Chapter III

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The protagonists of Malamud fall into two varieties. The first group which is called the proletarian type depends on the material success. These protagonists are uneducated, disconsolate and rootless with a chequered past. Their quest may be appreciated mainly in terms of the realization of the “American Dream”. Such protagonists are Roy Hobbs, Frank Alpine and Yakov Bov.

There is another group of protagonists who can be classified as semi-bourgeois. They are educated and belong to the higher level of society. The quest of these protagonists can be analysed and judged in terms of moral transcendence. Their quest for a new and better life is more sober and sophisticated than that of their proletarian counterparts. These protagonists are Seymour Levin in A New Life, Harry Lasser and Willie Spearmint in The Tenants and William Dubin in Dubin’s Lives.

At the outset, there seems to be little thematic link between A New Life and the earlier novels. But, in fact, Malamud attempts to extend those moral concerns which are highlighted in his previous works. This novel represents something of a “new” Malamud. It atleast shows a Malamud who rejects the “mythic” placelessness of The Natural and
The Assistant. Here he tries to find a more persuasive frame by which he can demonstrate his theme of suffering and regeneration.

Seymour Levin is a typical Malamudian Schlemiel who combines in himself the features of a Schlimazel. He makes a long journey from the East to the West searching for a new life. He comes to Cascadia college as a teacher with such ideals which provide "a man his value if he stands for them" (20). He wants to seek order, value, accomplishment, love in life.

Levin, the new instructor is a former drunkard. He tries to make something of his future out of the ruins of his past. But he finds to his disappointment that his attempts are blocked by those disasters which impede every man's grand plans.

On his arrival at Cascadia college, Levin is shocked to learn that it has lost the humanities. He has great taste for "Liberal arts which feed our hearts" (28). As an instructor in English he is a total failure. He takes keen interest in fishing, hunting and enjoying short time lay with the prettiest girls of the college. Levin's past life is full of tragedy and pathos. He became a drunkard due to circumstances. His father died as a thief in prison and his mother became mad after the death of her husband. So he tried to drown his sufferings in drinking. He even thought of committing suicide. But he realized that suicide would not be the proper solution to his miseries. He comes to know that life is holy and the source of freedom is the human spirit.
Levin, who is thus transformed, begins his quest for a new life. He travels thousands of miles to Cascadia of the west to accept his chosen career of teaching. Fifty colleges including the University of Gettysburgh rejected him. Cascadia college, a science and technical college, prefers composition to literature. Levin is irritated that he has to teach “people how to write who don’t know what to write on” (103).

Levin, in fact, wants to teach “how to keep civilization from destroying itself” (103). Though he does not have a talented intellect, he has the strongest urge to say that students must understand the meaning of humanism. Otherwise, they will not know “when freedom no longer exists” (103). Thus he has the greatest compulsion to be evolved with such thoughts in the classroom.

Levin blames himself for his past life which lacked direction and purpose. Speaking about his past and future ambitions, he tells Pauline: “In the past I cheated my past and killed my choices. .... Now that I can - ah - move again I hope better use of things”. (20).

Levin hopes that a new place like Cascadia college will inspire change in his life,. But with his high ideals, he feels like a fish out of water at Cascadia. It is neither old enough for tradition nor young enough to change. The worst thing about it is the Department of English, dominated by an aged and temperate Chairman Orville Fairchild.
Its pride is not the humanities but rather "whole snappy drill: in the
Elements of Grammar". Moreover, Levin cannot teach literature till he
gets his Ph.D. "the union card" to stay in college teaching. Gilley tells
Levin that he prefers composition to literature for the reason that he
finds more satisfaction in teaching composition than in literature.
He says: "You can just see those kids improving their writing from
one term to the next, and even from one paper to the next. It isn't
easy to notice much of a development of literary taste in a year". (23).

Levin's 'new life' thus begins on a pathetic note. He
is not interested in teaching composition. Further, the Director of
the composition objects to his beard saying that "some of your
students may think you are an odd ball" (20). He has to conduct
his struggle on the academic front mainly against Gerald Gilley
who gradually becomes Levin's main rival. Gilley is spiritually as
well as physically sterile. He tells Levin at the time of his
joining Cascadia college that "one of the first things you'll notice
about the West is its democracy" (31).

Ironically, Cascadia does not encourage liberal arts or
literature. When Levin tries to express his views to Gilley and Prof.
Fairchild, he is warned: "What we don't want around are trouble
makers. If some one is dissatisfied, if he doesn't respect other people's
intimate rights and peace of mind, the sooner he goes away, the
better" (33).
Though Levin longs to conform to his humanistic values, he remains an unintegrated soul. C.D. Fabricant, the "liberal" department scholar and gentleman farmer, is hardly the father Levin seeks. If Levin cannot find a father on the Cascadia staff, neither can he find a companion. He "wanted friendship and got friendliness, he wanted steak and they offered spam" (111).

The only person Levin can identify with is Leo Duffy who never actually appears in the novel. In fact, Duffy had committed suicide before Levin arrived at the Cascadia college. Levin's isolation is so complete that even, Gilley, the friendliest of his collègues becomes his profoundest enemy. Together, Gilley and the public memories of the dead Duffy decipher not only the primary paths Levin can choose at Cascadia but the destruction involved in both.

Throughout the novel, Levin's encounters with the memory of Duffy recall Frank Alpine's relationship to Morris Bober. Though Levin vows to eradicate the Duffy within, for such denial the night brings dreams in which Levin finds himself in furious combat with Duffy. Thus the more Levin retreats from Gilley, the more he finds himself in "self-love" drawn to Duffy.

The glories of teaching prove empty to Levin who seeks contentment in his room. But loneliness tortures him and sends him reeling into a search for feminine contact. Forgetting Prof. Fairchild's warning that the teachers should "refrain from dating students, no
matter what the provocation” (45), he indulges in sex with Laverne, the
waitress (70-75), Avis Fliss, his colleague (114-118) and a student called
Nadalee Hammerstad (124-126).

When Levin finds himself about to make love in a barn to
a waitress called Laverne, it betrays his animal passion inspite of his
resolutions to be disciplined. “In front of cows, he thought. Now I belong
to the ages” (75).

After his unsuccessful affair with her, he becomes isolated
in the society and longs for company, love marriage and children. The
next time it is with Avis Fliss, the only single woman instructor in the
Department of English.

Avis Fliss, Gilley’s stooge and spy, is only another form
of Memo Paris who is the disciple of love. One night, Levin is locked
with Avis in his office. He is about to consummate the love play. But
he recedes from the act out of compassion when he comes to know
that she has a sick breast: “Poor dame, he thought. She has little, why
should I make it less?” (119).

Nadalee is a flippant girl whose frivolity makes Levin long
for her. He could not keep from desiring her to consume and be
consumed. He is torn between will and lust. He forgets Prof. Fairchild’s
warning that he should refrain from dating students despite the
provocation. Lust prevails over will power. Levin’s affair shows a conflict
in him between moral hang up and an intense urge for sex. When he meets her at a motel owned by her aunt, she wants to improve her grade from C to B. But he firmly turns down her request and says: "I thought it wouldn't be fair to mark on one standard and every one else on another" (140).

