CHAPTER-V

VISION OF A GENIUS

Contemporary American literature reveals a nihilistic attitude to individual existence and life in general and considers humanistic values useless in a world devoid of truth. Great American writers have always been engaged in different forms of quest in their works and one of their main preoccupations is with the nature and creation of the self. Quest results in the waking of the individual, the knowledge of himself, knowledge about others, the world and the meaning of life. Saul Bellow, one of the most intellectual writers of the second half of the twentieth century, is a unique spokesman for humanitarian values and ideals in American literature. Bellow wishes to make art possible for life. In the Nobel Lecture delivered in Sweden, Bellow stressed the role of art saying that it should emphasize the unity of man: “Art attempts to find in the universe, in matter as well as in facts of life, what is fundamental, enduring, and essential.” (Bellow) Bellow’s fiction manifests itself in its positive, affirmative, optimistic approach to existence and individual whom he treats as a sub-angelic figure, i.e. man is created in the image of god, but he is a little lower than the angels. Bellow refuses to accept the idea of the twentieth century that humankind has reached its terminal point.

Saul Bellow is convinced that a human being can justify his existence, that he has sufficient power to overcome his ignominy and to complete his own life. As for Bellow, it is not external reality, or social forces or other people – but man himself who determines his own destiny. Bellow’s heroes may grieve, complain, lament, and they even despair about the future. They are on a quest for meaning in life and they firmly believe that man is free to choose and that he can become better. For the Bellow heroes, society is uncomfortable for them, indifferent to them; disagree with
their behavior and with their ideals. But finally they realize that the best part of man is found not in what he is but in what he would be or wills to be. The reality that they experience does not match with their ideals. All of Bellow’s heroes are nowhere better described than in the phrase: “the feeble-minded children of angels.” (DM 137)

For Bellow life is the source and measure of all values. The problem of evil disappears and the conception of sin loses all its meaning. The concern for what it is to be human is the central preoccupation of Bellow’s novels. At the same time Bellow has immense belief in the holiness of his heart, in the self and the soul. He understands that man is disjointed and life is meaningless, but still he believes that man can find meaning in this meaninglessness too. Man is able to survive and laugh at the meaninglessness of life.

Bellow’s narratives tell the tale of modern man in America, his terror in the face of dissolving reason, his persistent will to alter his destiny, his desire to re-affirm the value of community in an age when loyalties are fickle and materialism is in the forefront. In this regard, Bellow has been described as a great novelist, and a follower of Dreiser and Norris. His fiction is the struggle of his protagonist to redeem himself. Bellow’s constant and essential question is - can man be saved and the final answer is in the positive. Bellow wants the modern man to think and make a clear estimate of his own condition. Each hero views the world from his original perspective and struggles against different obstacles within himself in his quest for self knowledge. They are explorers of their inner universe and are determined to understand their human predicament. At the same time they do not shrink from involvement in the modern world but thrive on the various experiences of urban life with an appetite for living. They are also prepared to struggle against their own limitations and the madness of the modern world in an attempt to understand and
change their lives. Though they feel guilty and unworthy to live, they defend the human being in order to defend themselves. The heroes find that only by becoming unburdened of their guilty selves and entering the shared condition of all, can they hope to become worthy. Bellow wants to affirm the possibilities for the individual to live a meaningful life in our civilization and so he is against the literary traditions of despair and alienation and the negation of the self.

Bellow was once asked what he thought generally of man’s situation on the earth and Bellow replied that the mind is man’s environment and that it was replacing nature. The modern revolution is no more a revolution of machinery but it deals with the inner state of man. In fact, Bellow’s novels are a battle ground for contemporary intellectual disposition. His fictions are fictions of struggle, more of internal and philosophic struggles. They are the representations of our largest thoughts. Man is surrounded by a sea of experiences and strange phenomena in life which lead him to a conclusion that he is but an island. Thus the individual man looks upon himself as an isolated entity perpetually struggling for existence against these forces and is forcibly thrown back upon the resources of his mind. Bellow probes deep into the hidden corners of the human psyche in order to expose the mysterious truths of human existence. Bellow portrays characters struggling with the Jewish heritage of suffering, both physical and mental. For the Bellow protagonist, to assert himself as an individual, to know his own identity, is to understand history and this leads to his understanding of ideas and theories by which man have lived. Bellow puts pressure on the soul, to live up to its heroic calling. In this world, everything has to be fought for, won and defended. Bellow’s protagonists after many confrontations which involve intensive soul-searching examination will finally reach a viable position which will enable them to live a life founded on dignity and integrity. The sacrifice of the self is demanded in the interest of creating a more human person. At the core of his novels,
there is concern for other human beings, a concern which is evident especially in the transformation of the hero. Bellow insists that we are: “not gods, not beasts, but savages of somewhat damaged but not extinguished mobility.” (Bellow14) Though Bellow’s heroes are not perfectly transformed, they are capable of salvation, they are touched with truth, and they do learn to confront darkness and therefore are intellectual survivors.

From his first novel *Dangling Man* to his last fiction Saul Bellow has created an almost unbroken series of protagonists doing mental battle with themselves and the world. All his protagonists are trying to recover from a crisis of middle age in which man is overwhelmed by a happening which makes a mockery of his life and affirms his mismanagement of his life. Tommy Wilhelm, a salesman loses his job. Henderson, whose only vocation has been to exercise his vitality, is seized by the dread of his imminent death. Herzog a student of Romanticism has been undone by his wife’s love affair with his best friend. All these men are impulsive, self-dramatizing types and they are impatient with their adversities. Henderson is equally impatient and worried. All of them have wasted their powers. The principal problem stated in *Dangling Man*: “How should a good man live?” (*DM* 39) has become more specific with the question in *Last Analysis* as how a middle aged failure is to be: “reborn from an empty heart.” (*Last Analysis* 35) Joseph, Leventhal and Tommy Wilhelm are unable to get rid of the feeling that they have to live in an oppressive society and that the modern society suppresses their aspiration to live a fairly decent and successful life. They are constantly oppressed by the thought of madness, death and they are always anxious for self-preservation. Ordinary life repels them and they try to invent new formula to confront the terrors of society and also for their marginal existence. The various encounters and experiences force them to come out of the self-created fever and they learn to accept the fact that they belong to the world. Joseph’s final request for induction is not a defeat at all but rather a victory over his self-imposed
isolation. Saul Bellow’s heroes are generally Jews and a Jew is more vulnerable and more sensitive than others. They are more troubled by the relation between their true selves and the society in which they live. They are also anxious to find out the truth about the problems that they face. They are seekers, searchers, finally intellectual survivors. They are all initially presented as dangling men suspended between worlds, between ideas, institutions, commitments or value systems. They seem to possess the instincts of rebellion, but they are not rebels. They find their fellow beings accept the harsh reality of life and are ready to live with shabbiness and violence. Bellow’s protagonists resist such a vision of life and they try to defend their inner voices. Bellow sees his protagonists in their personal realities as they see themselves or better souls whose thoughts are coupled with emotions. Their survival depends upon what they think and how they feel. Even when they are trapped in isolation, they long for community. Joseph in Dangling Man and Augie March of The Adventures of Augie March have immense hopes for a colony and a school. Moses Herzog, the protagonist of Herzog also longs for companionship.

Joseph, the Journal keeper connects his violent outbursts to the unbearable conditions of modern life. Like Joseph, all are under the wrong impression that each one is an individual of immense value with an individual destiny and that there is no limit to what one can attain and one can go in search of including one’s own individual freedom. But when failure comes man gets isolated and punishes himself as Joseph does. Joseph is afraid and fearfully alone, yet continuously he struggles to achieve dignity and give a moral meaning to life. This Bellow hero does not trust action or heroics. He is an intellectual but has: “a pervasive sense of irony.” (Rovit 17) At the same times, he is unwilling to surrender himself to the feelings and passions which are unreasonable. His suffering is the result of a suspension of normal feeling in an uncaring and indifferent society. He compares himself to the English man of Goethe’s Poetry and
Life who: “hanged himself that he might no longer have to dress and undress himself every day.” (DM18) Joseph has in fact, lost his capacity to feel, to suffer, to love. At times he feels that this is a condemned age but at the same time he also has the doubt that it might be incorrect to think of it in that way. His life seems to be bitter and burdensome; his dreams are also bare, creating an atmosphere of terror. Yet Joseph is not completely given to total pessimism. There is a stubborn refusal to surrender completely.

The early Joseph is prepared to accept that man is aggressive by nature, but he can detect in his own heart nothing but gentleness. One of his remote ambitions is to found a utopian colony where spite and cruelty would be forbidden. Therefore he is dismayed to find himself being overtaken by his fits of violence. He loses his temper with his adolescent niece, manhandles his landlord and shouts at the bank employee. He seems to be: “a sort of human grenade whose pin has been withdrawn.” (147) His artist friend tells him that the monstrous city around them is not the real world. The real world is the world of art. Joseph appreciates this condition of the artist who through sharing with others the product of his imagination allows lonely individuals to become some kind of community. Unfortunately Joseph is not an artist but his keen interest is in being a good man.

