PENCARIAN IDENTITAS DARI DALAM THE ASSIS-TANT'KARYA BERNARD MALAMUD

The Search for Self Identity in Bernard Malamud's

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INTISARI

Tesis ini bertujuan untuk memperlihatkan kepribadian Bernard Malamud yang terhadap penduduk hidup dan juga kotor yang tragis para imigran Yahudi yang berasal dari Sibiu setelah mereka pindah dari Amerika pada akhir abad ke-19.

Tesis ini mengutuk pencerahan yang tragis pola utama dalam novel The Assistant, Morris Bober, dan juga mengkritik penyanyan Frank Alpine dari kembali kekhatan atau masa lalu yang dilukisannya; dia adalah seorang nabi-kaki berumur 23 tahun, berkebangsaan Jerman, yang menggawali pekerjannya dengan merampok toko milik Bober. Kemudian dengan pesyanan yang dalam, menjadi pembantu Bober, dan setelah Bober meninggal, menjadi pengantarinya. Regenerasi ini masyarakat setelah Frank menemukan jati dirinya yang sebenarnya. Pencarian identitas dirinya berakhir melalui perubahan status agama menjadi pengaruh agama Yahudi.

Karena penelitian ini di dalam lingkup disiplin Pengkajian Amerika, maka digunakan pendekatan interdisiplin di antaranya, pendekatan sejarah, budaya, sosioologi, dan pendekatan sejarah.

Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pembangunan orang Yahudi Amerika seperti yang dilukiskan oleh Bernard Malamud, cenderung sebagai masyarakat yang berdasarkanajaran moral sebagai dasar kemanusiaan. Sirkap inimerdekaan keinginan Malamud untuk mengajak orang Yahudi menerima orang yang baku Yahudi sebagai komunitas yang sanggup memperoleh kemewahan moral dan juga sebagai masyarakat yang menganggap teladan dari orang Yahudi sebagai bangsa pilihan Tuhan.

Kata-kata kunci: penderitaan — penyucian (dari dosa) — regenerasi — arahan moral — jati diri.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Migration is a fundamental human activity. America has emerged as a world of promise for the various people as well as for the immigrants coming from Europe, Africa as well as Asia. They wished to share their lives and create a new world in America. Shortly, America was built by immigrants. Some were fleeing religious persecution and political turmoil. Most however, came for economic reason and were part of expensive migratory systems that responded to changing demands in labor markets. Their experience in the United States was as diverse as their backgrounds and aspirations. Some became farmers and others worked hard in factories. Some settled permanently and others returned to their homeland. Collectively, however, they contributed to the building of a nation. As a group, the refugees who were successful in reaching the United States, have made a contribution to American culture. (Daniels, 1990: 2-29).

The contribution of ethnic writers adds to the complexity and richness of twentieth-century American literature. Of all the varied cultural and subcultural groups, the blacks and the Jews have been the most concerned with the problems of a pluralist society. If the blacks have been acutely aware in registering their protest against racial discrimination the Jews have been strenuously moving from circumstance to the centre of the American social structure. Haunted and supported by their traumatic past, immigrant Jews from Spain, Portugal, Germany and particularly from the Russian Pale have constantly tried to acquire a secure refuge from religious persecution (Sharma D.R., 1981: vii).

Talking about the assertions against Jewishness, the stamp of Jewishness is invariably assigned to the creative genius of Malamud who is generally looked upon as a mere purveyor of ethnic ideas. He is equally forthright in affirming that he is a Jew and fully conscious of his heritage of diaspora (exile) and suffering. His statement that says “every man is a Jew” (viii), and connected with the statement in the novel, The Assistant, that states “Do you like to suffer? They suffer because they are Jews” (A 135) tend to suggest that Malamud looks upon a Jew as a paradigm of human values and not a creature of a chosen tribe.

These statements interest and encourage the writer of this thesis to study Bernard Malamud’s own personality and his uniqueness by analyzing his novel The Assistant. The most important thing, he would like to know is Malamud’s own involvement concerning the exile and suffering of human beings as well as Jewish people in the world.
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The Assistant, which seems to be one of the novels of the postwar period, Jewish experience is used as a way of approaching the deepest, broadest problems of love and fear, of communion and isolation in human life (Collier’s Encyclopedia Vol.15, 1996: 257). It is also clear that both Maimonides's style and morality transcend the heritage of Judaism. "Jews," he says, "are absolutely the very stuff of drama," and the purpose of the writer is "to keep civilization from destroying itself." The heroes of Maimonides become, no less than the author himself, symbols of struggling humanity, partaking in its ambiguous fate (Vinson 1976: 876).

