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SAUL BELLOW'S USE OF SETTING IN

HENDERSON THE RAIN KING

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ABSTRACT

The most significant difference between Henderson the Rain King and Saul Bellow's other work is his use of setting. The city is normally the domain of his characters, a city teeming with crowds, violence and noise. The cities are well known to Americans and create a realistic backdrop for the characters and events portrayed in the work. In Henderson the Rain King, Eugene Henderson, the narrator, protagonist and pseudo author of the work, goes to a fictional Africa in search of self-awareness.

As the protagonist goes off to Africa, it becomes evident that he takes America with him. Henderson's world view and soldierly temperament, along with his knowledge and use of modern technology, are the primary burdens he carries with him on his sojourn. Henderson flees to Africa fearing that death will "annihilate" him and leave nothing behind but "junk". However, the soldierly Henderson, who would like to be a hero and savior of mankind, is not able to escape from his own attitudes and behaviors which caused his problems in the first place. Once in Africa, he is forced to confront himself and change his world view, i.e., he learns to be more aware of other people and their needs and therefore realizes that his own perspective of the world was the cause of his alienation from others.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the ways

in which Henderson's culture and society have created the problems that Henderson has to deal with and to investigate how an "escape" to Africa can bring about the necessary changes in a character like him. Underlying this investigation is the premise that there are correlations between physical environment and culture, and between body and mind. A given society within a physical environment will create cultural values which shape the way a person thinks and as a result will shape the way he behaves. The individual is never free from the values and ideals of his society and culture. However, in a society in which individuality and personal liberty are paramount objectives, the individual may cease to understand the needs and behaviors of others. Where everyone is struggling to be an individual, each person has their own wants and needs and is frequently insensitive to the needs of others.

Based on these assumptions, I have attempted to show the ways in which Bellow has used environment to portray the development of the attitudes and behaviors of the protagonist and to illustrate how a more primitive environment has been used to force a confrontation of self for the protagonist. As no such societies exist in the world, Bellow has created a fictional Africa to meet this purpose and to illustrate the basic problems of modern man living in an industrialized society.

RESUMO

A diferença mais significativa entre Henderson the Rain King e as outras obras de Saul Bellow é a maneira como ele usa o ambiente. A cidade é normalmente o domínio de seus personagens, uma cidade cheia de gente, violência e barulho. As cidades são bem conhecidas dos americanos e criam um fundo realístico para os personagens e os eventos retratados em suas obras. Em Henderson the Rain King, Eugene Henderson, o narrador, o protagonista e pseudo-autor da obra, vai para a África fictícia em busca de si mesmo.

Como o protagonista vai para a África, se torna evidente que ele leva a América consigo. A visão do mundo de Henderson e seu temperamento militante, combinados ao seu conhecimento e uso da tecnologia moderna, são os primeiros fardos que ele carrega consigo em sua viagem. Henderson foge para a África temendo que a morte o aniquile, não deixando nada de útil para trás. Porém, o soldado Henderson, que gostaria de ser herói e salvador da humanidade, não tem a capacidade para escapar de suas próprias atitudes e comportamentos que foram a causa de seus problemas iniciais. Ao chegar à África ele é forçado a enfrentar a si próprio e a mudar seu próprio ponto de vista sobre o mundo, isto é, ele aprende a ser mais consciente com os outros e suas necessidades. Portanto, Henderson chega a conclusão de que a visão que ele tinha do mundo era a causa de sua alienação em relação as outras pessoas.

O objetivo desta dissertação é investigar a maneira

como a cultura e a sociedade de Henderson criaram os problemas que ele tem que enfrentar e investigar como a sua "fuga" para a África pode trazer as mudanças necessárias ao próprio personagem. O fundamental desta investigação está na premissa de que existem correlações entre o meio ambiente e a cultura, e entre o corpo e a mente. Uma sociedade e um meio ambiente específicos criam valores culturais que formam o modo de pensar de uma pessoa e o resultado disto formará seu próprio comportamento. O indivíduo nunca fica livre dos valores e ideais de sua própria sociedade e cultura. Portanto, numa sociedade na qual a individualidade e a liberdade são os objetivos mais importantes, o indivíduo pode deixar de compreender as necessidades e comportamentos alheios. Num lugar onde todos lutam para se tornar indivíduos, cada um tem seus próprios desejos e necessidades, e frequentemente é insensível aos desejos e necessidades dos outros.

Baseada nestas suposições, fiz uma tentativa de mostrar as maneiras como Bellow usou o ambiente para demonstrar o desenvolvimento das atitudes e comportamentos do protagonista e ilustrar como um ambiente pode ser usado para forçar o confronto consigo mesmo. Como as sociedades primitivas não existem no mundo real, Bellow criou uma África fictícia para servir a este propósito e ilustrar os problemas básicos do homem moderno que vive numa sociedade industrializada.

Chapter One

Serious Fooling

Serious Fooling

In defense of his use of a fictional Africa rather than a factually realistic one, Saul Bellow, who studied African ethnology with the late professor Herskovits, tells us the professor scolded him for writing a book like Henderson the Rain King. He told Bellow "the subject was much too serious for such fooling." Bellow responded: "I felt my fooling was fairly serious".¹

Saul Bellow does not make a joke of Henderson's dilemma in the novel even though he takes a humorous approach to writing it. It is 'serious' in terms of its portrayal of the existential problems of modern man (particularly of modern American man) and of the pain that is felt when one lives in a technologically advanced society. It is 'fooling' in the sense that Bellow "fools around with" or manipulates the environment in an effort to illustrate how behavior is influenced by the environment to which the individual is exposed.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the main currents of American thought that are submerged within the protagonist, to see how he reflects his society through them, and to observe the ways in which the society he has been placed in could be expected to create a character like Henderson. The questions underlying this investigation are: What does Bellow use as a foundation for his portrayal of

Henderson's actions, motivations, problems and solutions? How is Henderson a representative American? How is he altered (or not altered) via his exposure to the various settings he is placed in? And, if Henderson is seen as a representative American, what does this novel suggest in terms of problems and solutions for America and Americans? As a point of focus for this study I have chosen setting, not only as a physical environment, but also because the physical locations Henderson is placed in have specific cultural and sociological aspects as well. Giles Gunn states in The Interpretation of Otherness that there is no such thing as a national "mentality"; within society there are individuals who think and feel differently; however, these different "mentalities" join together to form a cohesive unit called culture through which standards of behavior, tradition, values and etc. become established, which in turn influences the individuals that comprise that society. 2 Therefore, culture becomes the expression of a national "mentality" in so far as it reflects one of the many currents of thought existent within that society. Thus Henderson's quest can be explored in terms of landscapes as mentalscapes.

As a starting point of organization of material around a hypothesis which proposes landscapes as mentalscapes, I began with an interview of Saul Bellow by Gordon Lloyd Harper. 3 In this interview, Bellow describes the presence

of an inner or "primitive" commentator which gives him advice and tells him what the real world is. As he describes it, this inner voice seems to be an aspect of the subconscious that guides him. He says:

I don't care to trouble my mind to find an exact description for it, but it has to do with a kind of readiness to record impressions from a source of which we know little. 4

This inner voice, however, does not give clear impressions unless he is prepared to listen and has prepared the ground for it by preparing a "perfect occasion" which would be "truthful and necessary". 5 I am reminded of Henderson whose voice would not tell him what it wanted until he had prepared the ground for it through his journey into the interior of Africa. The fact that his voice demands incessantly suggests that Henderson is on the verge of making his discovery of reality or he would not have heard the voice at all.

In this same interview Bellow discusses the importance of setting to his work, saying that the settings themselves "suggest their own style of presentation" and he "elaborates" them. While defending his use of a fictional Africa, he relates his discussion with Professor Herskovits, therefore suggesting that the setting is created for specific purposes and as such determines how the characters will act and react within it.

According to Bellow, one of the goals of writers of realistic fiction is to create environments which "are somehow desirable, which are surrounded by atmospheres in which behavior becomes significant".⁶ This suggests that a tension exists between the need to provide desirable settings and realistic settings. However, if the setting becomes too real, it becomes factual. Therefore, for Bellow, it is necessary to find a balance between 'realism' (a realistic though fictional representation of environment) and 'factualism' (a documented replica of an already existent environment). By remaining too factual in a work, the author ceases to write fiction. Bellow states that "if you want to be ultimately realistic you bring artistic space itself into danger".⁷ For Bellow, this is an important issue: an attempt to become too realistic will inhibit or stifle the imagination altogether. Therefore, the writer of realistic fiction must find a balance between the creation of environments which appear to be real and the documentary like portrayal of actually existent environments.

This tension between 'realism' and 'factualism' as described by Bellow leads to what Tony Tanner sees as "an ambiguous attitude toward landscape [that] pervades contemporary American writing".⁸ This ambiguity involves, on the one hand, "scrupulous attention to the given terrain" which has been felt to be a "valid stabilizing strategy in the midst of any personal or social confusion." He cites

the work of Hemingway and William Carlos Williams as examples of writers who take this approach. On the other hand, Tanner goes on to say that "there has arisen a deep suspicion about the intentions and potencies of landscapes which surround the modern self."

At the heart of this 'suspicion' of environment, Tanner suggests, is behavioristic psychology. B. F. Skinner, in his book, Beyond Freedom and Dignity, portrays the interaction of the individual with his environment. According to him, individual behavior is always a reaction to people and events in the environment, and he maintains that the inner crises of man are a direct result of his interaction with his exterior world. Skinner places the environmental role in human behavior in activist terms when he says: "The environment not only prods or lashes, it selects. Its role is similar to natural selection though on a very different time scale."⁹

Environment seen in this sense casts man as a rather puny creature, against a background in which he is not in control. As a result, in modern American literature man is placed at the mercy of society and, like Dreiser's Sister Carrie, man "painfully [acquires] knowledge of life at its toughest and lowest".¹⁰ It is this interpretation of behaviorism which Tanner claims causes such pessimism in American literature during the fifties and sixties. As he comments: "Behaviorism, particularly if not properly

understood, offers a nightmare to the imaginative person cherishing dreams of authentic independent action".¹¹ This pessimistic view is in keeping with that presented by the historian Henry Adams, who saw himself as a helpless being, having no power to change the course of human history which he believed would lead to the destruction of civilization.

However, "if not particularly understood" becomes the key phrase, because behavioristic psychology claims that man can manipulate his environment and in so doing alter himself. According to B. F. Skinner,

The environment can be manipulated. It is true that man's genetic endowment can be changed only very slowly, but changes in the environment of the individual have quick and dramatic results.¹²

In sending Henderson to a fictional Africa, Bellow demonstrates the "suspicion" of territory common to American writers of the period and creates what Tanner says "might be called imperative, fictional territories to counter the environmental imperative from without."¹³

Bellow's environment in Henderson the Rain King becomes a graphic illustration of Skinner's concept of the interaction between the environment and the individual. Henderson's genetic endowment does affect his behavior. But more important is his inheritance of social values and concepts which have shaped his society and through that process have contributed to the shaping of Henderson's

character, i.e., to the development of the complex mental and ethical traits that determine his actions.

Even though Henderson is the fictional author of the novel, it remains Bellow's, and is well within the tradition of American literature which date from the nineteenth century. In particular, according to Tanner, Bellow's work is quite clearly related to Whitman and Dreiser.

In Democratic Vistas -- pessimistic as to American facts, optimistic as to American possibilities -- Whitman discusses a crucial paradox which is as much at the heart of Bellow's work as it is at his own. 14

Whitman describes the American dream of society where all men are equal "without rank, degree or privilege" in which a Utopian community based on love and equality would permit man to live by the democratic ideal. But even more importantly, Tanner emphasizes, is the celebration of the "free unencumbered self".¹⁵ The issue becomes one of how does the individual live "in an 'ensemble' in which all people were to be merged democratically together" and at the same time maintain an individual identity? Ultimately, however, Whitman's song is of the self, as is Bellow's. It is Tanner's belief that, in giving Henderson a father who was both a friend of Henry Adams and William James, he has given him an inheritance that will allow him to move through the pessimism that plagued Henry Adams (as well as modern novelists) to a more positive approach to life as expressed by William James.

It appears to me that in Henderson the Rain King Bellow is beginning to develop his theory of inheritance from past ages as well as of the influence of the present environment on the life of the individual. Therefore, the next point of inquiry begins with Henderson's family heritage and his father's friends: William James and Henry Adams.

William James in The Varieties of Religious Experience promotes the belief that personality is inherited. His theory provides a basis for Henderson's problems in his society, not only on cultural aspects of society but also on direct genetic inheritance. He says:

Heterogeneous personality has been explained as the result of inheritance -- the traits of character of compatible and antagonistic ancestors are supposed to be preserved along side of each other.¹⁶

In the beginning of the novel, Henderson only mentions his father and his father's friends, but later in the novel he admits that there were some less illustrious ancestors as well. However, James does not believe that the individual must remain a victim of heredity. He also promotes the possibility of growth and change for the individual. He provides a model for the regeneration of the individual and marks it clearly as a "religious" or "spiritual" concern. It is his claim that the individual will try to dominate his problems through will power, until he reaches a point of

exhaustion, a point in time which may last only a few minutes, which finally permits the "conversion" experience to take place:

So long as the egoistic worry of the sick soul guards the door, the expansive confidence of the soul of faith gains no presence. But let the former faint away, even for a moment, and the latter can profit by the opportunity, and having once acquired possession, may retain it.¹⁷

Thus, the concept of losing oneself in order to find oneself is promoted by James, who in the novel becomes a model for Dahfu as he helps Henderson to become a "being" person.

The next point of inquiry was to look at Henry Adams to see what possibilities exist for him in terms of Henderson's inheritance. It appears that Adams autobiographical work The Education of Henry Adams provides a description of the crisis of Western Civilization which becomes a model for Henderson's personal existential crisis and for his aborted attempts at searching for a solution in Europe and in the initial safari expedition with Charlie in Africa, though it must be remembered that Henderson's portrayal is exaggerated and comic in comparison to the polished sophisticated and indeed serious tone of Adam's work.

Henderson, as a representative American, confronts his existential dilemma head on, exaggerating events and placing unrelated items in juxtaposition to each other, creating humor in a burlesque fashion. As the fictional author of this novel, he makes fun of himself, of his clumsiness, of

his insecurity, and even of his own fear that he will die leaving "nothing but junk" behind him. Nothing seems sacred to this larger-than-life man-child whose gargantuan proportions, as they are graphically portrayed, become an expression of his humor.

As Henderson describes his search for answers to his soul's dilemma, he introduces several themes intertwining them and always giving them a distinctly personal touch, while they remain representative of a problematic America. The themes of the novel are based on the concept of the American Dream. "What is it?" and "How can I get it?" become the focus points of its expression. This American dream has its roots in Protestant America, where idealistically speaking, if you live moderately and work hard and strive to improve yourself as Benjamin Franklin did, God will bless you and make you prosperous and happy. Henderson has worked hard at being decent and efficient, yet he inherited three million dollars that does not make him happy. So, what is wrong with the dream? America's protestant work ethic with its impersonal machine-like application is the source of Henderson's dilemma. Henderson has to go to Africa where money has no value to redefine the dream and learn how to live comfortably within his society.

Judith Moss's article "The Body as Symbol in Saul Bellow's Henderson the Rain King" becomes significant in tying together Henderson's physical appearance and emotional

states with the environment. For Moss, "the body of Eugene Henderson is the central dramatic symbol" in the novel.¹⁸ His physical size matches his material wealth. Everything about him is big. His bigness and his desire seem to represent America, an America whose citizens are uncertain of their identity and afraid of death, thus representing the dilemma of contemporary man.

Because Henderson is a physically oriented character who of necessity must search in the physical world for a solution, environment becomes crucial in interpreting the "meaning" of Henderson the Rain King: landscape becomes relevant to body in similar terms as culture is to mind. In the African settings, the expression of culture is different, therefore offering an alternative mental state. However, Henderson does not deal with his world in intellectual terms; he must have first hand experience in order to change his perception.

Within the novel, what we learn about the settings from Henderson is focused on his relationship to events and people within these environments rather than on physical descriptions per se. When the settings are described in terms of geographical characteristics, it is done within the context of Henderson's reactions to events within the setting, providing clues to the sociological and cultural composition of the environment which becomes representative of the character of its people. In this way, setting serves

as both a reflection of Henderson's mental states and reinforcement of the role of environment in character formation. The journey he takes in the exterior world is an attempt to solve his internal problems which are caused, to a great extent, by his world. Thus, the need for physical travel is justified as a means of accomplishing an inner quest.

Bellow places Henderson in geographic locations which have specific historical, sociological and cultural components built into them which contribute to the characters' psychological response to events and influence their actions. Because Henderson's actions are always reactions to events, rather than consciously planned and executed, he moves in erratic patterns of motion, fleeing from one situation to the next. These events are controlled to a degree by environmental factors. Recurrent images in the environment become symbolic of specific things, which the protagonist responds to in similar ways, until those images are able to acquire a different significance through his interaction with the external environment and its respective characters.

In Henderson the Rain King Bellow presents two distinct types of settings: his civilized societies, which include Europe and the United States, settings which are intended to be realistic representations of actually existent places;

and his primitive African societies which "extend beyond time and geography". His African settings do not appear to be on any map; as Henderson tells the reader, "And I'm still not convinced that I didn't penetrate beyond geography". 19 Henderson gives Africa an ethereal appearance, a quality that impresses a mystical quality on his quest. (It must be remembered that Henderson did not follow a map; he was guided by a series of events and people as well as an inner voice that did not state its demand in terms of concrete and objective goals.) In an effort to make his experience more tangible, more concrete, as well as to communicate to others what has happened to him, he becomes the fictional author of the novel. His book then becomes his map (and ours) portraying the events and the surroundings in which they took place. It takes his search for self awareness out of the ethereal realm of his mind where his memories are in a constant state of flux and organizes them in print where the events recorded can be examined and placed in a physical concrete reality, giving his experience a temporal and spacial arrangement relative to his current life and circumstances. From such a position, he can better understand what has taken place within him and reinforce his sense of integrity.

