfortable in her nursing home. He visits her regularly to find out if she is being properly treated or not. He objects to her having roommates and gets her a private room. At one point, the director's wife asks her whether she would like to fit pins into Roosevelt campaign buttons. Mrs. March accepts. But when Simon sees his mother at this humble occupation, he

is outraged. He shouts at the director's wife and tells her that he will not have his mother working for ten, twenty, thirty cents, or a dollar an hour. Of course, the director's wife had innocently thought that work would keep Mrs. March happy. Simon tells her that his mother can have from him all the money she needs. Simon's exaggerated reaction reveals his pride, but it also shows his love for his old, semi-blind, and simple-minded mother.

Simon's behavior, of course, is not always noble or exemplary. On one occasion, when Simon is with the Magnuses, he extols the Magnus family, while downgrading his original family in Augie's presence:

> "You can see how unlucky we were not to have this kind of close and loyal family. There isn't anything these people won't do for one another. We don't even understand what that is because we never experienced it, we missed it all our lives. We had no luck. Now they've taken me in and made me one of them, as if I were their own child. I never understood what a real family was till now, and you ought to know how grateful I am. They may seem a little slow-witted to you." (AM, p. 217)

The last sentence shows Augie's love for banter. Though Augie notices that there is an element of truth in what Simon has said about the Magnus family, still he hates

Simon for denigrating his own family and wants to tell him, "This is crummy, to boost them and tear down your own. What's the matter with Mama or even Grandma?" (AM, p. 218). However, we should do well to remember that appearances are deceptive. Subsequently in the novel, we discover that though Simon loves to banter with the Magnuses, his real allegiance is to his original family. In other words, Simon's links with his original family, like Augie's, are truly indissoluble.

Like Simon, Augie also establishes a family of his own towards the end of the novel, but before he does so, he has to correct many of his errors and to learn a lot from life. His quest through life prepares him to have a developed attitude toward people in general. Moreover, the insights he gains from his quest show him the basis of family life and of love and harmony in marriage.

Augie learns different things from different people. Even the hypocritical Grandma has something to offer to Augie, some traits he can admire: pride, independence, and a protective attitude towards the March family. When her sons and Simon require her to move to the nursing home, she does so immediately without wasting any words. She does not appeal to anybody, either to the Marches or to her sons, and she finds sustenance in her solitary thoughts.

Einhorn, similarly, is Machiavellian but, at the same time, possesses heroic qualities. Einhorn is a cripple, but he still continues to lead an active life. When Augie

gets involved in a robbery, it is Einhorn who asks him to desist, suggesting that crime is alien to Augie's nature. He tells Augie, "You've got opposition in you. You don't slide through everything. You just make it look so" (AM, p. 117). Augie thinks that Einhorn's characterization of him is right:

> I never have accepted determination and wouldn't become what other people wanted to make of me. I had said 'no' to Joe Gorman too. To Grandma. To Jimmy. To lots of people. Einhorn had seen this in me. Because he too wanted to exert influence. (AM, pp. 117-18)

Had Einhorn's counsel totally sunk into Augie's mind, we would probably not see him later in the company of Joe Gorman, involved in the racket of running immigrants from the border from Canada. Nor would we see him towards the end of the novel connected with some shady business in Europe.

Einhorn, of course, has his darker side. In business, he can very often be unscrupulous. He orders things on approval he doesn't intend to pay for--stamps, packages of linen sachet, Japanese paper roses, etc. He is also unfaithful to his spouse. But Bellow seems to emphasize that there is heroism in common life. In spite of his handicap, Einhorn courageously embarks on a quest for selfhood. As he tells Augie,

> "Augie, you know another man in my position might be out of life for good. . . . You could say a man like me ought to be expected to lie down and quit the picture. Instead, I'm running a big business today." (AM, p. 75)

Even so, when Augie says that William Einhorn was the first superior man he knew, it is difficult to accept his point of view. Significantly, when Einhorn advises Augie to get even with Simon, who fails to send Augie the money he needs, Augie decides to sever his relation with Einhorn. Irving Howe's judgement is thus highly perceptive: "Augie March is . . . a kind of paean to the idea of personal freedom in hostile circumstances."[9] Sara S. Chapman is also right in arguing that there are many similarities of perspective between Augie March and Melville's Pierre. Both these novels share an idealistic vision of the hero's initial response to the world, and both novels show their heroes becoming involved in the ambiguities of the world which they discover.[10]

Later, Augie becomes the protege of Mrs. Renling, who pays for his education. But when the Renlings express the desire to adopt him, Augie refuses. Augie finds that Mrs. Renling's attitude to his own family is contemptuous. Mrs. Renling has never seen Augie's mother and doesn't intend to. When Augie tells Mrs. Renling in St. Joe that Simon is coming, she doesn't ask to meet him. At the same time, she

calls Augie "son" (AM, p. 152). Augie's reaction to this form of address is that he wants to remain faithful to his genuine family: "I had family enough to suit me and history to be loyal to, not as though I had been gotten off of a stockpile" (AM, p. 153). When Augie declines the Renlings' offer, declaring that he has his own folks, Mrs. Renling asks, "What folks? What folks?" (AM, p. 153). Augie answers, "Why, my mother, my brothers" (AM, p. 153). But Mrs. Renling continues, "What have they got to do with it? Baloney! Where's your father--tell me!" (AM, p. 153). Augie cannot answer this charge. Mrs. Renling tells him,

> "You don't even know who he is. Now, Augie, don't be a fool. A real family is somebody, and offers you something. Renling and I will be your parents because we will give you, and all the rest is bunk." (AM, p. 153)

It is obvious that Mrs. Renling's conception of the family is different from Augie's. Mrs. Renling is materialistic and thinks that the moment one fails to get any material benefit from his family, he does not need to pay any allegiance to it. Augie, on the contrary, believes that though he cannot get any material benefit from his family, he ought to remain true to it. Augie does not want to be won over to Mrs. Renling's point of view, and thus he parts from the Renlings and goes his own way. As Robert D. Crozier puts it, "Loyalty to his own sense of tradition in

his family, deracinated though it is, preserves him [Augie] from adoption by the forceful Mrs. Renling."[11]

Here, Augie chooses love over money. John W. Aldridge suggests that this decision is not final: "What one sees is simply the rich and the poor, and these consequently become the poles of commitment between which Augie vacillates."[12] It seems clear, however, that there comes a time when Augie no longer vacillates but makes the proper kind of commitment.

After many misadventures, Augie has a significant encounter with Kayo Obermark. Augie is both drawn by and resistant to Kayo's ideas; Kayo thinks that human life, being imperfect, is not enough. Kayo is not disappointed in humankind; he just doesn't care about it. But Augie decides to accept human life for what it is, together with its limitations and possibilities. He says, "What are you supposed to do but take the mixture and say imperfection is always the condition as found . . ." (AM, p. 260).

Later, Augie continues his quest in Mexico, where he goes with Thea Fenchel, whom he loves. It is in Mexico that Augie gets the insight which helps him to look with somewhat changed eyes on humanity and to prepare himself to establish a family of his own on a solid foundation.

Augie's affair with Thea is short-lived but crucial, since its termination forces Augie to recognize his limitations. At first, Augie thinks that his love for her is perfect: "I loved her [Thea] to the degree that anything

she chanced to do was welcome to me" (AM, p. 312). Later, Augie finds that Thea's behavior is at times curious and crude. She also has a suspicious nature. Things reach a crisis when she tells him that in the past, she had indulged in adultery. Later, when Augie has an accident, Thea drifts apart from him. Augie learns, to his mortification, that the young Talavera is a companion on Thea's hunting trips. Afterwards, Augie takes a false step, and in spite of Thea's objection, slips out in a car with Oliver's mistress Stella, ostensibly to rescue her from Oliver, but actually to spend the night with her as well. So, both Augie and Thea painfully realize that their affair has ended in frustration and that they have to part.

Augie realizes that most people are flawed and Thea couldn't stand this fact. What is more painful to Augie is that Thea had tried to use him as a means to an end. Thea tells him,

> "I thought if I could get through to one other person I could get through to more. So people wouldn't tire me, and so I wouldn't be afraid of them. . . . You're not special. You're like everybody else. You get tired easily. I don't want to see you any more." (AM, p. 396)

Augie ponders the breakdown of this relationship and finds out the truth about himself. Thea had told Augie that love would appear strange to him no matter what form

it took. Augie, on reflection, finds that there is a large amount of truth in this accusation:

> And I had always believed that where love was concerned I was on my mother's side, against the Grandma Lausches, the Mrs. Renlings, and the Lucy Magnuses.
>
> If I didn't have money or profession or duties, wasn't it so that I could be free, and a sincere follower of love?
>
> Me, love's servant? I wasn't at all! And suddenly my heart felt ugly, I was sick of myself. I thought that my aim of being simple was just a fraud, that I wasn't a bit good-hearted or affectionate, and I began to wish that Mexico from beyond the walls would come in and kill me and that I would be thrown in the bone dust and twisted, spiky crosses of the cemetry, for the insects and lizards. (AM, pp. 400-01)

Augie's realization that he has to learn anew how to love another human being is the prelude to his endeavor to change himself. The failure with Thea forces him to look within himself and to transform his own nature. This new insight will later help him when he establishes a family of his own.

Augie realizes that he needs to have a second chance

with Thea, as he had not been very brave in the relationship with her, seeking temporary embraces only to escape from the "mighty free-running terror and wild cold of chaos" (AM, p. 403). He wants to be brave. But when he goes to Chilpanzingo to meet Thea, he finds that she, equally as hurt as he is, is not willing to renew the relationship with him. None the less, his desire to alter himself, bit by bit, to suit the other's need, shows that Augie is gradually learning how to establish a family of his own and how to handle human attachments in a proper manner. In the past, Augie had drifted from one woman to another. Thea forces him to learn the secret of enduring attachment, without which, one cannot establish a family.

Thus, Gerald J. Goldberg is right in saying that "Bellow's principal theme in Augie March is self-knowledge: man's attempt to determine 'what we are.'"[13] Truly, Augie learns to transcend his own limitations to a large extent. Robert D. Crozier is also right when he compares Augie March with Dante's progress through the Inferno and the Purgatorio (Crozier, p. 22), and W. M. Frohock's judgment is equally perceptive: "Augie is not a picaro so much as a penitent."[14]

Augie makes another important discovery. When he learns from Moulton and Iggy that Talavera was Thea's old boyfriend and that Talavera, about whom Thea had told him nothing, was with Thea on her hunting trips while Augie was ill, Augie is very unhappy. He comes to the conclusion

that no human being can possess another person entirely:

> No, no wives don't own husbands nor husbands wives, nor parents children. They go away, or they die. So the only possessing is of the moment. If you're able. And while any wish lives, it lives in the face of its negative. This is why we make the obstinate sign of possession. Like deeds, certificates,rings, pledges, and other permanent things. (AM, p. 407)

Thus, when Augie marries Stella, he is loving and affectionate towards her, but he never tries to possess her.

Meanwhile, throughout his personal quest, Augie remains close to his original family. He does not forget his feeble-minded brother Georgie. After he returns from Mexico to Chicago, Augie meets Georgie, who is now a shoe-maker at the institution. There is a tender meeting between the two brothers. As he leaves the institution, Augie thinks that Georgie cannot be allowed to live his whole life like that and, since Simon has money, something should be done for him.

