

## **From other Exiles: Alienation or the Madness of Herzog?**

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### **Abstract**

This paper analyses how alienation in Saul Bellow's *Herzog* (1964) results in madness and wisdom at the same time. Following this, the researcher will firstly examine the background of alienation and its silent assumptions by highlighting the following features: the search for truth, the marginalization, and the mental paralysis of the hero, Herzog. In line with the findings achieved at this stage, the researcher will secondly study how alienation scrupulously traces Herzog's madness and wisdom, considering the relationships between alienation, on the one hand, and melancholy, oblivion and escapism, on the other hand. In the second part of this essay, the researcher will argue how madness is reflected in terms of wisdom and sanity. It is the wisdom of the marginalized intellectual in modern American society. Seen from this perspective, alienation and madness are argued to have satirical and allegorical dimensions as they entail reciprocal relationships with wisdom and sanity. The conclusion the researcher seeks to achieve is that when Herzog attempts to bypass and deconstruct the amoral ethics of modern American culture, he unexpectedly goes through various shifts from his being alienated, disregarded, rejected, mad and ultimately wise. Foucault's (1967) and Deleuze's (1968) concerns over the issues of madness and alienation prove to be an insightful theoretical platform in this paper.

**Keywords:** alienation, madness, exile, wisdom, modern American culture, Saul Bellow's *Herzog*

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## 1. Introduction

In a world that appears to be full of alienation, anxiety, despair, isolation, randomness, meaninglessness and madness, any attempt to celebrate the wisdom of the intellect and to elevate its projects of purifying the world provides an enigmatic satisfaction. On the one hand, there are melancholy and madness as the radical facets of alienation. On the other hand, there are faith, dream and wisdom as the aftermaths of never ending years of patient research, as an attempt to restore our lost humanity.

Edward Said (1935-2003), Wole Soyinka, (1934- ), Salman Rushdie, (1947- ) and others are names that immediately come to mind when we project our vision into themes like: exile, alienation, madness, and wisdom. Freedom, “difference,” “multiplicity,” democracy, equality and so on appear to be illusory triumphs. Différance and multiplicity, to borrow the terms from Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze, do not seem to do enhance the process of reconciliation with our humanity; rather, they often speed up the lust for destruction, dehumanization and, thus, alienation.

This, therefore, is the beginning of a new decade of a third millennium that has been vainly trying to celebrate hope and wisdom with paradoxical and satirical expressions like alienation, marginalization, void and madness. None has envisioned alienation and madness in the twentieth century better than Foucault in his book: *Madness and Civilization* (1967) in which people appear to be deterritorialized and decentred from their own space. Put together in confinement, prisons and isolated areas, they are alienated from society, everyday life and from their “I have in mind some of the historical facts concerning the history of madness in Europe” (pp. 5-25).

## 2. Madness and Alienation

This can only bring to mind Herzog of Saul Bellow’s *Herzog* (1964), a victim without a map, shouting from the onset of the story, “If I am out of my mind, it’s all right with me” (p. 7). This image is not surprising to the reader as it is one that keeps repeating itself throughout the Bellovian fictional world. However, this does not mean that the researcher wishes to give the impression that Bellow’s Herzog is about alienation and madness through the course of this intervention. Rather, I want to establish a problematical view of Herzog as alienated, marginalized and mad, on the one hand, an academic researcher and a philosopher, on the other hand.

Reading Bellow’s (1944) *Dangling Man*, one cannot fail to notice that Joseph tragically crystallizes the alienation of the storyteller of the story:

I, in this room, separate, alienated, distrustful, find in my purpose not an open world, but a closed, hopeless jail. My perspectives end in the walls. Nothing of the future comes to me. Only the past in its shabbiness and innocence. Some men seem to know exactly where their opportunities; they break prisons and cross whole Siberias to pursue them. One room holds me. (p, 92)

Sammler in *Mr Sammler’s Planet* reinforces Joseph’s words when he states:

I am very sad and torn today. Besides, I am aware of the abnormality of my own experience. Sometimes, I wonder whether I have any place her, among other bodies people. I assume I am one of you. But also I am not. I suspect my own judgments because my lot has been extreme. (Bellow, 1971, p, 209)

Yet to what extent do these passages foretell the truth of alienation and madness? Can we think of, in a deconstructionist manner, togetherness and wisdom? In other words, can wisdom destroy madness in *Herzog*? Indeed, it is to this marriage of marginalization, alienation, and deterritorialization, to borrow the term again from Gilles Deleuze, on the one hand, and wisdom, imagination, laughter and dreaming, on the other, that I want to establish and explore in the course of this intervention.

