

BELLOW'S HENDERSON: AMERICANS AWAKE

by

Jianjiong Zhu

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in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
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in
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For Huang Shu

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INTRODUCTION

Criticism of Saul Bellow's Henderson the Rain King is generally polarized between those who approach the work novelistically (i.e., from the point of view of social realism) and those whose generic perspective leans in the direction of modern romance (i.e., prose fiction whose worldview is numinous and mythic and whose cruxes of plot turn on ritual). Critics in the first category tend to be pessimistic about Bellow's relative achievement; those in the second are more willing to accept the unique donnés of the work.

All, however, recognize the importance of Henderson's African quest. John J. Clayton, for example, asserts that Henderson is a retelling of the Don Quixote story, in which the hero is a "dissatisfied idealist," full of "the bourgeois longing to fulfill his life, to transform himself and the world into something more noble" (166). But Clayton argues for the impossibility of the hero's redemption. More optimistic than Clayton, Eusebio L. Rodrigues praises the protagonist's "radiant confidence in man and in human possibility." Rodrigues emphasizes the comic aspects of the book, pointing out that "by creating a gargantuan clown as his protagonist, Bellow extends and enriches the quest for humanness" (108). Irving Malin pays the closest attention to mythic content, especially to the myth of the eternal return. For him, Henderson undertakes the traditional mythic quest, enduring the hardships which allow the movement from

chaos to order on the psychic level. In the process, however, Malin runs the risk of denying the book anything but myth: "it is dangerous to ask all the time about Henderson: what does it mean? Fantasy implies intimations of meaning which cannot be 'logically' grasped--as dreams are never really understood" (130).

Rightly indignant about this kind of reductive myth criticism, Judie Newman goes to the opposite extreme, claiming the regnant importance in the work of time and historical specificity. Assuming, as most others do, that Henderson's change at the end of the narrative is unearned, she argues that Henderson "has to learn that, while some change is possible, it can occur only within time" (70).

My thesis, then, is an attempt to reconcile the polar opinions about Henderson, first by stressing the importance of the hero's Americanness (he is the only non-Jewish protagonist in Bellow's major fiction), thus locating him in time and space, and, second, to show that an approach to the work which nonetheless treats it as modern romance and which takes due account of the function of myth and ritual can yield meanings important for those who would understand the modern American hero in the modern world.

In Chapter One, considering Eugene Henderson a mythic hero in Joseph Campbell's sense (Prometheus, Jason, Buddha), as well as an American Adam, a hero in the American tradition, I argue that Henderson is an epitome of modern America, with a rough body and a chaotic soul. Looking at Hender-

son from Mircea Eliade's perspective of history, I analyze the causes of Henderson's African quest, which I attribute to the spiritual poverty of modern America, or in James Baird's terms, the failure of cultural symbolism.

In Chapter Two, still following Campbell's archetypal pattern of heroic quest, I argue for a mythic (or romance) reading of Henderson's trip to the Arnewi and Wariri tribes, in which Henderson experiences various rituals. Relying on Jungian individuation theory, I argue that Henderson's African quest is a process of individuation, a shattering of his white American consciousness by the power of the dark unconscious in Africa, showing that the practical American way of life is not feasible in the heart of Africa. With regard to the vehicle of Henderson's transition from "I want" to other people's wanting, I emphasize the symbolic importance of the African lion, the totem of the Wariri tribe, along with frogs, water, and the navel.

Chapter Three focuses on Henderson's geographical and psychological return to America, on the way of which he redeems his ancestors, his fellow Americans, and himself by way of his recognition of his own American totem, the Great Bear. Citing Campbell's description of the bear's totemic significance among primitive American hunters and referring to the bear's importance in modern American literature, I argue for the bear as the prime symbol upon which the modern Americans, according to Bellow's vision, need to rely. In this chapter, I also argue that the comic quality of the

book, which has its roots in the primitive rituals, is meant to convey deep psychological meanings rather than to arouse simple naive laughter.

Finally, the conclusion defends my treatment of Henderson as a mythic narrative and attempts some assessment of Bel-low's artistic and social purpose.

Chapter I

DEPARTURE

At the opening of Henderson the Rain King, Eugene Henderson, the novel's protagonist-narrator, addresses the reader:

What made me take this trip to Africa? There is no quick explanation. Things got worse and worse and worse and pretty soon they were too complicated....

However, the world which I thought so mighty an oppressor has removed its wrath from me. But if I am to make sense to you people and explain why I went to Africa I must face up to the facts. (1)

Then, Henderson, presenting himself as a man who has acquired experience and wisdom, begins a narrative of his past troubles, both internal and external, how he launched his journey into the wild interior of Africa, and finally how he returned to America a changed man.

A reading of the work quickly makes clear that Henderson the Rain King is a mythic narrative or romance and that Henderson is a mythic hero by Joseph Campbell's definition in The Hero with a Thousand Faces: "A [mythological] hero ventures forth from the world of common day unto a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (30). Simplified, the standard path of such a

hero would be a ritualistic passage of departure/initiation/return.

In Campbell's sense of the mythic hero, Henderson ranks with Prometheus, who ascended to Olympus, stole the fire of gods, and descended with it to the earth; with Jason, who sailed through the Clashing Rocks into a sea of marvels, circumvented the dragon that guarded the Golden Fleece, and returned with the fleece and the power to wrest his rightful throne from a usurper; with Aeneas, who went down into the underworld, crossed the dreadful river of the dead, threw a sop to the three-headed watchdog Cerberus, conversed with the shade of his dead father, found out the truth, and finally returned through the ivory gate to his work in the world; and even with Gautama Sakyamuni, who set forth secretly from his father's royal palaces, wandered through the world, acquiring and transcending the eight stages of meditation, conquered Kama-Mara, the god of love and death, became the Buddha, the Enlightened one, and finally returned as the teacher of god and man to proclaim the path (Campbell 30-33).

Eugene Henderson as a mythic hero, however, also follows the literary tradition of American heroes. "Like heroes in the writing of other countries and of other times," writes Gross in The Heroic Ideal in American Literature, "the hero of American literature is a courageous, active, social man whose passions are more intense than those of the people whom he usually represents"; he is an extraordinary man who

"must pursue an ideal--in protest or in accommodation to some form of authority." Further, according to Gross, the American hero undergoes "the conflict between the ideal of America and the the authority of America, between the conception and the reality, between--in certain instances--the dream and the nightmare" (viii). Indeed, from Daniel Boone, the first and the most significant, and therefore the prototypic, American hero, through Melville's Ishmael and down to Hemingway's Robert Jordan, all these heroes follow the model of the "American as Adam" (Lewis 5), who "is the lover of the spirit of the wilderness, and [whose] acts of love and sacred affirmation are acts of violence against the spirit and her avatars" (Slotkin 22).

The only major differences among these protagonists derive from their distinctive historical time and geographical place, the temporal and local "signatures" upon the archetypes in Fiedler's vocabulary. While Daniel Boone, for example, was the innocent American Adam pushing West for a bountiful life, Ishmael was the fallen American Adam seeking truth from the White Whale in the Pacific Ocean, and Robert Jordan the disillusioned descendant of the American Adam, unconsciously redeeming his ancestors in Spain. Since he is closer temporarily to them, however, it is along the same line as Ishmael and Robert Jordan that we find Henderson as a mythic hero, submerging in the Orient of the collective unconscious. Moreover, it is in Henderson the Rain King that we discover the theme, embodied in Henderson's ritualistic

quest of departure/initiation/return, of a mid-twentieth-century American hero awakening out of the nightmare of historical time into the time of the Great Past.

In "The Horror of History," Mircea Eliade compares the effects of history, along with such human disasters as atomic bombing, on both the archaic man and the modern man. He advises us how the former can "defend himself from the terror of history" with "all the myths, rites, and customs" at his own disposal while "the [modern] man who has left the horizon of archetypes and repetition can no longer defend himself against that terror except through the idea of God" (161-62), thus confirming the necessity for the modern man, especially, in the West, when he has lost faith in Christianity, to turn to the primitive for a psychological redemption and a spiritual regeneration.

Consequently, I have entitled this chapter "Departure," which is Campbell's term for the first stage of the hero's passage. To avoid a reductive appreciation of Campbell, however, I will also analyze Henderson as modern American hero, heir of all the ages and sufferer from contemporary anomie, the condition which launches his African quest.

The Henderson who embarks for Africa is a man of fifty-five, husband of a second wife and father of four children. He weighs two hundred and forty pounds, has a twenty-two-inch neck, and is heir to a net fortune of three million dollars. His father was a well-known American scholar who was a good friend of William James and Henry Adams (4), and

his roots go even deeper into the cultural and historical past of the United States. His great grand-father was Secretary of State and his great uncles ambassadors to France and England (4). Indeed, this genetically superior man, whose given name--Eugene--suggests good birth and glorious descent, is the inheritor of all America--the once Promised Land. But it is strange, and maybe not strange at all, that he suffers a kind of inner want, which drives him insane and finally launches his journey to Africa. Thus, at the outset of the novel, Henderson, recollecting his past miseries, complains:

When I think of my condition at the age of fifty-five when I bought the ticket, all is grief. The facts begin to crowd me and soon I get a pressure in the chest. A disorderly rush begins--my parents, my wives, my girls, my children, my farm, my animals, my habits, my money, my music lessons, my drunkenness, my prejudices, my brutality, my teeth, my face, my soul! I have to cry, "No, no, get back, curse you, let me alone!" But how can they let me alone? They belong to me. They are mine. And they pile into me from all sides. It turns into chaos. (1)

We soon learn that Henderson is constantly tormented by an inner voice, that he raises stinky pigs, that he quarrels with strangers as well as with his neighbors, that he has divorced and remarried, that his daughter has mental problems, that his son has found a black girl-friend, and that, in one word, he and his family are never at rest. Characterizing his protagonist in this way, Bellow is clearly in the tradition of American literature, for we are reminded

of, in Thomas Wolfe's Look Homeward, Angel, Eugene, Henderson's namesake, who suffers similar family problems and later escapes to Europe.

