

# The Struggle for a Voice in Saul Bellow's *Dangling Man*

ソール・ベロー 『宙ぶらりんの男』 の声獲得への苦闘

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[Abstract] During World War II, Saul Bellow began writing his first novel *Dangling Man* just after having given up publishing *The Very Dark Tree*, a lost novel written during the prewar time. The plot of this unpublished novel was remembered by his friends, although the manuscript was destroyed by Bellow himself. According to their account, *The Very Dark Tree* is a story about an intellectual man who shuts himself in an underground room when he suffers an identity crisis. Both novels center on protagonists who experience an ambiguity of identity. In spite of the similarity between these works, their contexts are different. The protagonist of *The Very Dark Tree* stays underground, just like the underground man in Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*, the influence of which over *Dangling Man* has often been pointed out. On the other hand, *Dangling Man's* protagonist Joseph is not an underground man but rather an aboveground man. His rooms, as illustrated in the story, are all located on the upper floors of a building in which the residents share the sounds of daily life. That is, although the rooms are visually closed surrounded by walls, they are aurally open, not isolated. Since *Dangling Man* was published, it has received favorable attention for its description of the psychology of an American citizen during World War II. However, more than a few critics have pointed out weaknesses in the plot as well as the lack of links between each incident in the novel. Cognitive space as perceived spatially by the ear is emphasized by Marshall McLuhan and Yi-Fu Tuan when they call it auditory space. By focusing on the rooms as auditory space, Joseph's struggle for his voice is consistently clarified throughout the novel. Although he would like to live in harmony with the sounds, he cannot abide this acoustic environment during wartime. Joseph is deprived of his voice until he chooses to enlist in the army. This is the only choice for him, and his last cry is "Hurray" for going to the front as a soldier, despite his longing for peace and his unwillingness to fight. Highlighting this wartime swansong, the aboveground rooms in *Dangling Man* depicts the ruined harmony of citizen life during the war.

[Key Words] auditory space, World War II, *The Very Dark Tree*, sound, voice, swansong

[要旨] 第二次世界大戦参戦直後のアメリカで、ソール・ベローは初めての小説になるはずだった『とても暗い木』の出版化に奔走していた。だが、戦前に執筆されたこの作品が世に出ることはなく、代わりに書き上げられたのが『宙ぶらりんの男』である。『とても暗い木』の原稿は既に本人によって破棄されているものの、そのストーリーは明らかにされている。それによると、主人公はアイデンティティの危機をきっかけに地下室に籠るに至った知識人の男であり、両作品は類似している。ただし、地下室の男という設定は、これまで『宙ぶらりんの男』への影響が多く指摘されてきたドストエフスキーの『地下室の

手記』を想起させる。一方、『宙ぶらりんの男』の主人公は地下室に籠る男ではない。本作の中に主人公の部屋は複数描かれているが、いずれも地上階に位置する。『宙ぶらりんの男』に特徴的なこの部屋に着目すると、視覚的には閉鎖的な反面、聴覚的に開放的な空間が浮かび上がる。『宙ぶらりんの男』は戦時下の若者の心理を鮮やかに描出しているとして出版当時から高い評価を受けながら、そのプロットの弱さが指摘されてきた。日記形式で綴られたこの小説に描かれている一つ一つの出来事に相互の繋がりが見られないと批判する声も少なくない。しかし、マーシャル・マクルーハンやイーファー・トゥアンなどが注目した聴覚で捉える空間認識という視座から主人公の聴覚空間の変化を辿ることによって、本作に貫かれる音と声をめぐる葛藤を読み解くことができる。平和を希求しながら入隊を決意した主人公が最終的に上げる歓声はスワンソングであり、『宙ぶらりんの男』には、戦時下のアメリカで音と生活との調和が脅かされ、声の支配と抑圧をも免れない一市民の苦闘が刻まれている。

