DEATH AND REBIRTH: SAUL BELLOW'S *DANGLING MAN*

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In his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell introduces a term he borrows from James Joyce, the monomyth, an urmyth from which other myths descend. The core of this monomyth, he suggests, is "the mythological adventure of the hero;"[1] and the nuclear unit of the adventure can best be presented by the formula of the rites of passage: separation – initiation – return.[2] Campbell cites various adventurous lives of the mythic heroes such as Prometheus, Jason and Aeneas to verify his theory.[3] As a matter of fact, this original myth, according to many others, also tends to repeat the life cycle or the seasonal cycle.[4] And it is this cyclical aspect of the myth that wins the endorsement of many mythopoeic critics because it reflects the nature and substance of human life, the process of the natural world and the recurrent changes of the seasons.

Viewed at the literal level, Saul Bellow's *Dangling Man*, first published in 1944, is a study of modern man's alienation.[5]

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[1] *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 30.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Though there exists some disagreement about the subject of the monomyth, most mythopoeic critics still subscribe to this theory. As it has been pointed out by Sheldon Norman Grebstein, "this disagreement over the content of the basic myth seems to be neither very heated nor very decisive in the applied criticism of the mythopoeists." See Sheldon Norman Grebstein ed., *Perspectives in Contemporary Criticism* (New York: Harper & Row,1968), p. 316.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Saul Bellow, *Dangling Man* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1977). All references to the work in this paper are from this edition and will be noted parenthetically with page number in the text.

Joseph, a young man from Canada who has stayed in Chicago for eighteen law-abiding years, has quit his job at the Inter-American Travel Bureau to wait for the pending induction in the army since the draft call may come any time. He has submitted to all kinds of investigations and undergone tedious interviews and endless reclassifications, but still is left waiting. Before the final conscription, he can do nothing but wait. Meanwhile, he is living on his wife Iva's earnings. Iva is ready and willing to support him. "She claims that it is no burden and that she wants me to enjoy this liberty, to read and to do the delightful things I will be unable to do in the army" (p. 9). They have moved to a cheaper rooming house in order to cut down daily expenses. Joseph is now entirely free, and he decides to keep a journal, even though he understands that "to keep a journal nowadays is considered a kind of self-indulgence, a weakness, and in poor taste" (p. 7). Yet, he feels that "in my present state of demoralization, it has become necessary for me to keep a journal – that is, to talk to myself" (p. 7). His journal consists of entries successively dated from December 15, 1942, to April 9, 1943. These entries contain information about daily events, flashbacks to his earlier periods of life, accounts of several dreams, and imaginary conversations with his divided self, *Tu As Raison Aussi*, or the Spirit of Alternatives.

Though caught in an interim situation and growing "more and more dispirited" (p. 10), Joseph is actually engaged in a quest in the midst of his stifling alienation. And this quest, which corresponds very much to the rites of passage, the major components of the monomyth suggested by Campbell, turns out to be the controlling image as well as the deep structure of the whole novel. Like Dedalus and Bloom of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, who venture in the heart of Dublin, Joseph undertakes his quest in the cosmopolitan city of Chicago.

Joseph has been fettered in a world of chaos; his life is actually falling into decay. As he himself puts it, "it is perfectly clear to me that I am deteriorating, storing bitterness and spite which eat like acids at my endowment of generosity and good

will" (p. 10). His disorderly and declining condition is best symbolized by the psychological and physical problems of the characters surrounding him. For instance, there is this coughing and growling Mr. Vanaker, "a queer, annoying creature" (p. 13), who is always there to draw his attention and to irritate him so much that he has become his daily obsession. He describes Mr. Vanaker's derangement in his journal: "Mr Vanaker coughs. Not only that, but when he goes to the toilet he leaves the door ajar. He tramps down the hall, and a moment later you hear him splashing" (p. 13). And in the entry of January 2, Joseph writes of Mr. Vanaker's misbehavior which nearly starts a fire: "Mr. Vanaker observed the birth of the new year with large quantities of whisky, with coughing, pelting the yard with bottles, with frequent, noisy trips to the lavatory, and ended his revels with a fire" (p. 65). And finally when he finds himself interrupted by the old man's protesting coughs while he is wrangling with Iva, he outrageously reproaches him for stealing. The consequence of the disgrace is that the two parties are requested to move. These are not the only occasions where Mr. Vanaker is mentioned; the old man appears again and again in the journal, acting more or less as an embodiment of the chaotic psyche of our protagonist.

