The Virtues of First Love or Emergence of An Adult Self:

An Analysis of Saul Bellow's Novella, *The Actual*

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> When we are born, we cry that we are come
> To this great stage of fools.
>
> William Shakespeare. **King Lear**, IV: 6

Slighted lovers, cuckolded husbands, disgruntled academics, crafty writers, holocaust victims, affluent explorers of the unconscious and protean journeymen inhabit Saul Bellow's novels; their travails, explorations and blunders are the very subject of his works. A muted moral humanism in Bellow's early fiction is infused with a new vigor in **The Actual**[1]—in the almost instinctive adolescent response of an incomplete human being for another. Harry Trellman, the rich but aging protagonist of the novella, keeps his heart open to any new or missed suggestion from the cosmos. In moments of studied introspection, but possessing a heart of gold, he philosophizes: "A man's road back to himself is a return from his spiritual exile, for that is what a personal history amounts to—exile" (TA, p. 2). A strong desire to return to a perfect Platonic self makes what Saul Bellow is—an extremely introspective Jewish-American writer grappling with larger issues of life and the cosmos in the context of the ordinary concerns and emotions of people living in Chicago.[2] In a Platonic sense, the soul, exiled on earth, must remember its perfect and

absolute state it enjoyed before its entry into the world of flesh.[3] Therefore Bellow's characters, almost instinctively, stress values of goodness, dignity and humanity in a world irrevocably transformed by Hitler's pogroms. They are keenly aware of their Jewish past just as they are conscious of the inexorable American present. Harry recognizes the "powers" of his "human genius" and finds that it manifests itself in areas "where one least expects them." He is keenly Jewish too. He suspects that his "hypochondriac mother" had placed him in a "Jewish orphanage" to make him aware that "the Jews were a chosen people." Harry believes that his intuitive "habit of examining features and behavior" is a "carryover from some vestigial Jewish impulse" (TA, p. 43). In brief, a Hellenic introspection coupled with an awareness of a traumatic Hebraic past gives to Bellow's protagonists both, a philosophical and an emotional intensity which is keenly Jewish and American. The "spiritual exile" brings a heightened awareness of self and others, intensifies perception and taps inner potential. This road, needless to say, must be traveled by a typical Bellovian protagonist if he wishes to find himself through cutting the ego and becoming one with the larger ego of the cosmos.[4]

Over thirty years ago Bellow, while evaluating D. H. Lawrence's ***Lady Chatterley's Lover***, wrote in ***The Michigan Quarterly Review***, about the "personal history" of a writer thus: "For what is the point of recommending a course of life that one has not tried oneself"[5] Therefore testing and implementing become the cornerstone of responsible relationships that man in contemporary urban society is forever escaping.[6] In earlier novels there are attempts to intellectualize an experience, rationalize expectations, and to preempt or mitigate suffering. In **The Actual**, there is a transparency of emotion which at times verges on the confessional or autobiographical without being so. There is a conviction in the voice, a finality to decisions without giving in to the intellectual façade that doubts create—a naiveté that is

naturally energizing.

In this novella Bellow exploits the age-old motif of never-forgotten first love; and even if the object of love is not relentlessly pursued, it nevertheless remains, subconsciously, the ultimate goal of the romantic imagination. Though Trellman successfully wears a mask to hide his feelings, the Chicago billionaire, Sigmund Adletsky, perceiving the romantic but dissatisfied man behind the mask, calculatingly brings him to his first love Amy Wustrin at the Waldheim Cemetery where she is exhuming and reburying her husband Jay Wustrin. It seems as if both Harry and Amy are sitting on an active volcano which has been dormant for decades but suddenly after forty years erupts, and the molten lava of love flows fresh once more renewing their lives and rewarding their efforts.

