CONCLUSION

Diana Minotaite states:

Great American writers have always been disposed to different forms of quest in their works as one of their main preoccupations is with the nature and the creation of the Self. Quests recover essential things to human life in encounters between cultures, with alien surroundings, people, animals, nature, or the Other; namely, the waking of the individual in the knowledge of himself, knowledge about others, the world, and the meaning of life. American novels of quest lay emphasis on the nature of human freedom as the heroes of quest novels more often than not balance between their fear of being entrapped into some fixed forms of existence and that of having an amorphous identity or no identity at all.¹

By relying on a balance between man's participation in the world and man's perceptive ability, Bellow establishes a trend in his novels that breaks away from emphasis upon the absurd and concentrates on man's ability to make a useful, productive life out of an often incomprehensible yet tolerable world. According to Alfred Kazin,
What makes Bellow's work so unusual, and in its very sense of the extreme often so comic, is the fact that his characters are all burdened by a speculative quest, a need to understand their particular destiny within the general problem of human destiny. This compulsion, even when it is unconscious, as is the case of Asa Leventhal in *The Victim* or Tommy Wilhelm in *Seize the Day*, or mocked in himself as it is by Augie March, is the motivating energy of his heroes. And in *Henderson the Rain King*, the cry "I want! I want!" forces the hero to desert his family for Africa….²

In another context he writes:

... the Bellow persona was an hallucinated observer of what Sartre called the "hell that is other people" -- he brilliantly sized up the strength in other people's arms, lives, faces, seeing what they had to say to the predominating self's vision at the heart of each Bellow novel.... Bellow influenced himself far more than others ever did, which is why book after book added up to what he had experienced and learned. The key belief was that right thinking is virtue and can leave you in charge of the life that is so outrageous to live.

The process of self-teaching thus becomes the heart of Bellow's novels, and the key to their instructiveness for others. One could compile from Bellow's novels a whole commonplace book of wisdom in the crisis era that has been Bellow's subject
and opportunity. His novels are successively novels of instruction as well as existential adventure tales.\(^3\)

In his novels, Bellow deals with the phenomenology of selfhood, emphasizing the plight of man. He considers the vital questions of what it means to be human, what a human being should be like, how to become better and gain a complete fulfillment without alienating from society. Bellow's heroes are never static, they always aspire to something better in flight from their inner chaos and confusion, from the inhuman, superficial, and false. Therefore, a hero in quest is the pivot of Bellow's novels.

Bellow's first novel, *Dangling Man*, shows that spiritual fulfilment, to be "human," is to not to close the "gap between the ideal construction and the real world" (102) but instead to accept the real world as it is. All the various ideal constructions fail for Joseph in his search to be "human" because reality cannot be idealized or conceptualized. Bellow seems to imply in this novel that one can only experience it with the hope that this experience will be one that is life-affirming and gratuitous in nature. This is where we truly dangle as human beings: in our encounter with reality that reveals its genuine nature to us not as despair but one of hope.

Like Joseph's reason in not being able to provide answers to what it means to be "human," so does his experiment in unconstrained emotions end in failure. This experiment that marked the beginning of the novel is replaced with Joseph enlisting in the Army, something that one would expect of a protagonist in a Hemingway novel. In fact, Joseph recognizes that
Hemingway's stoicism is a response to the same question of what it means to be "human" in this present age:

Great pressure is brought to bear to make us undervalue ourselves.... We are schooled in quietness and, if one of us takes his measures occasionally, he does so coolly, as if he were examining his fingernails, not his soul .... Who can be the earnest huntsman of himself when he knows he is in turn a quarry? Or nothing so distinctive as quarry, but one of a shoal, driven toward the weirs. (86)

In a world without belief, how does one find a way to live, to be "human"? Joseph's answer suggests the Hemingway model could be such a path, even though it is an "ideal construction" that is ultimately is illusionary. The ironic ending of the novel underscores this point:

Hurray for regular hours!
And for the supervision of the spirit!
Long live regimentation! (140)

Clearly, to be "human" is not to adopt "regular hours" and "supervision of the spirit," but to recognize that life is one of grace from which we can choose and live a life of the spirit. The tragedy of Joseph is that he comes to this realization but later rejects it in the name of reason, but reason is not able to furnish him meaning to his life and thus leads him to surrender to an ideal construction that is neither real nor appealable. The result is he becomes
relieved of his "self-determination" with his "freedom canceled" for societal authority.