The bedridden landlady, Mrs. Kiefer, is another obsession of Joseph. As he records in his journal, "The old woman is not expected to live long. She is blind and very nearly bald; she must be close to ninety" (p. 13). To a certain extent, she has already become an apparition in the eyes of Joseph: "I see her at times, between the curtains, as I go upstairs" (p. 13). And the apartment she lives in is identified with the hospital of a religious order: "The windows are kept darkened; the halls and stairways smell of disinfectant" (p. 117). And when he is asked to help Mrs. Bartlett, the nurse, to carry up a cot from the storeroom to downstairs where she can sleep with the old woman, he discovers that "Mrs. Kiefer's cheeks were collapsed and her face was moist. It reminded me of a loaf, before the baker puts it in the oven, smeared with white of egg" (pp. 142-43). Mrs. Kiefer, apparently, has turned from an apparition

into a corpse.

Mr. Vanaker and Mrs. Kiefer serve as two domineering powers that are constantly haunting the psyche of Joseph. They precisely mirror the chaotic and deathlike situation from which Joseph continuously strives to escape. It is significant to note that this situation eventually comes to an end when Mr. Vanaker has to move and Mrs. Kiefer passes away. And all these happen just about the time Joseph is going into the army. The affinity between Joseph and Mr. Vanaker and Mrs. Kiefer thus cannot be mistaken. And what he is questing for are obviously things that are opposite to what he is attempting to escape. Therefore, with Mr. Vanaker's moving away and Mrs. Kiefer's death, Joseph is expected to end his disorderly and decaying life and thereby to perform a life-enhancing adventure in a world of orderliness.

As mentioned earlier, the story of *Dangling Man* finds its deep structure in the rites of passage outlined by Campbell. In other words, the protagonist will have to undergo the separation – initiation – return formalities before attaining to a new mode of existence. Joseph's separation from the world is hinted at by his quitting the job and his isolation as he himself is aware of:

> 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. . . . One room holds me. (pp. 75-76)

This Bartleby situation is further intensified by his metaphorical separation from the Hemingway code "of the athlete, of the tough boy" (p. 7), an American heritage which believes only in hardboiled-dom and asceticism and has been practiced by modern man. Such a code, comments Sarah Blacher Cohen, "totally ignores one of the most vital facets of a human being: man has feelings and the need to express them; he has an inner life and the need to examine it."[6] Joseph condemns the code

[6] *Saul Bellow's Enigmatic Laughter* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1974), p. 25.

and decides to live in a time "when people were in the habit of addressing themselves frequently and felt no shame at making a record of their inward transactions" (p. 7). This yearning for the time lost is interpreted by Irving Malin as an embrace of the eternal return.[7] Joseph's likening himself to Siva and hoping to have as many mouths as the Indian God has arms precisely reveal his great yearning for this mythic past. The separation of Joseph from the world marks his first step into the initiatory life. Joseph now faces with his life crises which he has to overcome; and the media which may lead him to pass safely through these crises are to be found in the rites of initiation which may in turn, hopefully, lift his life to a new and higher level of being. Interestingly enough, Joseph's daily life is then depicted with ritualistic flavor:

> At half past eight I eat breakfast. Afterwards I walk home and settle down to read the paper in the rocker by the window. I cover it from end to end, ritualistically, missing not a word. First come the comic strips (I follow them because I have done so since childhood, and I compel myself to read even the newest, most unpalatable ones), then I read the serious news and the columnists, and, finally, the gossip, the family page, the recipes, the obituaries, the society news, the ads, the children's puzzles, everything. Reluctant to put it aside, I even reread the comics to see if I have missed anything. (pp. 11-12)

Irving Malin sees in the Servatius party which Joseph and Iva attend "a ritual of inhuman madness."[8] This party, as a matter of fact, echoes many important motifs of *Dangling Man*. It reflects the kind of chaotic world from which Joseph tries so hard to escape. Therefore, he begins to regret when "the heat and stridency of the party burst upon us through the open door" (p. 33). When he and his wife arrive at the Servatius, the hostess Minna, with bare legs and high-heeled, red sandals, and with the air of the Greek priestess, cries out with festive tone, "sound the gong; they're here' " (p. 33). This musical reception immediately tints the party with a ritualistic mood.