Joseph gets isolated and because of this aloofness from the oppressive busy world, he gains a freedom from routine which presents a rare opportunity in modern society for the inner investigation or search of the self. He convinces himself that inner differences and inner communication are the only important factors to consider in his quest. His inner mental journey leaves him in isolation in his own self constructed ideal world which does not breach the gap between the ideal and reality. This inward search is not effective as it does not change his life. Because of the unsatisfactory outcome of his inner exploration, Joseph surrenders his solitude by going to the draft board. Joseph realizes that it is necessary to preserve his freedom but he also recognizes that his weariness comes from
his inability to be free. The real nature of the world will not be changed by war. When Joseph gives up his daily battle and makes preparations to join the army, he feels a great sense of relief. He purposefully rejoins the world which once seemed very brutal to him. Joseph had rejected the pressures of society to prove that self freedom is important and to prove that the most important goal of life should be the ability to find one’s self. But Joseph cannot endure this isolation for long. He cannot continue his solitary, inner search for truth endlessly. Joseph has to return to society, defeated and helpless. He does it with a sense of awareness of himself and with an understanding of the meaning of his existence. By isolating himself and confiding only in the journal, Joseph has not found the road to freedom. He has only discovered that freedom can be illusory. Finally, when he decides to give up his daily battle and make preparations to join the army, he feels a great sense of relief. He makes peace with Vanaker who had annoyed Joseph all these seven months. He and Eva are also in a state of peaceful co-existence. These are positive adjustments which seem to indicate a kind of consolation in defeat. Joseph also gets back to his reading, and one is reminded of his early statements where he talks of his books as: “guarantors of an extended life, far more precious and necessary than the one I was forced to lead daily.” (10) Finally Joseph discovers that his encounter with others and desire for freedom is really the desire for community.

The Spirit of Alternatives which Joseph creates, the alter ego is only a representation of his inward journey and this helps him in his quest for identity and survival. The job of the alter ego is to help Joseph face the truth about himself. The Spirit of Alternatives advises Joseph to look within himself, to trust his heart as well as his head. The alter ego tries to make him understand that only by accepting emotional truths he would be able to know himself. He reminds Joseph that he cannot shut out the world within the four walls of his room. In order to face the truth within, one must face outside
reality. But as The Spirit of Alternatives is a projection of Joseph, he cannot supply all the answers that he seeks. He does not open up to Joseph’s new vision. After requesting for his call, Joseph reflects on his childhood days. He mentally travels back to the scene of his childhood, his father’s home and realizes that the various things which are associated with, such as the house are transitory. He understands that man’s belief in the permanence of the world he has constructed is actually very dangerous and treacherous. His trip to his boyhood home is also a farewell to childhood and adolescence and it shows the completion of a phase of his initiation into manhood. His decision to leave immediately for the army implies an acceptance of impermanence, decay and death. The lesson that he has to grasp, the key lesson that Bellow tries to teach his readers is that the only permanence in life is a sense of belonging to society, to humanity. Joseph admits that he: “had not done well alone.”(190). Through the failure of Joseph, Bellow has shown his readers that a sense of identity and intellectual survival can be gained by active involvement with others.

During this period of isolation Joseph has reflected seriously on his experiences and attitudes and has made some progress in understanding truths about himself. He has learned that personal suffering can lead to greater self knowledge. He has also learned that identity construction cannot discard the pain of the world and that he must shed his romantic ideas and accept the reality of life with all its imperfections. He has become more honest with himself and what in most significant is that he has prepared himself for death and acknowledged the impermanence and transitory quality of life. Joseph achieves two important realizations hat he cannot be free except in giving himself away and that his quest is the common human quest. Recognizing that his destiny is also the common human destiny, Joseph rejoins his race. He too is re-born and celebrating life means accepting death. He elaborately celebrates the first day of spring by walking in the park with his
spring coat. Joseph, who had lost his confidence in his inability to control his destiny, utters a truth central to Bellow’s fiction: “And goodness is not achieved in a vacuum, but in the company of other men attended by love.” (92) All of Bellow’s heroes understand that man is a part of a community destined to share his life with others.

There is also a strong view from critics that Joseph has not learned to create a community with others. Submission to the army is not an act of communion but an act of giving up, surrendering to external pressures. Joseph has not gained a sense of self-esteem nor has he succeeded in his quest for identity. He suffers from weakness of imagination which results in his inability to make use of his freedom. And he has also not learned how to accept suffering and humiliation with grace. It will be Bellow’s task to create more fully developed protagonists who can fight with those difficult problems. In fact, Dangling Man is not only the story of Joseph’s initiation; it is also Bellow’s beginning as a novelist. Bellow has admitted that this novel and his next novel The Victim were his initiation pieces by which he set out to prove that he is able to write a novel in the style of the European masters.

The protagonist of Bellow’s second novel The Victim is dislocated from his normal life and subjected to a testing situation that exerts pressure on his sense of who or what he is. Asa Leventhal, the protagonist of this novel, is engaged in an attempt to preserve the purity and detachment of the self in the face of the chaos and darkness of external reality. Like Dangling Man, The Victim is a novel of self – discovery and self education. Asa Leventhal comes to understand the painful truths about himself that he could not rather face. He learns, through his inward journey and through his relationship with Kirby Allbee, to accept responsibility for the unintended consequences of his actions, and to perform his duty to others with a sense of caring that he had not possessed before. His relationship with Allbee and his
continuous self-examination of his motives contribute to his self education. Allbee plays the role of a catalyst for Leventhal’s inward journey of self examination. “He really did not know what went on about him, what strange things, and savage things. They hung near him all the time in trembling drops, invisible, usually or seen from a distance. (TV 94) Leventhal’s fears and Allbee’s ant-Semitic attacks are ultimately regarded as issues that are most clearly felt by the hero and that they must be resolved within his mind.

In The Victim, Bellow considers the burden of guilt and responsibility which is yet another human condition. Asa, like Joseph, is a victim and a dangling hero isolated and alienated. Asa has an honest mind. He wants to do what is right. He is even capable of a kind of idealism. In Asa’s character his deep and honest feelings of responsibility and accountability, his sense of the real and the ideal and his empathy for his fellowmen are found. Asa is a man who feels a real kinship with all of humanity and displays a deep sense of duty to his family and to his friends. Asa’s responsibility to his fellowmen is constantly being tested and not found wanting. When his brother’s family needs help because his nephew is sick and his brother is far away, Asa even becomes a surrogate father. It is due to those elements of nobility in his character that he is able to escape from a mental breakdown when problems and a sense of guilt oppress him. These qualities give him the dignity of development and the possibility of change. Asa realizes that to be human means to be accountable. The Victim is the story of man’s struggle to free himself from victimization, a struggle of self-encounter. Asa stands up to his fears, in spite of a strong inclination to run away. He does not run away and consequently he proves himself to be an intellectual survivor. Even in his encounter with Allbee, it is Albee who backs down
in the face of Asa’s anger. Bellow has made Albee set guidelines for Asa. Allbee states:

Now let me explain something to you. It’s a Christian idea but I don’t see why you shouldn’t be able to understand it. “Repent!” That’s John the Baptist coming out of the desert Change yourself, that’s what he’s saying, and be another man. You must be and the reason for that is you can be, and when your time comes here you will be. There’s another thing behind that “repent” it’s that we know what to repent. (226–27)

Asa Leventhal does finally emerge as a morally righteous person. His suffering, feebleness and servitude have no meaning and he gets sufficient power to overcome ignominy and to complete his own life and survive intellectually.

Like Joseph, Asa is also estranged from his wife, although only temporarily, while she visits her mother whereas Joseph has deliberately estranged himself emotionally from his wife. Like Joseph, he is mentally and emotionally estranged from anyone who can share his burdens. At the same time, he is a good husband, a good uncle, a good brother, a good worker in trying circumstances. He is never a troublemaker. He longs for community. Again as a Jew he feels ostracized from the non-Jewish world. He wants to be a part of the mainstream society and has social conscience. He is aware of how easily, in America, in particular, one can feel left out, lost, and ruined. He feels that he has lost control over his own reactions and behaviour. Through an alter ego, through Kirby Allbee, Asa is able to examine his motives and his relationship with others. Joseph in Dangling Man learns that in order to live, he must love. He must also accept death as a part of life. Leventhal learns to accept life with all its imperfections. Through adversity and through an inward journey, he discovers self knowledge that he needs in order to deal realistically with
his life. Asa must learn to balance his obligation to others against his obligation to himself. This is a hard lesson to learn in contemporary society.

Asa Leventhal must balance what he owes a man who is at once his persecutor, his victim, also his companion in this universe against what he owes himself. He discovers that he has a moral obligation in each direction - and that the issue is not only a moral one. Life is a battle in which each engagement suggests the necessity of disengagements and vice versa. (Klein93)

Asa Leventhal must learn a key lesson. He must learn to bear the moral burden of another. Although he dislikes Allbee, he learns to accept Allbee’s humanity. He has to cast off his self imposed burden of following morals and acquire an open heart. By identifying himself with them, he can learn to accept the flaws in his own nature. This is the major step in the process of joining the human community. By identifying with others he can learn to accept the flaws in his own nature. By recognizing the imperfections of his own nature, he can accept his own guilt for his errors without projecting it onto others. Thus he can give up his self created role of a victim and by rejecting victimhood he can acquire dignity which would enable him to survive intellectually.

At the beginning of the novel, Asa prefers to stay away from external involvement in his almost perverted attempts to protect himself from the outer world. He knows well that total introversion is not effective. But Asa also feels that any commitment to person or to institution is an act of conformity. For example, when he has an unusual feeling of responsibility for his brother’s son who is dying, Asa constantly fears getting involved with the family. He worries too much about what Elena’s mother will say to him, what his employer will think about him and at the
hospital what the doctor will say to him. All these outside contacts seem to enhance Asa’s feelings of insecurity and he avoids being involved with others. His tendency to isolate himself is also based on his strong sense of guilt that he is always in the wrong place at the wrong time. He always considers himself as a potential outcast or ruined person. His failure to achieve security is the result of his total failure to understand that his ego and the eternal world actually need each other. Asa would have easily become Joseph if it were not for the appearance of Kirbee Allbee. Allbee invades Asa’s privacy with the accusation that Asa is the cause of Allbee’s deplorable condition. Asa tries to ignore Allbee’s demands and accusations, and tries to remain uncommitted to everyone. However Asa is finally forced to recognize Allbee as an important factor in his life. Throughout his experience with Allbee, one sees Asa’s failure to establish proper relationship not only with Allbee but also with the whole realm of the external world. His inability to communicate with the world results in his failure to establish proper relationship with his consciousness. He seems to convince himself that Albee and all intruders cannot make a difference to him. Asa’s freedom is a freedom from commitment. He does not have room in his narrow conception of the world for others, but with Allbee’s attempt of suicide, it becomes apparent to Asa that the ridiculous situation in which Allbee has put him, could not be forced upon any one with a true sense of himself and of the situation of the present world.