Most critics agree that most of Maimonides's heroes are victims. Morris Buber, the sick and unsuccessful storekeeper in The Assistant, is attacked by crooks, threatened by business competition, and dies believing that he "gave away (his) life for nothing". Yet if victimization is central to Maimonides's fiction, so too are conversion and the possibility of good emerging from suffering. The Assistant, emphasizes not only the tragic career of Morris Buber but the redemption of Frank Alpine, who begins by robbing Buber's store, then in remorse becomes his assistant, and, after Buber's death, his replacement (Collier's Encyclopedia Vol. 15, 1996: 256-57).

Theoretical Approach

This study applies the American studies approach; therefore, the approach used is interdisciplinary. This approach requires the unity among the disciplines to get a better and deeper interpretation from the data provided as well as possible. In this relation, Tremain McDowell (1948: 5) states that "American studies are designed to modify a persistent characteristic of mankind and to advance a contemporary movement in education". In this case McDowell proposed not only interdisciplinary study: meanwhile, he expresses that American studies scholars have to reconcile the past, present, and future. McDowell then says that "Today American Studies are using the resources of the new learning to bridge past and future, in terms which both the historian and the scientist can accept." (4).

Since the acceptance of all the three tenses is a major doctrine in American Studies, Henry Nash Smith in his study Can American Studies Develop a Method? suggests that "The best thing we can do, ... is to conceive of American Studies as a collaboration among men working from within existing academic disciplines conventional methods of inquiry. This implies a sustained effort of the student of literature to take account of sociological, historical data ... and methods, and the sociologists or the historian to take account of the data and methods of scholarship in the fields of the arts" (14).
Referring to Smith's question above, Cecil F. Tate in his book *The Search for a Method in American Studies* (1973) believes that the answer to this question is yes. He expresses that it is the only method so far that has offered any hope for achieving the goal of interdisciplinary studies: the integration of structure, achievement, and function. It is the only method that implicitly asks the three questions what, why, and how. Surely the urge toward interdisciplinary studies springs not merely from a desire to solve old problems in traditional areas by bringing new methods to bear from the critical need for a new unifying vision of the wholeness of man, the final goal of all human studies*

Therefore, the discussion of this thesis begins by interpreting the novel as a literary work. In this case, American Studies scholars, in analyzing literary work, should consider the relationships between literary work and the society including its culture or its milieu where the literary work was produced. In this study, then, literary theory becomes essential, where the expressive approach is applicable.

Since this study is also historical approach which reveals the historical background of the novel, it needs to describe here the individual experiences as well as the role of the American Jewish community, how and why they face such experiences. From the life experiences of the main characters in *The Assistant*, we could draw the brief history of the Jewish immigrants in the United States, mainly, how they survived in the past. The sociological approach is applied to describe the American Jewish, as well as Russian immigrants who came to New York, their problems and their social structure of the society in the creation of the novel. Another approach used in this study is the cultural approach. This approach is used to trace some cultural elements of the American Jewish which caused them to have the complex fate of being a Jew as well as heritage of diaspora and suffering.

**Method of Research**

The method of research used in this study is library research. This research is specifically focusing on bibliographical sources which involve a collection of critical books and essays about the author's works and about the historical, sociological and cultural background of American Jewish in New York.

The analysis of the data is based on the primary work, *The Assistant* and from secondary works comprising books and articles on the author and his background. All resources are obtained from private, and university libraries.
THE ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL AND THE JEWISH IDENTITY

A. The Moral Basis of The Assistant

Literary work is the product or reflection of its author. In creating literary work, the author will project his or her thought and feeling according to the era or situation in which and when he lives in. H.L. Abrams describes in his book *The Mirror and the Lamp* that "Literary work is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and poetry is the utterance of the thought and the feelings of the artist" (1979: 21). What he thought or lived would likely show up in his works either directly or indirectly.

