A New Life, Malamud's third novel, was published in 1961. The novel is partly autobiographical for it is based on Malamud's own experience of teaching in Oregon State. As the title itself suggests, the novel deals with the theme of regeneration or at least with the possibilities of regeneration. Levin seeks renewal of life, his old life having come to nothing. He is "at thirty still running after last year's train, far behind in the world." Having experienced defeat and despair in earlier life, Levin is out to create a new life for himself and thus redeem his disreputable past. Levin's desire for a new life is very much like Frank's desire to start anew, the difference lies in their attitudes. Levin actively seeks for it whereas Frank has passively waited for it.

In a way "A New Life continues the examination of the apprentice theme present in The Assistant. The earlier book described the conversion of Frank Alpine to the search for the good life, whereas in the latter the conversion has already taken place and the subject is the difficult conduct of the search." However, "Seymour Levin, 'formerly a drunkard,' progresses—not like Frank Alpine from evil to good but from weakness and fear.
to strength and courage. An instructor at an agricultural college, Levin fumbles his way through sex and into love, through teaching and into understanding."

Another aspect of *A New Life* which holds one's attention is that the "mythic placelessness" of the former novels has been abandoned for the authentic, real life world of the academe in which Malamud works out his recurrent theme of "suffering and regeneration." Philip Roth has complained that "Malamud as writer of fiction, has not shown specific interest in the anxieties and dilemmas and corruptions of the modern American Jew... rather, his people live in a timeless depression and a placeless Lower East Side; their society is not affluent, their predicament not cultural." This remark while applicable to *The Natural* and *The Assistant* and many of Malamud's short stories is not true of Malamud's *A New Life* and *The Tenants*. In both these novels the hero is actively involved with modern society and its complexities. While Frank and Roy were still only striving to resolve immediate personal problems, Levin is as much concerned about his social responsibilities as his personal concerns.

Like all Malamud's heroes we find Levin at the beginning of the novel, on a journey from his past into the present — leaving behind, hopefully, "his weaknesses, impoverishment, indiscipline — the limp self entangled in the fabric of a
will-less life" (p.163). In Malamud's fiction journey is the symbol of quest and renewal. Frank had travelled to the east in search of better opportunities, Levin goes west "— seeking, you might say, my manifest destiny" (p.108).

In the past Levin's life has been full of failure and frustrations but in a moment of self-analysis he has "a triumphant insight" into himself and he realizes that he is made for a better destiny; "But one morning in somebody's filthy cellar, I awoke under burlap bags and saw my rotting shoes on a broken chair. They were lit in "dim sunlight from a shaft or window. I stared at the chair, it looked like a painting, a thing with a value of its own. ... I came to believe what I had often wanted to, that life is holy. I then became a man of principle" (p.201). Levin decides to become "New Levin, a man of purpose after largely wasted years" (p.55) and he hopes "that a new place will inspire change in one's life" (p.17). "To change intention changes fortune" (p.58), he quotes Montaigne but though his intentions are well meaning there is many a lapse in his actions. Levin, like Frank, realizes he is a man of principles but does not know how to put them into practice. Like Frank he is an unintegrated man in search of integrity of self.

On the personal front, although Levin has put his drunkenness behind him and has "awakened in his hole in the ground to a sense of life's holiness, he has not yet awakened to the love which makes those principles an actuality." His experiences
give him ample pain and unhappiness:

Just when I thought I had discovered what would save me — when I believed it — my senses seemed to die, as though self-redemption wasn't possible because of what I was — my emptiness the sign of my worth ... as a person I was nothing (p.201).

It is this sense of nothingness or non-being which leads to his quest for "order, value, accomplishment and love" (p.189) in life. It is when he will acquire meaning in life by acting responsibly that the feeling of non-being will be replaced by a sense of purpose.