Next, Augie works for Robey the millionaire as a research assistant. The book that Robey is planning to write is to be a survey of human happiness from the standpoint of the rich. Ironically, the man who wants to write about a program for contemporary humanity begrudges Augie

his meagre salary of thirty dollars a week. Augie finds that Robey is confused and, like Einhorn, only wants a listener. Sensing that he cannot learn anything from Robey, Augie leaves him.

Augie's next encounter is with his old neighbor Kayo Obermark. This time, Kayo imparts some valuable spiritual guidance to Augie. Speaking about Moha--a Navajo word, and also Sanskirt, meaning opposition of the finite--Kayo tells Augie, "It is the Bronx cheer of the conditioning forces. Love is the only answer to moha, being infinite. I mean all the forms of love, eros, agape, libido, philia, and ecstasy" (AM, p. 450). All these forms of love can be included in two main categories: physical love and spiritual love. Eros and libido are kinds of physical love, whereas agape and philia deal with brotherly or charitable love. Ecstasy has to do with the inner illumination of a person whether he feels empathy for a friend, or a beloved woman, or for the whole of humanity. What Kayo teaches him about love is impressed on Augie's mind.

Augie next meets Clem Tambow, to whom he explains his theory of the "axial lines of life" (AM, p. 454), a theory which contains the gist of the spiritual knowledge that Augie has learned so far from life. This theory has a central place in Bellow's fiction and as such deserves to be quoted in full:

"I have a feeling about the axial lines of life,

with respect to which you must be straight or else your existence is merely clownery, hiding tragedy. I must have had a feeling since I was a kid about these axial lines which made me want to have my existence on them, and so I have said 'no' like a stubborn fellow to all my persuaders, just on the obstinacy of my memory of these lines, never entirely clear. But lately I have felt these thrilling lines again. When striving stops, there they are as a gift. I was lying on the couch here before and they suddenly went quivering straight through me. Truth, love, peace, bounty, usefulness, harmony! And all noise and grates, distortion, clatter, distraction, effort, superfluity, passed off like something unreal. And I believe that any man at any time can come back to these axial lines, even if an unfortunate bastard, if he will be quiet and wait it out. The ambition of something special and outstanding I have always had is only a boast that distorts this knowledge from its origin, which is the oldest knowledge, older than the Ganges. At any time life can come together again and man be regenerated, and doesn't have to be a god or public servant like Osiris who gets torn apart annually for the sake of the common prosperity, but the man himself, finite and taped as he is, can still come where the axial

> lines are. He will be brought into focus. He will live with true joy. Even his pains will be joy if they are true, even his helplessness will not take away his power, even wandering will not take him away from himself, even the big social jokes and hoaxes need not make him ridiculous, even disappointment after disappointment need not take away love. Death will not be terrible to him if life is not. The embrace of other true people will take away his dread of fast change and short life. And this is not imaginary stuff, Clem, because I bring my entire life to the test." (AM, pp. 454-55)

Augie knows what he has to do to make life meaningful. He knows that an individual has to aim at truth, love, peace, usefulness, and harmony. An individual should also be victorious over any distraction that hinders him from achieving his goal. If he has to suffer as a consequence of his authentic endeavor, he can bear it and live with it. His pains will be compensated for by the recognition which other kindred souls accord to him for his pains and achievements. Augie's resolve is to live life in accordance with this noble philosophy. It will be seen that though Augie does not become entirely successful, he at least achieves commendable success in his relationships with his wife and humanity in general.

Augie's mind bubbles with positive plans as a consequence of developing this philosophy. He informs Clem Tambow of the utopian scheme he has devised. Significantly, this utopian plan illustrates to what extent thoughts of his mother and feeble-minded brother are everpresent in his mind. Augie's desire is to get a piece of property and settle down on it. He would like to get married and set up a kind of home and teach school. He desires to take his mother out of the home and bring his brother Georgie up from the South. Augie would get the needed money from Simon, and he would make Georgie the shoemaking instructor. However, Augie never truly succeeds in actualizing this utopian plan.

Not only does Augie entertain ideas about doing something worthwhile and engaging his mother and Georgie in activities which will prevent them from wasting their lives, but he also marries Stella Chesney. It is at this stage that we find the "opposition" that Augie really has in him. Prior to his marriage to Stella, Augie meets the lawyer Mintouchian, who is cynical about love. Ostensibly, he praises Augie because Augie is a lover and is about to marry for love. But Mintouchian himself is unfaithful to his wife. He tells Augie stories about cases he has encountered of husbands and wives leading double lives, or wives with lovers cheating innocent and devoted husbands. Saying it contains ancient wisdom, Mintouchian cites to Augie a little girls' song that he knows:

"I should worry, I should care,
I should marry a millionaire,
He should die and I should cry,
I should marry another guy."

(AM, p. 480)

The drift of Mintouchian's arguments can easily be understood from this, but he does not stop here. Mintouchian tells Augie what another man had once told him, that a man encounters many women and he loves each in turn: "The face you're kissing will change to some other face, and so will your face be replaced. It can't be helped . . ." (AM, p. 483). Though ostensibly Mintouchian shows disapproval of the man who had tried to equate love with adultery, it is obvious that he is fascinated by the idea. Mintouchian equates sensuality with love, but Augie is now developed enough not to be taken in by Mintouchian's fallacious arguments. Love for Augie now signifies not mere sensuality, but the total commitment of one person to another as well.

Augie does not allow his mind to be poisoned by Mintouchian's cynisism. He marries Stella and then ships out. After he suffers a shipwreck, he finds himself a survivor in the company of Basteshaw, the ship's carpenter. The confrontation between Augie and Bastewhaw reveals Augie's positive values and also the negative values of Basteshaw that Augie rejects. Augie is critical of Basteshaw because Basteshaw doesn't have proper family feeling. Basteshaw

is disrespectful not only to the memory of his father but also to the memory of his neurotic aunt who slept for fifteen years. Moreover, Basteshaw appears to be a dangerous lunatic because he claims that he has learned the secret of life, and he wants Augie to serve as his assistant in his scientific explorations. He even beats Augie when Augie sends signals to another ship, trying to be rescued.

Augie is level-headed enough to distrust Basteshaw's claim about having discovered the secret of life. Augie wants to put into practical use what he has learned about life, and he doesn't want to participate in Basteshaw's crazy schemes. Augie demonstrates his sane and positive attitude towards life. Moreover, he demonstrates his compassion and humanity when he nurses the sick Basteshaw, especially after Basteshaw had beaten him.

Augie, however, has not been transformed totally. After his rescue, Augie settles with Stella in Europe and engages in some shady business there. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. has recognized both Augie's strength and weakness. He says that Augie is endowed "not with 'singleness of purpose' but with an unquenchable hospitality toward experience."[15] In fact, Augie is still too pliant and lacks the ability to distinguish clearly between right and wrong. Since his attitude to humanity is now beyond reproach, he would not otherwise commit illegal acts, activities which ultimately can only harm people, never help them.

Moreover, Augie learns about Stella's weaknesses, but

instead of rejecting her, he tries to help her into becoming a better person. He also learns to tolerate those traits of her character which cannot be easily altered. He learns that Stella has lied to him many times; in fact, she has not told him anything about the old businessman Cumberland with whom she had a protracted relationship before her marriage to Augie. When challenged, Stella tells him that she kept the old affair a secret because she loved Augie and did not want to lose him. Augie later learns that she has kept other secrets from him as well. He finds out that Stella is threatening the old man and is probably thinking of a lawsuit. Augie firmly tells her that what she is doing has to stop. When she weeps and agrees, Augie is relieved. What is significant is that Augie neither repudiates her nor loses his poise when he realizes that his love for her is greater than her love for him. Pat Trefzger Overbeck's conclusion is thus appropriate: "[T]he narrator's gradual transformation from courtly lover into fully domesticated lover-husband suggests the paradigm of courtly love progression in C. S. Lewis' classic Allegory of Love" (Overbeck, p. 483).

Towards the end of the novel, Augie declares that he is a person of hope, and now his hopes center on children and a settled life. His whole quest has prepared him for upholding the institution of the family and all that it entails. Not only is he aware of his duties and obligations to his fammly, but he is also aware of his duties and

obligations to humanity as a whole. Augie, who sometimes feels that he is already a father, has not been able to convince his wife to have a child as yet. Be that as it may, Augie mentions one instance of his resisting the temptation to indulge in adultery when he is in Rome. He refuses a prostitute, telling her that he is a family man and has children. Of course, Augie mentions that he was somewhat attracted to the woman, and that it is natural for a man to be thus attracted. The significant fact is that he does not yield to the temptation. One remembers that Augie, who was once pliant and willing enough to carry William Einhorn on his shoulders to a disreputable place and later enjoyed the carnal embraces of a prostitute, now says "no" to a similar woman because he is married. He has not become a saint, but at the end of the quest, he has learned to relate positively to both his family and society, though his illegal business transactions reveal his deficiencies as a social being. Moreover, Augie's love for his original family continues unabated. He reaffirms his love for Simon and thinks that, now that he himself has money, something big should be done for his mother one of these days.

Thus, it is difficult to accept entirely Robert Penn Warren's comment that "Augie is the man with no commitments."[16] It is also impossible to accept the comments that Maxwell Geismar makes about the novel: "It offers nothing really substantial either in the field of human relationships or cultural criticism . . ."[17] Nor is it possible to

agree with Orville Prescott, who calls Augie March an "inchoate novel."[18] There are enough positive elements in the novel to make us feel that it is a significant literary product of its times.

Finally, Bellow demonstrates through the secondary characters in this novel that the family as we find it now is what it always had been in the past. There are some characters who are so unworthy that they fail to do justice to the idea of the family. But there are others who win our admiration by paying unfailing allegiance to their families. One cannot but conclude that Bellow is realistic in his delineation of the family. In this novel, we may witness divorces, but we also encounter stable families such as the Coblins, the Kreindls, and those of Grandma Lausch's two sons. Moreover, even when a couple has separated, the man may try to take the estranged wife back to his home. There are, of course, marriages of convenience, in which the husband desires mostly to cheat the wife out of her property. But there are also images of fidelity in women. Einhorn, an old lecher, has a wife who is not only faithful but practically dotes on her husband, knowing full well that Einhorn keeps a mistress at home. Mintouchian's wife, an old invalid, knows that her husband is unfaithful to her, but she remains faithful to him and recognizes that there is not only frailty in him, but greatness as well. Einhorn's brother Dingbat, who is a poolroom character, is perpetually loyal to his Machiavellian brother. Not only

that, but when his father Einhorn the Commissioner is on his death bed, Dingbat exhibits authentic pain and concern that would put many hypocritical mourners to shame.

Thus, one can safely conclude that The Adventures of Augie March shows the enduring nature of the family. It shows that the family is an irreplaceable institution which can minister to the emotional and spiritual needs of its members. It also shows the enduring nature of the attachments between mother and son and between brother and brother. Augie may not be perfect, but if he has learned that much, he's learned a great deal. In Henderson the Rain King, we meet another Bellovian protagonist who has to undertake a quest before he can learn to relate meaningfully both to the family and to humanity.