Setting, in relation to the above, then becomes important for several reasons. As I will attempt to demonstrate, his U. S. settings are important for shaping

the character of our representative American and identifying the sources of his alienation, as well as providing a historical source for the evolution of his culture and society. It appears that Henderson's conflicts are based, not only indirectly through the evolution of society, but directly through his family heritage, i.e., he inherits more from his father than physical appearance and property: he inherits a set of expectations which he for some time tries but fails to fulfill. His European settings seem to represent Henderson's search for cultural and religious roots and serve the purpose of identifying his quest as a spiritual one. His return to France is an attempt to recapture a boyhood experience, a time prior to the development of such anxiety over the welfare of his soul. The African settings Henderson encounters represent his search for his roots in primitive humanity, the two tribes presenting stereotypical or archetypical embodiments of primitive societies. However, as no such tribes actually exist, Bellow creates them to illustrate the conflict of developing a personal identity while struggling to be a part of "the Democratic ensemble" so eloquently described by Whitman while living in a Dreiserian world. The Arnewi represent the 'Democratic ensemble' in which personal identity fades into group identity. The Wariri represent a society in which individual identity must be strong in order to survive. Henderson is victimized, much of the time, by

an environment that is as insensitive to human longing and suffering as Dreiser's Chicago. However, like William James, Bellow seems to suggest that heredity influences the life of man through evolution, and like B.F. Skinner, he suggests that human beings are also influenced by their environments: by manipulating environment, individual behavior can be altered.

As Henderson discovers another hereditary influence in Africa, through Dahfu as his friend and teacher, his physical experience changes his perspective of the world around him. By changing his world view, he also changes his response to people and events in his world which changes the environmental response to him and he thus ceases to be oppressed. He learns not to take himself so seriously, and therefore begins to see others more clearly. This insight prepares him to re-enter society with new vigor and strength. Henderson's "I" loses some of its all encompassing importance and he can see others in a more clear perspective.

Bellow places Henderson in a realistic America, where as a wealthy man, he has the power and force to do as he pleases by virtue of being the inheritor of his father's estate. Even as he picks fights with the neighbors, the veterinarian, the snow plow driver, and Lily, none of them has the power or authority to punish him in any significant way. His money buys him impunity and nothing he encounters

encourages him to act in any other way. His behavior reinforces his isolation and his isolation reinforces his behavior. While he feels pain and drinks to escape the pain, it is only a temporary solution and his socially unacceptable behavior while drunk only increases the lack of positive relationships with peers, friends, family, neighbors and business associates, thus reinforcing his aggressive behavior.

In Africa, Bellow does not wish to fool the reader by placing Henderson in an unreal or contrived environment. Bellow's intention is to place Henderson in an environment where his normal patterns of behavior can become visible and can then be altered through his experience within that environment. In America his aggressive tendencies are allowed to cloud the sources of his aggression. In primitive Africa, he must come to terms with himself, because he cannot escape or avoid the results of his behavior, nor can he blame any one else for the results of his actions. Thus E. F. Skinner's concept of the way dramatic changes are brought about through altering the individual's environment is illustrated.

In the African settings he is, first with the Arnewi, able to see what happens when his aggression is left unchecked; then with the Wariri, he is able to see how his aggression can be tamed and harnessed. He is able to see his behavior as part of a chain of events and break the

chain. He can then see how he can begin to accomplish something for his own benefit as well as for others.

Henderson tells us at the beginning of the novel that the world is no longer his oppressor. In essence then, we assume from the first page of the novel that Henderson's search for self-awareness is a success story. His voice pushes him on in his quest refusing to allow him to quietly maintain the life of a wealthy aristocrat. Because he has acquired material success and has the power of money on his side, it is necessary for him to leave his native land in order to find an adequate challenge to his abuse of power.

Erik Erikson and William Barrett provide descriptions of the existential crisis as it is seen in society today. As I see it, they provide an updated version of Adams explanation (minus the feeling of doom) in psychological and philosophical terms respectively. They describe what happens to the individual and provide a link between impersonal technological societies and the development within the individual of the fear of death.

The literary critics have dealt with Henderson the Rain King along a variety of themes. Most of them have dealt with setting or environment as a subordinate issue. However, Tony Tanner's work has been indispensable in providing the foundation for the thesis.

Mary Lee Allen's dissertation, The Flower and the Chalk describes Henderson's adventure in Africa as "fantastic".

According to her, one of the reasons for this is that Bellow does not treat Africa

in a geographically, historically or sociologically realistic manner. Rather he emphasizes the unreal nature of Henderson's journey...back beyond geography. 21

It is my contention that, even though the African settings are not "factualistic", they are based on solid theoretical grounds and are there to promote a specific kind of experience and that the beyond time and geography aspect of his journey are in keeping with the mystical quality of the regeneration process as described by William James.

Allen's work becomes important as support of the idea that the setting provides a backdrop for all of Henderson's activities, creating the humor and movement of the novel. It can also be used to illustrate that the comic treatment of the novel does not negate the seriousness of the quest.

In chapter two, I will investigate the "civilized" settings, focusing on the effect of these environments on Henderson. I will attempt to provide historical and sociological evidence to demonstrate the extent to which Henderson reflects his society's values, norms and ideas, as well as delineating the underlying expression of American thought as expressed through Henderson.

The next chapter, "Guides to Integration: Synthesizing Experience", will focus on the ways in which Henderson makes connections between his civilized and uncivilized worlds;

between his internal quest and his outer vision and between himself and other human beings. I will attempt to portray the three guides that promote Henderson's move from chaos to organization, from "becoming" to "being", focusing on his flight from the death of Miss Lennox to the beginning of his journey into the interior of Africa.

The fourth chapter, "Africa: Escape or Catharsis", will deal with his experience in Africa, focusing on his move from an advanced technological society to a much less civilized state, and to show how Henderson carries his civilization with him. His Africa (after leaving Charlie's expedition) is actually divided into three parts: the desert which is uninhabited and therefore uncivilized; the Arnewi village which is primitive and peaceful; and the Wariri town, which is more advanced than the Arnewi society, but not an advanced civilization by any stretch of the imagination. I will attempt to show how Henderson's behavior is altered within these three African settings by his presence in each of them, and that in each of them Henderson relates to a person or people who represent, to various degrees, a combination of the civilized and primitive qualities that permit him to see these qualities in himself; that permit him to identify the destructive nature of his own violence and provide a model for another manner of dealing with the problems of life. I will attempt to illustrate that his progression from an uncivilized

environment to progressive levels of civilization is a necessary chain of events that provides him experiential learning that could not be acquired in a strictly intellectual or passive way by this physically oriented protagonist.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, "Homeward Bound", I will focus on Henderson's return journey toward reintegration within himself and his society. What are the clues that suggest that Henderson's search has fulfilled his expectations? Has he achieved the ability to live in and to be a productive member of his American society? In addressing these questions, a consolidation of Henderson's experience is expected to reveal the ways in which setting has been used by Bellow to provide the environment in which the "charm of life" can become visible for his protagonist.

Footnotes for Chapter One

1. Gordon Lloyd Harper, "Interview with Saul Bellow", in
Rovits, Earl, ed. Saul Bellow: A Collection
of Critical Essays, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1975),
p. 13,
2. Giles Gunn, The Interpretation of Otherness, (N. Y.:
Princeton u.p., 1979) p. 40-43
3. Harper, "Interview".
4. Harper, "Interview", p. 10,
5. Harper, "Interview", p. 9.
6. Harper, "Interview", p. 13.
7. Harper, "Interview", p. 13.
8. Tony Tanner, City of Words, (N. Y.: Harper and Row,
1971), p. 202
9. B. F. Skinner, Beyond Freedom and Dignity, (1971),
p. 39.
10. Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow, (Edinburgh: 1965.) p. 13.
11. Tanner, City, p. 202.
12. Skinner, Beyond, p. 29.
13. Tanner, City, p. 202.
14. Tanner, City, p. 10.
15. Tanner, City, p.. 10.
16. William James, Varieties of Religious Experience,
(Glasglow: Fountain Books, 1977), p. 64.
17. James, Varieties p. 9.

18. Judith Moss, p. 37.
19. Saul Bellow, Henderson the Rain King, (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, 1958), p. 50. All further references to the novel will appear in parenthetical references for the remainder of the thesis.
20. Mary Lee Allen, The Flower and the Chalk, Ph.D. Diss. Stanford University, 1968, (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1984), p.109
21. Allen, Flower and the Chalk, p. 109.

Chapter Two

Identity within Culture

Identity Within Culture

The sanest and best of us are of one clay with lunatics and prison inmates, and death finally runs the robustest of us down. And whenever we feel this, such a sense of vanity and provisionality of our voluntary career comes over us that our morality appears but as a plaster hiding a sore it can never cure, and all our well-doing as the hollowest substitute for that well-being that our lives ought to be grounded in, but alas! are not.

(William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience)

As Saul Bellow takes his protagonist from urban America to the interior of Africa, he gives Henderson the same objective as many of his fellow protagonists of the period, which is, according to critic Tony Tanner,

to gain a measure of freedom from the conditioning forces (even immunity) from those behavioral and intellectual versions of reality.....1

These "conditioning forces" are his 1950's American Society, a capitalist society which our millionaire protagonist sees as his oppressor. Henderson, as the fictional author and narrator of the novel, attempts to explain why he went to Africa, and his account is written after the fact. Tony Tanner's description of another fictional author's writing style could also describe Henderson's:

He is transposing his life by describing it in his chosen way....People and places [particularly in the early stages which take place in the U. S. settings] are often introduced by the word 'my':

the reiterated possessive pronoun reminds us that he is now doing the arranging and the placing. This is very much his version.²

Henderson's relationship to the world outside himself causes him pain. Yet it is his world, a society which is as much a part of him as he is of it. He has been created in its image and has adopted its values, ideals and traditions. This representative American carries the conflicting currents of America within his own being. He is the possessor of the riches of capitalist America and is repulsed by his wealth. He fought in the war in the service of his country yet returned from that war to behave (in his words) "like a bum" and to raise pigs, to be involved with earning more money and producing products which are an affront to his ancestry when he could remain idle. His involvement in his business is not due to his necessity to earn a living but to have something to keep him busy because he can not accept his social position and wealth as a legitimate measure of his value to society. His society, as it has been incorporated within him, is at war with his need to achieve an individual identity.

On the surface, the novel is a very physical approach to solving his problem. He responds physically and emotionally to the events, running from one crisis to another. Yet the fact remains that his written account of his adventure includes a "why" and a "how" explanation of his journey to self awareness, thus meeting the need of

intellectual understanding. Our hero, who had related to his world in an almost purely physical way, arrives at a point where intellectual understanding must place his journey in perspective with his internal state of being.

Eugene Henderson, the millionaire protagonist of the novel, mentions specific locations that contain certain cultural and sociological characteristics and refers to actual historical figures which are well known to the reader. Therefore, a sense of reality is created in the novel by providing a historical perspective to the novel and Henderson's relationship to that reality; he has a family history based on real characters, places, and events, which creates a time frame that extends into the historical past. But the novel is also an account of a successfully completed journey, therefore extending the time into the future. Due to our conception of time, based on the continuity of time extending from past to future, the continuum extends in both directions and helps the reader to, as Coleridge says, willingly suspend disbelief. Even though Henderson's journey takes Henderson to a fictional Africa, which the reader knows is fictional, the fiction takes on the image of reality. In addition, a "historical presence" is created which consists of those things within society that existed in the past and have contributed to the development of cultural norms, values and ideas. Within the individual this historical presence contributes to his world view. The

result is, as Gail Sheehy maintains in Pathfinders, that the individual who is alienated from his society must struggle to find a historical basis for his reintegration into society through historical processes, images, and values as well.³ Therefore, culture is correlated to landscape in the same way that mind is to body, i.e., the mentality of a society is expressed through its cultural images, norms and ideas. Landscape then becomes mentalscape through the interaction of the individual with his environment, and is a portrayal of the internal being in the external world.

By placing Henderson on an estate turned pig farm in Connecticut after World War II in the beginning of Henderson the Rain King, Bellow places him within a specific sociological and cultural framework. Henderson is influenced by his society even when he reacts against it, i.e., as a product of such a society, his vision is somewhat limited to its restrictions and standards, whether or not he is consciously aware of it. Henderson is therefore a reflection of his society. His existential problems become anchored firmly within the context of the society he lives in and are a reflection of it.

Although Henderson does not represent everything that is American and his final integration with his culture and society does not imply that he becomes like every American, Henderson's problems as well as solutions are based on collective American history, values and images, and are

from the beginning expressed in an American way, i.e. traditional as well as contemporary American literature is full of complaints about a system that deprives its citizens of a sense of social and individual well being. In fact, Erik Erikson says that the only healthy way for an American to write about America is to vent a gripe and exaggerate it.⁴ Henderson's reason for going to Africa, for understanding his search in a primitive social environment, is based on his complaints about a capitalist system where, no matter how wealthy and powerful people are, everyone wants more than they have. This becomes more clear to him when he explains at the end of the letter he wrote to Lily from Africa: "I had a voice that said I want! I want? It should have told me she wants, they want" (241). By the time he wrote the letter he had realized that his disturbance was a shared one, but at the time his voice was most threatening, he was not aware of the cause of its existence.

Henderson begins his "gripes" on the very first page of the novel. They consist of a list of 'facts' which "crowd in on" him when he thinks about them, facts which he cannot get rid of because they are part of him. They are his parents, wives, girls, children, farm, animals, habits, money, music lessons, drunkenness, prejudices, brutality, teeth, face and soul (7). While this list of 'facts' includes people and things which are external to him, he

relates to all of them as if they are an internal part of his being, a part which he would like to be free from. Through the process of communicating his experience via the novel, he portrays his relationship to each of the facts which have disturbed him. His attempt to portray how "the world [he] thought such a mighty oppressor has removed its wrath from [him]" (7) reveals Henderson's alienation both culturally and socially; and, all of his complaints become centered around a generalized anxiety which is consolidated into one major fear: his fear of death.

Henderson thinks that he should be able to accept his death very easily, as though living in a technologically advanced society should make one's death easier to face. He describes his thoughts on his flight to Africa:

And I dreamed down at the clouds and thought that when I was a kid I had dreamed up at them, and having dreamed at the clouds from both sides as no other generation had done, one should be able to accept his death very easily (39).

He is on his way to Africa because he is afraid that he will die without leaving a contribution to humanity. This becomes clear when, due to Miss Lennox's death, Henderson makes a commitment to do something to change his situation.

You too will die of this pestilence. Death will annihilate you and nothing will remain, and there will be nothing left but junk. Because nothing will have been and so nothing will be left. While something still is -- Now! For the sake of it all, get out! (37)

Henderson, with his millions, thinks that he has done nothing constructive with his life up to this point and that little time is left. Erik Erikson believes that this is a common American dilemma. He says: "I think it was the fear of becoming too old to choose which gave old age and death a bad name in this country".⁵ While Henderson has tried to soothe his voice with material goods, when Miss Lennox dies and his voice demands "I want," he becomes aware that he does not want to die without doing something with his life as a contributor to mankind; yet he does not know what that is. He can not imagine anything more than "non-existence" or a "void" for himself beyond death, nor can he feel content about the inheritance he will leave behind him. Because he can not project his image of himself beyond death, then the only projection beyond his own death that he can make is the material world he will leave behind, that is, the estate his family will inherit. The way he relates to the world around him is a reflection of his internal vision of himself and is in direct contradiction with the social position that is his due to his birthright. In other words, he projects his internal conflicts into the outer world and imagines how that world will see him.

As Henderson imagines what people will say of him while he is on the beach shooting bottles with a slingshot, he thinks that they expect something special from him as the son of a famous man. He is projecting his own expectations

onto anonymous men and women, because he feels guilty for not meeting the ideal standard his family position and American heritage have placed him in. Therefore he strikes out at the world in an effort to avoid confronting himself. This projects his internal conflict into the exterior world. At the same time he strikes out, he feels guilty. In the beach episode, people avoid confronting him and instead appeal to Lily to exert her influence to get him to behave in a more acceptable manner. The end result is that he becomes more isolated than ever. He feels like Joseph in Danqing Man who says:

Trouble, like physical pain, makes us actively aware that we are living, and when there is little in the life we lead to hold and draw and stir us, we seek and cherish it, preferring embarrassment or pain to indifference (35).

Henderson certainly asks for and gets his share of trouble. He got drunk and fell off his tractor and then managed to run over himself and break his leg; he got in a fight with a snow plow driver who tried to run him off the road; he also had a fight with a vet over a pig. The list is endless, according to Henderson, and is a reflection of the deteriorating quality of his life, a life in which pain and trouble are the things which let him know that he is still alive. The aggressive acts he performs are his way of running from death.

Henderson's attempts to run from death are a direct response to his fear of death. The event that seems to precipitate this fear of death is his brother's death. Henderson went to work instead of going to the funeral. This angered his father who, in his grief for the death of his eldest son, withdrew his affection from his youngest. Henderson says that his father never forgave him for being the only survivor of the three children. His sister's death is only mentioned in passing, but his brother's death seems to be the turning point at which Henderson's psychological dilemma intensifies and sets up a series of events which make him feel that he does not deserve his father's inheritance, because the wrong son survived.

In comparing himself with his brother he says that Dick was the sanest of the two. Dick had a "splendid record in the First World War, a regular lion" (33). When Henderson fought in the Second World War, he was wounded when he stepped on a land mine. His most memorable event from the war was being shaved at a crossroads in Italy where he was left naked and shivering, laughing and crying, and still had to deal with the crabs, which remained hidden in crevices, at a later date. Hardly lion-like behavior. He has tried to emulate his brother in an attempt to appease his guilt and, in his failure, reverts to his rebel-like self: our purple heart hero comes home to raise pigs, turns the estate

into a pig farm, behaves like a bum, and compares himself to the pigs he raises.

In his highly competitive society, he makes a lot of money. According to him he could not lose money on his pigs. He made over a hundred thousand dollars per year after taxes and expenses. While his farm contributes to his material needs, as well as contributing to his financial success, his identity as a pig farmer is an affront to his ancestry. As he tells us, his decision to become a pig farmer was made while he was still in the army. He tells us: "When I came back from the war it was with the thought of becoming a pig farmer, which illustrates what I thought of life in general" (22).