However, Levin happens to detect an error in totalling on verification. He promptly awards B grade to Nadalee. This shows his honesty. At the same time he is terribly disgusted with his affair with Nadalee and is gripped by fear of failure and isolation. He acutely feels "The future as new life was no longer predictable. That caused the floor to move under his bed" (145).

Levin's moral revulsion over his loveless affair with Nadalee coincides with the coming of winter. Having touched bottom, he begins to contemplate the end of his struggle for ideals: "In iron desperation, he concentrated on the sad golden beauty of a fifth of Whisky" (145).

Right at this point, Levin is born anew and the second movement of A New Life begins. Pauline Gilley enters the room on a warm and mythic wind carrying oranges and lemons. Though he feigns sleep, his resistance is pretence. It is an unsuccessful struggle against what he had unconsciously recognised on the day of his arrival at Cascadia
that Pauline was closely connected with his destiny. When she leaves him, he rises from his sick bed, and returns to a world transformed. There is no winter now, but instead of it, a landscape dripping with light appears to him. He feels sorry that he has not said a kind word to her. But he “feels like a man entering a new life and entered” (147).

Levin’s reaction to Pauline recalls the pattern of Roy Hobbs’s experiences with Iris Lemon who transforms Roy into a new man. Her compassion redeems him and makes him realise the true value of life. The unconscious dawning of love rebounds into Levin’s job and makes him reform himself in his teaching career. She shares his anguish for a new life: “I too am conscious of the misuses of my life, how quickly it goes and how little I do. I want more from myself than I get, probably than I’ve got. Are we misfits, Mr. Levin?” (165).

Levin and Pauline make love in the deep woods. It is the most satisfying affair for him. Still, he has his own fears that the slightest revelation of the act under the tree will bring him disaster. “To be involved with a married woman - danger by definition, whose behaviour he had no way of predicting was no joke . . . He feared his fate in her hand” (178).

With a suddenness that is totally unexpected, Levin begins to fear for his future and to doubt Pauline’s love. Pauline, too, with equal suddenness discovers herself full of guilt. Thus in a serious mood, Levin discusses his affair from the point of view of morality. He strongly
feels that morality should resist temptation. Since he has failed to resist, he must give up the continuance of the immoral. Out of love, he decides to give Pauline up. He sees it in the possibility of life: “To be good, then evil, then good was no moral way of life, but to be good after being evil was a possibility of life” (123).

The rejection of Levin’s love for Pauline, apart from morality, is supported when he discovers that Duffy and Pauline had been lovers. The proof is the photograph taken by Gilley which shows both Pauline and Duffy naked on the beach. Moreover, Pauline has not disclosed her love affair with Duffy. He withdraws from the image of Levin as Duffy, and avoids both the presence and the thought of Pauline so as to find redemption in his work.

Just when Levin wants to avoid Pauline, the latter decides to divorce Gilley and go with Levin. This happens when he seeks responsibility in the department. He tells Gilley that he will support neither Gilley nor Fabricant as Chairman, but the himself will run for the post. At the height of his compaigne, Pauline returns which makes difficult for Levin to reject her. Soon he receives the news that he is dismissed from service.

Pauline confesses to Levin that she wants a better life and wants it with him only. When he asks her about her love affair with
Duffy, she frankly admits it and tells him that Duffy is no more alive as he committed suicide long back.

Levin is full of compassion for Pauline. He has no regrets for the love he bore for her and at once realises the need to live with mutual love. He says: “I loved her; we loved. She loves me still, I have never been so loved” (291). His acceptance of Pauline is a kind of heroism, that belongs with The Assistant, taking the path of submission and suffering.

Levin, before accepting Pauline, undergoes an intense struggle with the totality of his changing personality. But in fact, his love for her has not gone. It is only changed into a non-romantic form. He resists all the inner voices which speak for escape for the future in order to realise all his dreams. Love also leads him to the final stage of triumph.

The finest scene of the novel is now reached when Levin confronts Gilley and asks for the custody of his children. Unable to control his anger, Gilley goes on with minute details the emotional instabilities and Pauline’s frequent nervous ailments. He also refers to the frequent and countless illnesses of the children who are going to be adopted by Levin. “Living with Pauline, Gilley warns Levin, is generally no bed of roses” (305). To this warning, Levin replied: “I have never slept on flowers” (305).
Failing to dissuade Levin, Gilley gives one final despairing alternative far beyond the reach of Levin. He is ready to give his children if Levin gives up his post. When Levin readily agrees to this demand, Gilley expresses his shock and wonder:

An older woman than yourself and not dependable, plus two adopted kids, no choice of yours, no job or promise of one and other assorted headaches. Why take that load on yourself? (310).

Levin shoots back with the reply: "Because I can, you son of a bitch" (310).

This simple short answer of Levin plucks him at once out of the determination of the past, present or future. His declaration gives him a thin zone of freedom where man faces manhood in the most painful of acts. It is the freedom to choose the absence of freedom. Again this line, wonderful in its brevity, sums up Malamud's early and late encounters with man's struggle to rise above himself. With pain and desperation, Levin chooses responsibility and defeat. The choice is based on an ancient morality that is partly Hebraic as in The Assistant and partly mythic as in The Natural. In the final pages of the novel, both these elements fuse and Levin restores the cycle of mythic triumph for which Roy Hobbs had proved himself unworthy.
Delighting in her swelling breasts, Pauline informs Levin that she is two months pregnant. Levin does not want her to abort, but says: "I want the child" (314). He gives her the gold hoop earring which he had brought and kept for her. This symbolises his true love for her. As Tony Tanner says, "Levin has given up dreams for reality and has paradoxically found freedom by willingly taking on the load of family commitments" (Tony Tanner 1971: 332).

The main interest of the novel is focussed on Levin's evolution from selfish love to selfless compassion. In fact, the novel is about two things. First as an academic satire, it traces Levin's history in Cascadia from the August day he arrives to the morning in June when he leaves with his wife and children. Secondly it is a love story, though unusually romantic, places demands on Levin that are highly reminiscent of Frank Alpine's love for Helen.

It is in the final encounter with Gilley that the change in Levin is most powerfully revealed. As Pauline has failed to find meaning in her life with her husband Gilley, she hopes for a new life. Gilley predicts that Levin and Pauline will fail. He, moreover, justifies his own position towards his own failure in his marriage relationship:

... She'll blame you for as much as she blames herself, because you married her in my case when she was twenty - and don't do what she calls "bring me out", meaning make
out of her something she couldn’t make out of herself though you may have broken your back trying to thicken up new ways to do it (304).

Malamud presents Levin as trying to bring out the inner change by intellectual determination. This is clear when he declares to Pauline that “one always hopes that a new place will inspire change - in one’s life. What Malamud presents is not a new life in a new place, but a new life in a new relationship.

_A New Life_ appears to fail when it is compared with _The Assistant_ and _The Fixer_ which are the finest novels of Malamud. Perhaps, the frenetic energy and vitality of _A New Life_ are not very deep against such works as the two novels mentioned above. However, the significance lies in the fact that Malamud, in this novel, makes genuine efforts to extend his talents which prove the vitality and growth of his literary art.

