

## I. Victimized Characters of Saul Bellow

The present research on Saul Bellow's novel *The Victim* explores the far reaching consequences of Holocaust which the Jews experience even in the modern world. The main reason behind this traumatized psyche of the characters is the Anti-Semitism prevalent in the society and its consequent result in paranoia.

The novel depicts the condition of the individuals especially Jews, who have undergone the suffering of loneliness, alienation, helplessness and betrayal. Many Jews hardly escaped from the mouth of death. Their existence is under the threat as the whole society was under the influence of Hitler's atrocity.

To prove the hypothesis stated above the theory of Anti-Semitism has been used as theoretical modality. Anti-Semitism is a theory related to the sense of hatred that heightened along with the rise of Christianity.

Saul Bellow, a Jewish writer, started writing in the early 1940s. His writing first appeared in the *Partisan Review* and his conspicuously cast literary mind is easily traced in those early writings. A poor boy from the Montreal ghetto and the Chicago West side Bellow invented a literary voice that brought Chicago street lingo into the high culture of Middle Europe, making it sound as though the ghetto quite naturally educated its children to absorb the full range of European experience, even if the style meant the occasional confusion. Bellow appropriately harbingered the future of American fiction. Mark Shechner in his essay "Jewish Writers" summarizes the traits of the would be talented writer:

[. . .] in Saul Bellow's first novel, *Dangling Man* (1945), we find the dominant tone of the emerging fiction in a nutshell: its privatism, its aggressive interiority, its prevailing tone of aloofness tempered by depression, its intimations of spiritual orphanage. Such moodiness has

nothing to in it of the robust optimism of the 1930s, which despite the depression, had turned down-at-heels American writers into spokesmen for bright future . . . . The new literature was one that called attention to what could no longer use: all forward looking social theories and those principles of literary representation that had gained currency under the umbrella of progressive thought. (200)

Similarly, the Swedish Nobel Prize Committee, has assessed his novels as an "analysis of our culture" and his works aptly represents our time. The committee clarifies:

the mixture of rich picaresque novel and subtle analysis of our culture, of entertaining adventure, drastic and tragic episodes in quick succession interspersed with philosophic conversation, all developed by a commentator with a witty tongue and penetrating insight into the outer and inner complications that drive us to act, or prevent us from acting, and that can be called the dilemma of our age. (n. pag)

His best-known works include *The Adventures of Augie March*, *Herzog*, *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, *Seize the Day*, *Humboldt's Gift* and *Ravelstein*. Widely regarded as one of the twentieth century's greatest authors, Bellow has had a 'huge literary influence' as BBC declares in 2005. A period of illness from a respiratory infection at age eight both taught him self-reliance -he was a very fit man despite his sedentary occupation- and provided an opportunity to satisfy his hunger for reading: reportedly, he decided to be a writer when he first read Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. When Bellow was nine, his family moved to the Humboldt Park neighborhood of Chicago, the city that was to form the backdrop of many of his novels. He rebelled

against what he later called the 'suffocating orthodoxy' of his religious upbringing, and he began writing at a young age. Bellow's lifelong love for the Bible began at four when he learned Hebrew. Bellow also grew up reading William Shakespeare and the Great Russian novelists of the 19th century. In Chicago, he took part in anthropological studies.

It has been suggested Bellow's study of anthropology had an interesting influence on his literary style, and anthropological references pepper his works. Bellow later did graduate work at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Paraphrasing Bellow's description of his close friend Allan Bloom John Podhoretz has said that both Bellow and Bloom "inhaled books and ideas the way the rest of us breathe air" (34). In the 1930s, Bellow was part of the Chicago branch of the Works Progress Administration Writer's Project, which included such future Chicago literary luminaries as Richard Wright and Nelson Algren. Most of the writers were radical: if they were not card-carrying members of the Communist Party USA, they were sympathetic to the cause. Bellow was a Trotskyist, but because of the greater numbers of Stalinist-leaning writers he had to suffer their taunts.

In 1948, Bellow was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship that allowed him to move to Paris, where he began writing *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953). Critics have remarked on the resemblance between Bellow's picaresque novel and the great 17th Century Spanish classic *Don Quixote*. The book starts with one of American literature's most famous opening paragraphs, and it follows its titular character through a series of careers and encounters, as he lives by his wits and his resolve. Written in a colloquial yet philosophical style, *The Adventures of Augie March* established Bellow's reputation as a major author.

Bellow hit the bestseller list in 1964 with his novel *Herzog*. Bellow was surprised at the commercial success of this cerebral novel about a middle-aged and troubled college professor who writes letters to friends, scholars and the dead, but never sends them. Bellow returned to his exploration of mental instability, and its relationship to genius, in his 1975 novel *Humboldt's Gift*. Bellow used his late friend and rival, the brilliant but self-destructive poet Delmore Schwartz, as his model for the novel's title character, Von Humboldt Fleisher. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1969.

Propelled by the success of *Humboldt's Gift*, Bellow won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1976. In the 70-minute address he gave to an audience in Stockholm, Sweden, Bellow called on writers to be beacons for civilization and awaken it from intellectual torpor. The following year, the National Endowment for the Humanities selected Bellow for the Jefferson Lecture, the U.S. federal government's highest honor for achievement in the humanities. Bellow's lecture was entitled "The Writer and His Country Look Each Other Over."

While he read voluminously, Bellow also played the violin and followed sports. Work was a constant for him, but he at times toiled at a plodding pace on his novels, frustrating the publishing company. His early works earned him the reputation as one of the foremost novelists of the 20th century, and by his death he was widely regarded to be one of the greatest living novelists. He was the first novelist to win the National Book Award three times. His friend and protégé Philip Roth has said of him, "The backbone of 20th-century American literature has been provided by two novelists – William Faulkner and Saul Bellow. Together they are the Melville, Hawthorne, and Twain of the 20th century." James Wood, in a eulogy of Bellow in *The New Republic*, wrote:

I judged all modern prose by his. Unfair, certainly, because he made even the fleet-footed – the Updikes, the DeLillos, the Roths – seem like monopodes. Yet what else could I do? I discovered Saul Bellow's prose in my late teens, and henceforth, the relationship had the quality of a love affair about which one could not keep silent. . . ., much has been said about Bellow's prose, and most of the praise—perhaps because it has been overwhelmingly by men—has tended toward the robust: We hear about Bellow's mixing of high and low registers, his Melvillean cadences jostling the jivey Yiddish rhythms, the great teeming democracy of the big novels, the crooks and frauds and intellectuals who loudly people the brilliant sensorium of the fiction. All of this is true enough . . . his stories seemed like mere suburban splinters. Ian McEwan wisely suggested last week that British writers and critics may have been attracted to Bellow precisely because he kept alive a Dickensian amplitude now lacking in the English novel. [. . .] But nobody mentioned the beauty of this writing, its music, its high lyricism, its firm but luxurious pleasure in language itself. [. . .] [I]n truth, I could not thank him enough when he was alive, and I cannot now. (26)

The author's works speak to the disorienting nature of modern civilization, and the countervailing ability of humans to overcome their frailty and achieve greatness (or at least awareness). Bellow saw many flaws in modern civilization, and its ability to foster madness, materialism and misleading knowledge. Principal characters in Bellow's fiction have heroic potential, and many times they stand in contrast to the negative forces of society. Often these characters are Jewish and have a sense of

alienation or otherness. And, he has consistently raised the theme of existentialist theme: "*The Victim*, Bellow's next novel, also has existentialist theme . . . [and his characters are] "alienated," unconnected to the world around [them]"( High181). Peter B High summarizes Bellow's subject as including everything around him:

Bellow's novels became a model for many new writers in the fifties. He had created for them a new kind of hero and a new kind of descriptive style. The Bellow hero lives active inside his own mind. He has the whole world—including heaven and hell—inside his own head. He searches for answers in his mind, rather than for things in the outside world. However, Bellow's descriptive style makes this outside world very real. He makes us feel as if we are walking the streets and riding the subways along with the character. (182)

Jewish life and identity is a major theme in Bellow's work, although he bristled at being called a "Jewish writer." Bellow's work also shows a great appreciation of America, and a fascination with the uniqueness and vibrancy of the American experience.

Bellow's work abounds in references and quotes from the likes of Marcel Proust and Henry James, but he offsets these high-culture references with jokes. Bellow interspersed autobiographical elements into his fiction, and many of his principal characters were said to bear a resemblance to him.

Martin Amis described Bellow as "The greatest American author ever, in my view"

His sentences seem to weigh more than anyone else's. He is like a force of nature. . . . He breaks all the rules [. . .]. The people in

Bellow's fiction are real people, yet the intensity of the gaze that he bathes them in, somehow through the particular, opens up into the universal. (81)

For Linda Grant, "what Bellow had to tell us in his fiction was that it was worth it, being alive."

His vigour, vitality, humour and passion were always matched by the insistence on thought, not the predigested cliches of the mass media or of those on the left which had begun to disgust him by the Sixties... It's easy to be a 'writer of conscience' - anyone can do it if they want to; just choose your cause. Bellow was a writer about conscience and consciousness, forever conflicted by the competing demands of the great cities, the individual's urge to survival against all odds and his equal need for love and some kind of penetrating understanding of what there was of significance beyond all the racket and racketeering. (Grant 20)

On the other hand, Bellow's detractors considered his work conventional and old-fashioned, as if the author was trying to revive the 19th century European novel. In a private letter, Vladimir Nabokov once referred to Bellow as a "miserable mediocrity." Journalist and author Ron Rosenbaum described Bellow's *Ravelstein* (2000) as the only book that rose above Bellow's failings as an author. Rosenfield wrote:

My problem with the pre-Ravelstein Bellow is that he all too often strains too hard to yoke together two somewhat contradictory aspects of his being and style. There's the street-wise Windy City wise guy and then-as if to show off that the wise guy has Wisdom-

there are the undigested chunks of arcane, not entirely impressive, philosophic thought and speculation. Just to make sure you know his novels have intellectual heft. That the world and the flesh in his prose are both figured and transfigured. (88)

Commenting on the same critic Markovits says:

But what, then, of the many defects -- the longueurs and digressions, the lectures on anthroposophy and religion, the arcane reading lists? What of the characters who don't change or grow but simply bristle onto the page, even the colorful lowlifes pontificating like fevered students in the seminars Bellow taught at the University of Chicago? teeming annals of the novelists's own marital discord. (45)

But, Markovits and what of the punitively caricatured ex-wives drawn from go on to answer his question: Shortcomings, to be sure. But so what? Nature doesn't owe us perfection. Novelists don't either. Who among us would even recognize perfection if we saw it? In any event, applying critical methods, of whatever sort, seemed futile in the case of an author who, as Randall Jarrell once wrote of Walt Whitman, is a world, a waste with, here and there, systems blazing at random out of the darkness -- those systems as beautifully and astonishingly organized as the rings and satellites of Saturn.

