Death in *Henderson the Rain King*

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Introduction

Saul Bellow was born in Lachine, Quebec, in 1915, as the fourth child of Abraham Bellow and Liz Bellow. Abraham and Liz had lived in St. Petersburg, Russia, but because of the depression they moved to Lachine, Canada. Soon they moved to Chicago, because the immigration to Canada was not successful. He attended the University of Chicago, and studied at Northwestern University from which he received his bachelor's degree in sociology and anthropology with honors in 1937. He soon embarked on writing, releasing his first work, *Dangling Man*, in 1944. *Henderson the Rain King* was his fifth work published in 1959. In 1976 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for the human understanding and subtle analysis of contemporary culture that are combined in his works.

The protagonist, Henderson, says to his native guide, Romilayu, in the latter part of the story,"You have to think about white Protestantism and the Constitution and the Civil War and capitalism and winning the West. All the major tasks and the big conquests were done before my time. That left the biggest problem of all, which was to encounter *death*"(emphasis added, 276).[1] The fear of death is Henderson's concern and the cause of mental malady which makes him say, "My life and deeds were a prison" (284).

Henderson comes from a distinguished family. He is a millionaire, living with his second wife, Lily, and their twins. The fear of death is the only crux beyond his control. One morning, their maid, Miss Lenox, dies of a heart attack because of her astonishment at the quarrel between Henderson and Lily. After her demise the junk in her room makes him feel that death is nothing but annihilation. The abrupt death and his feeling of nothingness after her death accelerate his fear of death. He makes up his mind to go to Africa to remedy his chaotic condition and to be released from mortality.

Africa greets Henderson with many images of death unexpectedly. He visits two tribes, the Arnewi and the Wariri, while there. Irritated with the images of death and death itself, Henderson learns a truth from both of the tribes. This truth will be explained later. His comical, noisy trip to Africa is a mental trip. And for Henderson Africa is "not Africa *per se* but a sphere of reality, or a state of mind, liberated from the tyranny of death" (Pifer, 96). The purpose of this essay is to consider *death* (for Henderson) in this respect. In the first chapter we want to show what Henderson's fear of death is, what he does because of the fear, and what results from it. In the second chapter we will discuss what he learns in Africa, to which he flies to escape the fear of death. In the last chapter we will debate Henderson's rebirth through his experiences in Africa and through the death of Dahfu, the king of the Wariri, who is a mentor for Henderson as the protagonists in Bellow's novels often have mentors.

I. Fear of Death

This chapter shows why Henderson fears death, what he tries to do to hide himself from the fear of death and what is produced by his hiding.

There are two reasons why he is afraid of death. One is to live like a stone falling into a pit or a grave with gathering momentum. Unlike the stone, he wishes to live a meaningful life. The other is disconnection with the dead. He longs for the immortality of soul.

First, he is suffering from the voice "I want, I want . . . " welling up from the abyss of his body. The voice means that Henderson wants his life to be meaningful. He fears to die "exactly like a stone, straight into deafness, and still the last, repeating I want, I want, I want, then striking the earth and entering it forever" (297). In other words, he opposes nihilistic way of life—the life emerged from darkness and buried in the darkness.

To appease the voice he tries to do various things. In his elegant garden, for instance, he keeps pigs and devotes himself in cooking mash for them. He also applies himself closely to chopping wood, lifting,

plowing, laying cement blocks, pouring concrete, etc. But he is always looking in vain for what he thinks may be a clue of something meaningful, with the voice whispering beside his ears, "I want, I want. . . ."