There is no doubt that for all the enlargement of its concerns, _A New Life_ belongs to the basic stream of Malamud’s thought. Success in failure or failure in success may be taken as the ritual conclusion of this novel. Similarly, one cannot question the relevancy of the novel regarding its place in Malamud’s development. It is, as Granville Hicks points out, “basically a serious novel about the difficulties of leading the good life” (Granville Hicks. 1961 : 20).
The novel *The Tenants* published in 1971, is a powerful and lyrical study of human relations in the twentieth century. It mainly deals with the relationship between Afro-Americans and Jews in the American Diaspora. It gives a kind of prophetic warning against racial fanaticism. Malamud hopes that the blacks and the Jews will come together and live in harmony.

Malamud is worried about the lack of compassion in a world of growing nihilistic tendencies. His portrayal of black consciousness is due to his acquaintance with black people, black fiction and history. He says:

> I lived on the edge of a black neighbourhood in Brooklyn when I was a boy. I played with blacks in the Flatbush Boy's club. I has a friend - Buster : we used to go to his house every so often . . . . I also read black fiction and history (Stern : 61).

The locale in the novels of Malamud changes, but he continues to depict the basic theme of compassionate commitment to human values. The novel *The Tenants* does not merely deal with black-white relations. It is closely related to the Malamud's corpus, since it tries to elaborate those human issues that characterise his earlier works. This novel is significant for "the idea of human togetherness lies at the heart of the novel" (D.R. Sharma : XVI). Through this novel, Malamud reveals his love of humanity.
Harry Lesser is a Jew who fails both in art and life. Willie Spearmint, an Afro-American like Harry, is a writer. The novel traces the travails of these two writer protagonists. Who are so deeply involved in their creative pursuits that they isolate themselves and even deny the realities of life. As men they are more alike than different in experience and so they do not yield to the other.

Both Harry and Willie Spearmint come together in an old building which is lying vacant. Harry has been working on a novel for nearly a decade. Yet it remains incomplete. Moreover, he has been repeatedly persuaded by his house-owner Levenspiel to vacate the place. But Harry thinks that he is a statutory tenant and so the owner has no right to eject him so easily. When Levenspiel is ready to pay a handsome amount of money for vacating the house, Harry is not willing and is very adamant.

Malamud’s darkened vision concerning man, finds its objective in the personality of Harry Lesser. Harry refuses to alleviate his Jewish landlord’s anxieties by showing love and understanding. The irony is heightened when he forsakes Irene to continue with his book, which is paradoxically, about love. The most Jewish about Harry is his commitment to work. The title of his novel is The Promised End. To the Jew, it is this promised end which would represent the high point of historical process. But Harry is not presented as the archetypal suffering Jew or the traditional Malamudian Schlemiel who achieves redemption by love.
Harry is seen struggling with the work throughout the novel. His involvement with writing keeps him off from the world: “He would not think how much of life he made no attempt to use. That was outside and he was in” (16.).

Levenspiel emerges as a symbolic reminder of life and its values which are disregarded by Lesser. Through him, Malamud stresses the need for understanding one’s sufferings. In this, Harry shows a total lack of compassion. Levenspiel tries in vain to break Lesser’s shell of egotism with his sarcastic remarks:

For Christ’s sake, what are you writing, the Holy Bible?

“Who can say” Who really knows? But not while you’re making that fucking racket. How can I think if my mind hurts already from the sound of your voice? My pen is dead in its tracks. Why don’t you go somewhere and let me work in peace? (22).

Like Pictures of Fidelman, The Tenants is about the relation of art to life. This novel, which has two protagonists, defines the agony of the creative process. Harry Lesser and Willie spearmint are confounded by the problems of structure and theme. As a result they are shut off from the reality of life. The factors that caused the novel are explained by malamud: “Jews and Blacks, the period of the troubles in New York city, the teachers’ strike, the rise of black activism, the mix-up of cause and effect, I thought I’d say a word”. (Stern.1975:61)
In *The Tenants* Malamud is deeply concerned about the impact of the tense times on the humanity. This is symbolically represented in the mutual hatred, suspicion and the guilt of the black and Jewish writers in this novel. His love of mankind includes the ill-treated blacks. *The Tenants* is not merely a story of black and white relations. It strongly pleads for the need of compassion.

Harry Lesser, the “telling” consciousness and central protagonist of the novel, is struggling to finish his third novel on love. He fails to show love and understanding when he refused to alleviate his land lord’s anxieties. His inability to love is reflected also in his lack of concern for his family. His past which lies hidden in his consciousness gradually surfaces towards the end of the novel, to reveal his excess of unnatural fears, a legacy, apparently, from the concentration camp experience.

Willie Spearmint, a black writer also chooses the same gloomy tenement in which Lesser lives. The gap between these two writers becomes clear when Willie does not hand for a shake. However Lesser does not mind Willie’s action and invites him to meet him for any help. Writing has different impact on them while Lesser writes about love, Willie says his work is about “me”. Both, however, enjoy writing more than life.

Though Lesser is a formalist he is ill at ease with theme. He is not able to “see” or “feel” except in language. (TT : 85)
He depicts the plight of a writer who loves a girl, but is “striken by anxiety because he finds it hard to give” (146). In fact, it reflects his own predicament.

Lesser’s writing reveals psychological tensions. But Willies work characterises a revolutionary outbreak of black anger. His intense hatred of the whites is clear in this statement made by him to Lesser:

The point I am making, Lesser, in case you not with it, is, I think this is the main way the blacks have to head along - to kill whites still those who are alive vomit with pain at the thought of what wrongs they have done us, and better not try to do any more. (TT :67).

Lesser, another lover in search of redemptive experience has withdrawn into a prison of his own making. The outer world has been shut out as completely as in The Fixer. Nothing is seen beyond the tenement in which Lesser fights himself and Willie Spearmint, his black adversary. Ben Siegel aptly observes:

Like Philip Roth’s recent my life as a man, Malamud’s book is a “mirror novel”, another effort at reducing to plausible fiction the events narrated and being read.

Failure appears also to be the fate of Wiilie Spearmint. He struggles to translate the miseries of his life into fiction. He relies
on his blackness and his shattering past does not give shape and meaning to his sprawling narrative. Dedicated to his own style and standards, Lesser finds Willes lack of craft offensive when Willie wants to criticise the book of Lesser.

Thinking of himself like Fidelman, Lesser thinks that ethnicity is quite an inadequate basis for art. Black has to be made "more than colour or culture, he tells Willie, while outrage should prove larger than mere" protest or ideology". (TT : 67)

The title of Harry Lesser’s novel The Promised End is quite ironic. His novel traces a writer’s quest for love. It also embodies his attempt to instruct his life through art. He knows nothing about love since he has completely isolated himself from others. His name also suggests that he is not perfect, neither as an artist nor even as a man. Like Roy Hobbs in The Natural, Lesser too, is locked up in his own egotistical self. Like Roy, who has no compassion for Whammer and Bump Bailey, Lesser rejects the landlord Levenspill’s repeated pleas of Habrachmones (Have Mercy). Thus he does not understand art and the value of other’s feelings.

