



ANDRE MALRAUX : TRAGEDY AND REVOLUTION

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Andre Malraux's great importance as a political novelist comes out of his personal involvement in the revolutionary experience of our time. He, as a member of the revolutionary committee, witnessed the tragic communist rising in Shanghai in 1927. *Man's Estate* emerged from this experience. Malraux was personally involved in the Spanish Civil War. He was made the organiser of the international brigades section of the Republican Air Force and flew as a bomberpilot. His novel "Days of Hope" was based on first-hand experience of the Spanish Civil War. His involvement gave him a deep insight into the structure and content of a modern revolution.

Malraux did not confine himself to recording the mere facts of a modern revolution. He went beyond the actual incident and examined the fundamental human problems of life.

Raymond Williams, in his *Modern Tragedy*, points out that "The most common idea of revolution excludes too much of our social experience. But it is more than this. The idea of tragedy, in its ordinary form, excludes especially that tragic experience which is social, and the idea of revolution, again in its ordinary form, excludes especially that social experience which is tragic. And if this is so, the contradiction is significant. It is not a merely formal opposition, of two ways of reading experience, between which we can choose."¹

It is our contention that Malraux's uniqueness as a modern political novelist lies in his achievement in creating the connection between revolution and tragedy.

"Man's Estate" opens with a vivid description of the state of mind of a political activist called Chen, who is ordered to kill a political rival. Chen cannot decide to kill his enemy. "Should Chen try lifting up the mosquito-net? Or should he strike through it? He felt desperate in his inability to decide. He knew he was strong really, but for the moment it was only a blank realization, powerless before that mass of white muslin which draped down from the ceiling over a body that was vaguer than a shadow from which only a foot protruded, the foot of a sleeper, angular but still convincingly human flesh. What light there was came from the neighbouring building a great rectangle of pale electric light, striped by the shadows of the window-bars, one of which cut across the bed just below the man's foot, as if to give

1. Raymond, Williams, *Modern Tragedy*, London, 1966, p. 64.