The Paradox of Being: A Study of Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant*

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I

The pursuit of a new life is Bernard Malamud's favorite theme, but it certainly is not a new one. For all the immigrants who came to America, immigration was the only way leading to a new life, no matter where they came from and why they had to leave their native country. Especially for the Jews from Europe, where they were restricted to live in ghettoes and shtetls. Yet the city that first greeted them in America, New York, did not receive them in a most friendly manner. Often the section of the city where the majority of Jewish immigrants inhabited resembled their native shtetl in poverty and crowdedness. Of the newness of life in New York James Yaffe describes:

> The real difference between the shtetl and the Lower East Side was psychological, not physical. The shtetl, after all, had a positive system of values, a long cultural and religious tradition. Most of the people who lived in it weren't willing to leave; they preferred the horrors of poverty and pogrom, even of conscription into the czar's army, to the risk of giving up their culture. Those who left, therefore, were by and large those who were willing to take that risk.[1]

However, even "those who were willing to take that risk" of "giving up their culture" did not lose "the urge to hold on to old traditions."[2] Ethnicity and religion remained to be innate influence and their value sometimes opposed the practicality of the New World. Yaffe points out this tendency and calls it the "split personality

which runs through all of the American Jewish history."[3]

To look at the matter from a larger point of view: the same kind of contradiction has existed among immigrants of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds. And to look at it from a universal point of view: each one of us has experienced, more or less, the same kind of struggle between one's innate values and those one needs to pay respect to in order to get on with the world he lives in. If the Jewish case is unique, it is because of their habit of abiding by the Law. In saying this, Law may refer to religious regulations to some, one's own moral rules to others. Malamud's interest is with the inner rule of an individual, the strong binds of his inner law, the crises such as poverty, bankruptcy, or oppression that he encounters in his pursuit of new life.

II

Will Herberg gives an account of the mechanism of acculturation of the immigrants in America in *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*. Immigrants, estranged from his native village, lacks the social identity that is usually provided by the local community. In other words, unless somehow located in society, first-generation immigrant remains rootless in the New World. Moreover, such a socially forlorn person finds it difficult to give his own life a definition. Herberg points out that the question "What am I?" corresponds to "What is he?"; the former question goes unanswered if the answer to the latter is lost. "Anglo-Saxon", "white-collar", "middle class" and "house in the suburbs" are the four key words to assimilation to the American model.[4] Yet, as Herberg makes it a point, immigrants were not expected to change their religion. Protestant, Catholic, and Jew served as social, rather than religious denominations that substituted the social identity they have left in their native village in Europe.

Of the four key words to success in America, "white-collar", "middle class" and "house in the suburbs" are social and economic goals, and they are supposed to be attainable if one is willing, diligent, intelligent and lucky enough. This upward mobility of American society has fitted in with the Jewish mentality. Herberg cites W. Lyold Warner's statement that the "traditionally high evaluation of education of the Jewish immigrants accords with the practical emphasis of education in their new culture." Herberg continues:

> In other words, by being Jewish they were, in a very curious way, becoming more typically American. Basically this was true of most immigrants, but particularly of the Jews, who before long were to reveal themselves as, in a certain sense, paradoxically the most "American" of all the ethnic groups that went into the making of modern America.[5]

The first generation was eager to give their children the best possible education, if the child was willing enough to be a professional. If not, the parents waited until the child was old or well-trained enough to succeed their business, just like the liquor dealer Julius Karp and his son Louis in *The Assistant.*

However, there were those who were left out of the upward moving trend, and such was Morris Bober. The first chapter of *The Assistant* introduces us to a day in the drab, dreary life in the Bober store; from Morris's early morning routine handling of the Polish woman who comes in for a roll, through the advent of his future assistant Frank Alpine as one of the "holdupniks." It gives a complete picture of the Bobers', especially Morris's daily and inner life. Though his business should be waiting on customers, all he does is waiting for them. His life is filled with contradictions, which he incurred when his sweet hopes in his new life in the New World proved to have turned sour. He had left his native Russia to flee from anti-semitism, yet the supposed-to-be-free world was far from satisfying. His store now "looked like a long dark tunnel" which "entombed" him.[6] America, the promised land of the free, had long ago closed all opportunities against him. His life has gotten to be so drab that sleep is his only excitement.

