



Idiots First

Bernard Malamud

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Black is My Favorite Color

Still Life

The Death of Me

A Choice of Profession

Life is Better than Death

The Jewbird

Naked Nude

The Cost of Living

The Maid's Shoes

Suppose a Wedding

The German Refugee

Idiots First Details

Date : Published November 1st 1986 by Farrar Straus Giroux (first published 1963)

ISBN : 9780374520106

Author : Bernard Malamud

Format : Paperback 212 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Fiction, The United States Of America, Literature, Jewish

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Andi says

2.5

Ci sono rimasta male...

Forse è il mio concetto di racconto breve che è un po' distorto, ma secondo me, se scrivi poche pagine, dovresti arrivare ad un finale scoppiettante.

Così non è per Malamud.

Piacevole da leggere, certo, ma niente di che (Rispetto alle critiche da WOW WOW WOW che ho letto in giro)

Phakin says

Teresa says

Primeiro os Idiotas

Um pai com encontro marcado com a morte; um filho dependente que é necessário proteger.

Negro é a Minha Cor Preferida

Quando preto e branco pode ser vermelho...

Natureza Morta

Só um pintor inspirado tem arte para "pregar uma mulher numa cruz"...

A Minha Morte

Para lutas sem tréguas, uma solução radical.

A Escolha de uma Profissão

Com muito estudo tudo se consegue.

A Vida é Melhor do que a Morte

Há que aproveitar enquanto se respira; depois logo se vê...

O Pássaro-Judeu

Só as crianças e as mães confiam em pássaros palradores.

O Nu Revelado

Nem sempre uma obra-prima é mais desejada que a sua imitação. É tudo uma questão de amor...

O Custo de Vida

Quando há dois negócios similares na mesma rua, algum acaba por falir...

Os Sapatos da Criada

Se uma mulher só tem uns sapatos rotos, não desperdiça a oportunidade de ter dois pares novos.

Imagine-se um Casamento

Se o pai quer casar a filha com um homem e a mãe quer casá-la com um outro, a boda pode acabar em tragédia, ou em comédia...

O Refugiado Alemão

*"Oh capitão! Meu capitão! terminou a nossa terrível viagem,
O navio resistiu a todas as tormentas, o prémio que buscávamos está ganho,
O porto está próximo, oiço os sinos, toda a gente está exultante,
Enquanto seguem com os olhos a firme quilha, o ameaçador e temerário navio:
Mas oh coração! coração! coração!
Oh as gotas vermelhas e sangrentas,
Onde no convés o meu capitão jaz,
Tombado, frio e morto.
(...)"*

Walt Whitman

Howard Shrier says

A great book of stories by a master. About half are set in the art world of Rome, while the others are mostly in the world of poor Jewish merchants in New York. Malamud is best known for his novels *The Natural*, *The Assistant*, *The Go-Between* and *The Fixer*, but I remain fond of the stories in this collection and *The Magic Barrel*.

Gary Peterson says

A mixed bag with more losers than winners. The stories span twelve years--1950 to 1963--and originally appeared in such diverse periodicals as *The Partisan Review*, *Playboy*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*.

Among the winners were "The Jewbird," which if I didn't know the author I would have credited to Bruce Jay Friedman. It was a refreshingly lighthearted story in a collection of tragic stories or at best stories of people living lives of quiet desperation. The two Arthur Fidelman stories were standouts, with "Naked Nude" my favorite story in the book (and with that title, it comes as no surprise it originally appeared in *Playboy*). "Naked Nude" was a testimony to artistic integrity and captured well an artist's pride in his work. It was also punctuated with some lighthearted moments and with an ending that left me smiling. "Still Life" was also good, but decidedly unpleasant, and ended on a gratuitously irreverent note that Malamud likely intended to be funny.

"A Choice of Profession" and "Life is Better than Death" were both originally published in 1963 and appear back-to-back in the book, which only drew attention to their similar themes of seemingly kind, caring, and

attentive men who turn out to be insensitive creeps who will abandon a woman at her most fragile moment. "The Maid's Shoes" was treading similar territory but ended up flipping the narrative, at least kind of, as that story's ending was a confusing mess.

And that was Malamud's greatest shortcoming--his inability to end a story well. Often there will be fascinating characters, settings, and events, then in the last paragraph Malamud makes a left turn and tacks on an unsatisfying ending. And many endings feel tacked on, as if Malamud wrote himself into a corner and then hurriedly scribbled a conclusion. "The German Refugee" is an example of just such a story that was so engaging until the last page when narrator Martin Goldberg visits Oskar's apartment and together with the reader discovers Malamud took off down the fire escape instead of resolving the story satisfactorily. "The German Refugee" is a lengthier story that closes out the collection and by the time I reached that last page I had a lot invested in the young, idealistic English tutor and his complex intellectual German student, so felt robbed when Malamud dealt me a card from the bottom of the deck (and a clichéd one, to boot).

Recurring elements in the stories are Judaism, Rome, teachers, and women who get lulled into bad situations (and also a few men who are likewise lulled). A surprising number of the stories were set in Rome, which Malamud captured well without ever having to go overboard by making his descriptions a travelogue of famous sites. Malamud captures both characters and settings well. That was the vexing thing--I really liked most of these stories up until the endings went horribly awry.