Joseph’s inability to cope with his freedom is a result of his programme to become a self-educated man, an ideal construction of eighteenth-century rationalism. But when it comes to reflection upon himself, we find his thoughts are unsorted, with various musings here and there but no concluding statements. Instead of philosophical examination, Joseph writes of the quotidian, as when he observes himself in the mirror:

... I observed new folds near my mouth and, around my eyes and the root of my nose, marks that had not been there a year before. It is not pleasant to find such changes. But, tying my tie, I shrugged them off as inevitable, the price of experience, an outlay that had better be made ungrudgingly, since it was bound in any case to be collected. (127)

The lack of an orderly systematic way to organize his thoughts and his fear of abstract discourse in Joseph are a reaction to such thought found in the character Jimmy Burns. This conflict between abstract, organized thought and individual existence is manifested when Joseph makes a scene to force Burns to recognize his existence. Initially Burns ignores his former colleague in the restaurant, but he is forced to acknowledge Joseph’s existence when Joseph halts squarely before Burns. As much as the ideologue may try, he or she cannot think someone out of existence. Reality cannot be ignored.
Joseph’s failure in systematic, abstract thought is what actually preserves him. Although he seeks to discover what it means to be "human" through his reason, Joseph’s refusal to conceptualize his thought in an abstract and systematic manner allows him to be in touch with reality as it exists. Whereas Jimmy Burns has reasoned himself out of reality, Joseph remains in touch with the world because the reality of someone like Burns repels him from using his reason abstractly. The tragedy for Joseph is that he eventually remains locked in the epistemological mode of reason, even when he encounters moments of grace as when he visits his childhood room. The reason he employs may be better than the one Burns uses -- concrete in attention and unsorted in its manner -- but it is unable to furnish any significant meaning for his existence.

As Joseph admits, his experiment has been a failure. But the experiment failed not because Joseph did not find spiritual fulfilment; rather, the experiment failed because Joseph refused to reject the "ideal constructions" of reason when he experienced reality's life-affirming and gratuitous nature when he visited his childhood room. In other words, Bellow points out the failure of archetypes to guide us in our lives because the experience of reality will always be greater and more resourceful than any account of it.

The irony is that Joseph's failure of thought is what actually preserves him: life's resistance to complete conceptualization contains an impulse for us to continue to live: "there might be a mechanism in us that tried to give us all
of life when there was danger of being cut off"(139), as Joseph reflects in his childhood room. The failure of his experiment does not lead Joseph to suicide, as one would expect, but to join the Army. Joseph's search for his special fate will be conducted in society and not in isolation from it. To be "human," therefore, is to be part of a community and not try to escape from it.

The Victim describes the frustrations of a New Yorker, Asa Leventhal, seeking to discover and preserve his own identity against the background of domestic and religious conflicts. The novel, which Bellow described as "a novel whose theme is guilt," is an unsettling moral parable. Asa's problem of finding himself is primarily a problem stemming from his ideas regarding his rather precarious position in the world. At the beginning of the novel, when Asa says, "I was lucky. I got away with it"(26), he means that his bad start, his mistakes, the things that might have wrecked him somehow combined to establish him. He had almost fallen in with that part of humanity of which he was frequently mindful, the part that did not get away with it -- the lost, the overcome, the effaced, the ruined.

Left alone in New York City while his wife is visiting her family, Asa Leventhal is confronted by a former co-worker whom he can barely remember. What seems like a chance encounter evolves into an uncanny bond that threatens to ruin Leventhal's life. As their relationship grows ever more volatile, Bellow stages a searching exploration of our obligations toward others.
At the heart of Bellow's work rests the conviction that man's problems derive from a profound dislocation of his social and political universe. *The Victim* opens with the picture of a middle-class magazine editor who appears unaware of any fundamental disharmony in his universe; Asa Leventhal's greatest concerns seem to be an illness in the family, a vacationing wife, and a dirty apartment. Despite his apparently contented surface, we soon learn that Asa has come perilously near falling spiritual prey to the environment.