At Cascadia, his surroundings are new and refreshing but the loneliness Levin has experienced in the past haunts him still. Levin, as yet, has not learnt to relate with others therefore gets isolated from the other members of the faculty. Seeking escape from loneliness Levin turns towards women for diversion. It is not genuine love that Levin seeks but romantic "love" — the satisfaction of his carnal desires. "Desire butchered him. He beheld his slaughtered face in the mirror and stared at it, wretched. How escape the ferocious lust that inflamed and tormented his thoughts as it corroded his will?" (p.138). In search of fulfilment of his egoistic desires and baser appetites Levin goes through a number of loveless affairs, all ending in fiascos. As their motivating force is sexual gratification and no emotional involvement, Levin's indisciplined longings are always awarded with disappointments, every sexual encounter of his ends in frustration and humiliation. Like Roy Hobbs, Levin too is consistently attracted by the wrong
kind of woman. Like Roy, he has been in love "often — with the wrong kind. One or two made hash of me" (p.200). Both, at first, are bereft of all sense of responsibility and unselfishness. Like Roy had learnt the lesson of unselfish love and responsibility from his painful experiences, Levin's frustrating (and amusing) experiences will inculcate these values in him.

It is through his experiences with the women in his life that we trace Levin's moral growth. In his encounter with Laverne, the waitress, Levin shows only lust. "He struggled to free himself from this degrading emotion" (p.77) but is will-less. By Malamudian rules an encounter of such a nature is bound to end in frustration. Levin's second involvement is with a colleague, Avis Fliss. Though there is a semblance of a relationship, Levin's desire for Avis is purely acquisitive. Avis, like Memo, is evil in nature. She spies on others and is spiteful too. Like Memo she has a sick breast and wears an artificial perfume. Once again the relationship ends in farce because the impulse behind it was selfish and acquisitive.

The next affair Levin indulges in is with his student Nadalee Hammerstad. Nadalee seeks a sexual relationship with her teacher in order to get a better grade and by falling for her temptations, Levin for the first time suffers from pangs of guilt. As do all Malamud's protagonists, Levin undergoes a conflict between his baser and better self. He realizes that his efforts to seek sex as a means of diversion is bound to end in frustration. "He argued
with himself: I have evil thoughts, expensive to my spirit; they represent my basest self. I must expunge them by will, no weak thing in man. I must live by responsibility, an invention of mine in me.... He would, in denial, reveal the depth of his strongest, truest strength. Character over lust" (p.140). But, in spite of his best efforts, "I've got to keep control of myself" (p.217), Levin has not yet learnt to master himself and he succumbs to his baser instincts: "The wall he had so painfully built against her, against desire, fell on his head" (p.141).

In retrospect, however, Levin's involvement with Nadalee invokes "crawling self-hatred" (p.164) in him. He undergoes a purgatorial journey in actuality and in his mind. "He could not understand why he chose so badly, why he invariably wound up with just that woman who was most clearly wrong for him" (p.265). He regrets his experiences, "the strewn garbage of his life, errors, mishaps, ignorance, experience from which he had learned nothing" (p.265). Levin's self-analysis paves the way for his growth and development. "If I could only live as I believe, Levin thought" (p.195).

Thus, in his fiction, Malamud is quite explicit in his views on sex. In an interview, Malamud has said: "Man must be his full self without depreciating the physical quality of love /but the future of a human being is less if love means just sleeping around." Thus, though Malamud does not condemn sex as evil he
definitely is against indulgence in sex without any feeling of love.

It is his involvement with Pauline Gilley which leads to Levin's change of attitude towards others. From a selfish irresponsible person, Levin grows up to be totally responsible and self-sacrificing. Initially, however, Levin's relationship with Pauline also is based on carnal desires. Engrossed in the fulfilment of his selfish demands Levin refuses to reciprocate the love offered to him by Pauline. He deliberately tries to avoid letting the physical relationship with Pauline develop into love. "Levin thought in terms of experience with her not necessarily commitment" (p.204). The consequences are that as long as Levin's affair with Pauline remains adulterous and only on a physical level, Levin experiences a "fiery pain in the butt" (p.213). In Malamud's fiction denial of love naturally brings pain, and with this painful experience begin's Levin's initiation into the hard facts of reality—a painful process for Levin and an occasion of laughter for the readers. But as Sidney Richman has observed, "Laughter serves in the capacity of redemptive emotion; it is a reminder that the way of transcendence lies only through the ability to endure privation." Levin continues to commit blunders and suffers from them till he learns to "give" to others selflessly. He discovers that "Love ungiven had caused Levin's pain. To be unpained he must give what he unwillingly withheld" (pp.215-216). In the words of Sandy
Cohn, "What actually causes him pain is not sin but his guilt over his failure to be honest with himself." His own guilty conscience makes him suffer; he knows he has deliberately curbed his love. "He had times without number warned himself, to harden, toughen, put on armor against love" (pp.217-218). He decides to love Pauline wholeheartedly, but in doing so finds his self-serving, irresponsible code of life shaken. Since Levin has not yet learnt to look beyond self he is ready to discard his love rather than assume a responsible, selfless role towards his beloved. "He wanted no tying down with ropes, long or short, seen or invisible — had to have room so he could fruitfully use freedom" (p.217).

