A STUDY OF SYMBOLISM IN SAUL BELLOW'S
DANGLING MAN AND THE VICTIM

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the following paper is to present a study of the occurrence and significance of symbolism in the novels Dangling Man and The Victim by Saul Bellow.

The main body of the paper is organized into the following chapters: Chapter Two, "A Critical Review of Bellow's Fiction," presenting a review of general criticism of Bellow's work; Chapter Three, "Symbols in Dangling Man and The Victim," which includes an explanation of the term symbolism as used in this paper, a critical review of the two novels under study, and an identification of symbols in context and interpretation and analysis of the significance of these symbols in relation to the theme of each work; and Chapter Four, "Conclusions," which presents a review of conclusions reached.

Bibliographical references used in search of secondary sources have been The Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature, Book Review Digest, Books in Print, Essay and General Literature Index, MLA Bibliography, and Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature. Major secondary sources used for Chapter Two have been Alfred Kazin's "The World of Saul Bellow," Robert R. Dutton's Saul Bellow, Keith Opdahl's The Novels of Saul Bellow: An Introduction,
and Bellow's essay "Distractions of a Fiction Writer."

While the content of Chapter Three is largely original, important secondary sources for that chapter have been J.E. Cirlot's *A Dictionary of Symbols* and Irving Malin's "Seven Images," in *Saul Bellow and the Critics*. Important supplementary sources for the entire paper, in addition to the secondary sources listed above, have been Peter De Vries' review of *Dangling Man*, published in *Book Week*; Diana Trilling's reviews of *Dangling Man* and *The Victim*, published in *The Nation*; Alfred Kazin's "Midtown and the Village," published in *Harper's Magazine*; John W. Aldridge's *In Search of Heresy: American Literature in an Age of Conformity*; and Ihab Hassan's *Radical Innocence*. While previous studies have dealt with symbolism in various other fiction works by Bellow, no such study has been made of *Dangling Man* and *The Victim*.

The study of symbolism in any work enhances the understanding of that work in that there will occur within the context of plot certain objects, actions, or images which mean more than themselves. Unless a work is allegorical, that which is termed a symbol has, of course, a literal meaning: it is an object, action, condition, or event in the physical world of the work, with a function or purpose of its own, distinguished from the necessity to be anything more than that which it physically is.

Yet, as Cirlot states with regard to symbols, "Nothing is meaningless or neutral: everything is significant. Nothing is independent, everything is in some way
related to something else."¹ That object or event or condition or action does function in a context. As a literal, physical entity it influences or affects the physical world in which it operates. As a representative or symbolic entity it projects additional, non-literal meaning into a literal, physical situation.

The benefit of a symbol is that it "suggest[s] . . . more thoughts and feelings than we could state; for if we stated as many as we could . . . some would be left over and some would remain unstatable."² A symbol brings with it all the unstatable implications--explicit and implicit--indicated by both the traditional meanings of that symbol and the context in which the symbol appears. A study of any work considers plot and characters in terms of meaning, purpose, significance--in terms of theme. A study of symbolism in a work attempts to further clarify the significance of plot and characters, attempts to further enhance the understanding of theme through identification of symbols with which "we associate many other activities and attitudes, which we can feel more easily than explain."³

In the following paper the term symbol has been

³Tindall, p. 9.
defined as an object or an image (group of objects, events, situations, conditions) which makes reference to, stands for, means, or represents "something"—an attitude, a philosophy, an emotion—in addition to its literal meaning. The significant symbols in Dangling Man and The Victim occur as images rather than as individual objects.
Chapter 2

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF BELLOW'S FICTION

Chapter Two presents a critical review of the fiction works of Saul Bellow. The chapter is divided into the following sections: (a) a review of the critical evaluation of the philosophy of Bellow as depicted in his work, (b) an analysis of the function of the writer as critics discern this function through Bellow's work, and (c) a critical evaluation of Bellow's protagonist as universal man.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a background upon which to base the study of specific symbols in Dangling Man and The Victim.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF BELLOW

Saul Bellow, American novelist, short story writer, and essayist born in Canada in 1915 has been for nearly two decades one of America's most prominent "intellectual" writers. Bellow's fiction concerns a range of human dilemma, with the consciousness of his characters always centering in the question of fate and of man's relationship to that fate—the "why's" of fate, the adjustment of oneself to this fate as the only means to real life, the question of "whether the axial lines [of necessity and progression of life] that we see,
... are what fate had to draw ...," and the recognition "that fate itself is character." To Bellow man cannot be free from this fate: true life for man is this fate in all its "unopposable," undeniable uncertainties. "Each individual must forge his self and find his essence out of senseless circumstances and meaningless limitations."  

In Bellow's vision, however, fate is defined not so much as destiny or fortune as it is defined as culture or past. This fate or culture or past establishes "the shaping force of heredity and social circumstances upon man, the isolation and burden of human life, the natural ruins of time, and the continuity of human history." Therefore man must recognize the necessity for living not against fate but with fate. The acceptance and understanding of fate or past discloses itself in Bellow's characters in a "speculative quest, a need to understand their peculiar destiny within the general problem of human destiny."

Yet man is Bellow's chief concern: man striving to find or make his place in the natural order, man adapting to

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5 Kazin, p. 220.
8 Kazin, p. 220.
9 Kazin, p. 218.
the inevitabilities of fate and thereby freeing himself to be man, man in every step of his progression toward fulfillment within his fate. "His protagonist is invariably an Everyman whose primary function is to embody the progress of a state of mind . . . ."10 Man is "the vital center" in Bellow's perception of the universe: "He is concerned with man alive . . . [and] . . . finds the essentials of human experience in human beings seeking themselves and seeking love."11

And while man must, perhaps, learn to live "not against but with fate," while culture exerts its influences, while society collectively may be an aspect of fate historically, while society or culture and mankind may be equated, society or culture or fate and individual man may not be so equated. Fate is something more than culture. Fate is beyond. Man, in his acceptance of fate, must yet find himself alienated from his culture, from society; man must realize that "self-realization" demands as its price "alienation from the culture . . . ."12 Indeed through plot and situation " . . . Bellow's heroes are strikingly free from society."13 Aspects of society, as Joseph's draft board in


12Eisinger, Fiction of the Forties, p. 308.

Dangling Man or employers who will not employ Asa Leventhal in The Victim, cause Bellow's protagonists to be placed "outside of the usual social context."14 And to Bellow it is man individual, man in relation to himself and to other men as individuals, man in self-discovery, which is of importance.