Secondly, Henderson fears the nothingness after death that he feels after Miss Lenox's death. For Henderson the nothingness symbolically expresses finality of death or perfect disconnection of the living from the dead. He wishes communication with the dead. He says to Dahfu, the king of the Wariri, "Well, it must be great. . . to think you are going to be reunited with a dear parent. I only wish such a thing could happen to me" (289) on a "lion day," this will be explained later. He also says to Romilayu, "I wouldn't agree to the death of my soul" (277). So he exerts himself to communicate with his late father playing his father's violin:

> My main purpose was to reach my father by playing on his violin . . . . I had felt I was pursuing my father's spirit, whispering, "Oh, Father, Pa. Do you recognize the sounds? This is me, Gene on your violin, trying to reach you." For it so happens that I have never been able to convince myself the dead are utterly dead . . . . (130)

The reason he is so eager to reach his father through the playing of the violin is that he thinks he was deserted by his father. When his elder brother died, his father was very hard on Henderson. So he left home. His father died before Henderson could reconcile with him. Though he plays the violin every day, he is still afraid that he is disconnected from his father.

To begin with "violence" is one of the measures he uses to hide his fear of death. B. Scheer-Schäzler also states, "By his violence he partly expresses his impotent anger at a life that he can neither bear nor change" (Scheer-Schäzler, 80). Examples abound.

One day Henderson gets into brawls in the county saloons near his farm and the troops look him up. But he is not worked over thanks to his background, coming from a prominent family, and thanks to Lily, who comes and bails him out. On an another day he has a quarrel with a driver of a snow plow on US7, when the driver forces him off the road.

One winter Lily takes him to a coast of the Gulf with their twins, because winters seem to make his condition worse. Contrary to her expectation his condition doesn't become better. He cannot stop the violence at the resort hotel. He gives up fishing and sits on the beach shooting at bottles with the slingshot given to the twins by his friend. In the dining room he puts bourbon into his morning coffee from a big flask. Then the other kids stop playing with the twins and the wives begin to avoid Lily.

Henderson is the most violent to his wife. Overhearing Lily's telephone call to her friend, "[he] is unkillable" (6), invokes his anxiety as he wants to believe that he is unkillable. He raves at her in public and swears at her in private. When Lily is entertaining her guests, he comes in with his filthy plaster cast (a few years ago he fell from a tractor while drinking, ran over himself and broke his leg). He goes up to the ladies Lily is entertaining with that plaster cast and shakes hands with them, saying, "I'm Mr. Henderson, how do you do?" Then he gets to Lily and shakes her hand as if she were merely another guest, a stranger like the rest. He does this on purpose. He imagines the ladies may be telling themselves, "He doesn't know her. In his mind he is still married to the first. Isn't that awful?"(5)

Next "greatness" is another measure Henderson uses to hide from his fear of death, just as John Jacob Clayton states about Henderson, "He garbs himself in a sense of importance, of special destiny; he isolates himself from others to avoid their condition . . . ." (Clayton, 234-235). Henderson deceives himself showing off his greatness—other ordinary people die but great Henderson does not perish.

First Henderson tries to manifest his greatness in the

village of Arnewi who are meek, cattle loving people. Upon entering the village, he sets fire to a bush with his lighter as a treat for the Arnewi. Immediately the bush is ablaze, flaming, roaring, and making a "brilliant manifestation" (48) which symbolizes Henderson's greatness.

Great Henderson, seeing a weeping girl of the tribe, says to his guide, Romilayu, "The poor soul is in trouble? Is there something I can do for her? She's coming to me for help . . . . " (50)

Moreover, learning that the Arnewi are suffering from drought, he says to Romilayu again, "So ask them what they want me to do. I intend to do something, ... There must be something only I can do . . . . " (51).

His last manifestation of his greatness at the Arnewi village is explosion of the reservoir. The Arnewi have a reservoir full of water. The problem is that there are many frogs living in the reservoir and, according to the tradition of the tribe, it is a taboo to drink the water contaminated by frogs. He tries to exterminate the frogs with the tools that he has brought with him from America. His intention is to kill the frogs with an explosion in the reservoir. He calls to the Arnewi who are anxiously watching his every action, "I hope I may die . . . if I don't drive out, exterminate, and crush the frogs" (73). He says to himself seeing Romilayu who is also uneasy, "I 〔can't〕 allow Romilayu to show his doubt . . . . " (105). Henderson, who is overconfident in his own project, breaks the wall of the reservoir when he crushes the frogs with the explosion, with the result that the precious water flows out to the last drop. The pyrrhic victory over the frogs forces Henderson to leave the village without showing his last and complete greatness.