NOTES

[1] David D. Galloway, "The Absurd Man as Picaro: The Novels of Saul Bellow," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 6 (Summer 1954), 234. Very rightly, Galloway compares Augie March to Huckleberry Finn. He shows that Augie and Huck both live by their wits and instincts, and in spite of their knowledge of human depravity, they both approach the world with great tenderness.

[2] Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), p. 45.

[3] Saul Bellow, The Adventures of Augie March (New York: The Viking Press, 1953), p. 3. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[4] Pat Trefzger Overbeck, "The Women in Augie March," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 10 (Fall 1968), 473-74. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[5] Robert Gorham Davis, Review of The Adventures of Augie March, New York Times Book Review, 48 (20 September 1953), p. 36.

[6] Robert R. Dutton, Saul Bellow (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 44.

[7] Chester E. Eisinger, "Saul Bellow: Love and

Identity," Accent, 18 (Summer, 1958), 187.

[8] T. E. Cassidy, "From Chicago," Commonweal, 58 (2 October 1953), p. 636.

[9] Irving Howe, "Mass Society and Post-Modern Fiction," in Recent American Fiction: Some Critical Views, ed. Joseph J. Waldmeir (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), p. 14.

[10] Sara S. Chapman, "Melville and Bellow in the Real World: Pierre and Augie March," West Virginia University Philological Papers, 18 (September 1971), 51-2. However, Chapman adds that whereas in Melville's novel one sees the tragic defeat of goodness and defeat in the real world which finally drive Pierre to commit suicide, Bellow's novel reveals authentic optimism.

[11] Robert D. Crozier, S. J., "Theme in Augie March," Critique, 7 (Spring-Summer 1965), 24. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[12] John W. Aldridge, "The Society of Three Novels," in his In Search of Heresy (New York: McGraw Hill, 1956), p. 133.

[13] Gerald J. Goldberg, "Life's Customer: Augie March," Critique, 3 (Summer 1960), 16. Goldberg sees more than a generic relationship between Fielding's Tom Jones and Bellow's Augie March. But he also sees a basic difference between the two novels. Goldberg thinks that there is a basic order and rationality underlying the world of Tom Jones which is lacking in that of Augie March.

[14] W. M. Frohock, "Saul Bellow and His Penitent Picaro," Southwest Review, 53 (Winter 1968), 44. Frohock argues that The Adventures of Augie March is not a picaresque novel, but a confession which adopts a picaresque structure. Augie has the moral sensitivity which the old picaros always lack.

[15] Nathan A. Scott, Jr., Three American Moralists: Mailer, Bellow, Trilling (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), p. 20.

[16] Robert Penn Warren, "The Man with No Commitments," New Republic, 129 (2 November 1953), p. 23.

[17] Maxwell Geismar, Review of The Adventures of Augie March, Nation, 177 (14 November 1953), p. 404.

[18] Orville Prescott, Review of The Adventures of Augie March, New York Times (18 September 1953), p. 21.

CHAPTER VI

HENDERSON THE RAIN KING

Henderson's quest for identity is significant for us because it is only after he undertakes a journey into Africa that he gains the needed insights which make it possible for him to love both family and society. Some critics have questioned the impact of Henderson's quest. Robert G. Davis, for example, asks, "How much of what he [Henderson] learned in Africa can be exported?"[1] Daniel J. Hughes feels that Henderson's quest and subsequent triumph are not depicted convincingly: "Bellow's unwillingness to show Henderson back in the society from which he fled makes his discovery and triumph less forceful, but so, according to the rhythmic expectations, is Henderson's return."[2] Finally, Donald Malcolm suggests that "the trouble is that the hero of this fantasy of redemption is simply too stupid for the task imposed on him."[3]

On the other hand, the book has elicited some extremely positive comments, suggesting that Henderson's quest is quite meaningful. Martin Price notes that "The hero of Saul Bellow's extraordinary new novel can best be identified as the American Adam."[4] David D. Galloway perceptively asserts that much of Henderson the Rain King is

not only reminiscent of the picaresque tradition, but that the novel also moves toward the Grail tradition.[5] Galloway also adds that the novel is filled with references to fertility myths, and that "Henderson is a pilgrim in progress" (Galloway, p. 245). Another critic, Elsie Leach, notices parallels between Henderson the Rain King and the Arthurian legends, and finds in the novel the myth of the dying king.[6]

A perusal of the novel supports the latter assessments. Henderson's journey into Africa is actually a journey into the depths of his own soul. Moreover, this voyage of discovery becomes a necessity, because without it, Henderson cannot find a remedy for his painful spiritual condition, for the turmoil responsible for his alienation from his second wife Lily and from society. Granville Hicks perceptively says that Henderson is a genuine "seeker for salvation."[7] Henderson's journey is a successful one, for it affords him an understanding of what is wrong in his inner world and it tells him what he must do to save himself and those others with whom his life is indissolubly linked.

At the outset of the novel, Henderson affords a clue to his troublesome and confused mental state:

> When I think of my condition at the age of fifty-five when I bought the ticket, all is grief. The facts begin to crowd me and soon I get a

> pressure in the chest. A disorderly rush begins--my parents, my wives, my girls, my children, my farm, my animals, my habits, my money, my music lessons, my drunkenness, my prejudices, my brutality, my teeth, my face, my soul! I have to cry "No, no, get back, curse you, let me alone!" But how can they let me alone? They belong to me. They are mine. And they pile into me from all sides. It turns into chaos.[8]

It is clear that Henderson's life is chaotic before he undertakes the quest, and that, even at this stage, he lacks peace and serenity. In fact, Patrick Cruttwell is right in declaring that "There is a vast unexplainable sorrow in the middle of him [Henderson] . . ."[9]

There are some immediate causes of Henderson's problems, but there are remote causes as well. One significant remote cause of his problems lies in his early youth. His brother Dick, whom he loved very much, died accidentally. Henderson's father loved both sons, but he seemed to be more hopeful about Dick than about Henderson. So when Dick died, Henderson's father began to despair, giving the impression that the family line had ended with Dick. After this, Henderson's father was angry with him on one occasion, maybe because Henderson did not comfort his father. As a result, Henderson left home, feeling in his heart that he was cast off, an Ishmael.[10] In retrospect,

Henderson thinks that he has been a bum: "It took all my father's charity to forgive me and I don't think he ever made it altogether" (HRK, p. 4).

Henderson's first marriage does not help him to set his life aright. To please his father, Henderson chooses a girl of his own social class. Unfortunately, his wife's mental illness is an unsurmountable barrier between Henderson and happiness. Henderson characterizes his first wife Frances as

> A remarkable person, handsome, tall, elegant, sinewy, with long arms and golden hair, private, fertile, and quiet. None of her family can quarrel with me if I add that she is a schizophrenic, for she certainly is that. I, too, am considered crazy, and with good reason--moody, rough, tyrannical, and probably mad. (HRK, p. 4)

Henderson is partially right about his mental oddities and these will be discussed in the proper place. What is important to note is that Henderson lives for twenty years with his first wife. But the gap between them widens, ultimately culminating in divorce. At one point, Frances leaves her husband at a party and takes the car, because she suddenly remembers that she has left a piece of unfinished business at home. It is after this incident that Lily, who later becomes Henderson's second wife and who has been introduced to Henderson at this party, suggests

to Henderson that he should divorce Frances. Henderson replies, "Is that a thing to say?" (HRK, p. 9). Though Henderson is considerate enough not to divorce Frances on the spur of the moment, he does not know how to bring her closer to him and thus achieve some success in his married life.

Speaking about his relationship with Frances, Henderson says, "Only once after I came back from the Army did anything of a personal nature take place between us and after that it was no soap, so I let her be, more or less" (HRK, p. 12). At this point, Frances has one conversation with him during which she asks him what he would like to do. Since he is losing interest in the farm, he expresses the desire of entering medical school. Frances responds by laughing at him.

We can understand the extent of Henderson's disappointment when we consider that the service motive is highly pronounced in Henderson's character, and that the thought of entering medical school is no momentary fantasy. In fact, Henderson has all along respected individuals such as Dr. Wilfred Grenfell and Albert Schweitzer. After Frances laughs at him, Henderson never discusses another thing with her, but he is convinced that his relationship with Frances is truly hopeless. When Frances asks for a divorce, he does not hesitate although he wishes her well.

Henderson's account reveals that Frances' schizophrenia is responsible for the failure of the relationship.

He does not emphasize those of his own deficiencies which could have contributed to the breakdown of that relationship. However, Henderson does discuss in detail his contribution to the worsening relationship with his second wife Lily.

Until the moment Henderson embarks on his journey into Africa, his relationship with Lily is not as nearly perfect as it could have been. This is surprising because Henderson and Lily married out of love. The reason for this initial failure is that Henderson lacks spiritual clarity and exhibits a number of mental peculiarities. In retrospect, Henderson says,

> I gave Lily a terrible time, worse than Frances. Frances was withdrawn, which protected her, but Lily caught it. Maybe a change for the better threw me; I was adjusted to a bad life. (HRK, p. 5)

Lily has to pursue him for a long time before Henderson finally agrees to marry her, but he recognizes many good qualities in Lily right from the beginning. Henderson says, "There was nothing promiscuous or loose about Lily, I assure you" (HRK, p. 10). Henderson admiringly mentions one instance when Lily genuinely tries to help some Italians and immigrants. Lily even follows Henderson to Europe, trying to convince him that she loves him. Lily wants him to live, not die. She feels that something good

may come even of Henderson, who realizes that Lily loves him. Lily also tells Henderson that she is indispensable to him. Henderson also realizes that he loves her, but he tells Lily that she is crazy and Lily replies, "Without you, maybe it's true. Maybe I'm not all there and I don't understand, but when we're together, I know" (HRK, pp. 18-19).

Even before Lily follows him to Europe, Henderson is afflicted with some kind of spiritual turmoil. He hears a ceaseless voice in his heart that says, "I want, I want, I want, oh, I want--" (HRK, p. 12). At this time, Henderson does not understand what he is in need of. Henderson tries promiscuity in Europe, but he cannot silence the insistent clamoring of "I want, I want."

When Henderson comes back from the war, it is with the thought of becoming a pig farmer, a fact which illustrates what he thinks of life in general at this juncture. Henderson remembers that the prophet Daniel had warned King Nebuchadnezzar, "They shall drive thee from among men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field" (HRK, p. 21). Henderson definitely sees himself in the image of a broken king, but his self-image is so low at this period that he cannot aspire to anything beyond being a pig farmer.

When Lily comes back home from Europe, she becomes engaged to a decent young man. She breaks her engagement to him when she sees Henderson again. Lily explains to

Henderson that the young man to whom she is engaged is dispensable, but Henderson is not: "I think we're each other's only friends, after all" (HRK, p. 26). After courting Lily for eighteen months, Henderson finally marries her.

Even after his marriage, however, Henderson cannot conquer his loneliness. His relationship with Lily is fraught with misunderstanding. Henderson says, "Family life with Lily was not all that might have been predicted by an optimist" (HRK, p. 28). His objection against Lily is that she is a blackmailer. Lily had told him in Europe that her mother had died. Actually, this is a ruse she employs so that Henderson may marry her speedily. Another naive objection is that Lily is not very clean. But the major cause of his dissatisfaction seems to be the fact that he feels that Lily does not love him truly. Once when Henderson comes home from the hospital after an accident, Lily is phoning a friend and says about Henderson that "He's unkillable" (HRK, p. 6). She says it jokingly. But this statement creates some bitterness in him. Even though he knows better, he puts an antagonistic interpretation to these words. Finally, there is misunderstanding over Lily's spending a long time away from the house so that she can have her portrait taken in a studio.