In immaturity Levin avoids commitment to love for he associates responsibility with lack of freedom. He does not want a future "chained" to Pauline and her two adopted children. Paradoxically, he will find his freedom at the end of the novel, by willingly taking on a load of responsibility. He breaks up their relationship and justifies his act by saying it is to save Pauline "anxiety and misery" when in fact it is "cowardice calling itself reason" (p.327). "The truth is that he avoided her for the same reason Roy Hobbs avoided Iris Lemon: fear. He avoids her out of the fear of getting involved, and the fear of Thanatos; he feared that his life would go off in directions he never expected." In Levin's immature mind responsibility through love and freedom are two contradictory aspects. Till now he has striven
to "keep romance apart from convenience" (p.206). It is only after much suffering that Levin realizes "as though I were discovering it for the first time, that the source of freedom is the human spirit" (p.202). He now admits that the prison is "really himself, flawed edifice of failures, each locking up tight the one before" (p.362). Once he can free himself from his own flawed conception of ideas he grows in maturity and responsibility. He realizes that "the main source of conscious morality was love of life, anybody's life. Morality was a way of giving value to other lives through assuring human rights. As you valued men's lives yours received value" (p.258). He grows to understand the other dimensions of love — the sacrificial and the totally selfless. Thus from preoccupation with self he passes on to selflessness and care of others. He takes up with Pauline again, with responsibility rather than with love. Even when his love for her dies Levin feels he must submit to the ideal of love:

That he, S. Levin, the self again betrayed by the senses (if not vice-versa), did not presently desire her, in no way diminished her as one worthy of love (his), and what is worth loving is worth love, or the other way around.... No matter what he had suffered or renounced, to what degree misused or failed feeling, if Pauline loving him loves, Levin with no known cause not to, will love her. He would without or despite feeling. He would hold on when he wanted terribly to let go. Love had led him, he would now lead love (p.338).

Through suffering Levin learns the lesson of discipline and the need to submit himself to a "personally delimiting involve-
ment with other lives." Just as Roy takes on the responsibility of Iris (whom he loves no doubt) and her family after learning the lesson of maturity through suffering, Levin also takes on the responsibility of Pauline and her family after he has disciplined himself even when he feels no emotional attachment towards them: "I feel as though all my feelings were buried in me under a rock" (p.340). Like Roy he has to assume fatherhood of children not his own and thus willingly accept all the resultant limitations and responsibilities. All Malamud's heroes have to take on such responsibilities before they prove themselves worthy of being actual fathers. Levin "by changing his attitude to the respective claims of self and others ... enters on his second life, the real 'new life.'"

Pauline is like Iris — the lady who helps the protagonist grow in maturity. Just as Iris revitalized Roy at the time when he was undergoing a slump, Pauline helps Levin recover from a depressive period of self-hate when he tries to drown his sorrow in "the sad golden beauty of a fifth of whiskey" (p.164). She comes into his life carrying lemons and oranges (Malamud's imagery for fruitfulness). She herself smells like a flower garden and looks like a lily on a tall stalk — symbols of a positive nature. Iris by just standing up for Roy during the game had helped him recover his batting prowess, Pauline likewise by talking to Levin helps him transcend his hateful self. "His misery had exhaled itself. He was once more the improved Levin ... he felt like a man entering a new life and entered" (p.165). Nature
symbolically reflects the beginning of a new life for Levin. Rain descends to rejuvenate nature, "everything was wet, trees, puddled roads, the grassy evening earth" (p. 165); soon afterwards "under golden clouds the setting sun flooded the room" (p. 165).