[キーワード] 聴覚空間、第二次世界大戦、『とても暗い木』、音、声、スワンソング

## Introduction

Saul Bellow (1915-2005) described his first novel *Dangling Man* (1944) as “the complete wartime swansong of ‘a righteous man’” (*Letters* 21). Although this remark has not been well discussed, it characterizes this work and reveals Bellow’s interest in musical voices. The “swansong” specifically refers to the last cry on the “last civilian day” (191) by Joseph, the narrator -protagonist, who decides to enlist the army after dangling life for a year. Although Joseph expresses his desire for peace and “a group whose covenants forbade spite, bloodiness, and cruelty” (39) in his journal, he shouts “Hurray” (191) for going to the front as a soldier in the end.

This final declaration may sound ambiguous, as many critics have pointed out. Published in the U.S. during World War II when the peace and quiet of daily life for the citizens was threatened, *Dangling Man* received favorable attention for Bellow’s insight. Edmund Wilson praised it for “one of the most honest pieces of testimony on the psychology of a whole generation who have grown up during the depression and the war” (78). Concerning its narrative structure, however, more than a few critics have pointed out the weak plot as well as the lack of noticeable events. There seems to be “no apparent link between one incident and another and, consequently, no dramatic progression” (Baumbach 131). Also, there seems “no organized plot, no dramatic interaction among characters working toward a resolution” (Clayton 57). It is true that this novel written in diary format seemingly demonstrates Joseph’s impulsive behaviors and confused thoughts instead of formulating the unity of action. However, Joseph’s striving for a musical voice organizes the stories throughout the journal. To clarify this storyline, this paper will conceive of the feature of Joseph’s environment as auditory space, thereby examining his conflicts by focusing on each room in which he is deprived of voice till his final decision of enlistment.

## 1 *The Dangling Man's* Rooms as Auditory Space

In order to consider Joseph's auditory space, the area of discussion needs to be clarified. Keeping the diary from December 15th in 1942 to April 9th in 1943, Joseph has lived in Mrs. Kiefer's rooming house with his wife Iva, in Chicago. However, the discussion cannot be limited to this but should include the other rooms where he also faces troubles over acoustic environment. Before moving into the rooming house, he has already "began to dangle" (11). Joseph who is twenty-seven years old and expects to be drafted quits the job at the travel bureau. Nevertheless, he is enforced to wait for the induction into the U.S. army. The draft is repeatedly postponed due to his uncertain identity, for he is Canadian by birth despite living in the U.S. for eighteen years. Joseph is a dangling man "because he is helpless to affect, or effect, his own destiny" (Pifer 28). Such an uncontrollable and unrest state is reflected in his trouble before moving to the rooming house, as discussed in detail later. Therefore, the argument will begin with the Gesell's apartment followed by the houses such as Servatius's, Almstadt's, Joseph's brother Amos's, and Mrs. Kiefer's rooming house, and end with his father's house where Joseph has spent his youth.

These rooms have in common that they are located on the second or higher floor. Since published, *Dangling Man* has been compared to Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1864). As Philipp Code asserts that this novel is "clearly inspired by Dostoyevsky's *Underground Man*" (12). And the critics have regarded Joseph's room in the Gesell's rooming house as a closed and isolated environment as Dostoyevsky's underground man's. However, Joseph lives there with his wife and have a conversation with other people unlike the underground man. Although Joseph calls this room as a "six-sided box" (91) where his "perspectives end in the walls" (92), he hears sounds from every quarter in the room aboveground.

