Six years after his previous book, Rembrandt's Hat, a collection of short stories, Malamud has written a long, ambitious novel called Dubin's Lives. In a pre-publication interview with Ralph Tyler, Malamud said that Dubin's Lives was his effort to sum up all that he had learnt over the years. The purpose of the book was evaluation of self, "What had my experience totaled up to? What did I know up to this point? I wanted to write a novel that was significant to me." 

In comparison to his earlier works Malamud said, "the texture of it, the depth of it, the quality of human experience in it is greater than in my previous books." Dubin's Lives is, as Malamud says, his attempt at bigness: "At breath, at a fuller use of what I have to offer.... I wanted to do more with character, also, to make life more complex, in the daily living of it, than I had done previously; And I wanted to get in more poetry, more of what is in me." The novel is about the protagonist's personal crisis in life at the age of fifty-six. "I am writing about one human being, not all human beings. To say it is about the whole of middle age is ridiculous," Malamud states emphatically. Moreover, the book is not autobiographical. Dubin is fictive the author asserts. "You won't find my autobiography in Dubin's Lives, although I dipped my fingers —not
my hand — more deeply into the autobiographical cream," Malamud told an interviewer.

Dubin's Lives has been judged as "Malamud's simplest novel since A New Life and may be his most affecting." Mark Shechner finds Dubin's Lives the richest of all Malamud's novels as "for once he has joined his private obsessions to plausible contemporary circumstances in a thoroughly convincing manner." He assumes Malamud has "grown weary of ethical or literary circumspection." The novel, however, is also open to much negative criticism. Joseph Epstein accuses Malamud of having become "unfocused morally, the world suddenly seeming more complicated to him than once it didn't and hence less susceptible of being dealt with by his art." Richard Locke is even more harsh: "Some book — ill written, self-serving, morally obtuse, narratively and psychologically crude."

All of Malamud's earlier novels spoke of moral possibilities of man through purgative suffering and selfless love. His novels were parables of man's redemption won through endurance and suffering. Malamud's later novels, however, fall outside the sphere of suffering and moral accountability which forms the basis of his earlier novels. We become conscious of the slow change that has overcome Malamud's fiction. The very system of values in which he had professed so much of faith is marked by discrepancies in the later novels. We conceive "contradictions between his celebrated pleas for
restraint and certain powerful emotional promptings — and that those contradictions have been steadily growing sharper."\textsuperscript{11} Malamud seems to have given up his belief in man's ability to transcend the self and "give" to another selflessly.

The undercurrent of pessimism that ran throughout \textit{The Tenants} is there in \textit{Dubin's Lives} also. Critics conclude that the "discrepancies between the emotional tenor of his books and their instructional promises have become too extreme for patching up and have threatened to fracture the Malamudian universe altogether."\textsuperscript{12} However, a closer study of the novel reveals that though Malamud does reject his oft repeated moral conservatism, his protagonist is made to learn through his experience; no moral injunctions are imposed upon him. Though Malamud has not let Dubin's experiences come under the dictates of any moral patterns yet one may draw, at times, moral inferences from the outcome of the experiences. There is nothing fabulistic about \textit{Dubin's Lives}. In it Malamud proves himself "a realist in the sense Dostoevsky was, a writer true to the strictures of experience."\textsuperscript{13} Unlike Malamud's earlier heroes, Dubin seeks no redemption, though, like the others, he does seek a new life.

