

Those Near At Hand: Family In The Novels Of Saul Bellow

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Introduction: Men in Crises

It is fitting that the first page of *The Adventures of Augie March* consists of two disparate statements on the protagonist's origins: first Augie's bold declaration of his identity and independence, then the recalled song in which his brother Georgie declares "evwy, evwy love Mama" (Augie March 1). Though the two statements of the March brothers may seem unrelated, they serve as precise illustrations of a division that appears not only within Augie March, but also within his fellow Bellovian protagonists Tommy Wilhelm, Eugene Henderson, Moses Herzog, and Charlie Citrine. Each man finds a tension between his obligations to and dependence upon his family and the desire to be self-sufficient in the world. This tension is manifested in many different ways, but inevitably leads the protagonists into a state of crisis, which is the starting point for Bellow's narratives.

The inability to function within society often manifests itself in the protagonists' troubled financial lives. As modern adults are bound by society to earn and spend, money becomes Bellow's repeated symbol of the adult world. Just as the slovenly Tommy Wilhelm nonetheless wears fashionable Jack Fagman shirts, each of the men possesses at least the outward trappings of being a modern adult. Even if Henderson wears a modern form of motley within his house and Herzog fails to match the perfectly proper fashion sense of his brothers, the five men are careful to appear in public wearing the suits and shirts dictated by their surroundings, which is reflected in Bellow's constant supply of sartorial details. However, their mastery of the world of money and business rarely extends beyond their businesslike attire. Augie hops from job to job and continually

ricochets between Depression-era penury and a luxurious life as the financial beneficiary of the Renlings, Thea, and his brother Simon. Wilhelm faces a harrowing breakdown of his daily life as he sinks closer and closer to bankruptcy, while Henderson suffers from the opposite condition, distressing over the sheer magnitude of his possessions and dependents, unable to find any true vocation since he can provide without having to work. Herzog and Citrine share dwindling bank accounts and lack Wilhelm's concern over approaching penury.¹ In contrast to the workers who surround them, Bellow's men are not defined by their work, but rather by the fact that they do not work.

If life within the world is indeed centered around money, it is the role of the adult to provide money and the role of the child to accept the monetary care of the parents. In failing to fit properly into the financial world, Bellow's men demonstrate their ambivalence and confusion over whether or not they are truly adults. Though the characters are often tempted to flee from the world of business in favor of more utopian schemes for life such as Augie's pipe dream of a school for orphans, such a move endangers their very identities. To reject financial concerns is, in effect, to renounce one's adulthood and resume dependence upon others. Tony Tanner observes this in the case of Tommy Wilhelm, who discovers at novel's end "that the business of life and the world's business are very different, may even be mutually hostile. Yet they are not easily disentangled and there can be no simple flight from one to the other" (Tanner Saul Bellow 70). Living without worrying about money in a monetary world requires the benefaction of another, and this position is untenable to the men, as exemplified by

¹ Herzog and Citrine also share the feature of having a rich brother who makes a late intervention to offer slight financial assistance, though neither Will Herzog nor Julius Citrine obviates the financial burdens. The biological family can still be depended upon for some measure of support, but as adults Herzog and Citrine cannot fully enter the childhood role of dependence upon blood relations.

Augie. While staying at Thea's apartment, Augie finds that his paramour keeps her cash in the refrigerator, making it a symbolic form of sustenance that she, mother-like, provides for him. This disparity in their relationship spells its own doom, for Augie requires freedom and cannot stand to be dependent upon the nourishment of the Fenchel fortune, which would force him to forever be a child under the power of Thea.

Though he maintains something of a carefree attitude towards money, Augie March is truly enveloped by it. As a boy he begins working, notably for the end of supporting his family, and his ensuing story is essentially one of a career path. It does not matter to Augie what his job is: dog groomer, research assistant, petty thief, or teacher, they are all equally disposable to him. What is critical is that he has some means of earning money. Though he may dream of greater deeds, Augie must play by the world's rules, and he willingly submits to the demands of the working world, first because he must help support his family, then simply because he is an adult.

The other men share Augie's entanglement with the financial world in their own ways. Tommy Wilhelm is certainly not a rich man, but neither is he a complete pauper. The means of earning money exist for him if he would just return to the Rojax Corporation and to his wife Margaret. Yet this creates a conflict of interest between Tommy's emotions and his financial concerns, as he feels slighted by Rojax and manipulated by Margaret. His individuality and his feelings are at odds with his business and keep him in the position of a child looking to his father for support.

Eugene Henderson at first appears to be a singular individual, towering as a monolith of physical strength. His perceived individuality stems from the dependency of so many and so much upon his fortune. He is defined by the fact that he must give to

others, if purely in the form of money, yet his mind's cry of "I want, I want" shows the desire to take in something from the world. His relationships with others are defined by the transfer of money, and his need is for another facet to his interactions with the world. Charlie Citrine, the other financially successful protagonist, similarly has his interpersonal relations characterized by money. It is through the exchange of blank checks that Von Humboldt Fleisher and he are made symbolic brothers, and through Humboldt's use of his check that their relationship ends. At novel's end, Citrine relents to Rinaldo Cantabile's demands to sue for film royalties only when the gangster points out that some of the royalties will go to care for Humboldt's elderly uncle Waldemar Wald. It is a final act of renewal for Citrine and Humboldt's fraternity, but it can only come once Citrine has been bankrupted. His destitution allows him to rebuild his financial and personal lives simultaneously and with the balance that had previously been absent.

Moses Herzog may be the protagonist who shows the least concern for money and for the adult monetary world; he is, after all, the protagonist who is the most removed from any world that exists outside of his own cranium. His most telling use of money is not in any transaction, but rather when he retrieves his father's pistol with the intention of killing Madeleine and Gersbach. Instead of simply pocketing the gun, Herzog cradles it in rubles taken from his father's desk so as to make it less obvious that he is carrying a firearm. The intellectual Herzog is attempting a violent act that is completely foreign to his character, and he must sheathe it in money, an attempt to disguise his crazed intentions with the cover of the financial world that surrounds him. His hope is that the money will hide his true intentions from the rest of the world. That Herzog sheathes his gun in outdated Russian rubles is utterly characteristic; the man who spends so much time

ineffectually inhabiting the past chooses an unusable old currency as his disguise in the world, a true alignment of his eccentric mind and his wallet.

The confusion and tension over whether the protagonists are to inhabit the roles of children or adults is apparent in another dimension of Bellow's novels—the very names of the men. Of the five, three are known by childlike diminutive names: Augie, Tommy, and Charlie. Tommy Wilhelm even has the distinction of being called by two kid names, as his father shortens his original first name of Wilhelm to the infantile Wilky. The endurance of these childhood nicknames denotes an inability to leave childhood behind and enter fully into adulthood; the men are trapped between the two states. This is particularly apparent in the comparison of Augie to the other two March brothers, Simon and Georgie. Simon inhabits fully the role of the adult, earning large amounts of money and swelling his girth in a manner that echoes Thea Fenchel's equivalent treatment of food and money. Most importantly, he is never known by anything but his full first name, while the mentally handicapped youngest March brother is only known by the childish name Georgie. Augie inhabits a chronological and philosophical middle ground in between his adult older brother and his permanent man-child younger brother. His name links him to Georgie, yet Augie is forced to exist in a world of Simon March and his peers.

Tommy Wilhelm's name gains an additional measure of symbolism through the fact that he has changed his name from the original Wilhelm Adler. Eschewing the name Adler, which links him to his father and biological family, he keeps the name Wilhelm, which was given by his biological family (and presumably his father) as a marker of his own individuality. Throughout the novel, the third-person narrator continuously refers to

the protagonist as “Wilhelm”, creating ambiguity over his identity. “Wilhelm” could equally denote him as the immature son of Dr. Adler or as the independent adult who has attempted to increase his independence from his family. His uncertain nature makes him a “large, odd excited, fleshy, blond, abrupt personality named Wilhelm, or Tommy [...] this Wilky, or Tommy Wilhelm” (Seize 35). This ambiguity of identity cannot be resolved and it indeed creates the anguish that plagues Tommy Wilhelm during the one fateful day of the novel.

There are, though, two protagonists who are known by their given names, Eugene Henderson and Moses Herzog. Their names are equally telling of their respective crises, each in its own manner. Throughout his travels, Henderson never introduces himself by or goes by his full name; rather, he exclusively uses his family name. It is particularly notable that when among the Arnewi and Wariri characters who each go by just one name, he chooses his last name over his individualizing first name. This effectively effaces the meaning of his first name (“good birth”), reflecting his feelings of inadequacy in relation to his father and older brother. Henderson instead clings to the surname that links him to great ancestral statesmen whom he regards with reverence. Defining himself as a descendent instead of as a well-born man in his own right leaves Henderson, like his fellow protagonists, a grown child surrounded by adults.

The meaning of Moses Herzog’s name is, fittingly, caught up in historical and religious significance. That he shares his name with a minor character in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, a very different book involving the interplay of antiquity and modernity, hints that there is much symbolism in Moses Elkanah Herzog.² His first name links him to a

² In addition to his significant first name, Herzog’s middle name Elkanah, meaning “God has made”, points to a Biblical antecedent, that of God’s son. Herzog recalls Christ not only in his belief in his own

great Hebrew patriarch and serves as a reminder of his heritage. However, Herzog possesses no other overt ties to Judaism, as shown by his contrast with Sandor Himmelstein, who converses with rabbis and despairingly asks “what good are these reform rabbis?” (Herzog 99). Herzog’s academic project is studying the interplay of Christianity and Romanticism, showing his awareness of the interplay of past and present. This is fitting as he bears the name Moses, but is forced to live in a modern world far removed from the Hebrew lawgiver. Herzog thus lives in dual roles, as both patriarch and child, both in the ancient world and in the contemporary world.

Herzog may display the clearest internal division between past and present, as evidenced in his letters, but this crisis of identity is common to his brethren Augie, Wilhelm, Henderson, and Citrine. All five of the characters exist in an unsure state of existence, simultaneously trying to be both adults and children and trying constantly to both transcend the material world and exist comfortably within its boundaries. While these opposing desires fuel their actions, they are most readily evident in the biological and constructed families that surround each of the men. The five protagonists distance themselves from their progenitors and siblings, display great ambivalence towards all of their lovers, and all fear the prospects of raising children when they themselves are not entirely adults. How each man balances the demands of childhood and adulthood and reconciles individuality with family life is the ultimate story within Bellow’s novels, and the resolution to which each one builds.

unbearable suffering, but also in his wife Madeleine (whose name is etymologically descended from “Magdalene”) and his friend Gersbach, whose betrayal and flaming red hair recall traditional depictions of Judas Iscariot.

For each of these five protagonists, the biological family of parents and siblings is frequently referenced but rarely seen. Augie makes a handful of visits to his mother and Georgie, and has periodic interactions with his brother Simon; Wilhelm lives in the same building as his father, who spends most of his time avoiding his son; Henderson leaves his family in America to explore Africa; Herzog reminisces at length about his family, but has only brief visits with his daughter and one of his siblings; lastly, Citrine makes only one family visit to the house of his brother Julius. As the men reach maturity and wish to establish independent lives of their own, they naturally distance themselves from their biological families. They understand a basic human need to escape from the childhood state of utter dependence upon others in order to become independent adults. This process is not unique to them, as all adults must leave behind their progenitors to start their own families, but Bellow's protagonists never fully embrace this move.

Though the men wish to be self-sufficient, they form bonds with their fellow adults in a manner that mimics the family relationships they have left behind. Robert Baker likens the characters to individual islands that "form archipelagos, and far beneath the surface all are rooted to the same ocean floor" (Baker 71); beneath the surface image of individuality lies a foundational bond to others. Augie March notes how the cooperation and support of others is necessary to accomplish goals that are beyond the capabilities of any one person. This is how Augie defines "the struggle of humanity, to recruit others to your version of what's real" (Augie March 437). Implicit in Augie's statement is the truth that individual identities cannot be wholly separated from society; humans shape one another and depend upon interpersonal relationships to affirm their

identities. From this necessity, the protagonists form surrogate families consisting of fellow would-be independent entities.

For instance, each protagonist either begins his narrative with a surrogate father-figure, or quickly finds one. Augie enters a filial relationship with Einhorn, Tommy Wilhelm with Dr. Tamkin, and Henderson with King Dahfu, while Herzog and Citrine find hybrid paternal and fraternal relationships with Valentine Gersbach and Von Humboldt Fleisher, and perhaps Rinaldo Cantabile. Similar relationships are created to fill in for the other broken bonds of the biological family. It is a measure of the adulthood and independence of the protagonists that they are capable of creating their new non-biological families. The act of leaving behind the relatives who were assigned to them without consent in favor of those who are selected is an act of individual affirmation, as the surrogate family members are chosen to fulfill the needs and goals of each protagonist.