Henderson realizes that alienation from his spouse is a characteristic which he shares with his deceased father, and he remembers that his father could not settle

into a quiet life either. He was sometimes extremely hard on Henderson's mother. On one occasion, he made her lie prostrate in her night-gown at the door of his room for two weeks before he would forgive her some silly words, perhaps like those Lily utters on the telephone, when she says that Henderson is unkillable.

As a result of this misunderstanding, Henderson raves at Lily in public and swears at her in private. He does not give her the status and dignity of a wife. In his own house, among guests, Henderson treats Lily as if she were a stranger. It is true that Henderson and Lily experience some happy moments together, but because of the misunderstanding, they are at war. Henderson says, "No, I treated her [Lily] like a stranger before the guests because I, the sole heir of the famous name and estate, am a bum, and she is not a lady but merely my wife--merely my wife" (HRK, p. 6). Since Henderson has a lowered self-image, and since he doesn't have any trust in the genuineness of his wife's love, he tries to drag her down to his own level of unimportance and to grudge her the dignified position of a wife.

However, there are numerous instances which indicate that Lily is quite supportive of him. Henderson gets into unnecessary brawls in country saloons, where the only thing that keeps him from being beaten is his social prominence. On these occasions, Lily comes and bails him out.

Moreover, since winters seem to make him worse, Lily

tries to aid him by taking him to a resort hotel on the Gulf. There, Henderson behaves strangely, shooting stones at bottles on the beach with his son's slingshot. The manager is constrained to bring the matter to Lily's notice; children stop playing with Lily's twins; and the other women avoid Lily. When Lily discusses the matter with Henderson, he frightens her by saying that he is going to blow his brains out. He is not at all grateful for her effort to help him through a change of environment; he does not bother about the painful social isolation of his family; and he tries to frighten Lily, knowing how it will affect her since her father committed suicide the same way.

Meanwhile, Henderson cannot silence the voice "I want, I want." To drown the voice, he tries playing the violin. To his dismay, only "[h]arsh cries" (HRK, p. 25) arise. Henderson feels that if he disciplines himself, eventually the voice of angels may come out of the violin. His main purpose, however, is to reach his father by playing on the violin his father used to play. Henderson has never been able to convince himself that the dead are utterly dead, so he whispers to his father's spirit, "Oh, Father, Pa. Do you recognize the sounds? This is me, Gene, on your violin, trying to reach you" (HRK, p. 30). Henderson's words reveal his nostalgia for his original family, but his feelings for the past do not assist him in silencing the disturbing voice, which is nothing but a manifestation

of his spiritual discontent.

Henderson's spiritual confusion adversely affects not only his relationship with his spouse, but also his relationship with people in general. While he is in Europe, he lives in the house of a Russian prince who has fallen on evil days. Henderson knows that he could help the man, but does nothing for him. Henderson has to rid himself of many imperfections before he can gain the stature of a fully-developed human being: "For, like most Bellow characters, and indeed many American heroes, he [Henderson] does not know how to relate himself to other people."[11]

Henderson's imperfect humanity is manifested in other instances as well. His behavior to his daughter Ricey shows not so much his lack of affection for her as his inability to deal with children with honesty, wisdom, and compassion. Ricey finds a black foundling in a shoebox, brings it home, and hides it somewhere. She becomes so fascinated by the foundling that she is full of "silent happiness" (HRK, p. 33). But Henderson's attitude forces Ricey to take the foundling to her dormitory, where she claims that the child is her own. The headmistress, taking Ricey's statement at its face value, makes her leave school, and the foundling is handed over to the proper authorities. Afterwards, Ricey is listless and unhappy. Henderson later realizes that he has committed an offence against Ricey, and he is affected by Ricey's unhappiness.

Although, at this stage, Henderson does not know how

to deal with his children, his relationship with his son Edward shows that he is affectionate and has their welfare at heart. Even when Henderson has problems with Lily, he is actively engrossed in giving counsel to his eldest son Edward. Edward thinks that he is better than his father. Henderson does not agree with him. He says, "Great things are done by Americans but not by the likes of us" (HRK, p. 123). Henderson does not like what Edward is doing and the environment he is living in. About Edward, Henderson says, "The most independent thing he ever did was to dress up a chimpanzee in a cowboy suit and drive it around New York in his open car" (HRK, p. 123). Yet he adds, "But a father is a father after all, and I had gone as far as California to talk to Edward" (HRK, p. 123).

Henderson wants his son to be a doctor, but Edward does not take his advice. Henderson knows that a son wants guidance from his father, but Henderson considers this expectation to be wrong. He tries to explain himself to his son, admitting to Edward that though he is often confused, he fights for the truth. Later, Edward falls in love with an Indian woman from Central America. At first, out of fatherly solicitude, Henderson objects to their union, but when Edward firmly declares his love for the Indian woman, Henderson relents. In spite of everything, he loves his son and thinks that if the relationship can do Edward any real good, he may have the desired relationship with the girl.

A final cause which contributes to Henderson's spiritual discontent is his perception of the rootlessness of modern man. He says, "Nobody truly occupies a station in life any more. There are mostly people who feel that they occupy the place that belongs to another by rights. There are displaced persons everywhere" (HRK, p. 34). Henderson has not found a proper niche either in the family or society and cannot combat the feeling of futility and rootlessness.

While there are, therefore, many contributing causes, the immediate event which precipitates Henderson's journey into Africa is the death of Miss Lenox, the old housekeeper. One day, when Henderson is fighting with Lily at the breakfast table, his shouts of rage cause Miss Lenox's death through heart failure. Henderson, looking on the dead body of Miss Lenox, realizes what death is like: "[T]ill this moment I had not understood what this gray and white and brown, the bark, the snow, the twigs, had been telling me" (HRK, p. 39). Henderson understands the fact of the inevitability of death and is compelled to make his life meaningful.

Because Henderson cannot find peace in his life and because he creates disorder and unhappiness both for himself and others, both inside and outside the family, he decides to go to Africa. Like many Bellow protagonists, he hopes that his quest will help him to gain new insights about life and to atone for his mistakes. Only after he

completes a successful quest can he hope to relate meaningfully to his family and society. From each of the two African tribes he visits, Henderson learns valuable lessons about how to relate to people in general and to his own family in particular.

Henderson first journeys to the land of the peaceful Arnewi tribe, who are suffering from a drought. There is water in a cistern for the cattle to drink, but the water is polluted by frogs. Since the frogs are taboo animals, the Arnewi do not know what to do about the problem. Because of the drought, the cattle are dying in large numbers. An Arnewi girl cries when Henderson first enters the land of the Arnewi, and Henderson suffers from a lowered self-image:

> "Shall I run back into the desert and stay there until the devil has passed out of me and I am fit to meet human kind again without driving it to despair at the first look? I haven't had enough desert yet. Let me throw away my gun and my helmet and the lighter and all this stuff and maybe I can get rid of my fierceness too and live out there on worms. On locusts. Until all the bad is burned out of me." (HRK, p. 49)

Moreover, Henderson admits that he cannot relate to society: "Society is what beats me. Alone I can be pretty good, but

let me go among people and there's the devil to pay" (HRK, p. 49).

Since altruism is very pronounced in him, Henderson wants to do something for the unhappy Arnewi. For him, the frogs are not taboo animals, and he decides to eliminate them: "Nevertheless, I told these creatures, just wait, you little sons of bitches, you'll croak in hell before I'm done" (HRK, p. 60). Later, Henderson adds,

> "Poor little bastards" was what I said, but in actual fact I was gloating--yuck--yuck--yuck! My heart was already fattening in anticipation of their death. We hate death, we fear death, but when you get right down to cases, there's nothing like it. (HRK, p. 89)

His gloating over powerless creatures shows grossness and insensitivity, not strength. Henderson has to go a long way before he can learn compassion, be freed of his callousness, and relate meaningfully to reality.

When Henderson defeats Prince Itelo in a wrestling match, the people applaud him. He is courteously treated by Queen Willatale and her sister Mtalba, two women of Bittahness. Bellow explains that "A Bittah was a person of real substance. You couldn't be any higher or better" (HRK, p. 75). Queen Willatale is spiritually superior, even to Mtalba: "She had risen above ordinary human limitations and did whatever she liked because of her

proven superiority in all departments" (HRK, p. 75).

Henderson knows that for his quest to become successful he must "burst the spirit's sleep" or else suffer the fate of remaining unregenerate. Henderson finds that there is no anxious care in Queen Willatale, and that she is marvelously sustained:

> "Oh, it's miserable to be human. You get such queer diseases. Just because you are human and for no other reason. Before you know it, you're just like other people you have seen with all those peculiar human ailments. Just another vehicle for temper and vanity and rashness and all the rest. Who wants it? Who needs it? These things occupy the place where a man's soul should be. . . . she [Queen Willatale] seems to know. Lust, rage, and all the rest of it. A regular bargain basement of deformities." (HRK, p. 83)

Henderson has an inkling of those faults he must rid himself of if he wants to transform his faulty nature.

Henderson learns some important truths from Queen Willatale. She tells him, "[W]orld is strange to a child. You not a child, Sir?" [Itelo translates] (HRK, p. 84). Since Henderson is not a child, he must behave like a man. In other words, Henderson has to achieve true humanity. The Queen also says, "Grun-tu-molani. Man want to live" [Itelo translates] (HRK, p. 85). Henderson is convinced that he

wants to survive; his problem is to learn how to change his erroneous attitudes and to start living a meaningful life.

Although Henderson clearly wants to help, he makes a serious blunder. He makes a bomb and throws it at the cistern. He succeeds in killing the frogs but, in the process, he destroys the cistern as well, and the life-giving water escapes from the cistern and loses itself in the sand. There is no doubt about Henderson's altruism but since he seems to be overzealous and somewhat thoughtless, there is a dichotomy between what he intends and what he executes. Everyone, except Romilayu, is disappointed and turns away from him. In shame and disgrace, Henderson leaves the Arnewi and, guided by Romilayu, journeys towards the land of the Wariri.[12]

The Wariri, unlike the Arnewi, are tough and worldly savages. To prove his manhood during his first encounter with the Wariri, Henderson has to undergo strange ordeals such as passing the night in a hut with a corpse. Henderson succeeds in proving that he is a strong and courageous person. But he has to learn what true courage means from Dahfu, the Wariri King who lives surrounded by enemy politicians. There are two rival factions in this land: the party of King Dahfu and the party of the Bunam (the high priest). Later on, Henderson joins Dahfu's faction as the King's admirer and disciple; the Bunam's faction is full of quite a number of influential, malicious, dangerous, and guileful people.

Meanwhile, the Bunam and his followers decide that

Henderson should be the new Sungo or Rain King. To be the Sungo, one has to lift a huge wooden idol of the goddess Mummah. The position of the Sungo is fraught with much danger, as Henderson later learns. In fact, the corpse that is placed in his hut is that of the ex-Sungo. Also, Henderson later infers that the one other potential candidate for the post of the Sungo pretends that he cannot lift Mummah, because he wants to be spared the anxiety of becoming the Rain King.

