

Personal and Collective Identity Codes and Challenges for Minorities, Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer*: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

People naturally live in a community and identity plays an essential role in their life. Codes and elements that construct their identity can be personal or collective, such as gender, name, religion, ethnicity, and language. In order to enjoy more privileges, minority people and those who are discriminated because of their identity, try to change their identity to be similar to the center or in other words, assimilate with it. At the same time, the hegemonic power tries to single out and highlight the identity codes which make one different from the center in order to discriminate them. The major character of the novel, Yakov Bok, changes his identity, name and appearance, as a Jew and enters into the district forbidden to Jews. During the course of the novel, he was arrested and accused of murdering a Christian boy, because he was the only Jew in the neighborhood. The state officials try to change his appearance to make him look like a Jew again and single out. Identity can be changed willingly in order to assimilate and use the advantages of being recognized as a certain person or part of a community, or by force due to the social and political condition of time to be condemned or to face the worst condition.

Key words: Identity, Bernard Malamud, *The Fixer*, Jewishness

INTRODUCTION

The word 'identity' which came out to be a crucial issue in cultural, political, and literary studies is taken from Latin '*idem*,' meaning 'the same.' Nicholas Bunnin and Jiyuan Yu argue that identity "has been interpreted in two ways: as singleness over time and as sameness amid difference" (Bunnin and Yu 2004)(325). Based on this interpretation, every person can remain within himself in spite of many alterations; however, it is very difficult to explain how such a thing can happen. Likewise, (*Longman dictionary of contemporary English: [for advanced learners]*, 2014) defines someone's identity as "their name or who they are or the qualities and attitudes that a person or group of people have, that make them different from other people." Regarding this definition identity is both personal and intrapersonal. For example, name is a personal identity code but being from a certain ethnicity is considered as a group identity code. Race and religion can be clear examples of quality and attitude. Accordingly, every individual can be composed of multiple identities which locate their role in family, society, class, religion, and even in a wider scale in the world.

Both aforementioned definitions focus on "sameness and difference." Indeed, identity as 'sameness amid diversity' raises two questions: the sameness which is shared by living at home; and questions concerning individual identity, it means the identity by which a person is himself and can be

distinguished from other people of the same kind. In some cases, 'home' might give man the opportunity of an equivalence relation; i.e. at home two things are identical if every property belonging to one belongs to the other. However, identity might be considered as a relation rather than as a property and as a relation between names or signs of objects and so on.(Baradaran Jamil 2013) But for Jews 'home' as collective identity code means differently compared to other religious or ethnic group. Jews are scattered in different parts of the world forming minorities beside the hegemonic center.

An identity is, according to Roy F. Baumeister "a definition, an interpretation of the self" (4). He also believes that, "[s]elf-awareness is a superimposed awareness"; however, the sense of identity is not just based on "the physical self but depends on meaning" since the "meaning occurs only within a contextual network of relationships". (Baumeister 1986) (12, 15) Rattansi believes that self-identification is not just restricted to an individual or group identity. Since identities are constructed by the political or civic institutions or assigned by others. They might categorize people as "white, black, 'mixed', Christian, Muslim, and so forth are a powerful source of such identificatory labels." (Rattansi 2007)(114) Therefore, drawing boundaries around characteristics of 'sameness', and thus belonging, necessarily involves practices of exclusion and the creation of identities of non-belonging for others. (114)

Being a social creature, human being's identity is the essence of his personality and plays an important role in their existence. There are a number of important elements that form one's identity. The homeland, race, ethnicity, religion, and culture are some of these elements. There are also a number of signifiers that can represent these identity elements. "identity is the name of historical, ethnical, social and cultural reality about individual's personality, and is the expression of subjective totality and consistency. At some point it is the answer of the question 'who am I?'" (Recep Taş and Erol 2014) Some people are proud of being identified as, for example, being from a certain country, race or religion but this might change in times. History together with the current political situation of the world can play an important role here (my emphasis). Just like the "truth" which according to Foucault is not "universal," superiority of one race or religion over the others is not universal and ever lasting, too. It means that sometimes one has to change identity and to be someone else.

