CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION
D.H. Lawrence said that to be an artist, one has to be terribly religious. The writers considered in this thesis seem to bear out the truth of this statement. One has only to point out certain obvious similarities among their later works in this connection. Seymour, the protagonist of the later works of Salinger, is a poet. Saul Bellow's Sammler speaks of the 'aesthetic consumption of the environment.' The major characters in Malamud's The Tenants and Rembrandt's Hat are also artists. With all these artist figures, the works of these writers acquire a deeply religious note. On the basis of this common denominator, further generalizations are possible. In Salinger, alienation is moral and community is transcendental. In Bellow, alienation is spiritual — in the sense that it goes beyond social sanctions — and community is humanistic. In Malamud, alienation as well as community are essentially products of the Jewish sensibility. Consequently, while Salinger's humanism springs from his transcendental, religious stance, Bellow's religious note proceeds from his humanistic commitments. In Malamud the humanistic and the religious are telescoped in terms of the rich Jewish heritage.

Though the concept of a community outlined here is essentially a spiritual and existential one, the context in which it occurs can make a major difference of aesthetic value.
The point can be illustrated by briefly referring to the novels discussed in Chapter I. In *Don Quixote*, it is not in the context of some social structure only that community occurs, but in relation to an entire cultural order. In *The Outsider*, Meursault's tirade against the priest is as much a confirmation of his own certitude as a quarrel with an entire cultural heritage. In *Dr. Zhivago*, the spiritual community that Lara and Yuri achieve is constantly related to the impersonal forces of history as they disruptingly move across the huge landscape of Russian culture. Similarly, in *The Tin Drum*, the dwarf drumming his loneliness and yearning for community becomes a symbolic comment on modern European culture.

It will be seen that all the three novelists, J.D. Salinger, Saul Bellow, and Bernard Malamud also display their concern with community in a cultural context of varying degrees. The best works of these writers exemplify the rich cultural context in which spiritual epiphany of community occurs. Thus one reason why, "For Esme - with Love and Squalor" remains superior to *The Catcher in the Rye* is that while the former has a rich cultural context in which the dialectic of isolation and brotherhood is worked out, the latter operates mostly in a thick social context. Similarly, *Herzog* remains Bellow's best book because it projects community in the context of pan-European cultural reality. Finally, Malamud reaches his heights in *The Fixer* because the novel acts out the loneliness-community tension in relation to two cultures.
confronting each other on certain basic issues of the human condition.

Depending on the norms adopted, there will always be differences of opinion about the best work these novelists have produced. But a convincing statement of general validity should be made. It is a measure of the maturity the contemporary American novel has achieved that all the three writers, Salinger, Bellow and Malamud explore the creative dialectic between alienation and community in authentic cultural contexts, informed by a religious vision. This is what every serious fiction writer has done -- singing angelic songs of heaven right at the heart of hell.

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