With regard to the nature of this chaotic situation, which is so intense as to shatter Henderson psychologically and to drive him to Africa, critics offer diverse answers. To Judie Newman, for example, "Henderson's problem is precisely his desire for an absolute change, a total transcendence of the present," a "present" in which Henderson is over-preoccupied with "passion and death" (70,71). John J. Clayton focuses on and magnifies Henderson's buffoonish aggressiveness: "It is not merely the contrast of gross millionaire and airy quest which is funny; the humor lies in the quest itself--the egoistic quest for personal fulfillment.... [Henderson] begins his quest with the hope of personal redemption....He must run to Africa to escape his sense of intrusion, asking 'who shall abide the day of his coming?'" (169,171). Thus, he emphasizes that Henderson's quest "is not for reality but for release from mortality" (172). And there is Eusebio L. Rodrigues, who attributes the African quest to Henderson's miserable life in America; arguing against Clayton that the inner voice is from Henderson's true being and is a desperate plea for self fulfillment, Rodrigue goes beyond Clayton in asserting that the voice is also the voice of America itself (113). Other critics treat Henderson more or less as a violent and malicious madman. Keith M. Opdahl says, "Wilhelm [the protagonist of

Bellow's Seize the Day] suffers from the malice of others while Henderson suffers from his own malice toward others" (118). Henderson goes to Africa, Opdahl reasons, "to cure his malicious self" (120). Robert G. Davies argues that it is "To escape himself or recreate himself, [that] Henderson departs on a photographic trip to Africa" (127)--hinting at Bellow's parody of Hemingway's Green Hills of Africa, in which the protagonist, differing from Hemingway's code heroes, goes to Africa for a photographic trip rather than for shooting and killing. Finally, Brigitte Scheer-Schazler locates the cause for Henderson's "sudden trip to Africa" in his tendency to see and experience "life in terms of violence. He is impatient, intolerant, and even brutal; existence, as he says, has become odious to him. By his violence he partly expresses his impotent anger at a life that he can neither bear nor change" (80).

Although there is some validity to the larger arguments these critics make about the reasons for Henderson's departure for Africa, they also interpret somewhat too literally the immediate causes of modern America's chaotic reality and of Henderson's violence and inner want. Only if we realize that the chaos Henderson experiences is the effect of some deeper causes, can we understand fully why it is so important that Henderson should go to Africa and why his quest should be vital to his fellow Americans' lives as well as to his own. On the right path here is Irving Malin, who observes that "The historical past is death, so he tries to

get in touch with the 'real' past--one different from history or junk" (33).

Henderson's America offers an epitome of twentieth-century Western man's unnatural condition, as described by Leo Marx in The Machine in the Garden, his historical and literary study of the pastoral ideal in technological America. According to Marx, Henderson's America is no longer that of Daniel Boone. That time (when Boone wished to improve upon God's creation) and place (where the new Adam directly communicated with the spirit of God) are gone. The American dream of improving upon the Garden has become a nightmare; Henderson mysteriously submits to his inner want, since as the representative twentieth-century American male he has lost sight of Walden Pond, the "navel of the earth," from which his ancestors drew their strength.

Claiming such an ancestry, however--"Hendersons have been on this property over two hundred years"--Henderson also questions it: "My ancestors stole land from the Indians. They got more from the government and cheated other settlers too, so I became heir to a great estate" (18). From Henderson's point of view, America was doomed right from the first European immigration. In his memory, there has never been any sign of America as a promised land, a new Garden of Eden, or a New World. That his ancestors were nothing but vulture-like thieves, as he implies, contributes to his being a "pig" millionaire.

What did I make? Why, I made a sort of trophy, I suppose. A man like me may become something like a trophy. Washed, clean, and dressed in expensive garments. Under the roof is insulation; on the windows thermopane; on the floor carpeting; and on the carpets furniture, and on the furniture covers, and on the cloth covers plastic covers; and wallpaper and drapes! All is swept and garnished. And who is in the midst of this? Who is sitting there? Man! That's who it is, man! (20)

This passage is an eloquent description of the material riches and spiritual bankruptcy of Henderson, the modern American. It is Henderson's lament for the isolation of the modern man; and it is the partial cause of his inner voice. At one point, Henderson himself swears emphatically, with certain justification: "There is a curse on this land. There is something bad going on. Something is wrong. There is a curse on this land" (33). Thus, so far, we envision a mad, spiritually paralyzed, giant ready to awake and to smash the "covers" into pieces. Although he strikes even asleep, he is not awake yet because he is still blind to what he wants and to the nature of the chaos, external and internal.

According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, this chaos has its origin in the binary structure of reality, "the great pairings" of affirmation and negation as perceived by Western man. In simple language, they are such polarities as yes and no, good and evil, and right and wrong. It is the polarity of Nature/Culture (Lévi-Strauss usually spells these two words with capital letters), however, that fundamentally structures the destiny and science of man. "In the inmost of his being and history," as George Steiner interprets this binary

structure, "man is a divided composite of biological and socially-culturally acquired elements. It is the interplay between biological constraints on the one hand, and social-cultural variables on the other, which determines our condition. That interplay is at every point dynamic because the environment, as it impinges on human biology, is itself modified by man's social and cultural activities. But the binary set, Nature/Culture, also points to an essential ambiguity, even tragedy, in the genesis of human consciousness" (27).

Lévi-Strauss illustrates his theory of the binary set by reference to the two myths of Prometheus and Oedipus. He argues that Prometheus stole fire in order to aid man's biological needs, but the cost was that man broke away from the animal world--his original home. This break caused man to be further split between the worlds of nature (where the wilderness is) and of culture (where human beings aggregate). This consequence of the break is further reinforced by Lévi-Strauss's interpretation of the myth of Oedipus. To Lévi-Strauss, that the answer to the riddle of the Sphinx was the word "man" and that Oedipus limped are further evidence of man's divided being. He reasons that the evolution of man's running on all fours to his walking on two limbs indicates that he is unbalanced and that he limps into the state of humanity. Consequently, "man finds himself in an unnatural power-relation to his environment and to his own animal origins" (Steiner 28).¹

If the machine in the garden brings about the split of nature and culture, which further causes Henderson's schizophrenia, then it is the loss of the life-source, i.e. the "navel of the earth," which has aggravated Henderson's chaos.

"What do you want?" he asks his inner voice. But it never says a thing except "I want, I want, I want!" (21). To free himself from the painful voice, Henderson takes a psychology student's advice to strike inanimate things for an outlet. Epitomizing American history, he chops wood, lifts, plows, lays cement blocks, pours concrete, cooks mash for the pigs, and breaks stones with a sledge-hammer. For, as Henderson discovers, "America is so big and everybody is working, making, digging, bulldozing, trucking, loading, and so on, and I guess the sufferers suffer at the same rate. Everybody wanting to pull together. I tried every cure you can think of" (21). But the result runs contrary to his intention. "Rude begets rude, and blows, blows; at least in my case; it not only begot but increased" (20). Then he starts to treat the voice like a sick child, walking it, trotting it, singing to it, reading to it, and making expensive purchases for it. But the voice carries right on. At last, he picks up his late father's violin "to reach my father" as if that would alleviate the pain. He plays, "with dedication, with feeling, with longing, love," but with no expected result. The problem is that Henderson does not realise that he cannot reach his father, and that, even if he did, he would

not be able to hear anything but the tremble and cry of the fiddle. "He [Henderson's father] was a very strong man, too, but as he declined in strength, especially after the death of my brother Dick (which made me the heir), he shut himself away and fiddled more and more" (22).

Such a passage also raises a number of questions. Why does Henderson say that his father "fiddled" instead of "played"? Why does Henderson never forget to correlate Dick's death with his own being the heir? And why does Henderson's voice have to start to plague him when the sun is setting just as his father began to be upset when his strength declined? Does this downward movement suggest something declining? Could that something be Protestantism, the "unofficial" religion of the United States, and is Bellow's point also that it has already declined? Encouraging the latter type of inquiry is the fact that Henderson the Rain King is Bellow's only book which has a Protestant protagonist.

When in France, Henderson's mother, being a pious Christian, used to write poems in the brick cathedral of Albi. When Henderson comes back to the cathedral town in France a middle-aged man, however, he does not come as a worshipper but as a tourist. He even threatens to commit suicide when he and Lily come to Chartres. More significant, at Vezelay, Henderson mistakes an orchard for a churchyard. When back in America, he sings Handel while playing his violin: "He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (26). Then, he asks, again quoting Handel:

"For who shall abide the day of His (the rightful one's) coming?"
 "And who shall stand when He (the rightful one) appearth?" (30).
 Finally, Henderson babbles neurotically: "When the rightful one appearth we shall stand and file out, glad at heart and greatly relieved, and saying, 'Welcome back, Bud. It's yours. Barns and houses are yours. Autumn beauty is yours. Take it, take it, take it!'" (30). Indeed, what can such an abundance of evidence prove but the decline of American religion! In Henderson's mind, the cathedral is a place not to redeem oneself but to commit suicide; nature (the orchard) equals the church, and Jesus is not God but only "Bud."

Attributed by Oswald Spengler to the ecstatic pursuit of materialistic values, ² the decline of Protestantism is more pointedly associated with cultural failure by James Baird in Ishmael. According to Baird, "cultural failure means the loss of a regnant and commanding authority in religious symbolism (religion here understood as the ultimately effective symbolic authority in the total culture of a race)" (16). In the Western world, specifically speaking, when love and blood lose the power to redeem man, the dominant Christian culture fails. This cultural failure causes the individual to become egocentric. The reason for this, according to Baird, is that "When God (in the habit of Protestant thought) ceased to be the transcending center, i.e., God apart from God identified with human perfections, men were left alone, centered in themselves, in a situation of monadic loneliness. 'When God became a person, man's personality

was driven into neurotic disintegration.' Cultural disintegration produced loneliness, the loss of the remnants of a common world" (29).

When cultural failure occurs, the creation of new religious symbols is inevitable, for "There is no end to the possibility of new prophets and new messiahs; nor is there any limit to be placed upon the importation and extension of old symbols into new and unaccustomed parts of the world" (Baird 4). Creators, artists in particular in the modern world, turn to the primitive world for the materials of new religious symbols--with the religious element distinguishing such genuine primitivism from academic primitivism. In the scope of this genuine primitivism, says Baird, art can and does create emotionally powerful symbols; imitating archaic myth and ritual, the artist becomes the restorer of the sacred center, the maker of symbols which reconstitute an archetypal reality and evoke a feeling ab origine (8). In short, the new symbol derived from the primitive source substitutes for the old, exhausted symbols of contemporary failed culture.