This was my first exposure to Malamud, but even though disappointing I won't make it my last. The two standout Fidelman stories have inspired me to read Pictures of Fidelman, and I also have on the docket A New Life, which chronicles the exploits of a young English professor. But nonetheless it seems the literary powers that be have already relegated Bernard Malamud to the back bench of Jewish-American authors, destined to sit behind Saul Bellow and Philip Roth. But if Malamud is sharing that back bench with Bruce Jay Friedman, Max Shulman, and Chaim Potok, he's in distinguished company.

Matthew Davidson says

In my opinion, Malamud is a master story-teller. But like all masters, not all of his stories are great. Some are merely very good. There is exceptional craft involved in the creation of each and every one, but my favourites are "The Jew Bird" and "The Death of Me." Like Somerset-Maugham, his best efforts end with a surprise. I should have seen the ending of "The Death of Me" coming, but I didn't.

There is an inherent sadness to each of the tales, but that is the true reflection of the nature of life, which is inherently sad. All human stories ultimately end with death, a fact which most people in western culture attempt to ignore.

I cannot recommend the work of this writer enough to either students of writing, or to anyone who just wishes to enjoy the exceptional use of language. And yes, there is a strong cultural Jewish perspective, which adds immeasurably to the depth of these works.

Roberto Fruchtengarten says

Contos que retratam personagens desafortunados, em diversas conjunturas. Muito agradável a leitura

wally says

5-stars. thought i had a review...not...could be that disease that makes you forget, anderson's...could be that is coming on, making me forget things. 5-stars though...i did do that back in may when i read these. jewbird...not all of them make a big impression. one thing, with anderson's disease...you can go back and reread and it's like the very first time...cue the soundtrack. it feels! like the very first time!

Maurizio Manco says

"La lingua del cuore è una lingua morta, oppure, quando la parli, nessuno capisce il tuo accento." (p. 48)

Bruce says

This collection contains a great story, "The Jewbird." Definitely not a raven intoning, "Evermore!" No, this is a skinny and scraggly black bird that is fully anthropomorphized and physically unattractive, a New Yorker talking incessantly with Yiddish syntax and idioms, the unwelcome (to Harry Cohen) and intrusive houseguest who won't leave. Harry would never have let the Jewbird stay at all but for the pleadings of his wife, Edie, and 10-year-old son Morris. Nonetheless he does everything he can to make the Jewbird, Schwartz, thoroughly unwelcome, and Schwartz ultimately leaves.

Schwartz, convinced that he is threatened by "Anti-Semeets," is thoroughly Jewish, and Harry definitely tries not to be, rejecting prayer and Kosher food (one irony being that Harry is probably as Anti-Semitic as the vague enemies that Schwartz fears). Schwartz does, though, have a positive influence on Morris, improving his weak study habits, but Morris's eventual acquisition of a cat proves disadvantageous.

The story is really very funny, a mixture of fantasy and realism, combining the humanized bird with accurate details in the lives of the truly human protagonists. Malamud pokes fun at ethnic stereotypes even as he skillfully explores issues such as intolerance, the rejection of those parts of ourselves that we find unattractive, hospitality, and the eagerness with which most of us define ourselves by what we are not or wish not to be. An irony within an irony is the fact that this Jewish author satirizes the Jewbird and Jewish family whom he creates.

Gary says

Superb short stories, funny, heartbreaking, deep. One short play. Yes, stories about Jewish things, I guess, but in Malamud's hands, that is realistic and transcendent. On the other hand, what he writes about is complete and enough in itself.

Haliagrace says

Read the title story and several others in the collection. The style is wonderful: written in immigrant broken English with such compelling turns of phrase, placing the reader alongside the characters. Content is sad and grim, writing is damn good.

Sandra says

Some of the situations of these short stories are from the mid-1900s, but the emotions and motivations of the characters are painfully contemporary. Malamud appears dispassionate in his rendering, yet his characters become intimate as they reveal individual complexes of guilt, confusion, selfishness, frustration, and weariness made human by flashes of virtue and compassion, but never joy.

Kate says

My favorites: *Still Life*, *The Jew-bird*, and *The German Refugee*.

Cruna Cristina Barbera says

Notoriamente il maestro indiscusso delle short stories americane è il divino Carver, ma.. Malamud vi sorprenderà!

Il punto di vista degli autori è del tutto diverso, l'America che raccontano non è esattamente la stessa, ma l'ironia e la volontà dissacrante c'è in entrambi.. e come!

In questa raccolta di racconti il fantastico entra nel quotidiano sorprendendo di gran lunga più il lettore che i personaggi e in modo del tutto diverso dalla lunga tradizione del genere in Europa.

Niente in comune con il fantastico "annunciato" della mitteleuropa 8dimenticate i racconti di Dikanka, se li avete letti, o le fantasmagorie della letteratura tedesca tra XIX e XX secolo).

Un uccello che parla in yddish, una pittrice incestuosa e i suoi fantasmi, un americano a Roma alle prese con le disavventure della sua domestica, due solitudini al cimitero, l'inganno e il disinganno di autore innamorato della sua opera.. e i nomi e tanti nomi che ricorrono, dall'uno all'altro racconto. Ritengo che una buona critica potrebbe sbizzarrirsi per ore sui tanti indizi e rimandi contenuti in questa raccolta, ma io, che sono una pessima critica, posso solo annotare che si tratta di racconti tragicamente ridicoli, a loro modo davvero entusiasmanti.