Willie Spearmint is a militant black writer who writes shocking social truths. His book is based on his broad understanding of his people’s history and the injustice of their sufferings. He feels for them a deep and overpowering love. Moved by the suffering of his people, he says:
I write black because I am black and what I got to say means something different to black people than it does to whites, if you dig. We do and we are, and we write different... The words make it different because the experience does. (66)

The conflict between Harry Lesser and Willie Spearmint is both personal and cultural. When Lesser points out that black experience can never become literature, Willie does not accept this criticism. On the other hand, he thinks that since Lesser is a white, he cannot judge the black experience. He says: “This is a book we talk in about that you don’t understand at all. White fiction ain’t the same as black. It can’t be”. (66)

Willie Spearmint has ideas which are based on his past experience. But he is not able to provide them a proper shape. He wants to improve his form and enrich his black experience. Lesser gives a grammar book. But Willie struggles with the book. However, there is some improvement in his writing. But the subject is the same (i.e) the hatred for the white. Lesser is not happy about this. When he expresses his unhappiness and regret, Willie once again retorts: “Lesser... You try in to raid of what I am going to write in my book, which is that the blacks have to murder you white MF’s for crippling our lives”. (126-27)

Like Harry, Willie too is a writer. He is a squatter with no legal rights to tenancy, but only a pressing need. His first book
deals with his tortured childhood, his term in jail and his progress towards a writer. He is a writer with a pronounced socialistic bent of mind. Moreover, he uses blackness as identity to promote the Afro-American cause of vengeance against the whites for their suffering down the ages.

Willie is defensive in his attitude and non-committal in his answers he gives during their initial stages of their acquaintance. This reflects the basic Afro-American distrust of the white race. For example, when Harry asks Willie what he is writing, the latter ill-manneredly retorts: “Now that’s personal question and what I am writing is my own business” (21).

Harry is a formalist writer and critic. To him “subject and form are inseparable” (67). His critique of Willie’s book revolves round the lack of aesthetic atmosphere in Willie’s work. Willie repudiates Harry’s criticism sneeringly. He thinks that Harry can never really write about Afro-American experience. According to Willie, Harry does not have the least idea of how an Afro-American feels or what being an Afro-American means. As far as Willie is concerned, Harry’s artistic creation is in effect a white girl with a lot of black paint on.

Harry seems to be a modernist in the tradition of Flaubert and James Joyce. But Willie is a militant Black writer, writing shocking social truths. When Harry goes through Willie’s work, it has an overwhelming impact on his mind. He feels that Willie should have
no connection with a white girl since he is writing a novel on black experience. Harry tells Irene with whom he has fallen in love: “I’ll tell you the truth Irene, my writing doesn’t come on right with me living with a white chick” (93-94). Still, he does not feel any compunction while enjoying a lay with Irene on every Sunday.

As a human being, Willie has no hesitation to enjoy a white woman sexually. Irene has been Willie’s lover for two years. She, ironically enough, knows the entire truth. She says: “Outside of his love for black people I don’t really think he loves anything but he works, the more he writes, the blacker he becomes” (93).

The relation of Harry and Willie to Irene brings out their inadequacy in their response to life and love. Irene thinks that Willie loves his black book more than her. Lesser comes closer to Irene as Willie is buried in writing. But his loyalties are divided between Irene and his book. He is totally committed or devoted neither to Irene nor his work. When Irene proposes marriage, he hesitates: “That’s what we’ll do .... As soon as the book is out of the way” (132).

Irene discovers that both Harry Lesser and Willie Spearmint are the same in their attitude towards love. Neither of them is ready to come out of their den of writing to enter life, she has already become disgusted with Willie and now finds that Lesser is not genuinely interested in her. So she bids farewell to Lesser also. She
makes up her mind once for all to leave Lesser with the following note to him without her address. “No book is as important as me” (170).

The heated discussion between Harry and Willie about art and form brings out the difference between their writing. Harry's writing reveals his psychological tensions. Willie's work, on the other hand, contains a revolutionary outburst of black anger. His soul is in his writings. He believes that he will be the "best soul writer" and will help his people to wipe out racism and establish economic equality through writing. For him, all concerns of literature - theme, art technique tantamount to black experience. Harry tells Willie that black literature cannot become literature just by writing it down. Their heated argument concludes with Willie's expository statement about what he thinks of art and form: "You want to know what's really art? I am art. Willie Spearmint The Blackman. My form is myself" (68).

Willie defends his work on the basis of his assertion that Black art is necessarily different from White art. Moreover, he has the consciousness that he is reflecting the anguish of a whole oppressed community which is fighting for its freedom. According to Willie, ten Jewish publishers have rejected his book since they are motivated by a fear of the contents rather than the apparently defective form. Willie's synecdochical awareness of responsibility for his community suggests that it is a recurrent theme in Malamud's fiction.
To understand the complex Jewish personality of Harry, it is helpful to recall what constitutes Jewishness for Malamud. Leslie Field observes:

In fact his (Malamud's) Jew may become indistinguishable from the non-Jew as he becomes homogenized in a larger, non-Jewish world. He may emerge as everyman as his identification with his own people's overriding concerns becomes peripheral or marginal (Leslie Field 1970: 109).

When Harry reveals his affair with Irene, Willie is unable to control his feelings. Willie's anger transforms him into a mad and bitter agent of destruction. He dashes his head against the wall. Then he goes to Irene's apartment and hits her in the eye and calls her filthy names. Even then he is not satisfied. As a final form of revenge, he destroys Harry's manuscripts.

Harry Lesser who indulges in day-dreaming about Irene's love, returns to his apartment. He is shocked to find his manuscripts burnt into ashes. Willie destroys not only Harry's manuscripts, but also his table, chair, lamp and mattress. Harry is nearly driven to madness with fury. For many days, he finds himself in aching void and feels terribly aggrieved at the complete loss of his work. Malamud movingly writes about Harry's reaction: "He saw himself buried in ashes" (136).
Willie’s hatred is at first directed against the “Whiteness” of Harry. Then only towards the end, his personal conflict changes his destructive loathing to Jews particularly. He crystallizes his hatred for them in a fantasy of a mass murder of Jews. In his final speech to Harry, he decries the idea of the Jews as the chosen tribe. He claims that from now on, Afro-American are the chosen lot. His artistic sensibility is so one-sided that he cannot see anything good about white nor anything bad about Black. In his short poem called “Manifested Destiny”, he writes:

White has no glow
No light for white,
Black is true glow
Is lit from in (155).

However, Harry Lesser consoles himself by saying that “the book is not the writer, the writer writes the book. It is only a book, it is not my life” (137).

Despite his best effort, Harry fails to write in a proper style. He forgets words or words forget him. He types wither for either all the time. He holds the fountain pen in his hand and moves it along the paper. It makes lines but no words. It makes Harry sad to reconstruct his burnt novel from the notes he preserved. Carlyle and T.E. Lawrence reconstructed the whole French Revolution and The Seven Pillars of Wisdom. As a rigid formalist, he “is determined to
finish his book where it was begun, created its history, still lives” (140). But he fails to complete his work.

Harry’s refusal to marry Irene Bell before completing his novel irritates and frustrates her. She cries in anger and irritation. “What sort of life is that for me? Why don’t fuck your book and save time all around” (142).