Secondly Henderson, forced to leave the Arnewi village, goes deeper into the African continent to the Wariri town, where he is also allured to manifest his greatness. In the town they are going to hold a rain festival due to the continuous drought. He is ushered into the arena by Dahfu, the king, to watch one of the rain making ceremonies. Many gods and goddesses are lined up in the arena. They move from one place to another the gods and goddesses. Turombo, who is supposed to be the strongest man in the tribe, challenges to lift the biggest goddess, Mummah, only to fail to move her. Henderson, who intended to say to the king when he met him for the first time, "I'm strong enough to run up a hill a hundred yards, with one of your bodies on my back" (162), thinks in his mind, "You are strong but it so happens I am stronger . . . This is a job for me. Yield, yield! Cede! Because here comes Henderson! Just let me get my hands to that Mummah, and by God . . . . " (186). Allowed by the king to go down into the arena to try to lift the goddess, Henderson embraces the goddess and succeeds.

Now that we are sure that Henderson's violence and his greatness are used to escape from the fear of death, the next step is to consider what is the result of his violence and greatness. Let us consider it from Schlossberg's interesting viewpoint. Schlossberg is Dahfu's counterpart in *The Victim*, which is Bellow's second novel published in 1947. The old jounalist, Schlossberg, remarks:

> It's bad to be less than human and it's bad to be more than human. What's more than human? . . . Caesar, . . . wanted to be like a god . . . . We only know what it is to die because some people die, if we make ourselves different from them, maybe we don't have to? Less than human is the other side of it . . . Good acting is exactly human . . . .[2]

According to the mentor, "to be more than human" is to be godlike, and "to know to die" is to admit that he is a human being like others. "To be less than human" can be understood to be like an animal.

Returning to Henderson's demeanor, we feel his "violence" results from his immediate and mechanical

desire which is not under his control. It is less than human. On the other hand his "greatness" is godlike aspiration, which is to be more than human. To be less than human and to be more than human are to refuse that he is a human being like others, having the same human fate, mortality. So Henderson is isolated. What is exactly "human" will be discussed in the next chapter.

II. Metaphorical Death

In the first chapter we discussed Henderson's exercising violence and pretending greatness to hide himself from fear of death, with the result that he is isolated. In other words his self is always armored. According to Dahfu, his self is emphasized, "ego emphasis." The purpose of this chapter is to show how the savage king, Dahfu, initiates Henderson metaphorically into accepting death and discarding his emphasized ego to regain humanity, or in Schlossberg's words, to be exactly human.

Queen Willatale of the Arnewi initiates Henderson into a mystery "Grun-tu-molani" ("Man wants to live"). To put it plainly, even if one thinks one does not deserve to live, everyone wants to live and does so. The ambiguous truth relieves Henderson, to some extent, who is irritated trying to look for the significance of life without finding it while fearing death. But Dahfu says that the truth from the queen is not enough to cure his malady. For how man must live is the question. What Dahfu conceives is a drastic therapy in a den of the lioness, Atti, which he keeps beneath the palace. The therapy is to make Henderson learn not to avoid the reality of death and to discard his old self. For this purpose the king requires him to undergo two ordeals—to face the lioness which is a symbol of death and to imitate the animal as a means to discard his old self.

The first practice, for Henderson the first ordeal, is to confront the lioness. Dahfu ushers him in the lioness' den. In the den the two different responses to the animal of Dahfu and Henderson metaphorically show their different attitudes toward life and death. To understand Henderson's refusal of death clearly, it is worthwhile to consider Dahfu's attitude in the den which is quite opposite to Henderson's.