It is through Kirby Allbee that Leventhal will achieve an awakening that will allow him to know what he is, to know what he is for, to know his purpose, to seek grace. Several years before the novel opens, Kirby Allbee had secured Asa Leventhal an interview with his employer. Whether at Allbee's instigation or from natural maliciousness, Mr. Rudiger mercilessly attacked the young man, and Asa, in turn, flew back at him with all the stored-up vehemence of weary, fruitless months of job seeking. Shortly after this encounter, Kirby Allbee was fired. Years later, having exhausted his dead wife's insurance money, Allbee returns as a kind of *alter ego* antagonist to remind Asa of his "guilt." Asa Leventhal is not totally unaware of the suffering and evil which dominate the modern world; he knows something of what it is to be a "victim." He merely chooses not to concern himself with this aspect of life and recedes into isolation. Allbee accuses him of keeping his spirit "under lock and key," where it is unnecessary to have to make any kind of reconciliations. At first Allbee seems only a hopelessly degenerate anti-
Semite, but he becomes a significant catalyst, forcing Asa to break out of his complacent mold and to admit the fact of his guilt.

Bellow’s third work, *The Adventures of Augie March*, is not only a picturesque novel of great zest but also a kind of *Bildungsroman*, an autobiographical record of physical experience as it relates to intellectual and emotional growth. Through a series of events from Chicago of the Depression to post-war Paris, Augie March experiences life as an affirmation of the human spirit. Augie’s own exuberant narration of his life, beginning in Chicago during the Great Depression, reveals a personality who is in some ways a reckless and amoral character reminiscent of the rogue-heroes of the Spanish picaresque novel of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Yet he is also a man who must define himself by his relationship to others and who views the world at large as basically sound.

Augie is a modern picaro in quest of "a better fate." Augie’s life story does not follow the clear cut pattern of a man on a quest. The hero, who is also the narrator, advances through a series of adventures which are relevant to a general life experience. Still, it is possible to discern a few stages in the hero’s development of personality: his inner and outer conflict and revelation. At the beginning of the novel, Augie is presented as an man without direction, a single purpose of life, or any high ambitions. In search of "a better fate," the words he often repeats throughout the novel, Augie engages in many kinds of activities which are varied in character: he works as a stock boy in a department store, sells trivia in a railway station, steals and sells textbooks,
begins a university education, becomes a coal salesman, enters the underworld, takes care of dogs for the social elite, falls in love twice, becomes a union organizer, trains an eagle to catch giant lizards in Mexico, joins the Merchant Marine, finally he marries and settles in Paris, where he participates in some form of shady international business. However, in the beginning, his understanding of "a better fate" is very vague and obscure. He exclaims, "What did I, out of all this, want for myself? I couldn't have told you ... I was circling yet ... I know I longed very much, but I didn't understand for what" (84).

Augie does not lack the attractiveness of personality, either: he is affectionate, sensitive, and is able to enjoy life, to see the good in all people, take them for what they are. The hero takes to everything that arouses his enthusiasm. However, his fight with deterministic inheritance tends to become an obsession. Augie shuns all kinds of influence if that makes a threat to his free unique self. At this point of his life Augie does not have a unique self; and does not even know where he belongs as he is a friend to people of all kinds. His problem is that in search of "something better" he leads an uninvolved existence. Augie is an objective observer of life though unable to affirm his ideals in life situations that he has to face. It is through involvement that a person can realize his human potential, create his selfhood, define his self.