Henderson's struggle is against fate itself. He has been born in a country which prides itself on the ideals of democracy, an America that came into existence because its founders were not given the freedom to practice their religious faiths "according to the dictates of their own conscience," in their native lands. By the toils of their labor they founded a new country based on the equality of all men, a country which became rich and powerful through hard physical labor as it cleared the wilderness to make way for the progress of civilization. Based on the ideals of democracy, the people, like Henderson himself, were not initially involved in intellectual pursuits but actively

building a nation which frequently failed to uphold the ideology of its founding fathers. It became divided over a conflict of slavery: a conflict between the right to use other people for personal economic gain or the commitment to a democratic ideal of the equality of all men. Supposedly the Civil War settled the issue. Supposedly the Second World War secured the right of individual liberty on a world scale. Bellow, through Henderson, seems to say that reality falls short of the ideal.

Henderson's reality after the war was a world in which the symbols of advanced civilization are a fit setting for a pig farm. The family estate with its portrait gallery of distinguished ancestors represents a service ideal he fails to live up to. He does not deserve the inheritance of his family estate because he does not live up to the humanitarian ideal of his family. The pictures of the family are still there, the ideal images they represent remain to be seen by all, but Henderson sees himself as a soldier, a fighter, a survivor, who is not aligned with the ideal.

As a representative American, whose life is more aligned with the pigs he raises than with any humanitarian ideology, Henderson becomes representative of a nation who knows how to fight to secure individual liberty, but does not know how to live with dignity after the fight is over. In winning the battle, not only is the enemy destroyed ,but

the very use of force to insure democracy destroys the ideal it represents. But the ideal, if not reality, has not disappeared entirely.

Henderson's inheritance is a burden fate has placed on him that he does not know how to handle. It was fate that allowed him to survive the war. As Henderson tells us, he provided the enemy the biggest target of any man in his outfit and yet was one of the two survivors of the original unit he went into combat with. The only other survivor was the Jew who went home to raise minks in the Catskills. The Jew seems to accept America as it is and is going to make his fortune in a wealthy Jewish mountain resort area. His focus is on the material wealth and success possible in America. Henderson seems insulted and retorts with an insult. If the Jew is going to raise minks whose only use is to provide pelts for the coats of the wealthy, then all the fighting and dying have been for nothing: life has gone to the pigs. Henderson's and Bellow's sentiments here obviously echo Orwell's Animal Farm where the pigs take over the farm and become even worse than the farmers they replace. While Henderson remains on his estate and tries to be the aristocratic gentleman farmer, the pigs have clearly taken over and he identifies more closely with them than his family ancestry. Better men than he had died in the war that fate has spared him from, and the wrong men have survived. When he overhears Lily tell a friend on the phone

that he was "unkillable", he gets upset because he feels he does not deserve to live in the place of honor granted him by virtue of his inheritance. His inner voice keeps up its incessant "I want, I want, I want," even more persistently.

This demanding cry rises from his chest. It is an indication of the correlation between him and America. As Eusebio L. Rodriques comments:

The voice that springs from his harried American soul is the secret promise of hope and rejuvenation that was when the Old World came to the New. But modern America with its technological routine, its nine-to-five business day, its dream of material success has forgotten its original dream and has lost sight of the fresh green breast of the new world that beckoned the Dutch sailors.⁶

The soul's needs have been forgotten in the scramble for material success, not only by Henderson, but by his society as a whole. The voice becomes an expression of the cultural mentality of his society of consumers who think that more material goods will make them happy.

Henderson, with his inner voice continually demanding "I want, I want, I want," is an echo of post-world War II America. According to Samuel Elliot Morrison, the country, which had geared up for increased production during the war, easily absorbed returning G.I.s in peacetime industries. The country prospered and everybody had money to spend on luxury items. "There was an enormous unsatisfied demand for consumer goods, which did not want purchasers, as almost

every class in the community had money to spend".⁷ Henderson, as a member of the wealthy class who had inherited three million dollars after taxes, was able to buy almost anything he wanted, and was still unsatisfied.

As a result of the war, many workers worked overtime. When the country returned to peacetime production, instead of decreasing wages to pre-war levels, employers simply cut overtime. This in effect reduced the salary of many workers by as much as one half. The union members wanted to continue to maintain the life styles which permitted them to buy luxury items. There were strikes everywhere to the point that they "threatened American industry and European recovery".⁸ The union members identified strongly with the power of collective bargaining, to force management to meet their demands regardless of the costs involved.

The conflict within Henderson resembles the conflict between the unions and management. Henderson's voice demands, "I want, I want, I want", which never seems to be satisfied. When he does not get what he wants he takes out his aggression on those around him which is expressed as "Strike. Strike." He wants something without knowing what exactly it is he wants and is never content with the outcome. As a result, he is always angry and continually in fights with everyone from law enforcement officials to neighbors to casual acquaintances. He ignores the personal costs he pays even though it alienates everyone around him.

No matter what he does, he is not able to validate his existence through physical labor or by striking out at the world around him.

Although Henderson does not refer directly to the on going strikes, or any of the social issues of his time, his sojourn in search of self awareness does lead him to confront the dilemmas raised by the strong identification of man with his function in society and his behavior to a degree does reflect the mentality of his highly industrialized society in which one's function in society becomes his identity with that society. It is a society whose government is founded on the democratic ideal; a country which made a dramatic recovery from economic depression due to her participation in a war; a culture whose traditions and values praise the equality of man and promote "doing good" in Benjamin Franklin style, "for the benefit of self and others", where capitalism has created a consumer demand for unlimited material success at the expense of spiritual values. In this type of society, the individual begins to identify with his function in society, as Henderson identifies with his function of raising pigs. This leads the individual to live a life which becomes increasingly more abstract, i.e., it causes the individual to place increasing value on things external to himself, as his list of 'facts' which he sees as part of

himself, and he thus feels alienated from himself. In an attempt to explain this phenomenon, William Barrett states:

In a society that requires of man only that he perform competently his own particular function, man becomes identified with this function, and the rest of his being is allowed to subsist as best it can -- just below the surface of consciousness and forgotten. 9

Eugene Henderson's success as a pig farmer is the one contribution that Henderson makes to his society, and he identifies with his function as a pig farmer. He lives with his pigs on his farm in a 'piggy' mansion (it is filthy), with his 'piggy' wife (she is filthy too), where the pigs have destroyed the flower garden and tipped over the statues from Florence and Salzburg and the entire place stinks of "swill and pigs and the mashes cooking, and dung" (21). However, the family portraits are a reminder of his heritage, of the family social status and service ideal. Lily wants her portrait painted and placed with the rest of the family; in short she wants to be a lady. But Henderson says that she is no lady but "merely my wife" (10). He behaves like a bum and is not a gentleman so Lily cannot be seen as a lady by him. He would like to forget that there is more to life than he has but his voice, which comes from his chest, does not let him. Subconsciously Henderson wants something more, something different from what he has. His inner voice makes that clear, without turning the abstract "I want" into a concrete and objective goal. So he

continues to suffer without consciously knowing why. Because he suffers, he places value on things outside himself, which leads to alienation, which leads to fear of death which escalates into a cyclic pattern of ever increasing levels of suffering, until Henderson is able to break the cycle.

Henderson suffers from the same psychological dilemma that Erik Ericson says others suffer from: "The patient of today suffers most under the problem of what he should - or indeed might - be or become".¹⁰ In his society, Henderson has the money and the freedom to buy and do anything (materially) that he wants and yet thinks life is for the pigs! Like others in his society he does not know what to do with his freedom. Of American society Erikson says:

The American feels so rich in his opportunities for free expression that he often no longer knows what it is he is free from. Neither does he know where he is not free; he does not recognize his native autocrats when he sees them. He is too immediately occupied with being efficient and being decent.¹¹

Henderson's "native autocrat" is his inner voice and he does not recognize what it wants or why it exists. He hears it, it dominates his existence, but he does not understand its source. He has tried being a good son for his father, went to an Ivy League college, married Frances who was from the right social class. After his father's death, he tried to reach him, to gain his approval from beyond the grave, by playing the violin. All attempts at being decent and

efficient. On the other hand, he does not know why he behaves like a bum. He seems to feel guilty for being the only heir to the family estate and feels that his father never forgave him for that. When he went looking for comfort in his father's books to find a statement that had given him comfort in the past ("forgiveness of sins is perpetual and righteousness first is not required"[7]), he found only the currency his father had used for bookmarks. He wanted forgiveness. He got money. His guilt is not appeased.

His 'autocrat' (his own internal dictator) takes the form of his internalized father image and everything he does seems to be a rebellion toward him while at the same time he tries to please him. Erikson says: "In mourning we become the lost person and we become again the person we were when the relationship was in its prime."¹² Henderson, who was sixteen when his brother died, says "I suppose my dad wished, I know he wished that I had gotten drowned instead of my brother Dick" (267). The 'prime' time of their relationship was spent with Henderson feeling guilty that the wrong son had drowned. On the one hand, Henderson is his father scolding himself for being a bum, for not being a proper "Henderson", and for living. On the other, he is his adolescent self, rebelling against an authoritarian father who he feels he cannot please no matter how hard he tries.

In an attempt to be his father, he also plays his father's violin. Even though he does not expect to become an accomplished violinist, he hopes to reach his father through his playing. It is a no win situation. This causes him to become ambivalent and he does what "ambivalent people always do: in turning to make amends to one person they 'inadvertently' do harm to another".¹³

This ambivalence leads Henderson to feel anxious about himself and his future. According to William Barrett, anxiety is destructive, because it "is always as inseparable from ourselves as our own breathing, because anxiety is our existence itself in its radical insecurity".¹⁴ Within this anxiety is a fear of "Nothingness". For Henderson, this is expressed when he says at Miss Lennox's death: "the last little room of dirt is waiting without windows. Death will annihilate you and nothing will remain." (37). At the center of his fear of "Nothingness" is his fear of death. He sees death as the end of him. Without a belief in any kind of after life what will be left behind after his death becomes important as a measure of the kind of life he has led. As Henderson struggles to find his place in his world, his fear of death becomes personified by the octopus in the aquarium in the South of France, becomes amplified when he plays his violin to reach his dead father, and reaches its

highest crescendo when he discovers Miss Lennox's cold and lifeless body.

Henderson's fear of death led to his fear of life and is illustrated in the following examples: When Henderson had succeeded in blowing up the cistern in the Arnewi village, he pleaded with Itelo to kill him; during the war he claims that he offered the enemy the biggest target of any man in the company. In both cases it seems that death would have been a relief to him, that death would have been an escape from misery. It is as if he was daring death to put an end to the 'Nothingness' in his life while at the same time believing that his death would result in 'Nothingness', i.e., he would cease to be.

In Erikson's psychological terms, the lack of an individual identity within the culture is caused by a failure, at the end of adolescence, of the part of ego that "integrates the infantile ego states and neutralizes the autocracy of the infantile superego".¹⁵ According to Erikson, this lack or loss of ego integration leads to a fear of death in which an individual's life is not acceptable as the ultimate life. Thus Henderson daring death to end his misery is not the same as acceptance of death. It means that he does not accept his life. Therefore, his ambivalence extends to encompass both life and death.

It is Barrett's contention that the fear of death cannot be overcome until the individual can accept the possibility of his own death and say as Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich "I am to die" and accept the possibility that "I may die at any moment, and therefore death is my possibility now".¹⁶ The acceptance of this possibility can be very liberating and allow the individual the freedom to be himself, to see himself as more than a cog in an abstract machine that supplies society with material goods.

Bellow places Henderson's dilemma in sociological terms by making him a representative American, and personifies the crisis of society through him. He is part of the capitalist machinery that he would like to escape from, but he can not escape from himself. As he tries to escape from the negative influences of society, through his aggressive acts toward the members of that society, the resulting alienation complicates his individual identity crisis. As Erikson states, identity with one's cultural norms and values is a necessary ingredient for ego integration within the individual.¹⁷ Henderson lacked this positive identification and fled from his environment to find a solution for his dilemma. As he struggles to arrive at a truthful description of "why" he went to Africa, he contrasts his uncouth and aggressive behavior with his lineage. When on the beach shooting stones at bottles, he imagines that people would say:

Do you see that great big fellow with the enormous nose and the mustache? Well, his great-grand father was Secretary of State, his great uncles were ambassadors to England and France, and his father was the famous scholar Willard Henderson who wrote that book on the Albigensians, a friend of William James and Henry Adams (10).

Even though he is rich and powerful, the descendent of famous men, he behaves, in his words, "like a bum". He also assumes that his lineage is well known, even though his father's friends are better known than his father, who is made to appear more important than he actually was, due to his famous friends. We have never heard of a scholar named Willard Henderson, and information on the Albigensians is limited. However, Adams and James, as friends of Henderson's father, and as shapers of the American national character, provide a historical basis for Henderson's problems and solutions, development and thought. They remain a submerged presence throughout the novel as Henderson's actions and concerns are echoes of their own personal and societal movement and focus. Therefore, Henderson's existential situation is portrayed as a result not only of his American 1950's society, but also of the historical development of that society, with its religious roots in Protestant Christianity.

According to Erik Erikson, there is no psychological crisis separate from society, family or the environment. The individual is always influenced by what occurs around him.¹⁸ In Henderson's case, a list is made of those things

which made chaos of his life and he tries to describe how he resolved the personal crisis it created. Through writing his account of his African experience, he is also trying to portray his personal evolution that allowed him to be reintegrated with the society, which is also based on American thought, values and images. Erikson states:

Psychoanalysis studies psychological evolution through the analysis of the individual. At the same time it throws light on the fact that the history of humanity is a gigantic metabolism of individual life cycles.¹⁹

Psychology then takes on a historical perspective, historical not only in terms of the individual, but also in terms of the evolution of society, and suggests a historical influence of the past on the individual as well as society. Therefore, Adams and James become focal points for the evolution of Henderson's society, by being a "historical presence" within him which has been inherited from his father and his father's society.

Of all of Adam's writings, The Education of Henry Adams is the most illustrative of the historian's attempt to understand his own life in relation to his society and its historical development, and bears a resemblance to Henderson's own quest. As Tony Tanner points out in his study of the work of Saul Bellow,

Henderson's education...provides a bizarre and barbaric compliment to that famous of all American educators -- that of Henry Adams. Who was also a traveller, a seeker after wisdom, a man with a

service ideal which he could never put into practice. And also an intimate of Henderson's more respectable ancestor's.²⁰

The Education of Henry Adams is Adam's attempt at providing an account of not only his personal evolution, but also of the relationship between his personal experience and the evolution of his world. Adams is a constant presence in Bellow's novel, through the presentation of Adam's concerns, even though the issues are presented in comic fashion through the often barbaric and clumsy Henderson. It is relevant to examine the similarities between the two protagonists. Adams, like Henderson, went to an Ivy League College, Harvard (though Henderson's remains nameless because he does not want to embarrass it). Like Henderson, Adams felt that his university education did not prepare him to deal with the world he lived in. Like Henderson, he was alienated from society. D. W. Brogan, in the introduction to the Education comments:

The Education ... is not a success story. It is indeed, on the surface, the story of one who failed because, trained to be at home in Franklin's world, he had to live in a world transformed by the new science and the new technology . 21

Like Henderson, money was not his measure of success nor was being a member of a famous family of statesmen. Adams also had a service ideal to live up to and never thought that he made a significant contribution to his society through that ideal, to make him worthy of his family

name. This contributed to his alienation from society, as it does in Henderson's case. Like Henderson, Adams made a tour of the churches in France, by automobile (Adams hated the automobile. It was too fast for him.), to find comfort. The difference between Adams and Henderson on their tours is that Adams saw the failure of Christianity to maintain the Virgin as a source of power, where in her palaces like the cathedral of Chartres, the weary could be comforted and united in faith; Henderson failed to see the power of the Virgin and saw himself as a failure in not being comforted by the Church. Instead, he has Lily on this trip with him and sees himself unworthy of the Virgin due to his relationship with Lily. He blames Lily's "dirty underthings" and sends her away, but his guilt is not relieved. Like Henderson, Adams is haunted by his fear of death. He sees man as helpless against the forces of nature which play with the puny forces of man.

One had heard and read a great deal about death, and even seen a little of it, and knew by heart the thousand commonplaces of religion and poetry which seemed to deaden one's senses and veil the horror. Society being immortal could put on immortality at will. Adams being mortal, felt only the mortality. Death took features altogether new to him, in these rich and sensuous surroundings. Nature enjoyed it, played with it, the horror added to her charm, she liked the torture and smothered her victim with caresses.²²

Adams witnessed the death of his sister from tetanus after she was thrown from a cab. He tells us: "the terror of the blow stayed by him thenceforth for life, until

repetition made it more than the will could struggle with, more than he could call on himself to bear". 23' Clearly the death of his sister causes him personal pain and he sees himself separated from his society, alienated from it, by virtue of its immortal quality. However, he did not run from death or suffer rejection from his father because of it as Henderson did. He allowed himself to feel the horror of it head on, even though it frightened him.

Henderson's death experience, which established a pattern of running from death, was the death of his brother. He did not witness the event or see nature as the torturer. The heat of anger, boiling water, spilled coffee, cold eyes and body, bubbles rising in water, moving water, the soul as a current of air which gets sucked out the window, all become images in his mind as symbols of death. The primary cause of death, in Henderson's mind, is his anger, not nature. The immortality of society is not expressed. Only when he is forced to face death directly by his presence with Dahfu when the lion kills him does Henderson learn to quit running from death. He then learns to express his grief at the loss of someone he loves and admires.

As Adams saw the power of nature playing with man in death, he also saw man as a puny creature playing with the forces of nature in trying to harness her power in the name of human progress. He questioned the wisdom of man in developing such mechanical devices as the steam engine, the

automobile, the dynamo, which could be measured in horsepower. Radium, as a source of power, is seen by him as a "new universe of force".²⁴ His concern was that, as man developed the capacity to create higher ratios of heat and intensity, the inability to control such force would endanger society. Adams comments: "complexity had extended itself on immense horizons, and arithmetical ratios were useless for any attempt at accuracy. The force evolved seemed more like explosion than gravitation"....²⁵ He thought that man's attempt at using the forces of nature mechanically would make man more puny and helpless and could lead to the enslavement or even the extinction of man.

