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Traumatic Experience in Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*

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This thesis entitled "Traumatic Experience in Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Ravi Prasad Bhattarai has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

The present research explores the tormented state of the protagonist, Mr. Sammler in Saul Bellow's *Mr Sammler's Planet* published in 1970. As a survivor of the Holocaust, Mr. Sammler goes through a severe sense of traumatic experience throughout his life because of his direct personal experiences of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis during the Second World War. The scenes of death camp constantly rise to the surface of his mind and make him alienated because they become the chief determinant of his life.

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Chapter I

Life and Works of Saul Bellow: An Introduction

The present research focuses on Saul Bellow's sixth novel, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970) in order to study traumatic experience of the holocaust survivor, Mr. Sammler who undergoes trauma throughout his life because of his direct personal experience of the holocaust atrocities in the Nazi Concentration Camp during the Second World War.

The study examines how history haunts and traumatizes the protagonist, Mr. Sammler who becomes the saddest man because of his direct personal experience of the Holocaust experiences in a Nazi Concentration Camp. A survivor of the Holocaust, haunted by memories of his literal escape from the grave and of the murder he committed to save himself, Sammler leads a disturbed life in the New York City. The novel moves from the moral discovery of common humanity in the post-war story to the tale of spiritual discovery and transcendental adventure.

The central intent of *Mr. Sammler's Planet* is an examination and denunciation of the Holocaust. The novel deals with the psycho-social catastrophe of the Holocaust. *Mr. Sammler's Planet* unwind along taut rope stretched between the conquest of space and the nightmare of the Concentration Camp. While America sets out on its great journey to the Moon pushing forward the frontiers of the continent, the protagonist Mr. Sammler suffers from the experience of the Holocaust which exercises a powerful, inescapable hold over his consciousness. He is a survivor of the death camp, a modern day Lazarus, somnambulist in the night of oblivion.

Bellow's novels are characterized by the “Bellow hero” – a term referring to the typical Bellow protagonist, a Jewish, male, intellectual urbanite who is struggling to find meaning in a materialistic and chaotic world. Among the most famous characters of his fiction are Augie March, Moses E. Herzog, and Charlie Citrine – a superb gallery of self-doubting, funny, charming, disillusioned, neurotic, and intelligent observers of the modern American way of life. While associating himself with his characters he says:

I am an American, Chicago born—Chicago, that somber city
 – and go at things as I have taught myself, free style, and will
 make the record in my own way: first to knock, first
 admitted; sometimes an innocent knock, sometimes a not so
 innocent. (*The Adventures of Augie March* 19)

Saul Bellow was born Solomon Bellows in Lachine, Quebec, a suburb of Montreal. His original birth certificate was lost when Lachine's city hall burned down in the 1920s, but Bellow customarily celebrated his birth date on June 10. Bellow's parents had emigrated in 1913 from Russia to Canada. In St. Petersburg Bellow's father, Abraham (Abram) had imported Turkish figs and Egyptian onions.

Bellow was raised until the age of nine in an impoverished, polyglot section of Montreal, full of Russians, Poles, Ukrainians, Greeks, and Italians. After his father was beaten – he was also a bootlegger – the family moved to Chicago in 1924. Although Bellow is not considered an autobiographical writer, his Canadian birth is dealt with in his first novel,

Dangling Man (1944), and his Jewish heritage and his several divorces are shared by many of his characters.

Bellow's works influenced widely American literature after World War II. While serving with the Merchant Marine, Bellow wrote *Dangling Man*, which depicted the intellectual and spiritual vacillations of a young man waiting to be drafted. The novel was loosely based on Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* (1864). It was followed by *The Victim* (1947), a paranoid story of a doppelganger, set against the realistic background of New York City. However, Chicago became the town that is usually connected to Bellow's books. "The people of Chicago are very proud of their wickedness. This is good old vulgar politics, despite the pretensions." (Bellow in *The New York Times*, July 6, 1980) In *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953) Bellow let himself loose and abandoned some of the formal restrictions he had followed in his earlier books. He started to write the book in Paris, and continued it in other places, but "not a single word of the book was composed in Chicago," he later said.

The rich picaresque novel recounts the seemingly unconnected experiences of its hero in his quest for self-understanding. Augie March, the protagonist, is born into an immigrant Jewish family in Chicago before the Depression. His mother is poor and nearly blind. George, his younger brother, is retarded, and his elder brother, Simon, wants to become rich as soon as possible. Each of them is 'drafted untimely into hardships'. Augie proceeds through a variety of dubious jobs and adventures. His employers

include the real estate dealer named Einhorn and Mrs. Renling, owner of a smart men's store, and other colorful, energetic characters, obsessed with sex, making money or both. Augie loves women and observes each portion of the female anatomy closely. On his mystical quest to discover 'the lesson and theory of power,' Augie finds everywhere lies, and asks why he always has to fall among theoreticians. The novel is a hymn to city life; it avoids sentimentality, and ends in Augie's healthy laugh.

At the beginning of his career, Bellow was influenced by Trotskyism and the Partisan Review group of intellectuals. He rejected Ernest Hemingway's 'tough guy' model of American fiction, and became engaged with a wide range of cultural fields and tradition - Nietzsche, Oedipal conflicts, popular culture, and Russian-Jewish heritage. Already from the first published stories Bellow examined the relation of author-character-narrator. Books narrated in the first person often have been mistaken for representing Bellow's own thoughts. "No writer can take it for granted that the views of his characters will not be attributed to him personally," he once said. "It is generally assumed, moreover, that all the events and ideas of a novel are based on the life experiences and the opinions of the novelist himself" (qtd. in Simic 15). In the play *The Last Analysis* (1965) Bellow attacked naive Freudianism, *The Dean's December*, *More Die of Heartbreak*, and *A Theft* deepened his engagement with the writings of Jung, *Seize the Day* used motifs from social anthropology. With *The Adventures of Augie March* Bellow changed his style, and made his homage to Mark Twain. *Herzog* (1964), Bellow's

major novel from the 1960s, centers on a middle-aged Jewish intellectual, Moses E. Herzog, whose life had come to a standstill. He is on the brink of suicide, he writes long letters to Nietzsche, Heidegger, ex-wife Madeleine, Adlai Stevenson, and God. As Augie March, Moses Herzog is introspective and troubled, but he finally also finds that he has much reason to be content with his life. After pouring all Herzog's thoughts into letters Bellow notes in the last words of the book. At this time he had no messages for anyone. Not a single word. The British writer Ian McEwan considers *Herzog* the most important post-war American novel:

Bellow, too, is convinced that to have a conscience is, after a certain age, to live permanently in an epistemological hell. The reason his and Dostoevsky's heroes are incapable of ever arriving at any closure is that they love their own suffering above everything else. They refuse to exchange their inner torment for the peace of mind that comes with bourgeois propriety or some kind of religious belief. In fact, they see their suffering as perhaps the last outpost of the heroic in our day and age. (qtd. in Simic 13)

From 1960 to 1962 Bellow co-edited the literary magazine *The Noble Savage*, and in 1962 he was appointed professor on the Committee of Social Thought at University of Chicago. In 1975 Bellow visited Israel and recorded his impressions in his first substantial non-fiction book, *To Jerusalem and Back* (1975). Bellow's disenchantment with the liberal establishment reflected in his novel *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), where

Arthur Samler, an elderly Polish Jew and survivor of the Holocaust, views with his only intact eye the world of black pickpockets, student revolutionaries and the ill-mannered younger generation. An acute observer of the signs of the times, Bellow wrote later in *Ravelstein* (2000): "Odd that mankind's benefactors should be amusing people. In America least this is often the case. Anyone who wants to govern the country has to entertain it" (qtd. in Bradbury 76).