An individual's identity is shaped according to their biological differences, gender, race and age, and psychological differences such as, job and social statute, beliefs and ideals, value judgment, relics and the legacy of ancestry. It is also shaped with what the individual feels and regards within his life as a total in addition to the historical legacy such as language, religion, art and civilization. In this respect, the quest for identity makes sense for the individual as one of the main aspects of development.

Accordingly, identity is an irremovable part of anyone's existence. Who we are, what we think, what we do, how we are treated and what we want to be make our identity. Since the world is not paradise the part of the identity which comes to the core of the debates and investigation is the quality of it makes one different from others. This turned out to be problematic and the cause of wars and injustices in our time. Although the fundamental categories of identity are gender and territory, they have minor attribute in this study but the major focus of this study is on religious and other collective identity codes.

The question of identity, however, is much more than how we define ourselves. Identity is never just a matter for the individual but constitutes a dynamic relationship between individual and outer environment, between self and others. 'Cultural identity' can be regarded as a historically constructed set of shared or common experiences that ought to be recovered to fulfill the desire to become one nation or one people.

Said objects to the homology between pairings such as us/them, or inside/out. And yet, at the same time, he faces the problem that identity is constituted through a process of othering. All cultures and societies construct identity 'out of a dialectic of self and other, the subject "I" who is native, authentic, at home, and the object "it" or "you", who is foreign, perhaps threatening, different, out there' (Said and Mohr 1986)(40)

Immigration is a phenomenon causing an identity crisis. Those who migrate willingly or unwillingly to settle in a new region based on how much the two places are different, the

people might face problems with their identities. Another factor which is more complicated and catastrophic is invasion. Forced conversion to the religion of the invaders and changing their collective identity was common in the past. It seems that in either cases people of the country cannot be called a nation according to the following definition. A nation can be defined as "a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members". (Smith 1991) A nation is expected to provide social ties between classes and individuals by presenting shared values, traditions and symbols. Smith states "it is through a shared, unique culture that we are enabled to know 'who we are' in the contemporary world" (17). When one does not have the codes of national identity they might be in danger as we will see in the discussion.

Another important part of identity is ethnicity. Considering ethnicity as a socio-biological concept gives the chance to have control over a part of it. "Belonging to an ethnic group is a matter of attitudes, perceptions, and sentiments that are necessarily fleeting and mutable varying with the particular situation of the subject" (20). An ethnic is a group of people who share a common historical and cultural heritage and frequently has a sense of group identity and ethnicity reveals cultural differences. It may or may not overlap with race. "Other factors that influenced identity construction were kinship connections, principles of descent, occupation, and religion". (Harrison 1998)

The following are the factors, which are important in identity formation arranged from the most important: "language, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status and gender". (Goldschmidt 2003) Here are the six attributes of the ethnic community according to Smith in his *National Identity*:

1. A collective proper name
2. A myth of common ancestry
3. Shared historical memories
4. One or more differentiating elements of common culture
5. An association with a specific homeland
6. A sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population (21)

Of course, for the Jews some of these attributes might be different especially when the notion of homeland is concerned. Smith believes that "an ethnic may persist, even when long divorced from its homeland, through an intense nostalgia and spiritual attachment. This is very much the fate of diaspora communities like Jews and Americans (23).

It is after all not uncommon to hear the view that Jews have been particularly prone to victimization because of their own attempts to retain a distinct identity and their refusal to assimilate (one version of the so-called 'Jewish problem'). (Rattansi 2007)(5)

There are many factors that might cause changes in cultural content of identity among events such as war, exile, enslavement, religious conversion, conquest, and immigration. In the next section noting the notion of identity, its

formation, transformation and other factors that the major character of *The Fixer* goes through will be discussed.

In general, an important conclusion from psychoanalytic, and the other conceptions of identity discussed above, is that individual identities are always subject to unconscious anxieties, fears, and continuous, vague, or more focused insecurities, which can be exacerbated in times of rapid change or in encounters with strangers. This has obvious implications for the exacerbation of racism against immigrants and ethnic minorities in times of intense globalization and the rapid transformation of communities and locales. (Rattansi 2007) (118)

METHODOLOGY

Regarding variety of definitions of identity concerning the role of an individual as self and as part of the society and the element of constructing an identity code based on biological identity codes and social and cultural codes this study investigates its significance in the life of the major character, Yakov Bok, in the novel *The Fixer* by Bernard Malamud, as an individual in a society and as a Jew representing his ethnicity. The study goes on focusing on how an individual might react and deal with his identity in critical circumstances.