Bellow likes to open his stories by envisioning the symptoms of madness, the radical alienation, of his storytellers. Pretending or pretending to pretend to be telling nice and attractive stories about his characters, he unexpectedly pushes the reader to the sphere of nowhere, identifying him with alienation. The exploitation of this form of beginning is a way of the alienation of Herzog, an intellectual and a Ph.D. holder who is writing a book about the history of Romanticism, and a means to the fusion of history, politics, religion and telling.

In the process of the storytelling, Herzog identifies with Foucault's words that "[Alienation and] madness [are] le déjà\_ là\_ of death" (1967, p. 16). Referring to what Mustapha Marrouchi calls "the pollution of language" (Marrouchi, 1995, p. 56), he writes endlessly and fanatically about his alienation to everyone under the sun. Addressing his friends, Herzog bitterly associates himself with destruction and nihilism "*Dear Wanda, Dear Zinka, Dear Libbie, Dear Ramona, Dear Sono, I need help in the worst way. I am afraid of falling apart. Dear Edvig, the fact is that madness also has been denied me*" (p. 19), an instance that unfathomably reinforces his lethargic status in the very beginning of the narrative, "If I am out of my mind, that's all right with me." Henderson symmetrically echoes him as he runs away to the wilderness of Africa, while Tommy Wilhelm in *Seize the Day* (1959) tragically turns to begging in the sad streets of the city of New York. The conflict is internalized and "alienation is highlighted as a metaphysical problem," "There is someone inside me. I am in his grip. When I speak of him I feel him in my head, pounding for order. He will ruin me" (p.19).

In the other part of the story, one may say that there is a story within the story. It is the story of Herzog, the father, who parallels Herzog the son. Although they do not share the same experiences of deformity and marginalization, they do meet in alienation and madness. Herzog, the son, is kept silent throughout the whole narrative. While the first acts, the second meditates, suffers and dreams of bringing some change to the bleak outlook of this age. This, indeed, seems to be the way Bellow wants to construct his narrative.

Madeleine, Herzog's ex-wife, radicalizes the sense of alienation and madness. She states, "It's painful to have to say I never loved you. I never will love you, either, so there is no point in going on" (p.17). Herzog turns into a "mad dog" (p. 17). She prevents him from seeing his daughter, and she gives the police a note about it. She dismisses him from her home and threatens

him with death. This represents evidence that the ontological being of Madeleine should not be seen as that which is summed up by the terminology of love, body, sex, desire in the Freudian and the Lacanian sense, nor should it be understood as related to polarities like: mind/ body, subject/ object, power/ weakness, women/ men, essential/ marginal and Madeleine/ Herzog. However, in her rejection of this classical dualism, Madeleine is seen as the possible project of becoming a subject, as Deleuze and Felix Guattari define it, (Bridotti, 1994, pp. 154-210) which unavoidably requires the negation, the effacement and the alienation of Herzog. Divorce does not express hatred, nor does it imply betrayal; rather, it firmly overtones Madeleine's freedom from the subjugation of the word "woman" and her subtraction from identities based on the phallus, on the one hand, and Herzog's madness, on the opposite hand.

In literary circles in contemporary American intellectual life, critics of Bellow (Martin Irving, Frank D. Mc Connell, Earl Rovit, Daniel Fuchs, Tony Tanner, Ihab Hassan and even Harold Bloom) can only manage to explain the why behind the why Herzog is a mad hero. Fuchs, (1984) qualifies the narrative as "[...] a dramatization of consciousness [...] a comedy of consciousness [...] a *cri de Coeur* [a story] of the gloom within the gloom" (1984, p. 16), in a way the reader views Herzog and views Herzog viewing Herzog, a fact which is bitterly echoed by Henderson's utterances "All is grief ... let me cry ... everything turns Into chaos" (Bellow, 1959, p.7), and again "Shall I run back into the desert and stay there until the devil has passed out of me" (p.45). Tony Tanner goes so far as to argue that the sense of alienation unreservedly stems from the end(s) of the narrative(s):