Characterized by hilarious laughter, frenzied dancing,

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[7] *Saul Bellow's Fiction* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), p. 26.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

excessive drinking, poetic incantation, and hypnotic death, the party is almost a parodic initiatory rite as well as a rebirth festival. Joseph, who attends and witnesses the gathering, sees the occasion as a shabby version of the Eleusinian Mysteries:

> The party blared on inside, and I began to think what a gathering of this sort meant. And it came to me all at once that the human purpose of these occasions had always been to free the charge of feeling in the pent heart; and that, as animals instinctively sought salt or lime, we, too, flew together at this need as we had at Eleusis, with rites and dances, and at other high festivals and corroborees to witness pains and tortures, to give our scorn, hatred, and desire temporary liberty and play. Only we did these things without grace or mystery, lacking the forms for them and, relying on drunkenness, assassinated the Gods in one another and shrieked in vengefulness and hurt. I frowned at this dreadful picture. (pp. 37-38)

The Eleusinian Mysteries are the cults of Demeter, the Earth Mother, and both she and her daughter Persephone are the chief divinities of the rites. The myth of the two goddesses was first told in detail in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, of which the author and the time of composition still remain unknown. But the story was mentioned originally in literary form in Hesiod's *Theogony:*

> Demeter, who feeds all, came to the bed
> Of Zeus, and bore white-armed Persephone
> Whom Aidoneus stole away from her,
> But Zeus the counsellor approved the match.[9]

Aidoneus here is simply a poetic form for Hades or Pluto, the ruler of the Underworld. Robert Graves, who gathers materials from varied sources, gives a very concise and vivid narrative of the myth in *The Greek Myth.* In his study, the poet-mythographer relates how the young Core, that is, Persephone, while gathering flowers on the plain, was abducted by Hades, and was made the bride and queen of the Underworld. Demeter, struck with grievance, sought her daughter over land and sea. "She sought Core without rest for nine days and nights, neither eating nor drinking and calling fruitlessly all the while."[10] This

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[9] Dorothea Wender, trans., *Hesiod and Theognis* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1977), 11. 912-15.

[10] Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1975), I, p. 90.

bereavement angered her and "instead of returning to Olympus, she continued to wander about the earth, forbidding the trees to yield fruit and the herbs to grow, until the race of men stood in danger of extinction."[11] She then took up her abode at Eleusis, vowing never to return to Olympus unless Persephone was restored to her. Zeus, realizing the fatality of the famine on earth, eventually sent Hermes to the Underworld and asked Hades to release Demeter's lost daughter. But just as Persephone was setting off for Eleusis, she was given a pomegranate to eat without the knowledge that this would cause her to come back to Hades again. Demeter was overjoyed with Persephone's return, but the news that her daughter had eaten the pomegranate maddened her, and she grew more dejected than ever. Zeus immediately begged their mother Rhea to negotiate with Demeter. Finally an agreement was settled that Persephone was to spend three winter months each year with Hades in the nether region and the rest of the year with her mother in the upper world. Demeter reluctantly accepted the compromise and therefore every spring Persephone would return to the earth and to her mother and the flowers and vegetation would bloom again. Before leaving for Olympus, Demeter initiated the kings and others and demonstrated the conduct of her rites and mysteries.

The Mysteries of Eleusis perhaps remain the most famous and important religious mysteries of the ancient world before Christian civilization. According to the archeologist George E. Mylonas, the Mysteries, unlike other pagan religious rites, were "not open to the general public, . . . but only to those who were properly initiated through a ritual prescribed by tradition and who had solemnly promised not to divulge the secret rites."[12] Although the substance of the secret rites is not disclosed, both literary and artistic sources have given us sufficient information upon which we may happily base our knowledge and our imagination. It is believed that the myth of

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

[12] *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 7.