The real subject of the novel is a "life battling with itself and effects of time — the effects of aging, the loneliness and paralysis of a long marriage, the desire for a new life."\textsuperscript{14} Thus once again we deal with Malamud's old theme — the protagonist's
quest for a new life and the way to it — by striking a balance between the opposing demands of private desires and selfless commitment towards others — a conflict that Malamud's later heroes find increasingly difficult to resolve, the result being that the total affirmation that we found in Malamud's earlier novels is lacking in his later novels. However, the later novels also have within them "a new completeness. Rather than serving as an illustration of an ethos, art here exists for itself."¹⁵

Dubin, the protagonist of Dubin's Lives, is the new activist hero. He is, as David L. Stevenson puts it, "an intrepid opportunist of the self. He is an eager, insatiable explorer of his own private experience, always on the alert, in Augie March's phrase, for 'a fate good enough.'"¹⁶ Dubin seeks escape from the stagnation of his everyday existence and for a personally meaningful identity. When we first meet him, his real concern is for his life in totality. Dubin is like all activist heroes who are "wholly concerned with their own special private irritations, their own erotic needs, anxious, frantic as to the meaning for themselves alone in their adventures in love."¹⁷ He is restless to experience some event "against which he can exercise fully and satisfactorily a personal sense of will, of agency."¹⁸

At the ripe age of fifty-six Dubin yearns for a new life. He worries that he has missed much in life and he must "be daring
before it was too late. He was almost fifty-eight hurrying toward sixty. Every year was a cheat, piling up age, reducing vitality. Dubin muses, "Life ought to begin again around fifty.... Middle age can stand new enterprises, new beginnings" (p.263). At this age Dubin feels the stirings of Lawrencian blood consciousness. "My God," Dubin thinks, "how long does this romantic hunger — residue of old forms, habits, day-dreams — haunt the blood?" (p.28). Fearing old age, Dubin seeks renewal of his youth and a kind of "redemption" from aging through an affair with a girl as young as his daughter. As Pearl K. Bell says, Dubin is a "middle aged man, assaulted by the terrors of mortality, seeking to renew his manhood with young and resilient flesh." Influenced by Lawrence, Dubin yearns to indulge in youthful sexual love, justifying it to himself as something he is entitled to at his age, "I'm not twenty, nor forty — I'm fifty-seven. Surely these years entitle me to this pleasure. In life one daren't miss what his nature requires. Only the spiritually impoverished can live without adventure" (p.223). He talks of the need to live life "to the hilt" (p.36), and asserts, "One recovers of youth only what he can borrow from the young" (p.54).

Thus Dubin plunges into an affair with youthful Fanny as his right to experience a rejuvenating experience "before he was too old to enjoy it" (p.306). He looks upon Fanny as a "breakwater against age, loss of vital energy, the approach of
death" (p.275). Alive, promiscuous Fanny restores Dubin's self-confidence and his hopes for a new life. She helps him get rid of his self-recriminations. An affair with Fanny proves to be a boost for his masculinity: "His experiences with Fanny, in variety, intensity, excitement heightened by her watchful curious knowing, sureness of her sexual self, willingness to give, couldn't have come at a better moment" (p.233). With Fanny Dubin experiences "The flowering pleasure, heathen innocence, of the natural life" (p.233). He exults: "Because of Fanny he was a different man, had grown new attributes, elements of a new self" (p.255).

As Fanny gives Dubin release from stagnation, he with his knowledge of many lives helps her grow from adolescent sexuality into mature womanhood. She outgrows her sluttishness and becomes more refined in her feelings and emotions. "Before his eyes the girl changed: had become loving, loyal, protective, kind" (p.152). Fanny looks upon Dubin as lover, father, friend and he helps her to become a lot more serious about herself in a way she never was earlier. She shows more control, wants better for herself. No longer wanting to let life drift along, she seeks stability in her relationship and herself feels more confident about her ability to reorganize her life. She gives totally to Dubin and expects more commitment from him.

