

# A Study on the Spatial Structure of Dreams in Bernard Malamud's "Man in the Drawer"

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## Abstract

Bernard Malamud was a well-known novelist who ever won many American National prizes for fiction, national arts award for literature association, as well as Pulitzer Prize. It can be imagined that they earned him high evaluation and prestige.

Though most of Malamud's works are full-length novels, he never stopped writing short stories even from the very beginning of his writing career. As a result, Malamud could not avoid admitting that he preferred to write short stories in one preface, at a time when he assembled his twenty five short stories into a book in 1983. Besides laying emphasis on lots of fun deriving from short stories writing, Malamud also stood out for the rigorous structure which should be featured by short stories. He asserted that rigorous structure is not only a must for literary works, but an essential basis.

Consequently, the study aimed to look into the spatial structure of dreams in Malamud's "Man in the Drawer", hoping for a glimpse of the leading edge. The study was, first of all, to categorize between manifest content and latent content of dreams in Malamud's "Man in the Drawer"; then, to parse the dreams in Malamud's short story in terms of spatial structure of equivalence of Jurij Lotman's theory, a semiologist; after that, based on the concept of semiotics, to highlight the language used in "Man in the Drawer", in terms of the natural language as the so-called primary language, as well as its form and content; at length, by the chance of entering Malamud's personal language world, to probe into the structure of its semiotic system with the aim of understanding the relations between the semantic world in the dreams of Malamud's stories and the real world.

**Keywords:** Spatial structure, Manifest content, Latent content, Equivalence, Natural language, Primary language

## 1. Research motivation and its importance

According to Sigmund Freud's (1978) viewpoint, a dream can be inspected from two aspects; one is its manifest content, the other is its latent one. He even emphasizes that by applying the process of interpretation one will be able "to detect a latent-content whose significance far surpasses that of the manifest dream-content." (Note 1) Normally speaking, the manifest content of one's dream is usually to be understood easily. Nevertheless, what one understands does not really mean the true side of the dream. Hence, it is necessary to come to the step of probing into its latent content; the reason why the latent content of one's dream is worth being unveiled is that there will be of much more significance within its content.

Freud even puts it more clearly, "the dream-content appears to us as a translation of the dream-thoughts into another mode of expression, whose symbols and laws of composition we must learn by comparing the origin with the translation. ... The dream-content is, as it were, presented in hieroglyphics, whose symbols must be translated, one by one, into the language of the dream-thoughts."(Note 2)

Factually, the irrational desire or instinct is gradually developed since one's childhood. Everyone has a wish or even much more since a boy or a girl. Such wishes can be regarded as one's manifest dream. Many people have tried their best to reach the goals and even try to make their dreams come true with their whole life. It is natural that one will have some dreams during their daily sleep before they really fulfill their final wishes. And very often, their dreams will appear in their sleep through the function of displacement or distortion in Freud's phrases.

Hence, in one's dream, when the desire or instinct is oppressed or forced to change its original appearance,

shows up with different appearance, it is factually called the latent dream. Since Freud reckons that wish-fulfillment is the meaning of every dream, he provides further notion, "wherever a wish-fulfillment is unrecognizable and disguised there must be present a tendency to defend oneself against this wish, and in consequence of this defense the wish is unable to express itself save in a distorted form." (Note 3)

It was obviously important for the people in the real world to have a better understanding of how the spatial structure (Lotman, 1977) might be for their dreams, and to have good ways to fulfill their wishes of dreams through literary works. Hence, it was also important to know how a fiction world would offer people an optimal way to learn from protagonists, and to transfer those learned into their own.

## 2. Research purpose

By means of Bernard Malamud's novel and the facilitation of Freud's and some semiotic ideas, it was hoped to break through the boundaries among the author, readers, and researchers, continue to produce text in terms of involving the literary content, and result in an effect of multi-statement and multi-interpretation.

The study aimed to create a way of openness for any possible text, not only encouraging readers to read, but also being invited to take part in the text by the author. It was also hoped to probe the way how Malamud highlighted the main theme about his tangled emotions toward America and Russia in terms of his personal language world in "Man in the drawer."

## 3. Literature review

Freud's (1978) theory depicts that the desire hidden in one's conscience is called manifest dream, and that such a desire, being distorted, appearing in one's dream, is called latent dream. And tracing the relations between the two, Freud makes it simple by naming the former, "dream-thoughts", and the latter, "dream-content".

In Bernard Malamud's short story, "Man in the Drawer", the above mentioned relations between dreams can be easily found out. As a matter of fact, one will recognize that dreams play important parts in Bernard Malamud's story, and that it owns its necessity to investigate them after one finishes reading any one of his stories.