Having read The Assistant, we can understand that the theme of redemptive suffering in the novel is clearly similar to that of his first novel, *The Natural*. But, unlike his first novel, Malamud supports the concept in *The Assistant* not with an ancient mythic ritual but with Talmudic ethics.

At one point in the novel, Morris tells Frank Alpine that the "Jewish Law" is the basis of his behaviour, not the word but the law, as reflected in the following quotation:

"This is not important to me if I taste pig or if I don't. To some Jews is this important but not to me. Nobody will tell me that I am not Jewish because I put in my mouth once in a while, when my tongue is dry, a piece ham. But they will tell me, and I will believe them, if I forget the Law. This means to do what is right, to be honest, to be good. This means to other people. Our life is hard enough. Why should we hurt somebody else? For everybody should be the best, not only for you or me. We ain't animals. This is why we need the Law. This is what a Jew believes." (A 19-30).

The nature of that law, as Morris defines it, consists of moral principles. Furthermore, Morris's approach to Judaism seems to convince Frank that to be a Jew means essentially to be a good human being, though he still remains puzzled about the excessive emphasis on suffering in Judaism. Philip Rahv in "A Malamud Reader" says that "Hence he is at times inclined to speak of suffering as the mark of the Jew and as his very fate. Leo Finkle, who is among the major characters of the extraordinary story *The Magic Barrel*, draws out of his very discomfiture the consolation that "he was a Jew and a Jew suffered." Frank Alpine in The Assistant, thinking of what it means to be a Jew, explains it to himself as follows:

"That's what they live for... to suffer. And the one who has got the biggest pain in the gut and can hold onto it longest without running to the toilet is the best Jew. No wonder they got on his nerves" (1967: x).

This is an outsider's point of view, and it remains for Morris Bobo, the unlucky and impoverished owner of the grocery store, to correct his
Italian clerk’s assertion that Jews like to suffer.

“If you live, you suffer. Some people suffer more, but not because they want. But I think it’s Jews don’t suffer for the Law, he will suffer for nothing”.


He adds that if a Jew forgets the Law, he is “not a good man”. In this case, we can also say that suffering occupies a central place in Malamud’s creative vision, for, it is redemptive and the only means to define the basis of humanity. This conclusively establishes that to be a ‘good Jew’ and ‘a good man’ are identical in Malamud’s moral vision (Sharma, D.R., 1981: xxiv).

Later, at Morris’s burial, a mysterious rabbi echoes the grocer’s morality and dignifies it with oratory: “Yes, Morris Beber was to me a true Jew because he lived in the Jewish experience, which he remembered, and with the Jewish heart” (A 277).

More vital than religious differences between orthodox Jews and Christians is Morris’s grim battle against the competitive commercial culture of super-markets. For twenty-two years he has been struggling to make an honest living, but the prosperous Jews in the neighborhood are squeezing him out. If he sells the store, he doesn’t know what to do next. He wavers between the possibility of disposing of it and making it pay for itself. In despair he once tries to commit suicide but fails in this as well, and it is Frank’s intervention that saves him (A 214 – 16). His other worry is Frank, whom he detects stealing, and this conflicts with his inner anxiety to keep him as his assistant.

Isher Hassan in his book Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel (1974 : 161) believes that Malamud’s vision is ‘pre-eminently moral’, he seems to grudge a tragic stature to Morris, for the latter lacks full tragic awareness. The following quotation supports this view, for Morris grows fully aware of being a prisoner in the store.

All he knew was he wanted better but had not after all these years learned how to get it. Luck was a gift. Karp had it, a few of his old friends had it, well-to-do men with grand-children already, while his poor daughter made in his image, faced – if not actively sought – old manhood. Life was meager, this world changed for the worse. America had become too complicated. One man counted for nothing. There were too many stories, depressions, anxieties. What had he escaped to here? (A 249).
B. The Reflection of The Protagonist and The Society Member

The Assistant can be categorized the most popular of Malamud's novels. Its protagonist, Frank Alpine is an Italian and initially a Jew-hater. In The Natural (1952), the non-Jewish protagonist, Roy Hobbs, is not concerned with religious problems, though in the end he too realizes that it is suffering that reveals the true value of life. The Assistant can be called an elaborate rendition of the theme of suffering. Before analysing it further, it might be important to observe Malamud's own view of the novel:

After completing my first novel, The Natural, in essence mystic, I wanted to do a more serious, deeper, perhaps, realistic piece of work. The apprentice character interested me, as he has in much of my fiction, the man who, as much as he can in the modern world, is in the process of changing his fate, his life. This short of person, not as complicated, appears for the first time in my writing in the short story. (Granville Hicks, in Sidney Richman, Bernard Malamud, 1966 : 51.)