The environment in *Dangling Man* should be compared with Bellow's unpublished story *The Very Dark Trees* as well as Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*. Just before starting on *Dangling Man*, Bellow gave up publishing it in 1942 and destroyed "the sole manuscript" (Leader 241) of this lost novel. Although it does not exist now, according to Bellow's biographer James Atlas, the outline of the story has been told to Bellow's friends such as Nathan Gould:

Written in the first person, it concerned an English professor named Jim, "an enlightened Southerner" who, on his way home from teaching at a midwestern university, is struck as if by a bolt of lightning and finds himself turned black. When he gets home, his wife doesn't recognize him at first, then locks him in the basement so he won't alarm the neighbors. "The Very Dark Trees" was both a fable about the

tenuous nature of identity and a caustic tale of liberal Southerner confronted by the reality of prejudice.” (Atlas 77)

There are a lot of similarities between *The Very Dark Trees* and *Dangling Man*. In the first place, both protagonists are married and intellectual. Also, Jim encounters an identity crisis which is beyond his control, just like Joseph whose identity as American is questioned. Then, because of such an uncertain identity, both Jim and Joseph start staying indoors unemployed. On the other hand, there is a crucial difference; Jim, unlike Joseph, secludes himself in the underground room to avoid communicating with other people. In other words, Jim stays alone in a voiceless basement. In *Dangling Man* which was published instead of the story of Jimmy the underground man, the acoustic environment is a distinguishing feature.

As for the acoustic aspects of environment, Marshall McLuhan offers an idea of auditory space in contrast to visual space. Auditory space is a cognitive space perceived spatially by the ear as McLuhan explains:

The eye focuses, pinpoints, abstracts, locating each object in physical space, against a background; the ear, however, favors sound from any direction. We hear equally well from right or left, front or back, above or below. If we lie down, it makes no difference, whereas in visual space the entire spectacle is altered. We can shut out the visual field by simply closing our eyes, but we are always triggered to respond to sound. (Carpenter and McLuhan 67-68)

Here is a suggestion that a visually closed space is not always closed in auditory space. Surrounded by sounds and voices, spaces are open enough for communication. This circumstance characterizes the rooms of the protagonist in *Dangling Man*. Although Joseph feels his “perspectives ends in walls” (92), he aurally hears sounds outside his room with his acute hearing.

## 2 The Voices under Control

The discussion will begin with a room in the Gesell’s apartment where Joseph starts his dangling life. Joseph has lived there with his wife Iva on the second floor until he resigns his job to join the army. This apartment is not a good environment for the stability of living. The landlord’s wife Mrs. Gesell is an amateur sculptor, and her workshop is in the basement. Since she works there on her art with a machine-powered chisel every day, she always makes the house trembled and “a daily racket in her shop downstairs” (142-3). Moreover, the heating equipment is useless in the winter because of the broken furnace. Although the landlord Mr. Gesell is an engineer, he fails to finish fixing it properly enough, which freezes Joseph’s room in the cold winter of Chicago. Joseph lives in distressed circumstances in the Gesell’s apartment.

Joseph nonetheless complains little about the noise and the bitter cold until his music is interrupted. Willing to make peace" (145), Joseph gets along with them, but he loses self-control when the electricity fault stops a music which he is listening to with Iva in the room. Joseph never conceals his anger any more but uses violence on Mr. Gesell. After hitting him "repeatedly" into his chest, belly and mouth, Joseph finally feels his anger vanished and regains composure. It is, however, too late to implore forgiveness; Mr. Gesell cries out to Joseph to be ejected from his apartment after all. When he is deprived of his favorite sound, Joseph finds that he has no voice in the rented apartment, and he starts his dangling life.

When Joseph recalls the Gesell's apartment, he obviously focuses on the sounds there although it has been less discussed before. His memory about this apartment begins with "a daily racket" (142) and ends with his shouting because of his music disturbed. Joseph's conflicts under the war are expressed through his behaviors toward his acoustic circumstances. Although this episode is recollected by Joseph in February 1943, it has happened from January to February in 1942, just after the U.S. has entered the World War II. Joseph never refers to the war, but he reveals his disquiet about the approaching war through expressing the rumbling sounds. And the interruption of his music triggers off his violent attitudes. Joseph who can tolerate toward both loud noises and intense cold in the building cannot accept losing his music. Despite that, he cannot regain his music, but Mr. Gesell shouts him down into silence. Joseph's room in the Gesell's apartment reveals his keen auditory sense and hopelessness to get hold of auditory space for his own music in the Gesell's apartment.