The book[s] remain, I think somewhat enigmatic, [their] over all intention[s] unclear, their perspective[s] shifting, their level[s] of Seriousness always in question. [They] manifest, indeed enact, a compelling joy derived from the sheer fact of human consciousness, but [they] are uncertain to the point of hysteria on the question of individual value. (1971, p. 304)

One cannot fail but notice the extra attention the storyteller gives to the ends of his stories. Like Angie March, Tommy Wilhelm and Henderson the Rain King, Herzog begins telling his story, but he does not end it. He echoes Hassan's words that the beginning is the end and the end is the beginning. Thus, the beginning and the end become much more problematic, confusing and elusive as the dividing lines between them have been scrupulously deformed by the authority of the author, which Hassan puts as follows:

[...] true seekers, Bellow Shows; never know where their quest will come to rest. Freedom, knowledge and love are merely versions of the real, they give the quest its form without determining its end, what we do recognize, in the end, is that reality eludes the versions we make of it, eludes and transcends them. (1961, p. 291)

Strategically, Hassan does not want to acknowledge explicitly that *Herzog* is a story about alienation that is gradually leading the reader to madness, lest he would be accused of misunderstanding and misreading the text.

Being sketched in this sense, Herzog shows no belief in referentiality, a fact that further sharpens the sense of alienation. In a deconstructionist manner, Herzog demystifies a radical attachment to the “natural” law of difference and multiplicity. When Madeleine asks for divorce, he does not resist, or he pretends that he does not resist, under the name of differences in beliefs and attitudes. His letters to philosophers like M. Heidegger, K. Marx, S. Freud, E. Kant, F. Hegel and politicians as President Truman, W. Churchill and Wilson trace his different view from their projects, foretelling blueprints of a utopian and humanitarian future world.

To philosophize the notion, Herzog, to recall Martin Heidegger, lives in a world of things and equipments to which he, unfortunately, does not belong (Clark, 1992, p. 12). Madeleine, his ex-wife, his daughter, Ramona, his girl-friend, his friends, his relatives, the world, politicians and philosophers are *others* to him. Herzog’s alienation and madness stem from the sad city of New York, of the amoral ethics of modern America and of the brutal, brutalizing and brutalized western world. By the end of the narrative, when he escapes from the city to the nowhere of space, and when he decides not to write any more letters, he dissociates himself from language as it turns to be a discourse of power, to borrow the term from Foucault. Herzog reaches the conclusion that contemporary political discourse, as translated by American politicians, postmodern philosophical discourse, as voiced by Martin Heidegger, the classical discourse of religion, as echoed by Madeleine’s strong faith, his Jewish silent assumption of deterritorialization are but systems of power and hegemony. His alienation and madness are further aggravated by this lack of belonging to all these discourses.

To radically philosophize the notions of power, hegemony and alienation, Michel Foucault goes so far as to argue that the existence of the human being is highly characterised by epistemological moments of alienation which might willingly be explained by the dual and contradictory movements of the discourse and the counter discourse. “[In any movement] according to him, we are at the end of one epistemic configuration and at the beginning of another. We exist in the gap between two *épistèmes*, one dying, the other not yet born-of which; however, the mad poets and artists of the last century and a half were the heralds” (White, 1979, p. 92). Herzog exists in the gap between silence and speech, thought and movement, presence and absence and life and death. Following this, he, as the emblematic epitome of the crisis of Western culture, does not only epitomise the inherent themes of alienation and madness, but also nostalgic feelings for a return to the origin, to the return of ethics in the Kantian sense.

In the long run, however, Herzog’s nostalgic feelings dissolve and go unheard because most of Bellow’s novels are full of death scenes and ambivalent journeys. *Herzog*, therefore, is a tale about revenge throughout which Herzog keeps procrastinating, like Shakespeare’s Hamlet, the murder of Madeleine and Valentine. Attending the death scene of the unknown girl, he has calmed down, and his lust for blood has been already satisfied. Henderson wishes to perform the action on behalf of Herzog, to be a victim, to die: “would death please wash me away and dissolve this giant collection of errors ... I wish I was dead” (1959, p.226), a wish that is satirically translated in the murder of his friend king Dahfu, “your Majesty, move over and I will die beside you. Or else be me and live; I never knew what to do with life anyway, and I’ll die instead” (p. 262). Sammler ends the telling of his tale mourning the death of his friend, “He felt that he was being

destroyed. What was left of him? He wept to himself ... well, Elya was gone. He was deprived of one more thing, stripped of one more creature [...] He lost his breath” (1971, p. 285). While Tommy Wilhelm finishes his journeys following the funeral of an unknown man.