Though humans in Bellow's world are necessarily social beings, some measure of individuality can be gained through the formation of a fabricated adult family. This family is an attempt to solve the dilemma that Tony Tanner finds in Bellow's fiction, "that too much autonomy involves loss of world, while too little leads to loss of self" (*City of Words* 72). All of these men, even the wildly antisocial Henderson, require and seek relationships with others, but always with the fear that attachment and commitment to others will ultimately rob them of their individuality and freedom. This concern arises as the adults chosen to affirm the protagonists' identities equally seek affirmation of their own chosen selves, much as characters such as the Renlings exercise more and more

influence over Augie until he feels compelled to flee their constrictions, which he “knew would suffocate me” (Augie 169).

Although each of the five men forges his own non-biological family to support him, this act brings them neither contentment nor completeness. Quite the opposite, the protagonists inevitably find difficulty accepting and assimilating into both families, the biological and the constructed. They exist in a middle ground of alienation from both their forebears and their chosen companions, unable to comfortably be a part of either family. This alienation represents a struggle to find a place between the worlds of childhood and adulthood, between being sons and fathers simultaneously, between providing for others and desiring the care of others. Though each protagonist believes that he has struck a balance between individuality and independence by creating his own adult family, their internal struggles continue as these constructed families also fail to meet their needs. Surrogate family members either try to confine the independently-minded protagonists or fail to fulfill their ideal roles as care-givers. The former category is exemplified by controlling characters such as Thea Fenchel and Renata Koffritz, the latter by Valentine Gersbach and Dr. Tamkin, who fail to be a brother to Herzog and a father to Wilhelm.

Due to the failures of the constructed families, which are themselves meant to rectify the failures of biological families, the central characters of Bellow's novels suffer an inability to function in relationships with these family members and in relation to society in general. Augie March floats buoyantly from experience to experience, but is incapable of forming either a definite personality or lasting relationships. Tommy Wilhelm finds his situation unbearable, but can think of no solutions. Eugene Henderson

acts the boor without knowing why; Moses Herzog sinks deeper and deeper into his crazed letters; Charlie Citrine both dreads and desires encounters with his fellow Chicagoans. It is Bellow's moral and novelistic project for these five men to reconcile himself to his situation in the world and to regain the capacity to form meaningful connections with others.

Chapter 1: Parents and Siblings

The biological family serves multiple roles for Bellow's protagonists. It is a source of protection and nurture, a representation of cultural heritage, and a means of introduction into adult life. Though Augie, Wilhelm, Henderson, Herzog, and Citrine must leave their parents and siblings behind in order to affirm themselves as true adults, these influences remain within them, often accompanied by a desire for an idealized form of parental or fraternal love. This desire is born of the imperfect love that they receive from their relatives, leading the men to find substitutes in their constructed families, though they never succeed entirely in finding an ideal family life.

In their dealings with their parents, the five protagonists display a particularly marked anxiety over their alternately feminine and masculine traits. Though the men possess characteristics that they associate with both sexes, they show a tendency towards traditional associations of fathers with a physical masculinity and mothers with a delicate femininity. Distressed by the mixture of these two, in their own personalities Bellow's men often attempt to distance themselves from that which they regard as feminine, even as they engage in supposedly feminine pursuits. To them, femininity is generally contained in intellectual pursuits, the opposite of the hard manual labor that they associate with father figures. The impulse to be manly leads them to lament like Tommy Wilhelm's that "I should have done hard labor all my life" (Seize 4) or the intellectual Moses Herzog who has "not the hands of a man whose occupation was mental, but of a born bricklayer or housepainter" (Herzog 102). Yet these attempts to fulfill a stereotypical sense of American masculinity are always undone by the feminine aspects

of the protagonists' characters; one example is Herzog's murder attempt being foiled by a mundane traffic accident as he chauffeurs his young daughter around Chicago.

One of the most frequent symbols of masculinity in Bellow's novels is military service, and it is always presented as a failed enterprise. An early comic example that presages many military experiences is young Augie March's belief that his absent father "was a soldier" (Augie 7); his older brother Simon quickly corrects this, noting that the uniform Augie remembers seeing on their father was that of an ignoble laundry-truck driver. Yet this association of the military with some desirable form of masculinity persists, leading Augie to have a voluntary hernia operation, Tommy Wilhelm to pass up a family exemption, and Eugene Henderson to circumvent age restrictions with his family's political cachet, all so that they can serve in World War II and prove themselves as American men. All three fail to achieve military greatness: Augie's stint in the Merchant Marine is mostly spent defending himself from his crazed comrade Hymie Basteshaw, Wilhelm works an office position, and Henderson only gets to use his commando training in his disastrous destruction of the Arnewi water supply. In Henderson's case, he is in part imitating his idealized and idolized brother Dick, who served with distinction in World War I. Henderson avoids dwelling on Dick's mad death back home, potentially the result of shell-shock and a sign that masculinity has its limitations. Moses Herzog also serves in World War II, but is immediately undermined by his fellow servicemen, who regard the intellectual man as being somehow foreign and effeminate. Herzog's naval service ends with his ship lost in fog on a training maneuver and his exclamation over the radio to the entire fleet "We're lost! Fucked!" (Herzog 175).

His utter despair at this exceedingly minor problem signals his unsuitability to be a military man, as does the asthma that secures his discharge shortly thereafter.

Bellow's male characters demonstrate their idealization of masculinity and wariness towards femininity through their attitudes towards their parents. Henderson obsessively seeks acceptance from his dead father with hardly any mention of his mother; similarly, he feels anguish over the death of his exemplar brother Dick, but only makes oblique references to an anonymous sister who also died young. Tommy Wilhelm desperately wants the love of his father, and like Henderson makes only fleeting comments about his sister. Wilhelm's sister mirrors him in that she too has changed her name and distanced herself from their family, but Wilhelm chooses to live under the same roof as Dr. Adler rather than turning to his potentially more sympathetic female sibling. The pull is always away from feminine influences that might corrupt the strong masculinity that Bellow's male characters desire but can never possess in a pure form. Though the protagonists are resistant, it is a simple fact of the world that just as each person must have a father and a mother, each person must have both masculine and feminine aspects and influences in his or her personality.

Among his many reminiscences, Moses Herzog recalls how his mother pushed for her children to be educated. Her feminine influence brings about unphysical and unmanly intellectualism, and in the present events of *Herzog*, the intellectual life has failed the protagonist. Herzog is betrayed by his life as an academic, the life started by his mother. Learning of Madeleine's infidelity in a letter from Lucas Asphalter, Herzog is literally betrayed by his life of letters. As a historian he has studied written knowledge, but the letter uses written knowledge to undermine his marriage and his masculinity. Herzog

desperately writes his own letters in an attempt to regain his lost control over knowledge. In this state of failure, Herzog fondly recalls his father, a sometimes-violent bootlegger, as “a sacred being, a king” (Herzog 161). Yet Father Herzog is an insufficient vision of masculinity: he is physically overpowered by his criminal partners and his bootlegging operation is robbed.

Moses may wish to take on the masculine aspects of his father, but the traits that they share reveal their feminine sides. Father Herzog threatens to shoot Moses with the revolver that his son later takes to kill Madeleine and Gersbach; in both cases the would-be killer is ineffectual and falls well short of any hardboiled adeptness at violence. What Moses repeatedly remembers as his happiest time with his father is a scene in which the bootlegger allows his children to paste fake labels onto his bottles. Though not an intellectual, Father Herzog is in fact instilling Moses with the basis of his career: seeing how the bottles become whatever the labels say they are, young Moses learns that words shape reality. His thoughts and work are an attempt “to change reality into language” (Pearce 77) that he can control; this is why the memory is so vivid for the intellectual Moses, while his businessman brother Will has forgotten it. Even the activity that most defines Herzog in the present of his story, letter-writing, has its roots in an intellectual male. Herzog’s grandfather was a scholar and “wrote long letters in Hebrew” (Herzog 151). This activity may have symbolized a male role to his Old World forebears, but in Herzog’s present milieu it becomes effete and feminized, causing further confusion in Moses’ conception of masculinity.

Herzog’s personality points to the way that “Bellow’s ‘real women’ are firmly settled inside his ‘real men’” (Wilson 74). To flee from femininity is to deny part of the

very nature of the male characters, creating turmoil that must be resolved. This resolution is suggested, when Charlie Citrine symbolically has not only Von Humboldt Fleisher interred in a new grave, but Fleisher's mother as well. This comes at the very end of *Humboldt's Gift*, when Citrine appears to have finally struck a balance with his feminine nature, and seems to posthumously grant his troubled friend this same peace through the dual burial.

Extensive symbolism is found in the case of Eugene Henderson amongst the matrilineal Arnewi and the patrilineal Wariri. The two tribes are described in oppositional terms that heighten their gendered natures. Henderson states that "the Arnewi are milk-drinkers exclusively" (Henderson 61), a designation that likens them to infants dependent upon a mother's breast. The frogs are referred to as a "plague" (Henderson 61) and recall the plagues of Exodus and making Henderson a potential patriarchal Moses. He believes that he can kill the frogs specifically because he is an outsider, a man unrestricted by the same boundaries as the feminine Arnewi. His failure shows an inability to fully understand femininity or his own person.

The Wariri exemplify the masculine, beginning with the tribal name that evokes war and militarism and the masculinity ascribed to such concepts. The Wariri broke off from the Arnewi long ago, leaving behind feminine society in order to create a purely masculine one. This is perhaps the ideal that Henderson and the other men yearn for, to be born of woman and yet wholly separated from her. Ultimately, King Dahfu and his tribe exemplify the limits of masculinity to the same extent that the passive Arnewi demonstrate the limits of femininity.

Henderson finds his masculine ideal in the form of King Dahfu, but for all of his physical might and self-assuredness, Dahfu is reluctant macho-man. Wariri society is moored to a cyclical tradition of violence, killing kings and replacing them with new kings to be killed. It is a social order that embodies a boyhood desire to supplant a powerful father-figure, always through violence.³ As a young man, Dahfu tried to escape from this society, studying abroad and nearly becoming a doctor, a profession involving a quasi-maternal nurturing of others. Yet upon the death of his father Gmilo, Dahfu finds that he is inextricably enmeshed in his masculine tribe and forsakes medicine to take up the kingship, knowing that he will be murdered as his predecessor Gmilo was. Dahfu displays simultaneous understanding of the need for masculinity and its dangers, as he notes that “it is a continuity-matter, for if the father did not strike the son, they would not be alike” (Henderson 213), but he also sees that “Any good man will try to break the cycle” (Henderson 297). Dahfu attempts to defy and alter the Wariri rituals of royal succession by not retrieving the lion cub that represents Gmilo, but he is ultimately unable to accomplish this end without the assistance of Eugene Henderson.

Henderson considers himself an outsider to the Arnewi, and though he spends much of the novel with them, he is equally out of place among the Wariri. His outsider status amongst the Wariri is symbolized by his unique ability to move a statue of the female deity Mummah, whose name is a homophone with “mama” and the many variants thereof. Though Dahfu is ultimately killed in fulfilling his traditional duties, by scheming to make the outsider Henderson his successor, he does manage to break the violent cycle of Wariri society. Henderson, possessing a femininity that Dahfu does not, is able to

³ Bellow resisted Freudianism, but the Wariri seem to be a literal incarnation of the Oedipus complex. This may be Bellow performing a burlesque of Freud, in which Henderson foregoes analysis and instead finds his therapy in the physical world.

abandon the tribe out of affection for his family and the desire to return to them. This leaves the Wariri kingless, forcing them to construct a new social order, and creating the possibility of a less violent, less hyper-masculine one.

Dahfu brings Henderson to recognize his own feminine aspects through an education with the lioness Atti. Atti is a feminine creature who embodies great power and danger, and is much reviled by the masculine Wariri, who “were charging him with desertion” (Henderson 256) when Dahfu leaves his court to visit the lioness. Henderson experiences great fear upon first encountering the lioness, a scene that serves as a fantastical manifestation of his fears of giving in to his feminine tendencies. Atti serves to demonstrate that femininity can coexist with power and strength in the same being. When Dahfu makes Henderson roar in imitation of Atti, he is pushing the fearful American towards an existence as a man who accepts his state of being simultaneously masculine and feminine. Dahfu, being a masculine Wariri can only admire the power of Atti; Henderson is the one who is capable of roaring and fully emulating her. This transformation is the goal of the emotional and intellectual journey that occurs within Henderson as he makes his physical journey into the wilds of Africa.

Henderson undergoes a mighty struggle in order to reconcile his own innate femininity, and Augie March expends no less energy in search of his masculine identity. Augie is unique among the protagonists in his existence as a fatherless man. With no original figure in his life by which to define masculinity, Augie is set on an endless path of finding and rejecting artificial father figures. Wilhelm, Henderson, and Herzog each only have to grapple with their one biological father, and each finds a single male acquaintance to serve as a substitute. But for Augie, a single Tamkin, Dahfu, or Gersbach

will not suffice, as Augie's surrogate fathers do not simply try to fulfill his definitions of masculinity, but rather supply these very definitions. Although he is unused to filial roles, Augie maintains a respect for fathers, stating that Basteshaw "didn't respect his old father. I didn't approve of that" (Augie 542). He may not have a father, but Augie March has an intuitive sense of respect for and reliance upon fathers, leading him to create his own father-figures.