V. S. Pritchett praised Bellow, finding his shorter works to be his best. Pritchett called Bellow's novella *Seize the Day* a "small gray masterpiece." Bellow's account of his 1975 trip to Israel, *To Jerusalem and Back: A Personal Account*, was criticized by Noam Chomsky in his 1983 book *Fateful Triangle: the United States, Israel & the Palestinians*. Bellow, he wrote, "sees an Israel where 'almost everyone is



reasonable and tolerant, and rancor against the Arabs is rare,' where the people 'think so hard, and so much' as they 'farm a barren land, industrialize it, build cities, make a society, do research, philosophize, write books, sustain a great moral tradition, and finally create an army of tough fighters.' He has also been criticized for having praised Joan Peters's book, *From Time Immemorial*, which denied the existence of Palestinians and was exposed almost immediately after publication as containing gross falsifications of the sources it cited (Salzborn 102).

As he grew older, Bellow moved decidedly away from leftist politics and became identified with cultural conservatism. His opponents included feminism, campus activism and postmodernism. Bellow also thrust himself into the often contentious realm of Jewish and African-American relations. In *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, Bellow's portrayal of a black pickpocket who exposes himself in public was criticized, by some activists, as racist. In 2007, attempts to name a street after Bellow in his Hyde Park neighborhood were scotched by local alderman on the grounds that Bellow had made remarks about the neighborhood's current inhabitants that they considered racist.

In an interview in the March 7, 1988 *New Yorker*, Bellow sparked a controversy when he asked, concerning multiculturalism, "Who is the Tolstoy of the Zulus? The Proust of the Papuans? I'd be glad to read him." The taunt was seen by some as a slight against non-Western literature. Bellow at first claimed to have been misquoted. Later, writing in his defense in the *New York Times*, he said, "The scandal is entirely journalistic in origin . . . Always foolishly trying to explain and edify all comers, I was speaking of the distinction between literate and preliterate societies. For I was once an anthropology student, you see" (3). Bellow claimed to have

remembered shortly after making his infamous comment that he had in fact read a Zulu novel in translation: *Chaka* by Thomas Mofolo.

The research, therefore, approaches the text through Anti-Semitism with special reference to the ideas by A. S Markovits, M. Milson, and F. Nirenstein. The first chapter is the introduction of the whole research work. Theoretical modality has been discussed in the second chapter and text has been analyzed on the basis of the same modality in the following chapter. Finally, thesis has been summarized and concluded with findings in the fourth chapter.

## **II. Anti-Semitism and Paranoia**

Anti-Semitism is hostility toward Jews that dates to ancient times, perhaps to the beginning of Jewish history. From the days of the Bible until the Roman Empire, Jews were criticized and sometimes punished for their efforts to remain a separate social and religious group - one that refused to adopt the values and the way of life of the non-Jewish societies in which it lived.

The rise of Christianity greatly increased hatred of Jews. They became seen not merely as outsiders but as people who rejected Jesus and crucified him - despite the fact that the Roman authorities ordered and carried out the crucifixion. By the high middle ages (11<sup>th</sup>—14<sup>th</sup> centuries), Jews were widely persecuted as barely human 'Christ-killers' and 'Devils.' Forced to live in all-Jewish ghettos, they were accused of poisoning rivers and wells during times of disease. Some were tortured and executed for supposedly abducting and killing Christian children to drink their blood or to use it in baking matzoh - a charge known as the "blood libel." A large number were forced to convert to Christianity to avoid death, torture, or expulsion, though many secretly practiced Judaism after their conversions. However, in recent times, the Catholic Church and other Christian churches have rejected these anti-Semitic falsehoods.

In the 18th century, as the influence of Christianity began to wane during the Enlightenment - which celebrated the rights and possibilities of men and women to a far greater extent than ever before - religiously based hatred of Jewishness gave way to non-religious criticism: Judaism was attacked as an outdated belief that blocked human progress. Jewish separatism was again targeted. As European countries began to take modern shape in the 19th century and national pride grew, Jews, who were still usually deprived of civil rights and lived throughout Europe as outsiders, were

subjected to further hostility. This hostility resulted at times in deadly persecution, as in the late-19th century Russian program—violent attacks on Jewish communities with the aid or indifference of the government. At the same time, in response to the decline of Christian belief and the growing number of Jews beginning to join the mainstream of European society (a trend known as "assimilation"), anti-Semites turned to the new "racial science," an attempt, since discredited, by various scientists and writers to "prove" the supremacy of non-Jewish whites. The opponents of Jews argued that Jewishness was not a religion but a racial category, and that the Jewish "race" was biologically inferior.

The belief in a Jewish race would later become Germany's justification for seeking to kill every Jew in lands Germany occupied during World War II, whether the person practiced Judaism or not. In fact, even the children or grandchildren of those who had converted to Christianity were murdered as members of the Jewish race. The Holocaust, as this systematic mass extermination between 1939-1945 is known, resulted in the death of six million Jews—more than a third of the world's Jewish population. While the rise to power of the Nazis in the 1920s and 1930s involved numerous social and political factors, the views that helped turn anti-Semitism into official government policy included belief in the inborn superiority of "Aryans," or whites. It believed that Jews destroyed societies; that Jews secretly worked together to gain control of the world; and that Jews already controlled world finance, business, media, entertainment, and Communism.

In the half-century since World War II, public anti-Semitism has become much less frequent in the Western world. While stereotypes about Jews remain common, Jews face little physical danger. The hatred of Jewishness and the conspiracy beliefs of past eras are for the most part shared only by tiny numbers of

those on the fringes of society (although as the World Trade Center and Oklahoma bombings showed, even a handful of extremists can carry out acts of great violence). There are exceptions, of course: disagreement over policy toward the State of Israel has created opportunities in which the expression "Zionist" - support for Israel as the Jewish homeland - is often used as an anti-Semitic code word for "Jew" in mainstream debate. Holocaust denial and other recent re-writings of history - such as the false claim that Jews controlled the Atlantic slave trade - lie about the events of the past in order to make Jews seem underhanded and evil.

More seriously, many nations in Europe and in the former Soviet empire are struggling, mostly due to unsettled or chaotic economic and social conditions, with movements opposing "foreigners" - including recent immigrants and traditional enemies. These movements champion racial or national supremacy, and call for the type of charismatic, authoritarian leader that historically persecuted Jews and other minorities.

But while parts of Europe remain caught up in racial unrest, the Middle East is home to the harshest anti-Semitism in the world today. Nazi-like language is regularly expressed by the media and governments in the countries that oppose Israel and the West. And as dozens and dozens of terrorist incidents have demonstrated, there are many in Middle Eastern countries willing to act on these beliefs. Christian heritage” (Bradbury 77), with the genetic simultaneity of premodern and modern Anti-Semitism clearly legible in the internal coding of antisemitic ciphers. Referring to Sigmund Freud, it is clear that Anti-Semitism or Jew-hating has its theological origins in Christianity, and that this unconsciously lives on in the form of Christian metaphors and myths within the fantasies of antisemites. The deeper cause for this projection oriented toward “the Jews” lies in the differences between Christianity and Judaism,

which emerge from a small narcissistic discontinuity, meaning that the origins of Anti-Semitism are essentially of a religious nature, since Jewish monotheism took away from humanity the illusion of potentially being God (Markovits 262, 300); however, Anti-Semitism formulates itself as an attempt (and, in light of antisemitic barbarity driven to mass extermination, definitely a pathetic one) at a “distorted cure” (Freud 159) for the profound narcissistic wound as an expression of antisemitic fantasies; it formulates itself as “hearsay about the Jews” (Adorno 125)—and not as a real engagement with Jewish religion or the history of Jewishness. Therefore, Anti-Semitism can only be deciphered by analyzing antisemites themselves—and not by analyzing Judaism or Jewish history. It is not an accident that the antisemite chooses “the Jews” on which to project his obsessions, nor is it accurate to say that Anti-Semitism has anything to do with actual Jewish behavior. Picking up on assertions by Parsons, Sartre, Horkheimer/Adorno, and Arendt concerning the concrete manifestations of an antisemitic projection oriented toward “the Jews,” one must emphasize that, because of the totalization of civil society and the associated essential interchangeability emerging from the commodification of all life, the projection screen of Anti-Semitism has become instrumentalized, and therefore, in a dehumanizing sense, arbitrary. The ticket mentality manifests itself in a reified way of perceiving the world, oriented toward interchangeability, indiscriminateness, and arbitrariness, and marked by a large portion of disinterest in and lack of empathy toward others. Anti-Semitic resentments certainly do not limit themselves to Jewish targets—in fact, as pointed out by Sartre, basically anyone can take on the function of the Jew in anti-Semitic fantasies; however, this does not change the historical reality that Anti-Semitism has always been and continues to be directed against Jews, and with barbaric brutality.