After acquiring "a lifetime income through the Burmese operation" Harry has settled down comfortably to a "semiretired" life in Chicago where he has "unfinished emotional business." Though aware of his inadequacies, he decides to do nothing about them; "I seem to have decided that to be busy about one's self-image, to adjust, revise, to tamper with it, was a waste of time" (TA, pp. 3–4). At school with his "round head," "fat black eyes," "insidious Fu Manchu look" and quiet, unassuming ways, Harry presents the picture of "an outsider, an orphan" (TA, p. 2). The strong emotional involvement the reader feels with Harry meeting Amy in Chicago, and later at the cemetery where they profess their love for each other, seem to be the result of Bellow's preoccupation with "lived experience" of Chicago, especially with the self-made man and woman of the middle class.[7] Here is Bellow the great chronicler of human emotions, spanning over five decades of personally lived experience in fiction, making sense of desires by seeing them through the lens of humanistic values. In brief, he wrestles with the lived experience of an entire Judeo-Christian world.

Early in life Harry develops a reticence, perhaps, born out of a fear of "exposure" (TA, p. 3) to explain himself. Therefore when situations arise that demand expression of feelings he invariably falters. He confesses early in the novel that though both his parents are alive he has, at school, assumed the identity of the "children from the orphanage." He feels compelled to do so as he finds "no occasion to explain [his] special circumstances". He is so successful in hiding his real self from others that even astute Adletsky initially makes a mistake in assessing him. Adletsky had "once or twice" said to Harry, "I don't take you for an emotional heavyweight. But all that means is that I missed something when I sized you up. We are both oddball Jews, Harry. But I founded this considerable fortune, which it so happens is a very Jewish thing" (TA, p. 38). We are aware that Harry is an "emotional heavyweight." He is also a "first-class noticer" of things who catalogues information about people, interprets their gestures and facial expression and stores all this knowledge in his mind. This somewhat retreating, reclusive protagonist develops an encyclopedic memory. His phenomenal memory is noticed by Adletsky who hires him immediately as his consultant (TA, p. 8). Harry too, though himself reasonably well off (given his business in antiques at Van Breen Street), is bowled over completely by Adletsky's wealth. Adletsky presides over the novel like "a pharaoh, the representative of the sun" (TA, p. 9); he becomes a father figure, a more mature Dr. Tamkin, a concerned Thaxter and a more enlightened King Dahfu. Harry wonders how Adletsky, who belongs to the "immigrant melting-pot generation," feels about his exorbitant wealth: "To be a trillionaire is like living in a controlled environment, I imagine" (TA, p. 6).

Adletsky is another person who hides his feelings; he wears a condom over her heart. He has developed a whole new system of self-preservation, referred to by Harry as the "Adletsky system," which is ostensibly based on a "Roosevelt-style brain trust" (TA, p. 15). His system employs a large

secretarial and executive staff and uses modern technology to speed up information gathering. In fact even before Adletsky meets Harry, Adletsky has collected all information about Harry. "Harry admits: My life and deeds had been sifted by members of his staff. Evidently I had survived the preliminary screening. He had been so fully briefed that there would be no talk about my origins, education, accomplishments—thank God" (TA, p. 7). Adletsky is suspicious, domineering, rude but highly perceptive and occasionally magnanimous. He is one of the smart reality instructors inhabiting Bellow's novels whose life style is quite instructive to the protagonist Sigmund as his name suggests stands for victorious protection. Helping Harry to express his feelings and thereby realize his desire for Amy, makes Sigmund live up to the meaning of his name and simultaneously remove the condom over his heart.