Humboldt's Gift (1975), which won the Pulitzer Prize, was narrated in the first person. The protagonist, Charlie Citrine, is a writer, rich and successful. But in his heart he knows that he is a failure – he is under the thumb of a small-time Chicago gangster, ruined by a divorce and finally abandoned by his mistress. He admires his dead friend, Von Humboldt Fleischer, modeled on the poet Delmore Schwartz (1913-1966). Humboldt, a talent wasted, represents for him all that is important in culture. Citrine continues the series of Bellow's losers, from Herzog to Sammler, but like his other novels, it is not gloomy, and finds a comic side even in its protagonist's tragedy.

Bellow's life-long sense of the inadequacy of Enlightenment principles and categories is a means of interpreting modern experience. In his mind past always lingers making his characters alienated and tragic. They carry within themselves a pang of past which makes them dejected.

Mr. Sammler's Planet has often been identified as Bellow's most pessimistic novel. Mr. Sammler, an elderly man, has experienced the promises and horrors of twentieth-century life. He offers an extensive

critique of modern values and speculates on the future after observing a pickpocket on a bus. Although many critics disagreed whether Mr. Sammler succeeds as a perceptive commentator who ruminates on contemporary existence, Bellow's portrayal of this character has generally been commended.

In Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, Mr. Sammler lives his remaining life with heavy burden of the past. Holocaust survivor, and keen observer of people, Mr. Sammler incisively comments on civilization, the human condition and contemporary culture as he trudges through New York City. In the novel, the bruised condition of Sammler invites pity as he is suffering from traumatic experience of the past.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents a brief introductory outline of the work. In addition, it gives a bird's eye view of the entire work.

The second chapter tries to briefly explain the theoretical modality that is applied in this research work. It discusses trauma theory, its type, and Freud's concept of traumatic survivals, as described in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

On the basis of the theoretical framework established in the second chapter, the third chapter analyzes the text at a considerable length. It analyzes the activities of the major character, Mr. Sammler. It sorts out some extracts from the text as evidence to prove the hypothesis of the study – how war memories traumatize Mr. Sammler. And, the fourth chapter is the conclusion of this research work.

Chapter II

A Study of Traumatic Survivals

Trauma: Theory and Problem

Trauma theory as a privileged critical category raises questions about the nature and representation of traumatic events arising from the diverse fields such as psychology, philosophy, ethics and aesthetics. These concerns of trauma theory "range from the public and historical to the private and memorial" (Luckhurst 497). Freudian psychoanalysis provided a model of traumatic subjectivity and various accounts about the effect of trauma and memory. Feminism generated not only the crucial political context but also a model of community for speaking out about forms of physical and sexual abuse that have been borrowed by subsequent 'survivor' groups. New historicism, fascinated by repression of historical narrative has developed a mode of countervailing recovery of what has been silenced or lost in traditional literary histories.

The problem of trauma is not simply a problem of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival. It is only in recognizing traumatic experience as a paradoxical relation between destructiveness and survival that we can also recognize the legacy of incomprehensibility at the heart of catastrophic experience.

In recent years psychiatry has shown an increasing insistence on the direct effects of external violence in psychic disorder. This trend has culminated in the study of "post-traumatic stress disorder," which describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events, in

which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled respective occurrence of hallucinations, flashbacks and other intrusive phenomena. As it is generally understood today, traumatic disorders reflect the direct imposition on the mind of the unavoidable reality of horrific events, the taking-over – psychically and neurobiologically – of the mind by an event that it cannot control. As such it is understood as the most real, and also most destructive psychic experience.

The trauma theory has aroused a vivid interest among the cultural and literary theorists. The person behind why trauma theory has begun to drag the attention of theorist pushes us to look at popular culture and mass media obsessed by repetitions of violent disaster. James Berger says it has become popular because of:

the successions of Die Hards, Terminators, and Robocops, as well as Nightmares on Elm street, disease and epidemic films, and now the return of the "classic" disaster films and of twisters and turbulence and the repeated sequence of miniapocalypses within each films; at "real life" cop shows; and at the news itself, that never exhausted source of pure horror. (571)

Thus, these days there are horror-inspiring representation of violence and disaster in books, films and TV serials which have interested the critics who have felt the need to study trauma theory because these events leave a great mental shock in readers and viewers.

Trauma theory is a discourse of the unrepresentable, of the event or objects that "destabilizes language and demands a vocabulary and syntax in some sense incommensurable with what went before" (573). In troubling ways, these discourses often blur into each other, creating a traumatic-sacred-sublime alterity in which historical complexity and historical pain are effaced or redeemed.

The word "trauma" refers to the action shown by the abnormal mind to the body. Trauma becomes problematic when it is reflected in the repetitive action. Trauma shows the direct reaction in abnormal phenomena. The abnormality is mostly psychic but is manifested in the physicality which becomes more uncommon and stressful. The stress to the mind occurs due to various causes.

Trauma is a medical term of Greek origin denoting a severe wound or injury and the resulting aftereffects. A grave injury to the head, for instance, might induce delirium or even a gradual enfeeblement of the victim. The devastating shock of an automobile accident has been known to cause the onset of diabetes or heart disorders in a person who has a latent weakness.

Relating to the Medic, *The American Heritage College Dictionary* defines trauma as "a serious injury or shock to the body, as from violence or an accident," and relating to *psychiat* the dictionary defines trauma as "an emotional wound or shock that creates substantial lasting damage to the psychological development of a person" (1439). Trauma may be in the form of natural and technological disasters, war, or individual trauma

Emotional trauma occurs when "the psychological pain of a traumatic event involve damage or threat of damage to an individual's psychic integrity or sense of self" (Carlson 29). Various stress-related disorders may result from the trauma experience, e. g. PTSD, depression, phobia attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, anxiety disorder, somatization disorder, attachment disorder, and conduct disorder, dissociative reactions, eating disturbances, and substance abuse (Pynoos 96). Trauma effects may also be evidenced as: "multiple personalities, paranoia, anger, and sleep problems; tendencies towards suicidality, irritability, mood swings, and odd rituals; difficulty trusting people and difficult relationships; and general despair, aimlessness, and hopelessness" (Root 229).

Trauma theory, which focus on acting out or working through trauma has its own issue and it cannot be explained with in its limited territory for it is interconnected "with specific ethical and socio- cultural tension" (Hartman 257). This arises from an awareness of persistence of violence in a culture that no longer condones the marital virtues of war. After Nazism, and totalitarianism generally, yearning for the arts of peace has never been greater. But, continuous ethnic conflict, genocidal episodes, and irrational and bloody event, reported as the main staple of the news, set up an intolerable contrast between the yearning and intractable. As a matter of fact, the trans-historical awareness of the incidence of trauma-personals should make us realize the extent of human suffering.

Mind-body research has opened up many new vistas in the study of trauma – among which are psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) and concept of cellular memory. Relative to trauma research, PNI and cellular memory help to explain the somatization of trauma. C. B. Pert writes that

memories are stored not only in the brain, but in a psychosomatic network extending into the body, particularly in the ubiquitous receptors between nerves and bundles of cell bodies called ganglia, which are distributed not just in and near the spinal cord, but all the way out along pathways to internal organs and the very surface of our skin. (143)

This shows that memories whether they are sweet or traumatic not only stay in the brain but also in other parts of body, which causes somatic disorder.