The anti-semitic worldview is thereby structured by a dualistic detachment from the external world, in which one's own beliefs are not checked against reality, the anti-semite reacts to an action or statement that *does not exist* (it is or was simply a figment of fantasy), and people or characteristics can be declared "Jews" or "Jewish," even if they are not such in actuality: "Juif par le regard de l'autre" (Markovits 203). This process takes place within the anti-Semitic formation of a Jewish idea, in which a transparent projection screen may be provided by Jewish culture, religion, and history, which themselves become arbitrarily distorted or even generated anew; because of this, Sartre is correct in focusing attention on the worldview and passion of the anti-Semites, in order to begin making Anti-Semitism comprehensible. In accordance with Arendt, one can say that in contrast to pre-modern anti-Jewish prejudice, modern Anti-Semitism represents an evolving historical process of abstraction culminating in a new peak in the twentieth century: away from actual Jews as projection objects toward the fictional "Jew," who has been identified as alien to the Volk, who is defined solely by anti-Semites, and who has no more hypothetical possibilities for escaping the anti-Semitic delusion.

According to Hannah Arendt, the evolution of modern Anti-Semitism through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was thus a process of radicalization in which anti-Jewish prejudices and resentments were increasingly divorced from the realities of society, until finally within the total ideology of National Socialism they became complete abstractions that "required no Jews, but only images of Jews, in order to unleash the hatred against them" (qtd. in Schulze /Rensmann 128).

On a political and social level, Anti-Semitism during the emerging modern was at first directed only against the Jews, and especially against their legal and political emancipation. The process of radicalization then took place through the

increasingly stronger emphasis on general political questions surrounding Anti-Semitism—a process succinctly summarized by Shulamit Volkov (1978) with the term *cultural code*, which is what Anti-Semitism had become through this process—erupting into a critique of the whole social and political system, finally leading to conceptions of a fundamentally new society, “inspiring the fantasies of the *völkisch* movement toward designing, planning, and building” (Wistrch 222). The delusional behind the process of antisemitic projection was and is concretized in a transaction of reciprocal reversals of the relationships between individual and society, a transposition between internal and external, between psyche and sociality. Borrowing from Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno’s analysis of mimesis and false projections in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (220), it can be said that the anti-Semitic worldview is not interested in a mimetic transformation process with an accurate representation of the object and a simultaneous recognition of the subject, but rather the opposite, in a projectional delusional transformation of external reality with the goal of conforming the social environment to match the individual’s delusional drive structure. Although, as previously stated, modern Anti-Semitism differs from pre-modern anti-Jewish prejudice in effectuating a process of abstraction, it nonetheless then delusionally seeks concrete projection screens and accuses Jews of *being* abstract and not concrete—for example, in the form of commodities or money. As Sartre pointed out, anti-Semites thus repudiate particular abstractions of civil society, especially the forms of modern property such as money and stocks, because these were closely associated with rationality and therefore were also related to the abstract intelligence of “the Jews.”

Thus, in the anti-Semitic fantasy, Jews become symbolic of abstraction *itself*, which makes clear the highly contradictory contents of anti-Semitic resentments: Jews



are accused of abstractness and are thereby blamed for the modern, which likewise encompasses socialism as much as liberalism and capitalism as much as enlightenment, as well as urbanity, mobility, and intellectualism.

Parsons pointed out that certain aspects of the annihilation of European Jewry will remain unexplained as long as Anti-Semitism is treated as a simple example of prejudice, xenophobia, and racism in general. Here, Parsons argues that although Anti-Semitism is certainly related to racist and völkisch stereotypes, racism itself is decidedly less complex than Anti-Semitism, because it lacks the ambivalence seen in anti-Semitic assertions, expressing straightforward scorn instead. That is to say, as long as the belief continues that Anti-Semitism is simply an example of scapegoating whose victims could have been members of any other group, because although the choice of anti-Semitic projection object exhibits arbitrariness, it was not accidental.

Anti-Semitism bears not only a considerable quantitative difference (as manifested in the Shoah) in comparison to prejudice and racism, it also has qualitative differences, in the concrete (material and sexual) articulation of the potential power attributed to the Other, as well as in the abstractness of the attribution given to Anti-Semitism, which is fantasized as a mysterious unfathomability, abstraction and generality. (Salzborn 93)

Because this fantasized power in Anti-Semitism has no identifiable bearer, it is perceived as rootless, fantastically large and uncontrollable, but above all as hidden behind a facade, and is therefore perceived as conspiratorial and unfathomable—in other words, as abstract.

Brought into contact with racial theories that had been emerging in the late nineteenth century, a conception of the naturalness and rootedness of organicity

became connected with the commodity-producing society, in which these thought patterns are themselves an expression of that same paradoxical fetish that generated the conception of the concrete as being natural, while increasingly representing the social-natural so that it appears to be biological (Parsons 21). The abstract and the concrete are not understood in their unity as rational parts of an antinomy, for which the real vanquishing of abstraction would be represented by the value encompassed by the historical-practical reconciliation of the contradiction itself, as well as of each of its sides. This is how the dichotomy of material-concrete versus abstract mutates into the racial dichotomy of Aryan versus Jew: Modern Anti-Semitism is therefore an especially dangerous form of fetish. Its power and its danger lie in that it offers a comprehensive worldview which seems to justify various types of anti-capitalist discontent, giving them political expression. It nonetheless allows capitalism to continue, insofar as it attacks only the personification of that social form. This understanding of Anti-Semitism allows one to see a significant impetus of Nazism as being an abbreviated anti-capitalism. A defining characteristic of Anti-Semitism is the hatred of the abstract. Its hypostatization of the existing concrete leads to a unanimous, barbarous—but not necessarily hate-filled mission: the deliverance of the world from the source of all evil in the form of the Jews (24). Historically, the anti-Semitic delusion was not an individual but rather a super-individual phenomenon, involving not just single paranoiacs, but rather an entire society that exalted the delusion of Anti-Semitism as the norm, so that, historically seen, the phantasm of social normality became structured by the anti-Semitic delusion. The anti-Semites transferred their delusion to reality and attempted to adjust reality to match their own psychic deviance. The anti-Semitic delusion escalated from a national conception of negative integration toward the extermination of those fantasized as being non-

identical, with the concrete goal of creating völkisch homogeneity and the extermination of the abstract possibility of non-identity and ambivalence. The antisemitic delusional structure implemented by National Socialism is thus the clearest manifestation of the social reality of anti-Semitic fantasies, and the mass extermination of Jews is the utopia of modern Anti-Semitism, which was barbarically realized in the Shoah—and whose replication in the present day is striven for by Islamic Anti-Semitism in particular. The anti-Semites want to annihilate that which they desire; aggressive extermination desires go together with narcissistic identification, and fantasized envy generates the delusion of omnipotence. The extent and radicalness of Anti-Semitism in a social and political system are fundamentally dependent on its material and conceptual concretization—which itself has been made realizable by the modern ambivalence of enlightened thought, because capitalist totality has produced economic foundations that are essentially identical around the world, and the potential for an anti-Semitic reaction to the ambivalent uncertainties of the modern is equally evident everywhere. Here, the crucial macro theoretical contextual prerequisite is the relationship between (nation) state organizing and its implementation in the sovereign state as the site of a systematized form of dominance although the relationship between the civil state and Anti-Semitism has remained under-examined in social science research to date.

Horkheimer and Adorno emphasized that Anti-Semitism is not focused on economic benefits, but is instead informed by psychic dispositions, in which Anti-Semitism only superficially appears to lack a rational intention: this intention is in fact composed of an (unconscious) affect that needs to be discharged—they thus took a crucial theoretical step past Sartre, who still argued a rational economic interest and did not delve deeply enough to see that this human interest can also be dominated by

drive contingencies (that is, in facilitating unconscious fantasies of acting out), as is the case with Anti-Semitism. Borrowing from Grunberger, it can be said that the antisemite projects his conflicts on the Jew, expediting an abreaction of some of his psychic complexes. A psychoanalytical interpretation of the early childhood ambivalence conflict and the Oedipal situation as subjective sites of antisemitic fantasies can be used in underpinning psychosocial insights into the orientation of Anti-Semitism's anti-Jewish projections and its affiliated household of fantasies and myths, as well as in understanding the attractivity for the individual of antisemitic resentments within their social dynamic from the perspective of personality psychology, which is itself closely interwoven with the mesoand macro-structure of civil society through the triangular familial structure in its social-functional dimension as the familial medium and thereby the "agent of society" (Adorno & Horkheimer 122).

Moreover, the question of the antisemitic personality structure is also tied to a historically affiliating process, meaning that the cohesiveness of the worldview (and thereby the radicality of the ego dissociation) and the harmony or disharmony between ego and superego are *concretely* dependent on individual biography as well as social and political contexts, and can further stabilize or radicalize according to socialization and context. Here, a question remains about the point of no return, or the point at which antisemitic prejudices cohere into a worldview and the ego dissociation suspends itself largely in favor of a relatively homogenous personality structure shaped by Anti-Semitism. It can be conjectured that a cognitive and especially an emotional predisposition toward antisemitic thought and affect structures is psychodynamically generated during childhood, and is therefore also furnished with a gradual potential for revision in later life.

Put another way, the revision of antisemitic resentments is pedagogically possible only if they have not already been established during childhood as the emotional and cognitive fundament for the individual's overall personality structure.