Frank Alpine is the apprentice character, the assistant to Morris Bober, a poor Russian Jew who struggles to run a grocery store. Malamud describes that Morris Bober's father was an Russian army man. He had escaped to America, hoping to find freedom and prosperity. When he was about "to be conscripted into the czar's army, his father asked him to run to America" ( A 97 ).

The significant point the author conveys in the novel is that despite being poor, one can be good. In the growth of Frank's vision and Morris's forbearance, the value of suffering is of crucial relevance. In this case, it is quite appropriate to call Morris as the ethical centre of the novel, for he embodies in his life-style the essential spirit of Jewishness and of humanity. What Frank wishes to realize, first through self-purgation and later through his conversion, is to become a Jew. It is the meaning of being human in a dogma and doctrine dominating life. With a teaching relationship between Morris and Frank, Morris is a victim of fellow Jews who forget the primary role of being a Jew in a competitive social order. His Jew neighbour, like the Kaps and the Pearls do very little to help Morris. They are in fact a foil to Morris, as Malamud portrays the situation in the scene below: The Kaps, Pearls and Bobers, representing attached houses and stores, but otherwise detachment, made up the small Jewish segment of this genteile community (A 17).

The Bobers work sixteen hours a day in a grocery store, to eke out a living; this is their share of the American Dream. But their daughter,
Helen, reads in the library and holds out for a better fate. He opens the stone early every morning, so that he can supply a three-cent roll to the Polish lady who invariably is his first customer. If a buyer forgets his money on the counter, Morris runs after him to hand that over. This condition can be seen in the following quotation:

He labored long hours, was the soul of honesty — he could not escape his honesty, it was bedrock, to cheat would cause an explosion in him, yet he trusted cheaters — coveted nobody's nothing and always got poorer. The harder he worked — his toil was a form of time-devouring time — the less he seemed to have. He was Morris Bodea and could be nobody more fortunate. With that name you had no sure sense of property, as if it were in your blood and history not to possess, or if by some miracle to own something, to do so on the verge of loss. At the end you were dusty and had less than at thirty (A 17 - 18).

When Frank hangs around Sam's joint after the holdup, unexpectedly he is closely examining St Francis of Assis's picture in a magazine. As Sam inquires why, the latter remarks that he is a great admirer of the saint, as Malamud puts it:

The picture was of a thin-faced, dark-haired monk in a coarse brown garment, standing bare-footed on a stony country road. His slender, hairy arms were raised to a flock of birds that dipped over his head. In the background was a grove of leafy trees; and in the far distance a church in sunlight (A 33 - 34).

As Frank explains to Sam, St. Francis is preaching to the birds. When Sam wants to know why he was great, Frank explains: ... For instance, he gave everything away that he owned, every cent, all his clothes off his back. He enjoyed it too poor. He said poverty was a queen and he loved her like she was a beautiful woman. ... It is on account of being poor that "He took a fresh view of things" (A 34).

Malamud seems to recommend a 'fresh view' in examining the relationship between Jews and Catholic, or for that matter, between Jews and Anglo-Saxon Protestants. The special senses on a 'fresh view' projects the creative intention of the novelist which values the fellowship of all faiths. Malamud, who is married to an Italian, is reported to have remarked in one interview that "Italians and Jews are closely related in their consciousness of the importance of personality, in their emphasis on the richness of life, in their tremendous sense of past and traditions" (D. R. Sharma, 1981: xx).

Frank presents a dark picture of property and, without realizing that the dispossessed can maintain an inner composure through under-
standing the strange functioning of destiny, he can not appreciate the human bonds between him and Morris. When he overcomes his initial revulsion against the Jew, he starts sharing his experiences with Morris and aquaints him with his unenviable past. Once, he tells the grocer of his failure:

"I could’ve been a college graduate by now, but when the time came to start going, I missed out because something else turned up that I took instead. With me one wrong thing leads to another and it ends in a trap. I want the moon so all I get is cheese" (A 41).