A store has special meanings in Malamud's stories. First, since his father owned a grocery store in Brooklyn, life in a store was something he was well acquainted with. Second, for the Jewish immigrants who came to America to be freed from the fear of pogroms, a store was the place where they could reign — the place where one could be one's own boss. Stories that preceded *The Assistant* help us understand the significance of the store.

"Armistice" (1940) features a "Morris" the storekeeper. The story begins with Morris Lieberman's nightmarish memory of pogrom he had experienced in his native Russia. The anguish recurs to him since the Nazis had come to power. Day after day, he listens intently to the radio hoping the war in Europe will finally be

the salvation of the Jews; however, the war situation is in favor of the Germans and Morris suffers so much that the salesmen who deliver goods to his store are surprised to see his anguish. One of such men, Gus Wagner who delivers meat and provisions, openly ridicules Morris's agony. As the Germans gain further ground in France, Gus makes fun of Morris still more, and he becomes another haunting version of pogrom for the suffering storekeeper. One day, the tension between them becomes so tense that insinuation turns into a quarrel. In the end, Morris cries out to Gus: "You Nazi! You don't deserve to live in America!"[7] The story illustrates the "refugee to America" aspect of Morris. He has fled from anti-semitism, settled in Brooklyn, believed in America, had faith in democracy. What, then, is democracy? Living in a democratic society is to have the chance to make choice, to be able to choose a new and better life. Morris Lieberman fights his own small fight for democracy in his fortress of a grocery store, while a bigger combat is going on in Europe.

Morris Bober is also a refugee-immigrant from Russia. Indeed, America was supposed to be his Edenic garden; however, it turned out that the promised land was not an idyllic shelter but a prison-like grocery store. Therefore, "as a man, in America, he rarely saw the sky" (9). As Iska Alter aptly points out, the native land he has risked his life to escape from becomes the Eden as he remembers his boyhood.[8] Although Morris Bober does not seem to have so much concern in what is going on in Europe as Morris Lieberman does, he still makes his political or ethnical stand clear by making it a rule to pay the German meat provisions man in cash: "from a German he wanted no favours" (9). In sum, "Armistice" is a prototype of *The Assistant* in its handling of the protagonist's victimized self-consciousness as a member of a persecuted race.

Economic injustice, another aspect of the democratic New World that victimizes the small Jewish storekeeper, is explored in "The Grocery Store" (1943) and later in "The Cost of Living." The grocery store in "The Grocery Store" is owned by Sam and Ida Kaplan. Sam, thoroughly exhausted after "nineteen impoverished years," day after day stands eighteen hours a day on his feet.[9] He is reduced to the point of nervous inertia and misery eats his heart and body. He is sick and tired of business and his wife Ida's ceaseless nagging. One day he turns on the gas radiator without making the light, thus risking his life and giving others the idea that it was a failed attempt of suicide, though Sam repeatedly insists it was an accident. (The

same accident is reproduced in *The Assistant.*) The story ends with the return of Ida's tender feeling toward Sam, leaving the readers with a faint hope for the future. This couple is later transformed into Sam and Sura Tomashevsky in "The Cost of Living." Both couples and their stores are menaced by a newer and bigger supermarket. Supermarkets, new and large in size, represent an aspect of extreme Americanism: the bigger and stronger the better, also the newer the better. It is a widely accepted national credo and a strategy crucial for success in capitalistic economic system. The big and new as well as the rich soar high above the destitute immigrants who had nothing to start out with. For those who never even came near the chance to advance from the initial stage, the big and new supermarket was a grotesquely merciless giant that threatened to take away what little they had.