To Henderson's astonishment, Dahfu appears to be more than a match for all his opponents put together. Dahfu is unperturbed though he is sitting, as it were, on the peak of a volcano. He has several scores of wives in his harem, and if any of his wives reports him to be sexually impotent, he will lose his life. Moreover, he has to catch a specially marked lion called Gmilo, in whom his deceased father is said to be incarnated. Unless he does that (and he must not wound the lion as he captures it), his kingship will not have the final, priestly sanction. Dahfu has not caught Gmilo; on the contrary, he keeps the lioness Atti in a subterranean den. The Bunam and his followers believe that all other lions except Gmilo are evil-doers and mischief-makers. Dahfu's opponents feel that by keeping Atti, Dahfu is indulging in witchcraft.

King Dahfu is obviously courageous and adjusts to reality without the slightest tremor. Henderson gradually assimilates some of Dahfu's good qualities. Dahfu's wives may

prove to be dangerous at some future time, but Henderson notices that there must be some of them who love Dahfu and whose love Dahfu reciprocates. On one occasion, during a festival, Dahfu and a painted woman play catch with two human skulls. Later, Henderson learns that this is a contest, with the woman as challenger, and that the penalty of missing a catch would be death. The King sails smoothly through the game as a skillful artist, without showing any nervousness at all.

Henderson realizes that King Dahfu, like Queen Willatale, has achieved what he is aspiring to achieve:

> Being people have all the breaks. Becoming people are very unlucky, always in a tizzy. The Becoming people are always having to make explanations or offer justifications to the Being people. While the Being people provoke these explanations. . . . Now Willatale, the queen of the Arnewi, and principal woman of Bittahness, was a Be-er if ever there was one. And at present King Dahfu. And if I had really been capable of the alert consciousness which it required I would have confessed that Becoming was beginning to come out of my ears. Enough! Enough! Time to have Become. Time to be! Burst the spirit's sleep. (HRK, p. 160)

Contact with Dahfu broadens Henderson's mental horizons. In

Dahfu, Henderson sees a man who is obviously a "master of reality." When Henderson compares himself with Dahfu, he sees how deficient he himself is in certain respects and he better understands what kept him from having a harmonious relationship with Lily. From Dahfu, Henderson primarily learns that one must not avoid reality, however frightening it may be. Henderson has been guilty of this in the past. Though he was married to Lily, he avoided making gestures of true love to her. Though the impoverished Russian prince needed his help, he avoided fulfilling his responsibility to his fellow man.

Dahfu and Henderson are attracted to each other. Dahfu has found a willing disciple who needs to learn and who has the capacity to imbibe the special knowledge of life that only a mentor like Dahfu can impart to him. Donald W. Markos perceptively maintains that "The life instinct is strong in Henderson, too, though it has been grossly mis-directed."[13] To Dahfu, Henderson says that he is impressed by "[t]he honest-to-God good" (HRK, p. 168). Dahfu teaches Henderson that "good cannot be labor or conflict" (HRK, p. 169). For Dahfu, good is "associated with inspiration, and not conflict" (HRK, p. 169). Thus, it can be said that Dahfu adds to the enlightenment that Henderson has attained in his encounter with Willatale, a perfect human being. Contact with Dahfu helps Henderson to bring about the needed change in his attitude to reality, which includes both family and society. It is with a new note of humility that

he says, "I need not have had that quarrel with Lily, standing over her in our matrimonial bed and shouting until Ricey took fright and escaped with the child. I proclaimed that I was on better terms with the real than she" (HRK, p. 167).

After his contact with Dahfu, Henderson is emboldened. He feels optimistic about humanity, and he says that he could have told Dahfu that "chaos doesn't run the whole show. That this is not a sick and hasty ride, helpless, through a dream into oblivion. No, sir! It can be arrested by a thing or two. By art, for instance . . ." (HRK, pp. 175-76).

Later, Henderson volunteers to lift Mummah, and he succeeds. He is elated, and he is made the Rain King. Finally, the Wariri are blest with rain. Michael A. Goldfinch perceptively remarks, "Henderson is the agent of fertility and grace, as symbolized by rain."[14] Henderson recognizes the change he feels within himself: "And so my fever is transformed into jubilation. My spirit was awake and it welcomed life anew! I was still alive and kicking and I had the old grun-tu-molani" (HRK, p. 193).

Henderson finds confirmation for some of his important ideas in Dahfu. Dahfu tells him, "Yet you are right for the long run, and good exchanged for evil truly is the answer. . . . I think the noble will have its turn in the world" (HRK, pp. 214-15). Henderson feels very happy that another man has said this to him.

Dahfu next tries to subject Henderson to lion therapy in real earnest. Dahfu believes in Lamarckian principles

and that a man can transform himself into whatever he wants to. Henderson says,

> He [Dahfu] had studied his way through a load of such books. And what he was engrossed by was a transformation of human material, that you could work either way, either from the rind to the core or from the core to the rind; the flesh influencing the mind, the mind influencing the flesh, back again to the mind, back once more to the flesh. The process as he saw it was utterly dynamic. (HRK, p. 236)

Dahfu can command Atti the lioness to do anything. He first wants Henderson to approach the lioness without any fear. Next, he wants Henderson to imitate the manner of the lion. Dahfu tells Henderson that Henderson had avoided a great deal, but Atti will change all that, because she is unavoidable. She will burnish Henderson, Dahfu believes, and will make his consciousness shine. Dahfu wants Henderson to absorb lion qualities from Atti. Dahfu feels that it is never too late for anyone to change: "What Homo sapiens imagines, he may slowly convert himself into" (HRK, p. 271).

Dahfu may be one of the cranks that Bellow's fiction abounds with, but his crankiness seems to be very closely allied to genius. Thus, one can agree entirely with Herbert Gold when he says, "Dahfu--who emerges as part divine minstrel man, part psychoanalyst, part Moses, wholly King--

seems to speak for peaceful inspiration, a state of being in virtue."[15] However, Dahfu's vision of life, though profound, is somewhat one-sided. Not everybody can cultivate Dahfu's total fearlessness which seems a somewhat superhuman ideal. Henderson does well by not having total faith in Dahfu's science. In fact, Henderson's behavior as he approaches Atti, under duress, constitutes some of the greatest moments of comedy in the novel. Gerald Weales has recognized Bellow's comic intention in this novel: "The incongruity of the man [Henderson] and his spiritual needs becomes the heart of a novel that is genuinely comic in intention."[16]

The typical Bellow protagonist alienates himself from his family if he is under severe stress or if he is in some kind of spiritual turmoil. However, as the protagonist recovers his spiritual poise, he journeys back toward the bosom of his family. If the spouse is someone whom the protagonist does not consider it worthwhile to return to, he will instead return to his children and his original family. Since Lily is someone he loved, though imperfectly, in the past, Henderson, having recovered his spiritual poise, now desires to go back to her. In a letter to her, he writes, "Lily, I probably haven't said this lately, but I have true feelings for you, baby, which wrings my heart. You can call it love. Although personally, I think that word is full of bluff" (HRK, p. 284). Allen Guttmann rightly says, "Fabulous Henderson's comic quest is ended when he learns to replace one verb (want) with two others (imagine, love)."[17]

Henderson wants Lily to enroll him in a medical school, indicating, as David D. Galloway notes, that "Henderson is able to rejoin society on satisfactory terms" (Galloway, p. 244). Henderson says, "I must break Lily from blackmail and set love on a true course" (HRK, p. 288). Henderson also finds out the truth about the insistent voice he used to hear. He now says, "I had a voice that said, I want! I Want? I? It should have told me she wants, he wants, they want. And moreover it's love that makes reality reality. The opposite makes the opposite" (HRK, p. 286). Norman Podhoretz's judgment is entirely correct:

> [W]hile Henderson's regeneration cannot be accepted as a total transformation of character, it seems to me wholly credible as an experience, the kind of experience that religious converts speak of when they say they have been re-born.[18]

For once, as Ihab H. Hassan points out, the American hero can go home again.[19]

Henderson's return to America is precipitated after Dahfu accidentally dies. Dahfu meets his end while hunting a lion supposed to be Gmilo. Although Henderson is now expected to fill Dahfu's place, he is apprehensive of the ways of the Bunam and his faction and escapes, together with Romilayu, from the land of the Wariri. Henderson takes a lion cub with him, a cub considered the spirit of Dahfu, whose life Henderson feels he ought to continue in

some way. Henderson names the cub Dahfu and decides that he will give it to Ricey, because he took a foundling from her.

Henderson now feels that there is justice in life. There is also a rhythm, which one cannot ignore. If one goes against this rhythm, he will be defeated. Sensing this and feeling homesick, Henderson, on his return journey, makes a transatlantic call and tells Lily, "Honey, I aim to do better, I've had it now" (HRK, p. 332). He has learned the lesson of love and declares, "Once more. Whatever gains I ever made were always due to love and nothing else" (HRK, p. 339).

On the plane, Henderson meets an American orphan who can speak only Persian. Henderson befriends him and takes him to his heart. The Bellow protagonist loves children, whether his own, or his brother's or other people's. Henderson lets the orphan play with the lion cub. As the plane touches Newfoundland (most critics have noted that the name is suggestive), Henderson and the orphan, together with the lion cub, get down on the ice. The child is like "medicine applied" to Henderson (HRK, p. 340). The pure air is a remedy, too, and, Henderson anticipates the joy of meeting Lily at Idlewild. Holding the orphan and the cub, Henderson dances in joy. Bellow describes this leap of joy in these beautiful words: "I guess I felt it was my turn now to move, and so went running--leaping, leaping, pounding, and tingling over the pure white lining of the gray arctic

silence" (HRK, pp. 340-41).

Bellow has once again shown in this novel that although the protagonist may be temporarily alienated from his family because of a spiritual distemper, he ultimately attains a spiritual enlightenment which enables him to come back to the bosom of his family. Henderson also finds a niche within the whole human family, for Bellow's heroes cannot remain isolated for long from family and society. Such feelings for family and society are, as we shall see, the inevitable product of Bellow's world view and of the American literary tradition to which he belongs.

NOTES

[1] Robert G. Davis, "The American Individualist Tradition: Bellow and Styron," in The Creative Present, eds. Nona Balakian and Charles Simmons (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), p. 129.

[2] Daniel J. Hughes, "Reality and the Hero: Lolita and Henderson the Rain King," Modern Fiction Studies, 6 (Winter 1960-61), 362-63.

[3] Donald Malcolm, "Rider Haggard Rides Again," The New Yorker, 35 (14 March 1959), p. 172.

[4] Martin Price, Review of Henderson the Rain King, The Yale Review, 48 (Spring 1959), 172.

[5] David D. Galloway, "The Absurd Man as Picaro: The Novels of Saul Bellow," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 6 (Summer 1964), 245. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[6] Elsie Leach, "From Ritual to Romance Again: Henderson the Rain King," Western Humanities Review, 14 (Spring 1960), 223-24.

[7] Granville Hicks, "The Search for Salvation," Saturday Review, 42 (21 February 1959), p. 20.