Asa recognizes the need for external circumstances but he is also engulfed by his own fears, that he cannot accept the challenges confronting him by participating in the world. He realizes that his evasiveness will not lead him to a true sense of the inner self and his friend also tells him: “Consciousness, that’s what you’re on. For God’s sake, give yourself a push and a shake . . .” (184) But Asa cannot extend his
consciousness to include the external world not only because of his apprehension of his ability to live with a strong vision of life but also because he cannot understand that a projection of consciousness into the world is the only way of proper understanding of himself. Since Asa fails to understand and accept the challenges of the outer world, he completely rejects Allbee. He goes back to his old habits and old routines. He merely exists in his limited world without a true understanding of this world and himself. But Allbee has a sense of life, he does not avoid conflict and he accepts the important relationship between himself and the world. Asa fails to accomplish what he desires from his guest because he is unwilling to attempt reality and responsibility. Among the various things Allbee represents for Leventhal, one is death. Leventhal: “is paralyzed by a figure of death.” (Opdahl57) Leventhal feels that Allbee is the messenger of death who turns out to be his greatest threat. Death is there is in his room, threatening him day and night. When Leventhal finds it impossible to accept many things, he is compelled to accept them including Allbee. The sub plot also reveals the kind of situation Leventhal is in. His attending to the illness of his nephew, also reminds one of Leventhal’s confrontation with death. The episode shows how Leventhal has mistaken his sister-in-law Elena and her mother. Leventhal is: “a man who falls short of love and understanding and humanity.” (Eisinger350)

Asa’s limitations tend to victimize him and it is gradually revealed that he has deep and honest feelings of responsibility and accountability. His empathy for his fellow man, Kirbee Allbee gives him the dignity of development and the possibility of change. Kirbee Allbee is a character who represents an outer force working on Asa and on a more significant level. He is an inner adversary, an alter ego. Allbee forces Asa to look deeply into himself and understand his confused and frightened
frustrations. Allbee symbolically embodies Asa’s victimizing characteristics and the fate of Asa is closely dependent upon that of Allbee. With Allbee as alter ego, Asa is brought to realization that he must destroy his inner force for his own survival. In the end, he is still unable to understand life’s mystery, but there is a pleasant openness and a hopeful awareness of the problem which are essential for survival. Although the truth about his life lies well behind him, he is willingly doing his duty as a real human being. However Asa Leventhal has understood that the support to our neat, well-ordered lives can crumble at any moment, inhuman demands can be made of us without any warning and these can come from the strangest quarters. It is only natural to resist but one has no choice. If one wants to be saved one has no choice, one must drop everything and be prepared to face bravely these impediments. *The Victim* ends with an affirmative note. Asa Leventhal regains control of his life and rejoins humanity without surrendering to another human being or institution. Bellow leaves the readers with a question: “What’s your idea of who runs things” (256) Bellow offers no answer but one can relate it to the epigraph from De Quincy which raised the same question. Bellow suggests that although one cannot gain knowledge of anything beyond our moral experience, one can gain a sense of community with fellow human beings by accepting them as they are and not projecting on to the blame for failures.

In *The Adventures of Augie March*, Bellow portrays an adolescent whose experiences with morally corrupt people help him to gain independence and a realistic attitude about the world. The novel is a novel of protest presenting a protagonist at odds with the dominant values of his culture. The protagonist of the novel Augie March is a man of adventure and travel who has conflicts with those who represent the diversity of American society. Like all Bellow’s heroes, Augie
March is Bellow’s representative in determining whether life can go on even in the pessimistic and nihilistic modern world. Bellow’s answer to this depressing question is in the positive. Bellow argues: “Either we want life to continue or we do not . . . if we do not want it to continue . . . in what form shall life be justified?” (Bellow62)

To answer this question is the writer’s moral function. Augie seeks escape from the confines of all those who would impose their own patterns on his life. In his search for “a good enough fate,” he embarks on a service of unplanned and aimless journeys. But there are again inward journeys, reflections that transport him to self understanding and self acceptance. The journey is not only a picaresque device, but a characteristic nineteenth century novel: “American fiction assumes typically the patterns of a journey . . . the individual’s alienation from the established social order and his reaching out toward community relationships and values.” (Kaul72) Augie rejects the morally inferior roles society has to offer him and seeks to form a new community.

In retrospective voice, Augie takes the reader on a circular tour of his life, from his early days as a naïve, romantic optimist to his pronouncement at the end as an intellectual survivor. “Why I am a sort of Columbus of those near to hand,” (536), an explorer in search of a “good enough fate”, one who discovers something far more important – his own identity which leads to his intellectual survival. Augie is an intellectual hero who refuses to lead “a disappointed life.” Augie realizes that to lead a happy life you must accept yourself as you are and then learn how to deal with the contradiction of this contemporary world. The misfortunes that fall on his way do not shatter his optimistic outlook. In the course of his adventures, Augie tries a variety of roles and occupations. Augie is:
A student, a petty thief, adopted son, tramp, lover, apprentice to assorted people and trades, a would be intellectual in the purlieus of the University of Chicago, a suppositious Trotskyite, an eagle tamer, a merchant seaman. (Chase 28)

In his search for a role to which he can commit himself, he passes through the lives of various characters – failures, losers and dreamers – all of whom are obsessed by a dominant idea of how to mould their lives in these chaotic times. From each of these mentors, rather reality-instructors Augie learns something about himself and the world. But most of the knowledge he gains is negative. His idea of a good enough fate changes and he becomes wiser and his experiences shift his vision. Augie understands the truth about himself. He discovers the root of his failure to find a long term profession. Augie craves for knowledge, experiences and love and exhibits great opposition to the values endorsed during his era. It has become very difficult for Augie to survive in a world that resists the acceptance of such a pure element.

In *The Adventures of Angie March* Bellow creates a character that is quite different from Joseph or Asa Leventhal. Joseph and Asa are introspective, whereas Augie is external. Bellow turns from a narrow ego-centered situation to a situation with open and almost limitless external bounds. He also turns from the quest held exclusively within the inner consciousness to Augie’s search for identity and survival outside himself. Augie has an insatiable and innate desire for adventure and expedition, a desire that springs from the idea that through external experience, his selfhood will somehow be revealed to him. In his quest, Augie tries to involve himself in many situations, to encounter many people, and he hopes that by a vast travel, by expeditions, he will attain a knowledge that will enhance the meaning of life and enable him to discover himself Augie’s explorations and adventures are
definite encounters with the external world but these encounters do not seem to serve as actual experiences for him. He never comes to a realization regarding his self and his place in this world, because his attempt to find a workable philosophy fails. He counts too heavily on total external experience without adequate interpretation for a revelation of the self, and thus he does not attain the balance of communication between his inner consciousness and the external world which is necessary for true self-knowledge. To say that Augie relies too heavily on external expedition does not imply that he is not perceptive. He continuously thinks, analysis, and tries to determine the importance of almost every action. However his interpretations of life and his conclusions derived from experiences are too often conclusions regarding the lives of the people with whom he is in contact. Often he fails to see how the implications may be applied to his life as well as to the life of his associates. Early in the novel, Augie admits that he has a weak sense of consequences and this makes it impossible for him to utilize his inner consciousness to bind all experiences together. Therefore, his external experience does not actively promote his internal understanding and the result is that his varied and vast adventures are not greatly beneficial to his quest for selfhood.

Augie March has the ability to understand other people and to perceive what they are doing with their lives. This is illustrated by his relationship with Grandma Lausch and with Einhorn. Augie accepts both Grandma Laushch and Einhorn as people, who, as he explains: “both believed they could show what could be done with the world, where it gave or resisted, where you could be confident and run or where you could only feel your way and were forced to blunder.” (AAM 71)) By his description of Grandma Lausch and Einhorn, Augie reveals an unusual knowledge of the two people in their struggle to show what they can do in this world. Throughout
his experiences with them, Augie interprets their actions and he acknowledges the life force behind what they do. However, Augie cannot apply to his own life what he learns from his close association with Grandma Lausch and Einhorn. He also cannot understand what he wants from his experience with these two persons. Augie responds to human influence, but fails to sustain any relationship that requires commitment. With his determination to find a good fate, coupled with his inability to gain strength of inner consciousness to balance his external experiences, Augie’s quest necessarily turns outward. He must taste life, explore and try to survive intellectually through external experience. In his quest, he tries to retain his sense of freedom by avoiding involvements which restrict his freedom.

At the beginning, Augie believes that his freedom is his only tool to a way of self-revelation that would automatically lead to intellectual survival. In his desire to maintain a true sense of freedom, Augie does not realize that there is no absolute freedom for man and his experiences do not bring him closer to identity. This is because the inner perception of his experience does not provide him knowledge as much as external experiences. Augie is forced to go aimlessly in search of himself through many experiences. Augie’s inability to internalize indicates that though Augie’s inner consciousness increases in knowledge, opinions and perceptive power, he fails to be benefited by the importance of his experiences. From all his wanderings and adventures he gains nothing except a sense of wanting to maintain his freedom so that he can continue with his wanderings. It has been pointed out that Augie cannot find a place for effective balance between internal and external experience necessary for self-revelation and he fails to profit from his experience. It is important to note that he does not despair in his failure. Even in his failure to find the selfhood he seeks, with each new experience his hope increases. Augie has a sense of longing
and a deep desire to establish himself in this world. He continues his search without losing all sense of perspectives. Augie’s hope is illustrative of what appears to be Bellow’s definite statement on the nature of man and his relationship of his world.