The big and new business haunts not only one's economic well-being but also one's moral integrity. How enduring poverty can make a man do something his morality will not permit under sound judgement best appears in the following episode in *The Assistant.* The scene comes immediately after Morris's fruitless day of job hunting has come to the end with a sigh, "America" (186). That night a stranger who calls himself a "macher" visits the store and proposes to set the place on fire so that he and Morris may defraud the insurance money. In inducing Morris, the stranger cannily dwells upon the justice of drawing money out of the insurance company:

> "We are poor people," the macher said, apologetically. "God loves the poor people but he helps the rich. The insurinks companies are rich. They take away your money and what they give you? Nothing. Don't feel sorry for the insurinks companies." (188)

Although Morris refuses to team up with this stranger he cannot refuse the temptation itself, and it doesn't take more than ten minutes until he starts searching for a piece of negative film, strikes a match and sets the negative on fire, only to burn the bottom of his apron. The episode is typically Malamudian: the stranger seems to be more of an illusion than a real person, an illusion only a cornered victim of circumstance sees. Even a man like Morris Bober, "the soul of honesty" (19), who has prided himself on his moral strength (he never cheats his customers) gives way to this temptation incarnated.

For a man left out of the upward moving tide, a democratic capitalistic society is no paradise although there may be no pogroms. However, the betrayal of the New World is not the sole factor that conditions Morris's mentality. Another factor that confines him to his life is his obsession of the past — his obsession of the Jewish past. As mentioned before, although times are bad everywhere, he pays the German meat provisions man in cash because "from a German he wanted no favours" (9). The new grocery store around the corner which threatens the survival of the Bober store is also owned by a German. Morris's attitude reflects Malamud's own: the massacre of the Jews in Europe, said Malamud in an interview, compelled him to question his existence as a Jew, his place in the Jewish heritage.[10]

The same past-haunted mood prevails in the family and it is described in the introductory chapter of the novel. Morris, who has nothing to do but to wait for the next customer, reads yesterday's newspaper. He confronts the destituteness of the store and bitterly admits that he has "slaved" his "whole life for nothing" (26). His wife Ida, though dissatisfied to share his fate, is feeling unsure about the crucial decision she made in the past: she feels guilty about having talked him into grocery business when he was in the first year of evening high school, "preparing, he had said, for pharmacy" (11). Their daughter Helen also looks back on the loss of her virginity with compunction and fights it with a "sense of waste" (17). The Depression gives them no chance to think or dream of the future. Such a view of life, that is, to look at the present in terms of the past, is a peculiarly Jewish attitude toward time. According to Irving Malin's *Jews and Americans*, the Jewish God works through history rather than through nature and the guiding principle for the Jewish people is recollection.[11]

Malin goes on to point out that such tendency to look back may result in alienation from the present. This also applies to the Bobers who confine themselves to the store. Since they eat behind the store and sleep upstairs, the store is their home itself rather than a mere place of business. Through repetitious use of words such as "grave", "tomb", "long dark tunnel", "prison" and "trapped", Malamud firmly establishes the image of the store and the Bobers' lives as being confined, imprisoned. The sense of imprisonment becomes even stronger by the keen audio and olfactory sensitivity the inhabitants exhibit. When Morris smokes, Ida senses it upstairs and stamps her feet; Morris is aware of the goings on in the store even when he is resting upstairs; later in the story when Helen and Frank fall in love,

they can tell how the other is doing by listening to each other's footsteps. The capitalist America that victimizes the small and the Jewish sense of the past doubly alienate the Bobers from the world.

Helen's recollection of her childhood elucidates another crucial factor that binds Morris to the store, her brother Ephraim's juvenile death: "When she and her brother were kids, at least on Jewish holidays Morris would close the store and venture forth to Second Avenue to see a Yiddish play, or take the family visiting but after Ephraim died he rarely went beyond the corner" (22). In the traditionally paternal Jewish family, often a son is the future prospect of the family itself.[12] The decease of his son made Morris's alienation from the future a complete one, as well as from the present. Past-ridden and future-haunted, he suffers the worst luck but has no other way of enduring than to wait. Waiting is associated with suffering and enduring rather than with hopes for the future.