Augie surveys the world of fathers by finding one and soon replacing him (or her) with a new one once the father figure begins exercising paternal control over him. Having never been subject to the authority of his biological father, Augie strenuously avoids losing any measure of his freedom even as he seeks new fathers. His eschewing of each father figure is analogous to how the other protagonists replace their biological fathers with other individuals; it is the nature of Bellow's fathers to be replaced. In the entirety of *The Adventures of Augie March*, the only deaths to occur are those of the two most powerful "fathers", Grandma Lausch and the Commissioner. Grandma Lausch is the first father figure in Augie's life, controlling the March family in the place of his delinquent father, and the Commissioner is capable of reducing his son, the would-be father figure Einhorn, to the status of a dependent child. Augie can simply ignore other father figures; at a certain level of power, the fathers can only disappear from the narrative in death.

No matter how strongly the protagonists display a marked aversion to the feminine influences of their mothers and establish closer ties to their fathers, maternal elements persist in their lives. Following the example of Herzog's parents, the fathers tend to be viewed as strong protectors while mothers are loving nurturers. The five male

protagonists continually strive to be strong enough to protect themselves, even if these efforts fail, but their desire to be nurtured is more complex. As they are not entirely sure of their adult status, the men lapse into a childlike yearning for a nurturing figure in their lives. This yearning will affect their relationships with women and with their children, but also creates a more generalized need for maternal care. For example, instead of facing the disaster of his marriage to Madeleine, Herzog “had been hoping for some definite sickness which would send him to a hospital [...] and his sister Helen might come to take care of him” (Herzog 16). The fantasy is for a form of the love and caring expected by an infant of its mother, which will soothe the men who find themselves nearly broken by the cruelties of the adult world. In Herzog’s case, his brother Will does indeed come to his side and provide loving support, which serves as a sort of therapy that allows Herzog to overcome his letter-writing mania.

The characters, though, can never entirely flee to childlike states of dependency—to do so would be to forsake all freedom. Thus Herzog may be cured of his letter-writing mania, but his peaceful condition at novel’s end has no certain future. Augie similarly ends his narrative in what appears to be a nurturing relationship with his wife Stella, but any sense of optimism is tempered by the abruptness of their marriage and Augie’s accounts of her deceitfulness, which seem to presage later conflict and further adventures for him. Henderson, too, ends his tale in a state of harmony, but his is achieved only through grief and hardship; he benefits not from the introduction of a maternal nurturing, but from witnessing the failure and impossibility of pure masculinity. Henderson never achieves his goal of living up to his father’s expectations. He instead abandons this

project as folly, and commits himself to his current family rather than enslaving himself to the legacy of his forefathers.

Charlie Citrine comes the closest to mirroring Moses Herzog in several respects. Both have strong childhood memories of dependency and the need to be cared for, as the two men share nearly identical childhood stays in sanatoria, much like Bellow himself. In their respective novels, Herzog and Citrine are rapidly falling from positions of success into near-penury and social turmoil. Both men also have encounters with a financially successful older brother, whom they refer to by a “family name” that recalls their Jewish heritage, Elya for Will Herzog and Ulick for Julius Citrine. While the Herzog brothers exist in a one-sided dynamic that has Will aiding his younger sibling, the Citrine brothers’ relationship possesses greater nuance. Both brothers are seeking something from their relationship; Charlie is looking for money and fraternal affection, and Julius “finds his brother’s books unreadable [...] But he wants his children to learn languages, and he wants his painting of the ocean” (Fuchs 246), referring to a work of art that Julius commissions his brother to find for him. Julius desires Charlie’s assistance and approval as an intellectual, needing culture from his brother in a way that mirrors Charlie’s need for money.

Yet while Charlie openly speaks of his love for his brother, Julius is more guarded in both giving and receiving fraternal love. Charlie sees this in his brother and theorizes that “Possibly he saw brotherly love as an opening for exploitation” (Humboldt 244), which must be avoided by businessmen like Julius. Julius lives wholly in the material world of business and finance, unlike Charlie, who only makes forays into the monetary world. It is Charlie who speaks of “Big Business with its fear of femininity” (Humboldt

27), an indictment that would carry over onto Julius. Charlie may have his own fears of the feminine, but Julius is even more committed to a life that denies it, setting himself up as a successful patriarch, a Henderson minus the failures. Yet Julius is also vulnerable, finding that his girth, necessitates a serious heart surgery.⁴ Just as with Bellow's other male characters, Julius's attempts to make himself into an invincible male power undermine his very existence. Charlie's role is to provide a form of feminine nurturing for his brother, providing access to the feminized world of art and intellect. Charlie's effectiveness may be hampered by his own difficulties, but their relationship remains one of mutual exchange.

Charlie Citrine's relationship with his brother Julius also serves as a mirror image of his relationship with Von Humboldt Fleisher. Fleisher is an established poet who can guide the young Citrine in the literary world. Once Citrine achieves success with his play *Von Trenck*, Fleisher gradually seeks financial support from Citrine, proposing that they become "blood brothers" by exchanging blank checks. The fraternal relationship between the two writers depends upon the exchange of money and culture just as the relationship between the Citrine brothers does, except that Charlie Citrine is in opposite roles in the two relationships. He thus takes on varied masculine and feminine positions, which he wildly oscillates between. As a result, Citrine does not quite have a single Tamkin or Dahfu or Gersbach to whom he attaches himself. Fleisher might have served this role, but he is deceased prior to the novel, denying Citrine his best father figure. Instead he tries to maintain numerous varied relationships with oddities such as Thaxter, Swiebel, and Cantabile. With an awareness of his inherent masculinity and femininity, Citrine seems

⁴ Julius Citrine's girth also recalls Simon March's concurrent growth in wealth and rotundity, creating a link between the financially successful figures.

intent on exploring both, but his self-knowledge is incomplete. Each relationship both provides and demands nurture from Citrine, and each proves an education for him as he seeks a balance between his two natures.

The one Bellovian protagonist who does not receive any of the familial nurturing that he needs is the one who voices his need for it the most desperately, Tommy Wilhelm. In addition to the financial support that he urgently needs, Tommy fervently desires familial love. His mother is deceased, and his sister is far removed from his story, whereas the other four protagonists think about and interact with their siblings at length. Tommy is thus forced to turn to his father for nurturing affection, and it is considerably lacking. Dr. Adler not only refuses to give Tommy financial help, but also “behaved toward his son as he had formerly done toward his patients, and it was a great grief to Wilhelm” (Seize 8). This distresses Tommy because although doctors care for patients, it is a business relationship that exists between them. Tommy’s relationship with his father is tainted by the attitudes of the financial world that Julius Citrine and Simon March inhabit, a world in which Tommy is a failure. Tommy’s attempts to gain any other form of love from his father meet only with failure. Being the only member of his family without a college education may allow Tommy to avoid “the distasteful oedipal competition” (Raper 75) by not trying to replace his father as a figure of power, but it also leads him into his disastrous stay in Hollywood and ignoble sales career, garnering disapproval from Dr. Adler, making it an ultimately misguided exercise in filial piety.

The inability to find familial love leads Tommy to seek it elsewhere. He tries to find it in any interpersonal relationship, perceiving the crowd in a subway tunnel as “his brothers and sisters” (Seize 81), whereas by contrast Herzog views his fellow subway

riders as experiencing “brotherhood in one of its cheapest forms” (Herzog 192), hypothesizing almost in a direct rebuttal to Wilhelm that “they return to the mass agitated, made fervent by their failure [...] Experiencing a raging consumption of potato love” (Herzog 193). Yet Tommy treasures even this simulacrum of love, and for the same reason he turns to Dr. Tamkin as a replacement for his unloving father. Tamkin resists classification; his motives are kept shrouded, even if it is undeniable that he loses Tommy’s savings and dispenses an unsatisfying, dimly outlined philosophy. At worst, Tamkin blatantly exploits Tommy, while at best their relationship mirrors that of Tommy and Dr. Adler in that Tamkin treats Tommy as a patient. A dubious non-medical doctor, Tamkin gives his patient Tommy a relationship that appears to be loving in comparison to the treatment he receives from Adler. Tamkin exists as Tommy’s imagined siblings in the subway tunnel do, the most attractive option facing a man whose pleas for a nurturing figure in his life cannot be filled.

In addition to their role in shaping the masculine and feminine aspects of the characters, Bellow’s families function as symbols of ancestry and heritage. With the exception of Henderson, the protagonists are descended from Jewish immigrants, though this aspect of their identity is relegated solely to their dealings with family members. None of the protagonists are very demonstrably Jewish: rabbis and synagogues have no place in Bellow’s novels. The minor character Sandor Himmelstein may go to temple, but the protagonist Moses Herzog expends far more time studying the Christian bible. Certain characters go by different names with family members than they do in their everyday life, such as Will “Elya” Herzog and Julius “Ulick” Citrine, signaling that the

heritage embodied within the family is separate from the outside world. The glimpse given into the Citrine family history comes when Charlie notes that his Eastern European ancestors originally spelled their last name “Tsitrine”, another example of names conforming to situations rather than being permanent bastions of cultural heritage.

The abandonment of Jewish heritage occurs in part, though not entirely, as a prerequisite for success in America. Existing in a country founded by and largely controlled by Protestants of Anglo-Saxon extraction, Bellow’s men set aside their Jewish identity in order to achieve success. Tommy Wilhelm changes his name and moves to Hollywood in an era lacking in overtly Jewish stars, Moses Herzog founds his reputation on the study of the decidedly gentile subjects of Christianity and Romanticism, and Charlie Citrine writes about German noblemen and Italian explorers. This move away from ancestry exists in all characters who achieve success in the material world, regardless of their generation. Old Dr. Adler lives in easy means due to his wealth and completely ignores his family. In doing so, Adler “thinks of himself as totally self-reliant, a self-made man, the American-Puritan-Protestant-Business ethic incarnate” (Raper 76), a model of American assimilation and business success. Similarly, Citrine notes that his “father became an American too and so did Julius. They stopped all that immigrant loving. Only I persisted, in my childish way” (Humboldt 299). Julius is a financial success because he fully accepts American ways, while Charlie keeps some slight vestiges of their heritage.

For Eugene Henderson, the sole gentile protagonist, a problem of leaving behind one’s heritage persists as well. Henderson begins his narrative by speaking of his trip to Africa, but immediately sets off on a tangent explaining his ancestry, family, and history.

It is not until the third chapter of *Henderson the Rain King* that he acknowledges this digression and resumes his African story. In making this digression Henderson exhibits a fixation on his heritage that detracts from his present life, as he feels forever insufficient when considering his famous and eminent forbears. His solution to this is to travel to the birthplace of all human life, to confront the absolute ancestry of humanity. This experience is traumatic and drives Henderson out of his preoccupation with the past and back to his present life with Lily and their children. It is another permutation of the struggle between childhood and adulthood that Bellow's protagonists maintain a form of heritage, but it must be largely ignored in their quotidian lives if they are to exist as functional adults.

Taken in a broader sense, this struggle is also analogous to the process of establishing an American identity. The biological family represents the immigrant cultures from which the protagonists emerge, cultures of the Old World that are left behind in the attempt to become American. As Philip Roth notes, the characters do not define themselves as Jewish-Americans, Russian-Americans, or Ukrainian-Americans, but follow Augie in declaring "without apology or hyphenation, 'I am an American, Chicago born.'" (Roth 142). As America is a New World nation that frequently denies the possession of any single identity or heritage, Bellow's men become American by distancing themselves from their genealogical roots and by forging independent identities. To be an American is analogous to being a true adult in Bellow's world: independence and self-definition must overcome the endless hold of shaping childhood influences.

Though it is never explicitly defined, the characters of Bellow's novels possess a certain sense of what an ordinary American identity is. Notably, this identity has no room for intellectualism. It is based in a gritty physical city world such as the one that the cosmopolitan Citrine finds when he descends from his high-rise apartment. This is reflected on the most eminent intellectual of Bellow's protagonists, Moses Herzog, whose fellow soldiers during World War II "considered him a foreigner" (Herzog 174) on account of his superior intelligence. Ramona at one point attempts to soothe Herzog by declaring "In Argentina they'd call you *macho*—masculine" (Herzog 19), but the problem persists that Moses is not considered manly in America. Given the connection Bellow often observes between intellectualism and femininity, the mainstream American identity would seem to be one that extols masculine strength. However, just as each protagonist fails in his military endeavors, this masculine American-ness is not an ideal, but rather an obstacle that stands between the protagonists and their self-discovery, discovery being the defining feature of America established by Augie and passed down through the novels.