Ambivalent and mythical journeys can only move and haunt the reader by the secretcies of their results. Being voyagers and explorers of civilization, Herzog metaphorically journeys through the world by writing letters to “everyone under the son,” while Henderson imaginatively travels to Africa. “Quarrelling with the world to assert the simple truths that the world denies” (Marrouchi, 1995, p. 67), Herzog unexpectedly establishes the truths of alienation and madness, which Henderson echoes, saying that “[...] to expect to be untouched by madness is a form of madness [...] the pursuit of sanity can be a form of madness, too” (1971, p.25). And the reader is left sad, alienated, as sad as the sad cities of New York and Chicago, “the saddest of cities, cit [ies] so ruinously sad that [they] had forgotten [their] name[s]” (Rushdie, 1990, p. 455).

In the sad cities, New York and Chicago, that have forgotten their names, Herzog and his father, Henderson and king Dahfu, the storytellers of the stories, have become paralyzed dreamers as they ceaselessly intone the unavoidable fate of restlessness and death. In the process of the storytelling, king Dahfu is killed, father Herzog unexpectedly disappears from the story, Henderson is enigmatically driven into oblivion, while Herzog opaquely identifies himself with silence. Space has turned into darkness, the dreams of purifying the world dissolve when the true names of the cities disappear forever.

In *Herzog* (1964), alienation and madness in terms of language turn to be a spectacle of signifiers and signifieds, a free play between the *écrivain* and the *écrivant*, to borrow the terms from Roland Barthes. When the *écrivain* produces a text, the *écrivant*, *Herzog* being that very text, can only reproduce the effects of alienation through the linguistic spectacle of signifiers and signifieds. Herzog, as an alienated lover, can only reveal the alienation of the reader as a lover of the text, the author and the hero, a nice image which can be illustrated as follows:

And as with the love affair, so with the text. Neither leads anywhere, both are charged uninterruptedly with an intense meaning. The lover finds himself [...] in, the brazier of meaning’, because of his compulsive need to interpret the ambiguous signs of the Loved One’s behaviour. The lover is thus also a reader. But he is a reader of a particular kind, the kind that a text, composed by a true *écrivain*, deserves. (Sturrock, 1979, p. 70)

Following this, the reader is only invited to enjoy the spectacle of these different layers of alienation and madness. In political terms, this means that Bellow keeps questioning the very ideas of alienation, exile, identity, the madness of the intellect on the one hand and “author , authority, authorship, authorization, the text, the book, the word, [the world] and the idea of the idea or of human kind” (Marrouchi, 1995, p. 69), on the other hand. In between, his Jewish assumptions keep working silently in order to produce the text to the world and the world to light. Pondering over the alienation of the Jewish, Bellow can only reflect Rushdie’s wise words on the alienation of human beings: “How did we get here? How did here get here in the first place? Is this, this brief life, all there is? How can it be? What should be the point of that” (1990, p. 421)? These are wise

words that can only imply that Bellow's intended wisdom out of alienation has been overlooked, that his readers turn to be incompetent textual readers and that *Herzog's* meaning has been left at the mercy of other misunderstandings, "misreading -or, indeed, non-readings."

## 2. Into Wisdom

Following this, can we think of alienation as a gesture into reason? Considering the satirical, the allegorical and the imaginative dimensions of the novel, is it possible to overcome madness and argue for the wisdom of the alienated and marginalized intellectual?