The predictions that Adams made concerning the possibility of the extinction of man through increasing ratios of heat and force focus directly on Henderson's dilemma, and lead to William Barrett's description of man's feelings of alienation in a mechanized society in which he feels like one more cog in an abstract social machine.

Henry Adams saw humanity victimized in an environment which promoted ever increasing ratios of energy beyond the capacity of man's control. According to Tanner, the result would lead to a state of entropy and the death of civilization. Entropy, "taken in its broadest sense as meaning the increasing disorder of energy moving at random within a closed system, finally arriving at total inertia".²⁶ In addition, Tanner states that many American

writers express these concepts in their writing, including Bellow, and that "Adams' explorations into the laws of physics point to the problem of the modern hero of which way to move, where to aim his personal energy".²⁷ The hero created within a world threatened by entropy struggles with the fate of being placed within a world he can not control, and often interprets his sense of entropy as a feeling of death.

The potential for man to blow himself up has been realized in the war Henderson has fought in, the war which he came home from to raise pigs. Henderson nearly blew himself up by stepping on a land mine. Of course Henderson makes a joke of it because he cannot face the terror of his own narrow encounter with death.

Another death pushes him to flee from his own country in an effort to find for himself what is missing in his society. Henderson runs from a life in America which is a reflection of what Adams saw as the crisis of Western Civilization. Adams, in defining the crisis as one of civilization, saw himself as lacking the tools to solve the problems of civilization. According to him, the educational process always lags a generation behind because society is advancing at such a rapid rate that educators are not able to teach their students concepts which will apply to the future. Progress, for Adams the historian, is seen in retrospect, and is moving forward at such an accelerated

rate that man becomes 'puny' and helpless. As a result, Adams predicts a destructive course for the future of humanity, a course which he has no power to stop. And, because he sees the problem as culturally defined, he is unable to solve his personal dilemmas within that culture, i.e., he is incapable of intercepting the historical development of a technological society or its effects on him. Man then becomes powerless in relation to the collective forces of society in the same way that he is against the uncontrollable forces of nature. Because he saw a cultural defined dilemma, he does not believe he can find a personal solution. Because he saw the failure of a society in which he lived, his life likewise encompassed the same failure. His identity was placed outside himself onto his society and therefore unalterable. While his inner man responded to and felt the fears of death, he extended his fears to encompass the fear that Western Civilization was on a collision course, obliviously putting on the cloak of immortality. He struggled to develop a mathematical formula by which he could inform his society of the dangerous step it was taking in trying to harness the colossal forces of nature. For Adams, the inevitability of death becomes equated with the inability of man to control the forces of nature. In addition, Christianity has failed to provide spiritual comfort against the inevitable.

While Henderson responds to these same crises, he sees his problems as his own failure to do the 'right' thing. Bellow has created Henderson proportionately as big as America, with a strong ego that permits him to move forcefully through life, who sees his problems as personal ones. Because of this, Henderson is a character who has the potential to step out of a society that is not able to control him entirely (although it has created him), and has the potential to find a unique solution for his personal existential dilemma. His alienation from his society, while it causes him pain, provides the necessary conditions for his search, outside of its confines, to end his alienation from it and from himself.

In opposition to Adams' view of himself as a powerless creature in an entropic world, Henderson's mental image of himself as materially successful and physically large and powerful permits him to make decisions and take actions which are in direct opposition to societal and familial expectations. In Henderson's conception of himself, he is the center of his universe and it is he who must make something out of his life, because it is his own failure which has caused him to be victimized by his world. Therefore, he is able to remove himself from a society in which he suffers from alienation. However, because he relates to his world in a physically concrete manner, he cannot overcome his inner conflicts in a purely intellectual

way. He pushes, bites, and shoves his way through the world in a tactile fashion that is very exaggerated. He can only understand what he has experienced first hand. Therefore, he cannot resolve his existential problems in an abstract fashion. Henderson's withdrawal from society and his written evaluation of the process are his attempts at understanding what he has physically experienced in an effort to consolidate it and make it uniquely his own. It represents an effort to integrate his ego states and develop a more mature approach to life. Adams' scholastic approach to dilemmas of his society led him to feel helpless about doing anything to resolve them. His Harvard education, one of the most progressive educations available at the time, had been inadequate in preparing him to keep up with the rapidly accelerating pace of so called "progress" that threatened the survival of the human race. However, as D. W. Brogan suggests in the introduction to the Education, "He might have learned much had he stayed there [at Harvard] longer, from William James..." 28 Tony Tanner also sees William James as a balancing agent against the pessimism of Henry Adams' view of the 'progress' of civilization leading it to its own destruction. Combining James' optimistic view of the individual as having the capacity to alter his own destiny within an environment, like the one described by Adams, permits an alternative to the destruction and resulting entropy of following such a path. Thus,

opening possibilities of life if we wish to appreciate the cosmic pessimism which is always latent in the American imagination. This pessimism comes to the surface...in a way which shows how deeply Henry Adams can influence future generations. 29

The story of William James is one of success, and his success is important in furnishing a success model for our protagonist. William James wanted to be a doctor. However, after receiving his medical degree, he was unable to practice medicine due to his own state of pessimism and doubt. Henderson also wanted to be a doctor, but due to his own lack of self confidence did not have the courage to attempt the study of medicine until after his African experience.

Henderson, like James, through an experiential mind/body psychology arrives at a philosophy in which the fear of death no longer keeps him from living. While Henderson vows to become a medical doctor in order to serve humanity, his age is against his admission to medical school. (I also suspect his scholastic record is against it.) However, his decision to apply to medical school is a very Jamesian approach to decision making. James, the optimist, thought that all decisions should be given the test of practical application to human behavior or satisfaction before being dismissed. If we remember that our fictional author writes his book after his return from Africa and that he does not tell the reader whether or not

he has been accepted as a medical student, his decision to write about his means of overcoming his existential problems is a very Jamesian approach as well. James, though a medical doctor, never taught or practiced medicine. He became a teacher and writer of psychology and philosophy. In so doing, he portrayed the manner in which he conquered his own fears of mortality. Thus, William James is more than a model of psychology that Henderson learns about from Dahfu. He becomes a historical presence within Henderson through the inheritance from his father and his father's society. It is this inner presence that allows Henderson to go beyond Dahfu's teachings in his search for a solution to a meaningless life, giving him the freedom to live according to his newly acquired values which make him the rightful heir to his father's fortune.

In Henderson the Rain King Bellow has personified the crisis of society through the protagonist. As has been demonstrated, Henry Adams and William James are instrumental in providing guidelines for the comprehension and resolution of the crisis by Henderson.

Footnotes Chapter 2

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2. Tanner, City, p. 227.
3. Gail Sheehy, Pathfinders, (N. Y.: Harper and Row, 1982), pp. 379-90,
4. Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society, (N.Y.: Norton 1963), p. 379.
5. Erikson, Childhood, pp. 294-95.
6. Eusebio L. Rodriques, Quest for the Human: An Exploration of Saul Bellow's Fiction, (London: Associated University Press, n.d.), p. 115.
7. Samuel Elliot Morrison, The Oxford History of the American People, (N.Y.: Oxford U P, 1965), .p. 1052.
8. Morrison, p. 1053.
9. William Barrett, Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy, (N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958), p. 26.
10. Erikson, p. 52.
11. Erikson, p. 273.
12. Erikson, p. 58.
13. Erikson, p. 64.
14. Barrett, p. 227.
15. Erikson, p. 279.
16. Barrett, p. 228.
17. Erikson, p. 68.

18. Erikson, p. 69.
19. Erikson, p. 279.
20. Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow, (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 75.
21. D. W. Brogan, Introduction, The Education of Henry Adams, by Henry Adams, (1918, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961), p. v.
22. Adams, p. 228.
23. Adams, p. 287.
24. Adams, p. 490.
25. Adams, pp. 490-91.
26. Tanner, City, p. 142.
27. Tanner, City, p. 150.
28. Brogan, in Education, p. xv.
29. Tanner, City, p. 149.

Chapter Three

Guides to Integration:

Synthesizing Experience

GUIDES TO INTEGRATION: SYNTHESIZING EXPERIENCE

There are two things in the mind of the candidate for conversion: first, the present incompleteness or wrongness, the "sin" which he is eager to escape from; and second, the positive ideal which he longs to encompass.... In the majority of cases, the "sin" almost exclusively engrosses the attention, so that conversion is 'a process of struggling away from sin rather than striving towards righteousness.'

William James
The Varieties of Religious Experience

As Eugene Henderson suffers from lack of ego integration and recoils from the painfully chaotic circumstances in his life, he does not know how to make the symbolic journey to the interior alone. He takes the path of least resistance and accepts the opportunities that present themselves to him. He needs guides along the way to help him on his journey. Miss Lennox, though unknown to her and of course without the intention of doing so, becomes his first guide on the journey through the event of her death. He sees the possibility of himself ending up like her and therefore flees from the scene hoping to find a remedy. In his flight from what he sees as a threat of death given him by Miss Lennox, he accepts Charlie's invitation for a honeymoon safari. Charlie, his boyhood friend, becomes the second guide in providing Africa as his destination, though he has an entirely different purpose in going to Africa. However, Henderson trusts him because their friendship has endured for many years; they share common roots in the community and in their social class. Henderson wants roots,

i.e., he wants to belong somewhere. Once in Africa however, he again retreats from what he sees as a death notice as he looks at the decay and rotting roots in his environment. His childhood roots are not based on anything solid in the present to give him solid footing in the adult world; after all they are both wearing short pants as they did when they were kids together in dancing class while pretending to be adults. Henderson, who felt like an airborne seed in the plane over Africa, goes in search of the promise offered by such a vision. Therefore, he leaves Charlie's expedition and engages Romilayu, one of the professional guides that Charlie had hired for his trip. This time, because Henderson knows that Romilayu is a professional guide, he wants Romilayu to lead him from the superficial panorama of Charlie's Africa to the primitive interior of the dark continent. Romilayu is experienced and trustworthy and provides a stable force, a hand to hold, if you will, to give him security in passing from one event to the next, thereby lending a sense of continuity to his journey. Romilayu stays with Henderson, providing a quiet stabilizing force throughout the remainder of the journey until he puts Henderson on his flight toward home. Through their combined influence, while unknown to each other, this unlikely trio forms a unity of action which takes Henderson into the interior where he will have the opportunity to achieve his purpose.

After the physical journey is complete, he feels "obliged to communicate" the "living proof of something of the highest importance" that has been presented to him (22). Therefore, he guides the reader through the process, as well as himself, in the completion of the next phase of his journey to the interior: the integration of his experience into a unified whole, and exposes the reader to his own unique vision of his world and his behavior in that world.

Henderson is primarily an externally oriented character who focuses on portraying the events that occurred and his physiological response to those events, i.e., he feels emotion through his body. He does not intellectualize, to any great degree, why certain things happened to him, but talks of the events that led up to them.

Initially, as Henderson tells his story, he seems to have difficulty in connecting these events together into any kind of synthesis; the chaotic order of his life is repeated in the pattern of organization of the events which lead him to Africa. They seem to be arranged at random with Henderson highlighting those events that are predominant in his own mind at the time. In writing an account of what he went to Africa for, he is re-inforcing and redefining the experience for himself in an effort to achieve the synthesis of understanding that is lacking in the beginning, thus becoming his own guide in the process, giving the journey a

definitive significance for himself. As Giles Gunn says in

The Interpretation of Otherness:

Exposure to events and participation in events does not become what we usually think of as 'experience' of them until we have, however minimally, begun to assess and appropriate the significance for ourselves, whereupon the terms of assessment and the manner of appropriation suddenly become as much a part of the experience itself as any of its other features.¹

Through this process, the individual's tentative solutions for reality become more stable and take on the added dimension of becoming something that is a more concrete part of himself. For a character as physically oriented as Henderson is, an attempt to express himself in writing is evidence of a changing view of himself in which he can communicate with others rather than acting out his aggression. It is a sign that Henderson is more integrated with himself both mentally and physically. Therefore, Henderson the Rain King is as much a part of Henderson's process of self realization as it is about that process.

The attempt to communicate what has happened to him that alienated him from his society and what has helped him to overcome that alienation is one of the tests of his tentative solutions. He wants to be understood and appeals directly to the reader when he says: "You know, compassion is useless, too, sometimes I feel. It just lasts long enough to get you in dutch" (27); and again when he invites the reader to look at his life with Lily: "So let's look at

a typical morning of my married life with Lily...Let's say..." (28). In the former, he is referring to a common sympathy of emotion, in the latter to the cultural institution of marriage depending on a common conception of marriage to help the reader better understand Henderson's experience of it. Through both, he prepares the reader to make a comparison between his experience and the 'norm' as it exists in society. For Henderson to be able to invite the reader to participate in a mutual understanding with him is a sign that he is now more comfortable and integrated within himself and with his society than before. It indicates that his expanded horizon includes his ability to express himself verbally, instead of striking out at everything around him. When he thought the world was his oppressor, he would not have taken the risk, he had not received positive reinforcement for the aggressive manner in which he tried to communicate with the inhabitants of his world. Henderson, before his journey, physically acted out his rage in ways that caused people to keep themselves distant from him, that caused them to dismiss his value to society and call him crazy. In Africa, Henderson found a friend in Dahfu, who wanted to share ideas with him, who valued what Henderson had to say, who did not reject him or call him crazy. In addition, Dahfu provided a means for Henderson to act out his aggression in ways which were harmless to those around him. He also understood that

Henderson's problems could not be solved through mere talk. He provided a frightening situation for Henderson to deal with in taking him into the lion's den where he was expected to imitate the roar of the tamed beast and thus tame the beast within. Dahfu also talked to Henderson to help him understand the process of integrating the mind and body to influence each other in positive ways. Dahfu did not believe the intellect to be superior to the body, or that the individual should ignore bodily needs and functions; he saw that they should work together in a harmonious way. However, Dahfu's sudden death forced Henderson to arrive at the final stages of understanding and integration by himself. Therefore, his attempt to interpret his experience is a necessary part of his process. Through it, the evaluation and affirmation of a self integrated with his circumstances becomes more solid and allows him to be comfortable with himself, which in turn allows him the freedom to express himself to others in non-aggressive ways, allowing him to move out from his position as the center of his own universe and have a more clear perspective of the other beings in his world.

With Henderson as the fictional author of the novel, we see the world from his perspective, and from that point of view we laugh with Henderson at himself. On the one hand, he lets us see the incongruities between the setting and the characters and the events which take place. On the other

hand, it appears that the characters seem to share physical characteristics of the environment and make the events which take place seem perfectly natural. Henderson's doubleness of vision, i.e., his perspective of both the congruent and the incongruent, helps to create and carry the humor throughout the novel, as well as to maintain the seriousness of his quest.² That he is able to make fun of himself and treat the situation with a sense of humor also suggests that he no longer suffers on a daily basis from the circumstances of his life. The transcendent self is above the suffering.³

The chain of events which permit this to happen is as important as the ways in which they are expressed, each event building on the effect of the previous one and multiplying the force of its impact on him, much like Adams' explanation of the multiplying effect of the ever expanding forces of nature which man is in the process of trying to control through technology. Because Henderson is a physically oriented character, his behavior is portrayed as a series of reactions to his environment, reactions which cause him to suffer the pain of isolation, and because he suffers, he reacts to situations in ways which cause him to suffer more. He does not suffer because he wants to, but because he does not know any other way to live. He does not know consciously how to break the cycle. He is not in control. This cycle of suffering he is trapped in, however, escalates to a point that forces him to take

action, or die (if not physically, at least emotionally and spiritually). He can not face himself anymore when, through his seething rage, he causes the death of Miss Lennox. Through her death, ironically, she becomes more important to him than alive. In this way, she becomes one of Skinners environmental "prods" pushing him on toward Africa.

While Henderson is in the dining room fighting with Lily, the old lady's heart stopped because of his rage (36). He felt guilty for her death and afraid that he would die and leave nothing behind but 'junk'. This is a serious matter. Henderson is deeply affected by it. However, the way in which he describes her death and the scene surrounding it is colored by Henderson's unique double vision which portrays it in such a way that it borders on the burlesque.

Death is not generally a humorous subject; it is usually treated very seriously, accompanied by mourning, tears and silence, all due to respect and grief for the deceased. But he is afraid of death, so in running from it he treats it comically, so that he will not have to acknowledge his feelings or accept the responsibility for the loss of her life. At the same time, as he is telling us about the event, he seems to be laughing at himself. In spite of the humor in this scene, Miss Lennox' death does have a serious impact on him. However, Henderson does not show grief at the loss of someone he loves but rather

demonstrates his preoccupation with himself: his guilt feelings and his fear of death remain at the center of his description. He shifts his attention between the image of the old spinster lying cold and lifeless on the floor, and the eggs boiling in the seething water on the stove, the cold barren winter that speaks to him of death, the ease with which the soul leaves the body, and his own feelings of guilt. Henderson is a fifty-five year old veteran with a purple heart, one of the two survivors in his original unit during World War II, who must have seen death all around him. Yet, he behaves like a child. He does not know what else to do, so he pins a note on her skirt that says "DO NOT DISTURB" (36). Then, without telling Lily what has happened or doing any of the things that might be expected, Henderson goes across the street to the old lady's house. While standing in the midst of her lifetime collection of junk, he says:

Oh, shame, shame! Oh, crying shame! How can we? why do we allow ourselves? What are we doing? The last little room of dirt is waiting. Without windows. So for God's sake make a move, Henderson, put forth effort. You, too, will die of this pestilence. Death will annihilate you and nothing will remain, and there will be nothing left but junk. Because nothing will have been and so nothing will be left. While something still is-- now! For the sake of all, get out (37).

The congruous and the incongruous included within Henderson's description of this event provides a contextual

contrast in which the tension of his mental state becomes the motivating force for his action. Because he is the center of his own universe, his focus remains on himself and highlights his fear of death.