Demeter and her daughter, accompanied by dances and music, was enacted during the celebration.[13] Many speculations have been made about the meaning and function of the Mysteries.[14] However, judged from the content of the myth and the nature of the ceremonies, the Mysteries are obviously the rites of fertility which anticipate the return of spring and the resurrection of the dead. The initiates who have participated in the celebrations would return joyously with a promise of the happiness of the future world and a steadfast belief in the resurrection and immortality of men. This blissful sentiment is best expressed by Sophocles' exultation over the rites: "Thrice blessed are those among men, who, after beholding these rites, go down to Hades. Only for them is there life, all the rest suffer an evil end."[15]

As can be expected, with fasting, music, dancing, singing hymns, sprinkling of water, public sacrifices, and other enlivening rituals, the worship of Demeter and Persephone must be an orgiastic occasion.[16] In Bellow's *Dangling Man*, as has already been pointed out, this aspect of the Eleusinian Mysteries is vividly enacted in the Servatius party, only that the modern party goers are no longer religiously-oriented. C. G. Jung once made a study of the cult of the Earth Mother and recognized that during the ceremonies, "certain obscenities took place because they were thought good for the fertility of the earth."[17] Similar activities can also be traced in the Servatius party; however, just as Joseph observes, "Only we did these things without grace or mystery" (pp. 37-38).

There is a hypnosis performance which climaxes the gathering. The hypnotist is Joseph's friend Morris, and the hypno-

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[13] Michael Grant, *Myths of the Greeks and Romans* (New York and Scarborough: New American Library, 1962), p. 132.

[14] Diverse opinions about the meaning of the rites are cited in Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, pp. 282-84.

[15] A. C. Pearson, trans., *The Fragments of Sophocles* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1917), III, p. 52.

[16] Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, p. 241.

[17] *Analytical Psychology: Its Theory and Practice* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 135.

tized, the hostess Minna. As is predictable, the performance finally turns out to be a terrible mess and the hypnotized becomes convulsive, helplessly crying for her husband. The scene remains a nauseating experience for the onlookers. Again, the mythic meaning of the episode must not be ignored here. It is a modern version of the fate of Persephone which forms the crucial part of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Frenzied and messy as it may seem, the hypnosis episode, with its symbolic death and resurrection, unmistakably helps reveal the major motif of the novel.

It is obvious then that the party's parody of the Eleusinian Mysteries is not without intention. The confusion of the gathering, again, like the unrational behaviors of Mr. Vanaker, rightly mirrors the disarrayed situation of Joseph. His attending the party, and moreover, his likening the party to the rites of Demeter and her daughter, manifest his constant fear of death and his simultaneous yearning for rebirth. As Mylonas' study shows, the cult of Demeter is also an initiatory ritual.[18] And G. S. Kirk sees in the renewal of crops in the myth of Demeter and Persephone which the Mysteries enact "a pledge of renewal for the initiates themselves, of life after death."[19] It is therefore justifiable to construe the Servatius party as a symbolic initiation of which Joseph is one of the initiates. As is common in most initiatory ceremonies, Joseph, as a novice, has to suffer or to witness different kinds or stages of unpleasant experiences, direct or indirect, so as to expect a discard of the old self and a renewal of life. Although Joseph is described as a regretful and reluctant party goer, his coming to the party at least shows his awareness of his alienated condition and his effort, reluctant as it may be, to rejoin his community. This effort corresponds to the hardships which an initiate undergoes during the tribal initiation so that he may become adult and join his community. This motif becomes

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[18] Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, pp. 236-37.

[19] *The Nature of Greek Myths* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1977), p. 250.

more and more conspicuous and as the novel proceeds, Joseph too is approaching the end of his separation and expecting a reunion with humanity.

Joseph's fear of death is implied all through the novel. His obsession with the landlady Mrs. Kiefer's impending death and his joining the Servatius party are obvious instances indicating his being terrified by death. Not only that, the novel, as John Jacob Clayton points out, actually "moves toward various hints of Joseph's death."[20] Among the hints suggested by Clayton, two, I think, are relevant to my analysis of the correlation between Joseph and Mrs. Kiefer and Mr. Vanaker:

> First, Mrs. Kiefer dies; an analogy to his [Joseph's] own case, she had been isolated in her room for a long while. There is an analogy between Mrs. Kiefer's nurse Mrs. Bartlett and Iva–both are freed by the absence of the one they take care of. . . . Then Vaneker [sic], the old man who all through the novel serves as a Dostoevskian double–isolated, thief, guilty offended generally–moves, leaving a box of junk, like the drift of a man's life: like the trunk Joseph packs immediately thereafter.[21]

Joseph's death is of course a metaphorical one and it is partly "the death of the old self."[22] The function of this metaphorical death again justifies my elucidation of his attending the party as an effort to abandon the old self and to anticipate a revival.