It is undeniable that a writer's work is one kind of product of the intellect or the imagination. Just as Raman Selden (1985) mentions in his "Structuralist Theories," the literary work, one may have long felt, "is the child of an author's creative life, and expresses the author's essential self." (Note 4) In "Man in the Drawer", Howard Harvitz, a visitor in the Soviet Union, has his manifest dream. Feliks Levitansky, a taxi driver, also has his manifest dream. In terms of Raman Selden's viewpoint, both Harvitz and Levitansky seem to be Bernard Malamud's children who are making dreams on behalf of the author.

In "Man in the Drawer", Harvitz is a man who "had been examining my life and needed more time to see where I stood" (Note 5) since the death of his wife, Rose. During his self-searching, he thinks then that a change of scene for him, maybe a month abroad, will be helpful. As a result, he comes to the U.S.S.R. Apparently, Harvitz's wish of searching himself or being closer to himself reflects his manifest dream. As for Levitansky, his manifest dream is that he has been looking for someone who can arrange for the publication of his stories abroad since he himself writes some stories. Therefore, when he is aware that Harvitz comes from America, he asks him to help, and says, "In this event, perhaps you will show to your publisher, and he will publish my work in America?" (p.206) He hopes that Harvitz can help him to fulfill his wish. And it is very clear that his wish is right his manifest dream. Malamud seemingly intends to imply that there are lots of human possibilities within one's dream. Edward A. Abramson (1993) ever puts it thus, "Levitansky's courage and Harvitz's growth in human understanding show the human possibilities that exist even amid tragedy." (Note 6)

But Harvitz refuses to help Levitansky at first because he is afraid that he will get some trouble if he helps a Russian to smuggle a manuscript out of Russia. Later, during such a struggle, Harvitz has a dream when falls asleep. He describes his dream,

... Then I recalled that in one of my dreams a drawer in a table I was sitting at had slowly come open, and Feliks Levitansky, a dwarf who lived in it along with a few friendly mice, managed to scale the wooden wall on the comb he used as a ladder, and hop from the drawer ledge to the top of the table. He leered in my face, shook his Lilliputian fist, and shouted in high-pitched but (to me) understandable Russian, "Atombombnik! You massacred innocent Japanese people! Amerikansky bastards!" (p.228)

Obviously, it is a latent dream. In this dream, Feliks becomes a dwarf. The place where he lives is changed to be a drawer. He lives there and has a few mice as his neighbors peacefully. In the dream, one can easily find out that the situation of distortion and displacement is widely used. By means of that distortion and displacement, and Feliks Levitansky's trying "to hop from the drawer ledge to the top of the table", it reveals that the hidden desire

of a change of scene for Harvitz is strong and unveiled here. In fact, the person who bounces from the drawer shelf in the dream might be Harvitz himself, too. During his waking hours, he would not like to confess to others his wishes of getting free from the barrier of life. But in his dream, he fulfills his wish by the role of Levitansky.

Freud (1978) thinks that these dreams are distorted, and that their wish-fulfillment is disguised beyond recognition. Hence, through his analysis, Freud comes to such a conclusion: "The dream is the (disguised) fulfillment of a (suppressed, repressed) wish." (Note 7) Consequently, when Harvitz is on his way to the airport, he changed his mind, and thinks, "Still, if Levitansky has the courage to send these stories out, the least I can do is give him [Levitansky] a hand. When one thinks of it it's little enough he does for human freedom during the course of his life." (p.230) In fact, the very thought of his doing something for human freedom is not only his hidden desire, but also a real resolution to set his own mind free because when he gives Levitansky a helping hand, it means he helps to get himself through the obstacles of life. It is the exact freedom that Malamud has long cared about. Jeffrey Helterman (1985) has pointed out, looking back at the stories Malamud wrote over almost forty-five years, one perceives a continuity of concerns: "the themes are freedom, commitment, responsibility, and the bonds of love and hate that link man to man." (Note 8)

Frankly speaking, there is a common place between Harvitz's and Levitansky's dreams. In their manifest dreams, both of them have tried their every endeavor to break through their current environments though they have different nationalities and different contents of wishes. The difference between their current environments exactly constructs a milieu of spatial structure. In literary works, spatial structure, as Jurij Lotman (1977) points out, plays an important role. (Note 9) Lotman argues that such a spatial structure always gets involved in the concept of equivalence because of the fact that any structure has to be very careful of the problem of balance. It is no doubt that balance cannot exist if no equivalence will come into being.