Bellow is concerned with the problems of "the individual versus society and the individual in self conflict";15 and these two types of conflict, between man and society and man and self, are not unrelated. Yet man is of supreme importance. Man, to Bellow, is, in the general scheme of things, above society, fate, the past, because man in Bellow's world is existential; man is responsible for his situation, his conflicts, and his problems: "But [he] is also regarded as capable of altering those conditions, whether or not [he is] aware of these responsibilities and powers."16 Man must accept limitations—both physical and psychological—imposed upon him by society, culture, past, by his personal history, and by self; but man may become more than his culture, history, or self.17 Man can, indeed must, extend beyond the limitations imposed by his history and achieve a true realization of self—become, in other words, truly human. Bellow's protagonists know that self "is capable of godlike reason, its

14Opdahl, p. 10.
15Dutton, p. 13.
16Dutton, p. 139.
17Dutton, p. 152.
faculty of imagination is boundless . . . "18 They also know that realization of self is not an easy task, that "self is also capable of unbelievable stupidities, inane actions, and romantic nonsense . . . "19 Yet man triumphant or man defeated, man in realization or man in ignorance of his powers of self-determination is to Bellow of supreme importance.

Some men of Bellow's world never realize their "human possibilities," as Joseph in Dangling Man and Asa in The Victim, who never recognize their capability for changing and resisting those forces which create for them their human conflicts.20 Never realizing their possibilities, never resisting these, to them, irresistible forces of history, culture, fate, they never achieve full self-realization, never become truly human. Augie of The Adventures of Augie March and Tommy Wilhelm of Seize the Day, however, progress somewhat further in the realm of self-realization: they learn that there is dignity in their human condition; even as they are not able themselves to make their human condition reach the heights for which they would hope, they are aware that man—in his potential for all things, in his potential for becoming true man—maintains a dignity without which all men would be less than human.21 Human worth is in man's

20Dutton, p. 139.
21Dutton, p. 139.
potential, not necessarily in his "success." And this Augie and Tommy recognize. The title characters of Henderson the Rain King and Herzog are able to complete the cycle of self-realization. Eugene Henderson and Moses Herzog "achieve a clear illumination of their human condition. Both Henderson and Herzog attain new lives on the power of that awareness."22 They not only recognize man's inherent potential, man's dignity, man's humanity, they themselves (unlike Joseph or Asa, unlike Tommy or Augie) are able to fulfill their human potential of self-direction and self-determination. And finally Artur Sammler in Mr. Sammler's Planet exercises his right to self-determination and self-direction upon his realization that "neither man nor his civilizations need be swept away by monstrous forces, for man creates those forces and he can control them by turning inwardly, to the depths of self, . . . ."23 Thus mankind in Bellow's world is man in all his variations, at all his levels of both awareness and ignorance of his human potential, in all his individual ability or inability to control his fate, in all the possible "discrepancy between human aspiration and human achievement."24 He is yet man, superior to society, to past, to fate, to culture, superior to all but God and the angels: he is man the subangelic. Bellow himself says, "... man might be

22Dutton, p. 139.
23Dutton, p. 163.
24Opdahl, p. 5.
godlike but he is wretched . . . "; yet Bellow presents not
"man wretched by nature" but "man in the image of God, man a
little lower than the angels [but] impotent . . . ."25 Of
wretched man not a great deal is to be expected, but of man
the subangelic, man the impotent angel should be expected
humanity, dignity, self-realization and self-determination.

THE WRITER

As the individual must alienate himself from society
and past in order to achieve self-realization despite that
society, despite that past, so must the writer, in order to
defend the individual in his expression against and his alien-
ation from society, "set himself against the society around
him," 26 Yet the writer's alienation from his society and
from his past, as the individual's alienation, is not an
alienation and estrangement from man. This alienation results
not from a rejection of man; indeed the writer is, in all
likelihood, "working, bitterly working, in an effort to meet
his brothers of the office and factory sympathetically . . . .
He is literally a brother and comes out of the same mass."27
The rejection is a rejection of the "oppressive and stulti-
ifying . . . [forces] of alienation and distraction . . . and

25Saul Bellow, "Distractions of a Fiction Writer,"
The Living Novel: A Symposium, ed. Granville Hicks (New York:

26Eisinger, Fiction of the Forties, pp. 341-342.

It is a rejection of those limitations which prevent man from achieving a true realization of his human potential, a true realization of self.

Bellow has been described by some critics as a "typical" American naturalist, but, according to Alfred Kazin, Bellow's novelistic endeavor is distinctly individual "in style, in speculative intelligence, in the anguish of its feeling and the conscious buffoonery of its wit," individual to the extent that "the various cultural labels that come with him--the Chicagoan, the Jew, the one-time anthropologist--figure more as themes in his work more [sic] than they explain him."

However in his celebration of life and of man in life, in his expression of man's "overwhelming need for love and the joy in life . . ." Bellow does exhibit elements of Hasidism. And while individual man is of supreme importance, all men are of supreme importance, as Asa Leventhal affirms when he decides that he is his brother's keeper. The Hasid would agree that a basic element of Hasidism is the code "which binds one man to another in a relationship of love and responsibility," and that while pain and "intolerable
suffering" are necessary and inevitable in man's existence, man can and does endure this suffering and learn "that 'the heartbeat of life is holy joy.'"\(^{32}\) Certainly one means of expression of this 'holy joy' is love of one's fellow man, not only on the part of the protagonist but on the part of the writer himself. For example, Augie March's love for man is evidenced in his "objective ability to see all sides of a person . . . his generous acceptance of people for what they are . . . his ability to see the good in people."\(^{33}\) Also Bellow believes that in writing (as well as in all other aspects of life one might presume) "this caring or believing or love alone matters. All the rest, obsolescence, historical views, manners, agreed views of the Universe, is simply nonsense and trash." He continues that, "If we don't . . . immediately care, then perish books both old and new, and novelists . . . . If we do care, if we believe in the existence of others, then what we write is necessary."\(^{34}\)

Thus Bellow, as does the Hasid within certain limitations imposed by metaphysical determinism, recognizes man's potential superiority to these external forces of past and society, man's intrinsic worth simply because he is a human being, man's potential ability to not only exist in that naturalistic universe but to truly live there.

\(^{32}\)Eisinger, Fiction of the Forties, p. 343.

\(^{33}\)Dutton, pp. 53-54.

