

美國短篇小說選註



AMERICAN
SHORT STORIES
ANNOTATED



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THE MOURNERS
THE PRISON
Bernard Malamud

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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美國短篇小說選註

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Bernard Malamud

b. 1914

Malamud is among the most successful Jewish writers who have flourished in the United States since the 1950's. In that decade Jewish writers began to write about Jewish subjects not with a Jewish readership in mind but for the world at large. As a consequence Jewishness has become a fascinating subject for the Gentile public, a revelation of what goes on in the community and souls of a people who for two thousand years have had no country they could call their own. They have had a unique history, an incredible power of adaptation and survival, and a definite role to play in world history. These writers have revealed what it is like to be a Jew in twentieth-century America and, in doing so, have reached a depth that gives universal value to the characters they created. These characters are human beings first and Jews second. An Irish writer, James Joyce, began this trend early in the twentieth century by creating the character of Leopold Bloom, the hero of *Ulysses*. Since then masterpieces of character analysis have been written.

Bernard Malamud's way of treating his characters is a combination of the comic and the pathetic, a combination that infallibly brings to the readers's mind memories of Leopold Bloom and of Charley Chaplin, insignificant men in the modern city who solve their problems in a comical and pathetic way. The three stories offered here are very

typical of this genre. But they are more than this. They are remarkable for their extreme complexity of meaning, a meaning that can hardly be defined while the reader feels, as in the case of Hamlet, that it is absolutely true to life. "The Prison", an Italian story, is much more simple.

Bernard Malamud was born in New York city in 1914 and lived his adolescent years during the depression of the 1930's, a time of general poverty offering a very pathetic picture of humanity. After his graduation with a B.A. degree from the College of the City of New York in 1936, he taught evening school classes in New York and took an M.A. at Columbia University in New York. Since then he has taught at Oregon State University and at Birmingham College in Vermont.

His first novel, *The Natural*, a baseball story, was published in 1952. His second and most famous novel is *The Assistant*, published in 1957. It has become the subject of a great number of critical studies. The next year he published his first collection of short stories entitled *The Magic Barrel* from which the three following stories have been selected. In 1961 *A New Life* appeared telling the story of a New York teacher exiled in a Northwest college. In 1963 Malamud published his second collection of short stories entitled *Idiots First*. In 1966 another novel, *The Fixer*, was published and in 1969 *Pictures of Fidelman*. His most recent novel is *The Tenants* a story on the relationship of a negro and a Jew cohabiting a slum tenement. His latest publication is another collection of short stories entitled *Rembrandt's Hat*.

I. THE MAGIC BARREL

Analysis

This is a story of great complexity and multiple tensions. At the primary level it is simply the story of a young man who thought he knew what he wanted a wife for: to win himself a congregation after his ordination as a rabbi. In the process of selecting the proper wife he discovers what he really wanted in a woman. In the course of this progressive discovery the young student rabbi is initiated into a fuller understanding of himself and of the strength of his passions. He did not love God so well as he might because he had not loved man. He decided to marry for love and the loved one turns out to be the opposite of a person who could win him a congregation, yet a person without whom life, even as a rabbi, had no meaning.

At a deeper and more universal level, it is the story of a young man who thought he could manage to live a life ruled by the Law, something imposed from above, liberating him from the subjection to flesh and blood, a life of the spirit divorced from the world, and by a sudden reversal ends up living by the rule of his own being, his instincts, desires and passions, in harmony with his soul, no matter how contrary to the expectations of a congregation, the community. Salzman, at the end of the story, prays for the dead thinking the rabbi has died spiritually while the young man has never before felt so spontaneously alive.

At another level, the story is one of quest and recognition. Leo's search for a wife is really a search for his own

soul. He starts out with illusions writing to Salzman about his strict standards and specifications. Yet when the marriage broker brings only a few names to choose from and remarks: is every girl good for a rabbi? Leo discovers that the strict standards had been self-deception, a mask covering his secret desires, still unknown to himself. When Lily asks him questions about his calling he finds himself unable to give a satisfactory answer. Later on he finds that none of the material advantages offered by Salzman's clients answer his deepest needs. The sudden illumination, the recognition scene of what he wants and what he is comes at the moment his eyes finally fall on Stella's picture: "he gazed at it a moment and let out a cry." It is the cry of recognition, of the discovery of what he had been looking for without knowing it, a sudden knowledge of his own soul through the picture of this young reluctant prostitute, "a wild one—wild, without shame." He looks for her like a man fighting for his life.