Even if heritage must be relegated to a subordinate role for Bellow's Americans, it is impossible to exist without some form of it, as is evidenced by the case of Augie March. Being fatherless, Augie is in the unique position of having no known heritage. Though the other protagonists must move away from their ancestry, Augie must construct his own. Being born into the heritage-free position of an adult paradoxically makes Augie a permanent child, traipsing carefree through the world in search of parental figures. In order to move beyond childhood, Augie must first create a childhood. His story takes the form of a memoir beginning with his infancy, moving in strict chronological order.

Bellow's other protagonists all exist in stories as adults, and occasionally recall events from their past. Augie does not do this because his childhood is inseparable from his adulthood; *The Adventures of Augie March* recalls his entire history as a way of creating a childhood state for Augie, a state from which he can move forward as an adult.

The heritage that is created for Augie is largely embodied in the singed set of the Harvard Classics that he receives from Einhorn. Since he has no known familial heritage, Augie takes on the shared heritage of Western civilization, as given to him by a surrogate father-figure. Books are one of the few constants in Augie's far-reaching journeys, and his act of becoming author to the memoirs that form the novel also makes him the author of his own history and heritage.⁵

Augie's creation of a childhood and a heritage is completed at novel's end, as he symbolically reverses the journeys taken by other characters. As the clear descendents of immigrants, the other protagonists move away from their European roots in order to create American identities. Henderson travels to Africa and Citrine to Europe, but both end their stories by traveling back to America, where their futures undeniably lie. Augie plots an opposite course, moving progressively farther and farther away from America: first to Mexico, then to the Atlantic with Basteshaw, finally ending his story in postwar Europe. It is a journey to establish the heritage that the fatherless Augie lacks, which will allow him to be an adult in the same manner as the other protagonists. His comments on being a Columbus and being brought back in chains are Augie's recognition of his move

⁵ Other circumstantial evidence points to a link between Augie and the classical world: he begins the sixteenth chapter of his narrative with a quotation from *Antony and Cleopatra*, his brother marries into a family with the Latinate surname "Magnus", Thea keeps an eagle named Caligula (an immature bald eagle, Caligula resembles the golden eagle emblem of ancient Rome, but will grow into an American symbol; a fitting allegory for Augie himself). Also, curiously, Augie's full first name is never given. He could possibly be Augustus March, a sort of emperor of America, in kid Roman form.

beyond childhood. Columbus left the Old World to explore America, much as Bellow's characters move beyond immigrant ties to the Old World in order to be American adults. Just as Columbus was brought back to Spain a prisoner, the other protagonists experience crises that cause them to recall the past that never truly leaves them.

Tommy's desire for a different paternal influence in his life, Henderson's obsession with living up to his family name, and Herzog's and Citrine's perpetual reminiscences are the equivalents of Columbus's imprisonment. It is from this state of enchainment that the protagonists must free themselves and return to their American adulthood. It is the case that "Bellow's heroes have to be 'tied up' before they can get their juices flowing" (Wilson 94) just as Augie is tied up by Basteshaw. Yet Augie has not completed his efforts to create a heritage when the Basteshaw incident occurs. As a result, it is not a major crisis in his life, but merely another object lesson for him. This confinement teaches Augie that such crises of enchainment can still occur, instilling him with an awareness that he may someday find himself inextricably bound by his position in the world. This does not undo Augie's sense of adventure and wonderment at the world, but it completes his move into adulthood by making him aware of the pitfalls that one faces at the end of a protected childhood.

Chapter 2: Wives and Lovers

The ambivalence towards nurturing influences present in Bellow's child-parent relationships is equally apparent in the sexual relationships of his protagonists. The women with whom the protagonists are romantically entangled can generally be divided into two groups, the nurturers and the manipulators. The nurturing lovers are generally passive in the relationship, allowing their male counterpart to define its boundaries and providing emotional support for him. The manipulators display much more forceful personalities and forever attempt, and often succeed, to make the men act according to their wishes. The former category includes Lily Henderson, Demmie Vonghel, and Herzog's lovers Sono Oguki and Ramona; the latter category includes more of the wives, with Denise Citrine, Madeleine Herzog, and Margaret Wilhelm, as well as Renata Koffritz and Thea Fenchel. There are examples of female characters who are difficult to classify as either nurturers or manipulators, who may constitute a third category; examples of this are Daisy Herzog, Frances Henderson, Stella March, and Tommy Wilhelm's lover Olive. This unclassifiable nature may be due to a simple lack of details concerning the characters, as is much the case with Olive, but they nevertheless bring out the traits of other female characters through their contrast.

Nurture takes on a different role within Bellow's novels when it comes from characters who are not biological relations of the protagonists. The nurturing that comes from parents and siblings is constricting as it reduces the men to the situation of an infant. Achieving adulthood involves leaving behind the biological family and its propensity to simultaneously nurture and confine its offspring. However, a nearly opposite problem is posed by nurture that originates outside the biological family. The problem created by

nurturing Bellovian lovers is not that they try to mold their men, but rather that their passive support requires that the men possess a firm identity of their own. The nurturers wish to support such an identity in the male characters, but secure identities are difficult to create for Bellow's characters.

The artificial families that the five men construct in their adulthood comprise fellow adults they hope will be capable of supporting the men in a way that makes up for the biological family's failings. The biological family constricts the men by always keeping them in the position of children, creating the desire for relationships that will grant them the comforts of a familial nurture while still allowing them to exist as adult men. However, the men remain conflicted over the extent to which they must abandon the safety of childhood in order to be actualized as adults, and they frequently draw away from lovers who support their adulthood. Lovers such as Ramona who are willing to support the identities of the men make a tacit requisite demand, namely that the chosen man has an identity. When, for instance, Demmie Vonghel voices support for Charlie Citrine's role as a writer and an intellectual, their relationship becomes dependent upon Citrine's ability to fulfill that role. Demmie does not attempt to shape Citrine into a particular type of person; instead she largely conforms herself to Citrine, which necessitates that he have his own distinct identity. Unlike maternal figures, Bellovian lovers nurture what they believe to be fully formed adult personalities, a troubling fact for protagonists who are neither fully adults nor children.

In another example, Lily Henderson wishes to support her husband's chosen identity, but Eugene Henderson finds himself distressed because he lacks a strongly-

defined identity and seeks out the constrictions of Dahfu that serve to impose one upon him.

The distinction between the nurture offered by mothers and that of lovers is apparent in Henderson's casual courtship of Lily. At their first tryst, Lily ensures that her mother will catch the pair, and presumably demand that they legitimize their relationship. Henderson interprets this as an attempt to force him into marriage. This is the sort of restriction that defines maternal nurture, but it comes from Lily's mother instead of from Lily directly, as she is nurturing in a non-maternal role to Henderson. Indeed, after parting icily, the two only become married after Lily has moved out of her mother's house, signifying that there is a difference between mothers and lovers in terms of how they relate to the protagonists. The constriction associated with maternal nurture must be removed before Henderson is willing to enter into marriage.

Tony Tanner notes how the urban "process of turning rubble into forms, forms into rubble, and so on, endlessly, is an important influence on Herzog's thoughts" (City 302), and it affects Herzog's sexual relationships. Herzog sees the continual decay and destruction of human creations and the attempts to resist this through new creations, which lends his thoughts on relationships an air of futility. This is particularly apparent when he rides in a taxi around New York and observes buildings being demolished so that new ones may be built. While he can admire the "delicate blue" (Herzog 36) of the new skyscrapers, he is trapped in the ground-level "poisonous exhaust of cheap fuel, and [...] the racket of machinery" (Herzog 37) that is necessary for the new buildings to exist. Likewise, Ramona presents the possibility of rebuilding his independent self, which was undone by the manipulations of Madeleine and Gersbach. Yet Herzog is plagued by fears

that a continued relationship with Ramona will entail a loss of freedom, a belief that is fueled by his observations of inevitable destruction and the messy foundations of new forms. He believes that even a nurturing relationship must eventually become degrading as part of a natural process.⁶

Herzog, accused by fellow Americans of being somehow foreign, finds nurture in relationships with foreign-born women, the Japanese Sono Oguki and the Argentine Ramona, but even as they affirm his identity, they affirm a creation that cannot be tenable in the long term; Herzog sees all human works inevitably crumbling, and his lovers build him up in a role that he will ultimately have to abandon as a matter of destruction and renewal. Such is the paradox that nurture can become an unintended form of constriction, while manipulation frees the protagonists from adult worries. Thus Bellow's men "would be free, but they want a shaping identity" (Tanner Saul Bellow 110), leading them to embrace the controlling Theas and Renatas.

The allure of the manipulative and domineering lovers is that they provide the men with ready-made identities and allow them to lapse into an easy childlike state. Being forced into the predetermined roles desired by the Thea Fenchels of the novels creates a childhood for the protagonists that "is Edenic not because it is free but because it is controlled and to a certain extent, imprisoning" (Wilson 167). In adulthood, the return to the position of the child is achieved not through nurture, but by attaching oneself to a character who possesses a superceding personality and adult determination. The model of this is Bellow's most childlike man, the mentally retarded Georgie March,

⁶ Herzog finds further evidence of this in the marriage of his friend Nachman, a poet with a wife named Laura, a clear allusion to Petrarch. Laura Nachman attempts suicide and is confined to an asylum, while Nachman is reduced to an unreal "gaunt apparition" (Herzog 146), demonstrating to Herzog that even the most idealized poetic romances will fall apart in the real world.

whose “simple-minded goodness seems to necessitate the protection of the asylum walls; it cannot exist in the world” (Tanner City 65). Just as Georgie is protected by his imprisoning asylum, accepting the constraints of manipulative lovers protects the men from the seemingly greater threats posed by the adult world, which demands that they have concrete, actualized identities. In the face of this arduous and complicated task, the men often choose to flee from adult responsibility when other characters present them with identities to inhabit.

This dynamic becomes apparent in the characters of Augie and Wilhelm, who both spend most of their respective stories without nurturing lovers, and who as a result are the two most childlike of Bellow’s protagonists. Augie may settle into a potentially nurturing relationship with Stella at novel’s end, but his romances are largely of a different nature. In both his flirtations with the Magnus family that has already subsumed his brother Simon and with Thea Fenchel, Bellow’s model manipulator, Augie is entirely malleable to the demands made upon him. Each relationship ends only because of the intrusion of another potential shaper of his character: Stella in Mexico, and Mimi Villars, whom Augie had unsuccessfully pursued romantically, creating the abortion scandal in which the Magnuses incorrectly cast him as her lover.⁷

Wilhelm does possess a possibly nurturing lover in Olive, but she is a virtual nonentity in his story. Far more of his time and thought is occupied by his wife Margaret, though unlike Thea, Margaret is not so much an intruder attempting to shape Wilhelm, but a symptom of his indecisive childishness. Wilhelm’s relationships with his father,

⁷ It may also be revealing that Augie ultimately switches roles with Arthur Einhorn. Arthur becomes Mimi’s lover, while Augie becomes the surrogate son of the Einhorn family. Augie and Arthur both seek forms of childhood in these relations and, having failed with their initial ones, seem content to trade places and try again.

Tamkin, and Maurice Venice demonstrate his innate tendency to act the child, continually placing himself completely under the control of an older man. Margaret merely requests the return of her husband and child support, but this simultaneously demands that he act like an adult but submit to Margaret's wishes, keeping him in a confused state between childlike submission and adult responsibility. Wilhelm is forever ambivalent on remaining childlike; he seeks protection, but also feels at least some pull towards becoming an independent adult. His commodities-market escapades are an attempt to free himself from his dependencies upon others and become a financial success. In doing this, he would achieve the true American business-world marker of adulthood. Margaret, perhaps unknowingly, attempts to force him permanently into childhood by encouraging his return to the Rojax Corporation, which tellingly manufactures children's furniture and from which he resigned after being slighted by an episode of nepotism (Fuchs 90). Wilhelm's manic final breakdown occurs after Margaret makes her ultimatum that he return to his responsibilities, and his melodramatic act of self-strangulation is symbolic of his plight: he may blame Margaret for strangling him, but the act is performed by himself, just as her manipulation of him merely reflects his own ambivalence towards adulthood. His willingness to be confined and shaped brings Margaret and her control into his life, and just as Wilhelm's pursuit of the manipulator Tamkin leads him into the funeral parlor at the end, his attempts to blame others for his childishness ultimately force Wilhelm to confront his own nature.

Faced with the possibility of escape from manipulation through divorce, both Moses Herzog and Charlie Citrine find themselves unable to sever themselves from their respective controlling wives. For Herzog, Ramona presents a nurturing replacement for

Madeleine, but he routinely avoids her and instead travels to Chicago for further interaction with his wife. Herzog's poorly planned scheme to kill Madeleine and Gersbach may be an attempt to fully exorcise manipulation from his life before moving onward with Ramona, but he is incapable of such a removal. It is indeed a sign of Madeleine's power over him that he feels so driven to action when he might try to forget her and move on with Ramona. Madeleine seeks to cause him grief, and succeeds greatly. Ramona is continually kept at the periphery of Herzog's life, but in response to Madeleine he is willing to travel halfway across the country and attempt an act of violence for which he is comically unqualified. It is only by his complete removal from the world and through his attachments to his brother Will and Ramona that Herzog appears to find freedom from Madeleine. Until that point, he remains the victim of her manipulations.