While Henderson is aggressively pounding on the table and spilling coffee (congruent to the way he lives his life in general), Miss Lennox, the soft spoken old woman who lives across the street from him with her cats is in the kitchen preparing breakfast for him and Lily. His aggression is contrasted against her timidity. His wealth and her poverty place them in opposite social positions. She obviously has a strong affiliation for her cats; he tried to shoot one that was left behind by one of his tenants. (Later in Africa he remembers the incident and makes a connection between it and the lioness who has the power, but not the mentality to deliver revenge on him for his previous act). Miss Lennox is harmless and he has caused her death. However, Miss Lennox, in her poverty, reflects the material focus of a society of people who want more than they have. Her accumulation of junk, worthless as it appears, reflects a lifetime acquisition of other people's discards. Even though she does not have money, she has collected her 'treasures' from the neighbors. They become her inheritance. However, the 'estate' she leaves behind, to no one in particular, resembles a junk yard, filled with cats; his resembles a junk yard full of pigs. Her life

reflects his own poverty of the soul and reminds him that he too is dying from it. Contrary to Lily's opinion that he is "unkillable", he knows better. He and Miss Lennox have both suffered from the same disease. With all his wealth, power, and social position, the son of a respectable scholar who was a friend to famous statesmen, he fears that he will end up like her. His money can not protect him from himself, or give him the love and respect of his fellow human beings, or let him reach beyond the grave to his father for forgiveness. Miss Lennox's death is a warning to him that death will annihilate him without giving him the opportunity to do something with his life that he would be proud to leave behind. Even though the event is the death of Miss Lennox, Henderson is still the central figure in this scene.

Of course in true Henderson style, his method of describing the event is exaggerated. He compares and contrasts abstract ideas with concrete environmental images which he uses as the basis for drawing conclusions about the event. Her cold body is placed in juxtaposition to the winter outside that has been speaking to him of death. The eggs boiling on the stove seem to be related to the fervor of his anger while he was fighting with Lily. When he turns off the gas, it appears that the anger that causes his rage to reach uncontrollable proportions is turned off too. Her body is cold because "the soul", has been, "like a current

of air, like a draft, like a bubble, sucked out of the window" (36). She is now cold like the winter outside the warm kitchen. His description is primarily a visual and physical one and not a psychological explanation.⁴ The visual effects of the setting are given meaning in abstract terms as he tries to make sense out of her death. When he pins the note on her skirt, it takes on a burlesque quality, giving the comic effect the double edge of exaggerated human clumsiness, as if he could protect himself by negating the seriousness of his crime. What he really wants is for himself not to be disturbed by her death.

Henderson does not make conscious connections between his response to Miss Lennox's death and to his brother's. However, similar images exist in his description of the earlier event and this one. In both cases coffee is spilled as the result of an expression of anger which ends in death. In Dick's case, the image presented is not water boiling on the stove but boiling hot coffee spewing across the diner when the bullet, which took the pen out of his friend's hand, also hit the coffee urn. In both cases, two targets are hit without the intention of doing so. When the police pursue Dick across the countryside, his car smashes into an embankment. Dick and his friend try to swim across the river to get away from the police, and Dick drowns. When Henderson feels the old lady's cold face, he says: "Dead!...The soul, like a current of air, like a draft, like

a bubble, sucked out of the window" (36). Henderson does not express the image directly, but when I think of a drowning person I see air bubbles rising to the surface as the lungs fill with water. Air escapes as bubbles and takes the soul with it. Henderson feels directly responsible for the death of Miss Lennox, and indirectly so for Dick's, i.e., the one time Dick's behavior resembles Henderson's it results in his death. In both situations, due to his own fear of death, Henderson runs away and does not attend the funerals.

The images of both deaths are combined when Henderson sees the octopus in the aquarium at Banyules, after putting Lily on the train to Paris. He says:

The eyes spoke to me coldly...I felt I was dying. The tentacles throbbed and motioned through the glass, the bubbles sped upward, and I thought "this is my last day. Death is giving me notice" (20).

One more time he responds to an external source in his environment as a threat of death and runs away, even though he is actually in no physical danger. His pattern of running from death has been established whether he is running from an imagined death threat or from an actual death that he is exposed to. Death is personified and speaks to him through environmental factors and events. It threatens to nullify his existence because he sees that his existence is worth nothing. And he wants so much for his life to mean something, he wants to be somebody in his own eyes, and more

than anything else, he wants to not want. In trying to cure his aching breast so it will quit the infernal demanding, he treats it like an "ailing child". He makes a decision to change his life after the aquarium incident. He returns to the United States, leaving Frances in France and divorces her. He takes up music lessons to learn to play the violin in an effort to reach his father and eventually marries Lily. He seems to think that Frances is the cause of his unhappiness and that by starting over without her he can be happy and the ache in his chest will go away and the voice will subside. He does not understand that something inside himself must change also. He focuses on changing the superficial factors that he blames for causing his misery, and continues to live in the habitual way, venting his anger on everything around him and in doing so escalating his cycle of suffering. His world view has not changed, so the inner man remains likewise unchanged.

According to B.F. Skinner, "The outer man whose behavior is to be explained could be very much like the inner man whose behavior is said to explain it." 5 The interior being is a reaction to the exterior world. While Henderson tries to learn to play the violin and marries Lily, he continues to be a pig farmer. He sees himself as a commando and hurtles himself through life striking out at anything that gets in his way. With all his financial success he sees himself as a sort of "trophy" rather than a

productive member of society who fulfills the expectations of his social status and prestige. His inner man is explained in terms of his relationship with the external environment through the behavior he demonstrates toward it. He has caused the death of a fellow sufferer like himself, a moral equal whose heart can not stand his rage.

When Lennox dies, Henderson's guilt and fear are so great that he will die without leaving a positive contribution to the world that he flees the scene of the crime vowing not to return without a solution. "So," says Henderson, "Miss Lennox went to the cemetery and I went to Idlewild and took a plane" (30). Charlie, his friend from boyhood, had invited him to go to Africa on his honeymoon the year before, but Henderson only decided to accept the invitation to go with him "when the hearse backed up the drive" to pick up Miss Lennox (38). He needed a remedy for his situation and Charlie gave him the excuse, a reason, a specific job to do: he was going to help Charlie and his wife photograph Africa. He tells us that he "wouldn't have known how to go right into Africa" by himself (38). Charlie planned the expedition and because it is convenient Henderson accepts the invitation, although he has another purpose than the one stated by Charlie. Through no conscious intention of his own, Charlie becomes another guide, by providing the "excuse" and the "direction" for Henderson to follow.

Henderson and Charlie make decisions in different ways due to differences in their world views. Charlie has made the decision to go to Africa on his honeymoon, a trip very much in keeping with the leisure class activities of the jet setters that F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote about in his novels. Henderson, however, like Ernest Hemingway (who also has the same initials) takes great pride in his identity as a soldier, and the reader is frequently reminded by him that his rough and aggressive ways are due to his soldierly temperament. Charlie knows what he wants to do and where he wants to do it. Henderson only knows that he wants a remedy for his life condition, but does not know exactly how that remedy will be accomplished. The expedition has been consciously and carefully planned by Charlie and includes guides, modern conveniences and photographic equipment. His idea of the primitive is a place where the pristine beauty of nature can be enjoyed. He is content with his modern conveniences in the midst of beautiful surroundings in the company of his new bride and his oldest and dearest friend. Charlie is not trying to escape from civilization; he takes it with him. He is not driven to see the interior of the 'dark' continent; he is content with the exterior and superficial aspects of Africa; he is the wealthy tourist on holiday. Henderson, on the other hand, wants to escape from civilization to the deep interior region of Africa where he can experience the unknown, where his soldierly temperament

will not interfere with his normal way of functioning, where he is not expected to abide by any strict code of social behavior due to his prominent standing in the community as the inheritor of wealth, prestige and power.

Henderson, at this time, does not have the capacity to see ahead and choose alternatives in a rational way. He is still caught in what Erik Erikson describes as an adolescent phase in which there is rebellion against authority and uncertainty about the future, so he feels uprooted and lacks the ability to achieve mutual trust in relationships. He reacts instead of acting, and his reactions fit a well defined pattern that is consistent with his lifestyle.

Henderson's decision to become a pig farmer was a similar kind of reaction. When the only other survivor in his original unit during the war, who was a Jew, announced that he was going to raise minks in the Catskills, Henderson announced that he was going to raise pigs:

So I said, or my demon said for me, "I'm going to start breeding pigs." And after these words were spoken I knew that if Goldstein had not been a Jew I might have said cattle and not pigs. So then it was too late to retrace (21).

Henderson, as a soldier in Europe, where Hitler's German army was brutally exterminating Jews, did not have the capacity to form a mutual trusting relationship with a Jew who was beside him in the fox hole, a fellow survivor. While fighting the exterminators, he makes a vindictive statement to one who represents the target of the enemy.

However, the decision, once made, had to be followed. As a soldier he required himself to be tough. For him to retract his decision would be a sign of weakness.

However, this requirement of toughness for himself is what allows him to change his decision to stay with Charlie on the expedition. He realizes that he really came to Africa with a different purpose in mind and must be true to the personal vow he has made. The expedition is too civilized because it has too many modern conveniences to suit his soldierly disposition. Even though he does not know exactly what will happen when he leaves Charlie's expedition, Henderson believes that Africa is the place where he can accomplish his "rebirth" and become free of his persecution by and fear of death images. Once again this belief is based on his response to the environment, a reaction to his impressions of Africa from the air.

Africa reached my feelings right away even from the air, from which it looked like the ancient bed of mankind. And at a height of three miles, sitting above the clouds, I felt like an airborne seed (39).

His interpretation of Africa as the "ancient bed of mankind" where he feels like an "airborne seed" presents imagery suggestive of consummation, fertility, birth and new life. Thus, his arrival in Africa is full of expectation. While initially in Africa, he says that he "didn't feel the pressure in his chest, nor hear the voice within" (40). However, after a short time the voice begins to taunt him

again and he takes his clues from the environment as to what the problem is.

While camped near a lake with Charlie, Charlie's wife (we are never told her name), some natives, trucks and equipment, he begins to notice the rotting roots in the soft water of the lake. He watches the crocodiles floating in the water between the Lilies and sees birds go into their open mouths to clean their teeth. He realizes, when he sees the open mouths of the crocodiles, just "how hot a damp creature could be." There is a feather-like bloom on the trees and the papyrus reeds begin to remind him of funeral plumes.

The images in the above scene are sharp and distinct. In contrast to the images of hope and regeneration from the air, the scene at the lake is one which illustrates the possibility and danger of death and decay in this place for Henderson. It is also suggestive that his relationship with Charlie, as a person who shares his cultural and childhood roots, is deteriorating. This scene, as a reflection of our hero's psychological state, is suggesting that if Henderson stays in this place there is a danger that he will die, without accomplishing his purpose. Here again are the images of heat and water and death which he has recently fled from when Miss Lennox died, reinforcing his pattern of flight from the fear of death, taken from environmental clues.

Even though Henderson values this relationship with his oldest friend, it seems that there is not a history which binds them through life imagery. Henderson's beginnings with Charlie go back to his early childhood to the time when they took dancing lessons in the house which now belongs to the undertaker who buried Miss Lennox.

In Africa, after he tells Charlie that he is going to go off on his own, he looks at Charlie and thinks: "Was this the kid I used to know in dancing class? How time has changed us both. But we were now, as then in short pants" (40). Their relationship is not based on anything solid in the current time frame but on childhood experiences which are artificially extended into the present by Henderson's presence on Charlie's honeymoon. They are still being children together on what is expected to be an adult experience between a man and a woman as they begin their married life together, i.e., a societal and cultural expectation exists that defines the purpose of a honeymoon as such. Charlie has taken Henderson along on his honeymoon and Charlie's wife does not like it. Henderson, man-child that he is, thinks it is only that she does not like him. "It was because I had forgotten to kiss his wife after the ceremony, and she wouldn't forgive me" (40). Later in the novel, as an aside to the original letter he wrote to Lily from the Wariri tribe, Henderson admits that he behaved badly at the wedding:

But on further recollection I see that the bride could never in the world forgive me for my behavior at the wedding... it wasn't only that I didn't kiss her, but that I was somehow alone with her in the cab on the way to Gemignano's I was very obnoxious. I said, Is this Parmesan cheese or is it Rinso?...I blew my nose in my foulard (237).

It is no wonder that Charlie's wife does not like Henderson, and does not like his presence on her honeymoon. Henderson insults her, does not ever call her by anything except "Charlie's wife", or even acknowledge that it is her honeymoon too. In essence she is a non-person for him. Henderson does not acknowledge the fact that he does not belong on their honeymoon because it is a honeymoon but takes his clues from the environment around him and from the demanding of his "I want, I want, I want", that blinds his ability to see other people's needs. He flees from Charlie's tourist expedition and sets out for the interior on his quest for a remedy, another reaction rather than a rational decision.

After traveling first by jeep, then by plane, then on foot, he says: "Geographically speaking I didn't have the remotest idea where we were, and I didn't care too much. It was not up to me to ask, since my object in coming here was to leave certain things behind" (41). Henderson leaves the decision about their destination up to Romilayu, his guide, who tells him they are going to visit the Arnewi tribe; it seems to Henderson that Romilayu wants to revisit the scenes of his youth.

Romilayu, like Charlie, is an important link in the chain of events which occur. Henderson needs assistance to go to the interior of Africa because he would not know how to get there alone either. Romilayu has scars and mutilations which show "that he had been born a pagan but somewhere along the way he had been converted, and now he said his prayers every evening" (42). "Pagan" represents pre-civilization, a time prior to the rapid moving industrialized society that Henderson is alienated from. "Christian" represents the civilized world. Romilayu has been able to make the transition from his pre-civilized state to a state embracing Christianity and the beginnings of Christian civilization. Henderson, who has made his tour of the churches in France, would like to embrace religion and find comfort in it but has not found the longed for quietude of soul in the church. Because Romilayu has made the transition, Henderson seems to think that he may be able to help him find the desired solace; that he has a more direct link to the creator than Henderson because he is closer to man's original state.

When Henderson understands that Romilayu wants to return to the scenes of his childhood to the tribes of the Arnewi and the Wariri, he seems to think that this is the way to discover the link in Romilayu's past which allowed him to become civilized. Because Romilayu has been successful in that transition, Henderson trusts him to be

his guide to a place where he can successfully bridge the gap himself. However, it is important to note that Romilayu does not represent the civilized world that Henderson has left; he is not educated and Henderson's verbal communication with him is minimal because Romilayu's ability to speak English is limited. As we will see in the next chapter, this promotes a non-verbal communication between them which becomes an important part of Henderson's growth.

In the desert, as they walk toward the Arnewi village, Henderson is convinced that they are on the trail to the pre-civilized world, and is convinced that civilization is the cause of his problems. He feels linked with nature and with the "pre-Adamic" past. Romilayu, who resembles the desert terrain they cross with his bush of unbrushable dusty hair which sticks out like a dwarf pine, knows this place well. As a product of "the ancient bed of mankind" Romilayu has already begun to fulfil Henderson's expectations of regeneration by leading him into an environment in which he can feel at peace with himself. His conflicts with the world disappear and he does experience the longed for quietude of soul. He "lost count of the days" (43) and becomes immersed in a pre-civilized sense of timelessness. He is especially glad to be here because he thinks that he has made good his escape from the civilized world which causes him so much grief. He clearly believes that the

world is glad to be rid of him. His "I", like the child's vision of himself, sees himself as the center around which everything revolves, and he uses his own sense of relief to represent how the world responds to him. He says: "...the world was glad to lose track of me, too for a while" (43). The civilized world, with its time centered movement, loses track of Henderson because Henderson has escaped his own preoccupation with time, and in doing so is free from the pressures of civilization and can feel at one with nature. Nature then becomes the link to God in the Emersonian sense and provides Henderson the quietude of soul he sought on his tour of the churches. However, Romilayu, unlike Lily, does not moralize or tell him what to do. He is a faithful servant who has his master's interest at heart and does his best to guide Henderson without imposing himself on his master. This quality in Romilayu permits Henderson to remain the center of all activity and to experience the consequences of his actions through his own behavior.

Miss Lennox through her death, Charlie as the jet setter on holiday, and Romilayu as his primitive advisor, form an unlikely trio which promotes Henderson's journey into the dark continent of the soul where he can discover his own role in his alienation from the world. Even Charlie's wife, as a non-person in Henderson's own mind, pushes Henderson to become a person in his own right; to become aligned with society which then ceases to be his

oppressor. Through their role in the process of pushing and leading him into facing his fear of death, Henderson begins to synthesize his experience into a cohesive meaning for himself. Though he looks to his environment for clues to the meaning of his life, the clues themselves refer to and solidify the significance of the characters and events which take place. As he portrays the events which lead him into the interior, his reasons for going become sharp images and become incorporated in the humor of his vision. The man-child bungler is then able to laugh at himself and his childish relationship to his world in a similar way that the adult is able to laugh at his own childhood pranks; the sharp images of childhood take their place in the mind of the adult, permitting him to see them in perspective and cherish them as the childhood experiences that they are. Thus, this unlikely trio is highly instrumental in leading Henderson on his journey to the interior where he acquires new knowledge about himself and his world. As he takes the reader with him on his journey, his own ability to be a guide for himself (in terms of consolidating his experience) and for others (in terms of being able to relate how he has solved his existential problems) becomes strengthened. Through the process of writing about his inner quest, the abstract idea about it is changed from something that exists outside himself in a dreamlike quality and becomes an integral aspect of his identity.

Footnotes Chapter 3

1. Giles Gunn, The Interpretation of Otherness: Religion and the American Imagination, (N.Y.: Oxford UP, 1979), p. 43.
2. Mary Lee Allen, The Flower and the Chalk, (PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, 1968, Ann Arbor: UMI, 1984), pp. 109-113.
3. William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, (The Gifford Lectures delivered at Edenburg in 1901-02, Glasgow: Fountain Books, 1977) pp. 143-160.
4. Judith Moss, "The Body as Symbol in Saul Bellew's Henderson the Rain King", (N.p.: n.p., n.d.) p. 55.
5. Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society, (N.Y.: Norton, 1963), p. 279.