After Augie's beloved Thea decides to leave him, the hero has a certain revelation. He realizes that all his life he has had an inferiority complex, was "feeble and poor, some silly creature, laughing and harmless." Therefore, to
conceal his weakness, he played their games. In other words, he has never been himself. Augie hero makes an attempt at self-examination:

Now I had started, and this terrible investigation had to go on. If this was how I was, it was certainly not how I appeared but must be my secret. So if I wanted to please, it was in order to mislead or show everyone, wasn't it, now? And this must be because I had an idea everyone was my better and had something I didn't have. But what did people seem to me anyhow, something fantastic? I didn't want to be what they made of me but wanted to please them. Kindly explain! An independent fate, and love too -- what a confusion! (401)

In this passage Augie has an insight into his problem. When this realization dawns on him, the hero makes up his mind to quit his pilgrimage. His biggest wish becomes to find the "axial lines" of life. Augie's great hope, he says, "is based upon getting to be still, so that the axial lines can be found. When striving stops, the truth comes as a gift -- bounty, harmony, love, and so forth" (514).

Augie learns many truths about himself from other people. Likewise, his friend Clem Tambow tries to prove to Augie that he has "a nobility syndrome" (434) and therefore, he cannot adjust to the reality situation. The hero, as he later finds out, is in search of Man with a capital letter. He discovers that man longs to be more than he is. But life is all there is, it depends on him how he
will learn "to arrest the moment," "seize the day," pull himself together to find his niche in life, which would help him fulfill his human potential, as "Man's character is his fate"(3). Saul Bellow's philosophy of life seems to be marked by his affirmation of the worthiness of human existence, a firm belief in man, his ability, as mentioned in *Henderson the Rain King*, "to burst the spirit's sleep," his reason and inner strength to be his own redeemer.

In *Seize the Day*, we find Tommy Wilhelm's quest for identity, his progression from the narrowing question of money plaguing the Americans of the 30s to many a metaphysical question apparently unanswered -- the progress in the novel being from a social to a metaphysical stance. In this quest for values he proceeds from a standpoint of total humiliation to the realization of self and of love in the final scene which is assuredly illustrative of a redemptive vision.

During the single day, Saul Bellow weaves brilliantly many events back and forth in the novel, including Tommy's changing name, going to Hollywood to learn producing movies, resigning his jobs, asking for help from his father, filing a divorce petition against his wife, capital investment, etc.; in the end he joins a stranger's funeral parade, follows them into a chapel, and begins to comprehend his life after listening to the music. Through these series of events the author Bellow seems to present his view that they are representations of the hero's struggle or quest for his life goal. First, Tommy's changing name signifies his attempt to gain his identity and recognition in society. He regards his old name Wilky as too Jewish and alters it into
"Tommy," which sounds American. Second, Tommy quits his schooling to learn to produce a movie in Hollywood, which shows he was ambitious and idealistic in his youth. Third, as to the divorce, the novel seems to suggest that Tommy breaks the ethics of Jewish family to run for a fresh love. Fourth, the cold hard surroundings and Tommy's fragility show him to be timid, irresolute and indecisive, which leads him to his being fired of his job, though he was promised promotion.

As Tommy has no relatives to turn to for help, he is forced to ask Dr. Tamkin, a fake doctor and speculator, to put his final 700 dollars into a stock market, in which he wishes to earn a little more. However, his hope is destroyed when Dr. Tamkin elopes with the capital investment. The embarrassment forces him to ask for help from his father, a millionaire. Tommy seems to be very emotional for he still thinks of his father to rely upon at the critical time. And his intended dependence on his father is a clear signal to look for fatherly love. Unexpectedly, the father refuses to give him any money, which makes Tommy feel depressed and disappointed with his father.

Still disgusted and fuming, Tommy receives an urgent call from his wife Margaret to remind him of the bills he has to cover. He loses control, confronts and shouts at his wife like he never thought he could. Walking down Broadway streets again, Tommy in his hopeless and frantic search for Tamkin, stumbles into several resolutions -- he will file a divorce, leave the city, and marry Olive.

Thinking he spots Tamkin in the crowd, Tommy follows them to the
chapel. He finds himself in the middle of a funeral service. Having given up the search, Tommy cries over the dead. He cries not for the bereaved family, but for himself, for his mistakes, for the things he let himself be, and for the things he longs for himself to become. Having cried with all his heart, Tommy feels the release of that "great and happy oblivion of tears" (118).