Charlie Citrine displays less subordination to his wife Denise, but he too has difficulty avoiding controlling relationships. Citrine, being the character who begins with the most sophisticated views on masculinity and nurture, as when he points out American business's "fear of femininity" (Humboldt 27), does not demonize his wife to the same extent that Herzog does. Herzog focuses his anger and sense of indignation on Madeleine, with occasional pieces of blame aimed at Gersbach, Sandor Himmelstein, and Dr. Edvig. By contrast, Citrine shows less enmity for Denise and additional scorn for the other parties involved in the divorce, notably her lawyer Pinsker and Judge Urbanovich. More attuned to matters of business and finance than Herzog is, he attacks the businessmen involved in the divorce, not his wife.

While Citrine prepares to end his relationship with Denise, he embarks on a new one with Renata that holds the possibility of mirroring his marriage. Renata recalls Ramona, another highly sexualized character of foreign extraction, but by virtue of her increased prominence she makes a greater display of the sort of manipulative potential that in *Herzog* makes Herzog fear that Ramona will rob him of his freedom. Renata is more actively pushing Citrine towards marriage, with considerable assistance from her mother. Though he suspects the domineering nature that hides beneath Renata's nurture, Citrine cannot pull himself away from her until, like Herzog, he reaches a personal low point financially and creatively. From this position he can recognize Renata's controlling ways, and her rejection of the penniless Citrine in favor of Flonzaley the undertaker finally frees him. In this respect, Citrine recalls Tommy Wilhelm, as both men gain knowledge once their inaction leads to financial and emotional ruin.

Henderson is the only one of the five protagonists who lacks a female manipulator. His wife Lily may display a slight capacity for manipulation in their first meetings, but she is unable to control the mighty Henderson. In fact, there seem to be no Americans who can accomplish this feat. As a millionaire in a capitalist society, Henderson is the one who owns and controls; such is the basis for his opening catalogue of his belongings, including his body, his physical possessions, and his wives and children. It is not until he travels to the utterly foreign wilds of Africa that Henderson meets someone capable of manipulating him, though it is neither a female nor a lover, but the figure of King Dahfu who fills this role.

Upon first meeting Dahfu, Henderson immediately notes the king's great athleticism, making Dahfu from the outset the only person who appears capable of

overpowering the absurdly immense American. The king quickly proves himself capable of tricking and controlling Henderson, duping him into becoming the rain king, forcing him to confront the lioness Atti, and setting Henderson up as his successor in order to disrupt the Wariri system of kingship. Henderson presents the perfect tool for Dahfu's project of altering Wariri society, and the king ably makes use of it. The experience of being manipulated for the first time proves therapeutic for Henderson, easing the burden he feels as the man who can only own and be responsible for others. This also serves as a prototype for other relationships in which protagonists seek out male companions, not as lovers, but as alternately nurturing and manipulative friends, relationships that nonetheless retain a certain element of homoerotic closeness.

One of Bellow's earliest examples of the blurring of friendship and eroticism comes not in a relationship between two men, but between Augie March and Mimi Villars. Augie is initially attracted to his neighbor Mimi, but after being rebuffed from any potential courtship, Augie settles into a platonic friendship with her. Even though Augie and Mimi interact in a manner typical of two platonic male friends, an unspoken erotic element remains in their relationship, as is brought out by the episode of Mimi's abortion. With her lover Frazer absent, Augie steps in as a replacement and brings Mimi to a doctor for the illegal procedure. Although none of the three voice any such declarations, Augie knows that the doctor "took me for the lover. I suppose Mimi wanted him to; as for me, that wasn't what I cared about" (Augie 279). Augie understands that it would be highly unusual for a purely platonic male friend to accompany Mimi in this situation, which he posits by imagining how the doctor sees him. Augie likewise understands Mimi's wish to appear as a woman with a supportive lover. Most importantly

Augie's insistence that he does not care about his appearance as her lover, presumably due to his overriding concern for her well-being, shows an unusual bond between them. This episode precipitates the end of Augie's engagement to Lucy Magnus, which he is willing to accept. What Augie cannot accept is abandoning his female friend to whom he has no overt sexual connection. Augie has no care for how others perceive him in this situation, and though hurt by the false accusations, he accepts his consequential estrangement from the Magnus family, who join the doctor in believing him to be Mimi's lover. The blend of the platonic and the erotic that runs throughout Augie's relationship with Mimi is repeated elsewhere, and especially in relationships between the protagonists and other men.

Augie himself proceeds to form business partnerships with other men that mimic his relationship with Mimi. Augie may ostensibly be an equal with men such as Joe Gorman and Manny Padilla, but it is always Augie's partner who determines their line of work and possesses an expertise that he lacks. This makes such partnerships analogous to the romantic partnerships with women that shape and mold Bellow's male characters. In Augie's business partnerships there is frequently an additional element of criminality, as he entangles himself with thieves and smugglers. The illicit nature of these relationships mirrors the illicit nature of Mimi's abortion and creates an intimacy born of secrecy between the men. The unique bonds of criminal secrecy draw the men into each other's confidence in a manner that brings them into a simulacrum of romantic intimacy.

The way in which Augie is continually remade by his business and crime partners thus approximates the way in which his brother Simon is remade as a member of the Magnus family. Through his marriage, Simon gains a new livelihood and a new identity

as a Magnus. This connection is strong enough to lead him to disown Augie (albeit not permanently) when his younger brother is accused of deceiving Lucy and being Mimi's lover. In this encounter, the brothers are pulled apart by their similar relationships with others, though Simon's is an actual sexual relationship, whereas Augie's is one of his friendships that attempt to imitate sexual couplings.

Moses Herzog finds a homoerotic friendship with the man who ultimately supplants him in his own marriage, Valentine Gersbach. Prior to the complete breakup of his marriage, Herzog considers Gersbach "a king, an emotional king" (Herzog 68), and Gersbach accompanies Herzog to Ludeyville and depends on him to secure a radio job there. Despite his displays of emotion, Gersbach is a figure of masculine physical might, towering in height and seemingly unhindered by his need for a prosthetic leg. Given Herzog's insecurity over his feminized intellectual traits, it is unsurprising that he is willing to follow Gersbach's lead in moving to Chicago, and that he seeks Gersbach's marital advice before his friend's betrayal is revealed. At the same time, Herzog does not realize that Gersbach equally idolizes him and desires the approval of a great intellectual. Gersbach's affair with Madeleine may in part be an attempt to actually become Moses, while Herzog's casual acceptance when Madeleine openly brings her diaphragm to a tryst with Gersbach shows a desire for an erotic bond between the men. If Herzog cannot be a masculine figure like Gersbach, he is willing to have a sexual connection with him through Madeleine. Similarly, Gersbach uses Madeleine to form a sexual link to his intellectual friend.

Their alternate desires for intellectualism and masculine power draw parallels between Herzog and Gersbach and the Citrine brothers, and Gersbach also shares some

similarity with Shura Herzog. Shura is a financial success, like his brother Will, but there is also a hint of the illicit about his dealings. Gersbach too seems a masculine success to Herzog and harbors his own secrets. Shura remains offstage in the novel, as Herzog rather requires the nurturing nature of Will to counteract the effects of the Shura-like Gersbach, much as he must turn away from Madeleine in favor of Ramona in order to recover his wits. Gersbach is part brother, part lover to Herzog, and it is only through his replacement by a different brother and a different lover that Herzog is able to recompose himself.

Charlie Citrine has several close male friends in his life, but two stand out above the others. Von Humboldt Fleisher and Rinaldo Cantabile both act at times as fathers and brothers to Citrine, but their relationships are also intertwined with Citrine's erotic life. The destruction of Fleisher's friendship with Citrine is centered around episodes concerning two women, Kathleen Fleisher and Demmie Vonghel. When the Fleishers divorce, Citrine serves as an intermediary, keeping Kathleen's whereabouts secret from her increasingly erratic husband. To Humboldt's mind, this secrecy links Charlie and Kathleen, and makes Charlie an equal partner in what he sees as betrayal by a lover, introducing an undercurrent of erotic competition to the friendship.

Citrine becomes a sort of lover to Von Humboldt Fleisher, and through another action Fleisher reciprocates this action. The pair exchange blank checks on Fleisher's suggestion as a means of becoming financial "blood-brothers" (Humboldt 130), and though Citrine is more successful than his friend for some time, the elder man does not use the check until just after the death of Demmie Vonghel. Citrine's great love Demmie dies in a plane crash with her father, separated from Citrine due to his intention never to

marry her. As soon as Demmie ceases to exist, Humboldt asserts his closeness to Citrine by cashing the check, intentionally drawing the attention of the grieving Citrine. This act of replacing Demmie in Citrine's thoughts can be seen as an attempt to replace Demmie in his life and to succeed her as his "lover". As his own marriage is troubled, Humboldt may see a male friendship with eroticized dimensions as an ideal replacement. While Citrine feels guilty over his treatment of Demmie, Humboldt's request for money signals that another person needs Citrine's attention and care, the sort of attention and care that he failed to show for Demmie. This elicits Citrine's angry response, which demonstrates his intention to continue seeking fulfillment in his relationships with women, and to withdraw from the sexualized male friendships that will reappear to him in the form of Rinaldo Cantabile.

Cantabile establishes himself in Citrine's life through his bizarre gesture of forcing the writer to watch observe his cloacal activities. This brings a form of eroticism into their relationship from the start, as Citrine becomes intimately familiar with Cantabile's body in a manner that no others are. Citrine the writer comes to think that Cantabile's "natural imagination was more prodigal and fertile than mine" (Humboldt 83) to think of such an original act, and notes that "the result was only to make us more intimate" (Humboldt 83). That the activity defies all social norms renders it akin to Augie's criminal adventures; Cantabile and Citrine share an unspeakable knowledge of the episode, which bestows upon them the intimacy that Augie shares with certain of his male friends. After his experiences with Humboldt, Citrine is wary of becoming involved with the would-be mobster, though certain differences prevent him from being entirely dismissive. While both Humboldt and Cantabile demand money from Citrine, Cantabile

carelessly tosses Citrine's payment from the top of a building. This act leaves Citrine's "sensation-loving soul [...] gratified" (Humboldt 102) and, along with the desecration of Citrine's expensive automobile, promises a different outlook on the world, an outlook that appeals to Citrine as he finds himself in financial difficulties. He cautiously maintains a relationship with Cantabile in hopes of learning from it an independence from the world of money, signaling a form of intimacy by calling Cantabile "Ronald", much as he calls his brother Julius by his family name "Ulick".⁸

When Citrine falls into a state of destitution in Madrid, it is Cantabile who appears to save him with news of the money to be made from Humboldt's film scripts. While Cantabile displays aspects of a caring and loving guardian in this encounter, Citrine ultimately rejects the friendship that seeks to imitate the one he shared with Humboldt. It is Citrine's experiences with Humboldt that lead him to this rejection. Though he might be tempted to resume his eroticized friendship with Cantabile given Renata's recent abandonment of him in favor of Flonzaley, Citrine knows from his experiences with Humboldt that such a friendship between males cannot fully replace erotic connections with women. Although the circumstances are different, both Humboldt and Cantabile can be seen as characters who try to replace a recently departed lover of Citrine's. Though Cantabile is more obsequious where Humboldt is brazen, Citrine recognizes the same intent.

It may then be the case that in re-interring Humboldt's body at the novel's conclusion, Citrine is burying the part of himself that fears relationships with women and

⁸ In calling Cantabile "Ronald", Citrine reverses the concept of "family names": he uses "Ulick" as a reminder of the Jewish heritage he shares with Julius, while "Ronald" replaces Cantabile's Italian background with an American one. Citrine seeks a love that he associates with the Old World from Julius, while Cantabile instructs him in how to live in modern America.

attempts to replace them with male friendships. Humboldt exemplified this drive in the extreme, with his wild distrust of his wife and attempt to supplant the late Demmie Vonghel in Citrine's life. Yet Citrine harbors a more subtle version of this distrust of females throughout the novel: he is always ambivalent over Renata and being forever drawn to male characters such as Cantabile. At the end of his narrative, Citrine is grieved by Renata's rejection of him, even if it saves him from her manipulations, and he in turn rejects the advances of Cantabile. Thus one of the many potential "gifts" that Humboldt gives to Citrine may be the knowledge, imparted through Humboldt's example, that male friendship has an importance, but it cannot be used as a replacement for sexual relationships.