Early during their affair when Dubin rushes Fanny to Venice for a week of sexual bliss, quite obviously treating her
as a diversion, Fanny resents his attitude and shows it by making love to a gondolier. Fanny is quite sure of what she wants, but, only on her own terms. She twice moves out of his life simply because she cannot bear the duplicity of their relationship. Her humiliation at the time she has to hide in the cold, dark barn so as to escape being caught with Dubin by Kitty, gives us an idea of her growing self-respect. "I am sick of hiding myself, of not being who I am. It drives me up a wall. I am entitled to an open, ordinary and satisfying life of my own" (p.284). Later, unhappy with Dubin's vacillations and non-committal behavior, Fanny breaks off the affair saying: "I'm not someone who's around just to keep your mind off old age. I have got to be more to you than a substitute for your lost youth, whatever the hell that is" (p.284). Fanny tries to force him to define his commitment to her, decide once for all how genuine, compelling it is.

Dubin, however, seems "bent on making sure that he remains unscathed and unentangled in the course of his pursuit of his individual happiness."21 He has not learnt the Malamudian rule that "Morality begins when one can control experience" (p.230). Like all previous heroes, Dubin too, in pursuit of selfish desires, shirks responsibility towards others. Little does he realize that "Freedom comes from responsibility and not responsibility from freedom."22 He allows erotic temptations to lead him, "Time passes, needs and feelings change.... One looks for diversions" (p.62). Despite this he wishes to remain loyal to his wife: "She
wasn't constituted for an emotionally, not to say morally, ambiguous relationship. To protect her peace of mind he had to lie though he wanted to protect her from his lies" (p.252). He tells Fanny, "There are commitments in marriage. It takes a while to reconsider each." "I don't think you reconsider anything," she retorts, "you may want to but you don't. You keep what you have and use anything else you can get" (p.282).

Dubin sees his wife suffer due to his withdrawal, he also senses her growing loneliness and nervousness, but Dubin, we read "live[8] much in his thoughts of his developing work and in long reveries of Fanny" (p.268). In narcissistic self-indulgence Dubin treats both Fanny and Kitty shabbily. He allows his marriage to crumble by withholding love from his wife and yet will not make any commitment to Fanny. His struggle to avoid entanglements is countered by both Fanny's and Kitty's urgent need for a commitment of love.

In Dubin we see the contradictions that are essentially a part of the human character. We note the "double-edged nature of Dubin's search for a new life, a search bounded on one side by the yearning to experience the fullness of life in all its sensuality, vitality and freedom; on the other by self deception." In him we see "the struggle to accommodate warring (or, at least, contending) impulses and desires to negotiate some kind of inner peace or balance of power, or perhaps just to maintain hostilities
at a low destructive level, between... the implacable, singular lusts for the flesh and its pleasures. The measured self vs. the insatiable self. The accommodating self vs. the ravenous self, "As Dubin's affair with Fanny flourishes and blooms one gets the feeling that Dubin has escaped the pressures of conformism which bind Malamud's former heroes. But we might have guessed, "sex untainted by guilt and the merciless stab of conscience, the uninhibited liberty to seek out the lineament of gratified desire wherever or however he choose," can never be the good fortune of a Malamudian hero, not even for Dubin, however, unorthodox a Malamud hero he may be. "

Shades of the old Malamud appear now and again. Knowing the rules by now, one can anticipate the outcome of the Venice episode. A series of comic tragedies overtake Dubin. Fanny suffers from diarrhoea after eating a dish of brains. Dubin spends his holiday doctoring her. When she is better and Dubin looks forward to consumation, he finds her on the floor making love to an ardent gondalier! He is made out to be a characteristic Malamudian character — a schlemiel. He cannot enjoy fulfilment of carnal appetite without paying for it by way of purgative suffering. "Just as nothing succeeds like failure in earlier Malamud books, nothing fails like success" in Dubin's Lives. His troubles increase in proportion with his youthful pleasures and for his transgressions Dubin pays heavily as retribution: "One paid for the pursuit of youth — from Faustus to Wm. Dubin" (p. 302).
Dubin and Fanny take full pleasure in each other but, nonetheless, Dubin suffers from the familiar pangs of conscience. An orthodox synagogue overlooks their lovenest and the rabbi praying at the window reminds Dubin of his forsaken duties towards his wife. He is both libidinous and obsessively guilty. "The secret escapist urge to remain uninvolved with life competes with the call (often prompted by guilt) to a conscious and willed acceptance of responsibility."27 Placed in an uncompromising situation with incompatible dualities of marriage and extra-marital affair, emotion and reason, Kitty and Fanny, Dubin is compelled to define his choice.