A vibrant symbol is actually that part of a myth, through which, in Steiner's words, "man makes sense of the world...[and] he confronts its irremediably contradictory, divided, alien presence. Man is enmeshed in primal contradictions between being and non-being, male and female, youth and age, light and dark, the edible and the toxic, the mobile and the inert." "He cannot," Steiner quotes Lévi-

Strauss, "resolve these formidable, clashing antithesis by purely rational processes" (26). In Henderson the Rain King, Saul Bellow assumes the task of creating a vibrant symbol by re-creating the myth of a hero on a quest.

In response to the question, "Which of your characters is most like you?" Bellow once replied: "Henderson--the absurd seeker of high qualities" (Clayton 167). Such a seeming dismissal of heroism is, however, countered and explained by another comment: "I don't think that I've represented any really good men; no one is thoroughly admirable in any of my novels. Realism has restrained me too much for that. I should like to represent good men. I long to know who and what they are and what their condition might be. I often represent men who desire such qualities but seem unable to achieve them on any significant scale" (Harper 191, emphasis mine). As my emphases indicate, what Bellow is really arguing is that heroism is not compatible with a "realistic" mode of fiction. Consequently, by approaching Henderson the Rain King as a romance, I would like to argue that Bellow does create a "good" man. Henderson's "malice" and "violence," as some critics describe it, do not reflect his own will, but arise from his being the victim of the modern social chaos as well as of the American Protestant and materialist tradition. He is a good man because, ultimately, he not only transcends the chaos himself but sets up a possible example of transcendence for his fellow Americans. He is a good man because he strikes not to destroy but to discover and recover the energy of American life.

What motivates Henderson is the consequences of man's long departure from nature and the decline of vibrant religious symbolism in America. Just as the four signs--age, disease, death, and monkhood--call the Future Buddha to adventure, so death--first envisioned in Frances's toothless face(10), then in the soft and cold expression of the octopus(16), and finally incarnated in Miss Lenox's physical death(34)--sends Henderson off to Africa, the matrix of mankind, for a remedy.

NOTES

¹ My research shows that George Steiner, in his discussion, was not simply quoting or paraphrasing but, in a highly comprehensive manner, synthesizing Lévi-Strauss's anthropological ideas in his colossal works. Therefore, specific pagination of quotes from Lévi-Strauss is impossible in this limited space.

² In The Decline of the West. Oswald Spengler states: "Every soul has religion, which is only another word for its existence. All living forms in which it expresses itself--all arts, doctrines, customs, all verse and idea--are ultimately religious, and must be so. But from the setting-in of Civilization they cannot be so any longer. As the essence of every Culture is religion, so--and consequently --the essence of every Civilization is irreligion--the two words are synonymous" (358). Further on, he observes: "It is [the] extinction of living inner religiousness, which gradually tells upon even the most insignificant element in a man's being, that becomes phenomenal in the historical world-picture at the turn from the Culture to the Civilization, the Climacteric of the Culture, as I have already called it, the time of change in which a mankind loses its spiritual fruitfulness for ever, and building takes the place of begetting. Unfruitfulness--understanding the word in all its direct seriousness--marks the brain-man of the megalopolis, as the sign of fulfilled destiny, and it is one of the most impressive facts of historical symbolism that the change manifests itself not only in the extinction of great art, of great courtesy, of great formal thought, of the great style in all things, but also quite carnally in the childlessness and "race-suicide" of the civilized and rootless strata, a phenomenon not peculiar to ourselves but already observed and deplored--and of course not remedied--in Imperial Rome and Imperial China" (359).

Chapter II

INITIATION

In "Life against Death in Henderson the Rain King," Donald W. Markos, recognizing "both the destructive symptoms of alienation as well as a potential vitality for regeneration" (194) in Henderson, rightly focuses on his need to encounter and conquer death in order to show "an America in need of change" (195). Like many other critics, Markos attributes the impetus for change to Henderson's inner call: "The voice does not express desire in the ordinary sense, but rather a need for 'coming into' one's identity and a cessation from the neurotic, hyperactive flight from the inescapable human condition" (196). That Markos insightfully connects Henderson with America and his individual inner change with the necessary social change of America enables him to highlight the idea of universal regeneration: "The impulse toward renewal is at the heart of this novel; it is the source of motivation and symbolism as well as incidental imagery" (195-96).

Markos's treatment of the book as a novel, however, leaves him in doubt about "whether Bellow simply means that a unity is possible between man and the world, that man absorbs influences from the external world, or whether the meaning is more inclusive, the bear perhaps being a symbol

of suffering nature--an idea familiar to Melville--and further evidence of that shared unity between man and nature" (203). Indeed, this problem seems to be inevitable when the book is received as a realistic novel. A treatment of it as modern romance will serve to dissolve Marko's doubt and perhaps finally provide a more profound understanding of Bellow's concern. ¹ My analysis in this chapter, then, keyed into the Jungian theory of archetypes and individuation, will focus on the arduous ritualistic process of the hero's transformation, through misunderstanding and misdirection, in Africa.

For a twentieth-century Westerner, according to Jung, the process of individuation is particularly significant when the Judeo-Christian culture has mostly exhausted the power of its symbols to sustain his spiritual life. Man needs spiritual support because, though thus far evolved, he still lives a life frequently affected by the dormant unconscious which the race had accumulated long before the individual became a conscious being. Logically, apart from his consciousness, man is in no way different from any species in the animal kingdom. Unfortunately, this peculiar quality has enabled man to engage in a material pursuit which has distanced him from nature, his birth place, and subsequently made him lose contact with it, "lose connection" as D. H. Lawrence would put it. Hence, there arises the necessity that religion maintain a link between man and nature. The failure of the dominant religion, however, as has occurred

in the West, leads to a rending of the human spirit because it forces the conscious individual to face alone the unconscious forces of nature, with which he has no capacity to cope successfully. Inevitably, concerned Westerners either go to the analyst or to the primitive for a bridge over the chasm, which exists between the historical and the cyclical modes of life and between human consciousness and the unconscious.

Coincidentally, man has created an abundance of tales about heroes or semi-gods in his endeavor to bridge the chasm, physical and psychological, between man and nature in order to save his fellowman. The title of Campbell's The Hero with a Thousand Faces suggests this singleness of heroic endeavor: regardless of the fact that these heroes may appear in different guises, accomplish different feats, and experience different adventures, they are essentially manifestation of one archetype. Besides the identical macro-pattern of departure/initiation/return, each stage of the pattern similarly contains its own micro-pattern. Essential to an understanding of this second stage of initiation is Jung's theory of individuation.

From a psychological point of view, Jung considers individuation as "a process or course of development arising out of the conflict between the two fundamental psychic facts" (Archetypes 288), which are consciousness and the unconscious. According to Jung, while consciousness pertains to the part of the psyche which is rational, attainable, and

ego-centric, the unconscious, and the collective unconscious in particular, is the unknown part of psyche, which is hereditary, chaotic, and irrational. "Consciousness grows out of an unconscious psyche which is older than it, and which goes on functioning with it or even in spite of it" (281). Jung thus metaphorically explains the meaning of the individuation process:

Conscious and unconscious do not make a whole when one of them is suppressed and injured by the other. If they must contend, let it at least be a fair fight with equal rights on both sides. Both are aspects of life. Consciousness should defend its reason and protect itself, and the chaotic life of the unconscious should be given the chance of having its way too--as much of it as we can stand. This means open conflict and open collaboration at once. That, evidently, is the way human life should be. It is the old game of hammer and anvil: between them the patient iron is forged into an indestructable whole, an "individual." (288)

Applying the Jungian individuation theory, Campbell divides the process, under the name of "initiation," into six possible steps: (1) the road of trials, (2) the meeting with the Goddess, (3) woman as the temptress, (4) atonement with the father, (5) Apotheosis, (6) the ultimate boon. It is not surprising to discover that Henderson undergoes a similar process in Africa. At the same time, one must not lose sight of the distinguishing characteristics of this hero which constitute Bellow's signature. We must see Henderson as a modern American, as well as an archetypal, hero. For as Leslie Fiedler observes: "Literature , properly

speaking, can be said to come into existence at the moment a Signature is imposed upon the Archetype. The purely archetypal, without signature elements, is the Myth" (462).

Henderson's African quest starts with his flight, the sequence of which, from Idlewild to Cairo and then to the "interior" of Africa, signifies his plunge from historical time into the cyclical tempus as well as from civilized place to the archaic locus.² Not only does his flight over the Atlantic ocean remind one of Atlantis, the lost continent of ancient civilization, and not only does his visit to the sphinx and the pyramids recall the matrix of human culture, both patent symbols of the collective unconscious, but also his landing in Africa suggests his potential growth as "an airborne seed" in "the ancient bed of mankind" (38). In order to reassure himself about his African mission, Henderson reiterates to himself: "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 of men has done, one should be able to accept his death very easily" (38). The issue, then, as Markos points out, is how to conquer death, or rather, how to live in the world of death, for in the modern world, as Henderson discovers, one has nothing to conquer but death. Naturally, no sooner does he touch down in Africa than a strong emotion seizes him. "Bountiful life!" he exclaims, "Oh, how bountiful life is" (38).

Nevertheless, the "bountiful life," though easily perceived, must be experienced in order to be attained. Thus, Henderson sets out on what Campbell calls a journey of "initiation." His inner voice precipitates his departure from Charlie, his travelling companion, onto a road of trials with the African guide, Romilayu, the typical wise old man or psychopomp figure of ancient myth. "So for days and days he led me through villages, over mountain trails, and into deserts, far, far out" (40). Before long, "I got clean away from everything, and we came into a region like a floor surrounded by mountains. It was hot, clear, and arid and after several days we saw no human footprints. Nor were there many plants; for that matter there was not much of anything here; it was all simplified and splendid, and I felt I was entering the past--the real past, no history or junk like that. The prehuman history" (41). And then "I lost count of the days" (42). Undoubtedly, Henderson has entered the archaic world of cyclical time, the "reality" of the Great Past, where "[t]he ritual repetitions of the primordial gestures are arduous ones, but their re-enactment is necessary if contemporary man is to awaken into the 'dream time,' into the mythic vision which can redeem him and make him one with his ancestors" (Teunissen 55).