[8] Saul Bellow, Henderson the Rain King (New York: The Viking Press, 1959), p. 3. Subsequent references to this

work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[9] Patrick Cruttwell, Review of Henderson the Rain King, Hudson Review, 12 (Summer 1959), 291.

[10] Robert R. Dutton, Saul Bellow (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), pp. 92-93, 112-13. Robert R. Dutton has recognized the likeness of Henderson not only to Ishmael but also to Lemuel Gulliver. Dutton compares the return of Gulliver to that of Henderson. The former is shattered by the vision of the Yahoos. Bellow's optimism is evidenced by the fact that Henderson comes back home with an attitude completely contrary to that of Gulliver.

[11] Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), p. 72.

[12] David D. Galloway points out that Henderson, in his faithful guide Romilayu, has his Sancho Panza, Queequeg, Virgil, and Hopeful.

[13] Donald W. Markos, "Life Against Death in Henderson the Rain King," Modern Fiction Studies, 17 (Summer 1971), 195.

[14] Michael A. Goldfinch, "A Journey to the Interior," English Studies, 43 (October 1962), p. 443.

[15] Herbert Gold, "Giant of Cosmic Despair," Nation, 188 (21 February 1959), p. 171.

[16] Gerald Weales, Review of Henderson the Rain King, The Reporter, 20 (19 March 1959), p. 47.

[17] Allen Guttmann, "Bellow's Henderson," Critique, 7 (Spring-Summer 1965), 33.

[18] Norman Podhoretz, "The Adventures of Saul Bellow," in his Doings and Undoings: The Fifties and After in American Writing (New York: Farrar, Straus & Company, 1964), p. 225.

[19] Ihab H. Hassan, "Saul Bellow: Five Faces of a Hero," Critique, 3 (Summer 1960), 35.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

An awareness of the tradition that Bellow belongs to aids us in understanding his thoughts on the nature of man, his position in an evolving universe, and his potential destiny. Bellow's philosophy, in turn, illuminates and informs his diagnosis of and his prescriptions for the ailments of contemporary humanity. In all of this, what remains constant is Bellow's feeling that love for humanity must keep pace with love for the family.

Bellow has reiterated throughout his entire oeuvre this seminal idea of the necessity of loving both one's family and mankind in general. His protagonists need their family, and their families are always there for them to go back to after they have emerged successfully from their quests and enlarged their sympathies. Bellow has never suggested that the family as an institution is decaying or disintegrating. Of course, he has shown the tensions and discords that can often be found in families, but he has also explained the causes responsible for these anomalies. Bellow has pointed out unmistakably those elements in human nature--personality quirks, ignorance, greed, antipathy, animosity, and twisted desire--that often

hinder man from achieving the happiness which is his birthright. As we have seen, Bellow not only presents the misery present in the family in which some distortions exist, but he also demonstrates the happiness of the family in which man relates to his kindred in the proper manner, with concern, understanding, and compassion.

Because it presents such a balanced view of human nature, Bellow's fiction can be called realistic. In his work, man occupies a position below the angels, and he is greater than inanimate nature and the brute part of creation. Man's uniqueness arises out of the fact that he is not fated to remain today what he was yesterday. In other words, man can learn from his mistakes--man does make mistakes, since he is not an angel--and can attain self-transcendence. The relentless movement towards Becoming characterizes sundry Bellovian protagonists. Sometimes, some of the protagonists reach a state of pure Being. But this state cannot be retained for long, because for man the process of Becoming never ends.

Since Bellow is such an important writer, interpreting contemporary humanity and human destiny for our benefit, attempts have been made to trace the tradition that Bellow belongs to. Richard Lehan states that though Bellow and Ellison have not written conscious existential fiction, they have affinities of spirit with the French writers. In fact, Sartre, Camus, Bowles, Bellow, Wright, and Ellison--are all concerned with the identity of man in the

modern world, the nature of good and evil, and the possibility of fulfillment in a contemporary world without God. They are interested in finding out whether action is possible in an ethical void and if so, what is the meaning of such action. Also, the world that the American hero has inherited is a world similar to that of the French existential hero, and both these types of hero have a similar world view.[1] It can be said that though Bellow starts with the exploration of the existential condition of his protagonists, he finally shows them as free and creative moral agents living in a morally ordered universe. They also normally seek communion with family and humanity. If any of them suffers from some spiritual turmoil, he may isolate himself temporarily from family and humanity. But since the alienated protagonist finds out that he is responsible for his own fate, he almost invariably succeeds in negotiating with his spiritual problem and finally reestablishing his links with both family and humanity.

M. Gilbert Porter rightly states that there is a pessimistic tradition in American fiction, which can be traced back to Puritanism, and that this tradition includes naturalistic fiction and current Black Humor fiction. Scientific materialism augmented theological determinism in the works of American naturalists such as Crane, Dreiser, Norris, and London. There was the suspicion that man was a victim of mysterious forces which he could neither understand nor control. Darwinian theories of evolution supplied

an element of dread that man was merely a plaything of an indifferent cosmic process.

But there is an optimistic tradition as well, one in which man is viewed as a resistant hero who is endowed with free will. He is capable of heroism, self-renewal, and self-transcendence. The New England transcendentalists such as Emerson and Thoreau maintained this optimistic view. They held that man, if he lives in harmony with the spiritual essence of the visible world, can develop morally and fulfill a high destiny. Whitman saw the nation and also the world spiralling upward towards an ultimate union with the Divine. Saul Bellow, together with Ralph Ellison, Bernard Malamud, and Ken Kesey, is a neo-transcendentalist who owes allegiance to this optimistic tradition in American literature.[2] Since Bellow's protagonists do not normally find smooth sailing through life, and since they reach a convincing kind of certitude only after profound spiritual struggles, it is possible to agree with Donald Markos that "In Bellow's fiction, Emerson's self-reliant and Whitman's life-embracing man survives in a somewhat diminished and battle-scarred, but convincing form."[3]

If Bellow does not lose faith in life, neither does he lose faith in his country. Almost all his novels take place in an American setting and his protagonists almost invariably end up proclaiming the Brotherhood of Man. This proclamation shows that his protagonists need both family

and humanity. Life is open-ended for these protagonists, and though they initially may relate only imperfectly to family and humanity, they gradually learn to adjust to their immediate families and to society. Thus, Robert D. Crozier is correct when he states that together with Salinger, Bellow is the forerunner of a more maturely intellectual and spiritual America.[4]

Chester E. Eisinger states that Bellow has possibly been influenced by Hasidism because the basic attitude in Bellow--the overwhelming need for love and the joy of life--bears a remarkable similarity to the principles of this Jewish sect which arose in the eighteenth century. In our own time, Martin Buber has been the principal spokesman for neo-Hasidism. This movement binds one man to another in a relation of love and responsibility. The Hasid knows that man must endure intolerable suffering and that sin is possible. However, the Hasid also knows that redemption is possible for every human being.[5]

Certainly, the central tenets of Hasidism can be noticed in Bellow's fiction, a fact which shows that Bellow adheres very closely to the Jewish moral system. Eisinger has pointed out that in the hasidic life, the appetites, far from being despised, are encouraged. However, the Hasid cannot violate the moral code in order to satisfy his appetites. Bellow also feels that the desire for the satisfaction of the appetites should not be divorced from ethical considerations. He denounces the permissive

morality of characters such as Angela Gruner, Feffer, Walter Bruch, and Wharton Horricker in Mr. Sammler's Planet. In fact, mere sensuality becomes progressively dissatisfying for the Bellovian protagonist. Herzog, following the breakdown of his relationship with Madeleine, demonstrates that his relationships with many mistresses (Wanda, Zinka, Sono, etc.) have terminated because all these relationships were outside wedlock. He is cautious about Ramona, who contemplates marriage. When Ramona shows sympathy for his ravaged condition and finally expresses her desire to marry him, he inwardly employs a criterion other than sensuality to judge her by. He wonders whether she would be kind to Junie, his and Madeleine's daughter. In Humboldt's Gift, Charlie Citrine is betrayed by Renata, and he recognizes her for what she is. But even before she deserts him, when she proposes marriage to him, he inwardly wonders whether she would push a wheel-chair for him when he became old. In The Dean's December, the dean gives up the habit of chasing many women. He has progressively disciplined himself to conform to the ideals of a monogamous relationship. In fact, over the years, Bellow's protagonists have become more and more austere.

Saul Bellow has made several statements about the goals that a writer should set for himself, and he has tried to adhere to these theories in his fiction. Bellow has said that the moral function cannot be divorced from art.[6] For him, the task of a writer is extremely demanding because

the writer must have a profound knowledge of the human condition: "[T]he writer must find enduring intuitions of what things are real and what things are important. His business is with these enduring intuitions which have the power to recognize occasions of suffering or occasions of happiness, in spite of all distortions and blearing."[7] Bellow feels that a writer need not be either unduly optimistic or foolishly pessimistic: "[T]he idiocy of orthodox affirmation and transparent or pointless optimism ought not to provoke an equal and opposite reaction."[8] He thinks that a writer should be aware of the crisis in contemporary life:

> Adapting Gresham's theorem to the literary situation one might say that public life drives private life into hiding. People begin to hoard their spiritual valuables. Public turbulence is largely coercive, not positive. It puts us into a passive position. There is not much we can do about the crises of international politics, the revolutions of Asia and Africa, the rise and transformation of masses. Technical and political decisions, invisible powers, secrets which can be shared only by a small elite, render the private will helpless and lead the individual into curious forms of behavior in the private sphere.

> Public life, vivid and formless turbulence, views, slogans, mysterious crises, and unreal configurations dissolve coherence in all but the most resistant minds, and even to such minds it is not always confident certainty that resistance can have a positive outcome. To take narcotics has become in some circles a mark of rebellious independence, and to search one's personal earth is sometimes felt to be the only honourable course. Rebels have no bourgeois certainties to return to when rebellions are done. The fixed points seem to be disappearing. Even the self is losing its firm outline.[9]

Bellow is also aware of the fact that the writer cannot produce great works of art out of the ingredients of polymorphous sexuality and vehement declarations of alienation.[10] But Bellow is unwilling to believe that all possibilities for the betterment of either the individual or the species are destroyed. For example, Herzog, a representative Bellovian intellectual, writes the following letter which he never posts:

> "Dear Doktor Professor Heidegger, I would like to know what you mean by the expression 'the fall into the quotidian.' Where did this fall occur? Where were we standing when it happened?" (H, p.49)

Bellow is not looking for a facile solution to the problems that face and haunt contemporary humanity. In fact, when one notices Bellow's portrayal of the frightening chaos of the modern world, it is easy to see why Bellow feels that only strong links with both family and humanity can help to usher in a new age of human brotherhood. In his non-fiction To Jerusalem and Back, Bellow contemplates the violence in the world, specifically in Lebanon and Cambodia:

> What is the meaning of such corpse-making? In ancient times the walls of captured cities in the Middle East were sometimes hung with the skin of the vanquished. That custom has died out. But the eagerness to kill for political ends--or to justify killing by such ends--is as keen now as it ever was.[11]

In the same book, Bellow expresses the feeling of uncertainty which creeps into human life when one considers the fact that for the first time in human history everyone has gone into politics.[12]

In Mr. Sammler's Planet, Bellow exposes the current sexual madness, making the protagonist, Sammler, reflect that,

> The labor of Puritanism was now ending. The dark satanic mills changing into light satanic

> mills. The reprobates converted into children of joy, the sexual ways of the seraglio and of the Congo bush adopted by the emancipated masses of New York, Amsterdam, London. (MSP, p. 32)

Sammler denounces the sexual madness that he sees around himself in New York with the moral indignation of an ancient Jewish prophet. He tells Angela Gruner, "New York makes one think about the collapse of civilization, about Sodom and Gomorrah, the end of the world" (MSP, p. 304). Bellow shows how the current sexual emancipation may produce the bizarre and perverse types of sexuality that Angela Gruner and Walter Bruch in Mr. Sammler's Planet exhibit. Angela Gruner's sexual perversity has been discussed earlier. Walter Bruch, an older man, has an affair with a young lady and he admits to Sammler that he has a habit of making fetishes of women's arms.