William James argues that the "essence" of a twice-born philosophy is "the belief that there is an element of real wrongness in this world, which is neither to be ignored nor evaded, but which must be squarely met and overcome by an appeal to the soul's heroic resources, and neutralized and cleansed away by suffering."[8] Harry understands the "wrongness in this world" but feels powerless to set it right; he cannot even overcome his inhibitions. He confronts the actuality of his emotions for Amy rather late but when he does, he is stripped of his pretensions and comes to terms with himself. Only when down and out, humbled by reality, Harry becomes willing and plaint. Now he is ready to achieve his heart's ultimate need. Tommy Wilhelm could only seize the day in a New York vault at the funeral of an unknown man where all his failures come crashing on him. As he cries he understands, so do Herzog, Charlie and a host of others. Humiliation, subjugation, cutting of the ego lead to the emergence of the moral being. Protagonists arrive at that sacred moment of self-acceptance, where the soul hankering for a spiritual union with the other, is fulfilled. In most novels this spiritual union is never realized, only its

indefinable suggestion is present. But in ***The Actual*** it becomes a tangible reality. In earlier novels Bellow's male protagonists are forever escaping commitment and responsibility. For the first time Harry accepts it.

In a way Amy is Harry's actual and Harry himself is his own actual. Towards the end of the novella Harry admits to Amy that the "best description" he has of her is that she is "an actual affinity" (TA, p. 100). From his high school days Amy, "riding towards puberty" in her roller skates is understood as a "love object." Her "fully feminine thighs," "the soft breasts in her sweater," the "double cheeks of her backside," "the smoothness of sexual maturity on her cheeks," the "Doublemint chewing gum fragrance" in her purse, and the thirty years old memory of her somewhat Japanese "naked body" is fresh in Harry's mind (TA, pp. 17–8, 83 and 21). He reveals to us that: "Half a century of feeling is invested in her, of fantasy, speculation, and absorption, of imaginary conversation. After forty years of concentrated imagining, I feel able to picture her at any moment of any given day" (TA, p. 18). Harry remembers her through her "personal odor," Coty's face powder and the "smell of animal musk released from the fur by the warmth of Amy's body when she unfastened those buttons," (TA, pp. 20 and 76). The highly suggestive olfactory images validate Harry's intense feelings for Amy. But Harry is too caught up in his obtuse intellectualization and social inhibitions to be able to confess his love for her. To worsen the problem in the relationship, Amy is quite conservative; she, therefore, finds it difficult to verbalize her feelings. Her "look virtuous" German-Jewish background prevents her from expressing her feelings openly. Harry remembers that Amy "avoided heavy feelings and perplexities" (TA, p. 23); but he does not do anything to help her express them.

Harry had married and become single once again but all other women in his life always reminded him of Amy: "Other women might remind me of you,

but there was only one actual Amy" (TA, p. 101). Only in the end after Amy buries her husband Jay, that Harry realizes how much he loves her: "I stood back from myself and looked into Amy's face. No one else on all this earth had such features. This was the most amazing thing in the life of the world" (TA, p. 104). On the other hand, Amy's love for Harry is no nympholetic love; she has been seriously in love with him from the very start but felt he might slight her feelings. She admits "Given the kinks of your high-level mental life, there was not a chance that you could ever think well of me. And I did give you serious thought. I was in love with you" (TA, p. 83). In the beginning his love for her was some kind of infantile paralysis that affected his spinal cord not his heart. Only later in life he confronts his own feelings honestly and discovers to his amazement that he all along loved her; he confesses: "Other women were apparitions. She, and only she, was no apparition" (TA, p. 84). Perhaps his Dickensian dislike for his mother, who had put him in an orphanage "while she traveled from spa to spa," has something to do with his self-absorption and resentment of others. But as he grows old he realizes that he must make peace with others: as he puts it: "I was prepared by now to make my peace with my species." There is a dawning of understanding, a maturing of his personality, as he honestly and squarely confronts the actuality of his feelings: "In the last phase of maturity, one could, one should, be straight with oneself" (TA, pp. 62–3). He realizes responsibility, understands commitment and accepts interdependence. The novel ends with an offer of marriage which we are given to believe Amy will accept. The novel concludes with these romantic words of acceptance: "Taking Amy by the hand, I said, 'It's not the best moment for a marriage offer. But if it's a mistake, it won't be my first one with you. This is the time to do what I'm now doing, and I hope you'll have me," (TA, p. 104). After all as their names suggest, Harry or Henry is the ruler of the home and Amy is his true beloved. Only when they understand the true

meaning of their identities they achieve actual fulfillment.