In the interior of Africa, Henderson's visits first to the Arnewi and then to the Wariri illustrate the "hammering game" of consciousness and the unconscious. The Arnewi are contented cattle-raisers as well as pious cattle worship-

pers. They are a passive and matriarchal tribe with Queen Willatale, the woman of Bittahness, as the monarch. When Henderson arrives, the tribesmen happen to be suffering from a drought caused by a plague of frogs. Cattle are dying of thirst and the tribe is mournful. At the sight of the Arnewi children, Henderson's instinctive thought is to give them a treat. Assuming for himself a Promethean aspect, he takes out his Austrian lighter and sets fire to a bush. In typically Western fashion, Henderson no doubt thinks that fire will bring happiness or progress to these primitive people. Again typically, he is mistaken: "It roared; it made a brilliant manifestation; it stretched to its limits and became extinct in the sand. I was left holding the lighter with the wick coming out of my fist like a slender white whisker. The kids were unanimously silent, they only looked, and I looked at them" (43-44). Indeed, Prometheus, if given a chance to look at the human race in possession of his fire, would be amazed to see its destructive power aside from its ability to protect man. Henderson's amazement at the tension between him and the kids, and his question "That's what they call reality's dark dream?" together show his lack of understanding of the difference between the historical man and the archaic man, and, as well, his potential ability to understand it, a quality which later helps him to achieve the goal of his quest, or rather, conquest.

Henderson's encounter with the Arnewi kids, however, is merely a prelude to a series of conflicts between his West-

ern consciousness and the Arnewi unconscious. Although he is aware of his internal urge as a call to adventure, he has difficulty comprehending it properly. In his American consciousness, Henderson habitually thinks of an adventure as a physical matter, which explains why he takes such pride not only in his ancestors' military accomplishment but also in his own Purple Heart. He repeatedly runs into trouble among the Arnewi, however, because he does not understand that the essential things are non-physical. Even the ceremonial wrestling match is a ritual, which forbids Henderson's commando technique. The irony is that, though on a spiritual quest, Henderson does not understand that his practical way of thinking will never solve any problem of the Arnewi, who live by the spirit of their own religion.

Consequently, when a group approach to show him their grief for their dying cattle, as the Arnewi customarily do to their guest, Henderson "picked up his H and H Magnum with the scope sights and showed it to the crowd," shouting, again assuming a heroic role, "Everybody! Leave it to me" (45). This reminds one of the stereotypical Hemingway hero, and the hero's initials, EH, are clearly designed to highlight Bellow's concern with parodying Ernest Hemingway. As Rodriques rightly says, in Henderson the Rain King, "The Hemingway attitude to life is unmercifully pilloried and parodied" (110). Subsequently, when he hears of the frog plague, which has prevented the cattle from drinking the water in the cistern, Henderson hits on his typically American

practical idea that "Survival is survival" (53). Further, one sees irony buried deep in his lecture to Prince Itelo. "Do you know why the Jews were defeated by the Romans? Because they wouldn't fight back on Saturday. And that's how it is with your water situation. Should you preserve yourself, or the cows, or preserve the custom? I would say, yourself. Live to make another custom" (56).

One probably needs to admit that Henderson's way of changing rules in Arnewiland might temporarily solve the water problem, but one must also see that, in this way, the Arnewi would no longer have been the Arnewi and Henderson himself would have come to the wrong tribe for redemption. To extend it further, Africa would have become America, where technological progress splits man and nature. ³ Given his Western orientation, however, it is only inevitable that Henderson finally blows up the frogs and the cistern as well. Indeed, the explosion of the cistern is a well constructed metaphor for the consequences of American civilization, which solves smaller problems and creates larger ones simultaneously. Henderson's destruction of the frogs and the cistern foreshadows his failure to transform himself spiritually, for by destroying frogs and water he symbolically destroys metamorphosis and vitality.

As a matter of fact, Henderson's failure can be attributed to his inability to comprehend the paradox of "Bittahness." In Chapter 7, Henderson meets Willatale, a woman of Bittahness. He learns from Itelo that "A Bittah was a person

of real substance. You couldn't be any higher or better. A Bittah was not only a woman but a man at the same time" (67). Thus, Willatale is not only husband of wives and wife of husbands but also father and mother of the tribe. Her single-eyed feature further identifies her with Tiresias, the blind androgynous prophet in Greek mythology. Moreover, Willatale generates a power peculiar to the source of life in the middle of her body, which is reminiscent of D. H. Lawrence on the solar plexus. ⁴ "I was aware of the old lady's navel and her internal organs as they made sounds of submergence. I felt as though I were riding in a balloon above the Spice Islands, soaring in hot clouds while exotic odors arose from below" (67). Henderson feels the significance of the power, but unfortunately he does not realize the significance of the navel.

To Campbell, the navel is "the center of the symbolic circle of the universe, the Immovable Spot of the Buddha legend, around which the world may be said to revolve" (40-1). About the Immovable Spot, he explains:

Beneath this spot is the earth-supporting head of the waters of the abyss, which are the divine life-creative energy and substance of the demiurge, the world-generative aspect of immortal being. The tree of life, i.e., the universe itself, grows from this point. It is rooted in the supporting darkness; the golden sun bird perches on its head; a spring, the inexhaustible well, bubbles at its foot. Or the figure may be that of a cosmic mountain, with the city of gods, like a lotus of light, upon its summit, and in its hollow the cities of the demons, illuminated by precious stones. Again, the figure may be that of the cosmic man or woman (for example the Buddha himself, or the dancing hindu goddess Kali) seated or

standing on this spot, or even fixed to the tree
(Attis, Jesus, Wotan).... (Hero 41)

It is not difficult to see, then, that Willatale is presented as such a cosmic figure. But Henderson fails to see that and merely clings to "grun-tu-molani," "man wants to live." Furthermore, his understanding of this motto remains at a superficial level since his over-excitement is apparently based on no solid foundation. One can reason that he has known all along that man wants to live, for it is death that has driven him to Africa, and that his transcendental exclamations such as "Not only I molani for myself but for everybody" and "Grun-tu-molani, everybody" are nothing beyond an expression of gratitude for others' sympathy. The crucial evidence, however, is his blasting of the cistern, which reveals his misunderstanding of the tribal religion, not to speak of Willatale's cosmic wisdom and the symbolic significance of the frogs.

From the mythic point of view, although frogs commonly represent the generative principle and renewed birth because of their metamorphosis, they are also creatures of pestilence. Gertrude Jobs records: "Among Mexican Indians a frog with a blood-stained mouth in every joint of her body is a form of the mother goddess who gives birth to mankind and devours the dead as well as sacrifices" (614). In Arnewiland, we find a similar case. The frogs in the cistern are evidently pests, which have been killing the cattle by keeping them away from the water source. But probably it is

their generative quality which has balanced the composure of the women of Bittahness, who are capable of reconciling the extremes of happiness and bitterness. Before Willatale's eyes, Henderson's attitude toward the frog plague and his survival plan would only seem childish. It is no small wonder, then, Willatale says to Henderson: "world is strange to a child. You not a child, Sir?" (75). Willatale's ambiguous question has really exposed Henderson's spiritual identity--a mere child, which suggests, according to Jung, that "a return to the world of childhood has become necessary." For without "making conscious of infantile, still unintegrated contents," "the entrance to the collective unconscious cannot be opened" and thus integration becomes impossible (Integration 111).

Henderson's failure in Arnewiland, however, does not impede him in his quest; paradoxically, it strengthens his will and offers him a chance for success in Waririland. His trap in Waririland leads to his encounter with death, the monster he has come to conquer and the truth he has come to seek. Therefore it is important to notice his change of attitude toward the dead body of the previous rain king of the tribe, who has been strangled for his physical failure. At the moment of discovery, "I tried to consult with myself as to what I should do, but I could not make sense, the reason being that I was becoming offended and angry" (122). Consciously, he relates this dead body to those on the Second World War battlefield, but, although he feels a difference,

he cannot "make sense" of it. It is Romilayu (the wise old man) who, by threatening to avoid him, calms him down and even enables him to communicate with the dead body. "I felt my mouth become very wide with the sorrow of it and the two of us, looking at the body, suffered silently for a while, the dead man in his silence sending a message to me such as, 'Here, man, is your being, which you think so terrific.' And just as silently I replied, 'Oh, be quiet, dead man, for Christ's sake'" (123). Undoubtedly, Bellow's purpose here is to suggest Henderson is being battered by the power of the unconscious.

As a matter of fact, death has been persistent in its presentations to Henderson in the form of the cold octopus, the dead Miss Lenox, his own threat of killing the cat and of suicide. Henderson, raised in the Judeo-Christian tradition, has thought that death is a kind of punishment, but that does not seem the case in Africa. The conversation between him and the dead body is indeed a communion between the living and the dead, between the present and the past, and between the mortal and the immortal. The presence of the dead body is a challenge, but it is not to be answered in Henderson's way--that is, to haul it out and dump it in a ravine. Instead, the challenge is to be met internally; he must integrate death with life just as Willatale has remained balanced in face of the frog plague. Yet, as Bellow would have it, Henderson will not recognize this reality until he has demonstrated his buffoonish character, which shows itself fully in the rain-making ritual.

Just as Henderson cannot thoroughly comprehend Willa-tale's "grun-tu-molani" and thus fails to grasp essential truth, so, as a result of history and ethnocentricity, he cannot comprehend the ritualistic function of the Wariri rain-making ceremony. Although he believes in a difference between the physical and the noumenal worlds, his belief seems to be merely an abstract concept, nothing more than what Baird calls "academic primitivism," a kind of intellectual decoration. Theoretically, Henderson thinks, "The physical is all there, and it belongs to science. But then there is the noumenal department, and there we create and create and create" (150). However, in reality, when he enters the "noumenal department," his mind is totally preoccupied with the "world of facts." Shortly before the rain-making ritual, drawing knowledge from Scientific American, Henderson makes a bet with Dahfu on the probability of precipitation, which is soon to witness his "practical" ignorance of the noumenal world.

To the Wariri, as one expects, the ritual has more than practical value. It means not only a deliverance of the tribe from the drought, but more importantly a spiritual regeneration of both the tribe and their land. The ritual starts with a firing of salutes in honor of the king and his ancestors and for Henderson, the intended rain-king. Then, a priest is cut on his skin as a ceremony of promotion, which is followed with a skull dance by the king and a female partner, both in the royal purple color. It is a cosmic

dance devoted to a group of wooden gods. "Around them and over them the king and this gilded woman began to play a game with the two skulls. Whirling them by the long ribbons, each took a short run and throw them high in the air, above the figure of wood which stood under the tarpaulins.... The two skulls flew up high, and then the king and the girl each made the catch. It was very neat" (156). "After this came tribal dances and routines that were strictly like Vaudeville" (159). Later, he observes an old woman wrestling with a dwarf and then two men swinging at each other's legs with whips, skipping into the air, something just like the "Roman holiday highjinks." The last item is the hauling of the wooden gods, which "ruled the air, the mountains, fire, plants, cattle, luck, sickness, clouds, birth, death" (163). It is not until then that the ritual as the object of Henderson's cool observation is turned into his "business."