However, Morris is not a mere passive victim of circumstance. Rather, he is endowed with what the author considers the highest virtue. Asked by an interviewer about his idea of selflessness, Malamud made the following comment:

> I like what might be called a sense of growth, a sense of, if you will, escape from the lowest levels of selfishness into a kind of generosity of spirit that makes one aware of the needs and the interests of other human beings, and perhaps even incites one to be of help to other human beings. Now, I realize that is not easily come by and it may even sound a little bit over-idealistic, but obviously there are people who are able to keep their own interests in decent proportion and who do not intrude with selfishness, or intrude so much, I should say, with their own interest.[13]

This statement explains the author's interest in St. Francis, as well as the Good Samaritan-like character of Morris Bober. Sacrificing sleep, he opens the store early to meet the need of the Polish woman; extends credits to those who are worse off; gives a bum like Frank Alpine food and a place to sleep in. This is the Law he explains to Frank: "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" (113). This is a morality born out of the peculiar history of the Jewish people, who have found life

"hard enough" in Diaspora, as well as of the man who has struggled for a meagre existence for himself and his family. Since the Law has originated from of the painful experience, it is practiced through suffering. It is within the Jewish heritage to seek a rebirth into a new life, and Morris extends the invitation to a better life to the gentiles, too.[14] Morris's statements "I suffer for you" and "you suffer for me" (113) are not so baffling if we think of how the two men assist each other in practicing the Law: they do help each other stay alive.

After years of toil, Morris the shlimozel finally gets the chance to begin a new and better life when his neighbor Karp's misfortune turns into good luck for him. In the final moment, however, luck fails him because of his impatience[15]:

> "I think I will shovel the snow," he told Ida at lunch-time.
> "Go better to sleep."
> "It ain't nice for the customers."
> "What customers — who needs them?"
> "People can't walk in such high snow," he argued.
> "Wait, tomorrow it will be melted." (195)

Ida is probably right in advising him to wait until the next day, since this is the last Sunday of March and the snow will surely not stay long. Yet Morris, who has waited all his life for customers, who has endured many bad spells, cannot resist the urge to go outdoors, catches pneumonia, and dies. It's the snow, the childhood memories that the snow revived in his mind: "He enjoyed shovelling snow. It reminded him that he had practically lived in it in his boyhood" (44) "He thought of himself, a boy running in it" (195). Ironically, the past hinders him from entering a new phase of life. In the struggle of Morris, thus, two contradictory Jewish traits are depicted: going back to the past, to the ethnical heritage and at the same time seeking a new life.[16]

III

Earlier fictions of Bernard Malamud frequently feature a young man pursuing a career. Seymour Levin (*A New Life*), Arthur Fidelman (*Pictures of Fidelman*), Sobel ("The First Seven Years"), Leo Finkle ("The Magic Barrel"), and of course

Frank Alpine are all in their apprenticeships. Malamud admitted his special interest in this type in a note for the Norwegian translation of *The Assistant*:

> 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 sort of person, not at all complicated, appears for the first time in my writing the short story, "The First Seven Years" ..., and I thought I would like to develop the possibilities of his type ....[17]

It should be noticed that the apprentice is, according to Malamud, in the process of "changing" his life, not "beginning." Therefore, the apprentice character dramatizes one's efforts to overcome his past as much as his struggle for the future.

When Frank settles down in Morris's store and takes over the job as the storekeeper, one of the salesmen who comes around gives him a piece of advice: "This kind of a store is a death tomb, positive," "Run out while you can" (57). After the salesman has left, Frank thinks "thoughts about his past, and wanting a new life" (57). His move from California to New York must have been made with much hope and determination, but the first step he took in the new life in New York ended up in a petty hold-up, which left him nothing but guilty feeling. He helps revive the store he has held up, is liked by the customers, deals with them cleverly and works hard. Finally, even Ida has to admit that he is bringing in more money and she gives him a raise. Yet he is not satisfied, he cannot get rid of the habit of pilfering quarters from the register. If Frank carried himself with honesty, and if he was able to forget the extra dollars, he would have lived in peace. However, "he felt a curious pleasure in his misery, as he had at times in the past when he was doing something he oughtn't to, so he kept on dropping quarters into his pants pocket" (64): he chooses, without much struggle, to keep on doing what he knows to be wrong and feels pleasure in doing so. Moreover, the pleasure is in acknowledging the iniquity of his act, rather than in the stealing itself. He experiences the same kind of pleasure when he spies on Helen in the bathroom. He feels "a moving joy" instead of remorse (71).