Over a span of two and a half years Dubin's affair twice runs into bad weather. Fanny walks out on him and he suffers winter-long depressions. As he isolates himself from others, his relations with his devoted, dependant wife and unhappy children deteriorate. He cannot get Fanny out of his mind and he cannot work. His memory plays tricks and his prostate gives him trouble, "He had entered the age of aging. I shall never recover what I have lost. He feared illness, immobility; the disgrace of death" (p.338). He tries to overcome his need for Fanny and his mental block by following a strict routine of dieting, jogging and long spells at the study table. He finds no antidote to his suffering; nothing stimulates his mind. "Hadn't Thoreau said the mind was the only strong hold against winter: it could, at least, anticipate spring.... Anticipation admits there is tomorrow, not much more," Dubin moans (pp.169-70).
The alienation in Dubin's life is not simply the outcome of his affair with Fanny. Dubin is a narcissist, so absorbed in himself that one is surprised at his interest in Fanny. Dubin, we see, is already emotionally cut-off from his children and not on the best of terms with Kitty. He has never been able to "give" much of himself to others before but, now, with his new problems he becomes totally isolated. Malamud has said: "Love in essence enlarges the self.... One can discover one-self through physical love. It should lead to self-knowledge — knowing." Dubin's rejuvenating affair does not help to open him up, on the contrary, it distances him further from his family. In loving Fanny he withholds love from his wife and daughter. Moreover, by Malamudian rules, no gain is without loss. Dubin gains favour with Fanny, but loses stability in his life. His success with Fanny does not give him untainted pleasures; he suffers from recurring nightmares of inevitable loss: "One may be able to mask dishonesty," he thinks, "but not its effects: the diminution of libido, ebb of feeling for a woman, love for her. Deceit distances" (p.256). Now he shuttles between Fanny, his biography on Lawrence and the misery the two generate when things don't work out.

Central to Dubin's quest for a new life is his fear of aging. "My concern with aging has made me conscious of death," (p.317) he ruminates. With time one gains experience, thus wisdom, but "time preached dying" (p.338) also. Dubin wants to cheat the
aging aspect of time by taking up with Fanny. Because of her youthfulness, Fanny represents a bright future. It is Kitty, with her constant thoughts of the lived life, who represents the past. Dubin's major problem is to reconcile his commitments towards Kitty (his past) and yet enjoy the potential of the future that Fanny offers, in his attempt to start a new life at such a late age. His quest for a new life, however, merely reinforces the hold of the past: "There are no new lives, only new illusions and disappointments." When he finally becomes impotent with his wife, Dubin considers this as a "humiliation, as a sign of the onset of old age, he doesn't take it as a moral or psychological signal that might be heeded as a legitimate cry of conscience, but rather as a vindication of his lust for life." His youth renewing visits to Fanny are "followed by a saddening sense of loss — awareness of an illusion he seemed to favour" (p.255). He craves to continue his affair with Fanny at the same time hates himself for having begun it. The problems he creates for himself make him despair: "What a mad thing to happen. What a fool I am. It was the having I wanted more than the girl. Who is she to me? ... I'm like a broken clock — works, time, mangled. What is life trying to teach me?" (p.162). Dubin has to learn to accept the delapidation that time wrought; in late middle-age he should not hope to recover his youth, "for what life is trying to teach him is the truth about time, its erosions, its duplicitities, what is recoverable from it and what isn't and above all how one can outwit it and how one can't." Dubin's ironic self-analysis, however, leads to no moral insight.
He suffers, as do all Malamud's heroes. His suffering is the outcome of his own blundering desires. Dubin suffers because he is not a mench but a man with many weaknesses and failings. Though Dubin suffers, one does not feel that he suffers as a victim or that suffering is his fate because he is a Jew. Unlike Malamud's earlier characters who were gentle Jewish martyrs like Morris Bober, Dubin, though born a Jew and now only marginally so, is no martyr. Indeed, it is his Catholic wife who suffers as a victim of Dubin's own psychological upheaval and its effects on their marriage. In his indecisiveness, Dubin will not give up one for the other and as a result both Kitty and Fanny suffer. Kitty, because of his growing intolerance towards "her sameness, dissatisfactions, eccentricities. He was bored with her fears, her unforgotten, unforgettable past" (p.269), and Fanny because of his non-committal attitude towards her. Dubin himself suffers most from his indecisiveness and comes to the conclusion: "life is forever fleeting, our fates juggled heartbreakingly by events we can't foresee or control and we are always pitifully vulnerable to what happens next" (p.36).