Katherine J. Conger asserts that traumatic events are recorded in "contracted musculature and energetically withdrawn tissue" (xvi). Eckberg describes traumatic events as being "laid down as perceptual, somatosensory experience or as implicit memory" (23). Through somatic therapy, the traumatic experience can be reorganized emotionally, neurophysiologically and cognitively. Aldwin writes: "Stress refers to that quality of experience, product through a person- environment transaction that through either over arousal or underarousal, results in psychological or physiological distress" (22). Root expresses the qualitative difference between stress and trauma:

Negative stressors by which we come to know self, others, and the environment, traumas leave an individual feeling 'put out,' inconvenienced, and distressed. These experiences are eventually relieved with the resolution of the stressor. In contrast, traumas represent destruction of basic organizing principles by which we come to know self, others, and the environment; traumas wound deeply in a way that challenges the meaning of life. Healing from the wounds of such an experience requires a restitution of order and meaning in one's life. (229)

Thus, trauma leaves a catastrophic effect in the victim, and the recovery from this requires a holistic and meaningful – emotional and physical development of a person.

Thus, trauma brings the aftereffects of the emotional upheavals. The types of the trauma are different. Mental trauma is described as the neurosis as a disorder. Freud describes it as a disorder which has its roots in some experience long since consciously forgotten and repressed, and which later on manifests itself in nightmares, overwhelming anxieties, and motor disturbances. Therefore physical and the psychological disturbances, arising from the unconscious remaining aftereffects of trauma upset the patient (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 19).

The physical trauma is taken as the response to the physical injury which depends on the degree and the suddenness of the injury and the previous physical condition of the victim. Physical trauma is related more

to physical hurts and damages which affect vital organs leading to the serious condition of the patients. Though the body reacts against the physical stress, these defenses are believed usually to increase the tissues' functional resistance to damaging stress, but they may overreact to trauma and cause early physical exhaustion. The physical trauma is *medic* that is serious injury or shock to the body, as from violence or an accident.

Trauma theoretically is a real psychological disorder. Trauma comes with the individual feeling and subjective assessment of victims of how threatened and helpless they feel. The extra-ordinary events closely affect the victims and they come fundamentally as the trauma itself.

Judy Kelly views the *psychiat* type of trauma as the emotional wound which hampers the psychological development of a person. He writes: "An emotional wound or shock that creates substantial lasting damage to the psychological development of a person. The emotional trauma occurs when the psychological pain of traumatic events involves damage or threat of damage to an individual's psychic integrity or sense of self" (1).

Various stress-related disorders may result from the trauma experience such as attachment disorders, conduct disorder, and dissociate reactions, eating disturbers. Trauma effects may also be evidenced as multiple personalities, paranoia, anger, and sleep problem, and difficulty trusting people and difficult relationships. Trauma theory has opened up many new vistas in the study of mind-body relation. Trauma is concerned with psychosomatic network extending into the body. Traumatic events are

laid down as perceptual, somatic-sensory experience, or as implicit memory.

Dominick LaCapra in *Representing the Holocaust, Theory and Trauma* talks about two related Goals: to intervene in some of the recent public controversies regarding holocaust representation and to elaborate a theory of historical trauma and its transmission. His contribution to the trauma theory and its cultural transmission is extraordinarily lucid and insightful. A traumatic historical event, as LaCapra argues, "tends to be repressed and then to return in forms of compulsive repetition" (574). He is concerned primarily with the return in the form of compulsive as discourse, rather than with physical returns such as the genocidal repetitions in Cambodia and Bosnia.

LaCapra wants to create a position that avoids both redemptive and sublime acting out. This acting out refers to the part the victim plays in real disastrous situation. He sets out to describe a work through trauma that does not deny the "irreducibility" of loss or the role of "paradox" (Berger 575) and aporia but avoids becoming compulsively fixated. The second work through trauma deals with how the victim endeavors to cope with past traumatic event which now haunts him. LaCapra describes two important implications of his view regarding the historical trauma. First, trauma provides a method of rethinking post-modern and post-structuralist theories with the historical context. LaCapra says, "The postmodern and the post-Holocaust become mutually intertwined issues that are best addressed in relation to other" (qtd. in Berger 576). This relation would

include a new traumatic understanding of what he calls 'the near fixation of the sublime or the almost obsessive preoccupation with loss, aporia, dispassion and deferred meaning,' (576).

Secondly, LaCarpra provides historical text over the literary canon, suggesting that a canonical text should not help permanently install an ideological order but should rather "help one to foreground ideological problems and work through them critically" (576). Each text would be, in effect a site of trauma with which the reader would have to engage. But LaCapra dares not examine the relations between historical trauma and any literary text although literature can be the site of acting out or working through.

Similarly, Cathy Caruth's essay "The Wound and the Voice" opens new ground on a problematic explored by Geoffery Hartman, Elaine Scamy, and Slavoj Zizek in the relation between pain and language, narrative, historical and ethnic dimensions Caruth argues that trauma as it first occurs is incomprehensible. It is only later, after a period of latency that it can be placed in a narrative: "the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located" (Berger 575). Traumatic narrative, then, is strongly referential, but not in any simple or direct way. And the construction of a history develops from this delayed response to trauma, which helps "history to arise where immediate understanding may not" (Berger 578).

Cathy Caruth in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, is concerned principally with questions of

reference and representation: how trauma becomes text, or how wound becomes voice. Caruth sketches a theory of trauma as instigator of historical narrative which describes the intersections of traumatic narrative. Caruth argues that trauma as it first occurs is incomprehensible. Traumatic narrative, then, is strongly referential, but not in any simple or direct way. Berger cites Caruth to claim that the historical narrative arises from traumatic repetition. Caruth argues that "the historical narrative arises from such intersections of traumatic repetitions, that history, like trauma, is never simply one's own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (5).

Caruth presents de Manian reference as a literary symptom, an unconscious, inevitable imprint of events all texts exhibit in the form of verbal ticks, or tropes; and she quite effectively reinterprets de Man's blindness and insight model in terms of traumatic impact and later inscription.

The impact of major traumatic events is never identical to any two people and trauma manifests where political and psychological forces fuse. On this point Deborah M. Horvitz citing Cathy Caruth, states:

If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is, indeed at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect with the language of literature and the

psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet.

(5)

Kali Tal, in *World of Hurt: Reading the literatures of Trauma*, takes an approach entirely different from those of LaCapra and Caruth: Tal is hostile to psychoanalysis and bases her views of trauma on cognitive psychology and of feminist politics that identifies strongly with the testimonies of rape and incest survivors. Tal's main discussions deal with recent critical approaches to the testimonies of Holocaust survivors, literature produced by American Veterans of the Vietnam War and testimonies of women survivors of incest and child abuse. Tal's chief concern is the social appropriations of individual testimonies. Differing quite emphatically from psychologically oriented writers like Caruth and Lacapra, Tal argues that the literature of trauma consists only of the writings of victims and survivors of trauma (Berger 576).

Berger defines Tal's view on literature of trauma as identity of author in relation with traumatic experience where he writes, "Literature of trauma is defined by the identity of its author. The works of the critic of the literature of trauma is both to identify and explicate literature by members of survivor groups and to deconstruct the process by which the dominant culture codifies their traumatic experience" (6).