According to Northrop Frye, there are four phases in the life journey of the hero of a quest-romance: conflict, death struggle, (provisional) dismemberment, and recognition of a newborn world. These stages can be traced in Henderson's life journey. At the first stage, he is shown in conflict with himself and society. Henderson recounts his life and reflects on the reasons of his going to Africa: "What made me take this trip to Africa? There is no quick explanation. Things got worse and worse and worse and pretty soon they were too complicated" (3). The hero's life in a society of material excess leads to hidden depression, rage, and finally to the conclusion that he is not fit to live among people. He seems to hate both society as it is and himself for not being able to oppose it by becoming better. Henderson perceives himself to be a failure, understands that his behaviour is irrational and unacceptable but is unable to put any effort to change it to the better. At this stage of his life, Henderson has no inner strength to resist the negative influence of society upon him and rejects its values because he has absorbed its features, and is therefore at war with himself. The hero suffers a "poverty of the soul" (26). Here Bellow is concerned with the spiritual malaise in an environment of sufficiency. Society Henderson lives in cannot satisfy his spiritual needs. The
second phase in Henderson’s existence is his direct confrontation with death when, because of his fault, Miss Lenox, an elderly family maid, succumbs to a heart attack and passes away. The woman’s death caused by him is that momentous event which suddenly illuminates his past, present, and future life. Now Henderson perceives that he is on the verge of his personal degradation, his spiritual downfall. He admits that he just could not continue as he was where he was and that "something could be and had to be done"(188). Thus, it serves as a turning point in his life. It is a characteristic feature of Bellow’s heroes to affirm life over death, the need for life to move in the face of its limits. Therefore, the hero leaves for Africa to find a remedy for his situation. This is Africa of the mind where values can be reconsidered and reality subjected to new perspectives.

The third stage of Henderson’s life is his account of his experiences with the natives of the Arnewi and the Wariri as part of his desperate attempt to "become better." In Africa Henderson returns to the primal bases of life and feeling, in nature, culture, and the animal kingdom. However, when his idea of a home-made bomb to drive out frogs from the cistern is not successful as along with the frogs the end of the cistern is also blown out, and all the water escapes into the arid soil, Henderson cannot understand his everlasting failure to achieve something of value. At this point, the hero experiences "dismemberment." Henderson's adventures in the land of the Wariri marks the fourth and final stage in his existence when he comes to a Great Awakening and welcomes a newborn world. Here the hero undergoes two tests of his
personality and learns lessons of life. First, Henderson succeeds in lifting up Mummah, goddess of rain, and is therefore appointed as the Rain King. The hero gains victory because at this moment he relies on himself and trusts his own strength and power to do it. Man's phobias make him self-recoiled as well as deprive him of his ability to see and enjoy the world's beauty. Learning to stand on all fours in a leonine way will enable him to conceive of the environment: the sky, the sun, the leaves and feel oneness with them, which will help him "rise from a grave of solitude"(226). What is more, the lioness will "force the present moment upon him"(260). Henderson learns to "seize the day." He starts feeling kindness and love. Only when an individual becomes aware of and develops his potential and thus achieves harmony with himself can he start appreciating his own life and the life of others. A happy human being can endow the world with happiness.

_Herzog_ is a contemporary portrait of the alienated American Jewish intellectual in search of identity. From Herzog's perspective this novel describes modern intellectuals' suffering, their nihilistic, confused and corrupting moral status which is reflected in the commonly existed spiritual crisis in society. Saul Bellow expresses his fear that the human species is losing its foothold on sanity and that the individual person is losing his capacity to comprehend ideas and to feel genuine emotions. Lacking necessary, justifiable ideologies, we are thrown back upon ourselves only to discover our own emptiness. Without moral certainty or without clear, rational explanations of the meaning of life, and without God, modern man is deeply
troubled. Herzog is Bellow’s modern man, exploring the possibilities of the individual in contemporary society. Continually, he is assailed by neuroses and forces beyond his control, and he must struggle to maintain his identity and his humanity. It is this crisis of identity which is at the heart of Bellow’s novel. At last, Herzog succeeds in questing for survival in his own psychological way. What makes Herzog so overwhelming is its attempt to incorporate so many contrary ideas. Contrasted throughout the novel are nihilism and hope, despair and comic irony, alienation and accommodation. He shows symptoms of withdrawal and masochism, yet he tends also to be wilful and sadistic. One of the novel’s major ideas is that man must survive by maintaining a painful awareness of this mixed human condition. Its hero also learns that it is impossible for one mind to comprehend all of human reality, and that the self is destroyed when it submits its destiny to others. He must constantly struggle to assert his individuality. Finally, he discovers that existence involves the necessity of accepting fragmentation, failure, suffering, irrationality, decay, and death. The novel offers no answers beyond this recognition of our burdens and limitations. For Bellow, it is only through burdens and limitations that we can achieve identity.