Augie consciously maintains his hopeful attitude and even though he submits to many strong willed associates he stubbornly clings to his ideas regarding the necessity of human association and interaction in the world. The most impressive example of Augie’s, rather Bellow’s rejection of the so-called modern pessimistic philosophy is seen in Augie’s adventurous trip of Mexico with Thea and his experiences with the eagle Caligula. Thea tries to change Augie’s constant preoccupation and association with other people to a rebellious attitude towards people and toward the world. Their relationship is representative of the struggle between the rebellious, self seeking hero who rejects the world and the hero who searches for himself a proper relationship with other people. This is paralleled with Thea’s attempt to train the eagle to be a ruthless hunter and killer. The eagle’s failure is compared with Augie’s failure but Augie only fails to reject Thea’s way of life.

The eagle Caligula, who during Thea’s training becomes representative of Augie, and is afraid of the real iguana and will not attack, the eagle personifies Augie’s rejection of Thea’s philosophy. The Caligula represents compassion cannot kill even when he is trained to do so. The Caligula is used to point out Augie’s rejection of Thea’s harsh and rebellious attitude. As Augie observes the Caligula during the training session, he describes the proud animal as having: “a nature that felt the triumph of beating his way up to the highest air to which flesh and bone could rise.” (337-38) Caligula’s desire to ‘beat his way up’ is not different from Augie’s desire to find: “a fate good enough.” Caligula does not soar really as high as he seems to be, Augie is also unable to attain his desired condition because he is not good in perceiving the
real. He admits “… my pride has always been hurt by my not being able to give account of myself and always being manipulated. Reality comes from giving an account yourself.” (461) Augie realizes that because of his failure to find himself, he is often manipulated by others. Augie cannot be successful by merely acknowledging his weaknesses. In order to establish himself in this world, he must overcome his weakness by thoroughly giving account of himself and by gaining a true sense of his selfhood. He knows that he had the right feeling about: “the axial lines of life…. Truth, love, bounty, usefulness, harmony,” and he strives to find existence based on these concepts. Augie’s quest is a quest of hope and in some respect, of fulfillment. He is to a large extent capable of discovering himself and the world. Augie remains the eternal optimist, tempered by his experiences, self educated, “free style” as he boasts in the first sentence of the narrative, but never bowed or defeated. “So Augie’s reality lies in a vision of life as triumphant, a goal that is ever speeding toward. He is the soul of cultural optimism and great self destiny- to him all is possible, even in a world not the best possible.” (Dutton46)

The most important lesson that Augie learns from his Mexican trip is that man has to accept his limited situation and any attempt on his part to subdue nature is bound to fail, for nature is stronger and stranger than men. The frustration and despair which Augie experiences in Mexico leaves painful marks, these experiences give him sufficient knowledge about the nature of reality. The immediate impact of the Mexican journey of Augie is that it makes him search for possibilities to adjust himself to the real situation. Augie returns at the end of his adventure, a condition that never changes in Augie’s life. Finally he lives the life as others do without nurturing any ideal vision. The ending appears like an anti-climax, considering the epic manner in which Bellow started his novel. By ending the novel is this way,
Bellow suggests that heroic adventures are not possible in an age of tremendous social and emotional dislocation. Instead of gloomily looking back upon the past and subscribing to the nihilistic and wasteland mentality of the pessimists of the modern world one should accept whatever life offers. At the end, in Augie’s view of himself as Columbus, Bellow intends an illumination, intellectual survival for his protagonist - a discovery of similar attitude between himself and another explorer. Both might have failed but their vision and judgment and courage are the best qualities of their nature which give them power and potentiality which give them the scope and possibility of a better fate.

Augie March is certainly a sympathetic character. He has qualities that are necessary for integrity, nobility and intellect. He is not only a keen observer; he also has a clear vision. He has the ability to see the good in people. Augie can win admiration from all in his general acceptance of people for what they are. Augie is an unconditional humanitarian who refuses to see the world as a valley of despair in spite of painful wounds and scars inflicted upon him. He has been all through his life afflicted by the greedy, cynical, shameful, ignorant and arrogant rich people. Yet Augie does not give way to despair. His survival lies in his vision of life as triumphant. He is the very soul of optimism who refuses to see the world as a world of ugliness. Bellow endows Augie with all the weapons needed to achieve a better fate to overcome ignominy. Augie realizes as does Joseph in Dangling Man that there is no identity, no better fate without a social commitment, without an understanding of one’s relationship to others. This is the way by which Augie emerges as an intellectual survivor.

In his next novel Seize the Day, Bellow presents a comprehensive study of Tommy Wilhelm. He is: “A hero who can run and brawl no longer, who must find a principle of
life in this world . . .” (Klein 122) The personality of Tommy Wilhelm and Augie March are completely different, but Tommy Wilhelm is representative of Augie March who has grown older and who can no longer sustain himself by external experiences. Wilhelm’s early life, like Augie’s is characterized by his exuberant attempt to encounter many external experiences. Like Bellow’s first three novels, Seize the Day also portrays the painful education and the subsequent survival of the protagonist. Tommy’s journey to self-awareness is one of reflection rather than action. Tommy Wilhelm is said to be Bellow’s most pessimistic creation of contemporary man, too weak to deal with the world in which he lives. In this novel, Wilhelm is portrayed as a protagonist who is burdened by the weight of this world. He is a man looked down upon by his father, persecuted by his wife and victimized by a charlatan. Like Augie, Tommy Wilhelm also lives in a world surrounded by Machiavellians. While Augie takes charge of his circumstances and sees to it that he is rescued, Tommy loses his emotional foothold and gives himself over to tears. A generalization about the American experience is seen in the opposing attitudes of Augie and Tommy. Another major difference between Augie and Tommy is that Augie learns an important lesson in reality which Tommy does not. Through his experiences and his observations of other’s errors, Augie learns that he cannot mould the world to fit his vision. But Tommy entertains dreams of becoming something more than what he is and longs to be freed from the burdens of life which the average man faces every day. His goals are unrealistic. Seize the Day is ultimately about Tommy’s failure to fulfill the American dream of success.

Tommy Wilhelm looks back on his early life and realizes that he had gone from one involvement to another without learning from his experiences. His desire to encounter variety of experiences is further illustrated by his leaving college to become an actor. By his movement in the world, through experiences, Wilhelm tries to retain what he thinks is
a sense of freedom. He even changes his name to retain his freedom. However his experiences and attempts to retain his freedom do not reveal self-knowledge. He is unable to utilize the knowledge gained from external experiences to promote an inner realization of himself. He has never learned the importance of relying upon his inner realization of himself. He does not know how to interpret his inner feeling and his inner revelations. He has never learned the importance of relying upon his inner consciousness for understanding the truth about himself and this world. Wilhelm seems to be completely lost. Wilhelm feels that almost everything in his life has resulted in complete failure: “He seems to have wandered up every dead end the world has to offer.” (Galloway 241) He has been unsuccessful in college, he has failed in his career as an actor, his marriage has ended in separation and he has resigned an important position in a large company. The worst of all, he has failed to establish a lasting relationship with his father. He feels that he has wasted his life. He realizes that much of his past seems futile to him and due to this, Wilhelm begins to accept the insight of his friend, the eccentric psychiatrist, Dr. Tamkin. By accepting Tamkin’s friendship and his philosophy, Wilhelm tries to escape from his desperate situation. He even believes that his situation will improve. However, his optimism is short lived and Tamkin loses all of Wilhelm’s money in the stock market. Wilhelm understands now that because of his inability to develop his inner consciousness, he could never learn from external experiences. Unless he can use his perceptive power to come to terms with the world and his inner self, he will continue to: “get burned again and again.” In fact, his father’s tyrannical, uncompromising character has rendered Wilhelm incapable of independence and existence. Though he has assumed adult responsibilities over twenty years of his life, at this point of time, he is unsuccessful and appears to be a born loser. However Wilhelm is not a complete failure, he is crippled not dead.
Wilhelm’s wife Margaret rightly points out the shortcomings of Wilhelm’s philosophy based upon external experiences without proper comprehension. She emphasizes the fact that he must stop thinking like a child. Wilhelm also admits that he never intensely uses his mind for anything, and even though he wants to gain important and revealing knowledge about himself through inner perception, it is clear that his intellectual evasiveness cannot be discarded. He cannot intellectualize his experiences adequately to gain from them and even at this age he continually attempts to start again. He is not able to improve his situation and he recognizes his futility and helplessness.

Tommy is childish, masochistic and disordered. He is one who fears humiliation, one who undervalues himself and is by all conventional standards a failure. He possesses qualities that render him vulnerable but his conceals a strength which is typically Jewish strength in suffering. The expression of refinement and strength can be noticed in the words: “I labor, I spend, I strive, I design, I love, I cling, I uphold, I give away, I envy, I long, I scorn, I die, I hide, I want.” (115) The change is positive and this seems to be a harbinger of the possibility of some fulfillment of desire and the possibility of surviving intellectually. On the final day in which his misery overwhelms him, he drowns metaphorically and out of his figurative death, his soul is born and he survives intellectually. In the funeral parlour, Wilhelm can finally breathe. He is suddenly saved from drowning because he cannot express his deepest emotions. He can love and pity mankind as a whole. In fact his greatest need is not money nor love nor peace that he seeks vainly in the city, but the reason of things. The key lesson Tommy must learn is to accept that the world is ambiguous and that flaws and virtues often go hand in hand. If he recognizes this he can accept himself.