DISCUSSION

Since the colonization and invading any unknown (to European) lands European countries tried to dictate their own language, culture, religion and literature to the colonized people either by force or in gradual process of teaching and preaching. The reaction of the colonized subject could be summed up as either assimilation or rejection. In either cases, the colonizer undermined whatever held by the colonized as identity icon. Religion as one of the most important parts of one's identity is not an exception.

In many nations, people with major differences in race or religion were segregated and forced to settle in ghettos and Harlems. Having been settled in these places they faced limitations and segregation. The main reason for the state as the hegemony and center to keep the people of the minority in margin is to have the highest control and monitoring on their activities.

The Jews had to live in special areas - Pales or shtetls. They were not allowed to move to different places. Moreover, it was impossible for them to own a piece of land. They could not work in agriculture. As a result, they mainly lived in urban areas. Furthermore, another limitation was imposed on the Jewish people in this area. They were not allowed to enter certain schools. All these restrictions together with organized pogroms led to a huge immigration at the beginning of the century. (Takaki 1993)

When people find themselves in a different culture or nation they try to assimilate in order to have the least problem and enjoy the most opportunities. These people most often try to hide their identity codes especially when they could cause problem.

In *The Fixer* the case is so, Yakov Bok as a Jew by birth is living with other coreligionists in a shtetl where life is

monotonous and the condition is drastic. Yakov began changing his identity with shaving his short beard of reddish cast not to look like a Jew. His father-in-law warned him for cutting that "Cut off your beard and you no longer resemble your creator," Shmuel had warned. "Since then he had been admonished by more than one Jew that he looked like a goy but it had caused him neither to mourn nor rejoice". (Malamud 1967)

The next thing he did in order not to be recognized as Jew was letting his praying shawl be drawn in the river while he was crossing for the fear of the boatman. As the time passes in any circumstances he tried to act as if he was not a Jew but a Russian villager. He even gave a false name when he was asked to introduce himself because he knew that his real name can reveal his identity as a Jew.

Malamud used Jewishness as an identity icon not as a religious faith regarding Yakov Bok since he says that he is "a free thinker." In many occasions Yakov says that he is "Jew born" or "a Jew by birth and nationality" not a religious Jew. Bok in addition to his miseries since he stepped into this world and all his bad lucks as he states "opportunity here is born dead" finds himself in the most humiliating and painful experience of all. After five and a half years of fruitless life with his wife, Raisl, he neglected her bed and stopped sleeping with her; so she ran off with a stranger. Out of his pessimistic thought, Bok believed that she ran away "with a goy I'm positive." (10) This event doubled his pain and put him in the center of the attention wherever he stepped in the village. In addition to all his bad lucks and miseries, he could not tolerate the meaningful gaze and murmur of people after Raisl eloped, so he decides to leave the village to find his luck somewhere else. Of course, it was not the only reason for him to leave, similar to other Malamudian characters the more they learn the more they understand about their miseries and current situation.

"Yakov only neglects for some time the lesson which many of his fellow Jews can teach him; he does not look to them and learn from them the law or the philosophy which sustains them in their wretched existence." By "leaving there (shtetl), he is fully prepared to give up his identity as a Jew" (Teranishi 1994).

When Malamud introduces Bok, he intentionally mentions that "[H]is nose was sometimes Jewish, sometimes not." "This description implies that he cannot completely give up his identity as a Jew nor accept it as his fundamental personality." (185) Now that he finds himself in such a condition that he cannot stay there anymore he tries to remove or get rid of any sign or symbol that can signify him as a Jew. By stepping out of the inner world of shtetl to the world beyond Bok will face "a tension between the belief in a primordial, inherited and fixed identity, on the one hand, and a constructed, voluntary identity, on the other hand". (Buelens and Lievens 2010) Indirectly it indicates that Jews and non-Jews are not treated equally or are the same. One might receive advantages and the other one just gets troubles.