Unlike Laverne, Avis and Nadalee, Pauline seeks not just sexual satisfaction with Levin. Like Iris, Pauline is prepared to give much in their relationship and to help Levin in his quest for a new life: "I want to give you what you haven't had. I want to make up for all you've been through in the past. I want to make you happy with me" (p. 248). Moreover, Pauline herself seeks a more fulfilling life. Her desire to be a better person than she is, meets with no sympathy in her husband. With Levin she seeks a better future for herself too, "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" (p. 189).

In his desperate efforts to begin a new life Levin wants to cast off his miserable past for it has been full of failures. By coming to the west and putting a distance of three thousand miles between his present self and his past self, Levin hopes to escape his unfortunate past and start life anew like a pioneer. Whereas Frank has tried to atone for his past mistakes, Levin tries to forget his past failings. He is afraid to face his own weak self of the past and in order to hide from it Levin grows
a beard for it seems to give him a new identity. He explains to Laverne that it is "out of respect for the dead" (p. 79) that he has grown a beard. Levin wants his past to be a dead past for he does not realize that a new life does not mean burying the old one. Despite his best efforts to bury the past Levin is constantly haunted by it: "it often amazed Levin how past-drenched present was" (p. 25). He constantly fears repeating his past failures: "A white-eyed hound bayed at him from the window — his classic fear, failure after grimy years to master himself" (p. 164). "Was the past, he asked himself, taking over in a new land? Had the new self failed?" (p. 125).

Like Roy and Frank, Levin has to learn to discipline his weak, egoistic self of the past rather than try to outrun it for that is not possible. Levin tries to put a vast distance between his past self and his present self only to realize "his escape to the West had thus far come to nothing, space corrupted by time, the past-contaminated self. Mold memories, bad habits, worse luck..... It left him frightened because he thought he had outdistanced it by three thousand miles. The future as new life was no longer predictable" (pp. 163-64). What is expected of the Malamud hero is to accept the past without being afraid of it. Only reluctantly Levin concedes the fact that one cannot escape one's past; it "hides but is present" (p. 56). After having suffered so much Levin now understands what Santyana said: "If you don't remember the past you were condemned to relive it" (p. 291).
Levin, once he outgrows the tyranny of the past, shaved off his beard. He grew it "in a time of doubt ... when he ... couldn't look at himself ... in the face" (p.188). More sure of himself now he no longer feels the need to hide from himself.

At last he pours out to Pauline in torrents of self-pity all his unbearable loneliness and despair of the past. He gives vent to the humiliations of his past life; he tells Pauline about his thieving father, his mad, suicidal mother, himself a drunkard cast off by the unhappy, embittered woman he loved. He is "glad he had told her about the past; it was a relief to share that with some one" (p.204). Moreover, Levin has to learn that the fear of repeating the failures of his past can paralyse a man in the present. The fear can imprison him in selfishness and prevent him from assuming the role of responsible involvement towards others. One of the reasons why Levin avoids commitment in his relationship with Pauline is that he fears repeating his past failure in love. After having outgrown his past nihilistic attitude, he tells Pauline: "I denied the self for having denied life.... I couldn't respond to experience, the thought of love was unbearable. It was my largest and most hopeless loss of self before death" (p.201).

Levin's final liberation comes when he maturely accepts his shameful past and tries to transcend it in his present: "He thought of his unhappy years as though they had endured only minutes,
black birds long ago dissolved in night. Gone for all time. He had made too much of past experience, not enough of possibility's new forms forever. In heaven's eyes he beheld a seeing rose" (p.217).