"The Magic Barrel" is also the story of a spiritual conflict between two different approaches to God—the traditional approach which requires an ascetic withdrawal from the world, and the new one that assumes all the joys, passions, and struggles that life on earth has to offer in order to reach God through the fullness of the human condition. Salzman sees in the rabbi a soul lost through his own daughter: "she should burn in hell"; while the rabbi sees in her one who "could understand him and help him seek whatever he was seeking," and "he pictured, in her, his own redemption."

"The Magic Barrel" is also in many ways a sort of fairy

tale. Its title and its opening lines: "not long ago there lived. . ." already suggest such a type of story. The setting is quite realistic, even what is technically called naturalistic: slum tenements, meager rooms, flabby clothing, cripples, with dialogues that carefully imitate real life speech. Yet in the middle of all this picture of reality the figure of Salzman, himself a realistic character, appears often in the eyes of Leo Finkle with the aura of a supernatural being: he "appeared one night out of the dark fourth-floor hallway"; on another visit "before Leo could say enter he was standing in the room"; during Leo's walk with Lily Hirschorn along Riverside Drive the rabbi uneasily sensed the matchmaker "to be somewhere around, hiding perhaps in a tree. . . or perhaps a cloven-hoofed Pan, piping nuptial ditties as he danced his invisible way before them," and later during the unbearable walk it mercifully snowed which Leo "would not put past Salzman's machinations." On a later visit Leo realizes that Salzman has disappeared "as if on the wings of the wind." In a carefully written dialogue Malamud has Salzman's wife tell Leo that her husband's office is "in the air," and then that it is "in his socks," thus bringing together the naturalistic and magic aspects of the story. At the end of the story when Leo has finally forced an appointment with Stella out of Salzman, Leo leaves the restaurant with "a tormenting suspicion that Salzman had planned it all to happen this way." Salzman is like a being sent from above to help Leo find himself and redemption in the girl. The meeting of Leo and Stella is described with the imagery of a fairy tale.

Malamud well deserves his reputation of a writer capable

of putting more in a few words than another in a long novel.

THE MAGIC BARREL

Not long ago there lived in uptown New York,¹ in a small, almost meager room,² though crowded with books, Leo Finkle, a rabbinical student in the Yeshivah University.³ Finkle, after six years of study, was to be ordained⁴ in June and had been advised by an acquaintance that he might find it easier to win himself a congregation⁵ if he were married. Since he had no present prospects of marriage,⁶ after two tormented days of turning it over in his mind, he called in Pinye Salzman, a marriage broker⁷ whose

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| 1. uptown New York: | 紐約市北區。 |
| 2. meager room: | 簡陋狹小的房間。 |
| 3. Yeshivah University: | 紐約的猶太神學院。 |
| 4. was to be ordained: | 將正式受命為教會服務。 |
| 5. win himself a congregation: | congregation: 宗教性的聚會。此句是指如果他結婚了會使教徒比較有信心，因而能獲得財政及各方面的支援得以主持一個以他為重心的宗教性聚會。 |
| 6. prospect of marriage: | 結婚的可能性，指對象和條件。 |
| 7. marriage broker: | 婚姻介紹人。 |

two-line advertisement he had read in the *Forward*.⁸

The matchmaker appeared one night out of the dark fourth-floor hallway of the graystone rooming house⁹ where Finkle lived, grasping a black, strapped portfolio¹⁰ that had been worn thin with use. Salzman, who had been long in the business, was of slight but dignified build,¹¹ wearing an old hat, and an overcoat too short and tight for him. He smelled frankly of fish, which he loved to eat, and although he was missing a few teeth, his presence was not displeasing, because of an amiable manner curiously contrasted with mournful eyes. His voice, his lips, his wisp of beard, his bony fingers were animated, but give him a moment of repose and his mild blue eyes revealed a depth of sadness, a characteristic that put Leo a little at ease although the situation, for him, was inherently tense.¹²