The next to be analyzed is a party room at the Servatius's house, which is also an unpleasant environment for Joseph. According to his recollection, he joins the Servatius party with Iva in March 1942, just after his fighting against Mr. Gesell as seen above. From the very first, Joseph is unwilling to go to the party even though most of his friends are gathering there, as he clearly says: "I did not want to go. It was Iva who insisted" (40). And no sooner has he arrived, he regrets to be there because the "heat and stridency of the party burst upon" him through the open door" (41). He remembers Minna Servatius has cried at that time with "alarming suddenness" to make an announce to his friends: "Sound the gong, they're here" (41). Then, in the living room, he is annoyed at noisy voice; a loud music from the phonograph without listener; people busying on talking or arguing. In the end, Joseph is angered when he watches his friend Morris Abt hypnotizes Minna. It is Minna, of course, who has asked him to be hypnotized as an entertainment at the party, but Joseph uncomfortably regards it is Morris's revenge on Minna, for she has jilted him before. After leaving the party with his displeasure, he has "an uneasy, dream-ridden night" (57). He starts avoiding his friends thereafter. That is, these experiences at the Servatius's house determine Joseph to give up the community which he has belonged to.

The party room in the Servatius's house is depicted by focusing on Joseph's irritation over sounds. This is at first seen in his annoyance with the noise at the entrance, and then in the living room as above. Not only that, but his angry response to the hypnotism is also his resentment over an aggression against auditory space because it is the behavior of Morris's controlling auditory space of Minna. When Minna hypnotized in public shows her consciousness too dim to answer any questions by Morris, Joseph cannot stand by and see Minna who is lying down in the room any longer. At that night, what shocks him as terribly as he cannot fall asleep is the hypnosis which deprives her voice helplessly. Thus, his memory of the Servatius's party room discloses his irritation at both uncontrollable noises and invasion of auditory space.

### 3 Citizen Life in Harmony with Sounds

The discussion is to move on the acoustic environment of Mrs. Kiefer's rooming house, where Joseph starts writing this journal. Just at the almost same time as he goes to the Servatius party, he moves into this rooming house with Iva. While Iva is working outside by day, Joseph almost stays indoor by himself, for he has kept away from his friends since the Servatius party. He feels isolated there as he says: "I, in this room, separate, alienated, distrustful, find in my purpose not an open world, but a closed, hopeless jail" (92). He seems to stay alone there silently in the room.

However, as regards the acoustic environment, this room is not closed but rather open. Surrounded by other rooms, the location of this aboveground room supports its openness in the first place, as briefly referred to in the preceding chapter. Secondly, the nature of this rooming house provides an open environment for his room. Because the tenants of this house have no telephone, no mail box, no toilet, nor kitchen in their room personally, they frequently need to open the door and go down stairs for everyday life. In other words, this circumstance enforces Joseph to meet people and talk each other. Thirdly, the rooming house is not soundproof but the walls in this rooming house are thin enough for all the residents to share sounds of daily life. While staying alone in the room, Joseph cannot avoid hearing sounds outside as he expresses in the journal one day at nearly noon:

Into the silence of the house there fall accentuating sounds, the closing of a door in another room, the ticking of drops from a faucet, the rustling of the steam in the radiator, the thrum of a sewing machine upstairs. The unmade bed, the walls, are brightly striped. The made knocks and pushes open the door. (15)

He intends to depict the prison like condition of the room when he looks at the "striped" walls. Yet as his description about the sounds reveals, his room in the rooming house has no wall in the aspect of auditory space.