The change that Levin undergoes through the novel is obvious when we trace the names he changes. As the "New Levin," he introduces himself as S.Levin. Gilley addresses him as "Sy," others call him "Seymour," Pauline calls him "Lev," for she says, "That's my name for you. Sy is too much like sigh, Lev is closer to love" (pp.219-20). When Levin reconciles himself to his past and moves on in affirmation of a new life at the end of the novel, he tells Pauline "Sam, they used to call me home" (p.366) way back in the past. Thus, we see "in each novel the decision for change is gradually revealed to the consciousness of the hero as the beginning of a quest, not merely for a new life in a new environment but for a new life in a new free self." Levin comes to the realization that "to be good after being evil was a possibility of life. You stopped doing what was wrong and you did right. It was not easy but ... you knew it was right from the form it gave your life, the moving esthetic the act created in you" (p.258).

Like all Malamud's heroes, Levin is an orphan who is in search of a spiritual father on whose life style he can base his own pattern of behavior. Levin at first seeks the father figure among his seniors and colleagues. Fairchild, the head of the department and Dr.Gilley who appointed him, could both be considered
the most natural choice for being spiritual fathers but they prove most false for their ideas are utilitarian, not liberal and humanitarian. In fact it is in comparison with Gerald Gilley that we evaluate Levin. Gilley is a self-centred person whose limited self is symbolized in his sterility. On the other hand, Levin's future possibility is evident in the impregnation of Pauline by him — Pregnency being the symbol of fruitful love. Besides the pleasure love gives Malamud has also spoken of its creative aspect: "It should induce a love of life — yours, mine ... There should be an awareness of creativity, and indulgence in the act of creation." Being inadequate himself Gilley fails to understand Levin's willingness to accept the manifold (mostly unpleasant) responsibilities.

The two men who show some potential for being his spiritual fathers but prove inadequate are Dr. Fabrikant and Mr. Bucket. Dr. Fabrikant shows his worth by being a "liberal," a literature scholar and a farmer. But he too proves to be "false" for this puritanical anti-feminist teacher is only theoretically liberal. Joseph Bucket also attracts Levin, "there was about this man's experience, as Levin had heard it, a quality that made him think they could be friends" (p.61). But, though possessing the right values Bucket is too timid to fight for his values because he cannot risk his job for he has a responsibility towards his large family.
It is Leo Duffy eventually who holds his attention and whose example helps Levin accept and transcend his past self. From the very beginning Levin feels an affinity towards Duffy even though he is already out of the picture. When Levin first comes to Cascadia College, he is briefed on the code of behavior he must follow and given an example of Duffy, "a disagreeable radical who made a lot of trouble" (p.35), for all that he should not be, for Duffy's misdemeanors resulted in his consequent shameful exit from the college. Paradoxically, Levin feels strongly drawn to Duffy: "almost from the moment of hearing his name he had in self-love been drawn to Duffy" (p.325). When Prof. Fairchild talks of Duffy as "the misfit who sneaks in to escape his inadequacy elsewhere and ... the aggressive pest whose one purpose is to upset other people's apple carts." (p.41), Levin feels as if it is his own character the Professor had summed up. He tries to rebuild Duffy's past piece by piece and ironically does so by reliving it himself. All the "errors" Duffy makes Levin repeats, thus making Duffy's unlucky fate his own. Despite himself, Levin probes into the circumstances of Duffy's fall and "uncovers the secret of Duffy's past by reliving it." The secret of Duffy's past is "his sin against the Cascadian commandment enjoining non-involvement and promising freedom. Duffy, therefore becomes the touchstone of moral stature in the novel." He breaks all the superficial codes of behavior imposed upon him. He dares to be different and
to give vent to his intellectual and physical needs. He affronts the mediocre intelligence of the teachers and their pseudo respectability.

For such assertion of his personal rights Duffy is made to leave in disgrace and is judged by the Cascadian standards as a fool who lost his chances to make good. Pauline however, describes him to Levin as "Leo Duffy was different and not the slightest bit fake under any circumstances. He was serious about ideas and should have been given a fair chance to defend his. People were irritated with him because he challenged their premises" (p.190). While others consider him a fellow-travelling radical without principles, Pauline has "the highest regard for him" (p.190) and she quotes him for Levin "Leo Duffy used to say, 'A good cause is the highest excitement'" (p.190). These words sufficiently inspire Levin and he elects Duffy as his spiritual father and appropriates his values. Just as Frank decides to accept Morris as his spiritual father and relive his failed career so Levin makes Duffy's unhappy career his own.