The funeral scene echoes a frequent theme expressed by Bellow, that one must accept the inevitability of one’s death in order to fulfill one’s life. The confrontation of
one’s death is always there in Bellow’s novel, and it is the beginning of a new life that admits one’s humanity. It seems likely, then, that the “drowning” at the end is not an accession to masochistic failure, but a hint of new life for Tommy’s true soul, an image of spiritual life like that of the fisherman at the end of Eliot’s *Wasteland*. If the final breakdown of Tommy’s armoring signifies despair, more crucially it signifies hope. It is the wail of a baby at his birth. And if this ambiguous ending points towards possible redemption, it also affirms the beauty and dignity of Tommy Wilhelm and all men” (Clayton128-34). Wilhelm cries for the failure he has been, for the death-in-life that he has experienced. He cries for the pretender soul now put to rest, whose misplaced values caused him to be married to suffering in all aspects of his existence. He cries for the time he has wasted and the mistakes he has made. His tears are tears of personal sorrow. He cries also for mankind, for those millions like himself, who have lived a life of anguish and loneliness.

   His death, however, is not purely negative, for in the death of the old self, there is the birth of a new self who will be, the novel implies, more capable of dealing with his own temperament and the world around him.” (Porter79- 88)

Wilhelm has to be reborn and he has to live and love. Tommy is symbolically the corpse in the funeral, then his death can be seen as a release from the burden of selfhood and imposter soul. The image of death by drowning offers hope. As Milton in *Lycidas* says of Edward King, he expressed not only anxiety for his own life but also for the future. Thus the image of death by drowning hints at partial redemption from selfhood:

   Sunk though he beneath the watery floor
   So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
   And yet anon repairs his dropping head
So Lycidas sunk but mounted high …

If Lycidas can mount high, co can Tommy Wilhelm. All the unpleasantness passes through like soothing sea waves. He is becoming a responsible person in the deepest and fullest sense of the word. Now he is literally able to respond to all men and to the whole world in its concrete reality. He has managed to seize the day. Wilhelm’s future may continue to be a series of failures. That is a reality not only for Wilhelm but for everyone. But Wilhelm has accepted responsibility in life, which is always based on hope, faith and truth.

Tommy Wilhelm crying at the funeral of an unknown man is the ultimate realization of the title. For the first time in the novel Tommy simply drops aside his calculations and simply surrenders to his emotion and understands his state of being in the world. His crying indicates the sum total of all his ventures. He seizes the moment to weep openly at his failure, at his short comings, at how the reality of his life did not mirror anything of its dreams. His tears at this unknown person’s funeral indicate that he has recognized his own failure. This is a new beginning with a better sense of the self. His railings against the money driven nature of society, his desire to be a profitable part of it, his antagonisms with his father and ex-wife all have been realized in the final scene. In a world where few would weep for him, he must seize the opportunity to weep for what might have been and what could have been. Tommy Wilhelm is finally overwhelmed by his troubles, and at last he has sensed his kinship with other men. The drowning is like a baptism that leads to rebirth, although this is not explicitly stated. Throughout the novel Wilhelm was like a drowning man. Finally, he comes face to face with the fate that awaits all humans and gets connected with the dead man. The ultimate need of Wilhelm’s heart is to love, to be loved, to be part of the family that cares to give him his place in human
society. These are simple human needs and when he is not able to have these things in his life he feels like slow death. But in this final moment of death and re-birth, he feels a sense of brotherhood within the wider human community. As Wilhelm weeps over the corpse, a bystander remarks that he may be called a dead man’s brother. Although it is not true, symbolically it is very accurate. Another bystander remarks that the two cannot be brothers because: “They’re not alike at all. Night and Day.” (118) They are in fact alike. In a way this is deeper even than family connections.

Wilhelm refers to himself early in the novel as a: “fair haired Hippopotamus” (6) and this image is repeated many times. It is his characteristic way of seeing himself. The burden of this life, the suffering it contains, is suggested in the ugliness and massiveness of the hippo when out of water. The weight and ugliness are removed when the hippo is in water and there seems to be a profound harmony with nature. So is it with Wilhelm who at the end of the novel seizes the day of his soul’s birth, a soul whose capacity is as unlimited as the hippo’s large size. What is significant is Wilhelm’s change of character. He has been humbled by a great fact of nature. He has been forced into dependency on nature and this brings him into union with nature. The day is at last saved through reckoning of his past errors, reconciliation with present plight and redemption of his anguished soul. “Seize” denotes aggressive i.e. to live fully man must assert his will against circumstance. To seize the “day” however, suggests an acceptance of the present moment. If man accepts the limitations of fate, man finds joy instead of agony. In this absurd world, the past and the future have absolutely no value and the future is an impending nightmare. Tommy Wilhelm finally recovers his faith in life, and believes that he must, that he could and would receive the good things, the happy things and the easy tranquil things of life. Things were complex but they must be reduced to simplicity again. His end is not death but a new life. His acceptance of his fate, his hope for community life and his affirmation of the
common life of man are strong indications of Tommy Wilhelm's intellectual survival. Like the other protagonists Wilhelm is also concerned with creating order out of confusion within the hearts. The struggling hero ultimately attempts to throw off the burdens affecting his life. Wilhelm is a real victim of this tragic world, which money had created, but he is not a total victim because even in his extremity of wreckage he holds on to his concept that this materialistic world is not the final reality, that the soul’s business is different from the world’s business. He may not have learned to seize the day but he has learned something deeper, he has learnt to live with the real self unaffected by the money world. There is an awareness of the supreme value of life, real existence and intellectual survival beyond financial success or failure.

It seems strange that a writer who is defending the individual sees human redemption possible only by discarding individuality. It is not that Bellow looks for a new kind of individuality, one free from pride, from false, traditional ideas and greatness. The world is to be endured and to be loved. Bellow believes: “that life is mysterious, that it cannot be reduced to formula; we see this belief more fully dramatized in Seize the Day, as in the passage comparing hidden truth to a fish that gets away. If life contains such mystery it cannot be trivial; the human being must be a significant creature.” (Clayton250)

The novel offers hope, a movement toward community and affirmation of the common life. This is the redemption for Tommy Wilhelm, this is intellectual survival for him and above all for every human being.

The characterization of Eugene Henderson in *Henderson the Rain King* is the exact opposite of Tommy Wilhelm. There is no self – pitying, no passive *schlemiel* waiting for his luck to change. Like Tommy, Henderson does not depend on others to solve his problems. He takes action and initiates his search for a more meaningful life. Eugene Henderson, on the surface appears to be a unique Bellow hero. He is a multimillionaire by
inheritance and thus he is free from some of the burdens like Jewishness and money that affect Bellow's other heroes. Henderson is depicted as a world traveler both as a soldier and as civilian. He has lived in England, France, Italy and Germany. He is affluent but in spite of his wealth, he suffers from poverty of the soul. Like all Bellow heroes he is drawn to an idea of order and yearns to occupy a “station in life” and at the age of fifty five is contemplating taking up a medical course. He has the urge to help others with their fundamental social needs but he is incapable of behaving in the society in a conventional way and this behavior prevents him from realizing his ideals. As he yearns for order and meaning in life, he finds only chaos and meaninglessness but he does not withdraw from society totally into a world inside but clashes directly with society. He exerts his physical self in the world to find the reality necessary for true knowledge of himself, but his inability to understand how self-revelation comes through inner perception and external experience other than himself. He is very talkative seeking something other than himself. He is very talkative but this only shows his confusion and mental anguish.

Henderson is unsuccessful in his attempt to find proper communication with the world, because he has only an intense desire for such communication and does not have the understanding of the importance of external communication. He does not try to bridge the gap that exists between his individualistic wishes and his social demands. He merely rebels against the world. He fails to achieve communication by his rash destructive acts. He also goes further from the worldly acceptance of men and matters that is necessary for the attainment of self-knowledge. His rebellious attitude is primarily the result of his inability to live up to his ideas of what society expects from him. He cannot satisfy his own image of himself in society and it becomes impossible for him to develop a sure sense of himself. Everything in Henderson’s world seems to suppress him, and he attributes the chaos and misery of his life to all those who are involved with him in his life. His strained
relationship with all those around him only indicates his overwhelming but frustrated desire to establish himself in some meaningful way and to participate in the world. Even though his life is characterized by a withdrawal into his inner world or by violent action against the external world, in his subconscious mind there is the need for participation in the world. Energy emanates from his entire being, but he does not know how to channel it. His tremendous desire to escape his stifling life and environment leads him to his sojourn to Africa.