Harvitz wants to let his mind free, and Levitansky would like to ask freedom for his stories. Their common place in dreams is the longing for freedom. Freedom refers to a sense of self that is built up over time as the person participates in social life. The sense of self, here, is also a personal identity. According to Hilary Siebert and Begoña Sío-Castiñeira (1999), to have a personal identity is to identify with some set of other people, with whom one feels an affinity, in whose company one feels comfortable, and whose ideas and beliefs are similar to one's own. Siebert and Sío-Castiñeira put it thus, "One feels real and whole as a person in relation to this community, and one also has a place in the larger society as a result of one's membership and identification with it." (Note 10) Whatever the basis it is, personal identity is a feeling of selfhood that underlies and, in a sense, makes possible the variety of situated identities the person assumes.

Then, even in Harvitz's dreams when he falls asleep over a book and a bottle of sweetish warm beer, he sees that the dwarf Levitansky tries to escape from the drawer. It is exactly the way Levitansky shows his determination to pursue freedom. And it is also through such a latent dream that Harvitz reveals his mind for freedom. Hence, it can be said that both Harvitz and Levitansky fulfill their wishes for freedom through Harvitz's nightmare. From this point of view, the survey of dreams, manifest or latent, has its significance, to some degree. It is exactly what Freud believes in his theory,

... the dream is not meaningless, not absurd, does not presuppose that one part of our store of ideas is dormant while another part begins to awake. It is a perfectly valid psychic phenomenon, actually a wish-fulfillment. (Note 11)

Through the investigation of Harvitz's latent dream-thought, it will be found that dreams do really own a meaning, and that both Harvitz and Levitansky effect their wishes for freedom.

#### **4. Methodology**

##### *4.1 Research object*

The research object was Bernard Malamud's novel, "Man in the drawer", which was considered as one of Bernard Malamud's best known story, and was also awarded O. Henry Awards in 1969. It portrayed an American writer in Russia who was involved in the fate of a Jewish dissident writer and was compelled to smuggle the latter's stories out of his repressive country.

##### *4.2 Research tool*

The tool adopted by the study was the concept of spatial structure, through which the ideas of manifest content and latent content of dreams, as well as the spatial structure of equivalence of Jurij Lotman's theory, were used to collect the qualitative data from the text of Bernard Malamud.

### 4.3 Research method

By means of entering Malamud's personal language world, it aims to probe into the structure of its semiotic system with the aim of understanding the relations between the semantic world in the dreams of Malamud's stories and the real world. The followings are four main phrases:

- (a) To classify the dreams in "Man in the drawer"
- (b) To analyze the spatial structure of equivalence
- (c) To make comparison between form and content
- (d) To find out any significance from Malamud's personal language world

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Spatial Structure of Equivalence

Since, as Raman Selden has put it thus, the work is the result of a writer's experiences and wisdom, it is quite proper if a writer's work is compared to an architect's; that is a writer is supposed to build his story well enough if he or she would like to let it draw reader's attention, just like that a successful architect will erect magnificent buildings. Hence, the importance of a work's structure is exactly like that of architecture. Good structure will make a work to be a writer's masterpiece. It can thus be said that the structure of a work can provide a hint of a writer's creation if it is really exquisite.

Just as Jurij Lotman points out, spatial structure plays a critical role. And such a spatial structure always gets involved in the concept of equivalence owing to the fact that any structure has to pay its very attention to the problem of balance. It is rather clear that balance will not exist if there is no equivalence. And if balance will not exist, the structure of a story, or architecture, will collapse. Through its collapse, the plot of a story will have not any space to go through. Therefore, the spatial structure of equivalence indeed plays a remarkable part in literary works.

And the spatial structure of equivalence is something like "high and low," "right and left," "near and far," "open and close," "bound and boundless," etc. In Malamud's "Man in the Drawer," such a structure is noticeable, too. First of all, one can inspect them from the viewpoint of "near and far." Harvitz comes to the Soviet Union from America. From the aspect of geographic location, America represents "far," and the Soviet Union where the story goes represents "near." Hence, America and the Soviet Union highlight the spatial structure of equivalence geographically. Then, from the aspect social status, since Harvitz is a "free-lance writer" (p.203), he seems to stand for one of those who come from the "high" ranks of society; as for Levitansky who works as a "taxi driver" (p.194), he can be regarded as one of those who come from the "low" ranks of society. Therefore, the difference between their jobs apparently constructed the spatial structure of equivalence concerning "high and low" socially. And then, the Soviet Union is generally reckoned as "left" politically because its system is "Communism"; while Harvitz's country, America, obviously represents "right" politically, for its system is "Democracy".