The death of Joseph is implied elsewhere. In the January 20 entry of his journal, he jots down a hellish experience which he confronted on his way to meet Iva downtown on the occasion of their sixth wedding anniversary:

> When I came to the smoky alley alongside the library where the southbound cars emerge, I saw a man sprawl out in front of me, and at once I was the centre of a large crowd and, from a distance that could not have been as great as it seems, a mounted policeman standing before a Cottage Grove car was gazing. (p. 94)

Joseph's awareness of himself as the center of the crowd

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[20] *Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), p. 117.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

[22] *Ibid.*

immediately suggests his identification with the fallen man.[23] When he withdraws with others, he begins to smart and to recall the scene of his mother's death. And what is more, he sees in the figure of the man on the ground "a pre-vision" (p. 95). Nearly a week later in the January 26 entry of his journal, he reveals how much he is preoccupied with the scene. He writes: "Could the fallen man of last week have seen, had he chanced to open his eyes, his death in the face of that policeman who bent over him? " (p. 101)

All these examples, which are overt enough to illustrate Joseph's preoccupation, must not be overlooked, because, not only do they intensify the prevailing motif of the entire novel, but also foreshadow, with the scene of the fallen stranger in particular, his journey to the land of the dead which he undertakes in his dreams.

The first dream Joseph records describes how he has arrived at a vault to reclaim someone killed in a massacre:

> A few nights ago I found myself in a low chamber with rows of large cribs or wicker bassinets in which the dead of a massacre were lying. I am sure they were victims of a massacre, because my mission was to reclaim one for a particular family. My guide picked up a tag and said, 'This one was found near. . .' I do not remember the name; it ended in *Tanza.* It must have been Constanza. It was either there or in Bucharest that those slain by the Iron Guard were slung from hooks in a slaughterhouse. I have seen the pictures. I looked at the reclining face and murmured that I was not personally acquainted with the deceased. I had merely been asked, as an outsider. . . . I did not even know the family well. At which my guide turned, smiling, and I guessed that he meant—there was not enough light in the vault to make his meaning unambiguous, but I thought I understood— 'It's well to put oneself in the clear in something like this.' This was his warning to me. He approved of my neutrality. . . . 'Do you think he can be found?' I said. 'Would he be here?' I showed my distrust. We continued up the aisle; it was more like the path of a grey draught than anything so substantial as a floor. The bodies, as I have said, were lying in cribs, and looked remarkably infantile, their faces pinched and wounded. I do not remember much more. . . . (pp. 99-100)

Joseph's dream is an epic journey to Hades. His finding himself among the victims of the massacre reminds us of Odysseus'

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

being surrounded by the ghosts during his search for Teiresias in the nation of the dead:

> Now the souls gathered, stirring out of Erebos,
> brides and young men, and men grown old in pain,
> and tender girls whose hearts were new to grief;
> many were there, too, torn by brazen lanceheads,
> battle-slain, bearing still bloody gear.
> From every side they came and sought the pit
> with rustling cries; and I grew sick with fear.[24]

Just as Odysseus "grew sick with fear," Joseph finds himself in "an atmosphere of terror such as my father many years ago could conjure for me, describing Gehenna and the damned until I shrieked and begged him to stop . . ." (p. 100). The discrepancy lies in the fact that Homer's lines signify an effort to envision the tragic destiny of the entire humanity because the ghosts Odysseus encounters comprise man and woman, young and old; whereas the bodies Joseph sees "looked remarkably infantile" (p. 100). The implication of the infantility of the corpses is not difficult to understand. Apparently the body Joseph is seeking is but the embodiment of his childhood or original self which is dead now.[25] This childhood or original self, for our purpose, can be equated with the old self of Joseph I have proposed in the previous pages.

Joseph's descent into the Underworld also reminds us of Psyche's mission, under the order of Aphrodite, to seek out Persephone in Hades.[26] Such a journey of Psyche, if successful, claims Erich Neumann, "will be equivalent to the night sea journey of the sun through the darkness of the underworld."[27] Just like the setting of the sun, a necessity which promises its rising in the next morning, the journey to the Underworld is

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[24] Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), Book XI, 11. 37-43.