The king is much relaxed in the lioness' den. He calls to the lioness in a "delighted, playful voice, nasal, African, and songlike . . . . " (223). He approaches the lioness:

> 〔The〕 king had taken one of those easy positions of his and was resting on his elbow. He had such a *relaxed way* about him . . . . (emphasis added, 224)

Dahfu's relaxed attitude toward the lioness, a metaphorical death, symbolizes his real attitude toward life and death. Though he is living calmly and compassionate to everyone, he is a kissing cousin to death. The king is under two threats of death. According to the tradition in the Wariri, the king has to catch a lion which is believed to have the soul of the father king in a certain period, and he will also be strangled when he cannot be of any further service to his more than sixty wives. In spite of these crises he does not fear death. Henderson says to Romilayu, admiring the king's dignity:

> Look at all the way he has to fear, and still look at the way he lies on that sofa . . . . And the way he lies on it, Romilayu! And the females wait on him. But on the table near him he has those two skulls used at the rain ceremony, one his father's and the other his grandfather's . . . . (277)

Dahfu's attitude toward the crisis of death expressed in the citation is tantamount to that in the lioness' den.

Let us return to Henderson's attitude in the den. Even before he enters the den, hearing the lioness' snarl, he is threatened by the fear of death. He fears that he will be bitten and killed by the animal. It is the same fear that he felt at an aquarium on the Vermillion Coast

called Banyules, which is always haunting him. He had a strange experience in the aquarium:

> I looked in at an octopus, and the creature seemed also to look at me and press its soft head to the glass, flat, the flesh becoming pale and granular—blanched, speckled. The eyes spoke to me coldly. But even more speaking, even more cold, was the soft head with its speckles, and the Brownian motion in those speckles, a cosmic coldness in which I felt I was dying. The tentacles throbbed and motioned through the glass, the bubbles sped upward, and I thought, "This is my last day. Death is giving me notice." (19)

Therefore, for Henderson, entering the den and facing the animal, is beyond imagination although Dahfu urges him to follow down into the den. Imagining himself bitten by the lioness and bleeding, he is contracted:

> Not an inch did I stir from the position I was left in, not even to reset my helmet when it sank over my brows with the wrinkling of my forehead that resulted from the intensity of my concentration. No, I stood there half deaf, half blind, with my throat closing and all the *sphincters shut.* (emphasis added, 224)

This attitude in the den is the miniature of the attitude toward death of timid Henderson.

What do the two different responses to the lioness result in? Dahfu, who is relaxed beside the animal, can see the lioness well. As the king himself says, he can see her beauty very well. On the other hand Henderson, who fears the animal and contracted, cannot see her beauty. Dahfu calls him an "avoider." The king says to him, "I believe the fear has subsided you will be capable of admiring 〔the lioness'〕 beauty . . . . When the fear yields, a beauty is disclosed in its place" (262). In short Dahfu means that, if he confronts death—he admits that he himself is also a mortal man like other ordinary people and when he stops exercising violence and pretending greatness, he can appreciate the beauty of human beings—love. To see the love well, the king forces him to perform a further drill in the den.

The other practice in the den is to imitate the lioness to discard his ego-ridden self. Dahfu has a kind of conviction between inside and outside, especially as applied to human beings. He is engrossed by a belief in the transformation of human material, that we can work either way, either from the rind to the core or from the core to rind—the flesh influencing the mind, the mind influencing the flesh, back again to the mind, back once more to the flesh. Concretely the king requires Henderson to walk, be on all fours and roar like the lioness.

First the king tells him not to run but to walk, because he is running for fear of the animal. Dahfu says "I intend to loosen you up . . . because you are so contracted. This is why you are running. The tendency of your conscious is to isolate self. This makes you extremely contracted and self-recoiled . . . . " (264).

Secondly Dahfu urges him to assume the posture of the lioness. But Henderson's strong self prevents him from throwing himself before the animal. His pride forces him to complain to the king. He tells the king that it will be easy for the king to imitate the animal because the king was born and brought up in Africa, and it is the king's idea. What Henderson has to discard is that consciousness.