Herzog learns of himself and makes sense of both his personal and intellectual history through his constant manufacturing of his own self by writing letters never meant to reach the addressees. Bellow constantly digresses from the plot to improvise on the meaning of existence and selfhood
while offering the reader Herzog's attempts at self-definition. For instance, in a letter to General Eisenhower Herzog appropriately writes:

Tolstoi (1828-1910) said, 'Kings are history's slaves.' The higher one stands in the scale of power, the more his actions are determined. To Tolstoi, freedom is entirely personal. That man is free whose condition is simple, truthful -- real. To be free is to be released from historical limitation. On the other hand, GWF Hegel (1770-1831) understood the essence of human life to be derived from history. History, memory -- that is what makes us human, that, and our knowledge of death: 'by man came death.' For knowledge of death makes us wish to extend our lives at the expense of others. And this is the root of the struggle for power.

Placed just about at the centre of the novel, Herzog's recognition of Hegel's concept of history and its relation to human existence also accounts for his quest for self-recognition.

Herzog, a representative of well-educated intellectuals, is a misfit in society, and cannot reconcile with the outer world. All these problems are manifested in his alienation, his masochism, and his fear of death. Bellow's real intention is to show his optimistic outlook of life from the negative side. His very purpose is to appeal to people to live in an optimistic way. Herzog's self-knowledge is linked with the social through his letters ironically. His
acceptance of death and coming to terms with the fact that existence leads to mortality, which is triggered by his watching the murder trial of a woman accused of causing the death of a small child and his car accident, comes with his decision to stop writing and accept existence as it is, embracing all its irregularities.

In *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, Bellow's primary interest lies, as the title suggests, in global history, concerning two historical events: the Holocaust, in the past, and the Apollo moon shot which occupies the immediate future of the novel. Bellow developed in the novel the opposition between optimistic and pessimistic visions of global history.

From his intellectual eyrie Mr. Sammler, a Holocaust survivor living in New York, casts a cold eye -- one eye, in fact -- on the life and death of the planet, surveying at a glance an obsolete, bankrupt Western intellectual tradition -- which he himself is yet part of -- and laying before us all its sinister ambiguities. To Sammler, the USA at the time is a scene of commotion, where rebellion, violence, madness and absurdity abound; and where the youth either indulge themselves in sex or are obsessed with fantastic illusions. The chaotic external environment seems to threaten the very existence of Mr. Sammler. However, the alienated individual, in spite of his confusion and frustration, never quits his spiritual pilgrimage in a heroic attempt to reach the unattainable truth and order in life.
During the three days it takes Sammler to cross the city to reach the bedside of the dying Elya Gruner, Sammler's one-eyed, inward-looking view of the world puts the reader in touch with a remarkable range of experience and incident from the teeming, tumultuous urban landscape: bizarre encounters with pickpockets, a heckling student at Columbia University, the pursuit of a stolen manuscript, the lunatic antics of his own and Gruner's children.

A key theme of the novel is humanity's quest for self-understanding. Sammler thinks Walter and Angela are accurate reflections of the American psyche. He thinks that the modern world has slid into spiritual despair. In this milieu, Sammler sees himself as "not quite human" and largely alienated from those around him. However, Elya Gruner's life educates Sammler. Born in a "hoodlum neighborhood," he became wealthy through the medical practice and then made a fortune in real-estate and other business dealings. He sent his children to the top schools, supports distant relatives financially, and tries to be affectionate to everyone. If he has some character flaws -- being overly gregarious, proud, perhaps having had some corrupt dealings -- they are overshadowed in the end by his generosity and sincerity.