Sammler is also attuned to the signs of impending apocalypse. As a Jew, he experienced the holocaust, and his escape from the mass grave was providential. Sammler knows that the collapse that the world had seen might take place again. In fact, the destructive forces are raging in the contemporary world: "You could see the suicidal impulses of the world pushing strongly" (MSP, p. 33). Moreover, Bellow shows the curse that man is afflicted with when he dares to live without God. Sammler recounts an episode from the holocaust when he barely escaped with

his life. Sammler killed a man whom he had disarmed. The man had begged for his life, saying "I have children" (MSP, p. 139). But Sammler felt no mercy, because his own suffering at that time had dehumanized him. Deprivation had made him mad and wild. At the moment of killing the German, Sammler had felt joy but, in retrospect, he admits that at that moment he was divorced from God.

Sammler also feels that forces of organized control can create madness in an environment. He says, "Madness is the attempted liberty of people who feel themselves overwhelmed by giant forces of organized control" (MSP, p. 146). Bellow has always denounced false individuality--the kind of individuality that alienates man from the rest of humanity. Sammler says, "This liberation into individuality has not been a great success. For a historian of great interest, but for one aware of suffering it is appalling. Hearts that get no real wage, souls that find no nourishment" (MSP, pp. 228-29). Sammler, however, is still full of hopes for man and he is certain about what should be the goal of human existence: "The spirit knows that its growth is the real aim of existence" (MSP, p. 236).

Bellow has not tried to soften the contours of reality. John Jacob Clayton is entirely right in saying that Bellow does not decry the fact that ordinary life is little conducive to human nobility.[13] Bellow is against materialism, and one of the reasons why human life has lost some of its dignity is that it has become commercialized. Herzog's

letter to the president reveals the menace that Bellow fears: "The life of every citizen is becoming a business. This, it seems to me, is one of the worst interpretations of the meaning of human life history has ever seen. Man's life is not a business" (H, p. 11).

Herzog is also aware of the fact that what man has to fear is the "enemies of life," and these enemies are powerful: "Come to the point. But what was the point? The point was that there were people who could destroy mankind and they were foolish and arrogant, crazy, and must be begged not to do it. Let the enemies of life step down" (H, p. 51). Moreover, Herzog is worried about unemployment problems, overpopulation, the race question, and the violence of adolescent gangs in the U. S. A. What Herzog vaguely has in mind is to offer his house and property in Ludeyville to the idealistic Bhave movement. Although he actually doesn't succeed in doing it, still his concern for humanity is obvious.

Bellow believes that in spite of his momentous mistakes, man still has a residual greatness because of which his history deserves to be continued. Sammler thinks,

> Underneath there persists, powerfully too, a thick sense of what is normal for human life. Duties are observed. Attachments are preserved. There is work. People show up for jobs. It is extraordinary. They come on the

> bus to the factory. They open the shop, they sweep, they wrap, they wash, they fix, they tend, they count, they mind the computers. Each day, each night. And however rebellious at heart, however despairing, terrified, or worn bare, come to their tasks. Up and down the elevator, sitting down to the desk, behind the wheel, tending machinery. For such a volatile and restless animal, an ape subject to so many diseases, to anguish, boredom, such discipline, such drill, such strength for regularity, such assumption of responsibility, such regard for order (even in disorder) is a great mystery, too. Oh, it is a mystery. One cannot mistake it for thorough madness, therefore. (MSP, pp. 146-47)

Violence is incapable of solving the problems of the contemporary world. Mark Harris is right in stating that throughout Bellow's work violence is pointless, mad, and associated with brainlessness.[14] Bellow favors life, peace, and civilization, and opposes guns and untimely death (Harris, p. 12).

For Bellow, life is mysterious and, certainly, nobody knows enough about it. Therefore, the Bellow protagonist has to pass beyond the ideal construction which either he or his Reality Instructors invent. Ultimately, he has to

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weep. As Bellow puts it, "There is a man's own greatness, and then there is the greatness of his imbecility--both are eternal."[17]

Bellow does not think that human capacities have diminished in the modern world:

> I do not feel that human capacity to feel and do really have dwindled or that the quality of humanity has degenerated. I rather think that people appear smaller because society has become so immense. Hugest of all are the fears that surround us. These are what makes it hard for us to determine our proper size and the importance of our deeds.[18]

For Bellow, man must "choose dignity"; he should love others and be courageous. Bellow also shows us that the individual possesses those qualities which can help him, if his will is perfect, to relate properly to both family and society. Ihab H. Hassan is right in saying, "Thus does the progress of Bellow's hero maintain a sense both of hope and humility. And thus does it disclose to us a form of human courage."[19]

In several of Bellow's short stories, the protagonists either choose the virtues of dignity, courage, and love or endorse them. In a short story entitled "Leaving the Yellow House," the protagonist is an old woman named Hattie who has lived all by herself at Sago Desert Lake for twenty years. She has few neighbors, and when she has a car

accident, she is alarmed about her future. All her neighbors express the fear that she cannot make it alone any longer. But she begins to recover. Bellow writes, "She [Hattie] was not to be miserable for long; she had the expression of a permanent survivor."[20] Hattie can't think of anyone to leave her yellow house to in her will. Therefore, while drunk, she leaves it to herself.

In "Looking for Mr. Green," George Grebe, a white man, delivers relief checks in a district populated mainly by blacks. Grebe had got the job during the difficult period of the depression, and he wants to do well in his job. The epigraph reveals the moral lesson the story contains: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."[21] One day Grebe goes out to find Mr. Green, a black, but he encounters many problems on the way: "It was an unfavorable day, too--fall, and cold, dark weather, windy" (p. 85). Grebe's chief warns him that he may have trouble locating the man because the black people might be suspicious of him. They might think that he is a plain-clothes detective, or an installment collector, or summons server.

Just as Old Hattie shows courage in confronting the future boldly, Grebe shows compassion. He must have had an idea of what real poverty is like. He knows that Green needs the relief check very badly; therefore, he decides to find Green whatever the obstacles may be. Some other people are even amused by his persistence. Finally, Grebe

locates the apartment, and although he doesn't see Green, he sees a naked, drunk woman, who comes to open the door. Thinking that she must be Mrs. Green, although he is not totally sure, Grebe delivers the check to her. Grebe's desire to help Green shows not only his compassion for others, but also his overwhelming desire to make his own existence meaningful. In this story, Bellow shows that if man exercises the power of his imagination, he can understand the plight of others, and then he can act properly in accordance with his knowledge.

The short story "Dora" takes its name from the protagonist who is forty-two and who grew up as an orphan. Like Grebe, she is an admirable character who tries to do her job properly. As she herself indicates, her spirit is willing:

> I'm strong for a person of my size and in good condition from being active. Many women far from old give in, cry and worry. That's especially so with married women who begin to see their youth behind them. But I, as long as death doesn't collect me, I'll be and act the same regardless--lucky I'm free from that.[22]

She doesn't care about her looks, for she doesn't intend to get married.

Dora's room is in the back, on a court with three apartment buildings. She is afraid of what she might hear at

night:

> Not that, but a quarrel, a father and a son, a daughter home late and the parents waiting for her with all kinds of accusations, a married couple who have been storing up for each other like bad, horrible grease, and in the middle of the night all that hate begins to burn and stink. (p. 189)

Nobody can help at such moments, for no one knows where exactly these sounds and screams are coming from. Bellow makes it clear that this screaming is due to mistakes which lead to pain, which in turn leads to further mistakes.

One night, a fifty-year-old neighbor falls unconscious in his own room because of a stroke. Dora, with the help of another lady, removes him to the hospital. The man does not regain consciousness and Dora senses that he is not probably going to live. Although she lived with him in the same apartment complex, she was not acquainted with him. But she becomes aware of him after the accident, when she notices his strangely unattached condition. Nothing personal can be discovered about the man, except his social security card and commercial letters. Dora realizes that the man is more alone than she, more alone than anybody she has ever known. Dora feels that people are getting to be like this man all the time, and she feels profound pity for him.

She doesn't miss a single day visiting this unconscious man. Her personality is profoundly altered. She tries on lipstick at midday while she should be working, and she visits him, knowing full well that he is probably not going to survive.

In "Address by Gooley MacDowell to the Hasbeens Club of Chicago," the protagonist, Gooley MacDowell, is a poor-man's Socrates. He says that we have too much advice, but Polonius-like, we cannot use it. In his speech, he emphasizes the need for both knowledge and happiness in human life: "I also say a knowledge to be true must be confirmed or arrive with a happiness, and we're a little thin on that side, too."[23]

"A Talk with the Yellow Kid" is actually an interview with a famous con-man who is now old and reformed, although the police still keep a sharp eye on him. The Kid reveals that he made several fortunes by swindling, and lost as many as he made, always in legitimate enterprises. What is important for our purposes is that the Kid betrays a basic integrity: "I have never cheated any honest man, only rascals. They may have been respectable but they were never any good."[24]

In "A Sermon by Dr. Pep," the protagonist Dr. Pep seems to be a crank. He says that by the use of euphemisms, modern man tries to disguise the fact that he, a rational being, is also carnivorous. The truth should be acknowledged, and a man should pay the price for the sacrificing of

life that is being continuously made for him. But Dr. Pep is actually wise, for underneath his seemingly rambling thoughts, he raises profound questions about human conduct and endorses the virtues of love and compassion: "A billion years of devouring are behind us; will we even them up with as many of love and compassion before the earthly time is up?"[25]

Bellow also upholds the virtue of love in his short story "The Old System." Dr. Braun is the central character who recounts the family history of two of his deceased cousins, Isaac Braun and his sister Tina. "Braun now discovered that he and Cousin Isaac had loved each other."[26] Since there are two more survivors in the same family, we wonder why the deceased Braun alone arouses such feelings in him. Dr. Braun himself provides the answer, one which reveals the underlying basis of human relationships: "But in childhood, Isaac had shown him [Dr. Braun] great kindness. The others, not very much" (p. 45).

Only Isaac became a millionaire; the others, though well-to-do, couldn't amass such wealth. Tina bore Isaac a grudge, because, according to her, he did not give her and her other brothers any chance to become rich. Actually, the fault was not Isaac's. At a critical moment, Tina and the other brothers backed out of putting money into a profitable but risky investment. Isaac had to gamble; the others were not prepared to. As a result, Tina considers Isaac as a "heartless man" (p. 63), saying that

Isaac would pick God's own pocket (p. 55). She also says that Isaac never had a tear in his eye unless the wind was blowing (p. 62). The quarrel between Tina and Isaac lasts for years. Eventually, the brothers make it up, but Tina does not and Isaac and Tina do not see each other for some years. Afterwards, Isaac remembers his father's affection for Tina, and that once Tina was his "baby sister" (p. 63).