Of all the women Bellow presents in his fiction Amy may most suitably be compared to Demmie Vonghel in ***Humboldt's Gift***[9] and Ramona in ***Herzog***.[10] Demmie is, perhaps, one woman Charlie is truly in love with. However he does not realize this till it is too late. For soon afterwards Demmie dies in an airplane crash and Charlie hunts for her remains trying to locate the wreckage of the aircraft in the mountains. (HG, p. 165).[11] Charlie cannot confront the actuality of marriage with her and the monotonous boredom of embracing her night after night. The sense of boredom drives him away from her. Charlie admits that what she actually wanted was an engagement ring (HG, p. 165). Again Ramona with all her feminine oomph and skill in sexual stimulation wants to marry Herzog, but Herzog is wary of any long-range commitment after the collapse of his marriage. He gets protection from Ramona she restores his vitality and manhood which has taken a beating lately. Amy too, like Demmie and Ramona, is a simple girl wanting to get married to the man she loves most; but Harry, though he finds her "a great beauty," is caught up in intellectual, "highbrow" pretensions and cannot bring himself to accepting her proposal of marriage (TA, p. 61). He too, like Charlie, anticipates the inescapable boredom of a middle-class married life and his romantic soul revolts. He confesses: "There were still kitchens with onions and potato peels in the sink, and streetcars grinding on the rails. So this love, straight and simple, an involuntary music, was an embarrassment to a little crook like me .... I wasn't about to join the middle-class for Amy's sake and be a petty bourgeois" (TA, pp. 70–1). When finally Harry marries Amy he symbolically marries all the women Bellow's protagonists have failed to marry—women who possessed a certain childlike innocence from Demmie to Ramona. He moves from adolescence to adulthood. Marriage destroys his singular isolation; his pleasure-seeking, narcissistic and voyaging self becomes

reconciled to a stable reality, to the actual, to the self and the other.

Not only is Harry Trellman Charlie Citrine but he is also, to some extent, Augie March, rejecting power and economic success in "the pursuit of a primal innocence." Harry is more Jewish and American in his search for an idyllic love in a novella like **The Actual**, which has a "truly American Happy Ending." The Huck Finn in Augie is chained, and for once the nympholeptic women of Bellow get transformed into a mature Amy Wustrin, who notwithstanding her matronly appearance responds sincerely.[12] Harry, like Augie, adrift on a sea of change, finally lands on terra firma and makes peace with himself. The "revolutionist" has been tamed by a "middle-class girl" (TA, p. 71).

The city of Chicago becomes not only an arena for hiding emotions but also for their expression when conditions are right. Erik H. Erikson in his 1973 Jefferson Lectures points out that "concern flourishes where permitted to do so."[13] Chicago threatens Harry with its strong sense of "emptiness" (TA, p. 4); at the same time it is this place where his "emotional roots" are (TA, p. 3). Harry employs a powerful olfactory image to describe Chicago: "The main threat in a place like Chicago is emptiness—human gaps and breaks, a sort of spiritual ozone that smells like bleach ... I found ways to protect myself from this liminal threat (the threat of being sucked into outer space)" (TA, p. 4). The "liminal threat" remains for most protagonists of Bellow a tangible reality; they must constantly guard themselves from "being sucked into outer space" while living in an impersonal city like Chicago. Bellow wrote in 1983 that while walking on La Moyne Street he discovered "only a vacant lot" where his family once lived "half a century ago." He comments on the fast changing Chicago: "It forces you inward, to look for what endures. Give Chicago half a chance, and it will turn you into a philosopher."[14] Sammler, Citrine, March and Herzog all philosophize to establish their bearings in Chicago and to escape