Throughout the novel, Sammler goes to check in on Elya at the hospital and tries to make sure that he is comfortable. From Sammler's other-worldly perspective, the best course is to make the transition to non-being or eternal-being as painless as possible. But Sammler discovers that his retreat from humanity is not what was desired by Elya or required of himself. What Elya needed was to communicate, to be alive even at the end, to have the chance
to put things in order. Sammler realizes that by his retreat, he wronged Elya, though Elya would never say so, and probably would not even think so. Sammler is confronted with a duty on this earth that cannot be set aside even if he does not feel at home here. Elya's example teaches Sammler that he must come back, a second time, to the land of the living. Sammler learns that even Angela and Wallace are not as spiritually bankrupt as he first thought. All human beings are naturally oriented toward the transcendent source of order, meaning, and purpose; and from this orientation, goodness flows into humanity.

In *Humboldt's Gift* Charlie Citrine questions himself on why he was so obsessed with the older poet Von Humboldt Fleisher for close to 40 years of his life; "Is it that the number of people who got serious about Art and Thought in the USA is so small that even those who flunked out are unforgettable?" (370). As the sorry state of Humboldt is revealed, the poet is seen as a victim of American society.

Saul Bellow seems to suggest that the artist in America has three stages: 1. the enthusiastic beginner finding a mentor, 2. the prime years of success, and 3. the artist at a standstill when his soul becomes empty as he is disillusioned with society and himself. For many it ends in depression, insanity and even suicide, but there is the possibility of rejuvenation. Humboldt tried in his last hours to give the push that was needed for Charlie to reach the fourth stage of rejuvenation. This stage is only hinted at for the novel stops there. Certainly, the materialism and the shallowness of American culture is a
burden for the true artist yet like Charlie he can overcome these limitations through his own strengths.

Gilead Morahg, in his essay "The Art of Dr. Tankin" reveals the following about Bellow's writing:

His work reflects a growing conviction, most fully articulated in Humboldt's Gift, that the awakened soul constitutes the viable basis for both the reconciliation of the individual with his innermost self and the fulfillment of literature's role as a means of reconciliation. In an essay that appeared almost simultaneously with *Humboldt's Gift*, Bellow writes that "what can make a writer truly interesting is an inadmissible resource, something we all hesitate to mention although we all know it intimately -- the soul." 

Charlie, like the man in Humboldt's last script, has been trying to please two women and ends up pleasing no one. He was constantly listening to the advice of others, often bad advice. Living for others had become counterproductive because everyone was after his wealth. In a more subdued lifestyle he will be freed to concentrate on simpler joys and his creative impulses. With Kathleen as a person to touch base with he could age more contently. After all, it was possible that Humboldt's "gift" to the two of them was more than the script, and even more than the inspirational letter. Perhaps, it was to bring Charlie and Kathleen together. No matter what happens,
Charlie has chosen exile to Europe as his way to come to terms with himself, change his life, and renew his creative voice.

Thus even though the hero of Bellow's novels is a questing figure, as are the heroes of most modern novels, Bellow's conception of this quest is different from that of other novelists. The struggle of his heroes is conducted in the philosophical and social complexities of modern society, but whereas the search for selfhood in most modern novels is usually conducted within the consciousness of "existential" man, the success of the search of Bellow's hero depends upon his understanding of his purpose in the world and of his responsibilities to other people.

To conclude,

It is true that Bellow's heroes finally learn to humble themselves before experience. But if they end with humility, they begin in humiliation. They sink first to their knees by sullen choice and sink again at last because they must. They cultivate anger in perversity, suspicion and petulance in the spirit of hope.... Freedom is the provisional goal of their quest, but freedom forces upon them a knowledge of the self they did not bargain for, and self-knowledge discloses to them a world intelligible only in love.
REFERENCES


4. On his application for a Guggenheim fellowship submitted in October 1945, Bellow wrote that he was working on The Victim, "a novel whose theme is guilt."