Chapter Four

Africa: Escape or Catharsis

Africa: Escape or Catharsis

The actual journey may have been quite different, but the actual journey has no interest for education, the memory was all that mattered.

The Education of Henry Adams

Still, an explanation is necessary, for living proof of something of the highest importance has been presented to me so I am obliged to communicate it. And not the least of the difficulties is that it happened as in a dream.

Henderson the Rain King

In the desert with Romilayu, Henderson's expectations are raised that his impressions from the air about Africa being the right place for him are accurate. As they cross the desert floor, where the night air breathes back on them "breath for breath" (42), Henderson experiences a euphoric feeling of peace within himself. It is clearly a religious experience. Temporal matters of time and space become inconsequential and this promotes the dreamlike quality of the remainder of his journey into the interior.

Time and space become altered in the sense that fixed schedules and deadlines disappear, geographical boundaries become unimportant and the present time and place of existence take priority in the scheme of on-going events while the clock and calendar as markers of the passage of time go unheeded. Henderson is aware of the passing of days, but does not count them; they provide a rhythm of movement that is contained within the routine of daily

existence, a routine in which certain events happen in the morning, afternoon and evening, but he does not note the exact time of day, or even the day of the week. This allows each day and place to bring its own experience above and beyond what our hero might predict, and keeps him centered within the present set of circumstances and events. As William James says of the individual who is striving for second birth:

Yet all the while the forces of mere organic ripening within him are going on towards their own prefigured result, and his conscious strainings are letting loose subconscious allies behind the scenes, which work toward enlightenment.¹

This letting go of his conscious awareness of time and space permits his subconscious to be in line with his conscious experience in the now which is necessary for him, if his old habitual ways of being are to be interrupted and therefore changed. While an event may trigger a memory of a past event, there is always something that jolts him back to his present environment which keeps him centered in the 'now'. At the same time, however, the flashbacks allow him to make connections between his past and his present, thus allowing an integration of experience.

His sense of timelessness that begins while he is crossing the desert with Romilayu marks the beginning of a return to a childhood type of existence where, as in a young child's game of peek-a-boo, things not seen are at least temporarily forgotten; the perspective changes so the events

of the present moment hold one's attention and allow a spontaneous response to each of the succeeding events. This is a time for Henderson when he is not concerned with the 'adult' notions of responsibility for the maintenance functions of life, i.e., planning ahead to insure adequate food, shelter, and other necessities of life. He is willing to eat what is at hand and to accept shelter as it comes, and to allow others to make those decisions for him.

In addition, one of the traits of being a good soldier is also the ability to follow orders and not be concerned for the creature comforts of life. He leaves Charlie's expedition in order to simplify and in going deeper into the inner regions of Africa with Romilayu as his guide, he trusts Romilayu to lead him in the same way that he would trust a commanding officer. It is Romilayu who knows the terrain and the way through it as well as the people and their customs and beliefs. Henderson follows Romilayu willingly and, as he does, his faith in Romilayu's leadership ability is reinforced. However, it also appears to me that in maintaining his idea of himself as a soldier, he is playing a child's game in which the invisible enemy is always just over the hill and not to be taken too seriously when encountered. After all, the enemy in World War II did not wound him directly, he stepped on the land mine himself. The 'enemy' he encountered directly was the crabs, not terribly dangerous but irritating. When he went to get some

powder to get rid of them, he was stripped and shaved at a crossroads in Italy in full public view, left laughing and crying and swearing revenge. However, instead of describing feelings of humiliation, Henderson compares himself to Ulysses who "was naked as the sirens sang" (23).

In this comparison with a mythical hero rather than an actual hero Henderson seems to be saying that his 'hero-ness' is a myth. It must be remembered that in the Greek version of the myth, Ulysses did not resist the singing of the sirens; he was tied to his boat while his oarsmen wore earplugs. Therefore, it was not Ulysses' strength that allowed him to escape following the sirens' song to his death but his cunning that allowed him to think of a way to hear the irresistible song without succumbing to its call. By comparing himself to Ulysses, he sees himself in the image of a mythical hero which is a child-like act of cunning that allows Henderson to escape feeling humiliated. If a hero like Ulysses could allow himself to be naked during such an event without being humiliated, Henderson could do no less. After all, he does have his Purple Heart which technically makes him a hero, mythical or not, and his life too has been spared in the war, as was Ulysses'. The game of soldier is continued as Henderson with his soldierly temperament goes home to raise pigs after the war.

In Africa, when they are ambushed by the Wariri, he takes it with the same spirit as being shaved at the

crossroads in Italy. When he sees the Wariri soldiers above them on the rocks, he realizes that the soldiers have the fire power to blow them "off the hillside" (100). Yet, following Romilayu's example of laying flat on the ground with his face buried in the dust among the pebbles while waiting for the soldiers to approach them, he is "grinning". He says: "To be disarmed in ambush was a joke to me for the first few minutes,..." (101). But at last Henderson begins to take them more seriously when they are told to pick up their packs and move on. This is the first time Henderson realizes any serious consequences directly from an enemy and he says he did not overpower them because he remembered the frog incident with the Arnewi.

While Henderson leaves the modern comforts of civilization behind him with Charlie's expedition, he takes with him one of the destructive elements of power that Henry Adams feared would lead to the violent destruction of the human race: his .375 Magnum rifle with its scope sights; a weapon which Henderson, as a soldier, appears to know how to control, which does, in fact, lead to the destruction of the Arnewi Village water supply and destroys their hope for survival. The oneness with nature Henderson had experienced in the desert gave him the impression that he had God-like qualities, as is shown when he burns the bush for the Arnewi children. Henderson, with his modern technology, i.e., his cigarette lighter and weapons, sees himself as big and as

powerful as nature; therefore, he can assault nature with his modern technology in God-like vengeance on the frogs.

In the desert, with only his guide present, Henderson's verbal communication is limited, reduced to the minimal exchange necessary and in the long intervals of silence he observes nature around him and feels part of it. Thus he establishes his identity with nature and the physical world around him, in a mystical departure from time and space reality. As William James comments:

We pass into mystical states from out of ordinary consciousness as from a less into a more, as from a smallness into a vastness, and at the same time as from an unrest to a rest.... In them the unlimited absorbs the limits and peacefully closes the account.²

As he experiences this oneness with nature, as he was unable to do when camped at the lake with Charlie's expedition, he feels at peace with himself, thus marking the beginning of the unification of his physical being with his physical world.

This is a primitive experience not only in the sense that the geographic location is not civilized, but also because the communication between him and Romilayu is primarily non-verbal, since Romilayu's ability to speak English is limited. His bond with Romilayu is one of purpose and experience in the present. There is no need to tell Romilayu why he is here or what he expects to gain by coming to Africa, so he is free to just 'be'. Romilayu has

no expectations for Henderson to live up to and therefore Henderson can not disappoint Romilayu. Therefore, Henderson has no reason to strike out in anger or guilt or fear. Romilayu, as his guide, is in command as it is he who knows the way, and it is he who begins to show the civilized man through example, a pre-verbal type of communication with his creator:

On his knees, he pressed his purple hands together under his chin, which receded, and with his lips pushed forward and the powerful though short muscles jumping under the skin of his arms, he'd pray. He'd fetch up deep sounds from his chest, like confiding groans of his soul (42).

Henderson encourages Romilayu's prayers from the soul and in doing so fully accepts him as his spiritual guide, as well as his physical guide into Africa. In this way, the man-child is led to the interior where he will encounter others who will also teach him valuable lessons.

The lessons he will learn are directly related to the influence of environmental factors these others have been exposed to. Itelo and Dahfu are specific examples of men who have left their native environments and reflect the influence of the civilized world to varying degrees. They also reflect their primitive tribes. Through travel they have broadened their knowledge and experience, therefore justifying Henderson's belief that he can accomplish a similar task.

We are not told what Itelo studied, but Dahfu studied medicine and was called home to become king shortly before he was to receive his medical degree. They both then are like Romilayu in the sense that they are a blend of the civilized and uncivilized worlds. They both are able to function in civilization as well as in their primitive tribes. They both teach him something about non-verbal communication. With Itelo he wrestles so that, according to tribal custom, Itelo can get to know him. With Dahfu, he learns to imitate the roar of a lioness. With Itelo, he thinks that he must hold in his rage so that he does not kill Itelo with the self defense tactics he learned as a soldier. With Dahfu, the purpose of roaring like a lion is to let out his rage. Itelo's tribe, the Arnewi, is peaceful and he does not seem to know that a friendly wrestling match can result in violence; nor that he is in any danger in wrestling Henderson. Dahfu's tribe, the Wariri, is a warlike tribe that lives by aggression, so Dahfu understands the potential damage that violent aggression can do to a person. Itelo is at home with his tribal customs, he has no quarrel with his tribal beliefs. When the presence of frogs and tadpoles in the village drinking water threatens (due to the prohibition of drinking water that has animals in it) the survival of the tribe, neither he nor any of the other members of the tribe will take action to rid it of the living creatures or interfere with Henderson's attempt to

accomplish this task. Dahfu, on the other hand, has gone against tribal custom in keeping the female lion that he captured instead of the male lion which is believed to contain the spirit of his dead father, the previous king. This fact turns the religious leaders of the community against him and contributes to the conspiracy which leads to Dahfu's death.

Itelo and Dahfu are each representatives of their respective tribes in the same way that Henderson is a representative American. Their attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, reflect the influence of their native environments. Although they have been educated in the civilized world, their comportment within their less civilized societies is within the perimeters of expected behavior according to the model of primitive societies outlined by Thorstein Veblen.³ As we examine their respective tribal societies and their roles within them, the relationship between Itelo and Dahfu to their respective tribes will become more clear.

The Arnewi tribe fits his description of "the primitive phase of peaceable savagery" which he calls "the peaceable or antepredatory variant".⁴ According to Veblen, this variant marks the beginnings of social development in which the conditions of life seem to have permitted a peaceful existence, and the character (the

temperament and spiritual attitudes) of these men seems to have been peaceful and unaggressive.

The dominant spiritual feature of this presumptive initial phase of culture seems to have been an unreflecting, unformulated sense of group solidarity, largely expressing itself in a complacent, but by no means strenuous, sympathy with all facility of human life, and an uneasy revulsion against apprehended inhibition or futility of life.⁵

Henderson goes from an uninhabited desert to the Arnewi tribe, where he encounters the beginnings of social order, an order in which their struggle for survival was aimed at the non-human environment which created a high degree of unity among the people. When Henderson arrives at their village, they are suffering from a drought. Even though they have a supply of water, they will not use it. As Itelo tells Henderson: "Mus' be no ahnimal in drink wattah" (54). None of Henderson's suggestions to rid the water of the frogs is acceptable to prince Itelo who makes "loud exhalations to show how impossible" (54) any of them are.

The Arnewi as a group is united in mind, through the unity of thought and purpose. They have shared beliefs in their tribal customs which cannot be changed because they are incapable of conceiving a different order: they are innocent in the Biblical sense as they do not recognize good or evil. Itelo, who has been educated in the civilized world, has put on the clothes and language of civilization yet he has not lost his innocence. His wrestling match with

Henderson is not seen as competition but as a way of getting acquainted, and he does not know he is in any danger of being hurt by Henderson. He remains united in the non-competitive, non-aggressive values, norms and beliefs of his people.

The tribe welcomes Henderson as one of them. Henderson has found a society that appreciates his value as a human being. They see that he is different from them but do not have the capacity to judge him. They accept the sincerity of his offer to help them save the lives of their sacred cattle. Itelo's Aunt Mtalba, the queen's sister, even proposes marriage to Henderson, giving him the bride price. Such a marriage would signify Henderson's inclusion into their tribal belief system.

The Arnewi seem to see life as a unity of the physical world (body) with the non-physical world (mind/thought/spirit). According to their shared belief system, they cannot drink water that contains animals. Removing life (frogs) from the preserver/giver of life (water/spirit) is prohibited. They do not question the existing order as they have no conception of any other. They are of one mind, one body, one spirit.

The queen is an embodiment of the all in one concept of the tribal order. She is an androgenous being, both male and female. The queen's children call her both mother and father. She has many spouses, both husbands and wives. She

has a male lion skin wrapped around her back and knotted over her navel and a spice islands odor emanates from her lower parts as Henderson gives her enormous matriarchal belly the expected kiss. One of her eyes is covered by a cataract while her normal eye looks out at the world, which for Henderson signifies her ability to look inward for wisdom while looking out at the physical world around her. There is no separation of vision. The queen and her sister are happy women of "bittahness" (bitterness?). Thus the queen symbolizes the unity of, or, as Keats says, the 'reconciliation' of opposites. A point from which there is no opposition. Therefore, they do not oppose Henderson's decision to remove the frogs from the cistern.

Henderson assaults the problem with a soldierly vengeance. If he can destroy the frog population in the cistern, he can validate the Arnewi's acceptance of him and annihilate his fear of death before it can annihilate him through allowing him to provide a useful service to the community: he can save the lives of the cattle who are dying because they are not allowed to drink the frog infested water and therefore save the tribe. His "grun-tu-molani", his desire to live, leads him to kill in order to save life, an opposition which leads to the certain demise of the tribe who live in peace and tranquility without opposition to each other or to tradition or to opposition.

While oneness with nature promotes a feeling of wholeness, the individual must be free to think for himself and oppose actions which are contrary to his own belief system. Peace that is achieved through such total unification of the opposites is a nullification of the peaceful existence it embodies. Transcendence through death is the result. Henderson's "grun-tu-molani" leads him to reject transcendence through peaceful acceptance of his own death by attempting to save life through taking life which is in keeping with his soldierly temperament.

Each of the tribes Henderson visits represents a specific aspect of Henry Adams' historical perspective of the development of Western Civilization. It was his contention that in Europe in the Middle Ages, when people were united in their faith in the Virgin, they were able to accomplish great things. With the advancement of civilization, through the development of technology to harness the power of nature, thus conquering nature, the faith of the people was divided and civilization was put on a path to destruction. Adams saw the unity of faith in the Virgin as a motivating force more powerful than the modern dynamo. The Virgin inspired men to build great Cathedrals, whose architectural complexity and beauty could never be duplicated by the force of all the dynamos in the world combined. The loss of the unity in faith would lead to the

destruction of the human race as man replaced faith in the Virgin for faith in mechanical force.⁶

By placing Henderson in an environment like the Arnewi village, Bellow places him in a position to illustrate the fallacy of Adam's belief in the power of a unifying faith to save humanity. These people are so united in their beliefs that they are unprepared to protect themselves from external forces, as is illustrated by Henderson's destruction of their precious water supply. They are so unified in mind that rational thought is impossible, which leaves them vulnerable to aggression. According to Erikson, to be a mature integrated individual, one must also identify with his society and have a sense of belonging to it. Through this process, the individual learns to communicate with the other beings in his world and to express his individuality. However, over-identification leaves the individual unable to think for him or her self. Itelo fails to provide the model for Henderson because he is so much in harmony with his people that he seems like an echo of them rather than a person in his own right. And like Whitman's concept of the individual in a Utopian community, the individual is so merged with the group that he fails to develop an individual identity.

What Henderson saw as a failure in destroying the cistern, in reality, has a positive effect on him. It shows him how dangerous it can be to take on god-like

qualities with the use of modern weapons against nature, against the innocent who are incapable of taking care of themselves. In an attempt to destroy nature's innocent frogs, he destroys the ability of the Arnewi to use nature's water to sustain life. His failure to be the god-like hero he imagined himself to be separates him from the tribe and forces him to search elsewhere for an individual identity, which would not have been possible had he stayed with the Arnewi. Therefore, this experience has been a valuable one for Henderson at the expense of the Arnewi.

In America, with its system of laws designed to protect individual liberty, where individuality is encouraged and rewarded, where strong penalties are imposed for depriving others of their civil rights, Henderson would not have been permitted to feel the full extent of his abuse of power. He has given us many examples of situations where people fought back or avoided him because he abused them. The Arnewi failed to recognize the danger he presented them and failed to stop him because they did not see it. Thus he feels the full impact of his action. Though done with good intentions, it was a deliberate act. Therefore his guilt in their destruction is greater than his accidental contribution to the death of Miss Lennox.

With his recent failure to be a "do gooder" (another Protestant Ethic) with the Arnewi, he and Romilayu go on to

the Wariri. As a war-like aggressive tribe who beat their gods and take death into their own hands, they represent Adams' concept of the chaotic order that threatens to annihilate the human race in its "progress" toward conquering nature through technology. The Wariri are an enlargement of his own aggressive tendencies which have allowed him to destroy the peaceful Arnewi because he was unable to predict the power and force of his bomb. Thus, Henderson fulfills Adams predictions of the consequences of the development of unlimited force to society. As he remains with the Wariri, he learns more about himself and the danger of the abuse of power, not only to himself as an individual but in a broader social context.

The Wariri tribe fits the description of Veblen's warlike aggressive "predatory variant" which developed as the social organization "changed in some degree from a group struggle against a non-human environment to a struggle against a human environment."⁵ Within the "predatory variant" there is disagreement, dissension and competition between individuals and groups that constitute that society. These qualities within the Wariri play a major role in Henderson's education with the tribe.

This primitive tribe has an army to protect its borders, that is armed with modern weapons. Their greeting of Henderson, in contrast to that of the Arnewi, clearly shows that they do not readily accept visitors and that they

fear intruders. Their leathery skinned, leather aproned guards match Henderson's vision of himself as a soldier. However, while he makes a child's game of being a soldier, the Wariri recognize the potential danger of his weapons and take them away from him.

The Wariri do not let him cast himself in the role of God. He is forced to beat their inanimate wooden gods and is appalled at their lack of respect for them. In addition, he physically suffers from his participation in the rain ceremony as a direct result of the blows given him to force him to do the beating. Henderson would like to embrace Christianity even though he has not found solace and comfort in its churches. Further more, any illusion he may have had that his oneness with God and nature could give him supernatural power is made to appear ridiculous as he receives the blows on his naked muddy body at the feet of Mummah. Their religious organization places itself above their gods, above nature, and above individual rights. At the same time, because he is big and strong, they use him to move the statue of the mother goddess thus bringing rain to the tribe. However, the religious leaders are in control, not God, and Henderson is forced to acknowledge this fact. While he is strong, he feels himself no match against the armed force of religion and submits to their demands.