By experiencing a more primitive culture, Henderson hopes to come to term with both the external and internal forces that are slowly crippling him. Like in Tommy Wilhelm's case, money or lack of it is not the root cause of his difficulties. He feels that he cannot restructure his life. He cannot manage his family and his money. He cannot control his brutality and drunkeness, he cannot discard his prejudices. Hence he runs off to Africa, hoping to strip himself of these burdens and to read his own heart with his experiences in the Dark Continent. However, Henderson's journey towards self understanding and maturity is inward. Like Bellow’s other protagonists, Henderson traverses an internal landscape fraught with conflict and contradiction. He says that people have only two choices – to turn inward toward self examination in the hope of discovering how to make life more meaningful or to go off to exotic lands in search of meaning. He tells his native guide Romilayu: “And it’s the destiny of my generation of Americans to go out to the world and try to find the wisdom of life.” (HRK 277)

The direct trigger for Henderson’s trip to Africa is the death of the old woman Lennox. When Henderson encounters the death of Lennox – he is in deep despair and he begins to feel that he has to do something which would bring a dramatic change to his confused daily life. The awareness of human mortality urges him to seek positive meaning in his life. The confrontation with death becomes his inner necessity and his inner
inevitability. But the question that arises is why Henderson doesn’t confront death in the USA and why he goes to Africa for his revival. As said earlier, it is the destiny of every one of the modern generation to go far and wide in search of wisdom. The contemporary civilization which is a triumph of technology and perfection on a physical level leaves man reduced to the status of a decorative symbol. As Henderson himself says even the pigs have their function earmarked but man suffers from purposelessness and this cripples the human body and mind. Henderson says:

> What did I make? Why, I made a sort of trophy, I suppose. A man like me may become something like a trophy. Washed clean, and dressed in expensive garments. Under the roof is insulation; on the windows thermo pane; on the floor carpeting; and on the carpets furniture, and on the furniture covers, and on the cloth covers plaster covers; and wall paper and drapes. All is swept and garnished and who is in the midst of this? Who is sitting there? Man! That’s who it is Man! (24)

In fact, Henderson himself is uncertain about the real purpose behind his quest. “Was it because of he was nothing but an “instrument of this world’s processes?” Or is he one of those modern people for whom, “rest is painful” and one has to have perpetual “motion”? Or was he one of those wanderers stricken with the lust for knowledge?” (Shastri125)

Moreover, many Americans went out into the world seeking place that kept the things that modern America lost. In the 1960s, soul-searching trip to third world nations were in fashion. Another reason for Henderson's trip to Africa was to escape from his chaotic, daily life. Yet another reason for his trip is that it was journey to the past of human history. Henderson’s adventure also takes the form of a journey into the interior, into the inmost recesses of the self.
It is important to point out, that Henderson thinks of purification derived from his solitude in the African desert as a preparation for facing the world on better terms. He goes out into the world to find himself, not by gaining new perspective and knowledge from new experiences. There, he has the deep desire to learn more about himself from Queen Willatale to establish himself, to understand the importance of relationship with the external world. Through the limited knowledge gained through his experience with Willatale, he hopes to find a certain depth and meaning to life that he has previously failed to find. By attempting to attain lasting knowledge of himself in the world, Henderson tries to establish a sense of being. He wants to know truth and reality. His experiences can be useful to him in his attempt to understand his inner self as well as the outer world.

Henderson’s attempt to help the Arnewis turns to be a disaster and Henderson is overcome with grief and frustration. Actually he undergoes an existential experience. The frogs in the water are similar to the voices within. The problem is the same that of getting rid of the contaminating and frustrating elements from one’s life. For him, the superstition surrounding the frog - invested cistern represents social customs that oppress mankind. He argues that life must be affirmed at the cost of social constraint. “Should you preserve yourself, or the cows, or preserve the custom. I would say yourself. Live” I said, “to make another custom. Why should you be ruined by frogs?” (62). In Henderson the Rain King the blowing up of the cistern is a dramatic incident. It enables Bellow to take his protagonist out of the simple Arnewi world to a more complex and more modern Wariri world. Henderson could not be cured by Lily with her love and moralizing. Nor does Queen Willatale with her sympathy and with her grun-tu-molani help him. Henderson is unable to understand his everlasting failure to achieve something of value, Bellow says:

This curse, born with Adam and traveling its course up to the present, leaving in its wake, a poverty of the soul, is not to be lifted through the
genius of scientific or technological achievement; that man in his prideful manipulation of the measurable is likely to be persuaded of God like abilities that he does not possess; finally that this blind and willful misapprehension of his limited potentialities can drive man, in spite of good intentions, to destroy the value of life itself, just as the water loses value as it soaks the Arnewi Sands. Bellow says that man is not good; and for him to mistake his human nature as deity can only result in a disillusioning and despairing sickness of the heart. (Dutton 99-100)

It is king Dahfu of the Wariri who treats Henderson, educates him and guides him to truth and vision. The talk sessions of kind Dahfu and Henderson serve several important functions. They allow Bellow to project his ideas about man, his greatness and his nobility. In addition to a sense of existence, Henderson wants to know inner reality and truth, and he realizes that he must take help from king Dahfu in order to attain the inner perception necessary for the truth he seeks.

In Africa he feels togetherness between him and nature, as if he is a baby who had just been reborn. In the Arnewi Camp, he feels like a child who is immersed in maternal love. In Wariri he gets paternal love. Africa is a time-machine for him. Nature and the primitive tribes connect men to the image of origin. Grun-tu-molani seems to be profoundly true. It was his burning desire to live rather than simply to exist that drove him on his quest. But Henderson does not know how to live in the right way. The implied answer is that to live properly, a man must come to terms with death and this is what Henderson has been feeling. He understands the meaning of grum-to-molani. It is simply that man wants to live in spite of the darkness around him. The lion of the Wariri represents the inner strength of spirit that is necessary for one to have complete freedom of internal and external communication. Through his experiences with the lion, Henderson
believes that he can find a way to establish the complimentary forces necessary for success in his search, a strong sense of his inner consciousness and effective communication with the external world. Henderson realizes that he had never found reality; he had never had a true sense of the meaning of life. However, he learns from his experiences and through his association with king Dahfu that he must accept the outside world and his relationship to the world as something which at once offers him a chance for truth and a true sense of identity. He can no longer be an avoider as his spirit can no longer be suppressed.

Henderson’s return from Africa with a lion cub and with an orphaned child he finds on the plane is a representation of his desire to make a new beginning in the world. His intention to go to medical school shows his keenness to make his life meaningful and productive. He realizes that if he is cut off from the world, he cannot exist and that in order to maintain knowledge of his existence he merely has to maintain communication with his world which will lead to the retention of the knowledge of himself. Thus he will be able to maintain his mental balance and also survive intellectually in spite of the dull routine of everyday life. Love is the key lesson that Henderson and the other protagonists must learn. Learning to accept and also love others as they are can lead to a sense of community. Henderson tackling the lion with his bare hands after it attacked Dahfu, risking his own life to save a brother is an expression and acceptance of love. This act helps him to remove his guilt. This connects him with the world, the connection he has hungered for. He recognizes that there is an inevitable rhythm of life which he cannot remove. In recognizing that he cannot avoid circumstances, but must learn to accommodate to them, he gains maturity. His mental suffering is over and he realizes that life is ambiguous. Henderson refers to himself as Ishmail, and rightly so, for he is a survivor. He can compromise with life. His salvation will be: “through service and love. The movement is toward a resolution of the conflict between self and world; the
movement is form and defeat to acceptance and from acceptance to celebration”.

(Hassan322)

Human society cannot be progressive either with victim or with rebels. Man should be an integrated person. True life is possible when man gets rid of animal as well as demoniac instincts in him. Henderson attains this insight during his arduous and restless journey through the wilderness of Africa. Henderson’s suffering finally leads to his redeeming. Henderson negative feelings turn into positive ones in the end. He says: “But there’s justice. I believe there is justice and that much is promised I am not what I thought.” (328). Henderson affirms life and survives intellectually like Joseph, Asa, Augie, Herzog and other Bellow protagonists.

_Herzog_ is the portrait of a modern hero, Moses Herzog, a great sufferer, a joker and an intellectual survivor. Although disintegrated, he sees himself as a survivor both of his private disaster and those of his age. The novel proclaims that love still counts, justice still exists, intellectual and emotional courage still matter. Herzog’s journey through the mind renders him the answer to the piercing question which matters not only to the hero but also to the readers of this magnificent novel. Herzog is a wanderer in the mind as well as in the heart. Herzog is a great representation of the modern man and he touched a nerve in readers all over the world. In speaking about his novel _Herzog_, Bellow said that: “_Herzog_ is, to use that heavy German term, a _Bildungsroman_ - any _Bildungsroman_ concludes with the first step. The first real step.” (Bellow) In this sense all his novels are _Bildungsromans_. Throughout the novels his major characters are striving “to be” rather than to exist in a state of becoming. All of Bellow’s characters wander physically or mentally unfit to take their first real step. Moses E. Herzog races through the landscape of his mind and across the vistas of America in quest of emotional well being. Like Joseph,
Tommy Wilhelm and Eugene Henderson, he is also: “a chopped and shredded man.” (DM 164) His struggle is not only with himself, he has to fight a battle with a brutal society, a society that worships suffering. He feels disintegrated due to various unfortunate happenings in his life and he needs to put his fragmented psyche together again. To do this he must take the inward journey of re-experiencing his life. Only by this process he can come to terms with his past and learn from it, and this education will enable him to remove his guilt and also resolve many of his conflicts. Although the novel is told in the third person, the narrator’s voice so closely synchronizes with Herzog’s that with very little effort the reader is able to go into the protagonist’s consciousness. The reader’s position in the novel is: “we view Herzog and view Herzog viewing Herzog” (Fuchs83)

Like Bellow’s previous novels The Adventures of Augie March and Henderson the Rain King, Herzog traces the impulsive journey of the protagonist in his quest to gain self-knowledge by experience. Herzog is the intense account of an intellectual in an acute emotional crisis striving desperately for clarity, balance and coherence in life. Herzog’s difficulty in maintaining order in his chaotic life is mainly from his attempt to solve his emotional problems intellectually. His pre-occupation with self-development enables him to go deep into his self, while at the same time he keeps up an effort at communicating with the outside world. His letters function as an internal monologue, much like Joseph’s journal. In them he works out not only his quarrel with the world but his mental quarrel with himself, as Joseph does by constructing an alter-ego. Through this silent dialogue with the people in his life, philosophers and world leaders, alive and dead, he tests and rejects their philosophies. As it was with Augie, every character in the novel offers Herzog advice on how to live his life. The letters also allow Herzog challenge these reality instructors without confronting
them. The novel abounds with reality instructors - his wife, lawyer- friend, lover, even dead philosophers whose views Herzog turns over and over in his mind.
Whenever real problems become too painful he retreats into intellectual play. He frantically tries to create a viable condition by which he can maintain the dignity of self and define his character. By his letters Herzog is trying to reach out to the world. He cannot allow his emotions to remain locked inside himself, and through his intellectual approach to his problem, he reaches for the external world by communicating in the form of letters. Herzog is a very sensitive and perspective person and he is extremely vulnerable to the hypocrisies of inhuman behavior of people. His idea of perfect co-existence has been to respect the rights of others and to be good, but he becomes disappointed when he finds that there is no real sense of justice in this world. He wants to re-establish many of his vague ideas regarding the goodness of man. Herzog recognizes the need for the world to reach a survival point. He wants to renew a sense of human value and regard for one’s fellowman, although it is very difficult to cope with their own suffering with nobility and individuality.