If the antisemites have indeed succeeded in projecting upon the Jews, then they have achieved their dualistic paradise: all evil is now to be found on the one side, wherein their view the Jews are, and all good is to be found on the other side, where the antisemites consider themselves to be. According to Grunberger, the antisemite's ego ideal is of a narcissistic nature, and its fulfillment corresponds to a completed narcissistic integrity, which has been achieved by the antisemite through a projection upon the Jew. The creation of narcissistic integrity depends on the closing of an open narcissistic wound, which, according to Grunberger, can be considered central within the context of an Oedipal complex. People with antisemitic attitudes have never succeeded in correcting the wound to their self-esteem and have therefore foundered on the Oedipal conflict. The individual's wound corresponds to the collective wound described by Freud, which expresses itself in the Christian jealousy of Jews being (religiously speaking) the chosen people, and in the projective fantasy of a "Jewish world conspiracy." The Jew represents the Oedipal father image, in which the psychic function of the Jew is to enable both a distancing of the Oedipal conflict as well as a lingering in the narcissistic dimension. Here, the psychodynamic goal is to "fill a deep narcissistic fissure within the subject and between the subject and the outside world" (Perry, Schweitzer 62). It is an avoidance of the real Oedipal conflict, resulting in a pre-genital regression and an escape into the narcissistic universe as the site of the mother archetype, and the yearning for intrauterine perfection and the "prenatal elevated-elevating condition" (Grunberger 44). The anti-Semite stands between two worlds: that of illusion and Narcissus, and that of reality and Oedipus. For the anti-

Semite, the Jew appears here as “the mighty and as the castrated father”: The Jews are utilized for the abreaction of an unresolved and therefore “eternal” ambivalence towards the father. In accordance with this inner schism, he splits the interjected primal father figure into two halves: the aggressivity towards the evil, punishing father is directed towards the imago of the Jews to undergo an abreaction there, while positive feelings remain towards the beloved father figure, meaning God, the Fatherland, the ideal (Grunberger 268). This also makes clear on an individual psychological level what Ostow described within “Christianity’s apocalyptic imagery, in of danger or destruction with elements of achievement or victory,” (80, 85) combining “death fantasies” with “rebirth fantasies,” always in connection to messianic elements and the hope of an end to the current, negatively seen era. According to Ostow, the anti-Semitic worldview is therefore marked by a distinctly identifiable moralization. Sartre described this worldview as a dualism with an extreme polarization that largely excludes any kind of reality check, which itself relates to Arendt’s idea emphasizing the totality of Anti-Semitism and the concomitant hermetic self-containment of this worldview.

Upon reaching the state of criticality, the anti-Semitic psyche’s internal conflicts can no longer be endured, and the ambivalence toward the id’s suppressed drive impulses and the superego’s internalized father authority becomes so unbearable that they are only manageable through externalization and thus projection. Here, the Jews serve the delusional role of the demonized incarnation of one’s own projected destructive desires.. Expanding on Grunberger, it is therefore important to pick upon Loewenstein, who pointed out that “the Jew” functions *in two respects* as a projection object for Anti-Semitism: on the one hand, as the “repressed drives,” the internal “evil,” the forbidden (which refers back to the psychic connection between anti-

Semitic resentment and the anal complex, and thus the semantic fields of dirtiness, excrement, darkness, mysteriousness, sexuality, and money); and on the other hand, as the hated as well as beloved father, thus—in psychoanalytical terms—as a representative simultaneously of the id as well as the superego. However, a distinct shortcoming in theoretical Anti-Semitism research still remains in the lack of empirically secured insights concerning the id: although one may here work as well from an assumption of pre-genital dominance, the significance of oral and/or anal dimensions have not yet received sufficient empirical analysis. The psychic mechanism of projection, characteristic of Anti-Semitism, functions as a defensive measure against the efforts of one's own unconscious, as described by Fenichel (20). For the unconscious of the rioters, the Jew represents not only the authorities whom they do not dare to attack, but also their own repressed instincts which they hate and which are forbidden by the very authorities against whom they are directed. Anti-Semitism is indeed a condensation of the most contradictory tendencies: instinctual rebellion directed against the authorities, and the cruel suppression and punishment of this instinctual rebellion, directed against oneself. Unconsciously for the anti-Semite, the Jew is simultaneously the one against whom he would like to rebel, and the rebellious tendencies within himself.

The anti-Semitic conception of the Jew is irrational, and therefore cannot be altered through concrete experiences with Jews, either. According to Fenichel, the anti-Semite views the Jewish God—and therefore every Jew too—as the Devil and the Anti-Christ, the evil, anti-divine principle, on the basis of which God was nailed to the cross. The question of why the Jew has taken on this role in the anti-Semite's projections is answered by Freud, with a view to the historical relationship between Christianity and Judaism: The deeper motives behind Jew-hating are rooted in long-

ago times, they emerge from the racial unconscious, [ . . . ]. I would venture to say that this jealousy, directed against a people purporting to be God's first-born favorite offspring, has not yet been outgrown by the others, as if they still put faith in this claim. Furthermore, of the customs that the Jews use to mark themselves out, that of circumcision made a disagreeable, sinister impression, which can probably be explained as a reminder of dreaded castration, harking back to a gladly forgotten piece of the primal past.

And finally, the latest motive in this series, one should not forget that all these peoples who today excel in Jew-hating first became Christians late in history, and often forced by bloody compulsion. One could say they are all "badly baptized," and that, under a thin wash of Christianity, they have remained the same as their ancestors who paid homage to a barbaric polytheism. They have not yet overcome their grudge against the new religion that was forced upon them, but they have displaced it upon the source from which Christianity came to them (197). By contrast to pre-genitally influenced pagan religions, which focused on protecting and primarily motherly divinities, Jewish monotheism darkened religion by setting up the father as its central object, thus robbing it of motherly warmth. On the other hand, the stronger reincorporation of the motherly element in Christianity, in which the son has rediscovered the mother, has ultimately sparked a Jewish-Christian conflict in the unconscious.

Christianity, which as a kind of younger sibling to Judaism also asserts a monotheistic worldview, has not equated the deep narcissistic wound with Judaism—which had taken away from humanity the illusion of potentially being God—but instead with the Father himself. Anti-Semites do not identify with the austere law that was received with the (symbolic) murder of the primal father: instead of abstract,



austere equality, they have internalized concrete power and the associated option for authoritarian arbitrariness. Within this fascination with total (fatherly) power exists simultaneously the fear of the same, as well as the fear of one's own loss of power and status; all merge into Anti-Semitism's conception of the Jew being both powerful and powerless, castrating and castrated, as pointed out by Grunberger and Freud. Therefore, oral aggression and anal destructiveness are an unconscious expression of the narcissistic-omnipotent desire for merging. The anti-Semitic fantasy articulates itself sociologically as a fear of losing recognition, love, or status, or as a reaction to this loss (Parsons), and psychologically as an interaction between castration anxiety and castration depression (Freud 39), in which this anxiety tends to elicit an aggressive acting out of the unresolved conflicts, while the depression tends to elicit a defensive one. The circumcision practiced by Judaism acquires in anti-Semitic fantasies a malign, sinister, and frightening mythos, closely associated with the anal conception of the Jew as devil and witch, as the "terrible, phallic, omnipotent and dangerous mother" (Grunberger 259).

In the interrelationship between castration anxiety and castration depression, there also exists the perspective of gender politics in contextualizing a political theory of Anti-Semitism. Contrary to the assumption—arising from an understanding of gender based on theoretical difference—that women because of a differing Oedipal situation would take on Anti-Semitism solely as an adaptation of "dominant masculine value orientations," without this being affiliated with their psychic structure (Nirenstein 52), empirical findings show that such a differentiation is purely normative and does not hold in social reality. If the motif of castration is instead to be interpreted socially, then biological gender must be distinguished from social gender, meaning that the childhood perception is not about an actual lack or loss, but instead

about the behavioral patterns performed with the primary gender characteristics by the parents while interacting with their children, and the fixation on defined, socially contingent, and trained gender roles as applied during early childhood education, which are *symbolically* manifested in the primary male and female sex organs. Furthermore, Elisabeth Brainin showed that psychic needs and mechanisms such as narcissism, drive and affect repression, and anal-sadistic tendencies are not particular to masculine psychosexual development. In this respect, it can be stated that theoretical insights from social science research into Anti-Semitism are empirically valid for both sexes, although there still needs to be further, primarily qualitative biographical research into what forms of gender identification concretely manifest themselves in men and women, in order to achieve a more precise picture of the theoretical dimension of gender in Anti-Semitism. Here, too, one could presume a wider spectrum of possible identification patterns, which nonetheless ought to be traceable back to essentially similar primary socialization experiences.

Factors on the structural as well as individual levels allow one to summarize Anti-Semitism as—to borrow from Horkheimer Adorno and Arendt—ultimately a way of thinking, and—to borrow from Sartre and Claussen—a way of feeling: Anti-Semitism is both the inability and unwillingness to think abstractly and feel concretely; in Anti-Semitism, the two are switched, so that thinking is concrete, but feeling is abstract. Thus, all the ambivalences of modern civil society remain not only cognitively misunderstood and unconsidered, but also emotionally unprocessed, because feelings are abstracted and therefore the ambivalent uncertainties of the modern subject are not tolerated. With Anti-Semitism, the individual is doubly de-subjectivized: it forfeits intellectual mastery over its self-reflection, and forgoes the potential for emotional understanding and empathy. The anti-Semitic desire to think

concretely is complemented by the inability to *feel concretely*; the worldview is to be concrete, but the feelings are to be abstract—the intellectual and emotional perspectives are subjected to an inversion, and this dichotomy leads inevitably to psychic inner conflicts. Therefore, in terms of worldview, Anti-Semitism is a decisionistic attitude toward the world and a conscious and unconscious radical commitment to the dualistic anti-Semitic fantasy, both cognitively and emotionally.