The Wariri do not respect life, they respect power and force. Death in the Wariri tribe is not "natural", i.e., people do not die of "natural" causes. Anyone who does not adhere to the norms of the society, or who fails to perform according to tribal expectations is killed. They see themselves as superior to their wooden gods which are moved, in a contest of strength by the strongest members of their society, and then whipped. Henderson, who has played God by burning the bush when he wanted to impress the Arnewi children, finds himself among the whippers during the Wariri rain ceremony.

In his priestly duties as the rain king, it becomes clear that Henderson has no real power or authority: he is not the magistrate who passes judgement on the condemned, he merely takes it upon himself to sprinkle the prisoners with the holy water, believing it will bring them relief from the broiling hot sun; and he does not decide what his duties are as rain king, he merely fulfills the rituals expected of him; the magistrate judges the prisoners. By being shown as sitting on a pile of excrement in the market place at the center of the town, the magistrate's authority is based on the desire to wield power on the "waste" of others, thereby promoting the greatest personal gain to the economic leaders of the community. Individuals who do not conform will be "wasted"; they will become food for the vultures at the

gallows. King Dahfu himself has no real authority or power over his people as he has not yet captured his "father" lion "Gmilo". However, because Henderson respects Dahfu, and because he lost the wager he made with Dahfu at the rain ceremony, he remains with the tribe and faithfully attends to the duties of the rain king.

Henderson "Sungo" has no illusions about himself having any supernatural power to bring fertility to the tribe: he becomes the Sungo as a consequence of lifting Mummah and performs the role of rain king as expected of him. While he does not adhere to the tribal beliefs, he does try to understand them. He realizes that here too, like in America, he is an emblem of success: he has brought the much needed rain, according to tribal custom, through the tribal ritual.

Henderson has blamed the civilized world for his lack of real success, and in order to simplify, to leave his past and contemporary civilization behind him, to establish an identity for himself, he has come on this adventure. However, his purpose has not been to retreat into nature but to find man's roots in civilization. Africa, as seen as the "ancient bed of mankind" represents those beginnings. Romilayu had visited both of these tribal societies in his youth so it is a return to childhood experience for him. It is a return that Henderson hopes will show him how Romilayu has moved from the uncivilized to the civilized world,

thereby acquiring faith, and the ability to embrace Christianity. Therefore, when Henderson meets Itelo of the Arnewi, and discovers that Itelo speaks English, that the world has discovered his tribe, he is disappointed and fears that they will be too "civilized" to serve the purpose he had in mind.

These primitive societies, while they are not entirely primitive, are not advanced to the degree of European or American societies. In fact, these primitive societies appear to contain elements of civilization in a much more consolidated, less elusive scale than the societies he runs from. However, it becomes evident that their development has not led them to the state of a monied economy which becomes an important feature in his journey to self-awareness, as Henderson's wealth merely provides him the means to exit from and return to civilization.

American society is one in which it is impossible to exist without money. In fact, as has been demonstrated, the American desire for prosperity and the acquisition of capital as part of modern societal values has been an integral aspect of Henderson's existential dilemma.

While Henderson lives on his estate in Connecticut, it is not a self-contained, self-supporting entity. He raises pigs which are sold to the consumers of his society and contribute to his financial success. As Henderson comments:

I couldn't lose money. But they were killed and they were eaten. They made ham and gloves and gelatin and fertilizer. What did I make? Why I made a sort of trophy, I suppose. Washed, clean and dressed an expensive trophy (24).

The products made from his pigs are used to meet the needs of his society in a variety of ways. However, his financial success does not make him feel successful; when dressed as a gentleman, he does not feel like a gentleman. His success is artificial, hollow, he feels like an emblem of success, a trophy, not solid, alive and useful.

In Africa his money is useless to him, except for providing the means for him to get there. While the Arnewi seem to like the presents he gives them, it does not occur to them that he is a wealthy powerful man. When he encounters the Wariri, the guards take his guns away from him, and thus leave Henderson unarmed. Then as Rain King he is stripped naked and given the traditional tribal costume that the Rain King is expected to wear. Thus, all signs of material wealth are removed from his possession and he is required to face them without any of the symbols of American aristocratic society. However, he does keep his soldier type helmet, which allows him to continue to see himself as a soldier, even though his "travel stained" undershorts are clearly visible through the transparent pants of his Rain King costume.

In New York City the soldierly bum Henderson visits Lily who lives in a slum apartment building that is dirty and smelly. Her apartment is equally as repulsive as his Connecticut estate.

'Hell! How can you live in this stinking joint? It stinks in here,' I said. The building had hall toilets; the chain pulls had turned green and there were panes of plum-colored glass in the doors.

The drunks hid in the stairway from the weather, and Henderson went there to visit with his "face full of country color and booze" in his "thick padded coat, in pigskin gloves and pigskin shoes, a pigskin wallet in [his] pocket, seething with trouble" (14). The difference between him and the drunks in this scene is that Henderson looks well dressed and healthy even though he acts like a bum. These slum alcoholics do not have places to live or warm clothes and are trying to keep warm in the stairway. They seem to have accepted their fate: being drunk and hiding out from the weather; they have given up and do not expect more than temporary shelter from the cold world outside. Their outward appearance is a reflection of the lifestyle they have accepted for themselves and are a mirror for Henderson's internal state, of his vision of himself as a failure. Henderson's outward appearance is a reflection of his social position and is in direct opposition to his internal vision of himself. Henderson's fine clothes and

money do not protect him from his own feelings of alienation or relieve his sense of guilt. Henderson, with his voice saying "I want, I want, I want" says to himself "Strike! Strike! Strike!" His feelings are very aggressive. He wants and he wants to strike out at anything and everything that gets in his way or reminds him of his internal turmoil. He hates what he sees, and he hates feeling like a trophy. He hates the dichotomy between his internal feelings and his external appearance.

In Africa, with the Wariri tribe, unlike American society, he is not allowed to hide in drunkenness or given the freedom to do as he pleases. He has a specific function to perform as a service to the community. While he feels like an emblematic representation of fertility for the tribe, he takes childlike joy in performing his duties. And more importantly, as Rain King and (unknown to him) successor to King Dahfu, he spends time in the company of the king learning to be a "being person." Henderson truly admires the king for the graceful manner in which he lives in the face of violence and death. Henderson sees how much power the religious leaders of the community have and is afraid of the consequences Dahfu will pay if he does not release Atti and send her back to the jungle. The issue within Wariri society clearly becomes one of religious organization versus state authority, an opposition of power groups against each other.

In civilized society, man has dominated nature, to a degree, through modern technology and mechanized methods of mass production thereby creating the possibility of a highly consumer oriented society. The workers of society who are not rewarded for their labor to the extent that they want or expect strike, through the unions, to get more benefits, better working conditions, or increased salaries. Within the Wariri tribe, when they don't have water (which becomes the economic equivalent of money), they have a rain ceremony (the united effort of the people), they strike their wooden gods (the equivalent of unresponsive owners and managers of business in a money economy) and demand the needed rain. Sometimes they get it. Henderson was 'lucky' for them in this sense.

With the Arnewi tribe, very much like American society, Henderson is allowed the freedom to do as he pleases. They permit him to keep his guns and other possessions and give him royal treatment. When he has his audience with the queen and her sister, the entire village is present, applauding and whistling as presents are exchanged: during the interview, mothers pull nursing infants from their breasts so they can see Henderson; Henderson and Romilayu sleep in the house of Prince Itelo and his Aunt Mtalba; Matalba immediately falls in love with Henderson, proposes marriage and gives him the bride price so he can afford to marry her. In an effort to repay the Arnewi for their

kindness, using his modern ingenuity and military training, he builds a bomb that destroys any possibility of using the precious water.

It is important to note that in the cistern, as Henderson inspects it before the bombing, the water appears to be alive, i.e., moving because of the creatures swimming in it. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the images are closely associated with the images of moving water, bubbles and death. He looks at it until he feels like it is filling him, 'jostling' around inside of him. While he comments that the tadpoles remind him of sperm, he refuses to accept water as a life image. He looks at the frogs and says: "My heart was fattening in anticipation of their death. We hate death, we fear death, but when you get right down to cases, there's nothing like it" (72). He seems concerned that he is too eager to bring about their violent end. His justification is that he will save the lives of the Arnewi and their cows. However, this marks the beginning of a change in his association of water as an image of death: without water the Arnewi will die.

Unlike the situation with the Wariri, in which different groups are opposed to one another, the Arnewi are governed by an internalized set of beliefs and traditions which the tribe as a unit upholds. Henderson wants to show them how to make a new tradition by bombing the frogs, so

that they can live. He sees his task as one of clarifying values, an arrangement of mutual aid.

Everything depends on values - the values, and where's reality? I myself, dying of misery and boredom, had happiness, too, all around me as abundant as the water in that cistern, where cattle are forbidden to drink. And therefore I thought, this will be one of those mutual aid deals; where the Arnewi are irrational I'll help them, and where I'm irrational they'll help me (76).

While the Arnewi are united as a group in their struggle against a non-human environment, they fail to see that their internalized beliefs are in direct opposition to their survival. In the name of unity, they do not have the rational capacity to understand that tradition can be changed to meet the challenges of the changing environment around them. Queen Willatale of the Arnewi tells Henderson that he has "grun-tu-molani" ("man want to live"). However, as James has observed, "Knowledge about a thing is not the thing itself".⁷ They seem to admire him for his "grun-tu-molani", but do not seem to have it themselves. Yet, in Henderson's mind, his own association of water as a death image causes him to over-react and destroy the source of life his own mind has already rejected. In doing so, his own "grun-tu-molani" has brought about the fate of the Arnewi that he was trying to prevent.

While the Arnewi will not go against tradition to save their own lives, it becomes clear that they respect life.

When Henderson has destroyed the life of the "animals in drink wattah" and in doing so has destroyed their chances of survival, they will not punish Henderson in any way except to send him away from them. Henderson asks Itelo to kill him to save him from living with his disgrace. Itelo of course refuses and Henderson goes on to fulfill his quest.

In the Wariri tribe, as rain king, Henderson has specific duties that he must perform on a daily basis. After lunch, he is required to visit Mummah attended by two "amazons" (202), who fill a couple of gourds with some "disagreeable" water from a stone tank. Then in the company of a "considerable troop of the amazons" Henderson is carried in a hammock shaded by an umbrella through the village followed by a beating drum. People, especially women, come with little cups to get a dole of the water "as the Sungo" (title of the rain king) is "also in charge of fertility; you see it goes with the moisture" (204). He is then carried to the market place, which is also the magistrate's court where the judge, in a red gown, sits on a "dunghill". In a priestly type ritual, Henderson gets out of his hammock, and sprinkles water with a perforated gourd on the prisoner (there is always one) who is tied to a post. It appears that Henderson as Sungo administers "last rites" to the condemned, thus encompassing both ends of the life cycle, in which life and death are seen as a result, not of his making, but beyond his control. He is merely the pawn

of the leaders of the tribe even though he has the status of an aristocrat.

As he sees death on an almost daily basis, the spurious nature of his power over life and death are revealed to him gradually. With the Wariri tribe Henderson is forced to face death: 1) through the experience of being placed in a hut with a dead body on the first night in the town, 2) when he runs through the town during the rain ceremony, he passes the gallows on the edge of town. He says: "Those were dead men that hung there, each entertaining a crowd of vultures... (168); 3) when he faces his fear of death in the lion's den; and 4) later, when Henderson is unable to get to the lion quickly enough, his efforts to save Dahfu are in vain. He was entirely powerless to do anything to prevent any of the deaths that occurred.

Henderson sees very clearly that the Wariri is a tribe that does not respect life. People are killed for various reasons which are not altogether clarified by Henderson, and when he flees from the jail cell next to the one that contains Dahfu's body, it is quite clear that he is not running from an unrealistic fear. Henderson has already been told by Dahfu what happens to the king when he can no longer satisfy his women, and he has seen Dahfu destroyed by the lion. Therefore, Henderson is certain that he will not live long if he stays on as King.

Through his experience with death in the Wariri tribe, new images replace those previously associated with death, because none of the deaths are a result of Henderson's actions, and none of them are associated with water. They are a result of the abuse of power similar to his attempt to rid the Arnewi cistern of its frogs. This excessive use of power shows no respect for life and has undesirable consequences for the individual as well as for society.

In trying to show Henderson the negative effects of power, King Dahfu becomes a Christ-like advisor and teacher to help Henderson "burst the spirit's sleep." Dahfu is sorry for the abuse that Henderson takes during the rain ceremony and tells him "It is not my idea of how to be...I have other ideas. You will see" (179). They make a mutual pact to expect truth from each other. It becomes apparent that Dahfu is especially glad to have Henderson stay with him because he hopes that "exchanges of importance" will take place. "For I do not find it easy to express myself to my own people.... They are against me here" (179). He sees the reason for this problem as the primitive belief system of his people in which blows are exchanged for blows in the name of revenge. Dahfu attributes their differences in values to his travels in the civilized world where, as a medical student, he was learning to save lives, not take them. This difference in values sets him apart from his people and, to a degree, makes him more like the Arnewi in

that respect than his own people. He has been altered by his experience in a significant way which alienates his tribe from him. He is very secure within himself and remains unaffected by their distance from him, except that he would like to be able to share his knowledge and experience with them in order to improve the tribe.

Dahfu says that the problem began with the beginning of time. "Those prime-aval blows everybody still feels...In the beginning of time there was a handraised which struck. So the people are flinching yet" (180). Yet, Dahfu believes that the "noble will have its turn in the world" (182). Therefore, part of Henderson's learning becomes focused on the example of King Dahfu who refuses to pass on the "blows" of vengeance that he receives from his tribe. He thinks that "a brave man will try to make the evil stop with him. He shall keep the blow. No man will get it from him, and that is a sublime ambition" (181).

Henderson was ecstatic with emotion at hearing Dahfu talk about "nobility having its turn in the world" (182). He says:

I was blazing with fever and mental excitement because of the loftiness of our conversation and I saw things not double or triple merely, but in countless outlines of wavering color, gold, red, green, umber and so on, all flowing concentrically around each object. Sometimes Dahfu seemed to be three times his size with the spectrum around him. Larger than life, he loomed over me and spoke with more than one voice (182).

Dahfu then, takes on larger than life proportions and gains Henderson's love and respect. However, where Christ taught in parables, Dahfu takes a very practical approach to teaching Henderson. Instead of talking about God and spiritual matters, or telling stories of examples to be followed, he leads Henderson to the sub-terranean chamber where he learns to imitate the lioness' roar. After all, man is the only animal that needs revenge. Instead of separating himself from his animal nature to rise above the physical realm into heaven, Dahfu goes down into the earth where Atti is kept and copies her behavior; the king of the Wariri copies the queen of the beast in order to perfect himself as a human being. He has no supernatural power, he has the power to be human and to face his animal nature, to accept it as part of himself.

As Henderson forces himself to follow Dahfu into the chamber which is dark and damp and strong-smelling, he is forced to face his fears of death. The atmosphere, as he describes it, was

distributed as evenly as water...which recalled to me the speckled vision of twilight at Banyules-sur-mer in that aquarium, where I saw that creature the octopus, pressing its head against the glass. But where I had felt coldness there, here I felt very warm (186).

His memory of a past event, in which he has an imagined death notice, returns to him as he approaches the lions den telling himself to have faith. At the same time he imagines

the animal chasing him up the stairs and "washing its face in [his] blood" (187). As he enters the door of the den, he says, "I cannot deny that there lay over my consciousness the shadow of the cat I attempted to shoot under the bridge table" (187). His fear is clearly related not only to the present danger but also to a guilty conscience; he is afraid that the lioness, like a human being, will want to revenge one of the "smaller more vulnerable members" of its family. However, reassured by the soft-spoken love words of Dahfu, Atti allows Henderson to enter her domain where he watches as she and Dahfu play together in the darkness. For Henderson, even though he trusts Dahfu and has made his "truth" agreement with him, he is terrified. Entering the lion's den is a crisis for him. It occurs to him that the hour that "burst the spirit's sleep" might be the "judgement hour" for him. Yet he proceeds, with the help of Dahfu's gentle reassurance.

As Henderson overcomes his fear, he puts his whole being into his imitation of the lioness' roar until he loses consciousness of himself. As he does so, it appears that his rage and fear have been released and Henderson is reborn in the womblike chamber of the lioness' den. He, like the desert plant he read about in Scientific American, has received moisture in the depths of the earth and is ready to bloom, the "air borne seed" that flew into Africa has found rebirth.

Dahfu, who has been rejected by his tribe, becomes a model of the individual integrated within himself. His lioness has value to him even though his tribe believe the female lion to be an evil sorceress; Dahfu does not believe it. He has an intimate relationship with her and Henderson says she loves Dahfu in her animal way. The point for Dahfu seems to be that physical 'animal' love has its place too, it is not evil. When he explains to Henderson that one does not choose who to love, that love is not a rational process, that one loves or one does not, that it is not a matter of conscious selection, he is an echo of William James. The big challenge in life then is to love in the face of danger, and live gracefully with the threat of death, to take the blow without passing it on so humanity can stop flinching and let nobility have its day.

This attitude of nobility seems to fortify Dahfu, and allows the love of those who are close to him (his wives, Henderson, and Atti), to be sufficient for him. While he would like to be accepted by his tribe, he seems satisfied to be able to talk to Henderson. Henderson becomes his ally in the world he is alienated from. His courage in facing death in a situation which is of his own making (by going against the tribe in keeping Atti) demonstrates that his integration as an individual gives him the individual identity he needs to live life fully and gracefully. This

becomes Henderson's model for living in a world he can not change. This is Henderson's Catharsis.

Chapter Four

Footnotes

1. William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 212.
2. James, p. 401.
3. Thorstein Veblen, Theory of the Leisure Class, (Boston:, H. Mifflin, 1973), pp. 142-159.
4. Veblen, p. 146.
5. Veblen, p. 149.
6. "The Virgin and the Dynamo", in The Education of Henry Adams. PP. 471-96.
7. James, p. 467.