\(^{34}\)Bellow, "Distractions of a Fiction Writer," p. 20.
THE PROTAGONIST AS UNIVERSAL MAN

While Saul Bellow is considered by nearly all critics to be a novelist of great importance and merit, there can be seen a variance of opinion concerning the degree to which he has achieved his potential for greatness. He has been called variously "America's most important living novelist" (in 1968), a writer whose works, according to a consensus of critics "represent the contemporary American novel at its best" (in 1971), and by Opdahl (in 1967) an author who "has so far answered almost no one's idea of the great novelist and everyone's idea of the potentially great novelist." There is, however, agreement as to one important aspect of Bellow's vision: this vision is representative of his times, this vision portrays our time, our culture's problems, deficiencies, and unfulfilled expectations. He is, as Clayton says, "a spokesman for our culture . . . [knowing] where we're at . . . ." Readers and critics alike recognize and identify with his search for answers to Twentieth Century man's plight; Bellow "creates in his present readers a deeply personal response . . . ."  

37 Opdahl, p. 3.  
38 Clayton, p. 3.  
39 Opdahl, p. 3.
In Bellow's protagonists--and in his antagonists--one recognizes Everyman, the self; so do the characters (at any rate the protagonists) of Bellow's novels exhibit a recognition that they are not separate from, not different from, all other humanity, but that they are microcosmic of humanity. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Bellow's protagonists transpose their individual problems into humanity's problems:

Instead of living in the here-and-now, the protagonist transmutes living reality into philosophical problems which he can handle in verbal form. In particular, Am I worthy? becomes Is Man worthy?40

The glorification of the individual as Everyman is interpreted as a rejection by Bellow of the philosophy which considers man's life, man's values, man's humanity to be valueless in modern society; Bellow and his protagonists are anti-nihilistic. Mankind is of value, the individual and the self are of value; and the individual, through recognizing the positive force which is self, is capable of creating for himself a life which has meaning and purpose in terms of both himself and his fellow man.41

Bellow's view that the problems, complexities, uncertainties, defeats, gropings, searchings, and small victories which comprise such a large segment of the lives of his protagonists, are representative of the struggles of all men is seemingly evidenced by a consensus of opinion, according

40Clayton, p. 235.
41Clayton, p. 235.
to Opdahl, that the vision of the novel, the scope of the artistic imagination, does not extend beyond the vision, the imagination of the protagonist. As the protagonist does not find it possible to "break out of himself . . ." so is the novel thus limited in vision in that "the mind of the protagonist is that of the novel."\(^{12}\) Bellow's art then is subjective and individual rather than objective or social, unconscious rather than conscious or willful. In his work the structural requirements for creation of a unified, whole work often are made secondary to the "individual scene."\(^{13}\) Yet Opdahl, and others, explain if not defend Bellow's conflict of vision by pointing to an analogy between this conflict and "a larger conflict in our society":\(^{14}\) the conflict of political versus personal problems, the social versus the psychological, the public self versus the private self, the problem of victory or defeat, the problem of compromise and compensation for all men forced to exist among other men, forced to function among forces created by mankind's culture.\(^{15}\)

Within this subjective art with its subjective protagonist and its subjective vision, Bellow has been criticized by some for his absence of detachment, his too-close identification with his protagonist. If the vision, the

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\(^{12}\) Opdahl, p. 7.

\(^{13}\) Opdahl, p. 7.

\(^{14}\) Opdahl, p. 8.

\(^{15}\) Opdahl, p. 8.
philosophy, of the protagonist is not always Bellow's vision, Bellow's philosophy, the emotion of the protagonist is Bellow's emotion. On the other hand, other critics have complained that Bellow is too detached, too aloof, not close enough to his protagonists. According to Opdahl again, this detachment is intentional: Bellow "searches" for distance from the suffering in his fiction. He "brings" his heroes into ever closer contact with pain at the same time that he "seeks" to temper its immediacy.\(^4\)

Bellow's protagonists—those universal men—have, as well, received criticism in the negative, especially the protagonists of the earlier works. One of the major criticisms of Bellow's work is the employment of the "boyish" protagonist. Opdahl reports Norman Mailer's criticism that until Eugene Henderson (Henderson the Rain King) Bellow's heroes had not "the lust to struggle with the history about them."\(^5\) Kazin finds Bellow's earlier protagonists "gray, urban and dim, specters... [unable to] put up much of a fight... almost too easily put upon, not merely impotent but not even desirous of battle, "giving up to life a little too eloquently... not struggling enough with the angel before crying out in reverence and submission..."\(^6\) In other words the earlier novels are lacking in "someone big enough to fight

\(^4\) Opdahl, pp. 7, 18.
\(^5\) Opdahl, p. 13.
\(^6\) Kazin, p. 221.
with life." 49 By the time of the appearance of Henderson the Rain King, the protagonist has developed to the extent that "the possible testing of himself against life offers new possibilities," although the criticism is yet leveled that Henderson as well as Tommy Wilhelm of Seize the Day submit to fate too quickly. 50 This absence of "action," the protagonist's failure to act, causes the novel to become not actions initiated by the protagonist "because of who he is, but a series of disclosures, as at a psychoanalyst's, designed to afford him the knowledge that may heal him." 51 Again as in the case of the protagonist's mind, the protagonist's vision has become the vision of the novel.

Finally, the protagonists of Herzog and Mr. Sammler's Planet are able to reach a position of action: they become, eventually, not merely aware of the human situation; they achieve the potential of self-direction of which, Bellow believes, all men are capable. 52

Thus critics agree that Saul Bellow presents the existentialistic view of man as capable, within his individual and social past, of self-determination in terms of himself and his fellow man. Critics also seem largely to agree that Bellow's earlier protagonists are existentialistically

49 Kazin, p. 222.
50 Kazin, p. 222.
51 Opdahl, p. 13.
52 Dutton, pp. 139, 159, 163.
impotent, but that later protagonists do reach their human potential of not only self-understanding but of self-realization. The critics agree as well that Bellow has been one of Western literature's most important writers and will so continue to be.
Chapter 3

SYMBOLS IN DANGLING MAN AND THE VICTIM

Chapter Three presents a definition and discussion of symbolism, a brief summary and analysis of Dangling Man and The Victim, and an identification and interpretive discussion of the significant symbols, in context, in the two novels. Major symbols identified and discussed are the prison image, the weather image, the color image, the blood image, and the light image.