Undoubtably, this is a necessary transition for Henderson from mere spectator to participant in the ritual for an immersion in the unconscious. Staring at Bunam, Henderson feels himself being urged:

Listen! Harken unto me, you shmohawk! You are blind. The footsteps were accidental and yet the destiny could be no other. So now do not soften, oh no, brother, intensify rather what you are. This is the one and only ticket--intensify. Should you be overcome, you slob, should you lie in your own fat blood senseless, unconscious of nature whose gift you have betrayed, the world will soon take back what the world unsuccessfully sent forth. Each peculiarity is only one impulse of a series from the very heart of things--that old heart of things. The purpose will appear at last though maybe not to you. (168-69 italics Bel-low's, roman mine)

It is noteworthy that this speech is italicized just as Henderson's inner voice has been. Indeed, this speech does not sound as if coming from the mouth of the black head priest; rather, it is the sound of Henderson's inner voice. If there is ever a time when Henderson can hear what his inner voice has wanted, it is now. It does not want him merely to exert his physical strength, it wants him to shake off his spiritual sleep by immersing himself in the ritual so that rain will fall and the vital water will be available.

Jung's discussion of the symbolism of water underlines its special importance here. Jung emphasizes that water, "the commonest symbol of the unconscious" (18), "is no figure of speech, but a living symbol of the dark psyche" (Archetypes 17). Discussing the symbolism of water in relation to the impoverishment of Western religious symbolism, he observes, "Our intellect has achieved the most tremendous things, but in the meantime our spiritual dwelling has fallen into despair....Like greedy children we stretch out our hands and think that, if only we could grasp it [the wisdom of all ages], we would possess it, too. But what we possess is no longer valid, and our hands grow weary from the grasping, for riches lie everywhere, as far as the eye can reach. All their possessions turn to water..." (16). Consequently, "the way of the soul in search of its lost father...leads to the water, to the dark mirror that reposes at its bottom. Whoever has elected for the state of spiritual poverty, the true heritage of Protestantism carried to its logical con-

clusion, goes the way of the soul that leads to the water" (17).

On the way to the water, as one recalls, Henderson is not alone. One hundred years before, Melville's Ishmael, tired of what he had seen of the land, went whaling in the Pacific Ocean. Both of them go the way of the waters to "raise up the treasure, the precious heritage of the father," for "water means spirit that has become unconscious" (Jung 18-19). It is not accidental, then, that Henderson is presented in close contact with water: the mill where he has bathed, the Atlantic he has crossed, the cistern he has blown up, the muddy pond where he was thrown, and then the rain he helps to make. Just as Dahfu says seriously, Henderson's being the sungo is literal and "It is not merely dress" (190).

Again parallel to Ishmael, who descends to water and thus has a chance to encounter Moby Dick, a whale of all whiteness, Henderson undergoes the water ritual only to confront Atti, the lioness kept deep down in the den under King Dahfu's palace. Here, water becomes the lioness, with which Henderson is able to communicate in the deep layer of the earth. As Jung observes, "water is earthy and tangible, it is also the fluid of the instinct-driven body, blood and the flowing of the blood, the odour of the beast, carnality heavy with passion" (19). Thus, the rain Henderson has helped to bring down flows into the body of the lioness, infusing it with life, which Henderson later finds vibrating in himself.

The lion is the totemic figure in Waririland just as the cow is in Arnewiland. It is not only the object of the hunt but also of worship. It is, moreover, the king father of the tribe, for, after death, every king of the Wariri is incarnated in a lion cub, which his son captures in order to learn life from. Thus, Suffo has captured his father, Gmilo has captured Suffo, and now Dahfu is to capture Gmilo. And this continuation of lion capturing sustains the vitality of the tribe. In The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology Joseph Campbell supports the notion of the animal king father:

The animal life is translated into human life entirely, through the medium of death, slaughter, and the acts of cooking, tanning, sewing. So that, if it be true, as Geza Roheim has suggested, that "whatever is killed becomes father," it should be no cause for wonder that the animals in the mythologies of the Great Hunt are revered as spiritual fathers. The enigma of the totem (the curious image, at once animal and human, from which both the clan and the animal species of like name are supposed to be derived and which is the key figure in the social thinking of many hunting tribes) is by this formular perfectly interpreted. For, just as a father is the model for his son, so is the animal for his hunter. (128)

Coincidentally, King Dahfu teaches Henderson about the possibility of the transformation of animal spirit into human beings. To Dahfu, "Mountain people were mountain-like, plains people plain-like, water people water-like, cattle people...cattle-like" (213). And, of course, lion people lion-like. For, as the king believes, "'Nature is deep imitator. And as man is the prince of organisms he is the master of adaptations. He is the artist of suggestions. He him-

self is his principal work of art, in the body, working in the flesh'" (213). Logically, Dahfu himself, a lion imitator, wants Henderson to become a lion man. The irony, as one may suspect, is that the king speaks from the point of view of a certain modern psychology, not from his primitive religion. That, however, does not seem to promise any damage to Henderson's individuation process.

Henderson's contact with Atti is the most important stage of his individuation process, where he is struck awake to the life within himself. To reach the den, he follows "a staircase descending. It was wide enough, but dark--black ahead. A corrupt moldering smell rose from this darkness, which made me choke a little" (197). His sense of loss compels him to repeat to himself, "'Have faith, Henderson, it's about time you had some faith,'" for only "faith" can enlighten a soul when darkness overwhelms. After his prayer, significantly, "Daylight came from a narrow opening above my head." And then, at the bottom, a vision of the wall and the earth reminds him of the octopus "pressing its head against the glass" (198). Henderson's juxtaposition of the octopus with the lion and of the water with the den confirms the symbolic locale of the unconscious.

If Henderson is the hunter of his animal father, then King Dahfu is the shaman linking the animal and the hunter. Not only does Dahfu physically stand between Henderson and Atti, but also spiritually he "knows" her. He assures Henderson: "'Now, watch the way she walks. Beautiful? You said

it! Furthermore, this is uninstructed, specie-beauty.... Oh, Henderson, watch how she is rhythmical in behavior.... Watch how she gives her tail a flex. I feel it as if undergoing it personally. Now let us follow her" (236). It is simply undeniable that it is Atti, whose muzzle has touched "upward first at my armpits, and then between my legs, which naturally made the member there shrink into the shelter of my paunch" (200), that has aroused his bear spirit, as we shall see further on, for without Atti, which immerses Henderson in the unconscious, Henderson would not have discovered the animal, etymologically "soul" or "psyche" and thus life, in himself.

Henderson becomes an "in-dividual" as he recognizes the life in himself, discovers the truth of reality, or conquers death, in Markos's term, in Africa. In his letter to Lily, Henderson writes, "This experience in Africa has been tremendous. It has been tough, it has been perilous, it has been something. But I've matured twenty years in twenty days" (255). From Willatale's "grun-tu-molani," he has learned not to talk about suicide and has realized his true feelings for his family. From Dahfu and Atti, he has learned the significance of love. For he realizes now: "I had a voice that said, I want! I want? I? It should have told me she wants, he wants, they want. And moreover, it's love that makes reality reality. The opposite makes the opposite" (259).

Henderson's transition from "I want" to another's wanting, however, takes some knowledge of depth psychology to understand. In world creation myths, human beings are said to be generated from one person. "Whereas in Greek and Hebrew versions man is split in two by a god," Campbell observes, "in the Chinese, Hindu, and Australian it is the god itself who divides and multiplies" (Masks 109). In the Hindu version, "The universal Self becomes divided immediately after conceiving and uttering the pronoun 'I' (sanskrit 'aham')." This illustrates the fundamental Indian conviction that a sense of ego is the root of the world illusion. Ego generates fear and desire, and these are the passions that animate all life and even all being; for it is only after the concept 'I' has been established that the fear of one's own destruction can develop or any desire for personal enjoyment" (109). Consequently, to "dissolve both fear and desire" for a balance between nature and man, one needs "to clear the mind of the concept 'I.'" Whereas the Indian way is the use of yoga, Henderson's way is his "at-one-ment" with the animal father. And there is no misunderstanding that only in this sense does love make "reality reality."

Ultimately, Henderson's individuation is confirmed by his vision, ironically not his experience, of an atonement with the animal father. It happens at the moment when the lion assumed to be Gmilo is half captured in the hopo. When Dahfu is about to complete the capture, "[t]he king had fallen onto the lion. I saw the convulsion of the animal's hindq-

quarters. The claws tore. Instantly there came blood, before the king could throw himself over. I now hung from the edge of the platform by my fingers, hung and then fell, shouting as I went. I wish this had been the eternal pit" (281). But this, without his awareness, is the eternal pit. Analogous to the circumcised boy of Australian aborigines and to the crucified Jesus, Dahfu shows Henderson the act of initiation, falling on the head of the assumed lion father, before being clawed and therewith identified with the father. In this way, Dahfu renews himself and thus becomes eternal. Unconsciously, this vision exposes to Henderson the ultimate truth of the universe, which bursts his spirit's sleep.

From the Arnewi to the Wariri, Henderson starts with shattering his white consciousness, undergoes a conflict between his white consciousness and the black collective unconscious, and ends up being spiritually shaken awake by the lion, within which the collective unconscious resides. The reduction of Henderson's consciousness into a link with the invisible but powerful unconscious is consistently manifested in the metaphors of Henderson's being stripped to nakedness and his concern with repairing his dental bridge and his being physically struck by forces of nature. Besides being a process of individuation, the whole process is also a heroic achievement of an American goal in the twentieth century.

As if to complete the pattern of initiation illustrated by Campbell, Bellow apotheosizes Henderson by making him

king after Dahfu's death, and gives Henderson an opportunity to grab the Dahfu incarnated lion-cub--the boon of his quest--to bring home, since these episodes are not indispensable for the individuation process. But episodes such as these make up for the book's comic quality, which Bellow deems "more energetic, wiser, and manlier" (Harper 87) than complaint.