In the final surrealistic scene, both Harry and Willie meet for the last time. They hurl abuse at each other: ‘Blood suck in Jew Niggerhater’, ‘Anti-Semitic Ape’ (173). What starts as an emotional conflict comes to an end in the mutual homicide of the two protagonists. Malamud’s answer to the problem of racial prejudice can be discerned in Arthur Fidelman’s message to the world:

... before one can become a craftsman one must submit oneself in love to another, and be taught craft by him and the experience of love (Field and Field: 18-44).

Both Harry and Willie finally feel their agony and its cause. They realise the value of mercy, charity, tolerance, mutual co-operation and the futility of their behaviour. The novel ends with the slum lord’s cry for ‘mercy’. The Rabbi’s words capture vividly Malamud’s apocalyptic vision: “Someday God will bring together Ishmael and Israel to live as one people. It won’t be the first miracle” (164).
Though the conclusion is starkly realistic, through the Rabbi’s sermon, Malamud highlights the possibility of understanding.

Malamud tries to link the temporal with the permanent by incorporating myths and archetypal images. Malamud’s intention is to enable the reader to “tap the primordial powers of original creation” in order to increase the significance of the conflict. This reservoir of knowledge to encompass a larger world which links the modern world with the primitive.

Malamud’s syncretism is seen from his ability to transcend Jewish archetypes and embrace universal archetypes. In the words of Jung,

All the mythologized processes of nature, such as summer and winter, the phases of moon, the rainy seasons, and so forth, are in no sense allegories of these objective experiences; rather they are symbolic expressions of the inner, unconscious drama of the psyche which becomes accessible to man’s consciousness by way of projection - that is, mirrored in the events of nature (Jung, C.J. 1974 : 207).

Seasonal phrases play a very significant role in *The Tenants*. The novel begins like this: “He smelled the living earth in the dead of winter” (1). The paradox that is implicit in this line recalls T.S. Eliot’s lines: (1964 : 51 from The Wasteland: 

111
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.

People without true spiritual awakening find warmth in the cold of winter. The spiritual degeneracy of man makes him content to live in a state of sterility of spiritual dryness. Harry's degeneracy is caused by his inability to love and understand. In fact, he is praying like Eliot for a shower of rain to transform his "dry brain".

Wintry images are sustained motives which provide an understanding into Harry's state of mind. Moving towards the same mythic direction of Eliot's "The Fire Sermon", Harry's predicament seems to be a burning-in-life existence. Destruction by fire is given a cosmic dimension. Harry indeed is burning with the sins of selfishness and unwarranted tenacity which have to be purged. The synthesis of East and West is also the kind of universality that Malamud hopes for.

Marriage as qualitative change reconstructs the two separate individuals into a single being. This is an example of the temporal in touch with the permanent, the marriage of two mortals recreating the original marriage of the sun and the earth. In both the cases, where the wedding is conducted between Harry and Mary and Willie and Irene, a Black is paired with a White. The wedding signals a redeeming possibility in the vision of human salvation found in the harmonious relationship between the Afro-Americans and the whites.
Malamud uses colour symbolism, a major motif to underscore the Black-White dichotomy. The most striking symbol in the novel is the crumbling tenement occupied by Harry and Willie. Harry's inability to love and Willie's extreme hatred make them sterile "dry tubers". The dilapidated tenement is a perfect metaphorical extension of their unproductive minds.

Race memory is another important component of the structure of the novel. It plays a very vital role in Willie's character delineation. The Jews have not suffered as much as the Afro-American in America. So Harry's race memory is given a secondary importance. Willie writes fiction to dramatize the injustice, poverty and suffering of the Afro-American in a hostile white milieu. Through the story of Harry and Willie, Malamud shows how powerful and harmful race memory can be. Both Harry and Willie are unable to transcend their racial past.

Malamud observes sharp psychological accuracy in the character of Willie. Willie's book is largely autobiographical. His hatred for the Whites begins early in life. He hates Afro-Americans who have any association with whites. In his fantasy, he beats an Afro-American woman to death because she is involved in a sexual relationship with a white. The final eruption of his hatred which culminates in homicide brings the racial conflict to an end. This shows that Malamud has not given up hope for mankind though his protagonists fail to show love.
As a “symbolic realist”, Malamud competently blends the Jewish sense of the transcendent with the actual processes of life. He blends scenes of reality with those of fantasy. The blending is so imperceptible that it is difficult to find where fantasy ends and reality begins. Rimbaud and Verlaine are the two French symbolists who employed surrealism to demonstrate the inadequacy of conscious reality. Similarly Malamud blends fantasy and reality in order to increase the psychological impact of the novel.

There are three endings to the novel. The first ending of Harry’s novel is pure fantasy. His sheer desperation in his aesthetic struggle may be judged from the highly melodramatic ending that he envisages. It suggests a conclusion to his struggles, both in life and art. The second ending in marriage is part of Harry’s complex thought process. In a moment of heightened sensibility, the mind attains salvation through love and marriage. The final homicide, though ambiguously presented, is highly surrealistic and melodramatic. However, this ending is forceful in its intensity.

All the three endings of the novel are just as believable as they are unbelievable. They are the means by which the reader is provided with alternative perspectives on the issue. The surrealistic scenes seek to dislodge historical time and replace it with psychological time. They enable the past, present and future to constantly cross their respective boundaries to emerge and reemerge. Interpersed with the realistic scenes, the surrealistic scenes give time its illusory quality.
The novel *The Tenants* is saved from being totally bleak and pessimistic in outlook. This is due to Malamud's vision of hope which is reflected in Levenspiel's cries for mercy. This shows that man has the capacity to rise above his racial history and mean instincts and embrace the true brotherhood of love and compassion. The basic theme of compassionate commitment to human values is continued. As Daniel Stern says, Malamud's basic theme of all his work is derived from "one's sense of values, it's a vision of life, a feeling for people - real qualities in imaginary worlds" (Daniel Stern 1975 : 60).

*The Tenants*, apart from dealing with the racial conflict, highlights the essence of compassion and tolerance. The last sentence of the novel "Each thought the writer feels the anguish of the other" (173) helps the reader to infer that both Harry and Willie would feel the anguish of the other at least when they die. Feeling the anguish of the other is one's capacity for compassion. This is the new insight that emerges in Lesser who comes out of the tragic encounter.

The word 'mercy' repeated one hundred and fifteen times, "leaves the pages of the book altogether and hangs in the air, becoming a supplication addressed to the universe in general" (Jacob Korg, 1972 : 84). The horror presented at the end of the novel suggests the need of compassion. Since it is a kind of prophetic warning against fanaticism, it is not, therefore, as Cynthia Ozick says, "a claustrophobic novel" (Cynthia Ozick : 97).
To conclude, “Malamud timely responds to the tension born of the crisis of the times. He extends the horizon of his writing to deal with the neglected race of the blacks and their black consciousness.” (M. Rajagopalachari : 152). He focuses on the effect of the tense times on the humanity which is symbolically presented through Harry Lesser and Willie Spearmint.