He at once informed Salzman why he had asked him to come, explaining that his home was in Cleveland, and that but for his parents, who had married comparatively late in life, he was alone in the world. He had for six years devoted himself almost entirely to his studies, as a result of

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| 8. the <i>Forward</i> : | 一種雜誌或期刊的名稱。 |
| 9. rooming house: | 供膳宿的單間公寓式房子。 |
| 10. portfolio: | 公事包。 |
| 11. was of slight but dignified build: | 身材瘦弱，外貌却莊重。 |
| 12. inherently tense: | 無法避免的緊張。意指 Leo 在原本緊張的情況中感到了一絲緩和。 |

which, understandably, he had found himself without time for a social life and the company of young women. Therefore he thought it the better part of trial and error -of embarrassing fumbling¹³—to call in an experienced person to advise him on these matters. He remarked in passing that the function of the marriage broker was ancient and honorable, highly approved in the Jewish community, because it made practical the necessary¹⁴ without hindering joy.¹⁵ Moreover, his own parents had been brought together by a matchmaker. They had made, if not a financially profitable marriage—since neither had possessed any worldly goods to speak of¹⁶—at least a successful one in the sense of their everlasting devotion to each other.¹⁷ Salzman listened in embarrassed surprise, sensing a sort of apology. Later, however, he experienced a glow of pride¹⁸

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| 13. the better part of trial & error -of embarrassing fumbling: | Trial & error 屢敗屢試，不斷換索之意。embarrassing fumbling: 令人尷尬的失誤。part 意謂所能採取的最佳行動。此句是指與其盲目的亂試一通，或弄得尷尬連連，還不如去找老手請教一番為上策。 |
| 14. it made practical the necessary: | 實事求是，直接了當之意。 |
| 15. hindering joy: | 碍了和氣。 |
| 16. to speak of: | 值得一提。 |
| 17. devotion to each other: | 彼此之關愛。 |
| 18. a glow of pride: | 一股發自內心的驕傲。 |

in his work, an emotion that had left him years ago, and he heartily approved of Finkle.

The two went to their business.¹⁹ Leo had led Salzman to the only clear place in the room, a table near a window that overlooked the lamp-lit city. He seated himself at the matchmaker's side but facing him, attempting by an act of will to suppress the unpleasant tickle in his throat.²⁰ Salzman eagerly unstrapped his portfolio and removed a loose rubber band from a thin packet of much-handled cards. As he flipped through them,²¹ a gesture and sound that physically hurt Leo, the student pretended not to see and gazed steadfastly out the window. Although it was still February, winter was on its last legs,²² signs of which he had for the first time in years begun to notice. He now observed the round white moon, moving high in the sky through a cloud menagerie,²³ and watched with half-open mouth as it penetrated a huge hen,²⁴ and dropped out of her like an egg laying itself. Salzman, though pretending through eyeglasses he had just slipped on, to be engaged in

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19. went to their business: 書歸正傳；開始談正經事。
20. tickle in his throat: 不自在之意，指心中緊張喉嚨間癢癢的。
21. flipped through them: them 指 cards. 翻動卡片之意。
22. on its last legs: 尾聲；末期。
23. a cloud menagerie: 喻雲層變幻如各種不同的動物，所謂白雲蒼狗，有如一雲的動物園。
24. huge hen: 指有一片雲好像犬母雞。

scanning the writing²⁵ on the cards, stole occasional glances at the young man's distinguished face, noting with pleasure the long, severe scholar's nose, brown eyes heavy with learning, sensitive yet ascetic lips,²⁶ and a certain, almost hollow quality of the dark cheeks.²⁷ He gazed around at shelves upon shelves of books and let out a soft, contented sigh.

When Leo's eyes fell upon the cards, he counted six spread out in Salzman's hand.

"So few?" he asked in disappointment.

"You wouldn't believe me how much cards I got in my office,"²⁸ Salzman replied. "The drawers are already filled to the top, so I keep them now in a barrel, but is every girl good for a new rabbi?"