Even as Bellow's male characters draw conclusions about the differences between nurturing and controlling lovers, they are never truly delivered from the conflict between their yearnings for both. They seem almost incapable of having consecutive romantic relationships, but rather seek concurrent attachments to widely different lovers. Second marriages in Bellow's novels always find their roots during first marriages, and even at the end of each novel the characters' future relationships are rarely clear and predictable. Instead it is the case that Bellow's heroes do not so much transcend their opposing erotic desires, but rather end with the achievement of recognizing the inescapable nature of these desires. This recognition occurs differently for each protagonist and leaves each of them in a different position in the world, though all of them gain the same knowledge of themselves.

Moses Herzog is the character who best readily exemplifies this phenomenon. He is the one with the most concurrent lovers and the one whose story is most directly driven by his romantic entanglements. Herzog's first marriage, to the quietly supportive Daisy, is undermined as he begins the affair that grows into his second marriage. This is the first indication of his opposing desires for nurture and manipulation, as he gradually replaces a nurturing wife with the strong-willed Madeleine. Given his conflicting desires, Herzog becomes attached to both women simultaneously rather than ending his marriage to Daisy before becoming involved with Madeleine. Likewise, while still married to his manipulative second wife, Herzog begins relationships with more supportive women. Though he may have thought that he had killed the desire for nurture by marrying Madeline, Herzog finds that it is as present as ever within him. Herzog's journey forces him to recognize that his salvation is not to come from outside influences that are as different from him as possible, but from within himself.⁹ No nurturing woman can eradicate his desire to be controlled; the resolution is that Herzog understands the different desires that will always be within him. The element of happiness in the ending of *Herzog* comes from the fact that Moses has not merely fallen into a repetition of his previous relationships. In Ramona he finds support, but also the persistent threat of losing his freedom; by accepting both qualities within her, Herzog moves beyond his previous relationships and into one that suits his new understanding of himself.

⁹ It is also noteworthy that Herzog's paramours have increasingly exotic backgrounds: Daisy is Jewish as he is, Madeleine a convert to Catholicism, and they are followed by affairs with the European Wanda, the Japanese Sono, and Ramona, the Argentine woman whose heritage he calls "international—Spanish, French, Russian, Polish, and Jewish" (Herzog 19). The fact that Herzog seeks to control his desires by loving women of increasingly foreign backgrounds is symptomatic of his belief that his solution must come from the outside, and not from himself.

Charlie Citrine exhibits behavior similar to Herzog's, and though his story ends somewhat differently, it nonetheless ends with similar revelations for its protagonist. Much like Herzog, Citrine is unable to ignore the controlling wife whom he is in the process of divorcing. Yet while Madeleine Herzog attempts to rid herself of Moses, Denise Citrine pushes her husband towards a resumption of their former marital status, making it even more difficult for Citrine to ignore the urges that draw him towards manipulation. Citrine is also engaged in an affair with Renata during his marriage, with his mistress representing a perceived potential for nurture that feeds his opposing desires. Just as Herzog does, Citrine unconsciously seeks simultaneously attachment to manipulators and nurturers, and for both men this position is untenable. As Renata is slowly revealed to be more the manipulator, she is led to abandon the bankrupt Citrine, whereas Ramona proves to be more nurturing in a similar situation. Citrine may gain the same personal insight the Herzog does, but lacking a suitable lover, he ends his story as an enlightened bachelor.

Tommy Wilhelm also has a mistress as he attempts to divorce himself from a controlling wife, though neither woman is as clearly drawn as the lovers in Bellow's other novels. Wilhelm sees his wife Margaret as a harmful, constraining influence in his life, though her demands for child support are far more reasonable than the demands that are made by Madeleine Herzog. Wilhelm also casts his lover Olive as a perfectly submissive and supportive woman in contrast with Margaret, yet one of the only facts presented about her is her adherence to the regulations of her Catholicism. This already introduces an element of opposition to Wilhelm's desires for their relationship. Wilhelm's insistence on roughly categorizing his two lovers into the manipulator and the

supporter demonstrates his childishness, which pervades all of his actions. He ignores the nuances of each of his erotic relationships and seeks the facile solution of leaving Margaret for Olive and finding the pure supportiveness that is so lacking in his daily life.

In Bellow's novels, there are two slight deviations from this pattern of behavior towards lovers, Eugene Henderson and Augie March. Henderson does indeed begin his affair with his second wife Lily while still married to his first wife Frances, but he harbors no illusions of them representing either pure manipulation or pure nurture. Lily is supportive of her husband, but displays a certain manipulative potential from their early encounter at her mother's house. Henderson is thus always aware of her dual nature and does not seek to flee from his marriage, but rather to ameliorate it and learn how to love her properly. He is unique in his realization that the root of his problems lies within himself, as it manifests itself in the interior cries of "I want, I want". He undertakes his mad odyssey in search of self-knowledge to remedy his faulty relationships with the world, and ends it with his heartfelt phone call to Lily before flying home. The novel ends before he reaches home because Henderson has already found resolution within himself, leaving him confident in his ability to function as a proper family man as he frolics across the frozen landscape.

Augie, with his decades-long state of childhood, moves in degrees towards the simultaneous erotic attachments of the other protagonists, reflecting his gradual inculcation into the adult world. Initially, Augie's relationships are consecutive, though he is accused of seeing two women concurrently when he is mistaken for Mimi's lover in the aftermath of her abortion. It grieves Augie to be falsely accused, yet he does recognize that his behavior is suspicious. By contrast, Simon March, the embodiment of

adulthood as financial success, is married and keeps a mistress. When Simon's wife learns of his affair, she coolly dismisses the mistress from their married life, rejecting her false claims of pregnancy. This suggests that the possession of multiple lovers is taken to be a simple fact of adult existence, even if a person can only possess one family. Augie may be punished for appearing to have a pregnant lover, but it is nevertheless accepted that all adults feel the desire for multiple lovers.

Augie comes closer to having simultaneous relationships while in Mexico, on the evening when he abandons Thea in order to aid Stella. Again, Augie is not actually cheating on his lover, but whereas earlier he aided Mimi without thinking of the repercussions with Lucy Magnus, in Mexico he actively leaves Thea in order to help another woman who could become his lover. Later, while claiming to be happily married to Stella, he learns of his wife's deception and behavior that could be indicative of an affair with a mysterious man named Cumberland. Stella may vigorously deny the charges of wrongdoing, but the fact is nonetheless established: in Bellow's novels there is no marriage free from the threat of infidelity. The conflicting drives towards different types of lovers keep the possibility forever present.

Though there are instances, notably Henderson's, of reconciliation to a faithful loving marriage, the alternate desires for nurturers and manipulators are implacable, and can only but be accommodated the characters' adult existences. While there is a temptation on the part of the protagonists to think that nurturing lovers are the superior ones, Bellow constantly makes them recognize that they desire both nurturers and manipulators equally, and there is never a simple choice between the two.

Chapter 3: Children

As a result of their troubled relationships with their parents, the male characters of Bellow's novels are unsure and reserved in their dealings with their own children. With the exception of *Augie March*, the protagonists all have offspring, and all of them go on to behave or attempt to behave as surrogate parental figures to others. Yet they possess a great anxiety over acting as parents, born of their necessarily imperfect and unresolved relationships with their own parents, as well as of their lack of confidence in their own identities. They all fear that they are insufficient as fathers in the same way that they perceive their parents as lacking, and also believe that they are doomed to parental failure if they lack a firm identity through which they can impart knowledge to their children. The degree to which these questions are resolved varies wildly between the five characters, but none of the novels ends with children present. Rather, they always remain a future project, to be approached when the men are prepared, if ever.

Throughout Bellow's novels, children are kept offstage as much as possible. Tommy Wilhelm's two sons are spoken of, but never seen. Henderson lives with his wife and children for several chapters before leaving for Africa, never to see them again within the novel's pages. Herzog's visits with his children are infrequent, brief, and end with painful scenes of alienation, and Citrine speaks of his two daughters occasionally, but never sees them and gives no further thought to them as his narrative reaches its conclusion. While the protagonists' insecurities towards their lovers are always confronted and resolved in Bellow's novels, insecurities felt towards children are given a lesser degree of urgency. Though the novels often end with the protagonists preparing for

a new adult existence in their romantic relationships, the endings contain no concrete thoughts of becoming responsible, caring parents.

As discussed earlier, the great project of the protagonists is to establish their own clear identities while still living within society, which attempts to mold them; the lack of a clear identity drives the men to avoid their parental responsibilities, for they associate their own parents with strongly defined identities. The characters were controlled by their parents as children, and thus view their parents as powerful, distinct figures. Tommy Wilhelm views Dr. Adler as a source of power, a man capable of removing all of the perceived obstacles in Tommy's life. Herzog fondly recalls his father in reverential tones as "a sacred being, a king" (Herzog 161), even though the old man once futilely waved a gun in his son Moses's face; meanwhile Henderson holds up his father as an aristocratic ideal that he himself can never hope to approximate. Even though none of these three men has the loving relationship that he desires to have with his father, all three nevertheless admire their fathers' clear identities and find their own identities lacking in comparison.

Charlie Citrine is something of an exception to this pattern. He hardly mentions his parents, though he does repeatedly refer to his birthplace of Appleton, Wisconsin, and the fact that it also the hometown of Harry Houdini. That the urban Citrine always associates his small hometown with history's most famous escape artist creates the implication that he views his Chicagoan existence as an escape from constraining Wisconsin roots. Thus, instead of turning his parents into ideals that he cannot emulate, Citrine does the opposite by viewing them as figures that are to be avoided and forgotten. This reaction equally creates anxiety over assuming parenthood: if children are meant to

escape from their parents, Citrine consequentially believes that he will eventually be abandoned by his daughters.

Yet Citrine does not wholly exclude his daughters from his life. He has little hope for an affectionate relationship with his daughter Lish, in whom he sees similarities to her mother Denise. At the same time, he declares that his daughter Mary has a greater resemblance to her father and he maintains “an idea that I may be able to pervade the child’s mind with my spirit so that she will later take up the work I am getting too old [...] to continue” (Humboldt 73). Citrine recognizes a major motivation for having children: the desire to gain a form of immortality by shaping future generations. Instead of wishing for his family name to be carried on after his death, Citrine imagines that his artistic endeavors will outlive him. Having witnessed Von Humboldt Fleisher’s descent into obscurity, Citrine regards his offspring as a means of guaranteeing that his own works will be known beyond his lifetime. This would move him closer to being the canonized author that he aspires to be throughout his adult life.

The troublesome part of this parental project that Citrine must inculcate his daughter’s personality with his own. Since he is unsure of his own identity and role in the world, he does not know what it is that he is attempting to instill in Mary. If he is to live on in his daughter’s life, Citrine must first determine who he is; until such knowledge comes to him, he maintains a great distance from Mary. It may be the signal that Citrine has reached an understanding of himself late in the novel when, penniless and abandoned by Renata, he temporarily becomes a surrogate parent to little Roger Koffritz. Adoptive gestures such as this occur in several of Bellow’s novels, and although they each display

a tacit desire to be a parental figure, each adoption holds different repercussions and meanings.

The first Bellow protagonist to become an adoptive father is Augie March, when the disastrous end of his criminal enterprise with Joe Gorman requires him to ride a freight train home to Chicago. Among the many riders of the Depression-era train is a young boy named Stoney. Augie is characteristically passive in entering his parental role, as Stoney “attached himself to me” (Augie 181) and, with no clear destination of his own, blindly follows Augie’s accidental route to Detroit. When they begin their journey from Detroit to Chicago, Stoney falls asleep on a trolley. Unaware of this fact, Augie leaves him behind and later declares “I felt despondent that I had lost him” (Augie 190). Though he makes no overt signs of attachment to his young charge, Augie nevertheless becomes used to his presence and is distressed by his absence.

The relationship between Augie and Stoney is never entirely a parental one. Augie never betrays any concern for Stoney’s well-being; even though Augie is upset to lose his companion, he expresses no sense of protectiveness for the boy, whom he leaves in a strange new city. For Augie, Stoney is not so much a surrogate son to be protected from danger, but a friend and fellow traveler who provides him with company. Augie is distinct from the other protagonists in that he is both the only one without a father and the only one without children. Not having any true model of paternal behavior, Augie is unready to be a father himself, which is reflected in his relationship with Stoney. Though in some aspects they resemble a father and son, Augie is ultimately incapable of establishing a relationship more meaningful than the camaraderie that he forms with many of the people whom he encounters in his adventures. This sets him apart from other

characters who become adoptive father figures, though it still informs Augie's character and motivations.

