

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of study

I decide to analyze Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant* because it is interesting to notice how someone can be transformed through other people's values and manners after he has committed so many sins and also to notice that there is a man who is able to have remarkable values and manners although he is a poor man. These make me eager to know what values can transform someone.

Transformation often occurs in our daily life. How someone can be transformed depends on what influences him. One can be transformed through other people's values and manners. Someone's good manners and values depend on what he believes and what happens in the society often affects him indirectly. Values and manners can be applied or taught to others. If someone has good values, he or she must have good manners. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* states that value is "your principles about what is right or wrong, or your ideas about what is important in life". (Longman, 2001:1586) and manner is "the way in which something is done or happens". (Longman, 2001:872).

Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant* is about someone's transformation from a criminal to a better person. The protagonist's misdeeds have been transformed through someone's values and manners.

I choose to analyze a novel by a prominent Jewish American novelist, Bernard Malamud. Malamud wants to show the values and manners which Jewish people have that can transform someone into a better person. In *The Assistant*, Malamud wants to focus on Jewish values which are inspired by Christianity.

Bernard Malamud presents the theme of *The Assistant* through the two major characters. First he uses Frank Alpine as the central character. Frank is a young Italian and a criminal and the one who experiences the transformation. And the second character is Morris Bober, the owner of the grocery store and the one who fully applies Jewish values in his life. Malamud uses Frank Alpine's character to show that a man's characteristic is able to transform into a better one. And in this situation Morris Bober shows Frank Alpine how to live with good values and manners.

I choose to analyze the theme through the two major characters because the character's speeches, actions and reactions help to reveal the theme based on the fact that "as a major element in fiction, character is obviously of major importance for theme" (Kenney, 1966:94-95). And by analyzing the theme, I am able to get the main idea of the story and the author's intention of writing the novel. Kenney states that theme is "the total of meaning discovered by the writer in the process of writing and by the reader in the process of reading" (Kenney, 1966:94).

Statement of the problem

In order to analyze the novel, the present writer states the problem as follows:

1. What is the theme of Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant*?
2. How do the two major characters help to reveal the theme?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study based on the statement of the problems is:

1. To analyze the theme of Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant*.
2. To show how the two major characters help to reveal the theme.

Method of research

The method of research that I use is library research. First, I read the novel as the primary text. I also gather some information from the internet. And then I read several books which are connected to the topic. Finally, I use the selected data from the references to support the analysis and draw some conclusions.

Organization of the thesis

This thesis begins with Chapter One. This chapter consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research and the Organization of the Thesis. In Chapter Two I present the analysis of the theme. I put my conclusion in Chapter Three and this thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which consists of the Synopsis of the Literary Work and the Biography of the Author.