NOTES

¹ In "Life beyond Life: Cabell's Theory and Practice of Romance," Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teunissen define modern romance by comparing and contrasting it with realist and romantic perspectives. While "[t]he orientation of the realist...is towards the historical, the empirical, and the material; [while] his concern is with man's relationship to time and space; and [while] in his belief that the present is unique and significant, the realist is also the supreme egotist--equally prone to excessive optimism or pessimism," the perspective of the romancer, "in contrast, is a cosmic one wherein man is viewed from a vantage point which is beyond life, i.e. beyond history, time and place" (303-04). "From the 'beyond life' perspective what the romancer perceives in the first instance is that history, the idea of linear time, is an illusion and that in 'reality' time moves in great cycles" (304). Furthermore, in contrast to the "nostalgic romantic," "[t]he romancer is not a historical primitivist who believes that in the past men were more heroic, simple, and noble than today..." (305-06). However, as they explain, the romancer "is concerned with the mythological, and though he is not a historical primitivist, his methods and perspective are comparable to those associated with what Mircea Eliade calls 'archaic man.' In contrast to the men of modern civilizations who feel themselves connected to the cosmos only by history, men of the archaic societies according to Eliade feel themselves 'indissolubly connected with the Cosmos and cosmic rhythms.' For archaic man the only history was the Sacred History of the cosmos, the mythic past or that time beyond time in which the prototypes for all of human history have their existence, after having experienced the 'fall into history,' through the ritual repetition of the divine paradigms. Thus though archaic man did not live forever in the paradise of archetypes where dwelt 'men as they ought to be,' having fallen into profane time he knew that the process was not irreversible, and though fallen he was nevertheless conscious that the cosmic perspective was the true reality" (307).

² Here I follow Theodore Gaster's method of using these Latin words to differentiate the sacred time and place from the profane. For details, see note 1 of chapter 3.

³ In The Machine in the Garden, Leo Marx portrays the process of America having undergone the conflict between pastoralism and industrialism. He states: "The pastoral idea of America had, of course, lent itself to this illusion from the beginning. In the eighteenth century it had embraced a strangely ambiguous idea of history. It then had provided a clear sanction for the conquest of the wilderness, for improving upon raw nature and for economic and technological development--up to a point. The objective, in theory at least, was a society of the middle landscape, a rural nation exhibiting a happy balance of art and nature. But no one,

not even Jefferson, had been able to identify the point of arrest, the critical moment when the tilt might be expected and progress cease to be progress" (226). Further on, he quotes Faulkner's "The Bear" for support:

Then the little locomotive shrieked and began to move: a rapid churning of exhaust, a lethargic deliberate clashing of slack couplings travelling backward along the train, the exhaust changing to the deep low clapping bites of power as the caboose too began to move and from the cupola he watched the train's head complete the first and only curve in the entire line's length vanish into the wilderness, dragging its length of train behind it so that it resembled a small dingy harmless snake vanishing into weeds, drawing him with it too until soon it ran once more at its maximum clattering speed between the twin walls of unaxed wilderness as of old. It had been harmless once....

It had been harmless then....But it was different now. It was the same train, engine cars and caboose...running with its same illusion of frantic rapidity between the same twin walls of impenetrable and impervious woods...yet this time it was as though the train...had brought with it into the doomed wilderness even before the actual axe the shadow and portent of the new mill not even finished yet and the rails and ties which were not even laid; and he knew now what he had known as soon as he saw Hoke's this morning but had not yet thought into woods: why Major de Spain had not come back, and that after this time he himself, who had had to see it one time other, would return no more. (227)

⁴ For further discussion, see Lawrence's Fantasia of the Unconscious.

Chapter III

RETURN

As we have seen, Henderson's quest is geographical. He begins in North America, travels east through Europe to Africa, and finally returns to North America. More importantly, however, his return is rich in psychological symbolism. At the end of the book, as Henderson temporarily disembarks in Newfoundland, one reads:

So we were let out, this kid and I, and I carried him down from the ship and over the frozen ground of almost eternal winter, drawing breaths so deep they shook me, pure happiness, while the cold smote me from all sides through the stiff Italian corduroy with its broad wales, and the hairs of my beard turned spiky as the moisture of my breath froze instantly.... I told the kid, "Inhale. Your face is too white from your orphan's troubles. Breathe in this air, kid, and get a little color." I held him close to my chest. He didn't seem to be afraid that I would fall with him. While to me he was like medicine applied, and the air, too; it also was a remedy. Plus the happiness that I expected at Idlewild from meeting Lily. And the lion? He was in it, too. Laps and laps I galloped around the shining and riveted body of the plane, behind the fuel trucks. Dark faces were looking from within. The great, beautiful propellers were still, all four of them. I guess I felt it was my turn now to move, and so went running--leaping, leaping, pounding, and tingling over the pure white lining of the gray Arctic silence. (309)

One envisions Henderson holding the orphan, joyously dancing round and round the still plane. The transformation of Henderson's old life into the orphan's new one and the

reconciliation of Africa's torrid climate with the Arctic's frozen air and Henderson's comic dance all confirm the hero's successful individuation and his return to a "New-found-land." Indeed, Henderson's return is exactly what Joseph Campbell describes as the "eternal return."

Henderson's return from darkest Africa has been one of struggle and flight since, after Dahfu's death, he is supposed to succeed to his throne and, then, according to the tribal customs, to be strangled when he exhausts his manly vigor. Despite the satisfaction of his inner want--for now he realizes that "It wanted reality" (288) and that he has thus completed his original quest in Africa--Henderson's own individuation and his heroic restoration of his world will not be confirmed until he has recognized, or rather, re-recognized the significance of the bear totem for himself and for his fellow Americans. In order to identify the totem, Henderson needs to return to his own continent. For while the African lion may have awakened Henderson's animal spirit, the spirit of life, only his own animal ancestor can renew and sustain his own and his people's spiritual life.

It is necessary here to recall Daniel's prophecy, "They shall drive thee from among men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field" (207). Originally an interpretation of a dream of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, in which the King of Heaven, ruler of all the universe, will punish Nebuchadnezzar for his mighty material power which had affronted heaven, the prophecy, recurrently used in Hen-

erson the Rain King, actually prophecies Henderson's own fate (for, as we have already seen, he is the inheritor of technological America). Indeed, the prophecy strongly demands compensation for the American spiritual poverty. This spiritual strength, as Bellow perceives, can be rediscovered in primitive America, where the Great Bear reigns as totem.

Henderson's recognition of the totem, as it happens, occurs upon his flight, in its punning sense, from Africa to America, from the kingdom of dark power to that of civilization, and from the world of the unconscious to the world of consciousness. Although Henderson's flight from Waririland does not appear to be a magical flight in Campbell's sense, where witches and magicians use their power to capture the hero, it is in essence the same. For, when Bunam's assistant and the two Amazons tried to prevent his escape, Henderson succeeded in locking them in the hut and escaping with Romilayu, whose supernatural assistance (though practical enough to establish him as a survival instructor for the U.S. Air Force) protects Henderson throughout the ten days of wandering in the desert until Henderson recovers from his illness and finally goes aboard a plane bound for Europe.

According to Campbell's return pattern, after the exit from the other world, there follows the hero's resurrection and his restoration of this world. This does happen in Henderson the Rain King only it takes place psychologically rather than physically, which is appropriate since, for Henderson, it is the psychological importance of his travel which predominates.

Having witnessed Dahfu's atonement with his lion father (though it is not the supposed Gmilo) and having now left Waririland, Henderson begins to reconcile himself with his own father, who drove him out of home when he was still in his teens. Henderson explains to Romilayu, "'I suppose my dad wished, I know he wished, that I had gotten drowned instead of my brother Dick, up there near Plattsburg. Did this mean he didn't love me? Not at all. I, too, being a son, it tormented the old guy to wish it. Yes, if it had been me instead, he would have wept almost as much. Oh, I don't blame the old guy. Except it's life; and have we got any business to chide it?" (288 emphasis mine). These words and the feelings expressed by them are simple and even a little childish, but they are sufficient to convey the truth of life, the ambiguity of reality. As a matter of fact, Henderson is beginning to learn how to live in this uncertain world, that is, how to live and let live. Furthermore, if these words do not yet manifest Henderson's firm reconciliation of life and death, they at least open up a passage for it. "For I said, what's the universe? Big. And what are we? Little" (298). As a result of his arduous experience in the heart of Africa, Henderson steps out of his ego into his self, where he reconciles his ego with the independent world of nature. "'Oh, you can't get away from rhythm, Romilayu,' I recall saying many times to him. 'You just can't get away from it. The left hand shakes with the right hand, the in-hale follows the exhale, the systole talks to the diastole,

the hands play patty-cake, and feet dance with each other. And the stars, and all of that. And the tides, and all that junk. You've got to live at peace with it, because if it's going to worry you, you'll lose. You can't win against it" (299).

Before long, Henderson is flying over the Atlantic again. The water element, as one has already seen it do, seems to open up boundless possibilities for him. "I couldn't seem to get enough of it, as if I had been dehydrated--the water, combing along, endless, the Atlantic, deep. But the depth made me happy" (302). Moreover, the vision of water leads him to perceive the most fundamental truth of life: "Every twenty years or so the earth renews itself in young maidens" (303). And finally, water reminds him of Niagara Falls and of his days spent in Ontario. He sincerely admits, "Water can be very healing" (306). In a sense he flies over the symbolic lost Atlantis of his own unconscious.

More healing and more dependable to Henderson, however, is the North American bear totem. He recalls how, wandering in Ontario after leaving his grieving and temperamental father, he finally settled down with Smolak, an old brown bear, in an amusement park. Smolak had been trained to ride a bicycle, but now he "was green with time and down to his last teeth, like the pits of dates" (307). Together, "This poor broken ruined creature and I, alone, took the high rides twice a day. And while we climbed and dipped and swooped and swerved and rose again higher than Ferris wheels

and fell, we held on to each other. By a common bond of despair we embraced, cheek to cheek, as all support seemed to leave us and we started down the perpendicular drop. I was pressed into his long-suffering, age-worn, tragic, and discolored coat as he grunted and cried to me" (307). We are truly moved by their brotherly companionship in misery. No wonder Henderson once said to Hanson, his boss in the circus, "We're two of a kind. Smolak was cast off and I am an Ishmael, too" (307). Henderson then realizes, now some time after Dahfu's lecture, that, "if corporeal things are an image of the spiritual and visible objects are renderings of invisible ones, and if Smolak and I were outcasts together, two humorists before the crowd, but brothers in our souls--I enbeared by him, and he probably humanized by me--I didn't come to the pigs as a tabula rasa. It only stands to reason" (307). Of course, it stands only all the more to reason that, just as the lion should be the animal father of the Wariri tribe, so should the bear, even in the decrepitude of Smolak, be that of Henderson and of his fellow Americans.