Since he made his mind to leave the shtetl, he was fully prepared to leave everything beyond and never look back, because he had nothing to miss in that community and among

those people except for misery and misfortune. He grew up as an orphan with all those unfulfilled dreams. His marriage, too, brought him more pain and shame than joy and pleasure. So, he had little belonging in the terrible condition of shtetl to miss. "The other way, across the glassy brown river - the way he had come on a dying horse - the steppe stretched out into the vast green distance. Only thirty versts and the shtetl was invisible, gone - poof! - lost, maybe expired. Though he felt homesick he knew he would never return, yet what would it come to?" (Malamud 1967)

Finally he went to Kiev. And as it was mentioned in the novel as a historical record Podol, Kiev, and Plossky and other cities of that time had neighborhoods forbidden to Jews to settle or work. But Yakov "lived in the heart of Jewish quarter in the Podol District." (33) Since he could not get a good job there he stepped out of the ghetto. He was glad that he has not been recognized. "In the snow he felt anonymous, in a sense unseen in his Russian cap and coat - any unemployed worker. Russians passed him without looking at him and he passed them. Having been told he did not look Jewish he now believed it." (34)

The event which can be considered the most important one in the novel and the beginning of temporary good luck and permanent bad luck and misfortune for Yakov happened one evening when he was walking in a snow covered street of Plossky when he found a drunken man face down lying in the snow. Yakov's reaction apart from its artistic value carries Malamud's point of view about man. His immediate hesitation to help the man was the act of his logic. He was a stranger in that neighborhood and worse than that he was a Jew; moreover, he did not know if the man was dead or alive, so he wanted to avoid the possible consequences. But his moral common sense as a human moved him forward to help the man and save him, if he did not die already. Yakov turned the man over and found out that "[H]e was breathing and reeked of drink. The fixer at once noticed the black and white button pinned to his coat, the two-headed eagle of the Black Hundreds." (34) Meticulously, the button pinned to his coat reviled the man's identity. Yakov left the man and went to a corner, thinking of letting him die, the anti-Semitic. Being in the territory of the enemy and finding the enemy in such a condition, only the highest humanistic and Godly forces could make him return to the scene and save his deadliest enemy. With the help of the man's daughter, they took the man into his bed. Bok immediately left the house but the girl asked him to return the next day when her father was in a better state of the mind to thank him.

In this scene the other party wants to return Yakov's favor. But there is a big difference between what Yakov did and what they wanted to do in return. That is, Bok saved the man's life knowing that he is his enemy, a self-advertised Jew hater and also he knew that he was not allowed to enter that district. But what the man and his daughter wanted to do was an ordinary and expected behavior; moreover, they did not know that the man who acted as a savior was a Jew.

The next day Yakov was dubious whether to accept a reward from an anti-Semitic or not. Finally, he convinced himself to go, since their possible cash reward could save a Jew. "Why not a rouble or two if it kept a Jew alive?" (36).

He went to the man's house; the man introduced himself as "Nikolai Maximovitch Lebedev" and in return felling ashamed and sweaty Yakov gave his false name as he had planned "Yakov Ivanovitch Dologushev." And the girl's name was Zinaida Nikolaevna. Yakov is another step away from his real identity but not from his humanity. Lebedev talked about his drinking habit and said that once he was saved by a woman. Interestingly, he added that "[N]owadays people are far less concerned about their fellow humans than in times past. Religious feeling has shrunk in the world and kindness is rare. Very rare indeed" (38). But later on we find out that it is paradoxical. I mean it is not fellow human concern what Lebedev meant but fellow co-religioner.

Yakov accepted a painting work as his reward. Now he thinks that they might be good people and he might have misjudged them. "They're not bad people. The girl's direct and honest in her way, though she makes me uneasy, and as for the old man, maybe I misjudged him. How many goyim have I known in my life? Maybe someone stuck that Black Hundreds pin on his coat when he was drunk in the tavern" (41). Misunderstanding, misjudgment, and lack of knowledge about people who are different from us regarding religion or race are what lead us to the verge of hatred and exterminating feeling toward them. This is what Malamud tries to convey. In order to arouse our logic and passionate feeling, Malamud poses a question to make us think how we are treating other people. Yakov considered asking him directly, "Nikolai Maximovitch, will you please explain how you can cry for a dead dog (as he himself mentioned) yet belong to a society of fanatics that urges death on human beings who happen to be Jews? Explain to me the logic of it." (41).