Although he does not stop stealing, his feelings change when Morris returns to the store. He watches Morris closely, wondering "what kind of a man did you have to be born to shut yourself up in an overgrown coffin" (79) and comes to the con-

clusion that Jews are born to be prisoners, and that they live to suffer. A couple of Jewish salesmen who bring goods to the store serve Frank as samples that confirm his conclusion. Their ability to endure what seems to be the worst fate irritates him. This irritation is turned toward his own self when he realizes that he needs to confess the crime he has committed against Morris:

> This thought had lived in him with claws ... to clean it out of his self and bring in a little peace, a little order; to change the beginning, beginning with the past that always stupendously stank up till now — to change his life before the smell of it suffocated him. (82)

He desperately wishes to "jump free of what he had done" (83) and promises himself to confess everything some day, but fails to do so.

Frank's failure is caused by his inability to overcome his past. When he imagines telling the story of his life to Morris, including the confession of his crime, he looks at his life as a series of mistakes, or an accumulation of lost chances:

> Well, after certain bad breaks through various causes, mostly his own mistakes — he was piled high with regrets — after many such failures, though he tried every which way to free himself from them, usually he failed; so after a time he gave up and let himself be a bum. (84)

Two things ought to be noted here. One, he desires to "be freed" from past mistakes and failures; two, in the past as well as in the present, Frank easily gives up efforts to control himself, efforts to change his fate.

Frank's ideal of freedom is St. Francis, whose image is introduced several times in the story through Frank. The first episode comes before Frank starts helping the store, when he sees an illustration of St. Francis in a magazine which he happens to find on Sam Pearl's counter. The monk in this picture wears "a coarse brown garment," stands barefooted, raising his arms toward "a flock of birds that dipped over his head" (30). Birds are for Malamud a symbol of freedom.[18] Frank is obviously attracted to the freedom of spirit personified in the life of St. Francis. One of the things that make the monk a desirable man is, for Frank, his poverty:

> "... For instance, he gave everything away that he owned, every cent, all his clothes off his back. He enjoyed to be poor. He said poverty was a queen and he loved her like she was a beautiful woman."
> Sam shook his head. "It ain't beautiful, kiddo. To be poor is dirty work."
> "He took a fresh view of things." (31)

St. Francis, who was born rich, chose to be poor and the purpose of the choice was to help others, to be of assistance to those who were worse off. Not only is the monk a respectable figure for being free of monetary desires, but also for his sexual purity. When Frank and Helen walk and talk all by themselves for the first time, he tells her an episode from the life of St. Francis:

> "... My God, he thought, supposing I met some nice young girl and got married to her and by now I had a wife and a family? That made him feel so bad so he couldn't sleep ... The ground was covered with snow. Out of it he made this snow woman, and he said, 'There, that's my wife.'" (87)

Later in the novel, Frank half rapes Helen and the mistake resulted in the loss of her love (another lost chance) and his confidence in himself. Petty desire for money and irresistable lust doubly bind Frank to the routine he drags from the past. He yearns for a sunshiny dogma that would deliver him. Yet his understanding is that one has to be gifted to live like St. Francis: he explains, "He was born good, which is a talent if you have it" (31). He averts from looking at the stern morality of the story of the life of St. Francis, and remembers only its romanticism that he enjoyed as a child.