Nor can one limit Dubin's experiences to the confines of the Jewish plight and the existential plight: the suffering, the alienation and the utter loneliness characterizing the Jew's experience for two thousand years becomes in modern times, everyone's condition and offers the Jew as a symbol of the modern predicament. Fredrick J.Hoffman offers a similar observation but one that
emphasizes the self-assertion rather than the victimization of
the hero, "The Jewish situation is an existential one, within
limits. The self-assertion in this circumstance, is hedged by
doubts, by a comic self-consciousness, but ultimately the hero's
decision is all but entirely his own; he has a tradition, but it
demands that he act on his own initiative." \(^{32}\) In Dubin we see
an individual's existential situation as an isolated being
seeking meaning in life. The only way he can transcend the
universal chaos that surround him and forge a private identity
is by way of love, compassion and moral commitment.

Dubin's efforts at self-discovery and quest for a new life
are closely related to his quest to write a biography of D.H.
Lawrence. Through his biographies Dubin feels he learns how to
live life, "Biography ... teaches you the conduct of life. Those
who write about life reflect about life.... You see in other who
you are" (p.139). An interesting aspect of Dubin's personality is
his relationship between life and work. He himself leads a
confined, lonely life so as to write lives. Early in the novel,
Kitty asks her husband, "When will you take time to live?" Dubin
replies, "Writing is a mode of being. If I write I live" (p.111).
As a biographer, Dubin can be quite neurotic. He tends to diffuse
his identity with that of his subjects: "The joining — the
marriage? — has to be, or you can't stay on the vicarious track
of the past or whatever 'truth' you think you're tracking" (p.20).
John N.Kotre tells us that "his very name Du-bin (the German
Dubin leads an unnatural double life. He feels, "Everybody's life is mine unlived" (p.10) and he "writes lives he can't live" (p.10). In the lives of great men he seeks to complete himself. He makes others' lives mirrors of his self and seeks in them answers to his own life's dilemmas. Dubin constantly associates himself with great men — indeed, his own life seems made up of fragments of the lives of Lawrence, Thoreau, Carlyle! Freud's warning regarding the tendency of biographers to identify with their subjects aptly applies to Dubin, therefore, he is devastated to read in Freud, "Anyone turning biographer has committed himself to lies, to concealment, to hypocrisy, to flattery, and even to hiding his own lack of understanding" (p.317).

Thus, Dubin spends his life writing the lives of people or else reading biographies as if he were "famished for lives" (p.169); he is driven by a "hunger to live many lives" (p.176). Soon, however, Dubin finds out that lives are easier written than lived. By the time the novel draws to an end Dubin has learnt that "language is not life" and that he had nearly "given up life to write lives" (p.336). Therefore, he now wants to live his own life, moreso make up for all that he has missed in life.