A DEFINITION OF SYMBOLISM

In the study of symbolism in any work, one may identify two distinct although related types of symbols: that which might be called an object symbol and that which might be called an image symbol. When an object symbol occurs, a specific object represents a specific emotion, attitude, belief, or set of beliefs, as when a rose is said to symbolize perfection or love, or when the color black is said to "mean" death or evil. With the occurrence of the image symbol an object or series of objects, an action or series of actions, an event or series of events reflects or represents a "larger," more complex, more extensive abstraction, as when an ocean voyage is said to symbolize life, or when weather is said to be representative of
or reflective of the state of man's mind or heart or soul.

These object symbols and image symbols may, of course, appear in a work in various combinations. An object or an image symbol may appear alone or in juxtaposition with others of its kind. An object symbol may represent another object through its physical similarity with that object, which in turn has its own symbolic meaning, as when dark spots upon the ground are said to represent, because of physical appearance, blood, which may itself represent death, purge, Crucifixion, redemption, etc. More frequently, however, objects and images function simultaneously and concurrently, perhaps with several individual objects ultimately comprising an image symbol, as when clouds, sunlight, and rain all function individually as well as in union to create a weather image symbol. And of course a literary work—a novel, a poem, a play—may be said to, as a unified whole, create an image symbol of the state of the universe, of the state of mankind.

Any symbol, from a single graphic sign to the most complex of image symbols, may exist on various levels of reality. According to Cirlot one considers first, the physical "object"; second, the object with its "utilitarian function"; third—particularly true for the artistic symbol—the "symbolic function"... the dynamic tendency of the object to link up with its corresponding equivalents in all analogous series.53 It is of course this "symbolic function," these

"corresponding equivalents" with which a study of symbolism in a particular work primarily concerns itself.

Bellow himself, in a somewhat incisive essay entitled "Deep Readers of the World, Beware!" discounts much of the current preoccupation with symbols. Warning against attaching symbolic meaning particularly to isolated objects, he says, "Are we to attach meaning to whatever is grazed by the writer? . . . A true symbol is substantial, not accidental. You cannot avoid it, you cannot remove it." Bellow believes that the modern reader, indeed modern man, in his insistence upon finding "everything" to be symbolic, is more concerned with meaning, with the intellectual, and less concerned with feeling, with the emotional, than he ought to be. Meanings isolated from human emotion are cold. But combined, meaning and emotion create human action, human reaction, which should be our major concern both as readers and as humans. As Bellow states, "We need to see how human beings act after they have appropriated or assimilated the meanings. Meanings themselves are a dime a dozen." It would seem then that Bellow would prefer a study of the image symbol as opposed to the object symbol, the symbol of feeling as opposed to the symbol of the senses or the intellect, as a means of attempting to understand the individual human being--human-kind--through a work of art.

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An examination of significant symbols to be found in Dangling Man and The Victim will follow a brief summary and analysis of the two works.

A SUMMARY OF DANGLING MAN AND THE VICTIM

Dangling Man and The Victim are novels with both noticeable similarities and differences. Both works study the human conflict between self-direction and the naturalistic forces of the universe. The protagonist of each may be termed "anti-hero," a man both isolated and estranged, in the physical-psychological-spiritual sense, from the everyday, ordinary commerce of his fellows, a man apprehensive in "an existence that seems to be beyond [his] control."56

Dangling Man, Saul Bellow's first work, published in 1944, is the journal account of several months in the life of Joseph, aged 27, who has become, as the title indicates, a "dangling man." Joseph's situation involves his induction into the armed services (the time is World War II).

Although he has been a resident of the United States for eighteen years and now lives in Chicago, he is yet a citizen of Canada; and while he has received his induction notice, as an alien--albeit a friendly alien--he cannot be inducted until he has been investigated: "a sort of bureaucratic comedy trimmed out in red tape,"57 Joseph puts it. But as his


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·journal reveals, the situation for Joseph is not at all comic.

Joseph spends his days in "non-activity"—eating, reading the newspapers, creating errands for himself, thinking, and of course recording his thoughts in the journal. He is, in a sense, eager to go into the service, not because he wishes to take part in the war effort, but so that he might be removed from his dangling state: it is difficult to make plans, to write seriously, to secure employment if one is liable to be called into the military at any moment. But the situation with his draft board is not the only cause for Joseph's state of dangling. It is evident from Joseph's journal that his dangling originates within himself, within his reactions to and uncertainties about the world and his life within the world.

The Victim, published in 1947 and Bellow's second work, is the third person account of Asa Leventhal, an editor of a small New York trade paper. The primary plot of The Victim centers about Asa's persecution by Kirby Allbee, a drunken, degenerate, former acquaintance of Asa's who accuses Asa of responsibility for his current state. Allbee views Asa as the cause of his loss of employment several years earlier; since that time Allbee, who had apparently been "going down hill" even before the loss of his job, continued to sink into a state of near total degeneracy, ultimately losing not only job but wife, friends, and self-respect as well. According to Allbee, Asa had at that time taken
offense at an anti-Semitic remark he, Allbee, had made, and proceeded to "get back at" him because of the remark. Asa, at first denying the accusation but later acknowledging that he might have been unconsciously, unintentionally guilty of Allbee's accusation, accepts the responsibility of boarding Allbee for a few days and of trying to help him find employment.

A secondary plot of The Victim involves Asa's relationship with the family of his brother Max, who is working in Texas while his family remains in New York. The younger son has become seriously ill and Asa considers it his responsibility to answer his sister-in-law's call for assistance. Ultimately the reader realizes that Asa feels that he is his brother's keeper--and that all humankind are one's brothers.

The world of Joseph in Dangling Man and the world of Asa Leventhal in The Victim are not the same. Joseph's is a world in which he attempts "an examination of the meanings of freedom, and the implications of them to the individual." In Joseph's world one finds, quite definitely, the opportunity, indeed the necessity, for making choices. Joseph must choose either to relinquish his freedom or to remain in his freedom, to "continue in his struggle toward a personal and individual integrity" until the choice is no longer his to make. He must decide whether to attempt to maintain a personal

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58 Dutton, p. 35.
59 Dutton, p. 35.
freedom or to relinquish his personal freedom, to join voluntarily the regimentation of society, in this instance represented by the army. The world in which he will live and cope is Joseph’s to choose himself. Asa does not have such an alternative. Asa’s world is one in which the "burden of guilt and responsibility" is tested; Asa must cope, if he is to cope, in the world of human contact, in the "social environs" in which he finds himself. Unlike Joseph, Asa has no other world into which he might choose to go; Asa’s choices about his brother’s family and about Kirby Allbee must all be made within his given social context.