Herzog blames the world for its complete detachment from the suffering caused by the Holocaust. The whole world watched and allowed these injustices to take place. The fact that people allowed the Holocaust to occur horrifies Herzog as much as the event itself. Herzog looks back to a pre-war time and recalls his emotional connections to family members. These memories provide Herzog with an image of genuine human relationship – connections based upon love, family, community and compassion as opposed to the relationship of his present time. All through the novel he recalls several figures with whom he was associated: his childhood friend, his mother, his father, and his brother. At the same time, he also recalls some disturbing and traumatic experiences of his past. In one scene he recalls
being raped as a young child. When he recollects this horrifying experience he becomes greatly worried about his child’s safety. This inward journey is an attempt to establish ties with his family, community and nature in order to move towards a sense of content. Some of Herzog’s letters address the suffering of the modern world. He expresses his horror at the brutal mechanization of the modern world in a letter to his colleague Shapiro:

To realize that you are survivor is a shock. . . . As the dead go their way, you want to call them, but they depart in a black cloud of faces, souls. They flow out in smoke from the extermination chimneys, and leave you in the clear light of historical success— the technical success of the West. Then you know with a crash of the blood that mankind is making it—making it in glory though deafened by the explosions of blood. Unified by the horrible wars, instructed in our brutal stupidity by revolutions, by engineered famines directed by “ideologists” (heirs of Marx and Hegel and trained in the cunning of reason) perhaps we, modern mankind (can it be!), have done the nearly impossible, namely, learned something.” (Herzog 75)

According to Herzog, rather Bellow, technology corrupts, and as it puts its hold on to us it decreases traditional moral values. The Romantic age which valued beauty, mobility and integrity has passed. Herzog’s world is an age of spiritual exhaustion. Bellow links the increasingly technological world with a loss of human values. Although technology has eased life, it has put human beings under its control. Herzog is the victim of the pressures of modern life and this victimhood is partly due to his inability to control his environment. Herzog as representation of everyman asks himself and wonders what it means to be a man in this city.
Early in his life, Aunt Zipporah, a re-incarnation of Augie’s Grandma Lausch becomes Herzog’s first reality instructor. She admonishes Herzog’s father for living on dreams and depending on others for financial support. She urges Herzog’s mother to plant in the children not the unattainable dream of professional success, but the practical goal of good trade. Herzog remembers Aunt Zipporah after his encounter with Herzog’s childhood friend Nachman, a dreamer whose life is a lesson to Herzog in the lesson how not to live. Nachman is a bohemian attracted to obsessed artists and writers and always has the notion and belief that materialism corrupts values. Herzog realizes that the two extremist views of Nachman and Aunt Zipporah are not healthy approaches to life. He realizes that he must find a balance, a moderate approach to life. Just as Asa realizes in The Victim and Augie discovers in his encounter with Basteshaw, Herzog learns that balance is necessary to successful navigation of life’s course. With the acceptance of the ambiguity of life must come the acceptance of death as part of life. During the course of his reflections, Herzog comes to accept that life is life only when man understands death. As a young man he was afraid to face his mother’s impending death. As in Bellow’s other novels, the experience of someone else’s actual or threatened death brings relief to the protagonist. In Herzog, the scene of child murder acts as a catharsis for the protagonist. It both cleanses him and allows him to recognize his own mortality by placing someone else’s life in danger. He experiences a kind of re-birth in which he celebrates the ordinary. Release from mental strife brings peace. As a contemporary hero he has not been able to reconcile himself with society, but he has reconciled himself to the ambiguous nature of life and to his own ambiguous nature.

Herzog’s epistolary style enables him to recall his past and bring repressed emotions to the conscious mind. His letters are both symptoms of neurosis and the
means for cure as well. Through the letters the reader is drawn into Herzog’s intense consciousness and experiences and the loneliness of a man whose pen friends are distant and speechless. His final letter addressed to himself is an endeavour to make philosophical sense of these emotions. Herzog’s letters mean that the emotions are vital in their connection with the humans, but also in their power to reveal spiritual truths to man. They relieve the accumulating pressures of the mind. Into them he puts his needs, his resentments, and his sentiments and through them he expresses his beliefs and his faith. This epistolary from has advantages peculiar to it. It places the reader in the position of a confidential friend, thus creating a connecting link between the writer and the reader.

Herzog’s mind is a representative modern mind, crowded with ideas, metaphysics, values and necessary facts which he reveals through his unmailed letters. His mind is compelled to take on itself the burden of the whole world, the problem of mankind, but as a physical being he is one of the struggling and powerless men of the contemporary world. Moses is like a historian who wants to bring change.

You think history is the history of loving hearts? You fool! Look at these millions of dead. Can you pity them? Feel for them? You can nothing! There were too many. We burned them to ashes, we buried them with full dozens. History is the history of cruelty, love, as soft man think. . . . If the old God exists he must be a murderer. But the one true god is Death? (290)

Moses implies that humanity is responsible because the whole world watched and allowed these injustices to happen. Moses agrees with Nietzsche that deep pain makes one noble. Bellow suggests that Herzog is in deep pain - if he can overcome
this, it can lead to nobility. Herzog like Bellow finally views himself as an intellectual survivor. One of the key lessons that the Bellow hero learns is that life is ambiguous. In this novel, Bellow once again expresses his optimistic view of life. In acknowledging his humanity, Herzog accepts his own ambiguity his virtues and his sins as well as those of others. He emerges from his torment as an intellectual survivor because he has now experienced a truth he previously understood only intellectually. What is obvious in the novel is the struggle, sought by all of Bellow’s protagonists, to resolve conflicts within the self and to confess that existence is indeed wonderful. Herzog fully comprehends the relationship between himself and the world. He understands that the world is radically human and if he has to gain self knowledge, he cannot afford to lock himself up in a narrow sphere of inner consciousness and evade the world physically or intellectually. He must understand and share experience with others, work in the world and participate in the world situation in order to have a place as a living being in the world. He has: “the senses to respond, the emotions to care, and the mind to probe his surroundings, his people and himself. He also has the conscience and the vision and vitality to try to turn everything into a human reality.” (Malin186)

Herzog is also aware that to expect complete logic in human relation is impossible. When he suffers he realizes that some of the emotions he experiences are fake and this kind of feeling is the result of an intensely rational approach to life.

We must help one another. In this irrational world where, mercy, compassion, heart (even if a little fringed with self-interest), all rare things-hard won in many human battles fought by rare minorities victories whose results should never be taken for granted, for they were seldom reliable in anyone – rare things, were often debunked,
renounced, repudiated by every generation of skeptics. Reason itself logic, urged you to kneel and give thanks for every small sign of true kindness. (199)

Moses Herzog is presented as modern day Moses, who has some desire to change the world. He even had the goal of providing a cure for the modern condition. Bellow’s fiction records an inward journey in which the protagonist searches his heart and mind in order to reach a desired outcome, intellectual survival. Herzog moves both inwards and outwards and he seeks to recover his sanity and clarity by sorting out his thoughts and emotions. The novel is about Herzog’s struggle to gain control over his thoughts and mind. Herzog is survival literature and Bellow uses Herzog’s recovery to present an optimistic picture to the modern world. Bellow examines how an individual or community can overcome suffering. It is noticed that various factors like nihilism, betrayal, pedantry, individualization, romanticism lead to Herzog’s downfall but he rises above his circumstances. His struggle to overcome his suffering sends the message of strength, spirituality and rediscovered identity. While Herzog’s suffering reflects the condition of the post-war world, his survival and resistance of victimization send an optimistic message to a world recovering from the horrors of the war. Herzog is super sensitive, a great sufferer who thinks he has been untimely knocked down by the world, betrayed by those he loved. Like Henderson, he views the chaos of his personal life as a matter of his misplacement and like Henderson he sets out on an exploration of the meaning of his life. Henderson hurls himself into a physical journey whereas Herzog’s wanderings take place within himself. The real action in the novel is internal. Herzog knows that he must change from within. He must change his internal perspective in order to re-integrate his fragmented self. At the end of the novel Herzog is a compassionate
human being who has faced deep trauma and suffering and through a complex inward and outward journey, has risen above that suffering to become a true intellectual survivor. He has demonstrated that despite the worst form of betrayal by those whom he should be able to trust, wife, friend, therapist, he can learn to form meaningful and spiritual relationship with other human beings. He has proved that even in the face of mass commercialization and city growth, an individual can still experience a spiritual belonging with nature and God. This is the surest signal of intellectual survival for Herzog.

