CONCLUSION

THIS ABOVE ALL, TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE,
AND IT MUST FOLLOW, AS THE NIGHT THE DAY,
THOU CANST NOT THEN BE FALSE TO ANY MAN.

SHAKESPEARE, HAMLET

The modernist concept of Self, as shown in the analysis so far, does not conform to the old norms. The term 'unselfing' has been used despite its relatedness to the old terms such as self-consciousness, self-knowledge, self-awareness and self-realization, in order to make specific that the modernist self is not always the fruit of experience. It is a process where the end is in the experience itself or the experience itself is the end. Self is not a separate entity outside or elsewhere that needs to be reached after a laborious stretch of contemplation. Every act, thought and behaviour is an urge of the 'Self' and each moment of existence is an awareness of Self by itself. The individual has no need to seat himself to ponder over his past, present or future to achieve 'Self'. The 'unselfing' process is continuous and constant to anyone. It is the unselfing individual's will that makes it either good or bad, conscious or unconscious, diabolic or saintly, right or wrong, petty or magnanimous. Existence is rendered shape, form and significance, owing to Self, without which the term 'existence' itself cannot come into play or remain in vogue.
The point the modernist writer strives to drive home is that Self is not an abstract whole as it was believed to be by traditionalists. Self is, in fact, the individual in his variety. The fragments of selves are comprehended, felt or experienced through 'unselfing', not necessarily always in a vista or stretch. They are constantly unwoven in the individual's seeking an inner-world of experience.

The chapter-wise analysis has made evident, that the stage before 'unselfing' is an 'unstable' condition for the protagonists and their fragmentary forms of selves are either misleading, disturbed or distorted images of themselves. This initial state is a hypothetical state in the psyche of the protagonists who dilly-dally between freedom of choice and the dilemma caused by illusions that blur the right choice. Once the unselfing comes to a close (within the limited context of the novel), the Self makes a compromise or adjustment to the reality of existence. And this is the chief function of Self. Self at this point is a tactful liberator of the psyche from the binding shackles of obsessions, illusions, fears, anxieties, emotional disparities, and problems of money, sex, marriage, violence, corruption resentment, alienation, death, question of God, truth, religion and sense of guilt that issue forth from the predicamental existence (Hienemann, Existentialism 8).
The fictional worlds of Iris Murdoch and Saul Bellow are akin to each other in terms of the themes, convictions, problems and situations taken up for exploration. It is evident from the study made so far that be it Bruno, Dora, Mischa Fox or Bradley Pearson from Murdoch's novels, Herzog, Henderson, Corde or Citrine from Bellow's novels - the protagonists show a basic similarity of an austere faith that man could ease himself into any predicament however chaotic it may be provided the Self is comprehensive to their inner experiences.

The Murdoch and Bellow protagonists enjoy a common ability of celebrating reality however despicable the contingencies may be. They come to terms with Self only after a marathon exercise of illusory pursuits, misappropriations and misinterpretations, and a simultaneous unselfing that guides or misleads them. For a striking instance, the contextual difference lies in such obvious differences as in Murdoch's and Bellow's novels - where either one or the other character is either Jewish or often an outsider figure. Besides this basic distinction between the two novelists lies the post-war strife for significance and value of Self through the unselfing efforts.

Murdoch's protagonists are either victimizers or victims and they resolve in reality triumphantly, resign to
reality or construct an image for themselves to which they strictly adhere. But the Bellow protagonists are in majority victims of some personal or situational hazards.

The remarkable number of similarities in Murdoch and Bellow novels are worth considering for further detailed studies of the two novelists and their works. The subordinate characters, for instance, quite specifically the women characters in Murdoch's and Bellow's novels are victimizers of the protagonists. Besides this, such obsessions as letter-writing, art-artist-saint contradictions, the demonic-saint contrasts, fantasy-illusory-reality pursuits, animal imagery, are certain common traits in the works of the two novelists.

There is quite a striking difference in the style and manner of presentation in the two novelists. Either the agony that the holocaust impinges upon the mind or suffering imposed by the intricacies of existence makes the Bellow protagonists death-obsessed. Herzog, Henderson and Sammler are resurrected survivors of either the holocaust or death obsession of some form or the other. They show a peculiar way of defiance against the oddities of life, which marks their predicament as hilariously absurd. The Murdoch protagonists suffer death-obsession more severely than the Bellow
protagonists. The type of comforting compromise that Bellow's Henderson or Herzog, for instance, make with death is not evident in Murdoch's Bruno. Inspite of Bruno's analytic sagacity and cautiousness he relies on Nigel to debate about death and identifies God with death, perceiving the cue from Nigel's perspective. Though Bellow's Herzog believes in such an identity of death with God or vice versa, the consciousness is his own intellectual forethought and the compromise is his own strain of thought unlead by any reality-instructor like Nigel.