Commenting on the quality of the reader he is addressing, Bellow reasonably says the following: "I have in mind another human being who will understand me. I count on this. Not on perfect understanding, which is Cartesian, but on approximate understanding [...] and on a meeting of sympathies, which is human" (Harper, 1975, p. 13). This is a very intimate moment in Herzog's meditations:

Justice! Look who wants justice! Most of mankind has lived and died without – totally without it. People by the billions and for ages sweated, gypped, enslaved, suffocated, bled to death, buried with no more justice. But Moses E. Herzog at the top of his lungs, bellowing with pain and danger, has to have justice. (p. 270)

One way to stress reason is examining Herzog's meditations. One prominent instance that should not go unnoticed is his negotiation to the "concept" of risk in modern civilization referring to Dr. Strawforth's philosophy: "Dr. Strawforth says we must adopt his philosophy of risk with regard to radioactivity since Hiroshima [...] life in civilized countries ... stands upon the foundation of risk" (p.66) and to the view of de Tocqueville on the very notion of risk: "modern democracies would produce less crime, more private vice" (p.66), Herzog critically bypasses them saying that they should have claimed "less private crime, more collective crime" (p.66). Acknowledging the views of Nietzsche, Whitehead and John Dewey concerning the same issue, Herzog believes that there is a foolish, arrogant, crazy and destructive power which is blindly going to destroy humanity. To solve the problem, he pathetically states, "let the enemies of life step down. Let each man now examine his heart [...] let us lie down, men, women, and children, and cry, let life continue- we may not deserve it, but let it continue" (p. 67).

Henderson parallels Herzog in his discussion with king Dahfu concerning the function and endowments of the human mind. King Dahfu, in his turn, being the other facet of Henderson, nicely depicts a monologue rather than a dialogue, a point that highly complicates the act of understanding. Through the voice of king Dahfu, Henderson traces his philosophy: "the mind has a right to its reasonable doubts and with every short life it awakens and sees and understands what so many other minds of equally short life Span have left behind" (p.196). Henderson takes the notion to its ultimate point by refusing the fact that his philosophy might be possibly seen as a gesture of delusion, imagination and dreaming first, and, second, by doubting reality "Yes, I easily could understand that. Delusion, imagination, dreaming. However, this is not dreaming or sleeping, but waking [...] men of most" (p. 196). Completing Henderson's theoretical

speculations, Herzog puts the issue into philosophical terms through his ceaseless meditations on family, forgetfulness, history, humanity, life, love, god, gain and so on (pp. 352-353).

At this level, can we still think about alienation in terms of madness? Is it possible to claim that *Herzog* is a fine piece of imagination which enigmatically satirizes the madness of the age? Herzog, can he be seen as a wise intellectual, an intellectual who dreams of bringing some change to the world? Is this all that we can understand from the exile of the intellectual in his own homeland? Does *Herzog*, as a form of writing, substitute Herzog's "imaginary homeland?" Reading the narrative imaginatively might quench our thirst for the answer.

Questioning the nature of the human being, Herzog aggravates the sense of reason, the wisdom of the intellectual. Pondering over the nature of human beings, he thinks aloud, saying:

Those who have confidently described human nature, Hobbes, Freud, etcetera, by telling what we are 'intrinsically,' are not our greatest benefactors. This is true for Rousseau. I sympathize with Hume's attack on the introduction by the Romantics of perfection into human things [...] Modern Science achieves its profoundest results through anonymity, recognizing only the brilliant functioning of intellect. (p. 161)

By this token, Herzog raises philosophical questions. He discusses the nature of the human being and criticises great philosophers like Hobbes, Freud and Rousseau? Herzog imaginatively and romantically reconciles himself with God "thou movest me," a fact that stresses his implicit conversation with sanity. Once more, he Platonically speaks to Ramona about "the light of truths" as an alternative to "ineffectuality, banishment to personal life, confusion" (p. 314) which not only means the light and the truth of the self, but also of humanism and life in general, a point that is reinforced in his final letter to God, "how my mind has struggled to make coherent sense. I have not been good at it. But have desired to do your unknowable will, taking it, and you, without symbols. Everything of intensest significance" (p. 161).

Echoing Herzog, Henderson asserts that, "Imagination is a force of nature. Is this not enough to make a person full of ecstasy? Imagination, imagination, imagination! It converts to actual. It sustains, it alerts, it redeems" (1959, pp. 228-229), a case that is nicely typified by the feast in the Wariri tribe, the process of becoming the Rain king and capturing the lioness Atti. The feast is so romantically described that we are illusively deceived by a dream taking place in Henderson's mind, "[...] Deep drums carried by women of unusual stature, the female soldiers or amazons of the king [...] the drummers marched forward rapidly, the umbrellas twirling and dancing roundly and heavily [...] as these huge fringed and furled silk canopies advanced the Wariri got out of the ways." (p. 125). As the process of the storytelling develops, one notices that the feast is gradually accelerating to a point at which the rain starts falling, a fact that magically endows Henderson to be Henderson the Rain king. Sammler sums up this abrupt switch from madness to wisdom "madness is a masquerade, the project of a deeper reason [...] madness is a diagnosis or Verdict of some of our greatest doctors and geniuses, and of their man-disappointed minds" (1971, p. 199), assuming that the power of life in the Bellovian fictional world is endlessly demonstrating that all forms of madness are endeavouring to be infinite wisdom.