Both protagonists are, however, existentialistic in nature; both, at any rate, do choose. They may, by culture, history, nature, even by chance, be forced into situations which require their making decisions, yet they do have the human "right" or "privilege" of choice. And this right, this privilege, this responsibility they accept: they make choices. Asa and Joseph are perhaps not aware that each is himself the one who decides, ultimately, what his fate shall be, what his life shall be. Yet the important point is that they do each decide, and in this deciding, in being capable of choice as to what their actions shall be, each is indeed subangelic man.

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60 Dutton, p. 35.
61 Dutton, p. 35.
62 Dutton, pp. 47, 51.
THE SYMBOLS IN DANGLING MAN AND THE VICTIM

Significant symbols in Dangling Man and The Victim appear to be primarily in the form of image symbols. A major, frequently recurring image symbol of both novels is the prison. The prison image is, of course, in keeping with the theme of each novel: man entrapped and imprisoned, although temporarily, by his circumstances. Joseph is ensnared in his uncertain, dangling state by the workings of draft board bureaucracy; Asa is entrapped by Allbee's accusations and demands; each is, for a time at least, a prisoner of himself.

Indeed both Joseph and Asa identify for themselves prison images in their own worlds. To Joseph the rooming-house room in which he and his wife live is a prison, a place in which he finds himself "alone ten hours a day," a place which he rarely leaves. In his report of his daily regimen Joseph shows a recognition of his prisoner status. He leaves his room for meals daily at 8:30, 1:00, and 6:00, spends each morning sitting in a rocking chair reading the morning paper--"I cover it from end to end, ritualistically, missing not a word"--fabricates an errand for himself or occasionally goes on an errand for his wife. He does attempt to maintain a contact, although an impersonal contact, with the

63Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 8.
64Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 11.
remainder of society through his newspaper and his radio. Yet he recognizes in his prisoner existence a futility, a uselessness: "Three o'clock and nothing has happened to me; three o'clock; and the dark is already setting in" 65—a symbolic dark as well as a literal one, representing the state of Joseph's mind as he tries to establish his personal freedom.

Joseph finds as well another, a greater, a more all-pervasive kind of prison, a prison of his own life forces, a prison of the spirit. "My perspectives end in the walls. Nothing of the future comes to me," he writes in his journal. "Some men seem to know exactly where their opportunities lie; they break prisons and cross whole Siberias to pursue them. One room holds me." 66 One room holds his spirit. He is unable to continue work on a series of biographical essays on the Enlightenment philosophers; he is unable to read, although his wife continues to bring home new books. He experiences an impotence of the spirit—an imprisonment of his soul as well as a physical "imprisonment" in his room.

This imprisonment of self is in turn the source of Joseph's failure to make productive use of his freedom. Joseph recognizes his failure when he says, "I am unwilling to admit that I do not know how to use my freedom . . . ." 67

65 Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 11.
66 Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 61.
67 Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 9.
and, "If I were a little less obstinate, I would confess failure and say that I do not know what to do with my freedom."\(^68\) Joseph's final acquiescence to defeat, to failure, is his request, reported toward the end of the journal, to be inducted into the army "at the earliest possible moment."\(^69\)

Finally, as Malin points out, Joseph's nightmares, in which he envisions tombs and corpses, represent "the 'tomb' of his present existence . . . suggesting that Joseph is in Hell."\(^70\) But Joseph does resist, does "put up a fight" against his spiritual hell just as he puts up a fight against his physical separateness. He sees a form of resistance in Goethe's philosophy, which he describes:

Continued life means expectation. Death is the abolition of choice. The more choice is limited, the closer we are to death. The greatest cruelty is to curtail expectations without taking away life completely . . . . The best solution would be to live as if the ordinary expectations had not been removed, not from day to day, blindly. But that requires immense self-mastery.\(^71\)

Joseph's defense against his hell is to continue to maintain expectations, to continue in his right to choose the world in which he will function, although he perhaps is not at all times aware that he has this choice.

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\(^68\) Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 100.

\(^69\) Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 122.


\(^71\) Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 98.
The Victim identifies prisons as well. Physical prisons are imagined when, at the novel's beginning, Asa is seen struggling out of a train after almost missing his stop; he is almost "imprisoned" in the train until the next stop, but manages to force his way free by sheer will. 72 This incident serves as both a retrospective view of Asa's earlier life and a premonition of his near future. Later while on a ferry to Staten Island to visit his sister-in-law and nephews; one of whom is seriously ill, Asa imagines the scene in the engine room, a kind of under-water prison: 73

It was terrible, he imagined, on a day like this, the men nearly naked in the shaft alley as the huge thing rolled in a sweat of oil, the engines laboring. Each turn must be like a repeated strain on the heart and ribs of the wipers, there near the keel, beneath the water. 74

These prisons are, according to Malin, representative of Asa's mind; Asa "will not gain his freedom--his mind is a 'box' which holds ambivalent attitudes" 75 about responsibility, about futility, about "who runs things . . . ." 76

Asa's youth and early manhood are seen as having been a prison for Asa's soul and spirit. Homeless, lacking confidence, working at jobs devoid of "future," he had come

72 Malin, pp. 154-155.
73 Malin, p. 155.
75 Malin, p. 155.
76 Bellow, The Victim, p. 256.
to feel himself helpless, without power to overcome his situation. Several years later, after having resigned a civil service post in Baltimore after the breaking of his first engagement to Mary (now his wife), Asa began again to search for employment, hoping to secure a job in the trade publication field. And again, with refusal after refusal of employment, rejection after rejection, Asa returned to his state of insecurity. This time, however, this insecurity manifested itself in outward defensiveness and bellicosity, in most instances directed toward whoever was conducting the interview; and although he realized "that he was after all defeating his own purpose . . . ."77 Asa, imprisoned by his own impotent reactions to his negative situation, cannot bring himself to behave otherwise. Also imprisoning Asa is another aspect of his personal past: his mother's mental illness. Asa fears in others and particularly in himself any sign of mental distraction, any sign of loss of mental control. Awareness of the danger of the imprisoning power of mental distraction creates another kind of prison for Asa.

Even Asa's apartment, now that his wife is away for several weeks, takes on an aspect of the prison, with "the staircase narrow and full of turns";78 with the curtains motionless before an open window; with his feeling that the rooms contained mice; with the feeling that he was threatened

77Bellow, The Victim, p. 25.
78Bellow, The Victim, p. 28.
by something while he slept."79 Asa's entire physical environment, as well as his past, reflects his impending imprisonment by Allbee or by self.