Murdoch's protagonists live among hypocrites, egotists, deceiving swindlers and hard-hearted realists, but manage to maintain their standards of being 'best men' quite choosy about the decisions they take, be they positive or negative, chaotic or clear-sighted. However, unlike Bellow's protagonists, Murdoch's are comparatively too idealistic in their effort to unself, especially in their attempts to achieve a compromising view of Self.

In Chapter I, though both Bruno and Herzog suffer from repressions, obsessions and personal crises all of which are either situational, or manipulations of the other characters in the respective novels, Bellow's Herzog is more interesting than the complex Bruno whose unselfing is severed or misdirected
every now and then by his own fears, scepticism and passions. Murdoch creates her protagonists with specific intentions installing in their consciousness a deliberate mixture of memory, fantasy and illusions that spring from a creative imagination. It is this mixed state that excites a protagonist as Bruno to confront and analyse himself.

As far as the psychic pattern is concerned both Bruno and Herzog resemble each other though the two of them figure in two different works of two novelists. But Bellow's Herzog

...During the course of the novel...undergoes a psychotic episode in which he tries to rediscover his essential self by searching for clues in his own past.... he discovers in himself that ironic-comic Jewish "fool", who in the very process of discovering... seems more to become. Since there is no apparent place in the world suitable for this fool of the heart, [he strives for] - a reconciliation with nature, and through nature, with God, when the insoluble dilemma is concluded at the end of the novel. The rebirth euphoria at the end of the novel is contrived. It provides a lyrical moment's pause to the suffering of the hero; however, the assumption must be that, given this hero's mode, his suffering will continue as an unending process of the self. (Weinberg, The New Novel in America 106)

The relationships between Murdoch's and Bellow's protagonists with the other subordinate characters are not identical. Murdoch's protagonists collide with a limited range of relationships. In most of her novels a single 'power' or
Christ-figure (as critics generally refer to them) towers above the other revolving characters. The unselfing process which the protagonists undergo in this context thereby becomes restricted to a narrow track. And for a time it is an easy task for the audience to club two or three of the Murdoch protagonists as almost similar or misplace them in some context of any one of her novels, which would not seem unbearably incongruous. This game is easily and fairly possible in her novels The Flight from the Enchanter, Nuns and Soldiers and Sacred and Profane Love Machine.

Bellow's exploration of the various relationships is wide ranging and minute, and at the personal level of the protagonist quite attached, in a queer way. He attempts to study human relationship in all its plausibility and range and each relationship however has some drastic command or the other over the protagonists' plight in the novels. But these protagonists, quite comically or absurdly walk into their own prison of emotional entanglements.

The most prominent resort is alienation for most of the problems that figure in the novels of the two writers. This estrangement most often does not arise merely from an extravagant awareness of life's predicament, for both the novelists seem to imply that alienation is often the effect of
an 'unaccomplished', 'frustrated' and loathesome life. And, of course, from this vintage point, Self or unselfing commences for the protagonists.

Murdoch's alienated protagonists are found to develop a philosophic sense of life and of Self itself where all the cues that the Self grasps about life and the predicament of existence are in a way idealized. In such a context, the protagonists concerned cannot but be noticed for either a certain artificiality or some sort of strenuous manifestation inspite of their being self-prominent men. Though drawn into their own alienated world, Murdoch's protagonists have this rare capacity to aspire for such fantastic manifestations and this perhaps has led critics to refer to her men as Christ or power-figures.

However, the difference once again in the two novelists lies in the fact that each novelist sets out to argue or carry over their themes through their specific routes. For instance, as critics point out, Murdoch has a 'religionist' undertone and Bellow a 'humanist' one. The two novelists do not strictly adhere to the situations that spurt off the novels and their narrative. It is this point that makes their novels more predicamentally true and versatile to the concept of fleeting selves and unselfing.
In this context, there is yet another valuable point to be noticed, as in the case of Murdoch's Dora, Mischa Fox and Bradley Pearson or in the case of Henderson, Corde and Citrine, something or much of the past is reflected upon by these characters quite deliberately in the unselfing process. These characters are initially unsure as to what their status or role is in their respective predicaments, that is, whether they are or have been stable as a child, or in youthhood or in their adulthood. Their perplexity is reinforced and contracted further under various pressures of fears and dubiousness, until finally they are lead to reflect. And in the ensuing contexts, these characters seem to brim with such reflection beginning from their perplexities of their own polemics to their final resorts which may be either positive or negative.