the protean nature of the megalopolis. However they do not wish to leave the big city for here lies their memories, opportunities and identity. Though Harry finds the "liminal threat" intimidating he does not want to leave it. His memories of Amy is connected to Chicago's March blizzard. He remembers: It's a March morning, then, on the fault line between cold and mild. A blizzard has burst, in a way peculiar to Chicago, the snow is going round and round, heavily, and Amy is in the tiled shower, soaping herself" (TA, p. 21). Again Harry describes Adletsky's stretch limousine "slowly coming up through the snow" of a Chicago blizzard to pick up Amy from outside her Sheridan Road apartment house (TA, p. 76). It is this stretch limo of Adletsky which will bring Harry and Amy together in a cemetery located in a "relatively small Jewish neighborhood of Chicago" (TA, p. 80).

Bellow, like most successful writers shies away from categorization, evaluation and a psychological interpretation, though his characters are doing these very things in the novels most of the time. Early in ***The Actual*** Harry warns us that he has no use for Freud: "I grant that Freud was one of the most ingenuous men who ever lived, but I have no more use for his system than I have for Paley's watch" (TA, p. 1). But as the novella progresses we do see Adletsky analyzing Harry's and Amy's emotional condition, Harry evaluating Adletsky, Amy ascertaining Harry's love and the reason for its continuance for over four decades. Characters use psychology to understand others. For example, though Harry is taken in by Adletsky, he resents his evaluation of him: "Everybody prepares, and ascribes to others a power to judge, grants them the possession of standards that may be nonexistent" (TA, p. 8). Bellow's protagonists possess a terrible "power to judge," even lay down "nonexistent" "standards" to evaluate people and measure the sense of their achievement or failure whichever the case may be. This inexorable standard of judgement goads the protagonists to perform better and judge others, at times, somewhat

harshly. It prevents them from establishing responsible relationships and lead a normal adult life. They are distracted by women, money, family and personal fame till they find all these wanting. When they confront the very essence of their beings, like Tommy Wilhelm in ***Seize the Day***[15] or Herzog in the novel by the same name, they sense the need to expand their lives and include others. But this is short lived. Old habits die hard. Either novels end at this point and leave the reader guessing or the protagonists revert back to their earlier self-absorbed, self-seeking life. In this novella Bellows does a volte face; the protagonist has finally reached adulthood. He commits to the women he loves, even though he does it after four decades; and, he is not for once frightened by repetition and boredom. Harry, or Bellow (we may never finally know) has at last made peace with himself by tapping the perfect, essential self.[16]

Notes and References

1 Saul Bellow, ***The Actual*** (New York: Viking, 1997). All future references to the text are from this edition and marked as TA, except where the novel is named; the references are incorporated in the essay itself.

2 Daniel Fuchs qualifies Bellow's reflective consciousness by stating that Bellow, "is a novelist of intellect, he is not an intellectual novelist" (p. 1). ***Saul Bellow, Vision and Revision*** (New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Press Pvt Ltd., [1984] 1992).

3 Plato's Socrates in the Phaedrus argues about the preexistence of the soul in a pure state where "she beholds justice, temperance and knowledge absolute, not in the form of generation or of relation, which men call existence, but knowledge absolute in existence absolute; and beholding other existences in like manner and, feeding upon them, she passes down into the interior of the heavens and returns home, and there the charioteer putting up his horses at the stall, gives them ambrosia to eat and nectar to drink" [Trans. B. Jowett, ***The Works of Plato*** (New York: The Dial Press, 1945), pp. 405–6]. When the soul gets entombed in a mortal body it forgets the great absolutes and: "Ten

thousand years must elapse before the soul can return to the place from whence she came, for she can not grow her wings in less; only the soul of a philosopher, guileless and true, or the soul of a lover who is not without philosophy, may acquire wings in the third recurring period of a thousand years ..." (p. 407). The Platonic theme of the soul's exile upon earth and the protagonist-lover remembering a preexistent state of absolutes makes him feel alienated from others, on the one hand, and hanker for civility, goodness and humanity on the other. There is, therefore, a constant tension in Bellow between the mundane, sensuous and tempting world and the sublime, transcendental and absolute other-world. Bellow's protagonists are forever escaping the pressures of mechanization and urbanization through the metaphors of travel or orgasmic release.