It is therefore obvious that Bellow has established a hierarchical scheme that momentarily gives alienation-madness priority and makes wisdom a form which is derivative from madness itself. A deconstructionist reading of the narrative, *Herzog*, allows us to acknowledge that, to use Derrida's terminology, wisdom is essential in its own marginality; when madness is marginal in its essentiality, that is, the marginal in its very marginality should characterize the central object of discussion, alienation-wisdom.

Again, a deconstructionist reading, Derrida tells us, unmasks the blind spots of a text, unveils the insight of blindness and the wisdom of alienation. In Bellow's case, the discourse of power, which intones Michel Foucault, is, indeed, a philosophical discourse in Derrida's sense. To understand this kind of relationship, we need first to quote Jonathan Culler at length:

One could argue that philosophy has always depended for its existence on a notion of literary discourse and that the move which sets aside certain kinds of language as fictional, rhetorical, in an oblique and problematic relationship to truth, is the gesture by which philosophy, since Plato, has exorcized certain problems and defines itself. (Culler, 1979, p. 177)

Again:

Philosophy constituted itself in a direct relation to the Logos by identifying as its other a fictional and rhetorical mode of discourse, and the demonstration, carried out for example in some of Nietzsche's texts, that philosophy too is a rhetorical structure, based on fictions generated by tropes, leads one to posit what one might call an archi-or proto-literature which would be the common condition of both literature and philosophy. Philosophy cannot escape the rhetorical, the literary, the linguistic. (p. 178)

Following this, questioning philosophical issue (madness, wisdom, truth, the nature of human being, the endowments of mind, ethics ...), *Herzog*, and behind him Bellow, unexpectedly raises the problem of the relationship between literary and philosophical discourse. *Herzog*, with its own fictionality: story, event, space, hero, theme, language, with its logic and metaphysical issues is also a philosophical work. It is a fiction about poetry, to cite Martin Heidegger, and a book of philosophy whose "metaphoricity had been forgotten [forever]" (1979, p. 177). The mixture of the literary and the philosophical is in one way another version of the mixture of madness and wisdom, or let us call it wisdom and wisdom. The poetical language of the narrative unreservedly pushes to hearken to the demands of fiction, philosophy, alienation, exile, madness and wisdom.

It is only now that one might rightly wonder if one can still think of alienation-madness or not. Could one still call *Herzog* a paralyzed dreamer and a mad hero? Is it logical to say that madness is a parody of wisdom? Can one think of a man who is laughing and crying at the same time? Can one imagine him to be concurrently comic and tragic? Is it logically possible for us to accept the gesture of bringing two opposite terms (madness and wisdom) into one single unifying meaning which is wisdom? It is instantly clear that we are lost. To this, we might wonder if such

a man, who is endlessly contradicting himself, can be justly seen as a wise and a mad figure. More strikingly, having embarked on the previous findings, can one say that to be mad is to be wise?

In *Herzog* as well as in *Henderson the Rain King*, Bellow reminds us that he is a man of dreams, for humanism, for life, for writing, a man of a poetic type. In cultural terms, this means that Bellow, the Jewish figure, “someone in whom all cultures melt down and therefore was unable to take absolutist views,” is in Socratic terms a citizen of this world. What remains is not alienation, not even madness, but, in Derrida’s words, writing, the text, *Herzog*, the word, the world, *Alkitaab* and dreams:

We are the first generation to see the clouds from both sides. What a privilege! First people dreamed upward. Now they dream both upward and downward. This is bound to change something, somewhere. For me the entire experience has been similar to a dream. (Bellow, 1959, p. 236)

To Bellow, writing, like dreaming, like loving and living, exemplifies experiences of integration to the highest degree. *Herzog*, as a love story in the literal sense of the term, is a dream of life and love, *Henderson the Rain King*, *Seize the Day*, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet*, *Augie March* and the others are about that dire strife of the human being to negate the dissonance of the age. But strikingly enough, they remain, above all, about dreams and writing, “and what should dream or writing be if, as we know now, one may dream while writing? And if the scene of dream is always a scene of writing” (Derrida, 1974, p. 316).