[25] Clayton, *Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man*, p. 100.

[26] For a detailed analysis of Psyche's mission, see Erich Neumann, *Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine*, trans. Ralph Manheim, Bollingen Series LIV (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 114-15. See also Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, pp. 97-98.

[27] Neumann, *Amor and Psyche*, p. 114.

an archetypal image of death and rebirth.

The metaphorical death of Joseph symbolized by his journey to the Underworld thus cannot be mistaken. What remains to be examined is the rebirth aspect of the journey although this aspect has already been suggested by my comparison of the journey to the archetypal meaning of the night-sea crossing of the sun. Nevertheless, another evidence of the rebirth motif can also be sought in Joseph's description of his dream. As a matter of fact, Hades, traditionally recognized as a dark, cold and moist region, is on the archetypal level a symbol of the womb.[28] Hence Joseph's journey to Hades can be seen as a return to the womb of the Mother Earth, an act which anticipates his rebirth. Joseph discovers that he is in "a low chamber" where the dead of the massacre are lying. This low chamber or the vault, another womb image, to use Campbell's terminology, is the image of the belly of the whale which symbolizes "a transit into a sphere of rebirth."[29] Campbell maintains that this archetype of the hero in the belly of the whale remains a tradition widely known in the ancient myths and primitive folklores; it is "a form of self-annihilation."[30] Instead of passing outward, "the hero goes inward, to be born again."[31] In other words, the adventure in the belly of the whale not only is a life-renewing act, but also a life-extinguishing one. This double meaning of the adventure corresponds exactly to the death and rebirth motif of Joseph's voyage in the chamber during his stay in the lower world as he experiences in his dream. Therefore when Joseph ventures into the chamber, which symbolizes Hades, he is actually returning to the world-wide womb "to be born again."

Joseph recognizes in the guide of his dream "an ancient figure" (p. 100), a prototype not unfamiliar in the ancient

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[28] Elizabeth Cook, *The Ordinary and the Fabulous: An Introduction to Myths, Legends and Fairy Tales*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 3.

[29] Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p. 90.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

[31] *Ibid.*

myths, primitive beliefs and daily dreams. Jung calls this prototype the "wise old man."[32] In Odysseus' vision this part is played by Teiresias; while in Dante's the role is assumed by Virgil. This father-like figure, when he appears in dreams, claims Jung, is often "in the guise of a magician, doctor, priest, teacher, professor, grandfather, or any other person possessing authority."[33] Whereas in the primitive society, he is usually a medicine man, a shaman, or any religious leader who becomes particularly prominent and crucial during the tribal initiatory rites because the novice will have to receive instructions from him and only under his assistance will he be able to attain to another mode of being and be introduced to the culture and tradition of the society. Seen from this perspective, the function of the guide in Joseph's dream can never be missed then. He is there to warn Joseph against any possible hazard and to assist him to go through the unpleasant and dreadful ordeals so that he may securely undergo the initiatory death and then attain to a new mode of existence.

In another dream Joseph finds himself as a sapper with the army in North Africa whose mission is to render harmless the grenade traps in one of the houses. "I crawled through the window, dropped from the clay sill and saw a grenade wired to the door, ridged and ugly" (p. 100). And since his time is limited, he begins to tremble and perspire and finally fires at the grenade. He then realizes that if he had hit the grenade, he would have killed himself. Apparently the grenade here is another face of death, "ridged and ugly," as Joseph describes it. The house in which the grenade is hidden is obviously another form of Hades. When Joseph crawls through the window into the house, he is in fact descending into Hades and meeting death again. Missing the grenade, he then goes forward and cuts the first wire to make the grenade ineffective. This

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32 "The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairytales," in *Four Archetypes*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, Bollingen Series XX (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 93.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

action of Joseph is not without significance. It at least serves as a sign of Joseph's effort to end his continuous fear of death, a necessary step before acquiring a renewal of life.