The pious thing before the Day of Atonement, a Jewish religious occasion, is to visit the dead and to exchange forgiveness with the living. Isaac visits Tina on these occasions, but she will not forgive him. Even when Tina has cancer of the liver and lies dying in the hopsital, she refuses to see him. After much pleading from others, she agrees to see him, provided he pays her twenty thousand dollars. Isaac considers his sister to be more important than the money. He brings the money and comes to see her in the hospital. But Tina refuses to take the money. The whole affair at the deathbed appears to have been planned by Tina as a test of love.

The following thoughts come to Dr. Braun's consciousness as he considers the events of the past:

> And these tears! When you wept them from the heart, you felt you justified something. But what did you understand? Again, <u>nothing</u>! It is only an intimation of understanding. A promise that mankind might--<u>might</u>, mind you--

> eventually through its gift which might--might again!--be a divine gift, comprehend why it lived. Why life, why death. (pp. 82-83)

When Tina dies, the Brauns shed tears. Dr. Braun feels that these tears mean something. Life is so mysterious that one cannot understand it totally, but one can intuit that the purpose of life is to reach out towards other human beings in a spirit of understanding, love, and compassion. Ultimately, it is through the exercise of these qualities that one can justify his existence.

In his theoretical writings, Bellow has talked about the efficacy of love in human life:

> "To believe in the existence of human beings as such is love," says Simone Weil. This is what makes the difference. It is possible--all too possible--to say when we have read one more modern novel: "So what? What do I care? You yourself, the writer, didn't really care." But this caring or believing or love alone matters. All the rest, obsolescense, historical views, manners, agreed views of the universe, is simply nonsense and trash. If we don't care, don't immediately care, then perish books both old and new, and novelists, and governments, too! If we do care, if we do believe in the existence of others, then what we write is necessary. . . .

> A book, any book, may easily be superfluous. But to manifest love--can that be superfluous? Is there so much of it about us? Not so much. It is still effective against distraction.[27]

Bellow's advocacy of family cohesion is intertwined with his profound concern for the future of mankind. For him, love for humanity also means love for the family. Sammler's reflections reveal Bellow's love for the earth:

> And we know now from photographs the astronauts took, the beauty of the earth, its white and its blue, its fleeces, the great glitter afloat. A glorious planet. But wasn't everything being done to make it intolerable to abide here, an unconscious collaboration of all souls spreading madness and poison? To flush us out? (MSP, p. 135)

Bellow is also aware of the unity of man. He states that we must take our chance on a belief in the psychic unity of mankind.[28] Bellow's awareness of the oneness of human life shows that it is possible for man to relate harmoniously to both family and humanity. Tony Tanner is correct in thinking that more than one Bellow figure is spurred to undertake a search for the eternal human spirit among the ruins of modern civilization.[29] Frederick J. Hoffman points out that throughout his career, Bellow's concern has

been to show that a man's actions may be very absurd but he must take his chances in society.[30]

Joseph asks himself the question, "How should a good man live; what ought he to do?" (DM, p. 39). Before he requests the draft, he finds an answer. The only thing left for a man is to join the Brotherhood of Man. Thus, Joseph says, "I had not done well alone. I doubted whether anyone could" (DM, p. 190). He realizes that "there are no values outside life. There is nothing outside life" (DM, p. 165). Herzog also makes similar discoveries. To Luke Asphalter, he says, "I really believe that brotherhood is what makes a man human" (H, p. 272). Herzog also realizes that man does not seek chaos; he seeks harmony all his days:

> "The dream of man's heart, however we may distrust and resent it, is that life may complete itself in significant pattern. Some incomprehensible way. Before death. Not irrationally but incomprehensibly fulfilled. Spared by the clumsy police guardians, you get one last chance to know justice. Truth." (H, p. 303)

Sammler, though he sees around him many people making fools of themselves, is still full of admiration for man. He tells Angela, "There is still such a thing as man--or there was. There are still human qualities. Our weak species fought its fears; our crazy species fought its criminality.

We are an animal of genius" (MSP, p. 305).

Chirantan Kulshrestha rightly argues that "[F]rom Joseph to Citrine, Bellow's protagonists show a consistent attempt to outgrow their feeling that life is without pattern and move over to a position where they can exercise choices discriminately, acquire an awareness of their own significance, and affirm their faith in purposive values."[31] In the ultimate analysis, Bellow's view of life is religious. Kulshrestha rightly adds that "The religious view of life latent in Bellow's novels derives from two basic assumptions. Bellow considers it possible for an individual to step into religious life through a self-generated yearning for significance and to approach God through an acceptance of ordinary reality and the norms of ethical conduct" (Kulshrestha, p. 53).

Bellow is full of reverence for life. Mark Harris recognizes that this reverence for life is illustrated in Bellow's celebration of animals, plants, and trees. Bellow does so with his incomparable eye for the things of nature, their colors, their habits, and their motions of life (Harris, p. 163). As regards humanity, John Jacob Clayton perceptively points out that unlike Herman Wouk, Bellow does not affirm the present individual and the present society, but their possibilities (Clayton, pp. 5-6). In other words, Bellow cherishes the best self in an individual; he wants man to prove that he is a noble creation of God. In a very important interview, Bellow declares that

some truths may be man's allies in a mysterious universe: "It may be . . . that truth is not punitive. I've tried to suggest this in my books. . . . There may be some truths which are, after all, our friends in the universe."[32]

Bellow's message is at once humanistic and religious. It is a gospel which we find in the Bible: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." In Bellow's fiction, love for the family is just the first step to the goal of love for humanity. As Irving Malin indicates, "For the Jews the structure of the family incarnated universal structure."[33] Though the family is but one unit, it is a very basic unit in society. Without this unit, a larger society is not possible. I have not found any evidence in Bellow's fiction that the family is crumbling. One can say that the extended family is no longer fully operative. Parents die, and the conditions of modern life throw the siblings into different directions. They grow up and develop different types of personalities. But wherever they may be, there are basic ties that always bind them together. Because of the neurosis, cruelty, materialism, and greed of his partner, Bellow's protagonist may not initially find repose in marriage. He may himself partially be at fault. In either case, he traces the contours of the other women he meets, bleeding in his heart for the children from whom he is constrained to be absent. Sometimes, he succeeds in finding a congenial woman, and after the tempest, there comes a lull in his soul. Often he fails, and after taking

stock of himself and the situation of his life, he reaches a point of stasis. But he is also waiting for the next fray around the corner, when life will require him to march onwards in his quest for individuation and ultimately to effect a positive and proper relationship to humanity.

NOTES

[1] Richard Lehan, "Existentialism in Recent American Fiction: The Demonic Quest," in Recent American Fiction: Some Critical Views, ed. Joseph J. Waldmeir (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), pp. 63-64.

[2] M. Gilbert Porter, Whence the Power? The Artistry and Humanity of Saul Bellow (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1974), pp. 192-94.

[3] Donald William Markos, "The Humanism of Saul Bellow," Diss. Illinois 1966, p. 3.

[4] Robert D. Crozier, S. J., "Theme in Augie March," Critique, 7 (Spring-Summer 1965), 21-22.

[5] Chester E. Eisinger, "Saul Bellow: Love and Identity," Accent, 18 (Summer 1958), 182-83. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[6] Saul Bellow, "The Writer as Moralist," Atlantic Monthly, 211 (March 1963), p. 62.

[7] Saul Bellow, "The Writer and the Audience," Perspectives USA, 9 (Autumn 1954), 102.

[8] The Writer as Moralist," p. 61.

[9] Saul Bellow, "Some Notes on Recent American Fiction," Encounter, 21 (November 1963), p. 23.

[10] Saul Bellow, "The Thinking Man's Wasteland" [excerpt from address], Saturday Review, 48 (3 April 1965), p. 20.

[11] Saul Bellow, To Jerusalem and Back (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), p. 182.

[12] To Jerusalem and Back, p. 36.

[13] John Jacob Clayton, Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 24. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[14] Mark Harris, Saul Bellow: Drumlin Woodchuck (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1980), p. 15. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[15] Marcus Klein, "A Discipline of Nobility: Saul Bellow's Fiction," in his After Alienation: American Novels in Mid-Century (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1964), p. 34.

[16] Robert R. Dutton, Saul Bellow (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 2.

[17] Saul Bellow, "Distractions of a Fiction Writer," in The Living Novel: A Symposium, ed. Granville Hicks (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 15.

[18] Stanley J. Kunitz, ed., Twentieth Century Authors: First Supplement (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1955), p. 73.

[19] Ihab H. Hassan, "Saul Bellow: Five Faces of a Hero," Critique, 3 (Summer 1960), 36.

[20] Saul Bellow, "Leaving the Yellow House," in Mosby's Memoirs and Other Stories (New York: The Viking Press, 1958), p. 15.

[21] Saul Bellow, "Looking for Mr. Green," in Mosby's Memoirs and Other Stories (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), p. 85. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[22] Saul Bellow, "Cora," Harper's Bazaar, 83 (November 1949), p. 118. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[23] Saul Bellow, "Address by Gooley MacDowell to the Hasbeens Club of Chicago," Hudson Review, 4 (Summer 1951), 226.

[24] Saul Bellow, "A Talk with the Yellow Kid," Reporter, 15 (6 September 1956, p. 42.

[25] Saul Bellow, "A Sermon by Dr. Pep," Partisan Review, 16 (May 1949), p. 460.

[26] Saul Bellow, "The Old System," in Mosby's Memoirs and Other Stories (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), p. 45. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[27] "Distractions of a Fiction Writer," p. 20.

[28] "The Writer and the Audience," p. 100.

[29] Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), p. 23.

[30] Frederick J. Hoffman, "The Fool of Experience: Saul Bellow's Fiction," in Contemporary American Novelists, ed.

Harry T. Moore (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), p. 85.

[31] Chirantan Kulshrestha, Saul Bellow: The Problem of Affirmation (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1978), p. 18. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

[32] Gordon Lloyd Harper, "Saul Bellow," in Saul Bellow: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Earl Rovit (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975), p. 18.

[33] Irving Malin, Saul Bellow's Fiction (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1959), p. 56.

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v

VITA

ABI MOHAMMAD NIZAMUL HUQ

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: THE PATTERN OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN FOUR SELECTED NOVELS OF SAUL BELLOW

Major Field: English

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Faridpur, Bangladesh, 2 October 1948, the son of the late Mr. Abi Mohammad Manir Mian and Mrs. Rezia Begum.

Education: Graduated from Saint Gregory's High School, Dacca, Bangladesh, in 1963; received Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Dacca, Bangladesh, in 1969; received Master of Arts degree from the University of Dacca in 1971. Received Diploma in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language from University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology, U. K., in 1976; completed requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Oklahoma State University in July 1983.

Professional Experience: Teaching English Language and Literature in Bangladesh, 1971-1979. Teaching Freshman Composition in Oklahoma State University, 1980-1983.