Chapter 5

Homeward Bound

Homeward Bound

A mind is a system of ideas, each with the excitement it arouses, and with tendencies impulsive and inhibitive, which mutually check or reinforce one another. The collection of ideas alters by subtraction or by addition in the course of experience, and the tendencies alter as the organism gets more aged. A mental system may be undermined or weakened by this interstitial alteration just as a building is, and yet for a time keep upright by dead habit. But a new perception, a sudden emotional shock, or an occasion which lays bare the organic alteration, will make the whole fabric fall together; then the center of gravity sinks into an attitude more stable, for the new ideas that reach the centre in the rearrangement seem now to be locked there, and the new structure remains permanent.

William James
The Varieties of Religious Experience

As Henderson returns home he finally discovers, on the final lap of his journey, that it is almost Thanksgiving and three months later than he thought. For Henderson, this is an appropriate reentry into the world of fixed schedules and clocks and calendars as markers of the passage of time. His world now appears to be more favorable to him. Even though his world remains in more or less the same state in which he left it, it appears different to him. 1

Henderson, with his demanding voice, pushing him through life without telling him what it wanted, had no peace. He was unable to see reality around him. As he returns home, it becomes apparent that his all-encompassing "I" has enlarged to allow him to see others more clearly. Therefore he is able to give the orphan boy fresh air and a

view of the Newfoundland landscape. It is a cooling off period for him, a much needed break from the heat and intensity of Africa.

Henderson lost track of time in Africa and in the process lost track of himself. In the process he was able to find in himself a human being who is able to love without judgement and without having to be the center of his own universe. As he runs around the plane, the plane with the lion cub (Dahfu) becomes central, and Henderson is able to hold the small boy in his arms and feel empathy for his loss of parentage, and for the inability of the boy to communicate in English with those around him which isolates him from them.

The fact that Henderson does not speak Persian does not keep him from communicating with the boy. The empathy he feels becomes his guide for communication. He uses the skills he learned in Africa beginning in the desert with Romilayu, and the increased level of security he feels in himself allows him to reach out to the boy. He thinks of his daughter Ricey and the little black baby she brought home at Christmas the year before. He thinks that now he is able to extend a helping hand, not only to the Persian boy but also to others without feeling threatened. Because he is no longer harrassed by his demanding voice, he now recognizes that it should have said "I want, he wants, she wants," that others have needs and desires too. With this

recognition he is able to relate to others in a more genuine way. He no longer needs to strike out at others in his environment in the aggressive manner he did in the past.

As Henderson has carried his own culture within him, his internal changes have taken place via his experience. Elements of American society which have troubled him in the past, have been present within the African societies.² With the Arnewi tribe he had to confront the ideal of a pacific Democratic society in which the individual, integrated within the group, ceases to think and make decisions for himself. With the Wariri he has experienced the violent competitive spirit in which social organization pits groups within society against one another. In such a society the individual who is a member of the society is, through various means, prodded into joining one of the currents of thought that exist within that society and aligning himself with the group that supports such thought or be alienated from it.

The members of the Arnewi tribe were willing to accept him at face value, without judgement, as they were incapable of judging him. This Utopian, idealistic society was governed by a unified religious belief and all were welcome. To become a full member of such a society means giving up one's independent thinking. One has to be willing to accept the consequences of such unthinking behavior. For Henderson to fully accept inclusion into the tribe, he would have to

accept transcendence through death in much the same way that early Christians did in refusing to fight the gladiators of the Roman Empire. Henderson rejects such transcendence because he wants to live, and he wants to save their lives too.

The Arnewi, with their gentle, peaceful ways, represent a Christian benevolence toward life, as well as the acceptance of death. They epitomize the Christian ethic of "turn the other cheek" which Dahfu has taken on as a personal code of values. However, the Arnewi, in their totally peaceful approach to life, will not survive unless they learn a rational logical way of thinking that can allow, and perhaps nurture, independent thought and a rational way of dealing with a changing environment. Dahfu's death and the presumed end of the Arnewi are thus based on the same failure to alter principles which will permit a new tradition to carry them into the future.

In killing the frogs that threaten the Arnewi survival, Henderson also kills their religious ideal, which is the ideology they live by which makes them the beautiful peaceful people that are so appealing to Henderson. The Utopian ideal does not survive in Africa anymore than it did in the early American experiments. When outsiders bring in opposing values and behavior, the religious devotion to the ideal is disturbed. After all, Henderson succeeded in destroying not only the frogs, but also the retaining wall

of the cistern that held the water in. Uncontaminated water, then represents the pure ideal. Modern technology which permits the destruction of the contaminants also destroys the possibility of retaining the purity of the ideal. However, Bellow gives Henderson the responsibility for his actions. Henderson does not blame the bomb. He blames himself. The modern technology that permits Henderson to build the bomb is not responsible for its actions. Henderson leaves the tribe feeling like a failure for not accomplishing the good will mission as he had intended.

The unity of faith that Adams believed gave the people the creativity and force to build the great cathedrals of Europe did not prepare the people to cope with the power and force of modern technology. Bellow portrays the frailty of a people in an innocent state, united with nature and God, unable to understand the possible consequences if Henderson's efforts should fail. Failure to understand left them unprepared to take steps to protect themselves.

The Inquisitions held by the Catholic Church in the middle ages were not successful in saving the unity of faith with the Church. Thinking men and women formed Protestant religions and attempted to reinstate what they saw as the true teachings of Christ. They established new religious orders and moved to America. Even peaceful orders such as the Quakers in Pennsylvania used force to control the behavior of their people. The Quaker control of group

behavior took the shape of social disapproval rather than physical punishment. The Puritans who also wanted an ideal community based on Utopian ideology used means of punishment which are seen today as being very cruel. Neither of these Protestant attempts or the experiments such as Brook Farm by later inhabitants of America succeeded in the establishment of a Utopian community. As soon as outsiders arrived who challenged the status quo, tension and dissension mounted within the community, altering the unity of the people. In addition, Thoreau's experiment at Walden Pond demonstrates that man can arrive at a feeling of unity in nature, as Henderson does in the desert. However, Thoreau was never able to re-enter society and apply the principles so carefully laid down in his written portrayal of the experiment at Walden Pond. Thoreau suggests that "Walden Pond" means "Walled in pond".³ The cistern water is held in by a wall which Henderson manages to blow up. Henderson's misuse of modern technology destroys his possibility of an experience like Thoreau's at Walden Pond.

It appears that Bellow, like other authors of the fifties and sixties, has rejected Emersonian unity with God through nature as a solution to man's inability to feel integrated in society. He demonstrates through Henderson that such unity with nature can lead to a false sense of transcendence in which the individual assumes God-like

powers that are not based on the reality of the social world he lives in. 4

Bellow's use of Adams as an intimate of Henderson's father and of the historical development of American society illustrates how the growth of society and its increasing use of technology to harness the power and force of nature have led to a society which, as William Barrett claims, leads to a mechanized life in which the individual identifies with his role in society. Henderson wants to change his role in society from that of a pig farmer who behaves like a bum to that of a respectable member of society who makes a worthwhile contribution to it. Henderson wants to be seen as a hero, a savior of people less fortunate than he, in short, as a do gooder. However, the events that occur reach to the deeper problem of identity, which is founded with the self, separate from society and his role in it.

In his quest for self awareness, Henderson is not permitted to be the "savior" of the Arnewi,⁵ nor does he see himself as having any real supernatural power as Rain King. His position as Rain King, as the lifter and mover of Mummah and the bringer of the rain, is based on his physical strength which is no match for the religious leaders of the tribe. He merely fulfills his duties as expected. It becomes an activity which is separate from his identity as an individual. He sees that he has no power over the life and death of those he encounters in the Wariri tribe, while

at the same time he sees himself as responsible for his own actions. He has a job that is required of him because of his position in the community. At the same time, his real purpose of learning to be a 'being' person is Henderson's project with Dahfu, which is completely separate from his function in Wariri society. Therefore identity and role become separate and allow Henderson to pursue his quest with Dahfu in a physical experiential way. Therefore, the process is not something that is only talked about, it is acted upon. The physical actions and responses of the body affect what happens at a mental level and vice versa. His mental image of himself takes on new dimensions as he releases all his pent up anger and hostility and ultimately changes his response to his fear of death. He sees clearly that his function in Wariri society has very little to do with who he is. Instead, he sees Dahfu as a model of a person who lives gracefully in the fear of death, who is not only King of the Wariri, but also is almost a medical doctor who has used his studies to become a better human being.

As Henderson, isolated from his society, searched for solutions in the civilized world to appease his guilt at disappointing his father, trying to reach him by playing the violin, nothing in that world gave him comfort. In Africa he discovered in his friend Dahfu, a man who returned to his primitive tribe because he missed his father. Dahfu did not return to withdraw from the world, but to render a service

to his tribe by becoming king. Even though he had not fully attained the absolute right of authority because he had not yet captured his father lion "Gmilo", he was not anxious about his position in the tribal scheme of life. Even though he was not able to communicate his concerns and beliefs to members of his tribe because they did not understand him, he did not show concern for his own safety. He appeared to believe that his people needed their religious rituals and that they needed an example to teach them a different approach to life.⁶ He did not approve of their violent ways, yet he allowed them their violence without judging them negatively for it. Dahfu understood the revenge principle behind the violent acts. He sought to live among them in grace and dignity; by keeping Atti he tried to show them that she was not an evil sorceress; and when his tribe failed to see the lesson he wanted them to understand, he continued to live according to his inner principles. Dahfu was not willing to let the opinions of others interfere with the way he lived his daily life or allow them to impose an externalized set of values on him. However, it appears that his insistence in maintaining his own value system blinded him as to the extent of the opposition against him. The fact that Dahfu kept Atti against tribal opposition and concentrated on his work with Henderson suggests that Dahfu thought he could have an

impact on Henderson that would be greater than any he might have on his own tribe.

The competitive spirit within his tribe contributed to the strength of character which allowed him to go against his people, and his contact with lions from a very early age taught him how to face danger and to accept his animal nature graciously. It also blinded him to other types of danger in his society. His contact with Christian civilization taught him spiritual values which become the foundation for a new code by which to live. The values they represent become highlighted against the background of a primitive belief in the authority of superior force.

Bellow's use of William James as the other intimate of Henderson's father helps to balance the projections made by Adams of a world which was headed for self destruction. James places the responsibility back on the individual for changing his own life. He does not acknowledge that the individual is caught by fate in a world beyond his control. James, who was indeed a medical doctor who never practiced medicine, becomes a model for Dahfu. James medical studies placed him in a position to use the knowledge he gained to study the relationship between the mind and body which he applied to himself as a resolution to his negative approach to life. Ultimately, this led to his ability to help teach what he knew to others, exemplifying Franklin's concept of helping self and others. Dahfu then serves the purpose of

illustrating that while one's identity is not limited to his role in society, that role can be used to help oneself; as an extension of humanity, each man is responsible for his actions within his society.

Dahfu was willing to base his actions on his own belief system, (one which was acquired during his study of medicine away from the tribe) to live in a manner contrary to the tribal belief system, and to take the consequences of that action without fear. Dahfu's sense of responsibility for acting on his own belief system led him to take actions contrary to the dictates of the religious order of the tribe, which led to the plot that results in his death. His conscience is entirely focused on behaving in a novel way regardless of the possible consequences of his behavior. Therefore, Dahfu's behavior, while having the elements of the competitive spirit of his tribe, has also been influenced by his experience away from his society. Therefore, for Henderson, it becomes evident that the problems created within society that the individual has to face and the manner in which culture shape the individual's belief system, do not have to determine one's ultimate fate.

Bellow suggests that while society is a shaping force in the destiny of man, man has the capacity to step out of his role in society and acquire a sense of himself as an individual, therefore depriving society, through its cultural norms, expectations and beliefs, of being the sole

determinant of individual action. From such a position, man can then take responsibility for his own actions and become the contributing member to society that he has always wanted to be. Man can then be an individual and at the same time be an integral part of his society, therefore fulfilling Erikson's claim that the mature individual is capable of determining his actions in a rational way, of predicting the consequences of his behavior and therefore attain the ability to have both a cultural and an individual identity.

When this takes place, the individual is not limited by an incessant need and/or want for more and more and more. He is then in a position to assess his position in a more, though probably never totally, objective manner. The subjective state of deprivation is replaced by a position in which the environment is not seen as the persecuting enemy but rather as the relatively impersonal phenomena it actually is. Reality then, rather than illusion becomes the basis of decision making and 'being' rather than 'becoming' a stabilizing foundation in the life of the individual. From such a position, the individual no longer needs to fear death but is free to live, and with the feeling of aliveness restored, is free to love.⁷

Henderson truly loved the Arnewi and wanted to repay their kindness. He was humiliated by his failure to restore their use of the village water supply. However, as I have pointed out already, it appears that the Arnewi sheep-like

thinking was responsible for Henderson's failure, and to a greater degree for the problem in the first place. If they had developed the capacity of the individual to think and to find creative solutions, they would not have been at the mercy of Henderson. If they had recognized the potential danger of his weapons as the Wariri did, they might have disarmed him, forcing him to find a non-violent means of solving the problem. The fact that neither the practical approach to dealing with a changing environment nor an understanding of the potential of violence to harm the innocent exists, allows Henderson to feel the extent of his potential to do harm to those he loves and wishes to help. His Arnewi episode allowed Henderson to experience the full effect of his violent nature in Veblen's peaceable type primitive environment in a unique way, allowing him to feel the shock of his own violence against a people who were defenseless.

With the violent Wariri, Henderson is forced to behave in a peaceable way. He is not allowed to use his violence on others. Through his experience, he learns to understand the extensive effect violence can have when the competitive spirit is allowed to exercise unlimited force on the members of society.⁸ Through the discovery of his own potential violence, he learns to practice restraint, to stop the blow that ripples through humanity and to adopt a more tolerant attitude toward his family, friends and associates.

In my opinion, "Dahfu" is an acronym for: Dick, Africa, Henderson and father united. Certainly Dahfu represents this principle. For Dahfu, being educated in the civilized world, was very important to him. He was in his third year of medical school when he was called home to his tribe. The books from his studies were carried back on a donkey. He was a fervent reader and tried to pass on the value of his study to Henderson. Unlike Henderson's father, Dahfu had not written any of these books but was concerned with teaching Henderson the wisdom they contained. On the other hand, when Henderson had looked for wisdom and comfort in his father's books, he had found money, and his father's money had bought Henderson an Ivy league education. Henderson's own father had withdrawn from him to lock himself up in the library to play the violin when the eldest son drowned. In Africa, when Henderson humiliated himself with the Arnewi and suffered the guilt of their potential demise, he encounters Dahfu who listens to him and, like a loving father, tries to refocus his attention on the present activity with a future outcome in mind. Dahfu has his own problems to cope with: he has to satisfy his women and confront the disapproval of the tribe over keeping Atti. Yet, Dahfu has time to spend with Henderson and values the opportunity to share ideas with him, and he goes beyond the mere sharing of ideas. He is intent on teaching the practical application of those ideas.

Like a wise therapist, Dahfu encourages the patient to make a transference of the father image onto him. Yet, it is important to note, this is not done as a gimmick or to use Henderson as a pawn to further his medical studies. He also wants to pass on the lion training that was given him by his father; he wants to pass on his "birthright" to his heir to the throne, Henderson-Sungu, and he wants to pass on the nobility that is the future birthright of humanity. Therefore, the transference takes on an aspect of mutual reciprocity and provides a means for Henderson to be re-united with the father figure he lost, and like the son he wanted to be.

When Henderson flees the Wariri carrying the lion cub, he is, according to tribal custom, carrying with him the spirit of his dead father. Having at last been united with his father, he is not going to leave him behind in Africa. He changes his name to "Leo" Henderson, for the purposes of applying to medical school. He sees himself as acquiring the characteristics of the lion as well as the possibility of living up to Dahfu's expectations for him. 9

However, Henderson does not stay with the Wariri and accept the fate that the tribe chooses for him; he agrees with Dahfu that a brave man will take the blow and keep it. When he runs, it is from a real danger that the tribe will take his life if he allows it. Henderson knows from past experience that his money has created options for him, has

given him the freedom to do just about anything he chooses. He thinks that staying with the Wariri would be suicidal. In his own society, now that he has learned the danger of uncontrolled violence, he may have the opportunity to pass on the lessons that he has learned with Dahfu. He may be able to pass on his inheritance to his own children, an inheritance that will be more than money, one that will teach them how to live in the moment and to face the prospect of death with grace and dignity, knowing that his spirit will live on in his children, as the spirit of his father Dahfu lives on in him via the lion cub which he takes back to America.

While Henderson is disturbed by the dilemma of Western Civilization as described by Adams, he finds a Jamesian solution. In writing about his experience, he adopts an approach that James himself took. James, who had studied to be a medical doctor, was unable to practice medicine because he was debilitated by pessimism and doubt, fear of death and uncertainty about the existence of an afterlife. He turned to psychology for answers to his personal problems. Finding them, he then went on to be a writer, teacher and the founder of mind/body psychology. He could live in the present, knowing that what he did would make a positive contribution to the evolution of humanity. In Henderson's writing about his African experience, he is solidifying its implications for himself as well as transmitting what he

learned to others. He becomes like his own father: an author in his own right. Thus, he is worthy of his inheritance, having earned his place in society as a contributing productive member of that society. The world is no longer his oppressor.

1. M. Gilbert Porter, Whence the Power? The Artistry and the Humanity of Saul Bellow, (N.p.: U of Missouri P., 1974), p. 143.
2. Keith Michael Opdahl, The Novels of Saul Bellow: An Introduction, (University Park: Penn State UP, 1967), p. 138.
3. Henry David Thoreau, Walden, (N.Y.: The New American Library, 1960), p. 126.
4. Porter, p. 134.
5. Porter, pp. 134-35.
6. Opdahl, p. 138.
7. Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1965), p. 71.
8. Tanner, p. 73.
9. Opdahl, p. 133.

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