Thirdly Dahfu urges him to roar. He says, "Roar, roar, roar, Henderson-Sungo. Do not be afraid . . . Up with hind quarters. Threaten me . . . Feel it. Be the beast! You will recover humanity later . . . . " (267). Imitating the lioness will make Henderson's contracted sphincter loosen before what Henderson considers to be a ferocious animal. According to Dahfu's conviction about the connection between inside and outside, it will

also loosen Henderson's contracted mind, so called detachment from other ordinary people because of his violence and consciousness, "greatness."

To understand Dahfu's therapy, it is useful to explain here the idea of psychoanalyst, Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957). Many critics, more or less, refer to Bellow's introduction of Reichian theory. Clayton, for example, states, "The healing wisdom that Dahfu brings back from civilization (Dahfu has studied medical science in Beirut) is not only Heideggerian but Reichian" (Clayton, 180-181). Fuchs introduces Bellow's letter to Kessler. In the letter Bellow remarks, "All the while I was writing of Dahfu I had the ghost of Rosenfeld near at hand, my initiator into the Reichian mysteries" (Fuchs, 115). According to the psychoanalyst, the cosmos is filled with orgone energy. It is said that the psychoanalyst accumulated the energy in a box called orgone box and he tried to cure psychiatric patients in the box. In Reich's theory, there must be inter-relatedness of flesh and mind. His intention is first to take the patient's physical contraction off and then to take off the "character armor" that the patient constructs to defend himself from anxieties.

In Henderson's case "character armor" is his ego-ridden condition to exercise violence and pretend greatness. The lioness' den may be tantamount to Reich's orgone box. Henderson's character armor is taken off with his assuming the identity of the lioness. And "so [he] was the beast. [He] gave [himself] to it, and all [his] sorrow came out in the roaring" (107). It is the end of his old self.

III. Physical Death

In the previous chapter Henderson metaphorically learned how to be true "human" through omnipresent death. In this chapter we will discuss how he physically learns about the ubiquity of death and whether the death is nothingness as he feared in America.

Africa greets Henderson with many images of death and real death. First he is irritated with the doom of Dahfu, who is now his mentor, intimate friend, and who is exposed to death. According to the old tradition concerning the king's wives, which was mentioned in the second chapter, when he weakens and cannot satisfy the wives, he will be conveyed into the bush and there he will be strangled. After the king dies, the priest in the Wariri land will watch over the king until a maggot is seen upon Dahfu's body. The priest will wrap it in a piece of silk and bring it to the people. He will show it in public pronouncing and declaring it to be the king's soul. Then he will re-enter the bush and, after some time elapses, he will carry a lion's cub to town, explaining that the maggot has now experienced a metamorphosis, and has turned into a lion. And after another interval, he will announce to the people the fact that the lion has converted into the next king. This will be Dahfu's successor. The lion cub which they think metamorphosed from the maggot is marked. So it is easy to distinguish the right one from the wrong one. The lioness which the king keeps beneath the palace is the wrong one. Dahfu's attachment to the lioness is so deep that he cannot send it away. Thus the king is the focus of criticism, because the wrong lion (or lioness) is evil. Now the king is exposed to death due to two reasons—his possible impotence to the wives and the wrong lioness.

Secondly there are many other images of death in the Wariri land. Bellow insists that death is unavoidable. Henderson is frightened at sensing that the palace and the town smell of "death." Dead men's teeth have been sewed to the king's hat to prevent him from the evil eye. The teeth are talismans for the Wariri, but they are ominous for Henderson who fears death. Moreover he is threatened by the skulls in the king's room and dead men hanging on the gallows which entertain a crowd of vultures. Among these images of death, the corpse with which he is compelled to stay over night and the mummified head of one of the lion-women which Dahfu's mother, Queen Yasra, and her attendants show

him, are formidable.