While Augie encounters Stoney relatively early in his narrative, Eugene Henderson concludes his story by caring for a young boy on his flight back to America. The boy, a Persian orphan who knows no English, is lost in a completely foreign world, a situation analogous to the one that Henderson has just left behind in Africa. *Henderson the Rain King* also begins with a scene of adoption, as the adolescent Ricey Henderson creates a scandal by taking in a foundling baby. In that episode, Eugene admits "Now I feel I committed an offense against my daughter by parting her from this infant" (Henderson 37). This retrospective sentiment displays a major change in Henderson; the regret he shows in narrating this past episode gives voice to the caring and loving sentiments within him that he initially represses. In contrast to the refusal of Ricey's foundling, Henderson's acceptance of the Persian boy as his charge is a sign that he has ceased repressing his compassionate inclinations. Early in the novel, Henderson responds to his mind's continual cry of "I want, I want" as if it were "an ailing child whom you offer rhymes or candy" (Henderson 24), making a connection between his mental crisis and his desire to be caring for others, particularly children. Even though he is never reunited with his family within the events of the novel, Henderson's relationship with the Persian boy suggests his progress in becoming a caring father, which also frees him from the perpetual cries of "I want, I want".

The case of Charlie Citrine and Roger Koffritz differs from the previous adoptions in that the boy is not a stranger to the surrogate father. Roger is the son of Citrine's lover Renata, who leaves the boy in his care in Madrid while she flies off to

marry the undertaker Flonzaley. Since Citrine had previously contemplated whether or not to marry Renata, Roger represents the family that he would have had if he had chosen differently. During his earlier conversation with Naomi Lutz, Citrine considers that “it would have been bliss to sleep with her for forty years” (Humboldt 304), and his thoughts of how his adult family life could have been different persist. Posing as a widower with Roger as his son, Citrine initially claims that Roger’s mother died of leukemia, then alters his story so that “she had been killed by a truck when she stepped off a curb” (Humboldt 426), an imagined violent death similar to Demmie Vonghel’s fatal plane crash. This leaves a hint that Citrine’s attachment to Roger may in part be a substitute for the family that he should have had with Demmie.¹⁰

The younger Citrine leaves Naomi in order to pursue Von Humboldt Fleisher and the life of a writer, then declines to join Demmie on her fateful flight after secretly deciding that he will never marry her. His late realization that he should have spent his life with a nurturing lover instead of manipulators such as Denise and Renata produces his attachment to Roger, who becomes an ideal of the child that Citrine should have had.¹¹

A defining feature of all three of these adoptions is the fact that they are necessarily temporary. The intense loving sentiments that Henderson and Citrine express for their surrogate sons demonstrate their capabilities to be proper fathers, but such idealized relationships cannot last indefinitely. Parents and children still naturally enter

¹⁰ Daniel Fuchs points to an early draft of *Humboldt’s Gift* in which Citrine impregnates Demmie, then refuses to move in with her, prompting her death via an accidental overdose of pills and alcohol (Fuchs 256). This scenario makes an even stronger image of both the family that Citrine could have had and his guilt over rejecting Demmie.

¹¹ It is also significant that Roger is a surrogate son, while Citrine’s actual children are female. In musing how Mary Citrine might carry on his work, he imagines that she might work alongside a future husband (Humboldt 73), leaving a hint that Citrine in some way does desire a son to carry on his family name as well as his work.

more distanced relationships over time, regardless of how caring the parents might be. The importance of the adoptive acts for Henderson and Citrine is that despite their strained relationships with their children and despite their discouraging histories with their own parents, both men are still capable of expressing parental love. Both men end their narratives with uncertain futures ahead of them, but also with a hopefulness that comes in part from this recovery of their compassion.

Augie is the adoptive father who does not fit this mold. Rather, as a man without a father, his adventure with Stoney allows him to explore further what a father is meant to be. It also displays his capacity to act as a father, even if he lacks any true example to follow. Discovering the capacity to protect and care for dependents is a common theme throughout Bellow's novels, and all of the protagonists express this in some form. Aside from the adoptive acts that three of them undertake, the five novels continually reference the protagonists' desires to be caring for others, no matter how hard they may try to repress these inclinations for fear that they are maternal, and thereby potentially emasculating.

Their dreams of leading nurturing yet still masculine existences are often approached through the characters' frequent references to the medical profession. Doctors are admired in Bellow's novels for their constant support of the weak and ill, which embodies the protagonists' ideals of caring for their children and other dependents. Henderson has a lifelong dream of becoming a doctor, and though he always defers it, he is still musing about applying to medical school as he leaves Africa.¹² Augie March

¹² It is not coincidental that Dahfu had nearly obtained his M.D. when called upon to return to the Wariri as their king. In addition to providing more reason for Henderson to feel an affinity for the king, this represents Dahfu's failed attempt to escape the hyper-masculine Wariri and live with more of a balance of masculine and feminine traits.

serves as a druggist aboard a ship in the Merchant Marine during World War II. Both Henderson and Augie speak repeatedly with glowing admiration for Albert Schweitzer and Wilfred Grenfell, elevating the two self-sacrificing doctors to the level of heroes. Meanwhile Citrine and Herzog repeatedly recall their childhood stays in sanatoria, where they were helpless children who directly received the protection and care of medical professionals.

The physician may be a masculine ideal in Bellow's fiction because doctors are free to express nurturing inclinations that would otherwise be deemed feminine; this freedom arises from the fact that nurturing is a business enterprise for them. If Bellow's America equates adulthood with a capacity for business, medical professions form a rare outlet in which men can embrace their more feminine and maternal instincts under the auspices of their business-minded society. Thus while Tommy Wilhelm is distressed by his father's attitude towards him, Dr. Adler is admirable to the rest of the world. Adler is a financial success and therefore a mature American adult. His coldness towards his son is not so much a sign of the old man's wickedness and greed as it is a remonstrance of Tommy's immature refusal to enter adulthood by supporting his own existence. Bellow himself characterizes Tommy as "a misfit wooing his hard-nosed father with the corrupt platitudes of affection, or job-lot, bargain-sale psychological correctness" (Bellow *New Yorker* 83), using the language of retail business to express the cheapness and low quality of Tommy's appeals for financial assistance.

It is fitting then that Tommy seeks out Tamkin, the job-lot, bargain-sale version of the ideals that others would find in Dr. Adler. As a doctor in only the most dubious of ways, Tamkin makes nurturing gestures, however dubious they may be, without

embodying any of the business professionalism that Tommy finds so threatening to his childlike existence. Tamkin tangentially hints that he is responsible for the well-being of anonymous dependents, including “paying for the support of the orphaned child of a dead sweetheart” (Seize 76), a claim that could be taken as a euphemism for providing for a bastard child, and which is certainly an ironic example for Tommy to admire while he himself refuses to pay child support for his sons. Yet Tommy wants to believe that Tamkin is a sort of caring philanthropist, for this would qualify him as an alternative to Dr. Adler’s shrewd paternal behavior. This is of course quite incorrect, as Tamkin absconds with Tommy’s money, recalling Tommy’s much earlier misplaced trust in Maurice Venice. Tommy thus remains childish throughout the novel and stands out among the protagonists as the most childish of them and the character whose challenge to Bellow “was to represent him, not to recommend him” (Bellow New Yorker 83).

In addition to the case of Dr. Adler, there are examples of characters who show the potential to be caregivers and role models for the protagonists, but are at least in part defined by their childlessness. Two of the more prominent ones are Simon March and King Dahfu. Both men function at times in protective and mentoring roles, but both are childless for reasons that are instructive to their respective followers, Augie and Henderson.

Upon Augie’s return from Mexico, he is immediately embraced by his elder brother, despite their previous unpleasant parting following Mimi’s abortion. Between these two points in the narrative, Simon has gone from being a neophyte in the business world to being a resounding success. This effectively proves that he is, in fact, an adult. Thus when Augie returns, Simon is confident in acting as a protective figure towards his

more childish brother. Adulthood and financial success give Simon March the ability to behave as a parent, yet at the same time he remains forever childless. He is unable to conceive with his wife, and while his mistress Renée claims to be pregnant, this is a lie intended to extort payment. While the fact that Renée's is lying about being pregnant saves Simon's marriage, it also emasculates him by raising the possibility of his own infertility.

Here Bellow seems to be backing away from lurking demands that his protagonists grow up. Augie may be too immature to be a father (and would likely prove an unsupportive failure on the order of Tommy Wilhelm), but at a certain point the characters' fears of adulthood mix with Bellow's own concern. Much as Charlie Citrine accuses the business world of having a "fear of femininity" (Humboldt 27), Bellow sees that becoming too involved in the business of being an adult can lead to the renunciation of all feminized and nurturing inclinations. Such is the case for Simon March, the consummate American entrepreneur who is able to turn a profit even during the Great Depression. Some measure of Augie's naïve optimism is necessary even in adulthood, lest one become a barren prisoner of the financial world.

Likewise, Henderson may learn how to be a proper caring father through his experiences with King Dahfu, but the king himself has no children. While Simon March is ascribed masculinity by virtue of his business sense, Dahfu is a masculine figure through his powerful physicality. Like Simon, the king demonstrates that it is not enough to attain masculine ideals, for the lack of natural femininity renders him unfit and unable to become a parent. Dahfu is not completely without parental impulses; he does act as a mentor to Henderson and makes the American millionaire his successor, a role that would

normally be filled by the king's son. Yet Dahfu is trapped by his violent, hypermasculine society, which nullifies whatever feminine aspects he may possess. His motives are bound up in his telling statements that "if the father did not strike the son, they would not be alike" (Henderson 213), yet "Any good man will try to break the cycle" (Henderson 297). The first statement implies that a measure of the Wariri masculinity is necessary, but the second holds that these violent masculine tendencies must be tempered by more compassionate inclinations. Given the bloody conventions of Wariri succession, Dahfu must remain childless, for having an heir would perpetuate the cycle of violence that Dahfu himself is unable to escape. Henderson represents the king's attempt to break the cycle. Henderson's flight back to America disrupts the Wariri traditions and allows for the possibility of new parental attitudes, much as Henderson arrives in Newfoundland with a newfound ability to care for the Persian boy.

Bellow's men ultimately view their roles as fathers as a way of expressing their feminized caring instincts while occupying a role that is by definition masculine. Their inability to function as proper fathers is symptomatic of their inner confusion over these feminized traits that they both cling to and fear. Rather than providing clarity to their gender identities, having children only adds to their distress; Bellow's implication is that the figure of the perfectly caring father is, like the ideals of Grenfell and Schweitzer, and unattainable position. The futility of this enterprise is best illustrated by the example of Moses Herzog and his dealings with his own father and his two children.

Herzog has great admiration for his late father, just as Wilhelm and Henderson stand in awe of their mighty progenitors, but Father Herzog is the most ignoble of

Bellow's father figures. An inept bootlegger who eventually threatens his son Moses with a gun, he is nevertheless recalled with fondness and adoration. Moses thinks only briefly of his father's more violent tendencies, while repeatedly remembering scenes of affection from his childhood home. For all of his attempts to appear as a criminal mastermind and a potential killer, Father Herzog is ultimately unable to act upon such masculine impulses. Just as the son is equally unable to use the father's handgun, both Herzog fathers possess a caring feminine side, but are unsure of how to express it properly with their children.

Moses Herzog attempts to express his nurturing side in his scant encounters with his own son, Marco. Whenever he visits his son, Herzog first memorizes a slew of historical facts which he then imparts to Marco. Since Bellow and his characters believe that intellectualism is "feminine" in American society, these exercises in teaching historical trivia become an expression of Herzog's femininity. With his continual mental obsession with the past and with historical figures, Moses is truly attempting to pass on his understanding of the world to Marco. The historian is unsure of how to express his parental affection and falls back upon the intellectual aspect of his personality that is classed as being feminine, with the hope that it will be an adequate substitute for other feminized traits that befit a parent.

Herzog finds little success with Marco, who does not show interest in his father's latest set of historical facts. On the cusp of entering adolescence, Marco Herzog "was entering an age of silence and restraint with his father" (Herzog 58), which is an inevitable process. Children must separate from their parents as they reach adulthood, or else risk turning into immature dependents like Tommy Wilhelm. However, Moses

Herzog does not lightly accept that his children must grow apart from him, feeling that “His duty was to live. To be sane, and to live, and to look after the kids” (Herzog 31), a duty that allows him to express his affection. Finding Marco unreceptive to his paternal love, Herzog turns his attention to June and ventures to Chicago seeking to protect her from Madeleine and Gersbach, thereby acting as a loving father to the child who has not yet grown away from her parents. June represents Herzog’s last chance to become a proper father figure before his children are too old to require such a protective presence in their lives.

Herzog’s project of passing on knowledge to his children also parallels one of the episodes that most reveals Augie March’s feelings towards parenthood. Augie for a time finds happiness working as an elementary-school teacher, a job in which he “felt at home” (Augie 487) and “wanted to give the kids my best and tell them all I knew” (Augie 487). Tommy Wilhelm also feels that “It rests me to watch the kids play” (Seize 41), but where Wilhelm is passive, Augie engages with the children and wishes to offer them guidance and support.