Naturally, the different system between Harvitz's and Levitansky's countries has factually established the spatial structure of equivalence in "right and left" systematically and politically. And regarding "open and close", it goes without saying that such difference results from the various types of their society. In Harvitz's society of America, he can do what he would like to do, to write, to say, and even to travel abroad. In Levitansky's Russian society, however, he can do nothing freely; even to find a place for his novels to be issued will be impossible. Such a contrary between Harvitz's "openness" and Levitansky's "closeness" forms the spatial structure of equivalence. Then respecting "bound and boundless", it also has something to do with Harvitz's open society and Levitansky's close society; the former provides its people "boundless" freedom to express what are in their minds, but the latter does not. And through these various observations about Harvitz and Levitansky, one will indeed have great impression on the spatial structure of equivalence about their manifest dreams.

Secondly, in Harvitz's latent dreams after he goes to hear "Tosca" and hurries back to the hotel, one can perceive the trace of the spatial structure of equivalence. In one of Harvitz's dreams, he sits at a table. The drawer of this table symbolizes a world of "closeness" before it slowly comes "open". Here, the openness and closeness of the drawer reflect two different kinds of countries; one is America where Harvitz comes from, the other is Russia where Levitansky locates. And the different systems of democracy and communism about America and Russia provide enough evidence which demonstrates the spatial structure of equivalence – "closeness and openness." And then, in the dream, Levitansky becomes "a dwarf who lived in it along with a few friendly mice." (p.227) Later, he hops from the drawer ledge to the top of the table, shouts to Harvitz who is one with normal size,

“Atombombnik! You massacred innocent Japanese people! Amerikansky bastards!” (p.228) Here, Harvitz’s location is clearly “high” and that of Levitansky is “low” according to their different sizes in figures and proportion.

### **Insert Table 1 Here**

Hence, it is true that Malamud’s “Man in the Drawer” not only has the fact of spatial structure, but also fills with the beauty of spatial structure. Under such a structure, Malamud’s protagonists – Harvitz and Levitansky – have their vivid and impressive plots. And according to Israel Shenker (1972), “A Malamud character is someone who fears his fate, is caught up in it, yet manages to outrun it. He’s the subject and object of laughter and pity.” (Note 12) The fact of spatial structure, viewed from Malamud’s protagonists, unveils the precise subject and object.

### *5.2 Form and Content*

According to Jurij Lotman’s point of view, the spatial structure of literature and its content are always connected closely, and then produce great significance. Here, the spatial structure can be taken as the form of literature, and the plot of the story can be considered as the content of the literature. Such form and content are just like two sides of a coin; hence, it goes without saying that both form and content are important to the investigation of literature.

In semiotics, the natural language which is used in our daily life is always considered as the so-called primary language. The primary language, like Chinese or English, can build the primary modeling system. However, if such primary language reveals another meaning about words, it results in the secondary language which forms the secondary modeling system (Lotman, 1977). (Note 13) In novels, the words themselves can be regarded as the primary language; but, after their special meanings are uncovered, what they stand for is the secondary language.

Generally speaking, the primary language is something of “signifier” which only refers to the denotation of language; and the secondary language is that of “signified” which demonstrates the connotation of language. Just as what Raman Selden (1985) mentions about Saussure’s (a Swiss linguist, 1857-1913) assertion,

In his [Saussure’s] view, words are not symbols which correspond to referents, but rather are ‘signs’ which are made up of two parts (like two sides of a sheet of paper): a mark, either written or spoken, called a ‘signifier’, and a concept (what is ‘thought’ when the mark is made), called a ‘signified’. (Note 14)

As a result, the secondary modeling system is formed at the same time that the connotation of language is exposed. Therefore, if one regards one’s daily communicative words as the primary modeling system of language, literature is surely the secondary modeling system of language. Herein, the fact that the spatial structure of literature and its content combine each other together, overlapping the meaning of natural language, is a phenomenon of producing the secondary meaning. And the significance comes from the secondary meaning in literature.

Consequently, it is worth noticing that, in Malamud’s “Man in the Drawer,” the dream-content indeed produces their secondary meaning especially after their combining with the spatial structure above discussed, and after their overlapping the natural language. The spatial structure of equivalence – “high and low”, “right and left”, “near and far”, “open and close”, “bound and boundless”, etc. – will be of much significance, in “Man in the Drawer”, after it is examined from the angles of “society”, “politics”, etc. First, it is necessary for one to check the spatial structure of equivalence by means of the “social” point of view if one intends to find out any secondary meanings. Walter Shear (1966) offers his further notion about this, and says, “Although the novel as form is not always restricted to a concern with social milieu, certainly it is a type of literature that is often associated with social awareness.” (Note 15) And at the same time of checking it socially through the view of “social awareness”, such concepts as “freedom and slavery”, “one’s own and other persons”, “reachable and reachless”, “valuable and valueless”, “mortal and immortal”, “good and bad”, etc., are supposed to be used as indispensable index signs.