4 Hillel Halkin, "Mr. Bellow's Planet," ***Commentary***, October 1997, pp. 46–57. In this excellent essay on ***The Actual*** Halkin establishes a connection between the idea of a spiritual exile in Bellow and the image of the soul's exile in Plato. Amy's dead husband Jay Wustrin once presented Trellman a set of Benjamin Jowett's Plato. Halkin writes: "And it is with Plato that the haunting image of the soul's exile in this world enters Western thought.... In reading Saul Bellow, indeed, especially his later fiction, one sometimes suspects that one is reading a closet Platonist. The soul's exile is the grand if frequently submerged theme of many of his novels and stories" (p. 47).

5 Saul Bellow in "Where Do We Go From Here: The Future of Fiction," ***Critical Approaches to Fiction***, ed. Shiv K. Kumar and Keith McKeaned (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1968), pp. 8 and 11; rpt., THE MICHIGAN QUARTERLY REVIEW, Vol. 1, No. 1, (January 1962) pp. 27–33.

Bellow continues,

> The imagination is looking for new ways to express virtue. American society just now is in the grip of certain common falsehoods about virtue—not that anyone really believes them. And these cheerful falsehood beget these opposites in fiction, a dark literature, a literature of victimization, of old people sitting in ash cans waiting for the breath of life to depart. This is the way things stand; only this remains to be added that we have barely begun to comprehend what a human being is, and that the baker's daughter may have revelations and miracles to offer to keep fascinated novelists busy until the end of time.

6 Fuchs, p. 276. Discussing **Humboldt's Gift** Fuchs states, "Bellow makes a humanist's case for the spiritual, and his confession of faith is a preference of the Romantic to the modern view."

7 Mary Eagleton and David Pierce, **Attitudes to Class in the English Novel: From Walter Scott to David Storey**, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979). Writing about the reader response they state,

> The empathy which a reader will often feel with a character—how one identifies with the young Heathcliff in Emily Bronte's WUTHERING HEIGHTS, for example, staring in through the window of the Grange, at the pampered Lintons—springs from fiction's preoccupation with the lived experience of class rather than any abstraction (p. 9).

Again they state,

> The emphasis on how people are formed in their family environment before they enter society illustrates the growing awareness on the part of the novelists of an individual's socialization; the novelists 'clothe' their characters in the garments of class, nationality, status, wealth. But the placing of the individual in relation to his society indicates also the novelist's belief in a direct link between personal correct behaviour and the betterment of society. The hero, through experience, comes to a new self-knowledge, which in turn leads to a change in attitude and behaviour; in carrying out his public duties this change, we are to believe benefits everyone. At the same time, the curtailing of excess and the closer attention to responsibility safeguard the interests of the social group (p. 24).

8 William James, ***The Varieties of Religious Experience*** (1901–2), [1958; rpt. (New York: The New American Library, 1964)]. James adds: "Well this is exactly what asceticism thinks, and it voluntarily takes the initiation. Life is neither farce nor genteel comedy, it says, but something we must sit at in mourning garments, hoping its bitter taste will purge us of our folly," p. 281.

9 Saul Bellow, ***Humboldt's Gift*** [1973; rpt. (New York: Avon Publishers, 1976)]. All future references to the text are from this edition and marked HG, except where the novel is named; the references are incorporated in the essay itself.

10 Saul Bellow, ***Herzog*** [1961; rpt. (New York: Avon Books, 1976)]. All future references to the text are from this edition and marked H, except where the novel is named; the references are incorporated in the essay itself.