It is easy to draw a conclusion from these points discussed so far that Murdoch abides quite distinctly well within a clearly "articulated world view" (Podhoretz, Doings and Undoings 161), rendered by her self-analytic characters, which is evenly or predestinedly rhythmic despite the corrugated ups and downs of their predicament. On the other hand, Bellow though equally well articulated, or in the creation of his characters resorts to making them liberators of "rigid systems of beliefs" (Podhoretz, Doings and Undoings 162), that makes his works more realistic.
Both Murdoch and Bellow portray each of their protagonists in their variety though 'situationally' there could be a repetition of types as in the former's case. The protagonists are representatives of the various possibilities, probabilities and profundities of life and their unselfing process helps the audience see the preposterousness of their own lives. In no way do Murdoch's philosophical protagonists relate to the humaneness in Bellow's. According to her, there is uniqueness in every individual, and each individual has his own particularities and is opaque and is also a mixture of a bit of fact, a bit of fantasy or myth and a certain limit of anonymity too. Therefore, she weaves into her protagonists a certain mystery that makes them fantastic men and she compels or urges them to learn through their own exercise of life and freedom and also impels them to realise that the other characters around them are independent of their will (Culley, Characterization in Murdoch 338). This perhaps is the reason why Murdoch gives importance to such men as Mischa Fox in who are contemplative and introspective and appear less frequently in the novel in comparison with the other characters. Murdoch, as a result, fails to achieve a sense of balance between complexities of characters, contingencies and introspection which Bellow manages to acquire with easeful dexterity. Perhaps, in the process of creating and rendering her
protagonists, Murdoch tends to concentrate deliberately on the intensity of character-creation, rather than giving equal attention to the changing situations too.

Although Murdoch advocates that novels need be more reality oriented, much of the inclination she proclaims in her novels makes her protagonists more fantasy or philosophy conscious despite the crises that engulf them, although at times they are sufferers themselves. But as Peter Axthelm points out in a specific context:

Clearly Bellow does not intend to let his... [protagonists] off easily.... [Their unselfing] must be deep, sincere, unwavering relevant, [illusory perhaps but not fantastic]. Simple answers and bland generalizations will be exposed by the author's ironic comment, in a manner more direct, informal and gently humorous. (Modern Confessional Novel 132)

However, in Murdoch it is a dedicated bondage to the 'mysterious' inspite of the accessibility to self. This should explicate why Murdoch often creates fantastic images of men like Mischa Fox or the remote Rozanov or Martin Lynch Gibbon.

The first chapter shows the protagonists effort to come to terms with the various ideals, questions, eccentricities, that cram their minds. Both Bruno and Herzog, in this context reveal a sturdy, innate capacity to resolve to their ends, however hard the reality may be, specially in Bruno's case. The second chapter shows how self could be
achieved in a comically roundabout way, for instance, the elaborate animal adventures of Henderson, and the comic inspiring symbols of Dora. In the third chapter, Mischa Fox and Albert Corde are poised in a social, national or cultural context grasping the turmoil around in an effort to recognise and acknowledge the horror, illusions and obnoxiousness of the world outside. The fourth chapter is a comparative study of two writers, such as Bradley and Citrine, in their respective contexts, each ridden by their writers' convention or neurosis and specially the latter's slow equal concern for the neurosis and idiosyncrasies in the cultural context too.

Bellow discusses the sufferings of his protagonists more directly and openly. The mental complexities and the many sidedness of his protagonists are the central themes of his novels. His protagonists suffer from their varied knowledge of life and its matters and also suffer from the inadequacy of life in relation to their wisdom and experience. The psychological trauma persistently continues as these men believe in 'thinking' that does not succumb to any impediment. Bellow's presentation is more akin to reality and therefore naturally excel the systematically structured, carefully patterned, less complex and idealistic men of Murdoch. In short, Bellow's protagonists are the everyday dilly-dallying
failures of urban existence, and are naturally more appealing to the reader's mind than the Murdochian fixed characters.

Bellow's protagonists make a comic inquiry into the matters of life or existence or self. As a result, Bellow's men stand in a multifaceted view before their reading audience, that is, in relation to their own selves, in relation to their ideals and pursuits, in relation to their subordinate characters, and in relation to humour or comedy or farcical absurdity of existence - a technique specific to Bellow in riveting comedy as a tool of ridicule and self-mockery among all beings that exist.