Similar to anything tested or experienced, sexual relationship plays an important role in human's life, because it has both physical and psychological effects. The physical effect is not that long lasting but the psychological effect is permanent. Having sex with people from other race or religious group is influenced by what one have heard or what the religion said either to have or not to have relation with them for any reason. For people in general, the influence is accelerated by the superstition. In other words, people of different race or religion can be treated differently in sexual relation as "Other" for what can be regarded as their sexual identity. Malamud used this notion in his other novels, too. In this novel both Yakov and Zina are lonely, Yakov for leaving his marriage bed and Zina for her crippled leg. Her leg made her different from other girls and at the same time an "Other" to the eyes of men and as a result she is with no man. They both want to quench their sexual desire now that an intimacy grew between them. The night that Zina invited Yakov to her room, the way she dressed up, set the table and observed any possible precaution to be alone with Yakov indicated that something important was going to happen. "On the kitchen table Zina had laid out a feast, even some food he had never seen before....Zina, open and happy, and looking more attractive than he had ever seen, ... When she cleared the table Zina's breath was heavy. She brought out a guitar, plucked it, and in a high thin voice sang" (48). Thinking of that, Yakov wondered what it would be, since he had never been with

a Russian woman. Then he remembered what a friend told him about his experience with a Russian girl, so there will not be any problem about that since he said "it was the same as with any Jewess" (45). But Yakov's self-conscious about his condition made him worried. "And if I said "Jew" aloud she'd run in six directions" (44). As they approached the end of the party Yakov became more self-conscious and worried because

...he was strange to himself. ...Excitement and foreboding flowed into one feeling. No, he thought, it's a Russian woman. If she slept with me and found out who I was she'd cut her throat. Then he thought, it's not always so, there are some who wouldn't mind. For himself he was willing to experience what there was to experience. But let her lead. (48)

One of the problems with people who are different from other people might lead to mental and physical loss and is their self-conscious about what makes them different. It means that they come to the point that feels the difference and this knowledge makes them act as self-police or even makes them accept to treat differently. Malamud mentions that Yakov is getting ready to have Zina but his knowledge of being different hinders him. "Although he tried to think of her as possibly a friend she remained strange to him." (48) Now he is more conscious than ever, because the most private part of his body, his circumcised penis, will act as a signifier to signify that he is different and reveal his identity as a Jew and this might lead to any possible consequence.

Of course, what makes one to be more self-conscious about the "Othering" signifiers is the fear of being recognized and the treatment after this recognition. Yet, if Yakov had not been circumcised and there was no fear of being identified, he has two more concerns regarding Zina, her being a Russian girl and her crippled leg. Based on his knowledge from a friend who experienced a Russian girl he knows that there is nothing to be worried and about her leg he said that he would not mind. So, the only problem was his own condition. Even with this knowledge he wants to risk. Everything went on as they were arranged to give the feast of the two lonely characters a memorable finality. But Yakov's entering Zina's room a few minutes earlier that he was expected revealed that she was having her monthly bleeding. Zina's condition, too, made her different in the eye of Yakov. According to his religious background, women are unclean in this period and men should not have sex with them. Yakov refused to have sex with her, though she said that "it was the safest time" and she was "a lonely girl." Yakov's morality and modesty overcome his lust and desire. He put on his cloths and he was still sure that he was not unmasked because he was "taught that a Russian woman would never knowingly accept advances from a Jew".(Teranishi 1994)

After finishing the painting, Yakov accepted the job as an overseer in the brickyard offered by Lebedev and accepted to stay in a room there. He insisted on renting a flat somewhere in the neighborhood because he know that the brickyard was located in a district forbidden to Jews to live or even work. But Lebedev said that there is no transportation to work the time that he must be present at work. He was not at ease neither during the day while working nor at night in his dreams. His self-conscious about the condition intensified the feeling

of being an "Other" in the factory. By catching the foreman and the drivers cheating he knew that his job will be harder. "What worried him most – to be unmasked as a hidden Jew."

One cold evening when Yakov was returning to his room, he saw that some boys were attacking an old man. He scattered them and went closer and saw that "the old man was a Jew, a Hasid" who lost his way to a friend's house. Similar to the incident at the beginning of the novel, he helped the old man. Since his forehead was bleeding Yakov took him to his room for treatment. His humanistic and moral behavior was the trigger for his misfortune.