### **Insert Table 2 Here**

Socially speaking, Harvitz comes from a “far” country – America, which is full of freedom; Levitansky lives in a “near” country – Russia, whose society is visibly short of freedom, at least, to some extent. In the “far” America, Harvitz works as a “free-lance writer”, but in the “near” Russia where Harvitz pays a visit, Levitansky is an amateur writer without freedom since he cannot find any publisher for his novels. Herefrom, the “far” America and the “near” Russia seem to have formed the keen contrast of “freedom and slavery”.

Furthermore, it is also noticeable that the “social” point of view will make sense if one sees through it by means of the spatial structure of equivalence – “high and low”. In Harvitz’s manifest dream, his job as a “free-lance writer” symbolizes his “high” degree of freedom by which he can decide what to write, when to write, without anyone else’s restriction. Hence, “free-lance writer” can be regarded as “signifier”, and the degree of freedom and even social status can be regarded as “signified”, in the concept of semiotics. In fact, in Jacques Lacan’s (1991) standpoint, he restates Freud’s theories in the language of Saussure. In Lacan’s version of the sign, “the signified ‘slides’ beneath a signifier which ‘floats’”. Freud considered dreams the main outlet for repressed desires. His [Freud’s] theory of dreams is reinterpreted as a textual theory.” (Note 16) And in Levitansky’s manifest dream that he would like to obtain the opportunity of publication for his novels, the part-time job as a “taxi driver” typifies his “low” degree of social status, nevertheless, he needs it since he tells Harvitz, “Now is not for me the best of times.” (p.205) And the fact that he tries to ask Harvitz to arrange for his novel’s publication in Paris or either in London and “Money, if I could get, is not an idea” (p.206) represents his “low” degree of freedom. So, “taxi driver” is the so-called “signifier”, and his “low” degree of social status and embarrassed economic situation are the so-called “signified” in semiotics. As a result, after the structure of “high and low” is overlapped socially, one can easily perceive that Harvitz’s social system is freedom, and that of Levitansky’s is under slavery. At the “high” position of society, freedom is not hard for one to get, but hard for one from the “low” place of society. At the “high” place of society, one can have “one’s own” choice or decision, but choice or decision will only belong to “other persons” who are the ones from the “low” place.

In Harvitz’s latent dream, there is something meaningful if one inspects the equivalent structure of “high and low”, and “open and close” socially. In the dream, the “drawer” in a table is a “signifier” which means a container to hold something, but, at the same time, it can be a “signified” which means a “close” place where Levitansky, a midget, is trying to escape from. It is the situation just like what Harvitz sees in his dream that Levitansky “managed to scale the wooden wall on the comb he used as a ladder, and to hop from the drawer ledge to the top of the table.” (p.228) Contrary to the “close” world of the drawer, it is the “open” world outside the drawer. And after the structure of “open and close” is connected with the content of society, one can apprehend that Harvitz lives in an “open” world and enjoys his “freedom”, however, Levitansky lives in a “close” world like a “drawer” and loses his freedom. Hence, the contrast of “freedom and slavery” can be sensed here. And then, the place where the pygmy Levitansky stays is “low”; in such a “low” place, he is “reachless” to what he wants – not even a bit of freedom. Still, Harvitz’s place is “high” since he is sitting at this table where the drawer locates. And it is apparent that Harvitz is “reachable” to what he wants in his “high” place. Consequently, along with the connection between the structure of “high and low” and the content of society, one can discern that Harvitz is “reachable” to something, but Levitansky is “reachless” to even the freedom which he would like to give to his book.