The corpse in the hut tells Henderson that nobody can escape death. The first night he and Romilayu arrive at the Wariri town, they are ushered in a hut where they begin to sleep off their fatigue from the trek. Soon Henderson notices a corpse is leaning against the wall of the hut. Irritated by the corpse which reminds him of death that he has escaped by coming all the way to Africa from America, he throws it off into the nearby ravine. But to his surprise, it is not long before he notices that the corpse, which he believes he had successfully disposed of, is returned and laid beside him again. The corpse silently tells Henderson, "You cannot avoid death."

Another striking image of death is a mummified head. Before considering Henderson's response to the shriveled head, we had better learn whose head it is. A legend in the Wariri land tells us that, with a single exception, lions contain the souls of sorcerers. The exception is, of course, the lion which contained the soul of the former king, Gmilo. The shriveled head is the head of one of the lion-women, a sorceress, who went out and had trysts with lions. She poisoned people and bewitched them. So she was caught and strangled. But according to legend she came back as a lioness. The townspeople believe it is the lioness, Atti, which Dahfu keeps.

Returning to the point, we cannot pass over Henderson's surprise, anger and disappointment. What was the purpose of his journey to Africa? It is to be released from the fear of death. He, seeing the head, feels the same fear and ominous feeling that he had in Banyules at the aquarium watching an octopus, and he laments his fate. He mutters to himself, "Evidently I happen to have a great death potential . . . why is it always near me—why! Why can't I get away from it awhile! Why, why!" (252) The answer is simple, Henderson! That is "death is unavoidable."

In short, Dahfu's doom being exposed to death and many images of death in the Wariri land indicate that death is a kissing cousin to Henderson just as he has no choice but to face the lioness in the den which is firmly latched after he enters. Then is Henderson's trek in Africa in vain?

Let us consider Dahfu's death to judge whether Henderson's trek is in vain or not. It is common that the leader's death of a tribe gives the tribe a hope of rebirth, just as Fisher King's death in *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot produces the image of spiritual hope. Some protagonists in Bellow's novels also experience the rebirth in attendance of a death, as Wilhelm in *Seize the Day* is revived in tears beside a stranger's corpse, and as Asa in *The Victim* is impressed with the death of his nephew, Mickey, and hits on a clue to his transformation. So does Henderson. He regains humanity and understands immortality, attending and accepting (Dahfu's) death.

Henderson experiences the recovery of humanity on the lion day, which, as we mentioned earlier, is the day on which Dahfu has to catch the very lion which contains his late father's soul. On the day he goes into the deep mountain with the king, the king catches a lion which is not the right one and he is seriously wounded by its claws. Now Henderson, who was afraid of death, has been indoctrinated with an ordinance that death is unavoidable: metaphorically, the ordeal in the lioness' den, and actually, Dahfu's doom and many images of death. So his attitude toward the dying but *smiling* king is notable. He speaks to the king because of friendship or love for him, "Your Majesty, move over and I'll die beside you" (312). That is, he is accepting death. Henderson is admitting that he is also "human" as others. For death is a "human condition" shared with others. It is an ordinary and common condition of all human beings which they cannot flee. Now he is reconciling with humanity.

It may sound like paradox, but it may safely be assumed that Dahfu's death, mentally and physically, is the "immortality" for which Henderson was eagerly

seeking in America.

Mentally Dahfu's death makes Henderson realize his soul's union with Dahfu's. He has often wished to be united with the souls of the dead. In America he played his father's violin to be united with his late father. And also on the lion day, as stated above, he says enviously to Dahfu who is going to catch the lion that contains his late father's soul, "Well, it must be great . . . to think you are going to be reunited with a dear parent. I only wish such a thing could happen to me" (289). He feels that union after the king's death. When he tries to stop Dahfu's bleeding, he thinks to himself. "〔There〕 was blood all over me and soon it was dry. I tried to rub it off. Well, I thought, maybe this is a sign that I should continue his existence?" (314). "Continue his existence" can be understood that he wishes he will take over Dahfu's nobility. In fact he is determined to be a doctor after Dahfu's noble conduct when he returns to America. He will apply for the medical school. The king's nobility and his love for Henderson will live in his mind forever. Thus his union with Dahfu's soul is realized because of his acceptance of (Dahfu's) death. It is Dahfu's immortality in him.