Tal emphasizes on the individual survivor's account of trauma and her opposition to all interpretive "appropriations" that prevent her from seeing trauma in broader social and historical forms. Tal has no sense of traumatic return of the repressed, of widespread cultural symptoms and

fetishes, and of the role of trauma in ideology. Her political diagnosis seems simplistic: essentially that men are symptomatically inquiring and dominating women, and women should rise up and stop them.

Kali Tal defines trauma as a life threatening event that displaces one's preconceived notions about the world; Tal stresses that the event must be experienced first-hand, and not vicariously perceived as mediated through any textual conduct. In other words trauma is known as threat to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death.

Certainly, the effect of trauma is profound. Trauma brings changes to the individual and s/he reorganizes the experiences for the integration.

Kelly cites Root as saying:

Trauma permanently changes a person. It contrasts to its stressful experience, which challenges an individual's capacity to cope, trauma destroys multiple dimensions of security and exceeds the limits of human capacity to process and integrate horrible experiences into a coherent perception of self and self- in- relationship to other and the world. The disorganization created by this upheaval motivates the individual to attempt to find meaning in the experience so that she or he can reorganize the experience and integrate it into her or his perception of self, and self in relationship to others and the world. (3)

According to Kelly, there has been surprisingly little research conducted in the area of 'birthmother' trauma. That relinquishing of a child in a traumatic experience is alluded to over and over again throughout the literature; unresolved grief, guilt, and shame are signatory of many 'birthmothers.' Unresolved grief has been cited as a major component of the relinquishment experience. Some of the social and psychological factors were identified as contributing to unresolved grief among birthmothers. The factors are described as absence of social recognition regarding the loss, perceived absence of social support from family and friends and perception of coercion by family, friends or professionals relinquish the child, to the same extent, trauma may be the product of sadomasochism. Sadism is a psychological mechanism in which the sadist events gratify unconscious erotic fantasies by inflicting pain and violence. Masochism sometimes mistakenly understood to mean the enjoyment of pain, is, in fact, a complex psychodynamic in which powerlessness becomes eroticized, there entrenched within the victim's self-identity. (*Unclaimed Experience* 12)

Certainly psychoanalysis believes that crucial to recovering from an experience of trauma is the capacity and willingness to incorporate that traumatic event inside one's self as an indispensable piece of personal history and identity. The research on psychic trauma, which has been historically entwined with psychoanalytic theory, has increased in the past decade. Trauma may cause the psychological damages and such victims can be reached by psychoanalysis.

Sigmund Freud finds the dynamic of trauma, repression, and symptom formation as the matter of hysteria. The overpowering event is revealed in the form of somatic symptom or compulsive, repetitive behavior. Studying the trauma theory related with Freud, James Berger reads that the neurotic symptoms are related with the repressed drives. He comments, ". . . initial theory of trauma and symptom becomes problematic for Freud when he concluded that neurotic symptoms were often the result of repressed drives and desires than of traumatic events" (1). The traumatic event and its aftermath again become central to psychoanalysis. Further, the theory of trauma for Freud becomes the account for the historical development of entire culture. And he develops the elaboration of the concept of 'latency.' Berger defines the term as "a memory of traumatic events which can be lost over time but then regained in a symptomatic form when triggered by some similar events" (3).

All Freud's views on trauma manifest the ambivalence regarding the significance of the historical event. Regarding this late twentieth century time, the world is indeed defined by historical catastrophe. The different types and sizes of war have led the turmoil of all kinds. The events and the usual representation of these events have in large part shaped contemporary modes of viewing the world. The world develops according to the upcoming challenges and the changes. The trauma, based upon Freudian interpretation of mind, is somehow developed by the inner psyche of mankind. The result of trauma has become a tool of literary and cultural analysis. According to Freud, the trauma analysis pays the closest

attention to the representational means through which an event is remembered and yet retains the importance of the event itself, the thing that did not happen.

Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* indeed opens with his perplexed observation of a psychic disorder that appears to reflect the unavoidable and overwhelming imposition of violent events on the psyche. Faced with the striking occurrence of what were called the war neuroses in the wake of World War I Freud is started by the emergence of pathological condition, the repetitive experience of nightmares, and reliving of battlefield events – that is experienced like a neurotic pathology and yet whose symptoms reflect, in startling directness and simplicity, nothing but the unmediated occurrence of violent events. Freud thus compares it to the symptoms of another long-problematic phenomenon, the accident neurosis. The reliving of the battle can be compared, he says, to the nightmare of an accident:

Dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright. This astonished people far too little . . . Anyone who accepts it as something self-evident that dreams should put them back at night into the situation that caused them to fall ill has misunderstood the nature of dreams.

(Freud13)

The returning traumatic dream perplexes Freud because it cannot be understood in terms of any wish or unconscious meaning, but is, purely and inexplicably, the literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits. Unlike the symptoms of a normal neurosis, whose painful manifestations can be understood ultimately in terms of the attempted avoidance of unpleasurable conflict, the painful repletion of the flashback can only be understood as the absolute inability to avoid an unpleasurable event that has not been given psychic meaning in any way. In trauma, this is the outside gone inside without any mediation. Taking this literal return of the past as a model for repetitive behavior in general, Freud ultimately argues, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, that "it is traumatic repetition, rather than the meaningful distortions of neurosis, that defines the shape of individual lives" (17). Starting from the accident neurosis to explain the nature of individual histories, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* can thus be said to ask what it would mean for history to be understood as the history of trauma.

Freud's comparison of the war experience to that of the accident introduces another element which adds to the significance of this question. For it is not just any event that creates a traumatic neurosis, Freud indicates, but specially "severe mechanical concussions, railway disasters and other accidents involving a risk to life" (18). What Freud encounters in the traumatic neurosis is not the reaction to any horrible event but, rather, the peculiar, and perplexing experience of survival. If the dermas and flashbacks of the traumatized thus engage Freud's interest it is because

they bear witness to a survival that exceeds the very claims and consciousness of the one who endures it.

The intricate relation between trauma and survival indeed arises not, as one might expect, because of a seemingly direct and unmediated relation between consciousness and life-threatening events, but rather through the very paradoxical structure of indirectness in physical trauma. Indeed, Freud begins his discussion of trauma by noting the "bewildering" fact that psychological trauma occurs not in strict correspondence to the body's experience of life-threat – through the wounding of the body. Freud notes that a bodily injury "works as a role against development of a neurosis" (18). Indeed, survival for consciousness does not seem to be a matter of known experience at all. For if the return of the traumatizing event appears in many respects like a waking memory, it can nonetheless only occur in the mode of a symptom or a dream. Thus if a life-threat to the body is experienced as the direct infliction and the healing of the wound, trauma is suffered in the psyche precisely because it is not directly available to experience. The problem of survival, in trauma, thus emerges specifically a question: what does it mean for consciousness to survive?