Frank also has a problem in moral autonomy. Unlike Morris, he lacks the ability to wait. However, although Frank gets sick of the routine waiting and suffering in Morris's store, his love affair with Helen compels him to learn to wait before making the next move. The verb "wait", so frequently used in the description of Morris in the store, begins to be used with the impatient Frank patiently waiting for his love to be accomplished: "He longed to ask her to go out with him, but never dared ... So he waited" (81) "He was gentle, waiting for whatever he awaited with a grace she respected" (117) "He had waited and was still waiting. He had been born waiting" (121). Such statements show that he excels in the art of waiting

("awaited with a grace") and the talent is a natural one for him. It was discovered in his apprenticeship under Morris, and further developed by Helen's demand for self-discipline. Ironically, his decision to discipline himself and to "change and live in a worth-while way" (142) makes him put everything in his wallet back into the register, not knowing Helen would later call and ask him out; he concludes after short pondering to return a few dollars from the register to his wallet; Morris happens to witness this. His resolution to begin a new life as a morally disciplined man results only in the loss of Morris's faith in him. Yet, in a sense, Frank cannot take the situation as an actuality. When Morris reproaches him, he thinks: "This shouldn't be happening to me, for I am a different person now" (146). At this point, Frank is not yet a different person. In other words, he is not able to "wait" in the sense of the word that Morris practices as the core of his morality, or the Law. After he rescues Helen from Ward Minogue, Frank speaks of "all the endless heart-breaking waiting", gives not his ears to her pleas, and is ultimately rebuked as an "uncircumcised dog" (51).

On returning to his room from this unhappy incident, Frank thinks everything over and comes to the understanding that he has failed because he failed to wait until he was supposed to wait. In the small, box-like room, he gnaws at himself endlessly but then experiences a curious moment of epiphany:

> There was no place left to escape to. The room shrank. The bed was flying up at him. He felt trapped — sick, wanted to cry but couldn't. He planned to kill himself, at the same minute had a terrifying insight; that all the while he was acting like he wasn't, he was really a man of stern morality. (157)

Frank's room becomes identical with Morris's store in its tomb-like closedness. He begins to trace Morris's life physically and spiritually, and suffering becomes his habit of being. His knowledge of himself came not earlier when he was wandering like an ambitious youth in a mobile society, but when he settled in a prison-like place. He learns not to avert his eyes from his wrong doings and suffers, all for love's sake. He is apprenticed into the art of suffering in working under Morris Bober.

Although Morris is somewhat moved by Frank's pleas to let him stay, he refuses to let him continue in the store after he has seen Frank steal. By throwing him off,

the master undesignedly urges his apprentice to be independent. The apprenticeship is made complete after Morris's death by practicing the sublime morality: self-sacrifice. Frank gives himself a chance by providing Helen a chance for a better life. Keeping the store alive during the day and working at a cafeteria at night, Frank "lived in the future, to be forgiven" (207). To live in the future, he has to overcome the past, and to overcome the past he cuts off the routine of feeling pleasure in making mistakes, i. e., climbing up the airshaft to peek at Helen undressing and cheating customers. In assuming the title of "the grocer," he finally learns to be his own boss.

IV

Frank, a changed man now, is no longer past-haunted. Has he, then, won freedom without making compensation? His falling into Morris's grave, which is considered a symbol of the inheritance of the legacy and his rebirth, shows that he is literally falling in a pit. He assumes the responsibility as the head of the family. Earlier Morris gave Frank the following advice: "A young man without a family is free. Don't do what I did" (77). Having a family can be a burden or an entrapment. Seymour Levin in *A New Life*, who leaves the West unexpectedly with a wife and two children, is obviously not a free man. He has left New York, his painful past, to seek a new self, but the West as Eden fails him, just as New York failed Morris Bober. St. Francis could not have lived such a life as he did if he had been a family man. Settling down in family life marks the loss of youth. Frank has put himself in the prison of a store, confronted there his own self, struggled against it and began a new life, but this new and better life will someday no longer be new nor good. Then he will seek a yet newer life and in the process will return to the old Law — self-control and selflessness. Re-birth into new life is realized, paradoxically, by reversing to the past experience, past suffering.