Yet at the same time that Augie acts paternally as a teacher, he has a nightmare that deeply disturbs him in which he is married with two children who, in full Kafkaesque mode, resemble a calf and an insect. When Augie’s dream-wife tells him that she has hidden the children from the neighbors, he responds that “still they were our children and it wasn’t right that they should be behind the piano” (Augie 489), but finds only his own blind mother in their place. It is difficult to imagine that Bellow, with his aversion to Freud, couched great allegorical meaning in each aspect of the nightmare. Rather, Augie’s dream expresses the uncertainty of the relationship between a parent and child

who must eventually be separated. Augie searches for his own children and finds the mother that he has become distant from. This grieves Augie because he realizes that if he has children, they will separate from him just as he has from his own mother.

Augie's awareness of this aspect of parenthood may be what leads to his ideal fantasy of his life's work, a rural school where he can educate and care for orphans. In this setup, Augie would be able to express his nurturing side while occupying the role of teacher that he finds so fulfilling. With orphans for students Augie would be able to be a close equivalent to a parent without actually being one. Augie sees this situation as ideal because while individual students would grow up and leave him, much as children do with their parents, he would always maintain a school full of surrogate children who are always in a state of dependence upon him. He dreams of being a parent without having to see his children grow up and become independent of him and his affection.

Augie never becomes a father within the bounds of his novel, as having a family to provide for would demand the end of his freewheeling adventures, which continue even as his narrative closes. Complete abandonment of one's children is never condoned within Bellow's novels, for even his most estranged and neglectful fathers provide for their families for many years until their internal crises or external divorces separate them from their children; Augie thus remains childless so that his story can end with his characteristic feelings of restless freedom, unconstrained by concern for progeny.

As for the other four men, their commitments to their families stand, but are left uncertain. *Herzog* ends with the cleaning and rebuilding of Moses and Madeleine's ruined Berkshires home, an image that strongly suggests the rehabilitation of Herzog's family life, but there is no hint of whether he will ever repair his connections to Marco

and June. Similarly, *Humboldt's Gift* ends with Citrine burying Von Humboldt Fleisher and assuming that the flowers in the cemetery "must be crocuses" (Humboldt 487), seeking a symbol of rebirth as he symbolically lays to rest the artistic and monetary concerns that have overshadowed his relationships, as embodied in his poet friend. Like Herzog, Citrine may show signs of beginning a renewed life, but he still lacks any connection to his daughters and voices no concern over this fact.

Henderson is the only one to show a desire to return to his family, though his reunion is unseen by the reader. Under extremely different circumstances, Tommy Wilhelm at the end of *Seize the Day* is penniless and has no recourse but to return to Margaret and their sons, but Bellow does not write about this inevitable future, instead focusing on "the consummation of his heart's ultimate need" (Seize 114) and ending the novel by drawing away from the outside world and into Tommy. Even for the protagonists who, voluntarily or involuntarily, are bound to return to their families, any amelioration of their previous failures at parenting is merely implied, with Bellow's interest remaining on their internal lives.

The absence of children from Bellow's endings reinforces the fact that his protagonists' struggles are based within their own personalities and attitudes, and that their project is to resolve their inner conflicts. Repairing broken familial ties is a step that can only follow the resolution of their internal crises, and as such it is of secondary concern to the narratives. Children remain a concern of the future that can only be approached once the men have accepted their own adulthood.

Conclusion: Life in Cycles

In Bellow's novels, life operates in continual generational cycles that may be temporarily resisted by his protagonists, but are ultimately inescapable. Characters are bound to grow into adulthood and leave their parents and siblings behind, only to establish their own families that will undergo the same separations. The changes that come with adulthood and the creation of one's own family are distressing to Bellow's male characters as they seek a static existence, which is best exemplified by Moses Herzog's perpetual attempts to flee into the past rather than face his present situations. Herzog, along with Augie March, Tommy Wilhelm, Eugene Henderson, and Charlie Citrine, is forced to recognize the futility of resisting the natural cycle of biological generations and to accept a life within it.

Augie March exhibits the most paradoxical attitude towards change and adulthood. He blithely accepts the fact that his position in the world is constantly changing, yet he shies away from the changes that threaten to end his protracted childhood. He continually seeks the company of characters who manipulate and shape him, such as Grandma Lausch, Einhorn, and Thea Fenchel, but he leaves them whenever their manipulation threatens his wide-ranging freedom. This threat is most urgent in Augie's forced interaction with the crazed Hymie Basteshaw; Basteshaw physically binds Augie, demonstrating that his freedom is in fact vulnerable. It takes many years, but Augie finds a confinement that he cannot escape from.

The knowledge that adulthood, with its responsibilities and perceived end to childhood freedom, may be inevitable is particularly present in Augie's mind in the final passages of the novel. When Augie notes that "Columbus too thought he was a flop,

probably, when they sent him back in chains. Which didn't prove there was no America" (Augie 586), he is espousing a philosophy in which his freedom, though threatened, is still valuable and may be able to persist in some form. Augie fashions himself an explorer of the world like Columbus, but he foresees that adulthood will eventually restrict his freedom, his equivalent of Columbus's chains. In the face of inevitable entrapment by adulthood, Augie maintains his buoyant optimism through the end of the novel by realizing that just as Columbus's failure did not rescind his discoveries, adulthood will not retroactively render his adventures meaningless. Rather, Augie realizes that he must continue to enjoy his childlike freedom while it lasts, even as adulthood looms in his future.

While Augie accepts that his situation will eventually change and that he will be forced into adulthood, the more childish Tommy Wilhelm resists this idea for the entirety of *Seize the Day* and finds his inability to escape it traumatic. From the outset of his narrative, Tommy "realized that he could not keep this up much longer, and today he was afraid [...] that his routine was about to break up" (Seize 2). His routine consists of futilely begging his father for money and losing his own money to the quack Dr. Tamkin at the stock exchange, yet Tommy clings to this life. The very concept of change is abhorrent to him because it would necessitate his acceptance of adult responsibilities. Having already fled from his job and his marriage to live under the same hotel roof as his father, Tommy refuses to leave his refuge from adult life. Like Augie, he recognizes that childhood cannot last indefinitely, but instead of possessing Augie's *joie de vivre*, he can only make frantic attempts to further postpone adulthood. He "realized that Tamkin

spoke faultily” (Seize 68), but still clings to the hope that Tamkin can deliver him from his fate regardless.

Tommy’s final epiphany at the funeral comes after repeated references to death and cemeteries throughout the novel. Tommy grudgingly pays for life insurance from a company that “published pictures of funerals in the magazines, and frightened the suckers” (Seize 27), and is “angry because the stone bench between his mother’s and his grandmother’s graves had been overturned and broken” (Seize 30) and assumes that the damage was done by teenaged delinquents. Later, he tells his father “All you seem to think about is your death [...] But I’m going to die too” (Seize 49), to which Dr. Adler responds “I’m still alive, not dead” (Seize 51). These three incidents show Tommy’s growing awareness of mortality. Initially he dismisses the life insurance policy started by his mother-in-law as foolishness; Tommy still thinks of himself as a child, not as an adult like his mother-in-law who must consider death an imminent certainty. However, his awareness of death is awakened and he sees a clear distinction between adults such as his deceased mother and the young vandals he imagines desecrating her grave. In his imagining, adults are capable of dying, while children (of the sort who might vandalize graves) view death with irreverence.

When Tommy broaches the subject of death with his father, he begins to recognize his own mortality. Death is the ultimate end of one’s growth from childhood into adulthood, the process that Tommy wishes so dearly to resist. If Dr. Adler is obsessed with his own death, it means that he is aware of his status as a fully-grown adult who must die. Tommy is disturbed by mortality and its reminder that he cannot remain a child, but will inevitably grow older. Dr. Adler’s insistence that he is not yet dead is

much like Augie March's thought that adulthood is the end of childhood freedom, but not of all life and pleasure. Tommy lacks this insight and is thus traumatized when he finally stumbles into the funeral parlor and is confronted directly with death. He enters the funeral parlor looking for Tamkin, his last possible reprieve from returning to his family and his adult responsibilities, only to find that all of his paths lead to the inevitability of growing up, which ends in death.

In contrast to Augie and Tommy, Moses Herzog tries to fulfill his responsibilities to his children and to Ramona, but in his own way seeks the comforts of childhood. Herzog is an historian and spends much of the novel writing to figures of the past and recalling his own history. The narrative structure itself is presented as an examination of the past. The first page of *Herzog* places him in Ludeyville and details how he has just traveled from New York to Martha's Vineyard to Chicago to the Berkshires, adumbrating his movements throughout the novel. The novel consists of Herzog's recollection of this immediate past until the narrative returns to its chronological starting point. This occurs when Herzog, in a flurry of his letter-writing, tells himself that Luke Asphalter "may think you've simply gone off your nut. But if I am out of my mind, it's all right with me" (Herzog 343), repeating the novel's opening sentence verbatim.

The significance is that Herzog flees into the past as a response to the break-up of his marriage and living situation. While his letters and thoughts on the present world "tend to be abstract [...] his memories are necessarily more concrete" and to remember such personal specifics "is to realize that one is a self indeed" (Tanner *City of Words* 300). As Augie and Tommy know, it can be comforting to live as a child and have an identity given by the shaping influences of others. Herzog's attempts to find such a

shaping influence in Madeleine and Gersbach have failed, leaving him with nothing but the memories of a time when his identity was shaped by the adults in his life.

Herzog learns of Madeleine's affair with Gersbach through a letter from Geraldine Portnoy, Asphalter's assistant. His ensuing fits of letter-writing form his effort to reclaim the life that Madeleine's infidelity has interrupted. His delivery from the madness of his letters comes via his brother Will, an adult who still cares for Moses. Herzog finally understands that returning to the past is an impossibility and he must instead accept the love of Will and Ramona in order to construct a new life and routine to replace what he has lost.

Charlie Citrine follows a similar pattern in resolving his own displacement from society. While he does not obsess over the past to the same extent as Herzog, Citrine begins his narration by describing his friendship with Von Humboldt Fleisher before finally declaring "And now the present. A different side of life—entirely contemporary" (Humboldt 34). The deceased poet overshadows Citrine's life, a fact embodied in the opening sentence "The book of ballads published by Von Humboldt Fleisher in the Thirties was an immediate hit" (Humboldt 1), which introduces him before the reader is even aware of the existence of Citrine the narrator.

Citrine's present troubles concern his money and his lovers, much as Humboldt had a disastrous marriage and died bankrupt. Aware of these parallels, Citrine obsesses over his dead friend, hoping to gain insight into his own situation. Renata tells Citrine that he "is invent[ing] relationships with the dead you never had when they were living. You create connections they wouldn't allow, or you weren't capable of" (Humboldt 311),

a statement that he admits is accurate. Citrine's hope is that if Humboldt can be retroactively redeemed, it will prove that his own life is capable of being ameliorated.

Citrine's delivery from the destitution that claimed Humboldt comes from their screenplays and Humboldt's will. After breaking their friendship by abusing Citrine's blank check, Humboldt posthumously repays his protégé, which saves Citrine and demonstrates Humboldt's ability to be selfless. When interring the poet in a new grave, Citrine refers to him as "our pal, our nephew and brother" (Humboldt 485). Humboldt had said that the exchange of blank checks made he and Citrine blood brothers; his gift to Citrine renews this bond and echoes the end of *Herzog* where the appearance of brother Will rehabilitates Moses. With his past literally and figuratively buried, Citrine finds his own form of hopefulness at the conclusion of the novel.

In many ways the novel that most exemplifies the renewals that Bellow's protagonists undergo is *Henderson the Rain King*. While the other male characters seek solace in remembering and clinging to the past, Eugene Henderson departs from modern civilization and explores tribes in the birthplace of the human race. There he finds a disturbing form of the cycles of childhood and adulthood: the Wariri kings must be murdered for their sons to take the throne, at which point they undergo an apotheosis into lions. This mirrors Henderson's inheritance of his father's estate and his lionization of the august elder Henderson, and is also similar to Herzog's father-worship.

The wisdom that Henderson learns from Dahfu is that this particular father-son relationship is not the only one possible. By selecting Henderson as his successor, Dahfu effectively guarantees that the Wariri tradition will be interrupted upon his own death. The murderous line of succession is broken off, requiring a new tradition to replace it,

much as Henderson will necessarily inhabit a biological cycle that moves him from childhood into adulthood, but it need not be the self-destructive one with which he begins the novel.

The critical symbol of Henderson's transformation, and that of his fellow protagonists, is found on the airstrip in Newfoundland. Henderson sees that the airplane's "beautiful propellers were still, all four of them. I guess I felt it was my turn now to move" (Henderson 341), and the propellers form the metaphor of his situation. The propellers are fixed forever spinning in the same cycles, yet at the same time their circular motion produces forward motion and flight. So too are Bellow's male characters propelled by the very fact of their humanity, bound by cycles of biological generation and forced from childhood into adulthood and parenthood. Their project, and Bellow's project, is to discover that even within the constrictions of the cycles, there is a capacity for progress and for the establishment of a unique complete self. Bellow ends his novels by having his protagonists realize this, providing hopefulness for them and for a humanity that is contained in the image of Henderson joyfully bounding through the Newfoundland snow.

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