Freud's speculations on the causes of repetitive compulsion in relation to the origins of consciousness can indeed be understood as attempting to grasp the paradoxical relation between survival and consciousness. Freud suggests that the development of the mind seems, at first, to be very much like the development of the body consciousness that arises out of the need to protect "the little fragment of substance

suspended in the middle of an external world," which "would be killed by the stimulation emanating from these if it were not provided with a protective shield against stimuli" (27). Unlike the body, however, which protects the organism by means of a spatial boundary between inside and outside, the barrier of consciousness is a barrier of sensation and knowledge that protects by placing stimulation within an ordered experience of time. What causes trauma, then, is a shock that appears to work very much like a threat to the body's spatial integrity, but is in fact a break in the mind's experience of time:

We may, I think, tentatively venture to regard the common traumatic neurosis as an extensive breach being made in the protective shield against stimuli. This would seem to reinstate the old naive theory of shock . . . [It] regards the essence of the molecular structure . . . of the nervous system, whereas what we seek to understand are the effects produced on the organ of the mind. It is caused by lack of any preparedness for anxiety. (31)

The breach in the mind – the awareness of the threat to life - is not caused by pure quantitative amount of stimulus breaking through the body, Freud suggest, but precisely by "fright," the lack of preparedness to take in a stimulus that comes too quickly. It is not, simply the literal threatening of bodily life, but the fact that the threat is recognized as such by the mind one moment too late. The shock of the mind's relation to the threat of death is thus not the direct experience of the threat, but precisely the

missing of this experience, the fact that, not yet been fully known. And it is this lack or direct experience in time, which has not yet been fully known. And it is this lack or direct experience that, paradoxically, becomes the basis of the repetition of the nightmare: "These dreams are endeavoring to master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis" (18, 32).

The return of the traumatic experience in the dream is not the signal of the direct experience but, precisely, of the attempt to overcome the fact that it was not direct, to attempt to master what was never fully grasped in the first place. Not having truly known the threat of death in the past, the survivor is forced, continually, to confront it over and over again. For consciousness then, the act of survival, as the experience of trauma is the repeated confrontation with the necessity and impossibility of grasping the threat to one's own life. It is because the mind cannot control the possibility of its death directly that survival becomes for the human beings, paradoxically, an endless testimony to the impossibility of living.

From this perspective, the survival of trauma is more than the fortunate passage past a violent event, a passage that is accidentally interrupted by reminders of it, but the endless inherent necessity of repetition which ultimately may lead to destruction. The postulation of a drive to death, which Freud ultimately introduces in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, would seem only to realize the reality of the destructive force that the violence of history imposes on the human psyche, the formation of history as the endless repetition of previous violence.

If we attend closely, however, to Freud's description of the traumatic nightmare of the accident, we find a somewhat more complex notion of what is missed, and repeated, in the trauma. In the description of the accident dream, indeed, Freud does not simply attribute the traumatic fright to the dream itself, but to what happens upon waking up: "Dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of reputedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright" (Freud 27).

If "fright" is the term by which Freud defines the traumatic effect of not having been prepared in time, then the trauma of the nightmare does not simply consist in the experience within the dream, but in the experience of waking from it. It is the experience of walking into consciousness which is peculiarly identified with the reliving of the trauma. And as such it is not only the dreams that surprise: the fact not only of the dream but of having passed beyond it. What is enigmatically suggested is that the trauma consists not only in having confronted death, but in having survived, precisely, without knowing it? What one returns to, in the flashback, is not the incomprehensibility of the event of one's near death, but the very incomprehensibility of one's own survival. Repetition, in other words, is not the attempt to grasp that one died, but more fundamentally and enigmatically, the very attempt to claim one's own survival. If history is to be understood as the history of trauma, it is a history that is experienced as the endless attempt to assume one's survival as one's own.

It is this incomprehensibility of survival that is at the heart of Freud's formulation of the death drive. Freud compares the beginning of the history of the organism in the drive as the response to an awakening not unlike that of the nightmare:

The attributes of life were at some time awoken in inanimate matter by the action of a force of whose nature we can form no conception . . . The tension which then arose in what had hitherto been an inanimate substance endeavored to cancel itself out. In this way the first drive came into being; the drive to return to the inanimate state. (38)

At the beginning of the drive, Freud suggests, is not the traumatic imposition of death, but rather the traumatic "awakening to life" (35). Life itself, Freud suggests, is an awakening out of death for which there was no preparation. The origin of the drive is thus precisely the experience of having passed beyond death without knowing it. And it is in the attempt to master this awakening to life that the drive ultimately defines its historical structure: failing to return to the moment of its own act of living, the drive precisely departs into the future of a human history.

Hence, the following chapter will analyze trauma from the perspective of the survivors' traumatic experience of the Holocaust atrocities at the Nazi German death Camp during the Second World War. So, it is the war trauma of the traumatized survivor, Mr. Sammler in Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* that this present research work seeks to explore.

Chapter III

Traumatic Experience in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*

This chapter deals with war trauma which describes an overwhelming re-experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the events occur in the often delayed and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. The experience of the Holocaust survivor faced with sudden and massive death around him who suffers this sight in a numbed state, only to relieve it later on in repeated nightmares, is a central and recurring image of trauma.

Traumatic experiences leave long lasting effects on the victim. People who go through traumatic experiences often have certain symptoms and problems afterward. How severe these symptoms are depends on the person, the type of trauma involved, and the emotional support they receive from others. Reactions to and symptoms of trauma can be wide and varied, and differ in severity from person to person. Age factor also determines it. The victim of traumatic experience in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* is mature and intellectual person. So, it requires a subtle approach to explore the effect of trauma in him because he does not seem abnormal; neither does he turn to alcohol or drugs to escape the feelings as some other victims might do. Though the war experiences continually torment him, he tries his best to hide his tormented state. He wears "smoked glasses," at all times protecting his vision, but he "cannot be taken for a blind man" (5). Moreover, he does not have the look of blindness. He has much trouble in his life.

Mr. Sammler is as complex as the worlds of meaning that speed and twist into his life like fastballs, pop flies, curves, line drives, sinkers. He doggedly tries to read the codes and number on each one, than respond with a well placed smack before it means past him and thus into the muddy leather of incomprehension of self- depiction. However differently they might arrive, and wherever in time they may have begun, the rapidly shifting human themes of order and disorder, pity and heartlessness, scientific clarity and the befogging machinery of murder are eventually ordered in Mr. Sammler's mind, each revealing aspects of its opposite. He is impatient; life has brought him down a peg.

Before World War, Mr. Sammler traveled in the high British air of intellectual exchange, slurping up all sorts of theories and becoming a snob in the process, one who felt that he had worked himself up out of the common worm bucket. From his superior position, he had the right to turn the miniature serpents of society with the tip of his umbrella and make note of their distinctions, either for conversation or personal entertainment. But after the War, he remains a disturbed person in his later years, but having been partially blinded by a rifle butt, stripped naked, shot, and pushed into a mass grave by the Nazis, Mr. Sammler does not overestimate the resources of his learning – or the values and resources of civilization itself. His past bitter experience makes him see the people who threaten or disgust him, white or black, as categories of animals – as apes, as pumas, and so on. It is only when Mr. Sammler is forced to face their

human pain that he begins to achieve the kind of heroism our age demands.

In *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, Mr. Sammler, now lives in the New York City. However hard he tries to overcome his traumatic experience of the Holocaust atrocities of the Nazi Concentration Camp during the Second World War, the death camp Sojourn constantly rises to the surface of his mind asserting itself as the chief determinant of his life. This causes him a severe sense of mental problem and frustration as past memories frequently haunt him. Although he is a disturbed person, Mr. Sammler is unable to convey his Holocaust experience to anyone else. He feels he must bear his memories and their consequences alone. He considers himself defeated by history and makes every effort not to make others notice that he is suffering from trauma in the family, neighborhood and in the New York City.