Regarding his affair with Fanny, Dubin now reflects, "The thousands of lives I've read and the few I've written — would make the difference between badly and decently knowing. I thought I would know, at my age, what to do when I had to" (p.346). That
writing in his life is obvious from the way his spirits sink when his work stalls. He retreats into himself, punishes himself with strenuous exercise and dieting. When work goes on well he is alive and buoyant. But we also note that when busy with his work he quite selfishly neglects both Kitty and Fanny; everybody comes second to his work. "There were moments when he thought breaking it [his affair] up now might be a relief — a lot less to worry about; he'd be freer to concentrate on his work" (p.275).

Pursuit of life through art was the theme of *Pictures of Fidelman: An Exhibition* and *The Tenants*, likewise in *Dubin's Lives* we see the protagonist place art above the actualities of life.

Malamud has justified Dubin's want for isolation when at work. In an interview with Katha Pollitt he said: "Isolation is an important drama for any writer... you *have* to shut yourself out of the variety of life...." Dubin, however, takes his isolation to extremes. It only helps build up his already inflated self-esteem and cuts him off from lived life. He has no friends, colleagues or for that matter, binding relationships with his family members. His willed isolation is an expression of his colossal narcissism. Dubin, in total selfishness, makes emotional demands on others but isolates himself when it suits him. Like Fidelman and Lesser, Dubin, in pursuit of his profession, leads a narrow, regulated life. His self-centred world is ignorant of love, understanding and mutuality. Dubin makes a prison of his own through his repetitive denials to any sort of communication with the world outside. There are moments when he feels, "I'm
like a rock with an iron fence around it" (p.319). Dubin could admit that his prison, as that of S. Levin, is really his own flawed self from which there seems no escape to freedom. Dubin needs to reconcile the conflicting demands of his work and life as also within himself.

Moreover, in the lives of others Dubin seeks the answer to "how men hold themselves together" (p.317). Dubin is conscious of the conflict within himself—his repressed yearnings for a new life breaking up the ordered life he has been outwardly leading. To all appearances he is a settled, contented family man, "a controled type" (p.46) who fears "ineptitude, imbalance, disorder" (p.338). So when we see him plunge into an erotic affair one wonders at the transformation. Yet, if we dig deeper into Dubin's past we realize that the change is not as sudden as it seems at first. Dubin, by his own account is "an odd inward man held together by an ordered life" (p.347). This hints at the other self of Dubin that is beginning to be awakened. Having broken the bonds of his outwardly orderly life, Dubin responds to Fanny by giving expression to all his repressed feelings.

The division in his personality is suggested by the pun in the title, Dubin's Lives. The double-edged title, on the surface level, refers to Dubin's profession as a biographer who has written many lives—Thoreau, Lincoln, Mark Twain. It also refers, more deviously, to the different aspects of Dubin's
own personality and the double role he plays at the time we meet him. Moreover, he conducts not only his own life but those of the two women in his life.

It may seem paradoxical that Dubin, a man of meagre appetites should choose Lawrence, the prophet of sexuality as the subject for his biography. All who have known Dubin express surprise at his choice—finding it incongruous to his nature. The only explanation that Dubin has is that, rather than choosing Lawrence, he himself, in a way, has been chosen by the writer as if he wanted Dubin to learn from his experiences. The choice, however, bears out a subconscious logic. Lawrence becomes Dubin's other self—the repressed self that craves for freedom of his hidden desires.

Malamud said he chose D.H. Lawrence as Dubin's subject "because Lawrence's theories about the significant relationship of sexual experience to the deeper sources of life ... gave Dubin things he could think about more than mere experience itself.... So Lawrence's theories give the world of sex a kind of deepening." Lawrence influences Dubin's thought process and thereby his experiences. On the other hand his affair with Fanny "sparked his work. Ideas swarmed in Dubin's mind" (p.246). His own passionate experiences enhance his understanding of what Lawrence meant by "the slow invasion in you of the vast invisible God that lives in the ether" — "the old Pagan vision" (p.233). Through Fanny
he feels a "gifted man, an excellent biographer" (p.224). He now explicates D.H.Lawrence on sex as, "Sex to him, you understand, despite his ideology of blood-being, was a metaphor for a flowering life" (p.224).