By taking on "the perilous values represented in the 'exemplary' career of Leo Duffy, the legendary, fallen Adam of the Paradise of Eas'chester, he [Levin] thereby accepted the suffering and moral responsibility inherent in this choice."16 He emulates Duffy and asserts his personality. He chooses to liberate himself from the cramping morality of the Cascadian world. Duffy before Levin tried to bring about reforms in the department but failed in
his efforts due to his hot-headed approach. Levin follows Duffy's example and he also fails. Levin chooses to fight the election himself because he does not want to elect to a position of responsibility an inadequate man. That Levin (or for that matter Duffy) fails to win, does not reflect on the validity of his code of values but on the degenerate society bogged in mental and spiritual quagmire. Nevertheless, Levin overcomes his defeat — something Duffy did not learn to do. In the end Duffy "a broken man, the shadow of himself, quickly abandoned by all" (p.47), commits suicide, a cowardly escape from facing the hardships of life. "But Levin, having learned more about himself than Duffy was able to learn, elects to reform himself, to transcend the society about him rather than try to remake that society in his own far from perfect image." Levin converts his defeat into a triumph. "He redeems Duffy's failure by transcending the broken pattern of his predecessor's life — Duffy the prophet, the father of Levin's heroism." Thus it is Duffy's example that effectuates the social values which are already there in him when he first comes west. While Frank still has to look for values which will lead to his redemption, Levin has already formed his values from his reading of Thoreau, Whitman and Emerson. His values, however, are distorted by his belief in the "American myth appropriate to the groves of academec, and in the myth of the democratic West. This was exactly the case of Roy Hobbs in The Natural for he too had been caught in the American Dream for wealth and fame. Levin comes west carrying
romantic notions about love and life, "he imagined the pioneers in covered wagons entering this valley for the first time, and found it a moving thought.... He shuddered at his good fortune" (pp.4-5). However, it is not long before Levin realises that the idyllic surroundings are not perfect. Cascadia College is not a liberal arts college but, is, in fact, a wasteland suffering from intellectual stagnation. Though the teachers profess to be liberal and democratic, in practice they are rigid and selfish. Liberal arts which alone can inculcate democratic qualities are placed much below the sciences and vocational subjects. Even in the English Department Levin discovers "a glut of composition, bone-headed grammar, and remedial reading over about a dozen skimpy literature courses" (p.39). Prof. Fairchild and Dr. Gilley uphold service oriented teaching: "Our main function ... is to satisfy the needs of the professional schools on the campus with respect to written communication" (p.40). Not only in their intellectual standards but even in their moral standards the Cascadian teachers are bourgeois.

As it was in the last two novels so also in A New Life, Levin's aspirations, his dreams of a humanistic society are constantly constrained with the reality he is made to face. Every effort of the protagonist to make his dreams come true is thwarted by the harshness of the prevalent society. The juxtapositioning of the hero's dreams with the reality around, is the ironic technique in A New Life.
Romantic as he is, Levin takes upon himself the task to preserve mankind and civilization from self-destruction. His "purpose as self-improved man is to help the human lot, notwithstanding universal peril, anxiety, continued betrayal of freedom and oppression of man" (p.230). He recalls Emerson's words, "Whoever would be a man must be a non-conformist" (p.232) and he starts his campaign against the mediocrity and the puritanism practised in the department. Above all, he fights for the cause of the liberal arts for he feels they alone can nourish the soul of democracy and deepen our awareness of life. His commitment to literature is in a way his commitment to humanism:

The way the world is now ... I sometimes feel I'm engaged in a great irrelevancy, teaching people how to write who don't know what to write. I can give them subjects but not subject matter. I worry I'm not teaching how to keep civilization from destroying itself (p.115).