The war caught Mr. Sammler, with his daughter, Shula and his late wife, in Poland. They had gone there to liquidate his father-in-law's estate. She was killed in 1940, and her father's optical-instruments factory was "dismantled" and sent to Austria (15). His wife dies, his daughter remains hidden by nuns, and Sammler escapes death by shooting an enemy soldier, by crawling out from under a pile of dead Jewish bodies:

When he and sixty or seventy others, all stripped naked and having dug their own grave, were fired upon and fell in. Body upon his own body. Crushing. His dead wife near by somewhere. Struggling out much later from the weight of

corpses, crawling out of the loose soil. Scraping on his belly. Hiding in a shed. Finding a rag to wear. Lying in the woods many days. (Bellow 92)

Bellow mentions further Sammler's experiences of Nazi atrocities thus:

So for his part, it had happened that Sammler, with his wife and others, in a perfectly clear day, had had to strip naked. Waiting, then to be shot in the mass grave. Sammler had already that day been struck in the eye by a gun butt and blinded. In contraction from life, when naked, he already felt himself dead. But somehow he had failed. (137-38)

This describes Mr. Sammler's direct death experience at the hands of Nazi soldiers, which makes his present life traumatized.

War memories have possessed his mind so powerfully that, Mr Sammler cannot resist the thoughts about his experience of the death scenes at the death camp and in the Zamosht forest in Poland. There the fighting had erupted as there had been efforts to "reconstruct a Jewless Poland" (140). There had been a great massacre of which Sammler had been a witness and a victim. Sammler remembers:

The Poles at dawn came shooting. As soon as it was light enough for murder. There was fog, smoke. The sun tried to rise. Men began to drop, and Sammler ran. There were two other survivors. The other, like Sammler, found a break and rushed through. Hiding in the swamp, Sammler lay under a tree trunk, in the mid, under scum. At night he left the forest.

He took a chance with Cieslakiewicz next day. He spent those summer weeks in the cemetery. Then he appeared in Zamosht, in the town itself, wild, gaunt, decaying, the dead eye bulging- like a whelk. One of the doomed who had lasted it all out. (140)

These memories always occupy his mind and he even sees the Zamosht forest scenes in his dream. "In the privacy of his bed he turned very briefly to that rage. Luxury. And when he himself was nearly beaten to death. Had to lift dead bodies from himself. Desperate! Crawling out. Oh heart-bursting! Oh! Vile" (135). Then, he knew how it felt to take a life. When he wakes up, these things keep fizzing in his brain. Then rising, Sammler smooths back the bedding, the coverlet and draws on clean socks upto the knee. This leaves him with bitter experience of the past war period, making him alienated at present.

The war memories have disturbed his mind. This has made him an absentminded person. The very first sentence of the novel "Mr. Artur Sammler with his bushy eye took in the books and papers of his west side bedroom and suspected strongly that they were the wrong books, the wrong papers" (3) shows this absent-mindedness. Whenever somebody gazes at him, his mind goes back to that time when he faced death scenes and his physical organs become sensitive. When a pickpocket looks at him,

He felt a constriction, a clutch of sickness at the base of the skull where the nerves, muscles, blood vessels were tightly

interlaced. The breath of wartime Poland passing over the damaged tissues-that nerve-spaghetti, as he thought of it. (5)

When he walks on the street, he finds buses bearable but subways "killing." (5). He asks himself whether he must give up the bus. He does not mind his own business as a man of seventy in New York should do. It is now his problem that "he does not know his proper age, does not appreciate his situation" (5).

Once when Sammler and his nephew, Gruner's daughter, Angela talk about Gruner's health on the New York Street, Miss Angela is wearing a leather cap. It reminds him of war time in Israel where he had seen the six day war. There Italian camera men had brought with them three girls in 'mod' dress and they were wearing a similar cap that Angela was wearing:

Bombs were spilling from planes as remote as insects. You saw the wings when they spun into the light, and then heard detonations, and suburbs of smoke rose briefly. Remotely, you heard machinery – distant tank treads. You heard tiny war sounds. They were Italians, paparazzi, someone explained, and had brought with them these girls in mod dress. One of them had on just the sort of little cap that Angela wore, of hound-stooth check. (165)

This event also brings an image in the mind of Sammler of a Jesuit correspondent, Father Newell with whom Sammler had shared some time during the War. He had even borrowed ten dollars from father Newell. Sammler remembers:

Father Newell wore the full battle dress of the Vietnam jungles-yellow, black and green daubs and strips of camouflage. Sammler still owed him ten dollars; his share of the taxi they had hired in Tel Aviv to drive to the Syrian front . . . Father Newell sweated in his green battle clothes. His hair cropped Marines Lyle, his eyes also green and the cheeks splendid meat-red. Down below the tanks raced and the smoke puffed yellow from the ground few sounds rose. (166)

Artur Sammler, a European Jew who has been brought to America by a generous nephew, Dr. Arnold Elya Gruner in the wake of the Second World War, lives a disturbed and alienated life in New York City's Upper West Side. He was rescued from the ruins of Poland. Now he has lost all the meaning of his life because he does not have any definite aim and job. This makes him lonely and tormented:

He thought, since he had no job to wake up to, that he might sleep a second chance to resolve certain difficulties imaginatively for himself, and pulled up the disconnected electric blanket with its internal sinews and lumps. The satin binding was nice to the singer tips. He was still drowsy, but not really inclined to sleep time to be conscious. (4)

As a traumatized person, Mr. Sammler tries to direct his traumatic experiences towards the observation of things around him. Thus he becomes a minute observer of the chaos and decay of civilization in the

New York City of America. Although he is blind in "one eye" owing to Nazi brutality during the holocaust he is a perfect observer:

He liked to watch the changes of the ashen wires. They came to life with fury, throwing tiny sparks and sinking into red rigidity under the Pyres laboratory flask. Deeper. Blenching. He had only one good eye. The left distinguished only light and shade. But the good eye was dark-bright, full of observation through the overhanging hairs of the brow as in some breeds of dog. The combination made him conspicuous.

(4)

But his conspicuousness seems to be on his mind, which worries him a lot, making him a psychologically disturbed person.

In connection with the day-to-day observation of things, he comes across a "negro pickpocket at work" while returning on the customary bus late afternoons (5). As Mr. Sammler is deeply affected and haunted by morally shocking things like war, killing, crimes, he is drawn towards the activity of the Negro pickpocket. He keeps an eye on him almost on daily basis, which irritates the pickpocket. One day the Negro corners Sammler in the lobby and shows him his penis:

The black man had opened his fly and taken out his penis. It was displayed to Sammler with great oval testicles, a large tan-and-purple uncircumcised thing-a-tube, a snake; metallic hairs bristled at the thick base and the tip curled beyond the

supporting, demonstrating hand, suggesting the fleshy mobility of an elephant's trunk. (49)

This activity of the Negro is the manifestation of the degradation of moral values in American society. The Negro is totally disrespectful towards Sammler who is an old man. Moreover, he forcibly pushes Sammler into the corner beside the long blackish carved table. This incident leaves him with a bitter experience of living in the New York City.

Sammler finds the pickpocket on the bus daily. Then he decides to report it to the police. When he phones the police station, the police do not take this case seriously as they say they have other "priorities and they have a waiting list" (13-14). This makes Sammler disappointed at not being able to stop the pickpocket from his criminal activity. He comes out of the police station and sits "tensely" forward in bright lamplight, like a "motorcyclist who has been struck in the forehead by a pebble from the road, trivially stung, smiled with long lips.'America!' (he was speaking to himself)" (14).