The death of the king unveils "unknown dimensions" (Pifer, 97) in Henderson's mind, too. Regaining humanity by accepting (Dahfu's) death, he comes to be able to understand his late father. He thought that he was disconnected from his father's soul since his brother, Dick, died. At the age of sixteen his brother, Dick, drowned in the wild mountains. His father, being disappointed, was hard on him. On the evening of Dick's funeral his father cursed him because he went to work wrecking old cars which he started that summer. Putting aside his customary elegance of words, his father swore at him so much that Henderson at the age of sixteen couldn't comfort his father and thus went away. But now he can understand his father's grief. He thinks "〔an〕 old man, disappointed, of failing strength, may try to reinvigorate himself by means of anger" (336-337). From now on his father will live in his mind. It is immortality of his father in him of which he speaks when he says to Romilayu, "〔The dead〕 make us think of them. That is their immortality. In us" (329).

We have considered how Dahfu's death affected Henderson mentally. Next we will shift the problem away from the spiritual effect of Dahfu's death to physical one. Even a noble man in the Wariri land, King Dahfu, cannot avoid death. Above all what is shocking for Henderson is the ruin of the king's body. The body of the noble king is quickly corrupted in the extreme heat of Africa. "The face was swelled and lumpy, very much distorted. Owing to the effects of the heat, despite of love I felt for him I was obliged to turn away . . . " (325). Dahfu's flesh and bones will soon return to dust.

Here is physical immortality. Bellow often remarks that the dead will return to dust. In the early part of *Henderson the Rain King,* Henderson says in his beautiful garden, "Beneath this grass the earth may be filled with carcasses, yet that detracts nothing from a day like this, for they have become humus and the grass is thriving" (29). Also in *To Jerusalem and Back: A Personal Account,* we meet with the phrase, "I feel a good part of this dust must be ground out of human bone."[3] On his way home, Henderson says to himself, "Dahfu will never be seen again and presently I will never be seen again" (333). The human life-span is short, but after man dies, the body will return to dust, where new life will be born just as grasses wither and so they are forever green. That is physical immortality.

What Henderson learned during his trek in Africa is that death is omnipresent but that death is not nothingness.

Conclusion

Through the various images of death and death itself, Henderson cannot help but learn *"et in Arcadia ego."* Although, Africa releases him from fear of mortality. What the Dark Continent initiates him into is the comfort that physically and mentally man is immortal

though it may sound paradox. That is, only when he accept death, can he subdue it.

Physically he comes to know "〔dust〕 thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen., 3:19). Even the noble king, Dahfu, cannot avoid death and corruption of his body. Egregious Henderson will die soon, too. Then they will turn to dust, and it will help new life thrive. It is the rhythm of the universe.

Mentally to accept the rhythm is significant. It is acceptance of the rhythm as the spirit of *"amor fati"* through which Henderson regains humanity—love. "Whatever gains I ever made," says Henderson, "were always due to love and nothing else" (339). It is love which discloses the expansion of the unknown dimensions. With the expansion, he is easily imbued with Dahfu's noble conduct and is able to understand his late father. They will live in Henderson's mind forever. That is their immortality. Henderson, who has thus been released from the tyranny of mortality, comes back to America to live as one of the community and will conduct himself nobly.

In many cases the problems of Bellow's protagonists are settled or come to end in cities. It may be Bellow's affirmative attitude toward civilization though he attacks it. Reproaching its demerits, he admits that we are also the beneficiaries. The novel may be not only the author's attack on modern society but his warning to avoid a mess of pottage through the protagonist's comical quest.

Notes

1. In this essay, whenever we refer to *Henderson the Rain King,* the name of the author and the title will be omitted from the parenthesis.
2. Saul Bellow, *The Victim* (New York : Penguin, 1966), p. 112.
3. Saul Bellow, *To Jerusalem and Back: A Personal Account* (London: Penguin, 1977), p. 10.

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