Insights into the cognitive and emotional structure of Anti-Semitism also provide significant prospects for social science research into prevention, especially from psychological and sociological sources. If one begins with the premise that Anti-Semitism consists of a worldview and a passion that both emanate from a particular psychological basis that, though largely defined in early childhood, first produces a coherent worldview only later in psychological development, then the micro-theoretical prospects for the prevention of Anti-Semitism lie primarily within early childhood, in the encouragement of abstract thought and concrete feeling so as to strengthen the authentic and situation-appropriate articulation of one's own needs and interests—in contrast to the especially pronounced drive repression in all areas, that is characteristic of Anti-Semitism. Here, Longterm's empirical studies would be particularly useful in clarifying whether the ability for abstract thought and concrete feeling, as identified in individual biographies, also correlates in fact with a resistance against anti-Semitic models of interpreting the world. This question remains completely open, as the outline of a political theory of Anti-Semitism being presented here can only demonstrate insights into its characteristics—but not, however, whether a revision or modification of these basal structures would in fact be a successful prevention strategy on the level of the individual, especially if the structural factors were to remain intact. The conscious and unconscious interaction between factors on

the structural and individual levels, as well as their reciprocal stabilization and the attendant modification of ways to articulate anti-Semitic resentments, occurs through a process of cultural formation. Shulamit Volkov described with her concept of the cultural code the socio-cultural process of social segmentation and homogenization, which—historically as well as currently—leads to a polarization (both symbolic and real) by Anti-Semitism, and characterizes anti-Semitic mental images and worldviews. In Anti-Semitism as a comprehensive alternative worldview, Jews have become a symbol of the modern world, as emphasized not only by Volkov, but also by Sartre, Horkheimer/Adorno, Arendt, and Postone. The cultural basis for this identification process was the formation (completed in the Wilhelmine Empire and uninterrupted to the present day) of a semantic and symbolizing interpretational figure that continually led to new extremes in the polarization of the Jew-hating sentiments, which had at first still remained localized and ambivalent: with the achievement of Jewish emancipation, Anti-Semitism gradually became inextricably tied to its negation, whereby the Jews were assigned the function of a “third figure.”

Around the end of the nineteenth century, Anti-Semitism became an integral part of an entire culture, and a “permanent companion of aggressive nationalism and anti-modernism” (Volkov 44). In the process, Anti-Semitism changed from a bundle of ideas, values, and norms to a unique, widespread culture. Volkov accounts for this interpretive process on the semantic level from a symbolic viewpoint as the formation of a cultural code or the establishment of a linguistic shorthand, which on the one hand allows one to invoke particular associations and contexts, and on the other hand itself functions as a communicative cipher that refrains from any explicit mention of Anti-Semitism’s resentments during the symbolic communication involved in the cultural creation of meaning. Anti-Semitism has become a code that in the thought

and speech of anti-Semites requires no further explanations or details, so that Anti-Semitism can be communicated by catchwords and key images needing no further explication between those communicating, because everyone “understands” the unconscious dimension, or because the speaker hopes and expects that particular insinuations and catchwords will be correctly interpreted by the listener, since they assume that they belong to the same cultural system—which consists of, as succinctly summarized by A. H. Rosenfield “long-term, generation- spanning central value systems and codes, as well as the political and psychological behavioral dispositions, conventions and latencies” (311),

An analysis of the hermeneutics and symbolic force of anti-Semitic speech in the context of cultural interpretive frameworks in the interaction between individuals and groups reveals that, for many, the catchword “Anti-Semitism” was and is a repression of the real world, and—in terms of Critical Theory—a pathic worldview that interpretively distorted and deformed reality in such a way that it itself could appear to be the same thing, ideologically becoming it. The communication structure and interaction structure of anti-Semitic resentments within socio-cultural space are marked by a hermeneutic logic in which Jews are perceived as non-identical. Regarding the nation as a political form, Markovits pointed out that “the Jews” are not considered foreign at all, but rather as other, thus representing a “third figure”: “He [the Jew] is neither one nor the other, neither native nor foreigner” (270). Markovits argues that the polarization between native and foreigner marks out distinctly identifiable inside and outside positions, whereby “the Jew” is seen as neither one nor the other, and is thereby a third figure within this distinction between one’s own nation and the other one. “The Jew” therefore embodies within anti-Semitic semantics the negation of this distinction between one’s own nation and the other one, meaning

that, from Anti-Semitism's point of view, the Jews' existence *in* itself undermines the differentiation of nations and nation forms. In anti-Semitic fantasies, the Jew therefore also personifies the potential collapse of the world's national order:

The national form serves to contain a we-group in the world. The asymmetry between one's own and the foreign does not emerge from a denial of the nationhood or peoplehood of those outside. Instead, the symmetrical construction of "nation vs. nation" is made asymmetrical, on the level of imputations and judgements, by the dichotomy of "my nation and other nation." This implies a certain acknowledgement of the outside. [. . . ] The national form establishes a cultural interpretive framework which represents the world as nationally ordered. In this sense, the national form is at once both universalistic and particularistic. (277)

In the worldview of Anti-Semitism, Jews play the permanent role of being non-belonging and non-identical, a role that is particularly expressed in—as described in detail by Holz—a dichotomous perpetrator-victim inversion in anti-Semitic thought; a differentiation between the identity of the we-group and the non-identity of the Jews; an ethnicization and ontologization of the respectively imputed characteristics; a differentiation between "good" and "bad" Jews within the anti-Semitic fantasy (which serves to deflect accusations of Anti-Semitism); a contrasting of community and society in defining the social context of Anti-Semitism; and antithetical conceptions charged with religious, racial, or social meaning (Judaism vs. Christianity; "Jewish race" vs. "Nordic/Aryan race"; "acquisitive" vs. "productive").

### **III. Anti-Semitic Feeling and Paranoiac Pathology in Bellow's *The Victim***

#### ***The Victim* as a Story of a Paranoiac Personality**

The novels of Saul Bellow are based upon solidity of character and authenticity of event. The people, places, and events in these novels, however, have an intensity of presence that forces them upon the reader's senses and causes them to lodge in his memory. Despite the elements of fantasy, the peculiar twists of character, the disquieting failures of modulation, there is never in Bellow's fiction an air of contrivance. This last, however, can be said of a number of writers of lesser stature. The distinguishing quality that gives these works their unique pressure is their depth of moral implication. Many writers are interested in moral issues, but few are able to enter that awesome territory of confusion and paradox in which moral concern can have its only real trial. In a world where the consequences of an act are severed from its motive, Bellow's characters seek, often unconsciously, for a mode of behavior that will restore the link, bind intention to effect, and thus create the possibility of moral choice—or at least of potency. Instead of issues, which at least would be clear in their terms, they face confusion, turmoil, darkness noisy with unforeseeable moral collisions.

For Asa Leventhal, the protagonist of *The Victim*, the question of a man's responsibility for his actions is personal, immediate, painful, and as insistent as a wound. It is, in fact, hardly a question at all but rather pathology, something to be healed more than answered. On the one hand, he is plagued by a sense of persecution, a conviction that others are consciously and deliberately responsible for his sufferings, that society is joined in a total effort to exclude him from its graces. On the other, he is infected with an increasing sense of culpability by the woes of those around him.

His condition is aggravated by an inability to measure either his virtue or his potency. Though afflicted by an image of himself as inconsequential, a reject destined to dwell forever on the fringes of possibility, Leventhal nevertheless has a megaloid streak: he fears his own powers and sees himself as a man who cannot budge without visiting disaster upon his fellows.

Involved in Leventhal's consciousness of himself are three areas of action. First, there is his past, presented retrospectively in the novel. It is from the shocks of this personal history that his tenuous relation to the present derives. His mother having died in an insane asylum when he was eight, Leventhal, after finishing high school, left Hartford and went to New York where he worked as the assistant to an auctioneer. When the auctioneer died, he lost the job and began to drift, living in a dirty room on the lower East Side, working at odd jobs. The job that affected him most was a clerking position in a flophouse on lower Broadway, the ruined and outcast transients representing for him a condition that was a constant threat in his own life. After several years of this borderline existence, he took a civil service job in Baltimore, where he found a girl and became engaged, an event that promised to ameliorate his fears. But he was fated to suffer shock and delay before his marriage could come into being with any degree of security. Though he had in effect rediscovered his mother—this time young, attractive, eminently sane—in the person of his betrothed, he found that she had continued, during the engagement, a lingering affair with a married man. The result was immediate trauma and several years of separation before they finally married.

The crucial elements in that history is the reflection of his present phobic sense of being—insanity, infidelity, and poverty. Together these represent for him the ingredients of disaster in his relations with the world. The threat of insanity, a heritage



from his mother, is in effect a threat of lost control, that state in which he may unintentionally bring harm to others. It evokes fears of personal irresponsibility, of the arbitrary, the disordered, the perilous within the self. Infidelity implies the antithesis of this: deception by others, the conscious attempts of the world to smash personal defenses. Finally there is poverty, the potential effect of aimless forces, accidents of circumstance which seem always to Leventhal to exert a downward pressure, a thrust toward calamity. He sees himself as perpetually at the point where all of these possibilities intersect. Everywhere, within and beyond the shell of his being, is peril: "His difficulty . . . was that when he didn't find time to consider, when pressure was put on him, he behaved like a fool" (Bellow 20).

In the present time of the novel, Leventhal's frighteningly delicate condition is further elaborated through two involved situations, one happening at a distance, the other up so close that it is as much a manifestation of his frenzied consciousness as of realistic circumstance. His wife having gone to Maryland for several weeks to visit her mother, he is thrown into a period of isolation in the oppressive heart of New York, the stifling solitude of their Manhattan apartment, the opiate routine of his job on a trade paper. His sister-in-law on Staten Island, desperately worried during this time over the sickness of her younger boy, makes repeated demands upon Leventhal's attention, and he finds himself impelled to take on the emotional responsibilities of his brother, who has left his family in order to work somewhere in the West. Simultaneously, he is visited again and again in his apartment by an old acquaintance, Kirby Allbee, who accuses him of having wrecked Allbee's life. Like the heat, these oppressions are constant, debilitating, and disorienting. "He never liked this Albee, but he had never thought much about him. How was it, then, his name came to him readily" (23).