It is probably Helen Bober who has undergone a greater change, if not so drastic as Frank. Earlier in the story we hear from Helen her proud aspirations: "I want a larger and better life. I want the return of my possibilities" (42) "Less I will never take" "I won't [compromise] with my ideals" (44). Frank Alpine was in no way the kind of man she would want at first; however, in the end, when she realizes that he "had kept them [=Helen and Ida] alive," an important change occurs in her:

> It came to her that he had changed. It's true, he's not the same man, she said to herself. I should have known by now. She had despised him for the evil he had done, without understanding the why or aftermath, or admitting there could be an end to the bad and a beginning of good. (215)

Helen may be accused of her bookish imagination and romantic longing for education; yet considering the great proportion of Jewish young women among female college students in New York, her desire to earn a degree is not so unrealistic or selfish as it may seem.[20] Her problem is rather in not being able to free herself from the past. Her wish to "be a virgin again and at the same time a mother" (201) shows that she is torn apart between the past and the future. In the year following her father's death, she learns through Frank that people can overcome the past and change, be new. The lesson is disguised in a paradox: it comes through the lowest possible existence — a bum, holdup man, thief, rapist, a petty grocer at best. But she does accept the lesson through the suffering she shared with her father and Frank. A new life in the same old store has begun.

NOTES

1. James Yaffe, *The American Jews* (New York: Random House, 1968) 16.
2. Yaffe 18.
3. Yaffe 19.
4. Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in Religious Sociology* (New York: Doubleday, 1955) 22.
5. Herberg 22.
6. Bernard Malamud, *The Assistant* (1957; Penguin 1967,8,9). From here on, numbers in parentheses indicate the page numbers of this edition.
7. Malamud, *The People and Other Uncollected Stories* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1991) 108.
8. Iska Alter, *The Good Man's Dilemma: Social Criticism in the Fiction of Bernard Malamud* (New York: ASM Press, 1981) 20.
9. Malamud, *The People and Other Uncollected Stories* 127.
10. "The suffering of the Jews is a distinct thing for me. I for one believe that not enough has been made of the tragedy of the destruction of six million Jews. Somebody has to cry — even if it's a writer, 20 years later." Lawrence M. Lasher ed., *Conversations with Bernard Malamud* (Jackson: U of Mississippi P, 1991) 94.

11. Irving Malin, *Jews and Americans* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1965).
12. "Jews in Eastern Europe had seldom been permitted to own land and thus did not consider property the ultimate security. There as in America, unconscious family strategies relied instead upon investing in the future of male children so they could advance either by means of an education or by building up a small business." Sydney Stahl Weinberg, *The World of Our Mothers: The Lives of Jewish Immigrant Women* (Chapel Hill: The U of North Carolina P, 1988) 173.
13. *Conversation with Bernard Malamud* 105.
14. For instance, Frank Alpine is Italian; the woman who comes early every morning for a roll is Polish; the painter with four children to whom Morris has extended credit is Swedish; the teenager who stole a few things from the store but Morris refrained from reporting the police is Greek.
15. It should be noted that Malamud did not approve of having his characters called shlemiels (*Conversations with Bernard Malamud* 28). They should be called shlimozels, men who are "chronically unlucky." For definitions of shlemiels and shlimozels, see Leo Rosten, *The Joys of Yiddish* (1968; Penguin 1971).
16. Shigeo Hamano explains the Jewish mental mechanism of recurring to the "takhlis." Prof. Hamano's book helped me in getting an idea of Jewish consciousness. Shigeo Hamano, *Yudaya-kei America Bungaku no Shuppatu* [The Starting of the Jewish-American Literature] (Tokyo: Kenkyusya, 1984).
17. *Conversations with Bernard Malamud* 13.
18. *Conversations with Bernard Malamud* 20.
19. For a thorough discussion of the image of St. Francis in *The Assistant*, see the following book: Tateo Imamura, *Gendai America Bungaku — Seishun no Kiseki* [Contemporary American Literature] (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1991).
20. According to Weinberg, 52.1% of female college students in New York in 1934 were Jewish. There were also a great number of Jewish women who attended night schools. See Weinberg 175.