In The Tenants and Dubin's Lives, Malamud's protagonists are professional writers - novelist and biographer respectively. As a prominent biographer of literary lives, Dubin knows the vicarious nature of his craft. He lives the lives of others as he writes them and tries to understand his own self. He feels: “Every body's life is mine unlived. One writes lives he can't live. To live for ever is a human hunger” (Dubin's Lives : p.16). But like Harry Lesser or Willie of The Tenants, he writes so much that he forgets his responsibility to his wife and children. Kitty, his wife, at times reproaches him: “I’m married to you, not your book” (178).

The novel Dubin's Lives is a story of one human being, who faces the problems of sex, love, marriage and infidelity. It is a study of the psyche of a middle-aged biographer who seeks love, increased accomplishment and his secret self.

Like Fidelman, Harry Lesser, and Willie Spearmint, Dubin also considers writing a mode of being and believes that if he writes, he lives. His domestic life is not happy and his children are neurotic.
He, as his father’s true son, “shared his inertia, fear, living fate out of habit, compassion, impure love” (100).

Dubin, at the age of fifty six, is worried about the growing signs of old age in middle age. He prefers solitude to human company. His loneliness is due to unhappy domestic life. Malamud compares Dubin’s life to an unplanned journey on a wrong train:

Years after Hannah Dubin’s death, he seemed not to know what to do with himself. If your train’s on the wrong track, every station you come to is the wrong station. The wrong stops, year after year, were vocation and women he couldn’t make it with it. It seemed to William Dubin he was not prepared to invest a self in a better self - give up solitude, false dreams, the hold of the past. The train chugged on: the wrong train (100).

The central theme of the novel is the search for a new life. His idea of a new life is formed by the ideas of great people about whom he has written or read. At the moment he is writing about D.H. Lawrence. Though he is vastly influenced by Thoreau’s love of nature and freedom, he is haunted by Lawrentian motives of sex, love and guilt. He knows very well to write the life of D.H. Lawrence who is “so intricately involuted, self-contradictory difficult a man” (18). Yet Dubin prefers to write when he discovers an unpublished correspondence of Lawrence.
Dubin's philosophy of life is "to live life to the hilt". He supports Lawrence's theory: "I don't believe in the idea of one man for one woman" (135). He prefers sexual liberation to restraint. He does not want to make any kind of moral lesson out of life and wants to enjoy it. Moreover, there is no proper understanding between him and his wife Kitty. There is a clear temperamental incompatibility between them. Malamud refers to the incompatibility in their temperament in these words:

Dubin's wife could be overly intense, reserved, impatient under stress, punitive too often anxious. He could be egoistic, time bound impulsive defensive, too often anxious...... often the unmatched elements of their temperaments and tastes...... caused tension disagreements quarrels (141).

While working as an assistant editor of the magazine, the Nation, Dubin comes across a matrimonial advertisement by Kitty. Dubin, a drifter all his life, wants to marry her, though she has a child. Dubin's father strongly opposes his son's proposal. But Dubin turns a deaf ear to his father's racial objection: ... How can a man be a Jew if he isn't a man? How can he be a man if he gives up the woman he wants to marry. (81).

Dubin and Kitty like each other before marriage. But after their marriage there is lack of understanding between them. Before marrying Dubin, Kitty married a man called Nathanael. She
always compares Dubin with her former husband and finds Dubin inferior to Nathanael. Dubin tells her: “I want to run my life my own way, not like yours or Nathanael’s. I don’t want to go on sharing with you to my dying day the benefits of your previous marriage” (140).

Kitty is frank about her love affairs and confesses them to Dubin. But Dubin often deceives her and prefers sexual liberation. Both of them argue about “taste, habit idiosyncracy” (106). Kitty hates Dubin’s incessant pursuit of biographies. Dubin, on the other hand, becomes disgusted with Kitty’s “sameness, dissatisfaction, eccentricities” and “her fears, her unforgotten unforgettable past” (269).

Dubin seeks woman after women for sexual liberation. His affair with Fanny Bick forms part of the main action of the novel. Dubin falls in love with Fanny Bick, employed as a ‘cleaning person’ in his house. She is known for her illegal affairs with both married and unmarried men. She shares the hedonistic concept of Dubin in “seizing the day”. She says: “To me life is what you do, I want it to enjoy and not make any kind of moral lesson or fairy tale out of it” (42).

Finding Fanny gifted in femininity, Dubin falls for her. At the same time, he gets worried whether he “had responded to her as his usual self, or as one presently steeped in Lawrence’s sexual theories, odd as they were” (24). In the absence of his wife Kitty, Dubin refuses to make love to Fanny who quits the job. Dubin pursues her
and tells her that they can spend a week in Venice with him. His conscience pricks him for a moment when he thinks of his wife. But he justifies his action in these words:

I loved her ..... I love her still but differently. Time passes, needs and feelings change. One tries, with others to recover past pleasures, past privileges (69-70).

Fanny becomes sick and Dubin nurses her. The week they spend in Venice, thus ends in a fiasco. Dubin’s miseries continue when he finds his own daughter Maud with a man of his age. Dejected and perturbed, he returns to his hotel room only to see Fanny making love to a young gondolier. Out of sheer frustration, he bids goodbye to her. He goes to Stockholm to see his step-son Gerald, Dubin is shocked to find Gerald’s indifference to him. Besides he has changed his surname from Dubin to Willis:

Dubin returns home but he is disturbed by Fanny’s letters. He is unable to throw her out of his mind and concentrate on his work. He doubts whether he will succeed in portraying the life of Lawrence without having more of Fanny. According to David Levin, the confusion in Dubin as well as his pursuit of Fanny is “related to his anxiety about his own aging and the whereabouts and safety of his daughter” (David Levin 1980 : 165).
Dubin longs for his daughter. But when she comes back home, he finds himself estranged from her. She asks him why he has preferred to write the biography of Lawrence, a man who is totally different in temperament from him. Dubin tells her: “He picked me. There’s something he wants me to know”. (191).

The Venetian trip subjects Dubin to frustration and agony. Though he feels guilty that a man of his age should flirt with a girl of his daughter’s age, he resolves to act soberly in keeping with his age. But he fails to stick on to his resolution. One night, visiting his friend Oscar, he sleeps with his wife in his absence. Then he meets Fanny, stumbles and makes love to her. He justifies his action by saying “I have it coming to me” (59). Thus his resolution to “act the age I’ve earned” (121) shatters to pieces the moment he meets Fanny.

When Dubin is away from Fanny, he regrets for his lack of concern for his family. He is shocked to find that Maud is pregnant and does not want abortion. She does not even bother to inform her lover of her pregnancy. She tells her mother: “You’ve taught me to value life. I value life. How can I have abortion?” (364).

Kitty complains that Dubin is indifferent to her. She hates his beastly love of solitude. He cannot properly conceal his real self from Kitty. He desires to protect his relationship with Fanny without hurting Kitty. Fanny is not able to understand him. She becomes unhappy with his indecision. She pities Kitty. Her concern for Kitty’s
predicament marks the turning point in Dubin's life. She suggests that Dubin can stay three days in a week with her and the remaining four days with Kitty:

> She could have Thursday to Sunday. I'd like you to be with me Monday to Wednesday. There's a nice warm room with a desk for you to work in downstairs while you're here. I'd like to have that to look forward to. It would be less lonely those nights you aren't here (399).