The Novel Mr. Sammler’s Planet is essentially about its protagonist’s consciousness and it takes its form from what he perceives. Mr. Sammler, an old man who has experienced the promises and horrors of the twentieth century life, undertakes an extensive critique of modern value and speculation on the future. In the novel, there is a blending of the protagonist’s perception of external reality with his inner subjective processes in monologues. Like Bellow’s other heroes Mr. Sammler also hungers for what he knows is a decent life. He longs for love, for human brotherhood, for communion with God. At the same time, his ego insists upon absolute freedom, absolute power and absolute understanding. Mr. Sammler is also caught in the existential drama of alienation and despair, of hope and faith on the one hand, and skepticism and disbelief on the other. Though much of what Mr. Sammler thinks about the modern world is what Bellow thinks, he is not Bellow’s mouthpiece. He is an independent creation, a serious figure whose experiences and sensibility give him an authority to judge the world but does not permit him to give a totally impartial judgment. Mr. Sammler’s good eye observes the external world, but his other eye destroyed at the moment of confrontation with death, is the inward eye that looks on more urgent matters but can distinguish only light and shade.
Bellow characterizes Mr. Sammler as a ‘dangling man’ drawn to both order and chaos. Mr. Sammler’s world is not too different from the one inhabited by all Bellow’s heroes. Most of Bellow’s heroes are surrounded by cheats, liars, betrayers, characters who steal money, characters who steal their wives and so on. Sammler has to contend with a mugger, a rude student, and a whole society that seems to have given itself up to savagery. M. Sammler, is disgusted by the world that his friends’ and relatives’ weaknesses represent, but he is not disgusted by the characters themselves. It is perhaps for this reason that Mr. Sammler is able, at the end of the novel, to come up with a typically Bellovian affirmation of the world and its inhabitants. Dangling between human and non-human states, between content and emptiness, between full and void, when he confronts reality in New York with its crazy streets, foul reckless striking automobiles, addicts, perverts, drunkards, he feels completely foreign. The conviction transmitted by the crowd on the Broadway: “seemed to be that reality was a terrible thing and that the final truth about mankind was overwhelming and crushing.” (MSP 26)

Mr. Sammler is a hero who experiences and reflects on America of the sixties and the predicament of man on this planet at this point of history. Like Henderson, Mr. Sammler too is not overpowered by his predicament. On the other hand, he survives the attacks of the hostile society. Hence through the character of Mr. Sammler, Bellow defines what it means to be “exactly human” in a society that apparently tries to demolish all traces of humanity. The absurdity of the present causes Mr. Sammler to reflect on the past and comment upon society.

Mr. Sammler is an integral part of society and possesses an irrepressible curiosity and interest in life. But he is alienated. His age immediately sets him apart from those with whom he comes into contact. He largely derives his pessimism about contemporary society indirectly through his observation of friends, relatives and acquaintances who
communicate chaos, and directly from his unpleasant experiences on the streets of Manhattan. Mr. Sammler had earlier learned in the Holocaust period, not only about the human ability to commit unthinkable atrocities, but how a world of harsh realities can damage or destroy a person whose belief system is ensconced in the world of human ideals and ideas. Mr. Sammler seems genuinely troubled by his experiences after he has transformed them into a set of general ideas. It is what people symbolize rather than what they are that upsets Mr. Sammler’s equilibrium.

Mr. Sammler regards the earth as his planet despite the conditions that disrupt normal life and seeks to affirm human existence at a time when mankind is almost on the verge of exploring the possibility of creating a new world on the moon. In affirming life on the earth, Sammler is torn by two opposite pressures. Firstly he is alive to the fact that the advances in technology have not at all resolved the maddening conditions of human life. He also knows that there is yet no adequate substitute for what the earth offers. His knowledge of the evil present in the world prevents him from celebrating its freshness and glory. Dr. Lal is Sammler’s foil. For Dr. Lal, life on the moon seems to provide a way of dealing with the problem of vast multitudes. It is also a nihilistic expression of escaping the human condition. The aged Sammler, survivor of the Holocaust, with the knowledge of six million of his brethren having been killed, is insensitive to the problem of overpopulation. He is also not a pessimist. His positive thinking, which is a mark of intellectual survival, makes him consider the earth as a glorious planet but: “everything was being done to make it intolerable to abide.” (215)

Dr. Lal advances the thesis that if the moon were to be colonized, then the problem of human population on earth would be largely solved. Sammler believes that such a transportation of human species to the moon might be more a triumph of science rather than man’s triumph over himself. Staying on this planet and discovering the hidden design
of life is a much more profitable activity. Mr. Sammler himself wished to flee New York. He suggests that it is better not to have been born, but once having been born, man possesses a natural instinct for life. It is an unconscious obeisance to the will of God, which reveals itself in a respect for the power of creation. According to Mr. Sammler, man should concentrate his activities upon improving life on this earth. This earth is not so corrupt that it is unredeemable and he must seek to start life anew preferably on a new planet. He also knows that irrespective of what one thinks about life on earth, one has to leave this planet someday once and for all. With his instinctive Jewish feeling, Sammler realizes that life is sacred whether anybody thinks it to be so or not. Sammler discovers a fellow believer in Elya Gruner who becomes the archetypal figure for Sammler’s view of life. Though he was aware of Elya’s complicity in the corruption of the society, Sammler would still applaud Elya for maintaining human dignity in the face of all round decay in moral conscience and human integrity. Mr. Sammler firmly believes that earthly life is worthwhile so long as individuals like Elya continue to exist. In the death of Elya he sees the eternal truth of human existence. “The moment of illumination makes him aware that the knowledge he has sought in detachment is possible only through his love for others and his acknowledged participation in the condition of mortality.” (Pifer25)

Finally Artur Sammler has reconciled with the world around him. He has learned to balance the world of the spirit with the world of the physical, of the infinite with the finite. As he moves towards reconciliation between these two extremes, Sammler recognizes that he has erred in his estimation of the world around him. Though he first thought that the world might collapse, towards the end of the novel, he tells Angela Gruner:

I am not sure that this is the most of all times. But it is in the air now that things are falling apart, and I am affected by it. I always hated people who
declared that it was the end. What did they know about the end? From personal experience, from the grave if I may say so, I know something about it. But I was flat, dead wrong. (278)

Mr. Sammler’s pessimistic vision of the world is replaced with a new sense if faith, for as he tells Angela, things may be falling apart, but there are still human qualities. “Our weak species fought its fear; our crazy species fought its criminality. We are an animal of genius.” (278). His new faith in the world enables him to form a human bond with the people around him. His attitude towards other people in the novel has undergone a change. He invests a much more human interest in others. He no longer regards his daughter Shula as a lunatic but acknowledges her as his own flesh and blood and worthy of love. He tries to teach Angela what he himself has learned: that we all have a duty and obligation to maintain a human bond with the people around us.

In Bellow’s novels, the Jewish ethos of emphasizing a person’s freedom of choice is presented. It indicates that life is not totally circumscribed and that one possesses a meaningful freedom. All the heroes present the Jewish desire to be a part of community and not be separated from society, however materialistic and nihilistic it may be. The Jew has been conscious of the presence of an ideal world lying not outside but within the everyday world. He believes that Heaven is this world redeemed. Man is not finished. The world is not finished, on the contrary sanctified. Bellow offers some hope to society which is disillusioned by the Holocaust. Bellow reminds his readers that men have forgotten the golden rules of their lives and he seems to ask whether they have become machines and they have laid aside their feelings. “There is really no free choice we yield to social drives.” (Malin10) However Bellow promotes the belief that man can go beyond his petty self and endeavor to create a better social order. The humanist thinkers have often
suggested that personal relations are based on faith in human nature and in the integrity of
the individual, tolerance and goodwill.

Everyone can recognize the battle that Bellow puts his heroes through, it is
made up of love, sex and marriage, of common apprehensions and natural
catastrophes, of the struggle between parents and children, between victims
and persecutors, between love and hatred, between life and death. (Kazin)

Bellow heroes undergo agony and anguish not so much because of their deeds but because
of their desire to be better than normal. Dangling man, The Victim, Seize the Day, clearly
elaborate the theme of suffering and the protagonists rebel against the established order.
Joseph, Wilhelm and Leventhal crave for love and self esteem in the mass society of
America. They are sensitive and loving in nature but they suffer exceedingly and show
helplessness in the face of reality.

Values have changed and this has brought out a corresponding change in the
behavior pattern of man. Bellow says: “. . . humankind struggles with collective powers
for its freedom, the individual struggle with dehumanization for the possession of his
soul.” (Nobel Lecture) In the western society even the institution of marriage suffered
alarmingly due to divorce laws, the insignificant role of religion and awareness of general
and specific rights. The protagonist’s problem leads to the unhappy marriage which is
again linked with loss of faith in society, loss of faith in religion. The protagonist’s
experiences in the novel are similar to the times. The war, Depression and Fear have led
man to his own disintegration. So his fight with his fate led the reader also to sympathize
with him. The novels of Bellow work toward probing the depth of the protagonist’s
feelings and forging of the fragments of the protagonist’s life into a coherent whole even
under the circumstances of chaos. The Bellovian object is to accept oneself, to take life in
one’s own hands and to struggle to make something worthwhile out of one’s assets. There
is no need to worry about creating a better world as the world we live in is good enough. The term survivor can refer to any protagonist who has endured and survived extreme loss and suffering. Chirantan Kulshreshtha also recognizes the trends of victim literature and ‘Survival literature’ in Saul Bellow. He describes the victims as: “insecure, recalcitrant, unwilling to assume responsibility, and suspicious of their fellowman.” (Kulshreshtha 18). These characters are obsessed by thoughts of persecution, death and madness and they perceive the world around them as hostile and oppressive. Herzog and Mr. Sammler are the survivors, the protagonists who seek calm and contentment after undergoing a traumatic experience and loss. But they resist being victims and instead adapt themselves both psychologically and morally to cope with extreme suffering. They have an acute understanding of the problems of the world. Their acceptance of the problems gives them the strength to overcome their vices. Joseph, Asa and Wilhelm are victim heroes but with their spirituality, morals, and inward journey they also emerge as intellectual survivors. Augie and Henderson are bold and adventurous and it becomes possible for them to emerge as intellectual survivors.