Frank admits that "he does hit some nice, good spots in between, but they are few and far, and usually I end up like I started out, with nothing" (A 41). The gap between his aspirations and achievement brings him closer to the centre of searching for self-identity, as Malamud portrays in the scene below:

"... What I mean to say is that when I need it most, something is missing in me, in me or on account of me. I always have this dream when I want to tell somebody something on the telephone so bad it hurts, but then when I am in the booth, instead of a phone being there, a bunch of bananas is hanging on a hook" (A 42).

It is such thoughts which make Morris identify in Frank, an identical search for an appropriate footing in life. Morris feels that, although Frank is only twenty-five, he talks like him, a man of sixty, and listens to him with added interest when Frank continues: "All my life I wanted to accomplish something worthwhile — a thing people will say took a little doing, but I don’t ... I don’t do what I have to — that’s what I mean. The result is I move into a place with nothing, and I move out with nothing" (A 42).

Frank’s reaction to Morris and the Jew in general gives a great deal of complexity to the plot. After listening to the old grocer’s account of his escape from the Russian army, hoping to find freedom and prosperity in the USA, Frank sympathises with Morris’s existence in the prison of his state. Morris advises Frank not to become a grocer but to get an education and make a success of his life. His pity leaks out of his pants, he thought, but he would get used to it" (A 59). In this critical reference to pity, the author, Malamud, seems to project the stereotyped aspect of Jewish sentimentality and relates it with Jewish moral sense. Malamud seems to suggest that although suffering deepens moral awareness, it is absurd to turn it into an emblem of racial distinctiveness. The tragic dimension of Jewish suffering is described through one of Frank’s monologues below.
What kind of a man did you have to be born to stick yourself up in an overgrown coffin and never once during the day, so help you outside of going for your Yiddish newspaper, poke your back out of the door for a smooch of air? The answer wasn't hard to say — you had to be a Jew. They were born prisoners. That was what Morris was, with his deadly patience, or endurance, or whatever he called it. And it explained Al Masee, the paper products salesman, and that skinny moose Brethbart, whodragged from store to store his two heavy cartons full of bulls (A 102 - 05).

This Jewish characteristic annoys Frank and, he reads novels recommended by Helen stressing 'the truth about life' as Makemoud portrays in the quotation below:

To help him prepare for college Helen said he ought to read some good novels, some of the great ones. She wanted Frank to like novels, to enjoy in them what she did. So she checked out Madame Bovary, Anna Karenina and Crime and Punishment all by writers he had barely heard of, but they were very satisfying books, she said. He noticed she handled each yellowed page as though she were holding in her reverential hands the works of God Almighty. As if — according to her — you could read in them everything you couldn't afford not to know — the Truth about Life (A 127).

When he reads the novels, he is surprised to discover that Raskolnikov, the protagonist in Crime and Punishment, was not a Jew: "Raskolnikov, the student, gave him a pain, with all his miseries, Frank first had the idea he must be a Jew and was surprised when he found he wasn't" (A 128).

The common sense between a Jew and a Gentile through suffering makes Frank learn the fundamental value of Judaism. Malamud portrays it through Morris Bobet, a liberal Jew who has no interest in observing the Jewish dietary laws or Jewish holidays. He keeps the store open when other Jews like Karp and Pearl close their shops and demonstrate their Jewishness by visiting the synagogue. Morris is not worried about the form of his religion but its spirit which lies in being a good Jew. He believed in the Torah, this can be seen in the following quotation: "The important thing is the Torah. This is the Law — a Jew must believe in the Law" (A 149). When Frank further questions Morris's right to be regarded a "real Jew" because he does not keep his kitchen 'kosher' (mean that is clean or fit to eat according to the Jewish dietary laws), or wear a black hat. Morris answers that he observes only Yom Kippur as a holiday but does not worry about 'the old-fashioned' notion of kosher. He explains his position in this following quotation:
“This is not important to me if I taste pig or if I don’t. To some Jews is this important but not to me. Nobody will tell me that I am not Jewish because I put in my mouth once in a while, when my tongue is dry, a piece ham. But they will tell me, and I will believe them, if I forget the Law. This means to do what is right, to be honest, to be good. This means to other people. Our life is hard enough. Why should we hurt somebody else? For everybody should be the best, not only for you or me. We aren’t animals. This is why we need the Law. This is what a Jew believes” (149 - 50).