Yakov felt the danger and noticed that someone had entered his room while he was out. He decided to pack his few things and bag of tools and leave the factory but it was a little late. He was arrested on the stairs by a group of armed soldiers.

The impact of deforming hatred and the inhumane abuse of the Jew is almost unbelievable. Yet, the details of the life of just one Jew, Yakov Bok, is enough to convince the reader of the reality of people who hate and think and act as the Russian boatman (at the beginning of the novel) does. Mien the twelve-year-old son of Zhenia Golov is murdered, the murderer can only be a Jew, so the city of Kiev is flooded with hundreds of leaflets screaming, "WE ACCUSE THE JEWS".(Malamud 1967) The next day Yakov is singled out as the most likely man to commit such a malicious deed. After Yakov's arrest, inhumanity is piled upon inhumanity by the Russian official's imprisonment, beatings, insufficient clothing and food, debasing searches and treatment, refusal of legal counsel. Even the one ray of hope, Investigating Magistrate Bibikov, is spitefully removed by the men who are determined to convict Yakov of a ritual murder. In time of political turmoil when the Russian Tsar is desperately clinging to his dwindling power and authority, he and his officials grasp frantically at anything which might distract the attention of the Russian people from their own problems. Julius Ostrovsky recognizes the situation and tells Yakov "to distract popular attention from the breaches of the Russian Constitution they incite nationalism against non-Orthodox Russians. They persecute every minority - Poles, Finns, Germans, us - but especially us." (276) Thus, the Jew is chosen; the Jew is already despised by the Russian people because he eats different food, follows different customs and worships in a different church. He is a ready-made scapegoat which has been used before; all the Tsar, or any man, must do is bring the Jew out of storage, brush away the thin layer of dust, and remind the world of all the evils which the Jew has caused.

He thought that his conviction will be residing in a district forbidden to Jews but he was too positive. He caught in a trap that he had never thought of. Russians were looking for a scapegoat and now they found it. Yakov was accused of the most horrible crime. He was convicted of murdering the Christian boy.

The investigation started and Investigation Magistrate started asking different kinds of questions, which seemed irrelevant to Yakov. The Investigative Magistrate told him the he might be imprisoned at most for one month for entering the district forbidden to Jews. But little by little Yakov

noticed that they brought force more and more indictments one from Lebedev for giving him a false name and identity "I believe he knew full well, when he accepted my unwitting offer, that the Lukianovsky District is sacred territory and forbidden to Jews for residence," (77) he called himself a generous and lenient man but he emphasized that "I would never have tolerated a Jew in my employ." the other indictment came from Lebedev's daughter for sexual assault. She said that she was sure he wanted to rape her and when "I saw he was cut in the manner of Jewish males. I screamed loudly and he left the room" (84). The most dreadful of all was that they gathered witnesses to give clues that he murdered the Christian boy to get the blood for ritual purposes. Now Yakov found out that he was trapped, not as an individual person but as anybody as a Jew, because of the political situation of Russia. They tried any possible trick and false evidence to make a murderer out of him and make him confess the crime he had not committed in order to start their pogrom against Jews.

In his papers Yakov stated that he is a "Jew by birth and nationality". He was asked to clarify what he exactly meant by that. Yakov said that "what I meant by that is I'm not a religious man. I was when I was young but lost my belief" (80). But the Investigative Magistrate told him:

Legally you are a Jew. The Imperial Government considers you one even though you twist and squirm. You are so recorded on your passport. Our laws concerning Jews apply to you.

However, if you are ashamed of your people, why don't you leave the faith officially?"

"I'm not ashamed, your honor. Maybe I don't always like what I see-there are Jews of all sorts, as the saying goes, but if I'm going to be ashamed of anyone, it might as well be myself." As he said this his color heightened. (81)

Yakov tried to be realistic and said there are all sorts of Jews, good and bad it is in human nature not just in Jews. He asked Bibikov if he should wear prison cloth, he answered that "you will be treated as the other prisoners." But at the time of sending him into the prison he was asked to sit down for the haircut. Then the sergeant checked the paper and stopped the barber "Never mind that. The orders say let him keep his head of hair."