11 Even the imagery used to describe Demmie Vonguel and Amy Wustrin are quite similar. Charlie mentions that Demmie was knock-kneed and the "slight silken scrape" of the "knock-knees" would send him "soaring over mountain ranges" as if he were a locust (HG, p. 151). Charlie finds her movements sexually stimulating. Amy too has a faulty walk which is sexually attractive to Harry: "She didn't walk like a student. There was also the faulty management of her pumps. They dropped on the minor beat. This syncopation was the most telling idiosyncrasy of all. It bound the other traits together. What you were then aware of was the ungainly sexiness of her movement and her posture. The years between, with their crises and wars and presidential campaigns, all the transformations of the present age, have had no power to change her looks, the size of her eyes, or the brevity of her teeth. There's the power of Eros for you" (pp. 20–1).

12 Leslie A. Fiedler, ***To The Gentiles***, (New York: Stein and Day, 1972), pp. 62–4. Fiedler elaborates upon the identity of the individual and his sense of loneliness in Bellow thus:

> If man seems at the moment extraordinarily lonely, it is not only because he finds it hard to communicate with his fellows, but because he has lost touch with any over arching definition of himself.
>
> This Bellow realizes, as he realizes that it is precisely in such loneliness, once man learns not to endure but to become that loneliness, that man can rediscover his identity and his fellowship with others. We recognize the Bellow character because he is openly what we are in secret, because he is us without our customary defenses. Such a protagonist lives nowhere except in the City; he camps temporarily in boardinghouses or lonely hotels, sits by himself at the corner table of some seedy restaurant or climbs backbreaking stairways in search of another whose existence no one will admit. He is the man whose wife is off visiting her mother or has just left him; the man who returns to find his house in disorder or inhabited by a squalid derelict; the man who flees his room to follow the funeral of someone he never knew" (p. 64).

13 Erik H. Erikson, ***Dimensions of a New Identity: The 1973 Jefferson Lectures in the Humanities*** (New Delhi: Light and Life Publishers [1974], 1975). Towards the end of the lecture Erikson writes: "In youth you find out what *you care to do* and who you *care to be*—even in changing roles. In young adulthood

you learn whom you care to be with—at work and in private life, not only exchanging intimacies, but sharing intimacy, in adulthood, however, you learn to know what and whom you can *take care of.* I have said this is basic American before; but I must add that as a principle it corresponds to what in Hinduism is called the maintenance of the world ..." (p. 124).

14 Saul Bellow, "Chicago: The City That Was, The City That Is," ***It All Adds Up*** (New York: Viking Penguin, 1994), p. 245.

15 Saul Bellow, ***Seize the Day*** [1951; rpt. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971)]. Towards the end of the novella when Tommy Wilhelm confronts himself and his failures on all fronts, he is pushed by a New York crowd into the cool vault of a chapel where a funeral is taking place of an altogether stranger. Looking into the face of the dead man Tommy begins to cry and his soul is cleansed of its frustrations. At the end of the novel Bellow describes the epiphany thus:

> The flowers and lights fused ecstatically in Wilhelm's blind, wet eyes; the heavy sea-like music came up to his ears. It poured into him where he had hidden himself in the center of a crowd by the great and happy oblivion of tears. He heard it and sank deeper than sorrow, through torn sobs and cries the consummation of his heart's ultimate need (pp. 127–8).

Harry too, in the presence of death (both Harry and Amy are at the Jewish cemetery) realizes the power of love and comes closer to his "heart's ultimate need."

16 James Wood, "Essences Rising," ***The New Republic***, June 16, 1997 remarks that "Like all his work, it is about our wrestle for the essential amid the piles of our emotional slack.... Yet they are saying the same, which is that we do not have the right soul-privacy, the essential grounding that would enable us to communicate with ourselves and with each other" (pp. 41 and 44).