Morris’s approach to Judaism seems to convince Frank that to be a Jew means essentially to be a good human being. Again, Morris replies that suffering is an absolute feature of life, as reflected in the scene below: “If you live, you suffer. Some people suffer more, but not because they want. But I think if a Jew doesn’t suffer for the Law, he will suffer for nothing.” (A 150).

He adds that “If a Jew forgets the Law, “he is not a good Jew, and not a good man” (150). This statement really establishes that to be a good Jew and a good man, are identical in Malamud’s moral vision.

The full import of Morris’s views on life and Judaism is clear to Frank only after the grocer’s death. He seems to remember the words that the grocer uttered during his explication of Jewishness: Our life is hard enough. Why should we hurt somebody else? (A150). After much brooding and many incidents, Alpene enters a symbolic death and rebirth, and his decision is made without Helen’s knowledge or prompting, as Malamud portrays in the following scene:

One day in April Frank went to the hospital and had himself circumcised. For a couple of days he dragged himself around with a pain between his legs. The pain enervated and inspired him. After Passover he became a Jew (A 297).

Since Frank is a Christian Jew, or essentially a human being with little interest in ethnic formulations, his act of conversion is in fact a mere formal recognition of his vital inner change. Through a steady devotion to the ideal of love, Frank learns to distinguish between the two divergent forms of attitude. Emphasizing the basis of reciprocity in the I—Thou form of relationship, Martin Buber remarks: “Feelings one ‘has’; love occurs. Feelings dwell in a man, but man dwells in his love. This is no metaphor but actuality” (Buber, 1970 : 66).

What Buber seems to convey is his belief that to be truly human, man must treat man in a spirit of equality. It is through his emergence from the domain of lust to the realm of concern that Frank embodies the spirit of what the priest in Hemingway’s A Farewell to Arms (1929), tells
Frederic Henry as follows:

"Yes", he said. You do. What you tell me about in the nights. That is not love. That is only passion and lust. When you love you wish to do things for. You wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve" (Hemingway, 1929:72).

C. Dollars and Diplomas: The Impact of High Social Status upon Jewish Identification.

The extraordinary speed which most American Jews have attained middle-class if not upper-class status in the last hundred years has been thoroughly documented. Observers (e.g., Goldstein.) reckon that "nearly all American Jews of college age attend college; that Jews have been entering the professions in highly disproportionate numbers since the 1920s, if not earlier; and that the average affluence of American Jews equals if not surpasses that of Episcopalists, the wealthiest major religious denomination, and exceeds that of all major US ethnic groups" (Cohen, 1983:76).

While the fact of Jewish social mobility is not at issue, the underlying causes of that mobility have lately become a matter of debate. Conventional wisdom has long held that the Jew's cultural heritage was the key factor responsible for their remarkable success in this country (Glazer and Moynihan, 1970). Accordingly, the traditional heritage prized education, Jews were possessed of enormous drive and ambition, and they were adept at commerce and handling money.

The link between social mobility and Jewish identification can be formulated in several ways. Most central to this investigation is, of course, the notion that social mobility in American society signifies some measure of social integration into modern world. People who have higher educational attainment, more prestigious jobs, and higher incomes are people who have generally moved more thoroughly into the mainstream of society. That is why Morris B. Bevir has many times asked his assistant, Frank, to have an education which soon leads him into a good profession. Malamud portrays the condition in the scene below: "Don't throw away your chance for education." Morris advised. "It's the best thing for a young man" (A 41).

This sub-chapter will describe how higher education, professional life, and affluence have influenced the quantity and quality of Jewish society and ethnic identification. One of the reasons to speak of the Jewish group is that in a number of ways it is sharply defined, special and individual. Wherever they went, the Jews became in large proportion businessmen. They also showed a fierce passion to have their children
educated and become professionals

Income figures are difficult to interpret. One can point out that if Jews have higher incomes than non Jews, it may be because:
1. they are concentrated on the North-eastern Seaboard, which has higher incomes than many other parts of the country;
2. they are concentrated in big cities, which have higher incomes than rural areas or small cities;
3. they are among the better educated, who have higher incomes than less well educated;
4. they are in business and the professions to a higher degree than other people (Glazer, 1970: 143).