And what of Kirby Allbee, this strange figure from Asa's "past" (Allbee would certainly phrase it this way, although not Asa), this figure who possesses such a hold on Asa? Allbee's accusation that Asa deliberately caused him to lose his job for purposes of revenge; Asa's acceptance of the possibility that he might have been, although not intentionally the cause of Allbee's losing his job, indeed inadvertently responsible; and Asa's human choice to be responsible, to be his brother's keeper not only to his real brother Max but to Allbee and indeed ultimately to all mankind are the attitudes which create for Asa the strongest of prisons. Yet these prisons, and his choosing to place them about himself, are as well the strongest indications of Asa's humanness.

The image symbol weather, the daily, hourly functionings of the seasons, has been for man a constant indication of the natural presence, an all-pervasive element of nature affecting man and nearly all his endeavors. The weather image may be viewed as both affecting man and reflecting man's condition. This weather image is both affective and reflective in The Victim while it is primarily reflective in Dangling Man.

The setting of the greater part of Dangling Man is

79Bellow, The Victim, p. 30.
winter, both a physical winter and a winter for Joseph's spirit. Joseph seems to make little conscious effort to avoid contact with winter weather; he must go abroad if he is to remove himself from his prison room. He does on one occasion miss lunch in order to avoid getting his feet wet, but on other occasions he describes "a sharp wind outside; the sun, low and raw in a field of coarse clouds . . . the street . . . blown dry . . . creased and with thin sidelocks of snow, all but deserted." Following an argument with his wife, Joseph storms outside into the street; there "the intense cold of the past week had lifted [and] fog had succeeded it, rising in spongy gray blooms from the soaked walks, hovering in the yards and over the hollows . . . ." This cold, wintry, oppressive weather is indeed reflective of Joseph's depression, his aimless searching for a "self-constructive" means by which to spend his freedom. Joseph, aware and sensitive, recognizes this association with the natural phenomena. "A dark, burdensome day. I stormed up from sleep, not knowing what to do first," he writes, and later, in acute self-perception, "The cold is part of the general malignancy. I think of its fitness, as the war news comes in. You are bound to respect such a winter for its unmitigated wintriness." Joseph does not shun this natural

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80 Bellow, *Dangling Man*, p. 16.
81 Bellow, *Dangling Man*, p. 63.
82 Bellow, *Dangling Man*, p. 21.
83 Bellow, *Dangling Man*, p. 98.
state in which he can identify something of himself, something of mankind. Continuing, he quotes King Lear: "'I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness,' Lear yells. He invites their 'horrible pleasure.' He is quite right, too." The winter outdoors, as a physical element and as representative of his human state, is preferable to the imprisonment of his room. Here he can at least, in a sense, choose to meet himself in a searching confrontation.

For Asa Leventhal of *The Victim* weather is primarily a negative, oppressive, burdensome force. The opening paragraph describes a New York "as hot as Bangkok," a place of burdensome forces:

The whole continent seems to have moved from its place and slid nearer the equator, the bitter gray Atlantic to have become green and tropical, and the people, thronging the streets, barbaric fellahin among the stupendous monuments of their mystery, the lights of which, a dazzling profusion, climb upward endlessly into the heat of the sky.

This is the setting in which we first encounter Asa, as he returns from answering the summons of his sister-in-law Elena, who had called to request Asa's assistance with her small son Mickey, who is quite ill. Earlier, on his way to Elena's he encounters a cleansing thunderstorm, but then in the subway "the air was muggy; his face grew damp. The blades of the fan turned so slowly in the gloomy yellow

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84Bellow, *Dangling Man*, p. 98.
85Bellow, *The Victim*, p. 11.
86Bellow, *The Victim*, p. 11.
light that he could count the revolutions."87 Asa finds Mickey's sick room "hot, shadowy, close."88 These same images recur with each instance in which Asa is seen involved in the problems of his brother's child's illness. Heat, damp, sticky air, and oppressiveness contribute to Asa's general state of impatience and reflect his feeling of helplessness in the situation with Mickey (a seriously ill child, a mother who refuses to admit him to the hospital, a grandmother who encourages his mother's refusal).

Asa's situation with Allbee is seen in much the same imagery; an unbearable, stifling, oppressive heat represents the stifling, oppressive control which Allbee exerts over Asa.

For Asa the weather image seems at nearly all times a negative one. This is not the situation for Joseph, however. Not only does Joseph refuse to view nature as totally negative, he experiences positive reactions to nature. At the close of a day on which he has felt particularly close to Iva his wife, he awakens her so that they might share a sunset together:

We had an enormous sunset, a smashing of gaudy colors, apocalyptic reds and purples such as must have appeared on the punished bodies of great saints, blues heavy and rich.89

87 Bellow, The Victim, p. 13.
88 Bellow, The Victim, p. 17.
89 Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 82.
Yet Joseph obviously sees martyr symbols in the setting sun, and the implication may be assumed that he, of course, identifies with those great saints in their martyrdom. Joseph, who continues to find it increasingly difficult to maintain his individuality, his personal freedom, and his sense of self, sees in the oppressions of society the makings of the forces of martyrdom for himself as well as for all others. An important point, however, is that a martyr, whether he be one of the great saints, or Joseph a martyr to society in his search for personal freedom, or Asa a martyr to Allbee, is a martyr by choice, a martyr because he chooses to place himself in a situation in which he becomes a martyr. Joseph chooses to remain or not to remain a searcher for a personal freedom; Asa chooses to be responsible for Mickey and for Allbee. As long as man can choose, man is human. This aspect of choice is perhaps the most important positive implication of the sunset scene.

As Joseph progresses toward the point of decision to "collectivize,"90 his seeming sense of relief appears to reflect itself in the approaching spring: "... spring begins on Sunday. I always experience a rush of feeling on the twenty-first of March. 'Thank heavens, I've made it again!"91 But later descriptions of weather seem to indicate a "wavering" or a regret at the imminent decision to

90 Dutton, p. 35.
91 Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 113.
collectivize: "It was a slaty, windy day with specks of snow sliding through the trees." Later in the week, however, a morning which "began dull and numb" later "brightened miraculously." Later in this same day Joseph returns from a walk:

The room... was as full of this yellow [sunlight] as an egg is of yolk. In honor of the transformation in the weather, I decided to clean up for supper and, as I stood changing my shirt in the unaccustomed brilliance of the mirror, I observed new folds near my mouth and, around my eyes and the root of my nose, marks that had not been there a year before... I shrugged them off as inevitable, the price of experience, an outlay that had better be made ungrudgingly, since it was bound in any case to be collected.