Finally, the landlord characterizes this house as auditory space. Mrs. Kiefer is an old woman who is “blind” and “must be close to ninety” (16). She has managed this house by herself with her keen hearing for a long time. By focusing on the visual impairment, a geographer Yi-Fu Tuan gives attention to auditory space like McLuhan. In *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Tuan points out the visually impaired “can extrapolate from their experience of auditory space and of freedom in movement to envisage in their minds’ eyes panoramic views and boundless space” and he emphasizes “their experience of auditory space” (16). Employing Tuan’s appreciation of the “mind’s eyes,” this rooming house is a boundless space for Mrs. Kiefer. She has skillfully viewed the house with her mind’s eyes while catching the sounds and voices of the tenants. That is, the auditory openness of the house which is filled with sounds have provided an important measure for the minds’ eyes to the landlord.

However, this harmony between sounds and life in the rooming house is disturbed little by little, and the sounds are finally unwelcome in 1942. Since Mrs. Kiefer becomes bedridden in the fall, Mrs. Briggs as “the landlady’s daughter” cautions the residents not to make a sound “too loudly” (16). The sounds are not vital for the landlord but become just noises. Accordingly, Joseph also becomes annoyed at the sounds in the house, in contrast to his tolerance for the noises in the Gesell’s apartment as discussed. His intolerance to the sounds appears prominently in the description of Vanaker who lives next door to Joseph. He is irritated to hear Mr. Vanaker’s “coughing and growling” (16) and other noises as Joseph writes: “Mr. Vanaker coughs. Not only that, but when he goes to the toilet he leaves the door ajar. He tramps down the hall, and a moment later you hear him splashing” (17). As Joseph is annoyed, sounds are not helpful but bothering in the rooming house.

Joseph’s sensitivity to sound is seen in other places he visits at that time. For example, in the Almstadt’s house, he is annoyed at telephone talks of Mrs. Almstadt, who is his mother in law. He finds the “telephone was never idle for more than five minutes” (19) and “it was impossible not to hear her; she was a high, atonal voice which penetrates everywhere” (20) in the house. Joseph reveals his irritation over it to his father in law, but he never obtains any agreement. Instead, Mr. Almstadt reproves Joseph for his narrow-mindedness as he angrily says, “I don’t pay any attention to it. All women are talkers. Maybe Katy talks more than most, but you got to allow for that” (21). Against his reproach, Joseph decides not to talk as he expresses in his journal: “We were on better terms by this time. But I would not be drawn into a conversation. If I kept silent, I could not make another mistake. If I began to talk I would soon find myself explaining my position and defending my idleness.” (23) In the Almstadt’ house, he loses his voice while distressed over the noises which his acute ear catches.

Another example is shown in a rooming house where Kitty Daumler lives. Expecting to

enjoy talking with her, Joseph visits Kitty who is his ex-girlfriend. It is a while since last time he has come to see Kitty, and he wants to talk with her because she is a good listener as he says: "She liked me, liked listening to me" (101). However, Kitty shuts the door to Joseph because she has another man there. Missing a comfortable conversation in her room, he goes downstairs to get out of this house. Then he shows his hypersensitive hearing: "From various parts of the house there were sounds: of splashing and frying, of voices raised in argument or lowered in appeasement or persuasion, singing popular-songs" and "of chiming telephones, of the janitor's blooming radio one floor below" (104). His sensitivity to sound becomes keen when he loses a chance to be listened by her. Kitty's rooming house shows there is no room for Joseph to have a voice to be listened.

#### 4 A Voice in the Wartime Swansong

Joseph starts writing the journal with his rejection of "hard-boiled" (9) value. While he considers "this is an era of hardboiled-dom," he mocks this Hemingway-code as he declares at the beginning: "Do you have emotions? Strangle them. To a degree, everyone obeys this code. And it does admit of a limited kind of candor, a closemouthed straightforwardness... If you have difficulties, grapple with them silently, foes one of their commandments. To hell with that!" (9). What Joseph turns down here is "a closemouthed" states. He would like to be talkative rather than silent as he declares, "I intend to talk about mine, and if I had as many mouths as Siva has arms and kept them going all the time, I still could not do myself justice." (9) In other words, *Dangling Man* begins with a thirst to raise a voice.