And politically speaking, both Harvitz’s and Levitansky’s manifest dreams show the significance. It is especially obvious when the equivalent spatial structure of “open and close” is overlapped by the content of politics. In his manifest dream, Harvitz leaves his country, the States, which seems to be “open” politically, to the Soviet Union which is perceptibly “close” politically. On the surface, Harvitz’s motivation of visiting the Soviet Union after his wife’s (Rose’s) death is simple. As a matter of fact, he does not just leave his country, and pays a visit to the Soviet Union. Actually, he is “escaping” from his country. Hence, when he is more or less packing the trip overseas, he feels that “some of the relief I was looking for derived, in addition to what was still on my mind, from the necessity of making an unexpected serious personal decision.” (p.196) Moreover, his former wife, Lillian, seems to have been a helper of forwarding him to go to the Soviet Union soon. Because Lillian seems to be willing to take the chance of getting married to him again when Harvitz begins to see her after Rose’s death, she is just like the object which Harvitz wants to keep from since he cannot decide if he would get married with her again. Therefore, Harvitz’s leaving Lillian has the same degree of meanings as he leaves the States. Apparently, Harvitz has got his limitations in both his marriage and spiritual life. Earl H. Rovit (1960) once points out, “For Malamud seems to insist that there is a way of escaping the fatal limitations of the human condition. Man need not remain buried in the isolation of himself.” (Note 17) Consequently, “Lillian” is a “signifier” which stands for the identity of Harvitz’s former wife on the one hand; but, “Lillian” also acts as a “signified” which stands for the country of the States on the other hand; it also implies Harvitz’s “fatal limitations” and “the isolation of himself” from which he intends to escape. And when he enters the “close” Soviet Union, he finds that the place he escapes from is not as bad as he thinks it about before, especially after Levitansky gives him so much pressure as to ask him to smuggle his novels. So, when Harvitz prepares to go back home, he unlocks his suitcase and lays Levitansky’s manuscript on the top of his shirts. And then, just like Malamud depicts,

... Then I unpacked half the contents and slipped the manuscript into a folder containing my notes on literary museums and a few letters from Lillian. I then and there decided that if I got back to the States, the next time I saw her [Lillian] I would ask her to marry me. (p.230)

Here, the change of Harvitz's attitude toward Lillian represents that of Harvitz's attitude toward the States. The mood here and now for Harvitz is that he would like to fly back to the "open" States from the "close" Soviet Union politically as soon as possible. Moreover, the overlapping situation about the equivalent spatial structure of "open and close" and the content of politics, here, emits its significance of "freedom and slavery", and "reachable and reachless". Primarily, Harvitz intends to look for "some of the relief" just because he feels no complete freedom in his mind in the States. However, after he goes to the Soviet Union, and practically experiences the air there, he hopes to fly back to his country soon. It is worthy of attention that he finally identifies his country as a free one, trying to leave the enslaved Soviet Union immediately, and to ask Lillian to marry him. Once again, the overlap between such a structure and content reflects the meaning of Harvitz's returning to "freedom", and it also reflects that when freedom is "reachless", one will treasure it highly; on the contrary, when freedom is "reachable", one will often neglect its existence and does not catch it in time when something is "reachable" for him in his country, and that he shows his anxiety to own it when he is far away in the Soviet Union. The complex interaction between the structure of "open and close" and the content of politics, between "freedom and slavery" and "reachable and reachless", indeed makes sense.

Then in Levitansky's manifest dream, he would like to find someone who can make his novels published out of the Soviet Union. In other words, he is looking for freedom for the stories he writes. But what he writes is "presently for the drawer" (p.204) He tells Harvitz that he is in desperate situation. He has written for years but little is published. In the past, one editor once told him that his stories were good but he violated social realism. Hence, they warned him not to send his work to any journals. Basically speaking, Levitansky lives in the "close" Soviet Union politically. He has been trying very hard to give his stories an "open" world. He even tells Harvitz,

... I feel I am locked in drawer with my stories. Now I must get out or I suffocate. It becomes for me each day more difficult to write. ... I wish to have in minds different than my own and my wife acknowledgement of my art. I wish them to know my work is related to Russian writers of the past as well as modern. I am in tradition of Chechov, Corky, Isaac Babel. I know if book of my stories will be published, it will make for me favorable reputation. This is reason why you must help me – it is necessary for my interior liberty. (pp.214-215)

Here, "drawer" and "stories" are both "signifieds". But in the aspects of "signifieds", "drawer" represents the "close" world of the Soviet Union and "stories" mean a thought, or tool, to run toward the "open" world of freedom. Levitansky's desire for freedom through writing stories is so strong that he tells Harvitz, "If I stop my writing I may as well be dead" (p.217)

### **Insert Table 3 Here**

Hitherto, conspicuous significance derives from the overlap between the equivalent spatial structure of "open and close" and the content of politics. On the one hand, Levitansky intends to search for "freedom" for his stories, but it seems "reachless" for him. His stories are locked in the drawer by him reluctantly because he can send them to no places; that is the situation of "being slaved" in a sense. On the other hand, through the plea Levitansky poses, he hopes that Harvitz can help him to change the fact of "reachless" freedom into "reachable". Hence, for Levitansky here, the equivalent spatial structure of "open and close" overlaps the content of politics, and originates the significant relations between "freedom" and "slavery", "reachable" and "reachless".