Whereas Allbee's visits seem almost unreal, the hallucinations of a lonely mind, the events in Staten Island are in no important sense projections of his fear but disturbing occasions in the world beyond. His sister-in-law, an Italian, is a woman with alien responses. Fearing hospitals, she resists sending her child to one despite the seriousness of his condition. Thus she is, for Leventhal, an outsider, a stranger dwelling in a different set of attitudes, a different locale of consciousness. All strangers signify to Leventhal's paranoid spirit an accusation, a proclamation of his difference and therefore his error and guilt. When her child dies in a hospital to which Leventhal has urged her to commit him, this sense of accusation oppresses him despite the absence of vindictiveness, of any charge from his sister-in-law. A victim of outer circumstance and inward predilection, Leventhal stands accused of the sins, the enormities, of chance.

It is in the central situation of the book, the encounters with Allbee, an experience at once literal and fantastic, that the ordeals of Leventhal's conscience are most strikingly elaborated. Allbee, his accuser, is the personification of everything that Leventhal is oppressed by. Shabby, penniless, half-deranged, he evokes images of all those broken creatures in the flophouse of Leventhal's past. Allbee's accusations—that Leventhal had lost him his job by being rude to his employer, had thereby indirectly caused his wife to leave him, was even somehow responsible for the death of that wife in an automobile accident—are like dream representations of the vague but deep-seated guilt dragging constantly at Leventhal's life. Despite Leventhal's confused attempts to remove this specter from his consciousness as well as from his presence, Allbee presses closer, forcing a kind of intimacy that fuses the two in a grim relationship of hatred and compassion. Prevailing upon Leventhal to let him move into the apartment, he takes to wearing Leventhal's robes, to reading postcards from

Leventhal's wife on which are intimate references to details of their sex life, even brings a woman into Leventhal's bed and locks his harried host from the apartment. It is as though he has taken Leventhal's wife and is absorbing his existence. The result of this strange pattern of circumstances is that Leventhal—victimized, driven, tormented by Allbee's transgressions—finally comes to acknowledge his own complicity in his tormentor's plight. However inadvertently, he had initiated the chain of events that led to Allbee's disintegration. Allbee, his tormentor, is his victim and is also himself.

In the end, the increasing fusion of identities, Allbee's complete failure to distinguish between himself and his surrogate, brings the erratic relationship to a conclusion. When Allbee attempts suicide by turning on the gas in the middle of the night, an act that will of course destroy Leventhal as well as himself, Leventhal drives him from the apartment and shuts him from his life. Through the experience with Allbee, he seems to have sensed not only the necessity of recognizing one's part in the trials of his fellows but also the near madness of that lingering self-renunciation which obliterates the borders of identity. To be totally victimized by the sense that one has victimized others is to bring ruin not only upon the self but upon one's victims as well. When Leventhal encounters a somewhat regenerated Allbee several years later, this implicit lesson is reinforced by the happier circumstances of each.

Saul Bellow has always been attacked for portraying male protagonists who, as Chris Wood says, are "at best entirely unsuited, to . . . devouring, unreasonable women." A similar attitude is expressed by Joseph F. McCadden, who maintains that Bellow depicts "females as destructive, mercantile figures," while his protagonists are possessed by a "crippling hatred of wives, feelings of inadequacy and a sense of futility with their lives" (243, 89). As evidence, some critics cite the cases of the

comedian Bumbridge in *The Last Analysis*, Tommy Wilhelm in *Seize The Day*, Herzog in *Herzog*, and Kenneth Tractenberg in *The Actual*. Others, for example, Lillian Shapiro, question Bellow's conception of women and wonder if his position is molded by the betrayals of his former wives. Worse, D. T. Max thinks that Bellow, along with Hemingway, Mailer, and Roth, "were an aggressive clan--offensive to women" while Cecil Brown accuses Bellow of being racist against women and blacks, and wonders if this is the price to his becoming 'white.'

These reflections have failed to cope with the fact that Bellow's work provides a plurality of definitions of the American masculinity and, hence, femininity. In *Dangling Man* and *The Bellarosa Connection*, for instance, we encounter two women who deny their personal needs and ambitions to save, protect, provide for, and promote their husbands, thus playing the role of traditional Jewish women in multicultural America. Even in *Herzog*, we become witness to what James M. Millard calls Ramona's "theater of love" where Herzog's grief and misery are transformed into comfort and excitement (80). In 1994, Bellow's fifth wife, Janis, nursed her eighty-two-year-old husband through the crisis of having eaten a poisonous fish. The incident produced the novella *Ravelstein*, in which Bellow reiterates Plato's idea that the human is constantly striving to find his or her other half. And in *The Victim*--the focus of this study--we encounter two male figures who bitterly fight each other while fully aware of the absence of their wives. In fact, their ill treatment of their wives becomes the center of their dispute. Their rowdy arguments are pregnant with the language of stage acting and possession, and always incorporate the (re)presentation of masculinity and femininity. The questions to be asked are: Why are the two women silenced and deprived of their essential right to express themselves freely? Is their absence intentional? Is this Bellow's way of escaping women? Does he celebrate the

art of oppression by demonstrating a proud, independent masculinity and thus betray the human ideals he overtly supports? Are the two wives marginalized, distorted, or negated? Are they referred to as 'mysterious and unknowable lack?' Does Asa Leventhal, the protagonist of the novel, assert his will over his wife? And why do these two husbands turn manic, paranoid, distracted, and disheveled when their wives are away? This paper attempts to answer these questions and explore the representation of Jewish and American masculinities within the context of bewilderment, possession, and acting, and to investigate the notion of acting in a fictional world and how it affects the reading process.

By its very nature, possession is grounded in acting as it depends on the apparent transformation of the possessed into the voice, the actions, and the face of another. Moreover, possession can be authentic and spontaneous or fake and simulated to provide a show or attain certain benefits. In his study of possession among the Ethiopians, Michel Leiris terms the former type *theatre vecu* (theater lived) and the latter *theatre joue* (theater played) (434). Although this paper is not the place for a full discussion of contextualization from a Foucauldian viewpoint, it is worth referring to notable critics such as Greenblatt, F. B. Brownlow and others, whose works on exorcism, the custom so much manifested in the latter sixteenth century, are illuminating. Samuel Harsnett, who took upon himself the task of fighting the habit, sought to impose such a confession--the indelible mark of falsity, tawdriness, and rhetorical manipulation--on Catholics (Brownlow 104); he described their practices as a "play of sacred miracles" (Harsnett 202), and a "devil comedy" (280). Greenblatt opines that "exorcisms are stage plays fashioned by cunning clerical dramatists and performed by actors skilled in improvisation" (433). And Michael Macdonald writes that many famous physicians in the same period recorded that their demoniacs

suffered from "severe insanity ... anxiety and worry, religious perplexity of fears, or evil thoughts" (200).

Asa Leventhal displays many symptoms that relate him to the above two types of possession: the real and the false. Like the demoniacs who showed real marks of possession, Asa is often lonely, anxious, fear-stricken, suspicious, and aggressive and is filled with complaints about crowding, suffocation, strange movements, and extreme heat. He is even more so in the absence of his wife and following Allbee's harsh attacks. These symptoms probably result from Asa's failure to secure a job and provide bread for his family, his fear of life's instability, his abandonment of his brother's family, his distance from people aroused by his fear of anti-Semitism, his evil thoughts, and his wrongdoings against Kirby Allbee, his antagonist.

All Asa's thoughts and actions are marshalled to meet the desire for life stability and job safety. His fear so much dominates him that after Rudiger refuses to employ him, Asa is so dominated by fear, defeated psychology, mostly the guilt—self imposed guilt of being an agency of Albee losing job.

### **Anti-Semitic Feeling and Paranoiac Pathology of Leventhal**

In *The Victim*, Saul Bellow's character Asa Leventhal is a good example of someone suffering from paranoia. As a Jew in post-war America he is in a minority and he constantly feels that people dislike him or are even persecuting him because of his Jewishness. The situation is exacerbated by the arrival of Kirby Allbee, a figure from Leventhal's past who blames him for the loss of his job three years earlier.

The plot of the novel seems to be based on a novel by Dostoyevsky, *The Eternal Husband*, although Bellow says that the parallel, now obvious to him, did not occur to him at the time of writing. The theme of Dostoyevsky's novel is the dignity

of man. The protagonist, Alexey Velchaniov is unwell physically and both are burdened with guilt. Into the lives of each of these men comes a 'double'; someone they have hurt in the past and onto whom they can project their guilt. The 'doubles' prey on the guilt-ridden protagonists with a combination of love and hate. In each case there is an attempted murder, and the protagonist is healed. There are many further parallels, but what is actually important is the device of the 'double'. Allbee as Leventhal's 'double' is the anti-Semite Leventhal needs to justify his guilty feelings and sense of persecution, while Allbee needs to believe Leventhal to be to blame for his downfall so that he can blame the world for his troubles rather than himself. It is through their reciprocal blaming that they manage to escape from their afflictions. Leventhal says of Allbee that he was: "Haunted in his mind by wrongs or faults of his own which he turned into wrongs against himself."

But this is equally true of Leventhal himself; he is afraid that his boss, his brother's wife, his mother-in-law and even his friend Williston are all against him because he is a Jew, even though he is never attacked on these grounds and never persecuted at all.

When his nephew is sick, his paranoia is floated to the surface: If anything happens to the boy she [Boy's grandmother, who is not a Jew] would consider in the nature of judgment on the marriage. The marriage was impure to her. Yes, he understood how she felt about it. A Jew, a man of wrong blood, of bad blood, had given her daughter two children and that why this sickness was happening.

(54)

It should also be noted that Leventhal does not seem to be a particularly pious Jew, he does not attend synagogue nor does he observed the public holiday, which seems to make his paranoia even less well-founded.