Much of Bellow's works appeal in the manner in which he lets loose the problems of his protagonists naturally or realistically unsolved (Herzog) or as in certain cases quite insoluble (Citrine). This predicament which seems precarious in the lives of the Bellow protagonists is more convincing and true to reality than the busily engaged role-players in Murdoch's novels. Undeniably Murdoch's protagonists are progressive and show a positive development in their consciousness, as in Bruno's case, still there are fixed phases that all of her men outgrow, a self-initiating circumstance, a recourse and renumeration in their lives. But Murdoch does not consider comedy as a mode of utility exploited for self
inquiry for her protagonists. These men are created and done with for specific reasons and purposes and cannot afford to dwell in any dilly-dallying incertitude, nor do they have much to contribute in the guise of either buffoons or clowns. However, a few of Murdoch's protagonists are at times ludicrous which critics claim is purely unintentional on the part of the novelist.

At this juncture there is yet another point worthy of notice - Bellow's 'often-clowns' have their Self surface in almost comic extravaganza. These men laugh at their excess wariness of life and at their excess self-consciousness, discarding the pressures of existence in favour of laughter and jokes. They quite peculiarly seem to recognize their escapism, errors, fallibilities and foolishness in a comic sensation that comes to them naturally. There is such comicality accessible in Humboldt's Gift, Henderson the Rain King and Sammler's Planet. In these novels, the protagonists are portrayed as apparently foolish but in fact are wise or these men in all their hilarious absurdity are actually shrewd. But, just as Murdoch shows specific purpose or reason for her fantastic men, so does Bellow have a purpose in making his protagonists comic. This purpose is that of 'defence' - the type of defence that recovers their dormant self and brings a predicament in sight which is not necessarily always in their own favour. Murdoch's
unintentionally comic novels and protagonists, are suave and idealistic, never too simple to be realistic. The subtly humorous protagonists of Murdoch's novels divulge even their humorous revelations to their highly conventional scruples.

In examining the 'effective absurd' in Bellow's novels, Bellow seems to bring this into vogue in order to make comedy an emphatic impetus or indulgence in the seeking of self. Obviously, Bellow's hilarious jokes are meant to be means of self-affirmation. This is a technique unique to Bellow's novels distinct from Murdoch. Ultimately the point that the two novelists try to make is that the individual is "...not only what he conceives himself to be, but he is also what he wills himself to be" (Gill, *Existentialism* 13).

To sum up, despite the primal sufferings of the protagonists the novelists cast them into almost a spell of unique and free self. The Murdoch and Bellow protagonists lead an apparently felicitous life. Their creators are skilled enough to make the predicament appear inevitable in the context of the novels. Moreover, it is obviously inferable that besides either the idiosyncratic oddities or sequential predicament there is also a pronounced and deliberate purpose in the lives of these protagonists, which resolves their final plight. Whatever be the role-play and psychological unselfing,
the paradoxical difference between the presentations of the two novelists is noticeable though at times quite subtle.

The abysmal depth of selfhood for both the novelists is exposed through thinking. But Bellow's profound men do not circumvent a Self that represents the traditional unity. And Murdoch's too render a Self that only persistent thinking could provide as a result of its intensity. On the contrary, the Self that the Bellow protagonists acknowledge is a realisation achieved from the 'abysms' of thoughts. This is perhaps the reason why critics like Conradi accuse Murdoch of taking a stance too far-fetched to be close to some philosophic ordainment. Bellow's protagonists manage to extricate themselves from illusory anchorages. They brave those aspects which they evaded all the while.

A reasonable number of similarities and differences figure between the works of Murdoch and Bellow. What has to be marked is that Self plays a predominant role in the works of the two novelists and Self is exploited in terms of reality, existence and inter-personal play and definitely not treated as a separate image or identity as in the traditional, sense, nor do they always serve merely pure idealistic or philosophic purposes.
The similarities and differences however, arise vindicative of the individualistic style of the two novelists. The novelists concentrate equally on the vulnerability of their protagonists to the hazards of existence and take special efforts to present the peculiar odds of existence convincingly.

This comparative study acquires its validity on the grounds that the two novelists believe in the value of human existence dangling between the pseudo-selves. The Self in Murdoch's and Bellow's novels is not the outmoded romantic conception (at times subtly traced in Murdoch's novels owing to her commitment to philosophy). Instead it is a concept that involves the protagonist's hatred, curses, dismissal and dissolution of the various pseudo-selves in him, into the reality within and without him.