The memories of war have shattered his life in such a way that he seems to be oblivious of himself and his situation. This happens especially when he is alone be it at home, or the streets. For example:

He did not in fact appear to know his age or at what point of life he stood. You could see that in his way of walking. On the streets, he was tense, quick, erratically light and reckless, the elderly hair stirring on the back of his head. Crossing, he lifted the rolled umbrella high and pointed to show cars,

buses, speeding trucks, and cabs bearing down on him the way he intended to go. They might run him over, but he could not help his style of striding blind. (6)

Later, when one of his friends, Feffer and Sammler talk about the Negro pickpocket, Sammler does not want to tell everything that had happened to him. He asks Feffer, "who told you about him?" (119). Then Feffer asks Sammler if the Negro pickpocket had threatened him with a gun. When Sammler hears the word 'gun,' he finds himself in mental imbalance because the death scenes of the Nazi concentration camp emerge in his mind. Bellow writes: "No gun. Had Sammler been in good balance he would have been able to resist Fetter. But his balance was not good. Descending to the subway was a trail. The grave, Elya, Death, entombment, the Mezvinski: vault" (120). These above-mentioned points regarding the horrendous and traumatic experiences of Mr. Sammler that he has undergone during the World War II help us understand the fact of the atrocity and extreme violence perpetrated upon war victims at the time.

The somber and gloomy thoughts of suffering, torture and death surface in Sammler's mind all the time. He never seems to be in joyful and jocular mood because the war experiences frequently haunt him. Bellow mentions, "Different matters, far from playful, preoccupy Sammler" (136). Feffer, wishing to divert him tells him the tale of the insurance adjuster who pulled out the pistol. Feffer says that with that rotten gun one has to shoot a man at close range, and in the head, killing point blank. This shooting in the head is what Sammler had been attempting to "shut out,

screen off. Hopeless" (137). Feffer's method of diversion makes Sammler more troubled. This diversion shrivels up. These things are not the subject to control for Sammler. They become the things to be endured. They become a power within him which do not care whether he can bear them or not. This reminds him of the day when in Zamosht Forest in Poland Sammler had shot a man at close range in order to save himself: "There at very close range he shot a man he had disarmed. He made him fling away his carbine" (138). Bellow remarks: "These become visions or nightmares for others, but for him daylight events, in full consciousness" (137). These details show how inhuman and barbaric treatment was exercised upon the victims.

These events leave an adverse effect on the later life of Mr. Sammler who tries to seem unaffected however as he is an intellectual and well-education person. In order to escape from such memories of his tormented past he once travels to the West in Rolls Royce with Wallace. Mr. Sammler is ready to think it might have a "sobering effect on the species, at this moment exceptionally troubled" (18). When Wallace offers the old man liquor or seven-up, but he wants nothing. Enclosing the umbrella between high knees,

he [Mr. Sammler] was reviewing some of the facts. Outer-space voyages were made possible by specialist-collaboration. While on earth sensitive ignorance still dreamed of being separate and 'whole' 'whole' ? A childish notion. It led to all this madness, mad religions, LSP, suicide,

to crime. He shut his eyes, breathed out of his soul some bad, and breathed in some good. (181)

This above quote shows how Bellow refers to the disintegrated world the war has brought, which has tormented Mr. Sammler. This feeling fills him with terror. It is a feeling of horror which

grows in strength, growl and grows. What was it? How was it to be put? He had rejoined life. He was near to others. But in some essential way he was also companionless. He was old. He lacked physical force. He did not know what to do. He had to turn to someone else - to an Eisen! A man himself very far out on another track, orbiting a very different foreign center. Sammler was powerless. To be powerless was death. And suddenly he saw himself not so much standing as strangely leaning, as reclining, and peculiarly in profile, and as a *past* person. (290)

This shows that Mr. Sammler is not himself. It is someone – and this strikes him – poor in spirit. He is someone between the "human and non-human states, between content and emptiness, between full and void, meaning, between this world and no world" (290). This explicitly describes Mr. Sammler's traumatized state.

Mr. Sammler lives now at Margotte's house with his daughter, Shula who is an absent-minded person. Margotte, who is his niece, also shares her joys and sorrows of her life with Sammler. Margotte's husband was killed in a plane crash. Both Sammler and Margotte get along well as they

always discuss things about the past. Moreover, most of her family had been destroyed by "the Nazis like his own" though she had "gotten out" in 1937 (15). These horrible incidents, no doubt, adversely affect the holocaust survivors.

Margotte's husband, Arkin was a good man whom Sammler misses very much. He often goes to Margotte's room and has a talk with her; the war memories draw him to her as she is also the victim of the holocaust. When he is invited by the widow to occupy a bedroom in the large apartment, Sammler asks to have "Arkin's humidor" in his room (8). Sentimental herself', Margotte said, "of course, uncle. What a nice thought. You did love Usher." Whenever they have a serious talk, the subject automatically moves towards the "holocaust". Sammler finds solace in the company of Margotte, who is the only close family member in his life. Although he has a daughter, she is not a worth companion for Sammler. Bellow comments: "But when it came to clutter, his daughter, Shula was much worse. He had lived with Shula for several years, just east of Broadway. She had too many oddities for her old father" (21).

Shula's cousin Gruner, the doctor, who has this work invented for her, employs Shula as a typist. Gruner had saved her from her equally "crazy husband," Eisen, in Israel, sending Sammler ten years ago to bring Shula to New York. Eisen is also the victim of the Holocaust, which makes his life hell. "With other mutilated veterans in Rumania, later, he had been thrown from a moving train. Apparently, because he was a Jew. Eisen had frozen his feet; his toes were amputated" (24).

Since everyone in his close relation has been the victim of the holocaust, Sammler faces existential crisis in his life. Though he is suffering from trauma and frustration, he struggles hard for his existence. In order to escape from this situation, he turns to the writings of great Western philosophers and writers. He is greatly impressed by H.G. Wells, whose memoir he wants to write. Wells attracts Sammler's attention because he wrote advocating the alternative world for mankind. He wrote about such things in his final sickness, horribly depressed by World War II. Shula says that, "Wells had said to papa about Lenin, Stalin, Mussolini, Hitler, World peace, atomic energy, the open conspiracy, and the colonization of the planets. Whole passage came back to Papa" (29). Wells had communicated things to Sammler that the world didn't know.

As a direct observer and witness to the war atrocities, Sammler has seen everything such as moral values, norms, and civilization devastated before his own eyes. Like many people who had seen the world collapse once, Mr. Sammler entertains the possibility it might "collapse twice" (33). So, he immerses himself in the study of the great historians, thinkers and philosophers in order to probe what went wrong. Bellow writes:

. . . labouring in his room with hard words and thoughts that had to be explained, stumbling through Toynbee, Freud, Burckhardt, Spengler. For he had been reading historians of civilization-Karl Marx, Max Weber, Max Scheler, Franz Oppenheimer. Side excursions into Adorno, Marcuse, Norman

O. Brown, whom he found to be worthless fellows. But after four or five years of this diet, he wished to read only certain religious writers of the thirteenth century-Suso, Tauler, and Meister Eckhart. (37)

As an intellectual, Mr. Sammler is intermittently invited to give lectures on the subject of war at Columbia University. But he cannot get much acclaim from students as he is suffering from trauma, frustration and depression. Although he tries to amuse students, there is no interest in them in the class:

He tried to begin humorously by recalling the lecturer who had addressed incurable alcoholics under the impression that they were the Browning Society. But there was no laughter. A microphone was hung on his chest. He began to speak of the mental atmosphere of England before the Second World War. The Musolini adventure in East Africa. Spain in 1936. The Great Purges in Russia. Stalinism in France and Britain. Blum, Daladier, the People's Front, Oswald Mosley. The mood of English intellectuals. For this he needed no notes, he could easily recall what people had said or written. (40)

The Holocaust is deeply rooted in his mind. He remembers exactly what happened there during the war. He further addresses, "I assume, "he said, "You are acquainted with the background, the event of nineteen seventeen. You know of the mutinous armies, the February Revolutionary in Russia, the disasters that befell authority" (40).