Leventhal's propensity to feel that he is the victim of persecution for no discernible reason is evident in his first meeting with Allbee. He is prepared to punch him before a word has passed between them merely because he approached looking 'suspicious'. Jonathan Wilson, however, argues that Bellow seems to be of the opinion that Leventhal has reason for being paranoid as city violence was fairly common. This does not seem to be a particularly a viable argument as Allbee is initially only verbally abusive, but progresses because Leventhal allowed himself to be so greatly riled by Allbee's presence. This can be seen in the description of his unease at being in a restaurant with his nephew when Allbee is also there.

Leventhal, in speaking to Philip, or smoking, or smiling, was so conscious of Allbee, so certain he was being scrutinised, that he was able to see himself as if through a strange pair of eyes The acuteness and intimacy of it astounded him, oppressed and intoxicated him. Another example of the his general feeling of persecution and paranoia can be seen when Leventhal is musing upon the 'strange savage things' which go on around him. They hung near him all the time in trembling drops, invisible usually, or seen from a distance. But that did not mean that there was always to be a distance, or that sooner or later one or two of the drops might not fall on him.

Further examples of his paranoia are evident in the fact that he believes that Allbee can have him blacklisted, even though he has been told that this is not the case, he feels that subway doors deliberately close on him and trucks 'encircle' him, he



believes that his ten year old nephew bears a grudge against him and the idea that his wife might be being unfaithful to him is even put into his mind by Allbee.

Returning to the theme of Allbee as Leventhal's 'double' it can be seen that Leventhal often projects some of his feelings onto Allbee, often those of which he himself is unconscious. The most important instance of this is seen in his projection of his sexual impulses. Bellow writes that when Leventhal descends in an elevator 'amid a crowd of girls, from the commercial school upstairs' he is 'largely unconscious of the pleasure that he took in their smooth arms and smooth faces'. However when Allbee is in the same elevator with Leventhal and the same girls, Allbee comments upon them as Leventhal's double, it is his job to make manifest Leventhal's hidden feelings, particularly those which he does not even admit to himself. There is a further example of this when Leventhal returns to his flat to find Allbee in bed with a woman, whom he immediately thinks Mrs Nunez, a woman from whom, throughout the novel Leventhal has felt a certain sexual suggestiveness emanating. Here Allbee is living what Leventhal desires, (even though it turns out that the woman is not Mrs Nunez) and so alleviates some of his guilt.

By the end of the novel Leventhal is much more at ease with himself. Allbee has provided him with the means of justifying his paranoia and guilty feelings and so he now no longer feels that he is being blamed for everything, (after having begun to believe at one point that he really was to blame for Allbee's job loss), and is not so ready to blame others for his misfortunes. Bellow writes:

The consciousness of an unremitting daily fight, though still present, was fainter, less troubling . . . As time went on he lost the feeling that he had, as he used to say, 'got away with it', his guilty relief, and the accompanying sense of infringement. (67)

In the final chapter of the novel both men seem much more confident and at ease with themselves. Having had the opportunity to justify their feelings of guilt and persecution by projecting them onto each other, Leventhal and Allbee seem to have been able to overcome their respective feelings of paranoia and accept themselves.

Asa Leventhal, who may or may not be the victim in the short novel *The Victim*, is an editor on a small trade magazine in Manhattan. At work he has to endure the pricks of casual anti-Semitism. His wife, whom he loves dearly, is out of town. One day, on the street, Leventhal feels he is being watched. Perhaps, he fears being watched. He tries to conceal his identity.

“Who is this costumer?” Leventhal said to himself. An actor, if I ever saw one. My God, my God, what kind of big fish is this? On of those guys who want you to think they can see to the bottom of your soul . . . He tried to stare him down, only now realizing how insolent he was. But the man did not go. (22)

A man approaches him, greets him. Dimly he recalls the man's name: Allbee. Why is he late, asks Allbee? Does he not remember that they had a rendezvous? Leventhal can remember no such thing. Then why is he here? asks Allbee. Allbee now embarks on a tedious story from the past in which Allbee had fixed Leventhal up with an interview with his (Allbee's) boss, during which Leventhal had (on purpose, Allbee says) behaved insultingly, as a result of which Allbee lost his job. Leventhal dimly recalls the events but rejects the implication that the interview was part of a plot against Allbee. If he stormed out of the interview, he says, it was because Allbee's boss had no interest in hiring him. Nevertheless, says Allbee, he is now jobless and homeless. He has to sleep in flophouses. What is Leventhal going to do about it?

Thus commences Allbee's persecution of Leventhal—or so it feels to Leventhal. Doggedly Leventhal resists Allbee's claim that he has been wronged and is therefore owed. This resistance is presented entirely from the inside: there is no authorial word to tell us whose side to take, to say which of the two is the victim, which the persecutor. Nor do we receive guidance about moral responsibility. Is Leventhal prudently resisting being taken for a ride, or is he refusing to accept that we are each our brother's keeper? Why me?—that is Leventhal's sole cry. Why does this stranger blame me, hate me, seek redress from me? Leventhal claims his hands are clean, but his friends are not so sure. Why has he become mixed up with an unsavory character like Allbee? they ask. Is he sure about his motives? Leventhal recalls his first meeting with Allbee, at a party. A Jewish girl had sung a ballad, and Allbee had told her she should try a psalm instead. "If you're not born to them [American ballads], it's no use trying to sing them." Did he at that moment unconsciously decide to pay Allbee back for his anti-Semitism?

With a heavy heart, Leventhal offers Allbee shelter. Allbee's personal habits turn out to be squalid. He also pries into Leventhal's private papers. Leventhal loses his temper and assaults Allbee, but Allbee keeps bouncing back. Allbee preaches a lesson that (he says) Leventhal ought to be able to understand despite being a Jew, namely that we must repent and become new men. Leventhal doubts Allbee's sincerity and says so. You doubt me because you are a Jew, replies Allbee. But why me? demands Leventhal again. "Why?" replies Allbee. "For good reasons; the best in the world!... I'm giving you a chance to be fair, Leventhal, and to do what's right."

(44)

Arriving home one evening, Leventhal finds the door locked against him and Allbee in his, Leventhal's, bed with a prostitute. Leventhal's outrage amuses Allbee.

“Where else, if not in bed?... Maybe you have some other way, more refined, different? Don’t you people claim that you are the same as everybody else?” (46).

Who is Allbee? A madman? A prophet in deep disguise? A sadist who chooses his victims at random? Allbee has his own story. He is like the plains Indian, he says, who in the coming of the railroad sees the end of his old way of life. He has decided to join the new dispensation. Leventhal the Jew, member of the new master race, must find him a job on the railroad of the future. “I want to get off [my] pony and be a conductor on that train” (43).

With his wife about to return, Leventhal orders Allbee to find other accommodation. In the middle of the night he wakes up to find the apartment full of gas. His first thought is that Allbee is trying to kill him. But it appears that Allbee has been trying unsuccessfully to gas himself in the kitchen. Allbee disappears from Leventhal’s life. Years pass. By degrees Leventhal sheds the guilty feeling that he has “got away with it.” It was uncalled for, he reflects, for Allbee to envy him his good job, his happy marriage. Such envy rests on a false premise: that to each of us a promise has been made. No such promise was ever made, by God or by the state.

Then one evening he runs into Allbee at the theater. Allbee is squiring a faded actress; he smells of drink. I have found my place on the train, Allbee informs him, but not as conductor, merely as a passenger. I have come to terms with “whoever runs things.” “What’s your idea of who runs things?” (42) asks Leventhal. But Allbee has disappeared into the crowd.

Bellow’s Kirby Allbee is an inspired creation, comic, pathetic, repulsive, and menacing. Sometimes his anti-Semitism seems amiable in a bluff kind of way; sometimes he speaks as if he has been taken over by his own caricature of the Jew, who now lives inside him and speaks through his lips. You Jews are taking over the

world, he whines. There is nothing for us poor Americans to do but seek out a humble corner for ourselves. Why do you victimize us so? What harm have we ever done you?

There is also a patrician American twist to Allbee's anti-Semitism. "Do you know, one of my ancestors was Governor Winthrop," he says. "Isn't it preposterous? It's really as if the children of Caliban were running everything." Above all Allbee is shameless, id-like, and unclean. Even his moments of ingratiation are offensive. Let me touch your hair, he pleads with Leventhal—"It's like an animal's hair" (68).

Leventhal is a good husband, a good uncle, a good brother, a good worker in trying circumstances. He is enlightened; he is not a troublemaker. He wants to be part of mainstream American society. His father did not care what gentiles thought of him as long as they paid what they owed. "That was his father's view. But not his. He rejected and recoiled from it." He has a social conscience. He is aware of how easily, in America in particular, one can fall among "the lost, the outcast, the overcome, the effaced, the ruined." He is even a good neighbor—after all, none of Allbee's gentile friends is prepared to take him in. So what more can be demanded of him?

The answer is: everything. *The Victim* is Bellow's most Dostoevskian book. The plot is adapted from Dostoevsky's *The Eternal Husband*, the story of a man accosted out of the blue by the husband of a woman he had an affair with years ago, someone whose insinuations and demands become more and more insufferably intimate. But it is not just the plot that Bellow owes to Dostoevsky, and the motif of the detested double. The very spirit of *The Victim* is Dostoevskian. The supports for our neat, well-ordered lives can crumble at any minute; inhuman demands can without warning be made of us, and from the strangest quarters; it will be only natural to resist (Why me?); but if we want to be saved we have no choice, we must drop

everything and follow. Yet this essentially religious message is put in the mouth of a repulsive anti-Semite. Is it any wonder that Leventhal balks?

Leventhal's heart is not closed; his resistance is not complete. There is something in all of us, he recognizes, that fights against the sleep of the quotidian. In Allbee's company, at stray moments, he feels himself on the point of escaping the confines of his old identity and seeing the world through fresh eyes. Something seems to be occurring in the area of his heart, some kind of premonition, whether of a heart attack or something more exalted he cannot say. At one moment he looks at Allbee and Allbee looks back and they might as well be the same person. At another—rendered in Bellow's most masterfully understated prose—we are somehow convinced that Leventhal is teetering on the point of revelation. But then a great fatigue overtakes him. It is all too much.