Joseph's rebirth can thus be anticipated. The motif is reiterated when the novel approaches its end just before Joseph has his wrangle with Iva and Mr. Vanaker. In the March 25 entry, he writes of the changing atmosphere of his surroundings and the vicissitude of natural phenomena: the sun has already succeeded in shaking the grass into livelier green as the winter is coming to its end; and even the houses, their doors and windows open, are "drawing in the freshness" (p. 143). Spring is impending, bringing with it an atmosphere of regeneration:

> . . . a few large birds, robins and grackles, appeared in the trees, and some of the trees themselves were beginning to bud. The large rough cases cracked at the tip, showing sticky green within, and one tree was erupting in crude red along its higher branches. I even saw in a brick passageway an untimely butterfly, out of place both in the season and the heart of the city, and somehow alien to the whole condition of the century. (pp. 143-44)

This rejuvenative phenomenon, as indicated by Thoreau, is a necessity in influencing mankind to rise "to a higher and more ethereal life."[34] Under the influence of the atmosphere and "in honour of the transformation of the weather," Joseph, therefore, decides "to clean up for supper . . ." (p. 144).

Joseph begins his journal in December, in the middle of the cold, barren winter and ends it in April of the next year, with the return of the spring. The seasonal cycle here, apart from signifying a renewal of life, underlies the major motif of the entire novel. The course from winter to spring indicates a journey from death to rebirth. Thus the April in *Dangling Man* is not the "cruelest" April of Eliot's "The Waste Land;" rather, it is the one celebrated by Geoffrey Chaucer:

> Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
> The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,

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[34] *Walden and Civil Disobedience*, ed. Owen Thomas (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966), p. 28.

And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge soone
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye . . .[35]

So, with the coming of regenerative April and fertilizing spring, Joseph ends his alienation and decides to return to humanity. After his quarrel with Iva and Mr. Vanaker, he feels so frustrated that he makes up his mind to join the army immediately. He then goes to the draft board and asks them to enlist him as soon as possible. His eagerness to be drafted reveals his readiness to join humanity again. He enters in his journal his feeling about going into the army:

I am no longer to be held accountable for myself; I am grateful for that. I am in other hands, relieved of self-determination, freedom cancelled.
Hurray for regular hours!
And for the supervision of the spirit!
Long live regimentation! (p. 159)

The affirmation may sound ironical in tone; however, if Joseph's quest is a quest for order and rebirth, he is likely to accomplish it in the regular hours and the regimentation of the army. Hence his enlistment is almost a self-surrender, a passing into another world, an Inferno or a Purgatory, through which he may expect to be rejuvenated. By the end of the novel, Joseph is no longer the old Joseph whom we see at the beginning but one who has undergone initiation and survived his metaphorical death. In other words, he is spiritually a newborn Joseph who, by his determination to answer the draft call at any moment, is now well-prepared to join "the collective fate."[36]

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[35] "General Prologue," *Canterbury Tales*, ed. A. C. Cawley (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1975), 11. 1-10.

[36] Brigitte Scheer-Schäzler, *Saul Bellow* (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Co., 1973), p. 12.

死亡與再生：論索爾貝婁的**擺盪的人**

（摘　要）

李　有　成

神話學者甘培爾（Joseph Campbell）在他的名著**千面英雄**（*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*）一書中提出了單一神話（monomyth）的觀念。他指出，這個單一神話的核心卽是英雄的追尋（the quest of the hero），而最能够表現這個追尋模式的正是生命禮儀（rites of passage），也就是隔離——啓蒙——回歸的三段儀式程序。

本文基本上是一個主題學的研究，全文論據大抵是以甘培爾的神話觀念爲基礎，藉神話批評的方法，詳細討論潛藏於**擺盪的人**（*Dangling Man*）這本小說背後的許多重要神話母題。本文作者認爲，小說主角約瑟夫（Joseph）去職後卽陷入隔離狀態之中，而在隔離狀態中他所經歷的正是一場象徵性的死亡，小說中的許多情節都是環繞着這個象徵性死亡的母題敷陳展開。實則象徵性死亡原本就是啓蒙儀式中不可或缺的一個程序。因此只有經歷了這場象徵性死亡之後，約瑟夫才能脫胎換骨，重獲新生。最後他終於如願入伍從軍，結束將近一年的隔離狀態，重新回到人羣中去，這一切也正意味着他已自象徵性死亡中復甦，其生命也由此得了更新。