The philosophical dimensions of the narrative emerge through this alternation between writing, dreaming, living and loving on the one hand and the madness of the age on the other hand. Considering the death of the author as established by Roland Barthes years ago, the authority of Bellow with his autobiographical details, that is, with facts that are closely related to his experience in life, dissolve, and the reader is deliberately left to discover the implications of the signs of dreams, “the dreams of a bad night are given to us as philosophy. You will say I too am a dreamer; I admit it, but I do what others fail to do, I give my dreams as dreams, and leave the reader to discover whether there is anything in them which may be useful to those who are awake” (p. 316). Bellow is a humanist philosopher, to recall Ricoeur, who can only shout his lungs out for humanism and life, not oblivion and madness. Sartre’s account on the humanist figure is a good case in point that is worth quoting at length:

The humanist philosopher who bends over his brothers like a wise elder brother who has a sense of responsibilities, the humanist who loves men as they are, the humanist who loves men as they ought to be, the one who wants to save them with their consent and the one who will save them in spite of themselves, [...] the one who loves death in man, the one who loves life in man, the happy humanist who always has the right word to make people laugh, the sober humanist whom you meet especially at funerals or wakes. (1938, p. 154)

Herzog, Henderson, Sammler, Tommy Wilhelm, Augie March, Humboldt, Asa Leventhal and the other fictional figures have resisted various temptations to dehumanization and to the wasteland identity, affirming that what remains are writing and dreaming. This can only imply that Bellow is not an outsider, to use Camus's word, of his age; rather he lives in his very Complicated Cosmos, that he does not "weep like a woman for what he cannot defend like a man," that he strives to make his fiction a metaphor for his philosophy, that is, Humanism.

The gist of all this is that Bellow is a "humanist philosopher" whose fiction, *Herzog*, might be aptly seen as a "synthesis of the novel," and an encyclopaedic work that is shaped upon the works of Bellow's predecessors and upon his own experience as a man and as a writer. In this, reinventing the literature of journeys and the epistolary form highly reminds us of the tradition of journeys in British eighteenth-century fiction. The technique of recollection may immediately bring to mind Wordsworth's "spots of time" in *The Prelude*. More amazingly, *Herzog*, as an encyclopaedic work, voices never-ending themes of history, religion, philosophy, art, painting, ethics, politics, a fact that has prompted Forrest Read to write "what kind of novel is it? We can find there the elements of the historical, ideological, metaphysical, romantic, anti-romantic, erotic, the romance etc" (Read, 1967, p. 205). But above all it is an anti-novel.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to show how Bellow's heroes in *Herzog* and *Henderson the Rain King* start their stories as being alienated heroes and end up being mad intellectuals. In the process of storytelling, Bellow theorises for the way the contemporary fiction should be written in the light of other disciplines such as history, philosophy and politics. Bellow suggest that these attempts of purifying the wor(l)d and restoring our lost humanity can only bring to the mind names like Edward Said, Salman Rushdie, Taslima Nasreen, Mahmoud Darwish, André Brink, Kateb Yacine, in our Tunisian context Mohamed Habib Hamed, Frantz Fanon, Wole Soyinka and others who have experienced hard times of exile, alienation and deterritorialization. Echoing Herzog, Soyinka enigmatically mocks the age with its dogma, alienation, corruption and void. His wise words are powerfully etched to our memories:

[...] You cyst, you cyst, you splint in the arrow of ignorance, the dog in dogma, tick of a heretic, the tick of politics, the mock of democracy, the man of Marxism, a tic of the fanatic the boo in Buddhism, the hum in Mohammed, the dash in the Criss-cross of Christ, a dot on the i of ego, an ass in the mass, the ash in ashram, a boot in the Kibbutz, the pee in priesthood, oh how dare you raise your hindquarters you dog of dogma and cast of the scent of your existence on the Lamp-post of Destiny you hole in the Zero of nothing. (Soyinka, 1987, p. 34)

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