Kitty leaves for Stockholm in search of Gerald. Fanny arrives and wants to have sex with Dubin in Kitty's double bed. Dubin refuses. Fanny wants to know from him when he has planned to leave his wife Kitty. Dubin does not give her direct reply. He says: "There are commitments in marriage. It takes a while to reconsider each" (294). Fanny, who is unable to control herself at Dubin's reply, bursts out: "... I'm not some one who's around just to keep your mind off old age... I'm sick of hiding myself, of not being who I am" (295-269).

Maud is not happy with her father because he has not cared for his family. She finds her lover, though old, is full of concern for her. He is not only her lover, but also her friend and father. She finds that there is something "extraordinary" in their relationship and "that it had been happening, since man appeared on earth" (362). When she leaves for Newyork, Kitty accuses that Dubin is responsible for driving Maud out of the house. Before her departure,
she tells Dubin: “Pay attention to your wife . . . she is not a happy woman” (363).

Dubin’s cold response to Kitty makes her turn to Evan Ondyx whom she often consults for therapy. She admits her guilt but blames Dubin for it. She tells him: ‘But what I want to say now is that I’ve broken it off. I don’t regret what I’ve done, but, I didn’t do it easily. If it weren’t for you I don’t think I would have done it’ (375).

Fanny gradually realises that she should organise herself and make her own choice. She says “I have to be careful about my future. It’s my life and I have to respect it” (362). Dubin also changes. Fanny can manage herself, but Kitty cannot solve her problems. Fanny sympathises with Kitty’s predicament. When she asks Dubin if he loves Kitty, he tells her:

. . . . do you love her?’
‘I love her life’
‘Do you love me?’
He said he did (400).

It is Fanny’s sympathy that makes Dubin realise his responsibilities to his family. He realises that “in loving Fanny he withheld love from his wife and daughter” (296). Dubin returns to his wife as a loving husband. He completes the biography of Anne Freud written in collaboration with Maud whom he is able to protect with
affection and love. When he finishes D.H. Lawrence's biography, he feels a sense of fulfilment. Happiness and peace come to Dubin's family. Dubin is transformed by the epiphany of Fanny's genuine sympathy for Kitty who needs all support to solve her problems. Fanny plays a significant and memorable role in bringing about a change in Dubin and thus enables him to resolve his moral dilemma.

In William Dubin, Malamud has not only created one of his best characters but also makes one feel so keenly the enigmatic quality of life. Malamud seems to suggest that instead of worrying about civilization, one should attempt to regulate one's life. This is what William Dubin, the protagonist of the novel, fails to do.

Dubin, "a five-foot-eleven grizzled man with thin legs" (7) is a middle-aged biographer who feels attracted towards Lawrentian motives, sex and love. Revealing the familiar moral stance of Malamud, the novel deals with the question how a man will create for himself a new life? By learning to balance the conflicting demands of passion and commitment, one is reborn to life and to one's life's work. This seems to be the message of Malamud in this novel.

Both Dubin and Kitty live in their own worlds away from the present. While Dubin spends his time in writing the lives of the dead, his wife Kitty lives in the world of her reminiscences of her former husband and estranged children. Caught between his duty to his family and his passion for Fanny,
Dubin’s work halts. It moves only when he continues his illicit connection with Fanny who seems to be more inspiring to Dubin than Kitty to complete his biographical works. Kitty, too, has an affair with Evan Ondyke.

Though torn by a sense of guilt, Dubin finds it extremely difficult to forget Fanny once for all. Kitty needs the assistance of Dubin and so Fanny tells him that he cannot ride two horses at the same time. She magnanimously gives way to Kitty and her compassion opens Dubin’s eyes and makes him start a new life.

Dubin who seeks sexual liberation, does not actually find any happiness. In the Malamud cannon, sexual liberation brings more turmoil than restraint. Commenting on the novel, Malamud has opined that “the texture of it, the depth of it, the quality of human experience in it is greater than in my previous books” (Ralph Tyler : 32).

The theme of compassion is suggested in Dubin’s Lives in realisation of one’s obligations and responsibilities. Dubin with compassionate understanding, ultimately returns to his wife, after overcoming his passion for Fanny. However, the development of the theme of compassion gets marred by Dubin’s sexual bouts with Fanny. Moreover, this novel falls short of Malamud’s achievement in The Assistant and The Fixer from the point of view of consistency in moral vision and technique of narration. Though the inner conflict in Dubin is evident, his return to Kitty is abrupt. In the words of Pearl
K. Bell, the book does not end, but “just stops like a car running out of gas; or like a writer whose weariness with his creatures has become intolerable” (Pearl K. Bell : 75).

After experimenting with a painter in *Pictures of Fidelman* and novelists in *The Tenants*, Malamud offers a creative insight into the art of biography. The novel in a way, is significant as it deals with “the limits of love and marriage, of familiarity and of self-fulfilment” (Robert Rubenstein : 58).

It is said the characterisation of the novel is not satisfactory. Pearl K. Bell says that the novel is “so overloaded with e¡igésis that no character but Dubin emerges with any credible human clarity” (Bell : 75). Besides, the novel suffers from lack of artistic control of plot and there is not much convincing situation to account for the conflicting motives of Dubin who fails to measure up to the crisis of morality. This fact explains the weakness of the theme of compassion in Dubin’s Lives.

*Dubin’s Lives*, despite its weakness in characterisation and plot construction, probes into the psyche of a middle-aged man racked with the problems of sex, love and infidelity. In this novel, Malamud emulates the complexity of the 19th century novel in the manner of Thomas Hardy and George Eliot. There is a change in the overall tone of the novel. From the “sad eyed ironist of human suffering”, Malamud becomes an unself conscious celebrant of the self” (Dean Flower : 305).
Both the novels *The Tenants* and *Dubin’s Lives* are as distinct in their handling of similar themes as are all of Malamud’s works from one another. His cannon covers not only a remarkable variety of settings and modes, but one of the most diverse assortments of literary heroes in modern fiction. Moving through their moral odysseys, they suggest prismatic reflections of one essential odyssey through self-discovery to the humanistic life.

At the outset, Malamud’s three major novels *The Assistant, A New Life* and *The Fixer* have much in common with the works of the naturalistic writers. But Malamud emphasizes in his works such concerns as the liberation of the individual human spirit and the need for love, faith and understanding in human relations. For him, life is something more than a joke and literature is something more than an empty game. His writings may be taken as “in answer to the nihilism of the late Fifties’s and Sixties similar to T.S.Eliot’s answer to the nihilism and materialism of the late Teens and Twenties”. (Richard Astro and Jackson J.Benson : 18) Malamud’s protagonists search for an authentic self and life style and an identity worthy of commitment. He is interested in bringing out man’s hidden strength which is seen in the resources of the spirit. Compassion provides man with this hidden strength. Yakov in *The Fixer*, Levin in *A New Life* and Morris Bober in *The Assistant*, although losers, show extraordinary tenacity to suffer because of their compassion. This compassionate vision of Malamud forms the essence of his entire work.
It is compassion, more than love, that prompts Levin to accept pregnant Pauline and her adopted children at the cost of his career. This evolution of Levin can be interpreted as “a classical progress from eros, fleshly love to agape, the spiritual love of one of God’s creatures for another”. (Stanley Edgar Hyman : 34) This novel brings out Malamud’s message that there can be no responsibility without some love.