In the criticism of Henderson the Rain King, very little attention has been paid to the totemic bear. Those who have touched upon the issue of totemism, however, all seem to assume its importance in determining Henderson's future life. In Whence the Power? The Artistry and Humanity of Saul Bellow, M. G. Porter, from a social point of view, thinks that "The story of Smolak and his world-battered wisdom stands as an objective correlative for Henderson, who has achieved a

similar wisdom and who now gives comfort in his turn to a Persian" (143). With special respect to his North American origin, Malcolm Bradbury discovers that, in the end, Henderson "must settle for his own nature, closer to the fair-ground bear, that sad humorist, than the lion" (65). Most elaborate on the bear is probably Daniel Fuchs, who, in his excellent study of the manuscript of the book, observes that "the right note is reached" only after "Henderson's recollection of a gimmicky amusement park job." He further states that "Neither the lion nor the pig will quite do for Henderson, but the domesticated bear...seems just about right." Most importantly, Fuchs recognizes that "Henderson's being influenced by the bear is a qualified knowledge" (119). However, it is E. L. Rodrigues who, regarding Smolak as teacher of life to Henderson in the same manner that any animal father is to the primitive hunters, states, "This huge, old, tottering clown of the fairground, who had accepted his wretched condition, taught Henderson a truth that he had forgotten, the truth that one has to accept the conditions of life, the truth that 'for creatures there is nothing that ever runs unmingled'" (154). Rodrigues's insightful statement directs our attention to Bellow's evocation of the primitive sphere of the animal spirit.

In The Way of the Animal Powers, a brilliant study of primitive mythologies, Joseph Campbell describes in great detail the wide-spread "cults of the master bear." Among primitive hunters, the bear enjoys a mysterious power de-

rived from his long-term hibernation, from his keen hearing, and from his human appearance (especially when he stands up) and human characteristics. He has earned many respectful names. Apart from those offered in Europe and in Asia, Campbell cites the names the bear enjoys in North America:

Among the Abnaki of Quebec: Cousin, rationalized by the observation that a skinned bear, in its proportions, looks much like a man. "These tracks," the Abnaki will say, "are our cousin's." The related Penobscot, on the Penobscot River in Maine, speak of the bear as Grandfather; he is grandfather of all the animals. And the Montagnais-Nascapi of Labrador, who likewise call the bear Grandfather, speak of him after his death, respectfully, as Short Tail, Food of the Fire, Black Food, and the One Who Owns the Chin. South of Hudson Bay, the Eastern Cree call him both Short Tail and Black Food, as well as Crooked Tail, Old Porcupine, the Lynxlike Creature, Wrangler, and Angry One, while for the Plains Cree of Saskatchewan, he is the Four-legged Human, Chief's Son, Crooked and Tired. The Sauk and the Menominee of Wisconsin refer to him as Elder Brother and as Old Man; the Blackfeet, north of the upper Missouri, as the Unmentionable One, That Big Hairy One, and Sticky Mouth. All of these tribes are Algonquian, but to the Tsimshian of the Northwest Coast the bear is again Grandfather, as he is also to the Yukaghir, the Tungus, and the Yakuts of Siberia. (147)

The primitive respect for the bear is such, according to Campbell, that the killing of the bear is generally regarded as "a ritual act, to be performed in a special way. Knives and clubs, primitive weapons, are commonly preferred even where guns are available, for they comport with the antiquity of the cult." Again, "when the bear has been slain, it is usual to disclaim responsibility for his death" so that the Master Bear will not be angered with the hunter, whose live-

lihood depends on the game. Moreover, the bear is considered full of humanity. A legend of the Ainu of Hokkaido runs like this: a bear was attracted to the song of a young woman, who was gathering roots and other food in the mountain. At the sight of the bear, the woman was terrified and ran away leaving her baby behind. The bear pitied the child and suckled it for days until he was shot by the hunters coming to save the child. Seeing the baby alive and well, the hunters were impressed. "'That bear is good," they said to each other. "He has kept this lost baby alive. Surely that bear is a deity deserving of our worship'" (Campbell, Way, 149). Here, one naturally thinks of the bearish Henderson caring for the orphan on the plane.

In southern British Columbia, again according to Campbell, the Lillooet Indians had a special Bear Song "that was to be chanted solemnly and with genuine emotion over the body of the bear, naming the boons of power they expected to derive from slaying him:

You were the first to die, greatest of beasts.

We respect and shall treat you accordingly;

No woman will eat your flesh,

No dog insult you.

May the lesser animals all follow you

and die by our traps and arrows.

May we now kill plenty of game.

May the goods of those we gamble with

Follow us as we leave the play,

And come into our possession.

May the goods of those we play lehol with

Become completely ours,

Even as a beast that we have slain. (149)

With all the primitive reverence and respect for the bear in mind, Campbell rightly observes: "The animal life is translated into human life entirely, through the medium of death, slaughter, and the acts of cooking, tanning, sewing. So that, if it be true...that 'whatever is killed becomes father,' it should be no cause for wonder that the animals in the mythologies of the Great Hunt are revered as spiritual fathers" (Masks 128). It is significant to note, however, that the bear influence is profound not only on North American Indians but also on the white race who followed them. And this is fully reflected in the literary works of other modern American writers, most notably Hemingway and Faulkner, Bellow's predecessors.

In For Whom the Bell Tolls, there is a long conversation between Robert Jordan, the American protagonist, and old Anselmo, his primitive mentor, about bear totemism:

"So is the chest of a man like the chest of a bear," Robert Jordan said. "With the hide removed from the bear, there are many similarities in the muscles."

"Yes," Anselmo said. "The gypsies believe the bear to be a brother of man."

"So do the Indians in America," Robert Jordan said. "And when they kill a bear they apologize to him and ask his pardon. They put his skull in a tree and they ask him to forgive them before they leave it."

"The gypsies believe the bear to be a brother of man because he has the same body beneath his

hide, because he drinks beer, because he enjoys music and because he likes to dance."

"So also believe the Indians."

"Are the Indians then gypsies?"

"No. But they believe alike about the bear."
(40)

This passage constitutes an indispensable part of the mythic narrative of the book, and, as John J. Teunissen points out, it reveals "the most basic and primitive yearnings, yearnings which primitive man seeks to realize through myth and ritual and which the modern artist occasionally expresses through his art" (67). And those yearnings are uniformly for reconnection with the cycle of life and death, the cosmic wheel upon which human existence turns.

More evocative still of the totemic bear himself is Faulkner's description in his novella "The Bear," in which one feels the pulse of the spirit of nature just as Ike does when he encounters the phantom-like Old Ben. Early in the novella, one reads:

It ran in his knowledge before he ever saw it. It loomed and towered in his dreams before he even saw the unaxed woods where it left its crooked print, shaggy, tremendous, red-eyed, not malevolent but just big, too big for the dogs which tried to bay it, for the men and the bullets they fired into it; too big for the very country which was its constricting scope. It was as if the boy had already divined what his senses and intellect had not encompassed yet: that doomed wilderness whose edges were being constantly and punily gnawed at by men with plows and axes who feared it because it was wilderness, men myriad and nameless even to one another in the land where the old bear had earned a name, and through which ran not even a mortal beast but an anachronism indomitable and invincible out of an old, dead time, a phantom, epitome and apotheosis of the old, wild life which the little puny humans swarmed and hacked at in a

fury of abhorrence and fear, like pygmies about the ankles of a drowsing elephant;--the old bear, solitary, indomitable, and alone; widowed, childless, and absolved of mortality--old Priam reft of his old wife and outlived all his sons. (229)

Just as the white whale once did, the bear, Grandfather, father, and brother in one, has preoccupied some of the best minds of the twentieth-century American artists, who have expressed their primitive yearnings through art. The best explanation for this artistic focus on the animal ancestor remains that offered by Jung and Baird: when the symbolism of the dominant culture fails, a new symbolism is sought to take its place. In this respect it remains necessary to remind ourselves how primitivism replaces the failing American Protestantism as a source of spiritual support. At the same time, however, Hemingway, Faulkner, and Bellow reveal their different perspectives toward American society and its possibilities for renewal through their different versions of the bear.

Hemingway's use of the bear totem rightly locates Spain as Robert Jordan's spiritual home, topocosmically linked in Theodore Gaster's sense with the geography, ethnography, and myth of Jordan's native Montana. ' It is not difficult to see, then, that Jordan's journey to Spain is actually one into the collective unconscious, an escape "from the prison of time and history into the timeless through the repetition of primordial gestures, of the archetypal creative act, of the sayings and makings of the ancestors" (Teunissen 55).

Although Jordan may have redeemed his own ancestors through his ritualistic act (the blowing up of the profane bridge), Hemingway could not help revealing his pessimism about the potential for the regeneration of contemporary America by leaving Jordan in the primordial "home."

Faulkner's totemism reveals much the same dark pessimism. In the familiar boundary area between the wilderness and the civilized human world, Ike, a young WASP descendant becomes aware of Old Ben, the almost legendary bear grandfather, not only to all the beasts but also to all the humans on this land. Coached by Sam Fathers, a shamanistic figure, Ike learns quickly the woodlore and soon becomes a promising young hunter. But, significantly, it is not Ike but Boon, a half-wit half Indian, who finally kills the bear, not with a gun, but with a knife, in exactly the same way his Indian ancestors performed their ritualistic bear killings. This bear killing, however, regenerates the wilderness and the Great Past. Consequently, it is clearly not too far-fetched to assert that Faulkner presents an especially pessimistic view of civilized America in "The Bear." It is also likely, however, that both Hemingway and Faulkner were too escapist to perceive a world of such innocence and nobility as inherent in the Great Past so that they did not bother exploring the possibility of redeeming their contemporary fellow Americans.

Bellow, however, makes the effort to explore this possibility in the very positive although open-ended conclusion

of his novel. His bear is not as mysterious and powerful as Faulkner's; instead, he is senile, clumsy, and even comic. In his humane brotherhood, the bear entertains, consoles, and embraces man as if to ensure a hopeful and prosperous future for contemporary America. Since the totemic bear, like all the archtypes, has two sides, benevolent and terrible, Faulkner's Old Ben may represent the terrible, while Bellow's Smolak is certainly the benevolent. And it is significant to note that, while in "The Bear" Faulkner let the dog, Lion, beat Old Ben, in Henderson, Bellow lets Smolak beat Atti. This discrepancy might well indicate Bellow's opposite stance from his predecessor.