Joseph's aspiration to have voice relates to his ardent desire for music. Joseph desperately tries to secure the space for his chosen music. He at first shows his tenacious attachment to music in Gesell's apartment as discussed. And next, he eagerly needs music in Mrs. Kiefer's rooming house. When he comes back home, he immediately turns on the radio to listens to the music. He enjoys "half an hour of symphonic music" (15). Then he finally demonstrates for what he needs music so much in Amos's house. Amos is Joseph's brother, and unlike Joseph he is a successful businessman who married a wealthy woman. When Joseph and Iva are invited to Christmas dinner at Amos's large house, he feels uncomfortable at the table and escapes to a music room in the attic. What he does while listening to the music there is shown in this scene:

It was the first movement, the adagio, that I cared most about. Its sober opening notes, preliminaries to a thoughtful confession, showed me that I was still an apprentice in suffering and humiliation. I had not even begun. I had, furthermore, no right to expect to avoid them. So much was immediately clear. (67)

He is enraptured by a dialogue with himself over the music. As John Clayton appreciates



Joseph's experience in this environment, the "truth sheds light on the passage in which Joseph listens to Haydn in the music room" (Clayton 67). Joseph is delighted because the music has "showed" his current state, that is, he needs auditory space filled with his favorite music to listen to his inner voice.

It is, however, difficult for Joseph to maintain such an auditory space. For example, to begin with Gesell's apartment, he cannot keep listening to the music because of the broken basic services for daily life such as radiators and electricity. What is worse, he has no right to fix them nor to stay living in the apartment, for he is not the property owner. Next, in Mrs. Kiefer's rooming house, the radio he enjoys listening to is interrupted by the announcer who "begins to advertise someone's credit-clothing" (15). Joseph cannot devote himself to his comfortable sounds because of his financial situation. Finally, in the music room at Amos's house, he is pleased with himself by repeatedly playing a record, but nonetheless he is disturbed by Amos's only child Etta. Etta is sixteen years old, and as a daughter of wealthy parents she looks down on her wretched uncle. Insisting that both the phonograph and the record belong to her as well as the room, she orders Joseph to return the music room to her. She eventually attacks Joseph with a violent remark: "Beggars can't be choosers!" (70). Although he can "hear the others running upstairs" to the music room (71), he despicably uses violence to punish Etta who he thinks is spoiled. Joseph is suffered from dissonance "not merely between the military world and the civilian world, but between the material world of action and the ideal world of thought" (Porter 6). Held in contempt by his family, Joseph leaves the house without saying anything. As these examples show, the economic difficulties divest Joseph of his room for music, that is, his voice.

Joseph's monologue comes to an impasse. After talking to himself on the journal for two months, he finds himself talking with "the Spirit of Alternatives" (134) in his room at Mrs. Kiefer's. This Spirit that is "an unseen voice" (Fishman 627) plays a role of responsive voice to Joseph. Responsive voice encourages speakers to talk. The Spirit is, as its another names, "*But on the Other Hand or 'Tu As Raison Aussi'*" (135), suggest, an assistant to help Joseph to find various approaches to solve his problems. "This Spirit, of course acts as Joseph's other self" (Dutton) to help him speak of his "ideal" (153). With the responses from the Spirit, Joseph expects to make his "separate destiny" (168) clear. However, Joseph is not satisfied with the sort of virtual conversations which he has two times. The first dialogue irritates Joseph and the second one makes him feel sick at the very end of the discussions. There is a limit to what a silent monologue can do in the end. The novel progresses with Joseph's transition "from optimistic to pessimistic" (Wilson 41) as he feels his struggle for a voice hopeless.