Thematically, Lawrence's views on sex, love and women, influence Dubin to the extent that there are times when Dubin becomes Lawrence the lover, the free. Lawrence gives him the impetus to give vent to his desires and after having experienced Lawrence-like experiences in actuality, he understands the writer's views on sex "as a dark force of blood-consciousness through which man experiences the primal mystery" (p.34) and he concludes that Lawrence "wants man to risk himself for a plentitude of life through love" (p.322).

Like Lawrence, Dubin perceives the cycle of seasons as an embodiment of the cycle of birth and death in life. Like the writer, Dubin is deeply affected by the changing seasons. He fights winter "as if it were the true enemy" (p.140). He dreads the coming of August for it belies its warmth and conspires with winter. In spring he is festive for "spring lights spring within" (p.276). If winter makes him feel old and decrepit, spring resurrects him. His work progresses and Fanny rejuvenates his physically.

As Dubin tries to comprehend the Lawrencian feelings within himself, he studies, quotes and learns from Lawrence and in the process we gain insight into Dubin. "How curious it is, Dubin..."
thought, as you write a man's life, how often his experiences become yours to live. This goes on from book to book: their lives evoke mine or why do I write? I write to know the next room of my fate. To know it I must complete Lawrence's life" (p.317). Lawrence exerts much influence on Dubin in spite of the fact that Dubin is aware of the contradictions in the writer's life. He knows, as we know, the ironic fact that Lawrence was impotent at a relatively young age of forty-two and his sexual manifestoes were in fact a protest against his ineffectual self rather than an affirmation of his sexual liberation. "Dubin tries to be a Lawrencian hero in a Malamud world, that is, a phallic narcissist in a life of modest designs and severe consequences." Naturally, Lawrencian sexuality and narcissism have no place in Malamud's world of dire consequences for unpressed desires.

Dubin enters into the affair with Fanny wholeheartedly but suffers much because of the confusion it creates in his orderly life. His desire for the affair comes into conflict with his self-hatred for having begun it. The effort to keep it a secret makes him think, "One may be able to mask dishonesty but not its effects" (p.256). His marriage, his work, his mental and physical powers all seem to disintegrate in the face of his quest for a new life of self-fulfilment. Malamud has said, "One must accept limits on one's needs in order to live effectively with others, so that the gift of life may function."
This is the lesson all Malamud's protagonists learn through a painful process and this is what Dubin will also learn slowly and painfully. By learning to strike a balance between his own conflicting selves Dubin will find stability in life.

It is in confrontation with a "double" — one's moral self — that Malamud's protagonists are able to grasp insight into themselves. Kitty is Dubin's "mirror-image double." She is in a way his own moral self whom he would like to ignore but is unable to do so. In her presence his guilt sense surfaces and he judges his actions. Through self-scrutiny he learns of his failings and makes an effort to overcome them. Such self-evaluation eventually leads to his acceptance of his responsibilities towards his family.

Otherwise too, there are many mirror images in Dubin's Lives. Like Frank Alpine in The Assistant, Dubin appraises himself in front of mirrors. In them he faces up to his private guilt and frustrations. Emotionally torn between selfless obligations and private temptations Dubin repeatedly fails to see himself clearly. The partial, deflected glimpses he catches only intensify his own inadequacies. Washing before a cracked mirror he sees his own distorted image symbolic of his warped personality. In the mirror he confronts his conscience and finds it difficult to accept the unflattering truth his reflection conveys. He "could not stop talking to the suffering man in the warped glass" (p.314).
Thus Malamud makes his point when he shows that sexual liberation only brings loneliness and failure for Dubin. Fanny temporarily liberates Dubin but he does not achieve affirmation. Malamud, however, "pursues his favourite myth of moral exigency without resort to folklore or the easy affirmations of packaged morality." With patience and with credibility Malamud works out Dubin's fling into eroticism, the pangs of conscience and ultimately, a sane decision to return to his wife and home. Dubin's demonstration of love towards his wife is a moral act. "The moral act, no matter what moral act it is, is itself charged with significance because any moral act is difficult and unlikely." Moreover, once again Malamud affirms the possibility of human change and renewal. As do all of Malamud's lonely protagonists, Dubin learns that the new life he seeks is best gained by responding to another's needs. At last, then, Dubin acts responsibly. Like Levin, despite his failings, Dubin has realized that life is holy rather than happy.