He talks to his students about the humanistic values of liberal arts and the tendency of vocational studies to kill the human instinct in man. He advises the students to study more of the liberal arts before they become technicians. He tells them, "a man can find an ideal worth living for in the liberal arts. It might inspire him to work for a better society. It takes only one good man to make the world a little better" (p.275). Thus, Levin tries to vivify the Cascadian Wasteland by his humanistic approach. He takes upon himself the role of the mythic savior and thus tries to regenerate the Wasteland.
Levin feels "a good teacher is a liberator" (p.177) so when Hemingway's story "Ten Indians" is to be deleted from the course due to narrow-minded conservatism, he realizes it is his duty to fight such petty reactionary forces. His campaign against such conservatism makes his seniors hostile towards him. Zealous in his role as reformer, Levin over-acts his role, causing much dissension in the department. Increasingly frustrated at his inability to put his ethical ideas into practice, he resorts to his opponents' tactics: deceit, foul-play and blackmail. As Sidney Richman says, Levin's "emotional excesses, all motivated by a yearning to find a place for his ideals in the real world, identify the comic hero: the picaresque saint who, Quixote-like, seeks to overwhelm the evils of the world with enthusiasm."20

In spite of his bungling ways and his failure to effect change for the better in the society, one cannot help admiring the sincerity of Levin's search and his efforts. For example, he believes: "We must protect the human, the good and innocent. Those who had discovered their own moral courage, or created it, must join others who are moral; these must lead, without fanaticism. Any act of good is a diminution of evil in the world" (p.259). He concludes, "The good you did for one you did for all; it wasn't a bad way to love" (p.273).
However, Levin's final affirmation and sacrifice concern his personal life only. Levin fails to fulfil his regenerative role in society like a true folk hero. The public role that he takes up as a teacher comes to nothing. He hopes to bring about radical changes in the teaching world but he makes little attempt to assert himself (though more assertive than Frank, he is not a vigorous, active character), and eventually falls a victim to the demands made by others. We continue to expect him to leave a mark on the academic world but Levin disappoints us in our expectations. He is not able to break through the conservative, conformist society. Levin's act of submission to Gilley's demand that he renounce his college career in lieu of being allowed to keep the two children, subtracts from the affirmation he makes when he agrees to marry Pauline and accept all her responsibilities too.

Levin's promise to Gilley, when viewed from the point of morality upheld in Malamud's first two novels, seems a big sacrifice he is forced to make for the sake of the personal set of values which he has adopted. Gilles Gunn has said: "The experience of failure in Malamud's fiction is simply the testing ground of character; its purpose is to explore the possibilities for moral development and spiritual regeneration which follow from a recognition of the fact of failure."21 This is true of Frank's acceptance of Morris' unsuccessful life but Levin's failure to bear his social responsibility shows a failing in his character. One gets the feeling that Levin has striven too noisily, too childishly with too little
experience for almost nothing. In *The Assistant* Frank's passive suffering was lauded, now in *A New Life* Levin's passive submission to Gilley's demand seems implicitly rebuked. No doubt he had romantisized his ideals at first but by the end he learns enough to be able to deal with them practically but he chooses to abandon them absolutely. He passively suffers failure at the hands of Dr. Gilley. For the first time in Malamud's fiction comes the feeling that while suffering may be a redemptive force it has a negative side also since it "seems to necessitate the kind of passivity that acquiesces in the dominance of essentially vicious people like Gerald Gilley ... the passivity it canonizes leads to an abdication of the larger social responsibilities man should avoid."  

When we compare *A New Life* with *The Assistant* we observe Malamud's changing attitude towards suffering. Morris accepts suffering as his accepted fate as a Jew and tries to qualify it with his moral code. It is only towards the end that he has vague doubts about the morality of suffering. Levin, on the other hand, never willingly accepts his suffering or his victim status; nor does he think he suffers because it is his fate as a Jew. Nevertheless, in his suffering and his endurance is implied Levin's Jewishness. Though overtly Levin's Jewishness is not mentioned one guesses at it by the struggles and the suffering he has to undergo—above all by the way he ultimately endures all. Yet unlike Morris who suffers as a Jew, Levin suffers as a human being with no special
reference to his Jewishness, only that all who suffer are Jews according to Malamud.

Levin is a shlimazel of the Jewish folklore tradition — "the ill-starred blunderer who can expect the worst return for the best intentions, evil for every kindness, punishment for every misdeed. For him to sin is to get caught. And Levin quickly proceeds to do both." His is a typical Jewish fate, "for every pleasure, pain" (p.213), for every misdemeanour, punishment. "Levin wanted friendship and got friendliness; he wanted steak and they offered spam" (p.125).