"It's always like that," said the barber, incensed. "These pricks are born with privileges" (132). By letting him keep his hair they wanted him to be different from the other prisoners. They made him be an "Other" among them. Since having hair for prisoners could be considered as a privilege, other prisoners would think that he was a spy and treat him differently or attack him violently. "Why isn't your head shaved like the rest of us?"

"I don't know," Yakov whispered. "I told the barber to go ahead and do it."

"Are you a stool pigeon or squealer? The men are suspicious of you."

"No, no, tell them I'm not" (135).

Once again Yakov's self-conscious made him act as a stranger, because he thought other prisoners know who he is, he did not mix with them. One of the prisoners asked him

"Then why do you sit apart from us? Who the hell do you think you are?" According to the questions that Grubeshov, the Prosecuting Attorney, asked and all his and the gourds attempt to make him confess by using force, humiliation, dehumanization and sometimes by persuading him to admit the crime that they would let him flee from the country. The interesting thing is that Grubeshov told him

Your role in this murder was known to us before you were arrested. You were the only Jew living in the district, with the exceptions of Mandelbaum and Litvinov, Merchants of the First Guild, who weren't in Russia during the time of the commission of the crime, perhaps on purpose. We suspected a Jew at once because a Russian couldn't possibly commit that kind of crime. (128)

Yakov was convinced more than ever that he was there because he was a Jew and available at the time of the murder. Bok was still in his solitary confinement. He was not allowed to cut his hair or shave his beard, this time the reason was not that to make him different from other prisoners it was something else, now that he had been arrested for being a Jew they wanted him to look like a Jew, too. While he shaved his beard in order not to resemble a Jew at the time of leaving the shtetl, now he is forced to look like a Jew.

Up to this stage Yakov's major concern and struggle was with identity, either to hide or change it. But the next stage begins with any possible attempt by the police and the judiciary system to make him seem more Jewish than ever. In the prison "Yakov's hair was still not cropped but once was clipped a little by the prison barber; he was not permitted to shave, and his beard was growing long. One of the guards said 'that's to keep you looking more like a Jew...they say the warden is going to make you wear a Zhid caftan and a rabbi's round hat, and they are going to twist earlock out of your hair over your ears so you'll look kosher'" (174).

In the final stage, he finds out that it is a plot against the Jew not him as a single person, so he plays the role of a scapegoat to face his destiny. He came to the point that could not tolerate the torture and suffering and humiliation any more, sometimes he thought of killing himself. But he changed his mind. It seems that the time that he spent in prison made him know himself, his religion and what other people think about Jews. It seems that this realization made him more consistent and gave him hope to tolerate. He took the role of Christ symbolically for his nation as a scapegoat to suffer the pain and even died in order not to let another pogrom start against Jews.

The barber one morning came to trim his hair and comb his beard in Jewish manner. "...the barber, glancing stealthily at a yellowed photograph in his tunic pocket, combed out curls over his ears" (253). When his wife met him in the prison she told him "how strange you look in earlocks and long beard." Bok replied "that's their evidence against me" (255).

CONCLUSION

There are many factors and codes that construct anyone's identity such as name, gender, homeland, religion, and ethnicity. Since in the world we are living in, people and nations are not treated and valued based on humanistic qualities and

moral codes, those who are different (in any aspect) from the hegemony are marginalized and discriminated.

In order to make the injustice the least, people of minority do their best to assimilate or undergo certain changes to be identified more like the center. In so doing, they change their identity signifiers such as name, appearance, religion, etc. to resemble the center.

When the case becomes political and more complicated, minority people try to assimilate and attach to the center. At the same time the center as the controlling power tries to single out the minority in order to marginalize and mistreat it or apply any other political force over them.

Regarding the novel which has been discussed here the major character Yakov Bok as a Jew by birth and a free thinker as he considers himself, tries to change his identity codes such as his name, appearance, and other religious icons in order to hide his real identity. With his new identity and look he is positive to cross the border lines of margin and step to the realm of the center which is forbidden to Jews for a better opportunity and luck. But he finds himself entangled in the worst situation and bad luck. Though he could just be accused of entering into the district forbidden to Jews, he was accused of murdering a Christian boy, since he was the only hidden Jew in the district. The prison keepers and state officials did their best to make him look like a Jew, even more than he used to.

It can be said that what we do, who we are, and the way we are treated construct our identity and at the same time are affected by our identity.

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