Love goes not with freedom, but with entanglement and commitment. For Levin, sex becomes love and love becomes commitment. He becomes a saint not through the denial of the flesh as does Frank Alpine in The Assistant, but through asserting the rights of the flesh. In fact, both Levin and Frank Alpine indulge in flesh in the beginning, but ultimately reach a stage where physical love ceases to be important.

With an agonising quest for new life, Frank longs for Helen Bober, who wants to travel, experience and live like him. Frank’s presents evoke a throb of desire in her. But she does not want to marry a store keeper. Her love for him conflicts with her desire for a comfortable life. Rejecting his advances, she says that he will have to wait “till I am real sure I love you, may be till we’re married, if we ever are” (123).

All his carefully - built relations with Helen go to pieces due to his stupid and thoughtless attempt to seduce her. Before this,
she had considered non-Jewishness not an obstacle for marriage. However, Franks rash and hasty behaviour changes Helen’s passionate longing for Frank into deep hatred for him. Frank sincerely regrets for the harm he has done to her. He tries to convince her that he is good at heart and even when he is bad, he is good. He promises Ida, Helen’s mother, that he will not bother Helen anymore and decides to stay in the store and do anything for the sake of Helen Bober.

Frank experiences extraordinary relief when he confesses everything to Morris Bober. But his confession does not change the heart of Morris Bober who sternly orders Frank to quit the store. Frank tells Morris Bober, “you can trust me now, I swear it, and that’s why I am asking you to let me stay and help you” (176). But Morris Bober remains stubborn.

From now on, a spectacular change takes place, in Frank Alpine. He has not lost the affinity to the Bober family. He wants to help Helen to get the education she has always wanted. It is a Herculean task which Frank willingly accepts without any grudge. He succeeds in sending Helen to night college by spending only for the barest of his necessities. He stops “climbing up the air shaft to peep at Helen and he is honest in the store”. (214)

People can change. A New Life is possible and this is what Malamud has to say. Malamud’s world is generally a very dark naturalistic world where everything is nearly determined except the human
spirit. The moral, transcendence of Frank Alpine, Levin and Yakov has come about through the acceptance of their responsibilities and commitment. Levin and Frank Alpine find freedom in accepting the burden of family commitments with willingness. As Page Stegner observes, *A New Life* is mainly concerned with gradual commitment to becoming a man of principles. His quest for a new life is quite paradoxical to the quest of his proletarian counterparts like Frank Alpine in *The Assistant* and Yakov in *The Fixer*.

William Dubin, on the pretext of research, spends his time with Fanny. But at the same time he is worried about his being dishonest to his wife Kitty. However, he comes to realise that he is not giving his family its due: "If you loved someone with deepening passion, the love of others was effectively reduced" (278-279). He begins to charge and there is also a charge in Fanny, the servant maid, who realises that she has to be careful about her future.

At the end of the novel, there is a list of the books by Dubin. The list includes the biography of Anna Freud written in collaboration with Maud. When Dubin is able to finish Lawrence's biography in addition to *The Art of Biography*, he has a sense of fulfillment. Dubin's return to his wife Kitty and her children becomes possible due to the change in Fanny who can look after herself independently.

Malamud's *The Fixer* is a novel of great power and grandeur. According to Kenneth Allsop, this novel "is true and terrible
in a way documented facts cannot be”. The Fixer in its “metaphysic” of suffering conforms to Daniel Day Williams’ “empirical” and “phenomenological approach to suffering. Williams refers to three aspects of suffering as identification, communication and healing. He says:

Suffering does not remain a constant in the metaphysical situation. It points forward. It can be transmuted through being brought into a community of interpretation with a prospective dimension, that is with hope for creativity beyond the present. (Daniel Day Williams: 193).

Malamud’s concern is to unfold the mind of Yakov as he suffers and endures. The suffering of Dreyfus and in fact, every Jew in the Holocaust characterises the suffering of Yakov. His sufferings in prison toughen his character and will, strip him of arrogance and false pride. They increase his compassion and charity and enable him to “fix his heart”. His humiliations which inspire fantasies and hallucinations give him courage and teach him the meaning of true freedom. Real freedom consists in creating it for others. When the magistrate tells Yakov like this, the latter experiences “an extraordinary insight”. Something in him has changed.

Prison is a place where some men grow and become men in prison. Commenting on the recurrent “prison motif”, Malamud, is an interview, observes:
Perhaps I use it as a metaphor for the dilemma of all men; necessity whose bars we look through and try not to see. Social injustice, apathy, ignorance, guilt, obsession - the somewhat blind or blinded self, in other words. A man has to construct, invent his freedom. Imagination helps. A truly great man or woman extends it for others in the process of creating his or her own (Stern : 54).

Suffering plays a prominent part in Yakov's self-knowledge. In him suffering becomes a healing power through love and compassion. His self-knowledge in turn becomes "the entry into a significant community of selves". (Williams : 183) The change brought about by suffering in Yakov's attitude to life is, in essence, the theme of the novel. Malamud does not mention about the possibility of Yakov's conviction or acquittal,

In Malamud's novels one of the basic ideas is the search for a new life. This motive, for instance, drives Yakov Bok, the protagonist in The Fixer from the Stelt to Kiev. He endures the dreadful misery of his imprisonment. His suffering is three-fold:

The Fixer presents a threefold struggle, metaphorically those of Samson, Job and Christ, in search of a reconciliation with the inscrutable ways of the Maker .... His experience falls into two units, his life before imprisonment his suffering in prison. (Naik, Desai and Punekar 1974 : 257).
Yakov's moral strength continues to grow as he realises his capacity for suffering in his own right and for others. He does not fear suffering and his experience teaches the Jewishness in suffering:

He ceases to fear the stable, though he is enraged that it requires the Jew as victim to embody all its weakness and corruption (Helterman: 75).

Yakov's anger against the Tsar is just. It comes out of his intense suffering for no fault of his own. He would free the Jews from the atrocities of the Tsar by killing him. Thus his compassion makes him a Jew in the real sense. He becomes the personification of forbearance and compassion. His lawyer pays a glorious tribute to him when he says “you suffer for us all ..... I would be honoured to be in your place”. (TF: 273)

Suffering educates yakov, who learns, experiences and becomes sympathetic. Daniel Walden in his article says: “Through his trial and suffering yakov has learned; the experience is his”. (Walden: 159)

There is a gradual evolution in Yakov whose suffering is objectified. Yakov wails without any hope and help in prison. His wailings are quite natural and human in the contest provided. He is a typical schlemiel chosen for suffering. Malamud could refer to this
Malamud shows that after suffering untold miseries, men realise their inner blindness. Good sense ultimately dawns upon them. They begin to feel that freedom for the self is no freedom. To win people’s love, one must love everyone irrespective of caste, creed or colour. As a consequence of their change, Malamud’s protagonists become worthy of respect and admiration despite their meaningless and guilty past life. In the end, they attain self-transcendence through their suffering and compassion.