One sees "the Jewish 'suffering' in Levin's final predicament - the moral assumption of the burdensome Pauline" when we hear Pauline relate how Levin was "chosen" for nomination at the college. What Levin has assumed to be his assertion of freedom is not so in actuality. Pauline discloses that she had picked out his photograph from among the rejected applicants and persuaded Gerald to give him the job because his "picture reminded me of a Jewish boy I knew in college who was very kind to me during a trying time in my life" (p.361). Levin thus realizes that he has been predestined to enact the role he thinks he chooses out of his free will.

Under such circumstances the ending arouses misgiving but "only in the context of Levin's earlier romantic foolishness, his bungling idealism." Levin does grow in moral stature and
the "only true heroism in Malamud's work is the heroism of growing up." Levin's moral growth may be seen in his willingness to accept the burden of another man's wife toward's whom he is uncertain of his feelings, who has been the cause of his dismissal from college and for whose sake he has fore­sworn even his future career. He also takes on paternal responsibility of Pauline's adopted children. Levin's commitment to Pauline is out of a "mortification of the ego very much like what Frank Alpine imposed upon himself." He assumes responsibility at the cost of his own personal fulfilment — both in love and ambition; he takes it as a "stern moral imperative." He will love Pauline on principle, expecting no personal fulfilment. The demands made on Levin by his love affair with Pauline are not unlike the demands made on Frank for Helen. Both have to sacrifice much for the women who come into their lives.

In the end we see Levin leaving Cascadia in a second­hand car, jobless, without any prospects of one, a wife whom he does not love and whose inconsistency he is aware of, and two adopted children. "Why take that load on yourself?" Gerald Gilley asks and the reply he gets is, "because I can, you son of a bitch" (p.360). He assumes responsibility even though he does not have to because, as he says, he can. It is a decision made by a moral man who has learnt what freedom and responsibility mean. Levin's decision to start anew with such a responsibility, no good prospects for the future, requires
"enormous will, courage, capacity to bear pain, and an unshakable faith in the value of life and human decency — requiring in fact, an assertion of the self that by any standards ought to be considered heroic."

Levin himself is under no romantic illusions about his future. He knows it is going to be a hard, grim fight for a new life considering the encumbrances he has taken on himself. He is aware of the fact that he has "failed at his best plans" (p.362).

The myth employed at the end is that of the fall of Adam from the garden of Eden. But as Ducharme tells us, "the banishment is a liberation from a false paradise into a life of involvement and responsibility in the larger world of men and affairs."

One can be optimistic of the future because Pauline's barren womb now carries Levin's child. This forbades good to revive Levin's interest in her, "her body smelled like fresh-baked bread — the bread of flowers" (p.366). He gives her gold hoop earrings of his own choice and to her "God bless you, Lev," asks her to call him Sam as they used to call him at home in the past. This shows his willing acceptance of her and in Malamud's fiction, affirmation of unselfish love, responsibility towards others and acceptance and transcendence of one's past self are all redemptive acts.
It is at the end that the irony of the title becomes fully clear. The new life he had hoped for by coming to Cascadia turns out to be a bogus dream which he has to discard. Levin, a mature man now, moves on with a better, fuller life in view. Whatever the degree of success he may achieve, Levin moves on in the shadow of Huck Finn still in search of self-definition.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1Bernard Malamud, A New Life (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1961), p.205. All page numbers quoted in the chapter are from this text.

2Granville Hicks, "His Hopes on the Human Heart," Saturday Review, 46 (October 12, 1963), 32.


7Sidney Richman, p.68.

8Sandy Cohn, Bernard Malamud and the Trial by Love (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1974), pp.68-69.

9Sandy Cohn, p.69.


13E.H.L.Masilamoni, p.36.


15Robert Ducharme, p.23.

16Ibid., p.69.

17Sandy Cohn, p.63.


19Robert Ducharme, p.21.

20Sidney Richman, p.84.


22Robert Ducharme, p.112.


25 Robert Ducharme, p. 47.


27 Robert Ducharme, p. 87.


30 Robert Ducharme, p. 23.