And then it is necessary to pay attention to Harvitz's latent dream from the viewpoint of politics. In the dream, "drawer" is a "signifier" as well as a "signified" politically. At the level of "signified", it means a "close" country, Levitansky has become a Lilliputian who lives with mice. Just contrary to "drawer", there is an "open" world which is exactly the place Levitansky dreams for. When the structure – the form – of "open and close" is overlapped by the content of politics, it is beyond denial that something in it relates to "freedom and slavery", "one's own and other persons", and "reachable and reachless". In addition, something "valuable and valueless" further highlights the significance of Harvitz's latent dream. Just because of the different political systems, freedom is "valuable" for Levitansky who longs for it very much; however, freedom seems "valueless" for Harvitz who owns too much and does not know how to regard it highly. Until after Harvitz flies to Russia and finds that Levitansky is really a man in need of freedom, he feels aware that something is factually "valuable".

## 6. Conclusion and suggestion

As it is well known, every writer can use the same words without any restriction to convey his or her different thought to readers. The words the writer uses are called the “natural language” which is also the “primary modeling system” at the same time. Such a system builds Malamud’s story world of “Man in the Drawer” basically and literally.

In “Man in the Drawer”, the “primary modeling system” is erected by the use of natural language. The natural language here finds its embodiment in the words of “the Soviet Union”, “American”, “taxi driver”, “drawer”, “wooden wall”, “dwarf”, “free-lance writer”, “Lillian”, “manuscript”, and so on. It is rather plain that other writers may as well use them in their works.

On the surface, it shows nothing special literally. Nevertheless, it is the very fact that there exists the spatial structure of equivalence – such as “high and low”, “right and left”, “near and far”, “open and close”, and so on. And if the spatial structure of equivalence is taken to be one kind of “form”, the problems the story brings about socially and politically can be regarded as one kind of “content”. In “Man in the Drawer”, when the “form” in the direction of longitude and the “content” in that of latitude are connected, significance will be brought up if their connection goes a step further and overlaps the above mentioned natural language.

The result is that “the Soviet Union” is a country which not only means a “far” country from America but also means “slavery”, that “taxi driver” is not only an occupation for Levitansky but a “runner” pursuing “freedom” for his stories, that “drawer” is not just a place for putting something in but a “close” place showing no freedom, that “Lillian” is not merely Harvitz’s former wife but an object he is eager to return to its embrace just like one’s country, and that “manuscript” of Levitansky’s stories is not simply something he writes on the paper but a thought for freedom, respect, and hope. Here, one can perceive that, above the natural language, Malamud has formed his own language world where both “form”, a signifier, and “content”, a signified, play important parts in “Man in the Drawer” and have good interaction each other. Here, one can even agree Sheldon J. Hershinow’s (1980) point of view, “Malamud demonstrates an implicit respect of self. His protagonists characteristically transcend the disorder that surrounds them, finding meaning in the power of love and moral commitment.” (Note 18)

### Insert Table 4 Here

In Malamud’s personal language world, concepts of relative pairs are prevailing and they form the secondary modeling system. In such a system, there are “high and low”, “right and left”, “near and far”, “open and close”, “freedom and slavery”, “one’s own and other persons”, “reachable and reachless”, “valuable and valueless”, “good and bad”, and so forth. Through the connection of these relative pairs, it will be meaningful if “high”, “right”, “near”, “open”, “freedom”, “one’s own”, “reachable”, “valuable”, and “good”, are put together in one side of a column, but, “low”, “left”, “far”, “close”, “slavery”, “other persons”, “reachless”, “valueless”, and “bad” are put in the other side.

One will find out that the side, containing “high” and so on, is exactly an object of mutation of “America”, and that the other side including “low” and so on, is like that mutation of “the Soviet Union”. Therefore, the main theme of “America” and “the Soviet Union” backs up the whole secondary modeling system from the beginning of the story, “Man in the Drawer”, to its very end.

### Insert Table 5 Here

And the system shows its keen relationship with the real world out of the story. Besides manifesting the way both form and content penetrate each other, the system also displays the beauty and significance of Malamud’s personal language world. Sheldon J. Hershinow provides his persuasive comments,

... Out of everyday defeats and indignities of ordinary people, Malamud creates beautiful parables that capture that the joy as well as the pain of life; he expresses the dignity of the human spirit searching for freedom and moral growth in the face of hardship, injustice, and the existential anguish of life in our time. (Note 19)

In Malamud’s personal language world, “Russia”, “America”, “taxi driver”, “drawer”, “dwarf”, and “free-lance writer” are all significant “parables” which organize a world that blends hope with despair, pain with possibility, and suffering with moral growth. Such a blend makes possible the sign systems of Malamud’s special language world. The sign systems are exactly the indispensable elements to the beautiful spatial structure of Malamud’s stories.