While this erratic weather is symptomatic of Joseph's reluctance to accept his decision to collectivize as right, there are indications of his coming reconciliation with his decision. Thus as Joseph tries to be a sort of Renaissance man, attempting "to strike a balance between what he wants and what he is compelled to do, between the necessity and the wish," he often consciously reflects the Renaissance tradition of the natural phenomenon of weather reflecting the natural phenomenon of the state of man's soul and spirit.

The color image, often appearing in the description of weather, appears primarily as a negative image, either

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92 Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 113.
93 Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 114.
94 Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 115.
95 Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 121.
through tradition or as a result of the context in which it appears. This situation is most certainly found in The Victim. In the same situations in which negative prison images and negative weather images occur are found repeatedly the same color images. Greens, blacks, blues, browns, reds abound: a "green and tropical" Atlantic; black doors; black air; glass-blue summer air; the black hair and eyes of Elena, whom Asa fears to be "distracted" and too excitable; factories brown and red in the sunset light of a too-warm summer evening; "the hot green netting of the bridges." Situations in which Asa is confronted by Allbee contain these negative color images as well. The fountain in the park in which they first meet flows with a "green leaden glint"; Allbee's eyes are a "green and leaden color" and later a brooding blue. Asa imagines a physical closeness with Allbee in which he can see "the color of the blood in his ear." Mickey's grandmother, Elena's mother, presents totally an aura of black in her dress, in her physical features, and in her attitude, as Asa imagines it, of displeasure and disgrace at her daughter's having married a Jew. These color symbols, negative by tradition or by context, are

96 Bellow, The Victim, p. 11.
97 Bellow, The Victim, p. 40.
98 Bellow, The Victim, p. 31.
99 Bellow, The Victim, p. 35.
100 Bellow, The Victim, p. 99.
much in keeping with Asa's feeling of entrapment, helplessness, and futility in handling the situations with his sick nephew and with Allbee: black representing doom, evil, death, and fear; brown standing as a less intense and somewhat ambiguous form of this doom, evil, death, and fear; green representing in some contexts growth or fertility but in other contexts representing death or lividness; blue representing perhaps a dark, stormy sea (image of the "voyage of life"), perhaps innocence (Asa's innocence in the face of Allbee's accusations); and red representing emotion, fire, passion, death wounds, and blood.\textsuperscript{101} These color images are representative of Asa's unawareness of his human potential for self-determination: as the retreating, darker colors from the group above represent "passivity and debilitation,"\textsuperscript{102} so does Asa believe himself to be unable to control and to influence his situation.

Joseph the dangling man also records color images. His is a physical world of blacks and grays, of brown leaves and dirty snow, colors fitting for the world of one who feels increasingly that he cannot maintain a personal freedom against a world which emphasizes and favors the collective society.

Even as Joseph experiences personal relief upon making a definite decision to join this collective society,

\textsuperscript{101}Cirlot, pp. 50-52.

\textsuperscript{102}Cirlot, p. 50.
as represented by the positive reaction he experiences to the colors of a late winter sunset, and even as he experiences a feeling of enlightenment while standing in a yellow sunlight-filled room (with yellow representing intuition or illumination\textsuperscript{103}), Asa's world tends to become filled with soft reds and yellows, positive colors,\textsuperscript{104} at the time of his final decision to rid himself of Allbee because Allbee will not permit himself to be helped, and later at a time in which Asa's "consciousness of an unremitting daily fight . . . was fainter and less troubling," at a time in which he had "lost the feeling that he had, as he used to say, 'got away with it,' his guilty sense of relief and the accompanying sense of infringement."\textsuperscript{105}

In keeping with the negative red color image, in a few instances in \textit{Dangling Man} and \textit{The Victim} there appears the blood image. The major instance of the blood image in \textit{The Victim} occurs during the first confrontation between Asa and Allbee in the following conversation:

"I haven't thought about you in years, frankly," Asa told Allbee, "and I don't know why you think I care whether you exist or not. What, are we related?"
"By blood? No, no . . . heavens!" Allbee laughed.\textsuperscript{106}

The irony of this conversation is heightened in a

\textsuperscript{103}Girlot, pp. 51-52.
\textsuperscript{104}Girlot, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{105}Bellow, \textit{The Victim}, p. 248.
\textsuperscript{106}Bellow, \textit{The Victim}, p. 34.
later conversation at the time when Allbee and Asa's brother, Max, are introduced by Asa. "Your brother? I didn't know you had one," Allbee says. "Only one," is Asa's reply. This, of course, is not true for Asa. Asa considers anything less than being one's brother's keeper to be less than human; and Asa, as witnessed particularly in his acceptance of responsibility for a hand in creating Allbee's current state, considers himself to have more than one brother. This brother relationship Allbee seems to recognize in his answer that he and Asa are not related "by blood." The difference, however, is of course that Asa tends to view the brother's keeper philosophy in terms of his responsibility to other men, while Allbee views this philosophy in terms of other men's responsibility to him.

For Joseph in Dangling Man blood images are not so positive. He has taken a blood test as a part of his induction process (a process both creating and representative of his personal conflict). While helping to nurse his father-in-law, Almstadt, who is ill, Joseph encounters subtle negative reaction on the part of his mother-in-law to his state of inactivity (he had resigned his job upon receiving his first induction notice and has not sought another). Shortly after this "incident" (which Joseph has prevented from becoming an argument by making no response), he goes to the kitchen of the Almstadt home where he encounters a partially

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107 Bellow, The Victim, pp. 205-206.
cleaned chicken "which raveled over the sopping draining board and splattered the enamel with blood." Later when he happens upon a former friend from his Communist party days (a much younger Joseph had, as he admits, been a Communist) who considers Joseph to have "sold out" upon leaving Communism, Joseph defends his action by accusing the man of adhering to a useless, out-dated philosophy: "I know his mind . . . the rest have compromised themselves to the ears, but he still believes in the revolution. Blood will run, the power will change hands . . . ."

In all instances the blood image appears for Joseph as a negative image, one related to his existence in his state of uncertainty, related to ideas and philosophies which have failed him in his search for freedom. For Asa Leventhal the blood image is ambiguous, relating to his feeling and belief of responsibility to others, which is at once his prison and his humanity.