All these factors might be appropriate reasons for Bober, the central character of the novel discussed, to choose New York as a place to emigrate from Russia. New York Jews can never become as completely a business and professional group as can Jews in cities where they form; they are only 5 percent of the population. The Jewish businessman is traditionally a small businessman, in his own or a family owned firm. He does not move about except to make sales or buy (147). Bober and his wife, Ida, work sixteen hours a day in a grocery store, basically to earn a living. They are well past middle age, and have given up their lives, their illusions, even the promise of a richer future which comes with education for their single daughter, Helen. Shortly, their pains-taking and effort as well as hard work in the store are money-oriented. This condition is well portrayed when Helen supposed that her father became successful and retired from the meager railroad flat above the store to a big house on the Parkway:

None of them did well and were too poor to move elsewhere until Karp, who with a shoe store that barely made him a living, got the brilliant idea after Prohibition gurgled down the drain and liquor licences were offered to the public, to borrow cash from a white-bearded rich uncle and put it for one. Everybody's surprise he got the licence though Karp, when asked how, winked a heavy-lidded eye and answered nothing. Within a short time after cheap shoes had become expensive bottles, in spite of the poor neighborhood — or may be because of it, Helen supposed — he became astonishingly successful and retired his overweight wife from the meager railroad flat above the store to a big house on the Parkway — from which she hardly ever stepped forth — the house complete with two-car garage and Mercury (4.17).

The quotation above also shows us that "In 1920s, Americans self-righteously proclaimed prohibition of alcohol; then, patronizing speak-
easies and bootleggers. they increased the amount of social drinking" (Davis, 1984: 289). However, for Karp, the anti-alcohol policy becomes a good chance to be a speakeasy instead of a shoe store proprietor, in which can raise his income in a short time. He doesn't think of the rightfulness of his profession, but he just thinks of money for the sake of identity or social status.

For Jews, business and the professions, mean the small business and free professions. This kind of career is more hazardous than that of the corporation, but it may also offer greater opportunities. The post-war period gave many opportunities to small business, and the tax structure was more favorable to the proprietor of a business than to the salary earner (Glazer, 1970: 149).

Jewish businessmen in large part are not as acculturated as Jewish professionals. Many businessmen have not gone to college, they are often self made, even today they are often immigrants. In this instance, we can see Bohr, Karp, and Pearl; they don't have good educational background. For these reasons 'succession', the problem of what their sons or daughters will do is intense for them. When the father is an immigrant and not a college man, and the son or daughter has gotten a good education, there is a great strain involved in his or her taking up the family business.

This problem is really happened in The Assistant, to Bohr and his daughter, Helen. She keeps on dreaming a good education in order to help her struggling family business. Malamud pictures the condition in the scene below:

Since, though, the situation was better, Morris told Helen that he wanted her to keep more of her hard-earned twenty-five dollars; he said she must now keep fifteen, and if business stayed as it was may be he would not need her assistance anymore. He hoped so. Helen was overwhelmed at having fifteen a week to spend on herself. She needed shoes badly and could use a new coat—hers was little better than a rag—and a dress or two. And she wanted to put away a few dollars for future tuition at NYU (A. 724).

It is the same with Frank, he has a great desire of an education; he is always advised by Morris to get an education and make the success of his life, as it is seen in the scene below: "Don't throw away your chance for education," Morris advised. "It's the best thing for a young man."

"I could've been a college graduate by now, but when the time came to start going, I missed it out because something else turned up that I took instead. With me one wrong thing leads to another and it ends in a trap. I want the money so all I get is cheese" (A44).
Following the advancing generation and educational attainment, American Jews underwent rapid changes in the ways in which they earned their livelihoods. The third and fourth generations entered graduate and professional schools in substantial numbers to emerge as teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, accountants, academics, and social workers (Glazer, 1970: 84). In science and medicine, Albert Einstein, J. Robert Oppenheimer, and Jonas Salk are perhaps the best known of the many Jewish Americans who achieved distinction in their field. In economics, Milton Friedman, Paul Samuelson, and Simon Kuznets were Nobel prize winners. Among the literary figures, Lillian Hellman, Arthur Miller, J. D. Salinger, Saul Bellow, and Malamud are parts of a very long list of Jewish contributors to American letters (Sowell, 1981: 90). Even today, the prominent figure, the U.S. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Madeleine Albright, and the U.S. International Finance Manager, George Soros are American Jewish.

