

THE TREATMENT OF THE JEW
IN
SAUL BELLOW'S *THE VICTIM*
AND
BERNARD MALAMUD'S *THE ASSISTANT*

Tajiro Iwayama

The Victim and *The Assistant* are usually discussed as novels of Semitism and anti-Semitism. The present article tries to show they achieve much more.

Asa Leventhal of *The Victim* and Morris Bober of *The Assistant* are the Jews who feel persecuted. They are the victims of their own conviction that they have broken into others' domain in an alien world where daily their precarious position is in question. Kirby Allbee, antagonist of Asa Leventhal, is an anti-Semite. He accuses Leventhal of having deliberately caused him to lose his job in revenge for an anti-Semitic remark. Leventhal at first denies the charge, but later comes to a partial acceptance of it. He feels himself a victim of anti-Semitism, and believes that if a man suffers, he deserves suffering, which comes to him as punishment. Confronted by anti-Semitism, he is forced to assume his identity as a Jew and discovers that he is doomed to accept the Jewish role as victim. He is a victim not only of anti-Semitism but also of conviction that he is an alien. This sudden confrontation brings him off the world of detachment and into the world of commitment. He must go through experience to reach the final recognition of guilt and responsibility. He is both a victim and a victimizer. On moral and philosophical levels man is a victim of his own guilt, but, as Allbee says to Leventhal that "the day of succeeding by your own efforts is past . . . and it's all blind movement,

vast movement, and the individual is shuttled back and forth," personal effort comes to mean less in the contemporary world and is not responsible for making the fate of individual men. It is difficult to see how any man can be responsible for any other. On the social level, man is the victim of other men's action. Thus the relationship of Leventhal and Allbee begins with their specific problem and the social problem of anti-Semitism, and later it symbolizes the relationship of the whole universe. It is the problem of not only Jew or Gentile, but of man.

Frank Alpine, an anti-Semite in *The Assistant*, has a quite similar function to Allbee's. But, when he is discharged from the position as an assistant, he becomes "a changed man" and a savior of the Bobers. He finally has himself circumcised. He says that he has to work with no pay because he has his debt to Morris Bober. What is important here is that his debt is not only to Morris but to humanity. In other words, he is a victim of humanity as Leventhal is; "He made himself a victim. He could, with a little more courage, have been more than he was." His very answer and courage are significant, because he could be Man. Thus, the relationship between Bober and Alpine is not that of the Jew and the anti-Semite, but that of man and man.

The problems of Semitism and anti-Semitism are preliminary in these novels. Bellow and Malamud have succeeded in getting at the profound truth that lies beneath the surface.

SHERWOOD ANDERSON AND J. D. SALINGER

Yorimasa Nasu

One of the most outstanding marks that we ever noticed in American novels is, no doubt, a defiant attitude toward over-civilization and over-sophistication. To this mark, Sherwood Anderson and J. D. Salinger are no exceptions. While reading through their novels, we often find the word 'grotesque' in the former, and the word 'freak' in the latter. The two writers will try to depict distortions of the modern society in these synonymous words. In order to attract our attentions to them, both writers use an innocent eye and a grotesque society as a set. A child or a youth character enters their novels as a camera eye, and the grotesque or freak aspects of the adult society are exactly reflected on this special eye. Comparison of Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) and Salinger's *The Catcher In The Rye* (1945) would lead us to the best understanding of the experiment. George Willard and Holden Caulfield do not fill the normal role of a novel hero; they show no notable actions and always remain an outsider who is free from all human relations. The two boys are only an arrow mark, pointing to something grotesque or freak in the society. In all their actions, they are rather passive than active, rather indoor inhabitants than outdoor players. In spite of various experiences, their natural quality of innocence undergoes no change. At the last part of the novels, we observe a clear distinction between George and Holden: George traces the traditional course of escape in American novels, while Holden resigns himself from escape, and wants to become a helper of children, the future builders of the human society. Holden dares to advance forward, not to remain depressed and inactive. This shows a new drift—from negative attitude toward the society

to positive attitude. We can say that Salinger has a promising future as a builder of a new bright tradition of American literature.

S. MAUGHAM'S AGNOSTICISM

Bin Miyai

Somerset Maugham, because of his early environment with his uncle, a clergyman, and his physiological condition (stammering), became frustrated to the outer world as a boy. This inferiority complex was the real basis of his sceptical attitude toward life and everything, especially to the formal belief and dogma in the Christian churches. With scepticism, he could get rid of the obsession of his juvenile agony under stern code of Christianity. From the logical contradiction of his absolute scepticism, he adopted the empirical way of thinking, and began to refuse everything beyond his own experience and recognition. His agnostic philosophy has its basis these spiritual development in his inner self. With the training as a surgeon and the influence of French naturalism, tinged by the *fin-de-siècle* like aestheticism, his method as a writer was realistic clinicalism. Supported by the pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer and Darwin's evolutionism, his nihilistic amorality began to develop as agnosticism, symbolized as a Persian rug, its pattern being the aimless, mechanical expression of this world.

THE SETTING OF THE ENGLISH NOVELS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY (2)

Toichiro Ohta

In the preceding chapters we pointed out the influence of surroundings in the dramatic novel, under which events are to happen and develop, and the life of the characters is to be destined to come to a tragic end. Those surroundings are Middlemarch in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, the Floss in her *The Mill on the Floss*, Egdon Heath in Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native*, and the moor of Yorkshire, namely, Wuthering Heights in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. The strong will of Egdon Heath is overwhelming, overrides Eustacia's wishes of running away from the heath to live her gaudy life in a city, and brings her to ruin in the heath which she hates intensely. The atmosphere of Wuthering Heights always stirs people to violence. The character of Catherine, the heroine of *Wuthering Heights*, is violent and passionate. She is an embodiment of this violent moor. The given qualities of the characters, which are given by the spirit of the surroundings, determine their actions, while the action gradually changes the characters; thus everything rushes to a tragic end, slowly in the beginning but gradually faster and faster until everything is finished. Time moves to its end and is consumed, though it is inexhaustible in the novel of character. In the dramatic novel the gap between the characters and the plot disappears.

The space of the dramatic novel in which the characters play their active part is a place isolated from the world. It does not give the characters any chance to run away from it; they are strongly bound to it and can find no escape. If they could, they would not live their tragic life. It is permanently unchangeable Nature, the earth, and

primitive surroundings independent of temporal fashions which dominate them. There is great significance in surroundings like Egdon Heath or Wuthering Heights whose great power governs the figures in the novel and decides their destiny. We can see how important is the element of setting which leads the novels in the latter half of the 19th century to be tragic.