Finally, in both Dangling Man and The Victim there appears the image of light: sunlight, lamplight, and streetlight. The scene of an unpleasant evening for Joseph in the home of his rather wealthy and self-important brother is one in which "a weak lamp, burns in one corner . . . [with] one band of light crossing the curtain [and] the rest of the room . . . nearly dark." On a winter afternoon which is

108Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 17.
110Bellow, Dangling Man, p. 44.
to Joseph wonderful and beautiful, Joseph reports the scene outside and then its effect upon the indoor scene: "The light gave an air of innocence to some of the common objects in the room." Joseph's realization that new wrinkles in his face are "inevitable, the price of experience. . . ." takes place in a room filled with warm yellow sunlight. And Joseph's final decision concerning his personal freedom and his resistance to "collectivizing" comes as he walks in the rain out of a dark street toward "the static shower of lights in the street ahead." He muses, "I believe I had known for some time that the moment I had been waiting for had come, and that it was impossible to resist any longer. I must give myself up." And Joseph directs his steps toward the draft board office.

Asa Leventhal also experiences moments of illumination or awareness which are accompanied by images of light. A lamp rather than sunlight illuminates the apartment of Elena, Asa's sister-in-law, when he visits her sick child; and later, as the child is being taken to a hospital, Asa observes "the boy's eyes with the light of the [taxi] meter on them." Scenes between Asa and Allbee are accompanied by

111Bellow, *Dangling Man*, p. 79.
112Bellow, *Dangling Man*, p. 144.
113Bellow, *Dangling Man*, p. 121.
114Bellow, *Dangling Man*, p. 121.
115Bellow, *The Victim*, p. 65.
yellowed lamps gathering insects, dimly-lighted rooms, and a lamp shining in the gray and blue air.

In these scenes illumination does occur for the protagonists. Joseph realizes and even accepts the distance and the difference between his brother and himself. The "air of innocence" that a sunny winter afternoon gives to his room is in marked contrast to his vision before and after that this room is a prison. And his realization that changing physical appearance is inevitable and that he has no choice but to choose to "collectivize" are not realizations which he enjoys reaching. Asa's awareness of "hopeless" situations with both his nephew Mickey and with Kirby Allbee cannot be pleasant realizations.

Yet as negative as these revelations and realizations are to Joseph and to Asa, they are at the very least revelations, illuminations, perceptions. And in this self-knowledge may Asa and Joseph be able to find saving virtue for themselves. As Girlot states, "... to become illuminated is to become aware of a source of light, and, in consequence, of spiritual strength."116

116Girlot, p. 179.
Chapter 4

CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing study produces three major conclusions. First, significant symbols in both *Dangling Man* and *The Victim* appear as image symbols rather than as object symbols. Second, the majority of symbols in both novels are negative rather than positive in tone, in keeping with the critical evaluation that Bellow's protagonists find themselves beset by conflicts and oppression from their culture, their personal history, and the self. An exception to the occurrence of these negative-toned symbols is the appearance of positive symbols in terms of the protagonist's self-enlightenment and awareness; the protagonist, beset by these conflicts, becomes truly human when he reaches a point of decision-making, whether he realizes or not that he is fulfilling his human potential of self-direction through the choices he makes. Third, major symbols in both novels occur, for the most part, in the form of "natural" rather than "artificial" or man-made images.

The major symbols appearing in *Dangling Man* and *The Victim*—the prison, weather, color, blood, and light—are image symbols. These symbols appear not as objects but as groupings of objects, events, situations, or conditions.
Individual, isolated objects do not appear as major symbols in either work.

The majority of symbols appearing in Dangling Man and The Victim are negative in tone. The prison image appears as a reflection of their mental, spiritual, and psychological confinement for both Joseph and Asa. Joseph is physically "imprisoned" by his room and by his routine. Asa imagines prisons in his physical world: a train, a ferry, his apartment. Joseph and Asa also find themselves symbolically (psychologically, spiritually, and mentally) imprisoned. Joseph is imprisoned in his search for a personal freedom and in his inability to maintain this personal freedom. Asa is imprisoned in his entrapment by his personal past and by Allbee's accusations. Neither Joseph nor Asa realizes that he does control his own situation through his decision-making.

Weather presents for Joseph the physical cold of winter, for Asa the oppressive heat of summer. This cold weather is reflective of the depression into which Joseph falls as he remains in his state of uncertainty and indecision. This oppressive heat is reflective of the oppression which Asa feels as he attempts to cope with the illness of his nephew Mickey and with Allbee. This failure of Joseph and of Asa to recognize their human potential for self-determination is reflected in the weather images.

Major color images, particularly blacks, blues, greens, and browns, are negative, either from traditional meaning or
from the context in which they occur. These color images appear for Joseph and for Asa in descriptions of situations which for them are negative, primarily because they do not recognize that they are in control of these situations: Joseph seeks to maintain his personal freedom; Asa seeks to fulfill his responsibility to his nephew and to resolve his conflict with Allbee. Both Joseph and Asa function without recognizing their capacity for self-determination.

The blood image is, for Joseph particularly, a negative image. This image appears for him as both the cause and the result of his state of indecisiveness. This blood image relates directly to his indecisive state in terms of a blood test which is a part of the process of his induction into the service and indirectly to this state as a description of a political and personal philosophy in which he has not been able to find a means to personal freedom. For Asa the blood image is ambiguous, relating both positively and negatively to his blood-relationship with his sick nephew and to his non-blood relationship to Allbee. Both of these relationships create for Asa unpleasant and troublesome responsibilities; but Asa's acceptance of these responsibilities is for him not only an instance of imprisonment but an indication of his humanity. Yet Asa, as Joseph, is not aware of his responsibility for controlling these situations.

Other positive images occur in both Dangling Man and The Victim. Both weather and color images appear in a positive context in terms of Joseph's recognition and acceptance
of the limitations which are placed upon the personal freedom of an individual. Positive color images are seen for Asa in terms of actions which he takes in order to resolve his conflict with Allbee.

For both protagonists the image of light represents a positive situation of awareness, self-understanding, and illumination. Again, however, neither Joseph nor Asa recognizes that these positive color and light images also relate to their decisions to control their situations.

The major symbols appearing in Dangling Man and The Victim are, for the most part, "natural" and not "artificial" images. Weather, color, and blood each are naturally occurring images, not dependent upon man for their existence. The prison image is presented as an artificial or man-made image, while the image of light is presented as both natural and artificial.
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