Thus, the denouement in which we see Dubin return to his wife "with love" is not unconvincing and capricious as it first seems. Though *Dubin's Lives* seems to be at variance with the rest of Malamud's fiction, we soon realize that it is very close in theme to his earlier works. The novel opens out imaginatively to cover new aspects of life yet continues to project Malamud's established ideas and viewpoints. Dubin learns that a new life hinges on renewed responsibilities and not a false conception of freedom. With his growing responsibility comes freedom and release.
from the creative block he has been suffering from. The postscript which follows has a list of "works by William B. Dubin." The list includes his work on Lawrence and a couple of other biographies. The fact that Dubin succeeds in completing his biography on Lawrence is indicative of his ability to resolve the conflicting demands of both his life and work. Obviously the crisis in his life has blown over, he has learnt from his experiences, overcome his middle-aged desires, stabilized, worked and produced more biographies in the future.

However, we note that Dubin's Lives takes its own course without any moral pressures while Malamud's earlier novels strove openly to moral conclusions. Moreover, in this novel Malamud's moral purpose is often belied by a complex form of irony. It simultaneously affirms and undercuts Malamud's moral vision.

The hope expressed in the end — the affirmation made, lacks the vitality and conviction displayed in the earlier novels. Dubin does come home to Kitty "with love" but we do not witness Dubin's moral growth that leads to the change of heart. He continues to be self-preoccupied and reluctant to acknowledge his responsibilities towards Kitty till the very end though he does suffer due to his follies and learns his lessons slowly.

As in The Tenants, Malamud does express concern at the spiritual failure of our civilization. "Someone sings without
knowing why and it's a song expressing hunger for love, regret for life unlived, sorrow for the shortness of life. Even some of the joyful songs evoke memories of something lost that one hopes endures" (p. 147). The degeneration of society has taken its toll and yet in Malamud's world human weaknesses place no man beyond redemption.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2Ibid., p.32.


4Ralph Tyler, p.32.

5Katha Pollitt, p.38.

6G.W.Hunt, Atlantic, 243 (March 1979), 132.

7Mark Shechner, "The Return of the Repressed," The Nation, 228 (March 19, 1979), 277.

8Ibid., p.277.


11Mark Shechner, p.277.

12Ibid., p.277.


17 Ibid., p. 247.

18 Ibid., p. 244.


20 Pearl K. Bell, "Heller and Malamud: Then and Now," *Commentary*, 67 (June 1979), 73.


23 S. J. Hershinow, p. 107.


25 Pearl K. Bell, p. 61.

26 Mark Sheehner, p. 278.
27 S. J. Hershinow, p. 143.


29 Pearl K. Bell, p. 73.

30 Richard Locke, p. 69.

31 R. Gilman, p. 29.


34 Katha Pollitt, p. 37.

35 Ralph Tyler, p. 32.

36 Mark Shechner, p. 277.

37 E. H. L. Masilamoni, p. 36.

38 Mark Shechner, p. 279.

27 S.J. Hershinow, p. 143.


29 Pearl K. Bell, p. 73.

30 Richard Locke, p. 69.

31 R. Gilman, p. 29.


34 Katha Pollitt, p. 37.

35 Ralph Tyler, p. 32.

36 Mark Shechner, p. 277.

37 E.H.L. Masilamoni, p. 36.

38 Mark Shechner, p. 279.