Contributing to Bellow's optimistic tenor, in addition to his use of the complete quest pattern, is his use of comic elements in an essentially mythic narrative. Sarah Blacher Cohen makes an extensive study of Bellow's comedy in her Saul Bellow's Enigmatic Laughter, in which she devoted a chapter to Henderson. As a point of departure, she states: "To avoid the monotony of an identical search for essentials and to dispel any excessive solemnity or sentimentality which might vitiate the search, Bellow places Henderson's mission in the context of a whimsical fantasy. Here it is often treated with sportive irreverence where tipsy ideas intrude to unbalance sober ones, established truths from previous novels vie with recent travesties, and Henderson himself vacillates between commitment and clowning" (116). Then, in her conclusion, she wisely emphasizes that in Hen-

erson the Rain King "The dreaded nightmare experiences of the earlier realistic novels are transformed into the playful and dreamlike romance" (emphasis mine) and that "Beneath his bluster and buffoonery, Henderson is also a serious explorer who has hacked his way through the tangled underbrush and has learned from his mental travels" (142).

Cohen makes one conspicuous statement, however, which undermines her discussion of the book as romance. In her discussion of Henderson's impossible imitation of Atti, Cohen decides that what "Bellow seems to be saying is that "man cannot lapse entirely into the beast, no matter how desirable it would be to absorb its litheness, spontaneity, and untamed ferocity" and that "He must make do with his own awkwardness, his unavoidable constraints, and his inherent anxiety." As a result, "because he has attempted the impossible, because his set of circumstances is so farfetched and his discomfort so excessive, we cannot sympathize with him"; instead, "we can only be overcome with mirth at Henderson's sorry state" (133).

Cohen's definition of comedy may be somewhat simplistic since she seems to be concerned exclusively with laughter. She has not traced the ritualistic root of comedy. ² That, of course, seems to be excusable since twentieth-century comedy is so far removed from rituals that naive laughter seems the only response.

Beyond the naive laughter, however, there is still the ritualistic and metaphysical side of comedy. W. M. Merchant

argues "that comedy has a nobler metaphysical quality than [the] traditional tones and phrases would imply; that particular comedies in our Western literatures have attitudes which go beyond this mildly therapeutic role, the mere chastisement of folly; that Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Moliere or Brecht provide us with teasing problems of evaluation if we attempt to confine their comedy simply to social correction" (4). In support of his argument, he unfolds the close ties of comedy with rituals on the stage in Shakespeare's lifetime. Merchant observes, "The ritual pattern of comedy, like that of tragedy, was [then] still linked to the annual festival rhythms, whether these were the consciously christian celebrations of birth, death and resurrection, of Christmas, Good Friday and Easter-day, or the mythical archetypes of 'birth, copulation and death' in the rhythms of the natural year: the fecundity of summer, the ripe maturity of autumn, the death and burial of winter and the renewal and birth of spring" (53). This celebration of human and cosmic cycles of life and death is what influences Northrop Frye's "green world," "its plot being assimilated to the ritual theme of the triumph of life and love over the waste land" (Anatomy 182).

Ultimately, then, comedy can be traced back to all the primitive cultures. In "The Lesson of the Mask," Campbell argues convincingly that the spirit of playfulness or "make-believe" operates in all primitive cultures and religions. He quotes, among others, R. R. Marett in his chapter on

"Primitive Credulity" in The Threshold of Religion, "The savage is a good actor who can be quite absorbed in his role, like a child at play; and also, like a child, a good spectator who can be frightened to death by the roaring of something he knows perfectly well to be no 'real' lion" (Masks 23). In the Roman Catholic Mass, as Campbell observes, the same kind of playful (though serious in appearance) spirit exists when the priest solemnly pronounces that the bread is the body of Christ and the wine his blood. So does this same spirit exist in Buddhism, which teaches that the universe and even every object in the universe are God himself. This playfulness, as Campbell further observes, provides the playful with "a principle release [which] operates throughout the series by way of the alchemy of an 'as if'; and that, through this, the impact of all so-called 'reality' upon the psyche is transubstantiated. The play state and the rapturous seizures sometimes deriving from it represent, therefore, a step rather toward than away from the ineluctable truth; and belief--acquiescence in a belief that is not quite belief--is the first step toward the deepened participation that the festival affords in that general will to life which, in its metaphysical aspect, is antecedent to, and the creator of, all life's laws" (Masks 28).

Therefore, Henderson's archetypal quest and the characters in the book, comic as they may seem, are serious, sincere, and affirmative in the ritualistic sense. Consequently, Henderson's last dance around the plane, a ritual dance

indeed, celebrates his own spiritual regeneration and the union between the Great Past and the profane present, thus confirming optimism for America's future. In this resonant "Yea" saying romance, Bellow manifests, as his book's open ending well suggests, his confidence in new possibilities in modern America. No small wonder, then, Bellow once said in an interview: "Obligated to choose between complaint and comedy, I choose comedy, as more energetic, wiser, and manlier" (Harper 187), for, as Cornford asserts, the essential core of the ritualistic comedy involves "the expulsion of death, the induction of life" (53).

NOTES

¹ In Thespis, Theodore Gaster states: "Basic to the entire procedure [of the seasonal rituals] is the conception that what is in turn eclipsed and revitalized is not merely the human community of a given area or locality but the total corporate unit of all elements, animate and inanimate alike, which together constitute its distinctive character and 'atmosphere.' To this wider entity we may assign the name topocosm, formed (on the analogy of microcosm and macrocosm) from Greek topos, 'place,' and cosmos, 'world, order' (24). On the same page, he states: "The essence of the topocosm is that it possesses a twofold character, at once real and punctual, and ideal and durative, the former aspect being necessarily immersed in the latter, as a moment is immersed in time. If it is bodied forth as a real and concrete organism in the present, it exists also as an ideal, timeless entity, embracing but transcending the here and now in exactly the same way that the ideal America embraces but transcends the present generation of Americans."

² In The Origin of Attic Comedy, F. M. Cornford illustrates a complete definition through his thorough examination of the existent thirteen Greek comedies. Cornford finds that a sacred marriage is characteristic of the Aristophanic comedies, in which "the bridegroom and bride are the representatives of divine or spiritual beings, the powers of fertility in nature, however these may be conceived" (18). As he further states, "[i]n the plays of Aristophanes we find the protagonist, certainly in some cases and possibly in all, wearing an artificial phallus as part of his costume. We have seen too, that he regularly leads a Komos at the end, as male partner in a marriage. If we are right in supposing that this is the survival of a ritual marriage, little doubt can remain as to the further point that, in that case, the protagonist in Comedy must originally have been the spirit of fertility himself, Phales or Dionysus. Who else, indeed, can lead the Komos from which, in all possibility, Comedy ()derives its name?" (19-20).

CONCLUSION

A serious question inevitably raised by a discussion such as mine is whether Henderson the Rain King is really amenable to the kind of symbolic reading that I have given it. In answering this question, one needs to consider that Saul Bellow, a week before publication of the book, wrote a warning, apparently directed to interpreters such as I, entitled "Deep Readers of the World, Beware." Objecting to a symbolic reading of any object or action in literary works, he warned that "deep reading has gone [so] far" that "it has become dangerous to literature" (1). True enough, but one also needs to remember that Bellow does not object to a deep reading of what he calls "a true symbol." "A true symbol," as he observes in the same warning article, "is substantial, not accidental. You cannot avoid it, you cannot remove it. You can't take the handkerchief from 'Othello,' or the sea from 'The Nigger of the Narcissus,' or the disfigured feet from 'Oedipus Rex'" (1). Nor can we, indeed, remove Africa, the lion, and the bear from Henderson the Rain King, for they are what Bellow calls true symbols and what James Baird calls "a cluster of symbols," which cannot be removed and which together yield a consistent system of meanings in the text.

Such a carefully written "warning" as Bellow's is really not adequate to serve realists as an effective weapon against symbolism in the case of Henderson the Rain King,

for Bellow does not warn against a symbolic reading of his own book at all. If one is open-minded enough--although it is not wise here to speculate upon Bellow's motive for his warning--one can at least see that the warning itself is as artistic as the book it preceeded. One can reasonably suspect that the "warning" was written for the reading public, who are generally contented with a "naive" reading of the book they buy. Bellow, a truth-seeking artist himself, however, would never be satisfied with such a readership.

Bellow is a serious intellectual writer for all his comedy. As he said in an interview, "Years ago, I studied African ethnography with the late Professor Herskovits. Later he scolded me for writing a book like Henderson. He said the subject was much too serious for such fooling. I felt that my fooling was fairly serious. Literalness, factualism, will smother the imagination altogether" (Harper 189). One is informed, then, that the book has really two aspects: the comic and the serious. While the former promotes the vehicle, the latter holds the tenor. Bellow's purpose is to entertain while both Henderson and he explore certain aspects of reality in order to live a more fully human life.

Bellow's art resembles life in that, while life is lived by all biological beings, the truth of life, primitive and modern, is not perceived by all. That the book is filled with the author's primitive yearnings is endorsed by Bellow's own statement, regarding the change of style from Augie March to Henderson: "I suppose that all of us have a

primitive prompter or commentator within, who from earliest years has been advising us what the real world is. There is such a commentator in me. I have to prepare the ground for him. From this source come words, phrases, syllables; sometimes only sounds, which I try to interpret, sometimes whole paragraphs, fully punctuated" (Harper 183). He continued, saying that this change "was an attempt to get nearer to that primitive commentator" (184). That is probably why it was so difficult for Bellow to complete his revision of the manuscript of the book.

Thus, while Eugene Henderson is the archetypal hero seeking reality in darkest Africa, within the hero is Saul Bellow himself seeking the meaning of life in "mental travel," one similar to that of Hemingway's vis-a-vis Robert Jordan in For Whom the Bell Tolls. For like Hemingway, who--although he had been to Spain--composed his book about the Spanish War in New York, Bellow had never been to Africa by the time he was writing about a quest in the continent. In their mental travels, both writers manifested their longing for primitive self-renewal and both succeeded. For Bellow to admire Hemingway's art is then no small wonder, for he admits, "I think of Hemingway as a man who developed a significant manner as an artist, a life-style which is important..." (Harper 181).

Indeed, it is not accidental that Bellow should have created a significant piece of art in the primivistic tradition of such important American writers as Melville, Hemingway,

and Faulkner. For, like these ancestors, Bellow is aware of and cooperates with his internal "primitive commentator," but he does it in a wholly affirmative way, thus stamping upon his book his own firm signature.

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