Sammler is supposed to give lecture on politics in seminary. He usually does not know what seminars are about as he is traumatized by the past. Bellow describes him:

Not always attentive, he failed to understand clearly; perhaps there was nothing clear to understand; but it seemed that he had promised, although he couldn't remember promising. But Falter confused him more. There were so many projects, such cross references, so many confidences and requests for secrecy, so many scandals, and frauds, spiritual communication- a continual flow backward, forward, and lateral, above, below; like any page of Joyce's *Ulysses*, always in *medias res*. (33)

Finally when Sammler mentions Orwell to say that British radicals were all protected by the Royal Navy, the students object, calling it 'shit'. And they humiliate him shouting at him, "Hey! Old Man!" (42).

After this incident no one really tries to defend him. Most of the young people seem to be against him. The shouting sounds hostile. Then Sammler, feeling shocked and disappointed, turns from the lectern, finds his umbrella and hat and leaves. He finds himself "abruptly out of the university. Back in the city" (43). Even if "insulted, pained, somewhere bleeding, not with sadness, but translating heartache into delicate, even piercing observation," Sammler thus returns home. He does not let this pain affect others. He carries it within himself in a lonely and alienated way, and he is greatly shocked to find disintegration everywhere. At one

time during his stay in New York, Sammler suffers severely from the sense of trauma and alienation. He even begins to feel that he lacks human characteristics. Bellow writes:

For a long time he had felt that he was not necessarily human. Had no great use, during that time, for most creatures. Very little interest in himself. Cold even to the thought of recovery. What was there to recover? Little regard for earlier forms of himself. Disaffected his judgement almost blank . . . So that now, really, Sammler didn't know how to take himself. He wanted, with God, to be free from the bondage of the ordinary and the finite. (177)

Another escape from the present situation of torment is the thesis of Dr. Lal, the Indian Biophysicist, on "The Future of the Moon" which becomes another aspect of Mr. Sammler's intellectual pursuit. Unlike other Bellovian heroes, Mr. Sammler is more intellectual and more composed. Post-War degradation has made Sammler's planet a doomed one and New York in which the novel is set is simply a wasteland. So, Sammler wants to make Dr. Lal's thesis "human settlement on the moon in future" his own ambition, his own planet. During his discussion with Dr. Lal, Sammler regrets the lack of order and insists on order over love to create his own world, "own planet" (63). This is the result of the holocaust atrocities.

Dr. Lal, who has come to New York to present his optimistic paper, "The Future of the Moon" at the seminar of the great scientists, is harassed by Sammler's daughter, Shula. She steals the optimistic manuscript for

her father because she thinks Sammler was desperate for that manuscript. It fascinates him. His desire for the manuscript is his escapist attitude because he has been feeling troubled due to war memories.

Sammler's disturbed mental state reaches its climax when his only trusting person, Gruner, his nephew lies on his death bed. It was Gruner who had brought Sammler and his daughter from Poland. So, Sammler is deeply affected by the condition of Gruner. When Sammler and Margotte talk about Gruner's death, Sammler again becomes preoccupied with the subject of death, recollecting his past war memories:

By coming back, by preoccupation with the subject, the dying, the mystery of dying, and the state of death. Also, by having been inside death. By having been given the shovel and told to dig. By digging beside his digging wife. When she faltered he tried to help her. By this digging, not speaking, he tried to convey something to her and fortify her. But as it had turned out, he had prepared her for death without sharing it. She was killed, not he. She had been blinded, he had a stunned face, and he was unaware that blood was coming from him till they stripped and he saw it knot his cloths.

(273)

Ultimately Gruner dies and Sammler is shattered than ever before. So far he has been relying on great western writings, and philosophies. But when these things fail to satisfy him he seems on the brink of faith in order to escape from mental disorder.

In this way, the Holocaust memories trouble Mr. Sammler's life, making him alienated from his family and society. The scenes of death at the hands of Nazis, including that of his wife, his compulsive shooting of a Nazi soldier and his escape from there are the bitterest experiences Sammler has had as Holocaust survivor. These experiences leave an adverse effect on his later life in New York City causing him serious trauma and alienation.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* deals with the post-holocaust traumatic experience of the protagonist, Mr. Sammler who goes through a severe sense of trauma and alienation because of his personal experience of the Holocaust atrocities during the Second World War. The memories of the war frequently recur and haunt him as the scenes of death constantly come to his mind throughout his life. It makes him both physically and mentally troubled in family and society.

Artur Sammler possesses memories of the war as he has literally spent part of the war inside a grave. Mr. Sammler goes through the bitter experience of the Holocaust atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis. During the War Period, Sammler was taken to Zamosht Forest where he had a narrow escape from death. There he, along with his wife and daughter was made to dig his own grave. They are all striped naked. His wife is shot dead before his own eyes there, and his daughter is rescued by a nun. As for himself, Sammler escapes by shooting a soldier who had been guarding him. But he loses one eye as another soldier hits him with the butt of the rifle. So, Sammler has lost the vision in one eye and suffers from a severe sense of emotional and intellectual trauma.

As an intellectual and academician, Sammler lectures occasionally at Columbia University but spends most of his time drifting about the city, trying to make sense of an utterly foreign world, a world he despises and despairs of. Sammler's strange encounters with a black pickpocket who

follows Sammler back to his apartment building and exposes himself to him his disastrous attempt to speak to a group of Columbia students, and his relationship with his friend's daughter aggravate his already tormented state.

Mr. Sammler's bitter war experiences haunt him frequently and trouble his life in New York City. As a result, he becomes a minute observer of the modern world, its people and their moral decay and insanities. He cannot engage himself in positive creative and humorous activities. Thus, he becomes a lonely and alienated person. Whatever he thinks and does, can be related to his war experiences which force him to focus on negative aspects.

Sammler is a 'registrar of madness,' a refined and civilized being caught among people crazy with the promises of the future. His mature and vigilant gaze reflects on the degradation of city life while looking deep into the sufferings of humankind. "Sorry for all and sore at heart," he observes how greater luxury and leisure have only led to more human suffering. Thus he becomes the most mentally disturbed person in life.

In course of leading his meaningless and alienated life, Sammler starts to study the writings of great western writers and philosophers such as H. G. Wells, Karl Marx, and Franz Oppenheimer. As he seeks alternative world for mankind, Wells draws his attention, and Mr. Sammler wants to write a memoir on him. He is impressed by Wells' science fiction. But even these studies cannot give any meaning to his troubled life. Eventually, when his nephew Dr. Gruner lies on his death

bed, Sammler's past experience of death scenes trouble him making him lose the order of his mind.

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