Leo blushed at this, regretting all he had revealed of

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25. scanning the writing: 快速翻看。
26. sensitive yet ascetic lips: 意指Rabbi的嘴唇看起來雖然敏感多情而事實上他却是個禁慾的人。
27. hollow quality of the dark cheeks: 指面頰瘦削而黑。
28. You wouldn't believe me how much cards I got in my office: 此為猶太移民所說的美語，不合文法。正規的用法是：You wouldn't believe how many cards I have in my office. 或是 You wouldn't believe me if I told you how many cards

himself in a curriculum vitae²⁹ he had sent to Salzman. He had thought it best to acquaint him with his strict standards and specifications, but in having done so, felt he had told the marriage broker more than was absolutely necessary.

He hesitantly inquired, "Do you keep photographs of your clients on file³⁰?"

"First comes³¹ family, amount of dowry, also what kind promises,³²" Salzman replied, unbuttoning his tight coat and settling himself in the chair. "After comes pictures, rabbi."

"Call me Mr. Finkle. I'm not yet a rabbi."

Salzman said he would, but instead called him doctor, which he changed to rabbi when Leo was not listening too attentively.

Salzman adjusted his horn-rimmed spectacles,³³ gently cleared his throat and read in an eager voice the contents of the top card:

"Sophie P. Twenty four years. Widow one year. No children. Educated high school and two years college. Father promises eight thousand dollars. Has wonderful

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| 29. curriculum vitae: | 拉丁文意即「履歷」，小傳，簡歷之謂。 |
| 30. on file: | 歸檔。 |
| 31. comes: | 等於 Come。 |
| 32. what kind promises: | 等於 What kind of promises. |
| 33. horn-rimmed spectacles: | 配有牛角鏡框的眼鏡。 |

wholesale business. Also real estate.³⁴ On the mother's side comes teachers, also one actor. Well known on Second Avenue."

Leo gazed up in surprise. "Did you say a widow?"

"A widow don't mean spoiled, rabbi. She lived with her husband maybe four months. He was a sick boy she made a mistake to marry him."

"Marrying a widow has never entered my mind."

"This is because you have no experience. A widow, especially if she is young and healthy like this girl, is a wonderful person to marry. She will be thankful to you the rest of her life. Believe me, if I was looking now for a bride, I would marry a widow."

Leo reflected, then shook his head.

Salzman hunched his shoulders³⁵ in an almost imperceptible³⁶ gesture of disappointment. He placed the card down on the wooden table and began to read another:

"Lily H. High school teacher. Regular. Not a substitute.³⁷ Has savings and new Dodge car. Lived in Paris one year. Father is successful dentist thirty-five years. Interested in professional man. Well Americanized family. Wonderful opportunity."

"I knew her personally," said Salzman. "I wish you

34. real estate:

不動產，地產。

35. hunched his shoulder

產一弓肩。

36. imperceptible:

無法察覺；看不出來的。

37. Regular. Not a substitute:

指 Lily 為正式教員而非代課教員。

could see this girl. She is a doll. Also very intelligent. All day you could talk to her about books and theyafter and what not. She also knows current events.”³⁸

“I don’t believe you mentioned her age?”

“Her age?” Salzman said, raising his brows. “Her age is thirty-two years.”

Leo said after a while, “I’m afraid that seems a little too old.”

Salzman let out a laugh. “So how old are you, rabbi?”

“Twenty-seven.”

“So what is the difference, tell me, between twenty-seven and thirty-two? My own wife is seven years older than me. So what did I suffer?—Nothing, If Rothschild’s³⁹ a daughter wants to marry you, would you say on account her age, no?”⁴⁰

“Yes,⁴¹” Leo said dryly.

Salzman shook off the no in the yes.⁴² “Five years don’t

38. current events:

時事；流行的新聞；話題。

39. Rothschild:

屬於歐洲之猶太望族的一支。

正規用法如下：If R.’S daughter
Wanted to

40. Would you say on account
of her age, no?:

正規用法如下：Would you say no
on account of her age.

41. Yes:

意謂「是的」，我會說「不」。

42. Shook off the no in the
yes:

指 Salzman 用手表示拒絕接受
Leo 那一聲 yes 之中所含的 no.