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## Notes

- Note 1. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. By A.A. Brill. (New York: Random House, Inc., 1978), p.70.
- Note 2. Ibid., p.174.
- Note 3. Ibid., p.51.
- Note 4. Walter Shear, "Culture Conflict in the Assistant" in *The Midwest Quarterly* 7:4 (July 1966), p.367.
- Note 5. Bernard Malamud, "Man in the Drawer", *The Stories of Bernard Malamud* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1983), p.196. All future references are to this text.
- Note 6. Edward A. Abramson, "The Short Stories." *Bernard Malamud Revisited*. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), p.136.
- Note 7. Sigmund Freud, p. 68.
- Note 8. Jeffrey Helterman, *Understanding Bernard Malamud*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985), p.129.
- Note 9. Jurij Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. Trans. By Gail Lenhoff and Ronald Vroon (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1977), p.37.
- Note 10. Hilary Siebert & Begoña Sío-Castiñeira, "Invention or proclamation: Jewish identity in the stories of Bernard Malamud and Isaiah Spiegel." *Journal of the short story in English*, 32 (Spring 1999).
- Note 11. Sigmund Freud, p.33.
- Note 12. Israel Shenker, "Bernard Malamud on Writing Fiction," *Writer's Digest*. (July, 1972), p.22.
- Note 13. Jurij Lotman, p.37.
- Note 14. Raman Selden, "Structuralist Theories", *A Reader's Guide to contemporary Literary Theory* (Sussex: The Harvester Press Limited, 1985), p.53.
- Note 15. Walter Shear, p.367.
- Note 16. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954 (Vol. Book 1)*. Eds. By Jacques-Alain Miller. Trans. By John Forrester. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), p.59
- Note 17. Earl H. Rovit, "Bernard Malamud and the Jewish Literary Tradition" in *Critique* 3:2 (Winter-Spring 1960), p.9.
- Note 18. Sheldon J. Hershinow, *Bernard Malamud* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., Inc., 1980), p.13.
- Note 19. Ibid., p.146.

Table 1. The spatial structure of equivalence about Harvitz’s and Levitansky’s manifest dreams

Spatial structure angle protagonist		form					
		high/low	right/left	near/far	open/close	bound/boundless	
content	society	Harvitz	high	--	far	open	boundless
		Levitansky	low	--	near	close	bound
	politics	Harvitz	--	right	--	open	boundless
		Levitansky	--	left	--	close	bound

Table 2. Walter Shear and indispensable index signs

Social awareness protagonist	Freedom/slavery	one’s own/ other persons’	reachable/reachless	Valuable/valueless
Harvitz	freedom	one’s own	reachable	valueless
Levitansky	slavery	other persons’	reachless	valuable

Table 3. Semiotics vs. “Man in the drawer”

semiotics name	signifier	signified
Harvitz	1. free-lance writer	1. the degree of freedom and social status
	2. drawer in the dream	2. close place
	3. Lillian, Harvitz’s former wife	3. the country of the States
Levitansky	1. Taxi driver	1. low rank of social status and embarrassed economic situation
	2. His stories are locked in the drawer by him.	2. He feels he is locked in the drawer with his stories, and must get out or he suffocates.
	3. Finding someone who can make his novels published out of the Soviet Union.	3. It is necessary for his interior liberty.

Table 4. Word significance between systems

system	Primary modeling system	Secondary modeling system
natural language		
the Soviet Union	a far country	slavery
taxi driver	an occupation	a “runner” pursuing “freedom” for his stories
drawer	a place for putting something in	A “close” place showing no freedom
Lillian	Harvitz’s former wife	An object Harvitz is eager to return to its embrace just like one’s country
manuscript of Levitansky’s stories	something Levitansky writes on the paper	a thought for freedom, respect, and hope

Table 5. Malamud’s main theme in terms of secondary modeling system

country	America	Soviet Union
relative pairs		
high/low	high	low
right/left	right	left
near/far	near	far
open/close	open	close
freedom/slavery	freedom	slavery
one’s own/other persons’	one’s own	other persons’
reachable/reachless	reachable	reachless
valuable/valueless	valuable	valueless
good/bad	good	bad