Joseph is deprived of his voice because of his status. For example, he cannot tell Iva about his troubles over his position in the society, and by which a rift opens up the couple. He argues with Iva when she asks him to withdraw money by check at the bank, for he refuses

to do it despite he has more free time than her. Until then, their relations have been restored in the way he is in sympathy with her. When he hears the “mixed rhythm of her breathing and” his, he is endeared by her (118). However, the harmony between them never keeps long. He is not sympathized because he never tells Iva about the story that he has been neglected and insulted there before. He cannot forget the vice president insultingly calls him by his name instead of his surname; “Now, where do you work, Joseph?” (174). Since the abusive remarks from the vice-president of the bank echo in his mind, Joseph has closed his mouth for six months. There is less conversation between Iva and Joseph who loses his voice due to his position in the society.

This is also seen in the arguments between Joseph and Captain Briggs, who is a son in law of the landlord. While Joseph and Iva are quarrelling over the withdrawal as above, Mr. Vanaker makes noises as usual. Joseph cannot let him do and tries to stop him violently. However, Joseph’s behaviors ironically bother the other residents because Mrs. Kiefer is dying in a bed at that time. The Captain orders Joseph to be calm down while shouting, “This is not a tavern” and he calls Joseph’s attitude as “the worst kind of rowdyism” (181). Named as a noisy person by the Captain who has a respectable status especially in wartime, Joseph has no right to reply. He is just a tenant and a citizen with no title opposite to the Captain. In the end, when Joseph is ejected from the rooming house, he decides to join the army without telling anybody. It is hard to live in wartime America for the unemployed citizen who rejects to “consume its [war] benefit” (84)

Joseph’s hope only appears in a room where he has grown up. His transformation is brought about by this old room. There are a few objects he has left such as a Persian print, a bookcase, a water pitcher and glass. These things awaken memories in his minds. This is just “an ordinary and, in some ways mean, room,” but it has been “a standard site, the bearded Persian under the round stones and the water color, fixtures” (190) of his youth. He recognizes this place has “great personal significance” (190) for him. Until then, he has been troubled with the rooms as discussed above. Now the old room transforms his view as his description: “The room, delusively, dwindled and become a tiny square, swiftly drawn back, myself and all the objects in it growing smaller (189). He calls the room as a “square” instead of the “six-sided box” (91) which he has mentioned before to describe his room. Gilbert Porter confirms that the “baffling symbolic walls” have “finally given way a little” (27). The change in the dimension from two to three metaphorically represents his change of aspect on the environment. In other words, since this old room looks “tiny” and two dimensions for him, it is possible for Joseph to bring it to the war front as his portable memory.

## Conclusion

Just after destroying the manuscript of Saul Bellow's lost novel, *The Very Dark Tree* written during the prewar time, Saul Bellow began working on *Dangling Man*. Bellow changed its stage from the underground in the former story to the aboveground. The place where Joseph, *Dangling Man's* protagonist, lives is not isolated. He lives with his wife in a rooming house where all tenants share the sounds of daily life. Although he regards his room as a closed space surrounded by walls, the nature of the room is aurally open as is the nature of the other rooms where Joseph stays. Focusing on auditory space, as it has been called by Marshall McLuhan and Yi-Fu Tuan, each room in this novel demonstrates Joseph's struggle for his voice. Although critics have pointed out the lack of link between the incidents in the novel, Joseph's acute hearing offers connection between each incident. Joseph would like to live in harmony with the sounds, but as his rooms as auditory space shows, he cannot tolerate such an acoustic environment during wartime, and fears that his voice will be controlled. Since he is deprived of his voice until he enlists in the army, he has no choice than he "cheers in the novel's last line" (Pifer 39) crying "Hurray" for going to the front as a soldier despite his unwillingness to fight. *Dangling Man* is "the complete wartime swansong" (*Letters* 21). Providing the keen ears of the protagonist, *Dangling Man* depicts the ruined harmony of citizen life during the war.

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(英文学専攻 博士課程後期 3年)