CONCLUSION

Bernard Malamud is one of the Jewish writers who tends to picture a single hypenated racial group, the Jewish American. His greatness lies in his acknowledging the most obvious quality of his fiction; it is its goodness. The main character of the novel, Morris Bober, to be sure, is the humble man. He has endurance, the power to accept suffering without surrendering to despair for the pain cause. He is acquainted with the tragic qualities of life, and he defines the few as a suffering man with a good heart. He is one who reconciles himself to agony, not because he wants to be sognized but for the sake of the Law. This is only one source of Bober's strength besides charity.

The central action of the novel, however, develops from Bober’s relation to Frank Alpine. As the title suggests, Frank is probably the hero of the novel. He, too, is a humble man. The regeneration of Frank — his literal and semantic conversion to the Jewish faith — is the true theme of the novel. When he first appears, he is a wanderer, an anti-Semite, even a thief.

The search of Frank Alpine for an identity ends immediately after Bober's death of pneumonia, in the last, brief paragraph of the novel, with the ritual of circumcision. When Frank Alpine finally professes the Jewish religion, he is not only accepting suffering but also finding hope.

Malamud's Jews are simply symbols for all men who suffer to be better than they are. Suffering, Malamud is saying, is the human lot, but we need not surrender to despair. Frank, whose hope until the end of
the novel has been vague day-dreams, has found a new way to live. He knows very well that he has become a changed man. After intense self-scrutiny, Frank realizes his own mistakes and his need to be concerned with other people.

Culturally, Jews have been able to maintain their identity because of their ability to adopt the mores of the societies in which they have lived without losing essential continuity with the past. We are certain that the novel expresses Malamud's belief in the inherent goodness and perfectability of man and his capacity to learn from suffering and become better morally. Shortly, the combination between the principle of Judaism and Christianity as reflected in the novel is apparently a kind of moral teaching, or a message which Malamud wants to reveal to all the people in the world, especially to Americans. Although Frank, is initially a Jew hater who begins his profession by robbing Bober's store as an act of anti-Semitism, he still has goodness as well as moral principle as the basis of humanity.

Malamud's reason in presenting such humble man and goodness in the novel is to ask American people as a nation of immigrants to take a lesson from Jewish suffering for the sake of the future of the nation itself.

Social mobility and Jewish identification can be achieved through educational attainment. People who have higher educational attainment, more prestigious jobs, and higher incomes are people who have generally move into the mainstream of society. Therefore, they show a fierce passion to have their children educated and become professional.

In a number of ways, the Jewish group is sharply defined as "special and individual." Wherever they went, the Jews became in large proportions businessmen. For Jews, business and professions mean the small business and free professions. This kind of career offers greater opportunities than that of corporations. This condition is caused by the government's policy in the post-war period that gave many opportunities to small business, and the tax structure was more favorable to the proprietor of a business than to the salary earner.

Finally, for Indonesians, the experiences as well as the sufferings of the American Jews as illustrated in the novel may also happen in our country, Indonesia. In this new era of "Reformation" administered by the President B. J. Habibie, we are really facing the difficulties of life as well as sufferings caused by monetary crises. This event may cause something to occur that leads to chaos. Many riots happened in some of the provinces in Indonesia last May, 1998. This situation was followed by ethnic persecution as well as sexual harassment, therefore; many ethnic
groups left Indonesia. Not realizing that this act will emerge a worse impact to our economic stability.

Suppose the government’s policy on tax structure is more favorable to the small business and free professions than that of corporations, as it is found in the United States, it might be helpful to lessen the suffering of the people. In reality, the government of Indonesia determined unfavorable policy to our economy that certain big corporations, by way of nepotism, postpone their tax payment. In other words, the government gives tax-holiday for the corporations until they grow well. This policy also evokes bad impact to our economic stability.

As a good Indonesian citizen, we must be humble and patient to face the ordeals. Religiously God will not burden His people with various ordeals which the people are unable to solve; however, it is nothing other than moral teaching. Without the ordeals given, we really don’t know “what happenings surround us, why they happen, and how to overcome them.” Through the portrayal of the hero in the novel, we need not despair, on the contrary, we must find hope that we are able to solve the problems happening to us by working hard, loving each other and abolishing discrimination among human beings.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