Looking back over his career, Bellow has tended to disparage *The Victim*. If *Dangling Man* was his BA as a writer, he has said, *The Victim* was his Ph.D. "I was still learning, establishing my credentials, proving that a young man from Chicago had a right to claim the world's attention." He is too modest. *The Victim* is within inches of joining *Billy Budd* in the first rank of American novellas. If it has a weakness, it is a weakness not of execution but of ambition. He has not made Leventhal enough of an intellectual heavyweight to dispute adequately with Allbee (and with Dostoevsky behind him) the universality of the Christian model of the call to repentance.

### **Modern Man as Jew: Some Anti-Semitic Feelings and Events**

In most American fiction concerned with Jews in more than an incidental way, Jewishness has been looked on as constituting a kind of world, and Jews as people who inhabit this world. This Jewish world had a distinct and recognizable

geographical location—the East Side, the Bronx, Williamsburg, Coney Island, to name a few of the places—and spoke a distinct and recognizable idiom. Like Yiddish literature, it was a literature of idiom, and no small part of the achievement of such writers as Daniel Fuchs and Clifford Odets was their ability to re-create this Jewish world, to render its idiom. Compared to Kasrilevke, this world was not a very stable one, its Jewish quality not very pure; but stable or unstable, pure or impure, to be a Jew meant to inhabit it. Even in Delmore Schwartz's obsessive stories of childhood, where the Jewish quality has lost almost all its graces, being generalized into the gray horror of petty-bourgeois existence, and the Jewish idiom has lost all its vigor, lingering on as a faint, dispirited echo, Jewishness is seen as the constituent element of, if not a world, at least a milieu, a family.

This type of literature was written by Jews. Where Jews have been portrayed outside a Jewish world—here we have to reckon with Jewish and Gentile writers both—they have been viewed either as detached fragments of such a world; or as human beings who happen to be Jewish—that is, their Jewishness in some sense or another has been dissociated from their human essence and relegated to a secondary place or they have been reduced to represent some single thing or principle, good or bad. Saul Bellow's *The Victim* is, the first attempt in American literature to consider Jewishness not in its singularity, not as constitutive of a special world of experience, but as a quality that informs all of modern life, as the quality of modernity itself.

Everything that stamps Asa Leventhal, the hero of this novel, as a Jew, stamps him at the same time as a representative homo urbis. Take his speech, for example. Though there is little or nothing in it that is specifically Jewish, it has an indefinable Jewish quality. Though this is a Jew talking, we know at the same time that it is the general accent of the metropolis which we hear, the harsh, fragmentary, exhausted

language of the street, department store, subway, and apartment house. ““Wait a minute, what’s your idea of who runs things?”” said Leventhal.”But Leventhal is most a Jew, and most a man of the modern city, in the guilt and loneliness of his sense of having presumed on the world, of having “got away with it,” (98) as he expresses:

His relative good fortune as an editor of a *New York* trade magazine he enjoys uneasily, as somehow not his due. It is an act of presumption on his part, an “infringement,” narrowly to have escaped the ranks of “the lost, the outcast, the overcome, the effaced, and the ruined” (112) and to have established himself in the world. He possesses nothing with perfect certainty: neither his wife, who once loved another man; nor his brother, married to an Italian woman and now a workingman wearing the kind of clothes his father used to sell in his store; nor his job.

His feeling of having trespassed, of presuming, of not belonging, of not possessing, is plainly Jewish, of course—it is the psychology of the modern galut. But it is plainly something else too. It is an essential part of the sense of the city that is captured so well in this novel, it is the malaise of the megalopolis, it is the discomfiture and dispossession of everything human in face of the colossal indifference of modern metropolises. Not only are the Jews in galut.

Allbee, the decayed anti-Semite who suddenly emerges out of the feverish heat of a New York summer to challenge Leventhal, as if conjured up out of his own guilty feelings, though real enough, is also Leventhal’s alter ego. He charges Leventhal explicitly with what Leventhal has already charged himself with obscurely: that Leventhal is indeed guilty—of Allbee’s ruin, by having usurped a place in the world which a superior right would assign to Allbee; that their positions are inverted—the one belongs where the other is. Leventhal, self-convicted, his habitual anxious impassivity pierced, is unable properly to defend himself. Allbee gradually



violates—and so attempts to dispossess Leventhal of—the most intimate center of his personal security: first his apartment, which Allbee moves into and makes foul; next his wife's love letters; then, when Allbee brings in a woman from the street, his bed; finally Allbee turns on the gas and by his own attempted suicide attempts to deprive Leventhal even of his life.

The anti-Semite is both a materialization of the real threats that surround Leventhal, and a negative, extreme inversion of himself. The relationship of both to each other has a kind of lopsided symmetry and ingenious duality. If Allbee is a paranoiac, Leventhal is at least an extremely suspicious person; if Allbee, because he knows Leventhal is a Jew, presumes to know him absolutely, in a way that only God can know a person, Leventhal at least presumes to explain Allbee by his being a drunkard; if Allbee, though claiming to be Leventhal's victim, really victimizes Leventhal, Leventhal is at least in some degree responsible for Allbee's having lost his job. Insofar as Allbee is Leventhal's negative self, Leventhal is his own victim; insofar as Allbee exists independently, Leventhal is the victim of another. Threatened from within and from without—what is this if not the Jewish situation? if not the general situation? If Leventhal were not a Jew, were neutral, The Victim would be simply one of many bleak accounts of a modern life in the thin manner of American naturalism. The fact that he is a Jew gives the story its radical depth. What would otherwise tend to be a sociological description of one man's lot, now acquires a certain metaphysical quality, a quality of fate. For a Jew is inescapably and utterly committed to the present; there is no retreat; retreat would only lead him to the ghetto as Leventhal realizes, when he rejects his father's proud ghetto disdain of everything except the groschen of the world.

One of the reasons why Jews have figured so prominently as characters in modern literature is just this, their radical involvement in the modern world. This involvement has been seen invidiously by reactionary critics of modern society, for whom the omnipresent Jew is only the sign and symbol of the falling-off of contemporary life from some more splendid earlier state. But it has also been viewed under another aspect, as the human situation, as modern fate. *The Victim*, then, is concerned with one of the great themes of European literature. Knowing this, one feels the disparity between the largeness of its theme and the modest, narrow, bare, abrupt American genre of writing in which it is realized. But this is perhaps unfair to the author. He is not after all seeking to emulate European examples; he is writing an American novel, and the American accent is inevitably a modest one

It's impossible to please everyone. Hopefully, there isn't a soul on this earth that doesn't realize that, even if it takes them a while to do so. An obsession with appeasing people in life is one of the most vain and futile preoccupations that a person can have. For every individual, there is bound to be at least a handful of people that they will be despised by. It rarely takes very much either. We make judgments based upon someone's image, ideology, dietary preferences, habits, etc. Have you ever found yourself despising someone merely based on the way that they open a door?

The idea of vague ethical discourse seems to be lying beneath the more obvious moral of Saul Bellow's, *The Victim*. The protagonist, Asa Leventhal lives a modest existence working for a small paper in New York. In the midst of a brutally hot summer, while his wife is out of town, he is confronted by a man from his past whose life he had supposedly ruined. The man's name is Kirby Allbee, who had once arranged an interview with a prominent newspaper, and assertively accuses Leventhal of not only getting him fired from his job, but also his subsequent divorce, which was

also followed by his wife's death. What follows is a subplot involving a personal family tragedy for Leventhal while being pursued by Allbee who is seeking out some sort of moral reparation.

The problem is that even if the reader finds Albee's convictions solid, it's difficult to ignore how much of a loathsome character he is. Leventhal's faults are minor in comparison. Allbee is an anti-semitic, self-pitying, drunken asshole. There is very little to like about him. One wonders how Leventhal could possibly even consider the guilt that he should feel here. However, he has such a difficult time imagining how anyone, even Allbee could find him responsible for something as serious as the single-handed destruction of a life. Leventhal is obviously not to blame here, but he is a man that is easily lead into psychotically obsessive guilt. Allbee just takes advantage of this.

#### **IV. Paranoia as the Result of Victimization**

This research on Saul Bellow's *The Victim* mostly focuses on the main character, Asha Leventhal, and explores his social and psychological relation to the society and other people. Because of excessive social and historical pressures Leventhal becomes a paranoiac and almost loses his wit. This is partly because of his sense of guilt and partly because of his anti-Semite friend, Albee, who, Leventhal thinks, was fired by his boss because of Leventhal himself. This reading is carried through the perspective of Anti-Semitism and resulted that its social view that has affected Leventhal's psyche and has become a paranoiac.

In *The Victim*, the title character, Asha Leventhal is a Jew, settling in a post-War America with the feeling of paranoia that the society, his friends, and mostly Albee, his alter ego, is plotting something against him. In a cold, bleak and suffocating environment of New York he constantly feels that he is being looked into. People around him try to expose his Jewishness, they have been treating him unfairly—at least that is what he thinks—for he is Jew. On the greater context, Leventhal, being a Jew, carries the accuse of being a "Christ-killer," which is manifested implicitly, though, in his feeling and mostly Albee's accuse that he is responsible for Albee's having lost his job. Putting differently, Leventhal carries the historical guilt syndrome thinly veiled in Albee's accuse.

Leventhal is a victim of anti-Semitism. Being a Jew, carrying the historical burden, living with a feeling of guilt, totally alone—having been left by his wife for a month—and constantly being encroached by his own friend Albee, Leventhal is smitten by the society and by his own consciousness in post-War America. His identity is perpetually scrutinized, his weaknesses are poked at and exposed and he is

rendered dysfunctional to handle the situation sanely and falls prey to the anti-Semites. His difficult situation is the outcome of the injustice and discriminatory society especially against Jewish. In a sense he is the victim of the time and atrocious social situation that he encountered.

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